

STYLISTIC DEVELOPMENT IN HUGO'S POETRY

The late M. Ferdinand Brunetière¹ attempted to divide Hugo's poetry into three distinct periods. According to this classification the first or *lyric* period includes his work in poetry down to, but not including, "Les châtiments." The earlier-written poems of "Les contemplations" fall in this division. The second period M. Brunetière designates as the *epic-satiric inspiration*, and it includes "Les châtiments" and the first "Légende des siècles." The third division is entitled the *apocalyptic inspiration*; it embraces the visionary poems of the exile period, and, generally speaking, all the poems of his later life.

M. Brunetière's division is more ingenious than serviceable. It expresses a half-truth, but it is too arbitrary and lacks definite precision. No transition in Hugo's poetry, for example, is more marked than that from his early pseudo-classic manner to the freer and less academic inspiration of his second period. Such an important transition Brunetière's classification neglects. It is of more practical benefit to the student of Hugo's poetry that he should have his attention called to certain definite features of Hugo's style which illustrate a gradual change in poetic method. The following division suggests itself as a plain statement of the facts:

I. THE EARLY OR ACADEMIC MANNER, represented by the "Odes" of 1822 and 1824. Here Hugo is dominated by the rhetorical methods of such pseudo-classicists as Lebrun, Delille, Lefranc de Pompignan, and Jean-Baptiste Rousseau. His style is therefore marked by the inversions, the periphrases, the apostrophes, and the set rhetorical epithets of eighteenth-century poetry. A certain vagueness and tendency to abstractness, so different from the concreteness and directness of his later poetry, is noticeable.

¹ "Manuel de l'histoire de la littérature française," Paris, Ch. Delagrave, 1898.