UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON

FACULTY OF ARTS

FRENCH

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

THE MÉMOIRES OF HECTOR BERLIOZ - QUALITIES AND SIGNIFICANCE

by: John C. Crawford.

CONTENTS

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON

FACULTY OF ARTS

FRENCH

ABSTRACT

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

THE MÉMOIRES OF HECTOR BERLIOZ - QUALITIES AND SIGNIFICANCE

by: John C. Crawford.

The aim of this thesis is to examine the ability and importance of the composer Berlioz as a prose-writer; his Mémoires have been chosen as a suitable subject of study for this purpose.

The thesis comprises five chapters; the first discusses the composer's possible reasons for producing a set of memoirs, and introduces the aim of showing that they can reveal something of the genuine artistic status of their writer. The claim is that this status goes beyond present-day popular opinion. The second chapter discusses Berlioz's account of the social and artistic influences on him, relating this to a historical context. Chapter Three is primarily about the literary style; but aspects of the musician's personal characteristics, seen or expressed in the Mémoires, have proved to be closely related to his manner of verbal expression, and so are considered here. The fourth chapter deals with the 'real' content of the book - personal, historical, social and aesthetic themes, plus an increasing psychological perceptiveness and self-knowledge. These together are considered as evidence of the emergence of a vision going beyond Romanticism. In the final (fifth) chapter it has seemed justifiable to introduce a more deliberate consideration of the music itself. This is in order to examine the relationship between Mémoires and musical compositions, primarily for the purpose of showing more clearly the previously

suggested progress of the Berliozian aesthetic beyond Romanticism. It is hoped also to show here that certain attitudes and ideas seen in the prose-work have continued relevance, and even influence, in the present age.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The aim of the present critical attempt is to examine the artistic character and ideas of the composer Hector Berlioz through his prose-writing in the Mémoires, to try to estimate both the nature and the extent of his achievement in them, and finally to see what connections can be made between the nature of the Mémoires and that of the music itself. The quality of the Mémoires both in style and in content seems amply to justify their consideration as literature and as social and artistic document. It seems possible to learn from them a good deal about the nature of Berlioz's aesthetic aims and outlook, and to perceive in them those ideas and attitudes which link him with contemporary artists; and it seems possible also to learn much from the Mémoires about the phenomenon of Berlioz the human being, as well as that of the musician. It will of course be necessary from time to time to make reference to the practical results of Berlioz' ideals in the form of the music he wrote, in chapters other than the last.

The question is relevant here of the composer's motive and purpose in writing the Mémoires. Certainly they are not 'confessions'; they reveal only such intimate details of his private life as are relevant to his career as an artist or to an aspect of temperament or outlook which the writer wishes to illustrate. When he portrays his own emotions vividly, it is never solely to provide vicarious emotional indulgence for the reader; indeed, it often seems that the emotion is presented in such a way as to enable the writer to pass an almost detached judgement on it, and to invite the reader to criticise it or even laugh at it. Examples of this process will be examined later. We cannot, then, attribute a sensationalist or a masochistically self-revealing motive to Berlioz. Nor does it seem possible, on reading the Mémoires, to believe in an attempt on the composer's part to promote an 'image' or to increase his own reputation by

presenting an exaggerated view of his achievements; the element of self-criticism, even self-mockery, in the work, the author's willingness to show himself in an unfavourable light or in a ridiculous situation, suggest the improbability of such a motive.

In his own preface to the Mémoires, written in London in 1848, Berlioz, after expressing his dissatisfaction with the many inaccurate and misleading accounts of his career which were current, continues: 'Cette étude retrospective me fournira en outre l'occasion de donner des notions exactes sur les difficultés que présente, à notre époque, la carrière des compositeurs, et d'offrir à ceux-ci quelques enseignements utiles'. This statement is accepted and confirmed later by, for example, the composer Charles Gounod who, in his forward to an edition of Berlioz's correspondence, (1) refers to the Mémoires '---- qu'il a publiées de son vivant, non pour le vain plaisir d'écrire des confessions, mais pour laisser une notice biographique exacte qui, par le récit de ses luttes et de ses déboires, pût servir d'enseignement aux jeunes compositeurs'. The idea of 'useful advice' is of course in the event a euphemism for what is in places an attack on the philistinism of the time as pungent as anything in the 'Soirées de l'Orchestre' (Gounod was right to mention the 'luttes' and the 'déboires'); but substantially we may perhaps accept these motives (although they must be examined further elsewhere in this essay). Berlioz's own position as an artist in post-revolutionary French society, particularly as one dependent for success upon public performance of his works, may perhaps in some ways be compared to that of the artist in Soviet Russia in the 1950's; the artist is 'free' to create whatever he chooses, being no longer the servant of the Church or of an aristocracy demanding hack-work 'to order' for any occasion; but he is nevertheless dependent for survival, first, on success with a public comprising a growing number of 'consumers' with no real experience or

tradition in the appreciation of what is best in the more sophisticated art-forms, and second, on a bureaucracy which accords help and financial support only to those whose ideas it considers orthodox. The difference, perhaps, in this context, between a Berlioz and a Solzenitsyn or a Shostakovitch is that the French composer's creative outlook was nurtured specifically in the Romantic tradition of seeing the artist as prophet and guide for society rather than as its obedient mouthpiece. The Mémoires is certainly, on one level, an account of Berlioz's reactions to his situation in society.

The motives already mentioned for the writing of the Mémoires, however, may not be the only ones. It may well be that even by 1848 Berlioz was beginning to doubt whether he could ever achieve all that he felt he needed to achieve in music in order fully to establish and vindicate the artistic ideals and values of which he saw himself as champion; and that there was a growing unconscious need to explain to posterity the reasons for what he might later have to regard as a partial defeat for his life's work. The tone of Chapter LIX suggests this, and particularly such passages as the one beginning: 'Maintenant, me voilà, sinon au terme de ma carrière, au moins sur la pente de plus en plus rapide qui y conduit;----'. (2) Further, it seems justifiable from the nature of certain nostalgic passages in the Mémoires, particularly those connected with his childhood and with Estelle and the 'Stella Maris' vision, to look for some element, however subconscious, of what might anachronistically be called a Bergsonian search for the self, a self-assessment or self-identification motive such as is found in a good many other important works of an autobiographical type or with some autobiographical element, from Montaigne to Proust. These possibilities will be considered further.

It seems clear on examination of the Mémoires that Berlioz found in the genre an appropriate and congenial vehicle for the expression of his aims and ideals, ranging from practical recommendations as to curricula for the

training of musicians, to his conviction of the sacredness and absolute value of the work of art, with all its implications. In choosing for his purpose an essentially anecdotal and informal literary framework (containing moreover an important element of dialogue), Berlioz was, however, also following a pre-existing Romantic tradition - a tradition which (in a purely Nineteenth Century context) seems to have had its origin in Germany in 1802 with the launching of Rochlitz's 'Musikalische Allgemeine Zeitung', whose contributors included young musicians who often adopted a fictional, and particularly a dialogue , form as a medium for the discussion of ideas. Prominent among them was E.T.A. Hoffman with his imaginary 'Seraphions-brüder', a writer whose ideas on a possible 'union of the arts' foreshadowed the aims of Berlioz and Wagner. One of the results of Hoffman's influence on the composer Carl Maria von Weber was the latter's publication in 1828 of a literary 'fragment of a musical journey' which was to have been part of the projected but abandoned novel 'Tonkünstlers Leben'. The critic J. Warrack thinks it (3) almost certain that this story, in which at one point the hero, Felise, eavesdrops on a pre-rehearsal conversation among musicians, is the inspiration for the Soirées de l'Orchestre; and it may well help to explain the dialogue element in the Mémoires themselves.

The commonly accepted image of Berlioz as composer and as Romantic artist seems to derive largely from the 'programme' of the Symphonie Fantastique and from little else, except perhaps some Daumier cartoon portraits or some passing and marginal description, in programme notes, of Lélio as a sequel to the 'Fantastique', - the latter probably derogatory or at least a mis-representation due to necessary brevity. Even the function of the programme of the 'Fantastique' seems to have been frequently misunderstood, as Baillif and others have pointed out, and seen as autobiographical 'confession' or as a literal 'explanation' of the music. Thus it is small wonder that for many music-lovers who know little of

Berlioz beyond this first symphony, there is an impression of psychological instability, of imagination running riot, of uncontrolled emotion, of the total rejection of classical techniques and of formal considerations in general, in favour of startling and garish effects associated with the step-by-step illustration of a sensational and highly improbable story-line. Musical commentators such as Dickinson have pointed out that many listeners are so influenced by, or dependent on, the programme of the 'Fantastique' that they tend to become unable or unwilling to listen to the work as music, thus seldom noticing its technical strengths, its masterly orchestration, its individual and wide-spanning melodic lines, its rhythmical vitality and originality, as musical virtues. (The attitude of many to the phenomenon of the Symphonie Fantastique, in fact, would appear to provide convincing evidence that human perception through the senses is heavily conditioned by desires, expectations and prejudices). Of course balance and proportion, technical control and classical restraint, can be perceived in Berlioz' music, in increasing measure throughout the composer's creative career, culminating in what can perhaps be seen as his supreme masterpiece, Les Troyens . It might be said that in this work he came nearest to an artistic solution of one of the most important problems of the Romantic era, one which is often implicit, and occasionally explicit, in the Mémoires: that of reconciling and integrating the subconscious, primeval, almost demonic sources of inspiration on which the artist drew and which were moreover the driving force for his idealism, with the 'rational' means of expression and realisation of those ideals, in society as in art-forms which reflected many of that society's convictions and conventions. This dilemma is symptomatised in various ways; it often appears in Romanticism as a'décalage' between ideal and reality - the root cause of weltschmerz or the French 'mal du siècle' which caused the nostalgic sorrows of Werther and of René alike; or again, the alienation of the artist

from society, which regards him as in some sense 'mad' - a theme which occurs in the Mémoires, and in for example, the novels of Stendhal, or the paintings of Delacroix (one thinks, for example, of the painting of Tasso in the madhouse). This dialectic between reason and order, and the artistic or inspirational kind of 'madness', is a theme in Berlioz's life-story as it is for some listeners at least a problem in his music; and so is closely reflected in the Mémoires. Clearly to be seen in them, alongside the frenzy and the eccentricities, is a more balanced and controlled attitude, a scrupulous fairness and honesty, a steadfast following of high artistic ideals coupled with the readiness to tackle the most practical aspects of the struggle for their furtherance, and a critical self-knowledge that can operate, as we shall see, even in moments of extravagant enthusiasm. It is hoped to show that, to whoever reads the Mémoires without prejudice and in more than cursory fashion, there appears from the outset the picture of a sincere and dignified personality, largely free from bombast and self-deception, whose heroic (the word here seems justified) and life-long fight for what he believed in deserves our gratitude and admiration almost as much as do the musical works he created.

References

All volume-and-page references are to the two-volume Garnier-Flammarion 1969 paper-back French edition of the Mémoires of Berlioz, unless specifically otherwise stated.

1. Introduction

(1) Lettres Intimes (Calman-Lévy) 1882

(2) Vol.II, p.312.

(3) Broadcast talk, BBC 3, Nov. 1980

CHAPTER 2

INFLUENCES

The influences on any great artist are inevitably many and various, not always readily discernible or provable; and in any case (assuming the artist's genuine originality and imagination) they become absorbed, buried in the artistic unconscious, often to manifest themselves only in subtle, indirect and diffused fashion, through the filter of the artist's own creative thought-processes. So it is, in many instances, with Berlioz' musical works; however, the Mémoires provide some clear guidelines which allow the reader to perceive at least the most important influences on the complex, and sometimes seemingly self-contradictory, artistic personality of this composer.

One of the first influences to appear in the Mémoires, one which seems to remain active upon and within the composer all his life, is that of the natural characteristics of particular areas which Berlioz visited or lived in, particularly those of his place of birth and its surroundings. The Alpine foothills between Grenoble and Lyon, with their lakes and mountain scenery, was (and is) an area of great natural beauty, one to which the young musician-to-be was clearly sensitive. The opening description of his birth-place is simple, direct and sincere - we can sense the sympathetic and somewhat nostalgic attachment to this area behind the words; the panorama below him is 'riche, dorée, verdoyante', and its peace has 'je ne sais quelle majesté rêveuse'. (1) A little later we are given a description of Meylan (2) (clearly associated with a special emotion and nostalgia which will cause him to return later in life), with the white cottage surrounded by vines and gardens, and overlooking the Isère valley. There are typical Romantic ingredients here - rocks, woods, flowing water, a ruined tower. When Berlioz looks up at the 'rocher immense' of the Saint-Eynard, he sees

it (in retrospect) as 'une retraite évidemment prédestinée à être le theâtre d'un roman'. Perhaps it is not fanciful to infer that this environment influenced his caste of mind towards a sense of natural balance, proportion and rhythm, operating on a broad scale, together with the sense of the value of freedom, both physical and mental, and an awareness of the power of sudden contrasts of mood and pace. For a musical example of the latter we need look no further than the early Symphonie Fantastique, where, in the 'Scène aux champs' movement we have an idyllic out-door echo between cor anglais and oboe, followed by an impressive storm-feeling in lower instruments later, in as impressive a natural sense of picture and feeling as had ever been produced in music to that date. (The composer's Italian experience can have had no influence on this, since the work was first performed in 1830, the year before his first visit to Italy). Most critics would now agree also that, underlying this same work, is the natural balance and proportion of the symphonic form, but with an absence of any rigid following of classical patterns; H. Macdonald, in the 1982 Master Musicians book on Berlioz (3), for example, speaks of 'dramatic continuity' and 'musical unification' in the work (4), while mentioning particular passages in the work where 'conventional formal procedures----- are swept away ----' (5).

After the opening chapters, the recurring influence of, and reference to, natural phenomena in the Mémoires can perhaps be conveniently regarded as falling into three broad categories: nature as consolation, nature as revelation and guidance, even inspiration, and nature as spur and guide in the 'search for the self' - often of course via memory. With, then, the consolatory power of nature initially in mind, we see as an example Berlioz's impulse (6) after learning of the death of Prince Lichnowsky and realising all that it implied concerning the position of the arts in society, to rush out into the open air: ---'il faut que je

sorte, que je marche, que je coure, que je crie au grand air!' (Here also we can see the typical recourse to the physical activity of brisk walking as consolation). Later, in chapter XL, Berlioz relates how he sometimes, while in Italy, spent the night sleeping out of doors under the laurel-trees; and we see him too, clutching instinctively (and literally) at the things of the earth in order to help him fight separation and loneliness (this has, interestingly, a counterpoint in II, LVIII, where Berlioz tells how, when in a highly emotional state induced by vivid nostalgia: ' ---- je saisis la terre dans une étreinte convulsive --- je mords la mousse ---'). Again we see later (7) the artist, as if to console himself for the remoteness of his loved one, personifying the beauty of the bay of Naples, with the sea 'faisant la sieste' with its (her?) 'robe azurée' inflected with 'plis moeilleux' (this last, admittedly, followed soon after by more threatening images). However, what finally shakes him out of his black mood seems to be the festivities of the lazzaroni, whose description is introduced by 'C'était par un beau jour d'automne ---' - the setting itself, then, was also conducive to recovery.

Coming back from Italy (12th May 1832) Berlioz compares his recent impressions of its natural beauty with that of the area of his own childhood near the French Alps, and seems (8) to favour the latter: 'Toutes ces villas, cette riche verdure -- c'est ravissant, c'est beau, il n'y a rien de pareil en Italie! ---'. The fact that he continues to find his own area, more than any other, conducive to calm, proportion and sanity is indicated at the beginning of the next chapter (9) where he contrasts the mental effects of 'mes loisirs de la Côte Saint-André' with the stresses of Paris life already mentioned (10): 'Il m'avait semblé entendre gronder Paris dans le lointain'. That it is purely natural beauty of the region of his birth which pleases and comforts him in this instance, and not, as one might suppose, partly the fact of being once again in his home with his family, is shown in his

letters to Humbert Ferrand at this time; those of June and July of 1832 (11) express impatience to see his friend, because of a certain boredom (not to mention a depressing toothache!).

In the second volume of the Mémoires (GF edition 1969), one gets the impression that Berlioz's sensitiveness to natural influence, while now less frequently talked of, and so perhaps less obvious, is more concerned with what has earlier in this chapter been defined as 'revelation and guidance', because of the increased tendency for Berlioz to discuss the psychological influence on him of natural experiences. We can see indications of this in the chapter (12) where he discusses the relevance of his dream of Meylan; and in a later chapter (13) where the description of the Russian sledge-riding takes on an unmistakable psychological emphasis: 'une rudesse et un fracas capables de vous décrocher le cerveau', and the daytime aspect 'qui me permettait d'embrasser d'un coup d'oeil ce morne et éblouissant désert' reminds him (14) of the disastrous circumstances of Napoleon's retreat from Moscow.

In the final section 'Voyage en Dauphiné' we see nature as encouraging realisation, or the remembering of, personal feelings; we learn, for instance, (15) of the author's wandering by the Seine (in 1864) with his son and a friend, where 'nous convînmes tous les trois qu'il est bon de vivre pour adorer le beau' and where he remembers feelings of despair experienced in the same area 36 years previously, connecting it with effects in Shakespeare's 'Hamlet'. Here, then, we can clearly see, as has been suggested earlier, a connection between reaction to natural beauty and artistic experience.

A little later Berlioz, during a re-visit to his brother-in-law in Vienne, sees Adèle's portrait and remembers a winter outing with her (during the family visit after his Italian year) where the memory of the affectionate sharing of an umbrella was a symbol of their mutual love and

understanding (---'nous fîmes plus de deux lieues, serrés l'un contre l'àutre, sans dire un mot. Nous nous aimions'). (16) In Meylan (at the point (17) where he hopes to see 'Mme F ***' soon, in the Lyon area) his perceptions of natural surroundings familiar to him seem inseparable from his early love for Estelle which is now being revived, not to say re-lived. They seem also inseparable from memories of home as a child; when with Adèle his language (as reported) is simple, and relates to things like whether or not he should wear wellington-boots; a little later he describes himself as having 'une âme qui se cramponne au passé' at that time. But here, above all else is the memory of Estelle. Discovering the stone she once stood on, he occupies the place himself; at this point he even looks for plants, flowers and bushes which were there originally: 'Ah! voilà le cerisier! --- je prends son tronc entre mes bras --- Tu te souviens d'elle sans doute, bel arbre! et tu me comprends! ---' Here the traditional Romantic characteristic of seeing nature as reflecting and sharing human emotion seems no longer to be mere literary tradition, but a personal and individual reaction, moving in its directness and spontaneity.

In Berlioz's attitude to, and experience of, nature, as recorded in the Mémoires, we may connect certain elements with the author's outlook as musician and Romantic artist, in that for him beauty is not abstract, but connected with, and influential upon, human emotions. It can contain extremes such as 'rudesse' and 'fracas' (we see these in the Symphonie Fantastique of 1830), or at other times order, peace and a feeling of familiarity (here we may perhaps mention the non-vocal slow movement of the Romeo and Juliette symphony). There will at certain times be the possibility of (helpful ?) effect upon the understanding of 'real' life experiences; as with Berlioz's natural description found in the Mémoires, there is in his main art no necessary need for constant pictorial representation for this to happen. At the point where (18) the writer describes his seeing again

the inside of Estelle's former house and the natural views from within: 'Et me voilà dans la petite chambre, dont la fenêtre s'ouvre sur les profondeurs de la plaine, et d'où, quand j'avais douze ans, elle me montra d'un geste fier et ravi la poétique vallée', the description itself is so skeletal as to be scarcely such; more important than mere appearance in its factual details are the effects it has upon, or the power it has of translating, human feelings. When she showed him the view from her window, Estelle was both proud to be able to communicate this experience to another, and also herself enthralled by it ('un geste fier et ravi') because of its 'profondeurs' which imply a sense of mystery and of lack of limitation, and of its 'poétique' quality which implies surely her realisation (or at least that imputed to her by Berlioz) of some correspondence between its nature and her feelings. Here, of course, Berlioz is associating himself with Estelle because of her power of evoking his own appreciation of natural beauty. In the end, then, 'meaning' in nature seems (paradoxically ?) to depend as completely on humanity and human consciousness as does meaning in art.

Human beings are of course normally a primary influence on each other, and therefore on most characters famous or otherwise - and Berlioz is certainly no exception in this sensitivity. This, of course, is not to say that the musician, either in personal nature or in his mature musical creation, was imitative and derivative and no more; nothing could be further from the truth; nevertheless his sensitiveness to those close to him comes out clearly in the Mémoires, while the emotion in human relationships instils his music - perhaps to a greater extent, but at least more overtly - than that of any composer before him.

Looking first at his relationship with his own immediate family, it is clear that the influence of his father was far more significant than the brief early Catholic influence from his mother. Louis-Joseph was, as well as a respected local

doctor,a well-known citizen, who was even mayor, briefly, in 1817. His son had no other early education than from him; but more significant perhaps is the fact that this father was 'doué d'un esprit libre' (19). Berlioz explains: 'C'est dire qu'il n'a aucun préjugé social, politique ni religieux' (20). Even Hector's musical education was at first from his father (21) who then got Imbert, theatre second-fiddle, to teach him further; it must be admitted however that there is no possibility of his ever having envisaged a professional musical career for his son; when, in 1822, young Hector hints at the possibility in a letter from Paris, the father's reply was such that ' --- la conclusion était que je ne pouvais pas tarder à sentir la folie de ma détermination --- '. (22) No - the vital influences are other. At the beginning of LVIII, Berlioz clearly shows how much he admired and found in common with his father, whose qualities he saw as 'si parfaites et si naturelles'; (23) this corresponds with what we learn of Louis-Joseph much earlier (in II), where it is clear that his devotion to a high standard in his life-saving work went well beyond any desire for money or fame. This man's attitude to life surely encouraged in the young musician-to-be aims that might be summarised as: the need to make all one's acts as honest and as high in achievement as possible, and as little as possible influenced by immediate practical limitations, whether or not this attitude offers money or fame. Should we attribute also to his father Berlioz's love of Virgil which, once developed, was to last a lifetime and culminate in the composition of 'Les Troyens' ? If there is an influence here it is indirect it would seem, since the musician's account (24) of his first learning of Virgil's works from his father maintains that Virgil (along with Horace) seemed to him 'surtout odieuse' to begin with, and that it was while studying the 4th book of the Aeneiad where Dido dies, that eventually (and, it would seem, spontaneously on the pupil's part) 'je fus pris d'un

frissonment nerveux, et, dans l'impossibilité de continuer, je m'arrêtai court', (25) as the author's portrayal of human tragedy reached his sensitivity for the first time. We can perhaps see here, incidentally, the beginnings of Berlioz's faith in the genuineness of the portrayal of human emotion and situation which could be attained in the arts; and we must credit the father at least with the introduction to a great example.

Of Berlioz's mother we are told relatively little after his portrayal of the period of his youth. At the end of chapter III he shows us her lack of understanding of his emotions in her teasing of his attitude to Estelle; and later we learn of her extreme opposition to his wish for a musical career, on the Catholic grounds of the presumed immorality of the artistic life: 'Pour elle, acteurs --- musiciens --- compositeurs étaient --- frappés par l'Eglise d'excommunication, ---'; (26) but at the end of his account of an uncomfortable incident he regrets its necessity since his mother is otherwise 'tendre', and when she goes off by herself to a neighbouring country house so as not to have to see him depart for a musical career, he clearly regrets that 'je dus m'éloigner sans embrasser ma mère --- '. (27) Berlioz's affection for his mother was not destroyed; but we may be glad that the influence of her exaggerated faith was virtually nil.

With his sisters, the relationship is different, especially in the case of Adèle; here we might say that Berlioz found a successful relationship with the opposite sex such as he could find neither with mother nor wife. When his father dies, (28) Adèle's letter to him is as much to comfort him as to show her own sorrow, whereas Nanci's shows primarily the love for her father which all three shared. Later (29) it is his 'beloved Adèle' who looks after Nanci on the latter's painful death-bed. However it would not perhaps be justified to talk of influence on Berlioz here in any overt and calculable sense. Among

other relations, we might mention his uncle Felix Marmion who, apart from his military career and his following of Napoleon, is mentioned as having a musical talent, both in violin-playing and in singing comic-opera parts (presumably for self-amusement only); Berlioz, as a boy, admired him, calling him 'joyeux et galant' (30) - and, of course, an element of inheritance of talent might also apply.

Beyond the family, and apart from purely artistic (or other purely situational) relationships, three persons must be mentioned here in connection with possible influence on Berlioz: his first wife, the actress Harriet Smithson from Ireland; his first young love, the lastingly idealised Estelle; and the permanent friend particularly evident in his correspondence - Humbert Ferrand. Of the first two, a great deal has already been written elsewhere, and, in any case, what is in question here is not so much their respective lives or individual characters, as whether Berlioz's love for them had any effect on his character or ideals as shown in the Mémoires. One could perhaps say in general that what they had in common was the effect of fostering and maintaining in the musician's mind an idea of Romantic love which included both uplifting passion and joy on the one hand, and the possibility of disaster, separation and despair on the other. (Particularly in Estelle's case there is a persistent idealisation of love on Berlioz's part which goes beyond strict factual truth - an idealisation which could be maintained during long separation). Looking more closely at the case of Harriet first, it is clear that her original impact on Berlioz's feelings is almost inseparable from that of his first experience of a Shakespeare play. What he calls in chapter XVIII the 'plus grand drame de ma vie' is his going to see Hamlet performed by a visiting British company, in September 1827, in which he saw Harriet as Ophelia; of this experience he says: 'L'effet de son (Harriet's) prodigieux talent, ou plutôt de son génie dramatique, sur mon imagination et sur

mon coeur, n'est comparable qu'au bouleversement que me fit subir le poète dont elle était la digne interprète'. (31) It is perhaps significant that the first practical reaction was to write a musical setting, not of Shakespeare, but of Irish poetry, of which the first words are 'When he who adores thee ---'. And later, Berlioz makes it clear that the subject of his musical 'monodrame' called 'Lélio' is ' --- l'histoire de mon amour pour Miss Smithson, de mes angoisses, de mes rêves douloureux ---' (32), and he is clearly at this point (December 1832) finding himself almost irresistibly drawn to Shakespeare because of Harriet's performances. It would seem, then, that, in spite of the eventual failure of the Berlioz-Smithson marriage which was to take place, we must credit this (in some ways unfortunate) Irish actress with a considerable part in the introduction of Berlioz to one of his main sources of artistic inspiration. As regards Estelle, the case is different; in the sense that her own rôle in Berlioz's attitude to her is completely unconscious for the most part, and therefore passive, she has no real 'influence' upon him at all. Her great importance to him is almost entirely in what she comes to symbolise for him, artistically as well as personally. This is to be discussed in more detail elsewhere.

In Humbert Ferrand we see a lasting friend and correspondent with whom Berlioz feels increasingly free to discuss or confess anything, and from whom he can sometimes seek information or advice. Important as the reliability of a permanent human relationship undoubtedly is to Berlioz, it is here again difficult, from the Mémoires, to pinpoint anything which can be called influence emanating from Ferrand himself rather than from the news or information he conveys.

Purely artistic influence on the musician is clearly a different case. If we consider first his contemporaries (or near contemporaries) other than musicians, we must mention Chateaubriand and Byron although in the Mémoires they are scantily mentioned. In chapter XXXII Berlioz tells us of his

meeting, while on a rough journey to Rome, of an Italian who claimed to have commanded a boat on which Byron travelled, and to be an admirer of him. Berlioz compares impressions of the Englishman's adventurous character, and finally expresses 'le plaisir que j'éprouvais à me trouver ainsi côte à côte avec un compagnon du pélerinage de Child-Harold ---'. (33) Here there is clear admiration; it is elsewhere (34) that we learn of the Byron influence on the French musician. Chateaubriand's one mention in the Mémoires concerns Berlioz's (unsuccessful) attempt, early in his career, to borrow money from the writer (the result of some advice, as it happens, from Ferrand). Chateaubriand here is described as the ' -- seul homme capable de comprendre ---'. However, it is known, as D. Cairns says in the glossary of his translation of the Mémoires, (35) that 'René and Génie du christianisme (with its discussion of epic poetry and the great tragic passions of antiquity) were favourite books of Berlioz's youth and important influences on the growth of his poetic sensibility'. And in the musician's own prologue to his Symphonie Fantastique he speaks of 'un écrivain célèbre' who has spoken of 'vague des passions', which suggests Chateaubriand's influence in this direction. D. Cairns also mentions, in the above-mentioned glossary, (36) the possibility that 'His (Chateaubriand's) autobiography (Mémoires d'outre-tombe) --- may well have helped to stimulate Berlioz to write his own Mémoires'.

Two other influences in the above general category must at least be mentioned: Victor Hugo, and Goethe (via a translation of Faust by Gerard de Nerval). The first of these is perhaps the most frequently mentioned contemporary writer in the Mémoires, partly because the two men were acquainted personally with each other. Berlioz quotes Hugo's poetry in chapter XXX of the Mémoires; and more importantly there is a description in chapter XXXIX of the

attraction, for the musician, of the poem 'La Captive', from the Orientales; 'cette délicieuse poésie' (37) was soon effectively set to music while Berlioz was at Subiaco. Hugo's poetry is again praised in the letter to his musical friend Morel (1st letter from the first German visit in 1841 - 2), where he hopes, for his friend -- 'que vous avez lu et relu le beau livre de Victor Hugo', (38) because this would show Morel why a poetic description of the beautiful river Rhine would, written by Berlioz, be mere 'prosaiques diminutions' (39) as compared with Hugo's powers. The fact that Hugo's writings show a Romantic quality controlled by a comprehensive technique, as well as a capacity for great variety and contrast, together with the appearance in the poetry of examples of what Baudelaire in 1855 called 'correspondances' (for example: ' -- j'entendais l'ombre autour de lui vivre -- ' - A Mademoiselle Louise B.) must have been influences upon the musician we know, whose corresponding ideals will be dealt with later. As for Goethe (who, of course, died before Berlioz was in his 30's), it was through the translation of Nerval that the musician came to know the work which, to judge from his final important musical setting of it, was an inspiration to him. In the twenty-sixth chapter of his Mémoires he begins by describing his first reactions: 'Le merveilleux livre me fascina de prime abord; je ne la quittai plus; je le lisais sans cesse, à table, au théâtre, dans les rues, partout'. (40) He goes on to say how he conserved some basic musical ideas from his 'Huit scènes de Faust', (which were his first musical reaction, and regarded by him as a failure) in order to develop them differently later in the great musical 'légende', La Damnation de Faust of 1846, in which, as he describes later, (41) he combined some of Nerval's translation with some text of his own on the subject (-- 'comme si -- on pouvait d'ailleurs mettre en musique un tel poème tout entier, et sans en déranger l'ordonnance'). (42) That the fascination has remained,

and the inspiration deepened, is surely clear. In fact, in the light of the failure of the 'beau public de Paris' to support its first performance, and the resulting financial disaster for Berlioz, he must have been persuaded into seeing in the character of Faust some symbolism in which his own position was appropriate - if indeed this had not already happened.

Looking now at the influence of older writers, as this is confessed in the Mémoires, we must first look at that of Virgil. When first introduced to this ancient classical author by his father, Berlioz shows reluctance, even repugnance, as recounted in Chapter II, where he says that 'L'obligation d'apprendre chaque jour par coeur quelques vers d'Horace et de Virgile m'était surtout odieuse', (43) and calls the process 'une véritable torture de cerveau'. Yet clearly it is not long before the ancient writer's works came alive for him: 'Le poète latin, bien avant le fabuliste français (La Fontaine) --- en me parlant de passions épiques que je pressentais, sut le premier trouver le chemin de mon coeur et enflammer mon imagination naissante' (44) - and once he had some real familiarisation with the Aeneid, he could not translate certain parts of it aloud to his father without being shaken by emotion - witness his reaction to the account of the death of Dido, already mentioned. After the description of Berlioz's earlier experiences of this author, there are in the Mémoires many mentions or quotations which show how the influence never left him; a telling example is that in chapter XXXVII where he tells how, on one of his expeditions into the countryside, during his Italian experience in 1831, from Subiacco, how he once improvised a song on a passage of the Aene d which was 'enfoui dans ma mémoire depuis mon enfance'. (45) This he was reminded of by the mood of sadness evoked by the countryside. His emotional reactions here, both artistic and personal, are a mixture of sorrow, a sense of strangeness, and personal (if temporary) freedom. It is clear, also, from his 'postface',

in his discussion of the completion and the early performances of his greatest musical work, Les Troyens , that the second and fourth books of the Aeneid were for him not simply a basis for a libretto, but an inspiration: 'J'avoue avoir, moi aussi, ressenti à l'audition des Troyens des impressions violentes de certains morceaux bien executés --- L'air d'Enée --- et surtout le monologue de Didon --- me bouleversaient'. (46) Virgil was for Berlioz, it seems, the ideal of the perfectly controlled expression of deep human feeling and dramatic situation, of which he aimed at an equivalent in his music.

But for Berlioz, classical rules are not everything. The other great literary influence, complementary in many ways to Virgil, is of course Shakespeare, who showed him (among other things) that in modern times nothing relevant needed necessarily to be avoided because of a 'rule': 'Je mesurai --- l'immense ridicule des idées répandues en France sur Shakespeare par Voltaire --- et la pitoyable mesquinerie de notre vieille Poétique de pédagogues et de frères ignorantins'. (47) Shakespeare was not a childhood influence - he could hardly, of course, have been so, given the lack of any general knowledge and appreciation of his works in France during the earlier nineteenth century. But in 1827, after he had embarked on his musical career, he saw Hamlet and Romeo and Juliet performed in Paris by a visiting British company, with leading female roles played by Harriet Smithson. The enormous revelation and its overwhelming effects are described in chapter XVIII, where the plays of Shakespeare 'en m'ouvrant le ciel de l'art avec un fracas sublime, m'en illumina les plus lointaines profondeurs'. (48) To the ideas of controlled expression of exalted feeling and universal situation as found in Virgil, were now added: contrast of mood and situation, including even a juxtaposition of comedy and tragedy; relationships shown between the noble and the humble in society, with both represented as important characters;

and individual character and reactions portrayed beyond a situational limit. That Shakespeare is a continued help and revelation for Berlioz is clear in chapter LIX where the hints of trouble in the marriage to Harriet appear, and the musician's reaction to his feelings is: 'Shakespeare! Shakespeare! où est-il? où es-tu? Il me semble que lui seul parmi les êtres intelligents peut me comprendre et doit nous avoir compris tous les deux --- '. (49) In fact in this passage (as mentioned elsewhere in this essay) Shakespeare, with his sympathetic understanding of human nature in all its aspects, is almost a human replacement for God. It was perhaps inevitable that there should be musical compositions based on themes from Shakespeare, such as the 'Tempest' fantasy mentioned in chapter XXVII as well as the later important works based on Romeo and Juliet, and Beatrice and Benedict from Much Ado about nothing. For Berlioz the musician we could perhaps say that, between them, Virgil and Shakespeare represent (outside those from the realm of music itself) the main essence of Berlioz's ideals of art, which will be discussed in a later chapter.

With regard to the mention in the Mémoires of musical influences, there is little doubt that three composers meant more to him than any others: Gluck, Weber, and, above all, Beethoven. Gluck was, as far as we can tell, his first serious enthusiasm in music, and his introduction to what he regarded as real opera. While he was still a medical student he discovered that anyone was entitled to use the 'bibliothèque du Conservatoire' in Paris; and so he could study the scores of Gluck's works ' --- pour lesquelles j'avais déjà une passion instinctive'. (50) The day he first attended a performance of Iphigénie en Tauride was a longed-for event, after which: '--- je jurai, en sortant de l'Opéra, que, malgré père, mère, oncles, tantes, grands-parents et amis, je serais musicien'. (51) There seems no doubt from the Mémoires that the music of Gluck was the strongest single influence from outside which caused the

break from medical studies and the turn towards professional music. Berlioz makes it clear in Chapter XIV (52) that Gluck (with Spontini, whom, at the time, he estimated almost as much) was appreciated by him in 1827, before he had heard anything of Beethoven beyond the Second Symphony, and before Weber had written works like 'Der Freischütz', and that by comparison the new music of Rossini seemed to him to have something puerile about it, and was for him 'la musique d'un malhonnête homme'. (53) In XV we can begin to see one of the things which made Gluck important for Berlioz, where he criticises the conductor for re-arranging aspects of Gluck's orchestration, which Berlioz knew to be part of the means of expression of a definite atmosphere, and <u>not</u> a 'mistake' (eg. in writing <u>low</u> notes for flutes, or in the use - then unusual - of cymbals). (54) Here we can see the French musician's willingness to see new or unfamiliar ideas for what they were, and his refusal to be automatically put off by unorthodoxy.

In Chapter XVI we see Berlioz's reactions to the appearance of Weber's music at l'Odéon in 1824. He admits that, previously, 'Ce nouveau style' had found him intolerant because of his exclusive admiration of the classics, but that now he was affected by ' --- des surprises et des ravissements extrêmes', (55) in spite of evident imperfections - and even distortions - in the performances of Weber in France at that time. The 'torrent of previously unknown sensations' which immersed him, made of him an admirer of Weber's music, and one who acknowledged the German's inspiration and originality. What was this originality? Berlioz is clear; he describes what he saw as the virtues of 'Oberon' and of its predecessor 'Der Freischütz'. Each was 'simplement vrai', 'fièrement original' and 'ennemi des formules'; 'Freischütz', particularly, contained for him a 'poésie --- pleine de mouvement, de passion et de contrastes'; and its characters 'pris dans la vie commune', with 'la peinture de leurs sentiments'

and 'le tableau de leurs moeurs ' impressed him greatly. These quoted phrases (56) themselves, taken together, might almost form a definition of the new musical standard and ideals now growing in Berlioz's mind, for the initiation of which Weber must surely claim considerable importance. The new expressive power possible in music, particularly in the orchestra ('passions' and 'contrastes'), together with the new 'poésie'; and the new 'peinture' made possible by the development of instrumental efficiency and subtelty, and hence instrumental 'colour' were to help Berlioz to become the first great composer of French Romantic music, freeing his art from conservative restrictions as Beethoven, Schubert and Weber, in their different ways, had already done for it in Germany.

The most important musical influence of all, as is clear from the Mémoires, is that of Beethoven. At first, when Berlioz has only been able to hear (in 1827) little except one andante, and seen the scores of only the first two symphonies by his great German predecessor, he regards his standpoint as that of one who can see the 'sun', but has to see it 'obscured by the thick clouds' of French official conservatism. (57) Beethoven was, it may be said, the most important composer before Berlioz to show a kind of originality which was related to Romanticism; but this was not, it seems, considered by the Frenchman's musical teachers as a recommendation; indeed Beethoven could by no means be described as a generally widely known or highly esteemed composer, in the France of Berlioz's youth and early career. In XX, (58) however, we see the real revelation, with his first hearing of Beethoven's C minor symphony (no. 5), whose impact is at least as important as that of his first acquaintance with Shakespeare's plays. Berlioz's reactions to middle-period Beethoven are clearly different from those of his teachers, even where they were themselves eminent composers. The latter, conforming for the most part to the general reaction of French critics of their day, often

followed the opinion of Berton, ' -- qui regardait en pitié toute la moderne école allemande', (59) or, like Boieldieu 'qui ne savait trop ce qu'il fallait penser', were puzzled by it. Even of a genuinely fine composer like Cherubini, Berlioz could say that Beethoven's works of music 'sapaient l'édifice de ses théories les plus chères'. (60) Among his teachers Berlioz clearly regarded only Lesueur as feeling the real depth of this music; but some time after the concert he reports Lesueur as saying that ' -- il ne faut pas faire de la musique comme celle-là', on which remark Berlioz's comment is that 'c'est bien déclarer qu'on se garderait soi-même d'en écrire de pareille, mais parce qu'on sent qu'on ne le pourrait pas si on le voulait'. (61) Surely the implication here, put bluntly, is that Berlioz himself is the only composer in France at the time who has no fear that his own powers will eventually be 'shown up' by those of Beethoven to a condemning and despairing extent. The incredible fact is that, with no excessive pride or self-opinion, he was right.

On what grounds did he dare to make this instinctive - seeming judgement? He talks at one point of 'ce nouveau style' with its 'formes colossales'; (62) here is the realisation of Beethoven's ability to solve one of the biggest problems for the Romantic artist in whatever medium - that of maintaining coherent shape in the (often lengthy) expression of nature and of drama and human emotion and situation. In the lengthy letter to M. Desmaret ('cellist) written from Berlin in 1841-2, (63) we can witness the success of Berlioz's music in Germany, and feel the encouragement and joy which he felt when, in Beethoven's country, audiences could appreciate his own efforts at the expression of these same things.

It would be interesting to know for certain whether Berlioz ever heard Beethoven's last string quartets, (the editor of the G-F edition of the Mémoires, professeur P. Citron,

states that he did so in 1929; if so, it is surprising that the Mémoires do not mention such an important experience) where the German's own particular Romanticism is changing and giving way to a mysticism suggesting the portrayal of forces and ideals beyond humanity. In the tenth letter (to AMG Osborne), (64) the French musician talks of hearing Beethoven quartets, in Hanover, in such terms as 'musique transcendante'; 'ces adagios surhumains' which would suggest, perhaps, op. 132. Certainly the reactions of the players, as told by Berlioz, give an impression almost of an element of religion in the performance. If indeed he did at some time, as is likely, hear any of Beethoven's quartets from op. 127 onwards, these works can perhaps be seen as having a sort of psychological and artistic parallel with the later Berlioz, and particularly with certain later parts of 'Les Troyens', where the situation rises above the immediate towards the universal, and feeling is expressed in a way one can only describe as 'spatial'; Berlioz here rises ultimately beyond Romanticism towards a wider concept.

In general then, influences upon Berlioz are as many and varied as those of any other great artist; and, since his music, in maturity, sounds nothing like Beethoven's, Gluck's or anyone else's, those influences not rejected must have been completely absorbed. What his attitude to influence, as seen in the Mémoires, indicates, is his lack of prejudice or of excessive conservatism in his views of the arts of his day, and his consciousness of the need to look forward, in style, technique and content, to an extent not equalled by any of his musical contemporaries. Classical elements are not rejected, but interpreted and used in a new way, so that they will eventually combine with his Romanticism; and we can see too his great interest in the other arts, particularly literature and drama, and the desire to achieve a 'correspondance' between them and music, one not limited only to the composition of opera.

References II

Influences

(1) Vol I, p. 41
(2) " I, 47
(3) H. Macdonald, pub. O. Dent
(4) Macdonald p. 90
(5) Ibid, p. 92
(6) Vol I, 77
(7) " I, 255
(8) " I, 280 -
(9) " I, 283
(10) " I, 281
(11) 'Lettres Intimes' pp. 118-19 ed. Gounod Calman Levy 1882
(12) Vol II, 7, footnote.
(13) " II, 254
(14) " II, 255
(15) " II, 354
(16) " II, 613
(17) " II, 355
(18) " II, 356
(19) " I, 43
(20) " " "
(21) " I, 51
(22) " I, 64
(23) " II, 295
(24) " I, 45-6
(25) " I, 45-6
(26) " I, 85
(27) " I, 86
(28) " II, 58
(29) " II, 305-6
(30) " I, 47
(31) " I, 125
(32) " I, 285
(33) " I, 192
(34) Cited by Berlioz in an article in 1855, (acc. Cairns in his glossary to his trans. of Memoires, p. 659)
(35) P. 661 in Paper back Panther edn.
(36) ibid p. 662
(37) Vol I, 249
(38) " II, 55
(39) " " "
(40) " I, 167
(41) " II, 246
(42) " II, 247
(43) " I, 44
(44) " I, 45
(45) " I, 229
(46) " II, 342
(47) " I, 125
(48) " " "
(49) " II, 307
(50) " I, 64
(51) " " "
(52) " I, 102
(53) " I, 103
(54) " I, 108-9
(55) " I, 116
(56) " I, 117
(57) " I, 102
(58) " I, 138
(59) " " "
(60) " " "
(61) " I, 139
(62) " " "
(63) " II, 137-150
(64) " II, 150-5

CHAPTER 3

THE STYLE AND THE MAN

Perhaps the initial impression gained from Berlioz's Mémoires is that of a restless, agile, probing intellect, engaged in an unceasing exploration of whatever happens to be around him (including the behaviour of his fellow-creatures) through a stream of sense-impressions. Berlioz himself, in the account of his second visit to Germany, says he thinks he is one of three living musicians in whom the 'désir de voir et l'humeur inquiète' (1) is strongest. Many descriptive passages in the Mémoires bear witness to this; and they vary widely in style, tone and intent, as will be shown.

The composer's response to the natural world has already been discussed as an artistic influence. It is therefore perhaps relevant here to discuss the way in which Berlioz the writer has chosen to convey its effect to the reader through style and manner of expression generally. The description of his beloved native Dauphiné in chapter I, in the short paragraph beginning: 'La Côte Saint André, son nom l'indique ---', (2) and that in chapter III referring to Meylan ('Dans la partie haute de Meylan ---'), (3) are short and clear, with one or two lurking poetic undertones; the very simplicity is touching. In these passages we sense Berlioz's awareness of the importance of his emotional roots (and hence of the particular emotional magnet which will continue to exert its force). Another passage, among many which could be cited, is that in the account of the first German visit referring to the experience of the Schwarzwald: 'Cette excursion dans la Forêt-Noire m'a laissé un confus mélange de souvenirs joyeux, tristes, doux et pénibles, que je ne saurais évoquer sans un serrement de coeur presque inexplicable ---'. (4) And the mention of the 'double deuil noir et blanc' (4) shows us a glimpse of a

poetic impulse which emerges not infrequently elsewhere in the Mémoires. Of course it can fairly be said that, here, the writer is a more or less willing victim of what Ruskin was later to call 'pathetic fallacy', in that he is attributing to his natural surroundings a concordance with his own feelings; nevertheless this translation into words of Berlioz's first experience of a great mountainous forest has vividness and honesty. We see here also Berlioz's feeling for paradox; and his love for sudden strong contrast is apparent in the way the 'travail du ronge-coeur si actif dans la solitude' (4) is immediately followed by: ' --- Puis l'arrivée a Hechingen, les gais visages, l'amabilité du prince, les fêtes du premier jour de l'an ---'. (4) In chapter LV we find a description with a different tone and purpose - a graphic, more or less realistic account of sledge-riding in Russia, which the French musician finds anything but comfortable; the vocabulary and style is accordingly more concrete and more violent; he is being thrown about 'avec une rudesse et un fracas capables de vous décrocher le cerveau'. (5) Then, suddenly, the vast wastes provoke thoughts of past, more epic suffering; and with them come the paradoxical image of 'ce morne et éblouissant désert ---'. (5) With this kind of intrinsic contrast, surprising yet natural, we are not far from one aspect of Berlioz's music.

We know, too, that the musician often needed to seek nature and the open air as a solace in moments of crisis or tension. In chapter VIII, for example, after the death of Lichnowski: 'Oh! il faut que je sorte, --- que je crie au grand air!'. (6) In chapter XXXVII, we read of Berlioz's memories of the journeys through the Italian countryside, which are a 'cruelle mémoire des jours de liberté' (7) compared with his present situation of being 'replongé dans la tourmente parisienne'. (8) His official musical experience in Italy was not particularly congenial to him;

but he talks of 'Italie sauvage' as being 'insoucieuse de ta soeur, l'Italie artiste', (7) and therefore giving him a feeling of freedom.

The observation of, and reactions to, nature in the Mémoires, often seem to overlap with observation and reaction with regard to human society; in some of Berlioz's more sustained descriptive passages we see what Bailbé has called 'cette mise en valeur dramatique', (9) often involving the presentation of a character in a cartoon-like thumb-nail sketch, set deftly into the context of the scene. One thinks, for example, of the description of the journey in Italy following the musician's obtaining of the Prix de Rome, at the point where he is among the Abbruzzi, and where scenic impressions mingle with glimpses of cottages and churches, and so with the expression of the writer's interest in people, their customs and their music. Nearing Subacio, the account reads like a modern-style travelogue: ' --- Ce sont les somptueux monastères, peuplés d'hommes pieux et bien-veillants ---' (10) (et seq.). Then, in Subacio, we meet young Crispino 'qui avait l'insolence de prétendre avoir été brigand', (11) with his inimitable melismatic 'bonjorno'; and later, at Civitavella, the Signor Vincenzo: '--- enveloppé dans une redingote qu'il n'a pas quitté depuis dix ans, accroupi sous sa cheminée enfumée', (12) and ready to fire his questions at any newcomer, however travel weary: ' --- vous n'obtiendrez pas un verre de vin avant de lui avoir répondu sur La Fayette, Louis-Philippe et la Garde Nationale'. (12) In these examples we can notice too Berlioz's undoubted gift for a humorous or satirical kind of social observation.

Having turned our main attention largely from nature itself in the Mémoires towards humanity, we may here perhaps mention the scornful irony of which the musician is sometimes capable in a description of a social scene or situation as in his account of deliberate deprivation of money owed to him in chapter XLVI , or in his account of

the ambiguous and contradictory attitude of some to the first appearance of 'Les Troyens' in the'Postface'. Sometimes there is dissent to the point of bitter rejection; one such passage, which can only be called the 'carnaval romain' scene, is in chapter XXXVI, where the piling-up of images after the words ' --- fort gras, en effect ---', (13) although rabelaisian in style and verve, is to the point and pungent in its ironic disapproval. It is interesting to note here that, in contrast to the artist's warm and un-class-conscious response to Crispino, and his feeling of comradeship with some of the lazzaroni, he finds the unconstrained behaviour of humanity in the mass sometimes repugnant; the sardonic passage in chapter XXXVI, beginning: 'Bon peuple ---' (14) shows, as much as anything else, his sense of personal isolation in such situations, the religious element notwithstanding. The above-mentioned passage is, incidentally, of what one might call the 'montage' type, in which a number of rapid, widely varying glimpses add up to an overall impression of a scene, conveying also its movement and life. Perhaps similar to it in method is the continuation of the description, mentioned earlier, of the approach to Subiaco, where the artist turns his attention to the villages ('agglomérations de maisons grisâtres' (15)) and offers us a montage of impressions giving a total picture full of evocative detail, and moreover imbued with real human sympathy. These and other passages could surely excuse one from any agreement with Baillif's opinion that Berlioz's field of consciousness, while providing intense images, was narrow and incapable of encompassing a wide sweep. Doubts about the critic's opinion strengthen when we consider the music, with its melodies so long-spanned, sometimes, as to have remained uncomprehended by many listeners for half a century or more.

Some of Berlioz's scenes in the Mémoires involving the observation or participation of people show a natural leaning

towards, and talent for, dialogue. The early interview with Cherubini in which the latter's stammer is somewhat unkindly reproduced, is well-known. Just a few pages later a very different dialogue occurs, this time between the artist and his mother, on the subject of his musical career. The atmosphere is more tense, caricature is absent; his mother calls him 'vous'; he for his part can only talk haltingly in his distress. There is a certain air of melodrama present - more natural to Berlioz's contemporaries than to the twentieth century probably - but it is significant that the composer should choose to 'dramatise' what must have been a difficult point in the history of his relationship with his family. In chapter XV we meet absurd comedy, in the cross-purposes dialogue between two audience-members at a performance of Sacchini's 'Oedipe', one unmoved and engrossed in eating an orange, the other caught up in the emotions of the opera. This almost Ionesco-like episode shows its writer's sense of fun together with an underlying disapproval. One notices, too, the allusive deftness with which Berlioz refers a few lines later to the more unmoved of the two as 'mon néophyte mangeur d'oranges'. (16) This combination of rapidity and economy, often amusingly, with pinpoint identification of the essential trait, and this use, also, of the incongruity of vocabulary or idea, are both characteristic. One could multiply examples - the Irishman (surely left-handed?) in the Redoutensaal who shook the Berlioz hand that did not write the 'Roméo et Juliette' (17) symphony, or the episode of the supposed 'castrato' in the Sistine chapel, whose wife's priceless reply to Berlioz's blundering remark must be the only sexual double-entendre in the whole of the composer's prose output - modestly left untranslated! (18)

There are other aspects of the physical world encompassed by Berlioz's inquiring spirit; we see him, for example, pondering on the origins and pronunciation of place-names in the section describing his second trip to Germany; and

wherever he goes he seems to notice the architecture of the churches, the character of the houses. One area to which he often turns is that of technology - an interest which must have been encouraged in him by his early training in medicine, and no doubt by the climate of the age in which he lived. In chapter V there is mention of the musician's following (for a time) Gay-Lussac's course in electricity; the footnote at the beginning of VI shows us his interest in the physics involved in acoustics; and in XXXVII, as he sets out for Tivoli in the pouring rain, he allows us a glimpse of his satisfaction in his 'fusil à pistons me permettant de chasser malgré l'humidité'. (19)

It goes without saying that the composer's main technological preoccupation was inevitably the developing instruments of the orchestra, their construction and technique. This was an area where important changes were afoot - it was the age of Boehm and Sax, and of the development of Stölzel's valve for brass instruments. Perhaps the best example of Berlioz's interest and growing understanding in this field is the case of the orchestral horn. In chapter LI we see him chiding the braying 'tower-harmony' sound of the 'cors de chasse' tradition, as too brassy for orchestral purposes; later he discusses the question of hand-stopping, and elsewhere the relative merits of different types of valve. He discusses, too, the question of whether, even with valves, the old stopping technique should not be retained for the sake of preserving certain effects of tone-colour. In other places he shows his insight into crooking and transposition problems for the playing of this instrument.

Of course it is true that the composer's interest in instrumental technology is not purely for its own sake; it is bound up with questions of orchestral balance, blend and tone-colour, (eg. II, 60 (bottom)) things of which the importance to the composer raises questions concerning his approach to his art which must be dealt with elsewhere in

this essay. However, what can be said here is that the evident competence shown (eventually an expertise, which resulted in the great treatise on orchestration) again helps to belie the image of the wild, unpractical and ill-controlled artistic temperament popularly attributed to Berlioz.

The literary merit of the 'Mémoires' is by no means limited to a dramatic flair coupled with the expression of alert attention to the environment, however. In XXVIII for example, we find a story of how, in the year that he won the Prix de Rome, Berlioz 'stole' a friend's girl ('Mademoiselle M***') more or less by accident; it is a model of economy, simplicity and compression, together with an irony, a suggestive power and a vein of gentle self-mockery worthy of Stendhal: ' --- elle m'indiquait un rendez-vous secret pour le lendemain. J'oubliai de m'y rendre - chez-d'oeuvre de rouerie digne des plus grands hommes du genre, si je l'eusse fait exprès ---'. (20) He admits, too, that the affair turned out to be a physically passionate one - but he is not going to give intimate details (' --- je n'écris pas des confessions'). (21) A few pages later there appears, in contrast, a perfectly good piece of Nineteenth-century adventure-story writing - the description of the storm during the sea-crossing from Marseille, with its moments of local colour or nautical vocabulary, its conveying of danger and suspense on the storm-tossed boat, and its sailor hero, alone at the helm. (22) (Was this helmsman perhaps for Berlioz a symbolic figure, taking over the guiding rôle, showing the true course of action for the community, superseding both official leader and religion?). And if we look for the art of the raconteur, we can find it for example of how the employee who registered his luggage at Magdelburg refused to believe he was dealing with the Berlioz, (23) and whose consequent suspicions (like those of the dealer to whom Kreisler once anonymously took his Stradivarius) almost had dramatic consequences.

In some of Berlioz's descriptions we find a capacity to conjure up poetic images which, though necessarily appearing fairly infrequently, are one of the 'bonus' pleasures for the reader of the 'Mémoires'. In letter no. 4 to Humbert Ferrand from Prague, the description of the city seen from 'cette montagne brodée de marbre' (24) is a highlight. The image of the 'torrent de maisons' (24) tumbling down the mountainside to the water's edge is a near - 'correspondance' - we can almost hear rushing water; moreover, the elements of personification, and the concluding soothing sounds and rhythms contrasting with the initial cascade-image, are all, to say the least, impressive. Here we have vivid, almost impressionistic scenic description, and also perhaps something more - the basis of a poem which a Hugo might have written. A sustained image of a very different kind is to be found, as Bailbé has pointed out, (25) in the extended 'tunnelling' or 'mole' idea in chapter XLVII, which begins: 'N'oublions pas le mal qui nous font en coeur ---'. Bailbé tends to point to the influence of La Fontaine in the case of all the composer's animal images; but here we seem to have a very different feeling, more like Keats' 'curious conscience burrowing like a worm' from the ode to Sleep, with its suggestion of deep mental unease. One could point also to the description mentioned earlier of the arrival at Subiaco (XXXVII) where, after the 'travelogue' style passage, and once Berlioz strikes a personal note by mentioning his own arrival, the tone changes, with the 'moissonneurs attardés qui reviennent des plaines, au tintement mélancolique de la campanella d'un couvent caché'. (26) As an image it may now seem to us rather over-familiar, but the words give the right feeling; the first phrase quoted is more or less an alexandrine, while the second is noticeable for the way in which the Italian 'campanella' is left untranslated, not just for local colour, but also to reinforce the onomatopeia in 'tintement mélancolique'.

We have seen that, in his observation of his fellow-beings, Berlioz has the ability to capture the essential atmosphere of an episode in a few words, or to characterise someone by pinpointing perhaps only one essential trait or idiosyncrasy. A parallel ability can be seen in the description of places: when the composer, in chapter LVIII, recalls the impact on him of seeing again his grandfather's former home, he achieves an almost Bergsonian effect by his mention of the 'salon --- avec ses peintures grotesques et ses fantastiques oiseaux en papier de toutes couleurs collés contre le mur.' (27) The flair for rapid semi-caricatural thumb-nail character-sketching may indeed be the mark of an artist with a dramatic instinct; one finds much the same thing in the (translated) letters of Mozart; and it is an aptitude the two musicians seem to share with the poet Keats, of whom it could perhaps be argued (on the evidence, for example, of some genuinely dramatic passages in Hyperion) that a dramatic talent was beginning to emerge at the time of his death - and who shared with Hector Berlioz, as it happens, two other things: one, an interest in things classical, and a liking for classical metaphors and images; and the other, this same ability to bring an overall impression dramatically into focus by 'zooming in' on one significant detail. Compare the effect of the coloured paper birds with Keats' description of a wood in winter in the Eve of St. Agnes :

' --- ah, bitter chill it was
The owl, for all his feathers, was a-cold.'

The aim is different (there is no nostalgia in the Keats example), but the method is the same.

It seems clear from some parts of the 'Mémoires' that Berlioz, for all his protestations of boredom and exasperation with the activity of prose-writing, enjoyed using words, at least when context and circumstances were right. His flair for image and metaphor has been mentioned, and this of course is enriched by similes and allusions taken from

classical antiquity, and characters from Shakespeare, especially perhaps the latter; perhaps the most obvious example is the way Harriet is sometimes referred to as a particular Shakespeare character - even at her end she is 'poor Ophelia'; (28) while at the beginning of the 'postface' where he himself feels that his own career is finished, he says that 'Othello's occupation's gone'. (29) In chapter LIX, he opposes the artistically supportive Germans with the philistine French calling the latter (among other things!) 'mes Guildenstern, mes Rosencranz, mes Iago ---'. (30) Of the former source the examples are by no means always serious; in chapter XLI, on a rough small-boat journey, he thinks fairly humorously of an analogy with Aeneas' nautical journey, calling the captain 'digne émule du héros troyen'; (31) at the end of the 'Premier Voyage en Allemagne' chapter, however, after his experiences of German music and in particular of Beethoven-playing, he feels as if: 'Je viens --- de consulter l'oracle de Delphes', (32) in serious mood.

The composer's vocabulary is an extended one; this is due, it seems, not only to accretions from the worlds of medicine, electricity or music, or to a knowledge of classical Latin, but also to a general liking for the unusual or the unexpected. J. M. Bailbé has pointed out his use of words such as 'logogriphe', 'aristarques' or 'esquinancie', and of borrowed English, German or Italian words; the same critic comments, too, on the way the writer sometimes slips in a final adjective to a series, which alters the meaning of all the preceding ones, as for example in XL: ' --- je ressentis de nouveaux les atteintes d'une cruelle maladie (morale, nerveuse, imaginaire, tout ce qu'on voudra) ---'. (33) What the critic does not point out is the way in which this example, as in several other similar cases, is symptomatic of Berlioz's instinct for self-awareness and even self-mockery. The use of incongruity between noun and adjective is also

sometimes a feature, often helped out with the use of medical vocabulary; there is for instance the end of the composer's description of the quarrels over the provisioning of the student household in the rue de la Harpe in XII: 'O pharmaceutique amour propre!'; (34) or in XLIII where, at an Italian funeral, he wonders how the dead girl's husband can tolerate the somewhat cavalier treatment of her corpse by the officials, and (with rather questionable taste) turns the potentially pathetic into the grotesque, with 'Lymphatique époux!' (35) (we note, incidentally, in both cases, the whimsical use of the normally poetic or rhetorical device of adjectival precedence). The same incongruity can be noticed also in examples such as the 'néophyte mangeur d'oranges' expression noted earlier. The liking for antithesis and contrast within the construction of the sentence can be seen in the account of the first German expedition (tenth letter), from the words: 'C'est là que notre art tantôt sommeille platement ---', (36) to name but one example. In this passage the question of taste also arises - the antithetic style soon degenerates here into a patch of rather tasteless rhetoric, before changing into reflection on the financial position of the arts in France. Berlioz's love of punning and play on words, too, sometimes full of Rabelaisian verve, is at other times merely puerile and pointless - the joyful punning involved in Berlioz's welcome in Italy by fellow-students in chapter XXXIII may be tolerable; but things like 'Hony fut honni' make even their author wince.

We may feel ready to accuse Berlioz of questionable taste also in the element of the grotesque and the macabre which is occasionally present in the Mémoires. This aspect must however be seen in the context of the time; the macabre seems to have been a constant, if intermittent, concomitant of the Romantic vision internationally; Enid Starkie, for example, mentions the translation of Hoffman into French as 'a deep influence on the macabre side of

Romanticism' (37) in her book on Baudelaire, while Baudelaire himself said, with reference to a parallel in this respect between himself and Edgar Allan Poe, that 'tout mystique a un vice caché'; (38) and as for examples, most readers could quote things like the hunchback in Hugo's 'Notre Dame de Paris', or the old lady worshipping (literally) her stuffed parrot in Flaubert's conte. This aspect of nineteenth century French literature seems to be the obverse of the coin - the 'id' of Romanticism underlying its 'super-ego' of idealistic aspiration (Baudelaire's remark quoted above suggests that he understood it in this way); the macabre is, in this case, the Romantics' attempt (possibly subconscious) to deal with, or express at least, the darker side of the human personality. Critics have inevitably pointed to the picture Berlioz gives us of the dissecting room at the Hospice de la Pitié in V; and one could cite also the account of the exhumation of Harriet Smithson's body in the 'postface', with its Hamlet-like overtones. This last example however could be seen to have a meaning beyond mere grotesqueness, since Berlioz is here beginning to think about the approach of his own death, wherein the ironic parallel between the decay of Harriet's beauty and his musical brain has surely occured to him - he talks of the gaping mouth of the vault waiting to swallow also 'ma part de pourriture', (39) not in any kind of panic, but in the calmness of weary pessimism, facing an elementary truth. Berlioz's consideration of the darker and more alarming aspects of human life and personality were not by any means limited to prose-writings; he shocked his audiences, having been shown the possibility by Weber (particularly in the Wolf's Glen scene in Der Freischütz), by daring to express it in music. Nowadays we may feel free to ridicule the 'programme' of the Symphonie Fantastique; but we continue to relish the music - witches' sabbath and all - since the work's genuine relation

to human psychology does not depend on the 'story'.

However, the macabre is obviously not the only, nor the most important, sombre element in the Mémoires. (We have already seen that the episode in the 'postface' mentioned above contains an unquestionable sincerity and grief which go beyond mere 'horror story' atmosphere). Throughout the Mémoires, there recurs increasingly the sense of conflict with opposing forces, a nostalgia for what could be or what might have been, and, in later chapters, a weariness and a sense, if not exactly of failure, of the way in which the frailty of the human organism, combined with the imperfections of human society, robs the artist of the final victory, and frustrates the full realisation of ideals. Even of his adolescence the composer says that 'un crêpe noir couvrait mes pensées' (his tunes were all in minor keys!) - he was prone to fits of causeless melancholy; as he says in the letter to Girard from Stuttgart ' --- mais je suis ainsi fait, que je souffre parfois, sans motif apparent ---'. (40) In a letter to Ferrand from Vienna he mournfully surveys the Parisian scene with its commercialism, its shallow pleasure-seeking and its artistic vulgarity; his symbols here of Parisian civilisation are the choking fumes of asphalt being put down, the stink of cheap cigar smoke, raucous laughter, and the interminable jangle of a barrel-organ. (The heavy repetition of the ambiguous word 'Barbarie' is effective here). (41) He goes on to talk of 'ennui' and 'spleen'. Nostalgia, when it occurs in a specific form, is occasionally pure homesickness, sometimes the imaginative 'remembering' of some great tragedy of the past, whether it be real, such as the events of 1812, or from literature (particularly Virgil); sometimes it is regret for the fact that great artists of the past like Goethe, Shakespeare or Beethoven are no longer living, even in men's estimation it seemed to him sometimes, and quite often what seems, interestingly, to be a longing for the age of enlightened noble patronage

of the arts. But the greatest and most abiding nostalgia in the musician's life is that for his impossible love for Estelle, his 'stella maris', the guiding star of the ultimate principles of love and of artistic truth, and one which might show him the way through the uncharted seas of his life. The importance which Berlioz attached to Estelle has its beginnings of course in early-adolescent infatuation, sensitively outlined in the early chapters; but from the start the worship is idealist rather then sexual - one could talk of it in terms of Stendhalien 'cristallisation', since Berlioz could be said to have subconsciously attributed to her the qualities which best represented (one could almost say symbolised) the ideals to which his life and art needed his allegiance; as Stendhal said: ' -- c'est l'opération de l'esprit, qui tire de tout ce qui se présente la découverte que l'objet aimé a de nouvelles perfections'. (42) Certainly this crystal-covering grew into a great star that seems to the reader of the Mémoires to stand for the abstract essence of the artist's idealism, and not an object of physical passion. No wonder that the sensible old lady who was the real Estelle whom he met at the end of his later search, realised that she, as a reality, could have nothing to give the great composer which corresponded with his own view of her. Of that incident Berlioz says that he was in no way disappointed by her older appearance, and that ' -- tout mon âme a volé vers son idole ---'. (43) At first, he says, his emotion almost prevents him from finding words; but when he does (as is clear from the piece of dialogue quoted in the 'Voyage en Dauphiné' chapter), it is to maintain the restrained and relatively calm conversational tone which Estelle has already inaugurated. The style of the Mémoires at this point shows, in fact, both the tactful refraining, on the musician's part, from imposing his emotions upon the old lady, and also his awareness that the account here will be more effective for the reader if the emotions are left

imprisoned behind ordinary and genuine words.

While it is true that the composer started out with a view of art influenced by the pantheistic Christianity proposed by Chateaubriand in the 'Génie du Christianisme', ultimately he saw no validity in, and could seek no support from, orthodox religion. In chapter XXV we see a fairly violent anti-establishment view, on historical and humanitarian grounds: 'Le Pape est un barbare ---' is his comment in the footnote; (44) elsewhere we see what is (at least on the surface) merely irreverent anti-clerical humour - in chapter XLI for example we see Berlioz trying to pray for his Italian guide as the man had asked him to: ' --- je récitai très sérieusement un premier 'Pater' pour mon brave sergent, mais au second j'éclatai de rire'. (45) Or there is the well-known story of the blasphemous joke which offended Mendelssohn, who had happened to fall over during a conversation in which, as it happened, the Frenchman was putting forward unorthodox religious views: 'Admirez la justice divine --- c'est moi qui blasphème, et c'est vous qui tombez'. (46) But in the later chapters of the Mémoires rejection of religion has become far more than a mere irreverent joke. Chapter LIX tells us of Berlioz's reaction to the death of his sister Nanci. The writer begins the chapter wearily, then talks of the path he has still to travel in life: ' -- j'y trouverai partout les mêmes profondes ornières, les mêmes cailloux raboteux, les mêmes terrains défoncés ---' - an impressive nature-metaphor to express his pessimism regarding the continuation of his difficulties as an artist in society (he reckons he would need at least two hundred years to get them behind him); then, suddenly: 'J'ai perdu ma soeur aînée, Nanci'. (47) He tells how her death was slow and painful, and inveighs against both the law of the land and the Catholic religion for being opposed to euthanasia in cases of diseases which are incurable and causing great suffering. The language here is, though of course darkened by his feelings, fairly

factual and medical at first, until he thinks of how people would say that his sister's suffering was 'God's will'; and his bitter meditation throws up this passage: 'Quels non-sens que ces questions de fatalité, de divinité, de libre arbitre, etc.!! C'est l'absurde infini; l'entendement (48) humain y tournoie et ne peut que s'y perdre!' Very soon afterwards he talks of Harriet's death; after musing over their doomed marriage and his first wife's unhappy and abortive struggles as an artist, he finally exclaims: 'Shakespeare! --- c'est toi qui es notre père, toi qui es aux cieux, s'il y a des cieux.

' - Dieu est stupide et atroce dans son indifférence infinie; toi seul es le Dieu bon pour les âmes d'artistes; reçois-nous sur ton sein, père, embrasse-nous!' (49) The only immortality, he goes on to imply, is that of genius. This may remind us of Vigny's agnostic stoicism and the message of 'La Bouteille à la mer', or perhaps of Wagner's 'I believe in God, Mozart and Beethoven ---' - but it seems in fact to go further than either. The experience of existence in the world expressed by Berlioz in the last three examples is illogical, gratuitous, repetitious, discontinuous, and unguided by any discernible transcendancy; it seems in fact near to being an experience of the absurd. With this in mind we might be tempted to see, in the last passage quoted, the idea of artistic creation as a kind of 'révolte' in Camus' sense (it is not the only passage in this chapter with Camusian-like connotations for the modern reader; there is the earlier mention of ' -- quelque roche sublime que je gravirai à grande peine' (50) which makes one think of the Sisyphus myth); yet here Shakespeare seems to be, for the composer, not so much a symbol of 'révolte' as a refuge and comforting father-figure, in his state of terrifying awareness. This lucidity is scarcely the unflinching gaze advocated later by Camus; one is tempted to coin a phrase in the manner of French critics and call it 'lucidité Romantique', since it is a heart-cry from

one who still has a nostalgia for, even perhaps a desperate clinging belief in, the existence of some genuinely transcendent ideal or principle beyond art, which might be the justification of art, and to which his art might provide the guiding clue for himself and for society.

In Berlioz's approach to style, tone, subject-matter, to the structure of a story or scene in the Mémoires, we often notice, as has already been suggested, an element of unexpected contrast, of paradox, incongruity or discrepancy (the extent to which there may be a parallel to this in the music will be discussed later). It is connected sometimes with the artist's quest for self-knowledge, his fundamental honesty in self-appraisal, and his frequent self-mockery. The extraordinary capability which the Mémoires reveals to us is that of experiencing a strong and sincere emotion, and, more or less simultaneously, of standing outside it and judging it and its origins. Bailbé talks of Berlioz's 'lucidité totale vis-à-vis lui-même'. (51) One might be excused a passing doubt as to whether Bailbé has mistaken honesty for lucidity; but he is surely right in inferring the reality of the composer's emotions, however extravagent they may seem to the twentieth century reader. The critic refers to the episode of Berlioz's revisit to the house at Meylan, now lived in by strangers, in the Voyage en Dauphiné' chapter, quoting the vividly convincing detail of the musician's chewing on his handkerchief in anguish as being the sort of image which would not be introduced by someone who was trying gratuitously to inflate or sentimentalize the account of his own feelings. With this one must agree, since the passage in question shows the 'emotional reality' of a genuine writer. Often the process appears as a kind of 'pulling back from the brink' effect in which the emotional climate is cancelled abruptly by the intrusion of an alien (perhaps even comic or ironic) word, phrase or idea. As early as chapter III, where Berlioz is describing his childhood adoration of Estelle, the passage

beginning: 'En l'apercevant, je sentis une secousse électrique ---' (52) sincerely conveys the painful intensity of young love; yet even before we are introduced to the adult villagers' point of view of the lad's reactions, we hear through the youngster's ears the ridiculous clanking of his uncle's spurs as he dances with Estelle. Perhaps a clearer example is in XXXIV where the musician describes his reactions to the news that, while he is in Italy, his marriage prospects have been betrayed by the girl's mother; distraught, he makes for Nice with confused intentions of a double murder followed by suicide. But even before we get to the self-mockery of: 'Oh! la jolie scène! ---', (53) the judgement has fallen, with: ' --- et si le pistolet venait à rater (cela c'est vu) ---' (53) - the incongruous tone of the parenthesis shows us a different, more matter-of-fact mode of thought, operating seemingly simultaneously with the other and providing, as it were, an alternative standpoint from which the more emotional and irrational attitude may be judged. In the narration of this episode, in other words, Berlioz is suggesting that at the time he could, and did, 'catch himself out' in the act of self-deception or of over-reaction to a situation. We see the composer watching himself with amusement while relating the rest of the (now abortive) suicide episode, especially at the point where the final coup de grâce to his melodramatic plan is the realisation that he is hungry. (54) This portrayal of quixotic action, stemming from sincere feeling and aspiration, but resulting in comic anti-climax, is worthy of Stendhal; it might perhaps be compared to the moment in Le Rouge et le noir (chapter XVI) where Julien Sorel, would-be seducer of Mathilde, having finally gained secret entrance (via a ladder) to her bedroom at one in the morning, suddenly finds himself having to invent conversation, gets criticised for squashing the flowers under the window, and is embarrassed by the use of 'tu'. (The final outcome, however, is not analogous).

Can a comparison between the two near-contemporary dauphinois artists be carried any further? A.K. Thorlby has this to say: (55) 'Perhaps nowhere in Romantic literature is the underlying tension between self-consciousness and spontaneity more clearly exhibited than in Stendhal's writing. The polarization of mind and world --- of the real and the imagined, were known to him immediately in the act of writing, and his heroes act it out'. It might not be too fanciful to put Berlioz beside Stendhal in this particular respect; both artists seem to possess a sense of the vulnerability of the lofty emotion or aspiration in the 'real' world of mundane considerations and mass indifference, just as they were both aware that the aspiration might, at times, itself turn out to be an illusion or an impossibility. For the musician, the great 'illusion' is the hope that Estelle might love him, in whatever sense. Here too we get the impression that, in spite of the persistence of the dream, Berlioz knows himself, sees the illusion for what it is. Perhaps one of the most moving paragraphs in the Mémoires is that towards the end of the 'Voyage en Dauphiné' chapter, beginning: 'Je crois maintenant vivre plus tranquille ---' (56) where he comes consciously to terms with the fact that Estelle could never have loved him: 'Elle ne m'aime pas, il est vrai, pourquoi m'aimerait-elle? ---'. (56) Nevertheless she does not now ignore him; and, as he has just said: ' --- je contemple mon 'étoile' qui semble au loin doucement me sourire'. (56) It seems here as if he realises at heart that his 'Stella Maris' fulfilled a psychological need, as a symbol of, or at least parallel to, the seemingly unattainable ideal in art, towards which his unfailing striving was becoming more difficult now. Musing, he asks himself: 'Laquelle des deux puissances peut élever l'homme au plus sublimes hauteurs, l'amour ou la musique? ---' and then sees his own answer: 'Pourquoi séparer l'un de l'autre? Ce sont les deux ailes de l'âme'. (57)

That this is not a desperate or hasty conclusion is made clear by its having a precedent in chapter LIX where he realises perceptively just how inextricable were his first love of Shakespeare and his early love for Harriet.

In looking, then, for indications of the Berliozian world-outlook in the Mémoires, we can see many things which would fit comfortably into the usual conception of the 'typical' Romantic - energy and enthusiasm in the pursuit of ideals, strong emotions frankly confessed, a love of nature, a scorn of tradition for its own sake, a sense of isolation stemming from superior sensitivity, the pursuit of an ideal love, a vein of poetic nostalgia, and so on. But we also see structure and control, modesty and self-knowledge, concern for the practical realities of life, and a determined awareness of the need to carry the battle for true art into the heart of materialist society rather than shunning the latter. Of course, many of this second group of characteristics could in fact be found in any of the great Romantics; what seems to be peculiar to Berlioz is his combination of what has earlier been dubbed 'lucidité Romantique' with the Stendhalien sense of the precariousness of the lofty ideal or emotion. Sometimes, in the Mémoires, it is as if, to the composer, the world and his place in it seem to have two very different alternative meanings; and moreover that these two ways of understanding the world are, in certain situations (or rather combinations of situation and mood), present in his mind simultaneously. It will be necessary to discuss later in this essay the possibility that Berlioz, in his music, was (at least subconsciously) working towards a synthesis or resolution of these two modes of comprehending the world and the human situation; and it seems appropriate to do so in a final chapter in which the relationship between the content and manner of the Mémoires, and the great musical compositions to which the Mémoires are, in a sense, parallel, will be discussed. First, however (having considered,

together with literary style, the immediate content of the Memoires in terms of character, attitudes, relationships, mood, and the immediate effect on these of particular events) we must attempt to consider the underlying general content of the book in terms of overall themes, musical, political, sociological and historical.

III - References

Style and the man

(1) Vol. II, p. 99
(2) " I, " 41
(3) " I, " 47
(4) " II, " 71
(5) " II, " 254
(6) " I, " 77
(7) " I, " 232
(8) " I, " 230
(9) J.-M. Bailbé: 'Berlioz artiste et écrivain dans les Mémoires' (Rouen 1972) p. 13 (itself a quotation)
(10) Vol. I, p.231
(11) " I, " 235
(12) " I, " 236
(13) " I, " 224
(14) " I, " 227
(15) " I, " 237
(16) " I, " 113
(17) " II, " 199
(18) " I, " 246
(19) " I, " 230
(20) " I, " 173
(21) " I, " 174
(22) " I, " 193
(23) " I, " 210
(24) " II, " 217
(25) J.-M Bailbé ibid. p. 27
(26) Vol. I, p.232
(27) " II, " 298
(28) " II, " 308
(29) " II, " 333
(30) " II, " 321
(31) " I, " 257
(32) Vol. II, p.161
(33) " I, " 251
(34) " I, " 93-4
(35) " I, " 274-5
(36) " II, " 150-1
(37) E.Starkie: Baudelaire, (Faber @ Faber 1957, + Pelican p. b.) Pelican edn. p. 246.
(38) Magazine article on Poe, 1852
(39) Vol. II, p.351
(40) " II, " 71
(41) " II, " 184
(42) Stendhal: 'De l'Amour' chapter II.
(43) Vol. II, p.357
(44) " I, " 218
(45) " I, " 257
(46) " II, " 87
(47) " II, " 305
(48) " II, " 306
(49) " II, " 307
(50) " II, " 305
(51) J-M Bailbé ibid.,p. 20.
(52) Vol. I, p. 48
(53) " I, " 207
(54) " I, " 209
(55) 'Life and Letters in France' ed. Raitt, vol. 4 p. 16.
(56) Vol. II, p.374
(57) " II, " 375

CHAPTER 4

THEMES

Perhaps the most important aspect of the examination of the Mémoires of Berlioz, in the end, is to decide what they are really 'about', in a sense deeper than that implied by simply saying that they tell the story of the composer's life and career. This, of course, they do (albeit not in complete detail or even complete continuity) - but the autobiography as such can perhaps be seen as the least important aspect. Jacques Barzun, in his monumental book Berlioz and the Romantic Century written in 1949, says of the Mémoires that: '--- this unique document --- fulfilled a long-matured purpose intimately connected with his conception of the artist'; and later in the same chapter: '--- whoever delves deeper than the outward 'story' finds both truth and wisdom'. (1) Berlioz, in his own preface, says he has included in the book that of his biography which: 'dans ma vie laborieuse et agitée, me paraît susceptible de quelque intérêt pour les amis de l'art'. And then: 'Cette étude rétrospective me fournira en outre l'occasion de donner des notions exactes sur les difficultés que présente, à notre époque, la carrière des compositeurs, et d'offrir à ceux-ci quelques enseignements utiles'. (2) The life-and-career story is not so much an 'end', then, as the means whereby a number of important themes could be brought to the attention of the reader, whether professional or simply enthusiast, in an acceptable and interesting way.

The Position of the Artist

The numbers of those interested in the arts in Berlioz's day was beginning to enlarge considerably; it no longer consisted almost entirely of nobility and the privileged in general; a new and comparatively large section of the community was becoming noticeably more prosperous and (if only slightly) more educated, and were soon to be the new 'middle-class'; and they were becoming involved in the arts,

whether as audience members or as (usually financial) organisers for the government. Alfred Cobban, in the second volume of his History of Modern France, describes a Prefect of the Seine in the 1850's as having '--- the born philistine's conviction of his own artistic taste'. (3) Despite their ignorance in things artistic (even in areas where they could control the presentation of performances), however, their enthusiasms and dislikes were increasingly an influence to be considered by the dramatist or composer, while increasingly the box-office, or the State loan or prize or other financial decisions, governed his situation in terms of reward granted or witheld. Berlioz wrote from Germany to Heller in 1842, inspired by nostalgia for noble patronage, that: 'il faut convenir que les artistes préfèrent de beaucoup ces directeurs, comtes ou barons, aux industriels qui les exploitent' and added that any literary or musical knowledge was 'encore plus rares chez les directeurs entrepreneurs'. (4) One can in fact sense from the Mémoires that Berlioz's attitude to this situation, wherein the arts in general were reaching a greater proportion of the community, is one of a general moral approval, but one mixed with artistic as well as practical misgivings - an example can be found in the (tenth) letter from Germany in 1842 where he realises that the great Shakespeare whom he so admires was 'appréciable par la masse', but goes on to say that he finds great music of his own time to be 'essentiellement aristocratique'. (5) The fact is, of course, that the new 'freedom' of the musician from direct bondage to a noble family (with a rank perhaps about equal to that of cleaners or kitchen assistants) certainly did not necessarily imply freedom from poverty, misunderstanding or even victimisation. The audience might be wider, but it was also less reliably understanding and supportive, while the administrators were not disposed to 'waste' their money on the arts.

The ironic situation of the Romantic artist, felt no doubt especially by the creators of the performing arts, was

the way the attitudes of the new larger audiences correlated with their own; being largely ignorant of the traditional 'rules' and of formal virtues - and indeed of artistic technique in general - they (the audiences) were naturally more interested in the extent to which their feelings could be directly evoked, or their imagination encouraged by story or picture; while constructional merits and beauties of form counted for more or less nothing in the estimation of the majority. One could perhaps see in this a sort of impatiently exaggerated and distorted principle of Romanticism - but one which must often have led to hasty and premature misjudgements, expressed sometimes by rowdy interruptions of performances.

Berlioz's own fight against bureaucratic muddle created by the artistically ignorant or biased official is evident in many places in the Mémoires. In chapter XX11 for example we read of the farce of the assessment for the Prix de Rome; the candidates are kept virtually prisoners - even having their linen inspected - and are examined partly by non-musicians who join what the writer here calls the 'lyrique aréopage' (!): 'Ils avaient voix délibérative, et se trouvaient là pour juger d'un art qui leur est étranger'. (6) Those candidates whose compositions were for orchestra still had to have their works judged from piano arrangements - presumably as much for economic reasons as for any other reason; this was clearly a severe disadvantage to the (then rare) composer who, like Berlioz, created his music 'in colour' from the start, and whose very harmonic layouts depended on there being more than just two hands and a keyboard. The situation here was caused, of course, at least as much by narrowly conservative formal judgement on the part of the academics as by bureaucratic oppression; Berlioz clearly felt it as being a nightmare alliance of bigot and ignoramus against him. Later, during his second visit to Germany, he writes to H. Ferrand (5th letter) - in fact from Prague - of musical authorities (particularly in Paris) who: 'réunissent à ces indispensables conditions d'ignorance, d'impuissance et d'indifférence, une certaine paresse d'esprit voisine de la stupidité'. (7) - he is

discussing here those who run conservatories of music. In his tenth letter to George Osborne from Darmstadt during his first German visit he says more about the rapport between the arts (we should perhaps say 'performing arts', since he is clearly thinking mainly of his own) and governmental control of money. Writing of 'notre art', he says that while sometimes 'il a des spectateurs fidèles, enthousiastes, intelligents et dévoués', nevertheless 'c'est à Paris qu'il parle trop souvent à des sourds, à des idiots, à des sauvages'. (8) He goes on to imply metaphorically that art is free to flourish as long as it costs little: 'Ici il s'avance et se meut en liberté; là (ie. in Paris*) ses membres nerveux emprisonnésdans les liens gluants de la routine, cette vieille édentée, lui permettent à peine une marche lente et disgracieuse. C'est à Paris qu'on le couronne et qu'on le traite en dieu, pourvu cependant qu'on ne soit tenu d'immoler sur ses autels que de maigres victimes'. (9) Then Berlioz compares the treatment of art with that of 'le frère scrofuleux et adultérin de l'art, le métier', (9) the latter working successfully for wealth, and supporting art only of there is profit to be made from it - this policy making obvious 'sa bourgeoise insolence'. Only a few sentences later the somewhat political angle becomes clearer, where ' --- avec notre forme de gouvernement, plus l'artiste est artiste, et plus il doit souffrir', (9) because financial support depends on the artist not being '---hors de la portée des faibles yeux de la foule'; (9) only the trivial and easily comprehensible can be financed, in other words, since, for it, no time is needed for the audience to achieve comprehension before coming in large numbers. An exception to this situation, he thinks, might be the composer primarily of piano music - not, of course, because his works will necessarily be more easily comprehensible or more popular in style, but because they will be cheaper to publish and to have performed than works written for large orchestra (and maybe a chorus as well). Berlioz recognises that the problem is not confined to

* my bracketed addition.

France, and that the great Beethoven himself could be seen partly as a victim-figure of society, '--- sous combien de Ponce-Pilate ---' as he puts it elsewhere. (10)

Another misfortune often, in Berlioz's time, imposed upon the creator of performance arts (and of course the writer is thinking particularly of music) was the wilful alteration of great works by lesser men trying to 'improve' them, which usually meant trying to make them more acceptable to the inexperienced (and perhaps impatient) majority in the audience. Berlioz was adamant that only the original composer had any right to change a musical work once it was completed, and was angry at the insults (as he saw it) offered to composers present or past by the arbitrary cuts, re-orchestration, even harmonic 'corrections', imposed upon their works, whether through ignorance or for financial considerations. In chapter XV1, for example, we see the musician's criticism of the alterations of Weber's Freischütz by one Castilblaze ('Oh misérable! --- Et l'on donne cinquante coups de fouet à un pauvre matelot pour la moindre insubordination!') (11). In XL1V he talks of Fétis' 'corrections' of Beethoven, which entailed alteration of actual notes: 'Tout ce qui, dans l'harmonie de Beethoven, ne cadrait pas avec la théorie professée par M. Fétis, était changé d'un aplomb incroyable'. (12) On this occasion, Berlioz, officially asked by an editor to check the printed music after Fétis' efforts, apparently managed to persuade the editor to restore the original and to reject the 'crimes' which exasperated him. These and other similar examples in the Mémoires show Berlioz's belief that, in great music, the expressive rightness of 'unorthodox' writing is its justification; he evidently realised that there were cases where 'following the rules' would have resulted in an inferior - because inappropriate - pattern; this being amply demonstrated, as he saw it, by most of the 'corrections' of great works made by persons other than the original composer. This, surely, is not the 'wild Romantic formlessness' mentality credited to the writer of the Mémoires by popular opinion, but something which is very nearly the opposite; the belief that the construction-

and-design aspect of invention must continually be flexible in order adequately to accommodate and underline the artist's thoughts and ideas - patently not analogous to the belief that it can be neglected as unimportant. This is perhaps one way in which Berlioz's Mémoires help us better to understand - and to be ready if necessary to re-estimate - the attitudes of the great Romantics in general.

Advice to younger composers, together with a certain amount of warning, is an almost paternal element which we find in the Mémoires, connected of course with the beliefs and experiences mentioned above. In chapter LV Berlioz tells us how, while in Russia in 1847, he is suspected at first of not being a real musician at all, because of not being able to play any instrument to soloist standard; the misunderstanding he condemns, but realises it implies an attitude of which he approves - the sense of the requirement of real talent for an artistic career to be possible - and it causes him to remember a former interview, in Paris, of an 18-year-old would-be composer who could not read or write a note of music and who had never thought of such a career earlier. He (surely rightly) insists that real musicality is evident much earlier, in the love of listening and in the wanting to perform and to create it (in however childish a sense) when very young. In the same chapter he warns, too, of the shark teachers who will only too readily take large sums of money from the unmusical for inevitably pointless lessons given, while hiding their pupils' non-musicality from them in order to continue to profit financially. Of the young (and rich) un-talented would-be composer mentioned above he says that, discouraged by Berlioz, 'il se retira avec l'intention évidente de chercher un autre maître pour lui offrir sa vocation et --- son héritage. Dieu veuille qu'il ne l'ait pas trouvé!' (13)

Conversely he warns the genuine rising composer (in LIX) of the hardships to be faced in terms of lack of money, and of inadequate performances of their works '--- faute de répétitions qu'on ne peut payer,' (14) and of how local officials can

impose charges for the use of premises, for rehearsal or concert, which will negate much of the earnings from even a successful concert. Elsewhere (in the 'Deuxième Voyage en Allemagne'), in the sixth letter to Humbert Ferrand, he points out that, if financial help is no longer, in France at least, forthcoming from the noble, and is delayed, reduced or diverted when due from administrators because of prejudice or ignorance, then one has increasingly to rely purely on the support of the audiences who come - and the public he calls 'cet être multiple, juste ou injuste, raisonnable ou capricieux, naïf ou capricieux, enthousiaste ou moqueur, si facile à entraîner et si rebelle parfois ---' (15) - in other words totally unpredictable.

It is this same chapter where Berlioz also shows explicitly his precise and extensively knowledgeable opinions on the need to remedy the inadequacies of the musical education of his day, and about what improvements he regarded as urgent. Inspiration was the primary necessity, but it had to imply overall understanding of a precise and realistic kind. After a discussion on the orchestra, in which, for example, he deplores the situation wherein a viola-player was never taught as such, but was always a 'de-moted' violinist; asks for the instituting of classes for the bass-tuba because of an awareness that this contrabass Sax-horn was in process of replacing the old ophicleide; and says that most tympanists he had come across couldn't hold their sticks properly, and had no sense of the subtleties of rhythm (this being one possible reason for the limitations of percussion-scoring up to his day), he goes on to discuss scoring and conducting; his insistence on the need to use a full (rather than reduced or piano) score for the latter is surely a reflection of his refusal to exclude orchestral colour as a basic part of the music. He also wisely warns that a composer is not automatically an ideal conductor, and implies that precise training for directing an orchestra is desirable. In all this, of course, we are glimpsing Berlioz the eminent conductor of his day and lasting authority on orchestration. As for Berlioz the composer,

what is noticeable, here as elsewhere, is that in spite of his own early (and not-so-early) experience of jealous opposition to the progress of his own music, he has no desire to oppose or hinder the progress of those coming after him, and would rather their opportunities were greater rather than smaller than his own. Certainly overall we have no vague, irrational plea for the support of his art based only on emotion, but a knowledgeable and logical argument for what he knew needed to be done if music (especially orchestral music) was to fulfil the possibilities he envisaged. It would seem that Berlioz saw the increasing complication of the problems of being a composer as having two reasons in particular; one was the expansion in the orchestra, not just in size, but in variety of instrumental techniques and thus in expressive powers; the other was the drastically changing social, political and ideological context in which the artist now worked in the world around him, and for which he had to make his works relevant. Berlioz saw that an expansion of the types of teaching, both for the composer and for those who served his music, could cope with the first (as far as his own art was concerned at least). What of the second circumstance and the artist's attitude to it?

Attitude to the World - Politics and Religion

Overall in the Mémoires, politics and religion seem not to play a very great part; nevertheless there are passages and remarks enough to suggest that Berlioz was far from being isolated from the wider practicalities of society, or from its ideals and issues, since they were bound, sooner or later, to affect him in some way as an artist. Early in his life, at a critical time in 1821 just as he is about to start on medical training in Paris, he discovers the Chartists' attempt at revolution in England, and shows his sympathy for 'de bonnes pâtes de révolutionnaires' and his hate of violence - based authority in his reference to 'les canons, ces puissants orateurs, ces grands logiciens dont les arguments irrésistibles pénètrent si profondément dans les masses ---' (16). He continues

with a reference to O'Connell and the (to him) comparable Irish problem. (17) Then, moving out of the time-sequence of autobiography, he refers to his experience of Paris in July 1848; his horror of the killing is evident, as is his realisation that revolution is always confusion rather than following the clarity of 'good against bad': ' --- cette effroyable confusion du juste et de l'injuste, du bien et du mal, du vrai et du faux ---'. (18) In chapter XXV, after a conversation with Boïeldieu in which the latter has criticised him for being too daring in his musical style to win the Prix de Rome for that year (1829), Berlioz turns his thoughts to questioning briefly his own patriotism, realising how illogical are the extremes of patriotic feeling, and mentioning amusingly many of what he sees as the faults of his country, including 'nos sottes agitations politiques' and the way in which 'on y déchire l'univers et son maître avec de jolies dents bien blanches ---'. (19) Later, chapter XX1X shows us Berlioz in 1830, imprisoned once more, that summer, in the Palais de l'Institut in Paris, writing the cantata which was to be at last successful in winning the Prix de Rome, when the July Revolution broke out. The musician's reactions are clearly on the side of the people (although their reactions to success seem to him vulgar; 'O Parisiens! --- farceurs --- gigantesques si l'on vent, mais aussi gigantesques farceurs! ---'.) (20) and as soon as he can he tries to join them: 'Enfin, je fus libre, et je pus sortir et polissonner dans Paris, le pistolet au poing, avec la 'sainte Canaille' * jusqu'au lendemain'. (20) But by now things were nearly all over, and we read, not of Berlioz doing any fighting, but of his account of the pride of the workers in their having captured strategic parts of Paris without succumbing to any temptation to plunder. It was in fact to be several days before he joined a group of young Parisians, and by that time it was his voice and musicianship that was needed, not his revolver. It was a situation in which we perhaps see Berlioz more able to feel

* (Auguste Barbier's expression quoted by Berlioz)

at ease with working-people in the mass than at any other point mentioned in the Mémoires. In the whole of this account, however, one feels (as elsewhere) the dichotomy between the artist's sympathy for the common people and his instinctive feeling of not being genuinely one of them. A little later (just after the quoting of a letter from Rouget de Lisle prompted by the musician's setting of 'La Marseillaise'), he refers to calm being restored in the capital 'tant bien que mal', and of La Fayette persuading the people that Louis-Philippe's bourgeois monarchy would be as good as any republic, saying that ' --- quand le tour fut fait enfin, la machine sociale recommençant à fonctionner ---' (21) the arts could carry on, and his competition cantata heard by the ultra-conservative 'aréopages' of the Académie des beaux arts. His piece, he says, persuaded them of his 'conversion aux saintes doctrines' and got him the coveted first prize - whereupon he burnt it. The tone of this whole passage shows, surely, his sense of the impossibility of any real change in any aspects of the new national situation which could possibly be of benefit to the arts.

In this whole episode Berlioz has shown himself as being more or less forced to consider politics, and as being brought to the realisation that there could be no separation between government attitudes and the future of the arts. The 1830's can probably be seen, as J. Crabbe says in his biography ('Hector Berlioz, rational Romantic', pub. 1980) as the high point of the musician's (mild?) left-wing socialism, since this dwindled soon, in an increasingly commercial society whose voting population (3% of males over 21 according to Crabbe) consisted entirely of wealthy landowners and the new group of successful commercial men. We have already seen that by 1848, Berlioz, in contrast to certain other great artists of his day such as Victor Hugo, was against revolution, since the inevitably ambiguous result even of success made the violence into a useless waste of human life, as he saw it. Not that he had any

enthusiasm for the regime which 1848 was to overthrow either - by the early 1840's he was entirely dissatisfied with the customary treatment of the artist by officialdom. The (10th) letter to Osborne from Germany (1st visit) says it all; the restriction of official routine (' --- cette vieille édentée'), the appearance of bourgeois audiences with the 'deaf idiots and savages' among them, and: 'le frère scrofuleux et adultérin de l'art, le métier ---'. (22) 'Le métier', with its 'bourgeois insolence', although normally ignored and held in contempt by true art, ' --- quelquefois, ô honte! le bâtard importune son frère au point d'obtenir de lui d'incroyables faveurs; ---'. (23) But what is meant by 'le métier' here? D. Cairns has 'Commerce' itself; but could it not mean the popular hack-writer in music, drama or poetry who can steal the (increasingly uncultivated) audiences, working for money with no inspiration. In any case he (Berlioz) goes on to declare that any consent to an alliance with 'le métier' by true art: ' -- c'est l'amour du lucre rapide, immédiat, qui empoisonne ainsi quelquefois des âmes d'élite --'. (24) True art, then, will get little money from the state unless it 'earns' it by attracting wider (but less appreciative) audiences; but it will itself become debased by putting the gain of money as a high priority, since this means always producing works with no challenge to the understanding.

In 1844 Berlioz clashes again with the organisers of industry - and with the governmental Minister for Commerce into the bargain - on the occasion when, with Strauss, he organises an 'exposition musicale' to take place at the end of the Paris Exhibition of Industrial Products of that year, using the same enormous building. At first he criticises the hesitancy of the organisers in their agreeing to the project, only later realising the dangers of mistiming events to the extent of risking the presence of workmen and large machinery in the concert area during the performances; as it turns out he has to tolerate their noisy presence during the final rehearsal (!). The concert was a huge success; but such were the charges involved from police and Exhibition organisers

that Berlioz and Strauss could barely pay the performers, let alone make a profit for themselves. The sarcastic comment is (in Chapter LIII): 'Charmant pays de liberté, où les artistes sont serfs, reçois leurs bénédictions sincères et l'hommage de leur admiration, pour tes lois égales, nobles et libérales!' (25) But things were not over; Berlioz was summoned to police headquarters and accused (erroneously) of including a politically provoking piece of music disapproved of by the Minister of the Interior. It was the point at which the musician realised that censorship was raising its ugly head even in the concert hall.

By as early as the 1840's, then, it could be said that Berlioz had more or less renounced socialism, at least as far as his own activities were concerned, but that he also found the current French alternative, bourgeois capitalism, more or less totally abhorrent. What then is his final attitude? Perhaps it can be seen in his attitude to the monarchs and princes of the European states he visited, and the cultural atmosphere of the society around them. What he saw was in many cases benevolent despotism, of a sort which seemed reasonable because it still cultivated the arts. Cairns says that Berlioz was 'at heart --- a humane aristocrat'; (26) and we can see some justification for such an opinion if we look, for example, at the passage in the 'Suite du voyage en Russie' following chapter LVI, where, in Berlin, the orchestra was always of an irreproachable standard, even though there had been misunderstandings which would have caused a French orchestra to rebel; this presumably convinved him of a discipline and of a genuine wish to appreciate new music, which he did not find in Paris; and he goes on to describe the visits of the Princess to his rehearsals, and the genial interest of the King in his Russian experiences. His response to the King is: 'Vous êtes le vrai roi des artistes', because of the royal support (including financial support) of composers, and of a consistently reliable orchestra which could ' -- splendidement exécuter leurs ouvrages'. (27) Certainly our writer, to the end of his career seemed to receive far

more support and encouragement from foreign nobility than from the French Emperor or his minions. In the 'postface' of the Mémoires we see that it was the Countess Wittgenstein who encouraged Berlioz to tackle the ambitious task of creating the great opera Les Troyens; while the Emperor of France was the one who let him down later by withdrawing his promised support for the first production.

One has, therefore, to admit that however much of a progressive Berlioz was in musical composition, his political attitudes were positively retrograde. He was a man who cared for people in the mass, but could rarely feel one of them, and who abandoned the cause of social revolution, seemingly to turn eventually to the admiration of old-fashioned benevolent despotism. If we can believe that this was at least partly genuine, and not merely because it was from this direction that the best of his own personal support and acclaim often came, then was it not perhaps because he felt (if only partly consciously) that amid what he called ' -- cet être multiple, juste ou injuste, raisonnable ou capricieux' etc. (quoted more fully earlier in this chapter), those who were not yet ready to understand his art (much though he would have wished ultimately to communicate universally through it) were those who were not yet ready to govern themselves? Certainly he believed that music had its own beneficial effect in this area, as we see in one of the public speeches he made; this was at the Rhineland Festival of 1863, and is quoted from (translated into English) by Barzun in the second volume of his 'Berlioz and the Romantic Century': (28) ' -- under the influence of music, the soul is uplifted, the mind broadens, civilization progresses, and national hatreds dwindle' and later in the speech: 'The great poet has told us that

> The man that hath no music in himself
> Nor is not mov'd with concord of sweet sounds
> Is fit for treasons, stratagems and spoils
> ---Let no such man be trusted.'

Berlioz apparently then comments on this abbreviated quotation from the'Merchant of Venice'by saying that although

it might, on the individual level, contain poetic exaggeration ' -- it is much less so as regards nations; one must acknowledge today that where music stops barbarism begins'.

There are further implications to be seen in the above, since it all appears to start, basically, with the idea that, for Berlioz, 'under the influence of music the soul is uplifted', hence the art can effect an enormously wide 'good influence' on those who come to it with genuine appreciation. We are here, surely, almost at the point of view of music as a manifestation of God - or perhaps even a replacement for God. In order to see whether Berlioz's thinking has in fact arrived at such an attitude in the early 1860's, and, if so, how this has happened, we must start from the beginning. We are told of the early religious influences on the writer of the Mémoires, and of his first religious feelings, in chapter 1: 'Je n'ai pas besoin de dire que je fus élevé dans la foi catholique, apostolique et romaine'. (29) He calls it a 'religion charmante'and recalls his First Communion, taken with his sister. Significantly, during this, he admits the connection between his emotions and his hearing of choral singing of 'incomparable beauté'. And already in this first chapter the author admits that religion was a serious influence in his life for no more than a few early years, and always closely linked, in any case, with its musical expression. Later on he can criticise what he sees in the Roman Church; in XL111 he talks of the priest he saw in Florence who seemed to have a 'laconisme extraordinaire', and, in the burial ceremony he was conducting, to have an unfitting 'hâte de finir'. (30)

The influence of Berlioz's father is indicated as growing on him from about his seventh year; his father is described as 'doué d'un esprit libre' and as having 'aucun préjugé social, politique ni religieux', (31) merely acceding to his catholique wife in the matter of his son's religious upbringing rather than having any real attachment of his own to the faith. We must therefore, it seems, assume that especially from the time when his father became the main source of his education, Berlioz begins to abandon traditional rites, and veer towards the

agnosticism associated with this man of 'ineffable bonté'. (32)

The fact that the musical works with religious texts composed later are not traditionally religious in style or feeling is not, of course, necessarily an implication that the pieces have no spiritual quality at all; but both the Requiem of 1837 and the Te Deum of 1849 are felt by many listeners (and performers) to be outside any religious musical tradition. A.E.F. Dickinson, in 'The Music of Berlioz', says of the Requiem that ' -- the traditional framework is being permeated by a new concept -- springing less from pious and pathetic concern for 'rest' and 'light' for the dead than from an uprush of humanity stung to the quick with visions of judgement to come --', (33) and tells us that the Te Deum was approved of by critics from the beginning, and was accepted as ' -- non-liturgical church-music with some military features, but fundamentally for all occupations --' (34). Berlioz's mature music seems in fact to show us what his attitude to people, whether personal friends, officials in the government or peasants in the mass show us in the Mémoires: that, for this musician, if God exists, He is of importance only because of humanity, rather than the reverse; and that humanity itself is by far the greater concern throughout most of his life. We learn, too, from Dickinson in the same account of the Requiem that it was revived by Berlioz in 1850 (with a well-rehearsed orchestra) in aid of the families suffering from the Angiers bridge disaster of that year.

Significant reference to religion comes, of course, near the end of the Mémoires; in chapter LIX, where Berlioz relates the death of both his sister Nanci and of Harriet in 1854, he regards the conventional religious attitude to death as confusion for humanity rather than as comfort: 'Quels non-sens que ces questions de fatalité, de divinité, de libre arbitre, etc. // c'est l'absurde infini; l'entendement humain y tournoie et ne peut que s'y perdre' (35) - this with reference to what no doubt his brief and distant medical background causes him to see as the true mercy of euthanasia for the incurable slow-dying sufferer. The less painful death of his wife

reminds him of their life together, 'pauvres artistes s'aimant, et déchirés l'un par l'autre'; (35) and here it is Shakespeare that he regards as the truly understanding spirit rather than the traditional God of orthodox Christianity ('Dieu est stupide et atroce dans son indifférence infinie; toi seul * es le Dieu bon pour les âmes d'artistes'.) (37) This emotional passage tells us much, finally, about Berlioz's attitude to God and to the traditions of Christianity; clearly he is prepared to accept at least the possibility of the existence of God, but feels that the universality and infiniteness of such a Being, as normally portrayed, implies remoteness, and would be incomprehensible. For Berlioz the artist, it is failure to communicate with the human individual which is the 'stupidity' of any potential inspirational power; the highest inspiration of human origin (represented here by Shakespeare) is capable of reaching the human spirit. For the musician therefore, whether there is a God or not, the communication through traditional religion is a failure; the highest and most valuable perceptions available to Man are, in the end, achieved through art.

Values of the Arts

Art, for Berlioz, is then communicative in an important way; but we have already seen that this does not necessarily mean that, in its highest forms, it could always be immediately and easily communicative to those with no experience among the wider public which was emerging. However, we must not conclude from this that Berlioz believed that the complicated and the esoteric were themselves criteria for great art, any more than we can believe that he disregarded the importance of constructional aspects of music simply because he had rejected some of the traditional forms while altering or expanding others. The question of the relationship between the arts and nature is clearly important in this context, and the musician's attitude to this emerges in several places in the Mémoires. In XXIII, where he is talking to old Pingard, the Paris Institute usher, just before an attempt on the Prix de Rome,

* Shakespeare

there is, one feels, a quite serious implication in Berlioz's joking assertion that the 'natural' merits of the old man (his close affinity with the sea) were more likely to make him a good judge of Berlioz's own music than were the sophisticated but irrelevant qualifications of the sculptors and architects who would in fact judge it. (38) And whereas he will show later (in the 4th letter to Ferrand from Prague in 1846) his horror of the cheap, bad popular music heard in the 'places of pleasure' which he briefly explored in Bohemia, nevertheless in chapter XXXVII, in his account of his experiences in Italy, he mentions the 'refrains agrestes' (39) of the pifferari, heard during his first experience of the 'Italie sauvage', as being a part of that experience, providing him with a 'Liberté vraie, absolue, immense' from the more famous and more civilized (but to him more constricting) artistic side of Italy which he had come officially to investigate. What is more, he is confessedly ready, here, to improvise saltarelli for the local girls to dance to, as he was earlier to improvise simple guitar settings of Homer or Virgil while amid the mountains which inspired them. What can we make of this latter episode where, in chapter XXXVII, he claims to achieve 'le plus incroyable degré d'exaltation' expressed by 'sanglots convulsifs', (40) and where the impressiveness of the natural beauty itself clearly caused him to go into an apparent confusion of thought wherein quotations from Shakespeare, Virgil and Dante became merged, as he temporarily escapes from his problems of life into the experience of the reality of freedom amid nature, which he calls 'le sentiment de l'existence'. (41)

What appears like confusion and contradiction here may perhaps be interpreted as the combining and merging of aspects of great art in a momentary vision of its fundamental connection with natural strength, meaning and beauty - whether it be the 'popular' but subtle greatness of Shakespeare, or the classically controlled inspirations of the ancient Greeks and Romans. The overall picture of the foregoing, therefore, finally emerges, not as a series of contradictions, but as an indication of a

fundamental attitude: that of a great musician of the Romantic era who believed in the essential qualities of nature itself (including human nature and emotion) as the basis of artistic endeavour, while recognising also that workmanship of the highest quality was necessary for its expression - workmanship, whether simple or complicated, appropriate to one's own time. We have already seen that Berlioz elsewhere implies that it is the second-rate artist of his time who was prepared to neglect the necessity of craftmanship merely in order to make things easier for both producer and consumer; such a one would of course be aiming at the gaining of money via amusement, there being no question of communication on a higher level.

We can say, then, that in general there is no deliberate 'ivory tower' element perceivable in Berlioz's attitude which permanently precludes the understanding of the arts by simpler and humbler members of society - it is more a question of the separation caused by the corruptive influence of what the musician sees as a society based on commercial gain and 'organised' by inhuman officialdom. We have seen that in some respects art, for Berlioz, has taken over the rôle of religion in its power to rise above normal attitudes and feelings towards something approaching the infinite or the supernatural, while nevertheless remaining sufficiently natural and human to retain the power of understandable communication to those who will really listen. How, then, does Berlioz see this communication as happening in the case of music, and by what means?

In chapter XLIII of the Mémoires where the writer, talking of his Italian experience, criticises some aspects of the Italian attitude to music as he sees it (for example in the use of the same unchanged tune to convey different emotions, in some works), and it is here that two things in which Berlioz believes emerge: one, that music is capable of portraying human mood rather than merely imitating physically perceivable things; and the other, that music has a 'partie poétique' (42) which will not always accommodate itself to

traditional musical forms as they stand. Interesting also is the fact that here at one point he uses the expression 'cette belle manifestation de la * pensée --' (43) to describe something possible in music which he sees the Italians as tending to neglect. It is surely clear in all this that, by 'communication', one does not mean purely imitation. Indeed when we look outside the Mémoires at the music itself, we can see that for the most part it is not descriptive music in the usual sense at all. Even the relatively early Symphonie Fantastique is not comprehensible as a story if one does not already know the story, whereas it makes perfect sense as a logically constructed work suggestive of certain human emotions, moods and attitudes, whether one knows the story or not. Berlioz's music, then, is not 'programme' music - it is evocative music, representing feelings, moods and atmosphere on the one hand, and creating (or at least encouraging) them in the listener's mind on the other. If further confirmation of this intention is needed from the Mémoires, it can be found, for example, at the end of the 9th letter from Germany (to Desmarest) where he tells of a performance of selections from his Roméo et Juliette in which the contralto soloist, arriving at the words

Où se consume
Le rossignol en longs soupirs!

decided at the performance to make the music imitate the bird, by herself putting in a long trill. The composer's reaction is: 'Oh! Mademoiselle! quelle trahison! et vous avez l'air d'une si bonne personne!' (44) - clearly, for him, the mistake of thinking that the music needed to imitate something mentioned by the words was a blight on her character as much as on her musicianship!

It is often in Berlioz's comments, in the Mémoires, on the three main influences on his artistic outlook - Virgil, Shakespeare and Beethoven - which show us some of his own ideals most clearly. When, for example (in 1838) he is at last free (thanks to Paganini) to tackle a large composition,

* underlining mine

and chooses 'Roméo et Juliette' as a subject, his observations on Shakespeare's work include phrases such as: 'cette grande mer de poésie'; ' -- la folle brise de la fantaisie'; ' -- ce soleil d'amour'; and ' -- le temple de l'art pur'. (45) He approves, then, of the special means of expression which ultimately conveys more than its overt and immediate meaning; he recognises the kind of imagination which is sufficiently original and free from convention to seem like madness to the ignorant and the ultra-conservative; and sees love - love of humanity - as the 'sun' of existence, and a theme in the arts which is 'toujours nouveau' in the sense that it is too permanent and universal to be bound by the tastes or opinions of a particular age. Further, the work is an example in that it rises to a special height of experience, for those who will attempt to follow its meanings to the ultimate, in the 'temple de l'art pur' which no vulgarly popular hack-writer can attempt to reach. As for his <u>own</u> composition based on it - 'Il ne m'appartient pas de décider si j'y suis parvenu' (46) he says modestly, referring to the last point above.

As for Virgil, it is clear from Berlioz's account of his first real response to the Aeneid early in his life, and from the various kinds of appropriateness of the many quotations from it which appear all through the <u>Mémoires</u>, that it was this work which, perhaps more than any other, showed him that the portrayal and study of human nature, emotion, situation and relationships, could be conveyed with universal meaning and great emotive power without any loss of artistic control or perfection of construction.

For Berlioz, Beethoven was clearly the greatest musician of all time; and in his observations on the music of his German predecessor, in the <u>Mémoires</u>, we can see why. In his tenth letter to Osborne he discusses his experience of some of Beethoven's later chamber-music; and of the slow movements in particular his praise involves adjectives like 'transcendante' and 'surhumains', (47) while his observation of the players and the obvious effect on <u>them</u> of the music tells us much about

his own reactions; and if (as has been suggested earlier in this essay) these are in fact the last string quartets from op. 127 onwards, then we can see how certain of Berlioz's ideals concur with what can be seen as those of Beethoven in these works, ideals which can perhaps be listed as follows:

1) The use of ancient ideas if appropriate in a later * age.
2) The achievement of unity without necessarily following the formal traditions of one's own time.
3) The conception of music as capable of conveying a sort of ultimate vision or supreme meditation.
4) The ability to combine, even within a single movement, meditative tranquility, violent emotion, trivial humour or dance - sometimes in astonishingly abrupt alternation - without destroying overall unity. This ability is something of which Berlioz had surely met an equivalent in Shakespeare too, conveying as it does the surprising and the unexpected in the sudden changes of mood and variety of experience in human life itself.

The search for self

The last point above surely brings us back to Berlioz himself - not only to his music but to the Mémoires and their account, for example, of the young musician despairing in love, bound for murder and suicide, and being suddenly diverted from mood and project by feeling hungry.(!) This self-observation, often questioning or critical, and sometimes (as here) ultimately humorous, is not uncommon in the book. In fact, a main function of the Mémoires appears to be, whether consciously deliberate or not on Berlioz's part, self-identification; the process, where it occurs, seems in general to be, if not systematic, certainly honest.

If one looks first at the question of his local identity and his feeling for roots, there seems in general to be comparatively little which is problematic. Berlioz gives us, in the first chapter, the impression that he loves, and identifies with, the area of France in which he was born, and shows us,

* I refer particularly to the use of the Lydian mode in the 'heilige dankgesang' of op. 132.

as we have already seen, his appreciation of natural beauty arising from his early surroundings: 'La Côte Saint-André, son nom l'indique, est bâtie sur le versant d'une colline --- les pics gigantesques des Alpes'. (48)

We have already discussed the influence of his father, whom he praises affectionately in chapter II, and who is associated with his home area as 'bienfaiteur des pauvres et des paysans' and as one who, although very able, even eminent, in his field of work, cared more for the people around him than for fame or riches, and so never moved to Paris. It was also near his birthplace, of course, that Berlioz met the woman (then an 18 year old girl) whom he was to worship from afar for the rest of his life; her importance to him psychologically, as revealed in the Mémoires, must be discussed further. The musician's closeness to his sisters also reflects aspects of his temperament and character, although we have already (in chapter 2) doubted their having any important positive influence (to be seen in the Mémoires, at least). The first mention of Nanci is in Berlioz's second chapter where he says how much it meant to him to be able to take his first communion at the same time as his sister. She, too, was the first in the family to learn of his decision to abandon medicine for music (chapter X); however, the second of the two letters written to Berlioz by Adèle, on the death of their father, seems to suggest that it was his younger sister for whom he had the greater affection - certainly his sensitiveness to her warmth of heart is clear. His sisters give perhaps the earliest indication (together, perhaps, with the early references to Estelle) of what is probably a need in Berlioz for a closer and warmer relationship than that with his mother, whose long-maintained and somewhat bitter opposition to his career must have caused some degree of psychological deprivation. Yet there is, as Cairns says (in his notes to his translation of the Mémoires, p. 655), a complete absence of rancour apparent in the musician's account, which shows the kind of loving relationship of which he was capable.

His marriage (the first and most famous one), with its coincidence of the birth of love for Harriet and enthusiasm for Shakespeare, has been mentioned already. In chapter XVIII there is little suggestion of much more than a coincidence - Berlioz here seems to see a parallel rather than a merging. It is much later that he shows that he has clearly realised what has been happening in his mind; in chapter LIX he talks of his 'deux grands amours', saying that his love for Harriet and his discovery of Shakespeare were 'une passion cruelle, acharnée, où se confondaient, en se renforçant l'un par l'autre, l'amour pour la grande artiste et l'amour d'un grand art'. (49) (We notice here that he does not therefore see his love as an illusion or as an aberration created by circumstance). The expression 'se confondaient' is of course important in its implication, not of confusion, but of corresponding elements in an overall psychological attitude. First there is surely the value of the interpreter in artistic communication - Harriet by her acting showed Berlioz something of Shakespeare at a time when his understanding of English was minimal, and he must have seen the bard more clearly through her perception once he became close to her, thus increasing both his own artistic understanding and the bond with the beloved. Certainly it is clear, at the point in the Mémoires where Berlioz looks back over his (now past) life with Harriet (in LIX), that it was her subsequent failure as an interpreter (due to her injury as much as to popular apathy in France for Shakespeare) which caused 'nos déchirements intérieurs'. (50) Secondly there is the musician's increasing belief that love and artistic endeavour were the two great worthwhile things in life, connected as they were via the love of (and hence desire to communicate with) humanity in general - as he says himself later with reference to his music and his love of Estelle: 'Pourquoi séparer l'un de l'autre?'. (51) In this much later chapter, too, he seems to see more natural inevitability in the union of two artists who have met under the aegis of the artists' God, Shakespeare.

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of Berlioz's relationships

with other individuals is his attitude to his first love, and the permanence of its importance to him. That he should fall violently in love, at the age of twelve, with an older girl is not exactly unusual. That he should continue, even after marriage to another, to remember his first love as a precious experience, is by no means an uncommon male attitude. But that Berlioz should appear to regard that love as a continuing reality, and try, later in life, to seek the original loved-one and, with as much fervour as in early days, to establish a relationship with her, suggests that the lady concerned possessed qualities which for him represented certain special elements of human experience.

In chapter III Berlioz admits that initially it was Estelle's name which attracted him because of its connection with Florian's story of Estelle and Némorin; and he does not hide the fact that some of his early reactions to the young lady's physical presence were due as much to her 'brodequins roses' as to her eyes; (52) in general he shows himself, in other words, as a shy and naïve twelve-year-old. He nevertheless insists, however, on the intensity of his feelings, in terms such as 'secousse électrique', 'vertige', and 'douleur profonde', and says that he was a boy 'brisé par un amour au-dessus de ses forces'. (53) Here, typically, Berlioz shows an honest willingness to laugh at himself or to reveal the laughter of others; apart from admitting that everyone nearby, including Estelle herself, found his reactions to her amusing, he also tells of his jealous feelings as his uncle danced with her - still wearing his clanking spurs, (as previously mentioned in this essay) which the youngster found an additional grievance rather than an incongruity ('J'entends encore en frémissant le bruit des éperons ---').

Sexuality, as we have already hinted, could clearly have counted (consciously at least) for little; there was no hope of a union of any kind at any time; and yet Estelle was precious enough for little Hector to be jealous if any man showed an interest in her: 'La jalousie, cette pâle compagne des plus pures amours, me torturait au moindre mot adressé par

un homme à mon idole'. Her beauty in a general sense he connected with nature (' -- l'hamadryade du Saint-Eynard '), (54) but her eyes perhaps suggested to him, 'armés en guerre' as they were in his imagination, that she could always resist any kind of domination, and never be brought to nothing. She seemed, too, to have more natural understanding of social behaviour, and of relationship with the innocent, than Berlioz's own mother; the girl's laughter while offering to dance with the youngster may have had some accidental cruelty, but it is not presented as containing the sarcasm of his mother's remark, on his second encounter with his idol, that 'Némorin n'a point oublié son Estelle' - a remark of which the main irony lies in the possessive adjective, and of which Berlioz writes at the end of chapter III: 'Son Estelle! méchante mère! ---'. (55)

In chapter LVIII we find the memory of Estelle provoking in Berlioz a very emotional state of mind as, visiting his native district in order to see his sisters after the death of their father, he wanders near to the house where the adored one used to live with her sister and grandmother. Remembering particular events, he says: ' -- Oui, je vois, je revois, j'adore --- le passé m'est présent ---', and describes his first love as 'l'infini poème'. (56) His reaction is to throw himself down with his face to the ground she once walked on. He remembers not only some of the physical context provided by nature such as 'ce buisson de ronces' where 'elle s'est penchée pour cueillir des mûres sauvages', (57) but also his 'niaiserie du sentimentalisme enfant', (58) by which he means not so much his love itself as his decision at age 12 to write an opera about Florian's Estelle which he would dedicate to her namesake. At one point Berlioz finds still surviving 'un plant de pois roses dont elle a cueilli des fleurs'; (59) these flowers are for him a sign of 'Eternelle nature' - then he says: 'chère plante, reste et fleuris toujours --- sois-y l'emblème de cette partie de mon âme que j'y ai laissée et qui l'habitera tant que je vivrai!' (60) This seems to be a declaration of

loyalty not only to the early passion for Estelle, but also to precious qualities in his childhood life which he feels to have been in danger of being lost or suffocated since, and for which he has found a sort of symbolic place where they can survive. When in Grenoble shortly afterwards, struggling to laugh, with his cousin Victor, at his recent strange mood, the composer admits that his own laughs were 'désolés comme les rayons de soleil d'avril à travers la pluie --'; (61) and then: 'Oui, c'est absurde, je le sens, et pourtant cela est --- c'est absurde, et c'est vrai --- c'est puéril et immense' (62) - surely a moment of essential self-realisation is evident in this defensive statement to his cousin; his emotions, he sees, are genuine although illogical, of great importance to him in spite of their initial immaturity. Estelle, it seems, unconsciously revealed to the boy concepts and ideals which his mother could never have shown him: the importance of the connection between love and nature, the value and intensity of the perception of beauty, and the experience of self-dedication un-prompted by logical reason or by thoughts of result or reward. These things came to him in a sense too early, and yet, for the artist he was to be, and considering his future long struggle against the philistinism, materialism and shallowness which he found in society, it could be said that he needed to absorb their truth in a natural, instinctive way which might have been impossible later, and that he needed also to remain sensitive to someone in the world who would remind him of these ideals by being (however unconsciously) an unceasing symbol of them.

In a letter written to Estelle after he has met her again later in life, and when (towards the end of 1864) his state of mind having been near to accepting artistic defeat, his frustrations have been eased at last by this contact with her, he writes: 'Ne me prenez pas pour un homme bizarre qui est le jouet de son imagination'; and later: 'Je vous ai aimée, je vous aime, je vous aimerai, et j'ai soixante et un ans, et je connais le monde et n'ai pas une illusion'. (63) At the end of the letter he talks of 'une affection si complète, où se

confondront les sentiments de l'homme et les naïves effusions de coeur de l'enfant'. (64) The first of these quotations shows the idea of the consistency of love in the face of any opposition which society can provide - and we know that by now there is a close connection in Berlioz's mind (via the desire for profound human communication) between love and high artistic endeavour. We may incidentally remember here the earlier mention of Estelle's eyes as first seen by the boy: 'de grands yeux armés en guerre, bien que toujours souriants' - perhaps a detail which has become unconsciously a symbol of determination in the face of threat. The second quotation shows perhaps something of the feeling of a child for an adored mother. It is not impossible that somewhere deep in the musician's mind his first love is connected, too, with a concept of the ideal mother. Certainly his roots and his very identity he feels as closely connected with this first adoration, which has helped him throughout his life towards a clear retention of his own character and an uncorrupted vision of his aims and ideals albeit in an abstract and general way. We feel, then, that Estelle, though not herself any kind of artist, and perhaps knowing almost nothing about music, symbolises for Berlioz artistic ideals of genuineness, naturalness and invariable truth; and we remember again 'les deux ailes de l'âme', (65) and their connection in the Romantic view as being the two greatest means of deep and true communication between human beings.

Perhaps it would not be wrong to find also in these last pages of the Mémoires a suggestion of a 'finding' or 'arriving' such as is represented by Voltaire's final picture of Candide's marriage to Cunégonde; the fight for ideals, for communication via great art is almost over, the battle perhaps lost or at least abandoned; what is left is simpler, less spectacular, less taxing, but has itself a real value which is a compensation, if only an incomplete one, for the battle of the artist's life. If there is more intrinsic sadness in Berlioz, it is surely because there is less irony, more continued faith in what has gone before, and so more of a sense of the things he no longer has the strength or the time to do.

IV - References

Themes

(1) Barzun Vol. II ch. 20
(2) Vol. I, p. 39
(3) Cobban Hist. of MF Vol.2 (paperback) p. 168
(4) Vol. II, p.223
(5) " II, p.153
(6) " I, " 148
(7) " II, " 226
(8) " II, " 150
(9) " II, " 151
(10) " II, " 195
(11) " I, " 118
(12) " I, " 228
(13) " II, " 263
(14) " II, " 317
(15) " II, " 241
(16) " I, " 57
(17) " I, " 58
(18) " I, " 58 - 9
(19) " I, " 166
(20) " I, " 175 - 6
(21) " I, " 179
(22) " II, " 151
(23) " II, " 151
(24) " II, " 151
(25) " II, " 179
(26) Cairns' trans.
(27) Vol. II, p.283
(28) Barzun, II, p. 238
(29) Vol. I, p. 41
(30) " I, " 273
(31) " I, " 42
(32) " I, " 46
(33) Dickinson p. 100 (ch.6)
(34) Ibid p. 101.
(35) Vol. II, p. 306
(36) " II, " 307
(37) " II, " 307
(38) " I, " 154
(39) " I, " 232
(40) " I, " 230
(41) " I, " 230
(42) " I, " 276
(43) " I, " 277
(44) " II, " 149
(45) " II, " 35
(46) " II, " 35
(47) " II, " 155
(48) " I, " 41
(49) " II, " 311
(50) " II, " 307
(51) " II, " 375
(52) " I, " 49
(53) " I, " 48
(54) " I, " 49
(55) " I, " 49
(56) " II, " 301
(57) " II, " 301
(58) " II, " 301
(59) " II, " 301
(60) " II, " 301
(61) " II, " 302
(62) " II, " 303
(63) " II, " 363
(64) " II, " 364
(65) " II, " 375

CHAPTER 5

THE MÉMOIRES AND THE MUSIC

Berlioz being after all primarily a composer rather than a writer, it would seem necessary finally to try to relate what we find in the Mémoires to the music itself. This attempt will take two main directions; one, the actual information about the music found in the book; the other, the perceivable parallels between the characteristics of the prose-writing and the attitudes reflected therein, and those to be found in the musical compositions.

There is a significant amount of information, in the Mémoires, on Berlioz's attitude to certain other composers, showing the limitations of his own outlook in some directions; limitations causing him, for example, to deny the name of 'art' to the music of several earlier famous musicians. In XXIX he praises the unaccompanied choir of the Sistine Chapel in Rome for being free from what seems to him to be a vulgar and typically Italian dependance on impressive noise-production in order to impress the listener. The Palestrina he hears is pure and calm, and ' -- n'est pas sans charme'; but '-- on peut admettre que le goût et une certaine science aient guidé le musicien---; mais le génie! allons donc, c'est une plaisanterie'. (1) Berlioz seems to see, in particular, too little difference in style between Palestrina's secular and religious compositions to allow one to believe in a genuinely religious intention in the latter. Those who think there is, he says, 's'abusent étrangement. Ils ne connaissent pas, sans doute, ses madrigaux'. (2) The French composer is here asserting what for him is the impossibility of genuinely expressing both frivolous gallantry and holy saintliness with music of the same basic character. Of Palestrina he says: 'Il ne savait pas faire d'autre musique, voilà la vérité;---'. (3) For Berlioz, formal perfection is not a proof of inspiration - and we see here also the reflection of his own sense of the importance of varied expression in

music to underline different attitudes, character, mood or situation, whether these are embodied in a text to be set or simply imagined by the composer. Is there not here also more than a hint of the writer's increasing mistrust of the remote and (for him) uncommunicative language for worship of the traditional God?

In the ninth letter on the subject of Berlioz's first visit to Germany in 1841-2 (he writes to Desmaret from Berlin), his remarks on hearing the Bach St. Matthew Passion suggest, even allowing for his acute awareness of the inadequacy of the performance, no very great sympathy for Bach's genius. In North Germany, he says, 'on adore Bach, on croit en lui, sans supposer un instant que sa divinité puisse jamais être mise en question; --- Bach, c'est Bach comme Dieu c'est Dieu.' (4) This surely reflects Berlioz's suspicion of unquestioning faith as well as his remoteness from the Bach musical ethos.

Even Mozart appears in the Mémoires to be a composer whose genius became fully clear to the French musician only later in the latter's career. In chapter XVII he admits in retrospect to what he calls 'ma tiédeur pour l'auteur de 'Don Juan',' and talks of a particular soprano aria in which he finds 'une déplorable vocalise'; (5) and it is here that he admits that he was fully drawn only later to Mozart's music. It is interesting to compare the passage with a later one in the first letter (to Hambert) of the second German visit of 1846, where the 'Magic Flute' overture is extolled, and where Mozart can now stand comparison with Gluck and even with Beethoven.

Perhaps the only similarity between all three of the earlier composers mentioned is the fact that for the most part they are all content to take an idiom as they find it, and use it all their lives with little or no attempt to change it fundamentally or to break from it completely, since its basic characteristics suited what they had to say in music. This is perhaps less true of Mozart than of the earlier two, since Mozart's later music shows, if not the enlargements of,

or breaking away from, traditional basic structures, as is found in Beethoven, certainly a reaching-forward to an expressiveness and a portrayal of atmosphere or emotion in purely musical terms - even including orchestral colour, albeit within the limits of the orchestra of the time. These tendencies, although of course in some ways most noticeable in Mozart's operas, can also be seen in much of the later purely instrumental music; one thinks first perhaps of the famous G minor symphony (no. 40), of the F minor slow movement in the piano concerto in A, K.488, or of the 'disallowed' harmonic clashes in the slow introduction to the first movement of the C major string quartet K.465. (Berlioz says, in the passage in chapter XVII already mentioned, that 'les beautés merveilleuses de ses quatuors' (6) were among the influences which raised his opinion of the earlier Austrian composer). Such things must have seemed more like real communication to the Berlioz that we know from the Mémoires, and more progressive, than what he found in the music of J.S.Bach or Palestrina.

Gluck has already been mentioned as an important influence; the French composer's attitude to his music, from the early reading of the scores onwards, was of course one of continuous admiration and growing understanding. Gluck was, musically, French in outlook, and was already beginning to break away from the classical tradition of immobile recitative followed by formal da capo aria, because of his respect for the drama itself; and was also aware of the importance of the orchestra, however much he saw it as subsidiary to plot and character. In fact A.E.F. Dickinson, in the second chapter of his book on the music of Berlioz, tells us that what he * discovered in Gluck was 'chiefly his revelation of the power of the orchestra to make itself indispensible in scene after scene', although 'his carelessness over scoring detail --- did not go unheeded by his successor'. (7) In chapter XIV of the Mémoires we find Gluck's simplicity and dramatic sincerity contrasted with the 'cynisme mélodique' and the 'mépris de

* Berlioz

l'expression' (8) of Rossini, while in the next chapter Berlioz is furious about the alterations currently made to Gluck's orchestral parts, which he regards as dramatically effective - in chapter XXII he mentions an oboe passage in 'Iphigénie en Aulide', for example, which could not be reduced to piano and remain meaningful; in his own words the 'effet poignant' of so underlining words referring to 'Le cri plaintif de la nature', in the piano version 'vous donnera un son de clochette et rien de plus'. (9)

The attitude of Berlioz to the music of Weber is also apparent in the Mémoires, as (more indirectly) is the nature of the relationship of his own music to it. The influence here seems indeed almost as important as that of Beethoven or Glück, since it involves dramatic expression and orchestral colour - two aspects of which the future possibilities must have been suggested most clearly by the composer of 'Der Freischütz'. This opera was put on - badly sung and in a heavily distorted version according to Berlioz - at the Odéon in Paris in December 1824; Berlioz tells us (in chapter XVI) that he went to all the performances and soon knew this mutilated version by heart. He admits that he had originally been rather put off seeing it by what he calls his 'culte intolérant' (10) of classical bias (caused no doubt by the training he had received), but says that now the qualities of this opera 'me causa des surprises et des ravissements extrêmes malgré l'exécution incomplète ou grossière---'. (11) His metaphorical picture here of the nature of this new operatic style was of a score full of 'un arôme sauvage dont la délicieuse fraîcheur m'enivrait'; (12) a little later in the same chapter he is more specific at the point where he links its qualities with those of the later 'Oberon'. Weber's opera, he says, is 'l'ennemi des formules', and has a 'poésie -- pleine de mouvement, de passion et de contrastes'; in it, 'le surnaturel y amène des effets étranges et violents'. (13) The characters are, he says, made compelling by 'la peinture de leurs sentiments, le tableau de leurs moeurs', even though

(in the case of Der Freischütz at least) they give rise to a style removed from the heights of the classical tradition through being 'prise dans la vie commune'. (14) With specific reference to 'Oberon' he speaks of 'le rythme imprévu ' and of 'une grande vivacité d'imagination'. (15) He sees this music, then, as capable, through its relatively untrammelled style and form, and its imaginative orchestration, of underlining character, emotion and situation in a vivid and psychologically convincing way, and being able to cope with violent contrast in those areas, even including a sudden change from a friendly down-to-earth reality to the menacing supernatural. These very qualities can surely be seen in Berlioz's own greatest work, the opera 'Les Troyens', where a city is destroyed as the unexpected result of a supposedly friendly gift, and where a violent storm gives way to the emergence of great individual love - which itself is soon to be severed by pre-ordained (and supernaturally represented) destiny. In our writer-musician's description of Weber's music there is significance beyond superficial metaphor in the very terms used here: 'poésie', 'peinture', 'arôme', 'tableau', which seem more like an indication of his sense of a 'correspondance' between the arts, in which he surely sees music as an ideal participator with its absence of restriction to a narrowly specific meaning, and its new flexibility of expression.

The fifth letter (to Ernst) from Dresden, written during the first visit to Germany, contains some of Berlioz's reactions to the earlier operas of Wagner. Clearly the idea of the composer's writing of his own libretti for operas (where he has sufficient literary skill), for the sake of artistic unity, is approved of by the French musician, who recognises Wagner's ability in this respect, since, as he remarks: 'il faut convenir que les hommes capables d'accomplir deux fois avec succès ce double travail littéraire et musical ne sont pas communs, et que M. Wagner donnait une preuve de capacité plus que suffisante pour attirer sur lui l'attention

et l'intérêt'. (16) The music of 'The Flying Dutchman' Berlioz finds 'remarquable par son coloris sombre et certains effets orageux parfaitement motivés par le sujet', (17) but accuses its composer of a certain laziness in over-doing the use of tremolo, a trait he had already noticed in 'Rienzi', and which 'est de tous les effets de l'orchestre celui dont on se lasse le plus vite'. (18) Nevertheless Wagner is seen here as 'un jeune artiste doué de précieuses facultés.' (19) It seems, then, that in Dresden at this time the possibility of an important German opera composer who would pursue Berlioz's own ideal of unity between text and music (albeit with very different results) had already become apparent to him - one whose orchestration, impressive and appropriate as it was, would be 'darker' than his own (and, perhaps one could say, fundamentally less original).

To be able to express in an appropriate and effective manner that which is relevant to future ages, but especially communicative with one's own, was clearly important for a musician who, from early in his career, disliked and despised the works of those who seemed content to repeat what had already been said in music, and who did so in a language restricted by tradition. For Berlioz they included some of those who had preceded him in winning the Italian prize - and even some of their (and his) teachers. Reicha himself, in many ways respected by his most famous pupil, is criticised in chapter XIII of the Mémoires for including fugues at certain points in his religious works simply because (as Reicha seems to have admitted) that was what 'everyone did'. Our author's own comment is succinct: 'Miséria!'. (20) However, his attitude was, of course, a disadvantage as regards his own chances of winning the grand prix de Rome; as he says in his letter of the 29th November 1827 to Ferrand from Paris: 'Mon grand crime, aux yeux de ce vieil et froid classique --- est de chercher à faire du neuf'. (21) (Apparently the 'ancient classic' concerned was one of his teachers, a Monsieur Berton, who had maintained that his recent submission

was unplayable - unplayable, that is, on the piano, for which of course the composition had never been intended). Berlioz's final defiance in this respect was the cantata 'La Mort de Cléopatre', which failed to win the competition in 1827, since its imprudent daring showed to the full his growing dramatic sense and awareness of the expressive powers of the orchestra. Towards the end of its main section for soprano solo, low trombone chords with changing harmonies indicate the depths of despair into which the protagonist has sunk; then, soon afterwards, beyond the point where a stabbing sforzando on upper strings portrays the striking of the asp, there is a truly extraordinary passage in which the music becomes discontinuous and fragmented, in orchestral sound and voice-part alike; Cleopatra's world disintegrates. Although it has to be admitted that the most obvious portrayal here is of the physical weakness and gasping for breath of the queen (she is after all dying of blood-poisoning), it is still true that the overwhelming final impression of the passage in question is one of isolation, discontinuity and meaninglessness in the world as Cleopatra now sees it. The composer can certainly be 'accused' of '---faire du neuf--' here - it is very nearly a glimpse of the absurd; we have to wait for Alban Berg's 'Wozzek' before we find anything quite like it outside the works of Berlioz. Small wonder that this composition failed to win the coveted prize - the establishment must have been thoroughly disconcerted by it.

The work with which Berlioz finally won the right, a year later, to go to Italy, was one which he himself clearly regarded as worthless, since in chapter XXIX of the Mémoires he refers to it as 'un morceau que j'ai brûlé depuis lors', (22) and is scathingly ironic about the 'deux aréopages' who were impressed by it 'ayant reconnu ma conversion aux saintes doctrines'. (23) Clearly the winning cantata was deliberately written in an imitative and (for Berlioz) archaic style; he had at last followed the resolution he had made (but not then acted upon) after the 1827 failure, a resolution expressed,

in the letter to Ferrand already mentioned, as follows: '--- je prodiguerai les redondances, puisque ce sont là les formes auxquelles les grands maîtres se sont soumis, et qu'il ne faut pas faire mieux que les grands maîtres---' (24) The coldness of this particular winner's reception of the famed prize surely reflects a certain feeling of guilt for having perpetrated it after his achievement in 'La Mort de Cléopatre': '--- je ressentis peu de joie --- à me voir si froid, on eût dit que j'étais l'académicien ---'. (25)

Berlioz, then was convinced from the first that technical knowledge and clarity of purpose and structure, while important and indeed indispensible, should never be such as to restrict the wider expression of mood, atmosphere and so on, which would bring music into the Romantic era in parallel with the other arts. It would seem clear, as much from the Mémoires as from the music, that this attitude is closely linked with the fact that our writer-composer became a great orchestrator. A.E.F. Dickinson, in chapter 14 of his book 'The Music of Berlioz' (published by Faber in 1972) says that 'Berlioz's way of writing for orchestra was positively new'. (26) More interesting from the point of view of the Mémoires, perhaps, is the critic's statement at the end of the chapter that the composer's striking melody, often extended and rhythmically subtle, his sometimes un-traditional use of what is basically fairly traditional harmony, and particularly his orchestral virtuosity, are: 'presented as translations of a literary text or scene imagined or acted, from a full operatic libretto down to a programme-note or mere title'. (27) Having admitted the possible over-familiarity of these things for a modern audience, the writer adds that in Berlioz's music the poetic and the 'fanciful or dramatic' has enough truth and depth to 'convey a psychological burden that swings from the thought of a century ago to today's concern'. (28) The importance to this composer of appropriate instrumentation in the achievement of potent psychological suggestion was for him (and perhaps for the first time in musical history) at least equal with all other aspects of the technique of

composition. We have already briefly considered Mozart and Weber as (perceptibly in the Mémoires) the predecessors in this - but they do not seem to have found the same urgent need greatly to expand or renovate the orchestra of their respective eras.

There is much to be gleaned from the Mémoires on the question of Berlioz's preoccupation with the make-up of the orchestra, in terms of the sound-quality of the individual instruments as well as of their technique, especially from the beginning of his account of the first visit to Germany onwards. In the fifth letter from Germany during the earlier visit, we find for example a fairly detailed treatment of recent advances in harp technique, in the passage beginning: 'J'ai fait la connaissance, à Dresde, du prodigieux harpiste anglais Parish-Alvars---'. (29) Less peripheral is his consideration of the french horn, of which the valved version (as distinct from the natural instrument) was at that time becoming increasingly accepted by players. It is discussed in the seventh letter where Berlioz observes that 'plusieurs compositeurs se montrent hostiles au cor à cylindres', (30) but shows that he himself has studied both technique and tone-quality of the instrument, and has no objection to the newer development provided that valved notes are not used in places in the music where hand-stopped tone is more appropriate. To this end, horn-players, he says, 'doivent savoir se servir de la main dans le pavillon --'; and composers 'devront dorénavant indiquer dans leurs partitions, par un signe quelconque, celles des notes des parties de cor qui doivent être faites 'bouchées'' --- (31) The valved trumpet is then discussed, with the recognition that here the question of hand-stopping is not involved. This is in fact the start of a discussion of the complete brass section (including the new bass-tuba, recently invented by Adolphe Sax to replace the wooden ophicleide) and the acoustic effect of combinations of certain of its members. Comments then follow (for Mlle Bertin's benefit) on the tympani, comments which show an awareness of the severe

shortcomings of the percussion department of the usual contemporary orchestra, both in quality of instruments and ability of players. Berlioz's final remark on this situation is that 'ce défaut tient évidemment à la manière d'écrire des compositeurs, qui, n'ayant jamais rien demandé d'important à ces instruments, sont cause que leurs successeurs, qui écrivent d'une autre façon, n'en peuvent presque rien obtenir'. (32) This shows, as do the remarks on the orchestral horn, Berlioz's consciousness of the responsibility of the composer in the development of a greater capacity for variety of tone-colour in the orchestra of his day.

The fifth letter from Germany on the second visit, written to Hambert, shows us, in the section on the training of instrumentalists, the writer's knowledge of, and concern for, the string section; he recommends the thorough teaching of the wider aspects of technique (pizzicato, harmonics, cross-string spiccato etc.) and criticises the situation whereby the viola was never itself the subject of instrumental teaching, because it was always played by 'des violonistes de seconde ou de troisième force' (33) who were obliged, by their inferior technical ability, to transfer to a section of the orchestra which was, at the time, still too often confined to the playing of what Berlioz calls 'parties de remplissage'. (34) He is clearly aware, here, of the individual tone-colour of the lower-pitched instrument, which he believes to be deserving of parts with 'un intérêt relatif aux effets qu'il s'agit de produire'. (35)

Interest in the woodwind is apparent, a little later in the same passage, in a discussion of the various members of the clarinet family - including even the recently invented saxophone which was provisionally associated with them. (Of the latter Berlioz's judgement is, for once, in error; he maintains that 'le moment n'est pas éloigné où tous les compositeurs voudront l'employer', (36) whereas it has taken twentieth-century jazz to vindicate his conviction of the value of its superior flexibility and its expressive powers).

All this interest in instrumentation surely goes beyond mere technology, and shows us a combination of the two sides of the Berlioz we meet elsewhere in the Mémoires - the advocate of spontaneous and imaginative expressiveness, and the practical and sometimes humourously ironic realist who faces problems ranging from the political or financial to the minutely technical. If we seek for confirmation that Berlioz shows, in the above context, his care for humanity and his sense of humour, we can compare the relevant passages in the Mémoires with those in the 'Soirées de l'Orchestre', where the portrayal of semi-imaginary situations shows an acquaintance with the situation of the individual orchestral player, whose (usual) obedience in playing whatever is set before him does not hide his awareness of the inferiority and triviality of much of it, nor prevent his giving of his best when he senses understanding and inspiration on the part of conductor and composer respectively. The 'Third Evening' chapter from the 'Soirées de l'Orchestre', for example, consists of only a few lines, since the work being performed is 'Der Freischütz', this precluding any conversation between the players, who are responding to its demands with concentration and enthusiasm. (The end of the chapter introduces a humorous episode in which, in the next chapter, a grocer's assistant, having died early from over-eating and drinking, has his skeleton used in a supernatural scene of the Weber opera, in spite of the man's hostility to the composer's music while alive). It could be said that while Berlioz's idealism rarely permitted him to modify or reduce the orchestration of his compositions for economic or practical reasons, he was always aware that, since his was a performing art, the human strengths and weaknesses of those who presented it to the world for him had always to be sympathetically considered.

At the end of his chapter on the composer's character in the 1982 'Master Musicians' volume on Berlioz, Hugh Macdonald talks of 'the intimate connection between life and music that

is evident in everything he wrote'. (37) This is possibly true more for Berlioz than for many another composer; one might therefore hope to find in the Mémoires evidence of certain elements in his life and character which correspond to the qualities of his music. The first of these elements to be considered is the desire for freedom and independence; we have already seen this characteristic as it appears, for example, in the initial temporary alienation of his family when he renounced medicine for composition; and then later in the fairly constant rejection he experienced from the traditionalist organisers of the musical world in Paris (resulting most importantly in the discouragement from his doing as much composition as he would have liked in the form of opera, because of the unlikelihood of its performance). This latter situation is of course due to the fact that Berlioz, as we have already seen, regarded the conforming to the limitations of previous tradition for its own sake, or the composition of trivial music merely for the sake of financial success, as laziness and artistic dishonesty. (Financial success was, of course, only very intermittently and inadequately forthcoming for him, since his artistic ideals did not usually correspond with the expectations of relevant government departments either). Berlioz's freedom as a composer can be seen significantly in his rejection of traditional barriers between the genres; the 'Roméo et Juliette' symphony has a number of important vocal sections, the only precedent at that time being of course the finale of Beethoven's ninth symphony, which writers on music accept as an influence; clearly, however, Berlioz has taken the idea of a vocal or semi-vocal symphony much further, and in an original manner. That the work is truly dramatic in its portrayal of the Shakespeare play (Garrick's version of the plot portrayed in French by the verses of Deschamps) is beyond doubt, with the orchestra becoming vividly suggestive, even descriptive, of situation and emotion in the central parts; however, it is impossible to regard it as resembling

opera, since certain key scenes are given by the orchestra alone (eg. love scene and death scene), while only one soloist represents a Shakespeare character (the bass, Friar Lawrence), the other two simply sharing the narrative element with the chorus. Nearer to actual opera, but described by Berlioz as an 'opéra de concert', is the Damnation de Faust of the 1840's; this equally dramatic music has character-soloists, so that although originally created as a concert work, it has been found susceptible of conversion into actual opera. It seems more natural as a concert-work, however; the critic John Warrack has said (as quoted in the accompanying book to the Philips recording): 'the pace is different *, the arena impalpable and too varied, the dramatic logic not that of the theatre but of a listener with an imagination able to free itself from physical surroundings ---' (38) Later he observes that the fluidity of its (sometimes rapid) transitions gives it something of the nature of a dream. These two musical works, then, defy pigeonholing into a traditional category; the second of them has also another connection with the Mémoires in that the character of Faust can be seen as partly autobiographical, representing some of the aspects of the composer's life which we see in the prose-work: seemingly hopeless love, idealism at risk, isolation, love of nature and so on.

The other important aspect of Berlioz's musical search for freedom seems to lie in the expansion and new and original uses of the orchestra itself; quite apart from the aspects of this already discussed, there is the composer's facing of problems created by the practical difficulties of finding players required (sometimes in large numbers) for the performance of a particular work. The Mémoires show us that this composer would very rarely compromise in terms of the replacement of an instrument by another for which a player was more readily available, or by the reduction of numbers required in a particular section - this attitude resulting in the cancellation of more than one concert containing his

* ie. from that of opera

music, and sometimes in the draining of Berlioz's personal finances because of the absence of funding from elsewhere; neither Conservatoire pundits nor politicians nor the majority in the audiences were capable of envisaging the advances in purposeful effectiveness and in thematic/psychological relevance of orchestral sound which were taking place. We are told, for example, in chapter XXVI, of the projected performance at the Théâtre des Nouveautés of the recently composed Symphonie Fantastique, and of how it failed to take place because the management ' --- ne savaient pas qu'il fallait tant de choses pour une symphonie' (39) and could (or would) not organise the seating for the number of players engaged. That was in 1830; ten years later the situation was sometimes scarcely any better - the large 'festival' concert (containing among other things the Requiem) at the Opéra was beset by conspiracies, as we learn in chapter LI, designed to cause disruption, first in the orchestra and then in the audience. The first failed, because of the loyalty of the players, while the second had a moderate success in that the Marseillaise broke briefly into the programme; in the end the extra costs involved meant that Berlioz contributed 360fr. of his own instead of receiving a promised 500fr. from the director. 'Voilà comme on s'enrichit!' (40) is his ironic but resigned comment. Resigned? If there is resignation in Berlioz's attitude at times, it tends to be seen (in the Mémoires at least) more in the acceptance of personal financial loss than anywhere else. We rarely learn of a determined badgering of the authorities for fair pay such as J.S. Bach was capable of; and the Frenchman must also have realised the enormous practical difficulties he caused in demanding such large numbers of players - difficulties which cannot be said to have disappeared even in our own time!

Berlioz, then, we can see as an original and independant-minded artist, but perhaps not really as a revolutionary, either in politics or music. Just as, in the Mémoires, he seems to be able to accept the continuance in Europe of

despotic monarchy (at least as long as there is some evidence of a reasonably humane and not too un-progressive attitude on the part of the rulers) for the sake of the more experienced appreciation of the arts still shown by royalty and nobles in general, so in the music there is acceptance rather than drastic innovation in one area - that of harmony, where to a large extent he accepts the vocabulary of his day, although sometimes making original use of it. Certainly there is no revolution in the harmony of Berlioz's works to compare with that of,say, Schönberg in the next century.

The love of nature is another aspect to be found in both music and Mémoires. In the third chapter of this essay we have already referred to the natural descriptions of the first chapter of the Mémoires, and to the importance of nature to their author thereafter as arguably falling into the three categories of consolation, revelation, and self-examination. The 'Scène aux champs' movement of the Symphonie Fantastique has itself been previously mentioned in connection with the earliest descriptions of nature in the book (indeed we might regard the whole of this arguably autobiographical composition as a musical equivalent of the search-for-the-self element in the prose-work); there is also the 'Harold aux montagnes' first movement of the Harold en Italie symphony with solo viola, where Berlioz gives us 'scènes de mélancolie, de bonheur et de joie', depicting Harold (alias Hector?) wandering amid Italian natural scenery, his personality and reactions being centred on the sound of the solo viola. (H. Macdonald says of the whole work that the instrument 'speaks with Berlioz's own voice against the background of Italian scenery') (41) And apart from La Damnation de Faust whose Part I could be cited, there is surely, in the case of the 'Royal Hunt and Storm' music in the opera Les Troyens , a revelatory element in the changing natural scene - more fully revealing, in this case, of the love between Dido and Aeneas (perhaps finally to themselves, albeit for the benefit of the audience).

Another element common to both Mémoires and music is clearly the dramatic sense; in the prose-writing we have seen a liking for dialogue, and the interest in the unusual individual character (witness the Italian bandit of the 1830's, or the postal employee, determined that the person arriving in Magdeburg in 1841 was an impostor, and amusing Berlioz with his 'bonne mauvaise humeur'), (42) while its very style contains an honesty and conviction in the sometimes powerful vividness of its evocation of mood or situation. These qualities we can see mirrored in, for example, La Damnation de Faust ; and in the operas the characters (main ones at least) are certainly not puppets for the music, but rather the very origins, in the composer's imagination, of its melody, rhythms, progressions, colour and so on. Incidentally, are not these main characters, overtly operatic or otherwise, all shown, in the dramatic scenes chosen by this composer, as concerned in the attempt to eliminate (however enormous the task) the discrepancies between practical reality and imaginative idealism, as the Mémoires show us that Berlioz himself was?

Finally, what of religion? We know from the prose-work that the conventional aspects of religion were distrusted and finally rejected by the writer, but that a spiritual or near-spiritual artistic idealism remained to the end. In the religious compositions one might almost say that the reverse is true, in that conventional texts and forms are adopted, while the characteristics of the music do not convince one of any spiritual conviction of the literal truth of the words. But what does come across, particularly (in the opinion of the writer of this thesis) in the 'Requiem' and the 'Te Deum', is a faith in humanity and in the human capacity for idealism, combined with a kind of indirect suggestion that human qualities and idealism are not so much developed by the traditional forms and expression of religion, as being suggested or represented by the latter as by a kind of metaphor. There is, then, one feels, a

genuinness in the music in this context which, though not that of J.S.Bach or Bruckner (let alone Palestrina or Byrd), nevertheless confirms an idealism undestroyed by the rejection of the outward and literal in religious faith - the idealism which is the same as that evident in the Mémoires, in fact.

By way of epilogue, it would seem now relevant to consider what there might be in the Mémoires which foreshadowed, or at least had some connection with, the influence of Berlioz's art on subsequent musicians. We have seen that it was part of his artistic ideals that the arts should combine and co-operate, and that he thus became the first composer who consistently and consciously aimed, in his works, at the integration of sheer orchestral colour into the structure and meaning of the music, in the same way that visual colour in the work of, eg. Delacroix, was a part of the painting. It is this attitude to the means of expression which was one of the factors making it possible for the 'musical impressionism' of Debussy to come into being; the great orchestral works of the later French master would, as with those of the earlier composer, be inconceivable on the piano. We have seen, also, the psychological perception in the Mémoires, and we have linked it with the analysis of self on the one hand, and, on the other, with the ability to convey dramatic insights into mood and character, in a way never before so completely achieved by purely musical means. To the Romantics, music could be seen as increasingly the language of the subconscious, and of the innermost - and at the same time the least verbally expressible - thoughts and feelings. This attitude, clearly perceptible in the Mémoires, was to have important consequences in symphony and opera, in the area of what might be called musical expressionism. The main link appears to be through the composer Gustav Mahler, in whose creative development there seems little doubt as to the existence of a fairly direct Berlioz influence. Blaukopf, in his book on Mahler (trans. Goodwin, Allen Lane'73) has this to say when discussing the progressive diversifying of thematic ideas as they recur

in the First Symphony: 'In this he resembles the representative of French Romanticism, Hector Berlioz, whose technique of thematic development has rightly been called a method of 'varied repetition''. (43) In the book by Deryck Cooke 'Gustav Mahler; an introduction to his music' (Faber, 1980), we find: 'Mahler, like Berlioz --- in no sense 'orchestrated' his music, but conceived it straightaway for orchestra'. (44) Kennedy, in his book on Mahler in the 'Master Musicians' series (Dent, 1974), is less reserved about Berlioz's influence on the later German; after mentioning earlier influences, including Beethoven, he concludes: ' -- But to none of these did he owe as much in substance as he did to Berlioz, whose masterly and unconventional way of handling a symphony --- was obviously etched into Mahler's mind as ineradicably as his clear and colourful orchestration'. (45) Finally there is in Donald Mitchell's book on Mahler's 'Wunderhorn Years' (London 1975), a point where he notes the common flair of the two composers for what he calls their 'musicalisation of the sounds of nature', and also the 'theatrical sense of colour' (46) which they share.

Perhaps of greater relevance in the present overall context is what might be called the psychological aspects of the music of the two composers. Mitchell, where he considers Berlioz's influence on Mahler's Second Symphony, talks of 'the idea of a dramatic, biographical narrative projected into a cumulative sequence of movements' (47) as being clearly suggested originally by Berlioz's 'Episode de la vie d'un artiste'. The term 'biographical narrative' might suggest a slightly simplistic view of the Berlioz work; but the critic clarifies his meaning later by insisting on the innovatory nature of the Symphonie Fantastique as an exploration of the world of dreams and the unconscious - which seems undoubtedly to be the sense in which this work is genuinely and validly 'biographical'; the story or 'programme', in other words, is <u>interior</u>; it takes place in the subconscious.

The sudden intrusion, momentary but painful, of apparent

banality into some of the noblest passages in Mahler's music has often been noted by critics, most of whom agree that there is here no question of a lapse of taste or judgement on the part of the composer, but rather of the presentation of another, simultaneous, view of the situation, akin to those represented, for example, by the gravedigger scene in Hamlet - but with the more unexpected and violent juxtaposition possible in music. As an example we may point to the passage towards the end of the exposition of the first movement of Mahler's Sixth Symphony, where the 'Alma' theme becomes transformed, for seven or eight bars, into a jaunty, vulgar music-hall tune, made grotesque by the participation of heavy brass. (48) Here the susceptibility of the theme to this transformation seems to underline the fragility of the ideal it represents, and its vulnerability to debasement or at least mockery. A musical forerunner is not far to seek; in the 'Symphonie Fantastique' of Berlioz, where, in the 'Witches' Sabbath' movement, the 'idée fixe' (similarly representing the ideal beloved) occurs in debased form as a jaunty, trivial and somewhat grotesque tune in 6/8 on shrill Eb clarinet. But are we not, here (as in the Mahler example quoted), in the realm of the Berliozian 'lucidité romantique' mentioned earlier in this essay? Perhaps in the light of what has already been said, it is not fanciful to suggest that the ultimate 'meaning' of this passage (in so far as there is one expressible in words) has to do with the artist's fears concerning the vulnerability of any high ideal, at the hands of society at large, and his anxiety lest he should himself have been the victim of illusion, or will not have the strength to hold the ideal in its pure form. The realistic and painful awareness of the rough fate possible for any ideal in the everyday world of commerce and competition (not to say avarice and aggressiveness), and of the fact that the idealist could sometimes possibly be mistaken, is something we may see as common to Berlioz and Mahler; and it seems that it was through the music of

the former that the later German composer found the way to express it for himself. It could be said that the seminal influence of Berlioz's expression in music of what we have called 'lucidité romantique' does not end there; in the music of one of Mahler's greatest pupils, Alban Berg, we see another version of it, expressed in musico-dramatic terms in Wozzek , where the worthy, pure, innocent underdog is seen as victim and scapegoat. And in the works of another composer influenced (on his own admission, and by common consent of critics) by Mahler, namely Benjamin Britten, there is the theme of the vulnerability of childhood innocence, best exemplified perhaps in The Turn of the Screw .

Having attempted, in previous chapters of this study, to show the value of the Mémoires of Hector Berlioz as literature, as social and historical record, and as psychological insight, we have in this final one intended to show more specifically the relevance of the Mémoires to the musical compositions on which this nineteenth-century French artist's generally recognised greatness is based; and thereby to see whether unity can be established, not only between the various aspects of this human personality, but also between the private individual and the great composer. What we can see in La Damnation de Faust, in Roméo et Juliette, or in Les Troyens, at least as clearly as in the Mémoires, is a combination of realism with idealism; of the love of, and interest in, individual human personality with an abhorrence for certain characteristics of mass-humanity; of humour with seriousness; and of technical ability and control with the breadth and power of human emotion. If there is any waning of determination at the end of Berlioz's life, it is surely due to illness and exhaustion rather than to any relinquishing of fundamental values. We have seen that, while youthful enthusiasms may have faded, and while religious faith was early lost, the practical realism which grew within him did not destroy a basic idealism, but, together with his admiration for ancient classicism, transformed his Romanticism into something which was - and is - relevant beyond his own time.

Chapter V - References

(1) Vol. I, p. 243
(2) " I, p. 244
(3) " I, p. 244
(4) " II, p. 140
(5) " I, p. 123
(6) " I, p. 124
(7) Faber paperback p. 28
(8) Vol. I, p. 102
(9) " I, p. 148
(10) " I, p. 116
(11) " I, p. 116
(12) " I, p. 116
(13) " I, p. 117
(14) " I, p. 117
(15) " I, p. 118
(16) " II, pp. 99-100
(17) " II, p. 100
(18) " II, p. 100
(19) " II, p. 100
(20) " I, p. 98
(21) 'Lettres intimes' (Calman Lévy 1882) p. 8.
(22) Vol. I, p. 179
(23) " I, p. 179
(24) 'Lettres intimes' (C.L. 1882) p. 9.
(25) Vol. I, p. 179
(26) Faber paperback p. 253
(27) " " p. 255
(28) " " p. 255
(29) Vol. II, p. 102
(30) " II, p. 119
(31) " II, p. 120
(32) " II, p. 123
(33) " II, p. 230
(34) " II, p. 230
(35) " II, p. 230
(36) " II, p. 231
(37) Dent Hardback p. 75
(38) Notes to Philips recording of 'Damnation de Faust'
(39) Vol. I, p. 169
(40) " II, p. 50
(41) Master Musicians Chapter 6. p. 103
(42) Vol. II, p. 154
(43) Chapt. 5, p. 75 of Blaukopf
(44) Cooke, p. 14
(45) Kennedy (M.M.) Chapt. 9, p. 84
(46) Mitchell p. 335
(47) " p. 333
(48) From bar 91 in original version; Eulenburg miniature score p. 15.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Ballif. C. Berlioz. Seuil 1977

Bailbé J. M. Berlioz, artiste et écrivain dans les 'Mémoires' Presses universitaires 1972.

Barzun J. Berlioz and the Romantic Century (2 vols) 3rd edition - Columbia University Press 1969.

Barzun J. (translator) Evenings with the Orchestra (translation from 'Soirées de l'orchestre' by Berlioz). University of Chicago Press 1956, Phoenix edition 1973.

Berlioz H. Lettres intimes; Collected and prefaced by C. Gounod. Calman Lévy 1882.

Crabbe J. Hector Berlioz, Rational Romantic Stanmore Press (Kahn and Averill) 1980

Dickinson A.E.F. The Music of Berlioz. Faber 1972

Evans D.O. Les Romantiques français et la musique. Slatkine (Paris) 1934.

Felman S. La 'Folie' dans l'oeuvre romanesque de Stendhal. Corti (Paris) 1971.

Lockspeiser E. Music and painting - a study in comparative ideas from Turner to Schönberg. Cassell, 1973.

Macdonald H. Berlioz (in 'Master Musicians' series) Dent 1982.

Mitchell D. Gustav Mahler - the Wunderhorn years. Faber 1975.

Newman E. (writings by, ed. Heyworth) Berlioz, Romantic and Classic. Gollancz 1972.

Theses

Nurnberg (Miss) — Hector Berlioz' Musical Vocabulary PhD London, 1978.

Spencer B. — Shakespeare dans la vie et l'oeuvre de Hector Berlioz. M.A. Leeds, 1936.

Other Sources

(1) Warrack J. — Talk on Berlioz on BBC Radio 3, November 1980.

(2) Music: — Most of main compositions of Berlioz listened to, either in live performance or on tapes or records (the latter being mostly performances by LSO and Chorus, cond. C. Davis, on Philips). Miniature scores used where available.

(3) Correspondence: (a) Association Nationale Hector Berlioz. Siège sociale: Maison natale d'Hector Berlioz, La Côte Saint-André, Isère, France. (Received: Visual material, specimens of Berlioz's letters to Princess Sayn-Wittgenstein)

(b) Association du festival international Hector Berlioz (1979). Rue Garibaldi, Lyon, France. (Received: Booklists, addresses of Lyonnais bookshops concerned with the festival, modern copy of 'Journal des Débats' No. 2).