

READING VALÉRY THROUGH TANPINAR: THE ANALYSIS OF AN INFLUENCE

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## **ABSTRACT**

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Keywords: Paul Valéry, Ahmet Hamdi Tanpinar, Poetics, Influence, Crisis.

Ahmet Hamdi Tanpinar has expressed his admiration for the French poet and thinker Paul Valéry on various occasions. From his diaries to the collection of his articles, or to his lectures on literature, one can find the affirmation that his poetics are inspired from Valéry's.

However, although the relation between Tanpinar and Valéry has been analyzed on the level of poetics, Valéry's persona or 'System', which is an amalgam of texts that treats different facets of Valéry's poetics such as the concepts of perfection, clarity, constant consciousness and the sovereignty of the intellect in the process of writing, has often been dismissed as an elucidatory element for understanding Tanpinar and his works.

This thesis explores Paul Valéry's 'System' through the texts that Ahmet Hamdi Tanpinar has discussed in his elaborations on Valéry and the affinity that Tanpinar felt for Valéry's poetics, in order to understand the reasons as to why the poetical influence of Valéry has gained a deeper and a more personal aspect.

## ÖZET

### VALÉRY'YI TANPINAR ÜZERİNDEN OKUMAK: BİR ETKİNİN İNCELEMESİ

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Anahtar Kelimeler: Paul Valéry, Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar, Pojetika, Etki, Kriz.

Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar, Fransız şair ve düşünür Paul Valéry'e olan hayranlığını sıkça dile getirmiştir. Günlüklerine, makale derlemelerine veya edebiyat derslerine bakıldığından Tanpınar'ın poetikasının Valéry'den esinlenerek yaratıldığıının ifadesine rastlamak mümkündür.

Ancak, Tanpınar ile Valéry arasındaki bağ, edebiyat eleştirmenlerince poetika boyuntunda incelenmiş olsa da, kişi olarak Valéry'ye ya da Valéry'nin 'Sistem'ine – ki bu sistem yazma süreçlerinde açıklık, daimi bir bilinçlilik halinde olma, zekanın egemenliği ve mükemmellik kavramları gibi Valéry'nin poetikasının farklı yüzlerini ele alan metinlerin birleşiminden oluşur – Tanpınar'ın daha iyi anlaşılmasını sağlayacak açıklayıcı etmenler olarak bakılmamıştır.

Bu tez, Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar'ın Valéry üzerine yaptığı incelemelerde ele aldığı metinler üzerinden Paul Valéry'nin 'Sistem'ini incelerken, Tanpınar'ın Valéry'nin poetikasına duyduğu yakınlığı ele alarak, Valéry'nin temsil ettiği poetik etkinin nasıl daha derin ve kişisel bir boyut kazandığını anlamaya çalışıyor.

Bu tezi yazarken kimilerinin uykularını kaçırdım (ailem), kimilerini bitmek bilmeyen ve daldan dala atlayıp gelişen gevezeliğimle yordum (arkadaşlarım), kaygılanarak, kendime kızarak surat astım ve dolayısıyla endişelendirdim (sevgilim).

Kısacası bu çalışmanın yazım sürecinde çevreme dolaylı dolaysız hasar verdim.

Beni anlayışla karşıladıları, desteklerini esirgemedikleri, hatta çenebazlığını çoğu zaman besledikleri, fikirlerini paylaştıkları, fazla açıldığım zaman tutup kendime gelmemi sağladıkları, ve her şeyden önce sevgileriyle rahatlattıkları ve huzur verdikleri için bu çalışmayı:

Ferhat-Emine-Emre-Dila Yoleri'ye, tez danışmanım Hülya Adak'a, yoldaşım Şahan Yatarkalkmaz'a ve olmazsa olmazlar takımından: Ayşe Pehlivانer'e, Buket ve Umut Okucu-Özbay'a, Ege Kanar'a, Serra Kazma'ya, Sinan Tanrıdağ'a ve elimi hiç bırakmaması dileğiyle Arda Ertem'e adıyorum.

You must try, Psyche, to use up all your facility against an obstacle;  
face the granite, rouse yourself against it, and for a while despair.

See your vain enthusiasms and your frustrated aims fall away.  
Perhaps you lack sufficient wisdom yet prefer your will to your ease.

You find that stone too hard, you dream of the softness of wax  
and the obedience of clay?

Follow the path of your aroused thought  
and you will soon meet this infernal inscription:  
*There is nothing so beautiful as that which does not exist.*

Paul Valéry - 'Concerning Adonis'

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## INTRODUCTION

The endeavor of this thesis dissertation is twofold: first, to try to understand the attraction that Paul Valéry's work and persona held for Ahmet Hamdi Tanpinar, and second – and consequently – to look at Tanpinar's selection of Valéry's texts so as to sketch the contours of Paul Valéry's system of thought in order to illustrate Tanpinar's source of influence.

“My aesthetics were formed after I got to know Valéry” (*‘Antalyalı Gence Mektup’* cited in Enginün and Kerman 23). The readers interested in what Tanpinar wrote other than his prose and poetry are quite familiar with this affirmation, for the statement that Paul Valéry is a source of influence is repeated in various forms in Tanpinar's writings. However, the frequency of referral to Valéry on Tanpinar's regard and its dismissal by the critics is an intriguing contrast that makes the figure of Paul Valéry all the more interesting.

In *Ahmet Hamdi Tanpinar: Bir Kültür, Bir İnsan*, Turan Alptekin gives the account of a lecture on literature where Tanpinar attempted to illustrate the literary ambiance of his time, which gives the reader an insight to the trajectory that Tanpinar pursued in order to reach his own literary conception and the role that Paul Valéry played in it.

Tanpinar remarks that when his generation took up poetry, there were two important figures in Turkish literature: Yahya Kemal Beyatlı and Ziya Gökalp, who he also describes through their choice of poetic meters, respectively, the Arabic prosody (aruz vezni) and

syllabic meter (hece vezni). As to the new generation, Tanpınar notes that they were “in the middle”: “Back then, symbolists were dominant in our literature; Yahya Kemal came up with the theory of “rythme intérieur”. (...) Later, Y. Kemal told us about Heredia in his lectures” (Alptekin 40). From the statement of José-Maria de Heredia (1842-1905), we understand that Yahya Kemal introduced his students to Parnassian poets who gathered around the imposing figure of Charles Leconte de Lisle (1818-1894). This introduction has inevitably led Tanpınar to Baudelaire who reacted against Parnassians; Tanpınar remembers that his “world changed with Baudelaire”. While he was in Erzurum, Tanpınar discovered another poet who will be important in his own poetical growth: “When I stepped into Mallarmé's [poetical world], I stepped into fascination” (Alptekin 40).

Tanpınar depicts the situation in which he came to construct his poetry stating that as Symbolism had come to an end by 1901, on one hand the Neo-classic and on the other Modernism had emerged. As for Tanpinar's own stance, he articulates that he had two mottos which he imposed on himself: “First, I shall create a language of my own, such that, whichever word comes into it, shall wear its color. Second, to establish a form of syllabic meter building on prosody” (Alptekin 40).

In *Tanpinar'in Şiir Dünyası*, Mehmet Kaplan, who is Ahmet Hamdi's pupil and appears as the only authoritative figure that analyzed the poetics of Tanpınar through Valéry's, gives an insight on Tanpınar's encounter with Valéry. According to him, it was thanks to Ahmet Kutsi Tecer who had just returned from Paris that Tanpinar came to know Valéry: “Valéry was the most suitable poet for his nature and character” he writes, “their coalescence was sudden and strong” (Kaplan 54). Kaplan thinks that two of the primordial points that united these two poets who grew up under the strong light of the Mediterranean, one in the West, the other in the East, were the intellect and the sense of clarity. He adds that Tanpınar learned from Valéry to trust his experiences and especially that one can reach “infinity” only through “perfection” (original emphasis Kaplan54-55).

In his letter to a young student from Antalya, Tanpinar informs his addressee that his aesthetics were formed after he got to know Valéry between 1928 and 1930, and explains what he understands of aesthetics: “If you modify Valéry's words ‘A man who wants to write about his dreams must totally be conscious’ as ‘to construct the dream state with language with the utmost *conscious* effort and work’, the result is my perception of poetry” (*‘Antalyali Gence Mektup’* cited in Enginün and Kerman 23).

Mehmet Kaplan’s analysis of the above citation is that, after realizing the importance of the intellect and the conscious work through Valéry’s writings on the subject of poetry, Tanpinar has read other western poets and writers who attributed an importance to dream, fables and myth elaborated in the works of Sigmund Freud – who is regarded as the complete opposite of Valéry, by the latter himself; and through his readings Tanpinar has “tried to make a synthesis proper to his own vision between these two poles” (Kaplan 14).

Turan Alptekin recounts Tanpinar reaffirming his emulation of Valéry’s aesthetics: “What affected me essentially was Valéry. In 1926, my aesthetics was Valéry’s; I couldn’t get away from him much” (Alptekin 41). The last sentence is intriguing, for one wonders the reason why he could not get away from Valéry; was it because of some sort of gravitational pull that Valéry’s poems were exerting on the young poet who was striving to construct his own system?

Again, Mehmet Kaplan brings an elucidatory observation regarding this pull: by learning from Valéry to play with phrases within the poem (Kaplan 193), Tanpinar was freed from sentimentalism and could concentrate on the form, to which he gives the utmost importance in his poetical endeavor. According to Kaplan, it was the aesthetic taste that Tanpinar discovered within himself and developed through Valéry’s influence that saved him from “the extreme sensibility or the sentimentalism that pre-dominates his first poems”

(Kaplan 181). However, Kaplan also thinks that if he had not been earnestly loyal to the formalist poetry of Valéry, Tanpinar could have produced more free verses (Kaplan 189).

In his poetical analysis of Tanpinar's oeuvre, Mehmet Kaplan comes across an interesting similarity between Tanpinar and Valéry's poems: the last two verses of Tanpinar's *Hatırlama*, “Bir masal meyvası gibi paylaştık/ Mehtabı, kırılmış dal uçlarından”, are according to Kaplan, roughly the translation of the verses “We shared this fruit of fairy reels/The moon, to madmen well disposed”<sup>1</sup> from Valéry's *Le Bois Amical* (Kaplan 92). This poetic translation incites Kaplan to explain that from time to time Tanpinar had borrowed the ‘atmosphere’, and sometimes the ‘theme’ of his masters’ poems; here it is possible to assert that this poetic translation is the translation of an influence or elements of a poet into the form that another creates, this process should not be understood as imitation, as Kaplan explains regarding the similar verses in the two poems: “[Tanpinar] he described them with his own words, engendering images proper to himself, new verses out of these words” (Kaplan 93-94).

In Kaplan's opinion, Paul Valéry's poetic influence is most apparent in *Eşik* and *Zaman Kirintili*, on which Tanpinar worked the most. Taking Valéry as an example while composing them, these poems show Tanpinar's inspiration and art the most (Kaplan 141). It is possible to remark that another keyword appears in order to make sense of the Tanpinar – Valéry correlation: example. “The relation between Valéry and Tanpinar is nothing more than an association” affirms Kaplan, for in the poetical development of Tanpinar, Valéry is taken as an example and not as a source of imitation (Kaplan 141).

Kaplan asserts that it is impossible not to remember Valéry's *La Jeune Parque*, *Fragment du Narcisse* and *Ebauche d'un Serpent* when reading Tanpinar's *Eşik* and *Zaman*

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<sup>1</sup> Original verse: “Nous partagions ce fruit de fées/ La lune amicale aux insensés.

*Kirintiları*. In terms of “the long and complex structure of the poems and the expression of feelings and thought with rich images”, these two poems showcase the Valéryian aesthetics (Kaplan 142).

In his elaboration on his master Stéphane Mallarmé entitled *Lettre sur Mallarmé*, Paul Valéry writes on the same subject, influence, and the perspective he brings serves as a supporting argument for Kaplan’s remark: “It happens that the oeuvre of one, receives within the being of another a singular value, engenders consequences that are impossible to foresee” (LM 213). In this case, Valéry notes that influence is distinguishing itself from imitation, for when a whole oeuvre influences someone not by all its qualities but by certain of them, the influence will take a remarkable value (LM 214):

We say that an author is original when we are unaware of the hidden transformation that others changed in him; we mean that the dependence of what he does with respect to what has been done is excessively irregular and complex (LM 214). (...) The separate development of the quality of one by all the power of the other rarely fails to generate effects of extreme originality. (LM 215)

What is the case for Tanpinar? What is the level of Valéry’s influence? Is it an influence on the level where the oeuvre of Valéry creates a singular value within Tanpinar’s being? Is it solely the work or the person? Tanpinar seems also indecisive about the matter. On 18 February 1959, Tanpinar writes in his diary that the night before he read Valéry’s *Letters to Gide*: “I could have filled encyclopedias from one letter of [it], however I would not consider myself as worked. To work is to find. The fact that he was able to do it in 1894” (Enginün and Kerman 155).

What Tanpinar refers to by 1984 must be Valéry’s finding of the character of M. Teste, after the sentimental breakdown he underwent in 1892 (which will be elaborated at length in the next chapter), since he begins to write *La Soirée avec Monsieur Teste* (An

Evening with M. Teste) in 1894. Tanpinar asks what use this finding had for his poetry. The probable answer to this question is that Valéry's crisis and the emergence of the character of M. Teste who symbolizes the Cartesian Intellect (will be thoroughly illustrated in the second chapter), are what conducted Valéry's poetical orientation, the use that it had for his poetry is that it assured Valéry's return to poetry since with the crisis, also came an abandonment of literature.

Surely, Tanpinar knows the importance of M. Teste in the oeuvre of Valéry, for he had begun translating and publishing Monsieur Teste in parts between 1933 and 1934 (*An Evening with M. Teste*, in *Yeni Türk*); the editors of his diaries assert that today, no more than two published parts of *M. Teste* exist (Enginün and Kerman 43). However, thanks to Turgay Anar, we know that out of the nine chapters of the novel<sup>2</sup>, Tanpinar had translated three more chapters that were waiting to be published in various periodicals: *Letter from a Friend* (İstanbul, 1947), *Letter from Mme Emilie Teste* (İstanbul, 1947), *Preface* (Tercüme Dergisi, 1953) (Anar 233).

Tanpinar continues his contemplation regarding Valéry and writes: "I wonder if my poems and others are coming from Valéry, the thinker, or from the man that we really know. This conductivity<sup>3</sup> has done in literature what thirty Picassos could not do" (Enginün and Kerman 155). What does he mean with "the man that we really know"? Is it the Valéry known through his poetry or Valéry, the person, known through his relationships? Aside from the poetical affiliation, if the frequency of the referral to Valéry's persona in Tanpinar's diaries is taken into consideration, it is possible to assert that the influence of Valéry on Tanpinar is not a relation just in terms of work to work, but it has also an aspect established through what Tanpinar perceives in Valéry's personality.

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<sup>2</sup> Valéry was reluctant to call it a novel, since he did not enjoy novels much.

<sup>3</sup> Tanpinar uses French "conduiterie" which does not exist in French.

In the diary entry of May 15, 1961, Tanpinar writes his excitement about the publication of Paul Valéry's notebooks in 29 volumes, "Cahiers is going to be important"; however, because of monetary problems, buying the collection does not seem possible. He notes: "Two thousand liras at the least. Maybe more. In short, impossible. Poverty. Wall of money"; Tanpinar asks himself what will happen if he does not read it; he thinks that not reading the Cahiers will be a defect for him but consoles himself that nobody will know of it. Nevertheless, his conscience, or perhaps his sense of responsibility toward Valéry intervenes, and he delivers an important aspect regarding Valéry's position in his intellectual, but also intimate life: "And true Valéry is surely in his books, but when a person makes a man his light, he wants to know more about him" (Enginün and Kerman 288).

Valéry is such an influential light that Tanpinar is sometimes able to re-enact Valéry's experience; on December 3, 1958, Tanpinar cites a sentence from Valéry "That scenery is in front of my eyes and I told about the houses. Can a painter, I wonder, make a painting out of this?", and states that curiously, this remark had drawn his attention:

As a matter of fact, the scenery, with the silhouettes of Bulgur Palas and Hekimoğlu Ali Paşa mosque that rise with purple, dark blue, leaden, and pink colors towards Topkapı and Yedikule, and the vast sky behind them, and the leaden asphalt avenue and neon lights, is also in front of my eyes. (Enginün and Kerman 132)

Tanpinar tends to also compare himself to Valéry: "Unquestionably, I am not like Valéry. I don't have a *scientifique* genius, or psychological *cruosités*. At best, my skeptic being, my curiosities for some things are close to him. Yet, his ideas are enveloping me more than most" (D.e.: January 28, 1959 in Enginün and Kerman 152). From this statement, it seems that Tanpinar points out to the fact that *Valéry the thinker* influences him more on a personal level (my emphasis). The diary entry continues: "There must be some kind of a secret here relating to me". This sentence appears almost as an invitation for

the readers, or scholars perhaps, to investigate upon the envelopment that Tanpınar experiences.

### A. Tanpınar and his discontent

Although Tanpınar himself indicates to the important link with the French poet, little attention has been attributed to his insistence on Paul Valéry. Scholars who elaborated on Tanpınar have opted to concentrate more on the author's affiliation with Yahya Kemal and the Dergah circle, and the influence of Henri Bergson upon Tanpınar's conception of time, and more generally his system of thought. The orientation to these two important figures stems from the fact that on the one hand, the subject of Yahya Kemal and the implications of their relationship lead to the highly debated but also fructuous link to conservatism that Tanpınar has been labeled with; on the other hand, Henri Bergson emerges forth as a complimentary figure in these debates.

In *Yitirilmemiş Zamanın Ardında: Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar ve Muhafazakar Modernliğin Estetik Düzlemi*, Hasan Bülent Kahraman notes that in almost every literary elaboration Tanpınar has been related to modernity and, more than his poetical endeavor, he has been perceived as a thinker who has provided implicit or clear answers to the sociological, cultural and political problems of a definite period in Turkish history. This type elaboration tends to be problematic, for it reads and analysis Tanpınar from an external point of view. Kahraman qualifies this perception even more severely, as he thinks that Tanpınar is *used* : “(...) he is seen as a *symbol*, an *object of representation*” (original emphasis) (Kahraman 10-11).

Tanpınar's reduction into a symbol reminds of Aldous Huxley's words about the increasing importance that symbols have gained and how they are perceived as more real

than the realities to which they refer: “In the contexts of religion and politics, words are not regarded as standing, rather inadequately, for things and events; on the contrary, things and events are regarded as particular illustrations of words” (Huxley 9). It is possible to assert that reducing Tanpinar into a symbol is an attitude that inscribe itself in the realm of politics, hence the symbol can easily transform into a stigma. For the influence of Y.Kemal and H. Bergson was surely formative, but perceiving it as definitive restricts the vast amount of possibilities of interpretation and analysis that Tanpinar’s works are prone to generate.

At least, it is what seems to be felt by Tanpinar himself, for in his diaries there are passages where Tanpinar appears to be uncomfortable with the attributions made regarding his oeuvre. The last entry in his diary 13 days before his death in 1962, shows that Tanpinar was compelled to accentuate his artistic responsibility within society:

The truth is I am new to Turkish. But I am not new in the world. The world – which led art to a dead end – wants other kinds of things. Rightists say none but Turkey, a Turkish history which cannot surpass a learned by rote and blindfolded self praise, none but internal politics and propaganda. Left says that there is no Turkey, and there is no need for it; or something along the lines; wants a Turkey which it bends a little more every day, which is a little more broken, which is free of those that perceive themselves as entities within entities. I, on the other hand, am after a Turkey that takes part in the world, which is looking forward, and settling accounts with the past. This is my predicament with regards to my country. (D.e.: June 1, 1962 in Enginün and Kerman 332)

The statement about a society that settles its accounts with the past gestures toward a critical thinking of the past, a position against forgetfulness; Tanpinar’s gazing at the past does not necessarily imply nostalgia, a longing to the previous state. Further in his testimony, Tanpinar writes that he has *sympathies*, which incites the reader to reconsider whether if the critics have been too quick to stigmatize his work and thus, his artistic persona as conservative. The themes and discourses constructed throughout his novels and

especially his opinions disclosed in the collection of essays *Yaşadığım Gibi* are often used to show that his sympathies were tending toward the Right; it must be said that Mehmet Kaplan's preface where he exposes Tanpınar as a cultural conservative ought to have played a capital role in the symbolization/stigmatization. However, as the diary entry discloses, Tanpınar thinks that the political milieus within Turkish literary field are misreading his works:

Strangely they read my work superficially and both sides judge it so. To the rightists, contrary to my engagements – *Huzur* and *Beş Şehir* – I lean towards the left, I support the left. To the leftists, because I talk about ezan, Turkish music, and our history, I am on the rightists' side, if not on the racists'. Whereas, I just want to carry out the thing I am capable of doing on my own, my work. I am a liable observer. I have sympathies. (D.e.: January 11, 1962 in Enginün and Kerman 332)

The literary review Hece's special issue on Tanpınar has "Which Tanpınar?" as a title for its preface. This very question testifies to the fact that the confusion about the author's work as illustrated in the above citation has persisted. In the preface in question, the editors define Tanpınar as an intellectual of a "crisis of civilization", and assert that his identity comprises "all the characteristics and fluctuations of such an intellectual's such as fear, conflict, being casted aside or exalted" (Hece 5). The vast literature written on Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar's work and life parallels the characteristics and fluctuations of the aforementioned intellectual; it seems as if there is a "crisis of criticism".

Tanpınar ends his last diary entry with an unfinished sentence - one might perceive it as a prognosis regarding some of his works, which are also unfinished - it reads "the conspiracy of silence around me..." (Enginün and Kerman 334). Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar was concerned for and saddened by this conspiracy of silence, for nothing was ever written about his work. The comments of those who took the trouble of doing so, such as Necip Fazıl, were not fair according to Tanpınar: "Hamdi's poems are like honeycomb without the honey; the only remaining thing in the mouth afterwards, is the wax" (Tanpınar 1992

30). On the other hand, the diaries show that he also feels that there is a problem of communication within the literary field, as if nobody speaks the same language: “In each talk with the men of letters, I suspected being in the Tower of Babel (D.e.: June 1, 1961 in Enginün and Kerman 302). The allusion to the Tower of Babel can be interpreted as the consequence of the rift between the literary republican and conservative fronts, deriving from the Language Reform.

Cemil Meriç’s account about some of the people surrounding Tanpinar and their impression regarding the poet is shocking, but gives a background for Tanpinar’s discontent. Upon asking İhsan Kongar and Avni Yalikoğlu who were Tanpinar’s gambling fellows to be introduced himself to Tanpinar, Meriç received a humiliating retort from them: “Come now, he is one stupid guy, a scatterbrain, you wouldn’t like him, he’ll annoy you”. Thinking differently from them, Meriç observes:

For his contemporaries Ahmet Hamdi was a man bad at gambling, bad at drinking rakı, a distressed man. They were seeing only these sides of him. *None of them had read a word of Ahmet Hamdi. And this was their judgment regarding him.* An annoying man, who knows nothing. (my emphasis cited in Enginün and Kerman 14-15)

Tanpinar perceives and resents this ignorance about who he is and what he has accomplished. His account of a conversation that he overheard makes the reader think that the conspiracy of silence might point out to a common attitude among his fellow scholars and writers to stay silent about his work, to not read or analyze it, to not pay the attention it deserves and by doing so, erasing his name from the audience’s memory, and consequently to silence Tanpinar: “The youth is picking at Yahya Kemal around me. ‘He was grand, not’ etc. Some of the ideas are mine. *In today's literary world, at least five percent of the ideas are mine. My name is nowhere to be seen*” (my emphasis – D.e.: December 3, 1958 in Enginün and Kerman 134).

The silence surrounding Ahmet Hamdi Tanpinar was not only in the general literary milieu. If Paul Valéry is Tanpinar's symbolic master, in real life it was Yahya Kemal who assumed this role. However, it is possible to assert that he also played a primary role in Ahmet Hamdi's sensitivity to the lack of critical attention regarding his works; for Kemal failed at providing the emotional and literary support that Tanpinar needed, which then made their relationship problematic.

Orhan Okay elaborates on the forty year old friendship between Yahya Kemal and Ahmet Hamdi Tanpinar in his *Bir Hülya Adaminin Romanı*. He observes an incompatibility within the dynamics of this relationship. Not forgetting the aspect of teacher/student, master/pupil of their relation, Okay affirms that if we were to ask Tanpinar's place and value for Y.Kemal, the answer is close to nothing.

Whereas in his writings, Tanpinar perceives, according to Okay, Yahya Kemal as “a Zeus on top of the Olympus”, and as a consequence: “(B)eeyond doubt, nothing is more natural than Tanpinar expecting a compliment from [Y. Kemal] regarding his oeuvres, at least regarding his poems” (Okay 250). Okay states that Tanpinar did receive compliments from his master; two compliments to be precise, the first regarding his poem Isfahan, which Tanpinar wrote during his apprenticeship and, finding it extremely weak later on, did not include among poems to be published. The other one is a *mortifying* compliment that had upset Tanpinar. Okay cites Tanpinar’s account on Yahya Kemal joining him and his friend Ahmet Muhip for a conversation and after praising their prose work, told them: “Quit writing poetry. Give it up, it has ended with me. Your humble servant has already done it, with your permission. You can no longer do it” (Tanpinar 1992 37).

Regarding Okay’s affirmations on Tanpinar’s idolatry of Yahya Kemal, it is possible to say the diaries show the other side of the coin. Contrary to Valéry’s healthier relation with Mallarmé and the literary circle in which he interacted, Tanpinar had a problematic

experience with his own master Yahya Kemal and milieu. Kerman and Enginün informs the diary reader that Tanpınar was convinced that Kemal was searching for people who would praise him and he became distant from Kemal and the Dergâh circle (Enginün and Kerman 336).

Mehmet Kaplan explains that the great influence of Ahmet Haşim and Yahya Kemal over the youth of 1920's had delayed the development and expression of their own sensibilities; Tanpınar was among this young generation (Kaplan 48).

His thoughts about Yahya Kemal are ambivalent throughout the diary entries, sometimes he praises him, sometimes shows the poet under a very different light. We find the echo of Kemal's compliment/affront between the lines of his diary entry; indeed Tanpınar eventually gave up, however, not poetry but his veneration of Yahya Kemal as a master:

Yahya Kemal did a lot for us. However he did not have a horizon either. (*At least for me he could have done marvelous things. There were so many things that he could have facilitated. He did not do any of it.*) (my emphasis) Yahya Kemal wanted to be the Great Wall of China for us. My greatest luck was to break through this wall in time and go beyond it. He could have taught us a working system. He imprisoned us within an unnecessary vehemence (D.e.: March 18, 1961 in Enginün and Kerman 267-268)

In *Yaşadığım Gibi*, we find the familiar statement of Tanpınar's literary influence as he reaffirms his introduction to poetry through the angles of Valéry and Y.Kemal, Tanpınar creates a likeness between these two figures: "Even though their values and attitudes toward life is very much distinct, they are a little alike" (Tanpınar 1997 286). The statement that follows makes it clear that this likeness is on the level of their influence on Tanpınar's poetical vision, because Tanpınar writes that while through a tradition of meditation Valéry acquired a whole different oeuvre, "Yahya Kemal, regarding either his influence or oeuvre,

has stayed solely in Turkish Poetry" (Tanpinar 1997 286). In the diaries, this idea gains another perspective; Tanpinar thinks that Y.Kemal wasted his talent by staying in the frame of Ottoman poetry. It is possible to read a disdain of the fact that his master has opted for the effortless work in poetry, he did not strive for surpassing himself:

What consumed Yahya Kemal is undoubtedly the old poetry with which he created so many brilliant works. With the convenience of old poetry, it was only a matter of proficiency for him. He wasted himself. Why do I always return to this subject: Because I want a wider horizon, a clearer thinking, wider and more mature oeuvre than the man I call master and reminisce. Why Valéry, or even Gide, Proust, all Europeans always push their limits higher! (D.e.: April 10, 1961 in Enginün and Kerman 281)

Tanpinar's harshness regarding Y. Kemal becomes all the more clearer if we look at the development in the tone of his entries throughout his diaries; Tanpinar is self-critical, his sense of self is put into question, he asks: "...but what am I? I am sixty, I don't have an oeuvre" (D.e.: August 27, 1960 in Enginün and Kerman 208). It is natural that everything related to what he deems as failure will also get its share from the resentment that he feels toward himself. As Kahraman notes, when he reflected on his production, the real artistic anxiety for Tanpinar was in the field of poetry (Kahraman 10). Additionally, his personal journal shows that his anxiety had turned into a crisis during the last decade of his life.

## B. Tanpinar and the Crisis of the Intellect(ual)

Tanpinar takes a trip to Europe in 1953. From the direction that his notes take, the editors of the diaries deduce that his journey to Belgium and Netherlands intensified the solitude that he already was feeling throughout his life. Although numerous projects are preoccupying his mind, he complains about not being able to do anything and that the time is running short; Enginün and Kerman observes that towards the end of his first trip to

Europe Tanpinar is overtaken by a feeling of incompetence: “He is not happy with himself; he sees himself and his social circle as an obstacle for his happiness. And these feelings will gradually increase and become sorer towards the last days of his life” (Enginün and Kerman 69).

Indeed, the tone of his self-appraisal turns into a darker, self-destructive discourse. What is alarming in Tanpinar’s entries is that in page after page one witnesses the construction of a discourse of lack mingled with anger and resentment; either the lack of time to accomplish his novels, his poems, translations – especially that of Monsieur Teste: “Neither the plays, nor the Yahya Kemals, nor M.Teste, nor the novel, nor the Turkish literature article, nor the other writings and poems are finished” (D.e.: January 27, 1959 in Enginün and Kerman 152); either the lack of money, the lack of health, the lack of attention by his contemporaries, and the lack of motivation to accomplish the long list of mainly literary tasks that he sets for himself:

Discomfort again, *rechute*. Money issues. Do I really have no capability of concentration anymore? Will I die falling apart? My thinking before my materiality? Let’s talk openly. What is my aesthetics? I have to accept that I have not been present in most of the poetry I wrote until now. A human being is not the specific compliances of his voice, nor his specific sorrows. More than anything, he is his occupation, his work. There are voices in my poetry, but not the work of my hands. Certainly, I reached some places in some of my verses, but not to places I want to. (D.e.: February 2, 1959 in Enginün and Kerman 156)

February 1959 seems as the period that marks the culminating point of the distress into which Ahmet Hamdi fell; it is also important to note that his identification with Valéry’s crisis is affirmed in the diary entries that he wrote: “Midnight. Like the seventeen years old Valéry, I can also say that tonight, or today at noon, the moment of my destiny alighted upon the table” (D.e: February 7, 1959 in Enginün and Kerman 153). From “midnight” and “destiny”, it is understood that Tanpinar is referring to the faithful night of October 1892, when Valéry underwent a life changing intellectual breakdown. Nonetheless,

there is a miscalculation regarding Valéry's age, for being born in 1871, he began his Law studies and nothing much happened in 1888; the crisis that would put his destiny at play happened when he was twenty one.

From this entry, the supposition that Valéry was more than an artistic influence becomes possible. Because in their initiation to poetry, they have both been overshadowed by imposing father figures (Y. Kemal and S. Mallarmé), and that they have both strived to free themselves from the strain that those figures were constituting, Tanpınar felt a kinship between Valéry and himself, he saw in him something that resonated in his existence: they were related by crisis. Little can be guessed what Tanpınar means by his destiny alighting upon the table; was he considering his oeuvre? Was he considering constraining society and culture within which he tried to nurture and flourish his artistic identity? More importantly, what was the conclusion he reached?

What he wrote three days later points out to an existential crisis, under the light of which Tanpınar displays his destiny as a failure, it seems as he is regretting the path he has chosen:

A terrible aridity, a certain and really discouraging, even despairing, discontinuity paralyzes all my productions<sup>4</sup>. First a great infertility. And after to have not heard or taken anything seriously. To dwell in small games, to not come to terms with those who came before as one should do. I should have begun from where Valéry had left. It would require us to read our late master adequately. In fact there were two or three other names: Mallarmé, Nerval. The latter, with Baudelaire had much influence on me when I started. (D.e.: February 10, 1959 in Enginün and Kerman)

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<sup>4</sup> The original sentence is in French: “Une terrible aridité, une certaine et vraiment décourageant, même désespérant discontinuité paralyse toute mes productions”. I do not know if this sentence is a quote or belongs to Tanpınar.

In his entry of September 12, 1960, one can observe that he has come into terms with his regrets and resentment. He confesses a reluctance to confront what he deemed as his poetics and reaches a final definition:

After all that destructive experience, I am thinking about my aesthetics, the order of my world of poetry once again. There have been years until now in which I have not dared to do so. My aesthetics stems from symbolists. Yet, I am not a symbolist. However, I really wanted to be an absolutist like Valéry. (D.e: September 12, 1960 in Enginün and Kerman 221)

In order to conclude, Ahmet Hamdi Tanpinar's diaries hold enough examples for the reader to see that Tanpinar feels himself impelled to find his own voice and to reach perfection in poetry; however he also appears as an artist constrained by geography, both literary and space wise, for one can read a sense of void in which he tries to create and reflect his artistic identity. Did Valéry stand as an ideal that he could not reach? Or as an ideal that he might have reached if he had the favorable conditions? It seems as Valéry was more of a cathartic figure, whose Cartesian mind and ability to repel over-sentimentalism in order to obtain clarity and the most conscious craftsmanship *enlightened* Tanpinar in times of distress.

This is the reason why Tanpinar's regret about not beginning from where Valéry had left calls for taking a closer look to the *System* that the latter has established, which constitutes one of the underlying motives of this thesis dissertation. The biographical section concentrates on Valéry's personal life in order to understand his personal affiliations, his cultural and social environment, the birth of his works, in brief the real Valéry. The other chapters will concentrate on, under the guidance of Tanpinar's analysis on Valéry, the main concepts and figures that played a role in the conception of his System, his poetics, and the three masters that influenced his work: Poe, Baudelaire and Mallarmé.

## I. BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE ON PAUL VALÉRY

Regarding his elaborations on Valéry, Tanpinar seems not only interested in Valéry's artistic persona, but also in the real person that he came to know through Valéry's personal writings and the testimonies of his acquaintances about the poet. In his travel to Frances in 1953, Tanpinar was revisiting the trajectories of Valéry's life; in his diary, one can find addresses of places that Ahmet Hamdi wishes to visit, among them he notes Sète, where French poet was buried in a sea side cemetery.

Tanpinar also takes a trip to Valvins, near Paris where Stéphane Mallarmé lived, while describing Mallarmé's house in *Paris Tesadüfleri* (Paris' Encounters), he confesses that he cannot relate the house's modesty to the poet's image that he created in his mind, the house is: "Worthy of an elementary school teacher who pens those humble petitions to the era's ministers of education which make us cry as we read them now, rather than the figure of Mallarmé, the poet, in our minds", and then Tanpinar adds a remark that discloses the nature of the bond that he has with Mallarmé: "why don't I say *in my life*, I wonder?" he asks (my emphasis Tanpinar 1997 265).

This remark finds its explication when Tanpinar describes how he felt when he learned that visitors were not allowed to enter Mallarmé's house. Tanpinar laments:

(B)ut, how much I wanted to enter this door, and see the little room where he studied, and kept his notes. Mallarmé showed to Valéry, in this little house, the

corrected proofs of *Un Coup de Dés* which had just arrived from the printing house and told him about his ideas for the print. These are things I have been with for years, things that I have lived with virtually all my life... (Tanpinar 1997 265-66)

We are shown that Mallarmé has an important presence in Tanpinar's life; to this presence Tanpinar includes that of Mallarmé's pupil, Paul Valéry. In *Paris Tesadüfleri*, Tanpinar recounts his decision about crossing the bridge near Mallarmé's house and recalls Valéry who nearly drowned in the river beneath<sup>5</sup>. Tanpinar states that the *Cimetière Marin*'s poet liked to swim and was good at it, however for Tanpinar the incident has a more meaningful side to it: "If Valéry was not Valéry, he could have drowned as many did at Mallarmé's doorstep" (Tanpinar 1997 267).

The encounters of Tanpinar in Paris appears to be one of the illustrations how Paul Valéry was not just one of many artistic aspirations that Tanpinar cites in his diaries, lectures on literature etc. In Paris, Tanpinar seeks places that bear the traces of Valéry's personal experiences; however through his account of his journey, one can observe that the encounters are also perceived as providential: he is delighted to see that the poets that he admires the most had lived once nearby the hotel in which he is staying. While listening with his friends to the practice sounds pouring out of the building next-door (music school Scola) and Tanpinar wonders if Verlaine, Rilke and Valéry who lived close to his hotel had also heard these sounds: "I am imagining those heads that made my youth magical inclined to these sounds" (Tanpinar 1997 267-268). Paul Valéry plays the role of an experience for Tanpinar, he is not just a memory, and if it is not too farfetched to say, the journey of the author is emblematic for the transformation of a confabulation into an actual experience. This is sufficient enough for taking a closer look to the events, acquaintances and

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<sup>5</sup> Valéry had come to visit Mallarmé but could not find him at home, so he decided to take a swim in the Seine River explains Tanpinar.

circumstances that played in Paul Valéry's coming into being as one of the most important literary figure of interwar France.

### **The life of Valéry**

Ambroise Paul Toussaint Jules Valéry was born in Sète in 1871, a Mediterranean town in south of France, to a wealthy family whose roots descend to one of the most respected families of Genoa. Being Mediterranean, Valéry's poetry reflects the passion for the marvels that the sea and this specific geography has to offer, which can be taken as one of the affinities with Ahmet Hamdi Tanpinar.

Although being of a social and communicative nature, towards ten years old Valéry would begin to make his mind a sort of an island for himself, and to keep a secret garden where he cultivated the images that seemed quite his (Valéry OEI 13-14)<sup>6</sup>, which hints Valéry's underlying vocation to systematize his intellectual activities.

Valéry wrote his first verses in 1884; however he would not take poetry seriously until 1891. Until then, he noted that he endlessly enjoyed his own brain. He began to study Law in 1888. His interest in architecture and literature continued; his roommate Pierre Feline would witness how every day, early in the morning, Valéry would go to his desk, "slowly, torso and head tilted toward the ground, as a young priest goes to the altar to pray" (Valéry OEI 16).

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<sup>6</sup> The biographical introduction, in Oeuvres I (Paris: Gallimard, 1957), has been written by Valéry's daughter Agathe Rouart-Valéry, who cites his quotations from her father's inedited personal notes.

The fact that Valéry's very first publication is thanks to his brother Jules who discovered a manuscript of his poem *Rêve* (Dream) and sent it to the *Revue Maritime* in 1889, shows that from the beginning, Valéry was in an environment of support, which provided the ideal circumstances for his creativity to flourish.

The same year marks also another important development that will set the course for Valéry's poetic orientation: Valéry read Joris-Karl Huysmans' book on Stéphane Mallarmé *À Rebours* which would leave a great influence on the young poet. A year after, in a letter to his friend Albert Duprip he would disclose that while the Parnassian in him was evaporating, he was eying "the Master, the supernatural and magic artist, the most artist, Edgar Allan Poe, to whom Mallarmé's verses for Gautier can be applied: Magnificent, total and solitary" (Valéry OEI 17).

What can be considered as another important instance in Valéry's life is his first contact with Stéphane Mallarmé, whom he admires greatly. In 20 October 1890, he wrote to Mallarmé, sending him *Le Jeune Prêtre* and *La Suave Agonie*. Mallarmé's response came short after and it shows another aspect of the supportive and nourishing atmosphere within which Valéry was growing as a poet: "My dear poet, the gift of subtle analogy, with the adequate music, you possess it, which is everything ... As for advice, only solitude will give it" (Valéry OEI 17). It was also in this year that Valéry constructed another friendship, this time with a peer, with André Gide that will be fructuous throughout his life.

It was not only Mallarmé who recognized the talent that Valéry had; a flattering article was published in *Le Journal des Débats* in 1891, where Chantavoine mentioned that Valéry's name would be fluttered upon men's lips. Valéry sent a second letter to Mallarmé in order to obtain advice and to learn whether some reverie accumulated that winter in the distant province was adventurous or illusory. Mallarmé's answer was: "Your *Narcisse Parle* charms me ... Keep this rare tone" (Valéry OEI 18). While visiting his brother in

Paris, Valéry would at last, visit Mallarmé where they had a long conversation from poetry to Mallarmé's personal life.

In 1892, Valéry went to Genoa, where the famous crisis, referred to as *Nuit de Gêne*, took place. Agathe Rouart-Valéry notes that before the night of 4<sup>th</sup> October, he left Montpellier after going through an intense sentimental crisis; he was prey to doubt and great discouragement, and he was ready to renounce pursuing a literary career. "This resolution and his determination not to let his mind be reached by a too acute sensibility, affirm themselves during a stormy night" (Valéry OEI 20). Valéry himself described that night as: "Atrocious night – spent on my bed – storm everywhere – And my fate was playing in my head. I am between me and myself" (Valéry OEI 20).

Later, he would explain the consequences of this personal *coup d'État* (Valéry C 762) to Gustave Fourment: "The two valid deaths of these last days, the Poet and the indefinable fame that disappeared have, for our reveries, the fate that they accumulated". He would again write to Gide in 1893 on the subject, that he recognized the fact that the old tension (being the crisis) had "contributed very much to the development of consciousness, that is to say, the freedom to see and to judge" (Valéry OEI 20-21). The judgment that he reached was that he had to abandon literature; he renounced poetry until 1913. On the other hand, what he saw through the dismantling that the crisis had caused in his sense of self, was that he had to set aside the perturbations that the process of poetic creation were prone to provoke and construct himself a *System*, by which he could explore the working processes of his intellect.

The intellectual freedom that Valéry claims having obtained through the crisis results into the birth of an "ideal type" for his intellectual existence, the end product of the crisis is Edmond Teste. In 1894, he began writing *La Soirée avec Monsieur Teste* at Montpellier. 1894 was also the beginning of a lifelong from-dawn-to-ten praxis which would result in

257 *Cahiers*; the first one's title was *Journal de Bord* and had *Pré-Teste* as sub-title. Throughout the years he searched for a unifying paradigm, a *System*, expressed by a keen scientific eye, that would help him understand how the mind functioned, indeed the *geometry of everything* (Valéry C 106). The next year, in 1895, Valéry began to write *Introduction à la Méthode de Léonard de Vinci*, combining notions of painting, architecture, mathematics, mechanics, physics and mechanisms. As solitude was much “noisy” to him, the year 1896 passed with an effort in socializing with writers, actors, musicians like Debussy. He also assisted the funeral of Verlaine. He met Degas, while thinking to dedicate *Teste* to the painter, but was refused by the latter who told him that he did not like to be the subject of any writing (Valéry OEI 23).

In 1897 after the insistence of his mentor, he attended the official banquet held for Mallarmé, where this latter gave him the corrected and annotated draft of *Un Coup de Dés*, asking Valéry: “Am I not crazy, don't you think it is an act of dementia?” It was the master’s turn to ask for advice from his pupil, which shows that the esteem that Valéry felt for Mallarmé was reciprocated. The same year Valéry wrote *Valvins* as homage to Mallarmé, this latter showed his admiration for his friend’s talent by letting him know that the piece was reflecting completely Valéry’s artistry which was touching and abstractly rich (Valéry OEI 24). Later on, in a letter to Gide, Valéry disclosed that he was studying “the mathematics of speech (*parole*)” which indicates that the relationship with Mallarmé was also stimulating in terms of theoretical curiosity about poetry (Valéry OEI 24). Unfortunately, the support and stimulation would come to an end in 1889, not long after visiting him at Valvins, a telegram from Mallarmé’s daughter announced the poet’s death in September 9. While visiting Mallarmé’s mortuary chamber, Valéry discovered “a frightening shred of convulsed writing on which had been scribbled the order to not publish anything which was not edited, and to burn his notes” (Valéry OEI 25).

In *Dis/Re/Membering the Master*, Rachel Killick depicts the relationship of Mallarmé and Valéry under a negative light as she undertakes the psychological effects that Mallarmé's presence incited in Valéry. She claims that Mallarmé's encounter with Valéry was a return to a lost youth: Valéry was close in age to Mallarmé's son who died in childhood, thus "reawakening for Mallarmé the promise of self-renewal and favoring the rapid development of father/son relationship, both personal and literary in nature" (Killick 25). Appearing as a role model, Mallarmé offered emotional and social support; however, according to Killick, Valéry could never truly bury Mallarmé "the perfection of what is offered is, by virtue of that very perfection, constraining and disabling" (Killick 26). This claim can be contested with the fact that Valéry reached a wider audience than Mallarmé, and was accepted as the most important figure in French poetry of the period between the World Wars. His acceptance to the French *Académie* alone is enough to prove that he was not constrained or disabled.

Two years later, in 1900, he married and Gide was the best man at their wedding. Valéry was introduced to a circle of artists and intellectuals through his marriage to Jeannie Gobillard. Valéry's initiation to Berthe Monsot's circle, who was Gobillard's aunt, was one of S. Mallarmé's projects as he wanted to help Valéry to build his own social connections that would create the possibilities to meet and befriend various artists, connections that would widen his horizon. Indeed, his connections widened and among his acquaintances were Prince Pierre of Monaco, Ortega y Gasset, Rodin, Zweig, Einstein, Bergson, T.S. Eliot. The same year Valéry left the Ministry of War after serving three years as a redactor and became the private secretary of an influent administrator of Havas agency, a more moderate profession which would offer him more time to concentrate on his writing.

In 1902, writing to Gide that he would be pleased to talk about his cahiers with him, he disclosed that there was nothing more exciting than waking up (Valéry OE I 28). He frequently met with Degas, who had given Valéry the name Monsieur Ange (Mister

Angel). On their occasional meetings, Degas criticized Valéry to have a grave defect which was the desire to understand everything. In 1912, André Gide proposed vaguely to publish his old verses; later Valéry received a visit from Gaston Gallimard (one of Mallarmé's editors) who, on the request of Gide, came to propose him to publish his poetry.

In 1917, the original edition of *La Jeune Parque* was published by Gaston Gallimard, henceforth his official publisher; the poem would earn great applause. He began to frequent the circle of Ms. Mupheld, where he made the acquaintance of artists, statesmen, ultimately the high Parisian society (Valéry OEI 40). In 1920 *Le Cimetière Marin, Odes* and *Album des vers anciens* (collection of his poems before 1892) were published, the former in the *Nouvelle Revue Française*, the others by Gallimard. The same year he stayed for a while at The Pozzi family's house where he worked on Adonis. In the next year NRF published *L'Ebauche d'un Serpent* and *Eupalinos ou L'Architecte*. Upon reading the dialogues in Eupalinos, Rilke wrote to Gide about how he felt reading Valéry whom he did not know until then and admit "I was alone, I was waiting, and my whole oeuvre was waiting. One day I read Valéry, I knew that my waiting had come to an end" (Valéry OEI 44).

In 1922 the original edition of *Charmes* appeared. According to Robert Monestier, since *Charmes* was inspired by the Latin word "carmina" meaning "poems" and "incantations" at the same time, from the title Valéry seemed to suggest to readers to look for a secret meaning in his poetry. However, "perhaps irritated by the ingenuity of commentators" deduced Monestier, in 1942 Valéry fixed the title's meaning to Poetry (Valéry b 14).

On January he wrote to his brother that he did not feel quite well, that he could not sleep. Ms. Agathe did not give any more details of the small crisis however, Hélène M. Julien who analyzed the notebooks, observed that in the eighth volume there was a note where Valéry explained that looking at himself from a historical point of view, he found

two formidable events in his secret life: “a coup d’État in (18)92 and something immense, infinite, incommensurable in 1920. I casted the lightning on what I was in 92, 28 years later, it fell on me, from your lips” (Valéry C 762). Julien noted that the person in question was Catherine Pozzi, whose own Journal exposed the amorous relationship that she had with the poet. Pozzi was Valéry’s mistress from 1922 to 1928 (Julien 31).

In 1924 on the demand of Prince Pierre of Monaco, he spoke in a conference at Monte Carlo; the title was *La Situation de Baudelaire*. *Variété* would be published. Rilke sent him his translation of *Charmes* along with a dedication “this sum total of acceptance, of obedience, and of parallel activity”. Months after, he met this unknown friend; Rilke planted a willow tree “in memory of this solitude à deux” (Valéry OEI 47). In this year he visited Rome and Madrid for conferences, met Ortega y Gasset, and had conversations with Henri Bergson. During one of them, the latter disclosed that he began to create a system while studying memory and he made his tabula rasa in 1890, two years before Valéry’s own starting point (Valéry OEI 48).

In November 19, 1925, Valéry took Anatole France’s vacated seat at the Académie Française. One year after, he was nominated officer of Légion d’Honneur. He gave a speech at the Pen Club, of which he was the director after A. France, about his literary memories; Einstein was listening at the second row (Valéry OEI 50). In his inaugural speech for his position in the Académie, he took the audience by surprise by not uttering even once Anatole France’s name (Valéry OEI 51). In 1929, he participated in the conferences given by Einstein, “he is the only artist among all these scholars: he develops his incertitude and faith by basing them on architecture” (Valéry OEI 54). Together they visited Bergson. *Variété II* was published, followed by *Variété III* in 1933 and *Variété IV* in 1938, *Cantate du Narcisse* in 1939, *Tel Quel* in 1941, *Mauvaises Pensée et autres* in 1942, *Tel Quel II* in 1943 and *Variété V* in 1944.

His last notebook was entitled *Sub signo doloris* (I sign under pain), in which he noted “Where I come down to... I have the sensation that my life is achieved, which means that I do not see anything that would require a tomorrow. What is left to live will henceforth only be a time to waste. After all, I did what I could do” (Valéry OEI 72). He died in July 20, 1945. Upon De Gaulle’s insistence for a national funeral, a procession carried his coffin; Ms. Agathe noted “In Paris, only the Panthéon is lightened. Students stay up and the crowd marches past all night. (Valéry OEI 72)” He was buried in his hometown Sète to the same cemetery honored by his famous poem *Le Cimetière Marin*, on his tombstone were the verses from the poem “When thought has had its hour, oh how rewarding/Are the long vistas of celestial calm! (Valéry d 41)”<sup>7</sup>

In the preface of *Ego Scriptor*, Judith Robinson-Valéry, Valéry’s daughter-in-law who also annotated the book notes that:

The myth of a Valéry as obscure poet, “neo-classical”, a little old-fashioned, cut off from the literary avant-garde of his time, wanting to resurrect the alexandrine in 20<sup>th</sup> century, has a long life, however its agony begins. Thus, let it die in peace, alongside another myth which makes of Valéry a poet essentially “formal”, a sort of technician or calculating person of verse who would have let “intellectuality” prevail upon warmth (chaleur humaine). (Valéry a vii)

Her request from those who would read the author for the first time is to forget everything that had been written or said about Valéry and consider his body of work as a whole, where poetry and prose are in constant dialogue.

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<sup>7</sup> Poem translated by C. Day Lewis

## **II. MASKS OF THE INTELLECT: LEONARDO DA VINCI AND M. TESTE AS VALÉRY'S ROLE MODELS**

Tanpinar introduces the two concepts that mark the cardinal points of Paul Valéry's intellectual inquiry: certainty and clarity. He remarks that, driven by a need impossible to overcome, Valéry could find the clarity and certainty he was searching for neither in the work nor in the act of meditation itself.<sup>8</sup> Valéry is described by Tanpinar as a strong auto-critic who, through this self-reflexivity, could expose to his intellect prone to desire "to see the path drawn and enlightened beforehand and to construct a whole body of work upon a solid and stable foundation" that its competences and means had "incomplete, uncertain and not apprehended facets"; hence all activities of Valéry's intellect "was dominated by doubt" (Tanpinar 452).

It is possible to assert that the two texts that Valéry wrote after his sentimental crisis, *An Evening with Monsieur Teste* (1894) and *Introduction to the Method of Leonardo da Vinci* (1895) are primordial in understanding the foundational notions of Paul Valéry's system of thought. Through these texts, Valéry not also begins to develop his inquiry in order to construct his own poetics, but he also creates two ideal types that he will keep in his view throughout his life. Leonardo da Vinci appears to be Valéry's own private Apollo, whom he praises and tries to emulate, whereas M. Teste is a fictional character that comes

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<sup>8</sup> It must be noted that the concept of meditation is devoid of its religious, mystical or esoteric sense, when Valéry speaks of meditation it is in its Cartesian sense.

forth as an experiment regarding the poet's own projection. This chapter will concentrate on the depiction of these two figures through the guidance of Tanpinar's elaborations on the texts in question.

### **A. Intellectual Comedy: Leonardo da Vinci**

Tanpinar explains that Valéry's doubtful mind had incited him to dismiss literature and philosophy. After throwing the two disciplines on the island of *Vague Things* and *Impure Things*, there was only one step to take for Valéry: devotion to positive science and mathematics. According to Tanpinar, science and especially mathematics were the most suitable grounds of investigation of truths for this skeptical intellect which begun its query from itself (Tanpinar 452-453). Consequently, Tanpinar questions what would be left to investigate for a man who rejected ideas that do not evolve, being solely interested in the birth and development of them. The answer that Tanpinar gives is that one can only find spiritual life: "fear, passion, desire, delusion", which Valéry without hesitation dismisses as psychological impurities and their consequences are of no significance to the poet. Tanpinar discloses that Valéry was appertained to the abstract to the point of wanting the problems to appear to the intellect by themselves, pure and free from an external bearing. Even though Valéry would doubt his own faculties for not possessing this impossible quality, Tanpinar draws the reader's attention to the fact that in Introduction to the Method of Leonardo da Vinci, it is possible to find the answer to the above mentioned question regarding the truths that Valéry has discovered through his investigation (Tanpinar 1969 453).

The title itself, Introduction to the Method of Leonardo da Vinci, connotes two similar, yet distinct, interpretations: since Valéry allocates little attention to the analysis of

da Vinci's art/work, the first interpretation is that it is not an introduction to the method of Leonardo da Vinci, the artist in person, but to that of Valéry; the second interpretation that can be made is that the text attests to the birth of Valéry's lifelong endeavor regarding the process of creation of a work of art, hence his introduction to a method that he conceives through Leonardo da Vinci.

Valéry develops *Introduction* around the concepts of consciousness and construction and their counterparts that he finds in the figure of Leonardo da Vinci. "Whoever imagines a tree is also compelled to imagine a sky or a background against which to see it standing" (IMLDV 206) states Valéry; hence, in order to elaborate on Leonardo, he will first construct an affinity between his own faculties and those of this extraordinary man whom he admires deeply.

This man<sup>9</sup> that Valéry imagines, is productive in numerous activities that seem to be distinct from each other; the author observes that everything interests this man, especially the universality upon which he always meditates; he works constantly on the habits and structures of nature, he erects cathedrals and fortresses, he fashions ornaments and thousands of machines, and he "comes to be the only man who constructs, calculates, sets in motion" (IMLDV 205).

Valéry thinks that one cannot comprehend Leonardo by looking into one particular creation of his; one must find a unifying idea. However, Valéry wants to clarify the fact that "he is trying to express a point of view with regard to the detail of an intellectual life" (IMLDV 206). Valéry states that we tend to forget that human achievements, even though we take them for granted, have not always been in existence. One example that he gives

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<sup>9</sup> In the side notes Valéry informs that he wanted to write "this man and Leonard", for Leonard appeared to him as the mind's power. (Valéry OEI 1155)

regarding this forgetfulness is the mathematical works: the clarity of their construction leads one to think that they are not the work of any person at all, like the pi number, “there is something *inhuman* about them” (IMLDV 208). He observes that this inhuman quality made people think that sciences and arts are separated on the level of the minds devoted to each, and of the results obtained in both domains. Valéry thinks that the labors in both have a common basis; however they differ in what of it they include or leave out in forming their languages and symbols. Nonetheless he admits that there are few artists that have the “courage to say how they produced their work, I believe that”, continues Valéry, “there are not many more who take the risk of understanding it themselves” (IMLDV 207).

Valéry admits that “Internally there is drama”, yet it is often lost. However thanks to the manuscripts of Leonardo, Valéry is able to observe the operations of Leonardo’s mind. The author explains that the actors of this drama are “mental images” (IMLDV 209). The secret that a man of highest intelligence such as Leonardo possesses (Valéry mentions also Bonaparte) is that he is able to find a relationship “between things whose laws of continuity escape us” (IMLDV 211). He found a relation between things that others could not transpose or translate into a system of all their actions. Here continuity connotes interconnectivity:

It is certain that at the decisive moment they [Leonardo and Bonaparte] had only to perform some definite acts. And the achievement that impressed the world, the supreme achievements, was quite a simple affair – like comparing two lengths. This attitude makes it possible to grasp the unity of method with which we are so concerned. Here it is natural, elementary. It is life and the explanation of life. (IMLDV 211)

In 1894, Juliette Adam requested a short essay from Valéry about Introduction to the Method of Leonardo da Vinci for Nouvelle Revue which resulted in his composition of Note and Digression. The author begins by letting the reader know that after forgetting what he has written, the re-reading was effectuated with cold and critical acuity (ND 164),

and he develops the notion of consciousness through extensive, yet fragmented, examples and abstractions.

Valéry muses on the notion of *personality* and states that even if we envisage it as our deepest possession, it is only “a thing, and mutable and accidental in comparison with this other most naked ego” (ND 194-195) which is the primal human characteristic according to the author: consciousness.

Valéry discards the personality as “a secondary psychological divinity that lives in our looking-glass and answers to our name” (ND 195), since we are able to think about it and calculate its interests. On the other hand consciousness is:

The human characteristic is consciousness; the characteristic of consciousness is a process of perpetual exhaustion, of detachment without rest or exclusion from everything that comes before it, whatever that thing may be – an inexhaustible activity, independent of the quality as of the quantity of the things which appear and by means of which the man of intellect must at last bring himself deliberately to an unqualified refusal to be anything whatsoever. (ND 192-193)

Valéry thinks that by anticipating upon a certain, fictional future, our true present evades from our grasp, “(b)ut all the time each private life possesses, deep down as a treasure, the fundamental permanence of consciousness which depends on nothing” (ND 195-196). For Valéry the chief and secret achievement of the greatest mind is isolating this permanence of consciousness, that the author qualifies as substantial, from the strife of everyday truth; contrary to the ordinary mind who get carried away by the struggle that everyday life presents, the mind armed with an obstinate rigor (Leonardo’s favorite motto Hostinato Rigore) do not lose sight of the ever-dominating consciousness and arrive at “self-definition by means of this pure relationship, changeless amongst the most diverse objects, which will give him an almost inconceivable universality, give him, in a sense, the power of a corresponding universe” (ND 195-196).

Regarding the consciousness of the operations of thought, Valéry asserts that it is a rare faculty, even for the most powerful minds (IMLDV 211-212). If this mode of being conscious were to become constant, it would give the power to dissimulate the thoughts that one has meditated for too long and in vein, and to give them up when it is needed. In Valéry's point of view, "No matter what it be, a thought that has become fixed takes on the characteristics of hypnosis and becomes, in the language of logic, an idol; in the domain of poetic construction and art, a sterile monotony" (IMLDV 213). It is possible to observe that "the consciousness of the operations of thought" is the implementation by which the process of the creation is defined in Valéry's poetics.

The method that Valéry attributes to Leonardo da Vinci, and thus conceives for himself, is the conscious act of *construction*. The work itself must be separated from accidental circumstances that play a part in its genesis; that is why Valéry's reaction to an author who "is unable to give any account of the lines he has followed", which happens in the vast majority of cases, is an astonishment that passes all bounds, especially that of Valéry's who thinks that this kind of author "is the wielder of a power, the nature of which he does not understand" (IMLDV 234). What is possible to conclude about the method that Valéry establishes is that there is no place for anything that he will not be able to understand or inspect; it's a method designed upon a constant consciousness of the construction's process.

As for the figure of Leonardo, while having more admiration than an in-depth knowledge about the artist, Valéry saw in him an *Apollo* who banishes mysteries and brings clarity (ND 166), whom he defined as the principal character of the Intellectual Comedy, which is more precious for him than the *Human Comedy* and even from the *Divine Comedy* (ND 165).

## B. The Theatre of the Intellect: Monsieur Teste

While elaborating about the doubt that dominated the totality of Valéry's intellectual activities, Tanpinar introduces the account that the author gives in the preface of *Monsieur Teste* regarding the creation of Edmond Teste, where Valéry touches upon the concept of effort that he will retain in his system (Tanpinar 1969 452): "The sense of effort seemed to me the thing to be sought, and I did not value happy results which are no more than the natural fruits of our native powers" (Teste a 3).

Valéry explains that the imaginary character of M. Teste came to life in a little room where August Comte spent his early years, in a time when Valéry was "drunk with his own will" and amidst "strange excesses of insight" into himself.

(...)I was affected with the acute malady of precision. I was straining toward the extreme of the reckless desire to understand, seeking in myself the critical limits of my powers of attention. I was doing what I could in this way to increase a little the duration of a few thoughts. Everything that came easy was indifferent and almost offensive to me. (Teste a 3)

From this statement, Tanpinar deduces that Mallarmé's young pupil was more interested in "the energy of the workman — the substance of things he hopes to make" (Teste a 3) than the result, the end product that is the work: "For him, the act of writing was no more a mediocre act of breaking loose, exhaustion that occurred, as in others, without noticing the interference or supervision of certain pre-accepted methods" (Tanpinar 1969

452). As Valéry himself admits that let alone literature, he was subjecting even poetry where the requirements of work are precise to doubt:

The act of writing always requires a certain “sacrifice of the intellect”. It is quite clear, for instance, that the conditions of literary reading do not allow for an excessive precision of language. The intellect would readily exact of ordinary language certain perfections and purities that are not in its power. But rare are the readers who find pleasure only when their minds are tense. We get their attention only by offering a bit of amusement; and this kind of attention is passive. (Teste a 4)

Tanpınar observes that the ability to perceive the laws of continuity of the relationship between things that Valéry attributed to Leonardo da Vinci, has found a ground for application in language for the poet. Tanpınar remarks that even though the conclusion that Valéry reached was not entirely new to the world of art, it did not matter for the poet: “Valéry was not looking for the novelty, but for the certain and the absolute. The certainty and the absolute, the path that should be followed” (Tanpınar 1969 453).

Edmond Teste comes forth as an ideal example for Valéry’s Cartesian mind. Through the narrator in the first text of *Monsieur Teste*, Valéry declares that “discovery is nothing. The difficulty is to acquire what we discover” (Teste a 13). For Tanpınar, only those who are searching the extraordinary are entitled to ask for something new, however the extraordinary for Valéry, just as for M. Teste, is a weakness. Striving for enlightening his own path, Valéry did not spare his actions from doubt; he weighed them down and never lost control, however Tanpınar perceives that doubt “carries always a hidden conviction”. Regarding the fact that Valéry was refusing to place the realm of thought and emotions as the central subject of art, his doubts also affirmed the significance of language as the ultimate tool: “Because despite all our denials, there was a pile of artwork that demanded an explanation regarding its existence. (...) Valéry obtained an explanation for poetry in language. This is one of the truths he mentions in M. Teste and his other works (Tanpınar

1969 453). Let us take a closer look to what Valéry discloses through the texts of Monsieur Teste.

In the Introduction of Monsieur Teste, Valéry notes that M. Teste was born out of a memory and this is why the latter resembles him “much as a child resembles a father who at the moment of conceiving him was himself undergoing a profound change of being, and was not himself” (Teste a 5). The name Teste is explained as to be the old form of French “tête”, meaning *head*, but can also be derived from Latin “*testis*” meaning *witness*, *spectator*, and *testicle*. In Literary Polemics, Suzanne Guerlac affirms that Teste is often understood as head, but “witness” is more meaningful since “he is witness, precisely, to the ‘mental action’ (original emphasis)” (Guerlac 116).

*La Soirée avec Monsieur Teste*<sup>10</sup> (The Evening with Monsieur Teste) opens with the unidentified first person narrator reflecting upon ideas that came to him on the night of October 1893. He informs the reader beforehand that being always a good judge of himself, stupidity is not his strong point. Losing “rarely sight of himself”, he thinks that “we interpret our own thought too much according to the *expression* of other people” (Teste a 10), in his own experience with others, he came to realize that what he speaks to others is distinct from his thought, because what he tells others becomes *invariable*, his thinking is not so. This might have caused a feeling of superiority, but the narrator knows better:

What they call a superior being is one who has deceived himself. (...) Every great man is thus flawed with an error. Every mind considered powerful begins with the fault that makes it known. In exchange for a public fee, it gives the time necessary to make itself knowable, the energy spent in transmitting itself and in preparing the alien satisfaction. It even goes so far as to compare the formless games of glory to the joy of feeling unique — the great private pleasure. (Teste a 10)

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<sup>10</sup> Will be referred as SAMT henceforth. Unless specified otherwise, translations are Jackson Mathew's.

As the narrator reaches to the conclusion that “the strongest heads, the most exacting connoisseurs of thought” must be unknown men, from his memory occurs that of Edmond Teste. M. Teste, whom he recalls never seeing except at night, is a man of ordinary looking, perhaps forty years old, with an extraordinary rapid speech and quite voice, not using any gestures while speaking. The narrator defines Teste’s motionlessness as having *killed his puppet* (Teste a 12).

The killing of the puppet has a second meaning as we come to understand that M. Teste has discovered laws of the mind that nobody else knows, almost appearing as devoid of feelings, he hates melancholy, and he does not have *opinions*: for M. Teste declares that it has been twenty years since he had a book, he has also burned his papers: “I scribble in the flesh. . . I can retain what I wish. That is not the difficulty. *It is rather to retain what I shall want tomorrow!* I have tried to invent a mechanical sieve...” (Teste a 12).

The narrator explains that one of M. Teste’s main preoccupations is “The delicate art of duration: time, its distribution and regulation” (Teste a 13), his conscious study has a mechanical application: he spends his time searching the repetition of certain ideas and ripens them. His motto is “Maturare”, which simply means “to mature”.

M. Teste’s presence astonishes and sometimes terrifies the narrator, who thinks that this man is the master of his own thought:

He was a being absorbed in his own variation, one who becomes his own system, who gives himself up wholly to the frightful discipline of the free mind, and who sets his joys to killing one another, the stronger killing the weaker — the milder, the temporal, the joy of a moment, of an hour just begun, killed by the fundamental — by hope for the fundamental (Teste a 13). (...)If this man had changed the object of his inner meditations, if he had turned upon the world the controlled power of his mind, nothing could have resisted him. (Teste b 13)

Only the ease or difficulty of knowing and doing things interests M. Teste who takes “extreme care in measuring the degree of each quality, and to not getting attached to the problem” (Teste a 15). What he already knows does not arouse any concern in his mind; as for the notion of genius, that the narrator carelessly implies after a concert night where he feels delighted by the spectacle, M. Teste has only disdain:

M. Teste put in, in a rather loud voice: ". . . But, sir, what is the 'talent' of your trees — or of anyone ! . . . to me ! I am at home in MYSELF, I speak my language, I hate extraordinary things. Only weak minds need them. Believe me literally: *genius* is *easy*, *divinity* is *easy*. . . I mean simply — that I know how it is conceived. It is *easy*. Long ago — at least twenty years — the least thing out of the ordinary that some other man accomplished was for me a personal defeat. I used to see only ideas stolen from me! What nonsense! (Teste a 19) To say that our own image is not a matter of indifference to us! . . . To say that our imaginary battles, we treat it either too well or too badly!” He coughed. He said to himself: "What can a man do? . . . What is a man's potential? (original emphasis Teste b 17)

Upon M. Teste’s invitation for a cigar, together they head for Teste’s home, and stricken by the ordinariness of Teste’s study room, the narrator waits until his companion falls asleep, the text draws to an end with Teste’s murmuring:

If anyone says something and doesn't prove it — he's an enemy. I prefer the sound of the least fact, happening. I am being and seeing myself, seeing me see myself, and so forth. . . Let's think very closely. Bah! You can fall asleep on any subject. . . Sleep can continue any idea... (Teste a 23)

The second piece in the Teste series is *Letter from Mme Emilie Teste* which is, as the title indicates it, the letter that Edmond Teste’s wife writes to the narrator of the first text in order to thank him for the presents that he has sent and the letter that he has written to M. Teste. The letter seems almost answering the questions that the narrator wanders about Teste in SAMT: “What is M. Teste like when he is sick? How does he reason when he is in love! Is it possible for him to be sad? What would he be afraid of? What could make him tremble?” (Teste a 16)

Mrs. Emilie begins with a confession: she has read the letter to her husband but did not understand a word of it:

(...) I can hardly say I understood it. And yet, I confess that I took a certain pleasure in it. I do not mind listening to things that are abstract or too lofty for me; I find an almost musical delight in them. A good part of the soul can enjoy without understanding, and in me it is a large part.(Teste a 25)

This confession is similar to the narrator's words in the first story. He also alludes to music when M. Teste is talking about the fluctuations within the stock market; the speech seems like poetry to him:

M. Teste talked of money. I do not know how to reproduce his special eloquence: it seemed less precise than usual. Fatigue, the silence becoming deeper with the late hour, the bitter cigars, the abandon of night seemed to overtake him. I can still hear his voice, lowered and slow, making the flame dance above the single candle that burned between us, as he recited very large numbers, wearily. Eight hundred ten million seventy-five thousand five hundred fifty. . . . I listened to this unheard-of music without following the calculation. He conveyed to me the fever of the Bourse, and these long series of names of numbers gripped me like poetry. (Teste a 20-21)

However, while Emilie approaches the inability to understand from a sentimental point of view, the narrator will tend to rationalize his inaptitude. While they are returning from the concert, he is listening to M. Teste but cannot understand him completely:

Despite my efforts, I could follow his words only with great difficulty, finally deciding merely to remember them. The incoherence of speech depends on the one listening to it. The mind seems to me so made that it cannot be incoherent to itself. (...) I could vaguely make out the thread of his ideas, and I saw no contradiction in them; also, I would have been wary of too simple a solution. (Teste a 18-19)

The allusion to the power that Teste's holds in SAMT, is affirmed by Emilie who thinks that her husband uses his eyes in a particular way: "The very object they fix upon is perhaps the very object his mind wants to reduce to absolute nothing" (Teste a 25). What is

interesting in Emilie's affirmation is that she writes *inwardly* first but notes that she is mistaken and corrects herself, as if she feels to give away a secret that should not be disclosed to her correspondent, later she will even admit that she does not know anything else about him except what can be seen and heard (Teste a 32).

The entire letter is paralleling SAMT in terms of describing Edmond Teste :

He spoke, and one felt oneself confounded with *things* in his mind: one felt withdrawn, mingled with houses, with the grandeurs of space, with the shuffled colors of the street, with street corners. . . And the most cleverly touching words — the very ones that bring their author closer to us than any other man, those that make us believe the eternal wall between minds is falling — could come to him. He knew wonderfully that they would have moved *anyone else*. He spoke, and without being able to tell precisely the motives or the extent of the proscription, one knew that a large number of words had been banished from his discourse. The ones he used were sometimes so curiously held by his voice or lighted by his phrase that their weight was altered, their value new. (SAMT Teste a 14)

From Emilie's perspective, her husband's ability is terrifying, she confesses that *sometimes he is very hard*:

He shatters your mind with a word, and then I am like a defective vase the potter throws in the trash. My friend, he is as hard as an angel. He does not realize his strength: he finds unexpected words that are too true, words that destroy people, that waken them in the midst of their stupidity, face-to-face with themselves, quite trapped in what they are, living so naturally on nonsense. We live quite at our ease, each in his own absurdity, like fish in water, and never perceive except by some accident all the stupidity contained in the life of a reasonable person. (Teste a 26)

Having a powerful mind that arises from the connection of fragments of ideas, he loses his audience at every turn in "a web that he alone knows how to weave, break off, or catch up again" (Teste a 29). As she continues in her insight on her husband, it is possible to see that she is far from being as impressed as Teste's friend in SAMT, for she is the one subjected to its consequences, but she has found a way to manage it:

His whole being, which a moment ago was concentrated in one *place* on the frontiers of consciousness, has now lost its ideal object, an object that does and does not exist, since it is only a matter of a little more or a little less *intensity*. It took all the energy of a great body to sustain in the mind that diamond instant which is at once the idea and the Thing, both the entrance and the end. Well, sir, when this extraordinary mate captures and in a way masters me, and puts upon me the imprint of his strength, I have the impression of being substituted for that object of his will which he has just lost. I am like the plaything of a mind that is all muscle. (I express myself as best I can.) The truth he was seeking seems to take on my strength and living resistance, and by some quite ineffable transposition, his inner will passes out and is discharged through his hard and determined hands. These are very difficult moments. What can I do at such a time? I take refuge in my heart; and there I love him as I wish. (Teste a 31)

Emilie Teste is not taken by the marvels of the intellect as her husband or addressee; she thinks that if M. Teste were to be a little more absorbed into the private abysses of his mind, he would become invisible, for she is convinced that “one is no longer oneself in those straits. Our humanity cannot follow us toward such distant lights” (Teste a 30). As opposed to her husband’s endeavor to decipher his being, she believes that she would lose her being if she were to know herself completely, for what is most precious to one, is obscure (TESTE 32-33). It becomes apparent in her statements that Emilie is a woman of faith:

We never think that what we think conceals from us what we are. I certainly hope, my friend, that we are worth more than all our thoughts, and that our greatest merit before God will be for having tried to settle on something more solid than our mind’s babbling to itself, admirable as that may be (Teste a 26-27). I may say that at every moment my life seems to me a practical model of man’s existence in the divine mind. I have personal experience of being in the sphere of another being, as all souls are in Being. (Teste a 33)

She remembers that during a conversation about her faith and prayers her husband was able to reconstruct exactly her inner dialogue, she admits that there is a power in M. Teste’s language that is unknown to her, this power makes its audience see and hear what is

deeply hidden in them (TESTE 36). However she is doubtful of the coldness of her husband's pure apprehension:

(...)a mind incomparable in audacity and depth! It would seem that he has coldly explored the fervent soul. But in his reconstruction of my burning heart and its faith, there is a frightful absence of its very essence which is *hope*. . . . There is not a grain of hope in M. Teste's whole substance; and that is why I am somewhat uneasy at this use of his power. (TESTE 36)

Mrs. Emilie mentions a dialogue that she had with Father Mosson who has "a great and kind interest" in her husband; he tells her that "a monster of loneliness and curious knowledge" that M. Teste is in his regard, faces the innumerable and is victim of a quite abominable pride, for it cuts him from the living, not only form the now living but also from the eternally living. He continues his premonition:

His heart is a desert island. The whole extent and energy of his mind surround and defend it; its depths isolate and guard it against the truth. He flatters himself that he is quite alone there. . . . Patience, dear lady. Perhaps, one day, he will find some print upon the sand. . . . What happy and holy terror, what salutary fear, when he shall realize, by that pure vestige of grace, that his island is mysteriously inhabited! (Teste a 35)

### **III. FROM POETICS TO POÏETICS: AN ILLUSTRATION OF VALÉRY'S IDEAS ON POETRY**

On the occasion of *Variété II*'s publication in 1929, Tanpınar wrote an article introducing Valéry to the Turkish reader. Entitled simply *Paul Valéry*, the article appeared in the review *Görüş*<sup>11</sup> that he published with his friend Ahmet Kutsi Tercer in 1930, and was integrated to his collection of essays on literature *Edebiyat Üzerine Makaleler*<sup>12</sup> published posthumously in 1969 by Dergâh Yayınları.

Mehmet Kaplan explains that, along *Paul Valéry*, Tanpınar also wrote *Şiir Hakkında*, which showcases the new aesthetics that Tanpınar adopted. The article on *Paul Valéry*, on the other hand, illustrates the model from which he derived his aesthetics (Kaplan 55). Kaplan observes a parallelism between the two articles; in *Şiir Hakkında* Tanpınar writes:

(...) true poetry; essential art does not have any other aim than itself. It begins and ends with itself. All its nobility comes from that fact. The only thing that can be expected from it is that it arouses within us a pure interest, what we call aesthetic interest that is not concerned with the material side of our lives, the worries of everyday. (cited in Kaplan 56)

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<sup>11</sup> Görüş No:1 (Temmuz) 1930, pp.36-46

<sup>12</sup> Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar. Edebiyat Üzerine Makaleler. (İstanbul:Dergah Yayınları). 1969. pp.453-458

As it has been elucidated in the previous chapter, Valéry holds the intellect as the most important essence in art. Tanpinar thinks that by means of the intellect Valéry tries to explain poetry with its own tool, which is language, and that it is this very principle which gives him mastery over his art (Tanpinar 1969 457).

When thinking about the name of Aesthetics Valéry expresses that two ideas come to his mind: the first one is the idea of a “Science of the Beautiful”, which also suggests in Valéry’s opinion, that this science would “enable us to distinguish *with certainty* what we must love or hate, acclaim or destroy” and also would “teach us to produce, *without fail*, works of art whose value cannot be contested (original emphasis)” (Aesthetics 42); the second one is the idea of a “Science of Sensations” which gives one “the privilege of knowing what it means to *feel* (Aesthetics 42-43). Valéry adds that if he had to choose between the two, he would opt for the second one. This choice shows us that from his understanding of Aesthetics, he places his own art in the realm of Sensations.

In this realm, Valéry defines the aesthetic invention in poetry as “a conscious effort of composition”, and warns against confusing it “as it constantly is, with imagination” that he defines as “unqualified and without a substance” (Aesthetics 69). Tanpinar explains Valéry’s definition of conscious effort of composition by indicating that the poetic state is complete clarity and precision which has nothing to do with the unknown or external factors; with any idea or form that comes to mind suddenly and unexpectedly (Tanpinar 456).

While explaining clarity and precision, Tanpinar writes an analysis that also seems as his own thoughts regarding poetic creation:

A line is all in all just one line; it is contained in a very specific boundary, and means no more than the emptiness that precedes or follows it, as long as it is left all by itself. To continue from it, to create a whole body out of this one limb that we

acquired from out of nowhere, is a work only fit for the intellect and the will of an artist. It is only possible for an intellect that comprehended its tools and their power to deal with challenging rhyme, insubordinate language, prosody, and a bunch of difficulties arising from these. Enthusiasm, excitement and all these are contrary to this perception essential for creation. The state of the poet is different from the dream state. These flavors, these pleasures, these charms are attained through unceasing and conscious sacrifice. (Tanpinar 1969 456)

We find the echo of this paragraph in Valéry's attempts to demonstrate the stages of aesthetic invention regarding poetry. For him, poetry is an art of language, and language is a “combination of heterogeneous functions” that are all “independent variables, indeterminate factors” (Aesthetics 67-68); it is also a practical instrument. As an art of language, poetry thus is “obliged to struggle against its practical uses and the modern acceleration of its practical use” (Aesthetics 68). Valéry notes that “poetic language must aim at the preservation of form” in order to emphasize everything that distinguishes it from prose, and that the poet is “compelled to create the *universe of poetry* (...), the psychological and emotional state in which language can fulfill a role quite different from that of signifying what is or was or will be (original emphasis)” (Aesthetics 68). Valéry asserts that as a result of this separation from prose, in poetry “signification is not the essential, nor ultimately the only, element of language”. In this definition of poetry, the poet “operates with the complex value of words— that is, by composing *sound* and *sense* (original emphasis)” (Aesthetics 68-69). Valéry adds that in this composition, word meanings are not enough for poetry, and that poetry being an art essentially *in actu*, relying on performance the poetic effects are momentary (Aesthetics 69).

Tanpinar explains that what distinguishes poetry from prose is that, as Valéry defends, poetry is a game of the intellect and “just like every game it finds its purpose within itself”; prose on the other hand is always concerned with something other than itself (Tanpinar 1969 455). Tanpinar states that thought should be hidden in poetry “just as nutrients are in fruits” and that this kind of work of art has nothing to do with the spiritual

tendencies, or the adventures of an artist's heart or life because it is a pure product of intellect: "All bonds that tie it to its creator are cut loose. Consequently, experiences and efforts on reaching up to the work of art through the artist, or vice versa, are useless and unnecessary" (Tanpinar 456).

In *Au Sujet d'Adonis*, Valéry writes that in the genesis of a poem, everything occurs in the intimacy of the artist and what the biography assumes or history can observe is insignificant; the result, the poem itself has the utmost importance (ASA 14). In accordance with this idea, Tanpinar explains that if the work of art results into disclosing an aspect of the author's life, this is "this is the product of a moment of carelessness and weakness on the author's part, and ultimately is nothing more than an exposure occurring unintentionally" (Tanpinar 1969 456).

Valéry's claim that poetic creation is achieved with the composition of sound and sense through words resonates in the account he gives about a dialogue between Degas and Mallarmé in Oeuvre I: Valéry recalls Degas saying to Mallarmé that this latter's art is infernal because although Degas is full of ideas, he cannot manage to do what he wants. Mallarmé's reply is enlightening: "You do not make poems with ideas, my dear Degas, but with words" (Valéry OEII 1324). Tanpinar specifies the foundations of Valéry's poetry as "words and the relations between them, their fertility, their power of imbuing, the beauty arising from phrases, substances, means of effects, music, harmony, rhythm; the syntax and rules that bind words and language, the old rhetoric methods and games" (Tanpinar 1969 454). According to Tanpinar, what Valéry calls *Poésie Pure* is the perfection that the conscious will of an artist will reach using these tools.

It should be noted that Valéry's choice of words for the cleansing of poetry from elements alien to it incited Henri Brémont to link Valéry to his own theory of pure poetry. Suzanne Nash affirms that this link "is revealed to be only one more myth amongst many"

(Nash 197). Henri Brémond was an abbot and a Jesuit, as well as a member of the *Académie Française*. Edouard Roditi explains that on October 24th 1925, the abbot raised a controversy by reading to the members of the academy “a paper in which he defended obscure poetry, criticized Classical and rationalist aesthetics and attacked even the Poetics of Boileau” (Roditi 229). The paper in question was entitled *La Poésie Pure* and its argumentation was woven with a terminology of “prayer and mysticism” (Roditi 233).

Roditi points out to a detail which shows why the notion of Pure Poetry has been mistakenly attributed to Valéry:

When he first delivered his broadside as a speech, the good Abbe defended, in its opening paragraphs, the poetics of Edgar Allan Poe, of Baudelaire, of Mallarmé and, even more scandalously, the poetics of Paul Valéry, who was at that time still considered, in Académie circles, a veritable avant-garde crackpot. (Roditi 231)

Tanpinar elaborates on the ideas that Valéry suggests regarding poetry, on which Henri Brémond professed founding his theory of Poésie Pure: “Valéry thinks that mastery is in commanding the tools of art, rather than being controlled by them” (Tanpinar 1969 455). Tanpinar comments that poetry, even if it seems monolithic and just a pleasure for its reader is:

(A) kind of sophisticated and comprehensive technique that gives perfection to the word; it is the product of a long process whereby every possibility is individually measured, every detail is calculated, every trick is thought upon, by utilizing a sharp intelligence, a meticulous taste, and a fragile and alert ear on every word and phrase. (Tanpinar 1969 455)

Chris Andrews explains that the desire to purify poetry is a desire to exclude, and enumerates the act of purification that is observable in the literary lineage that is Poe, Baudelaire and Mallarmé: in the example of Edgar Allan Poe, it is the exclusion of “the discursive and the didactic” elements within poetry, Charles Baudelaire adds “the morally

edifying intentions, and scientific and political ideas” to the list of things to exclude from poetry, and Mallarmé – who has a more private approach – wants to exclude “journalism” from his writing (Andrews 25). As to Valéry, Andrews points out that what Valéry meant by “poésie pure” was “a horizon which oriented the efforts of the symbolists, but which could not be attained. He even suggested that the obsessive pursuit of purity tended to dehumanize symbolist poetry” (Andrews 26).

Tanpinar distinguishes between Valéry’s stylistic perception of pure poetry and that of Henri Brémont’s, who was holding poetry as “a mystical substance that defies any explanation and control, and only perceivable to those that have experience with it. Valéry, on the other hand, does not believe in the unexplainable; for him, it is a conscious act” (Tanpinar 1969 455). Tanpinar adds that for Valéry, even when writing about one’s dream, one must be alert, fully awakened (Tanpinar 1969 455). In *Lettre Sur Mallarmé*, Valéry writes that he would prefer to write a poor work in all conscience and entire lucidity, instead of writing a masterpiece “by the favor of a trance” (LM 226-227).

In *The Creation of Art*, Valéry observes that “when art has taken intellectual life as a subject, it has considered and portrayed the intellectual, and thinker, more than the intellect itself” (Aesthetics 119). M. Teste is the return to the intellect and his main concern is Valéry’s concern. As we know, M. Teste’s intellect is turned upon a primordial question: “Que peut un homme?”/ What can a man do? If we place the emphasis on peut/pouvoir, it will translate as “What is the power of a man?”. Thus, it is possible to direct the question to Valéry, then it will become “What is the power of an artist?”, or even, “What is the power of Art?”

These questions find their answers in Valéry’s short but powerful treatises *Man and the Sea Shell* and *My Poetics*. Upon finding a sea shell on the beach, Valéry begins to contemplate this object that *nature* has *created*; step by step he pursues this creation, and

by moving from nature to human beings, he ends up with the foremost *human* idea: *making* (Aesthetics 12). Thus for Valéry, the answer to what can a man, is simply “to make”. A man is able to “make”, a general opposition or parallelism to nature, which creates with a very subtle but highly mathematical process.

Therefore “What can a man?” appears also as the initial question that has engendered the very notion of art. Art is “making”, as Valéry repeats it in My “Poetics”. He affirms that he engaged in dealing with the *fabrication* of “works of the mind” in general, “works which the mind produces for its own use, and which indicate and encourage its own growth”. It is at this level that Valéry substitutes the word Poïetics to Poetics, for it is “the elementary notion of *making*, or *fabricating* (original emphasis)” (Aesthetics 113). Art as making is *Poïetics*. Valéry defines his theory of poetry as poïetics, as he claims that “(i)t is too often forgotten that art exists only in the *act*: art is *action*, it is an action whose aim it is to modify man’s sensibility and from it to conjure up developments that arouse perpetual desire” (Aesthetics 193-194).

Tanpinar states that as a man who looks for light and an order in everything, Valéry thinks that all faculties are in pursuit of the objective called perfection and that prosody, rhyme, and form contribute greatly to this perfection; however Genius, is a long impatience<sup>13</sup>, and is not valued in the Valéryan System (Tanpinar 1969 456). Tanpinar explains that difficulties that prosody, form and rhyme entail for the poet help the poet by providing the word with the determination and sturdiness, with strength that gives the word a certain virtuosity that is necessary for competing against time, “the greatest enemy” (Tanpinar 1969 457). Tanpinar is convinced that these difficulties will carry the poet to

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<sup>13</sup> Tanpinar is alluding to Valéry’s poem *Ébauche d’un Serpent* published in *Charmes*.

perfection; he thinks that the poet should strive to create these difficulties for himself. The absence of prosody, form and rhyme entails freedom; however Tanpinar warns that: “(f)reedom as well as in life itself, is also appealing in art. However, there is deception in this appeal. Freedom that arises out of dismissing existing forms and methods will not be able to fill the void it creates” (Tanpinar 1969 457).

In a BBC remake of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle’s Sherlock Holmes series, there is an interesting dialogue between Sherlock and Watson while they are investigating mysterious suicides that are susceptible of being the work of a serial killer, but impossible to prove. Holmes admits that the brilliant ones are always desperate to get caught, Watson asks the reason and the former delivers the punch line: “Appreciation! Applause! At long last the spotlight. That’s the frailty of genius, John, it needs an audience”<sup>14</sup>. The need for audience and applause are not intrinsic to genius, they are the symptoms of its frailty. Even if this remark is directed in the case of Holmes to a pathologically disturbed mind, it is possible to postulate its value for a general observation regarding the myth surrounding the concept of genius, and how it has been treated, and sometimes, experienced within the domain of art.

The processes of artistic creation have been defined in different ways through the testimonies of artists executing various forms of art; for some it was an intellectual process involving calculations or experiments, for others the experimentation was on another level where inspiration acquired a more transcendental nature. However, in any case, the concept of genius comes along as a powerful asset that attributes almost by itself a social status, a symbolic authority within the field of art. The concept is closely related to the act of creating; from its Latin root *gignere* which means “to beget, to produce”, genius is

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<sup>14</sup> From “A Study in Pink”, created by S. Moffat and M. Gatiss, produced by Hartswood Films for BBC Wales in 2010.

*generative power*. However, its meaning has differed from this broadness to denote the particular faculty of a particular man.

If we return to Paul Valéry, in his eyes the concept of genius does not have much value, maybe because of the frailty mentioned above; the need for a spectacle, to make a spectacle of oneself is not for Valéry's taste. In the Logbooks, M. Teste writes: "The admiration conferred on genius is due, at bottom – *the very bottom* – to our attributing to it the power of working miracles without fatigue – or very little. Yes, it's the ease, the spontaneity that rouses admiration and envy"; the lack of fatigue implies an effortless action. In the austere Poïetics of Valéry, where austerity has been inherited from Mallarmé, there is only suspicion for anything that comes effortlessly.

Valéry's System is susceptible to be defined as a philosophy; however, the French poet is not keen with being associated with philosophy. In the *Fragment d'un Descartes*, Valéry writes:

As for me, I find myself in this philosophy like a barbarian in an Athens where he knows very well that very precious object surround him... but in the midst of these objects, he worries and feels anxious, ill at ease; he holds a vague veneration mixed with a superstitious fear and a brutal desire to break everything or to put fire to so many mysterious marvels of which he feels no likeness in his soul. (Variété II 17)

Additionally, he will declare to Frédéric Lefèvre that he does not know if he can be brought back to any philosophical line, especially that of Bergson, and that he only tries to thoroughly examine what he calls his problems, which are not necessarily the traditional problems of philosophy (Lefèvre and Bremond 75).

It seems that Valéry's rejection to be defined as a philosopher does not stem from a complete disdain of philosophy, but from a volition to stand in the domain of art; if making

an observation of writing while writing, of making while making is sufficient enough for the merit of the title of philosopher, Valéry should be considered among the greatest ones. But again, he denies this title, for in his perception the philosopher is the one who reaches conclusions; to philosophize is not mere meditation. It is to begin from a point, and reach another through meditation. It is an act where “reaching” is the aim. On the contrary, Valéry insists on being constantly in the meditative phase. It does not mean that his thinking does not have an aim; however, since an artwork is never accomplished, so is the meditation.

Valéry delivers an interesting passage that might be considered as favoring the poet over the “huntsman” philosopher:

(...) the dialectical hunt is a magical hunt. When poets repair to the enchanted forest of Language it is the express purpose of getting lost; far gone bewilderment, they seek crossroads of meaning, unexpected echoes, strange encounters; they fear neither detours, surprises, nor darkness; but the huntsman who ventures into this forest in hot pursuit of the “truth”, who sticks to a single continuous path, from which he cannot deviate for a moment on pain of losing the scent or imperiling the progress he has already made, runs the risk of capturing nothing but his shadow. Sometimes the shadow is enormous, but a shadow it remains. (Aesthetics 48-49)

As a concluding and side note, it should be noted that there are two errors in Tanpinar’s article, regarding the references that he gives: the first one is the reference of a quote that he translates from Valéry, where Tanpinar writes that it is from the introduction of *Au Sujet D’Adonis*, which is an article written as a preface to La Fontaine’s *Fables*, however a closer look discloses that Tanpinar is quoting from *Au Sujet D’Euréka* that Valéry wrote as an analysis of Edgar Allan Poe’s *Eureka: A Prose Poem*. The second one is the reference of the book from which the text in question is taken, it reads *Variété II*; however, the texts on *Eureka* and *Adonis* were published in the first *Variété*. One might think that maybe Tanpinar had a collected volume of *Variété I and II*; however I was

unable to locate such an edition before or in 1930. This last mistake can be attributed to a simple typo. Nonetheless, the fact that the first mistake has escaped the attention of the editors and not being corrected yet reinforces my claim about Tanpinar's interest in Valéry not receiving much attention.

#### **IV. VALÉRY'S LITERARY LINEAGE: THREE MASTERS**

In his analysis of Valéry, Tanpinar evokes the name of Edgar Allan Poe, Charles Baudelaire and Stéphane Mallarmé and elaborates on their formative role regarding the construction of Valéry's poetics. Valéry wrote illustrative articles about these three masters in *Variété I* and *II*; through these articles, one can also see that Valéry constructs his own literary lineage.

Tanpinar relates Valéry's orientation toward mathematics and positive sciences to the great influence of Edgar Allan Poe whom he was reading at the time that he had decided to abandon writing poetry (Tanpinar 1969 452-453). Despite the abandonment of writing, he continued to think about the definition and explanation of poetry. Tanpinar notes that he found the explanation in language, and thus based all the creation that takes place in the realm of poetry solely on language. "(W)riting is building a most sound and flawless language machine more than anything else" quotes Tanpinar, and affirms that since there was nothing left to account for the reality that was art, Valéry felt the obligation to return his attention to language, he explains: "A mind such as his, would not contend to explain one unknown with another. He renounced all unknowns, such as Inspiration, Genius, and Mystery" (Tanpinar 1969 453-454).

Tanpinar gives the line “Oh my mother, Intellect!” from Valéry’s poem *Poésie*<sup>15</sup> in order to illustrate Valéry’s acceptance of the poetic intellect as the sole agent in creation. He states that as a consequence of this acceptance the French poet perceived consciousness as the most distinguishing feature of mankind: “So it was only language that could enlighten all the darkness and shoulder all the burden” (Tanpinar 1969 454). However, Tanpinar reminds that Valéry was not the first to reach to this conclusion, Poe and Baudelaire had previously determined the main idea about the role of language.

In *Avant-Propos*, which is the preface of Lucien Fabre’s book, *La Connaissance de la Déesse*, Valéry undertakes the task of illustrating the poetic mindset before Edgar Poe’s time. Referring to this text, Tanpinar explains that before Poe, poetry was coexisting with elements alien to it which brought obscurity and uncertainty. It was Poe who relieved poetry from the agony by stating and recommending “that whole metaphysical system, which uses science, mathematics and physics as its resources, should be separated from all essences including itself for the appearance of certainty” (Tanpinar 1969 454).

Reminding that Poe’s claim had not been taken into serious consideration until Baudelaire introduced him to the art scene, Tanpinar touches upon another figure of influence for Valéry. As the source of this influence, Tanpinar pinpoints Baudelaire’s idea of perfection which he perceived through Poe and embraced. While summarizing roughly *La Situation de Baudelaire* Tanpinar notes that Valéry acquired his love of music in poetry from Baudelaire (Tanpinar 1969 454), and that what he saw in him was the unification of a critical mind, a selective sensibility and a poetic quality that gave him, on the one hand, the power to create a sophisticated poetry and purify it from the alien elements that Poe illustrated in his elaborations on the theory of poetry, and on the other, the glory to be the

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<sup>15</sup> *Poésie* (Poem), is published in *Charmes*.

poet who brought up great poets such as Verlaine, Rimbaud, and Mallarmé (Tanpinar 1969 457).

Introducing Valéry as Stéphane Mallarmé’s young disciple frequenting the famous Tuesday meetings of the elder poet<sup>16</sup>, Tanpinar designates him as Mallarmé’s favorite pupil (Tanpinar 1969 452). He explains that Valéry was “exposed first-hand to the most artistic experience of the nineteenth century” and that he knew the weaknesses and strengths of his master’s system, the problems he dealt with during his whole life and the solutions he found for them. Tanpinar notes that language occupied also a major place in Mallarmé’s art; he had find his art’s secret in words and their interrelations. However, according to Tanpinar, as one of the major distinctive features of his time “was the pursuit of absolute beauty in poetry”, Mallarmé constructed the relations of his words “from entirely different matters” (Tanpinar 1969 454).

Tanpinar relates the greatness of Charles Baudelaire and Stéphane Mallarmé to their acceptance of art as “a positive and conscious affair rather than seeing it as ordinary work or phantasm” (Tanpinar 1969 457). He reminds that Valéry admired these two poets greatly and that he reserved a significant part of Variété II to them. This significant part that the author is referring to comprises of *La Situation de Baudelaire* and *Lettre sur Mallarmé*, *Un Coup de Dés*, *Dernière Visite à Mallarmé*, and *Stéphane Mallarmé*; these texts will be elucidated in depth in the last two sections of this chapter. As for the first section, it will concentrate on Valéry’s *Au Sujet d’‘Euréka’* in which the poet recounts his own mindset and what delighted him in Poe, while giving first a brief background knowledge about *Eureka* itself.

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<sup>16</sup> Those disciples were called “Mardistes” (Tuesdayists)

## A. The Maudit Thinker: Poe

From its dedication to the *profoundly respected* Alexander Von Humboldt<sup>17</sup>, Poe sets the course for the underlying discourse of his analysis. However, the full title of the text being Eureka: A Prose Poem discloses another trajectory for the reader.

In the preface, while probably aware of the short circuit that the text will cause in many critics' mind; the writer wishes his essay to be taken as a poem. However, the additional title Eureka: An Essay on the Material and Spiritual Universe and the fact that this comes just after the statement that it is a poem is interesting, albeit confusing. One wonders what Poe's intention was by adding this second title. Is the text going to be ironical? Because, looking at the first title, the reader expects a prose poem, but finds a very long study where she is not sure whether it is a mystical, philosophical or a scientific treatise. If the second title is taken into consideration, the essay is quite poetical, as if Poe is taking his gloves off to show that poetry is as competent as science in explaining the Universe. Is it an allegory? As the essay delves into the matters of the universe, is it telling the story of poetical creation; is the Universe the Mind and the God, the thought?

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<sup>17</sup> Alexander Von Humboldt (1769 – 1859) was a German scientist who claimed to reach a holistic view of nature through a scientific approach based on the interrelations of all natural sciences. He wrote *Kosmos*, an encyclopedic survey; the first volume appeared in 1845.

Valéry affirms that what Poe does is a cosmogonic poetry. In his study *Poetry and Cosmogony*, Chris Andrews remarks that “(s)cientific poetry written without a Socratic consciousness of its own ignorance is likely to make a fool of itself” (Andrews 339). This seems to be the fate attributed to Eureka. By the disdain and uproar it had engendered in the Anglo-American world, Eureka comes forth as a *texte maudit*. In *The "Crypt" of Edgar Poe*'s opening lines, Joseph N. Riddel claims that “If Poe did not exist, he would have had to be invented. One authoritative critical view holds that he is, after all, a French creation; or even that he invented, by a series of extravagant displacements, French symbolist poetics” (Riddel 117-118).

In *The Profundities of Edgar Poe*, Patrick F. Quinn admits that the common reader's attitude towards the poet was *apathy*; on the other hand, the American writers' usual response was *hostility*. He tracks the hostile criticism from “Henry James (“An enthusiasm for Poe is the mark of a decidedly primitive stage of reflection”) through Paul Elmer More (“Poe is the poet of unripe boys and unsound men”) to Yvor Winters (“Poe . . . whose literary merit appears to the present writer a very frail delusion”)” (Quinn 4).

Another critic who holds the *authoritative* view is T.S. Eliot; in *From Poe to Valéry*, he tries to comprehend the importance that Baudelaire, Mallarmé and Valéry had attributed to Poe, who has in his regard “an undeniably powerful intellect (...) of a highly gifted young person before puberty” (Eliot 35). Representing the beginning, the middle and the end of Symbolism, each of these three poets had “subjected themselves to the influence directly” (Eliot 28); Baudelaire was interested mostly in Poe’s personality, in him he found the poète maudit; Mallarmé was concerned with Poe’s technique of verse; and what attracted Valéry to Poe was his theory of poetry (Eliot 36-37). Although Eliot thinks that Edgar Allan Poe’s *Philosophy of Composition* was a hoax since he finds in the refined explanation of the creational phases an incompatibility with the poem in question The

Raven, he admits that what mattered for Valéry in the Philosophy was that the essay suggested him “a method and an occupation: observing oneself write” (Eliot 41).

Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849) wrote Eureka: A Prose Poem in 1848 and considered the prose poem as his masterpiece. The work in question has encountered ardent protestations from critics, varying from those who claimed that Poe’s postulations were groundless to those who dismissed the text entirely by qualifying it as a hoax (that Poe was notorious for).

Contrary to the outrage it created in the Anglo-Saxon world, Eureka did not incite such negative criticism in France, probably due to the sheltering of Baudelaire’s recognition and influence in the French literary circles. As for Paul Valéry, he accorded a special interest to Eureka; he was able to set aside Poe’s frail argumentation about the matters on Universe and creation, and bring to the reading of the prose poem another point of view.

In Eureka, Poe determines his subject as “the Physical, Metaphysical and Mathematical — of the Material and Spiritual Universe: — of its Essence, its Origin, its Creation, its Present Condition and its Destiny”, the text is constructed as a lengthy elaboration of his general proposition which is “*In the Original Unity of the First Thing lies the Secondary Cause of All Things, with the Germ of their Inevitable Annihilation*” (Poe 8).

This proposition can be explained and summarized<sup>18</sup> as: the secondary cause implies that there is a first one in the beginning, these two form a chain of causality. There is a first cause in the beginning – of what one might ask –; since annihilation is mentioned, it also

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<sup>18</sup> Which should be considered as just an attempt of explanation, for the subjects treated in the text challenge the uninformed mind, such as this reader’s.

implies its counterpart which is creation. Creation, a First Thing and a chain of causality leads us to the idea of “finity” (the finite) which Poe regards as “An ultimate termination of causes” (Poe 27). From this First cause, Poe arrives at God creating by volition Matter.

This matter is also defined as simplicity. This simplicity implies Oneness, which is for Poe “a principle abundantly sufficient to account for the constitution, the existing phenomena and the plainly inevitable annihilation of at least the material Universe” (Poe 30). What surfaces from this causal chain is that, the creation of a material Universe is possible if the Unity, the Oneness transforms into a multiplicity, which is the transformation of the normal into the abnormal: “The constitution of the Universe from the Particle (...) this constitution has been effected by *forcing* the originally and therefore normally *One* into the abnormal condition of *Many*” (original emphasis Poe 29-30). Here Poe gives the examples of attraction and repulsion observed in electricity and gravity.

In the light of what has been explain until know, it is possible to deduce (and reduce) the first cause to God, and the second one to Nature, the secondary cause inherent to Unity. Poe argues that this causal chain has a periodic character, when One will fulfill its purposes, which is to transform into Many it, it will return into its original condition of One (Poe 138): “In sinking into Unity, it will sink at once into that Nothingness which, to all Finite Perception, Unity must be — into that Material Nihility from which alone we can conceive it to have been evoked — to have been *created*, by the Volition of God” (Poe 139). This sinking into nothingness is the inevitable annihilation, however Poe does not see this constant motion as an end for Universe, for our Universe it will be, but other universes will emerge.

In *Au Sujet d’ “Euréka”* Valéry recounts his state of mind when he came across Poe’s Eureka:

I was twenty years old and I believed in the power of thought. (...) I had faith in some ideas that came to me. (...) what seemed so clear to my mind, seemed invincible to my being (...) I preserved these dark ideas as my secret of State. I was ashamed of their strangeness; I feared that they were absurd; I knew that they were and they were not. (...) I had stopped making verses; I did read scarcely. Novels and poems seemed to me as only particular applications, impure and half unconscious (...) As for philosophers (...) they were giving me only annoyance. (...) And then, it seemed useless to me to speculate over abstractions one did not define first. (...) I poked my nose into mystics. It is impossible to talk ill about it, for one finds there only what one brings. (AE 111-112)

Reading Eureka activates Valéry's mind, he admits that in a short while, Eureka taught him Newton's Law, Laplace's name and hypothesis, researches and speculations, in brief everything that the system of education was depriving the adolescents of that time (AE 113). Valéry alludes to the narrow minded curriculum of the education system that Turkish readers would not fail to draw similarities with their own experience: "It was the epoch where big books of physics did not say a word of the gravitational law, neither of the conservation of energy, nor Carnot's principle; they loved the three-way valve, Magdebourg's hemispheres, and the laborious and frail reasoning that the problem of the siphon was inspired them" (AE p.114). Eureka made him regain for scientific curiosity and passion.

However, Valéry was sharp enough not to be surprised or entirely seduced by the "enormity of the author's pretensions and ambitions, the solemnity of his preamble's tone, the strange discourse on method by which the book opens" (AE 114). What seduced him was the announcement of *a mastered thought* in the first pages of the prose poem, still he could discern a certain weakness, that Valéry interprets as "a desire for mental reservation, a sort of reluctance of the soul to spread what it had found the most precious", that was suggested by the mystery that enveloped Eureka (AE 114).

“In order to reach truth, Poe invokes the Consistency” says Valéry, the latter is quick to note that Poe is not giving any definition for what he means by consistency, and it is not very easy to make one. What he deduces from Poe’s explanations is that the Truth will be grasped only by “the immediate adhesion to an intuition; such intuition will assure the presence and sensibility of the mind for the reciprocal dependency of the system’s parts and properties. Thus the causality is symmetrical: in the successive states of the system exists a reciprocal dependency” (AE 115). Valéry explains that, from a point of view that would embrace the totality of the Universe, a cause and its effect have interchangeable roles.

However he has remarks to make regarding the system that Poe constructs: the first one is that this construction lays heavily on finalism. Valéry affirms that the doctrine is out of fashion and that he has “neither the power nor the desire to defend it”. Nevertheless cause and adaptations are two notions that lead inevitably to finalism. Valéry’s second remark is that in Poe’s system, consistency is at the same time the means of discovery and the discovery itself. Valéry finds it admirable: “(...) the example and the implementation of the appropriation’s reciprocity. The universe is constructed upon a plane which symmetry is, somehow, present within the intimate structure of our mind. The poetical instinct must blindly take us to truth” (AE 116). Valéry creates an analogy between this design and that of mathematicians:

It happens that they consider their discoveries not as the “creations” of their combinatory faculties, but rather as captures, that their attentions would make in a treasure of preexisting and natural forms, which is accessible only by a rare encounter of rigor, sensitivity and desire. (AE 116)

Unfortunately, all the consequences are not exactly deduced as this one, Poe fails at some points to develop his ideas: “There are shadows, and holes. There are some interventions that are little explained. There is a God” (AE 116).

Valéry perceives Edgar Allan Poe, as an amateur of the intellectual comedy and drama who had found interesting “the ingenuity, insistence, retraction of an inventor struggling with his own invention” (AE 116- 117). According to the author, Poe admirably knew the vices of his invention and that in *Eureka* he necessarily wanted to show all its beauties, to exploit all its advantages, to dissimulate all its miseries (AE 177). This is why Poe’s fundamental idea is a profound and sovereign one. In the scope of the theory of Consistency, there is, according to Valéry, a precise tentative to define the Universe by its *intrinsic values*.

In the proposition “*each law of Nature is dependent at all points upon all other laws*” (original emphasis Poe 81), Valéry sees the expression of a volition of general relativity, furthermore, he finds in *Eureka*, the affirmation of symmetrical and reciprocal relations between matter, time, space, gravitation and light: “*It is in fact, a formal symmetry which is the essential character of the Universe’s representation according to Einstein*” (original emphasis AE 117-118)<sup>19</sup>. Nonetheless Valéry knows that Poe was not interested in what constituted the physical phenomena: “he inserts life and consciousness in his design” (AE 118).

Valéry notes that the science in the first two decades of 20<sup>th</sup> century, is such that “the idea of the matter can be hardly distinguished from energy, everything deepens in agitations, rotations, exchanges and radiations” (AE 119), in this notice, one can observe a direct answer to the objections that had been made about Poe’s undemonstrated affirmations on matter, or the un-scientific approach in general; Valéry defends Poe by showing that the latter’s intuitions about the constitution of the physical, moral and

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<sup>19</sup> Poe even mentions a “matter without attraction and without repulsion” (Poe 139), as from the perspective of today’s science, one might even find an allusion to anti-matter and therefore, to black holes. The fact that it is in a *poem* must not escape our attention.

metaphysical Universe had been neither confirmed or invalidated by the discoveries made since 1847 (AE 121). Additionally, in some of Poe's views, Valéry sees the theories developed in his time such as the theory of Boltzmann and kinetic theory of gases, Carnot's theorem of thermodynamics.

Valéry reveals that Poe has constructed upon mathematical foundations, an abstract poem which is “one of the rare modern examples of the total explication of the natural and spiritual, a *cosmogony*” (original emphasis AE 122-123). Being one of the oldest literary forms, cosmogony sometimes borders on religion “with which it is confused at many points, and sometimes on science, from which it is necessarily distinguished by the absence of experimental proof” (AE 123). Still Valéry thinks that the glory of man is to waste his power on the void; “*It is absurd by what it seeks; great by what it finds*” is for him, the summary of the entire history of thought (original emphasis AE 123-124).

In Valéry's point of view, Universe is only a mythological expression; just as it “escapes our intuition, in the same way it is transcendent to our logic” (AE 130-131). In Eureka, Poe returns the cosmogonic poetry to its primitive and childlike vision of the Universe. Valéry closes his text with an allegory of origin: “*in the beginning was fable. There it will always remain*” (AE 131).

Although the text is the subject of the next section of this chapter, it seemed as more appropriate to integrate Valéry's interpretation about Poe's ideas on poetry here. In *La Situation de Baudelaire*, Valéry summarizes Poe's approach regarding poetry as the analysis of the psychological requirements of a poem, while attributing the utmost importance to requirements that depend on the “dimensions” of poetical works, considering especially their length (SB 165-166). As the epoch was inclined to draw “a sharper and sharper distinction between forms and provinces of activity”, Poe understood that modern poetry should conform to the situation and that this kind of poetry could produce itself in

a *pure state*. In Poe's theory, the necessities of poetic delight were a subject of analysis; he defined "absolute poetry" by "exhaustion", from this analysis and definition Poe showed a way and taught a very strict and fascinating doctrine in which he united a sort of mathematics with a sort of mysticism" (SB 166-167).

## B. The Flâneur Tutor: Baudelaire

*La Situation de Baudelaire* (The Position of Baudelaire) was first read at the *Société de Conférence* in February 19, 1924. The text was published as Introduction for the second edition of Baudelaire's *Fleurs du Mal* by Payot in 1926, and finally appeared in *Variété II* in 1929.

As the title implies, Valéry's main concern is to situate Baudelaire within French literature by elucidating the conditions by which he came to be the most important literary figure not only in France, but also in the international context, for, as Valéry remarks, his reception and publication abroad is "without precedent in the history of French Letters (SB 141). The attribution of importance results from the fact that until Baudelaire, French poets had a very restricted audience abroad. Valéry states that being readily accorded the leadership in prose, the French poets' mastery in poetry is unwillingly admitted. He thinks that, due its difference from the poetry of other nation, French poetry is inaccessible to them; Valéry lists the reasons of the inaccessibility as:

The order and rigor which have reigned over our language since the seventeenth century, our particular accentuation, our strict prosody, our taste for simplification and direct clarity, our fear of overstatement and absurdity, a sort of modesty in our expression and the abstract tendency of our thought. (SB 141-142)<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> The quotations have been taken from William Aspenwall Bradley's translation.

Although greater poets might be cited, Valéry claims that Baudelaire is the more *important* (original emphasis); since it is by virtue of Baudelaire's international acclaim that French poetry has imposed itself as modernity's poetry. For Valéry, the fact that such a marginal figure could initiate a movement of extended proportions lays within two exceptional circumstances other than Baudelaire's value as a poet (SB 143).

Valéry imagines that facing the literature of his age, Baudelaire was reacting and opposing to "the system or the absence of system, called romanticism" (SB 146). One of the circumstances that shaped Baudelaire's artistic endeavor was the fact that he wanted to be a great poet but at the same time, to distinguish himself from the romantics such as Victor Hugo, Alfred de Musset, Alfred de Vigny, and Alphonse de Lamartine; "a dazzling generation (...) in possession of the Empire of Letters" (SB 143-145). Beginning to write in 1840, he was in an ambivalent situation:

He has been brought up on the authors whom his instinct imperiously orders him to wipe out. His literary existence provoked and nourished by them, thrilled by their fame, determined by their works, is, however, necessarily dependent upon negation, upon the overthrow and replacement of those men who seemed to him to fill all fame's niches and to deny him: one, the world of forms; another, that of sentiments; a third, the picturesque; a fourth, profundity. [The thought of distinguishing himself] was even essentially Baudelaire. It was his *raison d'état*. In the domains of creation, which are also the domains of pride, the need to distinguish oneself cannot be separated from existence itself. Baudelaire wrote in the outline of his preface for the *Fleurs du mal*: "Illustrious poets have long divided the richest provinces of the poetical domain among themselves — Consequently, I shall do something else —" (SB 145)

Through the observation of what follows romanticism by contradicting and correcting it, and what takes its place, Valéry argues that the movement which has had an arbitrary definition by then can gain precision, and Baudelaire's work and recognition plays a significant role in defining the movement. Until Baudelaire, "Romanticism (...) was (...)

what naturalism countered and what Parnassus assembled its forces against", says Valéry and continues on what determined Baudelaire's position:

It was what roused almost simultaneously against itself the will to perfection — the mysticism of "art for art's sake" — the demand for observation and an impersonal recording of things; the desire, in a word, *for a more solid substance and for a subtler, purer form.* (SB 147-148)

Valéry outlines the diversity of reactionary attitudes against romanticism, before Baudelaire, where reflective action took the place of the spontaneous one (SB 149); Gautier's protest is against the imprecision of the language and the lack of discipline in formal conditions, Flaubert, Saint-Beuve and Leconte de Lisle react against "impassioned facility, stylistic inconsistency, and the excesses of silliness and eccentricity" (SB 148), while realists and Parnassians accept to lose in apparent intensity, in abundance, in oratorical dynamism, what they have gained in depth, in technical and intellectual quality (SB 148-149).

According to Valéry, romantics were after the effects of "shock, enthusiasm, and contrast", were neglecting the demands of rigor, depth, measure and concentrated thought, and were "averse to abstract thinking and to reasoning — and not only in their works, but also in the preparation of their works, which is infinitely more serious", thus ultimately "(a)t a time when science was about to undergo extraordinary developments, romanticism manifested an antiscientific state of mind. Passion and inspiration are persuaded that they are self-sufficient" (SB 156).

Valéry observes that the romantic oeuvre "ill supports a slow and unsympathetic reading by a difficult and refined reader", and Baudelaire being such a reader, by closely studying the work and personalities of great romantic figures notices that the movement is

reaching its end: “*Romanticism is at its apogee*, he might say; *consequently it is mortal*” (original emphasis SB 149).

Victor Hugo whose vast range of diction, diversity of rhythms, the superabundance of images “crushed all poetry” (SB 150), attracts Baudelaire’s attention, who notices later the inconsistency of Hugo’s work; his philosophy is simple, the developments in his writing is incoherent and disproportioned. Baudelaire’s shrewd critical eye begins to catch “the frequent contrasts between the marvels of detail and the fragility of the subject” (SB 150). Valéry compares the two poets by pointing out that Baudelaire:

(..) sought to do what Victor Hugo had not done; that he refrained from all the effects in which Victor Hugo was invincible; that he returned to a prosody less free and scrupulously removed from prose; that he pursued and almost always captured the production of *unbroken charm*, the inappreciable and quasi-transcendent quality of certain poems — but a quality seldom encountered, and rarely in its pure state, in the immense work of Victor Hugo. (SB 151)

At the risk of digressing from the subject matter, Valéry gives credit to Hugo’s impressive and incomparable vital energy in his *La Légende des Siècles*, a vital energy which is, in his regards, “longevity and capacity for work *combined* — longevity *multiplied* by the capacity for work” (SB 152).

Contrary to Hugo, Baudelaire – who according to Valéry felt that he would not live long as Hugo did – had to spare himself of repetitions and “to unite, in himself, with the spontaneous virtues of a poet, the sagacity, the skepticism, the attention and reasoning faculty of a critic” (SM 154). Accordingly, Valéry argues that even if Baudelaire was romantic in his origins and by his taste, under the light of these characteristics, he appears as a classic. From this new attribution, Valéry elucidates his definition of classicism:

(A) *classic* is a writer who carries a critic within him and who associates him intimately with his work. (...) Every classicism assumes a preceding romanticism. (...) The essence of classicism is to come after (original emphasis). (...) Composition, which is artifice, follows some primitive chaos of natural intuitions and developments. Purity is the result of infinite operations on the language, and the pursuit of form is nothing but the meditated reorganization of the means of expression. Classic consequently implies voluntary, concerted acts which modify "natural" production in conformance with a clear and rational conception of man and art. But, as the sciences have taught us, we can make a rational work and construct in orderly fashion only by means of a group of conventions. Classic art is recognized by the existence, the clearness, the absolutism of these conventions. Whether it is a matter of the three unities, of the prosodic precepts, or of verbal restrictions, these apparently arbitrary rules constitute its force and its weakness. Little understood today and now difficult to defend and almost impossible to observe, they nonetheless arise from an ancient, subtle, and deep understanding of the conditions of unmixed intellectual enjoyment. (SB 155-156)

The second circumstance that attributed Baudelaire a posthumous widespread recognition is according to Valéry, the “association of a critical intelligence with poetic proficiency” (SB 143) which led him to discover Edgar Allan Poe, and especially the new intellectual world that his works enclosed.

It is possible to discern the fascination that Valéry himself has regarding the American poet through his description of Baudelaire’s contact with Poe:

A demon of lucidity, a genius of analysis and an inventor of the newest, most seductive combinations of logic and imagination, of mysticism and calculation, a psychologist of the exceptional, a literary engineer who studied and utilized all the resources of art — thus Poe appeared to him, and filled him with admiration. So many original views and extraordinary promises enthralled him; his talent was transformed by them, his destiny magnificently changed. (S.B.143)

Valéry continues his eulogy by underlying the importance of Poe, amidst a population indifferent to its past and preoccupied by its material development, was a man who meditated on the matters of the mind with “with a clearness, a sagacity, a lucidity

which had never been encountered to such a degree in a head endowed with poetic invention" (SB 158). And yet, it was Baudelaire who introduced him into the European literature, without him he would have been forgotten because as Valéry reminds "Poe's universal glory is weak or contested only in his native country and England. This Anglo-Saxon poet is strangely neglected by his own race" (SB 161).

Even if his endeavors were not recognized in the Anglo-Saxon world, Valéry argues that it was Poe who, for the first time, had elucidated the relations between the oeuvre and the reader and studied the problem of literature in its premises, reducing it to a psychological problem that he approached by analysis "in which the logic and the mechanics of effects were deliberately employed" (SB 159). Valéry is convinced that the application and verification of this analysis is observable, from the works destined to act on the emotions of the readers (the short stories) to "the most refined types of literature and the delicate organization of the poet's creations" (the poem), thus, in every domain of literary production" (SB 159).

Poe's analysis is active and productive which makes it possible for him to invent several different varieties; Valéry is not surprised that Poe has:

(...)offered the first and most striking example of the scientific tale, of the modern cosmogonic poem, of the novel of criminal investigation, of the introduction into literature of morbid psychological states, and that all his work should manifest on every page an intelligence which is to be observed to the same degree in no other literary career.(SB 160)

Valéry recalls the attention to the fact that "*Baudelaire and Edgar Allan Poe exchanged values*" (original emphasis SB 160); Poe offered Baudelaire "a philosophy of composition, a theory of the artificial, comprehension and condemnation of the modern, importance of the exceptional and of a certain strangeness, an aristocratic attitude, mysticism, a taste for elegance and precision, even politics" (SB 160).

In exchange for this new system, Baudelaire extended Poe's thought ad infinitum through translation, prefaces and communicated his work to future generations (SB 162). Among the names who have been influenced by *Adventures of J. Gordon Pyrn*, the *Murders of the Rue Morgue*, *Ligeia*, the *Tell-Tale Heart*, Valéry cites Jules Vernes and Dostoevsky (SB 162). Considering the consequences of the discovery of Poe's works upon Baudelaire's poetry and French poetry in general, Valéry notes that certain poem in *Fleurs du Mal* take their sentiment and their material from Poe's poems.

What Valéry determines as the principal factor that reshaped Baudelaire's idea and art is Edgar Allan Poe's conception of poetry, which is associated with a certain metaphysical system that directed and dominated Poe's theory. Valéry admits that this metaphysical system is the generative of the theory but argues that it is not what constituted Poe's intellectual posterity on poetry developed through various articles. *The Poetic Principle*, is the most important of them all – though Valéry notes that it is also the essay in which the technique of English verse is treated the least – and it had penetrated Baudelaire's mind so densely that he came to consider its contents and the form of the essay *as his own property* (original emphasis SB 164). This *possession* went far as to remove the essay from Poe's translated work and to include only the most essential part in the preface of his translation of the *Histoires extraordinaires* (SB 165).

In an article on Théophile Gautier in *Art Romantique*, Baudelaire reproduces the whole text in the preface “preceding it with these very plain and surprising lines: “*It is occasionally permissible, I believe, to quote oneself in order to avoid paraphrasing oneself. I shall consequently repeat(..)*” (quoted in SB 165), which showcases the plagiarism leaving no point in debating it. Considering the position that Valéry takes in his own essays by favoring inspiration but condemning imitation, Valéry's thought regarding this plagiarism takes an interesting turn: he exculpates Baudelaire with a passage that seems as if he is trying to rationalize an act that he would condemn in the case of someone else:

Man cannot help appropriating what seems so exactly made *for him* that, in spite of himself, he regards it as made *by him* — He tends irresistibly to take over what suits his own person so closely; and language itself confuses, under the name of *possession*, the notion of what is adapted to someone and satisfies him entirely, with that of this person's property — Baudelaire, although enlightened and obsessed by the theory of *The Poetic Principle* — or, rather, because he was enlightened and possessed by it — did not include his translation (...) (original emphasis). (SB 164)

Elaborating on Poe's view on poetry, Valéry compares the entire volume of *Les Fleurs du mal* with other poetic works of the same period and finds it consistent with Poe's precepts as the work contains "neither historical nor legendary poems; nothing based upon a narrative. There are no flights into philosophy. Politics here make no appearance. Descriptions are rare and always pertinent. But all is charm, music, powerful and abstract sensuality ... Luxury, form and voluptuousness" (SB 167). In his best poems Valéry finds a combination of "flesh and spirit, a mixture of solemnity, warmth and bitterness, of eternity and intimacy, a most rare alliance of will with harmony" (SB 167); qualities that distinguishes these poems from romantic and Parnassian verse.

On their part, Parnassians had reproaches to make about Baudelaire, such as Leconte de Lisle criticized him with sterility; Valéry remarks that the latter forgot that "a poet's true fecundity does not consist in the number of his poems but rather in the extent of his effects. They can be judged only in time sequence" (SB 168). Baudelaire's unique work still "fills the whole poetic sphere" and abundant number of works deriving from it is the proof that it is still influential, contrary to Leconte de Lisle's *Poèmes Antiques* and *Poèmes Barbares'* influence which was less fructuous.

Nonetheless, Valéry recognizes that if Baudelaire had been under influenced by Lisle, he would refrain from writing certain "very slack verse" found in *Les Fleurs du Mal*: "Of the fourteen lines of the sonnet *Recueillement*, one of his most charming pieces, there are five or six which, to my never-failing surprise, are undeniably weak" (SB 169) notes

Valéry, however the magical nature of the first and last verses of this poem make the reader forget about the ineptitude of the central part. For Valéry “(o)nly a very great poet can effect a miracle of this kind” (SB 169).

Charm and Miracle are the words by which Valéry defines Baudelaire’s poetic production, and he delivers a passage where Valéryian poetics of perfection become the most apparent:

It should be shown that language contains emotive resources mingled with its practical, directly significant properties. The duty, the work, the function of the poet are to bring out and render active these forces of enchantment, these stimulants of the emotional life and intellectual sensibility, which are mixed together in the customary language with the signs and means of communication of ordinary superficial life. Thus the poet consecrates himself to and consumes himself in the task of defining and constructing a language within the language; and this operation, which is long, difficult, and delicate, which demands a diversity of mental qualities and is never finished, tends to constitute the speech of a being purer, more powerful and profound in his thoughts, more intense in his life, more elegant and felicitous in his speech, than any real person. This extraordinary speech manifests itself and is recognized by the rhythm and harmonies which sustain it, and which should be so intimately and even mysteriously bound to its origin that the sound and the sense can no longer be separated, responding to each other indefinitely in the memory. (SB 170-171)

Reacting against the prosaic style observed in French poetry since mid-seventeenth century, what distinguished Baudelaire’s poetry from all the others was the plenitude and uncommon clearness of its timbre, his voice develops “an admirably pure melodic line and a perfectly sustained sonority which distinguish it from all prose” (SB 171).

Baudelaire was not only a remarkable poet, whose endeavor initiated the poetry’s return to its essence, but he was also an art critic. Among his acquaintance were Manet and Delacroix:

He sought to weigh the respective merits of Ingres and his rival, as he had compared the quite different "realisms" of Courbet and Manet. For the great Daumier he had an admiration which posterity shares. Perhaps he exaggerated the value of Constantin Guys. But, on the whole, his judgments, invariably motivated and accompanied by the finest and most substantial considerations on painting, remain models of their kind, which is so terribly facile, hence so terribly difficult (original emphasis SB 172-173).

His passion for music led him to write articles on Wagner's *Tannhauser* and *Lohengrin*. Valéry calls the reader's attention that the influence of music upon literature, would animate, after Baudelaire's time, certain developments within the literary field; "*What was baptized as Symbolism is summed up quite simply in the intention common to several families of poets to take back from music what belonged to them*" (original emphasis SB 172) Valéry observes.

Valéry is convinced that Baudelaire's greatest glory was to inspire and through *Les Fleurs du Mal*'s charm engender great poets such as Verlaine, Mallarmé and Rimbaud. Valéry indicates that Verlaine developed "the sense of the intimate and the powerful, uneasy mixture of mystical emotion and sensual ardor"; Rimbaud's energetic, active but unfortunately brief work on the other hand discloses a continuity of Baudelaire's poetry in terms of the frenzy for evasion, the impatience excited by the universe, the deep consciousness of sensations and their harmonic resonance"; as for Mallarmé, whose first poems "might be taken for the most beautiful and compact of *Les Fleurs du mal*", according to Valéry, he has followed formal, technical experiments that "Poe's analyses and Baudelaire's essays and commentaries had communicated to him the passion and taught him the importance" (SB 173 -174). Valéry finishes his analysis by a genealogy: "While Verlaine and Rimbaud continued Baudelaire in the order of sentiment and sensation, Mallarmé carried his work forward in the province of perfection and poetic purity" (SB 174).

### C. The Austere Perfectionist: Mallarmé

This section will concentrate on Valéry's ideas on Mallarmé, the precepts underlying the poet's theory of poetry as well as regarding their personal relationship. The guiding texts are *Lettre sur Mallarmé*, *Un Coup de Dés*, *Dernière Visite à Mallarmé*, *Stéphane Mallarmé* and *Je disais quelquefois à Stéphane Mallarmé*<sup>21</sup>.

In *Passage de Verlaine*, regarding Stéphane Mallarmé, Valéry writes that “to be born amidst recently delivered masterpieces, and thus, to be obliged to make a whole different thing is a great misfortune” (PV 182). It seems that this great misfortune was also the catalyst that guided Mallarmé to renounce the immediate glory of poems written with the concern to entertain or please the public and its advantages in order to attain a system of thought which is, in Valéry's words, subtle and incorruptible. As even the most famous poets were “tainted by impurities, mingled with absences, weakened by lengthiness”, the first movement of Mallarmé's research was to define and to produce “the most exquisite and most perfect beauty” (SM 186-187).

Valéry elucidates his remarks on the influence that Baudelaire had on Mallarmé mentioned in the previous section: Mallarmé developed some qualities of romantic poets and by observing what Baudelaire accomplished “most exquisitely”, he has little by little

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<sup>21</sup> The titles of the texts will be henceforth abbreviated respectively as LM, CD, DVM, SM and JQSM

constructed a very particular way of poetry, which in its entirety was “a doctrine and problems, prodigiously stranger to modes of sensing and thinking of his fathers and brothers in poetry” (LM 215).

In lieu of his predecessors’ instinctive or traditional activity, that Valéry defines as a naïve desire and a work that is less mediated, through his meticulous analysis and thinking, Mallarmé created an artificial conception (LM 215). Opposed to the doctrines and anxieties of his contemporaries, his attempt was “to ordain the whole domain of letters by the general consideration of forms” (DVM 204-205).

The metaphor that Valéry draws for Mallarmé’s compositions is that of “crystalline constructions” (LM 225): the poet meditated upon each word that he would use in his poem, he considered and enumerated every kind of form; Valéry has witnessed that “this meditative mind will not construct his oeuvre until it had lived long enough in a preparatory world of presentiments, of harmonic arrangements, perfect forms and their reflections where chance temporizes, take its bearings, and finally crystallizes on a model” (LM 225-226).

Mallarmé’s poetics is an inner system according to Valéry, even if it involves an extended period of meditation upon the matters of language; it should be distinguished not only from the meditation of a philosopher but also from the endeavors of a mystic. However, there exists an analogy regarding both (LM 226); Valéry explains that even though the “prestigious and fantastic improvisations” of the French symbolist writer Villiers de l’Isle-Adam<sup>22</sup> had made an impression on Mallarmé and that the latter never

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<sup>22</sup> Auguste Villiers de l’Isle-Adam (1838 – 1889). Symbolist writer known for his short story collection *Contes Cruelles*(1883), drama *Axel*(1890), and his novel *L’Ève future* (1886), to which we owe the term “android”.

fully detached himself from a certain metaphysic, or even mysticism which is very hard to define (LM 218), the poet had transported the unfamiliar metaphysical themes into his authentic way of philosophy. Thus he gained the desire to give the art of writing a universal meaning, “a universal value” (LM 218):

This very mysterious head had weighed any means of a universal art; and had known, and as had assimilated the joys and various sorrows and the purest despairs that the extreme spiritual desire engenders; it had ruled out the crude prestige from poetry; had, within long and profound silences, judged and exterminated particular ambitions in order to elevate itself to conceive and contemplate a principle of every possible oeuvres; at the highest point of itself, it had found for itself an instinct of domination of the words’ universe, all comparable to the instinct of the greatest thinkers who trained themselves to overcome, by analysis and the combined construction of forms, every possible relation of the universe of ideas, or that of numbers and magnitudes. (LM 231)

From Valéry’s point of view, Mallarmé could reach a very abstract conception just by the profound study of his own art and without any scientific knowledge, which is very close to the speculations of certain sciences. However, Valéry informs that science and poetry were to opposite endeavors in Mallarmé’s mind, this would not refrain Valéry from seeing a similarity “between the constructions of an exact science with the design of reconstructing the whole system of poetry by using “pure and distinct notions, well isolated by the sharpness and accuracy of his judgment, and clearing the confusion that the multiple services of language cause within the minds who think about letters” (LM 216).

As he loathed explicit instructions, Valéry remembers that “for that matter, he would talk about his ideas only by figures” (DVM 205). Valéry admits that by trying to define his master’s tendencies, he contrasted the ordinary literature to that of Mallarmé’s: ordinary literature seemed like an arithmetic which is the research of particular results in which it is hard to distinguish the precept from the example; whereas what Mallarmé conceived was

analogous to algebra because it supposed the will to give prominence to the forms of language and to develop and conserve them through ideas (DVM 205).

In the *Lettre sur Mallarmé*, Valéry expresses that from the first time he read Mallarmé, his work comprised a “subject of marvels” for the young poet (LM 212); although the crystalline constructions of the master did not have “the transparency of the glass”, they would in their dense structure “break the mind’s habits and patterns upon their facets” (LM 225). Here is Valéry’s counterargument for those who accused Mallarmé of being too obscure: “(W)hat has been denominated as their obscurity is in truth, only their refraction” (LM 225).

Valéry argues that Mallarmé rigorously maintained the exigencies of keeping himself distant of confusions and superficialities while he was digging in the depths of his mind at the cost of casting away any clarity in his compositions; this is the proof of the poet’s bold attitude, for Valéry, the profundity of his mind urged him to defy, during all his life, the world and the mockery (LM 217). For, as his pupil explains, the development of his personal views have been “held up, disrupted and cluttered by the uncertain ideas reigning in the literary atmosphere of his time”, which did not give Mallarmé’s work a second consideration (LM 218). Even by its appearance, the oeuvre of Mallarmé “touched upon and attacked the fundamental conventions of the everyday language” says Valéry, and adds the underlying logic “You would not read me, had you already understood me” (LM 222).

Valéry continues on recounting the period when this great poetry was inciting ardent discussions: “Mallarmé’s name was only enough to attract interesting reactions; stupor, irony, sonorous rages; sometimes even testimonies of weakness which were sincere yet funny. But those who accepted that they did not understand the worth of Mallarmé were rare” (LM 221-222). Valéry indicates that he was delighted to observe a contrast between a

work that has been profoundly meditated, “the most calculated and the most conscious there ever was” and a quantity of reflexes that it unchained (LM 221).

He attests the magical power of Mallarmé’s work by the fact that it had “divided in one blow the populace from those who knew how to read. Its appearance of enigma instantly excited the core of the literate intelligence” (LM 221). “Where Kant, rather naively perhaps, thought seeing Moral Law, Mallarmé perceived, without a doubt, the Imperative of a poetry: a Poetics” (SM 198). This poetics came as a “revelation” and had moral effects; Valéry describes that the epoch had a religious air to it, around the “beautiful” there formed an adoration. Mallarmé’s works *Hérodiade*, *L’Après-midi d’un Faune*, *Sonnets* were “a treasure of incorruptible delights” (LM 220), because they were touching “the most sensitive part of cultivated mind, it overexcited the pride”, and that pride could not bear the incapability to understand (LM 220).

As the domain of literature is inclusive of the field of entertainment, Valéry acknowledges that this relation necessitates that the author fashions his art for an effortless pleasure of the public (LM 223). In fact, he even admits that the ease of reading is a general rule in letters; for “Everyone tends to read only what anybody could write” (JDQSM 645).

In *Stéphane Mallarmé*, Valéry looks at this problem from the point of view of the reader and asks if a poet can legitimately request his reader “the sensible and unfailing work of his mind” (SM 187). He confesses that all those who protested, laughed did not perceive what Valéry and his circle had perceived, however this majority was in a quite legitimate position (LM 222-223).

Nonetheless, there is also the question of the author and his work, his responsibility with regards to his art. Valéry is convinced that in literature the severe, hard work is produced by *refusals*. He muses that if the kinds and frequencies of refusals were to be

studied, the study would provide a primary resource for enlightening us about the undisclosed discussion at the time of the oeuvre's creation, "between the man's temperament, ambitions and expectations and on the other hand the excitement and intellectual means of the moment" (LM 228).

Valéry thinks that the degree of consciousness, the "quality of pride", the reserves and various concerns regarding future judgments of the public are manifested in the rigor of the rejections, the quantity of the solutions rejected and the possibilities that one refrains from (LM 229). Moreover, it is here that literature joins the field of ethics according to him (LM 229), additionally, it is also in this domain that he introduces the conflict between what must be obtained naturally (such as the ease of reading) and the effort, in this domain, where literature obtains "its heroes and martyrs of the resistance to effortless", where virtue manifests itself and also sometimes, hypocrisy" (LM 229).

What is the cost of banishing anything that is not conforming to the law that the poet has promulgated for himself? Or the consequences of an author reducing his oeuvre to its essence, giving it density, revises it indefinitely? Valéry admits that the rigor of rejection results into a scarcity of published works (LM 229-230).

Even though Mallarmé faced mockery and disdain, there was also a particular public who did "not conceive pleasure without the pain" and who were "not happy if their happiness in not, in some part, their own contrivance through which they wish to realize what it costs them" (LM 223). As Mallarmé created in France the very notion of the *difficult* author who introduced into art "the obligation of intellectual effort" (LM 224), he had also created for himself a particular audience who, by working their intellect upon Mallarmé's system of crystalline, were improving their own condition. Valéry defines his entourage as "small number of special connoisseurs who, once they had tasted him, could

no longer bear impure, immediate and undefended poems. *Everything else seemed naïve and uncourageous after reading him*" (LM 224).

*Un Coup de Dés* illustrates at length the effort that Mallarmé put into challenging the conventions of traditional poetry. Valéry was the first person to hear the poem, he remembers that the poet read the finished version "in a low, even voice, without the least "effect" and almost to himself" (CD 193). This simple reading incites Valéry to reconsider the disposition of reading a poem and he admits that the substitution of the lyricism of the person who reads the poem for the "real rhythm of the combined words" is an unnecessary artifice that defiles the beauty intrinsic to the composition, and that "ridicules or annihilates the oeuvre that exists by itself" (CD 194).

Here is another passage where Valéry delivers an homage to the mastery of art that he seems to be witnessing in *Un Coup de Dés*'s reading:

Here, truly, infinity spoke, thought and gave birth to temporal forms. Expectation, doubt and concentration *were visible things*. My comprehension had to cope with silences that have taken shape. I contemplated, at my leisure, priceless instants; the fraction of a second, during which an idea is born, shines, and shattered; the atom of time, the seeds of psychological centuries and of infinite consequences, - appeared at last like living being, while surrounded by their nothingness made sensible. Here were whispers, insinuations, thunder made visible, an entire spiritual tempest carried from page to page to the extreme of thinking, to an ineffable breaking point: here, the magic spell was woven; here, on the very paper, I do not know which scintillation of last star trembled infinitely pure in the same inter-conscious void where, like a new kind of matter, distributed in clusters, in streaks, into systems, coexisted Language! (CD 194-195)

Valéry explains that Mallarmé consecrated years to the study of the visual unity of the page in books, newspapers and even on posters. What he was orientating his attention to was "the effective distribution of white and black, the intensity of type styles. Before him, these were used only as natural ornaments of writing with the intension to excite toughly

the attention of the reader. Valéry's elucidation continues as he explains that in Mallarmé's system, by addressing to the glance that traverses it while reading, a page "must *intimate* the movement of composition; by a kind of material intuition, by a pre-established harmony between our various modes of perception, or between the differences of our senses' step, to make foresee to the intelligence what will occur" (original emphasis CD 199-200) [cf.Fig1]. By introducing a superficial reading that he attaches to the linear reading, the literary domain is enriched with a second dimension; as Mallarmé's endeavor ought to be profound regarding the composition of *Un Coup de Dés*, Valéry argues, thus it cannot be reduced to "to flatten a visual harmony over a preexisting intellectual melody", quite on the contrary "it requires an extreme, precise and subtle self-possession, conquered by a particular training, which permits of conducting the complex and momentary unity of distinct "parts of the soul" from a certain origin to a certain end" (CD 201-202).

In the closing lines of his letter to Jean Royère<sup>23</sup>, Valéry admits that he cannot think of Mallarmé without egotism; in his letter, he has tried to show "how the extreme of a tendency has been answered by the extreme of another" by pursuing the analysis of a particular case of influence in detail and in depth, and he has tried to show the direct and adverse effects of Mallarmé's oeuvre on Valéry's mind, and everything comes out as a mixture of memories and reflection (LM 234). In fact reading *Lettre sur Mallarmé*, one can observe the subject of Mallarmé is a very sensitive one for Valéry.

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<sup>23</sup> Jean Royère (1871-1956). The French poet wrote a book on Mallarmé and requested a preface from Valéry, the letter that Valéry wrote is the preface. Jean Royère. *Mallarmé*, Paris: Simon Kra, 1927.



Fig1. Illustration of *Un Coup de Dés*'s sixth page

In a letter to André Gide<sup>24</sup> written on 4<sup>th</sup> of January 1920, Valéry confesses: “I am compelled to write a deadly boring thing on *Le Coup de Dés*. I swore not to say anything, but B. was so affected by what has been published on him that I took my pen, and I am furious ...”. His *boring* analysis will be published a month later, as it is observable from the vocabulary of the various quotes given in this section, it seems that even if he chose a different path in poetical creation, Valéry felt obliged to defend Mallarmé against the accusations of obscurantism and showcase the beauty that one would find in his poems.

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<sup>24</sup> [January 1920 – Correspondance p.478]

Not only in his letter but also in almost all his writings on his master, Valéry cannot refrain from introspection. The allusion to Mallarmé as one of the reasons of his sentimental breakdown constructs the background of his elaborations:

Mallarmé the sterile; Mallarmé the precious; Mallarmé the very obscure; Mallarmé the most conscious; Mallarmé the most perfect; Mallarmé the hardest to himself from all those who have held a pen, gave me, from the first glance that I casted to Letters, an idea somehow supreme, a limit-idea or a sum-idea of their values and their powers. (LM 230-231)

Valéry ascribed to Mallarmé an asceticism that was very much conforming to his own judgments on literature that he always regarded “with great doubt about their true value” (LM 232). If we remember the “mysterious head” mentioned above, an analogy – that one cannot resist to make – emerges between Mallarmé and M. Teste, however Mallarmé is a head in which Valéry found the compilation of everything that perturbed the young poet about literature (LM 231). The pupil admits that without knowing it, Mallarmé played a primordial role in his internal history: “by his mere existence has modified so many evaluations within me, his action of attending has assured me of and has reinforced my opinion in so many things” (LM 212).

Furthermore, the role that Mallarmé played in initiating Valéry’s intellectual breakdown is recounted:

At the still tender age of twenty, and at the critical point in a strange and profound intellectual transformation, I suffered the shock of Mallarmé’s work; I felt surprise and intimate, instantaneous dismay; and astonishment; and the breaking of the bonds that tied me to the idols of my age. I felt myself become a fanatic; I experienced the crushing advance of a decisive spiritual conquest. (LM 218-219)

After such an experience, the *beautiful* gains another definition in Valéry's terminology, "it is what leads to desperation", however Valéry is insightful enough to advise that one must "welcome this kind of desperation which opens your eyes and enlightens you – and as old Horace said in Corneille – *which helps you...*" (LM 219).

The desperation that Mallarmé's work aroused within Valéry helped him to obtain a clearer idea of how he should construct his own oeuvre. He thought that an oeuvre searched within the coincidences of the mind, which means the spontaneous interconnections of ideas, would transform its author, compelling him to recognize and reorganize himself: "I was telling to myself that it is not the accomplished oeuvre and its aspects or effects in the world that can fulfill and edify us, but only the way we did it. Art and pain enhance us; but what the Muse and chance do is to only capture and abandon us" (LM 227).

With this he would attribute to the will and calculations of the agent an importance that he would withdraw from the artwork. However, this does not mean that Valéry's argument promotes the neglect of the work of art; he does not deny that his idea of shifting the attention from the work itself to the machinery, the process of creation, presents a danger for literature, in his words it is an atrocious idea. Nonetheless, this idea allies and opposes to his admiration for Mallarmé; what Valéry confesses to love in Mallarmé who has divided the written word, is his essentially determinate disposition; "calculating manner, this absolutist tendency demonstrated by extreme perfection of his work" (LM 227-228).

## **CONCLUSION**

### **A. Return to Monsieur Teste**

It has been previously mentioned that Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar worked on the translation of Monsieur Teste. Considering that out of all the primary texts in which Valéry constructs his own poetics of work, his acclaimed *System*, the fact that Tanpınar has deemed Monsieur Teste important to introduce to the Turkish reader is significant. He could have chosen *Introduction to the Method of Leonardo da Vinci* which presupposes an epistemological and analytical orientation on the Cartesian model (Céleyrette-Pietri 56), and thus can be interpreted as Paul Valéry's own Cartesian meditation.

It is significant because the work of translation is a work that requires an affinity with the author; it is also a work through the process of which one gains a deeper understanding of the text. The translation of the first chapter has been published in 1933 and from his diaries we know that the whole volume's translation was not finished yet in 1959, which makes approximately thirty years with M. Teste in the background of his life and his mind. This sole fact demonstrates how much Tanpınar venerates Paul Valéry's not only artistic but also intellectual work<sup>25</sup>, and consequently that M. Teste has a personal significance for

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<sup>25</sup> This choice brings a quirk: Tanpınar insists on being perceived as a poet but is renowned for his novels, whereas Valéry is an acclaimed poet and ardently insists that M. Teste is not a novel, and out of all Valéry's oeuvre Tanpınar opts for the novel.

Tanpinar. Let us return to Monsieur Teste and try to disclose one of the probable reasons of this significance.

In the preface of *Monsieur Teste*, A Note on Valéry, Jackson Mathews admits that as it is a very personal book, that the legend identifying M. Teste with Valéry himself has remained strong, but also that “Valéry was probably no more M. Teste than he was Leonardo, Mallarmé, or Descartes; he was all of these in his own way. Teste is simply the most persistent image of that unknown man, his author's consciousness” (*Teste* a xiii). Additionally, Teste is a mind behaving as a man: “a man regulated by his own powers of thought. *Monsieur Teste* is the story of consciousness and its effort to push being off the stage, to use it up” (*Teste* a xiii).

For readers who like to skip introductions and prefaces, like this reader, to perceive an identification between Valéry and his protagonist is almost inevitable. However, *La Soirée Avec Monsieur Teste* appears as Valéry's own narration of his meeting with M. Teste, and not the other way around; Valéry himself admits that Teste came out of a memory, just as in the case of the unidentified narrator who recreates M. Teste out of his memory.

Furthermore, if we take into consideration two specific affirmations made by the characters in the volume, one by the narrator, the other by M. Teste, a certain analogy with Valéry's personal experience becomes apparent, and consequently creates the possibility to speculate that not only the narrator or M. Teste but all the characters might reflect different fractions of Valéry's consciousness.

Considering that *La Soirée Avec Monsieur Teste* has been written in 1894, and that Valéry had his sentimental crisis on an October night in 1892, the narrator's referral to the October 1893 night when M. Teste's memory came to his mind, along with matters

concerning the intellect and genius, becomes intriguing, since it gives the possibility to associate the memory of Edmond Teste to the creation of this strange man. M. Teste seems strange because no background detail is given about his life but his abandonment of literature, we do not know what transformed him into this very hard man that Emilie tries to humanize in her letter. M. Teste, who is perhaps forty, discloses that he has abandoned reading books and writing twenty years ago, thus the reader can conclude that something happened when he was around twenty that incited him to abandon everything. Looking at this detail, one might reach the conclusion that he is indeed Valéry, as he also underwent a breakdown and abandoned literature. However this conclusion seems a little hasty, since Valéry did perhaps abandon literature for a while but he did not abandon writing, on the contrary he wrote excessively.

“Internally, there is a drama” is Valéry’s emphatic announcement in *Introduction to the Method of Leonardo da Vinci*, and he discloses that the actors of this drama are “mental images” (IMLDV 209). From this statement and from the consecutive reading of the pieces in the volume, one can reach the conclusion that the night at Gêne has engendered a theatre of the intellect where all the personalities are Valéry: Teste is his projection, what he would become if he had carried his impulse to abandon literature and writing, an unknown man of pure intellect; the narrator is Valéry as the young man recovered from the crisis; the wife, Emilie Teste is the voice of his conscience and sensibility with regards to such a terrible character that Teste is; the Father Mosson seems to symbolize the interested parties in the literary field (critics, other authors, thinkers, as well as the readers), he is the Other in Valéry’s thoughts.

In M. Teste’s logbooks, there is a private prayer that seems parodying Emilie’s prayers:

A SORT OF PRIVATE PRAYER: I thank this injustice, this affront that awakened me, and the strong sensation of which throw me away of its ridiculous cause, giving

me also such force and taste of my own thought that in the end my work has benefited from my anger; the search of my laws has profited from the incident. (Teste a 42)<sup>26</sup>

In light of the speculation given above, it is possible to interpret this prayer as Valéry's thankfulness regarding the crisis of 1892. The injustice in question is the perfection in Mallarmé's poetry that despairs the young poet, as Jackson Mathews recapitulates the crisis in his introductory notice for Monsieur Teste (Teste a vi). In *La Soirée Avec Monsieur Teste*, as we read his outburst about extraordinariness - given in this study-, he states that "at least twenty years [ago] — the least thing out of the ordinary that some other man accomplished was for me a personal defeat. I used to see only ideas stolen from me!" This statement correlates with the affront in the prayer. Paul Gifford indicates that Valéry's *System* "was invented in the founding crisis of 1892 by way of defensive reaction to a violently wounding experience of the Other" (Gifford 281). The *Other* was the influent figure of Stéphane Mallarmé; the violently wounding experience was the realization that while he was aspiring to create the most sublime poetry, there it was in front of him, in the works of Mallarmé. Teste continues his words with the acceptance that this feeling of personal defeat was meaningless ("What nonsense!"), this statement is also apparent in the prayer ("...its ridiculous cause"). Valéry wrote to André Gide in 1893, that the crisis had a great impact on the development of his consciousness, the freedom to see and judge; the last part of the prayer thus finds its affirmation.

One of the names that Valéry gives to M. Teste is "Hippogriff, a Chimera of the mythology of intellect" (Teste a 6). This attribution is also in the dialogue between Emilie

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<sup>26</sup> As the language that Valéry uses is susceptible to various translations (he admits in the Introduction to the difficulty that his writing will cause to a translator), this quote is my own translation.

Teste and Father Mosson, after she tells him that her husband reminds her of a mystic without a God, Father Mosson replies:

- "A mystic without God! Luminous nonsense! (...) Why not a Hippogriff, or a Centaur!"
- "Why not a Sphinx, Father?" (Teste a 35)

Emily Teste's suggestion is relevant to the depiction of her husband throughout the text; with his piercing eyes he sees everything but his most deadly weapon is his words, his questions. In the section of Teste's Logbooks, there is an interesting deduction: "Ideas", for me, are means of transformation — consequently they are phases or moments of some change. An "idea" of man "is a means of transforming a question (original emphasis)" (Teste a 91).

As mentioned several times in this study, the main problem that preoccupies M. Teste's intellect is "What can a man [do]?" In his case, what a man can do is to try to transform this question through a conscious study of ideas. Into what? What is possible to deduce from the narrator and Mrs. Emilie's account of Edmond Teste, is that he has found a way to transform his ideas into himself. Or what he is able to do is to transform himself completely into ideas. Valéry calls him a demon of possibility, because "the regard for the sum total of what he can do rules him" (Teste a 6).

Consequently, in the introduction, Valéry affirms that Monsieur Teste was born while he was trying to reduce himself to his real qualities because he was disgusted by the ideas and feelings that his fears, his hopes and terrors were inducing and rousing in him (Teste a 5). Thus, it is possible to assert that M. Teste is an idea that transformed the young Valéry battling his own fears and insecurities into a man who attributes the utmost importance to the capacity of his own mind.

Additionally, M. Teste can be regarded as one of the phases in Valéry's internal transformation; it can also be Valéry's solution, his way of regaining his self-esteem, a way out from the sentimental crisis by means of transforming the crisis into a theatre of the intellect, and ironically enough, Father Mosson's premonition about Teste finding a print on the sand and realizing that his heart's island is inhabited comes partially true. Indeed, Valéry finds something upon the sand, a seashell; however, his story does not finish with an inhabited heart, the seashell opens his heart and mind to infinite possibilities of understanding *how one can make art*.

Elizabeth Sewell notes that Valéry alludes to the Nietzschean opposition of Apollo and Dionysus in his revision of Leonardo da Vinci's method in *Note and Digression*; according to Sewell, Valéry finds in Apollo the very essence of control and consciousness (Sewell 665). In this sense, it is possible to state that Valéry found a way out of his intellectual, sentimental, existential crisis by means of setting his compass toward the Apollonian work, by choosing an ever conscious, analytical and rationalist work, by distancing himself from and resisting to any definition prone to create external elements that would lead to the interpretation of his works through anything other than themselves, such as Symbolism or Bergsonism, by striving to create his own System through which he would reach individuation. In the introduction of M. Teste, Valéry affirms that he made it a rule "secretly to hold as null or contemptible all opinions and habits of mind which grow out of life in common, out of our external relations with other men" (Teste a 4-5). As he discloses in *Introduction to the Method of Leonardo da Vinci*, Dionysus, with all the fears, uncertainties, ecstasies, trances and irrationality that he brings, is an enemy.

This particular choice seems as the most rational one if we reconsider the situation that Valéry was in when his encounter with giants such as Stéphane Mallarmé and Arthur Rimbaud had shattered his self-esteem and confidence in his own ability to create such perfection. The perfection had been already reached by them, what was left for Valéry?

In *Tel Quel*, Valéry writes: “Nothing is more original, nothing more characteristic of oneself than to nourish oneself on others. But one must digest them. The lion is made up of assimilated sheep” (Valéry OE II 478). Indeed, Valéry nourished himself on Poe by adopting the ethics of observing oneself while writing, on Baudelaire by learning to let aside the demands of the public and be able to stay true to one’s own technique even if it means to stand against a whole generation of poetry, on Mallarmé by adhering in an austere poetics of effort, striving for perfection. As he assimilated them, he thought that as the perfect poem had already been written, what he can do is to create a system which enables him to analyze how a perfect poem can be written.

Tanpinar’s affirmation regarding being enveloped by Valéry’s ideas and that there ought to be a secret relating to himself becomes clearer when we consider the fact that Tanpinar associated his own crisis with Valéry’s, not just because they were triggered by similar anxieties, but also because Valéry came out of the crisis with a solution to protect himself from romantic aspirations, Muses or any potential sentimental problem that would throw him back to a state where his ego is crushed by indecisiveness, fear, and worries. Valéry thinks that: “In our desires, our regrets, our quests, in our emotions and passions, and even in our effort to know ourselves, we are the puppets of nonexistent things – things that need not even exist to affect us” (Aesthetics 233). One must kill one’s puppet, as M. Teste did; however, Valéry’s ostracism regarding the world of emotions can be perceived as a cold rationalism that one would have difficulty to relate to the art of poetry. This rationalism is the consequence of an act of self-preservation and it should not be taken as Valéry being an austere rationalist.

On the occasion of Valéry’s sixtieth birthday in 1931 – one year after the publication of Tanpinar’s article on Valéry - Walter Benjamin writes:

Valéry once wanted to become a naval officer. Elements of this youthful dream can still be discerned in what he did become. First, there is his poetry with its sustained formal abundance, which language garners from thought as the sea does from a calm. Second, there is the thought itself, imbued with the spirit of mathematics – a thought that leans over its objects as if they were maritime charts and that, without indulging itself in contemplation of the “depths”, is content if it can hold a safe course (original emphasis). (Benjamin 531)

For Walter Benjamin the metaphor for the broad span encompassed by Paul Valéry would be “a giant compass, with one arm firmly anchored in the sea bed and the other stretched out wide toward the horizon” (Benjamin 531). Valéry’s austerity in rationalizing the process of creating can thus be perceived as a cardinal point towards which he set his artistic course in order to safeguard the clarity of his mind.

In the diary entry of February 22, 1959, in the grip of his own fears, anxieties and regrets, Tanpinar asks: “What am I? I wonder, an intellectual existentialism, is it possible?” The reasons of his existential crisis have been attempted to be specified in the introduction of this study under what can be summarized as economic, social and intellectual problems. His question is susceptible to speculation, one might interpret it as Tanpinar was wondering if the ideas and motives of an intellectual can find their parallel in his action; if there can be a complete symmetry between thought and action; if for once, can the imam actually do what he preaches.

Explaining the situation that Turkish poets were facing during the first two decades of 20<sup>th</sup> century - Yahya Kemal’s time - Cahit Tanyol explains that compared to French poetry in which the language was not a problem anymore, for the poet was finding it ready-made, in Turkish poetry there was the misfortune of a persisting problem of language. Tanyol pinpoints the result of this misfortune: “Because of this, in our culture, the generations of art, as a consequence of language being subjected to a kind of interruption,

could not have a unified tradition, not only in poetical approach but also in terms of language” (Tanyol 35).

In one of his lectures on literature, Tanpinar explains that he took two advices from Valéry who showed him – in Tanpinar’s own words – “the indispensability of rhyme and prosody”: “First was this: Even to live a dream, one must be awake. Thus, poetry, for me, is a conscious practice. Second, it is necessary to master technique and to view the matter through this technique” (Alptekin 42). Tanpinar is convinced that one can intervene to the universe if one possesses a technique. After this affirmation comes another one which echoes the lack of a unified tradition in Turkish literature and that the distress it puts the artist in has worsened: “In the mean time there was also the Modern. I was not as free as Yahya Kemal or Valéry” (Alptekin 42). I think that by Modern Tanpinar means the Modernist movement in literature, because he mentions the freedom of Valéry; however this freedom comes from the fact that his works are inscribed within the apogee of Modernity, he is the icon of French classical poetry of the Interwar period. Nicole Celeyrette-Pietri indicates that “*Modernism* is the word used by Valéry for the disorder of the modern world (original emphasis)” (Celeyrette-Pietri 249), Valéry’s iconic position will be contested by this disorder within the modern world, especially by the Surrealist movement.

The generation of Yahya Kemal was facing the problems of not having a unifying ground. As for Tanpinar, the critics who place him among the tradition of conservatism base their argument on his longing for a past, which is often referred as the Ottoman past. To determine whether he is conservative or not is not the subject of this thesis, however one can interpret his longing for a past, as a longing triggered by this lack of unity, a longing for a ground on which he can develop his ideas, on which he can create. Therefore, on the one hand, he is facing the problem of working within a void that this lack of unity brings,

and on the other, he also wants to experiment in the domains opened by Modernism, such as his surrealist take in *Abdullah Efendinin Rüyaları*.

Considering the constraining effects of working without a tradition, it is not a coincidence that Tanpinar was the first scholar to assemble an anthology of literature, *XIX. Asır Türk Edebiyatı Tarihi*, the first one to *classify* the literature of the previous century. This necessity for classification of what has been done in the literary field points out to the necessity he felt to find or create a ground, a tradition to base his work on; the act itself reminds of the Schlegel brothers and the Jena circle's first movement of classifying the literary history before establishing their own discourse.

In *Ahmet Hamdi Tanpinar ve Türk Modernizmi*, Orhan Pamuk remarks that Modernism is not a suitable concept to understand Tanpinar's oeuvre, because Modernism in literature entails an attitude against community, against life; a modernist holds society at gun point, whereas we cannot see Ahmet Hamdi Tanpinar "as a person collaborating with the devil". On the contrary, Pamuk thinks that Tanpinar "wants to be a man of mission with the soul of a saint" (Pamuk 446). Again, Pamuk's observation on Tanpinar's desire to be a man of mission leads us to think that in this mission, there is more than the idea of the artist's responsibilities toward a society or community; the mission is also about finding a reference point from which he could construct his own poetics.

Tanpinar was indeed not a Modernist, for to be one requires a Modern that he can hold at gun point, requires a tradition. One cannot be an iconoclast if there are no icons to cast. This implies that art progresses within a dialectical process that sublates but also raises the stakes of the game. In the interactions that Valéry has with his contemporaries, but also regarding his past, it is possible to see the contribution that the dialectical process is susceptible to bring. In the Larousse publication of Valéry's *Charmes*, after a chronology of Valéry's life, Robert Monestier gives an interesting enumeration that serves to locate

Valéry within the French literary tradition, and at the same time, illustrates a disposition that classifies and thus, creates an archive, a ground on and against which artistic tendencies, and schools of thought will be erected. In a sense, if we recall Tanpınar's well-known lament about geography being a destiny, Valéry is a positive illustration of what is possible when geography is not constraining. There you have it, a fragment of the French *Pantheon*:

Paul Valéry was born 29 years after S. Mallarmé, 27 years after P. Verlaine and A. France, 17 years after A. Rimbaud, 12 years after H. Bergson, 3 years after P. Claudel and Alain, 2 years after A. Gide, the same year as M. Proust, 2 years before Ch. Pégu and Colette, 9 years before G. Apollinaire, 10 years before Valéry Lardaùd, 11 years before J. Giraudaux, 13 years before G. Duhamel, 14 years before F. Mauriac, A. Maurois, and J. Romains, 25 years before H. de Montherlant, 30 years before A. Malraux. (Valéry b 6)

In his article on modern Turkish poetry, Orhan Koçak elaborates on the crippling effect of an inner disruption that the modern Turkish poets have undergone. This disruption is between historically defined “idea of national tradition as a mandate”, that he determines as *superego*, and an *ego ideal* “formed through successive identifications with the West” (Koçak 580). According to Koçak, the identification has been primarily with French culture, and he argues that Tanpınar has been crippled the most: “by leaving himself fully exposed to the impact of the opposite demands, Tanpinar became the greatest Turkish critic and a failed poet” (Koçak 581). As it can be observed throughout his diaries and letters to his friends, Tanpınar thinks that he could not accomplish what he strived for. In *Yaşadığım Gibi* there is a confession: “The most important events of my life consisted of my finding, one after the other, my own poets. Yes, because I was not able to find myself in due time, I was busy discovering others” (Tanpınar 1997 304).

I think this crippling was caused by a milieu that was indifferent to his work, a father figure who is more inhibitive than supportive, and restraining life conditions, rather than

affects of the ego ideal, the French poets, on Tanpinar's psyche – for him, it is the lineage from Nerval to Baudelaire, Mallarmé and Valéry – as suggested by Koçak. Moreover, the above citation considered along his diary entry “I just want to carry out the thing I am capable of doing on my own, my work. I am a liable observer. I have sympathies” – which has been interpreted from the frame of conservatism in the introduction of this study – gains a second interpretation, as the sympathies connote also the French poets. Further, in his last diary entry Tanpinar states that he wants a Turkey that settles its accounts with the past, this confrontation, not only in the realm of politics but also in the realm of art, is necessary to obtain a solid ground.

Additionally, Tanpinar does not blindly venerate Valéry; in his article on Paul Valéry, the reader can clearly perceive his critical reading. The article ends with an affirmation that there are outbursts and irrelevances in the ways in which Valéry exposes his *System*; he relates it to a tendency to exaggerate which is “the distinctive quality of our age”. Nevertheless, Tanpinar writes that how an idea is presented does not have much importance, for him the point is in the fact that “the idea has been said at a time when it is most needed and by the person who holds the utmost authority to utter it due to his works and their strength” (Tanpinar 1969 458).

Tanpinar is an observer with a responsibility not only toward society, but also toward himself, his own art. However in order to do so, he needs to find a way out of the crisis caused by the culture within which he tries artistically to come into being, a way out of the crisis that the external chaos creates within his being. It is at this very point that the figure of Paul Valéry becomes important for Tanpinar. This importance is also substantiated in the fact that the frequency of the referral to the French poet increases during the period in which Tanpinar puts his existence on trial.

As Valéry did not only find a way to attenuate the artistic anxiety, but any kind of anxiety, he was also the illustration of what a man can do within a culture that has the dispositions to support, to recognize, to refute, to dispute, to deconstruct and to reconstruct the work of art in itself, more than the man behind the work. Tanpinar was asking if an intellectual existentialism is possible: as a *demon of possibilities* M. Teste is a clear answer to this question.

Valéry is a stimulating father figure, an influence, an example, an experience for Tanpinar. Valéry's rationality is relieving for a mind at crisis; the texts through which he creates his System communicates also a solution for distressed and perturbed creative minds. For him, the only ego is that of the Ego Scriptor, the author's ego, and thus he tries to find ways to protect it from unnecessary vehemence.

In *Yaşadığım Gibi*, Tanpinar confesses that from the beginning he had lived divided between the storyteller and the poet, that his prose is as open to his life as his poem retreats into isolation. This statement resonates in the desire of poetry to distant itself from prose, because prose, by opening itself to life, concentrates on anything but itself, which has been illustrated on the chapter on poetics of this thesis. Tanpinar was perturbed by this confrontation of prose and poetry within himself. His confession gains another perspective when he affirms that toward 1926, and especially in 1927 that he underwent a crisis:

I underwent a rather big crisis. Modern poetry was pulling me toward itself. Most of my friends were abroad. (...) I was living with a strange hesitation. The true nature of poetry and the man's desires were clashing within me. Valéry saved me from this hesitation. (Tanpinar 1997 306)

In Tanpinar's own words, Valéry is a light which through its sole existence, sets an example for Tanpinar, saves him from hesitation, and gives him the reassurance that if he has the determination to not give into facility of popular writing for the sake of public

recognition, if he lets his intellect to be in constant awakening, if he strives to reach a state of consciousness about the process of the work itself, he will attain perfection. And if he cannot attain it well, it does not matter; the process of working has more importance than the outcome, because the end product is always an act of abandonment in Valéryian realm. Yet if he succeeds, the repudiation of his social circle, the taunts of the critics will not matter anymore. As Valéry says: “There is no masterpiece that has not been massacred a thousand and one times – and that perhaps is how we finally recognize a masterpiece, for only what is alive can be killed” (*Aesthetics* 193).

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