

## Alcohol: *The Water That Flames*

### Punch: *The Hoffmann Complex*



## Spontaneous Combustions

One of the most obvious phenomenological contradictions was brought about by the discovery of alcohol—a triumph of the thaumaturgical activity of human thought. Brandy, or eau-de-vie, is also eau de feu or fire-water. It is a water which burns the tongue and flames up at the slightest spark. It does not limit itself to dissolving and destroying as does *aqua fortis*. It disappears with what it burns. It is the communion of life and of fire. Alcohol is also an *immediate* food which quickly warms the cockles of the heart: in comparison with alcohol, even meats are *slow acting*. Alcohol, therefore, has been attributed many obvious substantialist values. It, too, reveals its action in small quantities: it is more concentrated than the most exquisite of consommés. It conforms to the rule of desire for realistic possession: to hold a great power within a small volume.

Since brandy burns before our entranced eyes, since, from the pit of the stomach, it radiates heat to the whole person, it affords proof of the convergence of inner experience and objective experiment. This double phenomenology prepares *complexes* that a psychoanalysis of objective knowledge will be obliged to eliminate in order to rediscover a true freedom of

experiment. Among these complexes there is one which is quite special and quite powerful; it is the one which, so to speak, closes the circle; when the flame has run across the alcohol, when the fire has left its mark and sign, when the primitive fire-water has become clearly enriched with shining, burning flames, then we drink it. Only brandy, of all the substances in the world, is so close to being of the same substance as fire.

In my youth, at the time of the great winter festivals, they used to prepare a *brûlot* (brandy burnt with sugar). My father would pour into a wide dish some marc-brandy produced from our own vineyard. In the center he would place pieces of broken sugar, the biggest ones in the sugar bowl. As soon as the match touched the tip of the sugar, a blue flame would run down to the surface of the alcohol with a little hiss. My mother would extinguish the hanging lamp. It was the hour of mystery, a time when a note of seriousness was introduced into the festivity. Familiar faces, which suddenly seemed strange in their ghastly paleness, were grouped about the round table. From time to time the sugar would sputter before its pyramid collapsed; a few yellow fringes would sparkle at the edges of the long pale flames. If the flames wavered and flickered, father would stir at the *brûlot* with an iron spoon. The spoon would come out sheathed in fire like an instrument of the devil. Then we would "theorize": to blow out the flames too late would make the *brûlot* too sweet; to put them out too soon would mean concentrating less fire and consequently diminishing the beneficent action of the *brûlot* against influenza. One of the watchers would tell of a *brûlot* that burned down to the last drop. Another would tell about the fire at the distillery when the barrels of rum "exploded like barrels of gunpowder," an explosion at which no one was ever present. At all costs we were bent on finding an objective and a general meaning for this exceptional phenomenon . . . Finally the *brûlot* would be in my glass: hot and sticky, truly an essence. And so how well I understand Vigenère when, in a rather affected manner, he speaks of the *brûlot* as "a little experiment . . . quite pleasant and exceptional." How well, too, I understand Boerhaave when he writes: "What seemed to me most agreeable in this experi-

ment is that the flame called forth by the match at a place some distance from this bowl . . . will leap across and light the alcohol which is in this same bowl." Yes, this is the true mobile fire, the fire which plays over the surface of the being, which plays with its own substance, entirely liberated from its own substance, liberated from itself. It is the will-o'the-wisp domesticated, the devil's fire displayed in the center of the family circle. When, after such a spectacle, we savored the delightful taste of the drink, we were left with unforgettable memories of the occasion. Between the entranced eye and the comfortably-glowing stomach was established a Baudelairien correspondence that was all the stronger since it was all the more materialized. For the drinker of the *brûlot* how poor and cold and *obscure* is the experience of a drinker of hot tea!

If one has not had a personal experience of this hot sugared alcohol that has been born of flame at some joyful midnight festivity, one has little understanding of the romantic value of punch; one is deprived of a diagnostic method of studying certain *phantasmagorical poems*. For example, one of the most characteristic traits of the work of Hoffmann, the teller of fantastic tales, is the importance given to the phenomena of fire. A poetry of the flame runs through his entire work. Moreover, the punch complex is here so much in evidence that it could be called the Hoffmann complex. A superficial examination might lead one to conclude that the punch is a pretext for telling the stories and is the mere accompaniment of a festive evening. For example, one of the finest tales, *The Song of Antonia*, is related one winter's evening "around a table on which was flaming a great bowl full of the punch of friendship," but this invitation to the realm of the fantastic is only a prelude to the story; it is not an integral part of it. Although it is striking that such a moving tale should thus be placed under the sign of fire, in other cases the sign is really incorporated into the story. The loves of Phosphorus and the Lily illustrate the poetry of fire (third evening):

". . . desire, which is developing a beneficent heat throughout your whole being, will soon plunge into your heart a thousand sharp darts;

for . . . the supreme pleasure that is being kindled by this spark I am placing within you is the hopeless grief that will make you perish only to germinate again in a different form. This spark is thought!" "Alas!" sighed the flower in a plaintive tone, "Since such an ardor now enflames me, can I not be yours?"

In the same story when the witchcraft, which was to have brought back the student Anselme to the poor Veronica, is completed, there is nothing left "but a light flame rising from the spirits of wine which burn in the bottom of the cauldron." Later in the story the salamander, Lindhorst, goes in and out of the bowl of punch; the flames in turn absorb him and reveal him. The battle between the witch and the salamander is a battle of flames; the snakes come out of the tureen filled with punch. Madness and intoxication, reason and enjoyment are constantly presented in combination. From time to time there appears in the stories a worthy bourgeois who would like to "understand" and who says to the student:

"How did this cursed punch manage to go to our heads and cause us to commit a thousand follies?" These were the words of Professor Paulmann when on the following morning he entered the room that was still strewn with broken mugs, in the midst of which the unfortunate periwig, reduced to its primary elements, was floating about, dissolved in an ocean of punch.

Thus the rationalized explanation, the bourgeois explanation, the explanation through a confession of drunkenness, is brought in to moderate the phantasmagorical visions, so that the tale appears as being half rational, half dream, as partly subjective experience and partly objective perception, at once plausible in its cause and unreal in its effect.

M. Sucher in his research into *The Sources of the Marvelous Element in the Work of Hoffmann* (*Les sources du merveilleux chez Hoffmann*), makes no mention of the experiences of alcohol; he does note, however, in passing: "As for Hoffmann, he saw the salamanders only in the flames of the punch bowl."

But he does not draw the conclusion which appears to us to be self-evident. If, in the first place, Hoffmann did not see the salamanders except in the flaming punch on a winter's evening when ghosts make their appearance at the height of the festivities in order to cause men's hearts to tremble; if, in the second place, it is obvious that the fire demons play a prime role in the reverie of Hoffmann, then it must be admitted that it is the paradoxical flame of the alcohol which is the prime inspiration, and that a whole section of his work becomes clear when studied in this light. It seems to us, then, that M. Sucher, in his subtle, intelligent study, has deprived himself of an important element of explanation. One should not be too ready to turn to rational constructions in seeking to understand an original literary genius. The unconscious, too, is a source of originality. Specifically, the alcoholic unconscious is a profound reality. One is mistaken if one imagines that alcohol simply stimulates our mental potentialities. In fact it creates these potentialities. It incorporates itself, so to speak, with that which is striving to express itself. It appears evident that alcohol is a creator of language. It enriches the vocabulary and frees the syntax. In point of fact, to return to the problem of fire, psychiatry has recognized the frequency of dreams about fire in cases of alcoholic delirium; it has shown that Lilliputian hallucinations are brought about by the excitation of alcohol. Now the reverie which leads to the miniature also leads to depth and stability: it is the reverie which in the final analysis best prepares us for engaging in rational thought. Bacchus is a beneficent god; by causing our reason to wander he prevents the ankylosis of logic and prepares the way for rational inventiveness.

Equally symptomatic is this page of Jean-Paul Richter, written, in what is already a Hoffmann-like tonality, on a New Year's Eve when, gathered around the pale flame of a punch bowl, the poet and four of his friends suddenly resolved to *look at one another as if they were already dead*:

It was as if the hand of death had squeezed the blood out of all the faces; the lips became bloodless, the hands white and elongated;

the room became a burial vault . . . In the moonlight a silent wind was tearing and whipping at the clouds, and in the places where the clouds left gaps in the open sky one could make out the darkness extending even beyond the stars. All was silent; the dying year seemed to struggle, utter its last sigh, and sink into the tombs of the past. O Angel of Time, you who have counted the sighs and the tears of mankind, forget them or hide them away! Who could bear the thought of their infinite number? <sup>1</sup>

How little it takes to make the reverie veer in one direction or another! It is a holiday; the poet, glass in hand, is drinking with his joyous companions; but a livid glow coming from the *brûlot* gives a dismal tone to even the most youthful songs; suddenly the pessimism induced by the ephemeral fire leads to a change in the reverie, the dying flame symbolizes the departing year, and time, the source of all woes, weighs down heavily upon their hearts. If it is again objected that the punch of Jean-Paul is but a pretext for a phantasmagorical idealism, scarcely any more material than the magic idealism of Novalis, it will have to be admitted that this pretext finds a ready development in the unconscious mind of the reader. In our opinion, this is proof that contemplation of objects to which many values are attached can release reveries whose development is as regular and as inevitable as that of sense-experiences.

Less profound souls will give off more artificial sonorities, but the fundamental theme will always ring through. O'Neddy sings in the *First Night of Fire and Flame (Première nuit de Feu et Flamme)*:

In the center of the room, around an iron bowl  
In size a worthy rival of the cups of hell,  
Wherein a lovely punch shines with prismatic flames,  
And rolls its waves along like some great sulphurous lake,

And the only ray of light in all the gloomy loft  
Comes from the sheaf of flame, a spirituous mirage.  
What a pure Ossianism is there in the crowning  
Of heads whose dull white brows . . .

While this is bad poetry, these lines bring together all the traditions attached to the *brûlot* and illustrate quite clearly, in their poetic poverty, the Hoffmann complex, which lays a veneer of learned thought over naive impressions. For the poet, sulphur and phosphorus feed the prism of the flames; hell is present in this impure festivity. If the *values* of the reverie before the fire were missing from these pages, they would not have enough poetic *value* to make them worth reading. The reader's unconscious makes up for the inadequacy of the poet's unconscious. The stanzas of O'Neddy are of interest only because of the "Ossianism" of the flame from the punch. For us they are the evocation of a whole period when the romantic Jeunes-France would gather around the Bol de Punch,<sup>2</sup> when Bohemian existence was illuminated, as Henry Murger says, by the "*brûlots* of passion."

No doubt this period seems dead and gone. Nowadays punch and the *brûlot* have lost their psychological values. Teetotalism, with all its censorious slogans, has forbidden such experiences. It is nonetheless true, in my opinion, that a whole area of phantasmagorical literature is dependent upon the poetic excitation of alcohol. The precise and concrete bases must not be forgotten, if we wish to understand the psychological meaning of literary constructions. It would be profitable to examine the leading themes one by one in their precise details without submerging them too quickly in general surveys. If our present work serves any useful purpose, it should suggest a classification of objective themes which would prepare the way for a classification of poetic temperaments. We have not yet been able to perfect an over-all doctrine, but it seems quite clear to us that there is some relation between the doctrine of the four physical elements and the doctrine of the four temperaments. In any case, the four categories of souls in whose dreams fire, water, air, or earth predominate, show themselves to be markedly different. Fire and water, particularly, remain enemies even in reverie, and the person who listens to the sound of the stream can scarcely comprehend the person who hears the song of the flames: they do not speak the same language.

By developing in all its general implications this Physics, or this Chemistry of reverie, one would easily arrive at a tetravalent doctrine of poetic temperaments. Indeed, the tetravalence of reverie is as clear and as productive as the chemical tetravalence of carbon. Reverie has four domains, four points from which it soars into infinite space. To surprise the secret of a true poet, of a sincere poet, of a poet who is faithful to his original language and is deaf to the discordant echoes of sensuous eclecticism, which would like to play on all the senses, one word is sufficient: "Tell me what your favorite phantom is. Is it the gnome, the salamander, the sylph or the undine?" Now—and I wonder if this has been noticed—all these chimerical beings are formed from and sustained by a unique substance: the gnome, terrestrial and condensed, lives in the fissure of the rock, guardian of the mineral and the gold, and stuffs himself with the most compact substances; the salamander, composed all of fire, is consumed in its own flame; the water nymph or undine glides noiselessly across the pond and feeds on her own reflection; the sylph for whom the least substance is a burden, who is frightened away by the tiniest drop of alcohol, who would even perhaps be angry with a smoker who might "contaminate her element" (Hoffmann), rises effortlessly into the blue sky, happy in her anorexia.

Such a classification of poetic inspirations should not, however, be attached to a more or less materialistic hypothesis which would claim to discover a predominant material element in human flesh. We are not dealing here with matter, but with orientation. It is not a question of being rooted in a particular substance, but of tendencies, of poetic exaltation. Now it is the primitive images which orient psychological tendencies; these were the sights and impressions which suddenly aroused an interest in what is normally devoid of interest, which gave an *interest to the object*. It is upon this image to which new values have been attributed that the whole imagination has converged; and thus it is that through a narrow gate the imagination, as Armand Petitjean has said, "transcends us and brings us face to face with the world." The total *conversion* of the imagination that Armand

Petitjean has analyzed with an astonishing lucidity<sup>3</sup> is prepared for, as it were, by this preliminary translation of the block of images into the language of one preferred image. If we were correct in our theory of this imaginative polarization, then it would become more evident why two minds, apparently congeneric like those of Hoffmann and Edgar Allan Poe, are ultimately revealed to be profoundly different. Both were given powerful aid in their superhuman and inhuman work of genius by the power of alcohol. But the alcoholism of Hoffmann appears very different from that of Edgar Allan Poe. The alcohol of Hoffmann is the alcohol which flames up; it is marked by the wholly qualitative and masculine sign of fire. The alcohol of Poe is the alcohol that submerges and brings forgetfulness and death; it is marked by the wholly quantitative and feminine sign of water. The genius of Edgar Allan Poe is associated with the sleeping waters, the dead waters, with the tarn which reflects the *House of Usher*. He hears "the distant murmur through the turbulent water" following the "opiate vapor, dewy, dim," which softly drips "drop by drop . . . into the universal valley," while "the lake a conscious slumber seems to take." (*The Sleeper*) For him the mountains and the cities "topple evermore into seas without a shore." It is near the swamps, the dismal tarns and pools "Where dwell the Ghouls, By each spot the most unholy, In each nook most melancholy," that he again finds the "Sheeted Memories of the Past, Shrouded forms that start and sigh As they pass the wanderer by." (*Dreamland*) If he thinks of a volcano it is to see it flowing like the water of rivers: "my heart was volcanic as the scoriac rivers that flow." Thus the element to which his imagination has become polarized is water or lifeless earth on which no flower grows; it is not fire. One will also be convinced of this psychoanalytically in reading the admirable work of Mme Marie Bonaparte.<sup>4</sup> Here it will be seen that the fire symbol rarely intervenes except to call up the opposite element, water; that the flame symbol operates only in a repellent mode, as a crudely sexual image, against which the tocsin is rung. The symbolism of the fireplace here appears as the symbolism of a cold vagina into which the murderers

shove and wall up their victim. Edgar Poe was truly "without hearth or home," the child of travelling actors, the child frightened when very young by the vision of a mother still young and smiling stretched out in the sleep of death. Alcohol itself did not warm him, comfort him, or make him gay! Poe never danced around a blazing punch bowl like a human flame, while holding hands with joyful companions. None of the complexes which are formed in the love of fire came to sustain and inspire him. Water alone gave him his horizon, his infinite, the unfathomable depths of his sorrow, and one would have to write an altogether different book to elucidate the poetry of sails and of glimmering lights, the poetry of the vague fear which makes us shudder by causing to resound within us the moanings of the Night.

In the preceding pages we have seen the poetic mind acting in complete obedience to the charm of a favorite image; we have seen it magnify all the possibilities, think of the great as modelled on the small, of the general as modelled on the vivid image, of power modelled on an ephemeral force, and of hell modelled on the *brûlot*. We are now going to show that the prescientific mind, in its original impulse, functions in almost the same way and that it, too, magnifies power in a fashion that is mistakenly overvalued by the unconscious. We shall see alcohol depicted as having such manifestly horrible effects that it will not be difficult for us to read the *observers' will to moralize* in the phenomena that are described. Thus, whereas the anti-alcohol movement in the nineteenth century developed along evolutionist lines, by charging the drinker with being responsible for all the defects of his race, we shall see teetotalism develop in the eighteenth century along the then predominant substantialist line. The will to condemn others always employs the weapon closest to hand. In a more general way, apart from the usual moralizing lesson, we shall have another example of the inertia of the obstacles of substantialism and animism at the threshold of objective knowledge.

Since alcohol is eminently combustible, it is easy to imagine that persons who indulge in spirituous liquors become, as it were,

*impregnated* with inflammable substances. We do not seek to find out if the assimilation of alcohol transforms it. The Harpagon complex, which dominates culture as it does every material occupation, makes us think that we lose nothing of what we absorb and that all precious substances are carefully stored away: fat produces fat; the phosphates produce bones; blood gives blood; alcohol gives alcohol. In particular, the unconscious cannot admit that a quality as characteristic and as marvellous as inflammability can totally disappear. This, then, is the conclusion: whoever drinks alcohol may burn like alcohol. The substantialist conviction is so strong that the *facts*, which undoubtedly could be accounted for by various more normal explanations, will impose themselves on the credulity of the public throughout the course of the eighteenth century. Here are some of these facts, quoted as being quite authentic by Socquet, an author of some repute, in his *Essay on Heat (Essai sur le Calorique)* published in 1801. All these examples are taken, we should note in passing, from the "Age of Enlightenment."

We read in the public records of Copenhagen, that in 1692 a woman of the lower classes, whose nourishment was derived almost solely from an immoderate use of spirituous liquors, was found one morning entirely consumed by fire except for the final joints of the fingers and the skull . . .

The *Annual Register* of London for 1763 (vol. XVIII, p. 78) reports the case of a woman aged fifty, much addicted to drunkenness, who, over a period of a year and a half, had drunk a pint of rum or brandy per day, and who was found almost entirely reduced to ashes, between her fireplace and her bed, while the bed clothes and other articles of furniture had suffered little damage; a fact which merits attention.

This final remark reveals quite clearly that the intuition is satisfied by this assumption of a wholly internal and substantial kind of combustion which in some way can recognize its preferred fuel.

We find in the *Systematic Encyclopedia (Encyclopédie méthodique)* (Article, *Pathological Anatomy of Man*) the story

of a woman about fifty years of age who, by indulging in a constant abuse of spirituous liquors, was likewise burnt up in the space of a few hours." Vicq-d'Azyr, who cites this fact, far from disputing it, declares that there have been many other similar cases.

The Transactions of the Royal Society of London offer an equally striking phenomenon . . . A sixty-year-old woman was found incinerated one morning after having, it is said, drunk heavily of spirituous liquors the preceding evening. The furniture had suffered little damage and the fire in the hearth was completely extinguished. This fact is attested to by a large number of eye witnesses . . .

Le Cat, in a *Report on Spontaneous Fires (Mémoire sur les incendies spontanés)*, cites several cases of human combustion of this type.

Others may be found in the *Essay on Human Combustions (Essai sur les Combustions humaines)* of Pierre-Aimé Lair.

Jean-Henri Cohausen, in a book printed in Amsterdam under the title of *Lumen novum Phosphoris accensum*, relates "that a gentleman at the time of Queen Bona Sforza, having drunk a large quantity of brandy, vomited flames and was consumed by them."

In the *Ephémérides* (almanac) of Germany one again reads that

often in the northern countries, flames shoot up from the stomachs of those who drink freely of strong liquors. It was seventeen years ago, says the author, that three gentlemen of Courlande, whose names propriety forbids me to mention, having vied with one another in drinking strong liquor, two of these gentlemen died, burned and suffocated by a flame which came forth from their stomachs.

Jallabert, one of the authors most often cited as being conversant with the technicalities of electrical phenomena, was relying in 1749 on similar "facts" to explain the production of electrical fire by the human body. A woman suffering from

rheumatism had rubbed her body for a long time with camphorated spirits of wine. She was found one morning reduced to ashes without there being any grounds for suspecting that either fire from heaven or common fire had played any part in this strange accident. "It can be attributed only to the fact that the most tenuous parts of the sulphurs of the body having been greatly agitated by the rubbing and mixed in with the most subtle particles of the camphorated spirits of wine are very apt to cause a fire."<sup>5</sup> Another author, Mortimer, gives this advice:<sup>6</sup> "I am very much of the opinion that it would be dangerous for persons accustomed to drinking a good deal of spirituous liquor or to using embrocations of camphorated spirits of wine to have themselves electrified."

These writers consider the substantial concentration of alcohol in the flesh to be so strong that they dare to speak of a *spontaneous combustion*, so that the drunkard does not even need a match to set himself on fire. In 1766 the Abbé Poncelet, an emulator of Buffon, will say: "Heat, as the principle of life, sets in motion and maintains the activity of the animal constitution, but when it is increased to the degree of fire it causes strange ravages. Have we not seen drunkards, whose bodies were superabundantly impregnated with burning spirits because of the habitual excessive drinking of strong liquor, who have suddenly caught fire of themselves and have been consumed by spontaneous combustions?" Thus burning due to alcoholism is only a particular case of an abnormal concentration of heat.

Certain authors go so far as to speak of deflagration. An ingenious distiller, author of a *Chemistry of Taste and Smell* (*Chimie du Goût et de l'Odorat*), points out in these terms the dangers of alcohol:<sup>7</sup> "Alcohol spares neither muscle, nor nerve, nor lymph, nor blood, which it inflames to such a point that it causes to perish by a surprising, instantaneous deflagration those who dare to carry excess to its final stage."

In the nineteenth century there are virtually no reports of cases of spontaneous combustion, the terrible punishment for alcoholism. They gradually become metaphorical and give way to ready jokes about the red faces of drunkards, about the

rubicund nose that a match could set on fire. These jokes are, moreover, immediately understood, a fact which proves that prescientific thought lingers on for a long time in the spoken language. It also lingers on in literature. Balzac has the prudence to refer to it through the mouth of a shrew. In *Le Cousin Pons*, Mme Cibot, the (un)lovely oyster seller, says in her incorrect speech:<sup>8</sup> "That woman, you know, 'as 'ad no luck because of her man, who drank everything in sight and who died of a spontaneous *imbustion*."

On the other hand Emile Zola, in one of his most "scientific" books, *Le Docteur Pascal*, gives a long account of the spontaneous combustion of a human being:<sup>9</sup>

Through the hole in the material, already as large as a five-franc piece, the naked thigh could be seen, a red thigh from which was coming forth a little blue flame. At first Félicité thought it was cloth, the underpants or the shirt, that was burning. But doubt was no longer permitted; she was indeed looking upon the bare flesh; and the little blue flame was escaping from this flesh, light and dancing like a flame flickering across the surface of a bowl of blazing spirits. It was scarcely any higher than the flame of a night lamp, was quiet and gentle and so unstable that the slightest breath of air caused it to move about.

Evidently what Zola is transporting into the realm of facts is his reverie before his punch bowl, his Hoffmann complex. Following this passage, the substantialist intuitions that we have illustrated in the preceding pages are displayed in all their ingenuousness: "Félicité understood that her uncle was catching fire there like a sponge soaked with brandy. He had been saturated for years with the strongest and most inflammable of brandies. Undoubtedly he would presently be aflame from head to foot." As can be seen, the living flesh has no thought of losing the glasses of proof spirits that have been absorbed in the previous years. It is more agreeable for us to imagine that alimentary assimilation is a careful concentration, an avaricious capitalization of the cherished substance.

The next day when Doctor Pascal comes to see uncle

Macquart, just as in the prescientific accounts we have cited, he finds no more than a handful of fine ashes in front of the chair, which has been scarcely blackened. Zola even somewhat overdoes it: "Nothing remained of him, not a bone, not a tooth, not a nail, nothing but this pile of grey dust that the draft of air from the doorway threatened to sweep away at any moment." And here finally we see appear the secret desire for an apotheosis through fire; Zola hears the call of the all-consuming funeral pyre, of the inner funeral pyre; the novelist indicates very clearly that the Empedocles complex is at work in his unconscious: uncle Macquart had then died "royally like the prince of drunkards, flaming up spontaneously and being consumed in the burning pyre of his own body . . . just imagine setting fire to oneself like a Saint John's fire!" Where did Zola see any bonfires of the summer solstice that could set themselves aflame as do the ardent passions? What better way is there to confess that the meaning of the objective metaphors has been reversed and that it is in the inner recesses of the unconscious that is found the inspiration for the burning flames which can, from within, consume a living body?

Such a story, entirely a product of the imagination, is particularly disturbing when it comes from the pen of a *naturalist* writer who used to say modestly, "I am only a scientist." It leads one to think that Zola built up his image of science on most naive reveries, and that his theories of heredity derive from the simple intuition of a past which has engraved itself on matter in a form that is no doubt as meanly substantialist, as flatly realistic, as the *concentration* of alcohol in a human body, of fire in a fevered heart.

Thus story-tellers, doctors, physicists, novelists, all of them dreamers, start off from the same images and pass on to the same thoughts. The Hoffmann complex binds them to an early image, to a memory of childhood. According to their temperament, in obedience to their personal "phantom," they enrich the subjective or objective aspect of the object they are contemplating. From the flames which emanate from the *brûlot* they fabricate men of fire or streams of substance. In all cases they

*attribute values*; they call upon all their own passions to explain a shaft of flame. They put their whole heart into “communicating” with a spectacle which fills them with wonderment and which therefore deceives them.