

CHAPTER 10

ARTISTIC CREATION

La création artistique . . . me paraît au point de jonction de la liberté et de la fatalité (Jean Grenier).¹

The discussion of Mediterranean humanism has raised the question of the small margin of creative initiative open to man; the chapter on orthodoxy has developed the idea of the *cadre* within which any such initiative must find expression. This chapter will take up the theme in the wider context of Grenier's aesthetics.

In 1962 Grenier was appointed to the chair of Aesthetics and the Science of Art in the University of Paris, in succession to Étienne Souriau, a post which he was to hold until his retirement in 1968. His interest in the subject had been lifelong. Many of his friends were artists themselves or at least lovers of art: Lemièrre, Dubuffet, Max Jacob, to mention only three.² His long association with Paulhan certainly stimulated his aesthetic interest. It was Paulhan's gifts as an art critic that Grenier particularly admired in him.³ Nevertheless, it was not until 1944, when his former pupil Camus asked him to take over the art column of *Combat*, that Grenier began to write in any quantity on aesthetics. He had contributed to *Verve* for the first time in 1939;⁴ in 1941 there appeared two tributes to the work of individual artists, one for an exhibition catalogue, the other to accompany a set of reproductions of paintings.⁵ He then wrote regularly for *Combat* between September 1944 and January 1955. After his departure for Egypt he sent only the occasional further contribution, but he also wrote articles on Egyptian painting and on Braque for several newspapers and reviews.⁶ By the time he returned to France at the end of 1950 he was already preparing for publication a collection of essays under the title *L'Esprit de la peinture contemporaine* (1951).⁷ During the next five years Grenier wrote individual articles for several reviews: *Verve*, *Derrière le miroir*, *Arts*, *Preuves*, *L'Œil* and *L'Express*, before settling down in 1955 to a regular collaboration with the last two named. In 1957, after a brief dalliance with *La Nef*, he moved to *Preuves*, and contributed to most issues between 1958 and 1963. He wrote several articles for *XX^e Siècle*, and, later, for *La Galerie des Arts*. There were always exhibition catalogues; and in the 1960s he contributed texts of varying lengths to several books and book-length catalogues devoted to the work of individual artists: Lansky, Borès, Gillet, Marfaing, Music . . . He also spoke

regularly on contemporary art on the radio. In 1963 Calmann-Lévy published a series of radio interviews, under the title *Entretiens avec dix-sept peintres non-figuratifs*. In 1963 and 1965 his Sorbonne lectures were published in the series 'Les Cours de Sorbonne',⁸ and 1970 saw the publication of *L'Art et ses problèmes*, based on his lectures and also on a series of articles written for the *NRF*.⁹ By that time he had resigned his chair, but he went on writing about art, and even after his death texts of his continued to appear in exhibition catalogues.¹⁰

This large amount of writing on art and aesthetics belongs mainly to the years after the Second World War. Indeed, there is nothing specifically devoted to art criticism or aesthetics before 1937, when Grenier presented a paper to the Deuxième Congrès International d'Esthétique et de Science de l'Art. Some of the earlier essays, however, had touched on related areas. 'Interiora rerum' (1927), for instance, is concerned with the artistic tradition of Classical Greece, and its aesthetic is that of Greek humanism. Grenier's reflections on Athenian sculpture are not to be seen primarily as oblique comments on his own vocation, but they do provide a basis for what will become a more personal aesthetic. The observation that 'dans le regard humain s'entre-croisent deux mondes' (*IM*, 125 (130)) looks forward not only to a fuller expression of Mediterranean humanism but also to the hypothesis of the dual nature of the creative process which will be examined later. In 'Les Îles Fortunées' (1932) there is present, in a reference to Rembrandt, the idea that plays such a large part in Grenier's aesthetics, that of true creativity involving a self-emptying and a waiting for revelation, for inspiration, for that *appel* which comes either from outside oneself or from the depths of one's true self.

This idea is taken up and developed in 'La Rose sans épines' (1935), where it is poetry rather than painting that is in question. Here again Grenier's thought moves on two levels, that of the creative moment itself and that of its capture by the poet. He begins by asking how the 'pullulement de la vie universelle' can be grasped and preserved in a work of art. It is the gesture, captured in an instant and appreciated in an instant, that gives the poem the quality of an *appel* putting the reader in touch with eternity. The response evoked in the reader is comparable to the original response of the poet. Grenier is pointing out that poetry is based on a response which, while itself momentary, is the channel for a revelation of eternity. It is therefore important to be receptive at the critical moment, and that is where preparation and technique come in. Grenier notes that 'il n'est pas question dans ces pages de la *technique* qui est au moins la moitié de la poésie, mais seulement de ses *sources*'. He speaks only in the most general terms of the preparation that may be necessary in order to become what he calls the locus, the *lieu*, of revelation. It is not unlike the preparation of the mystic in that it may involve long periods of *acedia* in the attempt to move from the experience of 'se sentir déchiré entre l'éternité de nos désirs et la

fragilité de nos vies' to that of 'faire de cette union un mariage d'amour'. The world forgets, or never sees, all this preparation. 'On voit toujours le poète comme une feuille morte qui s'élève au *gré du vent*; on ne sait pas que lorsqu'il s'agit vraiment d'un poète, toute la grâce qu'il obtient il l'a méritée' (*IM*, 148–56 (153–60)).¹¹

The work of preparation may be seen as the fashioning of oneself into a *cadre* suitable for the reception and channelling of the revelation when it comes. Man, however, as has been seen, remains at the sterile level of possibility until he opts for some attachment to a set of values. 'Sagesse de Lourmarin' (1936) presents the case for a geographical attachment. In that essay Grenier quotes Cézanne's appalled comment on another painter's work: 'Voilà un homme qui n'est né nulle part', and he adds: 'on pourrait en dire autant aujourd'hui de beaucoup de livres et d'œuvres d'art: ce sont des créations de gens qui ne sont nés nulle part' or who have otherwise 'perdu le sens de la terre'. Indeed, he claims that the greatest creative artists of the West have not created *ex nihilo* and in a vacuum, but have taken hold of their own heritage and have transformed it. Grenier is disturbed at the modern tendency to fix on some ideal which is situated not in the past but in the distant future, and then to try to reach it 'à travers une série ininterrompue de catastrophes'. Rather than imitate these followers of Prometheus (who, he suggests, is only Tantalus in disguise), he proposes the example of Orpheus, 'qui, les yeux fixés sur l'ordre du ciel, y conforma l'ordre de la terre'. That is to say, artistic creation is not to be absurdly ambitious and over-idealistic. Not that the ideal should be proscribed altogether, but the aim should rather be to 'exalter ce qui est' (*IM*, 104–08 (107–10)). Creation is not the product of a blind fatality, moving through history towards a predetermined goal, but the work of human beings, living at a given time and in a given place. That is the true meaning of humanism, which is able to renew mankind through contact with 'la sagesse populaire de la Méditerranée'.¹²

Before 1937, then, there are two clearly discernible ideas of the nature of artistic creation present in Grenier's writings. There is the emphasis on the revelation that must come to the individual, and to which he must respond; and there is the complementary emphasis on the part played by the individual himself in preparing and working. This double emphasis is only a transposition of the idea that was already present in 'Interiora rerum' (1927). It is the second aspect that forms the subject of a paper presented in 1937 to the Congress on Aesthetics, entitled 'La Dépendance de l'artiste et l'indépendance de l'art'.¹³ In it, Grenier argues that the artist needs to accept his dependence on society, without which he would be only a dilettante, a parasite, an aesthete, 'prêt à sacrifier des sentiments humains à des conceptions artificielles, qu'il veut faire prendre pour de l'art', and his art, however brilliant, would be sterile, cut off from 'la sève populaire'. In other words, his *cadre* must be a vital one. On the

other hand, art itself must preserve its independence, for it is not simply a product of the artist as a social being, and hence of society. Inspiration is not merely a question of derivation. Grenier does not in fact stress explicitly the need of a revelation, but he points instead to the process of maturation and transformation which, in other passages, follows the moment of inspiration and makes the actual work of art possible through the artist's mastery of technique. This reflects Grenier's growing interest in the problem of composition, which also gives rise to the supposed correspondence between himself and 'Cornélius' in 1939. The starting-point of the 'Lettre à Cornélius' is the difficulty of translating an initial inspiration into words. The correspondence with 'Cornélius' becomes polarized into an opposition between a desire for transformation on the one hand, for metamorphosis into something that represents completeness and fulfilment in contrast to the metaphysical imperfection of man, and on the other, the unacceptably arrogant call for a decisive act of creation.¹⁴ The subtitle of the 'Lettre', 'La Métamorphose', might have suggested a middle way, that of the transformation of the artist's own heritage to produce a work of art that is neither totally independent of his situation nor dictated by it; but in 1939 Grenier was working on *Le Choix* and once again finding himself unable to compromise with the demands of the Absolute. By the 1950s, however, Grenier again finds it possible to conceive of artistic creation in terms of the same two aspects to which attention has already been drawn. The relevant passages in *Les Grèves* (1957) will be noted in the context of possibility and its destruction, but there are some points which have particular relevance to the present discussion.

It is significant that the most important passage in which the problem of creation is treated in *Les Grèves* should come in the chapter entitled 'L'Exploration du passé'. The past, which constitutes the inescapable foundation of the artist's present situation, is also the source of his art:

Dans ce mélange de souvenirs et de fictions . . . je trébuche à chaque fois que je passe d'une page à l'autre. Donnez-moi le premier mot, la première phrase, et je continuerai dans la ligne qui m'aura été tracée . . . Mais qui me donnera le début? (*G*, 248)

The creative act is indeed a launching out, but a launching out into a domain that immediately proves to be not strange at all, but already experienced. It is to that extent familiar, and only too ready to lend itself to expression, or rather transcription, by the artist. The act itself is an emotional response which, in that it effects a 'coupure' in 'ce monde qui, si incohérent qu'il soit, n'en est pas moins un univers', is bound to be felt as a 'faute'; but thereafter creation is to be understood more as a regular 'travail de composition', within certain voluntarily accepted rules and restrictions. This interpretation is akin to that of the argument of 'Sagesse de Lourmarin'. There, the deliberate choice of Lourma-

rin as a 'terre de patrie' opens the way for a limited, human work of creation, even though the initial act of choice inevitably destroys the infinity of potential and thus declares inaccessible a certain ideal which is based on the preservation of that potential. There are cases in which that kind of perfection is no longer appropriate, as Grenier recognizes in his essay on Braque in *L'Esprit de la peinture contemporaine* (1951). Creative art cannot be an expression of a quest for perfection, for it must take into account what he calls, in 'La Rose sans épines', 'notre fragilité'. In 'Portrait de Braque' he points out that 'l'humain se mesure à l'étendue du sacrifice qu'il faut consentir pour renoncer à une perfection à laquelle on ne peut s'empêcher de viser. L'humain c'est, après la révolte du désespoir, une défaillance acceptée' (*EPC*, 35). The sentiment expressed in *Les Grèves* is similar: 'En attendant, comme les jours succèdent aux jours et que, trop faible, la vue humaine ne peut porter au delà d'un horizon très limité, le mieux est d'accomplir une tâche dont l'aurore verra le début, et le crépuscule, la fin' (*G*, 254).

The emphasis, then, is removed from the initial act and transferred to the continuum of preparation and maturation. Indeed, the initial act itself is seen as being prepared to a large extent by a hidden but none the less important process that is going on all the time under the surface. Even the modern ideal of spontaneity in art does not formally exclude the preparation of the artist himself to receive and transmit in some appreciable form what may still be 'la résultante de contingences'. In Grenier's eyes it is evidently coloured, and made more acceptable, by its affinities with certain Oriental traditions, according to which the artist must prepare himself by a long period of disciplined training for the execution of a work of art. In a footnote in 'Hasard et création' he draws attention to an article by Pierre Boulez¹⁵ which points to the possible solution adopted in Hindu music, where 'la réflexion ferait corps avec la spontanéité au lieu de se détacher d'elle'. This takes him back to the cycle of *karma* which he has already discussed elsewhere. Alternatively, he looks further East still, to China and Japan. 'Les Japonais ne commencent à dessiner une figure que lorsque, l'ayant longuement observée, ils peuvent la tracer d'un trait. De même dans la secte Zen, le satori. Tout est donné d'un coup.'¹⁶ In the chapter entitled 'Peintures récentes de Georges Braque', in *L'Esprit de la peinture contemporaine* (pp. 77-94), he links Braque's painting specifically with 'la sagesse taoïste', in his stress on waiting, self-preparation, and receiving. Chagall, too, is a man of response rather than affirmation. 'L'artiste est d'abord et avant tout celui qui ne dirige pas sa vie, et que la vie dirige. Il cherche les chocs, il les provoque, ces chocs qui peuvent le débarrasser de sa gangue' (*EPC*, 48). Here, however, both the *choc* and the response involve precisely the kind of intervention by the artist that Grenier claims is rejected by his contemporaries. He himself clearly prefers not to discount the contribution of the artist, and prefers to maintain the continuity of preparation and

composition in the finished work of art. In his chapter on Chagall he speaks of the need for a 'rupture d'habitudes' but also for an 'organisation d'une autre habitude' that will offer an authentic framework within which the work of art may be created. Emphasis is laid not on the total freedom which the artist enjoys in the space between these two periods of obedience to a system, but on the limited freedom-for-creation that is obtained by the adoption of the new system.

What then is to be understood by 'creation'? The central section of *L'Art et ses problèmes* (1970) is entitled 'De la création', and in it Grenier takes up and develops the same basic ideas that have been important since the 1930s. As always, Grenier's discussion is less a strict analysis than a continuous, flexible meditation, in which his own preoccupations are all the time informing the theories and attitudes that he examines. It is not going too far to see his treatment of creation as itself essentially creative, just as, in 'Les Îles Fortunées', Rembrandt's portrayal of the creative moment is seen as being itself creative. His discussion of the modern 'volonté de rupture', which he sees as giving rise to a whole civilization, a whole aesthetic of 'rupture', shows up both differences and similarities with his own views. While he is clearly no adherent of the kind of Promethean faith in history as bringing about the realization of Spirit, and so lending itself to a perpetual recommencement and recreation in the interests of an ultimate total liberation, yet the dissatisfaction with traditions that all too easily become fossilized and so cease to be creative is equally clearly something that he feels (*AP*, 197). Like St John of the Cross, the modern artist is 'écartelé entre deux modes d'existence qui semblent n'avoir pas de contact entre eux', with on the one hand the apocalyptic vision, the absorption of the spirit in higher things, and on the other, the 'boue' of human life in its temporal, social reality. The latter is seen as no less necessary than the former, for the artist needs some attachment, something in society 'qui puisse l'accueillir, le reconforter . . . enfin tout simplement le comprendre' (*AP*, 198–200). This, then, is a move away from the earlier emphasis on the need to make a clean break with the past. The discontinuity, if discontinuity there is to be — and creation, on any understanding, must involve some element of discontinuity — is to be not arbitrary and sudden but rather, in the words of 'Hasard et création', 'prévisible et prévue' (*PC*, 199n.). The greatness of the artist is measured not by his boldness in doing something entirely new, but by his success in holding together the two terms of his existence. Grenier makes this point clearly in the case of Rembrandt, in the *Entretiens avec Louis Foucher*: 'Il a réalisé l'idéal de Pascal: "On ne montre pas sa grandeur pour être à une extrémité, mais bien en touchant les deux à la fois, et remplissant tout l'entre-deux"' (*ELF*, 88).

This uneasy tension is by now a familiar theme in Grenier's work, but it should not be allowed to obscure a second major theme which is more directly

relevant to the title of the chapter 'L'Acte créateur'. The creative artist not only seeks to achieve a *vide* in order to create; he not only experiences a conflict between the ideal at which he aims and the far from ideal situation in which he finds himself: but he is faced with the anguish of the actual creative moment itself. This is the moment described by Lequier in 'La Feuille de charmillé', and by Valéry in his *Introduction à la méthode de Léonard de Vinci* (AP, 192–193). 'L'artiste créateur tremble': that single phrase sums up a whole sector of Grenier's sensibility. Grenier is tempted to concentrate all his attention on this infinitesimal point of time, destroying at a stroke his growing conviction that the emphasis should be placed much more on the continuum of preparation and maturation than on that single moment. Despite his willingness, already discussed, to forego perfection in the interest of an art that is truly human, he is now fascinated once again by a similar ideal of perfection. 'L'acte est plus important que la création. La création est une conséquence, une résultante . . . ce qui est beau, sublime, c'est l'acte, c'est l'*ictus*, c'est cette espèce de coup d'apoplexie, comme dit Empédocle, qui fait la génération' (AP, 193). There can be little doubt that he finds in the unique act of creation, considered on its own and apart from its consequences, something of that sublime perfection which is capable of revealing the Absolute.

Having allowed himself that nostalgic look, however, Grenier then concentrates in the remaining chapters of 'De la création' on creation as distinct from the creative act. The emphasis on the act is not thereby lessened, indeed its unique status is thrown more into relief. It is one of the central paradoxes of Grenier's work that in any given piece of writing, the crucial point may in fact be absent, or only hinted at, and the bulk of the piece may be given over to a discussion of themes that are really secondary. The themes of travel, of animals, of flowers and trees, and many others, are oblique facets of the principal theme of the Absolute which itself is often not explicitly present. It is impossible to say anything positive about the Absolute, as the Vedântists realized. It is similarly impossible to say anything positive about the actual moment of a creative act. The double sense of *angoisse* and *vertige* may be described, as may the practical experience of the work of creation in preparing and organizing, but the more one tries to pin down the moment at which the artist assumes the full responsibility of a voluntary creative act, the more it appears that other factors are involved, and the less the creative act can be grasped in itself. Indeed, while the existence of the Absolute is not called into question by the difficulty experienced in defining it, the very possibility of such a thing as a fully responsible creative act *is* called into question by the existence of the Absolute. The 'marge de l'humain' is small enough, and it disappears under close scrutiny. Rather than examine the supposed mode of operation of the human creative principle, then, Grenier turns to an extended exploration of the dual nature of creation, with the artist on the one hand, playing a

diminished role, and on the other, some form of revelation, stemming ultimately from the Absolute.

Chapters 6 and 7 for instance share the general title 'Les Modes positifs de la création'. The first begins with the question: 'Comment passer du mode négatif de la création à un mode positif?' This is a clear echo of the move from 'le Néant' to 'l'Être' in *Le Choix*, and all through the chapter there are similar echoes of passages from Grenier's other works. In many ways it is the most important chapter in 'De la création', although the others are needed to keep it in perspective. It is subtitled 'L'Instantané', and that provides an allusion to the central theme of the *instant* which runs right through Grenier's writing. The emphasis here, however, is not so much on the instant itself but on the context in which it occurs. In order for there to be an instant of revelation at all, there must be an appropriate preparation for it: 'Il faut une maturation avant qu'il y ait création, il faut une préparation personnelle' (AP, 260). Allusions to earlier works are particularly dense here, as Grenier comes to the kernel of his understanding of creation. It is not the agonizing responsibility of the free, creative act, with its corollary, the destruction of possibility: but rather the moment of response to 'l'appel de la création, quelle qu'elle soit'. 'C'est l'appel à quelque chose qui demande à se développer, et si je suis fidèle à ce rai de lumière qui passe par les interstices de la porte je pourrai arriver à faire quelque chose; sinon tout me sera d'avance interdit' (AP, 260).¹⁷ The painful state of stagnation and creative impotence may be prolonged, but that is just the time when an 'élaboration intérieure' is taking place, a process of discipline which will ensure that the 'torrent créateur', when it comes, is channelled by a 'digue' (compare the 'filières' of *Les Grèves*) (AP, 263; G, 14, 302) and not simply wasted in ephemeral facility.

At this point it is fair to ask whether such a hypothesis corresponds to the actual experience of creative artists, and in the first place to the experience of Grenier himself. When he began to write in the 1920s he evidently had a certain facility. In a letter of 1925 Lambert commented on some of Grenier's early attempts at novel-writing: 'Ces limites, ces résistances: bénissez-les. Elles vous sauveront et vous les vaincrez. Bien entendu, je ne parle pas de *victoires* (qu'en feriez-vous), il s'agit de vaincre continuellement' (10 October 1925). At that stage Grenier had evidently not yet begun to impose a regular discipline of writing on himself, but that was to become increasingly important for him. In *Les Grèves* he attributes to 'un de mes amis' what is clearly his own pattern of working: a regular starting-time early in the morning, and a fixed number of pages to be written each day, regardless of the ease or difficulty with which inspiration comes. The important thing is to be in regular training (G, 251–52). In the *Entretiens avec Louis Foucher* he combines that emphasis with a complementary reference to the need to spark off an idea that can then be expressed by the technique which has been acquired through long practice. He

draws attention to the value of physical movement 'pour mettre en branle une imagination lente à s'émouvoir', and of music for encouraging the flow of ideas (*ELF*, 97, 104), so that his practice corresponds to what he says of the artist in his essay on Chagall: 'Il cherche les chocs, il les provoque, ces chocs qui peuvent le débarrasser de sa gangue.' Furthermore he points to one advantage of obstacles that may be encountered by chance:

Pour les essayistes il existe une ressource qui leur donne une impulsion: c'est la commande qui leur est faite ou l'enseignement qu'ils doivent donner. Le sujet qu'ils ont à traiter leur importe peu au fond. Mais ils y trouvent une occasion de parler de tout ce qui les touche. Comme ils ne peuvent avoir d'autres sujets qu'eux-mêmes, tous les prétextes leur sont bons . . . Pour leur égoïsme foncier, c'est une libération. (*ELF*, 98)

Here he is giving an important clue to the understanding and appreciation of his own criticism of art and literature. His lack of interest in his actual subject matter is of course grossly exaggerated, but it is certainly true that he is always writing about himself even when his subject is intrinsically interesting. He himself once admitted: 'En fin de compte j'ai écrit sur moi-même' (*ELF*, 91). In *L'Art et ses problèmes* the more personal section 'De la création' is sandwiched between the more objective studies 'L'Imitation et les principes de l'esthétique classique' and 'Du goût', and it is important to realize that Grenier is speaking from his own experience and not merely as a dilettante theorist.

He also appeals, in this sixth chapter of 'De la création', to the experience of other artists. The obvious objections to the rule of sheer hard work, such as the apparent instances of improvisation and of spontaneous creation, may be seen to represent only the final, visible stage of a similar process. Three painters from different traditions, Kuo Hi, Giotto and Ingres are cited in support of the principle of a long incubation within the artist of his work of art, however quickly it may appear to be executed. The artist, then, does have a responsibility to prepare himself — a very different kind of responsibility from that envisaged earlier, where the creator exercises a radical freedom in a total vacuum. The idea of responsibility that is now being developed, so far from overthrowing value, involves a double recognition of value. There is the value that lies behind the creative *appel*, and also the value of the artist himself, his past, his situation, his path, all of which together constitute the raw material which will, with preparation, form the *cadre* (although that term is not used here) for the 'torrent créateur' when it comes. Grenier sums up his understanding of creation on the human plane by saying: 'je ne crois pas que l'illumination soit incompatible avec la maturation, loin de là' (*AP*, 271).¹⁸ Both aspects are affirmed, and the apparent incompatibility is denied. Any further comment can only be a re-emphasis of some facet of that duality, and not a serious modification of it.

It is perhaps significant that neither Chapter 6 nor Chapter 7 was published separately in the *Nouvelle Revue française* in the wake of the first five chapters. They are more personal, less easily able to be presented as objective and analytical studies of various theories of artistic creation. In fact Chapter 7 is really a continuation of the previous chapter, although its subtitle, 'Le Construit', gives it a misleading appearance of forming a contrast to 'L'Instantané'. It is true that Grenier begins by expounding Poe's theory that creation is entirely deliberate and cerebral, but he soon brings the two aspects together: 'Sous l'instantané il y a une structure, et sous le construit il y a quelque chose d'improvisé.' He goes on to develop an idea that complements what he has said in the previous chapter, namely that, without prejudice to the emphasis placed on the hard work of preparation, 'il y a des moments privilégiés dans la vie de tous les hommes, des lieux privilégiés dans lesquels la réussite est plus aisée' (AP, 276). In the terms of the previous chapter, these moments and places would be important elements among those that go to make up the basic framework which it is the artist's duty to prepare and bring to maturity for the reception of the creative revelation. In the present very short chapter, only five pages in length, Grenier refers explicitly only to 'l'enfance et ses paysages', which certainly provided privileged moments and places for the creation of *Les Grèves* just as much as for Proust's *A la recherche du temps perdu*, but which do not exhaust the sources of his own inspiration. His *terre d'élection*, Provence, does not belong to his childhood at all. What he says about childhood, however, is equally applicable to later experiences: the idea of metamorphosis by 'le souvenir et . . . l'oubli' is not limited to the former. Grenier's point is a general one, and he ends his discussion of 'les modes positifs de la création' with a restatement of the importance, in human creation, of continuity and of the limited exploitation of a given body of material, thus underlining the links with his conception of Mediterranean humanism.

From 'De la création', then, there emerge two major views of creation. One is that of the 'acte créateur', the totally free and responsible human act that is a true creation. The other, much more fully developed though never totally ousting the first, is that of man's limited role over against his situation, on the one hand, and the Absolute, on the other. It is a role which consists in preparing and transforming his inheritance in such a way that he will be able to respond to the creative revelation when it comes and so be the agent of a limited but still valuable metamorphosis. The first view was familiar to Grenier not only from his study of Lequier but from his observation of Western thought during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, while the second is indebted to traditions as diverse as Hinduism, Western Scholasticism and 'la sagesse populaire de la Méditerranée'. That elements of all these should figure in a treatise on aesthetic theory is typical of Grenier's refusal to keep different

intellectual disciplines separate from each other and from the business of living.

It has already been shown that there is no divorce between the theory of 'De la création' and Grenier's own practice as a creative artist. Similar preoccupations have also been found in his criticism of fellow-artists. Not only in the *Essais sur la peinture contemporaine*,¹⁹ but also in his presentation of the Dalmatian painter Zoran Music (1970),²⁰ Grenier emphasizes the underlying continuity of the artist's inspiration. The initial spark comes from an emotion (just as for Grenier himself, according to his reply to Louis Foucher), and this gives way to a transposition, what he calls 'la stylisation et sa mise en œuvre' (*M*, 17). It is the artist's past, here described as 'la poussière impalpable des jours', that is the source of the work of art. Once it has been so absorbed by him that it truly exists within him he is free to recompose a world. It is his own world, and he is its creator, but yet 'il se garde de couper le cordon ombilical qui le relie à la Nature' (*M*, 21). There is an attachment which is vital, however great the independence of the artist's imagination may be. Similarly, in his earlier text for *Borès* (1961), Grenier says: 'Lorsque je prononce le mot d'arbitraire je ne dis pas tout à fait le mot juste. Il y a bien un élément de décision qui intervient, mais cette décision doit être prise de telle sorte qu'elle paraisse inéluctable.' Instinct is more than a random selection, and it is the right instinct that needs to be encouraged: 'Ce qu'il faut et qui ne comporte pas de règles, c'est saisir l'occasion qui se présente et transformer le pur hasard en chance' (*B*, 35-36). It is not a question of choosing between a philosophy of extreme determinism and one of equally extreme, radical freedom. In order to find a middle way it is not necessary to become a Hindu and subscribe to all the metaphysical hypotheses on which the concept of *karma* rests, although a familiarity with Hindu metaphysics may help the Westerner to escape from the too-rigid categories of thought in which he has been brought up. There is a 'point de jonction', and it is the point of artistic creation, known to all cultural traditions. This solution is not simply academic for Grenier: it is in the practice of his own vocation as a creative writer that he seeks to resolve the problem of freedom and choice.