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# SCRUTINY

## A Quarterly Review

*Edited by*

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# MEASURE FOR MEASURE OR ANGLO-AMERICAN EXCHANGES

DR BETSKY, writing with an authority to which I cannot (and did not) pretend, while apparently taking me to task, confirms the main features of the situation to which my heterogeneous collection of 'documents' seemed to point. The charge of bordering on complacency, however, came as a disagreeable shock to me, the more so as it was made by one quite obviously without unfair animus. Indeed I would be content to submit to his courteous strictures without further comment did I not believe that by amplifying one or two of the points I tried to hint at rather than to make I could dispose of the complacency charge or at least isolate the area of difference in 'valuation' which may be detected in Dr Betsky's unambiguous (though occasionally it would seem, self-contradictory!) 'comment and reply' and may have provided the grounds for the wounding accusation. On the other hand, as I was not aware of exhibiting complacency in the 'Note', the taint may lie beyond my power to detect or eradicate. At the same time there is no doubt in my mind that complacency on either side would effectively prevent the understanding I believe can be reached and which would prove extremely beneficial to the English side (Dr Betsky is kind enough to suggest ways by which the benefits might become mutual) in Anglo-American exchanges at *Scrutiny* level.

In my note I referred to the possibility or desirability of 'civilization-wide unity'. It may help to clarify matters if I recall some of the relevant facts. Dr Betsky complained of the absence in the note of point-for-point comparison between the American and English 'scenes' and justifiably wondered from where I drew my comfort in reflecting on the literary world in such a centre as London. I simply took it for granted that English readers (for whom all my meagre scraps of borrowed information were intended) would supply the comparisons from the abundant stock of facts available to any reader of current English literary periodicals and what passes for literature in the judgment of the contributors to those periodicals. There is, notoriously, no comfort to be derived from even the most fragmentary acquaintance with the state of letters in England. Dr Betsky will have noted in the number of *Scrutiny* in which his comment appeared a reference to the 'embarrassment facing anyone who is concerned for the contemporary function of criticism'. The embarrassment is in part a measure of the relative success obtained in creating a public for whom there is no further need to amplify the analysis made in the

early numbers of *Scrutiny* of the system whereby our self-styled betterers virtually govern unchallenged through a network of 'interlocking directorates' But if none of the readers of this journal requires reviews of, say, the productions of Elizabeth Bowen, Graham Greene or V S Pritchett or needs reminding of the activity of these novelists in critical journalism, if the reader can supply his own comment on the phenomena connected with the recent canonization of the Sitwells, there is equally hardly a reader who does not meet in daily life with some evidence of the way in which the ramifications of the system choke his path and the extent to which in polite circles the *Scrutiny* opinion is still a minority opinion Nor are there wanting siren voices inviting one to make things easier all round 'After all, it is said, you have to recognize that we intellectuals (if you must use the word) are all in the same boat Faced with governmental indifference and the alienation of the masses, we should pull together We have the same concern for values (though we are less strident about it than you) And places could be found where your valuable contributions would resound to greater effect than in your self-chosen isolation' Polite rejection of these well-meant overtures earns the epithets 'humourless', 'narrow', 'Puritanical', 'presumptuous', 'intolerant', 'hypercritical', 'unattractive', 'lacking in charm' To fail to be impressed by Auden, Spender, Dylan Thomas *et hoc genus omne* and to say so in public is described as 'fouling the nest'

In these days of restricted travel it is less a matter of common knowledge that cultural exchanges between the various centres of our civilization (which may be defined geographically as the area covered by the sales of the English, Italian, German and French language editions of *Readers' Digest*) are largely in the hands of the very people who govern at home and their 'opposite numbers' in other lands A glance at the translations of English authors for sale in the bookshops of any foreign capital will reveal the channels through which contact with England is maintained Five minutes' conversation with a foreign 'intellectual' on his reading in modern English literature yields the same names even when the foreigner himself goes to the originals The 'coverage' of English literature in foreign reviews, when not entrusted to an English representative of the 'system', is regularly inspired by the dominating group Of course there are exceptions I have been approached quizzically by cultivated foreigners with, 'Is Mr Morgan (or Mr Spender or any other fashionable name among the literary people who visit foreign capitals privately or as delegates) *really* the best you have to offer?'—or 'Can you explain to me just *what* makes Rosamund Lehmann (or Elizabeth Bowen or I Compton-Burnett) a distinguished writer?' It is striking that authors of greater interest, if not carried by our distinguished travellers in literary wares, remain unknown abroad The foreigner does not spontaneously prefer, say, Graham Greene to L H Myers He hears only of the former and takes him as representative of the best the English can manage in the 'philosophical novelist's' line It is equally striking

that, as a general rule, our literary travellers bring home wares similar to those they have recommended abroad

The bearing of these facts on any attempts made on behalf of *Scrutiny* to establish fruitful relations with other centres will be obvious. It has become extremely difficult to discover who are the significant authors in any foreign country and it is almost hopeless to expect a disinterested examination of our own authors by foreign critics. What can still be done is, perhaps to study the intellectual climate in the centres that characterize our civilization. The significant varieties which may be discovered not only enrich our sense of the values we strive to keep alive at home, but provide a measure by which we can see ourselves as more or less removed from an ideal centre. It may be true that the foreigner could profit by noting what is written in *Scrutiny* of the situation in England. I hardly think it likely that our 'foreign coverage' would prove enlightening to the native on the spot and it has certainly never been offered with such immodest pretensions.

That the U.S.A. presents for us the significant variety from studying which we are most likely to derive profit in the ways I have just outlined, has long been my conviction, and to judge by the volumes of *Scrutiny* it would seem that a similar conviction is pretty generally shared by *Scrutiny's* editors and contributors. The study of the cultural history of literary America would still be profitable even if we had not such admirable helps as are provided by Henry Adams, Henry James, Edith Wharton, George Santayana and Malcolm Cowley (My 'note' was partly intended to point out the need for a continuation down to the present of *Exile's Return*). Contact with America is equally vital for the other reason I mentioned. We look to the lively critics in that country to tell us when our Emperor is naked. In the article to which Dr Betsky referred I wrote, 'One of the happiest features of *New Republic* reviews for English readers is their immunity from respect for established English values'. America has long since ceased to accept dictation of its values from a London group, however powerful the hold of such a group on the moulding of opinion in England. Yet, I had to report in the same article, 'there is observable a distressing tendency to take over Bloomsbury values without question'. That was in 1939. Since then Edmund Wilson and others have shown that critical independence is possible.

Dr Betsky, however, warns us against expecting too much. Whereas (he says in effect) the American critic is much livelier and much more devastating than the English critic when faced with an obviously immature American writer, when faced with an obviously immature English writer, such as Stephen Spender, writers for *Scrutiny* would note in American magazines the uncertainty of evaluative judgment. Why is this? Can it be that the English writer derives prestige in American eyes from crossing the Atlantic accompanied, as it were, by the echoes of a chorus of praising English critics? The American publishers would seem to think so. At least, a writer in *The Hudson Review* reports that, 'Along with

Mr Graham Greene's new novel, Viking has supplied a booklet of gratuitous information for reviewers, on the cover of which, bordered by a bilious grey-green, is a sepia portrait of the novelist. Inside, a number of his English colleagues make liberal use of the adjective 'great'. The American publisher's advertisement of *The Song of the Cold* by Dr Edith Sitwell (taken from *Partisan Review*) quotes from a review by John Lehmann (her English publisher) in the *New York Times Book Review Horizon*, it will be recalled, sponsored the 'British Edition' of *Partisan Review*. The November 1948 number (American edition) of *Partisan Review* might be considered, with only slight exaggeration, an 'American edition' of *Horizon*. It contains an extract from an autobiographical work in progress<sup>1</sup> by Stephen Spender (reminiscences among other things of Auden at Oxford) and an extract entitled 'The Creative Life in Our Time' from a longer correspondence between Elizabeth Bowen, Graham Greene and V S Pritchett. Further parallels under the heading 'Over here—over there' might be made. For instance, the reviewer in the *Times Literary Supplement* of F O Matthiessen's second, revised and enlarged, edition of *The Achievement of T S Eliot* writes 'the book, in spite of revision, seems here and there out of touch with present opinion. For instance, it is no longer usual to cite Miss Edith Sitwell as an example of the less effective aspects of modern poetry. Whether the rest of America has moved with the (English) times I have not yet heard. The only 'document' I have to hand is a photograph taken from an American magazine<sup>2</sup> showing Dr Edith and Sir Osbert Sitwell sitting in a New York bookshop and, as the caption tells us, receiving the homage, not only of the only other Englishman present, Mr Spender, but also of a group of American poets and poetesses, including Mr Auden, and with one of the two associate editors of *Partisan Review* in the foreground. The December 1948 number of *Partisan Review* contains a report of an interview with Sir Osbert, which if it is not an elaborate *mystification*, will surely have astonished Dr Betsy. Since the English public has failed to support the 'British edition' of this journal and many *Scrutiny* readers will not have access to this number, I append a few snippets 'his autobiography is one of the most highly personal documents since Rousseau's *Confessions*, though without any of its indiscretions. 'At fifty-six he is a very imposing figure. Tall and slightly stooped, he has a dignity and calm, which, at the cost of a cliché, can only be

<sup>1</sup>*The Life of Literature*

<sup>2</sup>*Life*, Dec 6th, 1948—in which we read (it may as a matter of curiosity be recorded) 'Edith is a candidate to succeed John Masfield as Poet Laureate, Osbert is literary adviser to Queen Elizabeth. In her book *The Song of the Cold* Edith takes her place among the topmost modern poets. With the just-published fourth volume of his autobiography, *Laughter in the Next Room*, Sir Osbert has not only hit the American best-seller list, but has also produced a classic chronicle of an amazing family'

described as Olympian' Sir Osbert's views, as reported, are in keeping, but this is not the place to reproduce them. The interviewer concludes, 'Whatever one's personal assessment of his judgments it is impossible not to admire a man who, both in his work and in his personal life, has fought so hard and with such pleasing results for standards above the common' (If this is the American equivalent of *pace sans rivre*, I must stand convicted of lack of appreciation)

Dr. Betsky will accuse me of a frivolous want of balance (there have, to my knowledge, been voices on the other side) if I continue at this level. Our area of difference does not begin *here*. Before approaching nearer, however, I should like to touch on a further observation concerning *Scrutiny*. 'It has failed in recent years to report American poetry and novels'. This failure was not due to contemptuous neglect. There were material difficulties, of course, during the war years. But reading was done 'with a view to reporting' during those years and yet no reviews appeared. Here I must confine myself to my own share. Of the novels and stories that came my way (with the exception of *Go down Moses*) not one seemed to me worthy of special mention and the list included *All the King's Men* and *The Middle of the Journey*, which I single out as having, in my opinion, been praised in both countries well above their merits. As for poetry, I can only wonder how much of the output of the last ten years Dr. Betsky will find himself re-reading in ten years' time.

When I come to Dr. Betsky's long list of critics (itself, apparently, a short selection) my embarrassment reaches its height. I can't pretend not to be acquainted with most of the names he puts forward. Indeed favourable mention has been made of some of them in these pages. Fortunately, I can refer Dr. Betsky to the article in the last number of *Scrutiny* by his distinguished com-patriot for a placing of one, at least, and not the least prominent, of these figures. For the rest, I can only appeal to Dr. Betsky to institute relevant comparisons in the light of his own sober critical standards. Does he not, for instance, detect an enormous difference in the quality of Edmund Wilson's criticism and that of, say, John Berryman? Perhaps Dr. Betsky was over-insistent in the face of my apparent complacency? It is no easier to engage on the merits of American literary periodicals. If we balance American and English periodicals off against each other, the *Virginia Quarterly* against, say, *The Nineteenth Century* or *The Dublin Review*, etc., and proceed to exhaustion, are we left with anything beyond *The Kenyon* and *The Sewanee*? Of the other reviews I have seen, *The Hudson*, for instance, does not seem so far to have found a *raison d'être*. In surveying the journals I know I put to myself two simple questions. In the course of a year or so, how often has a challenging and convincing critical article appeared or how often a piece of model criticism that could be placed with profit in the hands of students? The *Nation* does not come at all well out of this test.

Once through this awkward Scylla and Charybdis which I saw no possibility of evading we emerge into a larger field of appreciation. Dr Betsky does not seem to guess with what *brotherly* feelings his account of the plight of the American intellectual will be read by many *Scrutiny* readers, particularly those who have lived in environments where the money pressure is intense or where the contempt for the schoolmaster's career is extreme. (Of course, one comparatively hopeful conclusion does emerge. If some of the best of our younger critics have been formed in spite of unpropitious surroundings, part of the credit must go to English educational institutions, richly as they may have deserved Dr Betsky's strictures.) Dr Betsky has largely *done* what I merely intended. He has shown that the plight of the intellectual is indeed similar in both countries and that advantages and disadvantages lie on both sides of the Atlantic. Now that I have (I hope) indicated how little I feel that English people have cause for self-congratulation I should like briefly to refer to the indebtedness, large and extensive, already incurred towards the free, generous, disinterested spirit of enquiry exhibited by the best American writers. It is in a sense 'academic' to enquire whether fruitful two-way contacts can be made. They *have been* made, as can be seen from the excellent articles by Americans in *Scrutiny* and the contributions of *Scrutiny* writers to American periodicals.

If I may be allowed to 'clinch' the argument by a particular case I would refer to the review by Jerome Salzman of Mr Bentley's selection from *Scrutiny*. Mr Salzman, while unequivocally welcoming the 'revaluations' of established classics, draws the line and tries to explain away the unflattering treatment of Auden, Connolly, Virginia Woolf, etc. Yet (I should have thought) the same critical insight and power of discrimination were at work in dealing with past as with contemporary writers. If the critic spontaneously recognizes merit in one set of articles, surely also in the other—? It would be the same with the most challenging questioning of the articles on established classics. The same fruitful and valuable challenge should be given, one would think, in the field where we have no established values to fall back on, where first-hand judgment alone can help. We look to America for a courageous consistency and disinterested handling.

I have left for final consideration a point surprisingly not made by Dr Betsky. One of the great services which might be expected of a country so rapidly renewing itself at every moment would be the emergence of a fresh point of view. The critics in both countries now at the height of their powers received the decisive shocks from, let us say, D. H. Lawrence and T. S. Eliot. Naturally, the very much inferior work of the poets and novelists who first appeared in the thirties was judged severely by men and women who had come to maturity partly by living through the work of these greater figures. The function of criticism during those years involved rejection by the standards set up in that earlier time of the great mass of subsequent literary output. I have not heard a convincing



appeal against the broad lines of this rejection. But the critical faculties are undoubtedly numbed by constant repudiation and there is a danger (which we can never safely ignore) that the emergence of genuine new talent might be overlooked. Again, the successful application of a critical method calls for increasing vigilance as the years pass. The capacity for self-criticism has its limits however resolutely practised. Why should the graftings and cross-fertilizations not come from the America one senses over the horizon? The process need not be strictly dialectic, but perhaps by the application, in a sort, of, measure for measure?

H A MASON

## THE COLLOQUIAL MODE OF BYRON

### I

IT would be conceded by most critics that the poems in which Byron made his most substantial contribution to literature are *Beppo*, *A Vision of Judgement*, and *Don Juan*. All three exhibited a new tone that struck and charmed Byron's readers from the first. Jeffrey did an excellent job of isolating this tone in his review of *Beppo* in the *Edinburgh Review* for February 1818. Remarking enthusiastically on the style, he says that its ease and gaiety imply

the existence of certain habits of dissipation, derision, and intelligence in general society. It is perfectly distinct both from the witty, epigrammatic and satirical vein, in which Pope will never be surpassed—or equalled, and from the burlesque, humourous and distorted style which attained its greatest height in *Hudibras*. The style of which we are speaking is, no doubt, occasionally satirical and witty and humorous—but it is on the whole far more gay than poignant, and it is characterized, exactly as good conversation is, rather by its constant ease and amenity, than by any traits either of extraordinary brilliancy, or of strong and ludicrous effect. The great charm is in the simplicity and naturalness of the language—the free but guarded use of all polite idioms, and even of all phrases of temporary currency that have the stamp of good company on them.

This is excellent criticism from a man whose merits are sometimes obscured, and it is criticism that Mr. Bottrall (who seems to have been unacquainted with the Jeffrey review) writing in *The Criterion* in 1938 could do little more than substantiate and enlarge in his essay entitled 'Byron and the Colloquial Tradition in English

Poetry' The author of *Beppo* (Byron had published it anonymously) has presented us, Jeffrey had said, with 'about one hundred stanzas of good verse, entirely composed of common words, in their common places, never presenting us with one sprig of what is called poetical diction, or even making use of a single inversion, either to raise the style or assist the rhyme—but running on in an inexhaustible series of good, easy colloquial phrases, and finding them fall into verse by some unaccountable and happy fatality To Jeffrey the tone of *Beppo* had seemed a complete innovation (—unique we rather think in our language'), and the nearest approach to it he could think of was Prior, Peter Pindar, or Moore in the facetious vein

It is an unusual thing about much Byron criticism that having isolated predominant virtues in Byron's work, sometimes with a good deal of sensitivity as in the Jeffrey review, critics have had a tendency to look upon these qualities as an anomaly in the English tradition Byron's apparent intractability is partly due to the impact of his personality on the somewhat narrow imagination of much traditional criticism rather than to the impact of his actual poetry on a responsive sensibility Despite what the vaunters of the Italian influence may hint to the contrary, his poetry is intensely English, but a shock like that felt by Scrope Davies and Byron's estimable friend John Cam Hobhouse, when the first cantos of *Don Juan* reached England (a shock that was to be widely and deeply shared), seems somehow to have implanted the persistent idea that there is something slightly alien about Byron's modes of feeling Even Matthew Arnold's admirable estimate is influenced when he sees Byron so largely against a background of continental evaluations, and sets him up as so largely the opponent of British Philistinism With Arnold on Byron I should not wish to quarrel, but his emphasis does underline the situation And Mr Eliot is in the tradition (but on the whole, less amiably) when he writes in his essay on Byron 'He was right in making the hero of his house-party a Spaniard, for what he [Byron I take it, not Don Juan] understands and dislikes about English society is very much what an intelligent foreigner in the same position would understand and dislike' Yes but surely an intelligent Englishman also This remark of Eliot's is enlightening from several points of view, but it also suggests that Byron doesn't quite 'belong' The snub is gentle (perhaps *not* when read in the full context), but it is effective

What occurs in Byron criticism occurs also in much Byron scholarship Mr Claude M Fues in his *Lord Byron as a Satirist in Verse* is typical when he writes that *Beppo* may be taken as marking the turning point between the old era of Augustan influence, and the new one to come 'It is significant', he continues, 'that this poem is written, not in the characteristically English heroic couplet, but in the thoroughly foreign ottava rima Responsive to an altered and agreeable environment, Byron found in Italy and its literature an inspiration which affected him more profoundly than it had Goethe only a few decades before The results of this

influence, shown to some extent in his dramas though more decidedly in his satires, justify terming the years from 1817 until his death his Italian period. A mere mention of its contribution to satire indicates its importance: it produced *Beppo*, *A Vision of Judgement*, and *Don Juan*. But Fues then rather amusingly admits 'we may feel convinced that Byron drew from the Italian satirists something of their general tone, and yet be unable to clarify our general reasons for this belief or to frame them into an effective argument. Of such a sort, indeed, is much of the influence which Pulci, Berni, and Casti had on Byron. It is vague and evasive

In line with the Italian 'influences' one other may be mentioned, and it must be confessed that Byron himself is largely responsible. In 1817 he wrote to Murray 'Mr Whistlecraft has no greater admirer than myself. I have written a story in 89 stanzas, in imitation of him, called *Beppo*'. The poem in question was, of course, John Hookham Frere's wooden and worthless *Prospectus and Specimen of an Intended National Work* purportedly written by the brothers Whistlecraft. Since Frere was a student of the Italian burlesque writers this admiration of Byron's has been seized on by a good many scholars for anything they can make of it, with the result that Byron's greatest works are coupled in print with a title that can do little more than obfuscate their real merits and hide their real intentions. This is not to say that Frere's work, his use of ottava rima for example, may not have been suggestive to Byron, but his usefulness was mechanical and it has been critically misleading.

Against this background Mr Bottrall's attempt to insist on the traditional English quality in Byron must evoke sympathy. But Jeffrey in noting the sharp distinction between Byron and Pope had been perfectly right. It is therefore unfortunate that in setting up what he calls a 'colloquial tradition' for the purpose of securing Byron firmly to native bedrock Mr Bottrall runs the tradition from Dryden through Pope. He makes the best of the case by emphasizing *not* Byron's couplet poems, where the evidence would be weakest, but the later, richly colloquial poems. Yet his argument, when carefully considered, is not equal to the force of Mr F. R. Leavis's note in *Revaluation*. 'The eighteenth century element in him, says Mr Leavis of Byron, 'is essential to his success, and yet has at the same time the effect of bringing out how completely the Augustan order has disintegrated'.

In the following pages I wish to go a little further and suggest that Byron not only represents the deterioration of the Augustan order, but that his colloquialism (that aspect of his genius which is of interest here) sideskirts the Augustan Age altogether, and refers back to *certain* Caroline poets. One may as well begin one's argument by freely admitting that had Dryden and Pope never written we might not have *Beppo* and *Don Juan*. But that would not be because Byron was using effects taught him by the Augustans. Pope was a stimulant on Byron's imagination, but they belong to

different orders. There is very little eighteenth-century influence in Byron (if one excepts the couplet poems which used to be grossly over-estimated), but more important Byron came to write a kind of poetry with which Pope's manner could not consort except in a superficial and disengaging way.

If Dryden and Pope had not written we might not have *Beppo* and *Don Juan* but the language had already arrived somewhat earlier than Dryden at a stage of sophistication equal to achieving effects that we recognize as characteristically Byronic in those two poems. Any language can be perfectly equated, of course, *only* with the contemporary life for which it speaks, but the advances in language which *Don Juan* represents over these early poems (which must be examined later) should be accounted a personal achievement on Byron's part for what Dryden and Pope added to increase the resonance of those specific colloquial effects the earlier poets had invented was of a general nature—a broad deepening of the resources of language. Without knowing it Byron was in touch with a remoter vein than he supposed, and so if one cannot agree with Mr Bottrall's 'colloquial tradition' one need not thereby suppose that the peculiar success of *Don Juan* is an anomaly except insofar as that term is applicable to every original work of art. It may just be possible to show that, after all, Byron *does* 'belong'.

## II

But here I should like to take out several pages parenthetically for general comment. Mr Bottrall's use of the phrase 'colloquial tradition', engenders a moment of hesitation and doubt. When he mentions on the second page of his essay that Langland, Skelton, Chaucer, Dunbar, Henryson, Donne, Herbert, Dryden, Pope, Hopkins, Eliot, and Pound are in *some* of their poetry, colloquial, one certainly agrees—but hastens to question if the phrase does not embody a paralyzing inclusiveness insofar as literary criticism is concerned. By appearing more exact and narrow than it is it might easily prove misleading, and one reflects that Mr Bottrall himself has constructed a line (Dryden, Pope, and Byron) on the strength of what seem superficial colloquial resemblances.

The fact is that whenever a language achieves a high degree of sophistication in a particular mode, an ease and assurance in saying those things which the civilization it speaks for thinks most worth saying, that language has a centrifugal tendency to fly outward towards colloquialism and freedom. But there are as many different kinds of freedom as there are different kinds of language. Colloquialism isolated from the conventional language structure over which it plays has little interest or vitality. Its value lies in the peculiar illumination, the subtlety of emphasis it brings to the underlying forms and tropes of language at any given time, and the colloquial tone is continuously re-defined through a span of time by changes in these conventions. For if the colloquial character has certain principles that remain more or less constant, there is

ceaseless change going on within the structures of language, in reaction to which colloquialism has its being. It might be objected that this is partly a verbal difficulty. Possibly for I do not think that Mr Bottrall's term is useless, but dangerous. The essential gist of my objection could be stated like this. A colloquial tone or rhythm always has specific reference to the *particular state of the language* (and the vast theatre that phrase implies) with which it is taking liberties, its reference to its own continuous tradition is only a glancing one. In other words. The moment of operation for the colloquial mode is an insistent present with very little of the past inheritable *under its own name*.

The best way of seeing how particular restraints and the particular freedoms generated by them produce entirely new colloquial overtones is to examine some one poem in which the process can be observed. I have chosen Richard Lovelace's, unusual and beautiful 'La Bella Bona-Roba' for that purpose here, but I am alive to some objections that might be raised against the choice. For example, it follows the rhythm of the thinking rather than of the speaking voice—at least to some extent. However, I am not convinced that this distinction cuts deep, and it may be disregarded for the present purpose.

I cannot tell who loves the skeleton  
Of a poor marmoset, naught but bone, bone  
Give me a nakedness with her clothes on

Such whose white-satin upper coat of skin  
Cut upon velvet rich incarnadin,  
Has yet a body (and of flesh) within

Sure it is meant good husbandry in men,  
Who do incorporate with aery lean,  
T'repair their sides, and get their rib again

Hard hap unto that huntsman that decrees  
Fat joys for all his sweat, whenas he sees  
Afer his 'say, naught but his keeper's fees

Then, Love, I beg, when next thou takst thy bow,  
Thy angry shafts, and dost heart-hunting go,  
Pass rascal deer, strike me the largest doe

There is a curiously modern flavour about some of the above stanzas (one even thinks vaguely of the American poet, Wallace Stevens, though he could do nothing as fine), and possibly only then does it become clear how essentially different in structure, and consequently in the quality of delight offered, this poem is from anything that could be written to-day. Its deceptive modernity is based on the movement of the thought (almost stream-of-consciousness) through the words in such a way that there is an intimate familiarity bred between thought and speech convention, but these conventions mould the form of the familiarity, the

intimacy, what one dares call the 'colloquialism', to a countenance that is not at all 'modern' This interplay should be scrutinized closely

Consider the reflective repetition of 'bone' in Stanza 1 The slight elevation of tone in the first line is at once brought into intimate touch with the thought as that reflective repetition accurately reproduces the pattern of the thought's operation The singularity of the opening figure, 'skeleton of a poor marmoset', has a strangeness that is acceptable at once because it is so profoundly personal In the hands of a modern poet such a figure would have strong Imagist tendencies as in Stevens's

Above the forest of the parakeets,  
A parakeet of parakeets prevails,  
A pip of life amid a mort of tails

But Lovelace's figure is not devised, and it is not artificial, either in our pejorative modern sense or in the Elizabethan sense of a made thing showing craft It is organic in the poem as a whole, for it is in this opening figure that one strongly feels the whole poem has its origin Its effects are everywhere, and not least in the magnificent immediacy of the third line In the second, third, and fourth stanzas the rhythm continues to mirror the activity of the working mind with considerable subtlety, and the terse directness the 'colloquial' spareness, of many of the words is effective Several of the figures are of a somewhat homely variety, but woven with sureness into the courtly fabric Thus, 'Fat joys for all his sweat', 'T'repair their sides', and 'keeper's fees' look back to the best imagery in Jacobean dramatic writing These middle stanzas are certainly colloquial if one is permitted to define 'colloquial' as an effective, familiarly free gallantry of language with its own syntactical and decorous proprieties But with Stanza 5 the real reason for taking this poem of Lovelace's as a good example of the point to be made becomes apparent Stanza 5 represents a decided shift in imagery The sinuosities of personal thought are here ironed out in a highly conventional development But Stanza 2, one now recognizes, had represented an anticipation of this conventional resolution, and in Stanza 5 one has the delicious recognition that one has already been prepared for this change in tone And vice versa the *new tone* looks backward in retrospect across the preceding stanzas until it locks hands with Stanza 2 and so exerts its authority, humbling the intervening 'colloquialism' to a different and new cast or expression The transitions (and *effective* colloquialism is largely a matter of transitions, even if they are only implicitly present) have a perfect understanding of the whole situation The conventional 'white-satin upper coat of skin' and the conventional clothes images have been pre-cursors of the exquisite double pun in 'heart-hunting' and 'rascal deer'—exquisite of course, chiefly in this context For the highly artificial pun has been approached down avenues of murmuring colloquialisms that have induced a mood in the reader which, now focusing

on the deftly introduced 'rascal', transforms this closing device, so uncolloquial in itself, into something intimately felt

Even should one be inclined to cavil at the application of 'colloquial' to this poem, preferring to reserve this term for something in a more strenuous manner, the pattern of restraint and freedom which lies at the heart of colloquialism is very evident here, and it may become apparent later on that certain other Caroline writers, by coarsening this mode and using it to encompass other intentions, wrote verse that sounds strangely pre-Byronic. But in self-justification I had better say here that I am not setting up an opposing 'colloquial tradition' from the Carolines through, let us say Butler, to Byron. But by understanding the mode in which these pre-cursors (to use a weighted word) of Byron were functioning it should be easier to approach a proper reading of *Don Juan*. And this is difficult as long as one thinks of it in an Augustan colloquial tradition.

### III

Just who were these 'pre-cursors'? One takes a hint from Saintsbury. Writing on the minor Caroline poets in the *Cambridge History of English Literature* he came to treat of that almost forgotten poet Sir Francis Kynaston, who died in 1642 shortly after publishing his long (more or less mock-) heroic poem, *Leoline and Sydams*. Referring to this poem, Saintsbury offers it qualified approval and remarks that it 'presents an early, a fairly original and a very interesting anticipation of "Whistlecraft" and *Don Juan*' (One may forget 'Whistlecraft' without more ado). The poem has been reprinted only once since its original publication when Saintsbury included it in the second volume of his edition of *Minor Caroline Poets*. Turning to it there one finds a poem in which the colloquial element is used in a manner closer to Byron's than Dryden and Pope ever used it. The colloquialism has a certain raffishness that although concentrated, never moves with a sense of corrective point, and its brand of negligence is more easy and more disreputable than was common with either Dryden (if we except the Comedies) or Pope. The poem has 3381 lines written in Rime Royal and while it presents a sustained performance, the tone throughout is not always consistent with remarks I shall make about the passages quoted. And even when it seems nearest to *Don Juan* it does little more than provide a substantial base on which the greatest Byronic colloquial effects in verse were to be achieved. If these finest effects of Byron's poetry could be explained in terms of other writers they would not be worth explaining at all. In his essay on Byron Eliot quotes as 'first-rate' the following stanza from *Don Juan*:

He from the world had cut off a great man  
 Who in his time had made heroic bustle  
 Who in a row like Tom could lead the van,  
 Booze in the ken, or at the spellkin bustle?

Who queer a flat? Who (spite of Bow-Street's ban)  
 On the high toby-spice so flash the muzzle?  
 Who on a lark with black-eyed Sal (his blowing)  
 So prime, so swell, so nutty, and so knowing

Eliot rightly calls this something new in English verse, but the following stanzas from *Leoline and Sydamis* sound very much like Byron's manner in the earlier cantos where he has been writing at somewhat lower pressure

## XXIII

But to the matter shortly now to go,  
 That day the Prince did wed his beauteous bride,  
 As then the custom was, he did bestow  
 Rich scarfs, and points and many things beside  
 Which in fine curious knots were knit and tied,  
 And as his royal favours, worn by those  
 Whom he to grace his royal nuptials chose

## XXIV

Favours are oft, unhappily, by chance  
 Bestow'd for 'mongst those courtiers that did wear  
 The Prince's points, a Marquess was of France,  
 Who for some heinous fact he had done there,  
 Hang'd in effigie, fled from France for fear,  
 And so for refuge to Carleon came,  
*Monsieur Marquis Jean Foutre* was his name

## XXV

Who though he had a farnee face,  
 Thereto a bedstaff leg and a splay foot,  
 By angry nature made in man's disgrace,  
 Which no long slop, nor any ruffled boot  
 Could mend, or hide, for why they could not do't,  
 Though his mouth were a wide world without end,  
 His shape so ugly as no art could mend—

## XXVI

Although his weatherwise autumnal joints,  
 As if they wanted Nature's ligaments,  
 Did hang together, as if tied by points,  
 Though most deformed were his lineaments,  
 Yet fouler was his mind, and base intents  
 His matchless impudence which appeared in this,  
 That he made love to beauteous Sydamis

## XXVII

So by the canker-worm the fragrant rose  
 Is tainted so the serene wholesome air  
 By black contagion, pestilential grows,  
 As she by this base wretch who thought to impair  
 The chastity of one so matchless fair,



But his foul base intents being once detected,  
Were with all scorn and just disdain rejected

## XXVIII

In dire revenge thereof, that day the bands  
Were made between Prince Leoline and his bride,  
As the Arch-flaman joined had their hands,  
And made them one, which no man ought divide  
Upon the Prince's point this catiff tied  
A magic knot, and muttered a spell  
Which had an energetic force from hell

## XXIX

For by it was he maleficated,  
And quite depriv'd of all ability  
To use a woman, as shall be related,  
For Nature felt an imbecility,  
Extinguishing in him virility  
The sad events whereof to set before ye  
Is as the dire Praeludium to our story

It will not perhaps, be necessary to set a parallel passage from *Don Juan* beside Kynaston at this point, for the resemblances are fairly insistent, but certain characteristics may be commented on. There is for example, the explicit impatience of the opening line, the familiar easy references to images of fashion and dress, the casually introduced morality which the speaker *pretends* to take seriously ('Who for some heinous fact . . .', 'Yet fouler was his mind and base intents', etc), the coined words ('farinee' is coined from the now obsolete *farnous*, and here means mealy-faced), the impertinent descriptions ('bedstaff leg', 'Did hang together as if tied by points', etc), the affected gravity ('In dire revenge thereof'), the irreverence (in the liturgical echo from 'his mouth were a wide world without end'), the double rhymes with their impudent emphases, the burlesque quality (*Monsieur Marquis Jean Foutre* was his name', and the action of the whole piece), the feigned and over-stated veneration for young females, resulting (when viewed in a larger context than the present quotation) in a poised cynicism towards romantic love, the ribaldry that masquerades as a sense of decorum. All these things add up to other more broadly significant resemblances. There is, for example, the vigorous sweep of the narrative, its jaunty and extravagant rhythm that recognizes no obstacles in the telling. Turning back to the opening of this paper to re-read Jeffrey's comment on *Beppo* one finds his description of that poem applies almost equally well to this passage from *Leoline and Sydamis*, and it is a passage that has many counterparts in the poem.

Despite these resemblances, however, and despite Kynaston's well-known admiration for *Troilus and Criseyde* (which explains the *Rime Royal*), the tone of the colloquialism is Carolinian. If the writing here is much broader, the intentions much coarser, than in

Lovelace's poem, the free speech rhythms and the courtly conventions nevertheless interact in somewhat the same way as in 'La Bella Bona-Roba Stanza XXVII is a good place to examine this interaction

The first two lines of the stanza are good in their own right—conventionally pretty 'The serene wholesome air' recalls one of Kynaston's best short poems which begins

Do not conceal thy radiant eyes  
The starlight of serenest skies

But if for a moment in the first two lines of Stanza XXVII, Kynaston wishes to sound a note that is seriously effective in the Carolinian lyric convention, it is for the purpose of achieving a quite other effect in the stanza as a whole. From the third line there is a growing Spenserian heaviness in the imagery which I am sure is conscious and deliberate (for Kynaston was above all a *conscious* artist). One passes through 'black contagion', 'pestilential', and 'base wretch', until one can no longer doubt when we get to 'The beauty of one so matchless fair'. Having coarsened the beauty of his own Carolinian voice as it exists in the first two lines, he makes it progressively vulnerable to the light burlesque attack in the closing couplet, in which, had it been written by Byron, some critics might have detected an eighteenth-century overtone.

This control of Kynaston's over the verse of his own day, and a day preceding his own is the means by which he achieves, on occasion ironical effects of considerable delicacy. The opening stanza of *Leoline and Sydanis* may be quoted

Fortunes of Kings, enamour'd Prince's loves,  
Who erst from Royal ancestors did spring,  
Is the high subject that incites and moves  
My lowly voice in lofty notes to sing  
Of Leoline, son to a mighty King,  
And of a Princess, Sydanis the fair,  
Who were the world's incomparable pair

The heaviness of that heroic, epic beginning is turned aside with delightful knowingness in the metrical shift of 'incomparable'. But in order to appreciate what Sir Francis has done here one should pick up Milton and read (preferably aloud) the opening of *Paradise Lost*

The remarkable thing about Kynaston's use of such conventions is that the irony with which he transforms them into something new is invariably a sweet irony. The Spenserian influence in the following stanza becomes in his hands something new, and yet a good deal of the old Spenserian beauty remains under the warmth of the poet's courteous humour. The stanza describes the ocean-going chariot of Queen Amphitrite, surrounded by twelve Sea-Nymphs

Here I should<sup>8</sup> tell you how this glorious Queen  
 Sate in a chariot, no man's eye e'er saw  
 So rare a one, her robes were of sea-green,  
 Her coach four Hippopotami did draw,  
 Who fear'd no gust, nor tempests angry flaw  
 But to describe things now I cannot stand,  
 I haste to finish what I have in hand

Kynaston worked out his style from Chaucer and Spenser, fusing them together in a particular way under Carolinian pressures. Byron, of course, did not like Spenser, and he told Leigh Hunt (who did like him) that he couldn't read *The Faerie Queene*, but that may have been for the pleasure of contradicting Hunt. At any rate, there is an occasional passage in *Don Juan* in which the effects of Spenser on the language may be felt, remote certainly, but as a not entirely unlocalizable impact. The description of Norman Abbey (XIII, 56 to 62) is such a passage. There is no need to make anything of this fact since the influence is probably quite indirect, but it is interesting to observe that the sources that shaped Kynaston's style in the seventeenth century can still be traced in fossil form in *Don Juan*.

I do not wish to suggest that *Leohne and Sydamis* would seem tractable or even agreeable reading to most people, except perhaps in patches. Mr Douglas Bush in his *English Literature in the Earlier Seventeenth Century* says that it recalls the plots of Shakespeare's comedy and Shakespeare's sources. This is certainly true, but it also manages to suggest, by the recurrent colloquialism of its style and rhythm, specifically contemporary concerns. In a stanza by stanza commentary that Kynaston wrote on *Troilus and Criseyde* (and which, from a few extracts I have seen printed in a book-seller's announcement in 1796, appears to have a good deal of critical interest)<sup>1</sup> he observed 'Some do not improbably conjecture that Chaucer, in writing the loves and lives of Troilus and Criseyde, did rather glance at some private persons, as one of King Edward the third's sons, and a lady of the court, his paramour, than follow Homer, Dares Phrygius, or any author writing the history of those times'. It is impossible not to suppose, the texture and tone in parts of Kynaston's own poem being what they are, that he did not have Charles' court steadily in view.

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<sup>1</sup>In the opening note of his Commentary Kynaston gives an amusing glimpse, which I have never seen quoted anywhere, 'of my most learned and celebrated friend Mr Ben Johnson', reading 'a most ancient Grammar written in the Saxon tongue and character'. Kynaston has sometimes been ridiculed for translating *Troilus and Criseyde* into Latin rime royal, but it is important to remember that he was not playing tricks: he was seriously attempting to gain a wider audience for Shakespeare among the educated, and his Commentary makes it clear that he had a profound respect for Chaucer's original language that prevented him from turning it into contemporary English as Dryden was to do later.

Although the poem was published in 1642 it had probably been written several years before. As esquire of the body to Charles I Kynaston would have been in the midst of talk and curiosity about the fashionable Platonic Love that the Queen had introduced from France (Davenant wrote his *Platonic Lovers* soon after, in 1635 and literary repercussions were general, as the most casual acquaintance with the writers of the day will indicate). One of the main themes in the plot of *Leokne and Sydamis* was introduced in Stanzas XXVIII and XXIX quoted above, and this theme is obviously intended as a broad burlesque on the court fashion. If additional evidence is needed one might read the three rather dull stanzas beginning with number XLV in which the symptoms of Platonic Love are carefully anatomized. It should be noted in all this courtly Platonic Love literature that the Carolinians exploit the fashion for the grace and elegance of conceit it allows them and almost invariably they end by emphatically rejecting it. But their rejection is not the result of an Augustan 'good sense'. They merely turn the garment inside out by an elaborate verbal choreography of shifting tones and figures. What they aim at is not the correction of taste (although that is certainly implicit in their larger intention), but a highly skilled performance in which a cavalier can show his grace. Richard Steele's conception of the Christian Hero was still a long way off. But to say this is to slur over many difficulties and sacrifice delicacy of distinctions for an easy generalization. The Court Poets were a various group scaling down from those like Carew who possessed some of Jonson's strength to others whose general licence extended as far as their rhythm and images. Even in such a broadly defined group Kynaston's interests may have been a little unusual, but his poetry related him, as it did the others, directly to contemporary life by virtue of its style, its colloquialism. It is this direct relation to life that makes the resemblances between a few of the passages in *Leokne and Sydamis* and *Don Juan* seem authentic, and not merely spurious likenesses as in the case of 'Whistlecraft'.

But Kynaston was not the only writer of his day in whom the colloquial freedom of word and rhythm produced overtones that suggest the Carolinian use of language could be like Byron's. Nathaniel Whiting is the most abused among the romantic epic writers of his day, but yet his kind of colloquialism has something like the interest one finds in Kynaston's poem. Sauntsbury called his poetry 'uncouth jargon', and declared that *The Pleasing History of Albino and Bellama*, published in 1637, was 'graceless and slatternly'. This is excessive dispraise for Whiting has some very good poetry but it is impossible to pause here for a defence. The intonation we are looking for may be a little more than fugtively glimpsed in the following stanzas. Bellama is telling her father why she will not marry the wealthy but objectionable Don Fuco.

Bellama with a look fraught with disdain,  
 (Though hatred did not make her anger bold)  
 Says, 'Sir I'm sorry you do entertain

Such high conceits of folly hemmed with gold  
 Think you no marriage good if equal lands  
 Be not matchmakers and do join their hands?

Don Fuco has ten thousand pounds a year  
 With weighty titles would o'erload a mule  
 A piece of arras finely wrought and dear  
 But does he square his life to virtue's rule?  
 With vice as wealth, to countless sums he thrives,  
 But is, in virtue full as poor as wives

He knows to steer an horse and hollow hounds,  
 But not to guide his actions, less his tongue,  
 He speaks in state, but ev'ry sentence sounds  
 Of comic fragments or some tavern song  
 And shall I him hail'd by unworthy pelf,  
 Take to rule me, who cannot rule himself?

Shall I see other female vessels thrive  
 With mine own nectar, and they fee'd with money,  
 Whilst I like careful bee do keep' my hive,  
 And work the comb for them to suck the honey?  
 No, I'll no sharers have in my delight,  
 I'll have it one and only, else good night'

Certain stanzas from *Don Juan* come to mind immediately when one reads this verse. Choosing among the recollected alternatives from Byron to place beside this (and beside the Kynaston passage also) one would hesitate on passages like the description of Lord Henry Amundeville (XIII, 16 to 23) despite certain similarities because the intrusion of Byron's satiric genius would complicate the comparison. The following stanzas, and many others like them, would offer better grounds for judging. In Canto I Juha is berating her husband for jealousy

Yes, Don Alfonso! husband now no more,  
 If ever you indeed deserved the name,  
 Is't worthy of your years?—you have three-score—  
 Fifty or sixty, it is all the same—  
 Is't wise or fitting, causeless to explore  
 For facts against a virtuous woman's fame?  
 Ungrateful, perjured, barbarous Don Alfonso,  
 How dare you think your lady would go on so?

'Is it for this I have disdained to hold  
 The common privileges of my sex?  
 That I have chosen a confessor so old  
 And deaf that any other it would vex,  
 And never once he has had chance to scold,  
 But found my very innocence perplex  
 So much, he always doubted I was married—  
 How sorry you will be when I've miscarried!

It is interesting to remark that when the above passages from Whiting and Byron are read together, Whiting seems to have more of the eighteenth century in him than Byron. His couplet

And shall I him hail'd by unworthy pelt,  
Take to rule me, who cannot rule himself?

might have been written by George Crabbe, which illustrates the danger of attaching too much importance to superficial colloquial resemblances.

#### IV

Some general remarks and conclusions should be offered here. Whiting, although of interest to the arguer of this essay, is not a Court poet (he was an Anglican clergyman from Queens' College, Cambridge,<sup>2</sup> who defaulted to Puritanism). Sir Francis Kynaston, however, occupies an unusual position. He was so conscious of the elegant requirements of aristocratic life that in 1635 he founded a kind of Carolinian progressive college for young nobles called the Museum Minervae to which Charles contributed £100 from the treasury. While the Museum was intent on keeping in touch with the latest developments in Science and Logic, insistence was placed on those silkier skills by which the innate aristocrat emerges through the duller flesh, and young cavaliers were taught behaviour, music, riding, and dancing, as well as modern languages, coins, heraldry, and antiquities. The full course required seven years, but doubtless a great deal of refined leisure was involved in the studies.

It may be prophecy after the event, but one fancies it is easy to detect something of the schoolmaster in Kynaston, albeit a very graceful one. His short poems, the *Cynthrades*, have been overpraised (at least by Saintsbury) at the expense of his epic. The single example that the *Seventeenth Century Oxford Book* contains is his best, and while the first two stanzas have a certain strength and vitality, the remaining five are only a skilled exercise by an intelligent and sensitive man who was in the fashionable know. Kynaston's control of the Carolinian 'light lyric grace was pedagogic (reading his short poems one feels it was fitting, after all, that he should have remembered Jonson with an Anglo-Saxon Grammar in his hands), and his real taste was for the archaic Spenserian mode. But here he could be a minor master, and he sometimes transformed Spenser's effects into something quite new.

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<sup>2</sup>It was long thought that Sir Francis, after taking his degree from Oxford in 1604, had proceeded to Trinity College, Cambridge, had taken his M.A. there in 1609, and had held the office of proctor in 1634. However, in 1932, an American discovered that the Cambridge Kynaston was another man who ultimately became a rector in Suffolk. It is a pity that on this occasion H. G. Seccombe's scholarly eye was so searching since it would have made an amiable picture to have had both Sir Francis and Lord Byron Trinity men—but perhaps the symmetry would have been a little vulgar.

It is extremely interesting (and I think important) to compare what Kynaston as an elegant Caroline courtier could do to Spenser with what Milton some years later did to him. After Milton a poem like *Leoline and Sydanis* was out of the question, and when somewhat similar notes were struck in the language again it was by a poet who did not like Spenser, and who claimed never to have read him. But that poet significantly liked Milton (although Hunt relates that Byron once called attention to the fact he had no copy of Shakespeare or Milton in his library as an answer to charges that he had been influenced by those poets).

Milton claimed Spenser as his 'original', and though there is no doubt that Byron never read Kynaston, their poetry meets in an area of language where Spenser and Milton overlap. The important thing is that although differences of behaviour exist, both the Caroline courtier and the Regency nobleman conduct themselves with a certain mutually congenial recklessness of bearing within the given area.

What is the basis of this similarity of air between the two noblemen? One is naturally tempted to offer comparisons between the Carolinian Age and the Regency. There are obvious ways in which a Sir Thomas Lawrence resembles a Van Dyck more than a Reynolds resembles either. But the comparison is interesting only because it reveals how much the Regency had lost. Since *Don Juan* does not represent a loss one had better keep to Byron and leave the Age alone. There are at least two items about Byron of some importance that help to explain the Carolinian echoes. The first, which concerns his aristocratic attitudes, had better be by-passed here. If one notes the similarity in aristocratic styles, and the high degree of self-consciousness with which both men regarded the aristocracy, that is enough. The second is more interesting, and might profitably be made the subject of a separate essay. The Carolinians, we know, possessed a highly formal language, rich with rhetorical conventions and devices. The skill with which they used this language was suggested in the analysis of Lovelace's fine poem, and if 'La Bella Bona-Roba' is not entirely typical, on this score at least it may claim its representative quality. The formality of their language, and the definition which the Court provided for their attitudes enabled them, with this intricate instrument, to keep a certain distance between themselves and their feelings, a distance which allowed various shades of cynicism or detachment to circulate freely around their verbal statements. The effects that are achieved in this mode may cover a wide and complex range of feeling, but they are always distinct from effects in any mode in which the poet identifies himself with what he is feeling. These conventions (and they were identified by the Carolines with their language itself) were not formally accessible to Byron, but from the first he had built up a rhetoric of his own. One may not be impressed with this as it stands in *Childe Harold* ('The Isles of Greece', which is a fine thing, represents Byron's rhetoric at its best, and it is something quite different from the Carolinian mode), but in *Childe*

Harold Byron was already on his way to achieving a detachment which, when his state of mind changed (Lady Jersey's party is the convenient date, I believe) could be utilized in *Beppo* and *Don Juan* with entirely different effects 'Childe Harold at a little distance stood' begins one of the stanzas in that poem, and it was that magnificent little distance between the word and its open-faced meaning that Byron managed to keep free in *Don Juan* for the insidious intention. And this was something the Carolines could do in the same way, but not the Augustans

MARIUS BEWLEY

## THE MORAL BASIS OF POLITICAL CONFLICTS

I PROPOSE to enquire in this paper how far and in what sense the political conflicts of the present time involve a fundamental divergence in moral outlook. That there is such a divergence is widely held, though there is much difference of opinion about its precise nature. According to some the division is between those who attach ultimate value to the individual and those who attach ultimate value to the community. According to others the difference is between those who accept a universalist morality binding on all mankind and those who believe that moral rules are relative. Others again think that the difference is not about ultimate ends but that opposed views are held about the right relations between ends and means.

In approaching this question we have at the outset to face the view that moral differences, if they exist, are really irrelevant to the situation to-day. The forces engaged in the struggle for mastery are, it will be said, strictly amoral. No doubt both sides talk in moral terms and claim to be acting in defence of their rights. But this moral appeal is only made, so it is suggested, because it is psychologically useful, because it is recognized that people will not be ready for extreme sacrifices unless they are convinced that right is on their side. The moral appeal is thus used as a ruse for the multitude to hide the naked search for power.

This issue is certainly raised in an acute form in any attempt at interpreting totalitarian mentality, whether in the Nazi or Communist form. Was the Nazi movement the expression of a sheer lust for power, or was it rooted in a certain moral and historical outlook, in resentment felt by the Germans against the injustice to which they were supposed to have been subjected by the Allied and Associated Powers, in the belief in the ultimate superiority of German culture, a superiority so great that to secure its triumph the sacrifice of ordinary moral standards was justified? Or consider



the Communist case. Is the present conflict between the U S S R and the Western world rooted in ideological differences or is it merely a game of power politics? Is Russian diplomacy merely carrying on, in the new world setting, the old Czarist drive for expansion or is it in essence a desire to spread Communism? Is it, so to say Russian expansionism or Communist universalism?

Put in this form the question hardly permits of an answer. It raises problems of historical causality which in the present state of sociological knowledge we have no adequate means of resolving. We do not know how to compare the strength of ideas with that of other social forces. Nor can we ascertain with any confidence what were the motives which impelled the leaders and the people they led in these terrifying mass movements. Some of the leaders, no doubt, were power maniacs, utterly devoid of moral sensibility; others were moral fanatics, others again are not perhaps themselves moral fanatics, but rather disillusioned, uncertain, incapable of resolute action and thus inclined to admire certainty in others and to be carried away by a sort of borrowed fanaticism, the fanaticism of the loyal follower. Of the masses who are led a similar analysis is no doubt possible. It remains true all the same that in all cases the moral appeal is thought necessary, if enthusiasm is to be inspired and a readiness for sacrifice and devotion to the cause to be inculcated and sustained. The moral factor is thus, to put it mildly, not negligible.

The case of the communists presents some new features. Here again there is no doubt of the importance attached to the moral appeal. Their writings abound in uncontrolled and savage moral condemnation, they are inspired by a relentless hatred of tyranny and injustice. Yet in theory 'scientific' socialism regards all morals as reflecting the class struggle and presumably subject to an ineluctable law of social development. 'Whoever', says Trotsky, 'does not care to return to Moses, Christ or Mohammed, whoever is not satisfied with an eclectic hotch-potch (i.e., the ethical theories of the philosophers), must acknowledge that morality is a product of social development, that there is nothing immutable about it, that it serves social interests, that these interests are contradictory, that morality more than any other form of ideology has a class character'.<sup>1</sup> The morality of the bourgeois age is designed to inculcate submission to the powers that be, the morality of the proletariat is of the sort which is necessary for the revolution and while the struggle goes on there can be no supra class morality, whatever may be the case when classes have disappeared. In the interim 'morality serves politics'.

It is hard to say how far such doctrines can be taken seriously. Those who do not believe in ineluctable laws of social development will be equally sceptical of any law supposed to determine the changes which morals have undergone. It would be idle to pursue this further. From the practical point of view, that is to say, when

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<sup>1</sup>*Their Morals and Ours*, p 13

a question arises as to what is to be done, the so-called law of development turns out to be even less helpful than the despised Categorical Imperative. The point is well illustrated by the Trotsky-Stalin controversy. With some show of consistency Trotsky does not condemn the Stalin policy on moral grounds. 'Stalinist frame-ups are not, he says, a fruit of Bolshevik 'amoralism', no, like all important events in history they are a product of the concrete social struggle, and the most perfidious and severest of all at that the struggle of the new aristocracy against the masses that raised it to power' (p 23). Stalinism is explained as a deviation from the true path of proletarian revolution. It is 'an immense bureaucratic reaction against the proletarian dictatorship in a backward and isolated country', a new Bonapartism with its own 'Thermidor'. It is the height of intellectual and moral obtuseness, we are told, to identify the reactionary police morality of Stalinism with the revolutionary morality of the Bolsheviks (p 23). Trotsky, however, does not explain how this reactionary bureaucracy emerged out of the dictatorship of the proletariat established by the Communist party or how its emergence can be reconciled with the ineluctable law of social development. To describe it as reactionary can only mean that it is not in harmony with this law, or as Trotsky puts it, it is already condemned by history. This presumably would mean that it is destined to fail. But this Trotsky does not know and makes no attempt to show. In the long run he condemns Stalinism because in his view it is morally wrong, because 'it has regenerated the fetishism of power in forms that absolute monarchy dared not dream of' (p 23). In other words Trotsky does not really decide on policy by asking who is going to win but rather by asking who ought to win. It follows that differences in moral outlook are not mere reflexes of class conflict but are also regarded as capable of providing guidance for the direction which class conflict ought to follow. Trotsky, like others who profess to despise morals, is a moralist *malgré lui*.

In short the moral factor must be reckoned with in any attempt at interpreting social change, though it may be impossible in the present stage of sociology to estimate its precise importance. It can be safely said that so far no one has succeeded in formulating any ineluctable laws of social development and that there is no reason to doubt the efficacy of the human will in bringing about social changes. This has an important bearing on the present conflict between the West and the U S S R. What the Russians intend to do and by what considerations they are likely to be guided are thus questions of the greatest importance. The decision is not fore-ordained. There are no certain dynamic laws governing the expansion of empires. There is nothing which drives them inevitably to extend their zone of influence. They are guided by beliefs and the hopes and fears which these inspire. In the case of the U S S R the most plausible hypothesis is that, apart from the possible influence of some power maniacs, its counsellors are influenced by the belief that a conflict between them and the capitalist world

is, in accordance with Marxist doctrine, inevitable and that in the interest of self-defence it must have control over the neighbouring countries. This easily passes into the new policy of 'building socialism in one group of countries replacing the earlier policy of 'building socialism in one country'. It is easy to see how in this way communist faith and the policy of expansion fuse so that it becomes difficult to distinguish between them. How far the fear of a Western attack is inspired by Communist doctrine of inevitable conflict and how far it is fed by the behaviour, actual or imputed, of the Western peoples is a question as difficult to answer as the question whether the expansionist tendency once in full swing will be satisfied with anything less than world domination. It is clear, however, that 'ideological' differences do count and to understand their precise nature is therefore a task which is not to be neglected.

## II

Here we are concerned with ideologies in so far as they affect differences in moral outlook. It is commonly held that the essential point about totalitarian morality is the denial of a universal moral law binding on all mankind and its replacement by a relativist view of morals, racial relativism in the case of National Socialism and class relativism in the case of the Communists.

Let us consider the Nazi position first. The difficulty here is that we can easily do the Nazis too much honour by ascribing to them a definite theory maintained with some consistency. There is no doubt that in their propaganda appeal was made to justice, reason, fairness. There is no doubt also that in the same breath all the commonly accepted standards of justice and reasonableness were treated with contempt and derision. If their views can be described as relativistic they have little in common with the philosophic forms of relativism, they are so extreme as to amount to moral nihilism. The case is frankly stated by Mussolini in a passage which I quote at some length.

'In Germany relativism is an extraordinary daring and destructive theoretical construction (perhaps Germany's philosophical revenge which may announce the military revenge). In Italy relativism is simply a fact. Fascism is a super-relativistic movement because it has never attempted to clothe its complicated and powerful mental attitude with a definite programme but has succeeded by following its ever changing individual intuition. Everything I have said and done in these last years is relativism by intuition. If relativism signifies the end of faith in science, the decay of that myth "science" conceived as the discovery of absolute truth, I can boast of having applied relativism to the analysis of socialism. If relativism signifies contempt for fixed categories and men who claim to be the bearers of an external objective truth then there is nothing more relativistic than Fascist attitudes and activity. We Fascists have always

expressed our complete indifference towards all theories. We Fascists have had the courage to discard all traditional political theories, and we are aristocrats and democrats, revolutionaries and reactionaries, proletarians and anti-proletarians, pacifists and anti-pacifists. It is sufficient to have a single fixed point—the nation. The rest is obvious. From the fact that all ideologies are mere fictions, the modern relativist deduces that everybody is free to create for himself his own ideology and to attempt to carry it out with all possible energy.

(*Dniurna*, Milano, 1924, pp. 374-7. *Relativismo e Fascismo*, quoted by Franz Neumann, *Begemoth*, p. 462)

This can only be called a theory if the rejection of all theory is entitled to be called a theory.

The German National Socialist views are not very different apart from the intrusion of the racial element and the pretentious and turgid language in which they are expressed. They are based on what appears to be a form of vitalistic intuitionism. According to this, impulse and will are more vital than thought. The fundamental categories of thought and, in particular, the sense of values, spring from the race. Moral principles are tied to the race and are only binding within it. There is no such thing as humanity but only different racial communities. The community is the ultimate end and must never be treated as a means. Moral principles are binding, but validity means here, as elsewhere, the acceptance by the mass of the discoveries made by the creative minds of the race. Ultimately, therefore, there is no criterion other than the intuitions the leaders (or leader) have of what is good for the racial community. It is easy to see to what uses such a theory, if theory it can be called, can be put. Not only is the *Volk* put above all humanity but only the intuition of the leader decides where the true interests of the *Volk* lie. There is little to choose between this sort of thing and the frankly nihilistic intuitionism of Mussolini.<sup>2</sup>

Marxist morality is certainly not relativist in the sense of relying on individual emotion or intuition. On the contrary, it claims to be scientific, that is to say, to rely on an objective determination of social needs. It is presumed that were it possible to eliminate class bias and distortion, in other words were it possible to bring a classless society into being, a universal morality binding on all would for the first time become ascertainable. In existing societies, on the other hand, morality is always class-bound. This is seen in the title of one of Trotsky's books from which I have quoted—*Their Morals and Ours*. 'Morality', he says, is a function of the class struggle, democratic morality corresponds to the epoch of liberal and progressive capitalism, the sharpening of the class struggle destroyed this morality, in its place came the morality of Fascism on one side on the other the morality of the proletarian

<sup>2</sup>C. E. Krieger, *Völkisch-Politische Anthropologie*, 3 Bde Leipzig, 1937

revolution' (p 16) There may be some highly general principles, but the working code of morals, whatever the philosophers may say, is not in fact based on a consideration of general human needs. People are in fact guided by the needs of their class. This applies also to the workers in the transitional period. Especially during a civil war general moral ties are broken and the demands of the class over-ride all other claims. 'Our morality', says Lenin, 'is wholly subordinated to the interests of the class struggle of the proletariat. We deduce our morality from the facts and needs of the class struggle of the proletariat'. The ethics of the revolution is the ethics of war 'it explodes into mid-air all moral ties between the hostile classes' (Trotsky, p 14) 'Whoever accepts the end must accept the means, civil war with its wake of horror and crimes. Of course violence and lies are bad, but this merely means that we must condemn the class society which generates them. A society without social contradictions will naturally be a society without lies and violence. However, there is no way of building a bridge to that society save by revolutionary, that is violent, means. The revolution itself is a product of class society and of necessity bears its traits. From the point of view of 'eternal truth' revolution is of course anti-moral. But this merely means that idealist morality is counter-revolutionary, that is, in the service of the exploiters' (p 25) Revolutionary morality thus inculcates, in Spencer's phrase, amity within and enmity without. Nothing is to be done which sets one part of the working classes against another, or which is likely to lower their morale. Against the rest of the world everything is justified which is required by revolutionary tactics and strategy. When the class struggle is over a universal morality will become possible. Thus Engels 'A really human morality which transcends class antagonism and their legacies in thought becomes possible only at a stage of society which has not only overcome class antagonisms, but has even forgotten them in practical life' <sup>3</sup>

The theory can be summed up in the following way

1 The interests of the social classes are irreconcilably opposed. This is not an ethical proposition but is intended as a statement of fact.

2 The conflict thus generated produces a moral code appropriate to each stage. Thus, *e g.*, in the period of expanding capitalism with the resulting prosperity there was a certain softening of the relations between the classes, and this was expressed in the norms of democracy with its emphasis on freedom, justice and humanity. In the period of what is called 'decaying' capitalism these break down and reveal their helplessness. They are replaced, as Trotsky says, by the ethics of Fascism and Revolutionary Socialism. The ethics of the latter is naturally one necessitated by revolutionary tactics. This again is a statement of what purports to be historical fact.

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<sup>3</sup> *Anti-Duhring*, p 109

3 The relative ethics of the different periods can be examined not only from the point of view of their appropriateness to the conditions prevailing in each period, but also in the light of an ultimate ideal or end, for this ideal absolute validity is claimed. When we ask what this end is the answer is vague and in fact not very different from the answer given by bourgeois ethics. Marx tells us it is a mode of life in which the free development of each is the condition of the free development of all. Trotsky says 'A means can be justified only by its end. But the end in its turn needs to be justified. From the Marxist point of view, which expresses the historical interests of the proletariat, the end is justified if it leads to increasing the power of man over nature and to the abolition of the power of man over man.' It is an open question whether this is an improvement on the Kantian formula. Always treat humanity in your own person and in others as an end and never as a means merely.

4 This ideal can only be reached by revolutionary methods, that is, by violence. The ethics appropriate in this phase is that which is dictated by revolutionary strategy and tactics. These cannot be judged by bourgeois moral codes. Since the means have to be justified by the end, it has to be assumed that violent revolution both *can* attain the end and that it is the *only method* by which it can be attained.

It will be seen that all these propositions with the exception of the third, are statements of fact and not of ethics proper. It is open to question whether the interests of the social classes are irreconcilably in conflict in democratic societies, it is open to question whether historically the working code of morals is completely or even mainly class bound, it is open to question whether the ultimate end that is, the full and free development of personality, the abolition of the power of man over man, *can* be attained by violence and by violence alone. It is in reference to this last question that the most serious divergence exists between liberal and communist thought. Trotsky himself stresses what he calls the dialectical interdependence of means and ends. It has to be shown that the means chosen are 'really likely to lead to the liberation of mankind'. 'Precisely from this' he says, it follows that not all means are permissible. When we say that the end justifies the means then for us the conclusion follows that the great revolutionary end spurns those base means and ways which set one part of the working class against other parts, or attempt to make the masses happy without their participation, or lower the faith of the masses in themselves and their organization, replacing it by worship of the leaders' (p. 35). Are not these results, we must ask, certain to follow any revolution in which a minority seeks to impose its will on the rest of society by violent means?

If this analysis is on the right lines the ideological difference between the communists and their opponents does not concern ultimate moral ends. The communists cannot be described as believers in a moral relativity without qualification. On the

contrary, they pride themselves on their objective *ie*, scientifically determinable, view of ethics. Anticipating the classless society they apply the ethics which would then prevail as a standard by which the relative ethics of the class-ridden societies can be judged and which, as they say, embodies the real interests of the proletariat. Nor do they in theory reject the value of individual personality they claim as socialists always have done to aim at the liberation of mankind. Nor is their view of the relation between means and ends theoretically different from that which might well be held by moral philosophers who are not communists. For they realize that means and ends are interdependent, in other words, that the means adopted must be such as not to distort and corrupt the end aimed at. There is a moral difference, but this does not mean that the communists reject the fundamental principles of Western civilization. On the contrary what they suffer from is a moral fanaticism arising out of a loss of faith in the dilatory habits which they associate with the liberal spirit and out of despair at the terrible inertia of the masses. Thereafter the formidable apparatus of communist sociology comes into play. The bourgeoisie is represented as waging war with the working classes. The slogans of democracy are the weapons of the bourgeoisie. It has to be met by all the weapons of war available. For a time it may be necessary to play the democratic game, but in the end the masses cannot be brought to socialism through democratic methods. 'The path of socialist ideas' says Trotsky, 'which is visible through all deviations and even betrayals, foreshadows no other outcome but this to throw democracy aside and replace it by the mechanism of the proletariat, at the moment when the latter is strong enough to carry out such a task'.<sup>4</sup> The regime which is set up aims at the 'real interests of the labouring masses'. But these cannot be ascertained by the crude method of discovering their opinion. The business of the regime does not consist 'in statically reflecting a majority, but in dynamically creating it'.<sup>5</sup> How this has worked out in the case of the Russian Revolution we know. It has resulted in the seizure of power by a party which is only a small fraction of the proletariat. Operating a la Blanqui, it has established a pitiless dictatorship and rules fanatically in accordance with its own ideology and will to power. Others can play a similar game. The Nazis learnt its techniques: disruption of ordinary democratic processes, seizure of power by terrorist methods, obsessional propaganda directed at telling 'the masses' what they ought to want, reliance on a series of crises designed to keep alive the mentality of war, the maintenance of a form of government appropriate to war. The Nazi regime has been destroyed, but the methods now pursued by the Soviet, whether inspired by a missionary spirit or by the needs of self-defence, everywhere put the democracies to the severest possible tests. In these circumstances the moral issues are obscured. The

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<sup>4</sup>*Defence of Terrorism*, p 40

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid*, p 44

ultimate ends about which there may be little or no disagreement are forgotten. The means become all important and are pursued fanatically without any consideration of their relevance to the ends. What inspires this fanaticism is not a moral theory about ultimate ends but a sociological theory of the class struggle and the belief that a war between the communist states and the rest of the world is inevitable. This soon passes into the belief that the world is already at war. Ordinary moral standards then become inapplicable. 'The welfare of the Revolution, that is the supreme law'. The supra-class morality which is to provide the ultimate moral standard has no application. The operative moral code is that of war. Does this involve a conflict of ideologies between the communists and their opponents? Clearly the answer is 'yes'. Does the conflict involve a difference of moral outlook? The answer again must be 'yes' though the difference turns ultimately on a difference in the interpretation of the facts.

### III

Curiously enough justification for democracy has been sought by some writers in theories of moral relativity. Thus Kelsen has argued that the opposition between autocracy and democracy turns ultimately on our view of the nature of knowledge and especially of our theory of morality. Those who believe in the possibility of absolute knowledge will tend to autocratic forms of social organization, those who favour the positivistic view, or perhaps more correctly, those who accept a form of critical relativism, will tend towards democracy. In other words, since our views regarding the ends of social endeavour are only relative, we can only justify the use of coercion by the State when that coercion is agreed upon by the majority.<sup>6</sup> A similar view was held by Radbruch<sup>7</sup> who also argues that since all our value judgments are relative only the will of the majority should be decisive.

Whether this is logically consistent may be doubted, since it appears to raise at least one principle above the sphere of relative validity, namely, that where there is doubt, coercion ought not to be used. Be this as it may the fact that such theories have been held throws serious doubt upon the opposite view which has recently attracted some attention that there is a special association between logical positivism or other forms of ethical relativity and fascism. The fact is that historically no regular association in either direction can be established. Auguste Comte certainly held a relativist theory of knowledge, but can hardly be called a liberal democrat. The Utilitarians, empiricists in their theory of knowledge, were not ethical relativists, but they were ardent defenders of the main principles of democracy. The originators of logical positivism in Vienna were certainly far from supporting fascism. It would appear

<sup>6</sup>Cf *Allgemeine Staatslehre*, p 370

<sup>7</sup>*Rechtsphilosophie* (3rd ed 1932), Vorwort, p viii



that with such very general designations as positivism, relativism, democracy no fruitful analysis can be conducted. In applying ethical theories to the problems of political organization the important thing is not so much the formulation of ultimate ends as the discovery of mediating principles by the aid of which a link can be established between ultimate ends and the detail of life. The serious difficulties of morals are due in the main to ignorance of human nature and of the consequences of human inter-actions. It is easy for lofty principles to remain on a safe level of abstraction, or to be used, as they often have been, in justification of the *status quo*, or, as in the case of the revolutionaries, to justify whatever is thought to be tactically necessary. The growth of positive knowledge of human needs and potentiality is therefore an essential pre requisite of advance in ethical thought. The believer in a rational ethic need have no fear of the positive spirit. The task of a rational ethic is to clarify our ideals and this involves the careful disentangling of the elements of fact from the elements of valuation proper which are generally intermixed in our moral judgements. The deeper our knowledge of the facts, the greater the chance of increased insight into the nature of values. Whatever positivism has to contribute in this direction is all to the good. What to my mind is unacceptable in the positivist view of morals is the assumption that we know what we want that ends are just given and that the only question for investigation relates to the means needed in order to satisfy them. For this assumption there is no warrant in observation or in analytic introspection and it is not in harmony with what I take to be the main principle of positivism itself, namely, that knowledge must be based on observation.

Democracy cannot be based on moral indifference or moral scepticism. The ideas which gave it impetus are, first, the idea of freedom with its correlative notion of individual responsibility, and, secondly, the idea of equality which is the core of justice. It is sometimes said that liberalism is not committed to any particular conception of the content of the good,<sup>8</sup> that, on the contrary, it is based on the contention that everyone knows best what his own good is and that the important thing is that the individual should be free to pursue whatever ends he chooses, provided he does not interfere with the like freedom of other persons to pursue their own ends in their own way. This Spencerian formula still has some vitality despite the devastating criticism to which it has been subjected. It owes this vitality to the fact that it emphasizes the point that coercion is *pro tanto* evil. But it is surely illusory to think that the problem of the relation between coercion and freedom can be resolved without considering the nature of the ends aimed at, their bearing on the means which have to be adopted and their effect upon the agents and others concerned. As years of controversy have shown the problem is mainly one of the limits of

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<sup>8</sup>F Knight *Freedom and Reform* p 52

coercion, that is, of distinguishing between the kind of control that is necessary in order to secure the conditions under which ends having intrinsic value can be attained and the kind of control that is destructive of these values. It is a question of getting rid of coercion, direct and indirect, fatal to the realization of values, and of employing that kind of coercion which is indispensable for the attainment of those values. The problems involved concern both social philosophy and social science. It seems to me that on the purely ethical side the antinomies that worried the liberal thinkers of the nineteenth century have lost their sting. That liberty rests on constraint, that there is no real opposition between individual and social good may now be taken as sufficiently well established. Liberal thought has, I think, enriched the content of the idea of freedom by showing its relation to the intrinsic values of individual personality and by a deepened analysis of the relations between the individual and society. In all this there was nothing which would bring it into opposition with the main tenets of socialism, the inspiration of which was undoubtedly also the idea of freedom. But, as Hobhouse saw clearly,<sup>9</sup> there are forms of socialism with which liberalism can have nothing to do and, as he also saw, if there is such a thing as liberal socialism, it must fulfil two conditions. It must reflect the desires not of a handful of superior beings but of the masses of men, and it must make not for the suppression but for the free development of personality. Between this kind of socialism and present-day communism there is a deep cleavage. And it is a moral cleavage. For what counts in the communist ethics is not the ideal morality of the classless society in which 'the free development of each is the condition of the free development of all' but the relative morality of the class struggle which is the morality of enmity and war and in which the ordinary standards of morals are not only violated in practice but are openly derided in theory. This cleavage, in so far as it has a theoretical basis, is no doubt mainly due not to a divergence of view regarding ultimate values, but to a difference in the way in which the facts are interpreted. But in this, as in many other contexts, judgments of value and judgments of fact are confused, with the result that the ideals are corrupted and the facts distorted. Whether the struggle now raging is ultimately to be traced to moral causes is a problem which may well baffle enquiry but that the contest is embittered by a profound opposition of moral outlook is beyond doubt.

The control of group violence is the most urgent problem of our day. In particular, the association of war with revolution has now a significance far more terrifying than at any other time in history. The brutality of modern warfare with its mass deportations and the massacre of millions of the civilian population has deadened the power of moral appeal and has obliterated standards which formerly seemed self-evident. To the sufferers moral appeal comes as bitter mockery, to the ardent revolutionary as blatant hypocrisy.

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<sup>9</sup>*Liberalism* Chap VIII

It is no consolation to be reminded that the brutalities of the war were in a measure the product of the revolutionary tactics of the totalitarian regimes, whether communist or Nazi. The ruthlessness of the revolutionaries prepared the way for the ruthlessness of the wars and the amorality of war is reflected in the amorality of revolution. The blurring of the distinction between war and revolution has been further intensified by the experience of the resistance movements, whose tactics can be as readily used against the enemy within as against the aggressor without. The communist view that the ethics of the revolution is the ethics of enmity, therefore, presents a challenge which if not countered must end in the destruction of all forms of free government and liberal civilization.

Contrary to what one might be led to expect from communist writings, 'bourgeois' moral philosophers of varying political affiliation, have not denied that in certain circumstances there is moral justification for rebellion.<sup>10</sup> They have not indeed found it possible to lay down any general principles for it, or to put it more frankly, they have not discovered any infallible method for avoiding civil war. They have, however, pointed to certain general considerations which those who resort to force must bear in mind. Firstly they must be satisfied that they have a reasonable chance of success, secondly, they must have exhausted all peaceful means of attaining their ends and, thirdly, they must be convinced that the evils they want to remove are worse than the risk of disorder and anarchy. These considerations emphasized by philosophers writing in an age of security and stability are not likely to restrain struggling minorities driven to desperate measures by prolonged frustration and disillusion. Nor will nice calculations of the probability of success deter those who, moved by the feeling that injustice is worse than death set out 'to defy Power which seems omnipotent'. In reference to past revolutions who can say in retrospect whether any of them were worth the price and whether the price was necessary? In prospect the difficulty of weighing up the evils of resistance against the evils of the existing order are even greater, especially if the scale on which the comparison has now to be made is borne in mind. When Stalin was asked by a newspaper correspondent about the millions of peasants who died during the drive for collectivism he answered by drawing a comparison with the losses of the world war. 'Over seven-and-a-half million deaths for no purpose at all. Then you must acknowledge that our losses are small, because your war ended in chaos, while we are engaged in a work which will benefit the whole of humanity.'<sup>11</sup>

These difficulties of comparison are not to be dismissed lightly. Yet they do not differ in kind, though they differ greatly in degree of complexity from the difficulties we have to meet in other

<sup>10</sup>Cf. Ritchie, *Natural Rights*, Chap. XI, T. H. Green, *Philosophical Works*, II, pp. 455 seq., Sidgwick, *Elements of Politics*, p. 619 seq.

<sup>11</sup>Quoted in *Scientific Man versus Power Politics*, by H. J. Morganthau, p. 182.

important moral decisions. The principles may be sound enough, but in applying them to complex issues we are hindered by our ignorance of the facts and the probable consequences of the policies open to us. This applies to revolution as it applies to war. Theoretically we must admit, I take it, that from a moral point of view, there may be just rebellions as there may be just wars. In most democratic states, of course, there is a much greater chance of settling internal conflicts by peaceful methods than there is in the case of conflicts between states. Yet under modern conditions war and revolution have become so entangled that a failure to restrain the one must result in a failure to restrain the other. If the ethics of enmity are allowed to guide the relations between states they will also dominate the relations between groups within states. In both cases morality to be effective must cease to be group morality and reach out towards a morality binding on all persons in a world community.

MORRIS GINSBERG

## CORRESPONDENCE

### TO THE EDITORS OF *Scrutiny*

Clearly education ought not to become a Bantock-Ford monopoly in *Scrutiny*, it is time the caste were changed. For this reason I decided in advance not to reply to Mr Bantock's rejoinder. But for three reasons I now feel compelled to write after all, though as briefly as possible.

First, concerning the anecdote about a Dartington pupil, I want to offer my sincere apologies to Mr O'Malley for introducing him quite gratuitously into the discussion and for telling the story inaccurately into the bargain. Moreover, I am particularly sorry that my manner of telling the story gave Mr Bantock the opening which he took—though I think it was very wrong of him, for all his apology to take it at Mr O'Malley's expense. For if my 'expression [was] so slipshod' that Mr Bantock encountered 'some difficulty in discovering what precisely happened', then surely he had no right to deduce, out of my tangled verbiage, that Mr O'Malley's educational practice is 'inadequate'. At any rate, Mr O'Malley has since written

'Two anecdotes seem to have been telescoped. One had the moral that distinguished parents have great difficulty in accepting the fact that genius is not automatically transmitted. The other was more relevant. It concerned a child on whom the right literary views had been most successfully "imposed". His self-righteous condemnation of the trivial reading-matter of some of his friends betrayed a secret curiosity, even fascination. I persuaded him to sample what he condemned with such pleasure. For a while

he took up this new form of reading even more avidly than is usual, but he soon passed from the boys weeklies back to more serious reading—again, with my encouragement. He thenceforward ignored the more trivial reading matter, instead of wasting his energies keeping it at arm's length.

'It is only rarely that one would encourage the reading of detective novels and the like or the playing of boogie-woogie, but to attempt to 'impose' standards that exclude them seems to me both dishonest and inefficient. Learning and culture are not easily come by, though it is easy enough to impart convincing gestures.'

A great deal of Mr Bantock's rejoinder is taken up, profitably I feel, with clarifying his ideas on 'the authority of the subject' and with putting Method in its place. Though we differ in certain respects, I am quite content to leave it there. What I am less ready to leave alone is the fashion in which Mr Bantock uses my description of the school at Mishmar Haemek to prove that I am not 'primarily concerned with learning and culture', that my 'main sympathies lie elsewhere'. Whereas he stands for culture and 'certain autonomies of the individual', I put my faith, apparently, in 'the purely social' (and what this means is hinted at in asides about the 'concentration camp', 'Soviet apologist', 'neo-Marxist', and an intriguing reference to 'the knowledge one has of Mr Ford's position').

Now Mr Bantock 'proves' all this, 'the suspicion becomes a certainty', with his claim that I held up Mishmar Haemek as the kind of education I would recommend. It therefore seems necessary to assert that, in the sense implied, I did not hold up Mishmar Haemek as an ideal. I described it at some length as 'a striking illustration' of my denial that so-called free methods necessarily betoken a lack of purpose, as Mr Bantock argued in his original article. If my description was sympathetic in tone, that was because I wanted to indicate that these free methods seemed 'to foster certain very excellent human qualities', however rigid and narrow might be the ultimate purposes they were designed to subserve. Certainly I did nothing to conceal this rigidity and narrowness of purpose, and I made a point of observing that the social values animating the work at Mishmar Haemek were 'limited in some ways'. Had it been relevant to my purpose (and had I felt it necessary to point out something so obvious to *Scrutiny* readers), I would have developed this sense of limitation, for instance that I deplored the atmosphere of intolerance and philistinism. In short, had Mr Bantock really wanted to quote the kind of education I believe in, he might more reasonably have referred to the two instances of cultural education in which I was personally involved and which I also described at length, they do not seem to me to support his picture of me as a person not 'primarily concerned with learning and culture'.

Indeed, when he comes to the teaching of cultural subjects, I am convinced that it is Mr Bantock's approach, and not mine,

which does the least service to the arts. Thus he feels that 'the best *last* word [in response to a work of art] might well involve an admission to a lack of comprehension', and that 'the pupil's acceptance or rejection [of the teacher's demonstration of value] makes no scrap of difference, *except from the purely personal point of view of the pupil which is something irrelevant to the convincingness of the demonstration* (my italics). Now Mr Bantock's suggestion that a teacher's demonstration can really be convincing without having been moulded to the pupil's or at least the class's point of view, reveals, to my mind, a very limited and authoritarian idea of what is involved in helping someone (child or adult) to find his bearings in an art. It is true, of course, that if one's pupil were to consider Wilhelmina Stutch a superior poet to T S Eliot, that would not in itself lessen Mr Eliot's stature, but only the pupil's. What I was saying with no great claim to originality, was that it would be a poor teacher who was content only to *prove* Mr Eliot's superiority and leave his pupil (no doubt admitting to a lack of comprehension) to carry this proof around with him parrot-fashion. Surely the teacher should help him *feel* this difference of value in the very texture of the two writings, so that his task would not be done, nor his proof successful, until the pupil could agree with him from personal experience rather than out of deference to authority.

In short, one's concern in teaching the arts is not to hand out let alone impose, a prefabricated bundle of judgments, but to introduce a scheme of values in such a way as to develop in the pupil a capacity for first-hand discrimination and enjoyment. For while value is, I believe, inherent in the work of art, its apprehension depends on the sensibility of the individual reader or listener or looker. It seems to me odd that for this belief I am written off by Mr Bantock as being 'at one with the age', and odder still that I should have to urge such a point on someone who has been 'a reader of *Scrutiny* since its inception' and who so much champions 'the autonomies of the individual'.

Yours faithfully

BORIS FORD

## THE CASE OF JOHN WEBSTER

DISINTEGRATION characterizes the view of life which inspired Webster's best-known plays. It is perfectly true, as Dr Tillyard remarks,<sup>1</sup> that Webster, like the rest of his age, inherited 'the Elizabethan world-picture', but in his work we see that world-picture falling in ruins. When Dr Tillyard goes on to say that Webster's characters belong 'to a world of violent crime and violent change, of sin, blood and repentance, yet to a world loyal to a theological scheme', and adds 'indeed all the violence of Elizabethan drama has nothing to do with a dissolution of moral standards on the contrary, it can afford to indulge itself just because those standards were so powerful', he is overlooking the highly significant differences between Elizabethan drama and Jacobean drama, and uttering a dangerous half-truth. No doubt there is a definite 'theological scheme' behind Webster, in the sense that it was familiar to his audience and himself, and could therefore be drawn on for imagery, but *The White Dwell* and *The Dutchesse of Malfy* are our best evidence that the Elizabethan theological scheme could no longer hold together.

Henry James pointed out that the ultimate source of a novel's value is the quality of the mind which produced it,<sup>2</sup> and the same is true of drama. Great tragedy can be written only by a man who has achieved—at least for the period of composition—a profound and balanced insight into life. Webster—his plays are our evidence—did not achieve such an insight. The imagery, verse-texture, themes and philosophy of his plays all point to a fundamental flaw, which is ultimately a moral flaw.

If one reads through *The White Dwell* and *The Dutchesse of Malfy*, noting down the *sententiæ* and moralizing asides of the various characters, one finds oneself in possession of a definite attempt at a philosophy, a moral to the tale.

*"Integrity of life is James best friend,  
Which nobly (beyond Death) shall crowne the end"*<sup>3</sup>

This philosophy is Stoical and Senecan, with a Roman emphasis on the responsibilities of Princes.

<sup>1</sup>*The Elizabethan World Picture*, pp 17-18

<sup>2</sup>*The Art of Fiction*

<sup>3</sup>My references are to *The Complete Works of John Webster*, edited by F L Lucas (Chatto and Windus, 1927) *The Dutchesse of Malfy*, V, 5, 146 (Webster's italics)

The lives of Princes should like dyals move,  
Whose regular example is so strong,  
They make the times by them go right or wrong <sup>4</sup>

But this background of moral doctrine has nothing to do with the action of the plays so far from growing out of the action, it bears all the marks of having been superimposed by the poet in a cooler, less creative mood, than that in which the Duchess and Flammineo had their birth <sup>5</sup> There is no correspondence between the axioms and the life represented in the drama. This dissociation is the fundamental flaw in Webster.

What was wrong, apparently, was that there was available no philosophy of life which kindled Webster's imagination as certain aspects of Hell, or Chaos, kindled it. No moral order represented itself to his imagination as real. Consequently his plays contain brilliant passages of poetry—they appear whenever he touches on the small area which acted as his inspiration—but lack imaginative coherence. They have indeed a unity, the unity for which the 'mist' is a symbol, but one mood, isolated and out of focus, cannot be the basis of a profound tragic vision. Webster himself seems to have understood this better than some of his more enthusiastic critics, but his attempt to shore up chaos with a sententious philosophy is a flagrant artistic insincerity. Webster fails to realize his Senecan philosophy as he realizes his glimpses of Hell.

We might say that Webster suffered from the poverty—the philosophical poverty—of the tradition in which he worked, but the fact that he chose to write in the Revenge tradition at all is itself evidence of a lack of harmony in his own mind. For other traditions were available, notably the tradition of the Morality, to which Shakespeare's great tragedies owe more than has even yet been understood <sup>6</sup> Webster's choice of the Revenge tradition, his failure to give life to his Senecan moralizings and (we may add) the fact that his work contains no convincing statement of the *positive* aspect of the doctrine of Degree, are all related. Degree and Order—as we come to see—were not real enough to Webster to stir his imagination. A lower concept of the Universe, and of Man's place in it, was all that he could compass.

This explains the fascination which the 'Machiavellian' had for Webster. To the conservative Elizabethan the Machiavellian doctrine seemed merely the denial of that Order and Degree which

<sup>4</sup>*The White Dwell*, I, 2, 81

<sup>5</sup>The fact that Webster used common-place books supports this diagnosis.

<sup>6</sup>*Hamlet* owes more to the Revenge tradition, and less to the tradition of the Morality, than any other of Shakespeare's great tragedies, and while it contains passages of brilliant poetry, *Hamlet* lacks the unity and the tremendous moral force of *King Lear* and *Macbeth*. It is with the Shakespeare of *Hamlet* that Webster has something in common.



held the Universe together Machiavellianism was anarchism It is not surprising that a mind as unbalanced as Webster's should have allowed the Machiavellian ideal to usurp the place in his thought which a more conservative poet would have reserved for Degree As a consequence there is a remarkable number of 'politicians' in his two plays

Flammineo in *The White Drivel* is a good example He acts as pander to his sister Vittoria contrives her husband's death, and treats his mother with a cold, sub-human ferocity

I pray will you go to bed then,  
Least you be blasted <sup>7</sup>

He treacherously murders his brother in his mother's presence, and proclaims that nothing but a limitation of his natural ability prevents him from double-crossing his master, Brachiano 'I had as good a will to cosen him, as e'er an Officer of them all, but I had not cunning enough to doe it' <sup>8</sup> He tries to corrupt even Giovanni with cynical advice It is only when he is listening to the 'superstitious howling'<sup>9</sup> of his mother over the brother whom he has killed that Flammineo's Machiavellianism proves imperfect

I have a strange thing in mee to th' which  
I cannot give a name, without it bee  
Compassion <sup>10</sup>

Flammineo's philosophy is simply that

*Knaves do grow great by being great mens apes* <sup>11</sup>

He explains his own villainy by saying

I made a *kind of path*  
To her [Vittoria's] & mine owne preferment <sup>12</sup>

Flammineo's attitude to women proves him a 'Courtier' of a very different cast from Castiglione's ideal

I visited the Court, whence I return d  
More courteous more letcherous by farre <sup>13</sup>

His attitude to women is that of 'the cynic' He regards a woman's modesty as 'but the superficies of lust',<sup>14</sup> and makes love to Zanche 'just as a man holds a wolfe by the eares'<sup>15</sup>—to prevent her from

<sup>7</sup>W D, I, 2, 264

<sup>8</sup>W D, V, 3, 56-8

<sup>9</sup>W D, V, 4, 59

<sup>10</sup>W D, V, 4, 109

<sup>11</sup>W D, IV, 2, 246 (Webster's italics)

<sup>12</sup>W D, III, I, 36-7 (my italics)

<sup>13</sup>W D, I, 2, 319

<sup>14</sup>W D, I, 2, 18

<sup>15</sup>W D, V, I, 150

turning on him He looks on women—and on all humanity—as mere animals women are like curst dogges, human love making he regards as the coupling of mare and stallion<sup>16</sup> There is something peculiarly fiendish about his ironical comment, as he eavesdrops at the love-making of Vittoria and Brachiano

Braç, [enamoured] Nay lower, you shall weare my Jewell  
lower

Flam [aside] *That s better, she must weare his Jewell lower*<sup>17</sup>

There is an infinite weariness in Flamineo's voice when he says

☉ no othes for gods sake!<sup>18</sup>

The strident courage which Flamineo shows in dying—

Strike thunder, and strike lowde to my farewell<sup>19</sup>

—is a quality which he shares with all Webster's Machiavellians, and thus, the one admirable quality in so many of his characters, manifests Webster's peculiarly limited and deformed notion of ethics We find in Webster only the virtue of Hell the courage of despair The stridency of this pagan courage is very evident when Brachiano cries

*Monticelso,*

*Nemo me Impune laces*[s]it,<sup>20</sup>

or when Francisco proclaims

*Flectere si nequeo superos, Acheronta movebo*<sup>21</sup>

Demed insight into any virtue other than Stoical courage, Webster tries to erect unflinchingly perseverance in evil into the sum of moral goodness In the process he is disingenuous As Lamb remarked, This White Devil of Italy sets off a bad cause so speciously, and pleads *with such an innocence-resembling boldness*, that we are ready to expect, when she has done her pleadings, that all the court will rise and make proffer to defend her in spite of the utmost conviction of her guilt'<sup>22</sup> Vittoria is dishonourable Webster simply makes her behave as if she were honourable This is an artistic insincerity—a lie in the poet's heart—of which Shakespeare would not have been guilty, but Webster, having no profound

<sup>16</sup>There is little need to emphasize the remarkable amount of animal-imagery in the two plays As we should expect, most of the animals mentioned are ravenous or sinister

<sup>17</sup>W D, I, 2, 218 (my italics)

<sup>18</sup>W D, IV, 2, 150

<sup>19</sup>W D, V, 6, 276

<sup>20</sup>W D, III, 2, 186 (Webster's italics)

<sup>21</sup>W D, IV, 1, 143 (Webster's italics)

<sup>22</sup>*Specimens of English Dramatic Poets who Lived about the Time of Shakespear with Notes*

hold on any system of moral values, found it easy to write for Vittoria dissembling verse which in its righteous simplicity seems to proclaim her honesty in the face of her accusers

It is consonant with Webster's unbalanced outlook that the distinguishing mark of his Machiavellian 'heroes' is their individualism. In Shakespeare individualism is an infallible mark of villainy

Richard loves Richard, that is, I am I <sup>23</sup>

Like Richard III, Iago and Edmund in Shakespeare, Lodovico, the Cardinal, Bosola and Flamineo are all individualists, and all villains

The atmosphere in which Webster's characters live is the atmosphere of a corrupt Court. The description of 'France' at the beginning of *The Dutchesse of Malfy* sets off the scene of Webster's play by contrast

In seeking to reduce both State and People  
To a fix'd Order, the[ir] judicious King  
Begins at home <sup>24</sup>

To point the contrast, Bosola—who is one of the 'dissolute, and intamous persons'<sup>25</sup> who are banished from any healthy Court—enters just as this speech is finished. If Webster were an orthodox Elizabethan, the rest of the play would be an illustration of what happens in a state of which the Prince himself is evil

"Death, and diseases through the whole land spread <sup>26</sup>

But while the atmosphere of the play is precisely the atmosphere described in these opening lines, there is in Webster, as we have already mentioned, no convincing statement of the positive aspect of Degree, we do not for a moment believe that when the Duke and Cardinal are dead the state of Amalfi will return to a condition of health and normality. While the atmosphere of Webster's plays is as unhealthy as that of 'Vienna' in *Measure for Measure*, there is in Webster no Messianic Duke to return and save the state from chaos. The 'mist' of the two plays is all-embracing: we can form no notion of another world which will be revealed when the rotteness of Amalfi has come to a head and been purged away. Comfortable words spoken at the end of *The White Devil* and *The Dutchesse of Malfy* carry no conviction, if we take evil away from Webster's world, nothing is left

This explains the curious futility of all Webster's characters. When Bosola is asked how Antonio was killed, he answers

In a mist I know not how,  
Such a mistake, as I have often seene  
In a play <sup>27</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>Richard III, V, 3, 236

<sup>24</sup>DM, I, I, 8 (my italics)

<sup>25</sup>DM, I, I, 10

<sup>26</sup>DM, I, I, 16

Very similar in tone is the reply of the Duke in *The Dutchesse of Malfy*, when he is asked why he brought about the death of the Duchess, he replies that he had hoped to gain

An infinite masse of Treasure by her death<sup>28</sup>

This explanation is so off-hand and perfunctory that it can only be termed an *excuse* the Duke is in fact at a loss to find any plausible reason for his actions

All Webster's characters, indeed, and particularly his most consummate 'politicians', have only the most tenuous hold on reality, they are characterized by the same 'motiveless malignity' that Coleridge noticed in Iago. But whereas Iago is a subordinate character in *Othello*, so that we are prepared to accept the convention by which he is simply 'The Villain', a man who desires evil because it is his nature to do so, Webster's plays are almost entirely peopled by such characters.

Without adopting the attitude of the 'naturalistic' critic, we must maintain that there are too many inconsistencies in Webster's plays, and whereas inconsistencies are readily passed over when—as in Shakespeare—they are subservient to some important dramatic purpose, in Webster there is no deeper purpose than to make our flesh creep, and we feel an inevitable resentment.

There is in fact something a trifle ridiculous about Webster. When we have seen his two plays we have indeed 'supp'd full of horrors', and overheard 'talk fit for a charnel'. An irruption of real humour—humour of the Shakespearean sort—would knock Webster's waxworks into a cocked hat. He is too evidently bent on exploiting the emotions of his audience.

Webster, that is to say, is a decadent. He is decadent in the sense that he is incapable of realizing the whole of life in the form in which it revealed itself to the Elizabethans. By concentrating exclusively on the narrow aspect of life revealed in one mood, he threw the relations of the whole out of harmony. In his work the proper relations between the individual and society, between God and Man, are overthrown. The sensationalism of his plays is the stigma of an outlook on life as narrow as it is intense. Webster sees the human situation as a chaotic struggle, lit indeed by flashes of 'bitter lightning', but fated to sink again into a mist of confusion and sub-human activity.

' IAN JACK

## COMMENTS AND REVIEWS

### D H LAWRENCE PLACED

The following letter to the Editors is timely—it will serve instead of the note that was to have been printed under *Comments* in this issue—a note provoked immediately by a dismissal of D H Lawrence in *The New Statesman and Nation* (the critic being the Literary Editor) as a 'clinical case', and by this passage, which appeared in *The Times Literary Supplement* for December 18 last (the occasion being a review of Maupassant's *Bel Am* in translation)

'He accepted without reserve the large part that sex has played in life—not least in French life—and in French literature from the time of Rabelais and Ronsard. But his acceptance never sinks to the anatomical crudities of D H Lawrence, nor becomes, as with Lawrence, an obsession and a gospel'

To this admirer of Maupassant it may be replied that, while there is only one *Lady Chatterley's Lover* in Lawrence's *œuvre*, even in the special undertaking of that book he is preoccupied with the assertion of spiritual values—it is Maupassant whose attitude to sex is crude. But the critical *fiori legum* presented by Mr Coombes shows how little such a reply is likely to abash the offender, who enjoys the consciousness of having with him a consensus of the *élite*. It would be easy, with a very little research, to extend the anthology to fill a whole number of *Scrutiny*. A year of the higher journalism would provide flowers enough to occupy many pages.

It is a disgraceful state of affairs, bearing out to the full Lawrence's diagnostic severities about the contemporary civilized mind. To hope that any appeal to the facts and the truth can avail against prepossession, conceit and insensibility so potently banded is perhaps vain. All the same, it had been intended to return to Lawrence in these pages. As Mr Coombes says, the business of appraisal presents many complexities. But some critical treatment will be attempted in an early number of *Scrutiny*.

F R L

DEAR SIRS,

Though from time to time there have been highly appreciative references to D H Lawrence in the pages of *Scrutiny* (and in the works of *Scrutiny* writers, notably in *The Great Tradition*), there has never been a full article on Lawrence in your Review. The subject is a complex one, and the *Scrutiny* writers are busy people. But such is the nature and quality of the great bulk of criticism on Lawrence that *Scrutiny* could undertake nothing more valuable, I believe, than a 'Revaluation'

I give below a number of quotations which, if taken all together, would come roughly to the impression of Lawrence that is current in 'educated' circles. Among the authors are one or two respected names, and to them I apologise for including them in this company. And some of the articles, etc., from which the quotations are taken are, on the whole, 'pro-Lawrence', it is a pity that respected critics do not always make it clear that they are not bringing grist to the mills of the stupid or the nasty, when dealing with such a profound and complex theme as Lawrence. All the quotations seem to me sufficiently unambiguous to justify my use of them in this connection.

Roger Dattler, in *The Plain Man and the Novel*

'Since he had dismissed the brain for the belly-worship of his creed, the vision of a peaceful and rational society could have no attraction for him. He was an enemy of the mind, and though somehow he might have repudiated this as shrilly as he repudiated all accepted standards, he remained a mouthpiece of reaction in contemporary letters. The "mindless eyeless hysterical mass-consciousness", with which his work is identified has become the bane of modern Europe.'

D S Savage, in *The Personal Principle*

'The significance of Lawrence lay in his life rather than in his works' his refusal to allow art its due rights and to be himself the considerable artist which he potentially was' Lawrence's abandonment of all that we understand by the spiritual heritage of the West and his turning to vital primitivism' 'Because Lawrence was not a thinker' 'Lawrence's view of life, his "biologism", which is a similarly retrogressive dissolution back into primary life, implies a refusal of spiritual values'

V S Pritchett, in *The Living Novel*

'Lawrence's teachings are interesting because they are a compendium of what a whole generation wanted to feel, until Hitler arose, just after Lawrence's death, and they saw where the dark unconsciousness was leading them. Seen in this light Lawrence represented the last phase of the Romantic movement - random, irresponsible egotism, power for power's sake, the blood cult of Rosenberg. And Lawrence was representative, because tens of thousands of people in England and Europe were uprooted people, like himself'

F Swinnerton, in *The Georgian Literary Scene*

'My belief is that the reputation of this author will decline. As men and women learn more about their own minds, his remarkable pioneer work will fall in importance. We shall be forced back upon his books as literature, and this test, without considerable reservation, they will not pass'

Legouis and Cazamian, in *A History of English Literature*

'But it would be futile to try and lay the chief stress upon the artist in him the artist in him is neither very great nor of the finest quality, Lawrence indeed would not rank so high as he does but for the sombre enthusiasm that raises him above his own self'

Norman Nicholson, in *Man and Literature*

'In *St Mawr* Lawrence the critic sets out with the Freudian interpretation in his mind to make up a story about a horse. But the symbol has not really caught fire in the mind of Lawrence the creator. As a result, the horse never takes on real symbolical significance, but becomes a sort of grotesque caricature of Lawrence himself. In his identification of himself with the horse Lawrence even goes so far as to make the wretched animal have no foals *because it doesn't want to* (Mr Nicholson's italics). Lawrence, it should be remembered had no children, nor did many of his characters'

Compton Mackenzie, in *Literature in my Time*

but for Lawrence, married to a German wife, pressed for money, and in poor health, the war annihilated reality. It plunged him into a miasma of morbid dreams'. 'It is not absurd to suggest that Walt Whitman was a happier D H Lawrence, the happiness being conferred by the physical vigour fate denied to Lawrence'

Henry Miller, in *The Cosmological Eye*

'Lawrence's animal natures, just because of their irreducible obscenity, are the purest bodies in our current literature. Animated by a metaphysical conception they act through obedience to fundamental laws of nature. Of these laws Lawrence admits his complete ignorance. He created his metaphysical world by faith, he proceeds only by intuition. He may have been utterly wrong, but he is absolutely consistent'

Hugh Kingsmill, in *D H Lawrence*

'Though without any of Nietzsche's nobility of character and capacity to endure neglect and solitude, Lawrence in his slight way often recalls Nietzsche, another poet enmeshed in the will and solacing his impotence with dreams of new forms of life in which he would be the master'

W Empson, in a review of W Y Tindall's *D H Lawrence and Susan his Cow*

'It is fair enough to laugh at Lawrence, who got into some absurd personal and intellectual positions and no doubt for some people was a harmful leader. Hugh Kingsmill has done it recently very well, but he was funny with the human breadth that the

subject requires' (I may say here that though Mr Kingsmill's book is probably not the 'repulsive little book' that Mr Empson finds Mr Tindall's to be, it is not, in my opinion, distinguished by 'human breadth' in its humour or in anything else)

Rex Warner, in *The Cult of Power*

'And it seems to us now that his system, for all its fervour, was very largely negative, a mere assertion of his denial of the system of his upbringing His God, for instance, must be the exact opposite of the 'gentle Jesus' of his childhood' 'Fascism finally succeeded at least temporarily, in making the synthesis that eluded Lawrence'

Stephen Spender, in *The Destructive Element*

'There are two ways of regarding Lawrence The first is, qualitatively, as I have done here, regarding especially the descriptive passages in his novels, and the Nature poems in *Birds Beasts, and Flowers* The other and more disappointing way is to consider him, primarily as a preacher'

There they are then The fact that some of them are comical is little compensation Though some of the critics are comparatively unknown, their works are in public libraries and their influence spreads

*Scrutiny* writers are of course aware of the desperate state of affairs to be inferred from the quotations, but I don't feel that that makes this 'public challenge' superfluous If *Scrutiny* doesn't do something about it, who else is likely to? 'One must speak for life and growth amid all this mass of destruction and disintegration'

H COOMBES

## A GOOD BOOK ON MILTON

*PARADISE LOST AND ITS CRITICS*, by A J A Waldock  
(C U P, 8/6)

This is a book to be strongly recommended A series of accidents has prevented its being reviewed as yet in these pages



## CULTURE AND DR JOAD

Dr Joad is sometimes criticized for being 'a popular philosopher'. The charge, I suppose, may not be out of place in the polemics of unpopular professionals who don't write for the Sunday papers, but as a layman I feel that the more volunteers for the perilous crossing of the oceans of sense and sensibility that to-day separate Culture from the Common Man probably the better for us all. We don't live in the eighteenth century when rustics learned to read on Bunyan and *Tom Jones*, even less do we live in the Elizabethan age, when upper-class culture and popular culture (*pace* the Baconians and the Marxists) were inter-dependent. We live in the age of Hollywood. So the more Doctors Joad, probably the better for the general civilization we have to cope with at present, for no longer is it possible, as it was possible even so late as the mid-nineteenth century, for a man of average intelligence to absorb culture from his environment with no more formal training than a dame-school's.

They sometimes do great harm, of course, but that harm does not spring of necessity from their intention. If I single out Dr Joad as a partial exception, it is by reason of the essentially uncivilized ideas of culture he holds and propagates, peculiar enough indeed but which he shares with a good many people round and about Portland Place and also with some of those who go through the Great Turnstile every week end. I write as a literary journalist who has some slight inkling of non-journalistic standards, I venture to criticize him mainly in the light of a different experience of life from his own, and the different judgment of values it has imposed upon me.

No criticism of him would be fair were it not prefaced by some recognition of his general ability as a cultural interpreter to the Crowd. The trouble, of course, is that he himself often recognizes this ability, and the unchallengeable nature of his idea of culture, in a somewhat paltry, uncivilized manner. For instance, his book, *The Untutored Townsman's Invasion of the Country* (1946), contains admirable treatment of ideas that most readers of this magazine would endorse: no praise could be too high for the way in which Dr Joad has assembled his material and the almost general persuasiveness of temper he employs. But on occasion he shows us a seamy side. He is under the delusion, astonishing in one who has obviously given thought to the relation of culture to the modern world, that the blindness to things of the spirit in the present age is a blindness peculiar to the working class, not a myopia common to all. Thus he is indignant at Lord Nuffield for having introduced into the streets of Oxford 'regiments of working-class folk and their women, who are alike blind to the beauty and ignorant of the traditions of the city to which they have been brought, and by their spiritual *no less than their bodily* presence, impede the appreciation of those who value the things that belong distinctively to Oxford'.

Now it becomes apparent from the context that Dr Joad was writing in not quite so snobbish a spirit as the phrase I have italicized would suggest, but the slight qualification doesn't affect the fundamental issue and the real chance Dr Joad has let slip of proving that his concern for beauty is not on a par with his concern for the right accent and the proper way of sporting old tweed jackets and baggy trousers. It would seem a good idea if folk like Dr Joad (and their women) would attend to the beam in the eye of Oxford University before making so much fuss about the mote in the eye of Cowley Motors. Those who have used elementary observation at either Oxford or Cambridge or the provincial universities know to their shame and sorrow that it is not among the underdogs but among the undergraduates that the twentieth-century blindness to spiritual things shows most strikingly clear. What person who has passed through one of our universities, either on a B A course or on a bike, has not heard through the windows of university students jazz-noises that would apparently be more appropriate to East Side New York or to the imitation of it around Shepherds Bush? Jude the Obscure liked Oxford because of its sacred music—that was in the late nineteenth century. To-day a fair proportion of the undergraduate population prefer to this church music, and not for unorthodox reasons, the trumpety flourishings of a Louis Armstrong or a Nat Gonella. Some of these students admire this music of the mechanical age because they believe it is 'proletarian' or even 'folk' whereas the small part of the original song which had some connection with living people has for years now suffered a fate worse than death.

In the light of these facts, or opinions, it becomes puzzling to discover what respectable idea was going on in the mind of Dr Joad when he shook his beaver so sadly over the spiritual and bodily presence of Lord Nuffield's workmen in the sacred streets of Oxford. He is no simple snob, that is evident. But, like many other products of King's, Balliol, etc., he is under the delusion that between the proportion of university students who prefer Carroll to Orlando Gibbons and the roughly equal proportion of 'working-class folk and their women' who uphold a similar preference there stretches a yawning gulf. The yawning gulf seems to me to consist simply of cash. This is no new thought, for a long time it has become clear to persons of average intelligence that a star-studded cabaret, for instance, in an exclusive hotel or night-club is simply a more vulgar, more obscene, more witless version of that 'entertainment of the masses' which folk like Dr Joad constantly deplore. This is recognized, indeed in about the last place where one would dream of recognition—the old Etonian cabaret-star sums up his profession thus:

Give them smut and give them dirt,  
In a clean white tie and a clean white shirt

Whether this Frankau recognition is healthy or not I leave it to more qualified people to decide, but why pretend, as Dr Joad seems

to, that this form of culture comes from contact with the Lower Orders, when in reality (though I admit the inter-dependence) it is more the other way about, these sophisticated obscenities having almost driven out of popular affection the honest, near-Chaucerian vulgarity of *Knock em in the Old Kent Road*?

The political history of the 'thirties, too, must give us pause before we accept Dr Joad's astonishing division of this uncultural age into social classes. It was not simply material restraint, not even of the volunteer police-force that went mysteriously unmentioned in the newspapers<sup>1</sup> it was not simply material power that prevented a bloody revolution around 1936. Nor was it simply the arms programme. The violent revolution, propagated day and night by the Eton Red-Tie Brigade, was definitely refused (as some of the Public-Schoolboy-Communists honestly admitted) by the harassed, unemployed, Means-tested workers. The converts to the Gospel According to John Strachey were few and far between in the Distressed Areas, though they were more numerous in Oxford, Cambridge, Hampstead and the Isle of Wight. This preference for constitutional reform among those who had suffered the most from the incompetence and the callousness of our rulers was perhaps sadly dismissed by the Stracheys and the Upwards as the Last Relics of Petty-Bourgeois Inhibition. Such indeed it was if we remove the Marxist sneer from our faces. For it had many precedents in the history of the decent working class, this preference for non-violent methods—many precedents in the tradition of those who met their Peterloo on the tennis-court at Versailles. Even in the dark days of the early nineteenth century, the London Working Men's Association told the Prime Minister, in the words of their secretary William Lovett, that 'so far from entertaining any idea of disturbing the public peace, we were readily disposed to aid the authorities in preserving it, having offered to be sworn in as special constables'. Readers of this magazine might like to contrast that reasonable attitude with the stark realism' of Mr Rex Warner in *The Wild Goose Chase*. 'Even had they wished it, they knew that they could do nothing to stop the slaughter of policemen that was now taking place'<sup>2</sup>.

This preference for constitutional reform among the workers of the last decade, this preference itself has its cultural aspect. The average mner of the 1930's may have preferred the *News of the World* to the Bible, Bunyan, Milton and Burns which formed the educational background of poor radicals like Lovett, Bamford and Cooper in the even hungrier 1840's, but in his rejection of revolutionary methods whether consciously or unconsciously, the mner was closer to that educational background, to the Christian and humanist traditions, than were upper-class poetasters like Day Lewis or Warner who blustered about 'the blood-red dawn' and 'the hammer, the sickle, the blood' in a thoroughly objectionable,

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<sup>1</sup>See *The English Press Newspapers and News* by Jane Soames, with a Preface by Hilaire Belloc (Stanley Nott, 1936)

unrealistic, academic manner. So I don't think Dr Joad has anything much to fear from the contact of university students of this common type with the horny-handed mob. There is such a thing I would remind him, as a combination of delicate hands and horny intellect.

The equating of bodily with 'spiritual presence' in the passage quoted was not a mere slip on Dr Joad's part, for it becomes clear from other pages of his recent book (and of many other books and articles of his in the past) that he imagines culture to be synonymous with expensive eating and drinking—as do Miss Dorothy Sayers, Mr Warwick Deeping and many a jolly old Palinurus in such high places as *Horizon*, the *Tatler* and *Bystander* and the *New Statesman and Nation*. 'Bach fugues, Beethoven quartets, Château Yquem.' Dr Joad sighs reminiscently, not being aware apparently of Norman Douglas's discovery that the cult of the wine list and other gourmandizing is a comparatively recent institution and that gentlemen in the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries knew nothing of those intricate details that trouble the horny intellect of a Bertie Wooster or a Lord Peter Wimsey. Douglas adds that the cult of the wine-list etc., came in when true gentility of the spiritual variety, was disappearing, it came in, in fact, with the *nouveau riche*.

All this makes it doubtful whether a reasonably alert reader can accept the principal bee in Dr Joad's bonnet as being more than a drone. He is always extremely worried about 'the decline

<sup>2</sup>How far I am from promulgating a general sneer at Public-School and university education will be seen, I hope when I record my gratitude to three non-working-class writers who have maintained the importance of the English bourgeois tradition—that tradition which has proved such a stumbling block, both in theory and in practice, to Marxist ideas. 'The English bourgeois, so-called that is to say the member of English middle classes, is not only an organic part of the national society, he is nothing more or less than the average Englishman. Under modern conditions the middle classes have come to embrace so large a part of society that any attempt to eliminate them would inevitably result in the destruction of the whole social organism' (Christopher Dawson *Religion and the Modern State*, 1935). 'In moral outlook no one could be more bourgeois than the English working classes. In his own age and ours Dickens has been popular chiefly because he was able to express in a comic, simplified and therefore memorable form the native decency of the common man' (George Orwell *Inside the Whale*, 1940). 'We English *are* bourgeois, it is our achievement, not our failing. We have evolved a pattern of bourgeois life so radically tolerant that the proletariat can be absorbed into it. If the rest of Europe—Germany and France in particular—could have followed our example Europe might well have remained a political and cultural unity to-day' (John Middleton Murry in *The Adelphi*, 1946).

in the general level of literary and dramatic taste, and the continuous erosion of the environment in which alone original thought and work in literature and art can be recognized and encouraged' But 'In literature', wrote the Doctor in *The Book of Joad* (1932), 'my gods are still, as they were in 1912, Shaw and Wells and Bennett Of the stars who have risen in the literary firmament since the war none shine with a brilliance in any way comparable with those earlier luminaries' Apparently it has never occurred to him that some people preferred, and still prefer, and for cultural spiritual reasons, James and Conrad and Yeats to their contemporaries (speaking roughly), Shaw and Wells and Bennett, and that such people stand a better chance of appreciating Joyce, Lawrence, Forster, Owen, Thomas Rosenberg Pound, Eliot, Woolf, Dawson, Powys, Myers, etc., than people who agree with Chesterton that 'an artist is only a performing bear compared with the meanest man who fancies he has anything to say' or with Dr Joad himself (I quote *The Book* again) that 'the object of writing is to convey meaning by asserting something, and style, I agree with Shaw, is simply effectiveness of assertion He who has nothing to assert has no style and can have none'

Some of these philistine judgments are repeated in *The Testament of Joad* (1937), and in *Philosophy for Our Times* (1940) he contrasts the present period, which he subheads as 'foreheads defiantly low', with the happy time of his youth 'The effects of post-war debunking are to be seen in a deliberate and defiant lowbrowism To be observed reading Shakespeare is a ground for shame, to be seen reading the *Daily Blank* or the *Pictorial Blanker* a cause for congratulation The contemporary lowbrowism is not merely a matter of fact, it is an affirmation of values The snobbery of culture has been replaced by a snobbery of anticulture Tennyson, living in the Victorian age, maintained that man loved the highest when he saw it It has been left to us to make the discovery that he is more likely to heave a brick at it'

If Dr Joad means by 'us' the happy time when he himself was growing to maturity, I can only agree, but he doesn't mean that, he means the 'moderns' Yet it is surely obvious that the remarks of Chesterton, Shaw and their disciple, the Doctor himself, coupled with Wells' contempt for Shakespeare, G B S's classing of Dante and Milton as 'two of the greatest fools that ever lived', G K C's thinking it a *weakness* in Henry James that his novels don't infect us with the spirit of a schoolboy surely it is quite plain that all this and Northcliffe had a great deal to do with the 'contemporary lowbrowism' that Dr Joad thinks came in suddenly after 1918?

But it is not a question of citing names 'The object of writing is to convey meaning by asserting something', 'an artist is only a performing bear compared with the meanest man who fancies he has anything to say', 'What did Shakespeare do? what did he add to the world's totality?' If he had never lived, things would be very much as they are He added no idea, he altered

no idea, in the growing understanding of mankind —remarks such as these (partly, I admit, just a healthy reaction to the Art-for-Art's-Sake cult of Pater, Wilde and Baron Corvo) limited literature to one small aspect of it, the argumentative, and must have had a great influence upon the lowbrowism that Dr Joad claims he detests

It will not be forgotten that G B S was a brilliant and sensitive critic of music in the 'eighties and 'nineties of last century, and Dr Joad confesses that 'whatever reservoir of æsthetic sensibility I possess has flowed into the channel of music', though since Beethoven died practically no music has been written that I wish to hear (This strikes me as being rather a long period) The impersonal, artistic quality that Joad and Shaw presumably admire in music seems to be an affront to them in literature, where they insist on the dubious element of 'personality', of the egotistical, argumentative voice It is worth glancing at what a great poet had to say upon this subject 'A poet', wrote Keats, is the most unpoetical thing in existence, because he has no identity, he is continually informing and filling some other body The view of a contemporary poet is similar 'Poetry is not a turning loose of emotion, says T S Eliot, but an escape from emotion, it is not the expression of personality, but an escape from personality' We can see, with all respect, why Dr Joad so likes the preposterous poetaster Marchbanks, offered us in all seriousness by Shaw in *Candida*, and why there is a strong relation between the judgment of Mr Beverley Baxter, M P, in the *Radio Times* that '*Candida* is Shaw's best play' and the same gentleman's statement to the House of Commons that 'poetry is rightly regarded with suspicion by the British people'

Chesterton, too, was a great admirer of the architecture of the Middle Ages insisting on the impersonality of it, but he didn't think much of the impersonal architectural quality in the paintings of Cézanne, in the novels of James, Hardy and Conrad, in the plays of J M Synge He preferred, as he honestly said, 'the art which is a by-product of propaganda' He instanced Kipling's art (by-product of Imperialist propaganda) and Shaw's art (by-product of Fabianism), and it seems that Dr Joad would agree in preferring this by-product to the art of James, Yeats, Synge, Conrad, and their modern successors What Joad could have maintained with truth, I think, is that the late Victorians and the Edwardians produced *popular* novels of a quality we don't seem able to produce to-day, I am thinking of the best stories of Kipling, Conan Doyle, Wells, Belloc, Chesterton, and of Hardy and Conrad in their popular moments—genuinely popular achievements which have few counterparts at the present time But the notion of literature which Dr Joad shares with Shaw, Chesterton and Wells has a great deal to do with that separation of Highbrow from Lowbrow which he rightly deplures

R C CHURCHILL

## A NOTE ON CONTEMPORARY 'PHILOSOPHICAL' LITERARY CRITICISM IN FRANCE

Mr Furnell began a survey of French literary criticism in the nineteenth century (*Scrutiny*, Vol VIII, Nos 2 and 3) with the following remarks 'It will be our criticism, perhaps, that will most fittingly last longest', wrote M Charles Maurras in a characteristic pronouncement "A Sainte-Beuve and a Renan will have a good chance of making posterity one day forget the Flauberts, the Leconte de Lisle and perhaps even the Hugos' Frenchmen are sometimes extremely modest about their poets, but they are seldom modest about their critics. They have long regarded themselves as the great critics of the modern world and until lately no-one has ventured to challenge their supremacy' Certainly in France to-day, the general impression one gathers is that, while the novel, say, may be in temporary decline, still recovering its breath, as it were, after Proust and Gide, there is no reason for thinking that satisfaction, if not general, is still wide-spread. M. Henri Peyre, for instance, in a survey of recent works on contemporary French literature<sup>1</sup> wrote, *Il semble que nous vivions, depuis quatre ou cinq ans, à l'une des périodes les plus riches de la critique littéraire'* and he based his high estimate of this criticism in part on 'le substratum de pensée et même de philosophie sur lequel elle repose'. We have indeed witnessed a strong invasion by writers trained in philosophy into the domains of the novel and the drama and notice has been taken in these pages of some of the results. The following is a preliminary investigation (and no more) into what may be loosely called 'philosophical' literary criticism in post-war France.

M. Henri Peyre provides a convenient starting point. The most notable French critics of the years 1945-6, he writes, 'sont de tour d'esprit philosophique (Maurice Blanchot, Claude-Edmonde Magny, Maurice Merleau-Ponty et Jean Pouillon) ou des sociologues (Jules Monnerot, Roger Caillois) et la littérature gagne à être ainsi enrichie par des manieurs d'idées. Enfin cette jeune critique semble avoir réalisé non sans bonheur la réconciliation entre l'université et la littérature vivante. La plupart de ces interprètes des romanciers et des dramaturges d'aujourd'hui ont été formés aux méthodes universitaires, mais ils ont cessé de boudier ce qui se fait de grand, ou simplement de jeune et de neuf, autour d'eux'. This favourable verdict, I take it, would be generally countersigned in France.

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<sup>1</sup>*The French Review*, Vol XX, No 5, March 1947, cf *ibid* Vol XXI, No 3, January 1948 in 'L'année Littéraire 1947', 'la critique en France est toujours de premier ordre'

Occasionally this sense of possessing superior equipment has led French critics to rediscover or to 'revalue' English authors. Waugh and Greene, it appears, have been enjoying a vogue in France. The following<sup>2</sup> will serve to illustrate the position. 'Il est curieux de comparer l'accueil fait en France aux livres de Graham Greene et l'opinion qu'en forme le lecteur anglais moyen. Même pour un certain public pourtant au courant de la chose littéraire, *Brighton Rock* n'est qu'un excellent roman quasi policier, l'équivalent d'un roman de Simenon. Le bon Anglais ne consent qu'avec une stupefaction un peu amusée, et fort reticente, à admettre les implications métaphysiques que le Français averti, à la suite de quelques critiques de qualité, découvre dans cet ouvrage. Nous voyons dans Graham Greene le Bien et le Mal, la Conscience, la Fatalité, et Kafka et Faulkner, que sais-je? La lecture de ses romans devient un plaisir d'intelligence et de découverte. Et le jeu est au moins aussi amusant, aussi profitable que la pratique des mots croisés. Mais les Anglais hochent la tête et refusent de jouer.

If we turn to the French translation of *Brighton Rock*,<sup>3</sup> we find that it contains a preface, signed 'C E M', which might have inspired the above remarks. C E M there asserts that 'le thème fondamental du *Rocher de Brighton* est sans doute la notion de la Fatalité, cette idée qui hante une grande partie du roman contemporain comme elle obsède secrètement la conscience moderne, et qui risque de la hanter chaque jour un peu plus, à mesure que s'imposera plus complètement l'idée que l'absurde est la vérité dernière sur la condition humaine. On la retrouverait également présente dans les œuvres aussi dissemblables que celles de Faulkner (chez qui elle est vraiment la déesse voilée du *Sanctuaire*), de Steinbeck, de John O' Hara, dans *L'Étranger*, d'Albert Camus, voire chez Raymond Queneau ou chez Dos Passos pour citer pêle-mêle quelques noms. C'est sans doute l'œuvre de Graham Greene qui permet de former l'idée la plus exacte, la plus ontologiquement juste de cette fatalité. Ses romans, et singulièrement *Le Rocher de Brighton*, offrent la trame d'événements concrets qui incarne le mieux cette notion, qui en est le "corrélat objectif" (pour reprendre l'expression de T. S. Eliot) le plus minutieusement adapté. On peut résumer en quelques mots cette idée en disant: la Fatalité est une situation. Elle est même la situation par excellence, puisqu'elle se confond avec le fait que l'homme est inséparable de sa condition, identique à la place qu'il occupe dans le monde, avec l'impossibilité ou il est de s'en abstraire. Il s'imagine généralement le pouvoir (c'est bien souvent en cela qu'il croit que consiste sa liberté) mais cette possibilité est purement théorique, illusoire.' In fact, as C E M admits, one will have recognized here a theme abundantly developed by the philosopher existentialist, par Sartre dans *L'Être et le Néant*, et

<sup>2</sup>From an article by Jean-Louis Curtis in *La Table Ronde*, No 1, January 1948

<sup>3</sup>Robert Laffont, 1947



avant lui par Gabriel Marcel des son premier *Journal Métaphysique*'

A protest was made against this attempt to satirise 'Greene',<sup>4</sup> but it is perhaps more interesting to enquire into the assumptions which made such an identification possible. It would appear at first sight to be a tribute to the distracting power of a philosophic bias that no mention is made in the preface of what Graham Greene is actually offering in *Brighton Rock*. A passing allusion to Bernanos is the only reference to the unfree pre-occupation with the conditions of salvation and damnation which characterizes Gréene's work and serves to distinguish him from a crowd of other wise equally undistinguished novelists and detective story writers. It is less surprising to note that the philosophic bias seems to be allied to a defect of sensibility. C. E. M. describes the principal characters of *Brighton Rock* as 'aussi concrets que des personnages de Dickens, dont les creatures de Graham Greene (Ida, par exemple) ont parfois la puissante vulgarité'. More significant still, the literary development of Graham Greene is seen as analogous to that of Melville. 'Did not Melville begin his career with adventure stories' (Greene's 'entertainments') 'Are not *Moby Dick* and *Benito Cereno* full of sensational incidents?' And 'à chaque instant, comme chez Melville, nous avons l'impression que le drame concret qui se joue devant nous renvoie, pour être pleinement compris, à une tragédie différente de lui, qui se déroule sur un autre plan *métaphysique* celui-là au sens stricte du terme'.

This is the main assumption that Graham Greene's *oeuvre* is an attempt to express a truth which can be fully grasped only by a long series of analytic arguments. 'De longues analyses seraient nécessaires pour mettre au jour, sous sa forme abstraite, et dans toute sa complexité, cette vérité unique que les divers récits de Graham Greene ont essayé d'exprimer, chacun à sa façon, sous des aspects divers mais également concrets, et non sans l'ambiguïté peut-être inséparable de la forme romanesque. C'est ainsi qu'on pourrait tirer de *La Puissance et la Gloire* une conception de la trahison comme situation ontologique ou de *L'Agent Secret* des vues sur ce qu'on pourrait appeler l'*inespou*, distinct du désespoir en ce qu'il est lui aussi (comme la trahison) une situation objective, une structure du monde, et non pas un état d'âme ou une attitude d'esprit plus ou moins subjective, placée en tous cas sous la dépendance de la volonté'.

It would be absurd to continue to 'éplucher' any further what is after all only a short preface, a marginal essay. The purpose I have wanted to make it subserve is to present in a condensed form the gist of the argument of a longer work which has been regarded as one of the most remarkable productions of modern French criticism, *Les Sandales d'Empédocle*, by Claude-Edmonde Magny.<sup>5</sup> The book is remarkable among those of its kind in that the essays on Charles Morgan, Kafka and J.-P. Sartre are preceded by an

<sup>4</sup>By J. M. in *Critique*, June 1948

<sup>5</sup>Éditions de la Baconnière, Neuchâtel 1945

essay on the nature and function of literary criticism. One French critic at least, does not regard the previous history of French criticism as wholly admirable. The failing of previous critics is thus expressed: 'S'ils ont manqué de lucidité, c'est moins à l'égard des auteurs qu'envers leurs propres dons et surtout concernant la mission du critique'

From a book abounding in arguments I have selected what I regard as 'characteristic and unacceptable' in contemporary philosophic literary criticism in France. (A more extended commentary could, I well believe, be written, particularly on the seeming paradox that French critics appear at the same time unduly dependent on literature for their sustenance and unduly contemptuous or negligent of its specific virtues and characteristics. But as communications are still very much the preserve of V I P in the critical world and French books are still comparatively hard to obtain in England, the reader may prefer the present 'nibble' to a general arraignment based on evidence he could not control.)

Philosophy to-day, the argument runs, is starving—it cannot continue to feed on itself as it is trying to do.<sup>6</sup> Its indispensable pabulum is to be found (apart from the sciences) in literature, which contains the raw material in a purer or more digestible form than life. This raw material is not to be gathered on the surface—as is so often the practice of French critics—the valuable 'message' or 'doctrine' does not lie in the overt snippets of philosophical statement; a novel, for instance, may contain, but is implicit in the work and usually not part of the artist's conscious intention. (This is an attempt to dispose of the objection that a philosophical treatise would provide more valuable material than a novel.)

Nevertheless the value of the successful novel does not lie in the perfect embodiment of a 'vérité' or a 'vision du monde'. On the contrary, the sapphire is embedded (often beyond recovery) in the mud. 'Lorsque l'idée s'exprime en un oeuvre pleinement et uniquement littéraire, elle se charge d'une sorte de mauvaise graisse, d'une gangue qui adhère à elle et dont le critique ne pourra l'isoler; quelles que subtiles que soient les distillations fractionnées auxquelles il se livre.' Literature is essentially impure.

The critic's task is to refine away the baser elements by a process of abstraction. In this way what was unconscious and incoherent in the work is made conscious and coherent, if the novel is genuine. The effort is in short to give wherever possible a *conceptual equivalent* of the author's vision by reducing it to its abstract structure. Thus it is claimed that one of the essays in the book 'a montré qu'on pouvait trouver dans l'oeuvre de Kafka une théorie de la responsabilité, des vues sur la causalité, enfin une interprétation d'ensemble de la destinée humaine, suffisamment toutes trois et assez indépendantes de leur forme romanesque pour

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<sup>6</sup>Cf. *L'Age de Raison*: 'il se vit tout entier, béant, pensée, pensées sur des pensées, de pensées, il était transparent jusqu'à l'infini et pourri jusqu'à l'infini.'

supporter d'être transposées en termes purement intellectuels et ne rien perdre de leur unité intérieure et de leur force persuasive. Cela fonde en quelque sorte la valeur métaphysique de l'oeuvre'

The latent vision in the work of art can only gain by being thus brought to light. 'L'appréhension d'une idée sous forme abstraite en donne une possession plus sûre, semble-t-il, que le pressentiment parfois vague à l'excès de cette idée que peut nous donner une métaphore chaînelle'. Criticism is thus more lucid than literature. It exhibits its superiority by moving away from literature towards something higher. For when the critic has 'gutted' the individual work, his next task is to recognize his extract as essentially a partial, one-sided statement which requires completion or neutralizing by comparison with other statements similarly derived. This process is described as a gradual progression towards or in terms of 'la vie spirituelle'. The novel is a footprint or spoor showing where 'vie spirituelle' has been. The critic's aim is to 'vivre la vie spirituelle de façon aussi abstraite, aussi dépouillée que possible'. In this slow ascension, the value of literature is to provide a stage on the journey, but only a stage. 'Un moment viendra où elle devra s'effacer devant la philosophie'.

This is the central theme of the book, which is described in a prefatory note as 'un essai qui cherche—entre autres choses—à montrer que toute oeuvre finie, littéraire ou philosophique, peut être seulement une étape provisoire dans un devenir spirituel plus vaste qu'elle-même'. Or, as it is put on a later page, 'Ainsi littérature, critique et finalement philosophie, seront les trois étapes de l'ascension humaine vers la lumière'. Now, for anyone who does not regard the underlying notion as absurd, attention will be at once directed to the examination of the final term which gives meaning to the scale. The author does not claim to have reached the summit by any means, but there is disquieting evidence of what values may have governed the ascent. Thus in the pages where this theme is given its last treatment, one of the works mentioned as having to be surmounted and kicked away before the *salto mortale* from the extreme tip is made is Faulkner's *The Sound and The Fury*. More astonishing is that of the three authors considered at length, one is Charles Morgan True, Morgan's 'ideas', 'doctrine', or 'message' when duly abstracted are found to be contradictory. Nevertheless, he remains 'un romancier incomparable' and we hear of 'la perfection organique de Sparkenbroke'. One wonders, too, what to make of this: 'Mais qui de nous, pour penser son amour, n'a eu recours à Morgan, à Meredith, à Stendhal?' Indeed the closer we come to the actual text of Morgan's novels the stronger is the impression that the critic's standards are of a strange order.

Consider, for instance, this account of the last chapter of *The Fountain*. 'Quand Lewis et Julie, tels Adam et Eve, sortent chassés du Paradis terrestre d'Enkendaal, les Anges se voilent la face de leurs ailes en les regardant passer et pleurent sur l'échec de tout effort humain, nous avons l'impression d'assister à quelque catastrophe cosmique, mélucltable, telle la mort de Baldur ou la

chute de l'Olympe' After this, it is hardly surprising to find the following estimate of Morgan's female characters: 'Il a enrichi la littérature de quelques figures de femmes d'une délicatesse et en même temps d'une vérité (non pas certes au sens banal d'une vérité-copie<sup>1</sup>) inégalées avant lui, auprès de qui palissent les héroïnes les plus séduisantes de Stendhal et de Balzac. Le seul romancier, peut-être, qui ait su peindre des femmes aussi délicieuses, serait Meredith. In fact the whole essay on Morgan is a testimony to the help that may be obtained from an intellect trained on philosophy in confirming a powerful initial seduction due to want of natural taste or acquired sensibility.

*Les Sandales d'Empédocle* thus appears to offer no exception to Mr. Turnell's general rule: 'It is one of the consequences of a training in philosophy that it encourages the Frenchman's natural tendency to abstraction, to manipulate counters which instead of illuminating the work under discussion have precisely the opposite effect, they take the critic's mind off his text and carry him into a realm of abstract theorising for which the work of art is merely a pretext. Others are prevented by the excellence of their philosophical equipment from making that full and unfettered response to the work of art which is the basis of all criticism.'

An awkward consequence of this manner of treating literature (also noted by Mr. Turnell) is that one is almost forced to create an opposition between the kernel valuable to the philosophic critic and the literary mind. Various statements in the book, such as, 'les beautés littéraires seront étroitement solidaires des perfectionnements spirituelles', point to the desire to overcome the opposition, but in these matters it is the critical practice that counts and in the essays we note, for instance, 'le style de Sartre mériterait une étude spéciale' and 'les qualités du style de Kafka, qui vaudrait à lui seul toute une étude'. Not until these studies have been made will it be clear, to me at any rate, that stylistic considerations can be of the slightest value to the philosophic approach. (The author is evidently fascinated by recent studies on the syntax of certain authors. Even punctuation, it appears, has philosophic possibilities, but it is doubtful whether a full exposure to style in the widest sense, including the all too fleshly metaphors, could yield the abstract—three sentences long—which is the end product of philosophic inspection. There is, however, no knowing what may not come out of the hat, seeing what has already emerged. The immediate point is that the philosophic method seems to work apart from and without the stylistic approach.)

A more serious defect of this type of criticism is that it seems incapable of giving an account of the way a novel is organized, of its essential structure. The critic seems content to leave the matter at this level: 'roman ou poème ne sont guère moins des "systèmes" que le cartésianisme ou le hegelianisme'. And her passing references are all of an analytic kind, to 'character', 'syntax', 'vocabulary', 'style', 'technique d'exposition'.

If the main service of *Les Sandales d'Empédocle* is to provide a warning, there nevertheless remain scattered through the work a number of interesting asides, particularly on the principles of an approach to Kafka. Indeed an anthology of remarks could be collected quite contrary to the spirit of those I have selected. This is a first book and the author's thought appears to have matured between 1939 and 1945, the dates of the first and last essays. Since then a number of interesting articles have appeared in various periodicals, though none of those I have been able to obtain altogether transcends the limitations of the 'philosophic' approach. The reader of this book will also find an account of *La Nausee* which differs in many points from that given in these pages, though I am bound to add that it has not led me to modify my opinion.

H A MASON

## PURITAN BUNYAN

*JOHN BUNYAN, L'HOMME ET L'OEUVRE*, by Henri A Talon  
(Editions Je Sers', Paris, 700fr)

It is not unusual for French scholars to produce definitive books, and Dr Talon's *Bunyan* may stand with Castelan's *Jonson*, Legouis' *Marvell*, and Dottin's *Defoe*, to take related instances. Like them he has addressed his work primarily to French readers, yet has digested so much English writing that his study will be more esteemed on this side of the Channel and should supplant the books written in our own language. *John Bunyan, L'Homme et L'Oeuvre* is an attempt to focus upon the most important facts which does not become psychological or economic pathology.

By the biographical facts, and especially by an acute study of *Grace Abounding*, Dr Talon vindicates his author from the suggestion made in W York Tindall's *John Bunyan, Mechanick Preacher*<sup>1</sup>

'Se confesser le plus grand des pêcheurs, par exemple, ce n'est pas imiter tel ou tel, mais essayer de se convaincre qu'on est sauvé. Non pas jeu de rheteur, mais interrogation anxieuse d'une âme'

This is the core of Puritan theology. The problems of election and rejection created a community of interest among the sects and with out an appreciation of the import of such terms to a widely-ranging audience the merit of its literary expression, expository or (in Bunyan's case) creative, cannot be assessed or the appropriate response reawakened. To this end, one feels that Dr Talon might have extended his analyses of *Pilgrim's Progress*, for these chapters most of all need amplification with the experience of the elected.

<sup>1</sup>Reviewed in *Scrutiny*, Vol VI

author of *Grace Abounding*. The biographical nature of the allegory appears more fully from an article by Roger Sharrock, which was published after Dr Talon's book had gone to press.<sup>2</sup>

Dr Talon reminds us that a popular homiletic tradition persisted which related Bunyan to Langland but in spite of his sympathy with the work of Professor Owst, some of the documents he produces from the Middle Ages to support his thesis are but tenuously applied in his work. His knowledge of the lesser works of the Elizabethan period is perhaps susceptible of expansion, although few English scholars who are not specialists in the field of religion could show more complete bibliographies of an intensive search through the secondary sources. Chief among the exhibits Dr Talon uses Arthur Dent's *Plain Man's Pathway to Heaven*, a most popular Elizabethan pocket-book, which should provide the starting-point in any discussion of Bunyan, since it was a book he received as a dowry, owed his conversion to, and incorporated to a certain extent in his *Pilgrim's Progress* and *Life and Death of Mr Badman*. It is a religious dialogue in which the themes of regeneration and reprobation are discussed in vivid dramatic contrasts of character and lively popular speech. To Arthur Dent, drunkenness causes social problems—

'mis-spending all their time and money in gaming, noting, swearing, staving, swilling, bezelling, bibbling, brawling, and brabbling while their poor wives and children sit crying at home for bread, being ready to starve, to beg or to steal'

—but is primarily an ethical offence. Defoe, a writer with whom it is profitable to relate Bunyan as a Dissenter in an eighteenth-century *milieu*, treats sins in his religious writings almost solely as contrary to good manners. He used the same formulæ of human depravity but the Puritan conscience had lost the habit of subtle casuistry. The Dissenting academies were equipped, with their Modern studies, for the production of the journalist rather than the preacher. The author of *Moll Flanders* wrote religious dialogues called *The Family Instructor*, which reveal an ideal inferior to Bunyan's. They are incredibly lachrymose and attack sin with an uncertain touch.

"Jack, God damn me, how do'st do? How hast thou done this long time, by God?" and then they kiss and the t'other, as lewd as himself, goes on "Dear Tom, I am glad to see thee with all me heart, let me die"

The connection of Dent and Defoe involves Bunyan, but it is less fully explained here than one could have wished. More, too, might have been said about the Puritanism of the Elizabethan period than is known to the political histories. M. M. Knappen's *Tudor*

<sup>2</sup>*Spiritual Autobiography in Pilgrim's Progress*, R. E. S., April 1948, a valuable critical approach

*Puritanism* is, indeed, cited, but the merit of the closing chapters of that book, which deal with social and economic trends of non-conformist thought, is not disclosed by Dr Talon's use of them. *The Character of an Old English Puritan* written in 1646 by John Gere<sup>3</sup> states the domestic aspect more fully and proposes the difference between the Tudor and Stuart nonconformists. Chief among the latter whom Dr Talon quotes is Richard Baxter. He was an educated writer but he found difficulty in retaining that popular contact which is part of the achievement of George Herbert, Ben Jonson and Arthur Dent. Baxter tried to write a popular religious handbook *The Poor Man's Family Book* but failed to achieve the success of the *Plain Man's Pathway*, which he took<sup>o</sup> as a model of diction and approach to his readers. Such a contact denied him, so he excused himself 'I may suppose that riper Christians need not so loose a style or method as the ignorant and vulgar do'. His own *Autobiography* expresses his contempt for the mechanic preachers

'For any more particular account of heart-occurrences and God's operations upon me, I think it somewhat unsavoury to recite them'

Bunyan was not of the Restoration ethos but of the Elizabethan Jacobean

Dr Talon's account of the major works of Bunyan goes deeper than English criticism. He is, however, uncertain of the meaning of Mr Ignorance in spite of the extent of the literature on religious hypocrisy from which Bunyan and his fellows might have learned to recognize him. To such a reader, Ignorance is the Pharisee, the subject of an earlier tract by Bunyan himself. Attentive Puritans were assured of the danger lurking in the Hypocrite who could deceive others into pride and self-delusion. He enters the *Pilgrim's Progress* when the pilgrims are at their last stand, and is heralded, significantly, by the Shepherds of the Delectable Mountains, who are explaining the damnation that awaits those who encroach upon the celestial path. His fate is no less important than Christian's; his rejection is essential to the scheme of the book.

Those who know their Bunyan well will best be able to use this book in reconsideration. They will appreciate the analysis of the prose and the careful treatment of his social and religious thought, while noting that the extra-literary investigations are auxiliary to the main theme. The emergent social thought is close to that recently described by Dr Schenk in his *Concern for Social Justice in the Puritan Revolution*.

'The central and dominant tradition of Christianity has always accepted social as well as natural inequality, but it has demanded the permeation of all social relationships by the Christian spirit'

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<sup>3</sup>Quoted incidentally by Dr Talon. The whole text of this useful document appears in *Church Quarterly Review* April 1949

This may enable us to understand some of the peculiar political problems of the century and explain why Bunyan, in spite of early tendencies in the opposite direction, allowed the poor to remain in their fore-ordained state in *The Holy War*. He was no Christian Communist—he derives his radicalism from teaching of mediæval affiliations. To complete Dr Talon's picture, R. B. Schlatter's *Social Ideas of the Religious Leaders, 1660-1688* (one of the few omitted from his bibliography) should be consulted for the fullest account of contemporary social theory.

The patient insistence on the qualities of the work itself is the most admirable thing about this book, it tends to reassert the due order in literary criticism from which our own Ignorances have fallen, and makes the most of the occasion of a doctoral thesis. Its value will be felt by future students to have increased their critical perception, although notes and queries of all sorts may add to their factual knowledge. In this book the data of the conflict between Puritanism and Humanism are assembled—the influence of the folklore ballad, the religious allegory, the mediæval drama, the homily and primer, the ecclesiastical and moral discipline which did not inhibit the pious pilgrims from singing, playing and dancing on their way, or even from sudden leaps into the air in their rapture.

In conclusion it may be said that a renewed acquaintance with Bunyan will convince Dr Talon's readers that a central study in English civilization remains to be completed. This—which links *Piers Plowman* to the *Pilgrim's Progress*, as we have learned, would establish an even longer and more substantive tradition from *The Ancræn Riwle* to Hannah More, of interest to students of religious, social and literary history—the tradition of popular moral theology. It is exemplified by Dent, Herbert, Bunyan, Baxter, and Defoe, and many other writers who will be adequately estimated only when the importance of this genre is acknowledged and its texts revived.

MAURICE HUSSEY



MR ELIOT AND EDUCATION<sup>1</sup>

Mr Eliot is chiefly concerned, not with an attempt to prescribe the means by which a self-conscious 'culture' (in Arnold's sense of the self cultivation of the individual) may be acquired, but with defining those general social conditions, in the absence of which a high state of culture is unlikely to exist. He therefore admits, though he nowhere defines the standards by which the relative state of culture at any one moment may be determined, the possibility of higher and lower states of culture. To him that society is likely to achieve a high state of culture which permits at once the differentiation and the inter-communication of its people, as between their various classes, regions and sects. 'It is a recurrent theme of this essay, that a people should be neither too united nor too divided, if its culture is to flourish' (p 50). Thus, to take the classes for instance 'Neither a classless society nor a society of strict and impenetrable social barriers is good, each class should have constant additions and defections, the classes, while remaining distinct should be able to mix freely, and they should all have a community of culture with each other which will give them something in common, more fundamental than the community which each class has with its counterpart in another society' (p 50). The survival of the culture of the 'higher' class is 'dependent upon the health of the culture of the people' (p 35). Yet, 'If any definite conclusions emerge from this study, one of them is surely this, that culture is the one thing we cannot deliberately aim at. Even if these conditions with which I am concerned seem to the reader to represent desirable social aims, he must not leap to the conclusion that these aims can be fulfilled solely by deliberate organization' (p 19). The reason for this lies in the fact that 'culture can never be wholly conscious it cannot be planned because it is also the unconscious background to our planning' (p 94). It is not to be regarded as the 'sum of several activities, but (as) a way of life' (p 41). The health and coherence of a culture depend to a considerable extent on the degree of *unconscious* communication that can take place among its peoples, so that in social intercourse there is an implied reference to a background of common assumptions that makes one person intelligible to another. Thus, no person who is not *of* the culture can ever hope completely to understand, intellectually, the nature of that culture. And no person who is *of* the culture can ever hope completely to express the culture in objective terms. 'For to understand the culture is to understand the people, and this means an imaginative understanding. Such understanding can never be complete either it is abstract—and the essence escapes—or else it is *lived*' (p 41). This leads Mr Eliot to question one of the most cherished assumptions of modern educational policy—the idea of

<sup>1</sup>Intended as a contribution to a symposium on *Notes Towards a Definition of Culture* (Faber, 10/6)

equality of opportunity To give effect to such a notion, he thinks, would lead to too great a social fluidity, it is dependent upon an 'atomic view of society' The élites, thus chosen, 'will consist solely of individuals whose only common bond will be their professional interest with no social cohesion with no social continuity They will be united only by a part, and that the most conspicuous part, of their personalities they will meet like committees' (p 47) <sup>1</sup>

Mr Eliot's outlook is so different from that which informs so many of the writers on education at the moment, products, as most of them are of an unthinking acceptance of the superficial social catch-phrases of the day and well content to swim with the stream that his book is bound to stimulate where it is honestly read and pondered It is interesting to consider, for a moment where he differs from Arnold To Arnold culture was to be 'the great help out of our present difficulties, culture being a pursuit of our total perfection by means of getting to know on all the matters which most concern us, the best that has been thought and said in the world, and, through this knowledge turning a stream of fresh and free thought upon our stock notions and habits, which we now follow staunchly but mechanically, vainly imagining that there is a virtue in following them staunchly which makes up for the mischief of following them mechanically' Arnold was aware that cultural health was more than a matter for the individual and that the individual's capacity for cultural self-realization was closely bound up with the general state of society <sup>2</sup> But he could still quite without inhibitions recommend a course of self-cultivation that would at once liberate the individual and benefit the society of the time His distinction between 'doing' and 'thinking' implied a contrast between unself-conscious or unexamined action (the action of those, that is to say who 'swim with the stream') and action consciously deliberated in accordance with the notions derived from the best that was thought and known (though it should be noted in passing that he condemned 'abstract systems of renovation applied wholesale') He wrote, however, when self-consciousness was interpreted as a *freeing* of the personality from 'stock notions and habits' and too from the vices of 'Jacobinism' To increase the range of one's susceptibilities and of one's sensitivities, to avoid narrowness and provinciality, to seek an *inward* perfection so as

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<sup>1</sup>It must be understood that I have summarized above only those parts of Mr Eliot's book which seem to me to be useful in a discussion of the more immediate educational implications of his outlook Thus, a vitally important part of his thesis—the 'relationship' between religion and culture—has been omitted

<sup>2</sup>'Culture leads us to conceive of true human perfection as a *harmonious* perfection, developing all sides of our humanity, and as a *general* perfection developing all parts of our society For if one member suffer, the other members must suffer with it, and the fewer there are that follow the true way of salvation the harder that way is to find' (*Culture and Anarchy*)

to develop the 'best self' and help make 'sweetness and light' prevail, such notions rest on the assumptions, firstly, that culture is something that, with goodwill, can be acquired, and secondly, that the *same* culture ought to be acquired by everyone 'The men of culture are the true apostles of equality' Such notions spring from that very liberal ethos that Arnold was in certain respects to condemn. Despite, too, his hostility to abstract systems, the implications of Arnold's outlook demanded the application of abstract notions, derived admittedly from the best that was thought and known, to concrete realities. The tendency was for living to become, not a process of being, but the result of self-conscious manipulation. The educational imperatives are obvious. The teacher is to teach, is to make 'reason and the will of God prevail'. The detailed syllabus was not laid down, but the injunction to work for 'sweetness and light' was unequivocal. Such notions form the background of assumption of much modern educational policy.

It is perhaps the revelation of the subconscious depths of the human mind that has, in the intervening period, made the critic self-conscious about self-consciousness. Just as in our moral life, the self-conscious pursuit of moral ideals has tended to bring about a situation where 'it will appear more important to have the right moral ideal, than to act',<sup>3</sup> so the realization that our cultural life is dependent on 'those contacts and mutual influences at a less conscious level, which are perhaps even more important than ideas' (p 38) tends to make Mr Eliot sceptical about the effectiveness of conscious cultivation. 'The more education arrogates to itself the responsibility, the more systematically will it betray culture' (p 107).

Such notions, at their root, are not, of course, novel. Mr Eliot's scepticism springs from a dissatisfaction with a particular conception of self-conscious rationalism that, for instance, Keats was questioning when he wrote 'I have never yet been able to perceive how any thing can be known for truth by consecutive reasoning',—though Keats added, 'and yet it must be'. There is in many walks of life a distinction to be noted between 'doing' and 'knowing how to do' which may be said to correspond to the difference to be made between being cultured and knowing about culture. Though whether the fact of knowing about—becoming, that is to say, self-conscious about—*necessarily* inhibits 'being' it is hard to say. Certainly no man has made a more distinguished contribution to the criticism of his day than Mr Eliot, and no man

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<sup>3</sup>Cf Michael Oakeshott *The Tower of Babel* (*Cambridge Journal*, Vol 2, No 2). This seems an appropriate moment to draw attention to Mr Oakeshott's interesting contributions to that journal. Those who find Mr Eliot's approach sympathetic will receive further illumination from the article quoted above and also from *Rationalism in Politics* (*CJ*, Vol I, Nos 2 and 3). In the latter article, Mr Oakeshott examines the error of Post-Renaissance Rationalism 'in its belief that nothing but benefit can come from making inquiry self-conscious')

has practised more successfully as a poet. The fact, then, that Mr Eliot has achieved a greater degree of self-consciousness about the nature and function of the poetic art than practically any other living Anglo-Saxon has not inhibited Mr Eliot from also achieving the greatest success in the practice of that art, though it may indeed have helped to mould the particular nature of his creative writing. Moreover, Mr Eliot's awareness of the fact that communication exists on levels that are partly subconscious in itself springs from a consciousness of such levels. And whereas such an awareness might well lead Mr Eliot to question certain loose claims for education, they should not necessarily lead him to quite the degree of scepticism about education (conceived of as conscious instruction) that at times he seems to imply. For whereas it may be that the 'art of living' or, to use Mr Eliot's term, a 'way of life' can never quite be consciously achieved, no life worth living can ever be satisfactorily lived at an unself-conscious level. (One has only to bear in mind George Eliot's strictures on the 'men of safe traditional views') The possible source of Mr Eliot's bias can be detected, perhaps, in his use of the word 'growth'. After discussing the possibility of a further decline in culture, followed, it may be, by a period when there will be no culture, he states 'Then culture will have to grow again from the soil, and when I say it must grow again from the soil, I do not mean that it will be brought into existence by any activity of political demagogues' (p. 19). (A pointer in the same direction is an occasional tendency to associate consciousness with artificiality).<sup>4</sup> Yet the implied metaphoric comparison between the growth of a culture and the growth of the crops of the earth is surely a false one. For indeed, the laws that govern the growth of a culture and those that govern the growth of a seed whatever they may be in either case, are certainly not the same. Into man's development enters at least a limited capacity to shape his own ends and a consciousness of them which is entirely foreign to the development of the fruits of the earth. Thus to speak of a culture, a 'way of life', as growing from the soil is to colour the notion of culture in a particular way to stress the unself-conscious aspects in a manner which weights the scales against conscious effort. Again, Mr Eliot is concerned to define the word culture. Yet at one moment he speaks of culture as a way of life, the next he speaks of the possibility of there being no culture, which at least suggests that he is himself equating culture with the more self-conscious aspects of the 'way of life'. For indeed it is impossible to conceive of human beings as continuing to exist without following something that is describable as a way of life and therefore, having a culture within the meaning of the term that Mr Eliot is concerned to establish.

Now it may be argued that in all this there is a certain petty-

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<sup>4</sup>Thus Mr Eliot speaks of 'something artificial, something a little too conscious, about a community of people with strong local feeling, all of whom had come from somewhere else' (p. 52).

fogging and that Mr Eliot's thesis is sufficiently clear without these niggling attempts to trip him up. But I do not think so, for it seems to me that such confusions—if I have interpreted them aright—reveal the contradictions inherent in Mr Eliot's pessimism and determinism. There is indeed something subtly debilitating about Mr Eliot's diagnosis, and it is therefore of particular importance to detect any weakness in that account any hint that would help to define the incompleteness of Mr Eliot's account. What Mr Eliot in effect does is to posit an ideal state in which a high condition of culture might be achieved—a state which, incidentally, bears a significant relationship to the Platonic conception of the 'just' state—and then imply that as such an ordering of society cannot be induced by conscious volition, all we can do is to await the inevitable cultural decline. The awareness of the imperfection of human consciousness, instead of spurring the individual to the achievement of a best self, however imperfect in certain ways that best self may turn out to be, is being used subtly to undermine the idea of effort. And one's relief at not being faced with one more naïve 'programme for action' is tempered by the feeling that the process of seeing through the current catch-phrases has its dangers as well as its virtues. As Mr Eliot himself states 'Where scepticism is strength, pyrrhonism is weakness', there is a hint that in Mr Eliot's scepticism, the process of transfer may have begun.<sup>5</sup>

Yet the conception of a society which is indeed far removed from many current social notions gives Mr Eliot an independence of outlook which makes him an acute critic of current educational inadequacies. The fact that the type of social organization that he feels is a necessary pre-requisite to the achievement of a high state of culture is one that in the present state of social feeling has little or no likelihood of coming into being is no excuse for not heeding the warnings that his insight provides. He reminds us that we have substituted the notion of education in the abstract—purveyed through a system of education—for what should be a unified educational process of home, social environment and school. 'For the schools can transmit only a part of culture and they can only transmit this part effectively if the outside influences, not only of family and environment, but of work and play, of newsprint and spectacles and entertainment and sport are in harmony with them' (p 101). Hence, he says, 'Education in the modern sense implies a disintegrated society, in which it has come to be assumed

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<sup>5</sup>In fairness to Mr Eliot, it should be stated that there are moments when he hints at possible lines of action. Thus he states that 'we cannot directly set about to create or improve culture—we can only will the means which are favourable to culture', though he nowhere indicates precisely what the distinction involves. Cf too, pp 19-20. Again, while he concerned to fix the means which are most favourable to a high state of culture, he does not necessarily wish to imply that those means are socially desirable as ends. Cf pp 108-9.

that there must be one measure according to which everyone is educated simply more or less. Hence *Education* has become an abstraction' (p. 105). It is a mistake, he thinks, to make all members of the community share the same basic education. 'To aim to make everyone share in the appreciation of the fruits of the more conscious part of culture is to adulterate and cheapen what you give. A "mass-culture" will always be a substitute culture' (p. 107). This is a point of considerable importance at a time when the idea of a basic course, implied in the American comprehensive school (which has its advocates in this country) and recommended in the recent Harvard report, receives increasing attention. Even the differentiation between secondary grammar, modern and technical schools tends to be blurred by the notion inherent in any large-scale democratic society, which, by treating each man as equally capable of exercising a vote demands implicitly that each man shall be afforded the education which shall fit him for that object. And as the abstract political notion of the voter, in an age when we are dominated by abstract political notions, has replaced the concrete reality of the individual human being in so many minds, it is only natural that the education so conceived should tend towards an abstract uniformity which such ideas as 'parity of esteem' have brought about. Thus the political need to proclaim as equal what at the very least would be demonstrably different leads to the necessity of attempting, as far as possible, to conceal even that difference. Mr. George Tomlinson has recently pronounced

'We don't want children to grow up as historians only, or as teachers or housewives or factory workers only. We want them also to grow up and be educated as citizens with a proper sense of values, and able to understand and interpret and give service to the community, and as persons who have perception and appreciation of those things which have nothing to do with earning a living or with the machinery of society—persons who can enjoy the world of art, music, literature and so on.'

It is of course hard to attach any precise meaning to such blanket phraseology. But it might at least be pertinent to ask whether, for instance, there is any *necessary* distinction between, say, fulfilling the functions of a housewife and being a citizen with a proper sense of values (whatever they may be), or whether there are not some women who might become very good citizens with entirely adequate senses of value through seeking further perfection in the duties proper to a housewife. Again, might not the 'culture' proper to a good housewife be preferable, to an entirely inadequate smattering of knowledge of the world of art, music, etc. (Though that is not to argue that those housewives who are capable of appreciating more self-conscious arts should be prevented from doing so). It is easy to see that the abstract notion of the citizen and the cultured person (implying a self-conscious,

artistic culture) has got in the way of Mr Tomlinson's ability to see the cultural value of being a good historian, teacher, housewife or even a factory worker. It is the same outlook which is at present producing the distaste for specialization. Education, says Mr Tomlinson, 'must be for the whole of life, not just for one aspect of it'—a notion which has at least a respectable ancestry in Arnold, with his notion of 'a harmonious perfection only to be won by unreservedly cultivating many sides in us'. One of the difficulties arises, of course, from the inability to distinguish between different sorts of specialisms. Thus to specialize, say, in English literature would produce a very different and much more harmonious personality in Arnold's meaning of the term, than would concentration on some minute aspect of scientific investigation. And it is usually to be noted that when specialization is condemned, it is usually specialization in science that is intended. The fact, however, that every man has become a citizen of a state rather than the member of a class or of a trade or craft means that he can no longer seek his satisfactions within the restrictions which the specialization within a class or trade allowed—and there is no longer a coherence between his work and his play. Education for leisure has therefore become essential, and in leisure a man loses his identity, and becomes merely an abstraction, to acquire such superficial knowledge about 'art, music, literature and so on' as his nature will allow. And as many natures will not allow very much, a stereotyped art, music and literature have grown up, which, because they in no way relate themselves to the life lived by the individual, have come to depend for their appeal on an abstract of the stereotyped emotional attitudes that the majority of the people may be assumed to have. Thus, in a sense, what may be a solution is not less specialization but more, so that the potentialities of the specializations may be the more fully explored and the culture may be intimately related to the group life of the individual and not the imposed generalized notion of culture that serves to relieve, at present, the tedium of leisure. Such a notion, at least, presents itself as a possible approach to the question of what to do with the less self-conscious classes. And thus, too, the excesses both of those who regard education as a matter entirely for individual self-expression, and those who look to a single basic educational system will be avoided.

What has been said in this article must be regarded as random reflections rather than an ordered coherent attempt to deal with the educational implications of Mr Eliot's point of view. To attempt the latter would require more space than a review would allow. But this at least can be said: whatever objections can be urged against Mr Eliot's thesis—and it would not be difficult to urge several—what he asks are the fundamental questions, and I can think of no educational book in recent years which has shown such an awareness of them.

G H BANTOCK

## AMERICAN CRITICS AND POETIC DRAMA

*THE LANGUAGE OF TRAGEDY* by *Moody E Prior* (Columbia University Press London Geoffrey Cumberlege, 27/6)

*THIS GREAT STAGE IMAGERY AND STRUCTURE IN KING LEAR* by *Robert B Heilman* (Louisiana State University Press, \$3 50)

*RHETORIC AS A DRAMATIC LANGUAGE IN BEN JONSON* by *Alexander H Sackton* (Columbia University Press London Geoffrey Cumberlege )

It is becoming more and more difficult to keep up with the output of critical works from the American university presses. Catalogues and advertisements leave no doubt as to the thoroughness and industry with which the various fields are being covered. Three books on various aspects of poetic drama offer the opportunity to test the quality of some of this work, and prompt one or two general reflections. On the whole, the American writers seem to be more eclectic in their references to existing criticism on the same subject: there would appear to be a less marked tendency for them to fall into academic or social groups and coteries and to ignore work suggesting an unconventional or unfamiliar approach. Generally speaking they appear more receptive to new ideas, at any rate on the surface, and more willing to apply them both intensively and extensively. Professor Heilman expatiates on the imagery and structure of *King Lear* for some three hundred pages. Professor Prior covers the period from *Gorboduc* to the present day with heroic comprehensiveness. The idea that poetic drama is not merely drama in verse would seem to have become a fairly well accepted principle in America. And yet the final impression is disappointing: one feels that in the end far less is achieved than the pretensions warrant. If the American academic manner in criticism is free from some characteristic English defects, if it is more serious, less prone to elegant dilettantism, it has its own lapses, its own type of dullness and inadequacy. Some of these may arise from the greater pressure upon American university teachers to publish books: if a similar productivity were expected in this country it is difficult to believe that the results would be more satisfactory.

*The Language of Tragedy* begins promisingly with a discussion of 'The Nature of the Problem' which states the main point fairly: 'Had the tragedies of Shakespeare and of the ancients not been poetic tragedies, the impression of depth and vividness which their characters convey would have been impossible'. The long chapter on 'The Elizabethan Tradition' discusses Archer's attacks, Mr Eliot's answer, the tendency to explain everything as contemporary dramatic convention, and the tendency to abandon strictly dramatic aspects as trivial. Professor Prior's general position is that the



nature of Elizabethan dramatic entertainment was such that only comprehensive genius or stern artistic conscience could achieve a completely integrated work of art within it. After a somewhat pedantic account of imagery and patterned speech in *Tamburlaine* and *The Spanish Tragedy* he turns to Shakespeare, taking *Romeo and Juliet* and *King Lear* as specimens. His discussion of imagery in *Romeo and Juliet* is again not sufficiently controlled by a sense of critical relevance. Patterns of repeated imagery can no doubt be discovered in almost any work, but if their analysis is not to seem niggling the critic must effectually convince us of their significance in an adequate reading of the whole. The section on *King Lear* relates the imagery more convincingly to the larger themes from which it is generated. Passing on to Shakespeare's contemporaries Professor Prior distinguishes well between verse used merely as a current mode (Heywood), as a superficial means for isolated poetic effects (Beaumont and Fletcher) and as a true artistic convention. On the work of the other major Jacobean his comments are not very original: he omits Middleton, over-rates Webster and does rather less than justice to *The Revenger's Tragedy*. On Jonson's tragedies he could learn something from Dr Sackton, and he seems not to have read the work of Professor Knights.

The rest of the book deals with 'Tragedy and the Heroic Play', 'Nineteenth-century Tragedy' and 'The Present Age'. The middle chapters tend to be as dull as their subjects. It is not that Professor Prior really makes any unusual claims for Byron or Tennyson as dramatists, or even for Dryden, but one doubts the need for such elaborate and painstaking analyses to support the conventional judgments. He thinks that in *All for Love* Dryden for once achieved some success in 'the union of the poetical resources of language and the requirements of the dramatic form', but the discussion is not very persuasive. And was it necessary to examine the imagery of *Aurengzebe* at such length in order to arrive at the conclusion that it has no special function? Again, Professor Prior sees the derivative nature of *The Cenci* without drawing the obvious conclusions: he thinks that Shelley's poetic power 'gives it a kind of lyric unity'. The analyses of dramas by Byron, Tennyson and Browning succeed eventually in reaching a satisfactory statement of their limitations and may be of use to specialist students, but one feels that the important points could have been made with far less labour. On 'The Present Age' we are given a conscientious survey from Ibsen onwards, with some tendency to over-estimate the realistic drama's total achievement, and an account of the various reactions towards expressionism and attempts to revert to verse. No one is likely to quarrel with the conclusion that we in this age have not yet solved the problem for ourselves. But Professor Prior finds too many dramatists worth taking seriously, and he shows little realization of the fact that a living drama pre-supposes a community life which at present can be found only in the most fragmentary approximations: a full consideration of the problems would lead beyond criticism to cultural history and sociology.

Professor Heilman is familiar with 'the techniques of poetic analysis that have come into general use during the last two decades' and he attempts to apply them in a thorough analysis of *King Lear*. He is concerned not with the mere anthologizing of images and the classification of them by subjects' in Miss Spurgeon's manner but with the structures of meaning to which images contribute, together with direct references to a given theme and related symbolic incidents or actions. Thus he finds in the play certain main themes—blindness, disorder in nature, nakedness, mental disorder—which attain symbolic value because they are each prepared for by a pattern of related images and references. Gloucester's blindness is imbedded in a field of meanings centred in the concept of seeing—a sight pattern which leads metaphorically to the problem of insight. Edgar's nakedness is the focus of a pattern of clothes imagery—clothes as defence or encumbrance or pretence. The storm, a 'convulsion of nature', is related to a far-reaching series of inquiries into both human nature and the natural order, which are reinforced by a complex of animal imagery and the recurring theme of sex. The question of naturalness and unnaturalness is clearly connected with the further problem of justice, and so, via imagery of age and injury, and of values and valuation, with central problems of right and wrong. Similarly there are constant references to reason and madness long before madness becomes an actual issue. The whole series forms 'a questioning of the nature and sufficiency of the rational man'. Finally there is the consideration of man's relation to the universe as a whole which gives a pattern of references to the gods. He concludes that *King Lear* is 'finally a play about the ways of looking at and assessing the world of human experience'—the shrewd worldly group of characters reach only a superficial understanding of things; the apparently helpless and incompetent come to profound insights.

So much is set out in summary form in the first chapter, giving, as the author recognizes, little more than a skeleton of the play. The value of the book must depend on the actual analysis in which the various patterns are traced for inspection, and here one has to confess to some disappointment. Professor Heilman has something of interest to say on all the main themes noted above and a critical reader could derive useful hints from most chapters. But the 'scientific' thoroughness ultimately defeats its own object, insufficiently controlled by sensitiveness of response, it catalogues all references to a theme without adequate attention to their varying degrees of significance. 'Meaning in fact, comes to be too much a matter of sense alone, and the analysis does not allow for the simple fact that one reference to a theme may be much more potent emotionally than another. It is noticeable that Professor Heilman has little to say about the effects of rhythm upon imagery, and upon poetic meaning in general. A simple illustration of these criticisms may be found in his chapter on 'The Gods Are Just' with which one may compare Mr. Wilson Knight's treatment of the same subject in the chapter on 'The Lear Universe' in *The Wheel of Fire*.

Professor Heilman appears to take every slightest reference to the gods as of equal significance. Mr. Wilson Knight distinguishes carefully, finding many quite perfunctory in tone but some clearly more important. For all its merits, *This Great Stage* shows how easy it is for analysis to be pushed beyond the point where it loses touch with the actual experience of the work of art—a too thorough and schematic tidiness may be as misleading as undisciplined impressionism. To some extent one feels that expansion into a full-length book has blurred the main points of the discussion and that they might have been made more effectively in a fairly long essay.

In Dr. Sackton's book, too, there is a certain amount that looks like scholarly padding. But on the whole he has gained by being less ambitious. In an introductory chapter on the approaches to Ben Jonson he shows that his own approach derives largely from Mr. Eliot and Professor Knights. Sharing their opinion of Jonson's greatness, he has been led to inquire into the part played by rhetoric in his dramatic method. After a somewhat jejune outline of the tradition of rhetoric he goes on to discuss its uses in Elizabethan literature in general and especially in drama. His main chapters deal with the deliberate use by Jonson of technical jargon (culminating in *The Alchemist*) and hyperbole (especially in the Roman plays and *Volpone*). The latter section is prefaced by a discussion of the relatively simpler use of hyperbole in Kyd and early Marlowe, for contrast, and of the approach to Jonson's method in *The Jew of Malta*. In these chapters Dr. Sackton is able to contribute some useful passages of analysis of particular scenes, especially of *The Alchemist*, which has not received much close critical attention. He has perhaps pushed his thesis about as far as it will go, and in the concluding chapter, which contrasts Jonson's use of language for ironical purposes with that of Shakespeare, he has ignored, I think, some difficult questions—such as the effect of speeches like the opening of *Henry IV* (Part I) and some of those in *Henry V* and *Coriolanus*—again has the deliberate use of hyperbole any bearing upon Othello's rhetoric? But the book does contribute something to our reading of Jonson, and it provides scholarly backing for the critical insight of others.

R. G. Cox

## CROSS CURRENTS IN TWENTIETH-CENTURY MUSIC

- MAHLER *Lieder eines Fahrenden Gesellen* (Eugenia Zareska with L P O under van Beinum) Decca
- MEDTNER Society issue Vol I (Second Piano Concerto, piano pieces and songs Philharmonia Orchestra conducted Dobrowen, the composer and Oda Slobadskaya) H M V  
Vol II Piano Concerto No 3, Sonata Vocalise, Improvisation
- IRELAND Sonata No 1 for Violin and Piano (Frederick Grinke and the composer) Decca
- DELIUS *Brygg Favr* (R P O conducted Beecham) H M V
- BAX *The Garden of Fand* (R P O conducted Beecham) H M V
- STRAUSS *Metamorphosen* (Vienna Philharmonic conducted von Karajan) Columbia
- DEBUSSY *Jeux, poeme danse* (Orchestra of the Augusteo Rome, conducted de Sabata) H M V
- RAVEL Concerto for piano left hand and orchestra (Robert Casadesus with Philadelphia Orchestra conducted by Eugene Ormandy)
- RAVEL *Alborado del gracioso* (Dinu Liputti) Columbia
- STRAVINSKY *Le Sacre de Printemps* (Concertgehouw of Amsterdam under von Beinum) Decca
- STRAVINSKY Concerto in D for strings (Halle, conducted Barbirolli) H M V
- ROUSSEL *Petite Suite* and Fauré *Pavane* (Orchestra de la Societe du Conservatoire de Paris conducted Munch) Decca
- BRITTEN Interludes from *Peter Grimes* (L S O conducted Sargent) Columbia
- BRITTEN *The Rape of Lucrezia* (English Opera Group, conducted Reginald Goodall) H M V
- BARKELEY Divertimento (London Chamber Orchestra, conducted Anthony Bernard)
- BUSH *Dialectic* for string quartet (Aeolian Quartet) H M V
- ELIZALDE Violin Concerto (Christian Ferras with Orchestra conducted Gaston Poulet) Decca
- TIPPETT String Quartet No 2 (Zornian Quartet) Decca
- BARBER Symphony No 1 Columbia
- BLOCK String Quartet No 2 (Griller Quartet) Decca

One can no longer complain about the quantity of Modern Music being issued by the recording companies. One can complain of a certain capriciousness in the selection of works, and one would like to see some systematic attempt to record what one might call the established classics of twentieth-century music. But I suppose the recording companies might retort that they do not know what the established classics are and that, in the multifarious variety of twentieth-century techniques, they are not sure who could tell them. Surveying the miscellaneous bevy of works listed above one must admit that there is some excuse for caution. Have the musical idioms of a mere fifty years ever before shown such baffling diversity? How can one hope even to establish any chronological development when one considers the dates at which these works were written? Will they appear quite so ill-assorted to the historian of the future or will they have been ironed out by time not to a coherently consistent style like classical baroque or Mozartian *galant* but at least to a grey monotone of Twentieth-Century Music? I have just been attempting to write a chapter on the Techniques of the Twentieth Century for a work of musical history. I should be interested to know whether a historian of the twenty-first century will find this task as difficult as I did.

The first six works on the list belong in spirit and technique to the last years of the nineteenth century, though the last of them was written in 1945. The Mahler has a classical maturity of utterance because although an end, it is the end of a great and specific tradition. It is not among the most important of Mahler's works, but one has only to put it beside the Ireland Sonata to realize the value of an inherited tradition which is also an inherited civilization. I suppose the Ireland is remarkable for the time at which it was written, yet it has no more than a period air at this date, it seems weak and sugary and 'Edwardian' in large inverted commas. One does not think of referring to the Mahler as 'Viennese' in the same slightly patronizing way, one accepts Mahler's idiom as a part of the European tradition. It needed a genius of Delius's stature to overcome the provincial inspidity of Edwardian musical culture, and he did so only by turning his back on his society, creating a music that yearned for a vanishing world. *Brigg Fair* is a quintessential Delius piece making a characteristic use of variation form. The Bax work is similar to the Delius in technique and in intention, only whereas Delius evokes memories of the countryside and his own childhood, Bax deliberately evokes a fabulous never-never land—the Celtic twilight in which, as a *Radio Times* note once charmingly put it, 'Bax has been lost for the last twenty years'. It is, perhaps music of remarkable talent as compared with Delius's genius, but Bax's talent has seldom manifested itself with more luscious imaginativeness. This is a fine example of an unfashionable kind of music. Like the Delius, it is superbly played and recorded. The early Ireland work is also admirably performed. In the Mahler the singer is a little aggressive.

There is an element of nostalgia in the music of Medtner too, but it is less strongly marked than in Delius's and Bax's work. He is still composing in a full-blown nineteenth-century romantic style which is 'late' in its almost superabundant richness and luxuriance but makes no concession to modernity. The noble bearing and staggering virtuosity of his music suggest a more sensitive and rhythmically subtle Rachmaninov and one hopes that these records will help to introduce him to the wider public which would certainly enjoy his music if it had the chance to hear it. One must deprecate however, the ludicrous claims that have been made for Medtner in literature accompanying this recording venture. In Volume I the songs are beautiful and finely sung, the piano pieces rather dull and the concerto highly impressive if you like that kind of thing, with a powerful first movement that must be accounted a good piece of music by any standards. In Volume II the third concerto, written as recently as 1945, is less opulent, more fashionably austere than the second, but contains no music up to the level of the earlier work's first movement. The Sonata Vocalise is an experiment in the combination of a wordless coloratura part with Medtner's habitual intricate pianism. It is well written, but overlong for its musical substance. All the Medtner records are worth hearing for the composer's muscular and heroic piano playing, even if you find the music uncongenial.

The Strauss *Metamorphosen* is interesting. Written in 1945 it is none the less a continuation of the technique and aesthetic of *Tristan*, comparable with Schoenberg's moving *Verklärte Nacht*. Its technique is that of a continuous harmonic and melodic generation from a few seminal motives. The polyphonic texture of the writing for twenty-three strings is of extraordinary opulence, and the repeated use of enharmonic transitions imbues the voluptuous chromaticism with a strange, ghostly unreality. It is a 'tragic' complement to the ghostly comedy of the Oboe Concerto reviewed previously. Powerfully melancholy and valedictory it is, in relation to *Tristan*, an epilogue to an epilogue. It is extremely disturbing music though the disturbance is hardly pleasurable and perhaps not very valuable. Certainly I wouldn't agree with those who call it a *great work*. But it should be listened to. It marks the end of an era, and its technical virtuosity dazzles. The performance seems sympathetic.

In the next batch of works we may group the Debussy, the Ravel and the Roussel. *Jeux* is one of Debussy's last works against the conventional valuation of which I've often put in a protest. In this piece, however, the composer's peculiarly episodic and sequential structural methods are employed in so exaggerated a manner that the music seems unconvincing without the stage business it was designed to accompany. It is worth study, however, for its abundance indeed superabundance, of effects of texture and sonority, what a magnificent composer for the films Debussy would have made! This highly sophisticated use of line and colour is found too in both the Ravel and Roussel. The Ravel Concerto

has always seemed to me one of the most fascinating of the composer's later elegantly exotic works, and this version is strongly to be recommended. The Roussel Suite is somewhat self-parasitic and pedestrian, at least after the first movement. The fill-up of the lovely Fauré *Pavane* is inferior to the recent Columbia version in that it omits the brief but effective choral part.

These works—the Ravel Concerto most convincingly—show an attempt to discipline chromatic resource by a re-creation of classical structures. The Stravinsky *Sacre*—this time undoubtedly one of the established masterpieces—was also a reaction against chromatic disintegration in so far as it insisted with fanatical violence on the validity of metre. In the long run, such insistence had much the same effect as chromaticism, it destroyed traditional ideas of tonal coherence and after it Stravinsky was forced to tackle the problem of the reintegration of line. We can observe Stravinsky trying to solve this question of formal integration in a chaotic world, all through his 'neo-classic' works of which the Concerto in D is a recent but not very distinguished example. In so doing he has created some fine music, notably the *Symphonie des Psaumes* and the *Symphony in Three Movements* but we may doubt whether his re-creative genius has ever manifested itself with quite such authority as did his destructive genius in *Le Sacre*. It is interesting that at this date the relation of *Le Sacre* to Debussy seems unambiguous enough. The performance and recording of this still cataclysmic work are superb. The wry Concerto leads the Hallé into a somewhat finical performance.

The late works of Stravinsky have clearly suggested to Lennox Berkeley some of the exquisite noises which occur from time to time in his *Divertimento*. This piece does not seem to me, however to be up to the standard of Berkeley's finest recent work, such as the *Sabat Mater*, the incidental noises are delightful, but they are not justified by a sustained melodic invention, so that the music sounds rather parasitic suggesting now Roussel, now the final works of Debussy. Tippett's second Quartet could never be mistaken for the work of anyone else. It still seems to me an important work, though I am beginning to wonder if its rhythmic complexities, which are so largely the secret of its personal manner, don't in the long run defeat their own ends. There is a chance that they may cease to stimulate, as they cease to defeat, one's expectation. The finest passages in the third Quartet seem to be recovering a more stable rhythmic norm, without any sacrifice of Purcellian and madrigalian intensity.

Britten is so much a man of the theatre that I doubt whether the recording of two-thirds of *The Rape of Lucretia* gives an adequate notion of the music except to those familiar with the stage version. But it is admirably done by the Glyndebourne company. It might have been better to have started with *Herring*, I think which ought to become a part of the established repertoire, for it is not only 'clever' but very funny and brimming over with Good Tunes. But again you can't really take it out of the theatre,

and that is a strength rather than a weakness, at this stage at least in the composer's development. The Interludes from *Grimes* also lose much by being divorced from their context. In this case they are not very sensitively played.

Bush's *Dialectic* is about as untheatrical as a work could well be, but it is a fine piece for which one's liking as well as one's respect grows the better one knows it. It is an early experiment in the completely thematic technique which Bush has adopted consistently in his recent works. One of these pieces, notably the *English Suite* for strings or the lovely *Winter Journey* cantata for soli, string quartet and harp might perhaps have made a more grateful introduction of Bush to the gramophone public, but one is glad to have *Dialectic* which wears well because, it is honestly felt and logically argued in musical terms.

Whatever its deficiencies in charm, the Bush piece has everything which Elzalde's concerto hasn't. This work of a pupil of Falla is not obstreperously Spanish—the most obvious influence is the admirable one of Milhaud's *Cincertino de Printemps*—and brims over with charm of an unpretentious nature. But although each movement starts off with a delightful idea and has many elegant touches of orchestration, the work has no composition. The initial ideas are succeeded by amiable passage work, the pretty scenery on each side of the path does not disguise the fact that the path leads nowhere. These records are chiefly remarkable for the phenomenal fiddling of Christian Ferras, who is said to be only fourteen. Seldom have I heard such brilliance of attack and such scrupulous intonation in multiple stopping. It looks as though he will be in the Heifetz class.

An eighteenth-century composer with considerably less talent than Elzalde could not have produced so directionless a work still less could he have produced so emotionally inflated a one as Barber's *Symphony*. I have never been able to see anything in Barber's music except perhaps for the unpretentious *Dorset Beach*. Several American musicians whose opinion I respect have told me I was wrong about him, so I listened to this work carefully and hopefully. It still seems to me a crude and hysterical bit of melodrama, grievously overscored.

Nothing could reveal its shabby pretentiousness better than to put it beside Bloch's second Quartet, magnificently played by the Griller Quartet. Bloch is a highly intense and rhetorical composer whose music has sometimes degenerated to hysteria. But it was always passionately human and honest, never attitudinizing. Here the cruder violences are purged away, the slow fugato passages seem to me the most intensely moving music Bloch has given us with a nervously chromatic line worthy of comparison with the subtlest linear writing of Bartok and Berg. I'm still not so sure about the frantic metrical passages, though they are here convincingly absorbed into the structure. In any case this is a work of consequence.



## HUMANITAS

As most *Scrutiny* readers probably know, *Humanitas* is a quarterly review, inaugurated at Manchester, and contributed to mainly by teaching members of universities. Its title suggests well enough the function it proposes for itself—the function of vindicating, in a non-specialist intellectual organ, the idea of a university as a humane centre. Such an undertaking clearly deserves to succeed. The numbers of *Humanitas* to hand may fairly be taken as justifying the promoters' claim for support—even if one dissents from Bro. George Every's view of Charles Williams as a distinguished and improving writer, and deplores the critical approach that permits this kind of thing.

'The younger poets who came to light in 1937-42, such voices as Dylan Thomas, David Gascoyne, Alex Comfort and Sidney Keyes, have never suffered from any illusions about the future of our civilization.

(Bro. George Every's part in establishing certain authors tends to make one think that Christian Discrimination is decidedly a thing to be discouraged.)

*Humanitas* needs more support if it is to continue publication. 16/- a year, post free. Subscriptions should go to Dr W. Schenk, *Humanitas*, University College, Exeter.

AN AMERICAN SELECTION FROM  
'SCRUTINY'

Readers may be interested to know that under the title *The Importance of 'Scrutiny'*, a large volume of selected *Scrutiny* work has been brought out in America. The Editor, Mr. Eric Bentley, contributes an introductory essay. The volume is published by George W. Stewart, New York, at \$5.75.

Readers should be warned that, among the many misprints, there are some distressingly plausible and insidious ones.

# SCRUTINY

## A Quarterly Review

*Edited by*

L C KNIGHTS                      H A MASON  
F R LEAVIS

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## ARTHUR KOESTLER

THE work of Mr Arthur Koestler enjoys a certain vague esteem, especially his novel *Darkness at Noon*. Possibly because his themes are extremely topical and controversial, references to his books are often short-winded, stopping at an assertion without a demonstration. The following pages are offered as a contribution to critical definition.

It would be fair to describe Mr Koestler's as a war-time reputation. Many must have read his entire work for the first time when they returned to England. The chief innovations were the names of Mr Koestler and of Mr Warner, now much more insistently recommended than he was before the war. There were also several journalists who had achieved prominence, among them Mr George Orwell. None of these writers is negligible. But the mention of Mr Warner and of Mr Orwell at once prompts the remark, that Mr Koestler is much the more serious writer. There is more pressure behind his words, the pressure of experience. Mr Orwell also has had experiences which occasionally give to his work a seriousness similar to Mr Koestler's. He has some of the virtues of Mr E. M. Forster. But insularity has got the better of him. It is difficult to see why he decided to publish *Animal Farm*. Mr Warner is an earnest man. But his interests seem to have been derived from the reading of newspapers. When he writes of large European themes his strenuous prose becomes very trying.

Mr Koestler is intelligent, his literary gift unquestionable, and his work, which has received distinct praise, compels discussion at the most serious level. I take the following details of his personal history from the jackets of two of his novels. He was born in Budapest in 1905, a Hungarian subject, and studied engineering and psychology at the University of Vienna. Before the age of twenty one he had farmed in Palestine, had worked with an Arabian architect and had edited a short-lived weekly publication in Cairo. At twenty-one he became successively Middle East and Paris correspondent to the Ullstein chain of newspapers in Germany, took part in the Arctic expedition of the Graf Zeppelin, and was in turn science editor and foreign editor of various Ullstein newspapers in Berlin. In 1931 Koestler joined the Communist Party, travelled through central Asia and spent a year in the U.S.S.R. In 1933 he settled in France. In 1936 he went to Spain to cover the civil war for the *News Chronicle*. He was arrested by the Fascists, was condemned to death under a charge of espionage, and spent three months in prison. The British Foreign Office eventually succeeded in procuring his exchange for a prisoner of the Valencia Government. Eighteen months before the non-aggression pact was signed between Germany and Russia Koestler left the Communist Party, and 1938 found him back in Paris where he edited an anti-Soviet,

anti-Nazi weekly. When war broke out in 1939 he was arrested and sent to the Le Vernet detention camp, from which he was released in 1940, again through the intervention of British friends. He escaped to England and joined the British Army as a private. He is in his forties.

The characteristic which all readers agree in ascribing to Mr Koestler's work is 'intensity'. *Darkness at Noon* begins "The cell door slammed behind Rubashov"—and the expectation thus set up is not disappointed. *Thieves in the Night* begins "If I get killed to-day, it won't be by falling off the top of a truck" Joseph thought, digging his fingers into the tarred canvas cover of the swaying, lurching vehicle. He lay on his back, with arms spread out, a horizontally crucified figure on a rocking hearse under the stars. Again the same intensity is aimed at, but the deliberateness is felt at once in the strained tone, in the violence and spurious exaltation of the language. The events which Mr Koestler describes usually have the interest of topicality or unusualness, and they develop intensity in much the same way that a film develops it, by vividness of presentation, by insistence, and suspense. But Mr Koestler's intensity is so unrelied and so insistent that it seems often not to emerge from the situation in a novel but rather to satisfy some need in the author. I have the impression in reading him, that he is trying to justify himself to us, to justify the existence of these intense feelings in his own breast. He is always extremely conscious of the reader, of the effect he is making. A kind of emotional bullying is frequently my impression in reading his two most important novels *Darkness at Noon* and *Thieves in the Night*. Mr Koestler is not unaware of this tendency in himself. He plainly finds it very difficult to be fair. "We cannot afford to see the other man's point" says one of the characters in *Thieves in the Night*. And Joseph, the character through which the author conveys much of his own experience, writes in his diary "I wonder whether any other race has the same capacity for doctrinaire fanaticism as ours. It has, I suppose to do with the Exile. émigrés always have cliques and quarrels, and we have been émigrés for 2000 years. The exiled have nothing to hang on to except doctrines and convictions. Hence they fight over ideas like dogs over bones. The others call it politely our semitic intensity." This intensity has sources which cannot be detected by the critic, and of which the author himself is not fully conscious. The frequently sardonic tone in which Mr Koestler writes is a strong clue. It suggests that the author considers himself peculiarly privileged by his experience to describe the sufferings of others. He tends to identify *himself* with Rubashov, and the character draws on some of the intensity of the author's feelings for his own race. "We shall always be betrayed", says Joseph, "because something in us asks to be betrayed. There is this urge for the return to earth and normality, and there is that other urge to continue the hunt for a lost Paradise which is not in space". Mr Koestler is fond of that sort of emotional flourish, and it is not a matter to be ignored in an account of his intensity. Rubashov

also draws life from this utopianism, thwarted, oppressed and imprisoned Rubashov is made in his last moments to reflect 'But where was the Promised Land? Did there really exist any such goal for this wandering mankind? That was a question to which he would have liked an answer before it was too late' The ingenuousness of this is not in character, nor is the Old Testament idiom but comes from the author It is part of his determination to read wide significance into Rubashov's death

*Darkness at Noon* is amongst other things, an interpretation of the Moscow Trials The theme is intrinsically an important one Yet it is not such that the feelings of most people could attach themselves to it, as they might to a story of common violence or misfortune One felt that it needed interpreting and yet the reluctance of imaginative writers other than Mr Koestler to come forward with interpretations and strong convictions is understandable For in presenting the struggle as one between Persecutor and Persecuted one would certainly be simplifying unduly One would run the risk of identifying oneself with the victim, and thereby resigning the right to judge One would risk drawing against the Russians the strong emotions aroused by the Nazis There was a natural hesitation to interpret events in a country threatened by militant nazidom Reading *Darkness at Noon* I feel the need of some third party some standard of reference, such as the teacher of languages in *Under Western Eyes* It may be urged that Mr Koestler does not invite us to accept Rubashov as White and Gletkin as Black I think that he does I hope to show that Mr Koestler is not fastidious that he does in fact insist that we accept Rubashov at the author's valuation, and that to this end he turns all his intensity upon us I should like to believe that both Rubashov and Gletkin are objectively presented in the light of a total wisdom But I fear it is not the case The author assumes that we will accept Rubashov whether we admire what he represents or no And the emotional methods Koestler employs are not slight blemishes but the sign of a radical over-simplification And, I think, self-ignorance I find in Mr Koestler what has been described as 'a domnative mind in reverse'

Mr Koestler, then, took it upon himself to make the Trials real to us The main part of the book is taken up with the imprisoned man's reveries and his interrogation The most poignant chapters in it are those in which the isolated man communicates with prisoners in adjoining cells by means of a tapped-out quadratic alphabet They create, more vividly than anything I know, the sense of helplessness and the perilous hold on sanity of imprisoned men But the book aims to be more than an account of prison psychology more, also, than a critical presentation of the contest between two sorts of revolutionary There are signs that Mr Koestler set out to write with ironical detachment but he soon slips into the more congenial task of persuading the reader to take sides, and to believe that choices are simpler than they are He directs his intense power to this end and causes Rubashov to

generalize freely on the significance of his own fate. Much of the generalization has dated badly and it is usually too fluid to invite confidence. For example, when we come to this self-justification by Rubashov: "Our press and our schools cultivate chauvinism, militarism, dogmatism, conformism and ignorance. The arbitrary power of the government is unlimited and unexampled in history, freedom of the press, of opinion and of movement are as thoroughly exterminated as though the proclamation of the Rights of Man had never been." We whip the groaning masses of the country towards a theoretical future happiness, which only we can see. For the energies of this generation are exhausted—they were spent in the Revolution—for this generation is bled white and there is nothing left of it but a moaning, numbed, apathetic lump of sacrificial flesh'—we are made to look again at the date of the novel, 1938 to 1940, and perhaps also to recall Mr. Eliot's recent remark that

A considerable time must elapse before we can draw any illustration from Russia. There is something unconsidered in Mr. Koestler's approach to his subject—he has not clearly asked himself whether he intends to achieve the understanding and impersonality of art or to write highly-charged propaganda. Conrad described his own aim in *Under Western Eyes* as 'trying to catch the very soul of things Russian.' It is not a description that one could apply to *Darkness at Noon*. Mr. Koestler's Russians might be Germans, only less efficient—no more than the unformed puppets of the popular film. Mr. Koestler is not prepared to allow any humanity to his enemies. As several critics have remarked, he is something of a disappointed commissar.

The comparison of Mr. Koestler with Conrad must have been made by most readers, especially of *Darkness at Noon* with *Under Western Eyes*. Conrad certainly had more cause than Mr. Koestler to loathe everything Russian but he wrote not only with detachment but with pity—which is not self-pity—and he is careful not to generalize what he cannot make implicit. He is fastidious—he does not intrude—the teacher of languages is not Conrad. He wrote in his preface: 'My greatest anxiety was in being able to strike and sustain the note of scrupulous impartiality. The obligation of absolute fairness was imposed on me historically and hereditarily, by the peculiar experience of race and family, in addition to my primary conviction that truth alone is the justification of any fiction which makes the least claim to the quality of art or may hope to take its place in the culture of men and women of its time. I had never been called before to a greater effort of detachment from all passions, prejudices and even from personal memories. *Under Western Eyes* on its first appearance in England was a failure with the public, perhaps because of that very detachment.' The extreme contrast to this fastidiousness is the journalistic opportunism of Mr. Koestler's work and its quick popularity. Again Conrad writes: 'Razumov is treated sympathetically. Why should he not be? Being nobody's child he feels rather more keenly than another that he is a Russian—or he is nothing. Nobody

is exhibited as a monster here Mr Koestler, on the other hand, presents, as symbol and representative of modern Russia, the monster Gletkin 'His boots creaked at every step, his starched uniform crackled, and a sourish smell of sweat and leather became noticeable—a description which might of course apply to any man in uniform This description of the monster is repeated again and again in a technique suggesting the simplifying camera But, as Conrad knew, monsters are not enough in a theme of this kind The effect of Mr Koestler's book is to flatter complacency much as a film flatters it He dwells, for example, on the disorderliness of the prison doctor's clinic The infirmary was small and the air stuffy it smelled of carbolic and tobacco A bucket and two pans were filled to the brim with cotton-wool swabs and dirty bandages The doctor sat at a table with his back to them, reading the newspaper and chewing bread and dripping He was bald and had an unusually small skull, covered with white fluff, which reminded Rubashov of an ostrich In short, another monster and the monsters do betray the abstract nature of Mr Koestler's intensity He is something of an engineer in human affairs he wants quick results Reading Conrad's novels we pick up as we go some reflection on life, some generalization from experience, some rhythm of feeling, which collectively establish our confidence in the writer's spirit and intention, in the writer's qualifications, his wisdom but *Darkness at Noon*, though it is full of generalities, gives us nothing to grasp and to trust Its intensity is not generous but political—as if the writer merely intends that the prisoner and prisoner should change places What is so depressing in this novel is the fact that neither of Mr Koestler's alternatives represents anything very admirable, although we are constrained to accept the author's choice And one feels at times that the author relishes and savours the prison atmosphere There is a kind of ascetic expansiveness in his description of it

After several readings Rubashov remains an intangible figure His preoccupations elude us although he is plainly meant to carry our sympathy As an imprisoned man he has our pity But the author plainly expects the reader's unconditional approval for the essential passages in Rubashov's self-justification For example for such a passage as this 'For forty years he had fought against economic fatality It was the central ill of humanity, the cancer which was eating into its entrails It was there that one must operate the rest of the healing process would follow All else was dilettantism, romanticism, charlatanism One cannot heal a person mortally ill by pious exhortations The only solution was the surgeon's knife and his cool calculation' I cannot relate the passage to any possible actuality the medical metaphors are striking, indeed formidable, but I fail to see what they are about The prisoner is divided from his interrogators principally by his preference for international revolution and his disapproval of increasing Russian nationalism Mr Koestler shows himself quite incapable of evaluating national feeling as a social positive it is this incapacity that

helps to produce throughout the novel a sense of strain and unreality, as if something important were being ignored and left out. The differences, as stated by Gletkin, are certainly not trivial, especially in a political system as barbarously inflexible as the communist.

Significantly, the first interrogation of Rubashov begins with a wrangle over the proprietary rights to the plural pronoun 'we'. The discussion is of course potentially interesting, it is a pre-occupation from which no modern writer of importance can escape, and Henry James, Conrad, Synge, Lawrence Yeats, Mr Forster and Mr Eliot constantly return to it, indeed it is at the centre of their work. Rubashov tells his interrogator: "'Leave the masses out of it. You understand nothing of them. Nor probably do I any more. Once, when the great 'we' still existed, we understood them as no one had ever understood them before. At that time we were called the party of the Plebs. What did the others know of history?' They wondered at the changing forms of the surface and could not explain them. But we had descended into the depths, into the formless anonymous masses, which at all times constituted the substance of history, and we were the first to discover her laws of motion: we had discovered the laws of her inertia, of the slow changing of her molecular structure, and of her sudden eruptions. We dug in the primeval mud of history and there we found her laws. And now you have buried it all again. You killed the 'we', you destroyed it'''. But by this time Rubashov has become merely the mouthpiece of Mr Koestler, the disgruntled internationalist. There is a fluidity of assertion here, a flow of images, molecules and laws of motion about which I feel a strong mistrust: one recognizes the style of *The Yogi and the Commissar*. Mr Koestler's sympathies do not allow him to realize how much more cogent than Rubashov's the arguments of Ivanov and Gletkin often appear. So great indeed, is the author's confidence of having attached our sympathy to Rubashov that he is finally deliberately associated with Christ, in the emotional surge of the book's concluding section. Whilst listening to his daughter reading the newspaper report of Rubashov's trial, the porter Vasily whispers verses from the Gospels of St Mark and St Luke: "'And the soldiers led him away into the hall called Praetorium.'" I do not find it possible to respond to this bullying exaltation. Mr Koestler has made the situation much simpler than we know it to be, and the emotion he wrings from it seems rather cheap and expected. He might have avoided this over-simplification and also achieved a certain detachment had he been able to recognize any value at all in Russian consciousness of national identity: to him national sentiment is an old-fashioned irrelevance.

The weakness of the novel are conspicuous in the collection of essays *The Yogi and the Commissar*. The same lack of emotional fastidiousness is much more obtrusive here, and the naivety of some of Mr Koestler's intense aspirations is suggested by these sentences: "During the first few years Soviet myth and Russian reality were



fairly congruent. It was the heroic age in which legends are generated. Behind the smoke there was real fire. And what a fire! The people had seized the power and had maintained itself in power on one-sixth of the earth. Private ownership, the profit motive, sexual taboos, social conventions were abolished practically in one stroke. There were no more rich and poor, masters and servants, officers and men. The husband had no longer authority over his wife, the parent over his child, the teacher over his pupil. The history of Homo Sapiens seemed to start from scratch. There was a thunder behind the words of those unheard-of decrees like the voice from Sinai which gave the Ten Commandments. Those who listened felt as if some rigid crust inside them, the parched crust of scepticism, frustration, resigned common sense had suddenly burst open. Here, I believe, we are in touch with some of the things which Rubashov represents.

Throughout these essays Mr Koestler talks a great deal about 'values', but he does not come near to saying in what his values are embodied. His inability to give value to feelings of nationality allows him to make one or two startling observations. He writes 'If ever there was a chance of Socialism in Britain it was in the period from Dunkirk to the fall of Tobruk. However, the working class lacked the political maturity to grasp its opportunity. So much for the British working class. Mr Koestler is here not merely blind to national loyalties but also inexcusably ignorant—for a man who has given so much of his life to politics and makes such a parade of psychology—ignorant of the unusual social structure in the British Isles, the unusual distribution of economic power, and the satisfaction of wartime full employment. He is incapable of conceiving a situation in which classes do not think primarily of grasping opportunities, so he ascribes national loyalties to 'political immaturity'. As a consequence of his abstract notion of 'values' his talk of an intelligentsia is also unsatisfactory. When he speaks of 'a new fraternity in a new spiritual climate' and exclaims 'Let us build oases!', I do not feel that he has asked himself the questions—Who is included in this emphatic plural? The author and who else? And what language shall they speak? It seems indeed that the author wishes to create a world fit for Koestler to live in—'starting from scratch'. In some recent essays in which he examines his experience to discover the conditions necessary to civilized life, Mr Eliot claims for himself the title of social biologist. I do not believe that the author of *The Yogi and the Commissar* ever undertook such an examination or that he would recognize the usefulness of the title. There are of course some interesting things in the book, especially the discussion of Russian propaganda. But again one is disquieted by an obvious unwillingness to grant any merit to Russians. For example, as if to explain away Russian military effort he writes 'The population of Soviet Russia is more than twice that of Germany'. Then he adds 'The endurance and fatalism of the Russian soldier are proverbial', implying that endurance and fatalism are not such estimable qualities as German

discipline The author of *Darkness at Noon* seems here to be on the defensive

There is one passage in the book in which the thwarted internationalist reveals ingenuous disappointment that the war should have made people more conscious of what they were fighting for He writes 'One of the most powerful emotional factors is Xenophobia, from its totemistic tribal form to modern nationalism This factor too is largely independent of *real* self-interest thus the Socialist workers of Warsaw took arms against the Russian revolutionary army in 1920 the Arabs of Palestine took arms against Jewish infiltration which economically brought them enormous benefits In the present war whenever Nationalism conflicted with social ideology, Nationalism won Fascist Greece under Metaxas fought the Italian Fascist invader democratic Britain courted Fascist Spain, Japanese feudalism found a *modus vivendi* with Russian Bolshevism in other words, all the politicalisms might as well not have existed' The ingenuous regret expressed in this passage should be sufficient to destroy confidence in Mr Koestler's political insight 'Infiltration is a betraying word applied to Palestine, and subsequent history is a sufficient comment on the enormous benefits in store for the Arabs once their soil was bought up When Mr Koestler writes Xenophobia with a capital X, he is very far from realizing that national feeling makes the pattern of significant differences which is Europe that it is the focus of the most complete and intimate agreements and shared meanings, one of the disinterested ideals or values that Europeans will live for in the struggle of the rival materialisms of America and Russia Mr Koestler's attitude is that of a man who has nothing to lose He does not show us things that he loves he offers no criteria by which to judge what is valuable There is nothing in his work up to *The Yogi and the Commissar* to suggest that he had ever undertaken an analysis of his own sincerity—an examination of what he could possibly mean by an 'oasis' Mr Koestler, unlike Kafka, attempts to ignore his fate his luck, and projects his isolation on to his characters in revolt He thus escapes from his difficulty and distorts his experience I cannot imagine Mr Koestler writing as Conrad, with a humility that brings tears to one's eyes, wrote 'I heard myself addressed in English—the speech of my secret choice, of my future of my friendships, of the deepest affections, of hours of toil and hours of ease, of my very dreams' And if I dare not claim it aloud as my own then, at any rate the speech of my children

Before passing to some observations on *Thieves in the Night*, I should like to mention *Twilight Bar*, the play, satirical in intention, which Mr Koestler wrote in 1944 as a new version of a play written and lost in 1933 It is without value except as an illustration of Mr Koestler's confusion He explains in the preface that the play was an escape from the pressure of reality and again I have the guilty feeling of having disgraced the blackboard all set for a solemn lesson in history' In the play the inhabitants of an island

are visited by travellers from another planet who have the power to destroy all life in the places they visit, and to colonize them for their own kind. They spare those places in which the total happiness—measured by a Koestlerian calculus—exceeds pain. The islanders are given a short time to improve their total. Frightened by this threat they make elaborate carnival only to relapse when they know they are safe. These are the last words of the dialogue: "The more I think of it the less I understand what happened to the people on this island. When they were frightened they decided to be happy because they had no other choice. And they tasted happiness and found that it was good, they attempted the impossible and found that it worked. Then when they ceased to be frightened they said now that the danger has passed we can be unhappy again and with a sigh of relief they rushed back to their old misery." "That's how we are made. Each little skunk enjoys his own stunk".

It appears that Mr Koestler, like other people, enjoyed the sense of simplified purposes and massive solidarity brought by the war, and he is here expressing his regret that the possibility of heroic fantasy would and ('it is evil things we are fighting'), and that we should all break out of our militarist unity. Each little skunk enjoys his own stunk' is his statement of exasperation—it is not the only Swiftian touch in the play. That kind of irritation underlies, I think, all of Mr Koestler's work.

Mr Koestler's most recent book *Thieves in the Night* is his most direct attempt at analysis of his own intensities. He is here obviously trying to come to terms with national feeling, despite the fact that his fellow-Jews are frequently repulsive to him, and despite the lack of a national language. The book is not a novel but, as the sub-title states a chronicle. There is in it an intimacy and sense of human experience that give it exceptional vividness and life. But even sympathetic critics agree in finding it entirely propagandist in intention. Mr Koestler again finds it necessary to create a monster to symbolize the Arab world, his Mukhtar is fat and repulsive, his son hideous. 'At 6.30 a.m. the Mukhtar was woken by Issa, his eldest son. Issa had been standing for quite a while next to the bed not daring to touch his father, his close-set, slightly squinting eyes in the pale pock-marked face were anxiously fixed on the enormous bulk in the blue and yellow striped pyjamas. The Mukhtar had thrown the blanket off in his sleep. His crumpled pyjama-jacket had slipped upward, revealing a strip of brownish skin covered with black fluff just above the navel.' This recalls the Doctor in *Darkness at Noon*—'his skull bald and covered with white fluff'. The spittle of physical revulsion spurts from the author's lips.

Most readers of the book will have felt misgivings at the attempt to provoke intense feelings against the Arabs, and to win moral feeling to the Jewish side. The Palestine affair is an ugly example of international expediency, and cannot even be discussed in ethical terms. The writer who can deliberately work up intense feelings against the Arabs must be incapable of self-criticism. The theme of

the book is obviously extremely controversial, and a writer with more delicacy than Mr Koestler would probably not have written such a book at all. Many critics have noticed that the book is especially calculated to win American sympathy. There is in it a big-jawed good-natured, boozing American and there is some comedy—much indebted to Mr Forster but rather shrill—at the expense of British colonial life (Mr Forster's comedy leaves a much more distinct impression of the cruelty and the suffering). Whereas in *Darkness at Noon* Mr Koestler intends the English reader to feel self-righteous horror at Russian interrogation methods in *Thieves in the Night* he caters for American opinion of British methods with this: 'One of our fellows escaped yesterday from Jerusalem prison. Both his thumbs were dislocated as a result of being suspended by them for two hours. He was also beaten on the genitals bastinadoed and questioned while having water poured into his nostrils.' They have started third-degreering our boys. The Police here is riddled with former Black and Tans who know this kind of job. Now the knowledge that such things happen should have qualified the feeling in *Darkness at Noon*. The writer if he is to be interesting, must like the critic constantly refer his intense feelings to the universe, that is to all that he knows and all that he feels about all that he knows. Mr Koestler juggles his feelings—he makes acceptance easy for the reader he has in mind.

The valuable things in the book are the intelligent analyses of the problems facing the new colonists. He writes of the first generation of Palestine born children: 'Their parents were the most cosmopolitan race of the earth—they are provincial and chauvinistic. Their parents were sensitive bundles of nerves with awkward bodies—their nerves are whiplashes and their bodies those of a horde of Hebrew Tarzans. Their parents were notoriously polygot—they have been brought up in one language which had been hibernating for twenty centuries before being brought artificially back to life. There in the language is the main rub. The revival of Hebrew from its holy petrification to serve again as the living tongue of a nation was a fantastic achievement. But this miracle involves a heavy sacrifice. Our children are brought up in a language which has not developed since the beginning of the Christian era.'

There is much interesting comment throughout the book in which Mr Koestler—Joseph is merely a mouthpiece—analyses the quality of national feeling. He has to admit, at last, that he does not possess it and that it will not be easily created. But it is certainly a development that Mr Koestler now seems to recognize that national feeling is a positive—and that it is more than Xenophobia. He seems to have abandoned his belief that a country could be established by some beautiful act of supernatural engineering—he begins to realize that values are embodied in forms, in meanings, in language, in group customs, the life of significant soil.

The book is in effect, a justification of terrorism. But the process by which the English-Jew Joseph comes to abandon his

liberal ideals merely betrays the impossibility of giving non-Jews a favourable impression of terrorist activity. For Mr Koestler finds it necessary to introduce a beautiful but neurotic girl Dina, symbol to Joseph of all the sufferings of his people at the hands of the Nazis and to have her atrociously murdered by Arabs. We are given details. She must have put up a strong fight, for her finger nails were broken and there was also blood and bits of skin between her teeth. They counted twenty-seven stabs on her, none of which could have caused instantaneous death. Her nose was broken and some of her hair torn out with shreds of scalp.

This is Joseph's justification for joining the terrorists. It is obviously too easy a resolution of Koestler's problem. He has tried to work up enough intensity to believe himself in the right, to act with a flourish of righteous heroism. But the indulgence of animosity against the Arabs is gross, for Mr Koestler deliberately rouses against them, in Dina, the reader's sympathy for victims of German concentration camps. Mr Koestler is, I fear, painfully unscrupulous in these important matters. His creation of monsters is merely a confession of failure to present the human situation.

Koestler remains for me a gifted propagandist. I recognize his intelligence and the intensity of some of his experience but he has no impersonality. It seems to me that he is only now making discoveries which most people make much earlier in life. He insists on the luxury of hating his adversary as through prison bars. His intensities are not referred to the whole of experience; he deliberately suppresses what is inconvenient. As a propagandist he is thoroughly unscrupulous. His sardonic tone of the man who has suffered seems at times a form of conceit.

G D KLINGOPULOS

# THE 'CORTEGIANO' AND THE CIVILIZATION OF THE RENAISSANCE<sup>1</sup>

## I

WE are often told that English Literature owes a great debt to Castiglione's *Libro del Cortegiano* (*The Book of the Courtier*), this is, indeed, normally regarded as one of the outstanding examples of England's general debt to the Italian Renaissance. That such an influence existed and that it was great, is beyond doubt. But the value of this influence is not beyond doubt, it is the aim of this paper to raise this question.

The scene of Castiglione's book is laid at the small court of Urbino, in the year 1507. The members of the ducal household assemble every evening in one of the rooms of the palace where they sometimes invent certain witty sports and pastimes' or 'disputations of divers matters' (I quote in modern spelling, from Sir Thomas Hoby's translation of 1561). These games and debates are presided over by the Duchess, and among the usual participants are Giuliano de Medici (Lorenzo's son), the two Fregosos, Bibbiena, Pietro Bembo, and other 'virtuosi' of the Italian Renaissance (including, of course, the author, Count Baldassarre Castiglione). One evening, the company decide to discuss the 'good courtier, specifying all such conditions and particular qualities as of necessity must be in him that deserveth this name'. It is laid down that 'the principal and true profession of a courtier ought to be in feats of arms. And therefore will I have him to be of good shape, and well proportioned in his limbs and to show strength, lightness and quickness, and to have understanding in all exercises of the body that belong to a man of war. But physical exercises are not enough. The courtier must also be acquainted with literature, music, and the fine arts. 'Let him much exercise himself in poets, and no less in orators and historiographers, and also in writing both rhyme and prose, and especially in this our vulgar tongue'. He must be able to read music and to play some musical instruments, and he must have some skill in drawing and be a connoisseur of painting and sculpture. In general, 'let him do whatever other men do so he decline not at any time from commendable deeds, but governeth himself with

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<sup>1</sup>A paper read to the Doughty Society, Downing College, on 4th March, 1949

that good judgment that will not suffer him to enter into any folly Let him laugh, dally, jest, and dance, yet in such wise that he may always declare himself to be witty and discreet, and everything that he doth or speaketh, let him do it with a grace' (*aggraziato*)

How can the courtier acquire this necessary grace? Castiglione lays down one comprehensive rule, and in expressing it he has to coin a new word *sprezzatura*' The courtier whatsoever he does or says, must seem to do it without pain and (as it were) not minding it *That* may be said to be a very art, that appeareth not to be art In music for example 'for all he be skilful and doth well understand it, yet will I have him to dissemble the study and pains that a man must needs take in all things that are well done And let him make semblance that he esteemeth but little in himself that quality' (Here one cannot help thinking of the modern descendants of the *Cortegiano* We have all met them the devotees of *sprezzatura* —the prizemen who never do a stroke of work the Blues who never do any training)

Nearly all of these statements can be found in the first book of the *Cortegiano* The second book merely elaborates certain aspects of the ideal courtier's life, and the third book discusses the qualities of the courtier's female counterpart, the 'donna di palazzo' The fourth and last book has higher aims altogether What, it asks first, is the purpose of the courtier's life? It is to acquire, by the means described earlier, the good will and favour of the Prince he is serving that he may break his mind to him and always inform him frankly of the truth of every matter meet for him to understand, without fear or peril to displease him The courtier must in fact be the Prince's moral tutor, leading him with all the graces at his disposal, through the rough way of virtue beguiling him with a wholesome craft, as the wary physicians do, who many times when they minister to young and tender children in their sickness a medicine of bitter taste, anoint the cup about the brim with some sweet liquor'

Finally, the most notable man of letters among the courtiers of Urbino Pietro Bembo, concludes this series of dialogues with a Platonic panegyric on Love Love begins as the sensual attraction between the sexes and such attraction there is and must be between the courtier and the 'donna di palazzo' But this, Bembo maintains, is only the first stage of a noble pilgrimage, leading from sensual love to spiritual love, and thence to the contemplation of universal love, of God himself 'Let us therefore bend all our force and thoughts of soul to this most holy light, that showeth us the way which leadeth to heaven and let us climb up the stairs, which at the lowermost step have the shadow of sensual beauty, to the high mansion place where the heavenly, amiable and right beauty dwelleth which lieth hidden in the innermost secrets of God' 'Bembo, Castiglione adds, spoke 'with such vehemence that a man would have thought him (as it were) ravished and beside himself', and having finished, 'he stood still without once moving, holding his eyes towards heaven',

## II

Who we might ask was this enthusiastic orator this despiser of the mere shadow of sensual beauty? If we leave the pages of Castiglione's book for a moment and follow Bembo into real life we shall gain further insight into the world of which he was a representative member. He belonged to a patrician family of Venice at the time of the Urbino dialogues he was about thirty-seven years old. In his youth he travelled with his father who was in the Venetian diplomatic service and spent some time at the Medicean court in Florence. Later, he lived for several years at the smaller but equally cultivated courts of Ferrara and Urbino, in Ferrara he fell ardently in love with Lucrezia Borgia. Next, he became secretary of Pope Leo X, and chief 'arbiter litterarum' at the Papal court. In Rome he began to live with a beautiful girl called Morosina who bore him three children and remained with him until her death (it is perhaps not irrelevant to point out that Bembo was technically a clergyman and derived a large income from ecclesiastical benefices which he administered from a safe distance). In 1520 Bembo retired from Rome to Padua, and began to realize his old dream of a life *procul negotiis*, devoted to study and enjoyment. Here is his own description of his life in his Paduan villa: 'I read and write as much as I like, I ride I walk I often stroll in a spinney at the bottom of my garden. From this pleasant and beautiful garden I sometimes gather with my own hands the first-fruits for my supper, and some mornings I collect a basketful of strawberries which spread their fragrance in my mouth and all over my table. I need not mention that my house is full of roses all day long. I also have the opportunity of using a boat on a graceful little stream which passes my house and after a very short time flows into the Brenta, a fine and serene river. The same river washes my fields from another side, and so going for a good walk of an evening, it is always water rather than land, that delights me'. The villa itself resembled a museum. There were portraits of Dante, Petrarca and Boccaccio, and a supposed likeness of Petrarca's Laura a portrait of Bembo himself, by Raphael, and a picture by Mantegna, a number of female nudes, classical statues of marble and bronze, mostly representing mythological figures ancient vases, medals of all sorts, richly mounted gems numerous coins, and old inscriptions. Bembo was also a collector of Greek, Latin, and Provençal manuscripts and possessed an extensive library. It was in this setting that Bembo received his friends and discussed with them the matters nearest to his heart the excellence of Ciceronian Latin and the legitimate use of the vernacular in poetry. From this quasi-retreat he also conducted a vast correspondence, and he never allowed himself to lose sight of the political world that for him and his friends centred in Rome.

This manysidedness, it need hardly be stressed, has nothing in common with the efforts of the great 'uomini universali' of the Italian Renaissance, of Leonardo or Michelangelo, Bembo was far



too weak to attempt a genuine synthesis of the various spheres of experience. In town or country, at court or in his villa, life was calling him merely to 'delight and play', to a round of refined and sensuous pleasures. What then of his Platonic contempt for the senses? Bembo's Platonism, so elegantly propounded by him, is simply an additional adornment of life, not its centre and guide. In Bembo there was a wide gulf between ideal and reality.

It so happens that Bembo wrote a good deal of poetry. He was indeed regarded as the representative Italian poet and critic of his age, creating by his own productions the accepted standards of literature. Here, for example, is the octet from a typical sonnet of his on a very serious subject—the death of Morosina, the mother of his children:

Che mi giova mirar donne e donzelle  
 E prati, e selve, e rivi e'l bel governo  
 Che fa del mondo il buon motore eterno,  
 Mar, terra, cielo, e vaghe o ferme stelle?  
 Spenta colei ch'un Sol fu tra le belle  
 E tra le sagge or è mio nembo interno,  
 Forme d' orror mi sembra quant'io scerno  
 Esser cieco vorrei per non vedelle

(What can it help me to look at ladies, and meadows, and woods and rivers, and the beautiful order which the Eternal Mover has established in the world to look at sea, earth, sky, and the fixed or moving stars?)

*She* is dead who was a sun among the beautiful and the wise, and is now a cloud within me. Now I can only see shapes of horror. I should like to be blind so as not to see them')

Now Italian verse always *sounds* so impressive that we must first get rid of its intoxicating effect. Having done so we may perceive that the rhythm of these lines is quite mechanical. The enumeration of visual objects is purely decorative, it has no power of evocation. And therefore the writer's wish not to see these objects does not achieve any poignancy: he has not actually seen anything at all.

Take, on the other hand, a poem by Bembo's contemporary, Vittoria Colonna. It is also a sonnet, written for her friend and spiritual director, Cardinal Pole, at a time of great anguish and distress. She speaks of herself:

che sembro andar scarca e leggiera  
 E'n poca terra ho il cor chiuso e sepolto  
 ('I who seem unbound and unencumbered—  
 And yet my heart is buried in narrow soil')

And then she concludes by addressing Pole:

'Tu per gli aperti spaziosi campi  
 Del ciel cammini, e non piu nebbia o pietra  
 Ritardo o ingombra il tuo spedito corso

Io grave d'anni agghiaccio Or tu, ch'avvampi  
 D'alma fiamma celeste umil m'impetra  
 Dal comun Padre eterno omai soccorso'  
 (Travel thou through the open, spacious fields  
 Of Heaven—neither cloud nor boulder  
 May hinder or retard thy speedy course  
 Heavy with age I've turned to ice but thou  
 Who burnst with heavenly flame of life humbly  
 Beseech our Father for eternal help')

Attention should be drawn to the simple but vivid contrasts  
 narrow soil—spacious fields, 'ice—flame of life', and particularly  
 to the rhythmical subtlety, reminiscent of the English Metaphysicals,  
 in the line

E'n poca terra ho il cor chiuso e sepolto ,

and again immediately after the light-footed line

Ritardo o ingombra il tuo spedito corso

in the arresting words

Io grave d'anni agghiaccio

This may not be great poetry, but it is certainly not stilted  
 or affected. It is a simple statement of a real experience. And  
 that also applies to much of the poetry of Vittoria Colonna's great  
 friend, Michelangelo Buonarroti. For example, in a well-known  
 poem, addressed to Vittoria, he compares himself to the first model  
 that the sculptor shapes in worthless material, before entrusting his  
 ideas to the more valuable stone. Then he goes on

'Simil di me model nacqu'io da prima,  
 Di me model per opra piu perfetta  
 Da voi rinascere poi, donna alta e degna'  
 ('First I was born a model of my self  
 That later as a perfect work of art  
 You gracious lady, might create me new')

'Da voi rinascere poi, donna alta e degna'

this is tightly packed and allows the words 'alta e degna' to emerge  
 with Dantesque force and dignity. The Victorian critic J. A.  
 Symonds described Michelangelo's poems as 'ungrammatical, rude  
 in versification, crabbed or obscure in thought', this inevitably  
 reminds us of the former stock judgment on Donne.

### III

It is time for us to return to the Cortegiano. Our enquiry into  
 Bembo's life and work has enabled us to perceive some funda-  
 mental flaws in the polite and glittering world of Urbino. The  
 philosophy of these courtiers, we cannot help concluding, was a lie,  
 sensual pleasure, so far from being despised, was in fact the main-

spring of their lives. And more than that, not only was there a gulf between ideal and reality (there always is), but the ideal itself is highly questionable. This is not to suggest that good manners and conviviality are to be despised. But here they became divorced from life which, after all, is not a permanent sherry-party. Castiglione's courtier and Bembo in particular is the true precursor of a cultural type well-known among the educated classes of our own day: the sophisticated dilettante constantly searching for amusement, as if to conceal from himself and from the world his inner emptiness. (A good translation of *Il Cortegiano* might be *The New Statesman*.) The conception of 'courtesy' itself, so far from being enriched by the *Courtier*, became in fact debased. It lost the fuller meaning contained for example in Dante's unforgettable line 'O anima cortese Mantovana' (*Inf* II, 58, Beatrice's address to Virgil), or again in a significant sentence from Dame Julian of Norwich: 'Our curtes Lord will that we ben as homley with him as herte may thinke or soule may desiren'. Courtesy, in those contexts, denotes a quality of the soul.

It is not surprising to find that Castiglione is unaware of the more serious functions of art. Poetry, he lays down, should be practised by the courtier because of the enjoyment that it brings to himself and because 'he shall by this means never want pleasant entertainments with women which ordinarily love such matters'. One may also be a little sceptical about the *Cortegiano's* appreciation of other arts. True, Raffael and Michelangelo are mentioned with approval, but in music homophonic songs to the viol or lute are preferred to the much more valuable polyphonic works of the period, which include the best works of Josquin de Pres, one of the greatest composers of all times. The *Cortegiani* may have applauded, but cannot have understood, Michelangelo's intensely serious and self-sacrificing striving after artistic perfection.

Much of the courtiers' conversation in Castiglione's book turns on problems of language, and it must be admitted that in this connection some common sense is put forward. One of the main questions concerns the use of archaic words, after a very long argument the following sensible view seems to carry the day: 'The good use of speech ariseth of men that have wit, and with learning and practice have gotten a good judgment, and agree to receive the words they think good, which are known by a certain natural judgment, and not by any artificial rule. But one of the contributions to the discussion deserves special mention: 'Words', says Bernardo Bibbiena, 'that are no more in use in Florence do still continue among the men of the country, and are refused of the gentlemen for words corrupt and decayed by antiquity'. This hint is not taken up by the company, once again we must turn to Bembo for a view that was undoubtedly taken for granted by the courtiers of Urbino.

In his long and very influential treatise 'Della Volgar Lingua' Bembo makes a clear distinction between the language of the courtiers ('la Cortegiana lingua') and the language of the people

(‘quell altra che rimane in bocca del popolo’) He leaves us in no doubt about his view that in poetry at least, popular language has to be avoided. ‘Do you believe’, he writes, ‘that Petrarca could have written such beautiful such exquisite such noble poems in the language of the people? You are wrong if you believe that’ (It is characteristic that Dante is not mentioned in this context) The Cortegiano’s poetry, it is clear, has to rely on the poetic diction provided by the refined ‘lingua Cortegiana’.

This linguistic question provides us with the most convenient transition from the Italian Renaissance to its English counterpart. The *Cortegiano* exercised a great influence in England, Bembo’s Petrarchism was much imitated, many Englishmen became thoroughly Italianate (to the pious horror of the traditionalists). But we know that the greatest writers of the English Renaissance did not despise the popular language, they made in fact constant use of the traditional idioms and the speech-rhythms of the people. Ben Jonson demands that the poet’s language, though it ‘differ from the vulgar somewhat, shall not fly from all humanity’. And in fact Jonson’s English, as L. C. Knights reminds us, is not ‘polite’, it is, very largely, the popular English of an agricultural country. Bembo would have condemned as unrefined such lines as these of Wyatt’s

‘They flee from me, that sometime did me seek  
With naked foot stalking in my chamber’

And much of Shakespeare and Donne he would have regarded as utterly barbarous.

This attitude has all too often been echoed by English critics. Here for example, is what the Victorian critic Richard Garnett had to say, in 1898, of England’s relation to Italy: ‘A little while yet, and it would be needful to look beyond Alp and sea for the true Italy and find her in Shakespeare, Spenser, and Sidney. The lumping together of these names is still quite customary, and the search for the ‘true Italy’ has not been abandoned yet. This ‘search’ is, of course, connected with major issues which F. R. Leavis has often discussed: the cult of ‘form and ‘style’, the inflated reputations of Spenser and Milton, Tennyson’s ambition ‘to bring English as near to the Italian as possible’, the whole question, in fact of the English poetical tradition—all this is involved. For my present purpose I must confine myself to the following statement of the case. The culture of Castiglione’s Italy tended to remain esoteric and precious, its leaders formed, on the whole, an artificial and self-conscious group. The people have no place at all in the Cortegiano’s scheme of things. In the English Renaissance, on the other hand, many successful attempts were made to combine refinement with genuinely popular culture, its greatest achievements, as well as many of the minor ones, reflect the experiences and problems of a great people with its roots in the remote past. Tradition was being challenged by a new spirit, but the response often combined elements of both.

One of the earliest works of the English Renaissance is itself an interesting counterpart to Castiglione's *Cortegiano*—it is Sir Thomas Elyot's *Book of the Governor* (published in 1531 three years after Castiglione's work). *The Governor*, according to Elyot, is the man who bears any authority in the state, from the local magistrate upwards, and Elyot's book discusses the qualities and formation of that man. Here, for example, is what Elyot wishes his 'governors' to consider on appointment to office: "First, and above all thing let them consider that from God only proceedeth all honour, and that neither noble progeny, succession nor election be of such force, that by them any estate or dignity may be so established that God being stirred to vengeance shall not shortly resume it, and perchance translate it where it shall like him. They shall not think how much honour they receive, but how much care and burden. Let them think the greater dominion they have that thereby they sustain the more care and study. And that therefore they must have the less solace and pastime, and to sensual pleasures less opportunity." The moral seriousness of Elyot's approach is borne out by the context of his thought. He was a follower of Erasmus—"the famous Erasmus, as he says, whom all gentle wits are bound to thank and support." Erasmus' own ideal of the good life, though different from Elyot's 'vita activa', is yet nearer to it than to the world of Castiglione—the ideal of a life lived in serious intercourse with friends, simple yet civilized, beautiful yet devout. Elyot was also a friend of Thomas Moore—the man who tried to combine the Erasmian life with the duties of a 'governor'. It was in Thomas More's circle that the foundations were laid of the characteristically English contribution to the Renaissance. Thomas More was a courtier certainly, and he was open to new influences, but he was also firmly rooted in the popular culture of the Middle Ages. This emerges clearly from the following vivid scene contained in one of his religious treatises—a death-bed scene which owes nothing to the polish of Urbino.

'Have ye not ere this' writes More, 'in a sore sickness, felt it very grievous to have folk babble to you, and especially such things as ye should make answer to, when it was a pain to speak? Think ye not now that it will be a gentle pleasure, when we lie dying, all our body in pain, all our mind in trouble, our soul in sorrow, our breast all in dread while our life walketh awayward, while our death draweth toward, while the devil is busy about us, while we lack stomach and strength to bear any one of so manifold heinous troubles, will it not be a pleasant thing to see before thine eyes and hear at thine ear a rabble of fleshly friends, or rather of flesh flies, skipping about thy bed and thy sick body, like ravens about thy corpse, crying to thee on every side "What shall I have? What shall I have?" Then shall come thy children and cry for their parts, then shall come thy sweet wife, and where in thine health haply she spake thee not one sweet word in six weeks, now shall she call thee sweet husband and weep with much work and ask thee "what shall she have", then shall thine executors ask

for the keys, and ask what money is owing thee, ask what substance thou hast, and ask where thy money lieth And while thou liest in that case their words shall be so tedious that thou wilt wish all that they ask for upon a red fire so thou mightest lie one half-hour in rest

In the course of the sixteenth century the smooth Italian sonnets and the accomplishments of the Cortegiano reached England The court of Gloriana modelled itself on the famous company of Urbino and many of its members wrote the appropriate sonnets Like the Italian courts their English counterpart proved all but irresistible to many of the potential leaders of culture, we need only remind ourselves what a fascination the Court exercised over such great men of letters as Donne, Bacon and George Herbert

Apart from this alluring court-world (a world of seemingly autonomous secular values) there existed an older world in the parish-communities all over the country, in many a gentleman's household, in schools and vicarages in guilds and fraternities This was a world of traditional morality, a world where religion (no doubt, intermingled with superstition) tended to be taken seriously, in all essentials a mediæval world One of its aspects has recently been symbolized by T S Eliot in a passage which significantly incorporates some lines from Sir Thomas Elyot's *Book of the Governor*

‘ In that open field  
If you do not come too close, if you do not come too close,  
On a summer midnight you can hear the music  
Of the weak pipe and the little drum  
And see them dancing around the bonfire  
The association of man and woman  
In daunsinge signifying matrimome—  
A dignified and commodious sacrament  
Two and two, necessarye coniunction,  
Holding eche other by the hand or the arm  
Whiche betokeneth concorde’

Here was the home of the popular tunes and the racy idioms, here also the awareness, however dim and inarticulate, of a super-naturally sanctioned natural order which man could violate only at the price of his undoing This was an all-embracing order all spheres of life (politics, economics sexual relations etc.) were within its orbit It was this order which most of the artists and thinkers of the period assimilated in their youth During their lives they came to experience the conflict between the two co-existing worlds

We cannot pursue this subject in the present context Perhaps we can just venture the suggestion that this complexity is among the causes of the dramatic and polyphonic nature of the best works of the English Renaissance L C Knights has analysed this complexity in the case of Ben Jonson and has pointed to the co-existence in Jonson's work of a 'naïve delight in splendour' with a 'clear-

sighted recognition of its insignificance judged by fundamental human, or divine, standards' The greatest artists of the English Renaissance were able to transcend the world of the *Cortegiano* and to achieve a critical attitude towards it Only by a process of transfiguration, as in *The Winter's Tale*, could the courtiers remain part of a comprehensive order

Order' the great speech of Ulysses springs to mind It is, of course the 'locus classicus' for the Elizabethan conception of hierarchy But Shakespeare himself presents to us another aspect of this conception in a delightful scene in *The Winter's Tale* (V, 2)

*Clown* (to Autolycus) You denied to fight with me this other day, because I was no gentleman born see you these clothes' say, you see them not and think me still no gentleman born you were best say these robes were not gentleman born Give me the lie, do, and try whether I am not now gentleman born

*Autolycus* I know you are now sir, a gentleman born

*Clown* Ay, and have been so any time these four hours

*Shepherd* And so have I boy

*Clown* So you have but I was a gentleman born before my father for the King's son took me by the hand and called me brother, and then the two kings called my father brother, and then the prince my brother and the princess my sister called my father father, and so we wept and there was the first gentle man-like tears that ever we shed'

In Shakespeare we find both hierarchy and equality, unlike the courtiers of Urbino, he refused to be taken in by the pretensions of the gentleman born or made Perhaps we are entitled to say that only a combination of hierarchy and equality can prevent either of them from being idolised Both of them were occasionally combined even at the court of Elizabeth, this may have been a survival from earlier, homelier times 'At a solemn dancing', we are told in Selden's *Table Talk*, 'first you had the grave measures, then the corantoes and the galliards, and this is kept up with ceremony, at length to trenchmore and the cushion-dance, and then all the company dance, lord and groom, lady and kitchen-maid—no distinction' And once again we can turn to Sir Thomas Elyot's *Governor* for confirmation 'A public weal', he lays down at the beginning of his treatise, is a body living, compact or made of sundry estates and degrees of men' But he also insists that a gentleman is made 'of no better clay than a carter, and of liberty of will as much is given of God to the poor herdman as the great and mighty emperor, and he tells his 'governor' 'Thy dignity or authority, wherein thou only differest from others, is (as it were) but a weighty or heavy cloak, freshly glittering in the eyes of them that be purblind' 'Dres't in a little brief authority', no more than that

It may be that here we have come across one of the two common-places of the English Renaissance. It was of course a mediæval heritage—here is Langland's statement of it: 'For all we are Christ's creatures and of his coffer's rich And brethren as of one blood as well beggars as earls'. A member of Ben Jonson's and Falkland's circle, John Hales of Eton, expressed it in very similar terms: social differences between men he taught, could not derive any support from Christianity, 'for we have believed him that hath told us: In Jesus Christ there is neither high nor low'' (Hales, *Works* I, 131). In the 1640's shriller voices were to echo this gentle scholar, but there is no reason to believe that the Levellers' creed ('the poorest he that is in England hath a life to live as the greatest he') was new when it was expressed during the Civil War.

When the social critics and reformers from More onwards, inveigh against the evils of their age, they appealed to an underlying idea of equality which, in an important sense, outweighs all inequalities without obliterating them. Paradise was traditionally noted for the absence of gentlemen, so was the Golden Age, and 'state of nature' and status *innocentiæ* seem to have merged into one. A specifically English version of the Golden Age was represented by the image of pre-Conquest England. The well-known anti-Normanism of some Civil War radicals was not without precedent: many of the Elizabethan chroniclers for example, were surprisingly anti-Norman. 'Primitivism', in one form or another, was a good antidote against the claim of the ruling class for adulation.

Perhaps it was partly because of all this that so many of the works of the English Renaissance are both 'refined' and 'popular'. It will now be apparent that 'refinement' and 'popularity' are not, as is often believed, mutually exclusive, it may well be that the vitality of a civilization depends on a certain balance between them. However that may be we are perhaps allowed to conclude from our survey that the good manners and social graces of the *Cortegiano* must not be too readily identified with the real civilization of the Renaissance. The great achievements of that civilization transcend the court-world in every way, and there is a sense in which they came about not because, but in spite, of the polished society that assembled in Urbino and in all the other would-be Urbinos of that age.

WILHELM SCHENK



# MILL, BEATRICE WEBB AND THE 'ENGLISH SCHOOL

## PREFACE TO AN UNPRINTED VOLUME

JOHN STUART MILL'S essays on Bentham and Coleridge, may, I suppose properly be described as classical. Yet are they, for the literary student at any rate, in real and active recognition classical? I, personally, never heard of them when I was reading for the English Tripos at Cambridge, and I don't remember ever to have come across any direction to them in any of the 'authorities' that offer to guide the literary student through the nineteenth century. Yet it is more important that he should have read them than he should have read, say, *Sartor Resartus* or *Unto this Last*. But if it should, by some chance, have occurred to him to read them he wouldn't, unless he had luck, have found them very accessible. There they are, in Volume I of the old Victorian *Dissertations and Discussions* and no doubt it is as well that he should turn over the set of volumes in some library, and see what other topics Mill disserts upon and discusses. But if any where—and it certainly should often be so—any number of students should be wanting to read those two key essays at the same time (for purposes of discussion, for instance, or concerted written work), there would be a good deal of frustration. For the reprint of *Dissertations and Discussions* brought out in Routledge's 'Universal Library' is unobtainable (unless *à occasion*), and students cannot go to the bookshop and buy their copies of the required texts in any form—texts that should be widely possessed and generally accessible.

This present volume represents an ambition to make Mill's *Bentham* and *Coleridge* current classics for the literary student. But there was more to the actual operative purpose that moved me than this suggests, and for the literary student' doesn't, without some explaining, really convey my intention. And in the explaining I have to avow that essentially, I have been concerned to take a propagandist opportunity. I have been concerned to do something more by way of promoting that particular approach to the problem of liberal education which I outlined in *Education and the University*. I contend there that while, on the one hand, if the study of literature is to play its central part it must be informed and governed by a more athletic conception of criticism as a discipline of intelligence than it commonly is, on the other a serious study of literature inevitably leads outwards into other studies and disciplines, into fields not primarily literary, and that the problem

of liberal education at the university level the particular discipline being duly provided for, is to exploit this outward-leading to the best advantage. A liberal education cannot confine itself to the critical study of literature and the profit of a real literary training will show itself very largely in other-than-literary fields. It is with the means of cultivating and relating these fields that a serious attempt to grapple with the problem must be very largely preoccupied.

This insistence on extra-literary studies may seem superfluous the need being recognized in time-honoured and universal academic practice. My point is that my preoccupation with vindicating the study of literature as—what it so rarely is—a real discipline (and one without which there can be no real liberal education) carries with it, in the nature of things, a more exacting preoccupation with extra-literary studies than academic practice anywhere bears witness to. In the English Tripos for instance, with which my own work has been associated, the 'period' papers which the candidate has to take are headed *Literature, Life and Thought*. But no one should suppose from this that candidates for the English Tripos will have been guided through courses of work planned in the interests of an extended and unified understanding of any period or any part of it—or anything at all. It means merely that, if an odd candidate in picking, after a study of back papers the minimum safe number of topics on which to acquire so much knowledge as will show to advantage in a half-hour's to an hour's unloading, decides in favour of one coming under *Life and Thought*, he can count, if he is judicious and moderately lucky, on finding his opportunity. It will be a very unusual and fortunate student who has the grasp, the energy and the character to make it anything else. Most will not even glimpse what else it might and should be.

And if we ask how anything better is to be arrived at, the answer is that nothing substantially better can, under a system that for guidance leaves the student for the most part, to lectures, and reckons to test his quality by an end-of-course stand-and-deliver against the clock. Study under such a system inevitably tends to be an acquiring and arranging of *chiche*-material. The academic authorities believing in such a system will tend to take as their first-class man a type that may be described as the complete walking *chiche*—the man (it's often a woman) who unloads with such confident and accomplished ease in the examination-room because he has never really grappled with anything and is uninhibited by any inkling of the difference between the retailing of his amassed externalities and the effort to think something out into a grasped and unified order that he has made his own. Those who like this type will recruit themselves from it, and will inevitably tend to dislike, and as a student undervalue, the man who makes them uncomfortable by implicitly challenging their standards, their competence and their self-esteem: the system is disastrous and self-perpetuating. So the 'academic mind' comes to deserve itself depressing reputation.

I have suggested in *Education and the University* what, in an

'English School' that is really designed to promote the development of mature, energetic and creative minds, will replace the reliance on lectures and examinations. I am not proposing to recapitulate here my account of the methods of study-group, organized discussion and 'pieces of work' that seem to me, in their general lines, necessary conditions of any promising attack on the problem. But—and that is why I refer to my account of them—assumed by me as the right or ideal conditions, they are there as an implicit context in the suggestions I make below. Not that I think that except where these ideal conditions obtain nothing is worth attempting. Opportunities far from ideal are worth making the most of and it is out of experience of such that my suggestions come. Whenever, for instance (it is a good one for demonstrative purposes), one is faced with directing, as part of a much wider 'English' course, a study of the Victorian age, one can profitably ask oneself how such a study can be best approached and best organized. What are the likeliest lines for promoting, not the usual ready and confident superficiality of the 'good student' but that conscious and intelligent incompleteness which carries with it the principle of growth, not the canny amassing of inert material for the examination-room, but the organization that represents a measure of real understanding, and seeks of its very nature to extend and complete itself.

The opportunity I was endeavouring to make the most of when I thought of these two essays of Mill's, and of the reasons for making them more accessible, was a paper on George Eliot and her 'setting' instituted for Part II of the English Tripos. A paper for Part II, the student being relatively mature, with a good deal of reading behind him, and some measure of real study in the given field being presumably expected by the examiners, affords a better opportunity than any 'Life and Thought' licence in Part I—opportunity for experiment that may nevertheless have bearings on work in less favourable conditions. 'Setting', presumably, meant something more than the immediate intellectual and cultural environment as given in the books on George Eliot, an environment that, if it is to be worth serious study, must be related to a much wider context. In fact, we seemed committed to a pretty general study of the Victorian background and (to change the metaphor) to attempting some sort of charting of the main currents.

In helping students to tackle such an enterprise one looks for the approach that promises to educe most readily the lines of significant organization—the main lines on which most things in the whole complex field can be most significantly related. Such help is peculiarly necessary where the Victorian age is concerned. The student is very unlikely to have brought any very useful notions of how to proceed from his earlier literary studies. A man who has taken Part I of the English Tripos will know something of Carlyle, Ruskin, Arnold, Newman, Macaulay and other representative figures, but (and this seems to me a damning comment on the system) unless he is very exceptional he will not know how to push further in pursuit of an ordered understanding without a prohibitive

waste of time and energy. And—as, in my experience, the keenest and most competent searchers have verified—you may go through (say) Oliver Elton's *Survey of English Literature 1830-1880* without acquiring any better notion of how to deepen, extend and organize into real knowledge and understanding your smatterings and adumbrations.

It isn't, then, very helpful to suggest to your students that they should for a start with the help of Elton's *Survey* and Trevelyan's *British History in the Nineteenth Century* sketch a rough chart of the field marking the main features and outlining the main currents. They need more specific suggestions if they are to get their bearings in the age and establish their axes of reference. And surely the first obvious suggestion is that, of all the Victorian figures they are already acquainted with, Matthew Arnold, because of the peculiar quality of his intelligence and the peculiar nature of his relation to his time will repay special study in a way no others will, a suggestion to which the extremely useful book on him by Mr. Lionel Trilling<sup>1</sup> lying to hand, gives the greater force. But something further is needed—a complementary focal line, and here it is that Mill presents himself as meeting the case ideally.

In the first place, of course, it is his 'Bentham' and his Coleridge that propose themselves: once they are thought of, their due status as key documents is indisputable. To begin with, the two subjects are the key figures that Mill so convincingly exhibits them as being. The essays are devoted to justifying the attribution of significance that he makes in the earlier of them—that on Bentham (1838).

There are two men, recently deceased, to whom their country is indebted not only for the greater part of the important ideas which have been thrown into circulation among its thinking men in their time but for a revolution in its general modes of thought and investigation. The writers of whom we speak have never been read by the multitude, except for the more slight of their works, their readers have been few; but they have been the teachers of the teachers, there is hardly to be found in England an individual of any importance in the world of mind, who (whatever opinions he may have afterwards adopted) did not first learn to think from one of these two; and though their influences have but begun to diffuse themselves through these intermediate channels over society at large there is already scarcely a publication of any consequence addressed to the educated classes, which, if these persons had not existed, would not have been different from what it is. These men are, Jeremy Bentham and Samuel Taylor Coleridge—the two great seminal minds of England in their age.

But Bentham and Coleridge are not only, in actual history, the key and complementary powers by reference to which we can

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<sup>1</sup>*Matthew Arnold*, by Lionel Trilling (Allen and Unwin)

organize into significance so much of the field to be charted, even if they had had no great influence they would still have been the classical examples they are of two great opposing types of mind

It is hardly possible to speak of Coleridge, and his position among his contemporaries, without reverting to Bentham they are connected by two of the closest bonds of association—resemblance and contrast. It would be difficult to find two persons of philosophic eminence more exactly the contrary of one another. Compare their modes of treatment of any subject, and you might fancy them inhabitants of different worlds. They seem to have scarcely a principle or a premise in common. Each of them sees scarcely anything but what the other does not see. Bentham would have regarded Coleridge with a peculiar measure of the good-humoured contempt with which he was accustomed to regard all modes of philosophizing different from his own. Coleridge would probably have made Bentham one of the exceptions to the enlarged and liberal appreciation which (to the credit of *his* mode of philosophizing) he extended to most thinkers of any eminence from whom he differed.

And as we follow Mill's analysis, exposition and evaluation of this pair of opposites we are at the same time, we realize, forming a close acquaintance with a mind different from either—the mind that appreciates both and sees them as both necessary, generalizing the necessity in these terms

'For among the truths long recognized by Continental philosophers, but which very few Englishmen have yet arrived at, one is, the importance in the present imperfect state of mental and social science, of antagonistic modes of thought which, it will one day be felt, are as necessary to one another in speculation, as mutually checking powers are in a political constitution. A clear insight, indeed, into this necessity is the only rational or enduring basis of philosophical tolerance, the only condition under which liberality in matters of opinion can be anything better than a polite synonym for indifference between one opinion and another.'

Mill's is itself, as these essays sufficiently evidence a very distinguished mind. To read them with close attention is an educative experience. This is true as it is not true, for example, of *Biographia Literaria*, that academic classic which is habitually prescribed for study as an initiating and enlightening document. Mill's essays deserve to be called classical for their intrinsic quality, they are models of method and manner. Coleridge was a genius, but his writings cannot be said to be products of a disciplined mind. Mill's pre-eminently are, and they have an intellectual distinction that is at the same time a distinction of character. And the rigorous training that issues in such apparently easy mastery doesn't mean narrowness or dryness. The desiccating rigours and narrownesses of Mill's own education are, of course, notorious, he describes them

himself in the *Autobiography*. But, as the describing shows, he derived from them a kind of profit that had not entered into the intention behind them, so that when he defines Bentham's limitations his phrases represent something more than the 'vague generalities' of vaguely general recognition.

'Nobody's synthesis can be more complete than his analysis. If in his survey of human nature and life he has left any element out then wheresoever that element exerts any influence, his conclusions will fail more or less in their application.

'He had a phrase, expressive of the view he took of all moral speculations to which his method had not been applied, or (which he considered the same thing) not founded on a recognition of utility as the moral standard, this phrase was "vague generalities." Whatever presented itself to him in such a shape he dismissed as unworthy of notice, or dwelt upon only to denounce as absurd. He did not heed, or rather the nature of his mind prevented it from occurring to him, that these generalities contained the whole unanalysed experience of the human race.'

In many of the most natural and strongest feelings of human nature he had no sympathy, from many of its graver experiences he was altogether cut off and the faculty by which one mind understands a mind different from itself and throws itself into the feelings of that other mind, was denied him by his deficiency of Imagination.'

How much of human nature slumbered in him he knew not, neither can we know. He had never been made alive to the unseen influences which were acting on himself, nor consequently on his fellow-creatures. Knowing so little of human feelings, he knew still less of the influences by which those feelings are formed all the more subtle workings both of the mind upon itself, and of external things upon the mind, escaped him, and no one, probably who, in a highly instructed age ever attempted to give a rule to all human conduct, set out with a more limited conception either of the agencies by which human conduct is or of those by which it *should* be, influenced.'

Mill, then, for all the restrictive rigours of his father's educational experiment shows that he has a sensitive intelligence, informed by introspective subtlety, wide perceptions and a lively historical sense. The pupil of James Mill, and the self-styled Utilitarian, can write the classical appreciation of Coleridge and of the kind of reaction he stands for against that eighteenth century which is characterized with such admirable trenchancy in the Coleridge essay.<sup>2</sup>

It was natural that a philosophy which anathematized all that had been going on in Europe from Constantine to Luther, or even to Voltaire should be succeeded by another, at once a

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<sup>2</sup>'No one can calculate what struggles which the cause of improvement has yet to undergo, might have been spared if the philosophers of the eighteenth century had done anything like justice to the Past'

severe critic of the new tendencies of society, and an impassioned vindicator of what was good in the past. This is the easy merit of all Tory and Royalist writers. But the peculiarity of the Germano-Coleridgean school, is, that they saw beyond the immediate controversy, to the fundamental principles involved in all such controversies. They thus produced, not a piece of party advocacy, but a philosophy of society, in the only form in which it is yet possible that of a philosophy of history, not a defence of particular ethical or religious doctrines but a contribution, the largest yet made by any class of thinkers, towards the philosophy of human culture.

The thinker who could write these complementary appreciations of the two great opposites might call himself Utilitarian, and avow that in respect of the philosophical issue he stands with Locke as against the transcendentalists, but he was clearly no unqualified Benthamite. In fact, as we know, he spent his life in a strenuous endeavour, pursued with magnificent integrity to justify his contention that the Benthams and the Coleridges, these two sorts of men, who seem to be and believe themselves to be, enemies in reality allies' the side from which he inevitably worked having been determined by his upbringing, he worked indefatigably to correct and complete Utilitarianism by incorporating into it the measure of truth attained by the other side. And here we come to a third main point, for our purpose about these essays of Mill's the essayist is not merely a distinguished mind of a different type from Bentham or Coleridge, he is a great representative figure in Victorian intellectual history and the essays lead on to the *Autobiography*.

Mill's *Autobiography* is a classic that every cultivated person should have read, though very few candidates for Honours in English do, I think, read it. It is certainly a main document for us. The account of the young Mill's early training (and the consequent spiritual crisis) for which it is best known—a *locus classicus* of great significance in any case—has itself a direct bearing on the central themes of the essays and what should be central themes in any study of the Victorian age. The account of his intellectual life that forms the body of the book is an immediately relevant piece of Victorian history that, by reason of the contacts and connexions it records, lends itself peculiarly to the business of educating significant organization in the whole complex field.

Reading, in the account of the Philosophic Radicalism in which Mill made his *début*, of the early *Westminster Review*, we recall that George Eliot became virtual editor of that same review—for there is a continuity, in spite of the vicissitudes of its history—a quarter of a century later. And the connexion is a significant one. George Eliot was never a Benthamite, and the *Westminster Review* she edited was no longer the special organ of Philosophic Radicalism, but her succession in the line leading back to Mill may fairly serve as a reminder that the atmosphere of the intellectual milieu to which she belonged—a milieu very central to the Victorian

age—was in a general sense Utilitarian. Mill himself of course, by that time, was only in a very qualified sense a Utilitarian—or his Utilitarianism was a very different thing from that which he had received from his father. And the hospitality towards new contacts that played so large a part in his development out of pure Benthamism into something pretty much in resonance with George Eliot's unsystematized liberalism shows itself, as recorded in the *Autobiography*, very early.

There was Carlyle, of whose writings he says

What truths they contained though of the very kind which I was already receiving from other quarters were presented in a form and vesture less suited than any other to give them access to a mind trained as mine had been. They seemed a haze of poetry and German metaphysics, in which almost the only clear thing was a strong animosity to most of the opinions which were the basis of my mode of thought: religious scepticism, utilitarianism, the doctrine of circumstances, and the attaching any importance to democracy, logic or political economy' (p. 148 'World's Classics' edition to which the other page-references apply also)

But

I did not seek and cultivate Carlyle less on account of the fundamental differences in our philosophy' (p. 149). We may at first be surprised at his more than tolerance—his respect, and wonder what such a mind could learn from such an opposite. But it is respect, and not deference<sup>3</sup> he exhibits a true and wholly admirable humility that is at the same time a tenacity in working along his own arduous path.

'I did not, however, deem myself a competent judge of Carlyle. I felt that he was a poet, and that I was not, that he was a man of intuition, which I was not, and that as such, he not only saw many things long before me, which I could only when they were pointed out to me, hobble after and prove, but that it was highly probable he could see many things which were not visible to me even after they were pointed out.'

While this pre-eminently disciplined thinker, a trained logician and analyst, cannot report any particular view or change of view that he owes to Carlyle, he is conscious that that total sense of things—of human experience and the problems implicit in it—upon which analysis operates, and which conditions the analytic process, has responded in some way to Carlyle's imaginative heat and stress.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup>See *The Impulse to Dominate*, by D. W. Harding, p. 209 ff.

<sup>4</sup>Cf. 'Directly, Carlyle contributed little, but the atmospheric effect of his insistence on personality, immaterial values, and leadership was immense' G. M. Young, *Victorian England*, p. 55 (footnote)—This book is of great value in suggesting themes and for filling in background.



And here the student gets his hint as to the kind of attention Carlyle is worth. It is hard at this date to realize why Carlyle in his own time should have been felt to be so great and profound an influence, and it is bad economy to direct the student in the ordinary way to study him as a key figure of the age. A tenacious inquirer may waste many of his too few hours before deciding that from the great mass of Carlyle's writings no coherent doctrine or system of thought or body of wisdom can be extracted. If Carlyle is to get some attention (and this fairly represents the kind he is worth to the literary student in general), it might reasonably be given by way of an essay on the debt the young Mill may be imagined to owe him.

Of another early contact the effects were overt and indisputable, that which began in

1828 and 1829, when the Coleridgians, in the persons of Maurice and Sterling, made their appearance in the Society as a second Liberal and even Radical party, on totally different grounds from Benthamism and vehemently opposed to it, bringing into these discussions the general doctrines and modes of thought of the European reaction against the philosophy of the eighteenth century' <sup>5</sup>

This refers us back, of course, to the two essays. But it also adds very notably to the system of significant relations. For with Maurice, Christian Socialism and Arnold of Rugby appear on the map, and though (aided by the irresponsible Stracheyan *procédé*) we tend to let the ethos of *Tom Brown's Schooldays* stand for Thomas Arnold, his son has much closer affinities with him than is commonly supposed. So we establish a line running from Coleridge and the German historical critics through Thomas to Matthew Arnold, thus connecting the last—as there is point in doing—with his father's Broad Church liberalism <sup>6</sup>.

If Utilitarianism may be said to have pervaded the intellectual atmosphere in George Eliot's time, so, with equal truth, may Comtism, that most developed expression of the characteristic tendency of the age to replace supernatural religion by the service of humanity. The two are brought together in Mill, who, coming on Comte while extending his acquaintance with the Saint-Simonians (it was before 1830), formed a sustained interest in him, and was a pioneer in getting him known in this country. Mill, of course, never swallowed Positivism whole, and his objections to the system amounted, in essence, to George Eliot's. A great novelist can never be tempted to see a deified Society as the supremely real thing in

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<sup>5</sup>*Autobiography*, 'World's Classics' edition, p. 108. The other page references are to this edition.

<sup>6</sup>A line very relevant to George Eliot's development in fact, for the understanding of her intellectual and religious background, L. Trilling's *Matthew Arnold* provides a valuable supplement to Leslie Stephen's *George Eliot*.

relation to which the individual is insignificant,<sup>7</sup> and Mill's individualism was based on grounds of which George Eliot must have approved. Tocqueville (by whom, with so many of his contemporaries, he was profoundly impressed)<sup>8</sup> confirmed his strong sense of the need to safeguard, not only the rights, but the individuality, of the individual against the pressure of a democratic civilization. To preserve and foster variety seemed to him of ultimate importance, and he feared the drive of democratic conditions towards uniformity.<sup>9</sup>

On the other hand as we go on in the *Autobiography*, we see the original Benthamite individualism modifying itself radically. Bentham's idea of the world', he says in the essay on Bentham, is that of a collection of persons pursuing each his separate interest or pleasure and the prevention of whom from jostling one another more than is unavoidable, may be attempted by hopes and fears derived from three sources—the law, religion, and public opinion'.<sup>10</sup> And a much more positive conception of society on his own part is implied in his appreciation of Coleridge. Even at the stage at which he can call himself a Socialist his thinking is still that of a mind for which the individual is the prior fact, he works out from that to the idea of society, and doesn't seem to arrive at any very full inward recognition of the complexities covered by the individual-society antithesis. Yet the development is a sufficiently remarkable one. The individualist, son and pupil of James Mill, refining and deepening his liberalism,<sup>11</sup> comes in the eighteen-forties to avow himself a Socialist.

In short, I was [had been] a democrat but not the least of a Socialist. We were now much less democrats than I had been, because so long as education continues to be so wretchedly imperfect, we dreaded the ignorance and especially the selfishness and brutality of the mass, but our ideal of ultimate improvement went far beyond Democracy and would class us decidedly under the general designation of Socialists. While we repudiated with

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<sup>7</sup>The reader of George Eliot's fiction will have noted many reflective passages the implications of which bear as critically on Comtism as on Utilitarianism. See, e.g. *Janet's Repentance*, Chapter xxii. <sup>8</sup>See the essay on him in *Dissertations and Discussions*, Vol. I.

<sup>9</sup>See p. 214-15.

<sup>10</sup>One critic divided the rising generation into fluent Benthamites and muddled Coleridgians. S.T.C. once said to Miss Martineau: "You seem to regard society as an aggregate of individuals." "Of course I do", she replied. There is much history implicit in that encounter, and by 1850 Coleridge had won. *Victorian England*, p. 68 (footnote).

<sup>11</sup>In this third period (as it may be termed) of my mental progress, which now went hand in hand with hers, my opinions gained equally in breadth and depth, I understood more things, and those which I had understood before, I now understood more thoroughly. *Autobiography*, p. 194.

the greatest energy that tyranny of society over the individual which most Socialistic systems are supposed to involve, we yet looked forward to a time when society will no longer be divided into the idle and the industrious, when the rule that they who do not work shall not eat will be applied not to paupers only but impartially to all, when the division of the produce of labour, instead of depending, as in so great a degree it now does, on the accident of birth will be made by concert on an acknowledged principle of justice, and when it will no longer either be, or be thought to be, impossible for human beings to exert themselves strenuously in procuring benefits which are not to be exclusively their own, but to be shared with the society they belong to (p 196)

—It is a development that gives, in its classically representative way, a most important part of the intellectual history of the nineteenth century

By great good luck there lies ready to the student's hand—or should lie there—a book that, in a way not less deserving to be described as classically representative, carries on from much the point at which Mill's *Autobiography* stops. This is Beatrice Webb's *My Apprenticeship*. I doubt whether the full distinction of Mrs Webb's autobiography is yet generally recognized. The special political and personal associations that gained it immediate currency as a kind of documentary classic, the life's record of a notability whose life has been an important part of recent history, have tended I think, to promote something less than a full recognition. *My Apprenticeship* is one of the classics of English literature to say this is perhaps not merely otiose.

It is much richer in interest than Mill's *Autobiography*. The formative experience of Mrs Webb's early life was much richer. Her childhood was not an educational experiment, and she suffered nothing like the restrictive and starving intellectuality of Mill's upbringing. And as she describes her childhood, its milieu and its conditions, we recognize in the writer a potential novelist. In fact, it is not merely because she is a gifted and highly intellectual woman that, for all the differences of circumstances, she reminds us of George Eliot. She too is decidedly a woman earnest, strong in sympathetic imagination, and religiously given beneath all the liberal convictions of her intellect. Less easily intellectual, perhaps, than George Eliot she canalizes her earnestness finally in intellectual disciplines, and achieves her justifying work in a very different field from that of imaginative art. Yet in her initial drives and potentialities she is more like George Eliot than the distinctive achievements of the two women suggest.

Her account of her family and its antecedents is a representative piece of nineteenth-century social history.

'The family in which I was born and bred was curiously typical of the industrial development of the nineteenth century. My paternal grandfather, Richard Potter, was the son of a York

shire tenant farmer who increased the profits of farming by keeping a general provision shop at Tadcaster my maternal grandfather, Lawrence Heyworth belonged to a family of 'domestic manufacturers' in Rossendale in Lancashire, the majority of whom became, in the last decades of the eighteenth century 'hands in the new cotton mills Evidently my grandfathers were men of initiative and energy, for they rose rapidly to affluence and industrial power, one as a Manchester cotton warehouseman the other as a Liverpool merchant trading with South America Nonconformists in religion, and Radicals in politics, they both became after the 1832 Reform Act, Members of Parliament intimate friends of Cobden and Bright, and enthusiastic supporters of the Anti-Corn Law League My father graduated in the new London University of which my grandfather, as a leading Unitarian, was one of the founders' (p 2) <sup>17</sup>

Both grandfathers, we see, had been ardent Cobdenite Radicals But I doubt whether my father was ever a convinced Radical, and some time in the sixties he left the Reform Club and joined the Carlton' Appropriately, he was a financier and company-promoter prominently occupied in the railway-development of North America His daughter describes the opulent rootlessness of their lives

The same note of perpetual change characterized our social relationships The world of human intercourse in which I was brought up was in fact an endless series of human beings, unrelated one to another, and only casually connected with the family group—a miscellaneous crowd who came into and went out of our lives rapidly and unexpectedly Servants came and went, governesses and tutors came and went, business men of all sorts and degrees, from American railway presidents to Scandinavian timber growers from British Imperial company promoters to managers and technicians of local works, came and went, perpetually changing circles of "London Society" acquaintances came and went, intellectuals of all schools of thought, religious, scientific and literary, came and went my elder sisters' suitors, a series extensive and peculiar, came and went, leaving it is true, in the course of my girlhood, a permanent residue of seven brothers-in-law, who brought with them yet other business, professional and political affiliations, extending and diversifying the perpetually shifting panorama of human nature in society which opened to my view Our social relations had no roots in the neighbourhood, in vocation, in creed, or for that matter in race they likened a series of moving pictures—surface impressions without depth—restlessly stimulating in their glittering variety How expressive of the circumstance of modern profit-making machine enterprise is now its culminating attempt to entertain the world—the ubiquitous cinema!'

<sup>17</sup>The page-references given here are to the library edition (Longmans) The work was once obtainable in the 'Pelican Books'

Brought up in such a milieu, the 'career' that faced her as the normal one for a good-looking young woman of her class was marriage, and the kind of socially more or less functionless life that is called 'social'. Her account of her struggle, among the pressures and temptations of the environment, to escape such a life ('Dissipation doesn't suit me, morally or physically') and find a vocation is a classical document of certain essential characteristics of human nature that have played an enormous part in history, but not in the 'class' theories of culture of recent fashion. The home itself was not Philistine: in fact, the first part of *My Apprenticeship* serves as a most effective reminder of the actual concrete complexities simplified in Matthew Arnold's threefold classification, which (like Arnold's methods in general) had its point and its efficacy because there was a public capable of appreciating it—one, that is, not exhaustively describable as Philistine or Barbarian. The household of the successful Victorian company-promoter abounded in cultural interests and intellectual stimulus—to distracting excess, even, it might be suggested. This is a characteristic note.

'And whether we girls took down from the well-filled library shelves the *Confessions of St Augustine* or those of Jean Jacques Rousseau, whether the parcel from Hatchett's contained the latest novels by Guy de Maupassant and Emile Zola or the learned tomes of Auguste Comte or Ernest Renan, whether we ordered from the London Library or from Mudie's a pile of books on Eastern religions, or a heterogeneous selection of what I will call "yellow" literature, was determined by our own choice or by the suggestion of any casual friend or acquaintance. When we complained to my father that a book we wanted to read was banned by the libraries "Buy it, my dear", was his automatic answer.

Such a milieu, whatever its shortcomings, was not Philistine. And, for all the suggested heterogeneity of the interests and influences, there were predominant positive characters manifested in the sum of them: the company-promoter's home, in fact, gives us representative glimpses, not of Victorian Philistinism, but of Victorian intellectual culture in the period of George Eliot's established glory.

'In the particular social and intellectual environment in which I lived, this stream of tendencies culminated in Auguste Comte's union of the "religion of humanity" with a glorification of science, in opposition to both theology and metaphysics, as the final stage in the development of the human intellect. And once again I note that the reading of books was in my case directed and supplemented by friendly intercourse with the men and women most concerned with the subject-matter of the books. As a student I was familiar with the writings of the most famous of the English disciples and admirers of Auguste Comte. I had learnt my lesson from George Henry Lewes. I delighted in John Stuart Mill's *Autobiography*, and had given to his *System of Logic* and *Principles of Political Economy* an assiduous though somewhat

strained attention Above all the novels of George Eliot had been eagerly read and discussed in the family circle But I doubt whether my sister Margaret and I would have ordered from the London Library all the works of Comte himself if it had not been for a continuously friendly intercourse with the Frederic Harrison

The great friend of the family and frequenter of the house—philosopher on the hearth—was Herbert Spencer, and it was he above all others who encouraged the young aspirant and initiated her into the disciplined life of the mind As for the nature of his influence

He taught me to look on all social institutions exactly as if they were plants or animals—things that could be observed, classified and explained, and the action of which could to some extent be foretold if one knew enough about them'

The pupil who reminded him of George Eliot (p 29) provided her own corrective to an influence of this kind, for if she resembled the great novelist it was not merely in the intellectual grasp and stamina that so impressed Spencer, she was profoundly and imaginatively interested in the individual life<sup>13</sup> and as she herself notes (and as much in her book confirms), she might herself have been a novelist

'From my diary entries I infer that, if I had followed my taste and my temperament (I will not say my talent), I should have become, not a worker in the field of sociology, but a descriptive psychologist, either in the novel, to which I was from time to time tempted, or (if I had been born thirty years later) in a scientific analysis of the mental make-up of individual men and women, and their behaviour under particular conditions'<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> although I realised the value of physical science as a training in scientific method, the whole subject-matter of natural science bored me I was not interested in rocks and plants, grubs and animals, not even in man considered merely as a biped, with the organs of a biped What roused and absorbed my curiosity were men and women regarded—if I may use an old-fashioned word—as 'souls', their past and present conditions of life, their thoughts and feelings and their constantly changing behaviour'

<sup>14</sup>She goes on 'For there began to appear in my diary, from 1882 onwards, realistic scenes from country and town life, descriptions of manners and morals, analytic portraits of relations and friends—written, not with any view to self-education, as were my abstracts, extracts and reviews, but merely because I enjoyed writing them It is, however, significant that these sketches from life nearly always concern the relation of the individual to some particular social organisation, to big enterprise, or to Parliament, to the profession of law, or of medicine, or of the Church'

The passage (p 119) in which she elaborates the point that 'Something beyond keen intellectual faculty is necessary to the psychologist and sociologist' might have been written by George Eliot

Therefore I solemnly dedicate my energies for the next five months to the cultivation of the social instincts—trusting that the good dæmon within me will keep me from all vulgarity of mind insincerity and falseness I would like to go amongst men and women with a determination to know them, to humbly observe and consider their characteristics always remembering how much there is in the most inferior individual which is outside and beyond one's understanding Every fresh intimacy strengthens the conviction of one's own powerlessness to comprehend fully any other nature, even when one watches it with love And without sympathy there is an impassable barrier to the real knowledge of the inner workings which guide the outer actions of human beings Sympathy, or rather *accepted* sympathy, is the only instrument for the dissection of character All great knowers and describers of human nature must have possessed this instrument The perfection of the instrument depends no doubt on a purely intellectual quality, analytical imagination—this again, originating in subjective complexity of motive and thought But unless this latter quality is possessed to an extraordinary degree, insight into other natures is impossible, unless we subordinate our interest in self and its workings to a greater desire to understand others Therefore the resolution which has been growing in my mind is, that I will fight against my natural love of impressing others, and prepare my mind to receive impressions And as fast as I receive impressions I will formulate them, thereby avoiding the general haziness of outline which follows a period of receptivity without an attempt of expression' [MS diary, February 22, 1883]

The relation between this and such notes as the following, in which (with references to the inadequacies of such 'disciplined explorations of the varieties of human experience' as claimed academic recognition—psychology, and so on) she describes her attempts to train herself in observation and analysis, is obvious as is the bearing of all these parts of *My Apprenticeship* on the importance of literary studies as, not self-sufficient, but central to a properly conceived liberal education

For any detailed description of the complexity of human nature, of the variety and mixture in human motive, of the insurgence of instinct in the garb of reason, of the multifarious play of the social environment on the individual ego and of the individual ego on the social environment, I had to turn to novelists and poets

That a literary training, involving its proper discipline of intelligence (for there is one), would be very relevant to the essential qualifications of psychologists and sociologists—this is a contention the

grounds for which are pretty plainly hinted at in such texts as those from *My Apprenticeship*. Correlatively they hint at the ways in which in a university English School as it should be, literary studies would lead outside themselves into other fields and other disciplines.

Beatrice Potter's kind of interest in the individual life, her novelist's interest in the concrete, also helped to save her from any bondage to her mentor's individualism. For Spencer, so far from countenancing Mill's kind of development towards Socialism, made, in *Man versus the State* his protest against all compromise. That the author of *First Principles* should, in spite of his generalizing preoccupations with Biology, Psychology and Sociology, have been able to persist in an extreme individualism is a tribute to the strength of the Utilitarian tradition. No doubt the promptings of his essential influence followed up, were themselves calculated to lead his pupil to take less atomistic views of the relations between the individual and society. But the gifts that made her so unlike her teacher, and more like George Eliot than he most likely appreciated, must have speeded her escape from *laissez-faire*. The intelligence that recognized so clearly the roles of sympathy and imaginative insight, and that turned for the best instruction in 'the complexity of human nature and 'the multifarious play of the social environment on the individual ego, and of the individual ego on the social environment to the poets and the novelists couldn't have rested in Utilitarian individualism, or, contemplating slump-induced misery, have shared the simple faith of *The Times*. There is no one to blame for this, it is the result of Nature's simplest laws!

But the student in making this point will perhaps be aware of a certain irony as he thinks of the characteristic modern development with which her life's-work—that devoted life's-work (so different from a novelist's) in which she found her vocation—is associated. Certainly it is in a peculiarly suggestive way that her account of her apprenticeship brings together for his contemplation the unchastened individualism of the world into which she was born and that endless growth in the range and complexity of state organization and bureaucratic control which makes the individual feel so helpless and so insignificant in the modern world. The life-work for which Spencer inaugurated the training ended in *Soviet Communism A New Civilization* ('Its organisational structure is surely the most complicated known to political science'—[the Preface])

Spencer was not the only presence in the home, or the most intimate, of *laissez-faire* individualism—the pure, conscious and uncompromising creed. Here is Mrs Webb's account of her mother

'An ardent student of Adam Smith, Malthus, and particularly of Naussau Senior, she had been brought up in the strictest sect of Utilitarian economists. In middle life she had translated some of the essays of her friend Michel Chevalier, who represented the French variant of orthodox political economy, a variant which caricatured the dogmatic faith in a beneficent self-interest. And



my mother practised what she preached. Tested by economy in money and time she was an admirable expender of the family income—she never visited the servants' quarters and seldom spoke to any servant other than her own maid. She acted by deputy, training each daughter to carry out a carefully thought-out plan of the most economical supply of the best-regulated demand. Her intellect told her that to pay more than the market rate, to exact fewer than the customary hours or insist on less than the usual strain—even if it could be proved that these conditions were injurious to the health and happiness of the persons concerned—was an act of self-indulgence, a defiance of nature's laws which would bring disaster on the individual and the community. Similarly, it was the bounden duty of every citizen to better his social status, to ignore those beneath him, and to aim steadily at the top rung of the social ladder. Only by this persistent pursuit by each individual of his own and his family's interest would the highest general level of civilization be attained. It was on this issue that she and Herbert Spencer found themselves in happy accord. No one of the present generation realises with what sincerity and fervour these doctrines were held by the representative men and women of the mid-Victorian middle class. 'The man who sells his cow too cheap goes to hell' still epitomises, according to John Butler Yeats, "the greater part of the religion of Belfast—that last backwater of the sanctimonious commercialism of the nineteenth century."

Against this background the force of mind and character represented by Mill's development become more fully appreciable.

Of course, Mrs. Potter's rigid orthodoxy and Mill's intellectually strenuous modification do not exhaustively represent the Utilitarianism of the Victorian age, if we are to talk of Utilitarianism as having been pervasive. And this is the point at which to suggest that the postulated study-group ought to sketch for itself in brief the history of Utilitarian thought and its influence. Perhaps, as a measure of economy, a tough and efficient reader or two might be detailed to extract from Halévy's *Growth of Philosophic Radicalism* for the benefit of the group the main points about the origins of Benthamism. For Bentham, of course, brought together a great deal of representative thinking, and an account of his affiliations and connexions is a large part of the intellectual history of the eighteenth century. The history as given by Halévy is loaded with names, English and French, but our deputed inquirers could without great difficulty elicit the main lines and elements. In particular they would note the coming together of what is represented by the name of Adam Smith with what may be represented by the name of Newton. Not that Newton himself contributed directly to Benthamism in the way in which Adam Smith did, I am thinking of the ambition to do for human nature and human affairs what the immortal Newton, hailed as the great typical genius of the new physical science, had done for astronomy.

This ambition, we know, forms a characteristic accompaniment of the Benthamite ethos. Literary students—ours are literary in the first place—will have come on it in the work of Dr I. A. Richards' work that ought to be seen—even by literary students—in its relation to the tradition it belongs to. Approached in the way suggested, the offered psychological criticism of *The Principles of Literary Criticism*, in fact, is likely to strike them as curiously contemporary with Bentham. In the later phase, that represented by *Coleridge on Imagination*, the ambition takes a subtler form. The cue for the book itself our students will note, was given by Mill's pronouncement about Bentham and Coleridge in the essay on the latter. Whoever could master the premises and combine the methods of both would possess the entire English philosophy of their age. They will note too that Dr Richards's way of combining is to 'restate Coleridge in terms of Bentham', and perhaps they will go on to judge that this is a very different process from that to which Mill devoted his life,<sup>15</sup> a very different kind of thing from Mill's endeavour to modify crude Benthamite Utilitarianism into something fully consonant with an appreciation of Coleridge. They are likely, I think, to judge with some emphasis that the effect of 'restatement' is to *replace* Coleridge by Bentham.

I am here of course expressing my own view<sup>16</sup> (which at some time, in such radical matters, one is bound to do). And I will add further that the approach I have been indicating conduces, I think, to a due precipitation of the suspicion that the subtleties of Semasiology clothe an essentially Benthamite spirit—Benthamite in a field in which to be Benthamite is to be indifferent to essential elements in the problems one offers to be tackling. Certainly (it seems to me) Basic English exemplifies the practical spirit of Benthamism—'It can teach the means of organizing and regulating the merely *business* part of the social arrangements, Mill says<sup>17</sup>—applying itself to

<sup>15</sup>What more is needed concerning Mill's development will be found very accessible in Leslie Stephen's *The English Utilitarians*, Vol III *John Stuart Mill*

<sup>16</sup>It will be found expressed at length in an examination of *Coleridge on Imagination* that appeared in *Scrutiny* for March, 1935 (Vol III, No 4)

<sup>17</sup>And more fully 'If Bentham's theory of life can do so little for the individual, what can it do for society?'

It will enable a society which has attained a certain state of spiritual development, and the maintenance of which in that state is otherwise provided for, to prescribe the rules by which it may protect its material interests. It will do nothing (except sometimes as an instrument in the hands of a higher doctrine) for the spiritual interests of society, nor does it suffice of itself even for the material interests. That which alone causes any material interests to exist which alone enables any body of human beings to exist as a society is national character. All he can do is but to indicate means by which in any given state of the national mind,

matters where its indifference to essential human interests that are involved is calculated to have for those interests disastrous consequences

Whether these judgments are wholly endorsed or not, it is an important line of intellectual history that comes up with them. Adam Smith's name brings up the relation of Utilitarianism to social, economic and political history. The historical significance of the *laissez-faire* individualism that counts for so much in the Utilitarian tradition is plain enough: a society in which the classes associated with the expanding capitalist enterprise of eighteenth century England represented the stir of new energy naturally tended to see government, identified as it was with the persisting paternal and mercantilist habits of the vestigial old order, social and economic as mainly an obstructive and interfering nuisance, and to favour a minimal conception of it. Mill in his *Coleridge* says

The State, again, was no longer considered, according to the old ideal, as a concentration of the force of all the individuals of the nation in the hands of certain of its members, in order to the accomplishment of whatever could be best accomplished by systematic co-operation. It was found that the State was a bad judge of the wants of society, that it in reality cared very little for them, and when it attempted anything beyond that of police against crime, and arbitration of disputes, which are indispensable to social existence, the private sinister interest of some class or individual was usually the prompter of its proceedings. Government altogether was regarded as a necessary evil, and was required to hide itself, to make itself as little felt as possible. The cry of the people was not "help us" "guide us", "do for us the things we cannot do, and instruct us, that we may do well those which we can"—and truly such requirements from such rulers would have been a bitter jest: the cry was "let us alone". Power to decide questions of *meum* and *teum*, to protect society from open violence, and from some of the most dangerous modes of fraud, could not be withheld, these functions the Government was left in possession of, and to these it became the expectation of the public that it should confine itself.

But the significance in relation to social and economic history of Bentham's thought is a great deal wider than can be suggested by referring to Adam Smith and *laissez-faire*. Mill, in the essay on him, gives it in a general way here, in discussing him as the 'great questioner of things established'

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the material interests of society can be protected, saving the question, of which others may judge, whether the use of those means would have, on the national character any injurious influence'

The whole passage deserves pondering in relation to Matthew Arnold's preoccupations

Who before Bentham (whatever controversies might exist on points of detail) dared to speak disrespectfully, in express terms, of the British Constitution or the English Law? He did so, and his arguments and his example together encouraged others. We do not mean that his writings caused the Reform Bill or that the Appropriation Clause owns him as its parent. The changes which have been made, and the greater changes which will be made in our institutions, are not the work of philosophers but of the interests and instincts of large portions of society recently grown into strength. But Bentham gave voice to those interests and instincts until he spoke out those who found our institutions unsuited to them did not dare to say so did not dare consciously to think so they had never heard the excellence of those institutions questioned by cultivated men, by men of acknowledged intellect, and it is not in the nature of un instructed minds to resist the united authority of the instructed. Bentham broke the spell'

For all that, Bentham was politically no Radical, but rather Tory-inclined for a great part of his life. It was James Mill who in the early years of the nineteenth century, made Benthamism a political force and identified Bentham with Philosophic Radicalism. The history of the central part played by Philosophic Radicalism in the movement of agitation, political education and organized pressure that led up to the Reform Act of 1832 is to be found in Halévy's book. There is no need here to suggest what other reading should be done in this connexion, suitable tips would be readily gathered in consultation with qualified authority.<sup>18</sup> It is, however, in place to say that the members of our study-group following their special focal interests through this critical period of English history, would be well disposed and sensitized for improving their general grasp of it.

The Reform Act once achieved, the common aim that had held together the heterogeneous forces combined to achieve it was gone. The class that had risen to assured political power had naturally no enthusiasm for further reforms—reforms, that is, tending towards the sharing of its privileges and the reduction of its power. Apart from Municipal Reform, in which, of course, they were very much concerned, the one great distinctive achievement of the Philosophic Radicals consequent upon the act was, significantly, the new Poor Law, symbolic embodiment of all that was most rationally and righteously inhuman in orthodox Utilitarianism, with its implacable Malthusian logic. Utilitarianism, in fact, provided the sanction for the complacent selfishness and comfortable obtuseness of the

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<sup>18</sup>*William Cobbett* by G. D. H. Cole, and *The Life of Francis Place* by Graham Wallas, oughn't in any case to be missed. Cobbett it may be said here, should be a more substantial value for the 'English' student than he commonly is, and any specially designed 'English' library should contain his works.

prosperous classes in the great age of Progress they were protected by righteous rationality from the importunities of imaginative sympathy. We have had an illustration of the creed held simply and sincerely, and so in a sense respectably, in Mrs. Webb's account of her mother. The supreme document in creative literature, where Victorian Utilitarianism and its part in Victorian civilization are in question, is *Hard Times*, with the grim play of its title. This masterpiece, as I have argued elsewhere, offers itself as a key work for the critical study of fiction. Taking stock of its superiority in the Dickensian *œuvre* as a work of art, the critic finds himself considering those aspects of the Victorian world which exercised so strong a compulsion upon Dickens's creative powers, and controlled them, for once, to a profound and sustained seriousness of response. The close relations between literary criticism and extra-literary studies invited in the appreciation of *Hard Times* need, then, no insisting on, the general nature of the opportunity is plain.

Here I will only note that Gradgrind and Bounderby give us in significant association, two aspects of Victorian Utilitarianism. In Gradgrind, as in Beatrice Webb's mother, it is a matter of principle a serious creed, if a repellent one. But Gradgrind consorts freely and uncritically with Josiah Bounderby—marries his daughter to him, in fact. And Bounderby is rugged individualism' in its most gross and brutal forms. Yet Gradgrind is represented as a kind of James Mill, a stern and practical theorist, who gives his children, from intellectual conviction an education like that suffered by his son, and recorded in the *Autobiography*. And the justice of this vision of the tendency of James Mill's kind of Utilitarianism, as manifested in later history, can hardly be questioned.

But the Utilitarianism of the Victorian age was something more than a matter of Bounderby, Gradgrind and John Stuart Mill. What may fairly be called a Utilitarian ethos was pervasive, and can be found in representative figures who would not have called themselves Utilitarians. Is it not there, for instance, in Macaulay, the critic of James Mill? The student might ponder this question, while looking through the third chapter of the *History*<sup>19</sup> (considering, perhaps, along with it Chapter VI of Firth's *Commentary on Macaulay's History of England*).

This, then, is the kind of field that co-ordinates itself round John Stuart Mill, approached in the way suggested. For the other main figure—that to be set over against Mill—I have already proposed Matthew Arnold as the obvious choice. Set study of Carlyle or Ruskin, for instance, would be bad economy. What Carlyle<sup>20</sup>

<sup>19</sup>The essay by Matthew Arnold on Falkland in *Mixed Essays* might well be read in conjunction with this. (Arnold, of course, has in various places some very useful characterizing references to Macaulay.) Here too would be a good place to introduce H. Butterfield's *The Whig Interpretation of History* (along with which should be read *The Interpretation of History* by A. J. Woolford in *Scrutiny*, Vol. XIII, No. 1.)

stands for—or against (it is apt to seem mainly that)—can be summarized fairly briefly, voluminous as he is. Ruskin's destructive analysis of the orthodox political economy was a great and noble achievement entitling him to enduring honour but it can be worth few students' while to follow it through at any length in the original documents. It is fairly easy to say what his place and significance are.<sup>21</sup> Arnold, on the other hand, cannot be summarized. I say this with an eye, not on his weaknesses and inconsistencies as a thinker, but on his essential strength. And here we have a reason for his being worth special study. He is not easy to do justice to, and to attempt it seriously is to refine one's understanding of the nature of intelligence. For, though he is in so many ways so unlike Mill, he too stands for intelligence (as the contrast with Carlyle brings out). Unlike Mill, he is not a systematic thinker, he represents no strict intellectual discipline, he doesn't go in for sharpness and completeness of analysis or full and clear statement of principle and he is not preoccupied with consistency. This might seem to leave little that can be claimed for him—a conclusion, by all appearances, that has been pretty widely entertained, though he has contrived to command attention and remain a live author as Carlyle, I think has not and Ruskin has not.

The difficulty of being fair to him—a difficulty that every one interested in him must have experienced—is illustrated at the most distinguished level by Mr. T. S. Eliot in *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism*. It is illustrated in a much less respectable way by Raleigh, whose essay in *Some Authors* should be known to the student as a *locus classicus* for the unscrupulous and silly malice, revealing a radical dislike of live intelligence, that so often goes with a reputation for brilliance in the academic mind.<sup>22</sup> It is illustrated with honest and forthright crudity in another essay the student might well look at—that by J. M. Robertson in *Modern Humanists Reconsidered*. The obtuseness manifested in the march of Robertson's relentless logic has a clear relation to his demand for an equivalent logic in Arnold. And here we have the clue to the general unfairness from which Arnold has suffered—he has been judged by inappropriate criteria as if he offered what he doesn't and as if a critic who fails of logical rigour and strictness of definition

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<sup>20</sup>Leslie Stephen's essay on him in *Hours in a Library*, Vol. III, is very good and J. M. Robertson's in *Modern Humanists Reconsidered* is worth looking up, as is his essay on Ruskin.

<sup>21</sup>J. A. Hobson's *John Ruskin* is to be recommended. B. E. Lippincott's *Victorian Critics of Democracy* (Oxford University Press) dealing with Carlyle, Ruskin, Arnold and others will be found very useful.

<sup>22</sup>It is significant that Robert Bridges whose performance as friend and editor of Gerard Manley Hopkins so notably exemplifies the 'academic mind', should refer to Arnold as 'Mr. Kidglove-Cocksure', for which show of animus he is rebuked by Hopkins (*The Letters of Gerard Manley Hopkins to Robert Bridges*, XCIV).

is left with no respectable function of intelligence that he might be performing

The flexibility the sensitiveness, the constant delicacy of touch for the concrete in its complexity the intelligence that is inseparably one with an alert and fine sense of value—these qualities, however severe the criticism to be brought against him, are exemplified by Arnold and it is the reader of literary critical training who should find them a challenge to appreciation. Such a student will recall that in the essay, *The Function of Criticism*, it is more than the function of literary criticism that is being discussed it is the general function of critical intelligence in a civilized community. Arnold is defining a function that extends the habit, the methods and the qualifications of a good literary critic to the more general field. Our postulated student, who is to bring with him the training of a literary critic may profitably inquire how far and in what ways Arnold's writings exemplify such an extension.

And this brings me to a final emphasis on the intention of these notes the student I repeat is in the first place a student of literature. I am assuming that at the centre of the work here in view there will be a critical study of the novels of George Eliot, and I have been trying to suggest the kind of work—the approach, the development and the organization—that should I think, replace that represented (to take an instance in front of me) by the prescription for 'special study' of the English novel over two or three Victorian decades—a usual kind of prescription that seems to me radically and wastefully misconceived.

F R LEAVIS

## 'THE TEMPEST'

WHETHER *The Tempest* which we may assume to have been written immediately after *The Winter's Tale* is or is not a more satisfactory play is a question about which opinions may reasonably differ. What seems certain is that it represents a further and logical development in the 'symbolic' technique evolved in the series of Shakespeare's last comedies. We might define this development by saying that whereas *The Winter's Tale* is still concerned with the evolution of experience towards its completely adequate symbolic consummation, *The Tempest* assumes that this consummation has already been achieved, so that the various characters and situations exist from the first entirely in terms of their symbolic function. The sense of motion and development which emerges from the earlier play, and which F. R. Leavis possibly had in mind when he referred some years ago in *Scrutiny*<sup>1</sup> to its 'organic' character, is no longer apparent in *The Tempest*. Its absence, although we may agree that it makes the play poorer in a certain human content, was the inevitable consequence of a great artist's inability to repeat himself, for *The Tempest* is, whether we prefer it or not, the logical conclusion of the integrating process that produced *The Winter's Tale* and consequently of Shakespeare's art.

The main outline of the 'symbolic' pattern of the play follows familiar lines. We should never forget in this respect, that it is called *The Tempest*, and that it opens in a storm at sea. As in *The Winter's Tale* the storm, and the calm which follows it, are related respectively to the tragedy caused by human passion and the reconciliation which, after an acceptance of the suffering implied in that tragedy, follows upon repentance in its aftermath. At the centre of the action, formerly victim of the storm roused by unleashed human passion, but now as much its master as he is in control of the physical tempest he has raised to bring his enemies to the stage upon which their destinies are to be decided, stands the enigmatic figure of Prospero. At once the victim and the master of circumstances—and it is perhaps this double aspect of his nature which has proved, for many readers, the stumbling-block in the way of a full acceptance of the play—Prospero emerges increasingly, during the course of it as the instrument of judgment. Through his actions, and those of Ariel, the different motives which prevail in his former enemies are brought to the surface evaluated and finally judged. In the process of judgment the meeting of Prospero's daughter with the son of Alonso provides a symbolic ground of reconciliation in the familiar Shakespearean manner. Only after the final restoration of harmony has taken place on the island does Prospero, with his restored associates, return to resume his part in

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<sup>1</sup>April, 1942, p. 345



the human society from which envy and ambition had originally driven him

## I

The true interest of the play, however, lies less in the conception thus stated in general terms, than in the working out of it in terms of experience. In Prospero's opening exposition to Miranda (I, 1), which is little more than a monologue Shakespeare conveys facts which are necessary to the barest comprehension of what is going to happen, but he also, beyond this, prepares us for the interpretation the symbolic significance of the events we are to witness. Prospero's first aim is the awakening to moral issues of Miranda. Although our understanding of this is, in the nature of things, gradual, the tone and phrasing of Prospero's first speech is in itself significant

There's no harm done  
 No harm  
 I have done nothing but in care of thee,  
 Of thee my dear one, thee my daughter, who  
 Art ignorant of what thou art, nought knowing  
 Of whence I am, nor that I am more better  
 Than Prospero, master of a full poor cell  
 And thy no greater father

Prospero's confidence, which stands out in the reiterated 'No harm done No harm' as though he wished from the first to stress his perfect mastery of the situation, needs to be seen in contrast to Miranda's passionate fear. Miranda in her pity, is full of fear. Her fear, natural, attractive, human as it is, springs from her ignorance, from the same inexperience which led her imagination, in the opening speech of the scene, to imagine 'some noble creature' upon Alonso's ship and to live throughout with visions of a 'brave new world' and the enabled humanity that is to live in it. Prospero does not disapprove of these visions. Eventually he will endorse them, give them their proper place in his comprehensive view of spiritual reality, but, before this can be, they need to be reconciled to a fuller experience of the possibilities of human nature. It is the story of Florizel and Perdita over again. As their full happiness involved, as a preliminary condition the breaking-up of the rustic paradise in which they first met so must Miranda come to know 'what she is' in a way that can never be achieved in the isolation of the island. As a first step she must learn that life is not completely bounded by the relations of a father and a daughter happily contained within the limits of 'a full poor cell'. This 'cell' of retirement is itself a consequence of human sin, and the time has come for Miranda to know this and so to deepen her instinctive compassion by experience.

'T is time  
 I should inform thee further

Miranda, in her compassionate helplessness, wishes herself 'a god of power' to pluck her still imaginary hero from danger, but Prospero—who is 'a god of power', at least in so far as fullness of understanding and the sanction of Destiny can make him one—deliberately wills a storm which is itself symbolically bound to the consequences of previous sin and which shall bring to his daughter with the shadow of suffering, a more complete realization of what mature experience really means. That is why he is able to tell her 'I have done nothing but in care of thee' and that is why, in spite of all the suffering that seems to have been caused by the tempest, there has been 'no harm done'. No harm, but only the necessary prelude to a fuller and more complete life.

In the telling of the story which follows Miranda is, as it were, awakened into maturity. Piercing for her the dream which is her innocent life on the island, Prospero introduces her to wider possibilities. More properly speaking, by penetrating the veil which shrouds the dim backward and abysm of time' (and surely, in the charged mysteriousness of the phrase, we sense as much a reference to the universal human situation as to Miranda's particular position) he makes her aware of the knot of mingled motives which constitutes human society. The first thing she must learn, after so many years passed in the idyllic simplicity of Prospero's refuge is her connection with another and more complex mode of life. As soon as she finds out that she has indeed had such a life Miranda's question immediately brings out the moral issue.

O, the heavens,  
What foul play had we, that we came from thence?  
Or blessed was t we did?

In this way Miranda raises a question which could never have occurred to her in the previous state of innocence and which lies at the heart of Shakespeare's conception. How can we justify, within Prospero's providential philosophy, the existence of an evil which seems to be indissolubly connected with normal behaviour? Prospero is ready with an answer which will require the unfolding of the full pattern of the play to give it force, but which already indicates the foundations of his confidence.

Both, both, my girl  
By foul play (as thou say'st) were we heav'd hence,  
But blessedly help hither

From the assertion that the fugitives were protected by providential action during their journey to the island it is only a short step to affirm that their exile itself was, spiritually speaking, a privilege. Evil, apparently inconceivable on the island—for Caliban's instincts are safely under control—has to be accepted in society as part of the necessary price of maturity. The reason, in fact, so far as we can see it—and Prospero's answer attempts to go no further—is in the opportunity it offers for the working out of a final state of 'grace'. We are not asked to accept this yet, so long

before the end of the play, indeed it would be wrong to suppose that Shakespeare expects us to see in the use of the word 'blessedly' any more than a sign of Miranda's awakening to moral issues and a thread of conviction round which some kind of order may eventually gather. For the moment, in any case, Prospero's attention is primarily fixed upon expounding, still as a necessary step in Miranda's education, the nature of evil as revealed in the motives of his enemies.

Remembering previous plays we shall not be surprised to find, as we read the story of Prospero's expulsion from Milan that evil in *The Tempest* has two aspects—personal and social—which stand in the closest connection with one another. All through the tragedies the first consequence of evil has been anarchy and its motive the overthrow of natural 'degree' by the dominating force of passion. 'Degree', in its turn, is associated with two human institutions, the family and the body politic. These institutions are based, in the widest sense of the word, upon reason and are the foundations of a civilized, moral way of living, and it is only when passion in the individual overcomes reason and aims at the destruction of these institutions that evil enters society. In the story of Prospero's expulsion evil strikes both at the roots of social stability—for the head of the state is the guarantor of that 'degree' by observing which alone man can live in society—and at the unity of the family to overthrow the natural order of things. In casting Prospero with his daughter on to the open sea Antonio transgressed both against the Duke of Milan and his own brother.

First against the Duke. The account given by Prospero of his dukedom reminds us insistently of the story of the Duke in *Measure for Measure*. Like that mysterious personage Prospero lived 'retired', withdrawn from the world and devoted entirely to contemplation and the 'liberal' arts

I, thus neglecting worldly ends, all dedicated  
To closeness, and the bettering of my mind  
With that which, but by being so retired,  
O'erprised all popular rate,

and, like the Duke, he delegated the whole of his power to another. In so doing both opened the way for the entry of evil into their respective dominions. Prospero is quite explicit about this when he tells Miranda that his own neglect of the worldly ends of government—

in my false brother  
Awak'd an evil nature, and my trust,  
Like a good parent, did beget of him  
A falsehood in its contrary, as great  
As my trust was, which had indeed no limit,  
A confidence sans bound

The similarity between Prospero and the Duke of Vienna, two characters separated as they are by several years of Shakespeare's

most intense activity, is some indication of the continuity of spirit in which the plays were conceived. Both appear increasingly, as their stories are unfolded, to be in control of the events around them. Both, indeed, eventually attain a certain omniscience, even a reflection of divinity, which enables them finally to pass moral judgment upon those whose behaviour they have been observing throughout the play, but in each case this omniscience, this capacity to judge needs to be based on an understanding which has first been deepened by contact with reality. Prospero of course is more secure than the Duke in his mastery. His apprenticeship to experience has already been served before *The Tempest* opens and we hear of it now only as something in the past, whereas the Duke, conceived by Shakespeare before the process of deepening insight shadowed in the great tragedies had taken place, is still involved in his own search for clarification.<sup>2</sup> But the position of both is at bottom the same. Both begin by consecrating themselves to an ideal of purely personal perfection, and both in so doing neglect not only social duties but also an instrument, when properly conceived, for the attainment of that perfection itself. The position of Prospero, however, is complicated by an additional factor which points to the presence behind the play of the full tragic experience. Not only is his rule overthrown by that of a self-seeking usurper for whom the sacred guarantees of political 'degree' mean nothing, but the corruption which brings him suffering and loss springs from his own family.

At this point the political is replaced by the family issue. Prospero's own brother, who should have been his chief supporter by the most intimate personal ties becomes—

The ivy which had hid my princely trunk,  
And suck'd my verdure out on't

Perhaps only the very intimacy of the ties which bind a man to his brother enable Antonio to assume a part so completely contrary to Prospero's own, the man of the world is, as it were, complementary to the contemplative precisely because of the unity of blood that unites them. To Antonio's crime against the state, against the sacred intangibility of 'degree', is added at all events a crime against the bond of unity in the family which Prospero feels even more deeply—

I prithee, mark me, that a brother should  
Be so perfidious

The two crimes are, in fact, one, a common subversion of the natural order of things, a descent into anarchy prompted by personal selfishness which is, in the Shakespearean outlook of the great plays, the supreme cause of tragedy. But Prospero himself, by his past

<sup>2</sup>We are told that he has always been 'one that, above all other strifes, contended specially to know himself' (*Measure for Measure*, III, 1)

retirement, had helped unwittingly to bring these crimes about, and so only now, after helpless exposure to the tempestuous seas and years of confinement to a 'poor cell' on a most 'desolate isle'—desolate, in spite of all the graces with which his wisdom has endowed it because deprived of human society—is he in a position to assume with full moral authority his vocation of judgment

Beyond judgment, however, Prospero has yet another purpose—reconciliation. The old order, broken by the disruptive entry of passion into what had been the deepest of natural relationships, needs to be restored on the firmer basis provided by a wider experience. It is here that the process of Miranda's education links up with the play's more general 'symbolic' theme. The instrument of reconciliation, as in *The Winter's Tale* is to be the love spontaneously born in the children of the very fathers whose friendship passion had destroyed. Ferdinand and Miranda can restore the happiness of their parents just because they have had no part in the sin which had brought about their tragedy. And so still at the very beginning of the play—not as in *The Winter's Tale* at the end, for *The Tempest* concentrates our attention almost entirely upon the last, the reconciling stage in the tragic process—Miranda sees Ferdinand. Prompted still by her innocence, she greets him at once as something supernatural, the representative of a humanity exalted to something above the normal condition of man. Her first query is—

What is't? a spirit?  
Lorú, how it looks about! Believe me, sir,  
It carries a brave form. But 't is a spirit

And when Prospero has explained that she is looking at a man, she continues with an even more explicit reference to divinity

I might call him  
*A thing divine*, for nothing natural  
I ever saw so noble

The idea of *nobility* exalted to something like a state of divinity is fundamental to Shakespeare's purpose. It is, as we shall see, the conclusion towards which Prospero himself is moving, but the moment for accepting it has not yet come, and so he interrupts his daughter's ecstasy, breaks off the developing love, to which Ferdinand has responded at first sight, with what seems an inexorable brutality. Prospero's own explanation in his aside—

this swift business  
I must uneasy make lest too light winning  
Make the prize light—

is indeed most perfunctory. No doubt Shakespeare thought it sufficient to allow events to explain themselves. The enriched poetic content of the final scenes of reconciliation will be sufficient in due course, to show that Ferdinand's love for Miranda and hers for him have become deeper by being tested in the crucible of

adverse experience. For the fact is that Miranda's idealization, *divinization* of Ferdinand, based though it is upon sound instincts, is still inadequate. Her reaction reflects a tenderness and compassion which are still insufficiently mature, still unsupported by an adequate depth of spiritual experience. She greets Ferdinand as a god simply because she has seen nothing like him before, and yet as Prospero is quick to remind her, she has seen no other man than himself and Caliban. Her enthusiasm argues from a naive belief that nothing wicked can inhabit so fair a form—

There's nothing ill can dwell in such a temple  
If the ill spirit have so fair a house,  
Good things will strive to dwell with it

The religious associations called up by 'temple' and 'spirit' are significant and will eventually be taken up to form part of the final harmony, but they need first to be substantiated and confirmed by contact with human realities. Miranda herself unwittingly suggests that these realities are dangerous. Their outward form, even though it conceals something ill, may be so 'fair that even good things will be carried away and strive to dwell with it'. The behaviour of the men who have been cast ashore on the island by Prospero's providential storm—many of them presumably not much less god-like (at least potentially) than Ferdinand to Miranda's inexperienced gaze—will show how dangerous are her simple assumptions. Their behaviour calls for consideration in the main body of the play before Prospero's reconciling purpose can take mature shape. Only after his former enemies have done their worst and been, in turn, dominated by the superior power and insight of the man upon whose wronging their temporal good-fortune has so far depended will he be able to unite his daughter convincingly to Ferdinand in terms that are little short of god-like. But the divinity—such as it is—will then be founded upon a true experience of human nature and will express a spiritual reality, not merely a sentimental intuition, and this experience will have been obtained in the process of passing judgment on all the characters of the play.

## II

It is to pass judgment, indeed, as a prelude to reconciliation that Prospero has called all those concerned in his former banishment to be cast ashore on the island. From their first appearance (II 1) he subjects them to what is, in effect, an analysis of guilt. Having at the beginning of the action, got them safely together he proceeds to differentiate carefully between them, for some will turn out to be capable of redemption and others, in spite of his efforts, not. Their capacity is tested, above all, by their reactions to the ordeal to which they are exposed. Alonso, the King of Naples and—significantly—the character who has lost most in the wreck, comes best out of the test. Having lost, as he thinks, his son, and feeling that his journey to Tunis has been the cause of the whole

disaster, he refuses from the first to be comforted. His only reply to Gonzalo's loquacious consolation is 'Prithée peace', and when Sebastian reproaches him with having brought by his project so much needless suffering to those around him he makes no attempt to deny this but merely points out that, if his be the greater part of the blame, he also bears the brunt of the suffering

*Sebastian* The fault's your own

*Alonso* So is the dear'st of the loss

And it is just through the 'deariness' of his loss, since it has been fully assimilated through meditation in suffering, that the possibility of his redemption lies. In his refusal to be comforted Alonso is like the Leontes of the last Act of *The Winter's Tale*. To throw off sorrow in such a situation is to be insensible, and insensibility is perhaps in Shakespeare's mind at the time of writing these plays the greatest obstacle to redemption. Unlike Leontes Alonso does not really understand the reason for which this trial has been imposed upon him. He has forgotten, so it seems, his treatment of Prospero, but meanwhile the very inconsolable quality of his sorrow shows him to be capable of repentance, and Shakespeare no doubt intends to emphasize this quality in him when he makes him capable of receiving the symbolic visitation of sleep. Sleep, which deserted Macbeth after the murder of Duncan and which brought Lear to true self-knowledge, temporary happiness and the recovery of his reason, preserves in *The Tempest* its healing significance and Prospero himself, acting through Ariel, bestows it upon those whose spiritual state is such that they can accept it. Alonso can do so because, as we have said, he is morally sensitive, and so his response to Ariel's music is a positive one.

I wish mine eyes

Would, with themselves, shut up my thoughts. I find  
They are inclined to do so

Sebastian's comment in turn, insincerely proffered though it is, is in itself profoundly true to the Shakespearean intuition.

Please you, sir,

Do not omit the heavy offer of it  
It seldom visits sorrow, when it doth,  
It is a comforter

So Alonso sleeps in response to the invitation of the music, and his sleep is a sign that he will, when the time comes and his understanding has been completed, find his place in the final pattern of reconciliation.

The next stage in Shakespeare's analysis concerns Antonio and Sebastian. From the first, in the repartee to which they subject Gonzalo's efforts to cheer Alonso, they appear as cynics of the familiar Shakespearean type, their intelligence applied exclusively to purposes of destruction. When Adrian, otherwise insignificant,

and Gonzalo speak of the island in terms that directly recall Banquo's account of Macbeth's castle at the moment of Duncan's arrival before it, their reaction is typical and, to those who appreciate Shakespeare's handling of detail of this kind, full of meaning

- Adrian* It (the island) must needs be of subtle, tender and delicate temperance The air breathes upon us here most sweetly
- Sebastian* Ay as if it had lungs, and rotten ones
- Antonio* Or as t were perfumed by a fen
- Gonzalo* Here is everything advantageous to life
- Antonio* True, save means to live
- Gonzalo* But the rarity of it is, which is indeed almost beyond credit that our garments, being as they were, drenched in the sea, hold notwithstanding their freshness and glosses, being rather new-dyed than stained with salt water
- Antonio* If but one of his pockets could speak, would it not say he lies

The fresh sweetness of the air the tender and delicate temperance of the island are images of the kind generally associated, in the later plays, with the presence of grace, while the fact, insisted upon more than once by Gonzalo, that immersion in the tempest-driven waters has left the garments of Alonso and his courtiers even fresher than they had been before, is perhaps more directly symbolic. However that may be, 'grace' in Shakespeare always has its enemy in the cynic, the destructive critic who belittles its intimations in terms of his own sensuality and reduces its value to worthlessness. In so doing he becomes the vehicle of the profound emotional disturbance which, taken together with the positive reaction against its implications, produced the great tragedies. Sebastian and Antonio, indeed, are no more than the successors of Iago. The grossness of their utterances, the evocation of 'rotten lungs' and the 'perfume' of the fen are typical inversions of the 'grace'-images of Adrian and Gonzalo, and the reference, coarsely physical, to Gonzalo's pockets is part of the same attitude. With no conception of value, divorced from that free reverence for the established order upon which any tolerable spiritual life must, according to Shakespeare, be based, the part of these two in *The Tempest* is necessarily destructive, anarchic, and that is why they, unlike Alonso, remain finally beyond the limits of Prospero's reconciling action.

Taken in itself, the cynicism shown by Sebastian and Alonso does not seem of great moment, but we are soon shown that it is the prelude to graver crimes. The moral anarchy fostered by the destructive intelligence does not confine itself to conceits and witticisms. As soon as Alonso, succumbing to the inspired harmony of Ariel, surrenders to the sleep which foreshadows forgiveness and the healing of his sorrows, they turn to plot against order and



humanity itself Shakespeare indeed, explicitly stresses their wakefulness, their inability to receive or understand spiritual refreshment, in the wonder with which they comment on Alonso's drowsiness

*Sebastian* What a strange drowsiness possesses them!

*Antonio* It is the quality of the climate

*Sebastian* Why  
Doth it not then our eyelids sink? I find not  
Myself dispos'd to sleep

*Antonio* Nor I, my spirits are numb

Immediately afterwards this 'numbness' of the critical faculty, this vivacity which reflects nothing more than anarchy begins to translate itself into act Prospero's enemy, who had conspired to eject him from his rightful position, feels himself once more dominated by the desire for power

methinks I see it in thy face  
What thou should'st be the occasion speaks thee, and  
My strong imagination sees a crown  
Dropping upon thy head

Antonio is not the first Shakespearean character whose 'strong imagination envisaging a crime not yet apparent to an accomplice of weaker will sees that accomplice crowned in anticipation of the future Lady Macbeth, after seeing her husband crowned in her imagination, played in the death of Duncan very much the part played by Antonio in the plan to kill Alonso Only in Antonio's case the presence of the 'rational conviction that moral sanctions have no validity to restrain the ruthless following of self-interest is far more stressed and the inversion of natural values correspondingly more apparent The plan to murder Alonso thrusts against both the institutions, the family and the crown, which Shakespearean symbolism invests with particular reverence the family, founded upon the deepest, most instinctive ties of all, and the crown, upon the stability of which depends all possibility of holding off the ceaseless threat of anarchy which haunts human society It is no accident that both the traitors in this play are brothers to those whom they plan to ruin Antonio, the brother of Prospero who played the chief part in his banishment, and now Sebastian, stand in the same relationship of their victims, and both, in desiring to murder a king, are—like Macbeth—opening the gates to chaos

One more point needs to be noticed in considering this plot The two plotters are carefully distinguished in their characters The difference between them is well put in their dialogue

*Sebastian* Well, I am standing water

*Antonio* I'll teach you how to flow  
Do so to ebb  
Hereditary sloth instructs me

Against Alonso, as previously against Prospero, Antonio is the arch criminal. It is he who provides the energy of the plot, who shows the active desire to destroy all that stands in the way of his personal advancement—who—in short—moves the relatively languid Sebastian to act. The speed with which his mind moves is conveyed in the very motion of his speech. When Sebastian doubtfully brings up the name of Claribel we can feel the intensity of his thought in motion to dispose of an obstacle to his plans.

She that is queen of Tunis, she that dwells  
 Ten leagues beyond man's life she that from Naples  
 Can have no note unless the sun were post,—  
 The man in the moon's too slow,—till new-born chins  
 Be rough and razorable

The quick passage from idea to idea, the easy recourse to far-fetched, even grotesque comparisons ('Ten leagues beyond man's life', the 'man in the moon', unless the sun were post'), the interpolation of the phrase about the moon in the middle of another which itself leaps from the sun to 'new-born chins'—all this is thoroughly typical. The destructive energy of Iago, the same sense of keen intelligence at the service of the anarchic forces of passion, has descended to Antonio. That is why it is he, already the prime mover in Prospero's own banishment, who now by inciting Sebastian to a similar crime, becomes his chief antagonist in the conflict of good and evil which is the real theme of *The Tempest*.

The resemblance with Iago is carried a step further in a most interesting passage from the same dialogue. Sebastian is slow to be convinced, almost as slow—and for much the same reasons of timidity and sheer incapacity to think clearly—as Roderigo in *Othello*. Somewhere at the back of his slow mind a doubt, an obscure formulation of conscience, is slowly working its way to the light. It expresses itself finally in reply to Antonio's eager pressing of him to seize the unique occasion which has offered itself.

And how does your content  
 Tender your own good fortune?

For Antonio the occasion capriciously offered by blind fortune is everything, that and the capacity to seize it by a decisive act of the will to make one's content fit with what chance has offered. More cynically, because more convinced of the senseless nature of the fluctuations of fortune, Antonio repeats the advice given by Lady Macbeth to her husband, still more significantly—and for similar reasons to be traced ultimately to a pessimistic interpretation of the value of human actions—his advice is substantially that given by Machiavelli to his Prince. Success depends on the seizing of occasions and in practical affairs to succeed is the nearest approach to a categorical necessity. Only Machiavelli is not a cynic and his Prince is intended to have a purpose—that of saving Florence, and perhaps through Florence Italy, from the recurrent misery and degradation of foreign invasion, whereas Antonio has no aim, can

conceive, indeed, of no possible aim, beyond personal advancement

But Sebastian, slow as he is and—what is far worse—willing to be convinced does not reply directly His uncertainty finally expresses itself in an observation of whose profound meaning he is doubtless not completely aware

I remember

You did supplant your brother Prospero

Properly interpreted, this remark is something very like a warning Antonio, who is now moving him to supplant Alonso, once acted himself against Prospero Shakespeare does not, at this decisive moment in which Sebastian is choosing between good and evil, wish us to forget this fact Partly because we are to bear in mind always that it is Antonio, Prospero's brother, who is the moving spirit in the evil of this play and that the real conflict is between him and his brother, but also for another reason For what Sebastian is really trying to say is this once the accepted bond of conscience has been broken by an act of usurpation, once the moral foundations of 'degree' have been undermined both in the individual and in the relationships of society what is to prevent Antonio, should it serve his purposes, from turning upon the creation of his will? Once he has given his consent Sebastian is as likely as Alonso to be in danger As in the case of Macbeth, one crime will tend to become the stepping-stone to another, there is no logical stopping-place between the first overthrow of 'degree' and the complete abandonment of the restraints imposed by conscience upon which all 'degree' is founded

Antonio replies simply by pointing to his own success as a sufficient justification for his actions

True

And look how well my garments sit upon me,  
Much feater than before, my brother's servants  
Were then my fellows, now they are my men

This, which is substantially the argument of Iago and, still more, of Edmund in his dismissal of 'legitimacy', ends by convincing Sebastian that the action which seems to offer him most hope of profit is also justified But first he expresses his doubt a little more directly 'But for your conscience?' The cynical energy of Antonio's reply reminds us still more immediately of Iago The very word, as indicating any reality, is inconceivable to him

Ay, sir, where lies that? if it were a kibe,  
I would put me to my slipper but I feel not  
This deity in my bosom twenty consciences,  
That stand 'twixt me and Milan, candied be they,  
And melt ere they molest

The opening image, with its reduction of conscience to a 'kibe', that is, to a purely physical inconvenience of the kind which alone Antonio can conceive, is pure Iago So is the sneering reference

to 'deity', a word which can mean nothing to him but a sentimental superstition intervening between a man and the furthering of those selfish ends in the attainment of which alone he feels his manhood. The sense of sentimental unreality is driven home by the references common in Shakespeare and everywhere expressive of loathing, to 'candied' and melt, the stomach of the strong, practical man of action revolts against these finicky attempts to restrict his progress. The speech continues, still reflecting the vivacity and liveliness of the speaker in its rhythm and expression.

Here lies your brother,  
No better than the earth he lies upon,  
If he were that which now he's like (that's dead)  
Whom I, with this obedient steel, three inches of it  
Can lay to bed for ever, whiles you, doing thus  
To the perpetual wink for aye might put  
This ancient morsel, this Sir Prudence, who  
Should not upbraid our course For all the rest,  
They'll take suggestion as a cat laps milk,  
They'll tell the clock to any business that  
We say befits the hour

No one can deny Antonio's brilliance as a speaker. His words reflect the intense destructive energy of the man, energy to which his intelligence is bound in faithful service. They have vigour enough, and more, to move the sluggish Sebastian to his purposes. Behind them lies a deep-seated pessimism, the conviction that a dead man is no better than the earth he lies upon and that only three inches of steel, 'obedient' to a will firmly determined to carry out its own selfish purposes, lie between his victim and utter extinction. If this is so, if there be no moral sanction governing our acts and if conscience be a mere 'kibe', or an inconvenient 'deity' which a moment's reasoning can put securely to sleep, then the murder of a man who stands between him and power is the most natural thing in the world, so natural that he can discuss that man's death in terms of putting him 'to bed for ever'. As for Gonzalo and those who, like him, still feel conscience as a living thing, they are brushed aside in the contemptuous 'ancient morsel', 'Sir Prudence', and in the brilliant, scornful comparison implied in 'They'll take suggestion as a cat laps milk'. The whole thing given the will, the determination to act in freedom from all scruple is simplicity itself.

Sebastian has nothing positive to oppose to this conviction of anarchy. He yields at once, and as he yields Shakespeare is careful to remind us once more of Antonio's other crime.

Thy case, dear friend,  
Shall be my precedent, as thou gotst Milan,  
I'll come by Naples. Draw thy sword, one stroke  
Shall free thee from the tribute which thou payest,  
And I the king shall love thee

The last part of the speech shows how fully Sebastian has succumbed to the spirit of Antonio 'One stroke', one simple decisive action is sufficient to cut through all the obstacles which antiquated ties of conscience and custom put in the way of the plotters, and in a world in which only the blow really counts, the decisive stroke backed by the will resolved to achieve its personally dictated ends, everything is simple. The blow when struck, moreover, is to free Antonio from tribute', from the material pledge of that natural allegiance on which all order really depends. It is all simple, so simple that it leads fatally to destruction—a destruction logically implicit in the act itself even before it is condemned by Prospero and judged by the permanent standards of the moral law which upholds him and which he, in his limited sphere, in turn upholds.

## III

In his presentation, during the same scene, of the social situation created on the island mainly by Prospero's devisings, Shakespeare carries still a step further his analysis of the nature and development of evil. He relates it, in fact, to a personal interpretation of the doctrine of the original innocence of man. This he does by putting into the mouth of Gonzalo an example, apparently drawn from Montaigne, of those nostalgic speculations about primeval simplicity which seem to have so greatly attracted the sophisticated court societies of the sixteenth century and to which the discovery of the New World had given a fresh meaning. In landing upon the island Alonso and his followers are placed in the possession of virgin soil. Here, according to Gonzalo, is their opportunity to organize a community untainted by competition or the shadow of ambition—an arcadian anarchy founded upon the permission given to each of its members to follow his own instincts. His remarks with the accompanying comments of Antonio and Sebastian, are full of interest.

*Gonzalo* Had I plantation of this isle, my lord,—

*Antonio* He'd sow it with nettle-seed

*Sebastian* Or docks or mallows

*Gonzalo* And were the king on't, what would I do'

*Sebastian* 'Scape being drunk for want of wine

*Gonzalo* I' the commonwealth I would by contraries  
Execute all things, for no kind of traffic  
Would I admit, no name of magistrate,  
Letters should not be known, riches, poverty,  
And use of service, none  
No occupation, all men idle, all,  
And women, too, but innocent and pure,  
No sovereignty,—

*Sebastian* Yet he would be king on't  
*Antonio* The latter end of his commonwealth forgets the  
beginning

The dispassionate, academic catalogue in which Gonzalo expresses himself reflects perfectly the unreality of the whole dream. The nostalgia for an arcadian simplicity which produced, among other things, the pastoral convention of the sixteenth century was an international development which a writer like Cervantes in *Don Quixote's* discourse on the Golden Age,<sup>3</sup> could raise to genuine intensity of feeling. No doubt it was a half-realized reaction against the sense of anarchy and moral pessimism which dominated so much of the court life of the time. Yet it is not Shakespeare's purpose here to express any nostalgia of this kind, but rather to use its inherent weakness as a foil to bring out certain conceptions of his own. The sources of human misery are indeed to be excluded, according to Gonzalo from the commonwealth but with them, as soon appears every distinctive quality of human life. Gonzalo's next words show that the state of innocence is also necessarily the state of inexperience.

All things in common nature should produce  
*Without sweat or endeavour*, treason felony,  
Sword, pike, knife, gun, or need of any engine  
Would I not have, but nature should bring forth  
Of its own kind, all foison, all abundance,  
To feed my innocent people

All this is to come about, according to Gonzalo's ideal, 'without sweat or endeavour', but also without the salutary experience of effort from which is born often slowly and painfully, the capacity to distinguish between good and evil which is the foundation of the whole moral life. For knowledge of good implies awareness of the evil from which it is distinguished, and this knowledge is acquired through a process difficult but redeeming, of procreation and maturity. The inadequacy of Gonzalo's simplicity, already sufficiently indicated in his own words, is revealed once more by the comments of Antonio and Sebastian.

*Sebastian* No marrying 'mong his subjects?  
*Antonio* None, man, all idle, whores and knaves

Gonzalo's commonwealth is founded upon an amorality which leaves place for 'nettle-seed', 'docks' and 'mallows' to take possession of the ground. The fact that men like Antonio and Sebastian exist proves that some kind of cultivation of the human terrain is necessary. This cultivation, as they point out, is admitted by Gonzalo himself when he imagines that he is king of the island, for the 'latter', the anarchic end of his commonwealth had forgotten that its beginning was founded upon kingship,

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<sup>3</sup>*Don Quixote*, Part I, chapter xi

accepted authority, 'degree' The substance of the passage is evidently paralleled in the conception which underlies the treatment of the pastoral scene in *The Winter's Tale* The state of nature is one which man must, in the nature of things, outgrow as his experience develops the crucial problem is whether this development will be towards good, in the acceptance of some defined moral standard (sanctioned, in this play, by the Destiny which upholds Prospero) or towards the anarchy of unlimited personal desires

At this point it is time to consider Caliban For Caliban, half man and half beast, represents the real state of nature far more truly than any of Gonzalo's courtly theorizings and in his relations with Prospero the connection between 'nature and the moral, civilized state is far more profoundly considered The poetic strain which, it has been generally agreed Caliban possesses, represents in him the positive aspect of the real state of nature Unlike the men with whom he comes into contact and who corrupt him, Caliban has the advantage of being in touch with natural simplicity His poetry turns invariably upon his knowledge of and appreciation for the natural forces of the island When Trinculo and Stephano meet him he offers, in language that contrasts vividly and surely of set intention with their coarseness, to show them 'the best springs' and 'berries', where the jay's nest is to be found, and how 'to snare the nimble marmoset' All this is attractive, so attractive that we are sometimes apt to find Prospero's harshness to him—'Thou poisonous slave, got by the devil himself' (I, 11)—excessive and unsympathetic Yet, if we consider further, the harshness is a necessary part of Shakespeare's purpose For Caliban, with his natural simplicity, is indissolubly bound to Prospero Prospero himself admits this to Miranda when he tells her

We cannot miss him, he does make our fire,  
Fetch in our wood, and serves in offices  
That profit us (I, 11)

The kind of life that Prospero has established on his island assumes, in short, the existence of Caliban as a necessary condition

Besides being necessary, moreover, Caliban is in part Prospero's creation Finding him already on the island and needing him, Prospero tried from the first to incorporate him into the new civilized order of moral realities, and Caliban himself in his reply at once admits this and turns it into a most formidable indictment of the whole civilizing process which began by flattering him and finally turned into his tyrant

When thou camest first,  
Thou strok'st me, and made much of me, wouldst give me  
Water with berries in it, and teach me how  
To name the bigger light, and how the less,  
That burn by day and night, and then I lov'd thee,  
And show'd thee all the qualities o' the isle,  
The fresh springs, brine-pits, barren place and fertile

Curs'd be I that did so! All the charms  
Of Sycorax, toads, beetles, bats, light on you!  
For I am all the subjects that you have,  
Which first was mine own king

From this we may learn more than one thing fundamental to the play. In the first place, the poetry which we admire in Caliban was given to him, at least in part, by Prospero, the instinctive appreciation was, if we like his own a natural endowment, but the gift of expression, essentially a social, a civilizing gift, came to him from Prospero. The natural and the civilized orders are, in other words inextricably mixed, and the problem with which Prospero is wrestling is simply that the natural, animal man is a complete anarchist. For the burden of Caliban's grievance is that Prospero has deprived him of his freedom, subjected his physical individuality to the pre-eminence of spiritual rule.

For I am all the subjects that you have,  
Which first was my own king,

and he goes on to accuse Prospero of keeping him in prison who had originally been master of the whole island. Prospero's answer once more shows the problem in all its complexity.

I have used thee,  
Filth as thou art, with human care, and lodg'd thee  
In mine own cell, till thou didst seek to violate  
The honour of my child

Caliban, who is necessary to Prospero, whose animal instincts are a true part of human nature, is yet, by virtue of his very character, recalcitrant to all restraint to every claim of moral discipline. Regarding himself as lawful owner of the island he echoes, in his own way, Antonio by the assertion of his right to enjoy everything that appeals to his passions as desirable, so that when Prospero gave him liberty and the use of his own cell, he used his liberty to attack his master's dearest possession in the person of his daughter.

The conflict of flesh and spirit, which is simply that between civilized values and the state of nature, is not at this point in the play within sight of resolution. The animal instincts which man inherits from nature can neither be ignored, for they are a necessary part of his being, nor integrated in the new spiritual order, and so they lie in bondage to the master who came to give them spiritual significance but who has in fact destroyed their original spontaneity.

*Prospero*

Abhorred slave,  
Which any print of goodness will not take,  
Being capable of all ill I pitied thee,  
Took pains to make thee speak, taught thee each  
hour  
One thing or other when thou didst not, savage,  
Know thine own meaning, but would gabble, like



A thing most brutish, I endow'd thy purposes  
 With words that make them known But thy vile  
     race,  
 Though thou didst learn had that in't which  
     good natures  
 Could not abide to be with therefore wast thou  
 Deservedly confined into this rock, who had'st  
 Deserved more than a prison  
*Caliban* You taught me language and my profit on't  
 Is I know how to curse

Prospero's denunciation and Caliban's reply are each, from their own point of view, unanswerable How to harmonize these points of view, how to fit the claims of animal instinct harmoniously into those of reasonable spirituality, is something that Prospero himself does not yet appear to see, not until the events precipitated on the island by the advent of strangers have taken their course and Ariel has spoken with the voice of judgment, is there any sign of clarification

The deficiencies of Caliban's natural anarchism, already suggested by Prospero are further brought out by his meeting with Stephano and Trinculo Once more the theme is one which was being worked out in the New World before the eyes of Shakespeare's contemporaries The arrival on the island of men from the outer world of 'civilization' is fatal to the natural creature, who escapes from the bondage of Prospero only to fall into that, infinitely more degrading, of the basest camp-followers of a supposedly civilized society Caliban is, of course, greatly superior to Stephano and Trinculo The poetry of his simplicity is enough to ensure that, but, divorced as he is from spiritual judgment and seeking only the anarchic freedom of his desires, he falls into a slavery which the superiority of the expression, being so incongruous, only serves to make more grotesque Seduced by the 'celestial liquor' which Stephano gives him, he offers to serve him as a god

I prithee be my god  
 That's a brave god and bears celestial liquors,  
 I'll kneel to him  
 I'll kiss thy foot and swear myself thy subject (II, 1)

His aim in doing so is above all to free himself from service—'I'll bear no more stinks, but follow thee'—but, in following the freedom thus offered him by his fallacious instincts he goes out drunk, crying 'Freedom, hey-day!', indeed, but reduced in reality to a slavery far more degrading than any to which he had been subjected before

The depth of his degradation, and that of his new masters, is fully brought out when they next appear Completely enslaved as he now is in his ignorance to the worthless Stephano, Caliban's savagery begins to inspire the drunken sailors to plot against Prospero, animality takes charge of human nature and debases it

to new levels of evil. For Caliban ridiculous though he has become in his worship of Stephano and Trinculo is far more dangerous than the other two. In the brutal savagery of his proposals something breaks out which has been held in check so far by the domination of Prospero. That something finds expression in the unrestrained physical cruelty of the speeches in which he outlines his plot against his former master. Prospero is to be brained in his sleep, to have his skull battered in with a log, to be 'paunched' with a stake, to have his throat cut, most brutally of all perhaps—

I'll yield thee him asleep  
Where thou mayst knock a nail into his head (III ii)

But first and above all, he must be deprived of his books

Remember  
First to possess his books for without them  
He is but a sot as I am, nor hath not  
One spirit to command they all do hate him  
As rootedly as I

In ascribing his own hatred to the other spirits Caliban is speaking falsely, measuring spiritual things in terms of his own anarchic bestiality, but his emphasis on the books, and on his own comparative sottishness without them, shows that he realizes and fears the sources of Prospero's power. His realization accounts for the vehemence of his proposals. Against the spiritual power of Prospero his own instincts arise in physically inspired revulsion. The true motive of his craving for liberty is expressed more directly in the same and other speeches

that most deeply to consider is  
The beauty of his daughter  
She will become thy bed, I warrant,  
And bring thee forth brave brood

The use of the word 'brood' to describe the progeny of this imagined union brings out well the animal spirit in which it is conceived, the revolt of passion against reason, of 'blood' against moral control which it implies. And this is the spirit which leads Caliban to 'lick the boots' of the coarsest, lowest kind of human being. That he is still superior to Stephano and Trinculo is shown by the survival of his poetic instincts ('Be not afeared, the isle is full of noises'), but his subjection is in essence complete and springs inevitably from his conception of liberty. We are reminded of Shakespeare's treatment of the problem of liberty in *Measure for Measure*. In that play Claudio, as he is being taken to prison, freely confesses that the cause of his present condition is 'liberty, too much liberty'.<sup>4</sup> Freedom from restraint, unchecked by adherence to any spiritual loyalty freely accepted, can lead man through his instincts only to moral dissolution and chaos. This in turn is the lowest form

<sup>4</sup>*Measure for Measure*, I, 11

of slavery Caliban is bound by his nature to service, but his service, which might have been that offered him by Prospero when he first took him into his cell and tried to teach him the civilized graces turns to a mixture of the lowest animal brutality and sheer folly

## IV

At this point the development of the situation on the island is substantially complete. The two plots—that against Alonso and that against Prospero—are fully launched and the original seclusion of the island has been most effectively shattered by the entry of human passion and sin. Yet Prospero, in spite of all, has the threads in his hands and it is precisely at this moment that he chooses to indicate the moral resolution. Ariel's great speech addressed to Alonso and his companions before he deprives them of the enchanted banquet that has just been set before them is, in fact, nothing less than the keystone upon which the structure of the whole play rests.

You are three men of sin whom Destiny  
That hath to instrument this lower world  
And what is in't, the never-surfeited sea  
Hath caus'd to belch up you, and on this island,  
Where man doth not inhabit you 'mongst men  
Being most unfit to live

But remember

(For that's my business to you) that you three  
From Milan did supplant good Prospero  
Expos'd unto the sea (which hath requit it)  
Him and his innocent child for which foul deed,  
The powers delaying, not forgetting, have  
Incens'd the seas and shores, yea all the creatures,  
Against your peace Thee of thy son Alonso  
They have bereft, and do pronounce by me  
Lingering perdition (worse than any death  
Can be at once) shall step by step attend  
You and your ways, whose wraths to guard you from,  
Which here in this most desolate isle, else falls  
Upon your heads is nothing but heart's sorrow  
And a clear life ensuing (III iii)

Here at last—rather even than in any speech of Prospero's—is an explicit statement of what *The Tempest* is about. Shakespeare is careful to introduce the speech with a degree of pageantry and circumstance that make it stand out with great dramatic force against the general action. Ariel—generally the 'gentle Ariel' of Prospero's preference—is brought on to the stage in the form of a harpy to the accompaniment of thunder and lightning. He causes the banquet to vanish by a motion of his wings and then left face to face with those he has come to judge, he speaks. His words have a weighted simplicity that underlines their unique character.

and seriousness. The effect is obtained by means so direct that they barely call for analysis. Partly by the persistent use of heavy vocalic stresses, partly by the emphatic use of pauses in the middle and at the end of lines, partly by the significant insertion of parenthetical pauses into long unfolding sentences, the speech attains a measured magnificence unsurpassed in its kind, anywhere in Shakespeare. Unsurpassed because, perhaps for the first time in his work, the voice of Destiny delivers itself directly in judgment. 'I and my fellows', says Ariel, are ministers of Fate. As such he speaks and, by so speaking, he brings out the full meaning of the play.

The most important feature of the speech, indeed, is its affirmation of Destiny. This affirmation is in its unequivocal expression, unique in Shakespeare's work. Much of the symbolism of the later plays—the use, for example, of the associations of 'grace' in relation to fertility—has religious implications, but nowhere, not even in *The Winter's Tale* with its still rather misty references to 'the gods' is Destiny so personally conceived or conceded such absolute power in the working out of human affairs. Destiny, according to Ariel, hath to instrument the lower world. Delaying, not forgetting, it watches over the whole story and brings the characters concerned in it, with infallible foreknowledge to the conclusions willed by absolute justice. All this, however it may have been foreshadowed in earlier works, is substantially new, but at the same time inevitable. For all Shakespeare's symbolism, with the harmonizing purpose which underlies it, moves towards the presentation of the problems moral and artistic, involved in this final acceptance of the personal reality of Destiny. Without that acceptance the intuition of 'grace' is only an insubstantial dream, a tenuous harmony woven out of elements that have no more validity than that of a personal mood, with it, possibly the author lays himself open to the charge of going beyond his experience, of introducing an element of discontinuity in what had been so far the harmonious pattern of his work. Whatever we may conclude in this respect, we should do well to begin by recognizing that the problem, and the effort to resolve it, were implicit in the whole Shakespearean experience. Needless to say it was not part of the artist's purpose to substantiate this objective conception of Destiny by argument, but it was his aim, inevitable and necessary, to place it in the centre of his play, to allow the symbolic web of experiences to form around it and to see if it would, in the last analysis, fit.

In the detailed working out of this conception he returns to familiar ground. The symbolic use of storm and its association with new-born forces of harmony is one common to all Shakespeare's last plays. Marina in *Pericles* loses her mother and is herself apparently lost in a storm at sea, but the storm itself throws her up on a friendly shore and eventually she is restored to her father's arms. In *The Winter's Tale*, when Perdita is exposed to the elements by her father's unreasoning folly, she is found by the shepherds and her finding, while the storm is still raging and the

younger Clown sees a ship struggling in vain to preserve itself against the elements, is really the first step in reconciliation—thou mettest with things dying I with things new-born<sup>5</sup> So it is in *The Tempest* Only here 'the never-surfeited seas are explicitly controlled by a Destiny which has 'incensed' them against the 'foul deed' of those who plotted against Prospero and made them, in their anger, the instruments of an inexorable justice The sea, to which Prospero and Miranda were exposed by human selfishness, has—through Prospero's own action—brought the criminals to judgment

The key-note of the whole play which Ariel comes to emphasize, is indeed *judgment* Only when the good and evil in human nature have been understood and separated will the final reconciliation and restoration of harmony take place This moral judgment is based in *The Tempest* upon an objective sanction which needs to be proved in operation For this purpose—and really for this purpose alone—the various actors in the forgotten story of Naples and Milan have been brought together through the providential action of the storm upon 'this most desolate isle, 'where man doth not inhabit' Desolate surely because the work of purgation which is about to be accomplished needs to be accompanied by abstinence and a certain asceticism and desolate too because it is not a place upon which men are to live their full civilized lives—after the final reconciliation it is left by all except those whose nature debars them from playing a part in the 'brave new world' of beings at once spiritualized and social to which they are being offered entry—but on which they are to achieve moral understanding and learn to accept the judgment passed upon them In this process of education the fundamental need is for repentance Repentance is the necessary consequence, on the human side, of accepting judgment Here again the conception is not new in Shakespeare His last plays throw an increasing stress upon the Christian conception of penitence Lear is restored to his daughter after becoming aware of his own folly although the restoration, still insufficiently developed to prevail against the tragic spirit which dominates the play, is only temporary and illusory, Leontes, after sixteen years of penance for the follies to which his own passion has prompted him is restored to Hermione and, through the innocence of his daughter to his broken friendship with Polixenes Ariel calls for a similar repentance from Alonso and his fellows Unless their sojourn 'on this most desolate isle' has taught them their own evil and folly, unless it has shown them the necessity for 'heart's sorrow' and a 'clear life' to follow, their doom is certain For it is in the nature of unbridled passion, as Shakespeare had already presented it in the great series of tragedies from *Othello* to *Timon of Athens*, to lead its victims to self-destruction, and

<sup>5</sup>Act III, Sc iii I have tried to indicate the importance of this and other passages from *The Winter's Tale* in an essay on the play published in *Arena*, January, 1938, pp 301-314

*The Tempest*, with its insistence upon ideas of penance and amendment that can only follow from acceptance of a personal spiritual conception of Destiny, is conceived as nothing less than a counterpoise to this tragic process of ruin

## V

The way is now clear for a full understanding of the latter part of *The Tempest*. After the decisive intervention of Ariel Prospero's own words reflect an increase of confidence and power which itself indicates that the play is passing into a new stage

my high charms work,  
And these my enemies are all knit up  
In their distraction, *they are in my power* (III, 1v)

This power is of course, magic symbolical in quality and cannot therefore be realistically judged. Its justification, the proof that it is more than an abstract imposition upon what has been so far a very close analysis of the roots and consequences of selfishness will be *poetic* will depend upon Shakespeare's success in making the symbolic framework live through the vitality conveyed in his web of imagery

The process of drawing the symbolic threads to their appointed conclusion has several stages. The first is to consummate the union of Miranda and Ferdinand. Upon the union of the children in *The Tempest* as in *The Winter's Tale*, the reconciliation of the parents and of all the characters depends. Prospero has chosen to test their constancy severely, but we have already found (III, 1) that they have met the test successfully. Suffering has only cemented through mutual compassion, their devotion to one another, for, as Ferdinand himself puts it—

some kinds of baseness  
Are nobly undergone, and most poor matters  
Point to rich ends (III, 1)

Here again if we are not to be disappointed, it is necessary to accustom ourselves to the symbolic climate which pervades the play. The suffering of the two lovers, considered from a purely realistic point of view, may appear abstract and even perfunctory, but once we place the emphasis where it should be, upon the poetic content of the drama to which all Shakespeare's development points, it has its sufficient justification. The poet's use of words, relating this apparent commonplace to elements most essential to the verbal texture of *The Tempest* brings this home to us. 'Nobly' and 'rich' become clearly associated with the vision of a redeemed, ennobled humanity and with the new vitality that springs from the harmonizing of the passions. Once more we are reminded of earlier plays. Antony and Cleopatra were 'noble' in the love which constituted their triumph, even in the face of defeat, over the political world dominated by Octavius, and riches, in the hands of Duncan, serve

to manifest the overflowing generosity of 'grace' The love of Miranda and Ferdinand once it has fully unfolded under the guidance of Prospero will move upon similar levels

The effect of imagery of this kind is necessarily cumulative Its first expressions need to be appreciated in conscious retrospect When Miranda herself appears to Ferdinand as he is bearing his logs and speaks to him in the unsuspected presence of Prospero, the same impression of unique nobility begins, almost line by line, to penetrate the verse as we read we feel indeed the truth of Ferdinand's remark that 'The mistress which I serve quickens what's dead' Their emotion, as it expands, brings both the lovers to a new and intenser life Miranda becomes 'precious creature' 'the top of admiration', 'perfect', 'peerless' whilst, as to Ferdinand, Miranda says all when she says

I would not wish  
Any companion in the world but you,  
Nor can imagination form a shape,  
Besides yourself to like of

In lines like this the exaltation of love first undertaken against a political background in *Antony and Cleopatra*, and developed in *The Winter's Tale* reaches its full symbolic consummation Moved by such love for one another Ferdinand and Miranda are ready for Prospero's blessing upon their union He gives it still invisible, in lines pregnant with fertility and 'grace' which are most splendidly interwoven with those of the lovers

<i>Ferdinand</i>	I, Beyond all limit of what else is the world Do love, prize, honour you
<i>Miranda</i>	I am a fool To weep at what I am glad of
<i>Prospero</i>	Fair encounter Of two most rare affections! Heavens rain grace On that which breeds between them
<i>Ferdinand</i>	Wherefore weep you?
<i>Miranda</i>	At mine unworthiness, that dare not offer What I desire to give, and much less take What I shall die to want But this is trifling, And all the more it seeks to hide itself The bigger bulk it shows

Once again the parallels with other Shakespearean utterances are numerous and significant All the symbolic imagery of the last plays is here, the 'grace which blesses union and expresses itself in fertility and a grief which is itself life-giving' Miranda's love opens to expression like the child growing in the mother's womb Her grief becomes something rich and infinitely precious, itself of redeeming quality, and Prospero, who has given Ferdinand 'a third' of his own life lays by his gift the foundations of reconciliation in the eyes of Destiny

here, afore heaven,  
I ratify this my rich gift (IV 1)

The rather perfunctory masque commonplace in spite of its involved stressing of the images of fertility and love, is scarcely necessary after the brief scenes which it is intended to ratify. We may pass over it to the other issues which await Prospero.

For in spite of these notes of reconciliation and redeeming grief the presence of passion still has to make itself felt. As in the pastoral scene of *The Winter's Tale* the poetry of love is in a sense premature, needs to be confirmed by a wider experience, expanded into something more inclusive of the normal order of human experience. Just as Perdita and Florizel are torn apart by the entry of the aged and angry Polixenes, so is the idyll of Ferdinand and Miranda always present in Prospero's mind side by side with his knowledge of the plot against his life. Prospero, indeed, never forgets the sombre background of these idyllic scenes. His pre-occupation with it has been present from the first in a strange irritability which contrasts strongly at times with his prevailing serenity, and even as he is bringing Ferdinand and Miranda finally together, it comes out in a warning which at first strikes us as almost cryptically out of place.

Look thou be true do not give dalliance  
Too much the rein the strongest oaths are straw  
To the fire 1 the blood, be more abstemious- (IV, 1)

The fact is that Prospero has good reason to remember the evil effects of passion. The forces of evil are still at work on the island. He has brought them there himself for the final and decisive conflict. As we already know from Ariel's speech he is called upon to judge as well as to reconcile, and as soon as the marriage ceremony is over his other cares press back on his mind.

I had forgot the foul conspiracy  
Of the beast Caliban and his confederates

The thought, as Ferdinand observes, moves Prospero deeply and it is in the shadow of it that he makes his reflections on the insubstantiality of human affairs. The spirit in which it is spoken is manifest in the concluding lines which, although relatively unfamiliar, are perhaps the key to the type of feeling which produced the whole.

Sir, I am vexed,  
Bear with my weakness, my old brain is troubled,  
Be not disturbed with my infirmity,  
If you be pleas'd, retire into my cell,  
And there repose, a turn or two I'll walk,  
To still my beating mind

It is a mood very akin to pessimism that the thought of Caliban's plot rouses in Prospero. We feel him definitely steeling himself to meet it, to overcome evil in accordance with the moral conception of which he is the instrument. There is a deep sense of tension and



impending conflict, not always given their true value in defining the total impression made by the play, in his greeting to Ariel 'We must prepare to meet with Caliban' With Caliban, be it noted, rather than with his fellow conspirators They, when the time comes, will be easily led from their purposes by the prospect of trumpery spoils Caliban is more formidable, because his evil is rooted in an animal nature which no amount of civilized attention can change He is in fact, an original inhabitant of the isle as Prospero has known it and his is the irreducible element of bestiality in unredeemed human nature

A devil, a born devil, on whose nature  
Nurture can never stick on whom my pains  
Humanely taken, all, all lost quite lost  
And as with age his body uglier grows,  
So his mind cankers

The lines are pregnant with the rotting, cankering effect of evil on man's being driven home by the contrast between nature' and nurture, between inherent savagery and the civilizing sense implied in 'humanely' All Prospero's efforts to regenerate Caliban have failed, and when he actually comes in, driven by Ariel with his fellow conspirators he alone shows himself obdurate in his purposes While his companions are carried away by the hope of loot he remains firm in his intention to murder Prospero 'Let it alone, thou fool, 't is but trash' (IV, 1) Stephano and Trinculo have corrupted him indeed in so far as they have added to his original nature a ridiculous defecation of the vices of civilization symbolized in the figure of the bottle-bearing god, but the evil was in him before their arrival, since he was—after all—the heir of Sycorax against whom Prospero had struggled to purify the island The purpose of Caliban as we have seen is to achieve liberty, to destroy civilized restraints and live a life of anarchic, passion-directed freedom the existence of this purpose is not affected, though the possibility of attaining it is by his willingness to become in the very hour of his liberation from Prospero the servant of Stephano

Do that good mischief which may make this island  
Thine own for ever, and I, thy Caliban,  
For aye thy foot-licker

Yet this speech amounts to an admission that the liberty desired by Caliban is unattainable, that his freedom from Prospero's direction can only be bought at the price of slavery to something infinitely lower and more degrading, and in fact, with the help of Ariel, they are all three—Caliban, Stephano and Trinculo—easily defeated together

With their defeat the time has come for the final resolution Ferdinand and Miranda can now be united on an island purged by Prospero of the shadow of evil, and their union will serve at last to bring their divided parents once more together The last scene of the play is one of those conclusions, so common in Shake-

spare, in which the various strands of the play are brought together and its characters marshalled for the final grouping. The type, of course, is common in the earlier comedies and there are signs of a development from it—even faintly symbolic—in the *denouement* of *Measure for Measure* but it is only in the last plays that this technique appears fully adapted to the symbolic themes of reconciliation and regeneration. The scene opens with an announcement by Prospero that the moment of final resolution has come

Now, does my project gather to a head,  
My charms crack not, my spirits obey, and time  
Goes upright with his carriage (V, 1).

and Ariel confirms that this is 'the sixth hour, at which You said our work should cease

Having thus anticipated the approaching resolution Ariel goes on to paint his master a picture of the state in which he has left Alonso and his companions, a state in which he stresses the deep penitence of those of them who are capable of regeneration, and Prospero responds to this picture of repentance in the manner typical of the last plays—that is by forgiveness

Though with their high wrongs I am stung to the quick  
Yet with my nobler reason 'gainst my fury  
Do I take part the rarer action is  
In virtue than in vengeance, they being penitent,  
The sole drift of my purpose doth extend  
Not a frown further (V, 1)

The wording of the speech is worth pausing over. The victory of compassion over retribution is now a victory of the 'nobler reason against passionate fury. Nowhere is the part played by the Christian ethic in shaping this play more clearly stated. Reason and nobility are closely associated through all Shakespeare's tragic period. For Hamlet it is the use of reason that distinguishes man from the beast, makes him 'the paragon of animals', and it is just because reason does not lead him to realize this ideal of nobility in action that he is plunged into internal tragedy. Now, in *The Tempest*, the nobility of reason is finally asserted in an act of compassion which transcends the exercise of reasonable justice itself. In Ariel's great speech—as we have already seen, the necessity of retribution is stated. Now, once it has been affirmed and the actual punishment meted out, it gives way to the higher, still more reasonable (because nobler) virtue of compassion, and the bond between them, the thing which makes the transition possible, is simply the reasoned admission of guilt on the part of those whom Destiny has punished. To their reason, which has at last ennobled itself by acceptance, only a similar nobility in forgiveness can fitly respond. When it does so, in the words of Prospero, the pattern of the play is to all intents and purposes complete.

The moment of resolution is now at hand. Alonso and the group of courtiers who accompany him are brought in, spell-

bound, and Prospero's first action is to restore them to their full reason. The instrument of restoration in accordance with the prevailing symbolism of the play, is music which imposes harmony upon elements otherwise discordant. To its notes they wake, recover their being, or—more accurately—are transformed into a new life—

The charm dissolves apace  
 And as the morning steals upon the night,  
 Melting the darkness, so their rising senses  
 Begin to chase the ignorant fumes that mantle  
 Their clearer reason  
                   Their understanding  
 Begins to swell, and the approaching tide  
 Will shortly fill the reasonable shore  
 Which now lies foul and muddy

Once more the symbolic purpose is clear enough. The restoration to normality of Alonso and his followers is at the same time a triumph of the dawning reason over the night of passion-inspired sensuality. The 'rising senses' are purified of the ignorant fumes that have hitherto impeded them and become the true instruments of the 'clearer reason'. Not, of course, that the senses are bad in themselves. No one who has read *Antony and Cleopatra*, written not so long before *The Tempest*, can imagine that Shakespeare meant such a thing. It is not the senses in themselves but the disharmony with reason—control, 'degree that produces tragedy, and Prospero's whole activity has been an effort to restore the balance, to see reason and the senses working in a harmonious, fruitful co-operation, fertile in its consequences and crowned by 'grace'. This is the moment of his triumph. The 'approaching tide' of life fills 'the reasonable shore' and heralds the arrival of a new, more gracious humanity.

Yet even in the moment of triumph Prospero remembers the claims of judgment. Not all the courtiers before him can be expected to move on the same moral plane. Gonzalo, expressly described in religious terms as 'holy' and 'honourable', is of course capable of entering into the new world of 'grace', so is Alonso purified by repentance of his former sinfulness. These two Prospero embraces with an overflowing richness of affection that has, ever since Duncan, been associated in Shakespeare with the poetry of 'grace'

I embrace thy body  
 Let me embrace thine age, whose honour cannot  
 Be measur'd or confin'd

But this fulness of emotion, expressing itself in the passionate directness of 'I embrace *thy body*' and in the unlimited exaltation of its object, is an answer to penitence, to Alonso's concrete desire to resign his dukedom to its proper owner. In Antonio and Sebastian there is no such repentance, and therefore no such reconciliation. When Prospero rebukes them in an aside their only

comment is 'The devil speaks in him', to which he replies, even in the moment of forgiveness with an intensity of denunciation that brings home to us the continued existence of evil at this point

For you most wicked sir, whom to call brother  
 Would even infect my mouth I do forgive  
 Thy rankest fault—all of them and require  
 My dukedom of thee which perforce, I know,  
 Thou must restore

Justice, based on the moral condemnation which is felt so strongly behind 'infect' and 'rankest' and in the bitter afterthought 'all of them', needs to be satisfied as well as love, even in the culminating moment of happiness the reality of sin is alive to the memory. Forgiveness and condemnation are fused into a single gesture, and Antonio and Sebastian are by their own choice excluded from the new world which their presence must in itself destroy.

The time has now come to complete the reconciliation. As we have said already the children are to be responsible for bringing the fathers together. Their loss indeed has been an essential part of the process willed by Destiny. Alonso is still suffering for the loss which he believes final, of his son suffering so much that he calls his state irreparable and past the cure of patience. But Prospero too has lost his daughter, in the sense that he has allowed even inspired her to love the son of his former enemy, and in their common loss is the matter for reconciliation. The desire for it now comes most opportunely into Alonso's mind. He wishes that the two children were alive as 'king and queen' in Naples, and that he himself, still not forgetful of his past errors, 'were muddied in that oozy bed' where his son lies. With this gesture Prospero is satisfied. He discovers Ferdinand and Miranda at their game of chess and the stage is set for the final reconciliation in the freshly-dawned light of grace. Miranda's words to Ferdinand—

Yes, for a score of kingdoms you should wrangle,  
 And I would call it fair play—

remind us, in the implied comparison between the value of love and that of earthly kingdoms of the first appearance of Antony and Cleopatra in the earlier tragedy very different characters but the same boundless emotion of transfiguring love.

The lines which follow are completely typical of Shakespeare's latest manner. Upon their poetic quality depends the success of the symbolic purpose. For, realistically considered, the whole action of these last scenes—Alonso's repentance, Prospero's 'loss' of his daughter to counterbalance the supposed loss of Ferdinand—is thin and inadequate. But the details of the plot at this stage of *The Tempest* have no more importance than that which attaches to them as the necessary thread of incident upon which is based the whole choreography of a great *ballet*, and indeed the whole of the last scene of the play is really conceived as a formal *ballet* in which words replace visual images as the main artistic medium. This was

the dramatic conception towards which Shakespeare was moving in his last plays and which he achieves most fully in the crucial passage of the concluding episode of *The Tempest*. It opens with a recognition on the part of Ferdinand of the essential part played throughout this story by the sea as the minister of Destiny

Though the seas threaten, they are merciful,  
I have curs'd them without cause

The tragedy and suffering which have been caused by human sinfulness have turned in other words, into the instruments of reconciliation to a life fuller and richer than theirs. The entry into this life is symbolized, as usual, by the mutual act of blessing and forgiveness by which fathers and children are reconciled. Once more the situation, which recalls that of Cordelia and the restored Lear or that of the final scenes of *The Winter's Tale*, has about it more than a touch of what we should now call *ballet* technique, to appreciate the effect fully we need to see the characters significantly grouped for the religious act of benediction. Ferdinand kneels for blessing and is joined to Miranda. In their words to one another the vision of a reconciled, redeemed humanity is at last given clear poetic expression

*Alonso* Now all the blessings  
Of a glad father compass thee about!

*Miranda* O wonder!  
How many goodly creatures are there here!  
How beauteous mankind is! O, brave new world  
That has such people in't!

The vision of a new humanity, already glimpsed by Miranda in her innocent compassion when she first saw Ferdinand and now deepened by the trials to which Prospero has put her, here reaches its full expression and in the lines which follow immediately after Ferdinand recognizes both that this bride has been given him by 'immortal Providence' and that he has received from Prospero nothing less than a second life. In this second life his fellows—those of them who have shown a proper disposition—naturally participate. As the children are finally joined the two fathers are also brought together, Alonso craving pardon and Prospero granting forgiveness, both with the blessing of the divine grace

*Alonso* O, how oddly will it sound that I  
Must ask my child forgiveness!

*Prospero* There, sir, stop,  
Let not us burthen our remembrance with  
A heaviness that's gone

*Gonzalo* I have inly wept,  
Or should have spoke ere this. Look down, you  
gods,  
And on this couple drop a blessed crown!  
For it is you that have chalked forth the way  
Which brought us hither

In the light of earlier plays this is not difficult to interpret. Alonso like Lear, like Leontes has come through penitence to realize his errors and to ask his one child forgiveness, and Prospero replies that the time has come to cast off the burthen of past memories and to look forward to a harmony that long and often bitter experience has gained. And apart from them both the faithful Gonzalo is given for a moment a dignity that he has not so far reached in the play, a dignity that makes him at this stage—rather even than Prospero—the mouthpiece of Destiny. In his words the gods are invoked to ‘crown the new-born vision of humanity with a symbol of royalty the gods who have unwound the whole plot and brought it at last to its harmonious conclusion. The crown that they bestow is, in effect a sign of the ‘second’ the redeemed and ‘reasonable’ life which has been given the protagonists of the play through their experiences on the island. As Gonzalo puts it a few lines further down—

In one voyage  
Did Claribel her husband find at Tunis  
And Ferdinand, her brother, found a wife  
*Where he himself was lost* Prospero his dukedom  
In a poor isle, and all of us ourselves,  
*When no man whas his own*

In the light of these lines the whole action of the play—the loss no less than the finding the separations no less than the re-unions—is clearly seen to be a closely woven texture of symbolic elements. Recognized as such it grows vastly into a significance that rounds off our understanding of the whole play. For it is at this point, if anywhere, that the pattern of *The Tempest*—and with it the whole pattern initiated in the historical plays and carried through the tragedies to these last symbolic comedies—is substantially complete.

DEREK TRAVERSI

## COMMENTS AND REVIEWS

### SHAKESPEARE AND THE MEANINGS OF ‘NATURE’

*SHAKESPEARE'S DOCTRINE OF NATURE, A Study of King Lear* by John F. Danby (Faber and Faber, 16/-)

When we look back over the Shakespeare criticism of the last twenty years we can discern certain trends to which critics and scholars of very different kinds have contributed. Perhaps the most significant change that recent criticism has brought about is that the ‘new’ Shakespeare is much less impersonal than the old. Whereas in the older view Shakespeare was the god-like creator of

a peopled world, projecting—it is true—his own spirit into the inhabitants, but remaining essentially the analyst of 'their' passions, he is now felt as much more immediately engaged in the action he puts before us. If the verse has now moved well into the centre of attention, this is because the linguistic vitality is felt as the chief clue to the urgent personal themes that not only shape the poetic-dramatic structure of each play but form the figure in the carpet of the canon as a whole. A second shift is that Shakespeare's thought has been more closely related to the thought of his age—an age that was simultaneously mediæval and modern—and its enduring quality as with all enduring thought, as seen as an intimately personal response to problems that presented themselves in a specific historical context. The contemporary reassessment of Shakespeare is part of the reassessment of his age which in turn is part of the reassessment of our own.

The occasion of these remarks is a notable book by Mr John F. Danby in which these different forms of reassessment are deliberately brought together in a single effort of understanding. The centre of attention is *King Lear*. But understanding of *King Lear* is seen to involve understanding of intellectual and emotional trends in Shakespeare's work as a whole, and behind these, of ideas and attitudes current when Shakespeare wrote. Both Mr Danby's method and his major theme are indicated when he remarks of the characters in the play that none is complex

'yet each has an unmistakable richness of significance and an emphatic vitality. The richness and vitality come from the way in which they are related, through decision, to the abruptly contoured Nature [*i.e.*, to sharply contrasted ideas of Nature] which forms the general background. The characters thus call for the same kind of treatment as the characters of Morality. They are not Morality-figures. They stand one stage nearer to actuality than the personages of allegory. The clear Morality outline is however included in the play. The unambiguous Morality statement is presented in the deliberate stance each character adopts in the clearly-marked field.

The field in question is the field in which significant choice is seen to involve an attitude to 'Nature'—including in this term both the general scheme of things and man's 'nature' and his place in the wider scheme. Stated thus baldly this is the theme of Mr Wilson Knight in his essay on 'The Lear Universe' in *The Wheel of Fire*. But whereas Mr Wilson Knight confines himself strictly to the text of the play, Mr Danby demonstrates how Shakespeare, for his special purposes, enlisted the varied meanings of 'Nature' that the age provided.

Now a primary difficulty is that strictly speaking there is no 'Elizabethan view of Nature'. Of the many uses of the term that we meet with in Elizabethan literature none is capable of precise definition of a kind that we find, say, in J. S. Mill's lucid (and thoroughly nineteenth-century) essay on 'Nature'. As Mr Danby

makes plain, when an Elizabethan uses the word it is likely that he is invoking one or more of a whole cluster of related ideas. There is the idea of the divinely ordained pattern in the universe as a whole. There is the idea of man's essential nature, not as given, but as a good to be realized. And associated with these there are ideas of reason, custom, law, co-operation and degree. Mr Danby shows how the use of 'Nature' and 'natural by, say, Hooker on the one hand and by Hobbes on the other involved a radically contrasted conception of man, reason, and society. In the seventeenth century there was an increasing tendency to regard Nature as a system of a-moral forces, man as merely a part of this system, reason as 'a calculator of the means to satisfy the appetites with which we are born', and society as an expedient for regulating the conflicting claims of its individual units. *King Lear* shows the clash of these rival meanings of Nature and of the implications that necessarily accompany these meanings in the actualities of human intercourse. The man—or the most explicit—embodiment of the newer outlook is of course Edmund, whose opening soliloquy, 'Thou Nature art my Goddess', Mr Danby rightly regards as crucial.<sup>1</sup> Edmund is the New Man, the representative of a new kind of society, and in a fascinating chapter on Edmund's ancestry Mr Danby traces the changes of Shakespeare's attitude to the New Man (who is often explicitly the Machiavel) from Richard III onwards. Over against Edmund is Cordelia, and to understand Cordelia we need to invoke not individual psychology but the traditional view of Nature, of natural rights, duties, and relationships. Finally, in a chapter on Lear regarded both as King and Everyman, Mr Danby brings together his varied but associated themes, showing how, in Lear's fluctuations between the rival 'Natures' before his final reconciliation with Cordelia, Shakespeare is able to develop and deepen his insight into the individual moral sources of social disorder. 'The King good or bad, the state just or unjust, rebellion right or wrong, man himself a concord or a discord, all depends on the transactions that take place between the King and Nature. For the King should be representative man, the expression of every man's "natural honesty"', and as such the embodiment of the health of the state—a health of "diverse parts coupled with blessed concord"'. A short concluding section sketches a view of poetry not as an 'attitude to life' but as embodied wisdom, in the presence of which we are summoned to our most significant acts of choice.

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<sup>1</sup>It may be assumed that when Shakespeare created Edmund he had in mind some advanced contemporary discussion. Edmund, like D Amville in *The Atheist's Tragedy*, holds opinions about morality similar to those attributed to the French 'libertins' of the early seventeenth century, but one might expect to find evidence from nearer home. A recent essay by Professor R. C. Bald, 'Thou, Nature, art my goddess', in the Folger Library volume of *Memorial Studies to J. Q. Adams* helps to confirm the impression of topicality.



A summary such as this, by suggesting that the play is handled simply as a focus of 'ideas', does less than justice to Mr Danby. It is the unique and integral work of art that he starts from and brings us back to. Yet because his criticism is not only the expression of a genuinely individual mind but has also a representative significance, it may be permissible merely to assert its merits and to try to define a certain uneasiness that one feels when considering Mr Danby's critical method.

A distinction that I wish to make hinges on a disagreement that may at first seem arbitrary. Reminding us that Shakespeare stands closer than we do to the Morality, Mr Danby adds 'The people of his stories can have a direct relation to ideas behind the story and story, finally, can exist independently for its own sake and it, too, can have direct access to the body of meaning that informs it'. We have here three statements, to the first of which we give the assent that a new bit of original insight compels, and to the last of which we may find reasons for assenting. In a paragraph of which the general tenour is so admirable we may perhaps slide over the second of the three statements I have quoted 'story can exist independently for its own sake'. It represents, however, an important aspect of Mr Danby's method, and deserves some consideration. It reappears subsequently as the assertion that 'the bare contour of the story has been expressing the play's most inward meanings' (p 194), and that we can 'find Shakespeare's deepest meanings precisely where they should be in successful art—the on the surface' (p 203).

Now 'story' like 'surface', is an abstraction, and the validity of anything that may be said about 'story' as an expression of inward meaning will be in direct proportion to the critic's felt sense of the pressure on 'story' of a specific body of experience. When that pressure slackens there is a danger of taking the abstraction and, as it were, slipping behind it a set of meanings that have only a superficial resemblance to the original tissue from which it was torn. We see this process when Mr Danby enlists *Troilus and Cressida* in support of his interpretation (in itself just) of Tudor official propaganda.

'Society was supposed to be an ideal order—Troilus' Cressida. The same system in actuality could behave like Diomed's bitch. Troilus's dilemma when he sees his ideal in the arms of Diomed is Shakespeare's dilemma when he sees Nature claimed for the Virgin Queen and James (by Divine Right) the First' (p 52).

We see it also in the comment on *Othello* on page 65. And I think that the difficulty I experience in following the argument of the chapter called 'Killing the King' (a retrospective survey of some of the plays immediately preceding *King Lear*) may be due to similar causes.

To use 'story' in this way when we are dealing with Shakespeare's greater tragedies is to employ meanings at once too exactly formulated and too loose, and I can only regard it as fortunate

that in so much of the book Mr Danby is concerned with a good deal more than story or is at all events concerned with story in direct relation to the body of specific internal meanings that make *Lear* so, and not otherwise' But even in the handling of *Lear* itself the tendency to abstract and to schematize does seem to me sometimes to get in the way of the full development of Mr Danby's best insights Of *Lear* in the storm scenes he can say with force and point, 'We are no longer spectators of *this* man in *those* circumstances We occupy the same heath as *Lear* and are fellow agents and patients [for] the root of the mind is reached and activated' (pp 180-181) Yet he can at times speak as though the poetry of *King Lear* is a medium not for 'exploratory creation' but for the expression of 'previously definite ideas'<sup>2</sup> 'Hooker's axiomatic decencies', we are told (p 27), 'are those which *Lear* himself holds to I think it is this that explains why, in the chapter on *Lear* himself and in spite of the explicit insistence on *Lear's* fluctuations between the rival Natures, we miss something of the sense of vital process of discovery at the deepest levels of experience For me, at all events, this chapter has not the force and vividness of a fully bodied response that I find in the essay by Mr Wilson Knight to which I referred earlier It is only when the 'ideas' or 'doctrines are felt as assimilated into a profoundly exploratory poetry that we achieve that reorientation of the whole self, that activation of the root of the mind, which Mr Danby is well aware is what great tragedy demands Neither *Lear* nor we ourselves hold to any view' (p 21) until, in the terms used in the play, we see' because we have been forced to 'feel' It is only then that Cordelia can become, as Mr Danby says, 'a kind of beneficent Goddess of Nature' as well as a representative of human integrity and naturalness In other words we glimpse possibilities of a relationship between man and external Nature radically different from that represented by Edmund, Goneril, and Regan 'A fool sees not the same tree that a wise man sees'

I hope I have made it plain that Mr Danby's book is one that provokes formulation of disagreement as a tribute to its seriousness and integrity What my emphasis may have obscured is that its value is very far indeed from being confined to an invitation to re-thinking It is sure to be read, but for justice's sake I should like to end with a personal tribute The book has notably enriched my own understanding of *King Lear*, of Shakespeare, and of his times There are many passages (as different as the account of Shakespeare's growing period' in *King Henry IV* and the examination of the significance of Cordelia's 'Nothing') to which I know I shall return for further pondering And in a brilliant short chapter, 'The Fool and Handy-dandy', Mr Danby offers the best account

<sup>2</sup>I take these phrases from F R Leavis's essay, 'Tragedy and the "Medium"' (*Scrutiny*, XII, 4, p 249), in which the implications for tragedy of these different uses of language are developed It seems to me especially pertinent to refer to this essay at this point

that I have seen of the dramatic function of the Fool. It is perhaps significant that this chapter starts from an acute observation on the nature of the Fool's speech and is closely argued throughout in terms of the particular. There is no question here of the Fool's story being offered as equivalent to what the Fool says and is

L C KNIGHTS

## LOVEJOY AND THE HISTORY OF IDEAS

*THE GREAT CHAIN OF BEING* by Arthur O Lovejoy  
(Harvard University Press, 1936) Originally delivered as the  
William James Lectures at Harvard, 1933

*ESSAYS IN THE HISTORY OF IDEAS* by Arthur O Lovejoy  
(The John Hopkins Press 1948—C U P 27/6)

What is known to the literary student in England as background work (the sort of thing represented by Mr Basil Willey's volumes) passes more formally and formidably in America as the History (or sometimes even the Historiography) of Ideas. *The History of Ideas* is neither literary history, nor, strictly speaking, the history of philosophy, although it embodies something of both. Its stage of activity is best conceived by observing its scholars in actual performance, but something of its aims and methods may be suggested by the following passage from Arthur O Lovejoy's *The Great Chain of Being*

'By the history of ideas I mean something at once more specific and less restricted than the history of philosophy. It is differentiated primarily by the character of the units with which it concerns itself. Though it deals in great part with the same material as the other branches of the history of thought and depends greatly upon their prior labors, it divides that material in a special way, brings the parts of it into new groupings and relations, views it from the standpoint of a distinctive purpose. Its initial procedure may be said—though the parallel has its dangers—to be somewhat analogous to that of analytic chemistry. In dealing with the history of philosophical doctrines, for example, it cuts into the hard and fast individual systems and, for its own purposes, breaks them up into their component elements, into what may be called their unit-ideas'

An obvious danger in such a new 'field', and particularly in one whose birth seems a little artificial, is that since the material with which it deals belongs to it only by temporary adoption—is, in fact, abstracted from other fields—the new disciplines to which that material is submitted may behave towards it with a certain step-motherly indifference. The 'distinctive purpose' which Professor Lovejoy mentions in the above passage is, I suppose, the clarification of those historical confusions and ambiguities that prevail under the characteristic slogans of an age. Such clarifications are necessarily

valuable to the literary critic, whose judgments and evaluations should be enforced with as clear and accurate knowledge as possible. But at this point a restatement of certain things that have been said in *Scrutiny* on repeated occasions is hardly avoidable. The historian of ideas, quite as clearly as the literary historian, should have a norm of critical relevance before him constantly. Literature provides a large portion of the chief documents to which these historians resort in their analyses, but the 'facts' provided by documents carry a different (and possibly lesser, certainly less subtle) truth value than the kind of knowledge discoverable in literature sensitively responded to as such. If the most is to be made of literature even considered under its documentary aspect, this distinction must be kept in mind. But only the trained literary critic is likely to do so—or even to know what kind of a distinction is involved, or that it exists at all.

There is a good deal of evidence in Professor Lovejoy's essays that he is aware of this distinction, and what is better, his actual practice frequently reveals him with the distinction firmly held in mind. But there are several momentous lapses, the most monumental of which will be discussed a little later, and even when Professor Lovejoy is discussing the historiography of ideas in theory, he occasionally offers formulations that raise hesitations in one's mind. For example, there are disturbing implications in the following passage, also from *The Great Chain of Being*:

'It is this characteristic of the study of the history of ideas in literature which often puzzles students—even advanced students—in the present-day literature departments in our universities. Some of them are repelled when called upon to study some writer whose work, as literature is now dead—or at best of extremely slight value according to our present aesthetic and intellectual standards. Why not stick to the masterpieces, such students exclaim—or at least to these *plus* the minor classics—the things that can be still read with pleasure, or with a feeling of the significance for men of the present age of the ideas or the moods of feeling which they express? This is a natural enough state of mind, if you don't regard the study of literary history as including within its province the study of the ideas and feelings which other men in past times have been moved by, and of the processes by which what may be called literary and philosophical public opinion is formed. But if you *do* think the historian of literature ought to concern himself with these matters, your minor writer may be as important as—he may often, from this point of view, be more important than—the authors of what are now regarded as the masterpieces'

This quotation certainly seems exact enough in what it says, and yet I experience great difficulty in focussing it precisely. The reason may be found, I think, by comparing it with, say, 'Tradition and the Individual Talent'. At first it seems to be saying very much the same thing—to be recommending a relationship with the *whole*

past (and Eliot more than any other critic has insisted on the importance of the minor writers in achieving this relationship), an awareness that the mind of Europe 'is a mind that changes, and that this change is a development which abandons nothing *en route*'. But then the emphasis in Professor Lovejoy's essay suddenly seems to fall with a muted insistence on the way of erudition as the suitable means towards achieving this sense of the past and the uses to which the kind of erudition recommended will be put, even by 'advanced students', is already grimly familiar. One is not quite sure about certain terms in the above passage either. What constitutes the 'minor classic' that the hypothetical student professes himself 'willing to read'? And on what lower level do the 'minor writers' whom Professor Lovejoy says they should also read first make their appearance? There is a distinction here which if made at all does not seem clearly and firmly held. And to say that 'the ideas and feelings which other men in past times have been moved by' are best studied in such writers (this is at any rate an implicit assumption in the above passage) is, to put it modestly, a dangerous generalization. The question of course, is not really whether such writers should be read or not, it is the more important question of the way they should be read if the task is undertaken, and the kind of importance that should be attached to them. But it is pointless to discuss such problems in general terms, and in any event Professor Lovejoy's dealings with the major writers are likely to prove more illuminating.

The recent publication of *Essays in the History of Ideas* marked the twenty-fifth anniversary of the founding of the History of Ideas Club at John Hopkins' University, and it made generally accessible for the first time a number of essays selected from Professor Lovejoy's work over the past quarter century. The essays at their best reveal a critical and analytic intelligence of genuine distinction, but at a lower level they are confirmatory of the hesitations suggested above concerning the historiography of ideas. Perhaps in a note as short as the present one the two extremes can be best discussed by comparing Lovejoy's treatment of the poet he handles most unsatisfactorily to his treatment of the one with whom he is most successful. It is hardly surprising that a historian of ideas should falter on Milton, it is perhaps more expected that he should prove singularly successful with Coleridge.

I am not referring here to the academically well-known essay which is devoted entirely to Milton, 'Milton and the Paradox of the Fortunate Fall'. This essay, taking as its point of departure Adam's speech to the Archangel Michael in which Adam expresses his belief that he did the right thing after all about the apple, seeing so much good came from it, is mainly an attempt to show that there was an ancient and respectable tradition in religious writings for this attitude. Such investigations certainly have their value, and Professor Lovejoy usually conducts them with an exactness and point that is refreshingly tidy after the slopped-over erudition of much American scholarly writing. But the sense that

gets chiefly through to me from the verse in question is that for a paradox which had been embraced by Ambrose, Leo the Great, Gregory the Great, Francis de Sales, and Du Bartas' Adam hardly succeeds in being more than grandly casual about the whole thing. That such annotations add 'voluminosity' to Milton's verse (a point that Professor Lovejoy makes in an earlier essay) is not convincingly demonstrated by such analyses, whatever else their interest may be.

The essential weakness in Lovejoy's handling of Milton is revealed more incidentally in the opening essay, 'The Historiography of Ideas'. This essay is in part, an attempt to break down the departmentalization of studies which has occurred in American universities, and to bring about co-operative effort among scholars. This seems a fine goal, but Professor Lovejoy hardly adduces sufficient safeguards to prevent such co-operative scholarship from turning into an anonymous movement whose conduct and aims would represent the antithesis of any adequately sensitive response to literature conceived as something more than a mass of evidence waiting to be discovered, tested, and co-ordinated. He speaks freely of the 'specialist', but hardly at all of those essentially non-specialist disciplines which would provide the perspective in which the diverse activities of the 'specialists' would have to converge, finally, to some kind of order and relevancy. There is little to grow uneasy about in Professor Lovejoy's initial statement of the argument.

'From all that has so far been said one conclusion seems to me to emerge almost too plainly to require statement. It is that in almost all the branches of historiography which deal with the history of men's thoughts or opinions and the affective attitudes and behaviour associated with these, there is imperative need of more definite, responsible, organized collaboration between specialists in these several branches than has hitherto been customary—collaboration too, in some cases, between historians and specialists in non-historical disciplines, notably the natural sciences'

And Professor Lovejoy offers an important qualification

'What I have in mind is not simply the parcelling out of the subdivisions of a large subject among specialists in those subdivisions, it is the convergence upon *each* of them of all the special knowledge from all these subdivisions which is genuinely pertinent to it'

That specialists are frequently endowed with the kind of critical sensibility that would enable them to gauge 'pertinence' with much sureness one may doubt. And if the specialists managed to handle this miscellaneous knowledge pertinently as it impinged on their own subdivisions, the more important question of how they would relate their own subdivisions to the larger subject seems oddly neglected. One suspects that such unity as would inhere in such a co-operative scheme would probably result from a Central Committee which would co-ordinate the 'methodologies' and 'findings'

of the specialists under an over-all pattern, and would have very little to do with any sensitive recognition of the formal unity of the work of art which the specialists originally set out to investigate.

This impression is confirmed when Professor Lovejoy describes a project he would like to see undertaken—a book of annotations on *Paradise Lost* and of studies on special historical and literary aspects of that poem. Professor Lovejoy then enters into some detail:

‘I am unable to discover, through some bibliographical search and inquiries of English scholars, that there exists any modern work of this character, bringing together all the knowledge needed for placing that great English classic in its historical relations, and for the adequate illumination of the ideas which it contains. And the reason, no doubt, is that such a work cannot now be decently done by one man unaided, it needs the co-operation not only of a number of specialists in English, but also of a classical scholar, a mediævalist, a philosopher, a student of rabbinical and other Jewish literature, a theologian versed in early Protestant divinity, special students both of French and Italian literature of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and a historian of science specially at home in early modern astronomy.

One would not wish to under-estimate the importance of background materials in enriching one’s enjoyment of poetry; but if all this is necessary for a fully adequate reading of *Paradise Lost*, then it has ceased to exist in any significant way. However, Professor Lovejoy has already made it clear that he is keeping his eye on other things than the ultimate rights of the poetry.

A scholar for example, decides to attempt a special study of Milton, or narrowing his subject of investigation still further of *Paradise Lost*. It is, of course, possible to treat that work from an exclusively æsthetic point of view, as “pure literature”, without raising any historical questions about it—though, if I may thus parenthetically dogmatize, a great part even of the æsthetic values of the poem will thereby be lost. In any case, *Paradise Lost* is, *inter alia* an extremely interesting phenomenon in the history of the activities of the human mind, and it is, in part, as such that most scholars in English literature now approach it. Now *Paradise Lost* is not merely, as the schoolboy noted with surprise, full of familiar quotations, it is also full of ideas, which, if only as a means to the understanding of what Milton meant, and of the movement of his mind as he composed need to be seen in their historical perspectives. Even to recognize what is distinctive either of his style or his thought as distinctive, it is necessary to have both an extensive and a fairly intimate acquaintance with manifestations of the same ideas elsewhere, especially among his contemporaries and among those of his predecessors with whom he is known, or can be fairly presumed, to have been acquainted.’

The concluding sentence as regards style (at least style as relative to an evaluation of the poetry) is simply not true. Anyone interested in Milton as a thinker is, of course faced with a different problem. One might further say that if Milton's rhythm in poetry is so inept that the movement of his mind as he composed' (I assume that Professor Lovejoy is referring to Milton's rhythm in this phrase, but he could mean other things) has to be set in a fully documented perspective to be comprehended, one is quite right to forget that he was a poet and remember that he was also any one of a number of other things.

*A propos* of these recommendations for the study of Milton, I find the opening sentence of a recent review in *The Toronto Quarterly* relevant here. One of the minor paradoxes in the literary history of our time', it declares, 'is that the neglect and depreciation of Milton by the poets, their camp followers among the critics, and at last the general reader, has been accompanied by twenty-five years of vigorous Miltonic scholarship. This is true enough, and I find it extremely sinister in its implications for Milton, who, like any other poet I imagine would prefer being read to being excavated. I suspect that the general neglect of Milton to-day is more to be attributed to those twenty-five years of vigorous Miltonic scholarship, which have been so much concerned with keeping the body on view, than it is to any attempt on the part of the poets and their camp followers among the critics to bring Milton's poetry into immediate communication with a living sensibility.

But as I said, Professor Lovejoy is not at his best on Milton. Coleridge presents an entirely different kind of problem to Lovejoy, and he handles it beautifully. There can be little doubt that the essay, 'Coleridge and Kant's Two Worlds', is the best in the book, and although it deals chiefly with the metaphysics it elucidates Coleridge's mind in a way that is intimately relevant both to one's sense of his personality and his poetry. Part of the satisfaction one has in reading it comes from the exhibition of the highly disciplined control and precise knowledge with which order and clarity is introduced into a subject most people would agree is almost intractable. There is occasionally a professional quaintness present in Lovejoy's style (it has been apparent in some of the passages quoted), but in this essay the words cut through and define the thought with such trenchant economy and sureness, and at the same time they exhibit in spite of all the burden they must carry, such a delicate awareness of the pressure of Coleridge's personality in the material, that one would dare advance this essay as an almost perfect model of analytical exposition.

I find it particularly illuminating about the poets Milton and Coleridge that they should invite such different performances from Professor Lovejoy. In the case of Coleridge, in a genuinely fine analysis of 'The Dejection Ode', Professor Lovejoy shows that despite a number of Kantian interpretations offered by earlier critics, 'Coleridge is not expressing the thesis of "transcendental" idealism that the mind gives form to the world of objects that it



perceives, he is expressing, out of a painful personal experience the psychological fact that the power of natural beauty to give us pleasure is conditioned by our subjective states' The concrete analysis that follows is one of the best readings of 'The Dejection Ode I know of, and this is partly so because it squarely confronts the text itself, cutting away all excrescent interpretations In dealing with Milton, however Lovejoy's constant concern seems to be *not* to penetrate through to the poetic text, but to lay on successive layers of annotation and interpretation The Miltonic scholar seems to sense instinctively a certain thinness in the medium with which he is dealing, and to try to fill it up and provide an extraneous density Once released from this urge to provide 'density' Professor Lovejoy is much freer to demonstrate his own analytic and critical capacities

The metaphysics of Coleridge present an undeniable trial to the *literary* student whose attempt to 'do something about it, has in all probability, led him towards I A Richards, with the result that it was left undone Professor Lovejoy's essay does a good deal towards calming the uneasy conscience of such a student, and it gives him, most importantly, a sense of the quality of Coleridge's speculative thought The essay does not discuss Coleridge on the imagination, it is concerned with Coleridge's rejection of Hartley's necessitarianism, and his struggle to formulate his belief in the moral freedom of the individual But as Professor Lovejoy points out, this carries one up to the very threshold of the other problem—is, in fact, the necessary preparation for it To know Coleridge as man or as writer', Lovejoy remarks near the beginning of this essay, it is necessary to understand (if possible) the nature and interrelations of those philosophic ideas—abstract, often confused, usually sketchily expressed in any single passage, frequently conflicting with one another—which nevertheless were to him the most vital things in existence It is this sense of their vitality to Coleridge that Lovejoy manages to communicate, and which gives the paper so much of its value Such an achievement belongs to a more intimate order than anything likely to be won by any highly schematized co-operative scholarship, or by demolition squads however highly trained, breaking down idea-complexes

In this brief discussion I have wished to isolate what seem to me two extremes in Professor Lovejoy's practice His method might have been more clearly examined in such essays as 'On the Discrimination of Romanticisms', or 'The Parallel of Deism and Classicism', or more elaborately in *The Great Chain of Being* But Professor Lovejoy's remarks on Milton illuminate with unusual vividness some of the dangers that stalk the historianographer of ideas, while 'Coleridge and Kant's Two Worlds' seems to me to be somewhat arbitrarily brought under the heading 'Historiography of Ideas' at all, and thereby to offer, because of its very success, an implicit criticism of methods that more recognizably exhibit the marks of the historianographer's interests

MARIUS BEWLEY

## HOMAGE TO COMMON SENSE

FRANCIS JEFFREY OF THE EDINBURGH REVIEW by  
James A Greig (*Oliver and Boyd, 21/-*)

There was certainly room for a new study of Jeffrey. It is nearly forty years since Professor Nichol Smith's volume of selections appeared in the Oxford Miscellany series. L. E. Gates's essay was even earlier, and most people still draw their knowledge of him from the official surveys—Elton, the *Cambridge History*, Saintsbury's *History of Criticism*—written by men whose taste was formed at least before 1914. The popular legend derives from even further back and amounts to little more than a vague notion of an insensitive pontificator who was rude about Wordsworth and Keats (that Jeffrey's review of Keats was favourable and that Monckton Milnes dedicated the *Life and Letters* to him is even now by no means common knowledge).

Dr Greig has the enthusiasm of a compatriot and something of temperamental affinity with his subject. His work is based on a thorough knowledge of Jeffrey's actual writings and a wide scholarship covering memoirs, biographies and general studies of the period. He has even read a good deal of the forgotten literature which it fell to Jeffrey to review, including Southey's epics. He gives us a sound and lively account of Jeffrey's contemporary reputation and the later fluctuations of critical opinion on his work—a surprisingly odd and inconsistent assortment. He notes Jeffrey's relation to the Scotland of his day, the environment which had produced a little earlier Hume and Adam Smith, and brings out well the intellectual agility and energy which make his student days seem like a direct and intentional preparation for his later work as a reviewer. Dr Greig reminds us that Jeffrey's main business was the law, and that his whole literary output together with the editorial work of the *Edinburgh* had to be fitted into his spare time. He shows that although he made no profession of scholarship Jeffrey's learning should not be too easily dismissed, but that his essential merits lie rather in his firm grasp of practical living and his tendency to bring literature, politics and philosophy equally to that ultimate test. He was always anti-specialist and anti-academic.

Dr Greig has no difficulty in demonstrating Jeffrey's critical impartiality, whether in dealing with a popular hero (Burns), a personal friend (Scott), an enemy of the *Edinburgh* (Byron, as a result of Brougham's demolition of *Hours of Idleness*), a protégé of the *Edinburgh*'s publisher (James Montgomery, author of *The Wanderer of Switzerland*, reviewed in 1806), a political ally (Fox's *History of James II*, 1808), or a new young poet moving in unpoplar circles (Keats). He can be seen bringing forward what he thought unrecognized talent in Hogg's *The Queen's Wake* and Tennant's *Anster Fair*, and standing up for Barry Cornwall and

Leigh Hunt If he appears to have had a kind of double standard for literature, this was to some extent deliberate his severity increased with the distinction of the writer under review, in the belief that unless clearly discriminated, 'faults' were apt to be praised along with 'beauties' Moreover his primary concern was the moral tendency of a work, its relation to ordinary living, and his strongest condemnation was reserved for egoism, affectation and unwarranted assumption of superiority It seems unlikely that he really thought Wordsworth absolutely inferior in poetic power to Wilson, Hogg, Cornwall or other minor poets whom he praised, but the power, as he saw it, was at the service of a perverse poetic system and a false scheme of values In general Dr Greig claims that Jeffrey was fundamentally right about Wordsworth and that the time has come to admit the fact

Unfortunately his revaluation is not related to any comprehensive modern view of literary history He seems unaware that a general reaction set in against the whole Romantic attitude in poetry and criticism some thirty years ago and that to argue solemnly against the pronouncements of Saintsbury and the rest at this date is rather flogging dead horses His own reaction against romanticism is that of one still to some extent within the nineteenth-century tradition his views are not unlike those of Irving Babbitt, whom he mentions with approval The only modern critics quoted are Professor Garrod Mr F L Lucas, Mr Herbert Read and Mr Aldous Huxley Dr Greig's argument against Wordsworth is conducted with a curious animus (see the chapter called 'The Menace') at times, indeed, Wordsworth's influence appears to be made responsible for most of the disasters of modern civilization, including Hitler and the late war Various bits of irrelevant evidence are brought up against him, from Annette Vallon to the comments of the Grasmere (or Rydal?) butcher's boy, and his 'thought' is abstracted from the poetry and held up to ridicule We are presumably to consider this as emulating 'Jeffrey's endeavour to see literature—and life—as a whole' Dr Greig, one suspects, recognizes no alternative but art for art's sake and what he would call mere technical discussion Any stick will do, perhaps, to beat the more extravagant Wordsworthians but a true assessment must depend on an altogether more subtle analysis of what is actually there in the poetry, such as Dr Greig gives us no assurance that he can command At times we find him apparently endorsing the most conventional valuations—does he really, for example, consider the *Ode to Duty* a great poem? He contrasts Elizabethan with nineteenth-century romanticism in a manner which ignores altogether the quality of unified sensibility that we have come to recognize in the Metaphysicals, and lapses into bluff over-simplifications 'Where do we find Shakespeare bemusing himself by lengthy theorizings about poetic diction?' 'Shakespeare nowhere teaches that beatific wisdom may be acquired merely by sitting passive and absorbing impulses from vernal woods' etc His attempts to see things from the Jeffreyan angle are admirable up to a point, and it is right

that we should do justice to Jeffrey's shrewdness and sense but for an adequate critical view of the period it will hardly do simply to swing the pendulum back—a more comprehensive understanding is needed—one which would also do justice to the insights of Coleridge<sup>1</sup>

Part of the trouble is that Dr Greig deals with Jeffrey too much in isolation. He dismisses far too easily Leslie Stephen's opinion that Jeffrey belonged essentially to the eighteenth century, interpreting it narrowly as implying a mere repetition of *Augustan* commonplaces; he points to the various passages in which Jeffrey explicitly stated the superiority of the Elizabethan age to all others. But Leslie Stephen was talking about general habits of mind, shared by Crabbe, Jane Austen and Peacock as well as others of the reviewers: if we put Jeffrey in perspective in this way we can see his relation to Johnson in the critical tradition. Similarly there is a vein of opinion opposed to the general tendencies of romanticism which runs on through the reviews down to Arnold (if not beyond—see, for instance, the 1872 *Quarterly* article on the Pre-Raphaelites, entitled 'The Latest Development in Literary Poetry')<sup>2</sup>. Jeffrey's work is part of this link between the characteristic views of the two centuries. What is called throughout this book the 'Jeffreyan attitude' might more reasonably be described as a personal variation of eighteenth-century common sense.

Common sense alone, of course, has its limitations. The critic concerned to keep literature in touch with ordinary human values and moral standards needs the most sensitive response to what is actually before him: the slightest blunting of sensibility may result in taking the will for the deed—a fault which can be just as corrupting and as far-reaching in its results as the kind of romanticism Dr Greig deplors. It is for this reason that Jeffrey's occasional tolerance of Regency mediocrity is a more serious failing that Dr Greig seems to realize: it is not just a matter of over-estimating 'the technical strength' of Rogers and Campbell, but of distinguishing between the living and the dead, between that which is grasped and presented and that which is merely talked about and gestured towards. Dr Greig argues convincingly that the famous 'prophecy' passage of 1829 refers rather more to the contemporary state of reputations than to Jeffrey's own view of intrinsic merit. All the same, it occurs in a much too favourable review of Mrs Hemans, and there are other things—to explain away—the review of Campbell's *Theodric* which provoked *Blackwood's* taunts about 'The Barnly School of Criticism', and the maudlin letter to Dickens on the subject of *Little Nell*.

This, however, is not where the stress should be left in any

<sup>1</sup>Not an impossible task if we consider the interesting way Jeffrey sometimes anticipates Coleridge's criticisms of Wordsworth—a fact I mentioned some years ago in this journal. I am glad to find my view confirmed by Dr Greig, who makes the same point.

<sup>2</sup>Vol. CXXXII, p. 59.

discussion of Jeffrey. Because of his detachment from the Romantic outlook (or from the various individual reactions that we group under the one title) he was able to point to some of its defects in a way that we in our post-Romantic detachment can at length admit to be sound and shrewd, while he was less unappreciative of Romantic achievements than is generally realized. That does not by itself make him a great critic, much less the prophet for our times that Dr Greig occasionally suggests. Nevertheless it is desirable that a full study of this kind should be available, and one can only regret that it is not based on a more adequate critical method.

R G Cox

*MEN OF LETTERS AND THE ENGLISH PUBLIC IN THE  
XVIIIth CENTURY 1660-1744 DRYDEN ADDISON  
POPE by Alexandre Beljame Edited by Bonamy Dobree  
Translated by E O Lorrimer (Routledge and Kegan Paul, 25/-)*

Beljame's *Le Public et les Hommes de Lettres en Angleterre au Dix-huitième Siècle* first appeared in 1881, seven years before the death of Arnold. Why we should have had to wait nearly seventy years for an English translation is likely to remain a mystery: the important thing is that at this date a translation is still well worth while. Scholars have for decades acknowledged it as a standard work, but students have often had to be content with the relevant parts of more general and less detailed books such as Courthope's *History of English Poetry* or Leslie Stephen's invaluable *English Literature and Society in the Eighteenth Century*. There have been studies of the literary profession in earlier and later times, but no one writing in English has covered so thoroughly the crucial transition period between the Restoration and the death of Pope. Anyone going over the ground again would of necessity have to start from the facts assembled by Beljame's scholarship. He was also a pioneer in the whole field of investigation of literary sociology, with an instinct for the vital questions. By whom, in a given period, did writers expect to be read? What level of taste could they assume in their public? Who provided their bread and butter, and how directly did this affect the character of their work? What was their status in society?—and so on. His information, as a result, is of the kind useful to the critic who starts from the literature itself: it is not merely a miscellaneous assemblage of facts about 'background'.

That seventy years should have shown up a number of minor errors of fact and emphasis is hardly surprising. Most of these are corrected in the English version by additional footnotes from Professor Dobree, who also provides an introduction discussing the general lines of Beljame's thesis. He notes a certain oversimplification—a neglect of the better figures of Restoration literature, an exaggerated view of Jeremy Collier's importance, an unduly high estimate of Addison and his influence, a general

tendency to accept too easily the evidence of satirists concerning social life. The criticisms are fair up to a point and the warnings needed: it is true, too, that Beljame's dealings with Restoration drama have a somewhat Victorian tone. On the other hand Professor Dobrée's comments themselves, especially those aiming to redress the balance in favour of the drama, have sometimes an air of special pleading. It may have been unscholarly of Beljame to forget that many of his strictures on Restoration drama would apply equally well to, say, Beaumont and Fletcher, but the primary critical point is a comment on Beaumont and Fletcher. The reader, however, is put in a position to make his own adjustment between these different views, which is what really matters. As for the account of Addison, it is perhaps couched in over-enthusiastic terms, but there is still a tendency to think of him too much as a Victorian, or as quaintly 'period' in the manner of school productions of Goldsmith and Sheridan. The genuine achievement of defining and expressing the essential Augustan ethos and of bringing together the public and creating the taste for the novel, still hardly receives due recognition.

The main substance of the book in its broad outlines retains all its significance—the change from authorship as dependent on court patronage to authorship as an organized profession with a public in something like the modern sense and a properly functioning intermediary in the publisher. Beljame claims, with justice, that a recognition of just how new and unprecedented a thing was the independence of Pope should make it easier to arrive at a fair view of his personality and behaviour and to avoid the distortions so often introduced into criticism from inadequate biography.

Beljame's thorough bibliography has been carefully revised and brought up to date: there is a full index, and altogether the editor and translator deserve the gratitude of all students of literature for making this classic study available in such a useful form. It is a pity it could not have been produced at a more reasonable price.

R. G. Cox

## BEATRICE WEBB IN PARTNERSHIP

*OUR PARTNERSHIP*, by *Beatrice Webb* (Longmans 25/-)

This belated notice the present reviewer sees as primarily an occasion for an appeal to the publishers to reprint *My Apprenticeship*, which has been unobtainable for years. That work, as I argue earlier in these pages, should be recognized as an English classic that has a special value for the reader whose interests are in the first place 'literary', and for the 'director of English studies' who is seriously preoccupied with the problem of humane education. The admirer of *My Apprenticeship* will have gone on eagerly to *Our Partnership* and have read it with great interest. But, in the nature of the case, the later work couldn't be expected to achieve

anything like the classical quality of the earlier. The partnership established Beatrice Webb's formative years were over, *My Apprenticeship* written, the classical story of personal development and quest for a vocation—a story involving a background of representative family life and family history—had been told. *Our Partnership* records the exacting and enormous labours to which the Webbs together gave their lives, its interest is primarily political historical—an interest that must of course be great for all educated readers, though it is not of a kind to rank the later book in English literature with *My Apprenticeship*.

Beatrice Webb clearly had remarkable gifts for the work to which she devoted herself—and in which she felt herself fulfilled. For the Maggie Tulliver of *My Apprenticeship* miraculously realized her dream and aspiration—love identified with devotion to an inspiring and exalting duty—and found her vocation in labours more akin to those of the intellectual who sub-edited *The Westminster Review* and translated Spinoza and Feuerbach than to those of the great novelist who wrote *Middlemarch*. The qualities in which Beatrice Potter so strikingly resembles George Eliot are there, of course, in *Our Partnership*. We have them in the appraisals of character and personality in which incidentally to the exposition of the main themes, the book is rich. We have them in the admiring sympathy (characteristically qualified) with which she contemplates the Samurais of the Salvation Army (pp. 401-2).

'In respect to personal character all these men and women constitute a *Samurai* caste, that is, they are men and women selected for their power of subordinating themselves to their cause—most assuredly a remarkable type of ecclesiastic remarkable, because there is no inequality between man and woman because home life and married life are combined with a complete dedication of the individual to spiritual service. A beautiful spirit of love and personal service of content and joy, permeates the service, there is a persistent note of courtesy to others and open-mindedness to the world. The men, and some of the women, are far more cultivated than is usual with persons of the same social status—one can talk to them quite freely—far more freely than you could talk to an elementary school teacher, or trade union official. But the intensely compelling nature of the appeal to become converted made tonight by Brigadier Jackson and his wife, I confess, somewhat frightened me off recommending that the Salvation Army should be state- or rate-aided in this work of proselytising persons committed to their care for secular reasons'. Is it right to submit men, weakened by suffering, to this religious pressure exercised by the very persons who command their labour?'

Or take these observations provoked by *The Madras House* and *Misalliance* (pp. 447-8)

'G B S is brilliant but disgusting, Granville-Barker is intellectual but dull. They both harp on the mere physical

attractions of men to women and women to men, coupled with the insignificance of the female for any other purpose but sex attraction with tiresome iteration That is not the world I live in or indeed think to exist outside a limited circle

Where I think G B S, Granville-Barker, H G Wells and many other of the most modern authors go wrong from the standpoint of realism in its best sense, is their complete ignoring of religion By religion, I mean the communion of the soul with some righteousness *felt to be outside and above itself* This may take the conscious form of prayer or the unconscious form of ever-present and persisting aspirations—a faith, a hope and a devotion to a wholly disinterested purpose It is this unconscious form of religion which lies at the base of all Sidney's activity'

It is this profound seriousness which shows itself in her penetrating evaluations of personality—the quick intelligence with which she appraises the politicians, Civil Servants, intellectuals, public figures and the others with whom she has to do. An anthology of these personal notes would make lively and very impressive reading Asquith, Balfour, Sir Edward Grey, Milner, Haldane, Churchill, John Burns, Edward VII—the full list would be long The literary reader finds a special interest in her comments on intellectuals and authors That she could be radically critical of the old and intimate Fabian comrade, Shaw, comes out in a passage quoted above With a naïvety a little disconcerting in one so intelligent, she is enormously impressed by *Man and Superman* But *Major Barbara* precipitates the firm placing judgment (p 314)

G B S's play turned out to be a dance of devils—amazingly clever, grimly powerful in the second act—but ending, as all his plays end (or at any rate most of them), in an intellectual and moral morass

G B S is gambling with ideas and emotions in a way that distresses slow-minded prigs like Sidney and me, and hurts those with any fastidiousness But the stupid public will stand a good deal from one who is acclaimed as an unrivalled wit by the great ones of the world'

As a critic of his plays she had had the advantage (had that been necessary) of having witnessed his vanity, irresponsibility and obtuse and utter irreverence in the field of action

'G B S badly beaten, elsewhere the Progressives romping back with practically undiminished numbers As to the first event, we are not wholly grieved He certainly showed himself hopelessly intractable during the election Insisted that he was an atheist, that, though a teetotaler, he would force every citizen to imbibe a quarter of rum to cure any tendency to intoxication, laughed at the Nonconformist conscience, chaffed the Catholics about transubstantiation, abused the Liberals, and contemptuously patronized the Conservatives



Bertrand Russell is another friend, at first warmly admired, of whom she becomes profoundly critical, till, provoked by the *Free Man's Worship*, she makes the drastic comment to be found on p. 278

To the present reviewer one of the most poignantly significant things in the book is the footnote on p. 415 to this mention of Rupert Brooke. The other five were, I think, commonplace—Schloss, Strachey, Brooke (a poetic beauty). The footnote runs

This was the afterwards famous Rupert Brooke who put me off the track of his distinction by delivering a super-concerned lecture on the relation of the university man to the common herd of democracy. Also I am poetry blind like some persons are colour blind'

If Beatrice Webb was 'poetry blind', it is impossible to believe that she was congenitally so—indeed she hadn't supposed herself to be so in the formative years. More generally and positively, there is strong reason for holding that she was potentially a good literary critic, so that there is a significant irony in her being able to allege 'incapacity' in order to explain away the quick and sure report of her intelligence on Brooke. By her own account (see p. 118 above) she needed to be a competent reader of literature

And early in *Our Partnership* (p. 16) she says

'We accordingly devoted ourselves as scientists to the study of social institutions from trade unions to Cabinets, from family relations to churches, from economics to literature—a field itself so extensive that we have never been able to compass more than a few selected fragments of it'

The dilemma of the age of specialization is given us here—for 'fragments', of course, doesn't adequately express the inadequacy these scientists could not escape. And we cannot help seeing a significant relation between the development of Maggie Tulliver into the intellectual of *Soviet Russia: a New Civilization*, and such autobiographical notes as this (p. 292)

'What is utterly lacking [in the intellectual society that the Partners kept] is art, literature for its own sake, and music—whilst physical science only creeps up as analogous and illustrative matter, history appears in much the same aspect'

F. R. LEAVIS

# SCRUTINY

## A Quarterly Review

*Edited by*

L C KNIGHTS

H A MASON

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## JAMES'S DEBT TO HAWTHORNE (I)

'THE BLITHEDALE ROMANCE and 'THE BOSTONIANS

### I

THE question of indebtedness in art, the attempt to trace artistic influences, is quite as likely to lead towards distracting irrelevancies or academic obscurantism as towards any elevation from which one may take a clearer view and form a sounder judgment of the works in question. But some influences distinguish themselves as especially pertinent to any essential critical evaluation, as providing a unique glimpse, from the wire of tenuous connection of the intentions and motives, the tone and the tradition of the works stretched out below. The influence of Hawthorne on Henry James is of this pertinent character, and it is now commonly recognized to be so commonly, but not invariably. Mr David Garnett, for example, has recently gone on record as regarding Hawthorne's influence, not only as obnoxious to James's work but as confined to the earliest specimens of his art. 'It was from that sort of nonsense, Mr Garnett temerarily declares, 'that he escaped in the following year when he came to live in Europe. A year in Paris, meeting Flaubert, Turgenev, Maupassant, and Zola altered him'. The influence of Hawthorne on James is not only demonstrably far greater than in the case of any of the men here named it was an influence that persisted to the end, and in certain ways it grew more insistent towards the end. Its importance for James is to be gauged by the fact that Hawthorne was the great American predecessor the only one (for James was apparently unacquainted with Melville) through whose art he approached his own native tradition. Hawthorne's methods of work, his moral preoccupations, the fundamental problems that confronted him as an artist in America, his attraction to a kind of allegory that was akin to symbolism, even to some extent the actual scenes and materials and types he chose to deal with made a deep and lasting impression on James's 'fictions. The idea that James took to precipitate flight in his youth, and breathing a freer air in Europe, reduced his art to a series of scathing comments on America, is one that, for anyone who takes James's work seriously, cannot be tolerated. Great art is not commonly the product of rootlessness, and despite his long life abroad, James was able to keep in touch with those values which for him, and no matter how much he liked or preferred to live in Europe, were the special product of the New World. Not until *The Ivory Tower* does anything like a radical

questioning appear. The prevailing satire—the incessant fun-poking at Americans in Europe or for that matter Americans at home—is, in the end, but the sustained corrective shaking that the vigilant parent must administer to the loved but undutiful and frequently impossible child. James dealt out the punishment to so many Americans, particularly to so many of his American heroines that it came to pass off as animus against the nation, but beyond the sense one gets from the heroines so shaken of clattering parasols and disarranged bows and ruffles, one recognizes the deliberate design and intense desire of correcting absurdities and encouraging spiritual fineness. One sees, above all, the ingrained faith that what would ultimately appear when the manners were taught and the garden weeded would be a benefit to be conferred—a benefit uniquely American and wholly virtuous, and *at least* as great as anything the Old World had on her side to offer in exchange. To-day, it seems to be Milly Theale, the American heroine who most conspicuously *doesn't* get shaken, who has driven home at last the point of James's benevolent intentions. But what she also goes to prove is that James understood his own genius too well to withhold frequently the disciplinary arm.

It is disconcerting to have to emphasize these points here, for they should be commonly current in Jamesian criticism, and until I read Mr. Garnett's unjust allusions to Hawthorne I had assumed that nowadays they most certainly were. To endeavour to focus James's art against a background of continental writers is not to focus it at all, and to eliminate Hawthorne from the history of his artistic development is simply to eliminate the best part of James—the part in which his genius most profitably functioned. It is to eliminate from his significant experience the literary tradition in America in which those moral values from which he never withdrew, and to which he finally returned with added emphasis, received their peculiarly national celebration. It is a tradition that Hawthorne and James share with Melville, but it is not to be confused with the tradition stemming from Whitman whose influence for American letters is analogous in its exalted and stultifying affluence to the influence of Milton on eighteenth and nineteenth century English letters. The only point at which James was ever influenced by Whitman was when he had Isabel Archer describe Henrietta Stackpole to Ralph Touchett in terms recalling *Leaves of Grass*.

I like the great country stretching away beyond the rivers and across the prairies blooming and smiling and spreading till it stops at the green Pacific! A strong, sweet, fresh odour seems to rise from it, and Henrietta—pardon my simile—has something of that odour in her garments. To which one remembers, Ralph significantly replies, 'I'm not sure the Pacific's so green as that' <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>James published at the age of twenty-two a brilliant review of Whitman's *Drum-Taps* which ought to be given, but isn't likely to be, a prominent position among his critical writings. It is easily among his best pieces. Mr. Matthiessen reprints the review in

The tradition of Hawthorne is quite distinct from anything of that kind, and the point for an English reader, is worth keeping firmly in mind when one insists on the deep American quality in James Whitman did as much to ruin American poetry and prose (when one remembers Thomas Wolfe one is tempted to think the prose has suffered even more) as railroads and macadam highways have done to ruin American scenery—and in every respect he is the reverse of Hawthorne for if Hawthorne tried desperately to believe in the Future, it was a hope that the very nature of his moral pre-occupation caused constantly to default

If for the sake of convenience at this point one were to attempt a definition of Hawthorne's tradition, one might say that it was rooted in a traditional past a remote (for America, certainly remote) New England past in which Europe impinged directly on the New World and Calvinistic theology directly on moral action. By Hawthorne's time, both the Old World and the rigours of Calvinism had withdrawn into a hazy distance, but there was a fragrance and a memory that he knew, at least for a time, how to mould into form, how, in the medium of his art, to hold moral and psychological problems in a state of delicate suspension without, as in Whitman's case, precipitating a mud of optimistic conclusions. But the reality of Hawthorne is in his tone—a tone that is largely the evocation of regional intangibles—and it is unwise to generalize about it here. James had known Hawthorne's books from his early childhood. He relates in *A Small Boy and Others* the degree to which *The Scarlet Letter* worked upon his imagination, and how he lost himself in *The House of Seven Gables*. Books that exert their 'influence' in these opening years of life may continue to operate in the sensibility at levels where consciousness is not habitually active or attention alerted. They may acquire for the adult memory a picturesque and romantic beauty, but in the restless activity and 'expansion' of a sensibility that, in the American phrase is 'moving on', they must seem at last to rest on the laurels of nearly forgotten achievements, watching like old or early settlers the later stages of 'developments' they no longer understand, but at whose inception they importantly assisted

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*The James Family* with an apology for its 'wrong-headedness'. But its 'wrongheadedness' consists not in under-estimating Walt Whitman but in over-estimating American opinion, which came to accept Whitman's effusions as easily as it accepted the optimism of the Chamber of Commerce. The evidence that James revised his taste later in life is far from convincing. It is difficult to take James's behaviour at Mrs. Wharton's in 1905 (which she describes in her autobiography) without a grain of salt, and in any event, when in that year, James recognized Whitman as America's greatest poet he wasn't at all doing violence to his earlier opinion. The competition for that title was hardly impressive then, and James was probably as right in conferring it on Whitman as he was certainly right in the 1868 review

Much of the influence of Hawthorne on James is of this kind and it is a matter of extreme tact and delicacy to isolate it. James's first overlapped Hawthorne's last twenty one years of life, and Henry James the very young New York City dweller, was not so remote from the New England moral milieu in which Hawthorne, with so much greater detachment than his neighbours, lived, as to leave him an utter outsider. There are passages in the earlier prose of James in which the tone of Hawthorne is so clearly struck that without extraneous information, it would be impossible to say just who had written which. And yet one cannot help sensing that this similarity is due not more to Hawthorne's immediate example than to mutual propinities of temperament and shades of value that still characterized the American and determinedly local scene on which both James and Hawthorne drew. From one point of view this is an added difficulty in any attempt to trace the specific touches of Hawthorne on James's style and meaning for they seem to merge in the common atmosphere created by regional effects of climate and colour, but in the end this doesn't minimize—it only increases—the Hawthornian presence. He seems to fade into the New England scene and it is impossible for James to deal with the one without, whether faintly or urgently, invoking the other. In the end this is, perhaps Hawthorne's greatest gift to James—the gift literally, of a tradition, for it was through Hawthorne that James found New England artistically accessible, and it was, finally, this sense of rootedness, or more accurately of fine and enduring relation, that safe-guarded him from becoming, for the edification of Mr David Garnett, an Edwardian Maugham. Later when his novels became a dialectic of nations, the *Moderator*, instead of a displaced cosmopolitan, was a novelist whose values were centred and whose aims were clearly focussed. Apart from this general contribution of Hawthorne's, and insofar as we can trace them, the specific 'influences' seem to have been utilized by James with varying degrees of success. It was, of course, Hawthorne's masterpieces—*The Scarlet Letter* and *The House of Seven Gables*, as well as the short stories which exerted the greatest attraction—but this attraction was, if deepest of a nature extremely elusive. Before attempting to analyze it I should like to offer extended considerations of James's debt to the two last completed of Hawthorne's novels *The Blithedale Romance* and *The Marble Faun*. *The Blithedale Romance* is a relative failure, and while common opinion is against me *The Marble Faun* seems to me a far greater failure than *Blithedale*. Nevertheless, James was much influenced by them both, and it is surprising that the nature and extent of this influence has been so little noted by critics in the past. It is especially interesting to study in that we can trace the differences between James's early and late modes of assimilating the influence of Hawthorne, can see how relatively clumsily the later James was capable of dealing with it. Yet even here and perhaps here most of all, its effect is to underline the essential Americanism of Henry James—an Americanism so fine that, paradoxically, one feels that America would have been its

doom—and to reveal the fatuity of insisting, to any considerable extent on the influences of Flaubert, Turgenev, Maupassant, and Zola. But in another sense it is distressing to begin this paper with the two late novels, for it will entail a series of quotations from Hawthorne in which he cannot possibly show to advantage. But the decline that sets in after *The House of Seven Gables* itself involves important factors that must at last be considered, and until that time one can but ask the reader who may not be deeply familiar with Hawthorne to withhold his judgment which, on the basis of such a showing, could scarcely be favourable. For it would be a pity if, even momentarily, Mr. Garnett's sneer at Hawthorne should seem justified.

## II

The relation between *The Blithedale Romance* and *The Bostonians* has never, I believe, been commented on, and yet, for the Hawthornian influence on James, it is of the first importance. I wish to trace the outline of that influence in *The Bostonians*, but it is a task one undertakes with diffidence, for the relationship is frequently a hidden one, and its strongest pressures are sometimes felt on more or less concealed areas. At the outset James has placed a distraction in the way. Writing of *The Bostonians* in his *Notebooks* in 1883, when the project was just getting under way, James said:

Daudet's *Evangeliste* has given me the idea of this thing. I wished to write a very *American* tale, a tale very characteristic of our social conditions, and I asked myself what was the most salient and peculiar point in our social life. The answer was the situation of women, the decline of the sentiment of sex, the agitation on their behalf. But such a notice as this serves only as a distraction, it presents no real difficulty, for if Daudet's Madame Autheman helped to focus the question, it had been Hawthorne, years before who had provided the answer before the question had been asked. In his *Life of Hawthorne* (1879), James had already noted that answer, and if he now preferred giving credit to Daudet it is probable that his sensibility had simply 'moved on' to such an extent that he failed to note the rate at which he was taking hints from the Hawthorne novel he had known for so many years.

There is a difficulty in speaking of the 'influence' any novel may have had on another. This difficulty is intrinsic in the nature of the novel itself. The 'influence' is likely to be spread out over a much wider—and mostly unquotable—area than is the case with a poem or play, and it is likely to show itself in a wider variety of ways than is usual in the other instances. And prose rhythm, however personal and distinguished, exhibits an absorbent quality that is in contrast with the revealing intensity with which an 'influence' may be said to vibrate in the more luminous medium of poetry. James had written in his *Life of Hawthorne*: 'There is no strictness in the representation by novelists of persons who have struck them in life, and there can in the nature of things be none. From the moment the imagination takes a hand in the

game the inevitable tendency is to divergence to following what may be called new scents. The original gives hints, but the writer does what he likes with them and imports new elements into the picture. But if this is true in the representation by novelists of persons who have struck them in life it is far more true in their representation of the persons and events and intentions that have struck them in fiction. Such an influence in other words, must be largely a history of divergence and the interest for us in comparing *The Blithedale Romance* with *The Bostonians* is simply that we are able to chart out the course of the divergence with some accuracy. To do so helps illuminate the artistic intentions of both writers, and it helps to deepen the continuity of the American tradition.

*The Blithedale Romance* was suggestive to James in the first place in having provided a background scene which he wished not so much to emulate as to improve upon. In 1883 James had said that he wanted to write in *The Bostonians* a very American tale a tale very characteristic of our social conditions. But four years before his criticism of *The Blithedale Romance* had made the point even more explicitly.

I should have liked to see the story concern itself more with the little community in which its earlier scenes are laid and avail itself of so excellent an opportunity for describing unhackneyed specimens of human nature. I have already spoken of the absence of satire in the novel, of its not aiming in the least at satire, and of its offering no grounds for complaint as an invidious picture. Indeed, the Brethren of Brook Farm should have held themselves slighted rather than misrepresented, and have regretted that the admirable genius who for awhile was numbered among them should have treated their institution mainly as a perch for starting upon an imaginative flight.

But if Hawthorne neglected to fill in the details of the Utopians at Brook Farm, there were enough *positive* hints in other directions that James was willing to utilize—particularly the theme of women's rights that he considered so typical of the American scene. The accent of Mrs. Farrinder or Olive Chancellor or Verena Tarrant when they are eloquent on that subject James might have learned directly from experience, and yet it is difficult to think that dialogue like the following was not ringing in James's memory when he came to ask himself what was the most salient and peculiar point in our social life.

'Since her interview with Westervelt, Zenobia's continued inequalities of temper had been rather difficult for her friends to bear. On the first Sunday after that incident when Hollingsworth had clambered down from Eliot's pulpit, she declaimed with great earnestness and passion nothing short of anger, on the injustice which the world did to women, and equally to itself by not allowing them in freedom and honor, and with the fullest



welcome, their natural utterance in public

“‘It shall not always be so!’” cried she “‘If I live another year, I will lift up my own voice in behalf of women’s wider liberty””

She perhaps saw me smile

“‘What manner of ridicule do you find in this, Miles Coverdale?’ exclaimed Zenobia with a flash of anger in her eyes “‘That smile, permit me to say, makes me suspicious of a low tone of feeling and shallow thought. It is my belief—yes and my prophecy, should I die before it happens—that, when my sex shall achieve its rights, there will be ten eloquent women where there is now one eloquent man. Thus far no woman in the world has ever spoken out her whole heart and her whole mind. The mistrust and disapproval of the vast bulk of society throttles us as with two gigantic hands at our throats! We mumble a few weak words, it is true, on a limited range of subjects. But the pen is not for woman. Her power is too natural and immediate. It is with the living voice alone that she can compel the world to recognize the light of her intellect and the depth of her heart!’”

Verena Tarrant’s ‘gift’ of eloquence may not be directly traceable to Zenobia, whose record in that line is sufficiently remarkable yet the accent of Zenobia’s public manner (and her manner is never more public than when she is most private) is curiously near the idiom of the reformers in *The Bostonians*. This idiom as used by Hawthorne and James, and a little later by W. D. Howells in *The Undiscovered Country*—an unsatisfactory novel that is, at least in its first part, deeply indebted to both its distinguished predecessors—is undoubtedly in touch with the facts as they were, but the line of influence should not on that account, be under-estimated. The tone of Verena Tarrant’s little speech at Miss Birdseye’s, to take one of a number of possibilities, comes too near the Blithedale precedent for accidental similarity to seem a wholly plausible explanation.

‘I am only a girl, a simple American girl, and of course I haven’t seen much and there is a great deal of life that I don’t know anything about. But there are some things I feel—it seems to me as if I had been born to feel them, they are in my ears in the stillness of the night and before my face in the visions of the darkness. It is what the great sisterhood of women might do if they should all join hands, and lift up their voices above the brutal uproar of the world, in which it is so hard for the plea of mercy or of justice, the moan of weakness and suffering to be heard. We should quench it, we should make it still, and the sound of our lips would become the voice of universal peace! For this we must trust one another we must be true and gentle and kind. We must remember that the world is ours too, ours—little as we have ever had to say about anything!—and that the question is not yet definitely settled whether it will be a place of injustice or a place of love!’

Verena's style, of course, is her own and Zenobia's however some where between Verena's and Mrs Farrinder's but in *The Blithedale Romance* Hawthorne had laid down the suffragist vocabulary and the Transcendental speech rhythms authoritatively as far as literature was concerned and James had the advantage of all Hawthorne had already done—and not done. For although it is difficult to believe Zenobia's eloquence (despite Miles Coverdale's smile) is presented with a minimum of satirical intention on Hawthorne's part

James must also have got the idea for Selah Tarrant's mesmeric exhibition the purpose of which was to calm his daughter before one of her talks from the somewhat similar performance of Westervelt over the Veiled Lady. Although the surfaces of the suave Westervelt and Selah Tarrant are so opposite as moral quantities they add up to almost identical portions. But it is part of Hawthorne's failure that Westervelt is endowed with a sinister Gothic quality that is radically misleading in any attempted valuation of what Westervelt stands for. The right note is struck in the matter of teeth. In the excess of his delight, Hawthorne writes of Westervelt 'he opened his mouth wide, and disclosed a gold band around the upper part of his teeth, thereby making it apparent that every one of his brilliant grinders and incisors was a sham. This discovery affected me very oddly. I felt as if the whole man were a moral and physical humbug.' Selah Tarrant one remembers, had a fatuous habit of unfurling his wrinkles and showing his back teeth in what Olive Chancellor once thought of as his terrible smile, a smile that had the effect of illuminating Selah's moral quality, or lack of it.

James complained of 'the absence of satire' in *The Blithedale Romance* 'of its not aiming in the least at satire, and of its offering no grounds for complaint as an invidious picture'. To read *The Blithedale Romance* in the light of this comment, and to compare its characters fading away from time to time into unrealized shadows, with the sharply defined and clearly lighted characters in *The Bostonians* is not only to understand why Hawthorne's novel fails, but why it failed in a way that James found useful as a study in writing his own book. Westervelt and Selah, since they are already up for discussion, may serve to point the divergence in method. If Hawthorne's sense of evil was intense, his grasp of its concrete manifestations could sometimes be relatively relaxed, and his attempt to supply Westervelt with the accoutrements of Gothic Romance simply fail. The false teeth are right, or would be if they did not incongruously contradict all the other notes in the picture—the dark handsomeness, the worldly polish. And Westervelt's mesmeric talent instead of deepening the mystery Hawthorne so insistently invites to hang over his head, merely heightens the farce. His vaguely glimpsed past offers itself to the imagination as something merely cheap and more vulgar than immoral. Hawthorne didn't know his man—didn't even know his evil, and this must have been one of the chief points against which

James reacted. How he reacted we know for odd as it may seem, Selah is the counterpart of Westervelt in *The Bostomans*. Both are mesmerists who give public performances involving about the same degree and kind of charlatanism both have highly questionable personal histories, and if Selah is the father of a girl prodigy who literally sells his daughter to Olive Chancellor, Westervelt is the brother-in-law (apparently) of Priscilla (who, under the title of The Veiled Lady is also a girl prodigy in the mesmeric line) and he exploits her in the same way that Selah has exploited Verena. It will be seen that James took over these counters and rearranged them with far greater coherence in his own novel—but the parallelism is evident enough.

In stripping Selah of every vestige of Gothicism, James showed him up with a cruel explicitness that, while in no way minimizing the evil' that Westervelt represented, provided a scathing comment on the nature of that evil and by carrying it over into a realm of social comedy related it to the whole milieu that had produced it in the first place. *The Bostomans* is one of James's wittiest novels—and one in which the wit, without losing a degree of status is sometimes played with unusual broadness. To call its comedy 'brilliant' would be to insist on the moral illumination that reveals the dimensions of its meaning rather than on the mere glitter of surfaces that is usually accepted as justification for that adjective when applied to comedy in the social mode. The shifting distinction between comedy and tragedy is perhaps, finally dependent on a radical ambiguity in the nature of moral experience itself, but whatever the explanation the comic effects that James brings off on his carefully plotted stage frequently seem to be performed on trap doors opening immediately into subterranean regions of a vastly different character. To illustrate what I mean with a single but typical instance, one might take an excerpt from a description of Selah. He is being considered here from the viewpoint of his long-suffering and not too intelligent wife.

Her husband always had tickets for lectures, in moments of irritation at the want of a certain sequence in their career, she had remarked to him that it was the only thing he did have. The memory of all the winter nights they had tramped through the slush (the tickets, alas! were not car tickets) to hear Mrs. Ada T. P. Foat discourse on the "Summer-land", came back to her with bitterness. Selah was quite enthusiastic at one time about Mrs. Foat, and it was his wife's belief that he had been associated with her (that was Selah's expression in referring to such episodes) at Cayuga'

Everything from the superb name, Mrs. Ada T. P. Foat, and the title of her lecture, to that admirably chosen word, 'discourse', is right. The effect is deliciously comic, but when we hear Cayuga mentioned the comedy suddenly assumes a darker kind of life, different from what it was a moment before. We recall that Cayuga has just been mentioned a few pages back. Selah Tarrant had 'been

for a while a member of the celebrated Cayuga community where there were no wives or no husbands or something of that sort (Mrs Tarrant could never remember) The evil that Selah represents carries the odour of disinfectants about it in that beautifully built up word associated, and if he is comic Selah nevertheless is an actively sordid presence in the book that Westervelt could not begin to emulate in *Blithedale* In connection with this passage, one recalls from a later chapter the occasion of Verena's first visit to Olive Chancellor

Verena talked of the marriage-tie as she would have talked of the last novel—as if she had heard it as frequently discussed, and at certain times, listening to the answers she made to her questions, Olive Chancellor closed her eyes in the manner of a person waiting till giddiness passed Her young friend's revelations gave her a vertigo they made her perceive everything from which she should have rescued her Verena was perfectly uncontaminated, and she would never be touched by evil, but though Olive had no views about the marriage-tie except that she should hate it for herself—that particular reform she did not propose to consider—she didn't like the atmosphere of circles in which such institutions were called into question She had no wish now to enter into an examination of that particular one nevertheless, to make sure, she would just ask Verena whether she disapproved of it

Well I must say, said Miss Tarrant, I prefer free unions

The effect of Cayuga and Selah's associations has clearly been to confirm Verena's remarkable innocence Her preference for free unions falls from her lips with charming modesty, as proof against the tortured nerves of Olive Chancellor as it is against the extravagant fraudulency of her father James's tremendous and precise control over this vocabulary, his ability to impart even a human warmth to his sterilized phrases when they fall from the proper lips, make it possible for him to chisel his characters and values out of a hard rock of reality that gives him the right to challenge *The Blithedale Romance* He was determined to make *The Bostonians* a satire in a way he almost resentfully recognized *Blithedale* failed and to bring his full genius to the task of offering in *The Bostonians* grounds for complaint as an invidious picture It may have been because he felt guilty that he defended himself so earnestly to his brother when the latter charged him with having modelled Miss Birdseye on Hawthorne's aged but still living sister-in-law At any rate the defence is not convincing

But if *The Blithedale Romance* was suggestive to James in the respects enumerated above its chief suggestiveness must surely have resided in the way Hawthorne described the strange domination Zenobia exercised over Priscilla This theme is ultimately incoherent and again Hawthorne seems in doubt as to what he is doing But the theme as he develops it implies on the surface everything

that James was to take up so richly in the Chancellor-Tarrant relation Zenobia, except in her dominating quality does not equate with Olive Chancellor, but this 'divergence is something that embodies a good deal of interest in itself, and will have to be examined in some detail later on. Here in the beginning one might offer a quotation or two to indicate the emotional quality of the relationship. Zenobia is not the aggressive element in the way that Olive Chancellor is, Priscilla is so deliberately the victim that it is impossible to feel much sympathy for her, and in the passage below she seems more like Olive Chancellor in Verena's role than like Verena herself. This passage, taken from Chapter IV, describes Priscilla's first meeting with Zenobia. Miles Coverdale, the narrator, has just arrived at Blithedale (the Brook Farm of the story) to begin his experiment in Utopianism. It is the evening of a cold New England April day, and Coverdale and his colleagues (including Zenobia) are sitting around the fire in the farmhouse kitchen after supper awaiting the arrival of another member of the community, Hollingsworth. Suddenly there is a knock at the door, and Hollingsworth enters with an unexpected guest.

The stranger or whatever she were remained standing precisely on that spot of the kitchen floor to which Hollingsworth's kindly hand had impelled her. The cloak falling partly off, she was seen to be a very young woman dressed in a poor but decent gown, made high in the neck, and without any regard to fashion or smartness. Her brown hair fell down from beneath a hood, not in curls but with only a slight wave, her face was of a wan almost sickly hue, betokening almost habitual seclusion from the sun and free atmosphere, like a flower-shrub that had done its best to blossom in too scanty light. To complete the pitableness of her aspect she shivered either with cold, or fear, or nervous excitement, so that you might have beheld her shadow vibrating on the fire-lighted wall. In short, there has seldom been seen so depressed and sad a figure, as this young girl's

\* \* \* \*

'As yet the girl had not stirred. She stood near the door, fixing a pair of large brown, melancholy eyes upon Zenobia—only upon Zenobia!—she evidently saw nothing else in the room, save that bright, fair, rosy, beautiful woman. It was the strangest look I ever witnessed, long a mystery to me and forever a memory. Once she seemed about to move forward and greet her—I know not with what warmth or with what words—but, finally, instead of doing so, she dropped upon her knees, clasped her hands, and gazed piteously into Zenobia's face. Meeting no kindly reception, her head fell on her bosom.

'I never thoroughly forgave Zenobia for her conduct on this occasion. But women are always more cautious in their casual hospitalities than men.

' 'What does the girl mean?' cried she in a rather sharp

tone 'Is she crazy? Has she no tongue?

And here Hollingsworth stepped forward

'No wonder if the poor child's tongue is frozen in her mouth' said he and I think he positively frowned at Zenobia 'The very heart will be frozen in her bosom unless you women can warm it among you with the warmth that ought to be in your own

'You do not quite do me justice Mr Hollingsworth' said she almost humbly 'I am willing to be kind to the poor girl Is she a protégée of yours? What can I do for her'

'Have you anything to ask of this lady?' said Hollingsworth kindly to the girl 'I remember you mentioned her name before we left town'

'Only that she will shelter me' replied the girl tremulously 'Only that she will let me be always near her

Well, indeed', exclaimed Zenobia recovering herself, and laughing 'this is an adventure, and well worthy to be the first incident in our life of love and free-heartedness'

In the end Priscilla somewhat incredibly turns out to be Zenobia's half-sister—a fact of which Priscilla, but not Zenobia has been aware all along but this fact is not revealed until late in the book and even when it comes it does little towards offering an acceptable explanation of the psychological nature of the exhibition that has been offered Hawthorne develops the theme along the lines indicated in the above passage, and finally offers something in the nature of a solution by making both Priscilla and Zenobia fall in love with the same man—Hollingsworth It is clear that Hawthorne in describing the friendship of Priscilla and Zenobia was not consciously attempting anything like James undertook in *The Bostonians* James had written in his Notebooks 'The relation of the two girls should be a study of one of those friendships between women which are so common in New England' Hawthorne had quite accidentally blundered into the psychological aspect of the theme and having it on his hands, was quite incapable of evaluating it The passage below reveals Hawthorne at his worst

It was curious to observe how trustingly and yet how timidly our poor Priscilla betook herself into the shadow of Zenobia's protection She sat beside her on a stool, looking up, every now and then, with an expression of humble delight, at her new friend's beauty A brilliant woman is often an object of the devoted admiration—it might almost be termed worship or idolatry—of some young girl, who perhaps beholds the cynosure only at an awful distance and has as little hope of personal intercourse as of climbing among the stars of heaven We men are too gross to comprehend it Even a woman, of mature age, despises or laughs at such a passion There occurred to me no mode of accounting for Priscilla's behaviour, except by supposing that she had read some of Zenobia's stories (as such literature goes everywhere) or her tracts in defence of the sex,

and had come hither with the one purpose of being her slave. There is nothing parallel to this I believe—nothing so foolishly disinterested and hardly anything so beautiful—in the masculine nature at whatever epoch of life, or if there be a fine and rare development of character might reasonably be looked for from the youth who should prove himself capable of such self-forgetful affection’

This kind of unintelligence one can't help thinking must have been partly due to the Transcendental sweetness of Mrs Hawthorne that was at last beginning 'to tell' on her husband. This passage is important because it spots a defect of sensibility that was to make it impossible for Hawthorne to effect a successful transition between the manner of his two early romances and the realistic mode he was striving after in *Blithedale*. And yet Hawthorne could on occasion deal well enough with manners and society. There are a few effective scenes in *Blithedale* in which the realism is perfectly successful and one remembers the dozens of wonderful scenes and passages in the *English Notebooks* that prove Hawthorne was not lacking in this kind of talent. What he did lack was a seasoned and maturely focussed experience of the world. The deficiency so glaring in the above passage—a deficiency that relates to the fundamental failure in *The Marble Faun*—is broadly speaking, a deficiency of education—the absence of a tradition of manners that might have formed and refined the essential moral perceptions that come out so strongly in the earlier work. The evaluation or judgment in the passage in question is at bottom, essentially an evaluation of manners, however deceptively it may pass itself off as one of morals (to momentarily propose a dichotomy between the two). There was a yawning discrepancy in the New England tradition between the two terms, and it was this discrepancy that compelled Hawthorne to use the 'romance' (as he called it) rather than the novel form. The failure of Hawthorne's late work is not a personal failure—it is a failure in his background—something omitted from his tradition and training. But however much we may excuse the unpalatable muddle-headedness of the above passage (or not excuse it. D. H. Lawrence once wrote of this aspect of Hawthorne, 'one feels like giving Nathaniel a kick in the seat of his poor little pants'), it remained a blot that could be erased from the American tradition only by the brilliant corrective insights of *The Bostonians*. One now understands fully what James meant when he wrote 'The portion of the story that strikes me as least felicitous is that which deals with Priscilla, and with her mysterious relation to Zenobia.' Whether there was a conscious recognition of work to be done or not, it must have been when he read that passage that James instinctively took the line of duty that culminated in his greatest American novel.

*The Blithedale Romance* then, offers a set of counters that James found ready for re-shifting in *The Bostonians*. We have women's rights, mesmerism, Boston, the suggestion of a neurotic

friendship between two women. It also offered a suggestive set of characters. We have already considered how James was able to transform Westervelt into Selah Tarrant. But Hollingsworth the reformer, has certain affinities with Basil Ransom. Both men save their respective heroines by marrying them at the last minute. Hollingsworth in Chapter XXIII of *Blithedale* turns up at a lyceum hall in a Massachusetts village at which there is to be a mesmeric exhibition involving the Veiled Lady. The New England audience is gathered and the performance begins. A bearded personage in Oriental robes makes an address on hypnotism. Hollingsworth recognizes the mesmerist as Westervelt and a moment later he recognizes Westervelt's subject despite the veil as Priscilla. Westervelt proceeds to induce a trance in Priscilla, or rather he fails to induce one.

Greatly to the Professor's discomposure however just as he spoke these words the Veiled Lady arose. There was a mysterious tremor that shook the magic veil. The spectators it may be, imagined that she was about to take flight into that invisible sphere, and to the society of those purely spiritual beings with whom they reckoned her so near akin. Hollingsworth a moment ago had mounted the platform and now stood gazing at the figure with a sad intentness that brought the whole power of his great, stern yet tender soul into his glance.

'Come,' said he waving his hand towards her. 'You are safe!'

She threw off the veil and stood before that multitude of people pale, tremulous, shrinking as if only then had she discovered that a thousand eyes were gazing at her. 'Poor maiden! How strangely had she been betrayed! Blazoned abroad as a wonder of the world and performing what were adjudged as miracles—in the faith of many a seeress and a prophetess in the harsher judgment of others a mountebank—she had kept, as I religiously believe, her virgin reserve and sanctity of soul throughout it all. Within that encircling veil though an evil hand had flung it over her there was as deep a seclusion as if this forsaken girl had all the while been sitting under the shadow of Eliot's pulpit in the Blithedale woods at the feet of him who now summoned her to the shelter of his arms. And the true heart-throb of a woman's affection was too powerful for the jugglery that had hitherto environed her. She uttered a shriek, and fled to Hollingsworth, like one escaping from her deadliest enemy, and was safe forever.'

The manner in which this must have given hints for the closing chapter of *The Bostonians* should scarcely require emphasizing here. The reader is referred again to that last scene in James's novel in which Basil Ransom carries Verena triumphantly away to marriage from the Boston Music Hall just before her appearance to the impatient audience on the night that was to have been her greatest triumph. But if the above passage was the hint that James acted on, one can only say again how immeasurably better he did it.



Verena's innocence is a positively realized thing in James that does not need the symbolical operation of a mystic veil to protect it from vulgar violation. It beautifully protects itself. We know that if James took the cue, he also took the warning. Hawthorne is rather too fond of Sibylline attributes—a taste of the same order as his disposition to which I have already alluded, to talk about spheres and sympathies. As he made clear, he really didn't like the Veiled Lady.

The history of Westervelt's and Hollingsworth's influence in shaping the characters of Selah Tarrant and Basil Ransom is one of 'divergence'. But if the 'divergence' is marked in the case of the two men, it is even more curiously so with Zenobia and Priscilla. James's imagination was stimulated by Zenobia, and he showed marked partiality for her. At the cost of repeating a quotation already given in part, I must give James's full tribute to Zenobia here.

'The finest thing in *The Blithedale Romance* is the character of Zenobia, which I have said elsewhere strikes me as the nearest approach that Hawthorne has made to the complete creation of a *person*. She is more concrete than Hester or Miriam, or Hilda or Phoebe; she is a more definite image, produced by a greater multiplicity of touches. It is idle to inquire too closely whether Hawthorne had Margaret Fuller in his mind in constructing the figure of this brilliant specimen of the strong-minded class, and endowing her with the genius of conversation, or, on the assumption that such was the case, to compare the image at all strictly with the model. There is no strictness in the representation by novelists of persons who have struck them in life, and there can in the nature of things be none. From the moment the imagination takes a hand in the game, the inevitable tendency is to divergence, to following what may be called new scents. The original gives hints, but the writer does what he likes with them, and imports new elements into the picture. If there is this amount of reason for referring the wayward heroine of *Blithedale* to Hawthorne's impression of the most distinguished woman of her day in Boston, that Margaret Fuller was the only literary lady of eminence whom there is any sign of his having known, that she was proud, passionate, and eloquent, that she was much connected with the little world of Transcendentalism out of which the experiment of Brook Farm sprung, and that she had a miserable end and a watery grave—if these are facts to be noted on the one side, I say on the other, the beautiful and sumptuous Zenobia, with her rich and picturesque temperament and physical aspects, offers many points of divergence from the plain and strenuous invalid who represented feminine culture in the suburbs of the New England metropolis. This picturesqueness of Zenobia is very happily indicated and maintained, she is a woman in all the force of the term, and there is something very vivid and powerful in her large expression of womanly gifts and weaknesses.'

It is no wonder that feeling as he did about Zenobia, James felt that the relationship she was put into with Priscilla represented a kind of inartistic double dealing on Hawthorne's part. In writing *The Bostonians* James may be said in one sense to have avenged Zenobia and completely exculpated her by showing in Olive Chancellor what in such a relation Zenobia would have been. In that description of the first meeting between Priscilla and Zenobia it is Olive Chancellor with her morbid shyness, her pale pointed features, her nervous manner and her precipitate flood of emotion during her first private interview with Verena that Priscilla reminds one of. And it is on the other hand the highly coloured Verena that Zenobia suggests—Zenobia with the tropical or the jewelled flower in her hair, Verena white as women are who have that shade of red hair, they look as if their blood had gone into it. And both Zenobia and Verena are almost defined in the purity, one might almost say the innocence of their theatricality. James says of Verena, 'If she had produced a pair of castnets or a tambourine [Ransom] felt that such accessories would have been quite in keeping.' And Hawthorne in a similar accent says of Zenobia, 'It was wronging the rest of mankind to retain her as the spectacle of only a few. The stage would have been her proper sphere. And both women naturally have a highly histrionic sense of dress.'

When James came to create Verena Tarrant he gave her the role of Priscilla, but he conferred—with a far finer sense of the situation than Hawthorne had displayed—the charm, beauty and eloquence of Zenobia on her. The motives of Zenobia's victimization of Priscilla remain obscure in Hawthorne. James firmly lodged the motive of Olive Chancellor's victimization of Verena in Olive's own character and presented a pre-Freudian psychological study of astonishing penetration. On each re-reading the sense of how perfectly James understood the workings of complex hidden tensions comes out freshly and stronger than before. Gide complained that James always left out 'all the wild darkness, a charge that irritates me increasingly with time for James is one of the few novelists who do not require a stage blackout to conceal the incapacities of their own psychological, artistic, and moral understandings.'

Quantitatively speaking Olive Chancellor has a greater burden of guilt to carry than any of the characters in *The Blithedale Romance* or she would have if true self-knowledge formed any part of her character. The evil theme of dominance is parcelled out in *Blithedale*. We have Westervelt's 'dominance' over Zenobia, Zenobia's 'dominance' over Priscilla and Hollingsworth's dominance over Zenobia. All these dominances are compressed in *The Bostonians* into the single theme of Olive Chancellor's dominance over Verena. And this theme is treated with an understanding and a fullness of development that Hawthorne in any one of his three 'dominances' or in all of them put together, cannot begin to equal. James's understanding

of how to relate the characters to each other, how much substance and 'interest' to give them precisely how to define their respective functions, could not be improved upon. His rearrangements' introduce the brightest clarity into the *Blithedale* shadows and confusion.

It remains only to consider Hawthorne's and James's final disposal of their characters. Faced with defeat, both Zenobia and Olive court martyrdom—Zenobia, literally in a dramatic suicide, and Olive, figuratively, taking upon herself the hideous task of doing what James has made it inescapably clear her whole soul would most recoil from—announcing to the disappointed, shouting audience in the Music Hall that Miss Tarrant would not speak that evening.

'If he [Ransom] had observed her, it might have seemed to him that she hoped to find the fierce expiation she sought for in exposure to the thousands she had disappointed and deceived in offering herself to be trampled to death and torn to pieces. She might have suggested to him some feminine firebrand of Paris revolutions, erect on a barricade, or even the sacrificial figure of Hypatia, whirled through the furious mob of Alexandria.

The suicide of Zenobia herself James considered nearly the most tragical denouement in all Hawthorne. As for Priscilla and Verena—if they are 'saved' at last, the nature of the salvation in both cases is open to question. Hawthorne is more explicit than James. We have a glimpse of Priscilla years later, taking a walk through the woods with Hollingsworth, who seems to have attained to a remarkably precocious senility, thereby forcing on the willing Priscilla the role of a trained nurse. If on the other hand Basil Ransom doesn't have anything to expiate (Hollingsworth's 'dominance' over Zenobia, is of course, his 'crime', for which it appears, Priscilla is likely to suffer equally with the culprit) there are some remarkable hardinesses in his character. They are necessary one feels if he was to defeat Olive Chancellor. But their presence hardly makes the prospect any better for Verena, and James ends on this note:

'Ah, now I am glad!' said Verena when they reached the street. But though she was glad he presently discovered that beneath her hood, she was in tears. It is to be feared that with the union, so far from brilliant, into which she was about to enter, these were not the last she was destined to shed.'

The relationship then, between *The Blithedale Romance* and *The Bostonians* seems to be, point by point, nearer than between any other of Hawthorne's and James's novels. It has seemed worth examining at considerable length at the outset of this essay, because it is not a case of simple parallelism or an exhibition of 'influence' only. It would be easy to point out several dozen instances of that sort of thing in James's novels where, in some concrete particular, some turn of plot or twist of character, James had demonstrably borrowed consciously or unconsciously, from the earlier novelist.

Mr F O Matthiessen in *The American Renaissance* has mentioned a number of these parallelisms but if they are to be useful they should lead beyond themselves back to deeper similarities and mutual participations. The similarity between these two novels is important not simply as exhibiting James's indebtedness to Hawthorne but because both men are seen to be working in a tradition (as well as making it) to be dealing with moral quantities so permanently and recognizably established in the American scene that the success could not in James's case be a matter merely of discovery or of aboriginal insight working on untreated material. Part of the success of *The Bostonians* is a matter of subtle creative pressures, of skilled and instructed reticences and boldnesses of a security of knowledge that could only have occurred where there were the beginnings of a tradition trained (even if imperfectly trained) in handling that particular knowledge. It is an interesting comment on the important function of tradition in the creative act that James's masterpiece among the American novels should have had so conspicuous a precursor in American literature. Those who like to call James an international novelist are usually prompt to supply some European lineage or other but if the American half of the equation is to be filled out Hawthorne's is the only name that fits.

The question of whether or not James was conscious of 'using *The Blithedale Romance* for his own novel is unimportant. The device of the portrait in *The Sense of the Past* unquestionably derived in its ultimate source from Colonel Pyncheon's portrait in *The House of Seven Gables* and yet in the notes for the unfinished novel one can see James working into the idea of its function in his plot with no conscious sense whatever of Hawthorne's precedent. He had known Hawthorne too long and too intimately to be much concerned with him at that level of awareness, but this so far from minimizing the indebtedness proclaims its depth and suffusion. The question of how *consciously* James drew on *Blithedale* can, perhaps, be better answered when the nature of the two men's relationship has been more fully explored. But in the meantime it might be well to bear in mind as decidedly relevant to *The Bostonians* one of James's many tributes to Hawthorne:

Out of the soil of New England he sprang—in a crevice of that immitigable granite he sprouted and bloomed. Half of the interest that he possesses for an American reader with any turn for analysis must reside in his latent New England savour, and I think it no more than just to say that whatever entertainment he may yield to those who know him at a distance, it is an almost indispensable condition of properly appreciating him to have received a personal impression of the manners, the morals, indeed of the very climate, of the great region of which the remarkable city of Boston is the metropolis.

# THE SHAKESPEAREAN DIALECTIC

## AN ASPECT OF 'ANTONY & CLEOPATRA'

AT each stage in his development Shakespeare displays a surprising capacity for renewal. Let us assume that *Antony and Cleopatra* comes after *King Lear* that is goes with *Coriolanus* and that both it and *Coriolanus* immediately precede the so-called 'last period'. Between *Antony and Cleopatra* and the plays that have gone before there is no obvious connection in theme or technique. At the same time, only Plutarch links it with *Coriolanus*. Nothing in it would normally prepare us for *Cymbeline* or *The Winter's Tale* to follow. This apparent isolation is one of the main obstacles to arriving at a correct focus on the play. There seems to be a break in the internal continuity of the Shakespearean series—a continuity of series which stretches, I think from *Henry VI* to *King Lear* at least and which could possibly be extended to include *Timon* though here again there is something of a lesion and special factors external to the inner biography of Shakespeare as a playwright might have to be invoked to explain all that is happening. *Timon* however, it might be granted is the aftermath of *King Lear*. Can the same be said about *Antony and Cleopatra*? This is the broad problem which I propose to examine.

### I

To describe the swiftness of *Antony and Cleopatra* we need to draw on the imagery of the cinema. There is more cinematic movement, more panning, tracking and playing with the camera more mixing of shots than in any other of Shakespeare's tragedies. At the same time the technique is always under deliberate, almost cool, control. *Antony and Cleopatra* has none of the haphazardness of *Pericles* nor any of the plot-imposed vagaries of the last period. The technique is inwardly related to the meaning Shakespeare has to express. What is indicated is not enervation or indifference but rather what Coleridge recognized as 'giant power, an 'angelic strength'.

The swift traverse of time and space has often been commented upon. There is also the mixing. Egypt is called up vividly in Rome by Enobarbus' descriptions. Rome is always felt as a real presence in Egypt. On the frontiers of Empire Ventidius discusses what repercussions his victories will have on the people at staff-headquarters. Equally the present is interpenetrated by the past. Antony's past, particularly, is always powerfully put before us.

## Antony,

Leave thy lascivious wassails When thou once  
 Was beaten from Modena where thou slew'st  
 Hirtius and Pansa, consuls at thy heels  
 Did famine follow, whom thou fought'st against  
 Though daintily brought up with patience more  
 Than savages could suffer thou didst drink  
 The stale of horses and the gilded puddle  
 Which beasts would cough at, thy palate then did deign  
 I he roughest berry on the rudest hedge,  
 Yea like the stag when snow the pasture sheets  
 It is reported thou didst eat strange flesh,  
 Which some did die to look on

So too is Cleopatra's

I found you as a morsel cold upon  
 Dead Caesar's trencher nay, you were a fragment  
 Of Cneus Pompey's, besides what hotter hours  
 Unregister'd in vulgar fame you have  
 Luxuriously pick'd out

The hinterland of the quarrels that alternately divide and bring together again the triumvirate is constantly being suggested, troubles, truces and manoeuvres that go back (like Cleopatra's love affairs) to Julius Caesar's days. In no other of his plays is Shakespeare at such pains to suggest the stream of time past and its steady course through the present. In the public world of Roman affairs this is especially so. In the other world of Cleopatra the same suggestion of perspective always frames what is said and done. Is Antony merely the last of a long succession of such lovers? Or is this affair singular and unique as all love-affairs claim to be? Not enough weight has been given in recent assessments of the play to the ambiguity which invests everything in Egypt equally with all things in Rome. Yet this ambiguity is central to Shakespeare's experience in the play. If it is wrong to see the 'mutual pair' as a strumpet and her fool it is also wrong to see them as a Phoenix and a Turtle.

In addition to the swiftness and the variety of the impacts, and the interpenetration of the parts of time and space as they mix in the speech of the people immediately before us, there is also the added burden which Shakespeare's giant power of compelling presentation imposes. The effects are at once those of a rapid impressionism and a careful lapidary enrichment. Each figure, however minor, has its moment when it comes up into the brilliant foreground light—the Soothsayer with his 'infinite book of secrecy' the Old Man wishing 'much joy o' the worm' Enobarbus describing the barge on the Nile Lepidus asking 'What manner o' thing is your crocodile?' Ventidius giving once for all the field-officer's view of the higher-ups, the Eunuch and the game of billiards, Dolabella Octavia, even Fulvia whom we never see the canvas seems covered with Constable's snow.

Another feature of Shakespeare's technique which makes for the impression of uniqueness might be pointed to here. Shakespeare seems to be innovating also in methods of character-portrayal. Some of the stage-conventions as described by Miss Bradbrook do not seem to apply. Which for example are we to believe—what Caesar says about Antony after he is dead, or what he says about him, and his conduct towards him, while he is alive? What was Fulvia's character about whom we have such conflicting reports? Throughout the play we are forced by Shakespeare himself not to take comment at its face value. Judgments are more personal here than elsewhere. Goneril and Regan discussing their father's condition are reliable judges. Caesar, Antony, Enobarbus the soldiers Demetrius and Philo, are not—or not to the same extent. Judgment knits itself back into character as it might do in Ibsen and character issues from a mutable and ambiguous flux of things. Antony's momentary *agnorisis* can be generalized to cover the whole play.

Sometimes we see a cloud that's dragonish,  
 A vapour sometimes like a bear or lion  
 A tower'd citadel, a pendant rock,  
 A forked mountain, or blue promontory,  
 With trees upon't, that nod unto the world  
 And mock our eyes with air: thou hast seen these signs,  
 They are black vespers pageants  
 That which is now a horse, even with a thought  
 The rack dissolves, and makes it indistinct  
 As water is in water  
 My good knave, Eros, now thy captain is  
 Even such a body here I am Antony,  
 Yet cannot hold this visible shape, my knave

There is something deliquescent in the reality behind the play. It is a deliquescence to the full display of which each judgment, each aspect pointed to, and each character, is necessary, always provided that no single one of these is taken as final. The proportion of comment and judgment on the central characters is higher in *Antony and Cleopatra* than anywhere else in Shakespeare. This further underlines its uniqueness and the difficulties of coming by an adequate final assessment. Antony and Cleopatra are presented in three ways. There is what is said about them, there is what they say themselves, there is what they do. Each of these might correspond to a different level of response. Each is in tension against the others. Each makes its continuous and insistent claim on the spectator for judgment in its own right. The pigments vividly opposed to each other on the canvas have to mix in the spectator's eye.

Underlying, however, the bewildering oscillations of scene, the over-lapping and pleating of different times and places, the co-presence of opposed judgments, the innumerable opportunities for radical choice to intervene, there is, I think, a deliberate logic. It

is this which gives the play its compact unity of effect and makes its movement a sign of angelic strength rather than a symptom of febrility. It is the logic of a peculiarly Shakespearean dialectic. Opposites are juxtaposed, mingled, married, then from the very union which seems to promise strength dissolution flows. It is the process of this dialectic—the central process of the play—which we must trace if we wish to arrive anywhere near Shakespeare's meaning.

## II

The first scene opens with Philo's comment on the 'dotage' of his general:

those his goodly eyes  
That o'er the files and musters of the war  
Have glow'd like plated Mars, now bend  
Thee office and devotion of their view  
Upon a tawny front, his captain's heart  
Which in the scuffles of great fights hath burst  
The buckles on his breast, reneges all temper  
And is become the bellows and the fan  
To cool a gipsy's lust.

Nothing more has time to be said. Antony and Cleopatra themselves appear. Their first words express the essence of romantic love—a tacit contradiction of all that Philo seems to have just suggested:

*Cleo* If it be love indeed, tell me how much  
*Ant* There's beggary in the love that can be reckon'd  
*Cleo* I'll set a bourn how far to be lov'd  
*Ant* Then must thou needs find out new heaven, new earth.

Again immediately, an attendant announces the arrival of news from Rome. The atmosphere of the Egyptian court changes. We see the opposite effects of the intrusion on the two it most concerns. Antony will not hear the messengers. Cleopatra insists that he shall. Antony is taunted with a wicked caricature of what the news might be, and of the relation in which he stands to Rome. Yet the version is sufficiently like to make Antony blush—from anger or shame, or both:

Your dismissal  
Is come from Caesar, therefore hear it, Antony,  
Where's Fulvia's process? Caesar's would I say? both?  
Call in the messengers. As I am Egypt's queen,  
Thou blushest, Antony, and that blood of thine  
Is Caesar's homager, else so thy cheek pays shame  
When shrill-tongued Fulvia scolds.

Antony's reaction is to pitch his romantic vows higher still, asserting his independence of Rome in terms that should leave no doubt as to where he stands:



Let Rome in Tiber melt, and the wide arch  
Of the rang'd empire fall! Here is my space  
Kingdoms are clay our dungy earth alike  
Feeds beast as man the nobleness of life  
Is to do thus, when such a mutual pain  
And such a twain can do t, in which I bind  
On pain of punishment the world to woe  
We stand up peerless

This again has all the ring of absolute and heroic self-committal  
Cleopatra's reply, however, is typical both of herself and of the  
ambivalence that runs through everything in the play

'Excellent falsehood!  
Why did he marry Fulvia and not love her?  
I'll seem the fool I am not, Antony  
Will be himself

Her first words might be oxymoron or plain disbelief. The next call  
up the vista of Antony's past with its broken pledges and un-  
conscious insincurities—if they were no more. Her last words are  
highly ambiguous and turn the whole situation upside-down: she  
is the helpless creature wilfully blinding and deceiving herself.  
Antony is the self-contained and calculating manipulator of her  
weaknesses. In replying Antony is like the man innocent of ju-  
jitsu who thinks he is pushing when really he is being pulled.

'But stirr'd by Cleopatra  
Now, for the love of Love and her soft hours,  
Let's not confound the time with conference harsh  
What sport tonight?

Shakespeare gives the operative lines a subtle falsity of note that  
could equally indicate hearty play-acting, slightly awkward self-  
consciousness, or wilful evasion. Cleopatra's answer is realist and  
comes with a new urgency.

'Hear the ambassadors'

It drives Antony also to something we can recognize as more fully  
himself—something that is perceptive and tinged with the masterful  
as well as the reckless.

'Fie, wrangling queen!  
Whom everything becomes, to chide, to laugh  
To weep, whose every passion fully strives  
To make itself in thee fair and admir'd  
No messenger, but thine, and all alone,  
Tonight we'll wander through the streets and note  
The qualities of people. Come, my queen,  
Last night you did desire it speak not to us'

This is not only Antony's view of Cleopatra's character, and a  
reliable account of what she is really like. It is also an expression

of the deliquescent reality at the heart of the play which incarnates itself most completely in the persons of the hero and heroine. After Antony's speech, with this two-fold authority it bears, the comment of the soldiers seems peculiarly limited and out of place.

*Dem* Is Caesar with Antonius priz'd so slight?  
*Phil* Sir, sometimes when he is not Antony,  
 He comes too short of that great property  
 Which still should go with Antony  
*Dem* I am full sorry  
 That he approves the common liar who  
 Thus speaks of him at Rome but I will hope  
 Of better deeds tomorrow

It serves to remind us, however, of the world that stands around the lovers, the world of the faithful soldier who can only understand the soldierly, the world of the common liar that enjoys the unpleasant 'truth', the world too of Rome and Caesar that is radically opposed to the world of Egypt and Cleopatra.

The first scene is only slightly more than sixty lines long. Yet it is sufficient to illustrate all the main features of the play we have pointed to, and extensive enough to set up the swinging ambivalences—the alternatives and ambiguities constantly proposed to choice—which will govern and control our whole reaction to the play. There is the speed and oscillation, the interpenetration of Rome and Egypt and of present and past. Above all there is the dialectic marriage of the contraries and their dissolution through union. The jealousy of Cleopatra towards Fulvia, the outrage of Caesar to Antony's *amour propre*—these negative repulsions can serve to hold the mutual pair together as firmly as positive attractions. Antony and Cleopatra are opposed to the world that surrounds and isolates them. In this isolation their union seems absolute, infinite, and self-sufficient. Yet the war of the contraries pervades the love too. In coming together they lapse, slide, and fall apart unceasingly.

The outstanding achievement of the first scene is the way in which it begins with the soldiers' condemnation and returns us at the end to the same thing—allowing for this side eighteen lines out of the sixty-two. Yet at the end we are no longer satisfied as to the adequacy of what Demetrius and Philo say. Not that what they say has been disproved by what we have seen of Antony and Cleopatra. They are and they remain a strumpet and her fool. To have any judgment at all is to choose, apparently, either the judgment of the soldiers at the beginning of the scene or the lovers' own self-assessment that immediately follows it (Coleridge chose the former, Dr Sitwell and Mr Traversi take the latter). To entertain either judgment, however, is not enough. The deliquescent truth is neither in them nor between them but contains both. *Antony and Cleopatra* is Shakespeare's critique of judgment.

Scene I played out romantic love and lovers quarrels on a

lofty stage. It also gave the sharp local comment of the soldiery. Scene II takes the theme of love below-stairs and changes key. It also gives the universal comment of the Soothsayer, with its suggestion that everything is already decided: the tragedy is in the nature of things, now is already over: the future past, the present always

'In nature's infinite book of secrecy  
A little can I read  
I make not but foresee  
You have seen and prov'd a fairer former fortune  
Than that which is to approach'

In place of the 'romance' of love, Charmian, Iras and Alexas give the 'reality'. The reality in this case is a strong succession of rich, powerful, and adequate males.

Let me be married to three kings in a forenoon and widow them all, let me have a child at fifty to whom Herod of Jewry may do homage, find me to marry with Octavius Caesar, and companion me with my mistress.

It reads like a parody of Cleopatra's aspirations: just as the women's bickering and teasing of Alexas mimic Cleopatra's handling of Antony.

'Alexas,—come, his fortune, his fortune. O! let him marry a woman—that cannot go: sweet Isis, I beseech thee, and let her die too, and give him a worse, and let worse follow worse: till the worst of all follow him laughing to his grave, fifty-fold a cuckold!'

This seems a nightmare version of Antony's fate—the reflection in a distorting mirror of the thoughts and feelings that course through Antony after Cleopatra's desertion in the disastrous sea-fight.

The group is interrupted in its fortune-telling by the entry of Cleopatra. She is looking for Antony. Her remarks prepare us for the different mood about to establish itself.

'Saw you my lord?  
He was dispos'd to mirth, but on the sudden  
A Roman thought hath struck him'

Antony is heard approaching. Cleopatra immediately goes off. Now that he is coming she will refuse to see him.

When Antony appears he is surrounded by the messengers from Rome and immersed in Roman affairs. He veers savagely to the point of view both of the soldiers in the first scene and 'the common liar' in Rome. Throughout the play this is what marks him off from Cleopatra and makes him a more complex meeting-ground for the opposites than even she is herself. He can understand and respond to the appeal of Rome as much as he can understand and respond to Egypt.

'Speak to me home: mince not the general tongue,  
Name Cleopatra as she's called in Rome,

Rail thou in Fulvia's phrase, and taunt my faults  
 With such full licence as both truth and malice  
 Have power to utter O! then we bring forth weeds  
 When our quick winds lie still, and our ills told us  
 Is as our earring Fare thee well awhile  
 These strong Egyptian fetters I must break,  
 Or lose myself in dotage'

The second messenger brings news of Fulvia's death. It is characteristic of the play that what is hated during life should find favour once it is dead. Later in this scene that is reported to be the case with Pompey in the popular reaction to him

our slippery people—  
 Whose love is never link'd to the deseruer  
 Till his deserts are past—begin to throw  
 Pompey the great and all his dignities  
 Upon his son'

This is what happens too in Antony's case when, once he is dead, Octavius sings his praises. It also happens when Cleopatra is thought to have committed suicide and Antony flings from vituperation to acclamation almost without pausing. It happens now with Fulvia. Antony says

There's a great spirit gone! Thus did I desire it  
 What our contempts do often hurl from us  
 We wish it ours again, the present pleasure,  
 By revolution lowering, does become  
 The opposite of itself she's good being gone  
 The hand could pluck her back that shov'd her on  
 I must from this enchanting queen break off

Typically, when he joins the general, Enobarbus summons all the counter-arguments. To leave Egypt would be to kill Cleopatra. 'She is cunning', Antony says, 'past man's thought' 'Alack, sir, no', Enobarbus rejoins,

her passions are made of nothing but the finest part of pure love  
 We cannot call her winds and waters sighs and tears, they are  
 greater storms and tempests than almanacs can report this  
 cannot be sunning in her, if it be, she makes a shower of rain  
 as well as Jove'

Even if we read Enobarbus' words as irony the double-irony that works by virtue of the constant ambivalence in the play still turns them back to something approaching the truth and Cleopatra's real distress and anxiety over Antony's departure have already cut through the scene like a knife. The ding-dong continues

*Ant* Would I had never seen her!  
*Eno* O, sir! you had then left unseen a wonderful piece of work

*Ant* Fulvia is dead  
*Eno* Sir?  
*Ant* Fulvia is dead  
*Eno* Fulvia?  
*Ant* Dead  
*Eno* Why, sir, give the gods a thankful sacrifice this  
 grief is crown'd with consolation your old smock brings  
 forth a new petticoat

Antony, however, has made up his mind to go back to Rome. Antony does go back to Rome—but not in the mood and not with the motives of thorough-going reformation in which he remains at the end of *Scene II*. In *Scene III* the alchemy of the Shakespearean process is further at work. It works to make Antony do the thing resolved upon but for reasons the very opposite of those which led him to the resolve. The scene of his departure is chosen for Cleopatra's most sincere avowal. Having tormented Antony beyond all bearing she suddenly breaks off with

'Courteous lord, one word  
 Sir you and I must part but that's not it,  
 Sir you and I have loved, but there's not it,  
 That you know well something it is I would—  
 O my oblivion is a very Antony  
 And I am all forgotten

Antony's final words in the scene almost catch the very idiom of *The Phoenix and the Turtle*

'Let us go Come  
 Our separation so abides and flies  
 That thou, residing here, go'st yet with me,  
 And I, hence fleeting, here remain with thee  
 Away!'

It is, so to speak, the honeymoon of the contraries—only possible while the lovers are apart

### III

The first three scenes show how pervasive is that quality in technique and vision which we have called the Shakespearean 'dialectic'. It comes out in single images, it can permeate whole speeches, it governs the build-up inside each scene: it explains the way one scene is related to another. The word 'dialectic', of course, is unfortunately post-Hegelian. The thing we wish to point to, however, in using the word, is Shakespearean. In *Antony and Cleopatra* Shakespeare needs the opposites that merge, unite, and fall apart. They enable him to handle the reality he is writing about—the vast containing opposites of Rome and Egypt, the World and the Flesh.

Rome is the sphere of the political. Shakespeare uses the contraries (long before Blake) to give some sort of rational account

of the irrationals there involved. The common people, for example is the common har' Antony has already noted that its love is never link'd to the deserver till his deserts are past. Caesar, too has his own cold knowledge of the same fact

'It hath been taught us from the primal state  
That he which is was wished until he were,  
And the ebb'd man, ne'er loved till ne'er worth love,  
Comes dear'd by being lack'd. This common body,  
Like to the vagabond flag upon the stream,  
Goes to and back lackeying the varying tide,  
To rot itself with motion'

The great men however, behave exactly as they say the commons do, too. With Antony Fulvia becomes dear'd by being lack'd. In Caesar's case it is the same. The threat of Pompey makes him suddenly appreciate the grandeur of Antony's leadership, courage and endurance. The magnanimous praise of Antony in Act V is only possible because Antony by then is dead. The law is general judgment is a kind of accommodation to the irrational on reason's part

'men's judgments are  
A parcel of their fortunes and things outward  
Do draw the inward quality after them,  
To suffer all alike'

Even soldierly honour is rooted in the ambiguous. When Pompey's man mentions his treacherous scheme for disposing of all Pompey's rivals at one blow (the rivals are also Pompey's guests on board ship) Pompey exclaims

'Ah, this thou should'st have done  
And not have spoke on't. In me 'tis villainy,  
In thee 't had been good service. Thou must know  
'Tis not my profit that does lead mine honour,  
Mine honour it. Repent that e'er thy tongue  
Hath so betray'd thine act, being done unknown.  
I should have found it afterwards well done,  
But must condemn it now'

The law is general because it reflects the nature of the terrene world—the tidal swing of the opposites on which all things balance on a motion that rots them away.

The self-destruction of things that rot with the motion which their own nature and situation dictate is almost obsessive with Shakespeare throughout the play. The political world is the manipulation of the common body they despise by the great men whom the commons can never love until they are safely rid of them. The pattern which remains constant in all the possible groupings is that of open conflict alternating with diseased truce, neither of them satisfactory.

'Equality of two domestic powers  
Breeds scrupulous faction The hated grown to strength  
Are newly grown to love  
And quietness, grown sick of rest would purge  
By any desperate change'

Compacts between the great men merely represent the temporary  
sinking of lesser enmities in front of greater

'lesser enmities give way to greater  
Were t not that we stand up against them all  
'Twere pregnant they would square amongst themselves

Pompey's is a correct appreciation It is because of him that  
Octavius and Antony are reconciled They will rivet the alliance  
by means of Antony's marriage to Caesar's sister Enobarbus knows  
automatically that this union is a certain way of making conflict  
ultimately inevitable

'you shall find the bond that seems to tie their friendship together  
will be the very strangler of their amity'

Octavia is one of Shakespeare's minor triumphs in the play,  
beautifully placed in relation to the main figures and the tenour of  
their meaning Her importance is apt to be overlooked unless her  
careful positioning is noted Her presence gives a symmetrical form  
to the main relations of the play Octavia is the opposite of  
Cleopatra as Antony is the opposite of Caesar She is woman made  
the submissive tool of Roman policy, whereas Cleopatra always  
strives to make the political subservient to her (It is the thought  
of being led in triumph by Caesar as much as the thought of  
Antony's death which finally decides Cleopatra for suicide) Where  
Caesar and Cleopatra are simple and opposite Octavia—like  
Antony—is a focal point for the contraries There is nothing in her  
as a 'character-study' to account for the effect her presence has  
It is rather that she is transparent to the reality behind the play  
and one of its least mistakable mediators On the occasions when  
she appears herself, or when mention is made of her, it is the inter-  
fluent life of this reality rather than the personality of its vehicle  
which fills the scene

Her first entry is significant It comes immediately after the  
triumvirate and Pompey have made their pact We have just  
heard the following satiric account of Lepidus' behaviour—and  
Lepidus, like Octavia, has to stand between the two demi-Atlases

*Agrippa* 'Tis a noble Lepidus  
*Eno* A very fine one O! how he loves Caesar  
*Agrippa* Nay, but how dearly he adores Mark Antony  
*Eno* Caesar? Why, he's the Jupiter of men!  
*Agrippa* What's Antony? the god of Jupiter  
*Eno* Spake you of Caesar? How, the nonpareil!  
*Agrippa* O Antony! O thou Arabian bird!

Then the triumvrate and Octavia come on Octavia stirs Antony deeply But the imagery in which his vision of her is clothed carries us past the person described to the 'varying tide' by which everything in the play is moved

Her tongue will not obey her heart nor can  
Her heart obey her tongue the swan s down feather  
That stands upon the swell of the full tide  
And neither way inclines'

Octavia never escapes from her position midway between the contraries that maintain and split the world With Antony away in Athens, her brother first falls on Pompey then finds a pretext to destroy Lepidus He is now ready to mount his attack on the last remaining rival his competitor in top of all design' Hearing of it Octavia cries

'A more unhappy lady,  
If this division chance, ne'er stood between,  
Praying for both parts  
Husband win, win brother  
Prays and destroys the prayer no midway  
'Twixt these extremes at all'

Octavia s is the alternative plight to Cleopatra s for womanhood in the play The choice is merely between alternative methods of destruction—either at one's own hands, or through the agency of the process The 'swan s down feather', like the 'vagabond flag', can only swing on the tide until it rots with motion

Rome is the world of politics and policy Its supreme term is Octavius Caesar himself He, like Octavia, must be brought into relation with the pattern which he helps in part to define Half his significance is lost if he is seen only as a 'character' In Octavius' case we have aids external to the play which help towards a clear focus on what Shakespeare intends by him He falls recognizably into Shakespeare's studies of the 'politician'—the series that begins, with Richard III and continues down through Edmund

Octavius is a notable development in the figure which started as a machiavel pure and simple Shakespeare now betrays no sign of alarm, no hint of revulsion or rejection, almost no trace of emotion in putting him into a story He is taken completely for granted He has arrived and he will stay He is part of the structure of things He is 'Rome' In matters of politics and policy it is obvious that only the politicians count and politics is one half of life The politician is a perfectly normal person Given all his own way he would doubtless bring—as Octavius is certain his triumphs eventually will bring—a 'universal peace' To be normal like him, of course, and to enjoy the peace he offers, two conditions are necessary First, one must sacrifice the other half of life, then, one must be prepared to make complete submission By the time Shakespeare comes to depict Octavius he has refined away all the accidentals from the portrait—the diabolism, the rhetoric, the elaborate hypocrisy, the perverse glamour everything but the



essential deadliness and inescapability. Octavius marks an advance on Goneril and Regan. He shares their impatience with tax and brothel. He has no share in the lust which entraps even them. We might almost doubt whether Octavius has any personal appetite at all even the lust for power. His plan to lead Cleopatra in triumph has the appearance of a desire for personal satisfaction, but it is more likely that it fits into an impersonal wish on Caesar's part to subdue all things to Rome. Caesar, of course, is Rome—but a kind of impersonal embodiment. He is more like a cold and universal force than a warm-blooded man. He is the perfect commissar, invulnerable as no human being should be. Egypt has no part in his composition.

Caesar has the deceitfulness of the machiavel but he plays his cards without any flourish. He can rely on his opponents to undo themselves: they are more complicated than he. He puts the deserters from Antony in the van of his own battle.

'Plant those that are revolted in the van  
That Antony may seem to spend his fury  
Upon himself

The strength and weakness of those ranged against him constitute Caesar's fifth column. The opposition will rot away or eat the sword it fights with.

It is in the last act that Egypt and Rome confront each other singly, the duplicity of Caesar pitted against the duplicity of Cleopatra. There is no doubt as to who shall survive the contest. The tension is maintained throughout the fifth act only by the doubt left in the spectator's mind right up to the end as to which way Cleopatra will jump: will she accept submission or will she take her own life? The whole play has prepared us for just this doubt. In a sense whichever way the decision goes it is immaterial. The point of the play is not the decisions taken but the dubieties and ambivalences from which choice springs—the barren choice that only hastens its own negation. Rome, from the nature of things, can admit no compromise. Egypt, equally, can never submit to its contrary. So Cleopatra kills herself.

Cleopatra has been loved by recent commentators not wisely but too well. As Caesar impersonates the World she, of course, incarnates the Flesh. Part of Shakespeare's sleight of hand in the play—his trickery with our normal standards and powers of judgment—is to construct an account of the human universe consisting of only these two terms. There is no suggestion that the dichotomy is resolvable: unless we are willing to take the delusions of either party as a resolution, the 'universal peace' of Caesar, the Egypt-beyond-the-grave of Antony and Cleopatra in their autotoxic exaltations before they kill themselves.

Cleopatra is the Flesh, deciduous, opulent and endlessly renewable.

'she did make defect perfection  
Age cannot wither her, nor custom stale

Her infinite variety, other women cloy  
 The appetites they feed but she makes hungry  
 Where most she satisfies, for vilest things  
 Become themselves in her that the holy priests  
 Bless her when she is riggish'

The Flesh is also the female principle Cleopatra is Eve, and Woman

'No more but e en a woman, and commanded  
 By such poor passion as the maid that milks  
 And does the meanest chares'

She is also Circe

Let witchcraft join with beauty, lust with both!'

Shakespeare gives Cleopatra everything of which he is capable except his final and absolute approval Cleopatra is not an Octavia, much less a Cordelia The profusion of rich and hectic colour that surrounds her is the colour of the endless cycle of growth and decay, new greenery on old rottenness, the colour of the passions, the wild flaring of life as it burns itself richly away to death so that love of life and greed for death become indistinguishable

'there is mettle in death which commits some loving act upon her, she hath such a celerity in dying

The strength of the case Shakespeare puts against her is undeniable The soldiers, and Caesar, and Antony when the consciousness of Rome speaks through him are right as far as they go The strength of the case for her is that it is only Rome that condemns her And Egypt is a force as universal as Rome—as hot as the other is cold, as inevitably self-renewing as the other is inescapably deadly And the only appeal that can be made in the play is from Egypt to Rome, from Rome to Egypt And neither of these is final, because between them they have brought down Antony, the 'man of men'

For the tragedy of *Antony and Cleopatra* is above all the tragedy of Antony His human stature is greater than either Cleopatra's or Caesar's Yet there is no sphere in which he can express himself except either Rome or Egypt and to bestride both like a colossus and keep his balance is impossible The opposites play through Antony and play with him, and finally destroy him To Caesar (while Antony is in Egypt, and alive) he is

'A man who is the abstract of all faults  
 That all men follow'

To Cleopatra he appears instead a 'heavenly mingle ,

'Be'st thou sad or merry,  
 The violence of either thee becomes,  
 So it does no man else'

When she sees him returning safe from the battlefield she cries

'O infinite virtue! Com'st thou smiling from  
The world's great snare uncaught?'

After he is dead she remembers him as a kind of Mais

His face was as the heavens and therein stuck  
A sun and moon which kept their course, and lighted  
This little O the earth  
His legs bestrid the ocean, his rear'd arm  
Crested the world, his voice was propertied  
As all the tuned spheres and that to friends  
But when he meant to quail and shake the orb,  
He was a rattling thunder For his bounty  
There was no winter in't, an autumn 'twas  
That grew the more by reaping, his delights  
Were dolphin-like, they show'd his back above  
The element they liv'd in, in his lively  
Walk'd crowns and crownets, realms and islands were  
As plates dropped from his pocket  
Nature wants stuff  
To vie strange forms with fancy, yet t' imagine  
An Antony were nature's piece 'gainst fancy  
Condemning shadows quite'

This of course, is again the past catching fire from the urgent needs of the present, flaring in memory and imagination as it never did in actuality Antony is nothing so unambiguous as this The most judicious account of him is that of Lepidus when he is replying to Caesar's strictures

'I must not think there are  
Evils enow to darken all his goodness  
His faults in him seem as the spots of heaven,  
More fiery by night's blackness, hereditary  
Rather than purchased, what he cannot change  
Than what he chooses'

Here the ambiguities of the play's moral universe get their completest expression faults shine like stars, the heaven is black, the stars are spots Ambivalence need go no further

#### IV

The earlier criticism of *Antony and Cleopatra* tended to stress the downfall of the soldier in the middle-aged infatuate More recent criticism has seen the play as the epiphany of the soldier in the lover, and the re-assurance of all concerned that death is not the end In the view that has been put forward here neither of these is right The meaning of *Antony and Cleopatra* is in the Shakespearean 'dialectic'—in the deliquescent reality that expresses itself through the contraries

*Antony and Cleopatra* swims with glamour. Once we lose sight of the controlling structure of the opposites which holds the play together we are at the mercy of any random selection from its occasions. And occasions abound—moments, opinions, moods, speeches, characters, fragments of situation, forked mountains and blue promontories, imposed upon us with all the force of a 'giant power'. It is, then, eminently understandable that critics should succumb like Antony or hold aloof like Demetrius and Philo.

The Roman condemnation of the lovers is obviously inadequate. The sentimental reaction in their favour is equally mistaken. There is no so-called 'love-romanticism' in the play. The flesh has its glory and passion, its witchery. Love in *Antony and Cleopatra* is both these. The love of Antony and Cleopatra, however, is not asserted as a final value. The whole tenour of the play, in fact, moves in an opposite direction. Egypt is the Egypt of the biblical glosses: exile from the spirit, thralldom to the flesh-pots, diminution of human kindness. To go further still in sentimentality and claim that there is a 'redemption' motif in Antony and Cleopatra's love is an even more violent error. To the Shakespeare who wrote *King Lear* it would surely smack of blasphemy. The fourth and fifth acts of *Antony and Cleopatra* are not epiphanies. They are the ends moved to by that process whereby things rot themselves with motion—unhappy and bedizened and sordid, streaked with the mean, ignoble, the contemptible. Shakespeare may have his plays in which 'redemption' is a theme (and I think he has) but *Antony and Cleopatra* is not one of them.

*Antony and Cleopatra* is an account of things in terms of the World and the Flesh. Rome and Egypt, the two great contraries that maintain and destroy each other, considered apart from any third sphere which might stand over against them. How is it related to the plays of the 'great period', the period which comes to an end with *King Lear*?

The clue is given, I think, in the missing third term. *Antony and Cleopatra* is the deliberate construction of a world without a Cordelia. Shakespeare's symbol for a reality that transcends the political and the personal and

'redeems nature from the general curse  
Which twain have brought her to

One must call the construction deliberate, because after *King Lear* there can be no doubt that Shakespeare knew exactly where he was in these matters. Both *Antony and Cleopatra* and *Coriolanus* follow North's Plutarch without benefit of clergy. Both Antony and Coriolanus were cited by the sixteenth century moralists as notable examples of heathen men who lacked patience—the one committing suicide, the other rebelling against his country. In *Antony and Cleopatra* suicide is the general fate of those who wish to die. Cleopatra gives the audience a conscious reminder of the un-Christian ethos involved.

All's but naught,  
 Patience is sottish, and impatience does  
 Become a dog that's mad: then is it sin  
 To rush into the secret house of death  
 Ere death dare come to us?'

The Christian world-view in Shakespeare's time turned round a number of conceptions which were covered by the Elizabethans in their examination of the meanings of Nature. The theme of 'Nature' runs through the whole of *Macbeth*, *King Lear*, and *Timon*. Its absence from *Antony and Cleopatra* suggests Shakespeare's satisfaction that for him the theme is exhausted. He is inwardly free now to look at a classical story, deliberately excuse the Christian core of his thought, and make up his account in terms of what then remains over.

This explains the effect, I think, of *Antony and Cleopatra*. Freedom from the compulsive theme of the Natures, the conscious security gained from having given it final expression, enabled Shakespeare to handle something new and something which was bound to be intrinsically simpler. Part of the energy formerly absorbed in grappling with theme now bestows itself on technique. *Antony and Cleopatra* gives the impression of being a technical *tour de force* which Shakespeare enjoyed for its own sake.

The excision also explains, I think, the tone of the play—the sense of ripe-rottenness and hopelessness, the vision of self-destruction, the feeling of strenuous frustration and fevered futility, that which finds its greatest expression in Antony's speech before he gives himself his death-blow.

'Now

All length is torture, since the torch is out,  
 Lie down and stray no further. Now all labour  
 Mars what it does, yea, very force entangles  
 Itself with strength: seal then and all is done.

The excision, finally, explains what might be regarded as a diminution of scope in *Antony and Cleopatra*. We are, of course, only comparing Shakespeare with himself. The theme of Rome and Egypt, however, is simpler than the theme of 'Nature', the trick of using the contraries (again, for Shakespeare) relatively an easy way of organizing the universe. It is unusual, at any rate, for Shakespeare to rely on one trick so completely as he seems to do in *Antony and Cleopatra*. At times we are almost tempted to believe he has fallen a victim of habitual mannerism.

One last comment might be made. We referred at the beginning of this essay to Shakespeare's surprising capacity for self-renewal. *Antony and Cleopatra* is not the aftermath of *Lear* in any pejorative sense. There is something in it that is new and exciting and profound. Shakespeare remained still the youngest and the greatest of his contemporaries. In *Antony and Cleopatra* he is making his own adjustments to the new Jacobean tastes. The

play is Shakespeare's study of Mars and Venus—the presiding deities of Baroque society, painted for us again and again on the canvasses of his time. It shows us Virtue the root of the heroic in man, turned merely into *virtu* the warrior's art, and both of them ensnared in the world very force entangling itself with strength. It depicts the 'man of men' soldiering for a cynical Rome or whoring on furlough in a reckless Egypt. It is the tragedy of the destruction of man, the creative spirit, in perverse war and insensate love—the two complementary and opposed halves of a discreating society.

JOHN F. DANBY

## REQUIRED LITERATURE COURSES AS A CONTRIBUTION TO CULTURE

A NOTE ON AMERICAN EXPERIENCE

THIS essay is based on the experience of teaching required English subjects for two years in two State Universities, one in the Midwest, and one in the Pacific Northwest, of the U S A. The problems described may seem crude, the arguments obvious, even blatantly so. It is because the problems are crude, because the conclusions they suggest, however obvious, are so difficult to act upon in the circumstances, that I believe the article to be worth writing. Only through contact with these American students, and the conditions in which they are taught, have I learned what phrases like 'educating an élite', 'equality of opportunity', 'a core of common culture' and so forth mean and do not mean.

Culture in American education cannot be used in Mr. Eliot's sense of something imbibed in family and community life for much American teaching is intended to wean children away from an alien cultural inheritance. For many Americans national education is not even given in their mother tongue. Genuine American cultures took root in New England, in the Southern States, but they have disintegrated in a newer community which has produced, so far, little that touches the general public but a commercial pseudo-culture frankly intended for the immature in years or mentality. This situation is well known, and results in the passing round of terms like 'decadence' and 'disintegration', terms which, when not analysed, can only make people shut their eyes and let the landslide carry them away. (I refer readers here to Mr. Bantock's comments in his article '*Mr. Eliot and Education*',

*Scrutiny*, March 1949) Two questions are important here. Can education do anything to salvage or create culture in a community where it has disintegrated? Are the people born into a disintegrated culture necessarily disintegrated in themselves? Further the educators in a democratic society who adopt the belief that culture, or a substitute for it can be acquired at school must consider two hypotheses—that the community as a whole can be given, through education, a lowest common measure of culture, which will be sufficiently high to form a worthy national culture or that, the first hypothesis being unsound, there is a fair means of selecting an elite to acquire culture and transmit it to others. The first hypothesis is the most popular in America and is acted upon in the State University. The second is implicit in the selection of gifted students for private colleges.

Before commenting on attempts to supply Americans with 'a common core of culture' one should understand the conditions American teachers have to face.

Many State Universities accept all students who graduate from High School, that is who obtain passing grades in a sufficient number of subjects, computed by adding up 'credit hours'. The more students, the larger the grant the University receives thus educators are in the hands of administrators with financial considerations in mind. After the war the G I bill of rights subsidising further education for all veterans,<sup>1</sup> brought into the Universities a large number of men who would not previously have considered trying to obtain a degree. A large number of entrants drop out during the first two years, but not generally before they have been 'exposed to' (as the saying is) required language and literature. In such classes there are students from every type of home including nearly illiterate and foreign speaking, and every kind of school, from the small rural, to the huge impersonal urban. There are few references a teacher can make which will be understood by all students, Superman, Li'l Abner, Walter Winchell, The Reader's Digest, Lana Turner, hotrods, baseball and boxing stars, would meet general recognition. One cannot assume knowledge of classical, literary or biblical allusions,<sup>2</sup> or historical ones, except

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<sup>1</sup>Veterans in America, are, of course, ex-service men. I would like to add that many justified and are justifying, the educational grant received, and that it is among them the most serious students are often found.

<sup>2</sup>A student once came up after class and asked 'Is Apollo in Shakespeare or the Bible?' I spoke about Greek myths, but he still seemed dissatisfied, and said something about a man in a play 'whose wife done him wrong or he thought she did'. I then remembered Ronald Colman was appearing at a local cinema in *The Double Life* and asked if he meant 'Othello'. I was then able to satisfy him. I don't give this anecdote in order to sneer at a student who had the curiosity to seek for knowledge, but his state of mind is typical of the sort of confusion one finds

for the highlights of American history. If English readers are inclined to feel complacent at this point they should ask themselves what would happen if the Universities were filled by an influx of school leavers, qualified merely by finishing the courses provided in any type of English secondary school. I believe only one section of English students would show to advantage—the more intelligent among those educated at secondary schools of the 'grammar school type'. This is not intended as a criticism of the teachers in other kinds of school, but as a comment on the conditions which they often teach. The American High School is certainly inferior to the English Grammar School in preparing the more intelligent students—it makes one very uneasy about the policy of sinking English Grammar Schools into comprehensive schools of the American type.

There is not space here to discuss probable reasons why many students come from High School so inadequately prepared in English. Sound English teaching is hampered by the system of organising work in self-contained units of study by reading extracts and short poems rather than long complete works, and by testing the student's reading by brief, factual 'quizzes', as they are called. I have written more fully on testing and grading in two articles on American State Universities that appeared in March and April in *The Journal of Education*. I would add that there are classes in American schools well taught by inspiring teachers.

It should be remembered as well that American educators are faced with a difficulty 'old countries do not have to meet'. However far we in England have disrupted our culture, we still live in the family mansion. Our literature is closely bound up with our history and geography, so that in nearly every locality children's imaginations can be awakened by the sight of buildings, pictures or a countryside associated with what they read. In only a few American areas is this true. Whatever culture Americans decide to study as 'a common core' and a basis for understanding and creating American literature they must choose from another continent. A knowledge of Western European or, at any rate, English literature, is generally recognized as essential to the 'common core', but English literature is, to young Americans, a foreign literature, its writers foreign writers.

Working conditions present other problems. Teachers must often take unduly large numbers in inconvenient and uncomfortable rooms. Many students resent compulsion to attend required courses. They want a University degree as an economic and social asset, and are sometimes making effort and sacrifices to obtain it. Before they can enter a school, such as Dentistry, or Business Administration they find they must make a passing grade in essay-writing, and in the study of out of date authors who seem unable to express themselves in 'plain English'. They rebel in spirit, but they must sit through the classes, where their chief aim is to discover, and satisfy, the grading idiosyncrasies of the professor.

The kind of course planned to meet these conditions varies, but



is usually one of two types—the Survey, or the Appreciation Course. The Survey Course is intended to provide a chronological framework, and the class uses a book of extracts. Last year I taught from a syllabus that prescribed three terms' work, three classes per week. The first term's assignment was from Beowulf (in translation) to the seventeenth-century lyric poets, the second from Milton to Coleridge, and the third from Byron to Housman. Extracts to be read included *Gawayne and the Green Knight* (translated), Marlowe's *Dr Faustus* or Jonson's *Volpone* the first book of the *Faerie Queene* the first two books of *Paradise Lost* and *Adonais*. Most major and some minor figures were represented. Many of the students had never read material requiring more concentration than the *Reader's Digest* and some probably read voluntarily only comic strips, sports pages, and campus news. For most this was almost their first, and certainly their last taste of English Literature. A small percentage would eventually take English as their major study. For them the course might provide a useful framework, though anything so superficial seems a dangerous beginning. It cannot make a student aware of the living connection between writers and their period, and so he will only learn chronology in a mechanical way. One enthusiastic student compared the course to 'offering a child a candy stick and continually taking it away again. He thought it an excellent way of destroying a student's interest by constant frustration. An attempt is being made in this department to improve this particular course, making it less crowded by giving at least a week to each author. But the value of a Survey Course as a means of filling a 'cultural gap' is frequently questioned by its teachers.

The course which I taught in another University had no name other than 'English 430' but its object was to interest students in different kinds of literature, drawn from English and American authors, and introduce them to the commoner literary techniques and critical terms. It was experimental, and generally regarded as unsatisfactory by the department. For administrative reasons it was crammed into ten weeks, with five classes a week. Text books were used—a selection of short American novels (Henry James, Stephen Crane, Scott Fitzgerald, etc), a selection of plays (Sophocles, Congreve, Wilde, O'Neill, etc) and '*Understanding Poetry*' by Brooks and Warren. The reason why students used text books rather than the library was shortage of library accommodation. The chief difficulty, apart from speed and superficiality, was the shapelessness of the course. I taught it four times over during one year and was never able to give it coherence. I do not suppose it will remain long in its present form. Like the Survey Course, it illustrates the temptation, in planning one course as the student's sole experience of literature to include far too much, and to give too little attention to the students' mentality, interests and previous education.<sup>3</sup>

One second term composition course I taught had possibilities as an introduction to literature. It was devoted to the preparation

of a term paper based on a study of selected essays of Addison and Steele. The course was supposed to give training in setting out and footnoting a paper of this kind, but its greatest value lay in making the students read closely, and face problems of interpretation. When one realised the difficulty they had in understanding when Addison was writing humorously and ironically, and in grasping the relationship between Addison and Steele and the fictitious Spectator, one was appalled to think that the same students were struggling with the Survey Course previously described. Addison and Steele were chosen for this course partly because of the difficulty of obtaining suitable material in conveniently published form. They were too alien to hold, for ten weeks, the interest of students living in the Pacific Northwest.

The two years during which I taught at these two different institutions were too brief a time for me to do much to alter my own errors of approach. I found myself by the end, concentrating on two main points—convincing the students, at the cost of being irrelevant and anecdotal, that the writers crammed into their text books were once living men and women, and interpreting the works by reading aloud and explaining difficult words and phrases. I was not able to use discussion as much or as effectively as I could wish because of the size of the class, the unwillingness of the students to make themselves conspicuous, and appear to be trying for better grades by joining in, and, in one case the type of room in which I taught—a gloomy amphitheatre built for the Dramatic School.

I will return now to phrases I quoted at the beginning of the essay and reconsider them in the light of the admittedly limited experience which I have had.

It is idle to argue about whether one should educate a cultural 'elite'. One does that anyway. No one has yet evolved a system whereby some students will not be more sensitive than others to literature more able to enter into imaginative sympathy with the cultural life of other ages and peoples. However much such students are handicapped by being placed in large classes with those less intelligent and less interested, and by being given stereotyped assignments and mechanical tests they will remain sensitive and intelligent. But there is a great risk that they will also be arrogant, superficial and cynical. Humility is not acquired through being forced to keep the same pace as one's inferiors, to be truly humble one should be allowed one's full scope, and so come to appreciate one's limitations. The problem is not the existence of an élite, but its relationship to the rest of the community. Danger comes when it regards the less perspicacious as creatures to be fooled, and used for its own ends. I would not argue that it is good to segregate

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<sup>3</sup>The Director of the course told us of one student who was failing and was sent to him. After a long discussion he found the boy did not know how to read poetry. He believed each line should be read as a complete sentence.

gate the best students in Colleges or Universities of the Ivory Tower kind. But I am sure it is bad to throw them into educational factories without considering their special needs. That is not equality of opportunity.

If selection is necessary there must be a method of selection. I do not myself believe that any psychologically devised test is as good, at any rate for candidates for courses in the humanities, as the essay type of examination. I admit accurate grading of such is not easy.

There is a type of student who must not be forgotten in this discussion—the student who is interested in literature and sensitive to its values, and yet through poor previous education or some other reason, is too inarticulate to reach the level of University work. Such have an important part to play in keeping interest in literature alive in their community. But their latent interests and abilities are not easily discovered by methods of educational testing. Patient teaching may be necessary before some unexpected flowering comes, and then it may be only expressed by a gleam in the eye or a colloquial phrase. The presence of such students shows that further education should be widespread for those who wish to avail themselves of it. Preferably it should be in tutorial groups.

A 'common core of culture' cannot be provided by isolated literature courses given in Universities if there has been little foundation provided earlier in school life. Some traditional material, in particular the best known Greek myths and Bible stories, is necessary as a basis for understanding modern literature. The aim should not be to 'do' certain reputable authors and books, but to learn to read with comprehension and interest. If pupils can do this it is not necessary to worry too much about a 'common core'. Such a conception is artificial in a disintegrated society. The important thing is that as many people as possible should, at their level of understanding, appreciate human values as shown through literature. The most sensitive and intelligent will be the most refined, and, let us hope, least prejudiced in their selection.

MARGARET DIGGLE

## ' THE FAMILY REUNION '

We do not know very much of the future  
 Except that from generation to generation  
 The same things happen again and again

*Murder In The Cathedral*

**D**IFFERENT compositions require different efforts to read them comprehendingly and it is a peculiar and consistent effort that *The Family Reunion* demands. This effort is, I should say, towards vigilance—a vigilance against misunderstanding—and it arises partly from the fact that the play is deeply personal, partly from the elaboration and intricacy of the theme. Much denser here than in *Murder In the Cathedral* are the echoes from Eliot's poems. There is, as so frequently, the obsessive consciousness of the seasons (very apposite in a play that deals with similar cyclical phenomena), and there are the very nearly direct references to poems like *The Hollow Men*, *The Waste Land* and, particularly, *Burnt Norton*. This in itself argues a degree of self-implication not found in the earlier play, and the argument is endorsed when we consider that even as early as *The Waste Land* (1922) Eliot was already touching on the theme of hereditary misfortune or guilt. The fact of personal preoccupation having been tentatively established, however, it is necessary, for the time being, to discard it from the conscious appraisal of the play—inductive biography or psycho-analysis, especially of a living writer, is never criticism. I mention it here only to make a point to which we shall later revert.

As Eliot himself several times remarks in the text, the theme of the play is 'unsayable', only to be stated obliquely, and it is this fact which determines the technique he uses. This, the technique, can only be called algebraic. It is the unfocussing of what one may presume to be a concrete personal experience until only its abstract pattern—its 'algebra', is perceived, and the superimposition of this pattern upon a different and fictitious aggregate of facts. It is with these fictitious facts that we are concerned. They have so often been misrepresented that a short preliminary summary will not be out of place.

Briefly, we may say that *The Family Reunion* is the story of two generations, and of the interaction of the older upon the younger. We are given to understand that the marriage between Amy, Dowager Lady Monchensey, and the deceased Lord Monchensey was not a happy one. 'There was no ecstasy'. Also we are given imprecise but substantial suggestions that at some time during the marriage—a summer day of unusual heat—there occurred an adultery between the husband and his wife's sister, Agatha. At

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<sup>1</sup>Characteristically derogatory remarks on fortune-telling and astrology (as in *The Dry Salvages*) also figure

some time after this Lord Monchensey planned to murder his wife, but was deterred from doing so by Agatha, her reason being that Amy was pregnant. As she later confesses to Harry, Agatha felt then that only vicariously, through Amy's children would she ever enjoy motherhood. The child is in due course born and this is Harry, the main figure in the play. There are two more sons and then the father, Lord Monchensey dies. Harry is from an early age destined by his mother to marry an eligible and conformist cousin, Mary, but this arrangement does not come off. Instead he marries a stranger whom only Agatha is permitted to meet. Seven years after the marriage this younger Lady Monchensey disappears during a voyage across the Atlantic with her husband, and her death is presumed to be accidental. About a year after the voyage Harry returns to his home Wishwood, for the family reunion that is arranged for his mother's birthday, and, almost upon entering the house, declares that his wife did not fall overboard, but that he pushed her. It is from this point onwards that the main action of the play develops. The problem is to analyse dramatically, the motive which has prompted this 'murder' and to show how the analysis relieves Harry of some of the burden of guilt under which he is suffering, restoring him from the awful privacy of the insane mind' to a place 'somewhere on the other side of despair'.

One preliminary, however, we need to be quite sure about before proceeding with the development, and that is this question of the 'murder'. I have put the term in inverted commas partly because it is never quite confirmed, and partly because it is more of a symbol than a fact. As Agatha later remarks,

What we have written is not a story of detection,  
Of crime and punishment, but of sin and expiation.

The act is not that is to say, a physical reality, a push, rather is it to be equated with a whole complex of attitudes, the whole context of that (possibly imaginary) moment of 'murder' on the 'boat'. If it means anything, it is nearer to the concept of unhappiness in marriage than to the concept of killing. I will later endeavour to show what difficulties arise in relation to this treatment of the term. For the moment it is perhaps enough to realize that the act is consistently soft-pedalled. With this in mind we can proceed with the play.

The analysis of Harry's state of mind is naturally complex—a succession of hints, of indirect elucidations that does not so much conclude in certitude as slowly arrive at a preponderance of it. Two of the characters are principally concerned in helping Harry to explain himself to himself. Mary and Agatha. It might be said in this connection that while Mary diagnoses Agatha cures. It is Mary who, in the second scene of Part I, points out to Harry that his suffering is not an objective thing, but something self-imposed—the sub-conscious mind's punishment for what it regards as a transgression. This is not, of course, enough by itself to effect a catharsis, and Harry's remorse remains to torture him. In terms of the

dramatic symbolism, that is, the Eumenides appear. Later, in the balanced second scene of Part II, Agatha tells Harry of the earlier family history and of the relations between his father and mother. In the light of these revelations Harry perceives that the unhappiness of his marriage—the disposition towards ‘murder’, is in some sense hereditary and not simply the result of individual exceptional weakness in himself. His burden of guilt at once begins a metamorphosis. From the negatives of regret, self-mistrust and suffering his attitude shifts round to the positives of repentance and the will to expiate his sin.<sup>2</sup> It is, I think, one of the play’s great merits that it so successfully demonstrates how difficult and how far-reaching such a change of attitude may be. Thereafter Harry is free to go on his way—Amy’s attempt (‘to become a missionary’) should warn us that this cannot be paraphrased—

To the worship in the desert, the thirst and deprivation  
 A stony sanctuary and a primitive altar,  
 The heat of the sun and the icy vigil,  
 A care over lives of humble people  
 The lesson of ignorance of incurable diseases

Such things are possible, he adds. And

It is love and terror  
 Of what waits and wants me, and will not let me fall

Such, in outline, is the narrative of the play. It will be appreciated that this is only a basis from which to begin a critical appraisal of the whole. Poetic Drama is in some ways, perhaps, like Programme Music, since in each of these art-forms something relatively abstract and absolute is made to do a menial task. In each case, I would suggest, it is still the generalized references and effects—the poetry, the music—that matter most, and so here. What is important in reading or watching *The Family Reunion* is, in part at least, the sense of the play as an emotional or poetic experience—the sense of being disturbed, confused, lifted as if upon spear-points, and cast down again into the resolution. In part, also

<sup>2</sup>Compare C. M. Bowra’s comment on Oedipus: ‘He is not to be condemned for resisting his destiny, but to be admired for accepting it in all its horror and for being ready to work with the god to see that he makes his full amends. He who has been the victim and the sufferer regains the initiative and takes his destiny into his own hands’ (*Sophoclean Tragedy*, p. 185). See also Gilbert Murray’s *Aeschylus* (Oxford, 1940) p. 202 *et seq.* Harry, we might say, follows the Furies because he realizes that only in the contemplation of his dead wife’s suffering, her state-of-being-wronged, can he see his own sinfulness, and thus reach true humility, and so God. I need hardly add that this play is quite as implicitly ‘religious’ as is *Murder in the Cathedral* overtly.

one has to appreciate the texture of thought in the play, the detail with which the original bare idea has been cumulatively invested. It is not the factual *donnees* of the plot, but the significances and subtleties through which these are made to evolve that matter most. And here one can point out that in this play Eliot has once again succeeded in condensing a theme of the very widest significance into a wieldy and comprehensible unit. I say 'once again' because the technique operating largely by means of references, invites a comparison, *mutatis mutandis*, with the analogous condensing found in *The Waste Land*, in the minor poems and in the *Quartets*. There too we find a subject-matter which while it retains a maximum of implication, is nevertheless reduced to a quintessence.

There are, chiefly, two sorts of reference in *The Family Reunion*—those which make connection with psychological theory, and those which make connection with Greek myths and the Greek tragedies in which the myths were used. Eliot had already experimented with both types (I need only instance the 'Mother mother' term in *Difficulties Of A Statesman* and the Aristophanic-cum Aeschylean touches about *Sweeney Agonistes*) and in this play he sought to integrate them more fully than hitherto. What was the basis for integration will I think, be obvious if we remember the use of such a designation as 'Oedipus complex' in psycho-analysis. One of the principal preoccupations of the *Orestes* (Eliot's most specific source<sup>3</sup>) is with the idea of the transmissibility of sin. It is the banquet of Thyestes that leaves a curse upon the house of Agamemnon, and it is under the operation of this curse that Agamemnon commits the impious crime of sacrificing his daughter, Iphigenia. This, in turn, generates a curse—or perhaps rather extends the original—and the consequence is that Clytemnestra kills her husband. This, too, is an impure act, and the cycle proceeds. Granted such a belief in the inexorability of fate it is only by the positing of an intercessionary God that the chain can ever be broken, and looked at in this light the Athena-Apollo deity in the *Eumenedes* can be to some extent likened to the Saviour of the New Testament, who taught that God was not only Jehovah—Vengeance and Punishment—but Love and Forgiveness also. This shadowy identity is indeed something which may help us to understand the present play.

Now this idea of the transmissibility of sin, of the visitation of the sins of the fathers upon the children, is very much the case as it is thought still to obtain in the field of mental conflict. 'The child grown up', says the psychologist, 'is the parent in the next generation, and so neurosis is handed on and on'. To put the matter at its simplest level one might perhaps take the example of children whose parents have been divorced. It is common knowledge that, should this occur during the formative years of the children, they generally find it difficult to make a happy marriage.

<sup>3</sup>A quotation from *Coriolanus* V, iii, but Eliot is, in the poem, quite clearly using it in his own way and for his own purposes.

for themselves, and indeed have difficulty with most inter-sexual relationships. But one does not want to simplify the point too much.

It is, then, this parallel, in its religious as well as its intellectual implications that forms the axis upon which *The Family Reunion* is orientated, and the dramatist is I think at pains to keep his co-ordinates plain. Continually in the diction there appear phrases that are simply paraphrases of psychological technical terms. Thus we have 'the loop in time' for the paralysis to which neurosis (sometimes literally) gives rise and, for therapeutic catharsis a passage like this

The chain breaks

The wheel stops, and the noise of machinery,  
And the desert is cleared, under the judicial sun  
Of the final eye and the awful evacuation  
Cleanses

Even the chauffeur Downing's vague opinion that Harry 'Suffered from what they call a kind of repression' must be taken to be an intentional reference to the Psychology-co-ordinate. On the other hand we have not only the Eumenides but several locutions to remind us of Greek tragedy. Harry's despairing cry about 'the cancer that eats away the self' is surely the *λειχήνας ἐξέσθοντα ἀρχαίων φρονι* of the *Choephorae*? And if this is not enough we have the line

Can't you see them? *You* don't see them but I see them

and the specific reference to 'Argos' to preserve the association with Aeschylus.

Eliot, then, has established a fundamental relation between two religious orientations, two cultures, and he has shown a single abiding constant in both. Not only is the process engrossing and valuable *per se* it has the added merit that it reinforces his choice of the Greek type of drama as a *milieu* through which to attempt the reinstatement of verse drama in English. Method and content, as it were, coalesce. I do not, naturally, wish to imply by this that the corroboration was, after the choice of a theme, anything less than inevitable, but it is not every poet who is able to attain to this degree of unity and consistency. Plots are not ready-made, even when they are derivative, and opportunities for this sort of congruence cannot arise without a very considerable prior effort in planning and construction. It is often by the quality of sheer intelligence that Eliot surprises most.

But it is time to return more specifically to the text, and to make some attempt to isolate and evaluate its particular merits and demerits. Though agreement as to what is good and bad in the play is not, I suppose, likely to be general, no-one will presumably wish to deny that it offers grounds both for admiration and for



something less. I wish first, very briefly to consider what seem to me its merits, and then, in conclusion and by way of qualification, to make what I take to be the main criticism that must be lodged against it.

The first positive quality to notice, since it is the simplest, is probably the over-all neatness of the construction. As in *Murder In The Cathedral* there are none but the baldest stage-directions—doubtless a reaction from the gaudiness of Barrie and Shaw—and this matches the general economy in the writing. Insets' to give depth and perspective to what is going on are often of the briefest,<sup>4</sup> and a convention allowing the characters to fall into 'trances' in which they speak their secret thoughts also works admirably in the interests of concentration. At the same time certain recurrent phrases help to give symmetry and stability to the play, holding it together against the centrifugal thrust of the expanding theme. Amy's reference to clocks that may 'stop in the dark', for example, is repeated both at the opening and the end of the play. The reunion is 'a very particular occasion, until at last, with Amy's death, it does indeed become so. Harry's decision ('I must follow the bright angels') is taken up in the refrain of the last chant by Mary and Agatha. Follow, follow'. And so on. Wishwood is repeatedly called a cold place', except for the occasion when Agatha (and Harry, in a different place) remembers 'A summer day of unusual heat for this cold country'. The previous insistence helps, of course, to give the reminiscences the intensity they need. Through out Part II Harry is given a series of questions about his father, and these, while being as we might say an admirable dramatic device for presenting the subjective process of introspection, also help to build up expectation for Agatha's disclosures, which crown his inquiries at the climax of this part of the play. Most palpable of all, perhaps, is the protracted *George and Margaret* device with the younger brothers, Arthur and John. Continually expected, they never arrive, yet the mere reiteration of their names with the business occasioned by it, helps sensibly to hold the dialogue and the incidents of the plot together.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>One may instance the Doctor's mention of his first patient, the cancer-sufferer, and the admirable passage in which Downing recalls the night of the drowning.

<sup>5</sup>There are, of course, more substantial reasons for these references to the younger brothers. They are the two sons who have surrendered to their mother's will, thereby earning for themselves the reputation of 'reliability' among the family. To make them miss the reunion which Harry the runaway attends, is to comment upon that reliability and so, in an extended fashion, upon the success of their mother's methods. Moreover, there is a parallel between the three sons of each generation, and in this sense John and Arthur are clearly to be identified with, respectively, their uncles Gerald and Charles. Whatever is said about the nephews is accordingly applicable, in part, to the uncles, and thus the device becomes another instrument of economy.

These—neatness and integration—may seem somewhat formal qualities. Even if we find them so however, there are others which may be more easily accepted. Consider, for instance the element of verisimilitude in the play, that is, the touches of authenticity which Eliot has given to the details of his plot. We may find an example of this in Harry's description of the respite he enjoyed after the murder—

I lay two days in contented drowsiness,  
Then, I recovered

—though the precision here is, I think a little weakened by its being repeated in a later speech by Downing

*Charles* You've looked after his Lordship for over ten  
years  
*Downing* Eleven years, Sir, next Lady Day

One is also impressed by the circumstantiality with which the background of Harry's childhood is made to unfold. The hollow tree, a symbol of freedom and autonomy, the sense of everything being referred back to mother', John falling off the pony ('and always on his head'), the low conversation of triumphant aunts'—these memories of an unhappy childhood come naturally and convincingly forward. They are all moreover, apposite, and help to give correct definition to the picture of Harry's present suffering.

Equally fine, in that it shows a dramatist keenly sensitive to the need for at any rate an apparent credibility, is the touch which makes the paragraph about Arthur's accident 'not very conspicuous'. Had it been more prominent we might have wondered why Charles had not noticed it before. Again, and more significantly, there is special sensitiveness, both to theme and characters, manifest in that passage in which the 'murder' is so mildly introduced.

It was only reversing the senseless direction  
For a momentary rest on the burning wheel  
That cloudless night in the mid-Atlantic  
When I pushed her over

Harry is allowed to speak casually of the act because the suggestion must be that it is not itself intrinsically important while, conversely, Violet and the others (the representatives of incomprehension) are made to fasten upon the act alone, not on its causes or consequences. It is the same sensitiveness in the playwright that assigns to Harry just the right tone of coolness and unastonishment when he hears that his father once planned to murder his mother.

In what way did he wish to murder her ?

One can, so to speak, hear the next question—'By drowning?'—without its being intruded into the text.

As a study in the implications of personal and family relationships the play is, indeed, necessarily concerned with character, and

this close and analytical observation of the chief protagonists is everywhere apparent. Amy is another case. We are made to see how she has substituted a tie with Wishwood for the lost tie with her husband, and how, through Wishwood, she struggles to retain the love of her sons.

I keep Wishwood alive  
To keep the family alive, to keep them together,  
To keep me alive, and I live to keep them

Yet this, too, like the proposed marriage with Mary, never comes off. 'Nothing has been changed,' she says, 'I have seen to that.' And Harry, for whom this arrest has been imposed—perhaps because he is himself a neurotic—at once recognises it as a symptom of neurosis. 'the loop in time,' that is, the wish to linger in the past instead of living forward, into the future. Speaking to Mary he deprecates his mother's attitude.

It's very unnatural,  
This arresting of the normal change of things  
But it's very like her. What I might have expected

Amy is, in sum, the parasite-mother, preying for her life upon the lives of her children, especially Harry. This is why she collapses when she realises that Harry's decisions have passed beyond her control. Wishwood, the family, the whole complex, clock-like organisation has 'stopped in the dark.'<sup>6</sup>

I have said that the main characters are carefully observed. It would be true, on the whole, also to say that this observation is sympathetic—or at least neutral. The characters of the Chorus (Ivy, Violet, Charles, Gerald), on the other hand, are prosecuted with a consistent irony that sometimes comes dangerously close to malice. Charles, deploring the younger generation's proclivities for smoking and drinking, is made simultaneously to help himself to sherry and a cigarette. It is true that Gerald is more subtly ridiculed when he replies

You're being very hard on the younger generation  
I don't come across them very much now, myself,  
But I must say I've met some very decent specimens  
And some first-class shots—better than you were,  
Charles, as I remember

One might say that this comes near to being what Middleton Murry, speaking of Jane Austen, has called 'a perfect right and left'.<sup>7</sup> But subtlety is the exception here. Violet is given the merciless line, 'I do not seem to be very popular tonight', and Ivy, with her diagnosis as to the death of Harry's wife ('She may have done it in a fit of temper'), is also brought down to a level of caricature.

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On a careful reading I think it does indeed become apparent that the treatment of the Chorus offers the first intimation of a

possible defect in the play. Cognate with it, a sort of obverse of the same limitation, is the note of priggyishness often to be found in the speeches of Harry and Agatha. It is irritating time and again to encounter in these the same stilted tone of omniscience, the same assumption of superiority over the other characters.

Thus with most careful devotion  
 Thus with precise attention  
 To detail, interfering preparation  
 Of that which is already prepared  
 Men tighten the knot of confusion  
 Into perfect misunderstanding (*Agatha*),

I think it is probably going to be useless,  
 Or if anything make matters rather more difficult  
 But talk about it, if you like (*Harry*)

It seems a necessary move  
 In an unnecessary action  
 Not for the good that it will do  
 But that nothing may be undone  
 On the margin of the impossible (*Agatha*)

There are of course inevitabilities here. One of the play's pre-occupations is with a concept of 'consciousness'—awareness, more or less, of the complexity, perilousness, even the horror of life—and Harry and Agatha have to be shown more fully conscious than the lesser characters. At the same time it is unfortunate that the playwright has given them a near-oracular intonation to make this point clear. One does not want Othello, so to speak, to insinuate his own nobility and courage. Even if the device is to be thought of as a convention it still contrasts jarringly with the conversational accents of the Chorus. Frequently, too, it grows monotonous. I have heard a rustle of relief and agreement run through an audience at Violet's

This is just what I expected. But if Agatha  
 Is going to moralise about it, I shall scream

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<sup>6</sup>Only in relation to Amy's death can the play be called a tragedy, and to make that the pivot of the play is manifestly absurd. One might perhaps contrast Ibsen's *Ghosts* where the tragedy is that of Mrs Alving, not of her son.

<sup>7</sup>*The Problem of Style*, p. 63. The trick is, of course, part of the usual stock-in-trade of a satirist. A cruder example (*Silas Marner*, Part I, chapter xi) may make it clearer.

She actually said 'mate' for 'meat', 'appen' for 'perhaps', and 'oss' for 'horse,' which to young ladies living in good Lytherly society, who habitually said 'orse, even in domestic privacy, and only said 'appen' on the right occasions, was necessarily shocking.

I doubt whether it assists the sympathetic understanding of Harry or Agatha to raise this kind of prejudice against their speech. There are, then, let us say, uncertainties in the expression which limit its effectiveness. Side by side with the sensitive understanding with which, say Mary is presented we have these touches of pompousness in Harry and Agatha, and side by side with the excellent dramatic irony that enriches the scene between Harry and Winchell—the adroit play with the ambiguous term ‘her Ladyship’—we have the rather clumsy ironies with which the characters of the Chorus are attacked. An even greater uncertainty (not I think unconnected with these former) is to be found if we consider the intensity of Harry’s reaction to his ‘crime

It is not being alone

That is the horror—to be alone with the horror  
What matters is the filthiness I can clean my skin  
Purify my life void my mind,  
But always the filthiness that lies a little deeper

I was like that in a way, so long as I could think  
Even of my own life as an isolated ruin,  
A casual bit of waste in an orderly universe  
But it begins to seem just part of some huge disaster,  
Some monstrous mistake and aberration  
Of all men, of the world, which I cannot put in order

In and out, in an endless drift  
Of shrieking forms in a circular desert  
Weaving with contagion of putrescent embraces  
On dissolving bone

The accent is quite unmistakable, an accent of naked revulsion. One may query, however, how much it is supported by the play as a whole. For such an accent of despair to be properly subjugated to the facts of the plot there would have to be something patently unpleasant about the act of murder itself. Otherwise the effect of the play is to attribute Harry’s consciousness of ‘filthiness’ merely to his general hereditary neurosis which is no more than to say that it is Harry’s distress that causes his distress—to make him a lunatic, obsessed. Eliot has written of the attitudes of Pascal and Swift in a paragraph which furnishes a useful commentary here

A similar despair (to Pascal’s), when it is arrived at by a diseased character or an impure soul, may issue in the most disastrous consequences though with the most superb manifestations, and thus we get *Gulliver’s Travels*, but in Pascal we find no such distortion, his despair is in itself more terrible than Swift’s, because our heart tells us that it corresponds exactly to the facts and cannot be dismissed as mental disease but it was also a despair which was a necessary prelude to, and element in, the joy of faith’

This, surely applied to *The Family Reunion*, helps to bring out a very important point. If, that is to say Harry's 'despair' is disproportionate, then he is (like Swift) subject to 'mental disease', and, this being so his acceptance of religious responsibility must be very much closer to regression than to development—a mere evasion of the pitted struggle in his own consciousness. To make Harry a lunatic, in fact is to destroy the significance of the play. Some fact in the plot, some *point d'appui* must be found to support his attitude of horror and disgust and that fact when found, must provide an *adequate* support. The correspondence of emotion to fact must be preserved.

But the only sufficient support for the despair is, surely, the murder? To attribute Harry's despair to his neurosis is, as I have said seriously to risk branding him as an irresponsible psychopath and in more concrete terms it is also to locate a prime mover in the play—guilt—outside the compass of the facts as they are presented by the plot. Had the murder been an act in its nature particularly brutal there would obviously have been a very full and valid cause for the fervour of Harry's emotion. But as we have seen while being less than compelling in itself (if anything, a push) the act is consistently glossed over—*has* to be glossed over in order to bring out the real significance of the theme. We are left with the picture of a character who while speaking of filthiness and 'putrescent embraces' can explain these feelings no more satisfactorily than by referring them to

The accident of a dreaming moment  
Of a dreaming age, when I was someone else

How one may ask is this sharp disparity to be explained and how far does it indicate a defect in the conception of the play?

Inevitably, I would suggest, we are thrown back for the explanation, upon an earlier observation that I made namely that the play is, roughly, a transference of emotion from a personal experience to a fictitious setting. From time to time this transference is, through Harry, almost admitted

I am not speaking  
Of my own experience but trying to give you  
Comparisons in a more familiar medium

Two experiences are present in the play, and even the phantom presence of the personal experience (it is perhaps not fanciful to equate this with the personal experience represented by *The Waste Land*) is enough to blur the story of Harry, its fictitious equivalent.

Explanation is, however only half the problem. It yet remains to find some standard by which to gauge the seriousness of this insecurity—to see how far it constitutes a failure in the play. And here we can conveniently go back to the essay on *Hamlet* in *The Sacred Wood*. There, it will be remembered, Eliot makes the point that *Hamlet* must be adjudged an artistic failure because there

is in it an emotional tone which is not properly supported by the facts of the plot. It is perhaps advisable to quote his own words

'The only way of expressing emotion in the form of art is by finding an "objective correlative" in other words a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which shall be the formula of that *particular* emotion, such that when the external facts, which must terminate in sensory experience, are given the emotion is immediately invoked. If you examine any of Shakespeare's more successful tragedies you will find this exact equivalence<sup>8</sup>. The artistic "inevitability" lies in this complete adequacy of the external to the emotion and this is precisely what is deficient in *Hamlet*. Hamlet (the man) is dominated by an emotion which is inexpressible, because it is in *excess* of the facts as they appear.'

Here we come, seemingly, to the very heart of the matter. If the objective correlative is 'precisely what is deficient in *Hamlet*' it is, equally precisely, what is deficient in *The Family Reunion*. Two forces are pulling in opposite directions. The requirement of the total theme, on one side, demands that the 'murder' should be as nebulous as possible, and, on the other, the ferment of the personal experience requires the murder to be a very real and substantial 'objective correlative'. It cannot, however, be both, and in effect Harry becomes (what Eliot would have us believe Hamlet becomes) no more than a mouthpiece for obsession, disturbing and impairing the play in which he figures. If, in fact, *Hamlet* is to be accounted 'most certainly an artistic failure' then *The Family Reunion* must, I am afraid, be set as low. It is, after all, in that most central of his essays, *Tradition and the Individual Talent* that Eliot has written the truest criticism of this play. I mean that well-known passage where he says that 'the more perfect the artist, the more completely separate in him will be the man who suffers and the mind which creates. All the small defects of the play—the rancour towards the Chorus, the occasional hysteria or smugness in Harry's speeches, the general secretiveness—seem to group themselves into one radical deficiency, the lack of what Eliot has taught us to call 'impersonality'. Beyond a doubt there is a failure here, a failure on the part of the poet, a failure that the prescient critic has already diagnosed. One cannot but feel, regretfully, that it is the critic who is right.

JOHN PETER

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<sup>8</sup>I may add that examination will also reveal a statement on the matter by Shakespeare himself

Our size of sorrow  
Proportion'd to our cause, must be as great  
As that which makes it (*Antony and Cleopatra IV*,  
xv, 5-7)

## IN MEMORIAM

W SCHENK, 1918-1949

Willy Schenk, who died in June of this year, was an historian of very great promise. His first book, *The Concern for Social Justice in the Puritan Revolution* was an effective protest against the attribution to the seventeenth-century radicals of modern democratic ideas, and an attempt to place them in the spiritual setting where they belonged and a forthcoming book on Cardinal Pole is likely to prove a notable contribution to a renewed understanding of English humanism in the sixteenth century. The essay on the 'Cortegiano' and the Civilization of the Renaissance, which appeared in the last number of this journal may serve as an indication of the kind of history he was interested in writing. But Schenk's qualities as an historian were inseparable from his qualities as a man. The liveliness and good humour of his conversation were the expression of a mind that gave as readily as it received, and in talk with him it was impossible to separate the elements of intellectual stimulus and an indefinable quality of warmth and zest. His personal feeling for spiritual values, in religion, in literature and in music entered directly into his dealing with the past, and—although an indefatigable worker—his pre-occupation with history was primarily a pre-occupation with the embodiment of those values and their complex living interplay. Born in Czechoslovakia, naturalized in this country, and a Roman Catholic in religion, he combined an unforced sense of 'Europe' with a feeling for the local and particular, and for the abstractions and simplifications made for the sake of some unliving idea he had a good-natured contempt. Those who knew him, as a much loved friend or teacher, will remember him with gratitude.

L C K.

## CORRESPONDENCE

72 Rowley Avenue,  
Sidcup, KentTO THE EDITORS OF *Scrutiny*

Dear Sirs,

I wonder if it will be of interest to readers if I define my inability to see eye to eye with Mr Schenk in his account of Castiglione's *Courtier* in the June number of *Scrutiny*.

A few quotations are, it seems to me, sufficient to represent his case. 'The *philosophy* of these courtiers, we cannot help concluding, was a lie, sensual pleasure, so far from being despised, was in fact



the mainspring of their lives' 'the polite and glittering world of Urbino' 'here they (good manners and conviviality) became divorced from life which, after all, is not a *permanent sherry party* Castiglione's courtier, and Bembo in particular, is the true precursor of a cultural type well-known among the educated classes of our own day the sophisticated dilettante constantly searching for amusement, as if to conceal from himself and from the world his inner emptiness the culture of Castiglione's Italy tended to remain *esoteric and precious*, its leaders formed, on the whole an artificial and self-conscious group *The people have no place at all in the Cortegiano's scheme of things*' 'in Shakespeare we find both hierarchy and equality, *unlike the Courtiers of Urbino he refused to be taken in by the pretensions of the gentleman born or made*

In my eyes it is enough to set one passage of *The Courtier* against that for refutation

'It is God therefore that hath appointed the people under the custodie of Princes, which ought to have a diligent care over them, that they make him accompt of it, *as good stewardes do their Lord* and love them, and thinke their owne all the profit and losse that happeneth to them, and principally above all thing provide for their good estate and welfare Therefore ought the prince not onely to be good, but also to make others good, *like the Carpenter's square that is not only straight and just itself but also maketh straight and just whatsoever it is occupied about* And the greatest prooffe that the Prince is good, is when the people are good *because the life of the Prince is a lawe and ringleader of the Citizens* and upon the condicions of him must needes al others depende neyther it is meete for one that is ignorant, to teache *nor for him that is out of order to give order*, nor for him that falleth to help up another Therefore if the Prince will execute these offices aright it is requisit that he apply all his studie and diligence to get knowleage, afterward to facion himselfe and observe unchangeablye in everye thinge the lawe of reason, not written in papers, or in metal, but graven in its owne munde, that it may be to him alwayes not onele familiar, but inwarde, and live with him, as a parcell of him to the intent it may night and day admonish him and speake to him within his hart, *ridinge him of those troublous affections that untemperate mundes feele*'

The 'moral seriousness' of that is, unless I am mistaken, quite as profound as that of the Elyot passage invoked by Mr Schenk (After all, Elyot's *Governor* does owe a great deal to *The Courtier*)

This passage alone is sufficient evidence that Urbino is *not* just a 'polite and glittering world' with no contact with the rest of society It should be obvious that the *responsibilities* of a nobleman are as keenly felt here as in Elyot or Jonson or any figure of the English Renaissance

It would seem from Mr Schenk's essay that 'order' (despite the recurrence of references to Ulysses' great speech) is still not sufficiently understood Mr Schenk cites Langland as if his 'world' were apart from Castiglione's one (it follows) was equalitarian,

the other hierarchical. But Langland insists on the necessity for 'degree' in terms like that in *The Courtier*. In neither case is the equality of men in the eyes of God in dispute—order—in the shape of a king, nobles and magistrates etc.—exists in order to ensure that equality, to ensure justice (See Piers Plowman's remarks to the Knight)

This conception of order is the one obtaining in the time of Hooker, Eliot and Castiglione. This passage I quoted is by no means the only one demonstrating that the people have a place in the Cortegiano's scheme of things.

To turn now to the beginning of the article in particular the third paragraph—Mr Schenk sees in Castiglione's 'sprezzatura' nothing more than the understatments of 'The prizemen who never do a stroke of work, the Blues who never do any training' but that is not how the passage in question reads to me—the Courtier should eschew as much as a man may, and as a sharp and dangerous rock, *Affectation or Curiosity* and (to speak a new word) to use in every thyng a certain *Reckelesnes* and seeme whatsoever he doeth and sayethe to do it without pain, and (as it were) not myndyng it. Far from being 'esoteric and precious', 'an artificial and self-conscious group' Castiglione urges a modest deportment, one that shall *not* get things out of proportion or 'put on airs'.

The remarks about the musicians affected and the neglect of Josquin de Pres strike me as being a trifle beside the point—along with the account of Bembo's poetry.

In point of fact Mr Schenk's remarks about the discussion of language in *The Courtier* seem to me the very obverse of the truth. The topic is handled in Book I with deep feeling and reasonableness, and the chief speaker, Count Lewis, stresses the *living* nature of language and deprecates (this is the point) a written language that is out of touch with the spoken word. As regards the 'shadow of sensual beauty' most people are agreed in recognizing the fact that neo-platonism, if it is to mean anything, must *emerge* out of a very real and lively apprehension of the sensual world *before* transcending it (That is the point of the stairway). What so prejudiced Mr Schenk against *The Courtier* is difficult quite to see. One wouldn't make extravagant claims for it, but it is a fine book and the gulf between the *ideal* and the *real* of its 'civilization' is nothing like so great as he would have us believe.

Yours sincerely

I R BROWNING

EDITORIAL NOTE. Dr Schenk, we know, would have been glad that his essay should have initiated discussion, but unhappily he is no longer alive to carry discussion further.

TO THE EDITORS OF *Scrutiny*

Dear Sirs,

I think I was not the only reader to be pleasantly astonished by 'La Bella Bona-Roba', the poem by Lovelace in your last issue, presented for us with very just and able analysis by Mr Marius Bewley. I am grateful to Mr Bewley for bringing the poem to our notice, and I am assured of the substantial correctness of his account. I am the more concerned to draw attention to certain implications, incidental to that account which seem open to question.

After my first readings I endorsed the remark that 'There is a curiously modern flavour about some of the above stanzas (one even thinks vaguely of the American poet, Wallace Stevens ), and that 'Its deceptive modernity is based on the movement of the thought (almost stream-of-consciousness) through the words'. But these are two of the comments which I am now disposed to question. For although Mr Bewley agrees that the modernity is 'deceptive', the modernity in question appears to be that of Stevens, not necessarily (shall we say) that of Eliot. And it has recently been argued, very plausibly, that to treat seventeenth-century verse as if it were governed by the same intention as the verse of Eliot, is to distort.

'This recognition of author's *interpretation* as controlling subject must be distinguished from the modern author's portrayal of his own *process* of interpreting or feeling, of "the very movement of thought in a living mind", the "interplay of perception and reflection" (these phrases come from F. O. Matthiessen's and Edmund Wilson's essays on Eliot). The earlier author's subject was different, however similar his stuff, his subject was still "his meaning", not "himself-seeing it". One finds the choice of the images made upon different grounds, and their structural function differently affecting their nature, if one reads first Eliot's "Prufrock" and then even a difficult border-line case like Donne's "Elegy XI, Upon the losse of his Mistresses Chaine, for which he made satisfaction". Eliot shows us a man having a thought. Donne arranges the thoughts a man had, upon losing his mistress' property, into a carefully logical and hence wantonly witty exposition of the "bitter" and disproportionate cost of ladies'<sup>1</sup>

From certain passages of Mr Bewley's account it seems plain that he cannot subscribe to this distinction between the poet of the seventeenth century, and of the present.

'Consider the reflective repetition of "bone" in Stanza 1. The slight elevation of tone in the first line is at once brought into intimate touch with the thought as that reflective repetition accurately reproduces the pattern of the thought's operation. The singularity of the opening figure, "skeleton of a poor marmoset", has a strangeness that is acceptable at once because it is so pro-

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<sup>1</sup>Rosemond Tuve University of Chicago Press 'Elizabethan and Metaphysical Imagery', p. 43

foundly personal. In the hands of a modern poet such a figure would have strong Imagist tendencies as in Stevens's

'Above the forest of the parakeets  
A parakeet of parakeets prevails,  
A pip of life amid a mort of tails'

But Lovelace's figure is not devised, and it is not artificial, either in our pejorative modern sense or in the Elizabethan sense of a made thing showing craft. It is organic in the poem as a whole for it is in this opening figure that one strongly feels the whole poem has its origin. Its effects are everywhere, and not least in the magnificent immediacy of the third line. In the second, third, and fourth stanzas the rhythm continues to mirror the activity of the working mind with considerable subtlety, and the terse directness, the 'colloquial' sparseness of many of the words is effective.

Of Stanza 5, Mr Bewley remarks that 'The sinuosities of personal thought are here ironed out in a highly conventional development'. But from those sinuosities, from the rhythm which 'continues to mirror the activity of the working mind', from the repetition which 'accurately reproduces the pattern of the thought's operation', it is plain that this critic treats Lovelace as showing 'a man having a thought' not as arranging 'the thoughts a man had'. Miss Tuve, one gathers, would have to take issue with Mr Bewley and argue for the poem as 'artificial' in the Elizabethan sense of a made thing showing craft. Does the poem support Mr Bewley or Miss Tuve?

To begin with, it seems that the opening figure is not so 'strange', because not so profoundly personal, as Mr Bewley asserts or as it appears upon first sight. From the notes to the Oxford edition of Lovelace (ed C H Wilkinson, 1930) it appears that the series of images, 'monkey-ape-baboon-marmoset', was in common parlance connected with the courtesan, just as 'Bona-Roba' was an accepted euphuism for the same. There remains for the 'skeleton', introduced thus abruptly, some of the personal strangeness. But at least the common reference makes of Lovelace's figure something much less arbitrary and gratuitous than that 'parakeet' of Stevens which at first it so strikingly resembles. Similarly the 'magnificent immediacy' of the third line remains, but slightly blunted, when we realize that the figure 'clothes = flesh' was conventional in Lovelace's period and continually recurrent in his own work (cf for instance, 'To a Lady with child that ask'd an Old Shurt', and 'Love made in the first Ages To Chloris'). This blunting of the gratuitous element in the first figure leads me to question whether the repetition of 'bone', in the second line, is indeed 'reflective'. It now seems, I think, less novel and interesting, sheerly emphatic, not, 'bone, yes, bone', but 'bone upon bone'. The notes giving the precise meanings, from venery, of 'assay', of 'keeper's fees', of 'rascal deer', give the impression that the third and fourth stanzas are logical stages in an ordered and logical argument. Here,

says Mr Bewley, 'the rhythm continues to mirror the activity of the working mind with considerable subtlety' But it seems to me that between the activity and the mirroring of the activity has occurred a stage in which the activity has been pruned and arranged as strict argument For the 'Sure' of the third stanza ( Sure it is meant good husbandry in men ) carries the sense of 'It is true, I grant you', and before the fourth stanza we are to supply, as it seems to me a 'Yet' or a 'But — On the other hand

I would not deny that on this showing the poem appears less interesting than at first and I would agree that the considerable distinction which remains to it is admirably defined by Mr Bewley in terms of colloquial and conventional diction playing off against each other But Miss Tuve I feel, is in the right In the case of Lovelace, as in that of Donne, we have to do with the thoughts a man has, not with a man having thoughts And the distinction is not so pedantic as it appears

Yours sincerely,

St Catharine's College,  
Cambridge

DONALD A DAVIE

TO THE EDITORS OF *Scrutiny*

Dear Sirs,

Mr Davie's objections to my analysis of 'La Bella Bona-Roba' in my recent essay, 'The Colloquial Mode of Byron', raise an interesting problem, and in view of his interpretation of some of my words I am grateful to him for occasioning an opportunity to sharpen and clarify several things I said On some of the points which Mr Davie raises I am content to believe we shall remain in final disagreement, some of the others I think can be explained as misinterpretation of what I wrote, but on this score I am willing to accept any blame arising from awkward or faulty presentation, for Mr Davie's letter makes it clear that he has accorded me the courtesy of a very careful reading indeed

Before taking up Mr Davie's more detailed objections, there is one general charge he makes that I would like to refer to at once So far from equating the modes of seventeenth-century and twentieth-century poetry, I think I was clear in stating a distinction Mr Davie quotes me piece-meal as saying 'There is a curiously modern flavour about some of the above stanzas (one even thinks vaguely of the American poet Wallace Stevens )' But if Mr Davie had quoted not merely the first half of that sentence but the whole sentence, some of the ground of his objection would have been lost, for what I really wrote was 'There is a curiously modern flavour about some of the above stanzas (one even thinks vaguely of the American poet Wallace Stevens, though he could do nothing as fine), and possibly only then does it become clear how essentially different in structure, and consequently in the quality of delight offered, this poem is from anything that could be written to-day' My reason for including an analysis of 'La Bella Bona-Roba' in the

first place was precisely to point to its induplicable Carolinian character. I feel that Mr. Davie somewhat unjustifiably undertakes to restrict the application of my qualifying phrase, 'deceptive modernity' to the poetry of Wallace Stevens alone, thereby leaving him free (presumably on the basis of my phrase 'almost stream-of-consciousness', which I'll discuss later) to bring Mr. Eliot's poetry into the discussion as if it were I who had introduced it. I mentioned Stevens rather than Eliot because I felt that of all possible contemporary comparisons he was perhaps *nearest* to the seventeenth century, and that a comparison with him would therefore point the difference with telling exactness. If I may presume to quote a sentence of mine from an article on Wallace Stevens which is soon to appear in *Partisan Review*, having mentioned the superficial similarities between his poetry and the seventeenth century, I conclude 'But a comparison would hardly be fair to him for it would tend to show how much better off they were than we, both in the concrete immediacy of their language [Miss Tuve might object to this] and in the controlled precision of their abstractions'.

But I appreciate the confusion that my phrases 'almost stream-of-consciousness' and 'sinuosities of personal thought' may have caused when applied to 'La Bella Bona-Roba'. I naturally value Miss Tuve's work, and there is no doubt that a seventeenth-century poem cannot be read as a twentieth-century poem, but I think there is equally no doubt that a twentieth-century reader with whatever scholarly apparatus cannot read a seventeenth-century poem as its first readers did. Even if he could, I think it would be highly undesirable to do so, unless he were willing to devitalize utterly our concept of a living tradition. The impossibility of bridging the time gap seems to me to be admirably illustrated by Mr. Davie's insistence on the distinction between a man having a thought and the thought a man had. There is certainly a large proximate validity to this distinction, and Miss Tuve has proved that it can have a limited value critically, but in the end the dichotomy proves illusory. The subject is too large to be discussed in a letter with any effectiveness, and I do not feel much inclined to devote myself to a study of Miss Tuve's rather formidable work with that intensity which would justify capsuling one's disagreements in a few neat formulations. But if a man 'arranges' his thoughts, I hardly know what synonym a man might offer for 'arrangement' except 'thought' also. However successfully Miss Tuve herself may step over the trap in long series of distinctions and qualifications that make her book, for me at least, arduous reading, the twentieth-century reader can hardly keep the fact steadily or significantly in view that logical constructions were the easy and natural mode of operation for a civilization brought up on centuries of scholastic thinking. However differently the Elizabethans may have defined 'artificial', we ourselves lack the courage to apply that term in *any sense* to our own highly conventional forms of stream-of-consciousness and automatic writing. We rather fondly imagine, I think (although I doubt if I shall find much agreement) that our own forms reveal the very

bare bones of consciousness and the deep interiors of the personality. But in hands like Henry Miller's, say, they are more destitute of vitality and naturalness than *Euphuus*. The seventeenth- and twentieth-century modes of poetry are perfectly distinct from each other, but it is our excited sense of the personal force of the poet coming through his own particular mode by which we gauge the value of any poem, then or now. When I called 'La Bella Bona-Roba' 'almost stream-of-consciousness' I used a term to which to-day we are much inclined to attribute naturalness and directness, I had hoped to suggest thereby that Lovelace, in a quite other mode, was also achieving a great personal immediacy of expression, and that we should try to *read through* the conventional surfaces of the poem to its real value in a way we find it so easy to do when dealing with our own conventions of form. I do not think that the difficulty of reading seventeenth-century poetry well derives from the fact that we ignore the differences, despite Miss Tuve's alarm. I think it still comes from the fact that we shall always find it difficult to see how much two such different modes can have in common. I think that it is in this common ground, after all the distinctions have been made, that the ultimate critical judgment must occur. And my objection to Mr Davie's insistence on the distinction between a man's thought and a man having thoughts is simply that it minimizes that common ground unnecessarily.

In taking 'La Bella Bona-Roba' as an example of a convention-filled Carolinian poem, chosen to illustrate a quite other point in a different argument, I did not think it necessary to discuss its logical construction in any detail. Mr Davie is of course, perfectly correct in saying the middle stanzas exhibit an argument, and that "Sure" of the third stanza carries the sense of "It is true, I grant you." But we were aware of this from its most famous use as a logical nexus in Hamlet's soliloquy, 'How all occasions do inform against me'. And I would point to this soliloquy as a good example of how, in the seventeenth century, the sinuosities of 'personal thought' could find a natural mode of expression through a logical order that was native to them, but which is alien to us.

Turning now to Mr Davie's particular objections to my reading of 'La Bella Bona-Roba', I think I had better present a detailed analysis of what the poem seems to mean. For I am convinced that unless we read it, from one point of view as the poem of a *man having a thought* we shall not be able, despite its elaborate logic, to know what thought the man has had, and this, I believe, is an index to its profoundly personal character. But first I had better discuss what I mean by 'personal'. It appears that the question, Can a poet's image simultaneously participate in a common conventional currency and the personal feelings of the poet?—would be answered in different ways by Mr Davie and myself. Before considering the marmoset image, I think one might, with the effect of greater detachment, glance at an analogous image. I suppose that Mr Davie would grant that the cormorant was an even more widely used image in seventeenth-century poetry than the 'monkey-

ape-baboon marmoset' series of images. A typical instance of its use occurs in Dryden's *Conquest of Granada Part I*

You like some greedy cormorant devour  
All my whole life can give you in an hour

No one would maintain that this is distinguished verse or that Dryden drew very deeply on his sensibility in making such an image. Yet Marvell could write something strangely similar exhibiting quite as high a conventional content, and make it exquisitely personal

Now let us sport us while we may,  
And now, like am'rous buds of prey,  
Rather at once our Time devour,  
Than languish in his slow-chapt power

I find Marvell's image everything Dryden's is not immediate, personally urgent, and sensuously vivid not indeed, for any one sense, but in the imagination where all the senses merge in a composite unity. This is not, of course, 'personal' in the way that some romantic poetry is but I should be most inclined to take issue with Mr. Davie when he invokes the terms 'gratuitous' and 'arbitrary' as significant notes of the personal.

But to come to 'La Bella Bona-Roba' this poem seems to be a radical criticism of the conventionally wanton ethics of love that prevailed at the earlier Stuart Court and which reached full flowering later in writers like Sir George Etherege and the Earl of Rochester. We only possess the stark outlines of Lovelace's career, but we know well enough that his experience of the milieu was immediate and protracted. The sentiments of most of his verse are representative of the fashion, but this poem is one of the occasions on which he seems to have had a sharp personal reaction. The first stanza begins by falling back on the seventeenth-century concern with death and progressive decay. The current belief that the world was in a cycle of deterioration, moving from a remote Golden Age towards an impending dissolution was an implicit assumption behind such a poem as, say, Lovelace's *Love Made in the First Age*, where the theme is stated with conventional effectiveness, and in which decay and love are joined. The conjunction, I grant, is not unusual for the time, nevertheless I find the opening image of 'La Bella Bona-Roba' strange and personal, for the image of illicit erotic experience (the marmoset) is instantaneously and grotesquely transformed into a *momento mori* (the skeleton). Since a *momento mori* is an object for meditation, it still seems to me that the repeated 'bone' of the first stanza is meant to be a reflective repetition. There is a meditative withdrawal and shudder on the poet's part reflected in that repetition, and it is emphasized by his knowledge that he is almost alone in his reaction. The opening, 'I cannot tell who loves', probably means, 'I cannot measure or count the multitude', or it may even mean, 'I cannot confess the following sentiments to my usual type of companion'. In such a reading the unusual grammatical compression, by no means a typical



practice causes the thought and phrasing to impinge with great directness on each other. If we were to read the sentence as a simple confession of unspicacious ignorance it would be a very unconventional performance for a Carolinian courtier indeed. In the third line Lovelace begins to dissociate himself from the popular attitude 'Give me a nakedness with her clothes on' has an immediacy in no way blunted by the fact that skin and clothes images were common in the seventeenth century. (Despite Mr Davies' implication to the contrary, I pointed out in my article that 'white satin upper coat of skin' was a convention. I could hardly have done more.) The immediacy resides in the near personification of 'a nakedness' a quality divorced from its subject and standing up in its own right a self-existent entity. This immediacy is pressed home when one realizes the economy with which Lovelace is making an unusually complex statement in a minimum of words, and using conventional images for his own personal meaning. No contrast is intended between clothes and skin, for they are plainly identical. What Lovelace is asking for is a nakedness (physical love) that doesn't end with decay and death—that has no skeleton within—but which offers profounder fulfilment, which he symbolizes in the image of an interior nakedness replacing the skeleton and hence triumphing over the *momento mori* of the opening figure. The second stanza relates to the enlarged physical appetites and capacities that characterized the men of the Golden Age, and which Lovelace describes in 'Love Made in the First Age', and one might almost wonder if Lovelace were not simply regretting his own sensual limitations. But the appetites of the Golden Age were the reward of incorruption, and the third stanza of 'La Bella Bona-Roba' presents the desired fulfilment in terms of marriage, which it contrasts with the wasteful illicit love of stanzas 1 and 4. The man who establishes himself in marriage, consorting with a *single* love (Aery leane) rather than with a flock of loves, repairs the damage inflicted on him in Eden, and is a complete person again. But the rake has none of these satisfactions, and is left with expenses and penalties as his reward. In the closing stanza the 'rascal deer', or lean deer that must be passed over, relate to the skeleton of the opening line, and 'the largest doe' relates to the fleshly ideal body of the second stanza.

Now this seems to me the correct interpretation, but the meaning (*the thought Lovelace had*) is clear only because it is possible to arrive at it by watching Lovelace *have the thought*, in the process of which we sense the deeply personal feeling that is involved. It is easy to read this poem in an exactly opposite sense from the one I have given here. In such a reading, the successive nakednesses in the second stanza would be interpreted as a salute to carnal pleasure only. The 'Sure it is meant' of the third stanza would be read with an ironic inflection, and 'Aery leane' could then be interpreted, not as an Aery with a single falcon, but as an impoverished nest. In this reading, stanza 4 would become a description of the rewards that await fatuous husbands, and 'rascal deer' would be

husband-seeking ladies interchangeable with the *momento mori* of stanza 1. Instead of making a moral judgment on the manners of his age, Lovelace in such an interpretation, would appear to be making as severe an indictment of marriage as one could, equating it with living death.

It seems to me that both of these readings take due cognizance of seventeenth-century poetic and logical conventions. But elaborately extensive ambiguity of this kind can hardly be included as one of those conventions, and in any case the poem, in either reading, does not have the air of playing this sort of trick. I think, then, that the only guide we have to *which* of the two interpretations Lovelace intended will lie in discovering on which side the personal quality of his images and rhythm seems most intense and interesting, on which side the movement of the argument seems most intimately and sinuously to reflect the movement of his own mind as he develops that argument, and the reader can prove for himself how the quality changes on successive readings as one passes from one interpretation to the other. He can prove for himself how the quality *deteriorates* when he reads it with the second meaning in mind. The first interpretation, aligning itself with seventeenth-century melancholy—that melancholy consciousness that an age was dying and that a new one might not be born—imparts a seriousness to the whole poem which it loses entirely in the cheap conventional cynicism of the second reading. For example, consider stanza 4. According to the first interpretation, the huntsman is an impressive symbol of metaphysical restlessness whose keeper (suggesting a Divine Judge) will impose formidable sanctions for transgressions. According to the second reading the huntsman is a contemptible figure not wily enough to remain uncaught, and the keeper becomes his shrew of a wife. This reading completely desensitizes the rhythm, for since the flexible colloquial line enforces the deeper personal meaning one must, on the second interpretation, try to ignore the rhythm entirely and concentrate on the static presence of rhetorical conventions in the poem, which then loses its distinction and sinks down to the level of, say, Suckling.

I have no quarrel with the distinction which Mr. Davie takes over from Miss Tuve if it is very tentatively used, but I do not think it can be enlarged into a critical principle of deep validity, and I would not subscribe to any attempt to do so. The attempt itself appears to me to be an encroachment by scholarship on the proper grounds of criticism, but in saying this I certainly do not wish to appear ungracious on the subject of scholarship. The boundary between the two cannot be rigidly defined, but it is extremely important that we should attempt to keep it roughly in view. Such an exchange as Mr. Davie has invited helps—at least I am sure it helps the writers clarify their own attitudes—and in closing I have to thank Mr. Davie once more for raising the question, and for pointing to certain phrases in my own article which, in the interests of clarity, seem to call for emendation.

Yours sincerely

MARIUS BEWLEY

New York City,  
U S A

# COMMENTS AND REVIEWS

## KEYNES, LAWRENCE AND CAMBRIDGE

*TWO MEMOIRS, by J M Keynes introduced by David Garnett  
(Rupert Hart-Davis, 7/6)*

For the repugnance felt by Lawrence towards Mr David Garnett's friends, and the Cambridge-Bloomsbury milieu in general, Mr Garnett has a simple explanation jealousy 'He was a prophet who hated all those whose creeds protected them from ever becoming his disciples' That Lawrence had gifts Mr Garnett readily perceived In fact, he has 'never met a writer who appeared to have such genius I greatly admired and still admire, his short stories, his poems and several of his novels, particularly his first novel, *The White Peacock* (So, by way of paying one's tribute to James, one might say 'Yes, tremendous' I particularly admire *The American* Or, a greater genius being in question 'I particularly admire *Two Gentlemen of Verona* ) 'But', Mr Garnett continues,

'I was a rationalist and a scientist, and I was repelled by his intuitive and dogmatic philosophy, whereas the ideas of my friends from Cambridge interested and attracted me

'It was thus inevitable that sooner or later Lawrence would spew me out of his mouth, since I could never take his philosophy seriously'

Keynes too attempting his own explanation, invokes jealousy But he feels that more is needed His Memoir (the second of the pair that Mr Garnett introduces) is a piece of retrospective self-searching in which he asks whether he and his friends may not have provided Lawrence with some valid grounds for judging them adversely Keynes, no one will question was a distinguished mind, and the distinction is there, perhaps, in the very effort at self-criticism and a due humility But the significance of what he offers is not what he is conscious of, it lies in the inadequacy of the effort, and in the justification he brings Lawrence when he least intends it, or suspects it

The virtually intact complacency he exposes to our view gives us, at the outset, the assumptions on which the inquiry is to proceed 'But when all that has been said, was there something true and right in what Lawrence felt?' The 'but' leaves the assumptions with us as implicitly granted, following as it does on this

'Lawrence was jealous of the other lot, and Cambridge rationalism and cynicism, then at their height, were, of course, repulsive to him Bertie gave him what must have been, I think, his first

glimpse of Cambridge It overwhelmed, attracted and repulsed him—which was the other emotional disturbance It was obviously a civilization, and not less obviously uncomfortable and unattainable for him—very repulsive and very attractive

It was obviously a civilization —shocked as the provincial and puritanical Lawrence must inevitably have been he 'obviously can't but have admired and envied That Lawrence, judging out of his experience of something incomparably more worthy to be called a 'civilization' loathed and despised what was in front of him merely because he saw just what it was is inconceivable to Keynes

The Memoir is devoted to explaining the serious substance underlying the 'brittle stuff' of the conversation in which Lawrence couldn't be brought to join Such 'brittle stuff continued even in the maturer years of the *elite*, to be a large part of the 'civilization' —at least one gathers so from the way in which Keynes (it is 1938) announces his theme

'if it will not shock the Club too much, I should like in this contribution to its proceedings to introduce for once mental or spiritual instead of sexual adventures, to try and recall the principal impacts on one's virgin mind and to wonder how it has all turned out, and whether one still holds by that youthful religion'

The 'religion' was derived from G. E. Moore, and the Memoir is largely taken up with describing his influence 'Influence' here, of course means what was made of him, not in any field of disciplined study, but at the level of undergraduate 'civilization' That Moore himself deserves the high terms in which Keynes speaks of him no one will wish to question But the 'influence'—I well remember the exasperated despair with which its manifestations (in mild forms, I now see) filled me when I met them, just after the 1914 war, in friendly seniors who had been formed in that climate at the beginning of the century Keynes looking back, describes the intellectualities of the coterie and its religion with a certain amused irony, but it is not the detached irony of a mature valuation In 1938 he still takes them seriously, he sees them, not as illustrating a familiar undergraduate phase which should in any case be left behind as soon as possible, and which the most intelligent men should escape, but as serious and admirable—even, it would seem, when cultivated well beyond undergraduate years And that is what seems to me most significant in the Memoir, and most revelatory of the Cambridge Bloomsbury ethos

Of course, Keynes criticises the 'religion' for deficiencies and errors But he can't see that, 'seriously' as it took itself, to be inimical to the development of any real seriousness was its essence Articulatness and unreality cultivated together, callowness disguised from itself in articulateness, conceit casing itself safely in a confirmed sense of high sophistication, the uncertainty as to whether

one is serious or not taking itself for ironic poise who has not at some time observed the process?

'It did not prevent us from laughing most of the time and we enjoyed supreme self-confidence, superiority and contempt towards all the rest of the unconverted world'

'Broadly speaking we all knew for certain what were good states of mind and that they consisted in communion with objects of love, beauty and truth'

And Keynes describes the dialectical play ('It was a stringent education in dialectic', he tells us) that was to merge into, and, one gathers, was ultimately superseded by, the more 'brittle stuff'—describes it whimsically, but without in the least realizing that what he and his friends were illustrating was the power of an ancient university, in some of its climatic pockets, to arrest development, and that what they were finding in their intellectual performances was sanction and reinforcement for an undergraduate immaturity the more confident they grew in their sophistication, the less chance had they of discovering what seriousness was like

The more worldly sophistication that Lawrence encountered in 1914 was not a more genuine maturity. One can readily imagine how the incontinently flippant talk and the shiny complacency, snub-proof in its obtuse completeness, infuriated him. He loathed the flippancy, not because he was an inexperienced prude but for quite opposite reasons. He had been formed in a working-class culture in which intellectual interests were bound up with the social life of home and chapel, and never out of touch with the daily business of ensuring the supply of the daily bread. The intellectual interests were not the less real for that. E. T.'s *D. H. Lawrence* taken together with *Sons and Lovers* shows what an intense cultivation they had enjoyed during the formative years at Eastwood and Nottingham. Nothing could be more ludicrously wide of the mark than the assumption that Lawrence must have felt inferior and ill-educated when introduced in Russell's rooms to the dazzling civilization of Cambridge. But the thing to stress is his enormous advantage in experience. The young ex-elementary school-teacher was in a position to judge of the most distinguished intellectual among his friends, as he does in a letter of a year or so later

'What ails Russell is, in matters of life and emotion, the inexperience of youth. It isn't that life has been too much for him, but too little'

Keynes, looking back, does of course criticize the 'religion' for certain defects that fall under inexperience. He says that, in its account of human nature, it ignored the formidable part of the irrational forces, and ignored at the same time 'certain powerful and valuable springs of feeling'. But his criticisms have a way of not being able to realize the weight they ought to carry and the

depth to which they ought to strike. We lacked reverence, as Lawrence observed. Keynes endorses, as he thinks, this radical criticism. But what it means to him is just this and no more (damaging enough by itself, of course).

'We had no respect for traditional wisdom or the restraints of custom. It did not occur to any of us to respect the extraordinary accomplishment of our predecessors in the ordering of life (as it now seems to me to have been) or the elaborate framework they had devised to protect this order.

How little Keynes can understand the full force of Lawrence's criticism he shows when he explains what he calls the 'individualism of our philosophy'

Now what we got from Moore was by no means entirely what he offered us. He had one foot on the threshold of the new heaven, but the other foot in Sidgwick and the Benthamite calculus and the general rules of correct behaviour. We accepted Moore's religion, so to speak, and discarded his morals'

we were amongst the first of our generation, perhaps alone amongst our generation, to escape from the Benthamite tradition. In practice, of course, the outside world was not forgotten or forsworn.

'Moreover, it was this escape from Bentham, joined with the unsurpassable individualism of our philosophy, which has served to protect the whole lot of us from the final *reductio ad absurdum* of Benthamism known as Marxism. But we ourselves have remained altogether immune from the virus, as safe in the citadel of our ultimate faith as the Pope of Rome in his

These extracts illustrate how seriously Keynes takes the 'civilization' that must, he is sure, have impressed the 'ignorant, jealous, irritable' Lawrence. The 'unsurpassable individualism of our philosophy'—call the ethos evoked in the Memoir *that* while granting that the 'philosophy' had weaknesses, and it becomes possible for Keynes to conclude that 'this religion of ours was a very good one to grow up under'. And it becomes possible for him to suggest that the Club-members would have been more subject to the infection of Marxism if they had been at all seriously affected by the spirit of Sidgwick. But what Lawrence heard (and Keynes unwittingly bears him out) was the levity of so many petty egos, each primed with conscious clevernesses and hardened in self-approval.

'they talk endlessly, but endlessly—and never, never a good thing said. They are cased each in a hard little shell of his own and out of this they talk words. There is never for one second any outgoing of feeling and no reverence, not a crumb or grain of reverence. I cannot stand it'

The kind of triviality that Lawrence describes here is indeed a worse thing than Keynes was able to conceive it. And the significant fact that emerges unmistakably from the Memoir is that he couldn't really grasp the intention of the criticism he was considering. It is a fact that would seem substantially to confirm Lawrence.

If this judgment seems too severe, let it be remembered that the 'civilization' celebrated by Keynes produced Lytton Strachey, and that the literary world dominated by that civilization made Lytton Strachey a living Master and a prevailing influence. And if I should seem to be making too much here of facts belonging to the history of taste and literary fashion, I suggest a pondering of these comments which I take from a review by Sir Charles Webster (he is dealing at the moment with the other of the two memoirs in Keynes's book).

'Keynes let me read it in 1943, and its facts were then checked against the documents which record—in very different prose—the public incidents which it relates. They were accurate enough, as I told him at the time. But the details were of course selected and distorted to suit his purpose.

'These characterisations are of course caricatures. Keynes put down what suited his purpose at the moment. In this ruthless sacrifice of truth to literary purpose he was obviously much influenced by Lytton Strachey, whose popular books depended on little else. The political caricatures of the *Economic Consequences* did as much harm as the economic insight did good.'

Keynes was a great representative Cambridge man of his time. Cambridge produced him, as it produced the 'civilization' with which he associated himself and which exercised so strong a sway over the metropolitan centres of taste and fashion. Can we imagine Sidgwick or Leslie Stephen or Maitland being influenced by, or interested in, the equivalent of Lytton Strachey? By what steps, and by the operation of what causes, did so great a change come over Cambridge in so comparatively short a time? These are the questions that we find ourselves once more asking as we put down Keynes's little book. The inquiry into which the second would lead if seriously pursued would tell us about a great deal more than Cambridge. That is a reason for thinking it very much worth undertaking.

F R LEAVIS

## THE CULT OF DYLAN THOMAS

*DYLAN THOMAS*, by Henry Treece (*Lindsay Drummond*, 7/6)

Nothing has been more irritating about the vogue for Dylan Thomas's poetry than the apparent inability of his admirers to explain their enthusiasm. All sorts of unlikely people were, one gathered, swept off their feet by it, but no intelligible account of the experience emerged, much less anything that could be called reasoned analysis. Now Mr Treece has given us, according to his publishers, the first full-sized work on the poetry of Dylan Thomas to be published in England or the United States of America. It cannot be said that the result is either enlightening or convincing.

In the first place the book suffers from a lack of unity. Bits of it have appeared earlier in periodicals and elsewhere, and it is obvious that different parts were written at different times. The section dealing with *Deaths and Entrances*—a book now three years old, seems to have been added at the last minute. It is perhaps partly the effect of this lack of unity that Mr Treece's final estimate of Thomas should seem rather confused. What is presumably intended as an effort to discriminate among the poems often looks like self-contradiction. However, the real trouble is an equal innocence of standards and of critical method. Mr Eliot for example, might never have written a line of criticism for all the benefit it has been to Mr Treece (though he quotes from it occasionally) it is as if a Georgian poet had suddenly been projected into the later 'thirties and fed on a diet of Freud and surrealism. He appears to think that to object to a poem on the ground of incoherence can only mean that one is asking for the simplest paraphrasable prose sense: any idea of imaginative coherence and emotional order would seem to be beyond him. This naivete about meaning lies behind a good deal of contemporary writing, but it is seldom stated so clearly as here.

for artistic purposes, which require a peculiar use of language, "meaning" should be dependent on recognition of Pattern, and on any excitement, emotional or intellectual, of colour, sound or shape, which carries with it a satisfaction, or an inner fusion'

The quality of the satisfaction apparently doesn't matter. Nor need the poet bother much about communication.

It is probably the case that those readers who derive little satisfaction from any particular poet are living under different compulsions from that poet. Their problems are not his, and in consequence, they may not fully realize what he is about. Then again, it is likely that every reader "writes" the poem he wishes to read, or in other words, sees in a poem what he wants to see, not necessarily that which the poet most wanted to write.



Again, Mr Treece seems to think it doesn't matter. He seems to have no conception of the poem as in some sense a public fact, a resultant of different personal interpretations. Thomas's poems, he tells us, stand or fall by the coincidence at the time of writing with a similar mood or emotion on the part of the reader. Most of these quotations come from the chapter on 'General Characteristics', which ends with a note that Thomas is often 'unrepentantly directionless' and adds the significant comment 'That is how it is, and in a cultural tradition, such as ours, of indefinite laxity, how it should be. We have moved a long way from Lawrence's 'Thank God I'm not free, any more than a rooted tree is free

After such a frank abandonment of standards, the rest of the book is something of a damp squib, for the newest criticism links up uncommonly easily with the clichés of romanticism and the dullest academic chatter about Form. Mr Treece begins by asserting the rights of individual against collective myth—the latter he considers chiefly in the form of mechanistic ideology and finds it more dangerous to the artist than the former. The dangers of the subjective writer he thinks comparatively simple and avoidable, illustrating them from surrealist poetry. After the outline of Thomas's general characteristics there follows a discussion of influences, a motley collection indeed—Hopkins, Hart Crane, Swinburne, Rimbaud, Francis Thompson. A chapter on the debt to Hopkins is devoted partly to a mechanical and external note on common technical devices, partly to a rather vague comparison of the elements of 'inquiry and a terror of fearful expectation' in the two poets (the phrase comes from Charles Williams's introduction). There is no hint of the contrast in organization and discipline of feeling behind the words of the two poets. Similarly the chapter on Thomas the Mediaevalist is partly dubious generalization about 'the beautiful and dark conceptions of mysticism and introspection' partly academic notes on the use of alliterative patterns, Anglo-Saxon metres and Welsh *cywydd* and *cynghanedd*<sup>1</sup> quite unrelated to any expressive function.

The actual survey of Thomas's work begins with a note on his 'straight' poems, rather quaintly defensive and embarrassed in tone. These are not, it is true, especially outstanding or dis-

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<sup>1</sup>Mr Treece's reliability on these grounds may perhaps be gauged from his statement that *cywydd*, with its rhyming of accented and unaccented syllables, is illustrated in

Then to Sylvia let us sing  
For Sylvia is excelling

—lines which in their context, of course, make no pretence of rhyming together. He is in several places somewhat approximate about matters of fact, as when he says, outlining the state of the literary world in 1934, that D. H. Lawrence 'wasn't to publish *Pornography and So On* for two years'

tinguished, but they have at least the merit of coherence and honesty. On the significance of *18 Poems* Mr Treece can let himself go. Most of them, we learn, are concerned with pre-natal experience, giving voices to the glands and the nerves — they are praised as a notable extension of the subject-matter of poetry, and we hear of their magic and foetal unity. *25 Poems* is seen as 'a rather slipshod marking time', but *The Map of Love* as an important step forward. Mr Treece's descriptions will seem to many to be constantly giving away his critical case, as when he says that Thomas's personality is by turns arrogant and self-pitying, tender and wildly rhetorical. It is never relaxed and unselfconscious. In the chapter on the latest work Thomas emerges as the leader of the new romanticism, and again the account runs chiefly to vague discussions about subject-matter followed by jejune descriptions of formal and technical experiments. But on *Deaths and Entrances* Mr Treece is far less enthusiastic than many of the reviewers. In all fairness it must be said that he does try to discriminate, but his critical equipment is so inadequate that the result is not particularly helpful. His final estimate seems to be that 'Dylan Thomas is not a major poet because he is not yet a fully-realized man, but he still has hopes, and partisans will be able to find many passages of less guarded praise.

No doubt it is hardly fair to judge a poet by the pronouncements of his advocates, but it cannot be altogether without significance that on the rare occasions when a critic with standards brings himself to consider Thomas's work carefully and closely he tends to report with very limited enthusiasm. The parallel comments in *The Critic* a year or two ago by Miss Sitwell and Mr Henry Gibson were very revealing. Miss Sitwell seemed to be not so much reading as making up her own poems and reflecting on literature in general. Mr Treece's book is at least some slight improvement on that. Perhaps at this point the reviewer should make his own attitude explicit. Let me say then that after tackling Thomas's poetry at various phases of his development and making a special effort over *Deaths and Entrances* I can see very little of positive achievement, though I am ready to be convinced by any critic who will point out to me what I have missed. His work shows undoubted poetic gift, but a complete lack of organization and discipline. The much-vaunted romantic subjectivism looks for the most part like an excuse to avoid the trouble of precise communication. Of course, if Mr Treece is right, communication doesn't matter, except to that fit audience though few with similar compulsions, and some of the poet's own comments on his work seem to tend the same way. One can only insist that the vivid symbolization of personal conflicts does not by itself constitute art. 'Stephen Spender, says Mr Treece, 'will appeal to many who like pleasant sounds and new high-lights on old pictures, but Dylan Thomas will be the meat of the man whose primitive wonder, newly awakened, demands a fresh, if unbalanced, world in which he may declare his own dreams unselfconsciously'. If these are really the

alternatives it won't be merely the literary equivalents of the President of the Royal Academy who decide to keep their money in their pockets

R G Cox

## MR TURNELL'S CRITICISM

*THE CLASSICAL MOMENT*, by *Martin Turnell* (*Hamish Hamilton*, 12/6)

To one reader of *Scrutiny* at least the announcement of *The Classical Moment* aroused feelings of pleasurable anticipation. One remembered what stimulating, if sometimes controversial reading Mr Turnell's studies of the French Classical dramatists had supplied. With its introduction on the Seventeenth Century, its Epilogue, little redrafting but a number of additions what sort of a book does it make? Frankly not as good as I had hoped. Mr Turnell brings a freshness of mind to bear on Corneille, Moliere and Racine for which one must be grateful, and his examination of scenes and characters—the detailed appreciation of them—is sometimes full of insight. One feels at first sight, that this is indeed the book to thrust into the hands of the young, one to arouse an intelligent and well-directed enthusiasm in these three dramatists who have so often suffered from the fly-blown annotation of the school edition in which one once read them. All these virtues have been recognized in the many favourable reviews which *The Classical Moment* has received.

To one who is 'in the trade' Mr Turnell's book is even something of a challenge. It is the sort of book which one of our professors of French ought to have written and there are some certainly who would not have written anything as readable. As it is, Turnell's *Classical Moment* is already being widely read by undergraduates, but even those who are prepared to recommend it, and (to judge by one or two recent conversations in different Universities) those who read it, are not unconscious of how much of it is questionable.<sup>1</sup> The more I study it the more unequal does it appear in my eyes.

The title chosen is in itself revealing—a useful counter-blast to the more familiar 'classical age'. It is characteristic of a 'classical period' to think of itself as stable, as established, a high plateau at last attained and stretching on ahead without declivity or descent. Even a nodding familiarity with the French Seventeenth Century soon leads to the realization that what seemed an 'age' was only a brief twenty-five to thirty years, not *le siècle de Louis Quatorze*.

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<sup>1</sup>The incidental 'irresponsibilities' of the author are too frequent. For example we are told on p. 21 that Pascal and Bossuet were both admirers of the Cartesian system. In point of fact, they are just those whose criticism of Descartes and the implications of his system were most forthright.

but the earlier years of his personal reign. In this volume however the moment runs some danger of dissolving into a mathematical point—identifiable, in Mr Turnell's final analysis, with the appearance of *Le Misanthrope* in 1666 (p 46). Accordingly Corneille's generation represents the Age of Honour, Moliere's the Age of Reason and Racine's the Age of Passion. Too much of *The Classical Moment* is devoted to the elaboration of concepts of this kind and to an attempted evaluation of these dramatists as the expression of three phases in the life of French society. This treatment is often valid, though less novel than some English readers may imagine, but over it hovers the disquieting shadow of what might be called an unconscious Marxism.

Thus we are told that Corneille's heroes are 'the embodiment of all that was best in the middle classes from which the poet came' (p 22)—and, rather inconsistently, on p 38 that Felix in *Polyeucte* and Prusias in *Nicomede* are the means of making 'the essential criticism of middle class complacency'. Such comments (and there are many more in the same vein) seem, to me at least, almost nonsensical. Similarly if Moliere's early *Don Garcie de Navarre* has no success, it is, Mr Turnell appears to claim on p 46, because the public were not ripe for it. It is at least as plausible to hold, with most writers, that Moliere had not yet 'found himself' and had embarked on the kind of play for which he was temperamentally unsuited.

Mr Turnell is indeed so intent on relating his three figures to their age that he forgets throughout his book that dramatic technique and tradition have a determining influence on even the greatest of playwrights. In almost a hundred pages devoted to Moliere there is but one brief reference to the incalculable influence of the *Commedia dell'Arte* from which the formula of the *monomameac*, the technique of characterization, and consequently the very shape and much of the flavour of Moliere's Comedies are derived. This in turn leads him to assert that Moliere's characters are in no sense caricatures (p 64). Of course, they are caricatures, that is why they make us laugh. They are caricatures in every sense except one, namely that their creator has drawn them with a sufficiency of subtle incidental detail to keep them alive. No doubt, Mr Turnell would not dissent. Yet the remark is typical of the loose way in which some of this book is written.

This disregard for dramatic technique, this endeavour to consider the play as a mere sociological document is still more glaring in the case of Racine. Mr Turnell is convinced that these tragedies directly reflect a certain moral decadence of the France of Louis XIV, and that it is for this reason that 'Racine's characters have no place in the social order, they are outsiders who have lost their bearings as completely as Frédéric Moreau or any other nineteenth-century hero' (p 158). Has Mr Turnell never asked himself how far it is Racine's conception of tragedy and tragic *demesure* which determine the passionate nature of his characters?

The best pages of the book are, I think, those on Corneille

The symbolism of the duel, the cut and thrust of the dialogue with (it might be added) the tossing of a repeated word from speaker to speaker, the 'drama of imitation' (p 29) with the recurrent theme of hero and heroine who rise to the occasion—all these points are excellently made and the often unobserved subtlety of Corneille is well brought out in several passages

*The Classical Moment* ignores altogether the early comedies of Corneille which would have provided a suitable opportunity to talk about the middle class and to show how the apprenticeship of the *comédie d'intrigue* taught Corneille to organize *peripetia* of his heroic plays. He also dismisses the later work in three pages. In the result Corneille's drama does not quite emerge as the rich and varied thing that it is, nor does Mr Turnell see that his essential ideas on tragic (or more exactly heroic) drama make him the great example of what we may call French Baroque literature. The *Discours sur la Tragedie* are revealing in this connection. Choose the extraordinary event, the almost incredible story—but choose it, if possible, from a historical work. Once this has been done internal verisimilitude should be sought, but admiration rather than pity or terror will be the dominating sentiment to be provoked in the spectator. *Nicomede* has even more importance than Mr Turnell allows, since this play—the drama of admiration—was not only, in Corneille's own view, the most original of all his works, but embodied a theory to which despite minor variations, he was faithfully—artistically too faithful no doubt—up to the end of his long career.

The treatment of Molière is far more detailed. It contains many things well said, especially on *Don Juan*, and Mr Turnell has relied on good guides (as in the essay on Corneille). But there is also much repetition, too many long quotations to preface a couple of lines of comment (pp 67, 8, 84, 5, 128, 29, 30), and passages where one fears for the author's sense of humour. In one instance also for his knowledge of French (p 71) it looks as if he did not know that *serrez ma hanne avec ma discipline* means 'put away my hair shirt with my scourge' and the subsequent metaphorical interpretation of *prisonniers* rather shakes one's faith in his good sense.

The view-point which lies behind these studies of Molière is stated in various forms and places. Namely that in Molière above all we find proclaimed the 'basic verities' of *ordre, mesure, equite, bon goût* etc (p 10). They 'stand for something vivid and real'. The cause of their vividness lies precisely in the difficulty of these virtues to a generation of passionate men. It is this which gives rise to the 'passionate tug of war' so well dealt with on p 15. It is this 'hot-headedness' in Molière himself which is referred to by a recent French critic quoted on p 49. Mr Turnell does not give sufficient emphasis to his own idea, nor does he appear to have grasped firmly enough the essential general proposition that the ideals of a generation are commonly to be found in what it is not but would like to be. Thus, when he quotes from *Tartuffe* Cléante's famous

' Les hommes la plupart sont étrangement faits  
 Dans la juste nature on ne les voit jamais

his comment is merely ' This is the voice of true civilization, of a society in which it was natural to speak of measure and proportion,' and on p 47 he tells us that the ' true representatives of the Age of Moliere are the *honnêtes hommes* with their reasonable tolerant outlook, their solid, unheroic virtues This is but a half-truth His extravagant comic figures are no less representative in their violence It is natural to the *honnête homme* to speak of measure and proportion just because these qualities are felt as difficult, and are therefore less unheroic than they appear

Now one of the defects most to be eschewed by the *honnête homme* is violence and violent opinions Ever since Charron's *Sagesse* (1601) the definition of superstition accepted by a diversity of Frenchmen was dogmatism or violence of opinion This is the central defect of Orgon in *Tartuffe* Violence is the comic vice of Orgon *par excellence* It survives the unmasking of the villain, and Mr Turnell misses the point of the last scene where the worthy Orgon, moving to direct a *coup de pied* at the disappearing hypocrite is restrained by Cleante with

' Ne descends point, mon frere, a ces indignités '

There is thus no 'conversion' of Orgon, and Mr Turnell's reference to one on p 120 is meaningless This violence is even given as a family trait, too which takes its own characteristic forms in his mother and in his son While Cleante's views are very justly dealt with by Mr Turnell, it is a pity he has not explained with the help of Monsieur Michaut (whom he quotes) what the plot of the first *Tartuffe* complete in three acts, must have been a hypocrite in holy orders, no daughter, no Act II, and very probably an Elmire whose conduct was not so unlike that of George Dandin's wife It might have helped him to discuss the somewhat ambiguous figure which she cuts in the play as we know it, and it should have led him to suspect that Orgon's behaviour *prior* to his meeting with Tartuffe was later set in a more favourable light merely in order to soften the attack on the ' unco guid ' and to bring the focus of the play to bear more emphatically on the hypocrite himself

A long disquisition on *Le Misanthrope* rightly forms the centre-piece of this section of the book Here I find the treatment excellent if somewhat laborious Personally I should maintain that this play can best be summed up as one on the essential ambiguity of the term *honnête homme* In its original sense, which was still felt as operative, it meant the honest, the virtuous or moral man Yet it had come to mean (as we can see from La Rochefoucauld, the Chevalier de Méré and many a lesser writer) the man who knows *how to please* who possesses the quality of *savoir vivre* or still better, of a certain *savoir plaire* Can honesty and *savoir plaire* be conciliated? This is not only the dilemma of Alceste but of every character in the play Mr Turnell is surely right in concluding that

the catharsis lies in the perception that social adjustment is a personal matter where in the last resort no facile slogan or philosophical system can help us ' Or, as I should prefer diversity is the very salt of life, and the ambition of being wholly consistent (or indeed wholly any *one* thing) is to invite not indeed perhaps moral disaster but at least the laughter of our fellow men and on slaughts of the muse of comedy—a formulation less philosophical but more in keeping with the comic genius which was Molière's

Taken all in all, we may apply to these pages Turnell's own judgment of Monsieur R. Fernandez' study of Molière—' stimulating but erratic ' Of the erratic I cannot refrain from giving yet one more example Mr Turnell quotes Harpagon's famous monologue from *L'Avare* in its entirety and analyses it in a page and a half

He imagines he is surrounded by a vast number of people he proceeds to address the silent motionless figures of the night mare— Suddenly the silent throng seems to come to life etc etc (p 124) These *people* these *figures of a nightmare* are of course the audience in the theatre to whom Harpagon addresses himself The actor who plays the part cannot speak the line *ils me regardent tous et se mettent à rire* until he has by gesture or grimace provoked an explosion (a new explosion?) of laughter

It is obvious that Mr Turnell has never seen this play on the stage—which is just hard luck But how many, if any, of the plays dealt with in the volume has he seen on the stage? One finds oneself beginning to wonder

If Mr Turnell on Molière is erratic much of what he has to say on Racine is just wrong (from which structure I would except *Athalie and the Dictators*, the last chapter of this book) Some of his remarks already provoked on their appearance in *Scrutiny* some merited expostulations The gravest charge is, however, that Mr Turnell comes near to cooking the evidence in attempting to justify the claim that, 'in making sexual passion the supreme value in a world of dissolving values, the last refuge of a man who has lost faith in all else, Racine anticipates the writers of a later age' (p 182) Sexual passion is not the 'supreme value' in Racine's plays it is the supreme temptation It is (to paraphrase Karl Vossler) the natural destiny of humanity, bringing tragic disaster in its wake but over against it stand with increasing clearness from play to play, renunciation and sacrifice which are the spiritual vocation of man It is through self renunciation that Andromaque, that Jume, that Momme and Xiphars, that Iphigénie survive the disaster that overwhelms others The note of renunciation is there in the pathetic rôle of Atalide, it is the theme of *Bérénice*

*Bérénice* is the greatest stumbling block to Mr Turnell's view of Racine He is obliged to argue that its composition was an uncongenial task, that hence its verse seems 'hollow and inflated,' and that Titus is a prig It is necessary, however, to expose Mr Turnell's methods at their worst by what may at first sight appear a slightly pedantic examination

It is on the strength of five verses from Act II, Scene 2 (*Tu ne*

*l'ignores pas*) that we are invited to regard Titus as a prig. I ask Mr Turnell (and any reader) to consider the whole *tragede* (vv 499-522, *Ah ! que sous de beaux noms cette gloire est cruelle* etc) from which these five lines are arbitrarily extracted. How arbitrarily may be seen by the fact that the opening *Tu ne l'ignores pas* refers as much to what precedes as what follows. It is Titus' love for Berenice which in the past and under another sky has changed him from a weak pleasure-loving youth into one who has learnt *from her* to value courage, the public weal and the happiness of others. It is his immense moral debt to Bérenice which is the subject of the *tragede* (*Je lui dois tout, Paulin*) and the cruelty of having to reward her so ill for what she has done for him as a man. All the more so, since as we learn from lines 431-438, Titus had once been blind enough to hope for the imperial crown only to be able to set Berénice in the place which, in his devotion, he feels is rightly hers. The inability of Mr Turnell to appreciate this essential factor of the situation at the outset of the play renders it easier for him to discount *Bérenice* as an aberration from the real genius of Racine.

Mr Turnell continues 'It is not surprising to find *after this* that *honneur* and *gloire* are invoked with great frequency'. Perhaps he is not sufficiently aware that the word *gloire* had in the 17th century the specific connotation of *merited reputation*. He certainly is oblivious to the irony with which Titus frequently uses the word throughout the play—an irony which is explained and determined by the fundamental debt of Titus to the woman he loves, an irony which is aimed, not at the conception *gloire* itself, but at the price which has to be paid for it by that woman still more than by himself.

Turnell gives three passages to illustrate Titus' preoccupation with his own feelings (pp 189, 190). He admits that each of them begins with a reference to 'public virtues'—though these are not the verses which he quotes. But each of them do more, Titus enlarges on the irrevocable nature of his decision, he cries

'Il ne faut point ici nous attendre tous deux'

adding that if tears there must be, they shall be those of a queen and of an emperor—that is not those of mere private persons. He maintains in a third place that separation is the only thing which can save both of them from humiliation of one sort or another. It is not true that Titus is completely taken up with his own feelings. His cruel task is to bring Bérenice whom he still loves to the same voluntary decision as he has made, and this cannot be done without reference to, and expression of, his feelings.

In fact the arbitrary quotation of a few verses from this scene or that is particularly unfortunate when applied to anything so highly organized as a play of Racine. Essentially Turnell condemns this play on two counts. He is convinced that Titus' motive is simply an empty concern with 'what people will think', and he finds a conviction of 'the importance of their emotions to history' to be mere sentimentality. A moment's reflection on Roman history



—so often evoked by Titus—will bring home the fact that only a full acceptance of fundamental Roman law and custom was compatible with the rôle of a reforming emperor to which the son of Vespasian aspired. All this is indeed stated by Paulin in that second crucial scene of Act II. It is in this sense that Titus is bound to set an example—which will have all the more force as coming from the possessor of effective absolute power.

It is true that in our eyes, in Racine's eyes in the eyes of his principal characters, the Roman usage is little more than unreasonable prejudice. That is just what gives the double sacrifice of Titus and Berenice its crowning touch not only of pathos but of heroism. Suppose Racine had presented a justification of the Roman prejudice, had given us a Titus bowing only to a Senate insurrection his play would have lost its whole point—and lost the truly Cornelian quality (in the best sense of the word) which it unquestionably possesses.

It may be true that the verse of *Berenice* has not the same quality as that of *Andromaque* or *Phèdre*. Why should it have? Unlike all the other plays it is not only the tragedy of a shared and long-standing passion (only the discretion of stage convention may obscure the obvious fact that Bérenice is, and has long been, Titus' mistress), but it is intended by Racine as an exercise in the tragedy of *civilized beings* and, in more senses than one, the most modern of all his plays.

It would be idle to deny, however, that the treatment of Racine contains much that is sound and even penetrating. None the less we are again and again brought up against remarks that are misleading or impossibly far-fetched. A few examples must suffice.

Mr Turnell makes great play with M. de Rougement's *Amour en Occident* with its psycho-analytic interpretation of the Tristan story. This is a doubtful prop in itself. Even if we admit Rougement's thesis, it still seems absurd to say that 'there is an obvious parallel between the mission of Tristan and the mission of Oreste in *Andromaque*, (p. 169). Again, it is not when Hermione has been 'finally thrown over by Pyrrhus' (p. 177) that she says

Ah! je l'ai trop aimé pour ne le point hair

The line is in the very first scene of the play in which she appears. It is true enough that the clairvoyance of Racine's characters allow them to perceive unerringly the weakness of their opponents. But it is quite confusing to quote Hermione's bitterly ironical description of Pyrrhus' killing of Priam as an illustration of Pyrrhus' absence of pity (see p. 181).

The speech of Agrippine (*Britannicus* IV) which moves Turnell to claim that 'the bed sticks out in Racine's poetry' (p. 175) is of course a deliberately shameless revelation of the depths to which she has sunk, made to Nero in a final, fruitless and miscalculated effort to arouse a sense of gratitude for the price which she, his mother, has paid to place him on the throne.

The unreliability of Mr Turnell's methods of quotation could be illustrated *ad nauseam* alas! On p 183 a startling new example may be found We are told that 'When Alexandre declares

au seul nom d'un roi jusqu'alors *invincible*  
A de nouveaux exploits mon coeur devint *sensible*

we feel at once that there is a contrast between the heroic vocabulary and the lack of a corresponding drive in the texture of the verse *Invincible* is a borrowing from Corneille, but 'mon coeur devint sensible' bears Racine's own stamp) In point of fact (whatever the poetic quality of these verses) Alexandre's *new exploits* in the context are those of generosity towards a conquered enemy, the making of him into a friend! *Sensible* is thus an entirely appropriate term and the further comments of Mr Turnell ('The invincibility of the Cornelian hero would never provoke the reaction attributed to Alexandre in these lines') are seen to be directly belied by the very verses quoted

When we turn to the chapter on *Phedre* we find that Mr Turnell is prepared, in this instance, to admit that sexual passion is no longer the 'supreme value' but in his anxiety to use *Phedre* as a biographical document (even a sociological one?), he proceeds to the other extreme in a way which to my mind disturbs his view of this play It is not unfair to begin with Mr Turnell's summing up How far is Racine's play really amenable to the conclusions which he presents and which are concerned with the relation of the dramatist and this play?

'Phèdre stands for the guilty Racine of the past Hippolyte stands for the new Racine, the pure young man that he would like to have been This seems to be the true explanation of Phèdre's desperate concern with 'purity' It may well be as M Rougement suggests, that Racine set out to punish his own guilty passion in this play, but the curse which Phedre persuades Theseus to lay on Hippolyte is the outward sign of the internal ravages of her love for him For the play is nothing less than a *suicide pact* The Past infects the Present and in a sense, the Future, the old Racine infects the new, dragging him down miserably to the abyss Human society is obliterated and only the eternal values remain intact There is nothing left except to rebuild the human kingdom from the start with fresh material'

Some of this may be plausible enough in a domain where all is guesswork, though I can make no sense of the phrase *suicide pact* No curse is laid on Hippolyte at *Phedre's entreaties* and far from human society being abolished, the climax of Theseus' grief at the end of the play is also, as Jean Louis Barrault puts it, *le triomphe d'Arcie* The catastrophe brings with it a reconciliation and the obliteration of old feuds—an indication of *Neubeginn* which unity of subject prevents the dramatist developing, but which is certainly not concerned with 'new material' However, once we enter the field

of the unconscious, it is always possible to argue that by its ambivalence every motive is really its own opposite. What concerns me more is to show how certain parts of the play as a play have been distorted in order to lend colour, as it would seem, to these conclusions.

Thus we are asked to believe that 'fatal passion' is an infection, that 'Phèdre infects the "insensible" Hippolyte who becomes desperately in love with Aricie. But surely the total *difference* of Phèdre's love and Hippolyte's love (not to speak of Aricie's) is one of the fundamental themes of Racine's play. There is not a shred of evidence to show that Racine has hinted at any relation of cause and effect, nor could there be, since Hippolyte has admitted his passion for Aricie before he has the least inkling of what Phèdre's feelings for him are. It is part of his delineation as hitherto heart-whole, intact, that he should indulge in a movement of self-accusation, when he first makes his confession to Théramène. But Turnell's comment is 'Racine had become so obsessed by the Jansenist sense of the inherent sinfulness of sexual love that even Hippolyte's love for Aricie is described as a *fol amour*'. In point of fact the only fault with which Hippolyte reproaches himself is the comparative venial one in his eyes, in Théramène's eyes, and in Racine's eyes also, of contemplating a match of which his father will disapprove. His embarrassment before his father is no more than part of that natural nobility and reticence of character which ensures his destruction according to the most traditional tragic convention. This view is the one which the true pattern of the play with its niceties of adjustment demands and which Mr. Turnell's 'infection' would rule out.

Again in dealing with the scene in which Phèdre's jealousy of the newly discovered passion of Hippolyte for Aricie brings such a poignant contrast between *their* innocent happiness and her own unavoidable torment, the scene which finds its most unforgettable notes in

Tous les jours se levaient clairs et sereins pour eux  
and in the final

Ils s'aimeront toujours

Mr. Turnell declares that 'the idea of love has become for Phèdre inseparable from the idea of sin' (p. 209) and indulges in some involved special pleading on the use of terms such as *innocence* (which is apparently not innocence) and *furtive* (which surely means no more than 'shy'). Is one not justified in insisting that Phèdre's 'desperate concern with "purity",' her *rêve de candeur* as M. Blanchot calls it, is nowhere expressed more clearly than when, in the midst of her jealousy, she allows her mind to dwell in imagination on the young lovers?<sup>2</sup> The 'vicarious satisfaction' of

<sup>2</sup>It is at this point that the *fille de Minos et de Pasiphaë* is referred to as the 'ageing Amazon' (sic!)

this scene is only achieved precisely because their love is seen as *not* sin. Nor indeed does this view in any way interfere with the supposition if we care to make it that Racine has projected onto Hippolyte something of the young man he would like to have been. Indeed it fits such a supposition much better than the interpretation of the scene given in *The Classical Moment*.

It is, of course, true that the rôles of Hippolyte and Aricie need the sympathetic insight of actors and producer to come alive in the way that Phedre herself does even from the printed page. It may be that she stands in some peculiar relationship to the dramatist, whether it is that suggested by Rougement and Turnell. Yet there cannot be the slightest justification for the notion that this play has any specifically contemporary reference in the sense which *The Classical Moment* seems to imply, and indeed the alleged 'Jansenism' of the play (if not of the subsequent Preface) remains highly debatable.

Jansenism and 'contemporary problems' figure also in Mr Turnell's study of *Athalie* but here with far more justification. It is to my mind the most satisfactory of his chapters on Racine. It is indeed impossible to believe that no link between the persecuted Port Royal and the Levites of the play has been made by Racine. Mr Turnell's view (as revised for his book) is that it marks too a certain scepticism about the future not only of Jansenism but of the advent of a new Christian society. Surely it would be safer to say that some of the greatness of the conception of the play is just the implication that persecution, regeneration, falling away from God and return to Him are the stuff of which the web of human history is woven.

Much of this long article must indeed sound like a total condemnation of the book—and what can be more tedious than a prolonged *ereintement*! It is, however, just because *The Classical Moment* contains so much that is excellent that it is somebody's business to point out its failings both for the public's and Mr Turnell's sake. Let us hope that some of these may be amended in a subsequent edition. The author is in a fair way to acquire the reputation of one of our better British critics of French literature. Would it sound too pedantic or academic to suggest that it would be everybody's misfortune if he were to be regarded as an authority before he has become a little more scholarly?

ALAN M. BOASE

## THE NEW ANTIQUARIANISM

*THE THEORY OF LITERATURE* by Rene Wellek and Austin Warren (Harcourt Brace and Company New York 1949, 4\$ 50)

There would be little need to call this book to the attention of the English reading public if it did not appear so authentically and decisively to represent the voice of the critical-academic future in America. Undoubtedly a turning point has been reached. The antiquarian mills are closing down, or working on a schedule of strictly limited production. New factories are now springing up with newer equipment, tools more diversified, packages more brightly wrapped. Or, to put it another way, here is a pleasant world, circumscribed, comfortable leisurely. It is bounded by the file-card cabinet, the card-catalogue, the library-stack and reading room, the private study, the classroom, slashes of green (or asphalt) in the distance, and the prospect of endless, interminable 'problems' to keep one diverted for many years to come.

It is in its way impressive. Learned, even encyclopaedic, it manages to survey the whole province of literary theory, practice, scholarship, history and pedagogy. It maps sharply each separate division and the subordinate parts in the division. It summarizes achievements fairly, assessing intelligently, for example, the value of what it is supplanting—the scholarship concerned with 'The Ordering and Establishing of Evidence'—one of the better chapters. Mostly the book judges rival claims, stating each case honestly and in proportionate detail. Then, in common-sense fashion almost unique in the common practice of special (not to say 'private') pleading, it adjudicates well. Critically alert and knowledgeable, it moves with assurance among the contemporary problems of 'intention', 'Image, Symbol Myth', 'Literature and Psychology', 'Literature and Ideas', 'semasiology' and the rest. Its language is intelligible and establishes the ground for discourse where differences of opinion exist. Not many will want to contest too vigorously its summing up of any given claim. It is, thus, a *tour de force* and one would like to see it placed on library shelves as a kind of indispensable reference book for those students interested *not* in literary analysis, evaluation and tradition but in literary 'problems'.

But it aspires to more than text-book status. The last chapter indicates its essential intention of wishing to train graduate students, and through them all students, in the general approach and method. As such it appears to me clearly a major catastrophe, for it will undoubtedly have considerable influence.

Surely the volumes gathering dust on university library shelves ought long ago conclusively to have demonstrated that impressiveness in scope and detail—the achievement of Wellek and Warren—may be barren, academic. Details must be ordered into significance by clearly defined criteria and controlled strictly at every step by central and relevant critical preoccupations. Each subordinate

aspect of the complex critical-scholarly act must be given relative value. There are no such criteria, there is no such controlling purpose in this book. Instead of a clearly conceived sense of direction, instead of rigorous subordination, they offer only the awareness of countless difficulties—the problem of 'The Nature of Literature', and the scores of minor problems into which it may be subdivided, the multifaceted problems of 'The Function of Literature', of Euphony, Rhythm, and Meter, 'Style and Stylistics', 'Image, Metaphor, Symbol, Myth', 'The Nature and Modes of Narrative Fiction'. The formulation is characteristically abstract, and the student is encouraged to thread his way through an extensive bibliography. So that when Wellek and Warren say at one point: 'The neatness and perfection with which certain problems can be solved have always attracted minds which enjoy orderly procedure and the intricacies and manipulations, quite apart from any final significance which they may have', the unconscious irony is devastating.

They offer, implicitly, certain assumptions which, accepted and practised, can have only the most deplorable consequences. The first is that it is profitable to discuss in the abstract the differences between literature and literary study and the other disciplines—the world of 'practice'—philosophy, science, social studies, types of history and the rest. They say, characteristically: 'A full discussion of these problems would involve decisions on such problems as the classification of the sciences, the philosophy of history, and the theory of knowledge'—and they urge such study later as part of a positive programme. In the second place they assume that it is profitable, when one is confronted with different works of some excellence (the degree of excellence, incidentally, having been determined for Wellek and Warren by the better critics), to search for 'aesthetic laws which can be abstractly formulated as 'standards' and applied from the outside. And they assume, finally, that the relationship of literature to biography, 'psychology', 'society', 'ideas', and the 'fine arts' can be profitably explored without first and indispensably beginning with the better writing in the tradition.

At the expense of trying the patience of *Scrutiny* readers who are undoubtedly familiar with these matters, the point may best be driven home, perhaps, by offering principles of subordination against which some of the major inadequacies of the Wellek and Warren position may be seen. To begin with the American student, even more than the English, enters the university without the ability to read. The pervasive *ambiance* is corrupting: newspaper, radio, television, cinema, slick magazines, best-seller and worse. If one believes that the very exercise of literary-critical judgment as it leads to an assimilation of the better literature has important bearings in the last analysis, on the choices one makes in day-to-day living, one offers a central critical preoccupation. Students must be taught *first of all* to discriminate between the cheap commercial appeal and the genuine, then to discriminate among the genuine. For against the better literature they define the precise nature and quality of

belief and attitude. One is strongly tempted to Veblenize the situation when one considers that in America, where the vulgarization of literature has reached a pitch never achieved elsewhere, the university averts its nose.

Indeed, the book by Wellek and Warren represents the subtle, rarefied, ineffectual flower unaware of the existence of the dung out of which it grows. To ask where undergraduate, graduate or university lecturer is to get the necessary training is, from their point of view, to ask perhaps a vulgar impertinence. Instead they employ the unconscious trick (one uses the word in no really pejorative sense) of dismissal by reduction. They reduce the 'art of 'reading to an ideal for purely personal cultivation, desirable for 'widely spread literary culture'—invoking, in this way, the image of the exquisite palate. They are able, then, to their own satisfaction to conclude that this kind of dilettante ideal cannot 'replace the conception of 'literary scholarship'' cannot replace 'organized knowledge. The argument collapses, it would seem, if one questions the validity of 'replace' and substitutes an alternative intelligent reading habits as a necessary first step leading to relevant knowledge, including literary scholarship.

There is, next, the concept of 'tradition'. Students must be given the equipment, the necessary formulations, the orientation and the practice which will lead them to earn that tradition for themselves. The force of one of Eliot's major contributions to contemporary criticism is entirely lost on Wellek and Warren. They substitute for it instead the usual notion of academic 'influence'.

The real critical problems in this kind of study arise when we reach the stage of weighing and comparing, of showing how one artist utilizes the achievements of another artist, when we watch the transforming power' Graham Greene transforming Stevenson? Shadwell transforming Jonson? James M. Cain transforming Hemingway?

The first task of the literary-critical discipline, for student and expert alike, is that of determining—demonstrating in particular, concrete acts of analysis and judgment—the degree of achieved realization of intention in the work of literature itself. Wellek and Warren are indeed *aware* that this is so, that we study Shakespeare, for example, not for 'what he has in common with all men', but 'to discover what is peculiarly Shakespeare's, what makes Shakespeare Shakespeare'. But do they maintain unequivocally that this can be done only by analysis of individual works, by delicate comparisons and juxtapositions, where one may show discussible qualitative differences? Hardly. They conclude merely that 'this is obviously a problem of individuality and value'. They substitute, in other words, profitless philosophic speculations about the meaning of 'individuality and value' in works of literature, for the exacting task of first-hand judgment.

The full critical act begins—whatever the complexity of the intermediate stages—with personal responsiveness, the impact kept alive and organic. So far as one can see, Wellek and Warren seem entirely to have eliminated the only justification for taking literature

seriously in the first place—the fact that it takes place in the developing consciousness of our lives' (L C Knights) They substitute in its place the kind of liveliness which attends the solution of intellectual problems

With respect to 'intention' on the level of information, there is considerable margin for 'scholarship', exegeses of all kinds 'conventions' 'technique', or, to follow the order of Wellek and Warren biography, psychology, ideas, society, fine arts But this search for information is only a trap, a deception and a quicksand, a substitute for intelligent reading unless it is made strictly relevant to the degree of realization achieved the distance between intention purposed and intention achieved The error of Wellek and Warren here, as has been already suggested is not that of unawareness, but the absence of rigorous subordination They will say 'Nobody can deny that much light has been thrown on literature by a proper knowledge of the conditions under which it has been produced, the exegetical value of such a study seems indubitable Yet it is clear that casual study can never dispose of problems of description, analysis, and evaluation of the object as such as a work of literary art' Or 'All history, all environmental factors, can be argued to shape a work of art But the actual problems begin when we evaluate, compare, and isolate the individual factors which are supposed to determine the work of art There is awareness, true enough But in the context the individual statement appears almost as an afterthought, one idea democratically placed among scores of ideas, no more important, no less And the force of the statement is invariably abstract, the solution offered in the abstract terms of 'problems' They spend five chapters, thus, on matters which, properly subordinated, might have been disposed of easily in one

The training of the student—the practice continuing on all levels—should be one principally in practical criticism—in its most inclusive sense The student develops economy of skill and direction by continual, particular acts of interpretation and judgment on the concrete text, checked first by qualified guides, later by colleagues and the critical public Here the indispensable guide is, and can only be, *good practice* Wellek and Warren perceive at one point—once again simply as another critical perception which fails to order the full chapter—that the 'valuing of the poem is the experiencing, the realization, of aesthetically valuable qualities and relationships in the poem for any competent reader Our most competent readers are our best critics—or those individual essays where the best practice is exemplified Wellek and Warren offer hardly a single unequivocal example Instead, most of the examples offered (p 289) represent exegetical criticism in many forms—and even here they fail to evaluate among them

Standards inevitably grow out of the continual effort to fix the degree of realization They are simply the convenient means, the roughest and most flexible tips nothing more, for mobilizing sensibility for the purpose of demonstrating what qualities in the writing we find effective or ineffective Again, one of Eliot's con-



tributions was the offering of strategic tips for formulating more effectively our reasons for approval or disapproval 'impersonality' 'felt thought' It is here above all that Wellek and Warren are most unsatisfactory, for their standards are offered as aesthetic 'laws externally imposed 'complexity and coherence', 'integration and artistic intensity', 'multivalence', 'ironies and tensions' Mr Leavis in his early controversy with Mr Wellek,<sup>1</sup> demonstrated crushingly the serious limitations in such an approach But Mr Wellek, apparently acquiescing in the demonstration, has continued in the old ways

What, then, do they offer positively? What do they represent? They usher in the New Era And the surpassing ingenuity of the new antiquarianism is that it utilizes so well all the existing machinery of the old, with almost imperceptible alterations At present American faculties in English are staffed with specialists of the recognizable kind Milton men, Shakespeare men, Beowulf and Chaucer men, seventeenth-, eighteenth- and nineteenth-century men With minor specializations A revolution is now in progress Soon we shall have (p 291) The-Nature-and-Function-of-Literature-men, Freud-and-Jung-in-Relation-to-Literature-men, History-of-Ideas - in - the - nineteenth - Century - in - Relation - to - Literature -men, Catholic-Religion-in-Relation-to-Literature-men, Social-and-Political-Ideas-in-Relation-to-American-Literature-men On the graduate level, the 'contributions to knowledge', barren in much the same way will merely change with the fashion Now we shall have Ph D dissertations on 'The Mythic Element in the Short Stories of Willa Cather', 'Freudianism in John Lyly', 'Poetic Epistemology in the Poetry of Robert Frost', and 'The Explorative Symbol in the Works of Abraham Cowley And the same jealousy, fear and ruthless competition—the motor-car and toothpaste influence of the business world outside—will continue unabated within each faculty, each man guarding his speciality The English critical and academic public will watch the transformations with some interest

There is, as has been suggested, a sensible and legitimate use for the book a kind of reference for students who become interested, in the natural course of literary study in peripheral problems The bibliography—what they offer is only a skeleton, the original must have been extensive beyond belief—might have legitimate uses But there is too considerable an investment by this time in the new antiquarianism Too much would have to be scrapped in offering a common-sense alternative to the democratic fragmentation Wellek and Warren offer Besides, they are excellently provided with a dismissing apparatus They have categories for all occasions, and any alternative would be at once abstracted, reduced, tagged and rendered innocuous

SEYMOUR BETSKY

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<sup>1</sup>*Scrutiny*, March, June, September, 1937 Reproduced in *The Importance of Scrutiny*, edited by Eric Bentley George W Stewart Co., New York, 1949

## PROUST AND HIS CRITICS

*THE TWO WORLDS OF MARCEL PROUST*, by Harold March  
(O U P 16/-)

*MARCEL PROUST*, by Éhsabeth de Gramont (Flammarion  
220 fr)

*LE STYLE DE MARCEL PROUST* by Jean Mouton (Collection  
*Mises au Point*, Correa, 270 fr)

For some readers, writes Mr March, 'Proust's novel is gloomy, decadent, in itself a sufficient explanation of why the country that produced it went down to defeat in 1940, for others, a smaller number, it is radiant with youthful hope, poetry, and faith'. Literary critics would do well to avoid the word 'decadent' unless they are prepared to define it rigorously. In the sense in which it is used here, it has no application to literature and merely conveys a vague suggestion of moral disapproval which is not neutralized by 'some readers'. For it is one of the shortcomings of this conscientious, painstaking study that we are never sure where the author stands and that we are haunted by the spectre of a serious-faced American academic grimly pursuing a distasteful task. The impression is confirmed by Mr March's scattered observations. He speaks of a typical French village with its choirboy carrying the Host to some deathbed' and translates *poule* (meaning 'tart') by 'chicken'. They are small points, but they make us wonder whether the writer is sufficiently familiar with the French background to approach Proust with the knowledge and sympathy which the undertaking requires. On p. 57 he describes the author of *Pastiches et mélanges*, rather primly, as a clever imitator, a first-rate specimen of a third-rate class. But Proust's pastiches were altogether exceptional and (as M. Mouton shows) they can tell us a great deal about the writers who are parodied as well as about the formation of Proust's own style. The comments on Feuillerat on pp. 243-4 seem to me to be unjust to the point of travesty, though Mr March makes somewhat tardy amends in his bibliography. Prerequisite to the enjoyment of Proust', he writes in another place, 'is a preference for the overtones of experience to experience itself. Proust writes for introverts'. I do not entirely follow the distinction between 'the overtones of experience' and 'experience itself', but I am quite sure that 'introverts' has the same derogatory implications as 'decadent'. It is not surprising after this to learn that 'As a realistic panorama of society the novel is far inferior to Balzac's *Comédie humaine*'. In so far as this suggests that 'a realistic panorama of society' is intrinsically meritorious, the criterion seems to me to be of doubtful validity. Mr March is perfectly entitled to prefer Balzac to Proust—many Frenchmen do—but an admiration for the over-simplified view of society that we find in the *Comédie humaine* is likely to prove

a liability in dealing with Proust or with a novel like Stendhal's *Lucien Leuwen*

The Anglo-Saxon public often seems to prefer reading about the lives of great writers to reading their books. This probably explains the popularity of the critical biography' of which Mr. March's book is an example. His first chapter, 'The Climate of Ideas', gives an account of Proust's intellectual background. He mentions most of the prominent European thinkers and most of the literary movements of the nineteenth century—he matches 'decadence' with 'counter-decadence'—but the impression which emerges is one of considerable confusion. It is, broadly speaking, true to say that Proust's work was a reaction against nineteenth century naturalism, but it is only part of the truth. Mr. March thinks that the theoretic core' of Symbolism 'rested squarely on Schopenhauer and Hartmann', but he does not mention Descartes to whom Proust acknowledged a debt. If he had gone more carefully into the long-term influence of the idealist systems on literature and the implications of the Romantic revolt against the classic tradition he would have been more successful in 'situating Proust

The next two chapters deal on the whole adequately with Proust's life. The only reason for writing about a novelist's life is to illuminate his work. Heredity did play an important part in Proust's formation, but though he remarks that his father was a Catholic and his mother a Jewess, Mr. March does not examine the question as thoroughly as he might have done. Proust's father came of a middle class provincial family which has been traced back to the early seventeenth century. Dr. Adrien Proust was the first of the family to leave Illiers and seek his fortune in Paris. Now it seems to me that heredity was largely responsible for Marcel's feeling for the historic France which gives the novel its weight and solidity and explains what Mr. March well describes, in speaking of his style, as 'a firm classical substratum of precision, balance, and antithesis'. Proust was, as all his biographers have pointed out, essentially his mother's son as his brother Robert was his father's. Mme de Gramont suggests that the fact that he was born during the anxious days which followed the French defeat may have tipped the scales. 'Ce petit être', she says rightly if a trifle flamboyantly, 'devait contenir à la fois toute la saveur ternienne des Proust d'Illiers et toute l'âme biblique de ses ancêtres maternels'.

One reviewer has commended Mr. March's treatment of Proust's homosexuality for its 'tact' but his references to Krafft-Ebing ('Case 110 of the seventh edition') seem to me a little heavy-handed. He dismisses the late Maurice Sachs's rather frivolous 'Histonette', which appeared in the *Nouvelle Revue Française* in 1938, as 'scandal about Proust's homosexuality', but he does not seem to have read the same writer's *le Sabbat* which was published some months before his own book went to press. Sachs is by no means an unimpeachable witness, but his account of 'Les Bains du Ballon

d'Alsace' and its effect on Proust's work is plausible. It is of some importance to notice that the story is partially confirmed by Mme de Gramont on pp. 209-210 of her study.

It is fashionable at the present time to insist on the importance of the stories and sketches in *les Plaisirs et les jours* for an understanding of Proust. Mr. March analyses the book with care, but it is difficult not to feel that to spend 30 out of 250 pages on it is unduly generous and is distinctly out of proportion to its intrinsic worth. The chapters on *A la Recherche du temps perdu* seem to me to be the least satisfactory in the book. They contain useful information about its content, but do not say anything very new. There is too much about 'characters'—Marcel and Albertine and 'transcendental reality' ('mystic experience is another expression which might well be removed from the vocabulary of literary criticism'). The discussion of Proust's style which is almost exclusively based on translated passages—Mr. March's versions do not seem to me to be an improvement on Scott Moncrieff—is necessarily inconclusive.

It would perhaps be unfair to suggest that Mme de Gramont's book should have been called 'Tales from Proust', but it is as well that she has entered the field late. If her book had been published when Proust was a smart author, it would almost certainly have become a substitute for reading his novel. She begins with a short biographical sketch and devotes most of the remaining 210 pages to a summary of the novel. The writer seems to have known Proust and his circle well, and her summary is interspersed with clues to his models (*Quant à la princesse des Laumes, c'est une personne que j'ai bien connue jadis*). It seems a pity that Mme de Gramont did not abandon the idea of a summary and give us a book of memoirs which would have been more useful as well as more entertaining.

Her book is interesting for another reason. It helps to bring home to us the part played by non-literary factors in Proust's eclipse in the thirties and his present revival. The solemn, politically-minded writers of the thirties were inclined to dismiss him as the laureate of a dying society who had no 'message' for those who were naively awaiting the rosy dawn. Now that an egalitarian society is becoming a reality and levelling down has been elevated into a political first principle, we are more conscious of what was valuable in the aristocratic societies of the past. Some contemporary critics accept Feuillerat's view that Proust's picture of the aristocracy was too black, and it can scarcely be denied that it was disfigured by an unworthy element of petty spite. There is therefore something engaging about Mme de Gramont's evocation of Paris in the first decade of the present century and the vision of Laure Heymann passing 'dans sa gloire impure'.

Nevertheless, it is a relief to turn from the American view of Proust and from Mme de Gramont's chatty volume to a book which does promise to put first things first. For Proust has had altogether too much attention from philosophers, psychologists and gossip-

writers and altogether too little from literary critics. It is a curious fact that until the publication of M. Mouton's study, the two most determined attempts to deal with Proust's style were by German critics. The first was Dr. Ernst Robert Curtius's admirable essay which was republished about 1925 in his *Französischer Geist im Neuen Europa*,<sup>1</sup> and the second Leo Spitzer's long essay 'Zum Stil Marcel Proust's', which appeared in the second volume of his *Stilstudien* in Munich in 1928. M. Mouton has evidently read Spitzer with profit, but his footnote reference does far less than justice to that very able piece of work. The philological approach has one obvious danger. The philologist is interested in *language* in the narrow sense instead of in *style* in the wide sense, his analysis illustrates and classifies the various uses to which language can be put instead of isolating the qualities of a particular writer's sensibility. M. Mouton, indeed, remarks 'Leo Spitzer enregistre de nombreux faits de langue ou de style, mais n'en tire qu'incidemment des conclusions d'ordre psychologique ou moral'. It is a criticism which might not unfairly be applied to his own book. A certain amount of schematism is inevitable in an undertaking of this kind, but his book is rather too schematic. Discussions of 'Marcel Proust's Ideas on Style' and 'The Formation of Proust's Style' are followed by chapters on 'Les Images', 'Le Rythme', 'L'Énumération' and 'Le Langage des Personnages'. His account of Proust's imagery is little more than a description of the sources—religion, art, nature—on which he drew for his images, and it is a pity that he decided not to include a chapter on his vocabulary. But if his book does not contain anything as illuminating as Spitzer's discussion of the Proustian parenthesis, there are plenty of useful critical observations in it. It has one great advantage over the work of the philosophical critics: it sends us back to Proust's text instead of carrying us away into a realm of abstraction. If I had to make a list of the six most useful books on Proust I should include Curtius, Spitzer and Mouton.

MARTIN TURNELL

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<sup>1</sup>A French translation of the essay on Proust was published by La Nouvelle Revue, Paris, in 1928.

## THE CONTENT OF EDUCATION

\* *AN ESSAY ON THE CONTENT OF EDUCATION* by Eric James (*Harrap*, 5/-)

This admirable little essay deserves to be widely known. Lucidly and straightforwardly written, it contains an excellent defence of the much abused 'academic' position in current educational practice, and a penetrating analysis of contemporary educational clichés. Aware of the difficulties inherent in any attempt to educate a whole population—though convinced of its necessity—Dr James yet views with apprehension that shift in the balance of interest from what is to be learnt to the process of learning, for it is the latter that so occupies the minds of professional educationalists to-day. He is not concerned to lay down a detailed syllabus but 'rather to emphasize certain general ideas which (any) curricula should embody' (p. 62) it should be stated, however, that the clarity of Dr James' exposition inspires confidence in his capacity to implement his general principles by a detailed and reasonable series of educational expectations in terms of age and capacity of pupil. At a time when 'The acquisition of a certain body of knowledge as one of the desirable ends of education seems to be discussed less often, and certainly less intelligently, than the means by which activities may be stimulated or particular habits of thought inculcated', his essay is both pertinent and salutary for, as he adds, 'activity must use some material, and thought must be about something' (p. 9). There is indeed 'a minimum of essential knowledge appropriate to different ages and levels of intelligence' (p. 49).

The notion embodied in the famous sentence of the Primary School report 'The curriculum is to be thought of in terms of activity and experience rather than of knowledge to be acquired and facts to be stored', has at the moment a wide currency, Dr James' insistence on the necessary basis of factual knowledge is to be applauded. 'Too often', he asserts 'those who demand the inculcation of attitudes rather than facts—the attitude of willingness to find out for oneself, to think logically, and so on—fail to realize both how difficult is the development of such attitudes, and also what a firm foundation of elementary factual knowledge they assume' (p. 48). Moreover Dr James insists on a differentiation of value as between the various 'subjects'. 'The present tendency to equalize all subjects in status and esteem can only rest ultimately upon a profoundly materialistic philosophy' (p. 58), and he goes on to point out the mistake made by the materialists which serves to defeat the very ends they have in mind.

a society which fails to value academic studies adequately will not be successful even in the material sense, since the most fertile discoveries and most revolutionary ideas spring from those with high academic intelligences working usually in the

academic field a fact that is forgotten when suggestions are made that some of our highest intelligences must be encouraged to go into purely technical fields. These considerations must be borne in mind when we are faced with attacks upon what is described as 'merely verbal education', compared unfavourably if vaguely, with practical pursuits. Such comparison seems to ignore altogether that the whole progress of thought of social organization certainly of education itself rests upon concepts which are verbal in character and which depend for their use and development upon highly trained verbal intelligence (p. 589)

Dr James indeed stresses that education bears a vital relationship to the life of society, that it has in fact a social function to perform but he allows for no surrender to naively conceived social ends. The purpose of education, he considers 'is not only to produce the kind of citizens that the community demands, in terms of intellectual and technical and moral equipment. It is also concerned to ensure that the community shall be of such a nature that it demands the right kind of citizens' (p. 11). His view of what constitutes 'life in society' is reassuring. 'It is true enough that the content of our education must at every point be related to life, but the phrase has a far deeper significance than is guessed by many of those who use it, and in thinking of its social and economic meanings we must not overlook the life of the mind and the spirit' (p. 55).

Important too, are Dr James' considerations of what constitutes a university (pp. 63-70) and his lucid untanglings of the contradictions inherent in the current accepted notions concerning specialization and equality of opportunity. At a time when the notion of a 'general education' on the American model is still widely prevalent his remarks on specialization are of great interest. He rightly remarks, incidentally, that the emulation of American methods 'is one of the most lamentable elements in contemporary English educational thought' (p. 85). He asserts, on grounds that his analysis makes adequate, 'that a considerable degree of specialization must occur and need not be disastrous' (p. 73), and stresses, rightly to my mind, 'the educational value of a fairly deep study of a limited field, even in the upper forms of schools' (p. 71), pointing out that 'the effect of this apparent narrowing of the field of vision often results in a remarkable growth in intellectual power and range' (p. 87). He recognizes, however, the problem of narrow scientific research. He contends that such broadening of university studies as is thought, after careful consideration has been given to the problem of what is to constitute an educated man, to be necessary should be in the direction of philosophical inquiry, this is perhaps open to question. Literary studies tackled in the right way, could, for many students, provide perhaps a more adequate widening of experience.

In his comments on the question of equality of opportunity, Dr James probes some of the ambiguities of the phrase. He points out that political equalitarianism in effect denies equality of oppor-

tunity, which can only arise when children of similar intellectual endowment are placed together. Further the consequences of such politically inspired equalitarianism may have serious repercussions on the content of education. 'Studies which have hitherto been followed only by a minority acquire all the odium attaching to privilege of any kind. An equalitarian society will not look with favour on abilities possessed only by a few or tolerate opportunities enjoyed by a minority, even if they are freely open to all men with the right kind of ability' (p. 94), we may thus be faced 'not only with a plain denial of equality of opportunity, but with a narrowing and impoverishment of the whole content of education' (p. 95), and in such a case the loss to the community, in economic, social, and spiritual well-being, the deep injustice involved towards the ablest members of society are out of all proportion to the number involved (p. 96). The plea that a common core of subjects for all children should form the basis of the school curriculum—the plea of the Harvard report—is met by the acute comment that the resemblance between a given subject as learned by a very intelligent child and a dull child is purely nominal' (p. 98).

Dr James ends with an expression of hope which, if it is to be trusted, will be considered. Searching for an authority in whom final decisions about curriculum, at all levels, may be vested, he rejects for various adequate reasons, the local education committees, the parents and the children themselves, instead, he wishes to place the responsibility on the universities—understood to mean 'the consensus of academic opinion, the mind of the clergy, or the convictions of the academic elite'. He regrets that 'it is true to say that the guardians of the academic tradition are not sufficiently conscious of their responsibilities' (p. 114). He might, indeed, have added that remarkably few of them, even among the younger members, have much conception of what is going on or of the way in which the academic and intellectual standards of the country, so far as state education is concerned, at least, are being threatened by inadequate social theorisation and hasty and often unwise experimentation. Rightly, Dr James draws attention to the danger of shelving responsibility on to university departments of education. Educational experts 'need not have a truer vision of the proper ends of education in its fullest sense than a professor of mineralogy' (p. 115). It is alarming', he continues, 'to find that a person who has done some statistical work on the correlation among eight-year-olds between reading quotients and capacity to stick pegs into holes—perhaps very valuable in its context—becomes thereby an 'educationist' and qualified to speak with authority on the broadest questions of educational policy' (p. 116). He advises, therefore, that a small committee of university teachers and members of the inspectorate should be set up to 'consider the question (of the proper mental equipment of the educated man at university level) in the light of first principles' (p. 118), and conceives the possibility that such discussion might be adapted to all levels of the educational process.



I have contented myself with summarizing Dr James' position, for it is one with which I find myself so much in sympathy that comment would be superfluous. The recognition of the need for an adequately constituted centre of authority in educational matters, the exposure of current claptrap and the realization of diversity of value as between different educational undertakings, all go to make Dr James' book unusual among current educational writings. It is sad to think that even fifty years ago Dr James' book would have been regarded as redundant, not because it would provoke disagreement but because it would merely state what educated people normally assumed. To-day he will provoke more dissent than agreement—I have heard him described by a dignitary of the educational world as 'narrow'. That a genuine concern for 'maintaining the standards of culture through a time of immense social change, (for) ensuring that, as more men and women come into their inheritance of that culture' they should not find it 'mortgaged and debased' should be open to such description is as clear an indication as could be wished of the danger in which we stand.

G H BANTOCK

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# SCRUTINY

## A Quarterly Review

*Edited by*

L C KNIGHTS

H A MASON

F R LEAVIS

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## ‘SIR GAWAIN AND THE GREEN KNIGHT’

**S***IR Gawain and the Green Knight* is a great English poem. It has not so much been simply neglected as it has suffered the wrong kind of attention, the kind of attention that has perpetuated its essential neglect as a poem. For it would, indeed, be hard to say what in the nature of the poem itself exactly it is that has ever been attended to. The attention has not been a literary-critical attention, the attention that is appropriate to a poem. It has been of the kind that has tended to obscure rather than to expose the poem itself, a directing of attention away from the poem towards extrinsic matters, an interposition of pedantic irrelevances between the poem and the reader, an elaborate evasion of its significance. The poem has never been attended to as what in itself it uniquely is.

The mere mechanics of deciphering the text are, it may be admitted, troublesome. That is not simply because its language is a dialect of English (that of the North West Midlands) which is not the dialect which became our English, it is because (to speak out bluntly) of the unintelligent way in which the poem has been edited. The edition at present used by students and on which they are examined (it is, of course, the *edition* rather than the *poem* they are examined on) merely slavishly reproduces the deficiencies, confusions and inconsistencies of the copyist's spelling in the Cotton Nero IX MS. That kind of thing could have been done better by making photostat copies of the MS itself for the university libraries. The introduction and lengthy, mostly irrelevant notes which further overlay the poem in this edition (as in most other editions of so-called Middle English texts), illustrate again the depressing 'scholarly' technique of interposing extrinsic 'points of interest' between the reader and the poem and so distracting attention from the poem itself to these interposed obstacles, as if the significance of a great poem were not in itself the most difficult thing in the world to grasp without the deliberate obtrusion and exaggeration of external 'difficulties'. It seems the editors were themselves unaware of the significance and value of the poem they were editing. It is time the universities looked a little into the kind of thing they are responsible for.<sup>1</sup>

What little show of criticism of the poem there has been seems to have been governed by the determination to relate it to the mediæval French romances. It is certainly a part of the function

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<sup>1</sup>The old EETS edition which has been supplanted by Tolkien and Gordon's remains much the better edition to read the poem in, if only it were made generally available.

of criticism to see a poem in its place in relation to other poems. Seeing the poem as what in itself it is will indeed be simultaneous with seeing it in the place it establishes for itself in the order which all poems (it may be agreed) establish in relation to each other. The place of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*—and because it is a great poem it is a central place—is in the English tradition. It belongs to the first great creative moment of (I shall dare to say) *modern* English literature—the moment of the *Canterbury Tales* and of *Piers Plowman*. These three English poems, though robustly independent from each other, are not accidentally contemporary. Their very unlikeness to each other is a guarantee of the integrity, the individuality, the uniqueness of each. They are each different, as Ben Jonson is different from Shakespeare. But they have the same kind of relation to each other—and indeed to Shakespeare and to Ben Jonson—as Ben Jonson has to Shakespeare. When the important regional differences have been allowed for, they remain English poems, they have in common what is, as a whole, the same English community, they are nourished (allowing fully for their regional differences) by a common English soil. For *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* is the crown, the masterpiece of a whole school of poetry—the alliterative poetry of the North West of England—contemporary with Chaucer and Langland, distinct from either but equally an important, though less recognized element in the English tradition. I refer not only to the poems which appear in the same MS with *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*—*Cleanness*, *Patience* and *The Pearl*<sup>2</sup>—but also to such poems as the alliterative *Morte Arthure*, *The Auntyers of Arthure at the Tarn Wadling* and *The Destruction of Troy*.

There is no use my ignoring my feeling that the 'scholarly' concern to derive this superb English poem from French romances (even if the very existence of these has to be hypothetical), while allowing that somehow it goes one better than they do, has been such as, in effect, insidiously to belittle it. By establishing the 'derivativeness' of any given poem, or the limiting 'conditions' within which it had to be composed, it becomes more easy safely to do it down, to ignore its uniqueness, what it does that no other poem does. To attend to an assortment of French romances and Celtic tales is not at all the same thing as to attend to *Sir Gawain and the*

<sup>2</sup>To suppose as a matter of course or probability that because these poems appear in the same MS and dialect they are—on these grounds alone—by the same author is quite uncritical. Yet that is what the scholars who make a property of Middle English literature—detaching it from the rest of English literature for the purpose—do not hesitate to do. It is another instance of the uselessness of scholarship which is unqualified by a literary training and sensibility and unguided by a literary-critical discipline. What can be said is that in this particular locality there was a whole school of poetry, and that that poetry is such that it implies a cultivated society.

*Green Knight* just as to attend to Holinshed's Chronicle is not at all the same thing as to attend to *Macbeth*. To summarize the 'plots' of these French romances and of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* and to attend to and compare these summaries is still less the same thing as to attend to and compare the poems themselves. Such methods are a short cut to nowhere: they are not the methods of literary criticism. Yet to suppose that a task of critical elucidation and value has been accomplished by such comparisons of summaries is a form of self-deception that has been exceptionally prevalent among literary scholars discussing mediæval texts.

There is no need to deny that the author of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* may have had a French romance before him, just as Shakespeare has 'his sources'. It is unlikely that he did *not* read (or listen to) French romances. But even if we establish that a French romance (or group of romances) was the poem's literary source, we have got no nearer the poem itself. The poem is clearly not *just* a courtly romance, and it is totally a very different kind of thing from a French romance. Yet the sheer unlikeness of the English alliterative poem to all the French romances we have has not discouraged the attachment of apparently supreme importance to the relating of it to 'French Romance'. It is as if the placing of some of Shakespeare's plays in the context of the 'Italian Novel' were to be regarded as the function of Shakespearean criticism. The particular French romances which are not there for *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* to be derived from are lightly and heartedly assumed to have been there and to have been lost.<sup>3</sup> These hypothetical romances are discussed in relation to the poem almost as if they, rather than it, had a real existence.

Our task is to see the object, the English poem as what it positively is, and that is not, of course, the abstracted 'story'. If the value were in the 'story' in itself, then our editors' summary of it in the forefront of their edition would be all that we should require to read. It is what is made of the 'story', how it is realized, the kind of significance it is made to bear, what the poem totally communicates or does that is our object. To judge from the abstracted 'story' Morgan le Fay is the *cause* of all the events. Yet in the poem itself she is not at all felt to account for these events.<sup>4</sup> To do so she would have had to be realized as Lady Macbeth is realized. Her envy of Guinevere would have had to be as real a force, present in the texture of the poem, as the Macbeths' ambition. But it is not. The old woman of the Second Fit of the poem is realized, and at the end of the whole poem Gawain is told that she was Morgan. But where the old woman occurs the

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<sup>3</sup>One of the curiosities of Tolkien and Gordon's introduction is a diagram in which letters of the alphabet represent French originals that do not exist but are assumed to have existed. It is one of the things which candidates for the London English Honours B.A. annually memorise.

<sup>4</sup>*Pace* Tolkien and Gordon's Introduction Pg. XI

point is not that she is Morgan, but simply that she is an old woman. What the significance of the old woman is, in contrast to the young woman, will, of course, have to be considered in any critical analysis of the poem. The 'explanation'—Morgan's envy of Guinevere—introduced rather perfunctorily at the end of the poem (from the literary source or authority, perhaps) is, in effect, no more than a bone for the rationalizing mind to play with and be kept quiet with.

Yet though we may dismiss the abstracted 'story' as of no value in itself, we may well ask how it is that this particular rendering of the 'story' (or combination of 'stories') has turned out to be a great unified work of art. For the English poem has the unity of a very completed, very deliberately constructed and finished work of art. But not just constructed. The unity is more than a construction, it has the character of an organic unity, a unity of growth. A conscious and deliberate artist (bearing, perhaps, the same kind of relation to his subject matter as we imagine Homer does) the poet has constructed. But in so doing he has, as it were, co-operated with some inner organizing, unifying and realizing principle of life and growth. The result is both a satisfying surface completeness and a full-bodied, matured completion or fulfilment. We may perhaps legitimately begin by inquiring generally what this principle of life might be that has activated the genius of the poet and made the poem the remarkable Shakespearean unity it is, though only an analysis of the poem itself can more exactly define its nature.

It is a case in which the literary critic may appropriately find his initial hint in some of the observations of the anthropologists, provided he recognizes that that does not relieve him from his own responsibility and function of literary criticism, criticism of the particular poem as in itself it in fact is. Miss J. L. Weston's *From Ritual to Romance* and *The Quest of the Grail*—to a lesser extent the chapters on the Folk Drama in E. K. Chambers's *Medieval Stage*—provide exactly the hint we may have been looking for. Our poem is clearly a midwinter festival poem. The seasonal theme (as any detailed analysis of the poem will bear out) is the poem's underlying, indeed pervasive theme.

The Green Knight whose head is chopped off at his own request and who is yet as miraculously or magically alive as ever, bears an unmistakable relation to the Green Man—the Jack in the Green<sup>5</sup> or the Wild Man of the village festivals of England and Europe. He is in fact no other than a recrudescence in poetry of the Green Man. Who the Green Man is is well established. He is the descendent of the Vegetation or Nature god of (whatever his local name) almost universal and immemorial tradition whose death and resurrection

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<sup>5</sup>Represented by the lad wreathed in hawthorn, a walking bush, in the May Day village festivals. The leafy screens carried by the restoration army in *Macbeth* Birnam Wood advancing on Macbeth's castle, have certainly a related symbolic significance.

mythologizes the annual death and re-birth of nature—in the East the dry and rainy seasons, in Europe winter and spring. The episode (the First Fit of our poem) in which the Green Knight rides into the hall of Arthur's castle among the courtly company at the Christmas feast and demands to have his head chopped off is exactly a Christmas pageant play or interlude—a castle version of the village Folk Play—become real. The central episode of the traditional Folk Play, Sword Dance and Morris Dance was (as Chambers shows) a mock beheading or slaying followed by a revival or restoration to life (often by the Doctor who administered to the corpse the contents of an outsize bottle—the elixir of life).

A recently published book by C J P Cave, *Roof Bosses in Mediæval Churches*, has come very conveniently to hand to demonstrate the vitality of the Green Man in mediæval England. Mr Cave's photography has revealed very distinctly carvings on the roofs of cathedrals and parish churches which could previously only be distinguished through field glasses, or in some cases, because in shadow, have never been seen till this day. Ecclesiastics walking down below could not have seen what the carver was doing up there (60 or 70 feet up), he could carve what he liked. What he did carve again and again (as Mr Cave's photographs wonderfully reveal) was a face with leaves sprouting from the corners of its mouth, its eye-lids, eye-brows and ears, the face of the Green Man.<sup>6</sup>

The other protagonist, the Sir Gawain of our poem, is correspondingly related to a traditional Gawain who (Miss Weston tells us) did not originally belong among Arthur's knights any more than does the Green Knight. Gawain's traditional rôle (she convincingly establishes) was that of the hero—the agent who brought back the spring, restored the frozen life-processes, revived the god—or (in later versions) cured the king. Though there is no mention of that in our poem, there are other poems in which Sir Gawain is mysteriously spoken of as having the skill of a healer or doctor—not one of the usual skills of courtly knighthood.

The winter landscape through which, in our poem, Sir Gawain rides on his quest for the Green Chapel, where on New Year's Day he is to renew his acquaintance with the Green Knight, is again the northern European Waste Land, the land that has been (not, as in the east dried up) frozen up. If it is (implicitly) 'enchantment' which the land suffers from in our poem, it is the kind it suffers from every winter in the north of Europe, it is frozen up.

There are some unexpected underground resemblances (which may be glanced at here in transition) between Sir Gawain and Piers Plowman—in one part of Langland's poem described as 'the leche of life' and associated with the seasonal cycle—is identified with Christ, and Christ is the hero who (in *Passus XVIII*) harrows Hell, releases imprisoned life, restores the dead,

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<sup>6</sup>It can scarcely be accidental that so many village pubs in England are called The Green Man.

## Lord of life and of light

It is the Easter theme, the dreamer, appropriately, awakes to the sound of the Easter bells. The episode has *its* dramatic counterpart, too, the Harrowing of Hell of the Miracle Plays.

*Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* is of course, near the surface, a Christian poem. But it is Christian rather as some of the mediæval Christmas carols are Christian, as Christmas itself is Christian, Christian in harmony with pre-Christian nature belief and ritual, a Christian re-interpretation of these. It is Christian to about the same depth as it is a courtly romance. The value of 'courtesy'—Sir Gawain is among other things the pattern of courtesy, the most courteous of Arthur's courtly company—is certainly one of the values defined in the poem and brought out in relation to the other values in their order, Christian and pre-Christian, and these other values are pre-courtly.

The fundamental feeling or *knowledge* in the poem, the hidden source which the poet has tapped, the ultimate source of the poem's actuality, strength and coherence, is the knowledge, which the age-old experience of the race has turned into an assured knowledge, that there is life inexhaustible at the roots of the world even in the dead season, that there is perpetually to be expected the unexpected spring re-birth. The whole poem is, in its very texture—its imagery and rhythm—an assertion of belief in *life* as contrasted with winter deprivation and death, and it seems finally to discover, within the antagonism between man and nature, between the human and the other-than-human, an internal harmony, even a kind of humorous understanding.

There might be no great impropriety in describing as Elizabethan the poem's completeness of delighted acceptance and vivid consciousness of profane life as that takes the senses in rich colour and decorative pattern, in costly magnificence of costume and tapestry, jewellery and embroidery, in elaborate and subtle craftsmanship in metal, wood and stone, and of life also as it expresses itself in ceremonial banqueting, pageantry, music and 'carolling' (dancing and singing in unison) and in the strenuous physical exertions and hazards of tourneying and hunting, gay, Homeric laughter recurs throughout the scenes in the castles. Yet the rich and exuberant imagery of the poem is strictly controlled by the inner intention, it has its symbolic value in relation to the man, the 'life' significance. The jewellery and embroidery, for example, are related to the underlying fertility theme, contrasted with the chastity theme as the feasting and generous hospitality in the castles contrast with the winter dearth.

The poem depends for its local effects largely upon sheer weight and heaped-up pressure of language<sup>7</sup>—a piling-up of language that contrasts with Chaucer's civilized simplicity—masses of bright colours and concatenations of differentiated sounds. But it is not

<sup>7</sup>One of my Exeter students once counted that there are 20 different words for a man in the poem.



just lavishness and excess, it is all built into an art as firm as Ben Jonson's, it is even Shakespearean in the way it is all unflinchingly, unerringly controlled towards a total inclusive significance

The poem is in four Fits. It opens at once on the note of the indestructibility and perpetual renewal of life. Arthur's castle is placed in history as one of the phoenixes of Troy, the utterly destroyed city—

The borg brittened and brent to brondes and askes  
—from which the so many new cities and kingdoms of the Western  
World have sprung

On mony bonkkes ful brode Bretayn he settes wyth wyne  
Among these there is this kingdom of Britain where joy and trouble  
—like winter and spring—have many times alternated

Then the poem begins to move with a superb impression of the Christmas and New Year festivals at Arthur's castle

This kyng lay at Camylot upon Krystmasse  
With mony luffych lorde, ledes of the best,  
Bekenly of the Rounde Table alle tho rich brether,  
With rich revel oryght and rechles merthes  
Ther tournayed tulkes by tymes ful mony,  
Justed ful johile thuse gentyle knyghtes,  
Sythen kayred to the court caroles to make  
For ther the fest was iylche ful fiften dayes,  
With alle the mete and the murthe that men couthe avyse,  
Such glaum ande gle glonous to here,  
Dere dyn upon day, daunsyng on nyghtes,  
Al was hap upon heghe in halles and chambres  
With lordes and ladies, as levest him thought  
With alle the wele of the worlde thay woned ther samen,  
The most kyd knyghtes under Krystes selven,  
And the lovelokkest ladies that ever lif haden,  
And he the comlokest kyng that the court haldes,  
For al was this fayre folk in her first age, on sille,  
The hapnest under heven,  
Kyng hyghest mon of wyllle,  
Hit were now gret nye to neven  
So hardy a here on hille

Wyle New Yer was so yep that hit was new cummen,  
That day double on the dece was the douth served,  
Fro the kyng was cummen with knyghtes into the halle,  
The chauntre of the chapel cheved to an ende  
Loude crye was ther kest of clerkes and other,  
Nowel nayted onewe, nevened ful ofte,  
And sythen riche forth runnen to reche hondeselle,  
Geghed yeres-yiftes on high, yelde hem bi hond,  
Debated busyly aboute tho giftes,  
Ladies laghed ful loude, thogh thay lost haden,

And he that wan was not wrothe, that may ye wel trawe  
 Alle this murthe thay maden to the mete tyme,  
 When thay had waschen worthyly thay wenten to sete,  
 The best burne ay abof, as hit best semed,  
 Quene Guenore, ful gay, graythed in the myddes,  
 Dressed on the dere des, dubbed al aboute,  
 Smal sendal besides, a selure hir ouer  
 Of tryed tolouse, of tars tapites innoghe,  
 That were enbrawd and beten wyth the best gemmes  
 That myght be preved of prys wyth penyes to bye, in daye  
     The comlokest to discrye  
     Ther glent with eyen gray,  
     A semloker that ever he sye  
     Soth mought no mon say

Bot Arthure wolde not ete til al were served,  
 He was so joly of his joyfnes, and sumquat childgered  
 His lif liked hym lyght, he lovied the lasse  
 Auther to longe lye or to longe sitte,  
 So busied him his yonge blod and his brayn wylde

The fulness and vividness of life is there both in the imagery and in the rhythm. The alliterative lines build up (here and in the whole poem) into massive stanzaic paragraphs each concluding with a quartet of short rhymed lines which releases the reader momentarily before he is again caught up into the rhythmic energy of the succeeding paragraph. This superb poetry does not merely describe, its strong ringing rhythm *communicates* keen positive enjoyment of maximum life in its flowering prime. The youthfulness of Arthur and of Arthur's folk—

For al was this fayre folk in her first age

—introduces the theme of youth in contrast to age which is an aspect of the spring-winter (or New Year-Old Year) theme. The poem thus launched is sustained right through as a Christmas-New Year festival poem. The note of feasting—contrasted with the winter deprivation experienced by Gawain on his journey in the Second and Fourth Fits—keeps recurring. Compared with this poem's expression of the jollity, the confident belief in life of the mediæval English folk (one need not in this respect differentiate the castle folk from the village folk) much poetry since the Elizabethan sounds melancholy and weak.

Arthur looks for a marvel, Christmas being the season of marvels (what could be more marvellous than a birth in the dead season) and indeed the ceremonial banquet has hardly commenced, the first course brought in with 'crakkyng of trumpes', when

Ther haies in at the halle dor an aghlich mayster

He is no mummer disguised as a Green Knight who rides into the hall, he is the Green Knight

The huge impression—the Green Knight on the green horse—is massively built up. He is not just faerie but robustly substantial and a fiercely humorous character. The emphasis on his glittering array—the jewel-like greenness of his green colour and that of his horse, the glittering green jewellery, the rich embroidery of multiplied 'bryddes and flyghes'—is unmistakably significant of life resurgent. But more considered recognition of this significance had better be postponed till we come to the counterpart, in the structural balance, of the description of the Green Knight, the arming of Sir Gawain in the Second Fit. This predilection for jewels, for example, is certainly not just the influence of the lapidaries or an interest in what the contemporary jewellers and goldsmiths had to offer.

The 'vegetation' aspect of the Green Knight will be immediately recognized. His green beard is like a bush, and together with his long green hair covers his chest and back all round down to his elbows. He carries a holly branch in one hand—

a holyn bobbe

That is grattest in grene when greves are bare

—and in the other a huge axe (the weapon fertility symbol). He is as green as green verdure. It would indeed be singular not to feel that he is an up-cropping in poetry of the old vegetation god. After his head has been chopped off he is as vigorously alive as before, like a pollard tree, like John Barleycorn in the old ballads against whom came three kings from the West, their victory to try, and who, though killed and buried, 'sprang up again. And that surprised them all'.

My own experience is that the reader instinctively feels him to be an intruder from a pre-Christian, pre-courtly world. Something of the old untamed, unreclaimed north of Europe has come back here (though the Green Knight will be discovered not merely to typify the destructive, menacing aspects of wild nature hostile to pioneering humans in their struggle to maintain their clearings in forests and swamps). He carries no knightly arms but wields a Danish axe—the stress is on the primitive and heathen nature of the weapon. A 'salvage' intruder, he 'breaks the good feast', disturbs the ceremonious courtly order with his presence and his challenge the contrast is, at one level, between 'nature' and 'sophistication'. He evokes a half-amused, half-horrified fascination. If he is life, he is wild, uncouth, raw life. His demeanour and his behaviour in this castle of courtesy are outrageously discourteous, he behaves, as if radically a 'villeyn', with contemptuous humorous rudeness. In essence he is the *other*—the other than human.

The renk on his rounce hym ruched in his sadel,  
 And runschly his rede yen he reled aboute,  
 Bende his bresed browes blycande grene,  
 Wayved his berde for to wayte quo-so wolde ryse  
 When non wolde kepe hym with carp he coghed ful hye,

Ande nmed hym ful richley, and ryght hym to speke  
 'What, is this Arthures hous', quoth the hathel thenne,  
 'That al the rous renes of thurgh ryalmes so mony'  
 Where is now your sourquydrye and your conquestes,  
 Your gryndellayk and your greme, and your grete wordes?'

The challenge, to who will to chop off his head—'For it is Yol and New Yer —on condition that he who dares to do so will submit to have his own head chopped off on New Year's Day a year hence by the survivor (if the Green Knight *should* survive with his head off) is accepted by Gawain, Arthur's sister's son, the pattern of courtesy, the Prince

The dismembering act is gruesome enough. There is blood in the Green Man (For the red blood reigns in the winter's pale)<sup>8</sup> The courtly company kick away the head as it rolls towards them. That is not cruelty or even perhaps, simply horror, the head of the sacrificed beast in fertility rituals was believed pregnant with magical powers.<sup>9</sup>

That the bit of the broun stel bot on the grounde  
 The fayre hede fro the halce hit to the erthe,  
 That fele hit foyned wyth her fete, there hit forth roled,  
 The blod brayd fro the body, that blykked on the grene,  
 And nauther faltered ne fel the freke never the helder,  
 Bot stythly he start forth upon styf schonkes,  
 And runyschly he racht out, there as renkkes stoden,  
 Lacht to his lufly hed, and lyft hit up sone,  
 And sythen boges to his blonk, the brydel he cachches,  
 Steppes into stelbawe and strydes alofte,  
 And his hede by the here in his honde haldes

The impacts of the axe and of the head on the ground are felt in the 'bit bot hit' of the first and second lines

The chopping off of his own head is to this amazing fellow but a 'Crystemas gomen'. With a savage yell ('a runisch rout') he flings out of the hall, fire struck from the flints by his horse's hooves. Fire, later, is also struck from the hooves of Gawain's horse, and the flicker of fire in the *other* castle (of the Second and Third Fits) is too frequent to have an accidental significance.

The opening paragraphs of the Second Fit, superbly conveying an impression of the changing seasons, the revolving year, are not mere decoration. They are integral to the poem, they rise from the core of the unifying seasonal experience. We are not just told that a year has passed, we experience the year changing, the alternating pattern of the seasons.

<sup>8</sup>Autolykus' song in *A Winter's Tale*

<sup>9</sup>The anthropologists tell us that our game of football is derived from the struggle for possession of the head which, buried in the earth, would make the land fertile, the crops rich. In this case, however, the head is (very naturally) spurned.

Bot thagh the ende be hevvy haf ye no wonder,  
 For thagh men ben mery in mynde when thay han mayn  
 drynk,

A yere yernes ful yerne, and yeldes never lyke,  
 The forme to the fynisment foldes ful selden  
 Forthi thus Yol overyede, and the yere after,  
 And uche sesoun serlepes sued after other  
 After Crystenmasse com the crabbed lentoun  
 That fraystes flesch wyth the fysche and fode more symple  
 Bot thenne the weder of the worlde wyth wynter hit  
 threpes,

Colde clenges adoun, cloudes uplyften,  
 Schyre schedes the rayn in schowres ful warme,  
 Falles upon fayre flat, flowers there schewen,  
 Bothe groundes and the greves grene ar her wedes,  
 Bryddes busken to bylde, and bremlych syngen  
 For solace of the softe somer that sues thei after bi bonk,  
 And blossomes bolne to blowe  
 Bi rawes rych and ronk,  
 Then notes noble innowe  
 Ar herde in wod so wlonk

After, the sesoun of somer wyth the soft wyndes,  
 When Zeferus syfles hymself on sedes and erbes  
 Wela wyne is the wort that waxes thei out,  
 When the donkande dewe dropes of the leves  
 To bide a blysfyl blusche of the bryght sunne  
 Bot then hyes hervest, and hardenes hym sone,  
 Warnes hym for the wynter to wax ful rype  
 He dryves wyth droght the dust for to ryse,  
 Fro the face of the folde to flye ful hyghe  
 Wrothe wynde of the welkyn wrasteles with the sunne,  
 The leves lancen fro the lynde and lyghten on the grounde,  
 And al grayes the gres that grene was ere,  
 Thenne al rypes and rotes that ros upon fyrst,  
 And thus yirnes the yere in yisterdayes mony,  
 And wynter wyndes agayn, as the worlde askes

The Shakespearean phrases ('al rypes and rotes' 'in yisterdayes mony') remind the modern reader that the language of the poem is radically the same language as Shakespeare's. The analogy with human life—human life has its seasons—an analogy familiar to us in Shakespeare underlies the melancholy note of transience. The harmony between man and nature is here a harmony in their common fate of transience. Spring and summer, though vividly rejoiced in, are episodes in the perpetual process of change. The day approaches when Gawain must set off on his quest for the Green Chapel to keep his tryst with the Green Knight there on New Year's Day and take the return blow. The concluding emphasis is on the waning of the year. The year's revolution has, however, brought round again the Christmas-New Year season. The poem is thus

maintained right through as a Christmas and New Year festival poem

The arming of Sir Gawain, which (as already observed), corresponds, in the structural balance, to the description of the Green Knight is also not mere decoration, it is not just the mediæval romancer and his castle audience's interest in knightly accoutrement, armour and weapons. The representatives of life, including the youthful hero whose task it is to bring back life have always (the anthropologists tell us) been glittering figures. The throng of dancing youths who in the ancient rituals accompanied the god, the Maruts of India, the Corybantes and Couretes of the Greeks, the Salii of the Romans—the predecessors of the Sword Dancers and Morris Dancers of more recent folk festivals—were glitteringly arrayed, in their dances designed to stimulate the reproductive energies of nature, they carried flashing weapons, symbolical of fertility. In Sir Gawain's array and that of his horse, red colour, as distinguished from the gleaming green of his opposite, and gold—

That al glytered and glent as glem of the sun

—predominate. There is again a profusion of jewels and a silk embroidery of birds—'papiayes' and 'tortors'—

As many burde therabout had ben seven wynter

His array thus associates Gawain also with life resurgent ..

Nor is it accidental that Sir Gawain's emblem is the pentangle, an ancient life symbol. It appears as one of the figures on the Tarot Pack. It was believed (Miss Weston tells us) to 'give power over the other world'.<sup>10</sup> The Sword Dancers, as they enclose the head in their mock beheading, make the figure of the pentangle, as the dancers 'hold up the sign they cry triumphantly "A nut! a nut!"'<sup>11</sup> In *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* the pentangle has acquired a Christian significance, but the pre-Christian significance unmistakably underlies and is active in the poem.

The winter landscape through which Gawain now rides on his quest for the Green Chapel is again not mere decorative background to a romance, it is the northern European Waste Land. That is to say, it is actual winter as it may be experienced any winter among the mountains of North Wales after a blizzard. The geography of Gawain's search for the Green Chapel is and is intended to be,

<sup>10</sup>The significance of the pentangle (Faust's 'Druid's foot' that kept Mephisto from crossing the threshold) is preserved in the 'Five for the symbol at your door' of the old English counting-song *Green Grow the Rushes O*, where also Two is 'for the lilly-white boys clothed all in green, O'

<sup>11</sup>*From Ritual to Romance* p 93

'Nut' means 'knot'—as in the game 'nuts in May' which means 'breast-knots or nosegays in May', in our poem it is said that the English call the pentangle 'the endeles knot'

significant, or why else should we be told in such detail how he left the court in Somerset (Arthur's court representing the centre of Christian culture, civilization) to search Wales? And right through Wales to Anglesey—the Druid country, the home of the pre-Christian culture, the ancient religion of Britain, and where Gawain was the favourite hero and whence the original Gawain legend came—and so to the Wirral? After that the whereabouts of his wanderings becomes necessarily a mystery. The point is that Gawain *expected* the Green Chapel and the Green Man to be where the cult belonged, perhaps survived. And this specification of the real countryside of the quest makes Gawain's subsequent wanderings in the waste full of monsters more blood-chilling: it prevents the reader from feeling he is merely in the stock fairy-tale world of romance and can discount the horrors—Gawain's waste is felt to be real and perilous indeed.

The actuality of the experience of desolation—Gawain's experience of being a stranger in a mountainous frozen region—depends upon the actuality of this winter landscape. The experience is sharply distinct because the landscape which is its 'objective equivalent' is (in contrast to the indefinite dream landscapes of the *Faerie Queene*) sharply distinct. It is a landscape from which God (originally perhaps the god) appears to have withdrawn, a landscape desolate of humans, inhabited by un-human creatures, beasts and monsters against which Gawain must hazard his life. The succession of tests which Gawain will undergo has commenced. 'The test preceding and qualifying for initiation into the secrets of physical life, consisted in being brought into contact with the horrors of physical death' (J. L. Weston, *The Quest of the Grail*).

The actuality of this ice-bound universe—so vividly immediate in the poetry—is itself dependent upon distinctness and accuracy of sensation, on the sharpness or piercingness of the sensory impressions and the subtlety with which these are distinguished and differentiated.

When the colde cler water fro the cloude schadde,  
 And fres er hit falle myght to the falé erthe,  
 Ner slayn wyth the slete he sleped in his yrnnes  
 Mo nyghtes then innoghe in naked rokkes,  
 Ther as claterande fro the crest the colde borne rennes,  
 And hengeg hegh over his hede in hard usse-ikkles

'In his iron on the naked rocks'—no acuter impression of the cold endured by Gawain could be conceived or communicated in words.

But from among these rocks, on the morning of Christmas Eve, Sir Gawain enters a forest. The trees of the Sacred Wood (they are the traditionally sacred trees) are full of suffering, half-frozen birds.

Of hore okes ful hoge a hundreth togeder,  
 The hasel and the hawthorne were harled al samen,  
 With roghe raged mosse rayled aywhere,

With mony bryddes unblythe upon bare twyges,  
That pitosly ther piped for pyne of the colde

The intimate mediæval fellow-feeling for the birds—felt almost as another kind of humans—seems to restore a whole range of human feeling, sympathetic feelings that had been frozen up un-freeze<sup>12</sup> The Christian knight, remembering that it is Christmas Eve, prays to Christ and Mary for some lodging where he might hear mass and matins on Christmas morning

To se the servyse of that syre, that on that self nyght  
Of a burde was borne oure baret to quelle  
And therefore sykyng he sayde, I beseche the, lorde,  
And Mary, that is myldest moder so dere,<sup>•</sup>  
Of sum herber ther heghly I myght here masse  
Ande thy matynes to-morne, mekely I ask'

As if in answer to his prayer he is confronted with the miracle of a castle. It is an ancient experience of the race. You are crossing a desert, you look again and (as by magic) the desert is a garden, a paradise—as desert land may (often does) become quite suddenly after rainfall. So here, unexpectedly in the Waste Land is a castle where the knight, after deprivation, will be entertained with abundance of food and drink. The castle is unmistakably a version of the Grail Castle. (There is no mention of the Grail in our poem, but always associated with the fleeting appearances of the Grail, the life-giving vessel are just such windfalls of food and drink.)

In contrast to the rocks the castle seems almost fragile, as if it might vanish again in an instant by magic.

Chalkwhyte chymnes  
That pared out of papure purely hit semed

But it is multiplex in detail<sup>13</sup> a multiplicity of towers and turrets, signifying again fertility—as innumerable stalks thrust upward from the ground in spring—and colourful as flowers are. It is islanded by water, oasis-like in effect. Gawain is here nearer than he knows to the hidden source of life.

In the structural balance of the poem this castle balances, on the one hand, the Green Chapel of the Fourth (and final) Fit—Gawain has come first not to a chapel but a castle—on the other

<sup>12</sup>The moment is nearly analogous to the moment in the *Ancient Mariner* when 'A spring of love gushed from my heart / The albatross which suddenly appeared in the icy desolation ('Thorough the fog it came, As if it had been a Christian soul / ') is life, and in destroying it the Mariner committed a crime against life. The moment, in the purgatorial process, has come when the Mariner suddenly recovers his love for living creatures. "The self-same moment I could pray'

<sup>13</sup>The editors here interpose the red herring of 14th century castle architecture



hand, Arthur's castle The lord of this *other* castle (Sir Bercilak de la Hautdesert—the surname is perhaps significant) will, in the Fourth Fit, turn out to be the Green Knight Between the robust and boisterous lord of the castle, a huge man of mature age, and the Green Knight, there is a concealed resemblance, allowing that the colour of his beard is now reddish brown and not green

Brode, brycht, was his berde, and al bever-hued  
Felle face as the fyre

His association with fire has unmistakably the same kind of significance that the fire festivals had, the flicker of fire—fire light and torch light—is (as previously remarked) characteristic of the castle Gawain and the Green Knight of the First Fit have here in the Second Fit in some respects changed places After he has been clothed in fresh garments<sup>14</sup> the youthful Gawain looks like the spring

The Ver by his visage verayly hit semed  
Welnegh to uche hathel, alle on hues,  
Lowande and lufly alle his lymmes under

It is as if the spring itself has come to the castle and been welcomed As a guest, Gawain is restored to the warmth of human hospitality before the Yule fire

A cheyer byfore the chemne, ther charcole brenned

As the plentiful food and drink with which—in this hostelry of the Green Man—Gawain is generously refreshed contrasts with the winter deprivation, so also the domestic comfort and sumptuousness of the interior of the castle contrasts with the inhospitable rocks In return, Sir Gawain is to the folk in the castle the pattern of courtesy, 'the fyne fader of nurture'

There are in the castle a young woman and an old woman The lady hostess, Sir Bercilak's wife, is youthful and lovely

Thenne lyst the lady to loke on the knyght,  
Thenne com ho of hir closet with mony cler burdes  
Ho was the fayrest in felle, of flesche and of lyre,  
And of compas and colour and costes of alle other,  
And wener then Wenore, as the wyghe thoght

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<sup>14</sup>We may compare those who have 'suffered a sea-change' in *The Tempest*

'But the rarity of it is, which is indeed almost beyond credit that our garments, being, as they were, drenched in the sea, hold notwithstanding their freshness and glosses, being rather new-dyed than stained with salt-water'

The rebirth significance of the change of garments will be familiar enough

She is accompanied, however, by another lady who in contrast to her is old and withered

An other lady hir lad b the lyft honde,  
 That was alder than ho an auncian hit semed,  
 And heghly honored with hatheles aboute  
 Bot unlyke on to loke tho ladyes were  
 For if the yonge was yep, yolwe was that other  
 Riche red on that on rayled ayquere  
 Rugh ronkled chekes that other on rolled,  
 Kerhofes of that on, wyth mony cler perles,  
 Hir brest and hir bryght throte bare displayed,  
 Schon schyrer then snawe that schedes on hills,  
 That other wyth a gorger was gered over the swyre,  
 Chymbled over hir blake chyn wyth chalkwhyte vayles,  
 Hir frount folden in sylk, enfouled ayquere,  
 Toret and treteted with tryfles aboute,  
 That nocht was bare of that burde bot the blake browes  
 The tweyne eyen and the nase, the naked lypes,  
 And those were soure to se and sellyly blered

The realism of that reminds one of Villon's hags. Whoever this withered ancient is in the 'story' (she is, as we happen to be told at the very end of the poem, Morgan—originally, the scholars tell us a Celtic goddess) the point here is immediately the contrast between youth and age, which has its significance in relation to the underlying seasonal theme. Winter is the season when the year has lost its vigour, spring when the year recovers its youth, the year grows old in winter, young again in spring. The one woman is what the other turns into. Age is what youth turns into—the flesh withers. But in relation to the seasonal theme the order is here also reversible: the young woman supplants the old. The old year (in this respect there is doubtless an underground connection with the envy of Morgan) works the mischief, produces the frozen world simply by being old. Underlyingly the old woman and the young woman are the Old and the New Year.<sup>15</sup>

When the feast of Christmas draws to a close Gawain's host tells him he knows where the Green Chapel is—it is close at hand—and bids him rest in the castle for the three days that remain. Again there is a compact. During each of these three days the lord of the castle proposes to be abroad hunting. Each evening Gawain will exchange whatever he may have won during the day in the castle for whatever his host may have won in the chase.

The events of these three days before New Year's Day—the day of Gawain's tryst at the Green Chapel—are the subject of the Third Fit. They are days of apparent resting for Gawain but really of most perilous testing. The peril is the greater because Gawain

<sup>15</sup>Such figures were familiar features of the annual folk festivals. The Romans had their Mamurius Veturius and his female counterpart, Anna Perenna.

does not know he is being tested, on the contrary, these days have been assigned to relaxation. Yet on his success or failure in these days of testing by the gay, youthful lady, his distractingly lovely hostess, will depend, though he does not guess it, his success or failure, indeed his life, at the Green Chapel. Though the original and still the underlying, purpose of the diverse tests—to find out whether or not Gawain is a fit agent to bring back the spring—is resolved into the conception of a testing of fitness for Christian knighthood, chastity has here nothing very particularly to do with monastic asceticism. Chastity has immemorially been a requirement in fertility—or nature—ceremonies and initiations. The chastity theme—chastity as a pre-condition of fertility—is here complementary to the fertility theme.

The hunts are symbolically the doing-to-death of the qualities of the natural man which Courtesy has to vanquish, the deer is timidity or cowardice, the boar ferocity, the fox animal cunning. Gawain's first natural reaction at the first entrance of the lady is to pretend to be asleep and evade the issue if he can (the deer), at her second visit she invites him to violate her forcefully (the boar), on the third occasion Gawain partially identifies himself with the cunning (the fox) of the proffer of the Green Girdle—which later in the poem he recognizes as having been a snare—by accepting and concealing it. The hunts are thus a symbolic parallel of what Gawain is doing in the castle, in the way of self-conquest, to maintain the ideal of the Christian knight—as well as realistic hunts. The poem implies an audience trained to be on the alert for a symbolic—as well as a literal—meaning, it is what made the poem possible as both sophisticated art and a popular poem. The hunts move successively to a climax which is symbolic, the boar, we should think, would follow the fox, if the crescendo were literal-dramatic and not, as it is, spiritual-symbolic.

Further, the spoils of each day's hunt both correspond, in the exchange, to the kisses of the lady and provide in midwinter the fison, the plenty that is consumed at each evening's feast, for the note of feasting continues right through the Third Fit. The Green Man now appears as the huntsman. The intimate association of vegetable and animal life, of crops and herds, has always been recognized. The three hunts of our poem underlyingly correspond to the animal sacrifices of fertility rituals, they are sacrificial hunts which provision the successive ceremonial feasts. Each hunt has its own character corresponding to the character of the creature hunted, the first day's hunt is a deer hunt, the second a boar hunt, the third a fox hunt. The poem is endlessly various, fertile in diversity of invention.

The three episodes of the testing of Gawain by the lady who each morning steals into his chamber are interwoven with the three hunts. These slow-motion, gay but slyly perilous bed-chamber scenes contrast with the vital activity and rush of the hunts. If we consider only the interweaving and the glowing colours we may be reminded of a tapestry-piece, yet the analogy is inadequate because

these scenes are not *simply* picture, or processional pageantry, as the scenes in the *Faerie Queene* so easily dissociable from their intended moral' meaning, readily become. The scenes and the people involved in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* are substantial, alive and individual, the people—and even the boar and the fox—are real characters

There is a further complication of rhythm or pattern in this Fit composed by the rotation of each day, slow—dangerously slow—in the castle in Gawain's chamber, swift in the hunt, each day opens with its dawn-scene and closes with its evening feast after the day's hunt

The Third Fit opens with a lively enactment, in strong 'pausing' rhythm, of the animation, the vital movement of the departing guests on the first morning of the lord's three hunts

Ful erly bifore the day the folk uprysen,  
 Gestes that go wolde hor gromes thay calden  
 And thay busken up bilyve blonkkes to sadel  
 Tyffen her takles, trussen her males,  
 Richen hem the rychest, to ryde alle arrayde,  
 Lepen up lyghtly, lachen her brydeles

The startling effect on the wild creatures and the timid deer of the first sounds intimating a hunt is sympathetically apprehended

At the fyrst quethe of the quest quaked the wylde,  
 Der drof in the dale, doted for drede

Yet it is the exhilaration of the chase that is primarily communicated, and in that communication sounds, concatenations of sounds, have their full values

The hundes were halden in with hay! and war!  
 The does dryven with gret dyn to the depe slades  
 Hunters wyth hyghe horne hasted hem after  
 Wyth such a crakkande kry as klyffes haden brusten

There is a great plenty of deer (though many are 'hundes, barayne'), the significance of that will be plain

Meanwhile the gay lady steals into Gawain's chamber

And as in slomeryng he slode, sleyly he herde  
 A litel dyn at his dor, and derfly upon,  
 And he heves up his hed out of the clothes,  
 A corner of the cortyn he cast up a lyttel,  
 And waytes warly thiderwarde quat hit be myght  
 Hit was the ladi, loflyest to beholde,  
 That drow the dor after hir ful dernly and styлле,  
 And boged towarde the bed, and the burne schamed,  
 And layde hym down lystyly, and let as he slepte,  
 And ho stepped stilly and stel to his bedde,  
 Kest up the cortyn and creped withinne,  
 And set hir ful softly on the bed-syde,  
 And lenged there selly longe to loke when he wakened

The lede lay lurked a ful longe quyle,  
 Compast in his concience to quat that cace myght  
 Meve other amount—to mervayle hym thoght,  
 Bot yet he sayde in hymself, Moie semly hit were  
 To aspye wyth my spelle in space quat ho wolde '  
 Then he wakenede, and wroth, and to hir warde torned  
 And unlouked his eye-lyddes, and let as hym wondered,  
 And sayned hym, as bi his saye the safer to worthe, with  
 hande

Wyth chynne and cheke ful swete,  
 Bothe whit and red in blande,  
 Ful lufly con ho lete  
 Wyth lypes smal laghande

'God moroun, Sir Gawayn , sayde that gay lady,  
 'Ye ar a sleper unslye, that mon may slyde hider,  
 Now ar ye tan astyt' Bot true us may schape,  
 I schal bynde yow in your bedde that be ye trayst'  
 Al laghande the lady lanced tho boundes  
 'Goud moroun, gay, quoth Gawayn the blythe

The humanity of the scene, the humour of Gawain's embarrassment and of his pretending at first to be asleep distinguishes it absolutely from the 'temptation' scenes in the *Faerie Queene*, the gay laughing lady has more affinity with some of Chaucer's wives<sup>17</sup>. She is (it transpires at the end of the poem) in league with her husband to test the unsuspecting Gawain. The chastity test is complicated not only by its being a test of loyalty—the loyalty of guest to host—but also (much more difficult) a test of courtesy. Gawain has to resist the lady while at the same time not being discourteous to her. There is nothing unreal about this situation. The problem of how to resist different kinds of demands made upon one without being discourteous, is a very real problem of civilized social behaviour in any community in any age. The theme of the interplay between 'nature' and civilized behaviour—Sir Gawain being the pattern of civilized behaviour or 'courtesy'—attains its maximum insistence in the episode between Sir Gawain and the lady.

Immediately supervening on Gawain's first day's successful resistance we are present at the 'breaking up'—an elaborate ritual—of the finest of the slain deer<sup>18</sup>. Gawain's success each day thus synchronises in the poem with the death of the hunted beast for which he faithfully exchanges the lady's kisses, there are one kiss to be exchanged on the first day, two on the second, three on the third.

<sup>17</sup>The 'gay wives' of Dunbar's *Twa Marrit Wemen and the Wedo* are also real enough, but by comparison are savage, merciless creatures of instinct.

<sup>18</sup>We may compare this episode, as also the deaths of the boar and fox, with the animal sacrifice at the cave—the entrance to the underworld—in Book VI of the *Aeneid*, the Green Chapel also is a cave.

On the second day's dawn the castle is awakened by the crowing of a cock (that most mediæval of birds heard more than once in this Christmas festival poem) In the richly orchestrated poetry that renders the strenuous rushing action of the boar-hunt our consciousness of sounds, given substance as they are by imagery of impetuous physical movement again plays a large part

Thenne such a glauer ande glam of gedered rachches  
Ros that the rokkeres rungen aboute,  
Huntes hem hardened with horne and with muthe  
Then al in a semble sweyed togeder,  
Bitwene a flosche in that fryth and a foo cragge

The boar is a really formidable antagonist

On the sellokest swyn swenged out there  
Ful grymme when he gronyed, thenne greved mony,  
For thre at the fyrst thrast he thyrst to the erthe,  
And sparred forth good sped bouthe spyt more  
These other halowed hyghe! ful hyghe, and hay! hay!  
cryed,  
Haden hornes to mouthe, heterly rechated,  
Mony was the myry mouthe of men and of houndes

The second of the critical bed-chamber scenes—the second visit of the 'mere wyf', who on this occasion, after she has failed to induce him to constrain her by force, finally begs Gawain to teach her the art of courtly love-making in which, as a knight of Arthur's court, he is erudite—is interposed in this contrasting context, the peril for Gawain is even deadlier than on the first day

At the moment of our assurance at last of his second day's success we are present at the death of the boar. The terrible event is not merely told about, its savagery is experienced

Bot the lorde ouer the londes launced ful ofte,  
Sues his uncely swyn, that swynges bi the bonkkes  
And bote the best of his braches the bakkes in sunder  
He gets the bonk at his bak, bigynes to scrape,  
Whetes his whyte tuskes

The lord dismounts and, sword in hand, himself tackles the ferocious and maddened beast in a deadly duel, he also, as Gawain does, hazards his life

The wylde was war of the wyghe with weppen in honde,  
Hef hyghly the here, so hetterly he fnast  
That fele ferde for the freke, lest felle hym the worre  
The swyn settes hym out on the segge even,  
That the burne and the bor were bothe upon hepes  
In the wyghtest of the water, the worre hade that other,  
For the mon merkkes hym wel, as thay mette fyrst,  
Set sadly the scharp in the slot even,  
Hit hym up to the hult, that the hert schyndered

There was blawying of prys in mony breme horne,  
Heghe halowing on highe with hatheles that myght

The boar's head—the head of the sacrificed animal—is brought home to the castle in triumph

And sythen on a stuf stange stoutly hem henges  
Now with this ilk swyn thay swengen to home,  
The bores hed was borne bifore the burnes selven

The 'hoge hed'—exchanged for the two kisses—graces the evening seasonal feast among flickering torch-light and fire-light

clere lyght thenne

Wakn'ed bi woges, waxen torches  
Aboute the fyre upon flet, and on fele wyse  
At the soper and after, mony athel songes,  
As coundutes of Krystmasse and caroles newe

There is quite evidently a cunning relation between the boar's head and the heads of the Green Knight and of Gawain

On the frosty dawn of the third day as the sun rises redly against drifting clouds, the horns of the final hunt sound

Ferly fayre was the folde, for the forst clenget,  
In rede rudede upon rak rises the sunne,  
And ful clere costes the clowdes of the welkyn  
Huntes unhardeled bi a holt syde,  
Rokkeres roungen bi rys for rurde of her hornes

The strenuous exertions of this day's hunt are evoked by a fox, that fox is a character, Reynard, the well-known rascally character of the Beast Fables, a rascal to his end Dogs and men

Runnen forth in a rabel in his ryght fare

The fox

fyskes hem before, thay founden hym sone,  
And when thay seghe hym with syght thay sued hym fast,  
Wreyande hym ful weterly with a wroth noyse,  
And he trantes and tornayees thurgh mony tene greve,  
Havlounes, and herkenes bi hegges ful ofte  
At the last bi a littel dich he lepes ouer a spenne,  
Steles out ful stilly bi a strothe rande,  
Went haf wylt of the wode with wyles fro the houndes,  
Thenne was he went, er he wyst, to a wale tryster,  
Ther thre thro at a thrich thrat hym at ones, al graye  
He blenched agayn bileve  
And stifly start on-stray,  
With alle the wo on lyve  
To the wod he went away

Thenne was hit lif upon list to lythen the houndes,  
When alle the mute hade hym met, menged togeder  
Suche a sorwe at that syght thay sette on his hede

As alle the clamberande clyffes hade clatered on hepes,  
Here he was halawed, when hatheles hym metten,  
Loude he was gayned with garande speche,  
Ther he was threted and ofte thef called,  
And ay the titleres at his tayl, that tary he ne myght,  
Ofte he was runnen at, when he out rayked,  
And ofte reled in agayn, so Reniarde was wylé  
And ye he lad hem, bilagged men, the lorde and his meyny

Gawain's third and last test with the lady is meanwhile in progress. On this the day before he must keep his tryst with the Green Knight at the Green Chapel she wakens him from dreams that have been very naturally gloomy. But she is as gay and as distracting as ever.

In a mery mantyle mete to the erthe  
Hir thryven face and hir throte throwen al naked,  
Hir brest bare bifore, and bihinde eke  
The lady luflych com laghande swete

Now let Mary be mindful of her knight, for his fate at the Green Chapel will depend on how successfully he resists the gay lady here and now. This day's test is, in fact, the decisive test, before his to-morrow's venture into the unknown and unpredictable. He is human. He fails in a minor respect. He successfully resists the lady for the third time but—though he refuses a rich jewelled ring blazing like the sun—she at the very end slyly induces him to accept from her a simple-seeming lovelace, her Green Girdle, which she tells him magically preserves life. He accepts it not as a love-gift and not from essential cowardice, but because he positively wants life. He positively wants, in short, what the poem has made us so vividly apprehend through every nerve and sense.

The death of the fox supervenes upon—is equivalent to—Gawain's partial success, partial failure.

As he sprent ouer a spenne to spye the schrewe,  
Ther as he herde the houndes that hasted hym swythe,  
Renoud com richchande thurgh a roge greve,  
And alle the rabel in a res ryght at his heles  
The wyghe was war of the wylde, and warly abides,  
And braydes out the bryght bronde, and at the best castes  
And he schunt for the scharp, and schulde haf arered,  
A rach rapes hym to, ryght er he myght,  
And ryght bifore the hors fete thay fel on hym alle,  
And wored me this wyly wyth a wroth noyve  
The lorde lyghtes bilyve, and laches hym sone,  
Rased hym ful radly out of the rach mouthes,  
Haldes heghe ouer his hede, halowes faste,  
And ther bayen hym mony brath houndes

A requiem is sounded for Reynard's soul



Alle that ever ber bugle blowed at ones,  
 And alle thise other halowed that hade no hornes,  
 Hit was the myriest mute that ever men herde,  
 The rich rurd that ther was raysed for Renaude saule

(To-morrow, we may remember, it may be Gawain's turn) Gawain not to implicate his hostess, says nothing about her gift of her Green Girdle, and the lord apologetically exchanges the pelt of the fox—a mere fox—for the three kisses

For I haf hunted al this day, and nocht haf I geten  
 Bot this foule fox felle—the fende haf the godes<sup>1</sup>

The Third Fit draws to a close with the New Year's Eve feast and some natural preoccupation about the morrow

Gawain's journey through winter in quest of the Green Chapel is resumed in the Fourth (and last) Fit, in the structural balance the Fourth Fit corresponds in this aspect to the Second Fit, as in the final encounter between Gawain and the Green Knight it corresponds to the First Fit. The opening paragraph itself corresponds to the two opening paragraphs of the Second Fit conveying the experience of a year's revolution. The sense of time passing is again conveyed—on this occasion the passing of Old Year's Night into the wintry dawn of the New Year—and it is conveyed in particular terms of the wild weather outside the castle as Gawain listens to it on his bed with foreboding, conscious that his meeting with the Green Knight is now imminent

Now neghes the New Yere, and the nyght passes,  
 The day dryves to the derk, as Dryhten biddes,  
 Bot wylde wederes of the worlde wakned theroute,  
 Clowdes kesten kenly the colde to the erthe,  
 Wyth nyghe innoghe of the northe, the naked to tene,  
 The snaw smitered ful snart, that snapped the wylde,  
 The werbelande wynde wapped fro the hyghe,  
 And drof uche dale ful of dryftes ful grete  
 The leude lystened ful wel that ley in his bedde,  
 Thagh he lowkes his liddes, ful lyttel he slespes,  
 Bi uch kok that crue he knewe wel the steven

Gawain then rides out again through winter as it may be actually experienced any winter among the mountains

They bogen bi bonkkes ther boghes ar bare,  
 Thay clomben bi clyffes ther clenges the colde  
 The heven was up halt, bot ugly ther-under,  
 Mist mused on the mor, malt on the mountes,  
 Uch hille had a hatte, a myst-hakel huge  
 Brokes byled and breke bi bonkkes aboute,  
 Schyre schaterande on schores, ther thay doun schowved

One variation is that on this occasion Gawain is accompanied by a guide—the guide provided by his host—and knows that the

Green Chapel is at hand. As they draw near the place this guide fearfully warns Gawain of the peril and proposes a way of escape. It may be that the guide is well-meaning, or it may be that he, too, is in league with his master. But whether or not deliberately engineered this is certainly yet another test, a test that Gawain at once shows there is no danger of his failing in, he will go on, though courteously he thanks the fellow for his apparently friendly but dishonourable counsel. The guide then rides off leaving Gawain to go on alone.

Just as no event ever turns out to be exactly as one had expected it, but comes always with the shock of a difference, so the Green Chapel turns out to be quite different. It is not a chapel at all, it is 'nobot an olde cave'

And ouergrowen with gresse in glodes aywhere,  
And al was holwe inwith, nobot an olde cave

Its being a cave—that immemorial symbol and sacred place—is more richly significant than if it had been a chapel. Gawain is here at the hidden, secret source of life. If (as Kittredge suggests) the cave is the entrance to the underworld, that entrance is in our poem realized not as the devourer of life but as the source of life, the entrance through which life *returns* to the earth. The place—it is essentially an experience of a place—is felt as holy, enchanted, taboo, it is *sacer*. Possibly there were in the wilder regions of Britain (as J. L. Weston thinks) such ancient shrines of an earlier nature worship which were still places of worship—at least of veneration or fear—as late as the 14th century. The cave is certainly more appropriate than a Christian chapel to that wild mountain universe, to un-reclaimed, unredeemed nature.

The equivocal attitude of the mediæval Church to nature seems to be reflected in Sir Gawain's attitude. He feels—it is the ancient feeling—that the place is *sacer*, but he feels not simply that, he is not at all sure how to take it, how as a Christian knight he *ought* to take it. The Church's attempt to outlaw the old cults was (we know) what turned them into black magic and devil worship,<sup>19</sup> in Sir Gawain's first reaction to the place we see reflected the kind of attitude that by outlawing the surviving remnants of a nature cult produced witchcraft. Perhaps (Sir Gawain thinks) the cave is the Devil's kirk.

Here myght aboute mydnyght  
The dele his matynnes telle!

Perhaps the Green Man is after all the Devil (perhaps nature is the Devil!) who has lured him there in order to destroy him.

<sup>19</sup>Recently Christianized peoples could not at once imagine their old gods as not existing, the gods persisted though outlawed by the Christian Church and turned into devils. The identification of the Green Man with the genial outlaw Robin Hood is significant of the viewpoint contrary to the official ecclesiastical one.

'This ontre is ugly, with erbes ouergrowen,  
 Wel bisemes the wyghe wruxled in grene  
 Dele here his devocioun on the develes wyse  
 Now I fele hit is the fende, in my fyve wyttes,  
 That has stoken me this steven to strye me here  
 This is a chapel of meschaunce, that chekke hit bytyde!  
 Hit is the corsesdest kyrk that ever I com inne!

Gawan's fears are totally disproved by the event. The experience that immediately follows is of a sudden, overwhelming release of life-energies, as of some sudden thaw in which the pent-up, gigantic life beneath the frozen earth bursts free, suggestions of rushing water and wind powerfully contribute to the exhilaration of the experience.

Thene herde he of that hyghe hul, in a harde roche  
 Biyonde the broke, in a bonk, a wonder breme noyse  
 Quat! hit clatered in the clyff, as hit cleve schulde  
 As one upon a gryndelston hade grounden a sythe  
 What! hit wharred and whette, as water at a mulne,  
 What! hit rusched and ronge, rawthe to here

It is the Green Man sharpening his axe. Presently he comes

Whyrlande out of a wro wyth a felle weppen,  
 A Denes ax newe dyght, the dynt with to yelde

and leaps hugely across the intervening stream. The chief actors in the poem—essentially the hero and the god, man and nature—now again as in the First Fit, confront each other. The final test is executed by the Green Man with grim humour—two feints and a blow that merely grazes the skin, shedding a few symbolic drops of blood on the snow. For the Green Man turns out not to be such a bad fellow after all. He could have destroyed Gawain, but does not. In effect, therefore, he gives Gawain his life, he does not, as he so easily could, take it away, though it remains certain that if Gawain had failed in the tests with the lady he would have forfeited his life. His life is really in the balance. The graze is for his fault in accepting and concealing the Green Girdle.

Bot for ye lufed your lyf, the lasse I yow blame

There fellows immediately an impression as of a re-birth.

And when the burne segh the blode blenk on the snawe  
 He sprit forth spenne-fote more than a spere lenthe,  
 Hent heterly his helme, and on his hed cast,  
 Schot with his schulderes his fayre schelde under,  
 Braydes out a bryght sworde, and bremely he spekes—  
 Never syn that he was burne borne of his moder  
 Was he never in this worlde wyghe half so blythe

What is achieved seems to be a kind of adjustment, if not reconciliation<sup>20</sup> between man and nature, between the human and the other

than human. In a more limited sense, the courtly order has been put to the test of nature. Gawain recognizes his own nature, knows himself, as a consequence.

The Christian significance of the poem is that Gawain emerges from the whole succession of tests as nearly the perfection of Christian knighthood as that condition is humanly attainable. For though he has failed in minor respects—he accepted and concealed the Green Girdle—he shrank a little at the first descent of the axe—he could not humanly be more nearly the perfect Christian knight than he is, he is human, and human nature (according to Christian doctrine) is imperfect, only perfectible through grace. But Gawain is now sensitively conscious of his human imperfection and, therefore, does not fail in the essential Christian virtue of humility. In this respect the Gawain of our poem—who belongs to 'the noblest fellowship of Christian knights'—differs from the pre-Christian hero. He wears the Green Girdle as a garment of penitence.

Once we begin to realize how closely worked is the art of the poem, how complex the poem is in its significances as a work of art, it should be possible to avoid the error of regarding it simply as a recorded myth, the record of the story of a ritual. 'Myth is the new intellectual fashion', as an American reviewer of some recent books about myth and literature puts it.<sup>21</sup> The recent tendency in criticism, under the influence of anthropology, to interpret a work of art too simply by disinterring its buried myth and leaving it at that, seems to involve an unhappy confusion between myth and art. Unless we can see very exactly the relation between the myth and the art in the case of each individual work of literary art (where there is a myth *there* at all) the 'anthropological approach' to literature becomes only the latest technique for irrelevance. To discuss a poem as though it were a myth is only another way of evading the poem.

The same reviewer helpfully sums up what appear to be the findings, at the stage at present reached, of the Cambridge school of anthropologists who have explored the ritual theory of myth. 'Myth is neither a record of historical fact nor an explanation of nature. It is the spoken correlative of a ritual, the story which the rite enacts or once enacted'. The poet of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* was evidently a very conscious artist, conscious of what he wanted to do and of what he was doing. It seems probable that he

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<sup>20</sup> In the final development of the story [the Grail story] the Pathos is shared alike by the representative of the Vegetation Spirit and the Healer, whose task involves a period of stern testing and probation' (*From Ritual to Romance* page 104)

The Green Man and Gawain of the First Fit again appear in some respects to have changed places in the last Fit. Gawain withstanding the blow is compared to a 'stubbe' 'That rathered is in roche grounde with rotes a hundreth'

<sup>21</sup> Stanley Hyman *Myth, Ritual and Nonsense* (The Kenyon Review, Summer, 1949)

had consciously in mind—may have himself witnessed—the ritual the story of which underlies the poem. This underlying ritual and the poet's belief in its value as myth is what gives the poem its life. But it is not what has made the poem—not simply a record of a ritual—a complex work of art. A conscious artist the poet *begins* from a myth, he *ends* with the poem we have.

The poem—the work of a highly conscious and sophisticated artist—implies also a conscious and sophisticated audience. If we required evidence that there existed in England in the 14th century not only a vivid local life but—in what we regard<sup>a</sup> as a remote locality—a higher degree of *civilization* than exists anywhere, perhaps, in the 20th century we need only point to this poem. Thoroughly *local* as the poem is there is nothing provincial in a limiting sense about it, it is, in the best sense sophisticated. It implies as Shakespeare does, a highly refined and complex literary art, which engages at all levels, thus testifying to the existence of a truly integrated public, trained to respond.

The miracle of the poem is indeed that it has so consciously held and made the best of such diverse worlds, composed these without loss of diversity or substance in the very inclusive harmony of a superb work of art—a firmly rooted, multiple branched, gnarled but symmetrical northern oak. It should be as well known to us as Elyot's *Waste Land*, it equally belongs to the great English tradition. Its imagery and symbolism have also underlying affinities that are certainly not accidental with the characteristically Shakespearean.

JOHN SPEIRS

*Note* —The spelling of the quotations has been straightened out only in a few obvious respects. Far be it from me to venture upon what should be undertaken only by those who believe themselves qualified to edit texts. Since one of the conceptions of the *raison d'être* of a School of English Studies that has long been in favour in some universities is that it should turn out whole generations of editors of texts, it is surprising that we have still to await a straight text (as distinct, of course, from a 'translation') of this poem.

One is left wondering what could be the use of translations such as M. R. Ridley's, still less of a translation into Spenserian stanzas which is again in circulation. The poem is its own kind of English, if only that were given a fair chance by the editors.

[This is the first of a series of articles by Mr. Speirs revaluing English Mediæval literature —ED.]

# JAMES'S DEBT TO HAWTHORNE (II)

THE MARBLE FAUN' and 'THE WINGS OF THE DOVE'

BOTH *The Blithedale Romance* and *The Bostonians* deal with the theme of the American woman and principally under her aspect of excessive liberation. But the suffragist movement is only a corner of the whole subject and there are frequent points at which Hawthorne and James draw near in their treatment of the larger problem, reminding one that both novelists were far from remaining in the particular corner, and that they were capable of bestowing a conspicuousness on their American heroines that had little to do with the sensational effects of organized and militant feminism. The problem is ultimately one for sociological exploration, and one recalls that in *The American Scene* (1907) James offered some pages that, precisely as sociological exploration, are probably the best thing we shall ever have in that line. It has become the critical fashion to extol the nobilities and spiritual endowments that James lavished on several of his heroines, and the tendency has been to overlook the fact that in most of his best work the endowments, the way he gets them across to the reader, are intrinsically dependent on his recognition of what, for the final picture, is missing from the background and character of the American maiden. We have already seen his incisive touches rectifying the unsatiric vision of Hawthorne, and we have seen how his very mercilessness could animate the character of Verena Tarrant, exhibiting her virtues with a success forever closed to Hawthorne's more tender conception of Priscilla. Hawthorne's suggestiveness in *Blithedale* had been of the most valuable kind, but years later when James wrote *The Wings of the Dove* Hawthorne's example operated in a different way. James proved less critical, and although the 'influence' in this case was considerably less extensive, such an imprint as the precedent left on James's art was unfortunate in its effect.

But before discussing this later relation, relatively so much more tenuous than the one already considered, one should envisage James's most persistent attitude to his American girls and women as concretely as possible. The following quotation from *The American Scene*, written so late in James's career, may be taken as a kind of axial statement around which it is possible to group most, if not all, of his American heroines. It tickets their satiric content in a manner cutting enough to be, on occasion, cruel, at the same time allowing dancing room for those emergent virtues which, in the case of, say, Daisy Miller or Pandora Day, are the last things we

keep pathetically in view The importance of the passage will justify the inclusion of a quotation of such length

'She has been, accordingly, about the globe beyond all doubt, a huge success of curiosity, she has at her best—and far beyond any consciousness and intention of her own lively as these for the most part usually are—infinately amused the nations It has been found among them that, for more reasons than we can now go into, her manner of embodying and representing her sex has fairly made of her a new human convenience not unlike fifty of the others, of a slightly different order, the ingenious mechanical appliances, stoves refrigerators, sewing-machines, type-writers, cash-registers, that have done so much, in the household and the place of business, for the American name By which I am of course, far from meaning that the revelation has been of her utility as a domestic drudge, it has been much rather in the fact that the advantages attached to her being a woman at all have been so happily combined with the absence of the drawbacks, for persons intimately dealing with her, traditionally suggested by that condition The corresponding advantages, in the light of almost any old order, have always seemed inevitably paid for by the drawbacks, but here, unmistakably, was a case in which—as at first appeared, certainly—they were to be enjoyed very nearly for nothing What it came to evidently, was that she had been grown in an air in which a hundred of the "European" complications and dangers didn't exist, and in which also she had had to take upon herself a certain training for freedom It was not that she had had, in the vulgar sense, to "look out" for herself, inasmuch as it was of the very essence of her position not to be threatened or waylaid, but that she could develop her audacity on the basis of her security, just as she could develop her "powers" in a medium from which criticism was consistently absent Thus she arrived, full-blown, on the general scene, the least criticized object in proportion to her importance, that had ever adorned it It would take long to say why her situation, under this retrospect, may affect the inner fibre of the critic himself as one of the most touching on record, he may merely note his perception that she was to have been after all but the sport of fate For why need she originally, he wonders, have embraced so confidently, so gleefully, yet so unguardedly the terms offered her to 'an end practically so perfidious? Why need she, unless in the interest of her eventual discipline, have turned away with so light a heart after watching the Man, the deep American man, retire into his tent and let down the flap? She had her "paper" from him, their agreement signed and sealed, but would she not, in some other air and under some other sky, have been visited by a saving instinct? Would she not have said "No, this is too unnatural, there must be a trap in it somewhere—it's addressed really, in the long run, to making a fool of me?" It is impossible, of course, to tell, and her case, as it stands for us, at any rate, is that she showed no doubts'

It is in the world comprehended within the terms of this quotation that James achieved a classic success with the American female that was beyond Hawthorne's ambition. Hawthorne could exhibit a heavily Dickensian humour at the expense of a matrimonially inclined widow in his short story, *Mrs Bullfrog* or show himself genuinely ill-tempered in his crude attacks on the English dowager, but neither the intelligence nor the values that shot through the Jamesian comedy when it dealt with American womanhood was at Hawthorne's disposal. But at another level they had their common ground, for if James, particularly in his late work, can be credited with idealizing the American girl it was easy enough for him to look back from Milly Theale to a positive apotheosis of New England girlhood that Hawthorne had provided for the general edification many years before. There is a good deal of evidence to suggest that he *did* look back, and receive support from the precedent. Mr Matthiessen has written in *The American Renaissance* 'The characters who mark his greatest advance beyond anything in Hawthorne's scope and who are, indeed, the unique signatures of his sensibility, are his heroines, particularly Isabel Archer and Milly Theale.' As far as Milly Theale goes, exactly the opposite of this proposition seems to me to be true. James was most beyond Hawthorne's scope when he was drawing on that critical and satiric consciousness evidenced in the above quotation, and in *The Bostonians* we have seen how astonishingly far beyond Hawthorne's scope, James on such a theme, could really be. It is precisely in a character like Milly Theale that he draws especially near to his predecessor, and nearest, one must add, to some of his predecessor's sorriest aspects. Again, the importance of recognizing the relation resides partly in gauging the extent of James's participation in a prevailing American attitude, and especially the recognition should help to qualify the large over-estimation, as relative to the other works, which has overtaken *The Wings of the Dove* in recent years.

*The Marble Faun* was the last completed and artistically finished novel that Hawthorne wrote. Despite the opinion that accords *The Blithedale Romance* that unenviable distinction, it seems to me unmistakably the worst of the four major novels, although James was deeply impressed by it. He wrote that 'some of the finest pages in Hawthorne are to be found in it,' and he thought there was a great deal of interest in the simple combination and opposition of the four actors,' a remark that makes one think of *The Golden Bowl*. But before taking up the influence of *The Marble Faun* on James's conception of Milly Theale, I wish to glance at its much earlier effect on one of James's stories, *The Last of the Valeris*, which he had written in 1868. Not only will this suggest how the influence of *The Marble Faun*, making its impression thus early, was granted a remarkably long period of gestation in James's artistic consciousness during which its sown seeds might arrive at *any* maturity—it will reveal most of all how critics have tended to attribute to other writers, generally French, an influence



which, when distilled to its primal essence, is recognizably, if not blatantly Hawthorne's *The Last of the Valeri* is commonly supposed to have resulted from an early translation which James made of Mérimée's story *La Venus d'Ille*. The two stories have plots that present, in large measure parallel constructions. In both of them, pagan statues of goddesses are disinterred on estates belonging to persons in the respective stories, and in both cases the goddesses interfere in the marriages of the two heroes—the interference being supernatural in Mérimée's story, psychological in James's. The resemblance ends here but it is enough to have persuaded most critics that James took the story over from Mérimée, although several have remarked (Matthiessen among them) on a Hawthornian overtone. But it is precisely that Hawthornian element that is the significant thing in the story and without which *The Last of the Valeri* would be a piece of lifeless clap-trap. Conte Valerio derives from the pagan-Christian Donatello of *The Marble Faun*. Just as Donatello resembles the Faun of Praxiteles, Conte Valerio had a head and throat like some of the busts in the Vatican, and I more than once smiled at her [Martha, Valerio's wife's] archaeological zeal, declaring that I believed she had married the Count because he was like a statue of the Decadence.' The young heroine Martha, who is characterized by 'dove-like glances,' is described, interestingly enough in view of James's later course, as 'a young American girl who had the air and almost the habits of a princess. There are many points of resemblance between the two stories as far as plot goes (Donatello, it may be remembered, a little irrelevantly discovers an antique statue of a beautiful goddess in one of the later chapters of *The Marble Faun*), and particularly there is a similarity in the descriptive passages (Hawthorne's and James's scenes in the Pantheon, for example, should be compared), but I do not wish to emphasize this sort of thing. Where the two stories come very close and very significantly together is in the moral tone—the simultaneous love and fear of the past which was so characteristic of both men, and which, in them, is a peculiarly American note. Much later in this study of Hawthorne and James it will be necessary to examine this attitude with some care, but at this point I can only quote a passage from *The Last of the Valeri* which is perfect Hawthorne, and by no means imperfect James. Mérimée's story is a piece of artificial cleverness, but James's story is a subtle—if still rather young—analysis of the conflict between the past and the present when the sense and weight of tradition and history are unworkably heavy. If the reader is inclined to think that James's view seems very simple here, I do not think the meaning of *The Sense of the Past*, written in James's full maturity, will, in its ultimate distilment reveal anything more complex. This is the passage:

'The poor Count became, to my imagination, a dark efflorescence of the evil germs which history had implanted in his line. No wonder he was foredoomed to be cruel. Was not

cruelty a tradition of his race, and crime an example? The unholy passions of his forefathers revived, incurably, in his untaught nature and clamoured dumbly for an issue. What a heavy heritage it seemed to me, as I reckoned it up in my melancholy musings, the Count's interminable ancestry! Back to the profligate revival of arts and vices—back to the bloody medley of mediæval wars—back through the long, fitfully glaring dusk of the early ages to its ponderous origin in the solid Roman state—back through all the darkness of history it stretched itself, losing every claim on my sympathies as it went. Such a record was in itself a curse.

*The Last of the Valern* shares its central moral meaning with Hawthorne, and its indebtedness to him is at the very centre of its life. In making the point at such length I have wished primarily to afford relief against any possible shock in my initial assertion that the most forceful influence shaping James's conception of Milly Theale's character and function came from *The Marble Faun*. Demonstrably it had been a profound influence on a characteristic Jamesian story written when he was only twenty-five, and the influence was not of the kind that ended when the story was finished.

The impression it made was deepest in the case of one of the characters, the little New England copyist, Hilda. James is very explicit in his *Life of Hawthorne* as to the extent to which he responded:

'The character of Hilda has always struck me as an admirable invention—one of those things that mark the man of genius. It needed a man of genius and of Hawthorne's imaginative delicacy, to feel the propriety of such a figure as Hilda, and to perceive the relief it would both give and borrow. This pure and somewhat rigid New England girl, following the vocation of a copyist of pictures in Rome, unacquainted with evil and untouched by impurity, has been accidentally the witness, unknown and unsuspected, of the dark deed by which her friends, Miriam and Donatello, are knit together. This is her revelation of evil, her loss of perfect innocence. She has done no wrong, and yet wrong-doing has become a part of her experience, and she carries the weight of her detested knowledge upon her heart. She carries it a long time saddened and oppressed by it, till at last she can bear it no longer. If I have called the whole idea of the presence and effect of Hilda in the story a trait of genius, the purest touch of inspiration is the episode in which the poor girl deposits her burden. She has passed the whole lonely summer in Rome, and one day, at the end of it, finding herself in St. Peter's, she enters a confessional, strenuous daughter of the Puritans as she is, and pours out her dark knowledge into the bosom of the Church—then comes away with her conscience lightened, not a whit less Puritan than before. If the book contained nothing else noteworthy but this admirable scene, and the pages describing the

murder committed by Donatello under Miriam's eyes and the ecstatic wandering, afterwards, of the guilty couple through the "blood-stained streets of Rome", it would still deserve to rank high among the imaginative productions of our day'

In view of this expressed admiration for Hilda, the close similarity between the symbolism with which James presents Milly and that with which Hawthorne presents Hilda acquires genuine significance inasmuch as this symbolism carries implicit moral values that shed nearly identical lustres over the two girls. It is odd that this similarity has not been remarked particularly by Mr Matthiessen, but Milly Theale has no more ardent admirer among contemporary critics than he, whereas he is very justly repelled by Hilda, seeing her as a self-righteous and impossible prig who affords 'an ugly glimpse of American spiritual life as it was destined increasingly to become in the decades after the Civil War'. It may not be astonishing then that he has failed to note the likeness, for Milly is a far more attractive girl than Hilda. Nevertheless she is a direct descendant in the moral line, although by the time her generation has been reached the Puritanism has become civilized beyond easy recognition. In his later book, *Henry James The Major Phase*, Mr Matthiessen maintained that James, 'did not, like Mallarmé, start with his symbol. He reached it only with the final development of his theme, and then used it essentially in the older tradition of the poetic metaphor, to give concreteness, as well as allusive and beautiful extension of his thought'. I do not wish to discuss the nature of James's symbolism here,<sup>1</sup> but the following passage from *The Marble Faun* looks forward so directly towards

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<sup>1</sup>Frankly, I doubt if it is a discussable problem in the terms Mr Matthiessen uses here. There is a good deal of evidence that some of James's symbols had been in his mind for years before he used them, and if this is so there is no reason why such an image may not have planted the little acorn to which James was so fond of referring. F. R. Leavis has pointed, in *The Great Tradition* to an anticipation of one of James's most important symbols that seems to contradict Mr Matthiessen's description of his method of composing. In *The Portrait of a Lady* Madame Merle's concern for her rare porcelain coffee cup looks directly ahead to the central symbol in *The Golden Bowl*. Although Mr Leavis does not quote the passage in his text, it is important enough in the present argument to be reproduced here.

'I think you're very simple.' And Madame Merle kept her eye on her cup. 'I've come to think that with time I judged you, as I say, of old, but it's only since your marriage that I've understood you. I've seen better what you have been to your wife than I ever saw what you were for me. Please be very careful of that precious object.'

'It already has a wee bit of a tiny crack,' said Osmond dryly as he put it down.'

the central image of *The Wings of the Dove* that one cannot accept the resemblances as wholly coincidental

'Here she dwelt, in her tower, possessing a friend or two in Rome, but no home companion except the flock of doves whose cote was in a ruinous chamber contiguous to her own. They soon became as familiar with the fair-haired Saxon girl as if she were a born sister of their brood and her customary white robe bore such an analogy to their snowy plumage that the confraternity of artists called Hilda the Dove, and recognized her aerial apartment as the Dove-cote. And while the other doves flew far and wide in quest of what was good for them, Hilda likewise spread her wings, and sought such ethereal and imaginative sustenance as God ordains for creatures of her kind.'

It is even possible that the title of James's novel was suggested by his memory of one of the phrases above. The image of Hilda the Dove is not, it should be said at once, a random image which Hawthorne has applied in one paragraph and dropped. It is the persistent metaphor—the definitive symbol that occurs everywhere Hilda is discussed. It is in terms of this image that those qualities which James isolated in Hilda for particular praise—her purity and 'perfect innocence'—may be said to exist, and I cannot believe, after the hearty congratulation we have seen James offering Hawthorne for Hilda's character, that the metaphor which is the very essence of it should have failed to leave its mark on James's conscious memory. It is extremely difficult to guess from the *Notebooks* and the 'Preface' to *The Wings* just what the real history of the inception of that novel really was. Remembering that James had begun his 'Preface' by saying that '*The Wings of the Dove* published in 1902, represents to my memory a very old—if I shouldn't perhaps rather say a very young—motive', Mr Matthiessen (among others) has urged that James had his young cousin, Minny Temple, who died of tuberculosis at the age of twenty-four, in mind when he conceived Milly Theale. This is almost certainly true, but the mere desire persisting over so many years to commemorate his early friend, was as likely to introduce a note of forcing into the conception of Milly as it was to create, in Matthiessen's words, 'the most resonant symbol for what he had to say about humanity'. Certainly it embarrassed James when he came to apply those satiric touches by which so many of his earlier young women had been endowed with life. And yet if one goes back to the long quotation above in which James offered his critical analysis of the American woman, and if one compares item by item with what Milly offers, the similarities are striking. For example, it is as a 'new human convenience' that Milly makes her debut at Lord Mark's

'The lingering eyes looked her over, the lingering eyes were what went, in almost confessed simplicity, with the pointless "I say, Mark", and what was really most sensible of all was that, as

a pleasant matter of course, if she didn't mind, he seemed to suggest their letting people poor dear things, have the benefit of her'

And she is no less 'a huge success of curiosity'

'It was so little her fault, this oddity of what had 'gone round' about her, that to accept it without question might be as good a way as another feeling of life. It was inevitable to supply the probable description—that of the awfully rich young American who was so queer to behold, but nice by all accounts to know, and she had really but one instant of speculation as to fables or fantasies perchance originally launched'

Such passages could be multiplied, and they show that Milly is pre-eminently a legitimate subject for James's usual observations on the American girl—the kind of observation for which his genius was peculiarly suited—but for whatever reason of his own James withdrew the usual satiric penalties attaching to such insights, and wishing to spare her, he left her instead the victim of his indulgence. In his earlier work these satiric insights had penetrated to the centre and created the substance of his young women, establishing the richness of their reality, but inasmuch as he was commemorating Minny Temple he would not leave the Dove exposed, nor violate the sentimental memory. And yet so ingrained was the habit that he had to take deliberate precautions. There is an uneasy and uncertain note (which the technical concern so elaborately insisted on in the 'Preface' only nominally explains) when he says, speaking in his own voice in the novel itself 'She worked—and seemingly quite without design—upon the sympathy, the curiosity, the fancy of her associates, and we shall really ourselves scarce otherwise come closer to her than by feeling their impression and sharing, if need be, their confusion'. This uncertainty sometimes reveals itself in a significant unsteadiness of image of which James himself is conscious.

'It was her nature, once for all—a nature that reminded Mrs Stringham of the term always used in the newspapers about the great new steamers, the inordinate number of "feet of water" they drew, so that if, in your little boat, you had chosen to hover and approach, you had but yourself to thank, when once motion was started, for the way the draught pulled you. Milly drew the feet of water, and odd though it might seem that a lonely girl, who was not robust and who hated sound and show, should stir the stream like a leviathan, her companion floated off with the sense of rocking violently at her side'

James, of course, likes to build Milly's metaphors on a grand scale ('When Milly smiled it was a public event—when she didn't it was a chapter of history'), but James is quite right about this image—it does seem odd. In *The Portrait of a Lady*, with a far greater sense of proportion and fitness, James had developed the

elements of this metaphor just far enough. Madame Merle meanwhile, as lady in waiting to a princess circulating *incognita*, panted a little in her rear.' Both Isabel and Madame Merle emerge respectably from this description. But in the above image from *The Wings* it is clear what has happened—tugging at the satiric leash in spite of himself, and with no solid grasp of Milly to hold him back, James has given her a metaphor completely inappropriate to her because he cannot resist the urge to set Susan Stringham, with whom he is more secure, in her proper and ludicrous glory. But it is Milly who looks more ludicrous—as ludicrous, but not nearly as effective, as that truly massive young person, Rosanna Gaw in *The Ivory Tower* who simultaneously resembles a Burmese palanquin and 'a ship held back from speed yet with its own canvas expanded.' If I seem to make a good deal of the point here, it is because James's slip exhibits so woefully the way he *doesn't* have hold of Milly. It is not really a small thing, and it is an error that he could not conceivably have made with Isabel Archer or little Maisie Farrange or Verena Tarrant. Somewhat later in the novel, when he is dealing not with Milly but with Aunt Maud, he can bring off a somewhat similar metaphor with his customary success. 'Mrs Lowder, it was true, steering in the other quarter a course in which she called at subjects as if they were islets in an archipelago, continued to allow them their ease'

And James has a good deal of trouble with Milly's conversation, for none of his heroines are quite as lacking in animation or wit. James seems almost apologetic for having conferred those qualities in greater abundance on Mrs Lowder, but nevertheless James is never able to make Milly say anything more clever than her 'weak joke' in the following passage. Mrs Lowder is speaking first:

' "God has been good to one—positively, for I couldn't, at my age, have made a new friend—undertaken, I mean, out of the whole cloth, the real thing. It's like changing one's bankers—after fifty one doesn't do that. That's why Susie has been kept for me, as you seem to keep people in your wonderful country, in lavender and pink paper—coming back at last as out of a fairy tale and with you as an attendant fairy." Milly hereupon replied appreciatively that such a description of herself made her feel as if pink paper were her dress and lavender its trimming, but Aunt Maud was not to be deterred by a weak joke from keeping it up.'

Milly's witticism sounds a little like Catherine Sloper, but one may, for the measure of distance between the two novels, compare the reality and significant meaning one senses behind Catherine's little patheticisms with the uninteresting, dull inertness of Milly's response.

There is not space here to accumulate instances of the imperfect artistic realization which James brings to Milly, but one's impression of the kind of unsteadiness noted above is enforced, at quite a different level of imagery by the elaborate 'art' metaphors

by which James seeks to define his subtleties. The most important of them is perhaps too long to quote. It is that attempt to describe the relationship between Milly and Kate Croy by placing them, as it were, in a twilight scene from a Maeterlinck play. The passage, which is the most purple one James must ever have written, is in Chapter XXIV, and the reader who wishes to see how near, on occasion, James could draw to Pater and Arthur Symonds, may turn to it there. In the days when James had dealt with his heroines directly—heroines with whom he felt satirically, critically free (having no personal reasons to feel otherwise), this sort of metaphor would hardly have achieved his purposes, for it leaves James in the end very much where he was when he took it up on the outside. But James instinctively knew that his apotheosized, his 'royal' Milly was, at centre, just another 'exposed maiden', like the others he had written about, and for the sake of maintaining the difference he dared not penetrate deeper into the human substance than such a *fin de siècle* picture allowed.

Faced, then with such difficulties, the hints that he found in *The Marble Faun* on how to canonize an American girl in a novel must surely have been welcome. Once Milly is deprived of her gilding and courtesy titles of royalty the moral quantity she represents in such an unquestioned way begins to merge at once with that represented by Hilda. It is interesting to note that both novelists applied this moral coating quite deliberately from the outside, setting the girls against suggestive backgrounds, and decorating them with symbols of universally acknowledged value. Here is the process going on in Hawthorne. Miriam is on her way to visit Hilda in her tower studio.

'Miriam passed beneath the deep portal of the palace, and turning to the left, began to mount flight after flight of a staircase, which for the loftiness of its aspiration, was worthy to be Jacob's ladder, or, at all events, the staircase of the Tower of Babel. The city bustle, which is heard even in Rome, the rumble of wheels over the uncomfortable paving-stones, the harsh cries reechoing in the high and narrow streets, grew faint and died away, as the turmoil of the world will always die, if we set our faces to climb heavenward. Higher, and higher still, and now, glancing through the successive windows that threw in their narrow light upon the stairs, her view stretched across the roofs of the city, unimpeded even by the stateliest palaces. Only the domes of the churches ascend into this airy region, and hold up their golden crosses on a level with her eye, except that, out of the very heart of Rome, the column of Antoninus thrusts itself upward, with St Paul upon its summit, the sole human form that seems to have kept her company.'

Jacob's ladder, the Tower of Babel, heaven-aspiring staircases, church domes and their crosses, and a statue of St Paul, are all introduced simply for the purpose of shedding their radiance on Hilda. That there can be no mistake about the application,

Hawthorne makes Miriam say to Hilda almost immediately after the above paragraph: "You breathe sweet air, above all the evil scents of Rome, and even so, in your maiden elevation, you dwell above our vanities and passions, our moral dust and mud, with the doves and the angels for your nearest neighbors. I should not wonder if the Catholics were to make a saint of you, like your namesake of old." Of course the 'elevation' is significant, lifting Hilda above commonness, just as it does Milly in her Venetian palace in the following passage:

"The romance for her yet once more, would be to sit there for ever, through all her time, as in a fortress, and the idea became an image of never going down, of remaining aloft in the divine, dustless air, where she would hear but the plash of water against stone. The great floor on which they moved was at an altitude, and this prompted the rueful fancy: "Ah, not to go down—never, never to go down!" she strangely sighed to her friend.

"But why shouldn't you," he asked, "with that tremendous old staircase in your court? There ought of course always to be people at top and bottom, in Veronese costumes, to watch you do it!"

James's Dove, carrying as she does the title of 'heir of all the ages', benefits by the reference to the Veronese costumes in the same way that Hawthorne's Dove benefits by the numerous references to religious objects surrounding her studio, and by so many people calling her a Catholic saint. Apart from the central Dove symbol, which becomes a structural device in both novels, and apart from the manner in which the novelists build up their heroines from the outside, there are other fainter echoes of Hawthorne in *The Wings*. In view of James's great admiration for the scene in which Hilda confesses herself in St. Peter's, Milly's speech to Kate Croy on leaving Sir Luke Strett's office after her first interview seems particularly pointed: "I feel—I can't otherwise describe it—as if I had been, on my knees, to the priest. I've confessed and I've been absolved. It has been lifted off." A more evasive, but larger and more important resemblance, exists in the situations of the two girls themselves—the similarity of their natures being revealed under the pressure of a moral affliction not their own. Both Hilda and Milly are incorruptibly pure—indeed, positively purifying in their effect on others. (Hilda 'purified the objects of her regard by the mere act of turning such spotless eyes on them', while Milly, as Kate Croy affirms in the end, has taken both Densher and herself under her wings, and Densher at least is sanctified by that token.) Hilda loses her innocence by proxy, as it were, when she sees her friends commit a crime, and while James is never quite clear as to how much Milly has guessed about the extent of Kate's treachery, the presumption may safely be that she has guessed literally *everything*. At any rate, it kills her, just as Hilda's knowledge of Miriam's guilt induces a psychological crisis.



of the utmost gravity Both the Doves are personally stainless, but the guilt of others is unbearable to them, they are both incapable of submitting to the profane touch of the world, or of taking the shock of another's evil If one now glances back at James's comments on Hilda's character which were quoted earlier it becomes increasingly difficult not to suppose that James's attitude towards Milly must surely have found its reassuring and natively American precedent in *The Marble Faun* for if Minny Temple is the ultimate source of Milly Theale, Hawthorne's Dove yet seems to have been the only and the perfect artistic model, the fictional prototype

There are other points of approach as well The extent to which James took over Hawthorne's device of endowing ancient portraits with extraordinary resemblances to the living has been frequently enough noted by other critics There are no less than four distinct resemblances of this nature remarked on in *The Marble Faun*, and they are introduced to ends not unlike that which James had in view when Lord Mark shows Milly the Bronzino which her own features resemble But the only value of items like this is that they understudy the central and important relation that exists between the Doves To sum up the traits which these two have in common, one would say that the sinlessness of them both is emphasized They are angels pure and simple In Milly's case this aspect is minimized, not only because the fashion had changed considerably, but because James wished to show her off as primarily the culminating point of the past, 'the heiress of all the ages' Whatever else his intention was in doing this, it is obvious that such a conception would reduce the tension in that ambivalent attitude to the past which James shared with Hawthorne In Milly's gold-filled, American, de-verminizing hands the past might, after all, be soaped and combed into acceptability Some similar idea must have been gnawing in Hawthorne's thought, for Hilda, the expert little copyist, is an heiress of all the ages in no mean fashion herself

'If a picture had darkened into an indistinct shadow through time and neglect, or had been injured by cleaning, or retouched by some profane hand, she seemed to possess the faculty of seeing it in its pristine glory The copy would come from her hands with what the beholder felt must be the light which the old master had left upon the original in bestowing his final and most ethereal touch In some instances even (at least, so those believed who most appreciated Hilda's power and sensibility) she had been enabled to execute what the old master had conceived in his imagination, but had not so perfectly succeeded in putting upon canvas, a result surely not impossible when such depth of sympathy as she possessed was assisted by the delicate skill and accuracy of her slender hand In such cases the girl was but the finer instrument, a more exquisitely effective piece of mechanism, by the help of which the spirit of some great departed painter now first achieved his ideal, centuries after his own earthly hand, that other tool, had turned to dust'

Obviously both the girls are out to improve the past, but in comparison with Milly's regal ability to buy it up, this mode of recapture seems comparatively subtle. Point by point the notes arrange themselves, and in the end the attributes of the Doves total up to very nearly the same figure. Milly's 'Princess' equates with Hilda's 'Saint', and both girls have a treasure of gilt-edged metaphors deposited in their names enabling them to draw lavishly on dividends that neither one of them has done much to earn in her respective novel. It would seem that James had been 'taken in' by Hilda in a way he hadn't been 'taken in' by Priscilla and Zenobia when he wrote *The Bostonians*, and that the earlier James was capable of profiting in a sharper manner from Hawthorne's art than was the case later on.

I have emphasized the relation between Milly Theale and Minny Temple up to now because it seemed to personalize James's conception of Milly's character in a critically pertinent way. Such commemorative intentions on the part of a writer are frequently inhibiting, and something very similar may have contributed in Hawthorne's case to the failure of Hilda. We know that Hawthorne was in the habit of addressing Mrs. Hawthorne, in his letters to her, as his 'Dove', and the particular kind of moral effulgence that adorns Hilda is the sort of thing against which one must be braced constantly in Mrs. Hawthorne's letters. But Milly has to be viewed in a deeper perspective than this, and I bear in mind the analysis of her character and function that Mr. Quentin Anderson has offered in his extraordinary and valuable essay, 'Henry James and the New Jerusalem'.<sup>2</sup> It will be recalled that Mr. Anderson, examining the relation between the novels of James and his father's psychology and theology, discovered in the son's work, and particularly in the three late novels, a symbolic presentation of the elder James's doctrines—and to such an extent that these novels show in something of the fashion of fictionalized moralities. From the viewpoint of James's intention Mr. Anderson can be extremely convincing, and not least so in his analysis of *The Wings of the Dove* where Milly, the American girl, is shown to be the 'representative of divine love', redeeming mankind in the person of Merton Densher from the constrictive and appropriate love which is an inversion of the Divinity immanent in men. The rescue is effected in terms of the perfect selflessness of Milly's love as contrasted with the acquisitive instincts on which Kate Croy's love, which is merely the love of phenomenal appearances, is based. Perhaps I owe Mr. Anderson an apology for so brutalizing his meaning in this thumbnail paraphrase of a fragment of his total argument, but he has spoken for himself in the pages of this quarterly, and therefore most *Scrutiny* readers will already be familiar with the force of his case. Accepting this interpretation as more or less correct insofar as the meaning of *The Wings of the Dove* goes, what I wish to suggest is that the novelist capable of building such a construct would almost inevitably have found a

<sup>2</sup>*The Kenyon Review*, Autumn, 1946

treasure of suggestiveness in *The Marble Faun*. Although it will necessitate something like a recapitulation of points already made, I should like to consider here the relation between Hilda and Milly from the point of view of Mr. Anderson's analysis of *The Wings*. To do so has the double effect for me at any rate of adding its own note of persuasion to an already highly convincing case—there was, I conclude, the incipience of something just this outlandish long hanging in the American air—and it helps to reveal a weakness in Milly, an inherited taint, that was something more than a matter of blood or lungs.

*The Marble Faun* is unmistakably, but a little awkwardly, an allegory on the Fall of Man. Donatello, allegedly the descendant of a faun who, in some antique and guiltless age is said to have fallen in love with a daughter of the Monte Beni family and founded a line, appears to have inherited not only some of the physical characteristics of his remote ancestor but also the profound Golden Age innocence of the founding faun. He falls in love with Miriam, a member of the Roman art colony, a beautiful girl who bears some secret guilt with her. It is important to note that Miriam is wholly a European product with high family connections in the Papal government hunted at. The nature of her crime is carefully concealed, but it is clearly part of the texture of the institutionalized and crumbling un-American past that Hawthorne could not help being troubled by. This fact is made unmistakably clear when Miriam's partner in crime (the nature of which Hawthorne prudishly conceals) is revealed to have been a Capuchin monk. Hawthorne obviously chose the Capuchins because of the famous cemetery of the Cappuccini in Rome where the skeletons of the decomposed friars are on view—a setting that gave him an opportunity to be as explicit as a New Englander could wish about what he thought of the bones of the past. Miriam uses Donatello's love for her to involve him in her own guilt, and from that moment he loses his original innocence and enters a life of endless penance. Now the action and tragedy is centred in these two Europeans, but on the outskirts of that action we have the two Americans, Kenyon the sculptor and Hilda the copyist keenly aware of the good vibrations from the past, especially as these are transmissible through art objects but immune to any of those malign influences that have corrupted Miriam and Donatello. Hilda's function is to act as a kind of symbol of absolute good—so absolute, in fact, that she is essentially out of relation with any of the 'fallen' characters except insofar as the very rational Kenyon is able to make an occasional practical application of her highfalutin' morality to the lowly estate of the merely human characters in the story. I say 'merely human' with a sense of how more-than-human Hawthorne seems to wish Hilda, for the final and cumulative effect, to appear. She differs from Miriam not so much in not having fallen, but most radically in her practical inability to fall. Kenyon, for example, says of Hilda

' Her womanhood is of the ethereal type, and incompatible with any shadow of darkness or evil'

' "You are right" rejoined Miriam, "there are women of that ethereal type as you term it, and Hilda is one of them. She would die of her first wrong-doing—supposing for a moment that she could be capable of doing wrong,"'

Read in the full context of the novel, which is literally overgrown with similar lush specimens, such compliments cannot be interpreted as figurative. In the end the intention seems to be that they should literally apply, and though for convention's sake Hilda is content to allow that she is only, even weakly, human, she never seems wholly convinced of the fact. On her first meeting with Miriam after learning of the latter's guilt, she immediately rejects her friendship in these terms

' If I were one of God's angels with a nature incapable of stain, and garments that never could be spotted, I would keep ever at your side, and try to lead you upward. But I am a poor, lonely girl, whom God has set here in an evil world, and given her only a white robe, and bid her wear it back to Him, as white as when she put it on. Your powerful magnetism would be too much for me. The pure, white atmosphere, in which I try to discern what things are good and true, would be discolored. And, therefore, Miriam, before it is too late, I mean to put faith in this awful heart-quake, which warns me henceforth to avoid you'

Miriam greedily seizes this occasion for again asserting her belief in Hilda's super-human virtue. 'You have no sin, nor any conception of what it is, and therefore you are so terribly severe! As an angel you are not amiss, but as a human creature, and a woman among earthly men and women, you need a sin to soften you'. Hilda shows her willingness to accept this evaluation of herself, and describes the only kind of universe she would find tolerable

' "While there is a single guilty person in the universe, each innocent one must feel his innocence tortured by that guilt. Your deed, Miriam, has darkened the whole sky!"'

' Poor Hilda turned from her unhappy friend, and, sinking on her knees in a corner of the chamber, could not be prevailed upon to utter another word. And Miriam, with a long regard from the threshold, bade farewell to this doves' nest, this one little nook of pure thoughts and innocent enthusiasms, into which she had brought such trouble. Every crime destroys more Edens than our own'

I have said that the masculine counterpart of Hilda is the American, Kenyon. He participates in the same exalted sentiments, but being 'practical' he can communicate them to the Europeans in a way that is denied to the more exquisite and ethereal American Dove. Knowing that Donatello and Miriam are

both involved in the same guilt he suggests a union to them for the sake of mutual encouragement in penance His manner of speech relates him to Hilda very closely

‘‘Not for earthly bliss, therefore’’, said Kenyon ‘but for mutual elevation, and encouragement towards a severe and painful life, you take each other’s hands And if out of toil sacrifice prayer penitence and earnest effort towards right things, there comes at length a sombre and thoughtful happiness, taste it, and thank Heaven!’

But Kenyon is not the incorruptible fountain of grace that Hilda is He is capable of asking ‘Did Adam fall that we might ultimately rise to a far loftier paradise than his?’ The impeccable Hilda, whose moral theology is unerring replies

‘Oh hush! This is terrible, and I could weep for you, if you indeed believe it Do not you perceive what a mockery your creed makes, not only of all religious sentiments but of moral law’ and how it annuls and obliterates whatever precepts of Heaven are written deepest within us? You have shocked me beyond words!’

After this he can only propose marriage, seeing in such a union an unbeatable team

‘the mind wanders wild and wide, and, so lonely as I live and work, I have neither pole star above nor light of cottage windows here below, to bring me home Were you my guide, my counsellor, my inmost friend, with that white wisdom which clothes you as a celestial garment, all would go well O Hilda, guide me home!’

‘Home’ to such a pair as this can only mean America, and they postpone their return no longer, for Hawthorne has made it clear all along that their moral tone and achievement has its specific national origin, and can only be permanently sustained in the pure New England air

I have offered these quotations because they illustrate the extent to which the aura of exaltedness that surrounds Hilda is not meant to be one simply of atmosphere or effect, but is meant to cut out a solid moral reality Naturally, on such a showing Hilda is a dismal failure artistically The moral reality that she is supposed to embody, although fuzzily conceived, is clearly enough stated to reveal its radical falseness It has no counterpart in reality It is as impossible in the world of imagination as it is in life By the time Hawthorne got around to creating Hilda he was irrevocably ruined as an artist And yet we have James’s own words describing the intensity of his admiration It was Hilda that he particularly liked

Assuming that Mr Anderson’s analysis of *The Wings of the Dove* is essentially correct, it is easy to see what James must have

discovered—or thought he discovered—in Hawthorne's novel, even as early as the *Life* of 1879. The guilt of the past so largely European, is revealed in all its musty squalor by the contrasting purity of a young girl who being an American, has no part in that heritage of crime and misery that belongs to the Old World. This girl is a saint (we have everybody's word for it) who purifies by her mere presence. Hawthorne erred of course, by making her apotheosis so complete that no one except Kenyon, who obviously doesn't need it, can rise to the rarefied levels where her regenerative influence might be effective. But the sanctifying force that is implicit in the Dove image is to be taken just as seriously in Hilda's case as it is in Milly's. She has a mystic sympathy with everything good in the past, particularly when this good is communicable through art objects, but she is so sensitive to evil that the mere presence of a guilty person in the universe is terrible torture to her. The reason of her existence seems to be to set an impossible example in moral perfection unattainable by ordinary and non-American mortals. Everybody defers to Hilda in the same way that everybody defers to Milly, and if James is extremely diffident about approaching Milly except by indirection, we can be grateful to Hawthorne for revealing something of what James might have seen if he had ever got around to giving Milly a straight, hard look. It wasn't one can't help suspecting, altogether a matter of technical preoccupation that made James deem it wise to cultivate the oblique glance in Milly's direction. Unlike Hilda, Milly is certainly not repulsive, although she takes other people's exaggerated opinions of her worth with irritating complacency. She has, at any rate, a civilized manner. But the girls are sisters under the symbol, and it is a symbol that fails to convince one that its value is valid in either novel. James beautifully refurbished its feathers for a far better showing than it had had in *The Marble Faun* (parts of *The Wings*—those parts that don't deal with Milly—are among James's finest work), but it still remained a little stuffed Dove that 'the restless analyst' had more or less filched from Hawthorne's effects, and it was nothing less than cruel in James to expect a bird like that instead of a sprig, to carry in its delicate beak the tremendous cedar of meaning that Mr. Anderson has revealed to us.

MARIUS BEWLEY

## ON THE TRAGEDY OF ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA

MR DANBY'S essay on *Antony and Cleopatra* printed in the last number of this journal, was refreshing. I had for a long time felt that most criticism seriously distorts the play even critics who as a rule are far enough from finding in Shakespeare an exalted reflection of their own notions, who show in fact that they are capable of responding to Shakespeare's clear-sighted moral realism, seem unable to resist the temptation to romanticize this play. Mr Danby, to my mind, corrected a firmly established misreading. If, following in his footsteps, I offer some further comments, it is not because of any disagreement with the general tenour of his essay, so far as I understand it, but because it seems to me that the tragedy is more clearly defined than appears in his account. I cannot in fact make clear to myself what he intends by 'the reality behind the play', the metaphysical conclusions in terms of a Shakespearean dialectic of contraries elude my grasp, and I find myself wanting to express my sense of the play's sharper and more definite impact on the mind. Anyone who bothers to read both accounts will see that a substantial measure of agreement with Mr Danby is implied in my own.

The central theme of *The Tragedy of Antony and Cleopatra* is the relationship of Antony and Cleopatra. That relationship is evoked and defined with a variety of resources that has behind it almost the whole of Shakespeare's working lifetime. Different and apparently irreconcilable evaluations are explicit in commentary and implicit in direct speech and action as we move from point to point in the play our sympathy changes direction, and as a result of recurrent shifts of the emotional current, 'judgment' becomes more complex. No single statement that we are given concerning the central love-relationship or the individual lovers can be taken as summing up what the play as a whole has to offer, and it is a task of no little difficulty (though not, for the reader of Shakespeare, an unfamiliar one) to expose oneself to the whole experience rather than to some selected part of it. Now it is a significant fact that those who most glorify the passion of the lovers draw largely on the great speeches of Cleopatra just before her death. And although it may be argued that these great utterances represent a culmination or transcendence of what has gone before, the impression I always receive is that the part has been taken for the whole and the total meaning thereby obscured. If we are to understand these last scenes fully, and with them the nature and meaning of the whole tragedy, we must read them with a present consciousness of *all* that has preceded them.

Those who see the play as a triumphant assertion of the positive value of the love of Antony and Cleopatra speak of the energy expressing itself in and through that passion. Middleton Murry, invoking Blake, sees the play in terms of a conflict between Reason and Energy, and D. A. Traversi speaks of the transcendent justification of passion in terms of emotional value and vitality. 'Vitality,' of course, in dealing with this play, is a word one can hardly avoid. But even though one readily agrees that any kind of vitality in love at once establishes a qualitative difference from the mean and indistinct fantasys of lust, there are further important distinctions to be made. From the very opening of the play we have been made aware of something practised in the coquetry, the retreats, skirmishes and encounters. In the great central scenes—with a deliberate avoidance of glamour—the dramatist seems insistently to demand that we question ourselves about the nature and conditions of the energy which the lovers release in each other.

The sequence of scenes between Actum and the final defeat of Antony<sup>1</sup> opens, as Granville Barker remarked with a suggestion of dry and brittle comedy. In an apparent abeyance of feeling the lovers are more or less pushed into each other's arms by their respective followers, and there is something of inert resignation ('Love, I am full of lead. Some wine, within there. ') in the reconciliation that follows. Feeling does not well up in Antony until he discovers Cæsar's messenger kissing Cleopatra's hand. It is a perverse violence of cruelty—'Whip him, fellow, Till, like a boy, you see him cringe his face—that goads him into a semblance of energy, and it is in the backwash of this emotion that Cleopatra can humour him until she is, as it were again present to him. Shakespeare, however, leaves us in no doubt about the overwrought nature of Antony's feelings. The resolution that issues from the reconciliation

—I will be treble-sinew'd, hearted, breathed,  
And fight maliciously—

is in much the same key as his earlier angry ranting,—

O that I were  
Upon the hill of Basan to outroar  
The horned herd!

Now, according to Cleopatra, 'my lord is Antony again', but the very look of him is given us by Enobarbus—'Now he'll outstare the lightning'

Antony, in short, is galvanized into feeling, there is no true access of life and energy. And the significance of this is that we know that what we have to do with is an emphatic variation of a familiar pattern. Looking back, we can recall how often this love has seemed to thrive on emotional stimulants. They were necessary

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<sup>1</sup>Act III, scene xi to Act IV, scene xii, in the Arden edition they have never, I think, had critical justice done them



for much the same reason as the feasts and wine<sup>2</sup> For the continued references to feasting—and it is not only Cæsar and his dry Romans who emphasize the Alexandrian consumption of food and drink—are not simply a means of intensifying the imagery of tasting and savouring that is a constant accompaniment of the love theme They serve to bring out the element of repetition and monotony in a passion which, centring on itself, is self-consuming, leading ultimately to what Antony himself, in a most pregnant phrase, names as 'the heart of loss' Indeed, the speech in which this phrase occurs (IV, vii) is one of the pivotal things in the play In its evocation of an appalled sense of insubstantiality it ranks with Macbeth's,

My thought, whose murder yet is but fantastical,  
Shakes so my single state of man, that function  
Is smother'd in surmise, and nothing is,  
But what is not

With this difference that whereas Macbeth is, as it were, reaching forward to a region 'where nothing is but what is not', Antony is driven to recognize the element of unreality and enchantment in what he had thought was solid and enduring The speech has a superb sensuous reality that is simultaneously felt as discandying or melting, until the curious flicker of the double vision—both intensified and explained by the recurrent theme of 'Egyptian' magic and gipsy-like double-dealing—is resolved in the naked vision

Betray'd I am  
O this false soul of Egypt! this grave charm,—  
Whose eye beck'd forth my wars, and call'd them home,  
Whose bosom was my crownnet, my chief end,—  
Like a right gipsy, hath, at fast and loose,  
Beguiled me to the very heart of loss

Unless we are intoxicated by what is said about Cleopatra by her admirers, notably by Enobarbus, this seems to me a reading that is forced upon us by the play itself It is a reading in which I am confirmed by Mr Danby Yet it is certainly not the whole story The vitality of the poetry is not *only* the vitality of the creating mind, disengaged, as it were, from what it evokes with such clear-sighted realism, and the effect on the reader or spectator is not *only* that of watching the inevitable working out of a self-consuming passion Passages that compel a 'positive' response to the central love relationship may be far fewer than the usual romantic accounts of the play suggest, but they are certainly there,—and not only, as Mr Danby suggests, when the lovers are separated or about to part —

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<sup>2</sup>It is entirely in keeping that, after the reconciliation, when Antony 'is Antony again', he calls for 'one other gaudy night fill our bowls once more'

when you sued staying,  
 Then was the time for words no going then,  
 Eternity was in our lips and eyes,  
 Bliss in our brows' bent, none our parts so poor,  
 But was a race of heaven

The description of Cleopatra by Enobarbus (to an audience—it is a characteristic touch—a little too eager for news from Egypt) has a freshness and energy counteracting its suggestions of a deliberate sensuousness, and the famous Cydnus passage modulates easily into a racy buoyancy —

The city cast  
 Her people out upon her, and Antony,  
 Enthroned i' the market-place, did sit alone,  
 Whistling to the air, which, but for vacancy,  
 Had gone to gaze on Cleopatra too  
 And made a gap in nature

And it is not only a matter of isolated passages or small touches that compel our sympathy or admiration the whole poetry of 'Egypt'—in marked contrast to the 'Roman' poetry of buildings and substantial *things*—evokes a world of natural forces within which Antony and Cleopatra have their being

This, then, is what the play asks of us to be true to both these impressions of the presented relationship. On the one hand, a closed circle of passion, of which the boasted 'variety' is, in the end, entirely dependent on the application of fresh stimulants, on the other hand, natural force and fertility and spontaneous human feeling, all apparently inextricably tied ('this knot intricate') with passions directed to death. It is this paradox which is expressed in the metaphysical conceit of 'heart of loss'

Regarded in this way the consummation of the tragedy is seen to be perfect, and perfectly in keeping. As I have said, Cleopatra's lament over the dying Antony, her later evocation of his greatness and bounty, have weighed too heavily in the impression that many people seem to take from the play as a whole. That these things are great poetry goes without saying. But the almost unbearable pathos of the last scenes, as Mr. Danby rightly insists, is for what has *not* in fact been realized.

*Cleopatra* For his bounty,  
 There was no winter in't, an autumn 'twas  
 That grew the more by reaping his delights  
 Were dolphin-like, they show'd his back above  
 The element they lived in in his livery  
 Walk'd crowns and crownets, realms and islands were  
 As plates dropp'd from his pocket

*Dolabella* Cleopatra!  
*Cleopatra* Think you there was, or might be, such a man  
 As thus I dreamt of?

*Dolabella*

Gentle madam, no

*Cleopatra*

You lie up to the hearing of the gods  
 But if there be nor ever were, one such  
 It's past the size of dreaming nature wants stuff  
 To vie -trange foims with fancy, yet, to imagine  
 An Antony, were nature's piece gainst fancy,  
 Condemning shadows quite

The figure that Cleopatra evokes may not be fancy,—the poetry invests it with a substantial reality, but it is not the Antony that the play has given us, it is something disengaged from, or glimpsed through, that Antony. Nor should the power and beauty of Cleopatra's last great speech obscure the continued presence of something self-deceiving and unreal. She may speak of the baby at her breast that sucks the nurse asleep, but it is not, after all, a baby—new life, it is simply death.

It is, of course one of the signs of a great writer that he can afford to evoke sympathy or even admiration for what, in his final judgment, is discarded or condemned. In *Antony and Cleopatra* the sense of potentiality in life's untutored energies is pushed to its limit, and Shakespeare gives the maximum weight to an experience that is finally 'placed'. If we do not feel both the vitality and the sham vitality, both the variety and the monotony, both the impulse towards life and the impulse towards death, we are missing the full experience of the play.<sup>3</sup> It is perhaps this that makes the tragedy so sombre in its realism, so little comforting to the romantic imagination. For Shakespeare has chosen as his tragic theme the impulse that man perhaps most readily associates with a heightened sense of life and fulfilment—fulfilment not only in continued fertility and the perpetuation of life ('the sun that quickens Nilus' slime') but in the living present ('Eternity was in our lips and eyes'). It has not been part of my purpose to explore the range and depth of the poetry in which the theme of vitality twinned with frustration, of force that entangles itself with strength, is expressed, but it is of course, the range and depth of the poetry that make Antony and Cleopatra into universal figures. At the superb close, Cleopatra—both empress and lass unparalleled—is an incarnation of sexual passion, of those primeval energies that are both necessary and destructive, that insistently demand fulfilment in their own terms, and, by insisting on their own terms, thwart the fulfilment that they seek. The scene is rich in overtones, and I do not think that it is a forced interpretation that hears in the not-so-nonsensical warnings

<sup>3</sup>As so often with Shakespeare, the central theme is reflected in minute peculiarities of style. The paradox at the heart of the play is kept before us in a succession of paradoxical phrases: 'what they undid, did', 'did make defect perfection', 'now all labour Mars what it does, yea, very force entangles Itself with strength', 'strong toil of grace'. Compare also, 'The long day's work is done' and 'The bright day is done'.

of the rural fellow with his serpent an echo from the traditional Christian myth. But this is only an echo, not a key, and the tragedy is explained—so far as it needs explanation—entirely in terms of directly presented experience. 'There is no evil impulse', says Martin Buber, 'but that which is separated from the whole being'. It is precisely this that *The Tragedy of Antony and Cleopatra* reveals.<sup>4</sup>

L. C. KNIGHTS

## CORRESPONDENCE

To the Editor of *Scrutiny*

DEAR SIR,

May I crave the privilege of your space for a protest? For some years I have been aware of a slight diffidence, or reserve, in certain quarters in regard to the placing of my Shakespearean investigations within the contemporary context. Of that, by itself, it is perhaps not for me to complain. But when the (possibly unconscious) use of my findings is accompanied by either a careful reference to subsequent writers or by an implication, direct or indirect, that my own work is negligible, a mild rejoinder may be forgiven.

My friend Mr. John Danby's essay on *Antony and Cleopatra*, called 'The Shakespearean Dialectic' in *Scrutiny* (September, 1949, pp. 196-213) is a case in point. An important part of its substance has already appeared in my two long essays in *The Imperial Theme* (1931, pp. 198-326), which he does not refer to, yet clearly, by implication, dismisses. Here are some central correspondences, those from my book italicized for clarity —

The core of Mr. Danby's article concerns 'something deliquescent' (*i.e.* melting) 'in the reality behind the play', a certain 'deliquescent reality at the heart of the play' which 'incarnates itself' in the hero and heroine (198, 201). Compare from *Imperial Theme* 'we should observe especially the idea of "melting", "dissolving"—it is a crucial theme in the play' (236),

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<sup>4</sup>I do not think there is any need to invoke, as Mr. Danby does, 'a missing third term'. But if we look from the play to Shakespeare's achievement as a whole, it is not Cordelia that I should invoke, but Perdita: 'Fie, wrangling queen!' says Antony,

Whom every thing becomes, to chide, to laugh,  
To weep

The 'everything' is curiously limited. In Florizel's lovely panegyric, 'What you do, sweet, still betters what is done', where dancing, praying, and the performance of household tasks are brought into living relationship with the impersonal movement of the sea, there is essential variety.

together with the *numerous examples* offered (229-232-9). Again, 'It is the logic of a peculiarly Shakespearean dialectic. Opposites are juxtaposed, mingled, married' this is part of 'the central process of the play' (199). Compare, *So too, in the story, is element everywhere blended, mated, with element. Now we feel the pressure of our mating references throughout, the constant stress on melting, dissolving, mingling*' (261-2). After asserting that 'character issues from a mutable and ambiguous flux of things, Mr Danby quotes Antony's speech on cloud-formations which 'can be generalised to cover the whole play' (198). 'Flux, *Imperial Theme* likewise offers Antony's cloud-speech as an example, observing 'He would end these swift changes from unreality to unreality by the last alternation from the flux of life to the flux of death' (284). With 'The swinging ambivalences—the alternatives and ambiguities constantly proposed to choice—the speed and oscillation' (201) compare 'Antony's swift oscillations from despair to reckless courage from loathing to love 'now our oscillation is both fast and violent', 'the sweep of their oscillations getting wider and faster 'a strange see-saw motion of the spirit, an oscillating tendency, back and forth a "varying"'' (277, 281, 287, 265). 'The law is general—the tidal swing of the opposites on which all things balance on a motion that rots them away', 'The "varying tide" by which everything in the play is moved' (205, 207). 'Varying' again. Compare 'The persons seem unevenly balanced, swaying first one side then the other', 'this wavering, this ebbing and flowing, of love's vision, 'this wavering ebb and flow of the spirit a shifting, varying psychology' 'like a boat tossing idly on a vast sea' (265, 274-5, 280). After these passages both 'Shakespearean Dialectic' and *Imperial Theme* refer to both (i) the 'vagabond flag' passage and (ii) 'the swan's down-feather' passage ('Shakespearean Dialectic' 207, *Imperial Theme* 274). Of Pompey's speech on shipboard, 'Even soldierly honour is rooted in the ambiguous' (205) corresponds to 'There is (here) a curious blending of sophistry and honour' (266). Of people loved after death, though not before, compare 'Shakespearean Dialectic' 203-5 with *Imperial Theme* 287-8 (and elsewhere). Indeed, Mr Danby's 'ambivalence that runs through everything in the play' (200) was very fully discussed in *The Imperial Theme* in relation to a psychology 'varying between positive and negative, alternately charged with interchanging significance' (288-9). This 'dialectic' was my own main instrument of analysis, whether of persons or plot.

Is it unreasonable to suggest that some reference should have appeared to my essays? That Mr Danby's final reaction is less positive than mine, that he feels, in spite of the evidence to the contrary, that the various 'minglings' end in an ultimate dissolution is not to the point. Besides, he misunderstands 'Cleopatra', he says with clear reference to, among others my own work, 'has been loved by recent commentators not wisely but too well', 'recent criticism has seen the play as the epiphany of the soldier in the

lover, and the reassurance of all concerned that death is not the end' He refers to a 'sentimental reaction' in the lovers' favour (208, 210, 211) My second essay emphasized continually the sordid realism, in parts, of Shakespeare's treatment, noting in Cleopatra an *inscrutably evil callousness an utterly selfish streak of bottomless evil* (304) 'Cleopatra', says Mr Danby, 'is Eve and Woman She is also Circe (209) Exactly *Cleopatra is not one, but all woman She is Dido, or Milton's Eve with Eve's primal evil* (207, 304), she is also *Jezebel, Medusa, Dahlia* (309), and *Lady Macbeth* (290, 301) Mr Danby follows me in observing that she dies partly to save herself The good I found in Cleopatra was a metaphysical, not a moral, good, a good of *totality* (310) Mr Danby's failure to react to the positive emphasis of Act V is marked by his not facing Cleopatra's final transcending of 'deliquescence' and fluidly in I am marble constant, now the fleeting moon no planet is of mine, nor her dream, nor the fig-vendor's overtones of meaning (*Imperial Theme*, 313-8), nor Husband, I come Through writing, it seems, as a Christian apologist, Mr Danby is significantly forced back on regarding this peculiarly humanistic work, in Mr Eliot's opinion (in his essay on *Hamlet*) one of Shakespeare's two 'most assured artistic successes, as merely 'a technical *tour de force* which Shakespeare enjoyed for its own sake' (212)

In his most important study *Shakespeare's Doctrine of Nature* (1949) Mr Danby mainly follows *The Wheel of Fire* and *The Shakespearean Tempest* though without reference in regard to his central substances (i) the two sorts of nature in *King Lear*, (ii) Lear, Edmund and Cordelia as typifying different strata of human development, and (iii) the symbolic thunder These he relates—and I do not wish to deny the brilliance and value of his expansion—to theological issues, while noting, with obvious reference to such work as mine 'Atomization since Bradley has gone even further Shakespeare's story has been broken down into separate and jarring bits 'themes', 'world-views', 'ideas', even 'images' The co-ordinating principle of story has been overlooked' (203) This 'atomization' he has nevertheless found extremely useful Not only is his whole book based on it, but during the course of his argument he devotes (no doubt quite unconsciously) three pages (157-160) to a most accurate indeed model précis of my interpretation of *Troilus and Cressida* in *The Wheel of Fire* (The Trojans are chivalrous idealists, the Greeks practical realists', Troilus and Hector as representatives respectively of faith and reason, etc)

Mr D A Traversi's recent essay on *The Tempest (Scrutiny*, June, 1949) follows in general outline the reading of Colin Still and in detail (e.g. the tempest-symbol, the Antonio and Sebastian plot as recapitulating earlier plays, Prospero compared as controller of the action with Duke Vincentio, etc) my own treatment in *The Crown of Life* (1947), which was nevertheless recently dismissed in your pages as at the best 'not negligible', with the rider that I must probably be content to find my influence indirect and unacknow-

ledged I do not myself see the necessity. With Mr Traversi, I have no grumble, one cannot be always acknowledging, but there are limits—and they are reached when those influenced, to quote an amusing reviewer of *The Crown of Life*, crib with one hand what they crab with the other!

Though no associate of the critical school of *Scrutiny*, I can respect it, and I have cause to be grateful for its notice in the past, and to honour its normal regard to the statement of obligations. It is neither *Scrutiny*, nor Mr Danby, with whom I am at odds. I am sure no hostility is intended. What worries me is rather a certain 'climate of opinion'. I have recently had cause to register by the courtesy of the editors concerned, not dissimilar protests in *The Review of English Studies* (Oct. 1946) and *The Kenyon Review* (Winter, 1949). My present complaint is one of many.

A recent broadcast by Mr J Isaacs, called 'New Light on Shakespeare' and claiming to be an expert assessment of critical innovations in our time (*The Listener*, 7 July, 1949), while noting the imagistic investigations of Prof Spurgeon and according high praise to the more 'organic approach' of Dr Clemen, of my own work made no mention whatsoever. Again, *Shakespeare Survey II* contains an excellent article, 'The Renaissance Background of *Measure for Measure*' by Miss Elizabeth Marie Pope, relating the exact substance and many of the quotations of my essay 'Measure for Measure and the Gospels' in *The Wheel of Fire* to contemporary religious thought, rather in the manner of Mr Danby on *King Lear*. She notes the significance of the play's title, quoting other New Testament reminders (66), the Duke as a failure in secular authority by reason of his merciful nature (76), Angelo as at a loss, *in contrast to the Duke's self-knowledge*, before his own uprising instincts (76), the Duke as 'moving through so much of the action like an embodied Providence', a person 'with curiously allegorical overtones' (71), like God (80), the importance and nature of the final forgiveness of Angelo by (i) Mariana and (ii) Isabella (79), the play's conclusion in general as a 'deliberate effort' towards a profoundly merciful, yet patterned, justice (79-80), indeed, the whole work as a wrestling with problems of 'judgment, tolerance, mercy, retaliation in kind and Christian forgiveness as they appear to the holder of public office' (75). All this is presented without specific references, though she observes the comments on Shakespeare's Christian treatment here of law, authority, justice and mercy by 'such scholars as Roy Battenhouse, C J Sisson, and R W Chambers' (66), alluding to work that appeared, respectively, in 1946, 1934, and 1937, while making no indication whatsoever concerning the primary and only inclusive source in *The Wheel of Fire*, 1930, of which she might surely be expected to know since Dr Battenhouse himself gave full and proper references.<sup>1</sup> I have been

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<sup>1</sup>I have observed that Prof R W Chambers' essay is regularly cited for ideas that appeared earlier and with greater elaboration in *Measure for Measure and the Gospels*'

told that references to my own work are sometimes avoided in academic and critical circles for reasons of 'policy', exactly why, I cannot say. I hope this is wrong, and shall be only too happy to be assured of it.

It would be, no doubt, very dignified to keep silent, but where the favour of publishers—the true patrons of our time—is needed and the fight for reprints arduous the climate of opinion counts. However, let me end on a less personal note. I am fighting for something which *Scrutiny* might call 'romantic', for the essence of discovery, and its rights. What those earlier volumes discovered was at first often enough discounted as madness by scholar and critic as incompatible with the thought of Shakespeare's *milieu*. Now that the discoveries have become common property, a new 'thought of Shakespeare's time'—as with Dr Tillyard's studies, Mr Danby's *King Lear*, Miss Pope's *Measure for Measure*—is adjusted, wherever possible to meet them. But—and this is my final point—it was the romantic attitude and technique that discovered them and tapped the basic substances of the enduring poetry for scholar and critic to dress as they may, and as knowledge grows. I respect, and always have respected, both, in their sphere, all I ask for is an open and friendly relationship.

G WILSON KNIGHT

TO THE EDITORS OF *Scrutiny*

Dear Sirs,

There is very little I would wish to say in reply to Mr Wilson Knight's letter. I can only assure Mr Knight, quite simply, that neither my book nor my article derive from him. Both derive from that period of ferment in the late '20's and early '30's which threw up—especially in Cambridge—quite a number of readers of Shakespeare who were beginning to read Shakespeare's plays as poems. This is something that cannot be argued, but only asserted. But I hope Mr Wilson Knight will believe me.

However, he has made his charges public, and the public in these matters is in the best position to judge. Maybe those who read his letter will look up all the passages in his work which he claims I have used, and draw their own conclusions.

Yours sincerely,

JOHN F DANBY



# COMMENTS AND REVIEWS

## L H MYERS AND THE CRITICAL FUNCTION REBUKE AND REPLY

TO THE EDITORS OF *Scrutiny*

Dear Sirs,

The chief value of *Scrutiny's* critical method is that judgments are based upon close examination of actual texts, and not upon established reputation, whether that reputation has been established by *The Times Literary Supplement* or by *Scrutiny* itself. It is therefore disturbing to find that *Scrutiny* writers are some of them falling into the habit of delivering judgment on authors in batches without even taking the trouble to specify their individual offences. To quote a sentence from Mr H A Mason (*Measure for Measure* or *Anglo American Exchanges*, *Scrutiny* March 1949) 'To fail to be impressed by Auden, Spender, Dylan Thomas, *et hoc genus omne*, and to say so in public is described as "fouling the nest"'. Can Mr Mason really think that Dylan Thomas is of the same *genus* as Auden? And if he does, are we not entitled to some illustration?

In the same number of *Scrutiny* Mr R C Churchill writes 'Apparently it has never occurred to [Dr Joad] that some people preferred, and still prefer, and for cultural-spiritual reasons, James and Conrad and Yeats to their contemporaries (roughly speaking) Shaw and Wells and Bennett, and that such people stand a better chance of appreciating Joyce, Lawrence, Forster, Owen, Thomas, Rosenberg, Pound, Eliot, Woolf, Dawson, Powys, Myers, etc'. Mr Churchill neither specifies his 'cultural-spiritual reasons', nor gives any good reason for his grouping of Joyce and Lawrence with 'Dawson, Powys, Myers, etc'.

To quote again from Mr Mason 'The foreigner does not spontaneously prefer, say, Graham Greene to L H Myers. He hears only of the former, and takes him as representative of the best the English can do in the "philosophical novelist's" line'. Here we see Mr Mason contemptuously dismissing a writer by the simple process of mentioning him in the same breath with L H Myers, whom we are invited to accept without qualification and without evidence as a touchstone of literary virtue.

Since the name of L H Myers has been mentioned twice with reverence in one number of *Scrutiny*, it may be useful to examine a passage from this author, a passage picked out from the first of his novels to hand—his *Cho*, published by Penguin Books. Here is his description of a man on his deathbed taking a last farewell of his wife.

'He went on speaking, but with frequent lapses into silence. She could see that he was quite at his ease. Presently he threw

out "Death saves one, you know, from a multitude of follies" and his smile explained well enough what he meant

"Marion", he said a little later, "I doubt whether you realise how much you have been in my thoughts during the twenty-odd years that I've known you. Your vitality, your courage, your never-failing charm." His voice died away, but she just caught the words "an inborn gallantry of character"

"To this again she said nothing. He should never know that his tribute of praise fell upon a heart bitter with despair. Her courage! Good God! where was her courage now? Little did he realise that she was passing through a spiritual ordeal no less severe than his. For her the hour about to strike was the hour not of bereavement only but also of renunciation. She felt—and the persuasion this time was irresistible—that her Indian summer was drawing to a close. She might have told him that he was luckier than she, for whilst he was merely passing from waking into sleep, she was slipping from Life into Death-in-Life. She was entering the last stage of a woman's existence, when she has to live unsupported by the expectation, conscious or unconscious, of a love affair."

The whole context should be studied, but perhaps this quotation is enough to show what Myers is capable of. The equating of a woman's need for erotic stimulus with the fact of an actual death is a sufficient comment on Myers' sensibility, his description of a conscious death as a "passing from waking into sleep", together with such phrases as "Your vitality, your courage, your never-failing charm" "an inborn gallantry of character" "Her courage! Good God! where was her courage now?", these sufficiently reveal the quality of the writer's perceptions and feelings.

Can this passage, in other words, be safely quoted to a foreigner as the work of an author who is to be accepted as a standard of judgment (for that after all, is what both Mr. Mason and Mr. Churchill clearly imply)? Is it not on the contrary, cheap, slick, vulgar writing? It seems to us that *Scrutiny* writers are some of them in danger of resting complacently in their own past judgments instead of continuing the strenuous task of close critical examination and revaluing, which has won them the honourable title of *scrutineers*. Could we not have more scrutiny and less casual, unsupported condemnation or reverence? Perhaps a 'Re-valuation' of 'Powys, Myers, etc.' might next be undertaken. We have no doubt that Yeats, Eliot, Joyce, and Lawrence will stand any amount of critical re-examination, but we should not be offered dogmatic assertion in the place of critical illumination, and even the less significant authors have the right to a fair trial.

C VAN HEYNINGEN

G H DURRANT

University of Natal,  
Pietermaritzburg

A journal that attempts to maintain the function of criticism must be permitted some reliance on its past work. The effective performance of the function is necessarily a long-term affair. It would hardly be possible to proceed at all if one were forbidden to assume any judgment or valuation without demonstrating it. Of course, there is always the danger of assuming too easily, of resting too much on past work, and of slipping into a licentious economy, and it is wholesome to be kept reminded of the danger by such challenges as the present.

To say this, however, is not to say that our correspondents' rebuke is wholly just. So far, indeed, as it relates to Mr Mason's '*hoc genus omne*' we are not clear what their intention is. 'Can Mr Mason' they ask, really think that Dylan Thomas is of the same *genus* as Auden?' The '*genus*—Mr Mason's intention seems to us plain enough—is of writers passing current as established major values whose reputations unjustified by any creative achievement, are matters of mere fashion and of routine acceptance. To which of the two writers mentioned do our correspondents consider the bracketing to be unfair?' The adverse criticism of Auden has been argued and illustrated in these pages more than half-a-dozen times by almost as many different reviewers (including Mr Mason). Dylan Thomas, it is true, has not had as much attention. But a critique of him appeared as recently as Summer 1946 (Vol XIV, No 1), and a book on him—though, of course, our correspondents couldn't have foreseen this—was made the occasion for a critical repondering in our last issue (Vol XVI, No 3).

The inclusion of the two poets for the given purpose in the same '*genus*' seems to us critically just, grounds have been given, and we cannot see what our correspondents find to object to. Is it that historically Auden counts a great deal more, having been a major influence, and that he may reasonably be judged to have had a more impressive talent? But these considerations do not affect Mr Mason's point, which is that, while both Auden and Thomas pass current internationally as established values, successors in the line of English poets, whatever their own differing magnitudes and kinds, of Mr Eliot, neither of them, if creative achievement establishes a man a poet, has begun to make good the claims so universally endorsed. Neither exists in the same sky as Mr Eliot for comparisons of magnitude and significance. Their reputations illustrate both the abeyance in our time of the critical function, and the power of the system that has succeeded in substituting its own solidarity-values (see Mr John Hayward's British Council booklet, *Prose Literature since 1939*, commented on in *Scrutiny*, Vol XV, No 4, p 313) for those which properly concern criticism.

The system, Mr Mason was testifying in the passage about Graham Greene and L. H. Myers to which objection has been taken, controls British cultural relations with the Continent. Our correspondents, we gather, do not so much object to the dismissal

of Graham Greene (whom we have not yet dealt with in these pages—the difficulty has been to find a reviewer prepared to spend the necessary time on him) as to the acceptance of L H Myers—the assumption that a critic in *Scrutiny* has a right to refer to him without argument as a novelist who commands a high valuation. Where Myers is in question the Editors tend to rest on the consciousness that he has had close and extended critical attention in *Scrutiny*—that he had here, in fact, the first critique (we believe) that he ever received. Challenged, we have to confess that that was fifteen years ago (June 1934, Vol III, No 1). Still, his subsequent books were reviewed in these pages and, after all, since space is limited and there are always so many new things calling for notice, may we not reasonably plead our consciousness that there was D W Harding's original critique to refer back to?

It will be in place to do some quoting from it here. Commenting on the passage from *The Cho*, and underlining some phrases in it, our correspondents say 'these sufficiently reveal the quality of the writer's perceptions and feelings'. Haven't we here, they ask, 'cheap slick, vulgar writing'? But such conclusions cannot be safely drawn without the study of context they themselves prescribe, but do not actually seem to have made. To comment on the passages as they do is like criticizing James Joyce for the cheapness and vulgarity of Gertie MacDowell's soliloquies. As Harding observes, with illustrations, 'unfortunate prose' can be found which 'for many people must be a serious obstacle to the appreciation of his work's excellence'. But before he has observed this he has discussed both the nature of Myers' interests and aims, and the difference between *The Cho* and the other books.

'*The Cho* as a whole, in spite of the significance of this theme, lacks richness and importance. Its comparative failure is closely related to a difference in the treatment of character between this book and the others, the immediate sign of the difference being that you are invited to feel a little superior to the characters here whereas in the other novels you respect them.'

As for the theme

'In all four of his novels L H Myers is concerned with the theme of individual development in a civilized society, a society in which leisure and a tradition of culture make possible the practised intelligence and sensibility which he takes to be necessary conditions of development, and in fact in *The Cho* he sees what can be said for this civilized background in the absence of any of the highly developed individuals whom he's really interested in.'

Sir James is the character who is dying in the passage that our correspondents quote. Of him Harding says

'Sir James is not presented as anything other than a rather selfish man of small elegant life. The superficiality (in one sense)

of the civilization he stands for is stressed not only explicitly in the triviality of many of the characters but also by the recurrent contrast between it and the elementary impulses and physical facts below it. The death of Sir James is the most profound statement of the theme, but it also appears in his mild lechery just before his illness.

Of *The Cho*, again, Harding says

'In that book, although his theme is profound, underlying even the subtlest lives, Myers is attempting to present it in the lives of people who are not, as individuals of any great interest. It is for this reason that one is made to feel aloof from the characters, it is only the total pattern that they contribute to which can make any claim on our interest. In this technical respect *The Cho* can be classed with, say, T. F. Powys's novels, although with its less richly specific presentation of the theme and its less bold and well-knit pattern it is far inferior to Powys's best work. This treatment of character is probably only possible 'when a novel's themes are the simple profundities'

It should be plain, then, that, for all its inferiority (and it is in some ways a decidedly unpleasant book), *The Cho* need not be dismissed as cheap, and unworthy the sensitive reader's attention. Further, as Harding shows, it is, by the standard of what entitles Myers to the kind of respectful reference that our correspondents object to, inferior. Harding says

'In his better work Myers is engrossed with the subtler problems which cannot exist except for those who are living finely, and which besides raising fundamental issues also make up the detailed texture of living, and these novels, instead of being an *expression* of problems and beliefs, are rather a means in themselves of defining the problems and clarifying the beliefs. With this change of aim goes a change in the use of character. The people represented now are of the kind who have an immediate personal relevance for you apart from the total pattern of the novel. The heroes are at least as subtle and as complex in interest and feelings as you, and the villains—even if you feel superior to them—are formidable'

When in *Scrutiny* Myers is referred to as a writer of major interest in modern English fiction, it is above all *The Root and the Flower* that one has in mind. (This trilogy is now incorporated in the one-volume tetralogy *The Near and the Far*, the last part of which *The Pool of Vishnu* hardly adds strength to the whole.) Perhaps it is well to add that to take Myers as a writer of major interest who repays the most serious kind of attention is not to claim for him the status of great novelist. Harding's concluding paragraph runs

'The worth of Myers' work ought perhaps to be regarded as largely independent of one's opinion of the novels as works of

art, where judgments may differ widely, essentially they are means of communicating, and they would still be of remarkable value if you concluded that they were scientific essays of an unusual kind. Their first value lies in the fact that they do succeed—by whatever means—in conveying extremely clear and sensitive insight into the conditions of adult and self-responsible lives in a civilized society’

Myers was enough of a novelist to justify the mode in which he chose to develop his themes and his interests, and if his novels do not repay the intense and sustained attention of the serious and educated, then what fiction produced in English since the death of Lawrence does?

Our correspondents seem to object again to the attribution of distinguished status to T F Powys. And it is true that the high valuation has not, in *Scrutiny*, been backed by any critical study—though certain of those who were most concerned in founding *Scrutiny* had given close critical study to Powys in the days when his most important works were coming out. Critiques have been planned from time to time, but owing to a series of accidents, have not actually appeared. We hope the omission will be repaired before long. Meanwhile it should surely be found not extravagant to assume a general agreement that *Mr Weston's Good Wine* and *Fables* represent a remarkably original art that deserves serious critical appraisal. Bro George Every, in a book reviewed elsewhere in this issue, appears to endorse his Mr Norman Nicholson's bracketing of Powys with Joyce as ‘blasphemous and bawdy’. Actually, Powys's treatment of human life is as fundamentally serious and religious as Bunyan's (the mention of whom perhaps sufficiently affects the dissociation from Joyce), and to see Powys as ‘bawdy’ is to betray an extreme moral obtuseness.

F R L

#### POETRY PRIZES FOR THE FESTIVAL OF BRITAIN, 1951

Under the above head, we have received (O H M S) from the Chief Press Officer of the Festival the information that the Arts Council of Great Britain, in connexion with the Festival of Britain, 1951, will offer Poetry Prizes, to the value of £1,100. The following Panel of Judges has been appointed: Sir Kenneth Clark (*Chairman*), Professor C M Bowra, Lord David Cecil, Mr John Hayward, Mr George Rylands, Mr Basil Willey.

No doubt this Panel will do as well as any that one can conceive of as being found eligible, by the people who decide these things (who are they?), for such a responsibility. Nevertheless, the qualifications of these appointed national judges seem peculiarly worthy of notice.

The Chairman, Sir Kenneth Clark, has never been known as a critic of poetry, or literature—except that he wrote in *Horizon*

an appreciation (in the vulgar sense) of Dr Edith Sitwell as great poet

Professor Bowra has written a separately published essay (again 'appreciative') of Dr Sitwell's verse. He wrote a book on 'Symbolism' in poetry in which his main term remained so undefined, and was applied so variously, as to be of little use as a critical instrument. His reputation is based on his ability to write as a critical authority on the poetry of other languages, including Russian. He has given no evidence of any powers as a critic of English poetry.

Lord David Cecil made his *debut* as a biographer. He has written a book on Hardy's novels that has been dealt with in these pages (Vol XI, No 3). He has also written about other novelists. What grounds, one wonders (other than his having succeeded to a Chair of Poetry at Oxford), would his warmest admirers urge to establish a presumption of his fitness to judge of poetry—and of contemporary poetry?

Mr John Hayward is known as a specialist scholar who has done some editing. He wrote the British Council booklet referred to above, *Prose Literature since 1939*, in which, to quote our own comment, he presented the 'currency-values of Metropolitan literary society and the associated University *milieux* as the distinctions and achievements of contemporary England'.

Mr George Rylands is known as an actor-producer of Elizabethan drama.

Of Mr Basil Willey it can at least be said that he holds a Chair of English Literature. But it must be at once added that the books on which his reputation rests are remote from literary criticism, and offer no grounds at all for attributing to the writer any practice in the judgment of poetry.

It seems to us eloquent of the state of affairs that has been discussed here that the Arts Council of Great Britain, undertaking to use for the encouragement of poetry in this country the resources at its disposal, should have been able without bracing itself for a storm of protest or ridicule to invest with supreme critical authority a Panel so composed. It seems to us that, given for fellow-members any five of this Panel, no critic truly qualified would have consented to serve on it. And it seems to us that, even if by chance the distribution of the prizes should be such as to tend to the encouragement of such genuine creative gifts as may be found among the competitors, more harm than good will have been done to the cause of English poetry, which is inseparable from the cause of English criticism.

But, it will be asked, what other kinds of appointment could those responsible have made? They had to find persons of some formal standing whose names were known. Things being as they are to-day, what Panel both acceptable and truly qualified could one have chosen for them? And would things have been so much better in the time of Edmund Gosse? In fact, hasn't one to go back to the time of Leslie Stephen to find an England in which

the qualified authorities could be counted on to be sufficiently known and respected? (Though it must be remembered that Gosse knew and respected Henry James, whose refusal to countenance the 'associational process' was commented on in *Scrutiny* XIV, 2. The successors of Gosse would certainly not be inclined to parade respect for a similarly anti-associational contemporary genius, and they would be the reverse of inclined—or qualified—to promote his recognition.)

Yet there *is* something new in the contemporary situation. It is that to-day those whose views tell decisively in the organs and institutions of taste and cultural authority aid and abet, less and more innocently, the systematic suppression of criticism. *The Criterion* (except for marginal sneers in the back pages) never mentioned *Scrutiny*. It is not an accident that *The Times Literary Supplement*, which conscientiously reviews the most insignificant periodicals, never gives *Scrutiny* the shortest notice. Yet there is now a general recognition in all the literary and academic centres of the English-speaking world, and wherever English literature is studied, that *Scrutiny*, whatever its faults and shortcomings, has for seventeen years maintained a strenuous and lonely pre-eminence in the language as representing the function of criticism.

## THE SHAKESPEARE INDUSTRY

### PROGRESS REPORT

*SHAKESPEARE SURVEY 2* edited by Allardyce Nicoll (Cambridge University Press, 12/6)

There is no fall in the level of productivity in the Shakespeare industry. If one were not directly conscious of the continued output of books—scholarly, critical, popular and merely eccentric, such an enterprise as *Shakespeare Survey* would be an effective reminder. Described as an annual survey of Shakespearean study and production, it appears under the highest auspices, sponsored jointly by the University of Birmingham, the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre and the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, and edited by Professor Allardyce Nicoll with the assistance of an advisory board which musters a fair selection of the familiar distinguished names. This, the second number, contains articles ranging from bibliography and the history of the Elizabethan playhouse to accounts of recent stage production, Shakespeare in France, critical articles, and 'The Year's Contributions to Shakespearean Study'.

But if we ask what precisely *is* Shakespearean Study, and what *is* its relevance, the answer seems to be so general as to be almost meaningless. *Scrutiny* has always insisted, and at the risk of wearisome repetition it must be said again, that scholarship, to be profitable and alive, must start from a critical interest and answer



critical questions This is not only because without this start it will lack adequate direction and point, plodding on in the vague hope that almost any kind of fact may possibly some day be useful to someone, but for the more important reason that unless it takes its origin from a conscious critical point of view it will most probably be motivated by unconscious or half-conscious critical assumptions and prejudices In so far as these are a matter of taking over accepted values and conventional attitudes, they will in practice be based on the criticism of the past rather than upon a living concern with what the works under discussion mean to us to day As Mr Eliot has reminded us, there is no escape from the criticism of the past except through the criticism of the present These considerations would of course apply to a great deal of general literary scholarship in the academic journals if one finds much of it deadening and depressing it is not through a simple prejudice against research and its unspectacular labours, but from a conviction that lacking this critical direction much of it is labour misdirected and energy wasted On these general questions, *Shakespeare Survey* does little to reassure us The idea of providing a clearing-house for all kinds of work related to Shakespeare is admirable enough in the abstract, and to bring scholarship and criticism together in a significant relation would be a positive achievement But a general belief that Shakespeare is important hardly gives a sufficient basis of common ground among the contributors What is needed is some controlling conception of the precise way in which Shakespeare's work matters to us to-day and that, of course, implies some measure of agreement about the function of poetry and of poetic drama in particular, or at least some determination to work out these fundamental problems co-operatively

The lack of any such controlling conviction shows itself in the article on the year's contributions, divided into three sections: criticism, by Professor Ellis-Fermor, Shakespeare's Life and Times, by Professor D J Gordon, and textual studies, by Mr J G Macmanaway There is a tendency here to fall between two stools: one feels that the accounts should either be written from a much more definite critical position, with more drastic selection, or that they should be simply exhaustive lists compiled purely for reference This is most obvious in the first section, though it applies to all three to some extent the second makes most effort towards a critical survey As things are, it is often difficult to see the principle behind omissions and inclusions alike Why, for instance, is there no reference to Mr J C Maxwell's essay on *Timon of Athens* (*Scrutiny*, Summer, 1948)? Shorter notes of his are recorded and there is mention of articles in the two previous numbers of *Scrutiny* it can hardly be a simple question of date of publication, since M Fluchère's book, which appeared some months later, is duly noted

That all is not well seems to be the feeling behind an oddly mixed essay on 'The Trend of Shakespearean Scholarship' by

Professor Hardin Craig Though somewhat excessively respectful to the 'scientific' investigators and specialists, he is aware of the danger of extremes like those modern cosmological studies which would have us believe in an Elizabethan uniformity of mind greater than the farthest dreams of a totalitarian state' He maintains that scholarship, like all scientific investigation, is inadequate when it approaches the region where Shakespeare's greatest greatness lies' and of his own prescription that we 'make ourselves at home in the Renaissance he remarks The attempt may well turn out to be factitious without the kindling of imagination it is sure to be so' One is glad to find the emphasis laid upon Shakespeare's meaning and its importance— It is a disservice to Shakespeare and to the modern world to misinterpret his plays' But he tails off into generalities about the multiple ends of Renaissance art and his examples of great criticism is Granville Barker's last Preface—the best study of *Coriolanus* ever achieved by a critic Now this Preface is a great improvement on any earlier account of the play from the orthodox angle, and its honesty and thoroughness is rightly commended But it does not quite penetrate to the essential quality of the play one misses an adequate account of the total effect of the poetry in giving concrete embodiment to an ironic study of political and moral disharmony Some aspects of the play's atmosphere are better described by Mr Wilson Knight in *The Imperial Theme* though his chapter is unequal for an analysis leading us into the central experience of the work we have to go to Mr D A Traversi's essay (*Scrutiny* June, 1937) which one would be glad to see reprinted and made more accessible

The most valuable essay in the whole volume is Miss Pope's 'The Renaissance Background of *Measure for Measure*' This is an example of a scholarly enquiry which sets out to test certain critical conclusions about the play by asking whether or not the ideas and beliefs they assume would be likely to occur to the Elizabethan mind In an investigation of commentaries, sermons and tracts, Miss Pope examines first the contemporary theological doctrines of justice and mercy, and secondly the special responsibilities of the Christian governor, showing how closely the leading ideas of the play can be related to these current opinions She concludes that Shakespeare in this play is 'not so much rejecting the ordinary Christian doctrine of the Renaissance as clarifying it, strengthening it and holding it true to its own deepest implications' We are not entitled to draw direct conclusions about Shakespeare's own beliefs but we can say that 'when he put his mind to it, he could produce a more coherent, a more independent, and in the last analysis a more Christian piece of thinking on the subject than nine out of ten professional Renaissance theologians'

A purely critical contribution comes from Professor Morozov, of Moscow, on 'The Individualization of Shakespeare's Characters through Imagery' Noting that 'of recent years, Shakespeare is coming more and more to be regarded chiefly as a "dramatic poet" The realism of Shakespeare's characters, their specific

psychological traits and hence distinctive styles of speech, are often being thrown into obscurity', he sets out to confirm Shakespeare's realism—'that Shakespeare's characters do not speak for the author, but so to say, for themselves' That they might conceivably speak for both at the same time, or sometimes for one and sometimes for the other is not apparently thought possible Had Professor Morozov gone on to show how the characteristic imagery of the various *personæ* is often a way of presenting them and also of determining our attitude towards them, besides performing other functions in a total poetic context, he could have made a valuable contribution All he does in fact is to list the dominant images in the speech of a number of characters without any sufficient analysis of their effect or their significance The total result is not much more than the older critics achieved with less fuss The detailed analysis shows an inadequate conception of the way poetry works, and the general attitude suggests considerable naivety about Elizabethan dramatic conventions What is rather disquieting is to find the essay apparently considered important by so eminent an editorial board But it is only too obvious that the study of imagery has achieved respectability in its least useful form—isolated, that is, from rhythm, tone and general poetic effect

Two articles of somewhat similar type are Miss St Clare Byrne's 'Fifty Years of Shakespearean Production' and M Henri Fluchère's 'Shakespeare in France, 1900-1948' Both are interesting as evidence of the extraordinary difficulty of inducing actors and producers to allow Shakespeare to speak for himself on this point the first article is perhaps a little too optimistic The idea that the greatest English dramatic poet might possibly have known what he was about has penetrated very slowly, and continual vigilance is needed against the powerful vested interests in re-arranging his work for him Only recently a highly praised production of *Henry IV Part II* omitted the important incident of Lancaster's politic treachery, with its ironic implications and its relation to the play's total feeling And what possible justification can there be for presenting cut versions in the Third Programme? Miss St Clare Byrne's article is illustrated by some interesting photographs, but the captions to Plate IV seem to have been misplaced M Fluchère is concerned with much more than stage production, though he mentions it in passing, and many of his comments on French Shakespeareans would apply equally well to their English counterparts, as when, writing of the state of affairs at the beginning of the century he says 'The bogey of psychology had assumed the dignity of an academic vested interest And the party from which one should reasonably have expected some enlightenment, namely the body of university teachers, was lost in the sands of erudite research this was nothing more, on the whole, than a form of escapism—escape from the main problems, which are, and always have been, aesthetic or artistic problems'

For the rest, we are given a note by Professor Dover Wilson on Jonson's criticisms of *Julius Cæsar*, a learned summary of the

problems connected with Shakespeare's assumed contributions to *The Booke of Sir Thomas More*, with a reproduction of the passages in question, by Professor R C Bald, a note on 'An original drawing of the Globe Theatre' by Mr I A Shapiro, an account by Mr Leslie Hotson of the schemes from 1620 onwards for a London amphitheatre (which do not seem very relevant to the study of Shakespeare) and some international news

R G Cox

## THE LOGIC OF CHRISTIAN DISCRIMINATION

*POETRY AND PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY*, by George Every (S C M Press, 2/6)

I had occasion recently in these pages to observe that Christian Discrimination had come to seem to me a decidedly bad thing. This little book of Bro George Every's has the air of having been designed defiantly to justify that conclusion. It can be recommended for a brief perusal as showing unambiguously what in the concrete Christian Discrimination is, and where its logic leads.

One might, after looking through the book, start by asking why Mr Every has devoted so much time to poetry, and to creative literature in general, since (I hope I may be forgiven for saying) he shows no compelling interest in it, and no aptitude for its study. The answer he would give us is to be found in the first sentence of his Preface:

'This book is intended as an introduction to contemporary poetry, considered as the sensitive spot in the modern mind, where a new response to life, a new outlook upon the world, is taking shape'

He follows it up with a sentence that hardly clarifies the idea, and wouldn't, I think, have been left standing if anyone had asked him what he meant by it:

'The best poem is the most sensitive not only to the thoughts and feelings of the author, but to those of other people with whom he is in constant communication'

Still, I see what's in his mind. It's the idea that, in the given form, derives its currency from I A Richards:

'The poet is the point at which the growth of the mind shows itself'

But though this is the idea that seems to Mr Every to explain his dealings with poetry, he doesn't, as to be consistent he should, go on to try and be a critic. He knows beforehand, in a general kind of way, what new responses to life and what 'new outlook upon the world' are to be looked for as making a writer significant and important. They go with his conviction that the most important activity to-day is to promote a Christian revival. He nowhere

begins to come near the business of literary criticism, and it is difficult to see what apart from names, asserted importances, and impressive generalities his pupils (the substance of the book was given as lectures) can have got from him

the younger poets who came to light in 1937-42, such voices as Dylan Thomas, David Gascoyne, Alex Comfort, and Sidney Keyes, have never suffered from any illusions about the future of our civilization. For them the urgent problem is the imminence of death, the need of some significance that can be attached to dying in a world where there is no common belief in immortality'

This suggests well enough his principles of selection and association and the nature of his commentary. It is true that he does a good deal of quoting, but the pieces of verse he quotes get no critical examination, and don't as a rule support the implicit assumption that the author matters as a poet. Mr Every's indifference to the essential critical judgment appears at its most naked in his astonishing collocations. He can glide with perfect aplomb, in a paragraph, from *Little Gidding* to Miss Anne Ridler and Sidney Keyes without a hint of any perception on his part that, for any serious treatment of his theme something of a change of level has occurred, and that he cannot still be dealing with significance of the same order. Here is a characteristic passage

'Our greatest living novelist, Mr E M Forster deserted the novel twenty-five years ago for other forms of literature. Rex Warner seems to have done the same. Miss Elizabeth Bowen and Mr Desmond Hawkins have not added to their early output, which had great promise for the future. The reputation of Miss Compton-Burnett, so far chiefly among her fellow-writers, rests on a departure from the naturalistic novel into stylised conversation. Her characters are elongated and foreshortened in the manner of sculpture by Mr Henry Moore, a family group or a reclining woman. No other modern novelist cuts so close to the bone of life. As her prose recalls the verse of T S Eliot's plays, especially *The Family Reunion* so her treatment of the novel as a form of poetry makes a convenient introduction to novels by two poets, Herbert Read and Charles Williams'

Christian Discrimination, then, absolves Mr Every from the literary critic's kind of discrimination. This comment will not disturb him, he has provided for it, and disabled it, he feels. Tell him that, if poetry matters because it is the 'sensitive spot in the modern mind' where a new response to life is taking shape', then to detect 'poetry' and to discriminate between that which can properly be considered as such and that in which any journalist or extension-lecturer recognizes the *Zeitgeist* becomes a task of great delicacy and importance, the due execution of which only the fostering of the highest critical standards and the observance of the most scrupulous critical discipline can hope to ensure—tell

him this, and Mr Every replies (his immediate audience being of the W E A type)

'The error of the *Scrutiny* writers was to look for the intelligentsia in the same places where aesthetes were recruited in the days of the Yellow Book and the Rhymers' Club, among intelligent and well-informed young men and women at the older universities, who were prepared to adopt literature as a vocation. Such people develop very easily into pedants and pedantry can be reared on a diet of contemporary literature as well as on perfectly safe classics. The minority who in any age are really responsive to new developments in literature and the arts should always include a proportion of people who are not themselves engaged in the practice of literature who care for art because it helps them to make sense of their lives'

Mr Every doesn't actually bring out the word 'highbrow', but his tactic amounts to nothing more and nothing less than the launching of that appeal to the natural man and the natural man's dislike of the suggestion that perhaps in more important matters than football, billiards, and golf there are qualifications that can only be gained by discipline and experience developing natural aptitude. For what can be meant by 'the minority should always include a proportion of people who are not themselves engaged in the practice of literature'? The minority is what it is, that it should be bigger is always desirable, but it will not be enlarged by pretending that confidence based on lack of cultivated literary experience and lack of trained aptitude in analysis and judgment—for what does 'not engaged in the practice of literature' mean?—can be counted on to distinguish and respond to the significantly new in literature.

Mr Every's intention and drift are unmistakable. He writes

'The border between literary criticism and the evaluation of a writer's ideas had been obscured by the critics of the twenties and especially by Dr Leavis, in the interests of "significant form"'. Now to his great distress criticism seemed to be becoming completely immersed in theological and sociological polemic'

The doctrine of 'significant form' maintains that, where visual art is in question value-judgments, or judgments of significance, that appeal to the values and interests of general living, are irrelevant, the experience of art is *suu generis* and unrelated to the rest of life, being the concern of an aesthetic sense that is insulated from the rest of one's organization. The true aesthetic appreciator can only ejaculate, since the 'significance' of 'significant form' is to be ineffable, signifying nothing that can be discussed or indicated, it just is. Mr Every imputes a literary transposition of that doctrine to me. That is his way (and does he, on reflection find it honest?) of dealing with my insistence that theological, sociological, political or moral commentaries and judgments on works of literature should

be relevant, and that the business of ensuring relevance is a delicate one, calling for literary experience, cultivated scruple, trained skill, and the literary critic's concern with the quality of the life that is concretely present in the work in front of him

Having thus absolved himself from the duty of making the essential discriminations, Mr Every can facilitate the business of pushing his own special line of goods by accepting with a large and reassuring catholicity, as established values, most of the current names Auden, Dylan Thomas David Gascoyne, Alex Comfort, Herbert Read, Ronald Duncan, Edith Sitwell, a whole team of Christian poets, and not only Sidney Keyes, the boy war-casualty whom by some caprice it has been agreed to immortalize as a symbol of lost Genus (I can see no ground for his reputation), but his friend John Heath-Stubbs in all these, and how many more, one gathers, one can study, in the same sense as one can in D H Lawrence and T S Eliot, the 'sensitive spot where a new response to life is taking shape'

Mr Every's own line of goods is of course Christian Dr Sitwell writes emotionally with characteristic afflatus, about Christ, therefore she can be acclaimed as a great (if not yet quite a Christian) poet, of major significance in terms of the critic's concern with the 'sensitive spot' Of his own discovery and fostering Mr Every offers us as poet and intellectual of established standing (we are to assume), Mr Norman Nicholson—a writer in whom, I am bound to say, I can see no vestige of any gift, but only intentions and pretensions that have gathered assurance from assiduous encouragement and from the sense of swimming, shoal supported, with the tide But then, I can see no reason for being interested in Charles Williams, whom we are offered as a major power, and Mr Nicholson's inspirer

Mr Every gives us a whole chapter on 'The Poetic Influence of Charles Williams'

'To-day critics are failing in their understanding of the younger poets because they are not aware of his later work'

Williams, Mr Every, without producing any argument or evidence tending to make the valuation in the least plausible confidently sets up as a great poet—a peer, at least, of Eliot In what sense this is Christian Discrimination comes out with almost disarming naïveté here

'Admiring Milton, he rejected Eliot, until the arch-classicist and ultra-modern was revealed as an Anglo-Catholic lay theologian In 1935-6 Eliot and he wrote plays in succession to one another for the same Canterbury festival, *Murder in the Cathedral* and *Thomas Cranmer* From that time on their mutual influence grew In the long run Williams influenced Eliot more, because his own "effortless originality" was less open to any influence than Eliot's negative capacity, his infinite receptiveness'

The passages of Williams' verse quoted by Mr Every serve only to convince one that, however sound the poet's orthodoxy, he hadn't begun to be a poet, and that the critic is mistaken in

supposing himself to be interested in poetry. But Mr Every can assure us, as one who knows (having it on the highest authority) that it was Williams' creative influence that changed Mr Eliot's attitude towards Milton.

The influence of Eliot is seen in repulsions as well as in attraction. In answer to the challenge thrown down by his attack on the Chinese wall, Milton's grand manner of verse, Charles Williams built a Chinese wall of his own to resist the decay of words. This wall in the end prevailed to modify Eliot's judgment where critical arguments failed. In one instance at least the imitation of Milton had been of use.

It is one of the most revealing of contemporary fashions to suppose that Mr Eliot has seriously and radically changed his mind about Milton, and that the utterances giving colour to this view have significant critical bearings on his poetic development. I can only repeat that those who subscribe to this fashion can, it seems plain to me, never have taken an intelligent interest in his poetry, and never had any but a conventional respect for his genius. Mr Eliot, it is true, has referred in a commendatory way to Charles Williams' introduction to the 'Worlds' Classics Milton. Having taken the tip and looked at it I am obliged to report that I found it the merest attitudinizing and gesturing of a man who had nothing critically relevant to say. It may be an example of Christian Discrimination, I am sure it is not good literary criticism. As for Charles Williams' influence, all that we learn and divine of it leads me to the conclusion that here, in the *mikau* to which he belonged, we have a subject worth attention from the inquirer into the 'sociology' of contemporary literature. It seems to me that there is some danger of his verse-constructions being imposed on the student in succession to *The Testament of Beauty*.

What I want to say very earnestly to Bro George Every is that, insofar as he is truly concerned for religion, I think he is doing his cause a great deal of harm. Charles Williams is ostensibly inspired by Christian doctrine. But if you approach as a literary critic, unstiffened by the determination to 'discriminate Christianly', or if you approach merely with ordinary sensitiveness and good sense, you can hardly fail to see that Williams' preoccupation with the 'horror of evil' is evidence of an arrest at the school-boy (and -girl) stage rather than of spiritual maturity, and that his dealings in 'myth', mystery, the occult, and the supernatural belong essentially to the ethos of the thriller. To pass off his writings as spiritually edifying is to promote the opposite of spiritual health.

More generally, to debase the currency, and abrogate the function of criticism, as Mr Every offers to do, can only, I am convinced, do harm by the standards of any real concern for religion. What, one may ask, does Mr Every offer his disciples in return for the great poet to whom he denies them access? He offers them (they were in the first place extension-lecturers, theological students, and training teachers) pretentious phrases, vague and muddled ideas,



a confused exaltation of self-importance, and help towards believing that to feel vaguely excited and impressed is to have grappled with serious problems. On the other hand, to take, in any measure, what Mr Eliot's poetry has to give is to be educated into a new understanding of the nature of precision in thought, and at the same time to experience intimately an emotional and spiritual discipline. And this holds, irrespective of whether or not the reader subscribes to Christian doctrine.

As for Christian Discrimination, it needs to be said that there can be no substitute for the scrupulous and disinterested approach of the literary critic. If Christian belief and Christian attitudes have really affected the critic's sensibility then they will play their due part in his perceptions and judgments, without his summoning his creeds and doctrines to the job of discriminating and pronouncing. If on the other hand, he does, like Bro George Every, make a deliberate and determined set at 'discriminating Christianly' then the life of the spirit will suffer damage, more or less severe, in the ways that Bro George Every's work merely exemplifies with a peculiarly rich obviousness. It is fair to add (if I may use a phrase that was once reported to me as having been applied by the Editor of *The Criterion* to something quite different) that he represents the most active and formidable of contemporary 'gang-movements'

F R LEAVIS

## ART THE RELIGION AND THE SAINT

*RECOLLECTIONS OF LOGAN PEARSALL SMITH, by  
Robert Gathorne-Hardy (Constable, 18/-)*

L P Smith is likely to be of interest to the future literary sociologist as having been a member of an influential 'set'. Mr Gathorne-Hardy reports that 'Bernard Berenson, his brother-in-law, once said over-modestly to Logan, or so the latter affirmed, "If either of us is remembered after we're dead, it will only be because we knew Santayana"' *Recollections* contains a letter to the author written from the Berensons' home near Florence. 'I find it very pleasant here, in the luxury and splendour of this great Italian villa. Mrs Wharton is here, and Santayana nearby,—we are a little group of not unsuccessful people, old and ill and gay and disenchanting, and our tongues wag as freely I think as any tongues in Europe'. Looking back over the years, Smith could claim with justice to have been 'more or less acquainted' with Whistler, Sargent, and Henry James. And if he cared he could no doubt have collected similar but warmer testimonials than this, from Santayana, 'I have much to thank the Smiths for. They formed a lively band in the carnival, and led me into other bands in the masquerade, which I should hardly have joned of my own initiative'<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>*The Middle Span*, by George Santayana

*Recollections* sharpens one's consciousness of certain characteristics common to the 'set' and underlines the criticism of their social and cultural aspirations that they were individually and as a group both too 'worldly' and too 'aesthetic' Henry Adams and Henry James, Edith Wharton and Santayana certainly transcend the limitations of the *milieu* to which they belonged Their writings are products of a finer civilization than anything (to judge, for instance, by *Portrait of Edith Wharton*<sup>3</sup>) realised in the day-to-day life of the group, of which Smith's works are more nearly a reflection It is distinctive of these figures to have been able to conduct their lives according to a conception of what the civilized life should be And yet it is surely not being hypercritical to find something unsatisfactory about this, for instance, of Edith Wharton's life in Paris

'Here then she lived at last in plenty She had all the company about her that she needed, and of all the kinds, and so long as her company was right of its kind she was not exclusive, and there was a great deal of variety to be seen in her charming rooms Only this was always certain, that nothing admitted to the mixture would appear out of place against the background of her creation the careless or the formless were no more to be found there than the rough and the rude It was ever a polite gathering, but all were there who could interest Edith Wharton, and the ways of interesting her were many and diverse Between the worldly and the literary lay her range, touching no far extreme in either direction, and within these limits talent not too unworldly, elegance not too illiterate, there was space for a large concourse and it was admirably filled'

Mr Lubbock himself, though playfully, brings the charge 'It [the integrity of youth] may ask how a woman of such exacting judgment can be content with company in which art is an amusement, not a life to be lived Didn't she realize that the true makers of art and shapers of thought were to be found elsewhere Must we conclude that she won't go where thought is rich but entertainment modest? Dare one suppose that she has been a little spoilt by the world, and that the ranks of the toilers aren't fine enough for her?'

The Cult of Perfection, as the loftier side of their aspirations may be termed, took several forms The formula 'Flaubert-cum-Pater'<sup>5</sup> represents no more than the most general aspect of a standard which had to maintain itself over an abyss, an absence of related and supporting obligations—all that was missing from their lives as a result of the wrench from home, country, office That

<sup>3</sup>By Percy Lubbock

<sup>4</sup>Cf *The Great Tradition*, p 172 (footnote), 'H J's interest in 'civilization' betrays, tested by his actual selectiveness in the concrete field before him, a grave deficiency 'He didn't know the right people', "Q" once said to me, discussing James's criticism of the country-house'

it was a serious and respectable standard, however debased by isolation, goes without saying. It takes, for instance, a curious form in Berenson. Many pages of his *Sketch* are devoted to an exposition of his sense that with all the success he had earned as an art critic, his life was a failure. And he goes on to list among his supporting reasons that the feeling, that one must strive for the enduring, this promotion of the permanent, the surviving, the eternal, to aesthetic and even moral value has tended to inhibit and even to disperse my energies. Unless I could acquire the illusion that I had something to offer that would be lasting, it seemed only decent to do nothing'. Behind this lament is the regret that he lacked a 'style', and, as he finely realized, that the cosmopolitan life is inimical to good writing.

'Style', however, for Berenson, it is significant to note, was exhibited by *The Brook Kerith* and *Heloise and Abelard*. 'I had to realize that the pen is mightier than the thought, the learning, the feeling, the understanding, and that the muse of muses, Style, had chosen this up-to-date stage Irishman for its mouthpiece'. This notion of 'style' divorced from intelligent ideas was, of course, one from which Henry James was not exempt. In a letter to Edmund Gosse<sup>5</sup> James singles out the following passage from Loti's *Matelot*:

'Donc, ils en venaient à s'aimer d'une également pure tendresse, tous les deux. Elle, ignorante des choses d'amour et lisant chaque soir sa bible, elle, destinée à rester inutilement fraîche et jeune encore pendant quelques printemps pâles comme celui-ci, puis à vieillir et se faner dans l'enserrement monotone de ces mêmes rues et de ces mêmes murs. Lui, gâté déjà par les baisers et les étreintes, ayant le monde pour habitation changeante, appelé à partir, peut-être demain, pour ne revenir jamais et laisser son corps aux mers lointaines.'

and notes 'I have read *Matelot* more or less over again, for the extreme penury of the *idea* in Loti, and the almost puerile thinness of this particular donnée, wean me not a jot from the irresistible charm the rascal's very limitations have for me. I drink him down as he is—like a philtre or a *baiser*, and the coloration of his

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<sup>5</sup>The *TLS* reviewer of Bernard Berenson's *Sketch for a Self Portrait* justly remarks 'In spite of a laugh, in one of his books, at Pater's contemplation of the Mona Lisa, it is interesting to see how great a debt he acknowledges to Pater. He writes "The genius who revealed to me what from childhood I had been instinctively tending towards—was Walter Pater in his *Marius*, his *Imaginary Portraits*, his *Child in the House*, his *Emerald Uthwart*, his *Demeter*. It is for that I have loved him since youth and shall be grateful to him even to the House of Hades where, in the words of Nausicaa to Odysseus, I shall hail him as god"'

<sup>6</sup>May 1st, 1893, and compare in the *Notebooks* the entry for April 8th of that year.

*mouidres mots* has a peculiar magic for me. Read aloud to yourself the passage and perhaps you will find in it something of the same strange *eloquence* of suggestion and rhythm as I do which is what literature gives when it is most exquisite and which constitutes its sovereign value and its resistance to devouring time.

Forty years later, Mr Desmond MacCarthy wrote of the book on which Smith's admirers think that his reputation will rest, 'I agree with those reviewers of *All Trivia* who have predicted for it a life beyond the grave of contemporary reputation. It is the sort of bibelot that Father Time often keeps on his mantelpiece when he changes the furniture in his house. For style is the best preservative of thought, when we mean by style a manner of writing both traditional and personal, and excellently adapted to the matter in hand' (Though we may note that here there is 'thought' to be preserved, whereas James dismissed the Loti passage with 'And yet what maieseries!') The quotation from Mr MacCarthy is a reminder that L. P. Smith is not only a moon to the suns of the aristocratic American phase which gave us *The Education of Henry Adams*, *Winds of Doctrine*, *What Maisie Knew*, *The House of Mirth*, *Italian Painters of the Renaissance*, a phase which did not continue into the post-1918 world, but, owing to his extensive English connections (and in no small part to Mr MacCarthy himself), a factor in the 'continuous literary tradition' of England, so that Mr Connolly (who dedicated *Enemies of Promise* to 'Logan')

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<sup>7</sup>Which contains the remark, 'The last great exponents of the Mandarin style were Pater and Henry James'. Now that the book has been revised, we may note that this would-be stylist has detected (prompted, he says, by Edmund Wilson) slipshod phrases on every page of the original edition. The new edition nevertheless stands in need of further revision. More interesting, however, is the indication of a certain stagnation in the literary *milieu* where Mr Connolly plays the part of intelligent weathercock. 'What is much more disturbing is that I should have found it necessary to make so few alterations. I have not altered or inserted a single opinion. I have found it quite unnecessary to modify any of my literary judgments. In other words I am unwilling to recognize any revolution in the reputation of modern authors over the last ten years. Yeats, Joyce, Virginia Woolf, alas, are dead. The Sitwells have grown enormously in stature, Aldous Huxley has made a brilliant recovery, Auden and Orwell added new triumphs—but with these modifications the literary values remain unaltered.' Damaging as the admission may be for the author, the reader cannot but be grateful that *Enemies of Promise* has been made available again almost unchanged. We are not likely to have a second document of this order. The book was reviewed in these pages when it first appeared (see Vol. VIII, No. 1, 'The Background of Twentieth Century Letters', and for Mr Connolly's prose and criticism, Vol. XIII, No. 3, 'From Playground to

in 1943 was grabbing with avidity Smith's latest story for *Horizon* and now a *Sunday* reviewer of *Recollections* can write, The author of *Trivia* and *On Reading Shakespeare* will be remembered long after many noisier reputations are buried in silence. It is impossible that he will be considered a great writer by future generations, but because it is probable that he will be considered the best writer of prose in his time, his fame rests on enduring foundations'

This curious career deserves a moment's scrutiny. Smith demonstrated by publishing *Youth of Parnassus* in 1895 that he had reached the age of thirty without developing a scrap of talent. The reader of these 'Stories of Oxford Life' might be pardoned for supposing that their author had no first-hand knowledge of either Oxford or Life and little gift for constructing fables involving both. The flatness, lumpiness of the prose defy the search for models—it clearly isn't the product of intelligent study of any originals. Yet Smith was convinced that great prose could be written by practising hard and frequenting 'fine writers'. He apparently took Pater as his model and wrote exercises in the form of journals and letters. He claims (in *Unforgotten Years*) that Baudelaire's *Petits Poèmes en Prose* gave him his start. 'It occurred to me that the separate page or paragraph of prose had not been adequately exploited. Every aspect of existence I believed could find its best expression in some special literary form. But in the experience of each of us were there not moods, brief impressions and modern ways of feeling for which no exactly appropriate way of expression was at hand? This was the notion that began to haunt me in odd moments. Something like Baudelaire in style was what I dreamed of, but a style more idiomatic, more colloquial, yet capable of rising to the heights of poetic English prose'. The results of this meditation were first printed in 1897, polished and reprinted privately in 1902 as *Trivia (Poems in Prose)*, and would in all likelihood have been forgotten had not Mr MacCarthy encouraged the author to continue in 1918. An examination of *Trivia* in its final form suggests that Smith was progressively narrowing his interest, from the single paragraph to the phrase and from the phrase to the 'jewel-tinted' word, until he could bring forward (how seriously he probably could not himself have said, his irony being of the lightning conductor variety, insulating author and reader from serious consequences)

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Grave'). In the present context its peculiar interest lies in the perspective which enables Mr Connolly to see the post-1918 authors as in the pre-war tradition. 'In the history of literature there can have been few books more talked and written about, few names more mentioned than those of Proust, Joyce, Lytton Strachey, Virginia Woolf, the Sitwells, and Paul Valéry. Their moment was propitious. After the post-war disillusion they offered a religion of beauty, a cult of words, of meanings understood only by the initiated at a time when people were craving such initiations.'

## 'PHRASES

'Is there, after all, any solace like the solace and consolation of Language? When I am disconcerted by the unpleasing aspects of existence, when to me, as to Hamlet, this earth seems a sterile promontory, it is not in Metaphysics nor in Religion that I seek for reassurance, but in fine phrases. The thought of gazing on life's Evening Star makes of ugly old age a pleasing prospect, if I call Death mighty and unpersuaded, it has no terrors, I am perfectly content to be cut down as a flower, to flee as a shadow, to be swallowed like a snowflake on the sea. These similes soothe and effectually console me. I am sad only at the thought that Words must perish like all things mortal, that the most perfect Metaphors must be forgotten when the human race is dust.

"But the iniquity of Oblivion blindly scattereth her poppy."

The cultivation of this sort of interest in words was however, not without consequences. It formed the backbone of his literary judgment—and not only in prose. He found for instance, the greatness of Milton in a whole treasure-trove of jewel-tinted words—shells of sound, so full of overtones, and arousing such echoes after echoes of association that they have won him the enduring fame of the golden alchemist of our language. Above all, it led him into the solidest community of feeling with 'fellow-craftsmen' in the England of our day. For Smith, Bridges was 'the finest craftsman who has handled English since the time of Milton'. 'Max and Bunyon are our greatest contemporaries', he wrote in 1942! (A collection of tributes to 'Max' would show the astonishing lengths to which adulation of *belles-lettres* can be carried. The sky is the limit here, the only parallel being the associated cult of Jane Austen.) But the supreme example of the consequences of a narrow taste in misleading one into 'knowing the wrong people' and overlooking the genuine is quoted by Mr. Gathorne-Hardy in his *Recollections*.

"If we could find a bookshop," said Logan, "there's one particular book I should like to buy you. There was a nineteenth-century poet whose name I can't remember now, though I know it perfectly well—damn it! what was his name? He wrote one book of sonnets just one book which he polished for years, until he'd made it quite perfect. If I could choose what book in literature I might have written, I'd choose that. I'd rather have written it than any other book in the world!"

'Being profoundly ignorant then in French literature, I didn't realize, as now I should, that he was referring to *Les Trophées* of Heredia. Logan's copy is now in my possession, on the flyleaf he has written, "The book, of all the books in the world, that I should have wished to have written." This choice, I think, illustrates most admirably both the defects and the merits in Logan's heart: his boundless worship of beauty and

perfection—and that curious decrepitudenizing fear of the heart's depths. In nineteenth century France alone, *Les Fleurs du Mal*, surely, or some book of Verlaine's ought to be a preferable choice, but those revealed chasms, which Logan could never bring himself to explore, and then, how much pleasanter to have been Heredia than Verlaine or Baudelaire!

(This example has the further merit of pointing to the truly international nature of this respect for craftsmanship' Smith's slightly younger contemporary Gide, has recorded his memories of Heredia in *Si le grain ne meurt* 'Il s'intéressait à peu près exclusivement au monde extérieur et à l'art, je veux dire qu'il restait on ne peut plus embarrassé dans le domaine de la spéculation, et qu'il ne connaissait d'autrui que les gestes. Mais il avait beaucoup de lecture, et, comme il ignorait ses manques, rien ne lui faisait besoin. C'était plutôt un artiste qu'un poète, et plutôt encore un artisan. Je fus terriblement déçu d'abord puis j'en vins à me demander si ma déception ne venait pas de ce que je me faisais de l'art et de la poésie une idée fautive et si la simple perfection de métier n'était pas chose de plus de prix que je n'avais cru jusqu'alors')

Logan in *Trivial*, says Mr Gathorne-Hardy, 'painted a remarkably true picture of himself'. He did indeed supply the literary critic (if we include his carefully selected autobiographical sketches and *Reperusals*) with ample *data* for comment on the mind, the character, the *mores* and way of life of a certain type of *homme de lettres*. There would in fact be no need to turn for further evidence to *Recollections* if there had not been issued a challenge such as appeared in *The Sunday Times* in a review by Mr Desmond MacCarthy entitled 'A Saint of the Life of Letters'. Since Mr Gathorne-Hardy says something very similar, my attempt to use his evidence for justifying a very different account may appear disingenuous. In any case it is in place to enquire into the author's credibility as a witness. Although there is sufficient evidence in *Recollections* to show that Mr Gathorne-Hardy is a genuine disciple<sup>8</sup> of L. P. Smith and has a proper regard for truth,

<sup>8</sup>The question of disciples was a crucial one for a group without obvious means of securing continuity. Mr Berenson regretted that talk is not self-registering and confessed that he preferred to talk to women, 'especially certain society women', and to the adolescent minded rather than the mature. Santayana decided that his kind should not mate, ('*A deracine*, a man who has been torn up by the roots, cannot be replanted and should never propagate his kind'. 'I have been involuntarily uprooted. I accept the intellectual advantages of that position, with its social and moral disqualifications') and found his happiness in the society of well-connected young men of a non-academic turn of mind. 'The bond between them and me was of another kind. It was what I might call the sporting mind, unbiased intelligence, spreading freely from youthful curiosity to the interests of the world in general, including the

it is pleasant to find Mr MacCarthy confirming from his intimate knowledge of Smith both that the account given in *Recollections* is 'a most truthful one' and that Mr Gathorne-Hardy was of Smith's disciples 'the closest, most faithful, most dependent' Nevertheless there are certain cautionary remarks to be made The use that may be made of *Recollections* is qualified by a deliberate bias in the author's presentation 'I may have treated with too much irony—but that would have been Logan's way—the comical aspects of our mutual life

This bias would not have been distorting if the author had succeeded in giving, in the convincing detail with which the faults and loathsome aspects are presented, full realization to his lively sense of L P Smith's more amiable qualities Instead we have to rely on such remarks as these

'Among the qualities of his character which had most impressed and bewitched me, was an unparalleled aesthetic sensibility Words out-worn and over-worked must be reduced to their primitive meaning in order to express it His enjoyment of any beauty—of countryside or picture or building or a concatenation of words—was like a Delphic inspiration To enjoy such things with him was to be possessed by a sort of maenad enthusiasm'

But when we come to details we find as an instance of Smith's literary sensibility that after reading out Morris's *A Garden by the Sea*, the author looked up at Smith and saw that tears were running out of his eyes Smith professed an extravagant love of flowers, and in particular of hepaticas, but Mr Gathorne-Hardy tells a story showing that it was really the name and not the flower which charmed him And after noting that Smith's literary appreciation was limited, he goes on to admit, 'In other arts, his taste was less finished' and furnishes convincing evidence covering music, drama, and painting So when we hear, for instance, that 'he talked like an angel' or 'Logan could be the best company in the world', but are given telling instances of the reverse qualities, the boring anecdotes Smith endlessly repeated and behaviour that would have disgraced a hermit in whom the sense of social obligations had withered, it is difficult to feel sure where the balance should be struck

Fortunately, on the central topic, Smith's claim to the title of a literary saint, the evidence strikes me as overwhelming Smith was fond of referring to the agony of his literary labours, 'the delight and misery of his life' It was therefore a happy thought

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adventures of the philosophers' The note of *The Last Puritan* was struck by Smith when he told his disciple that beside the common interest in Jeremy Taylor another feature had attracted his favour 'That time when I first saw you in the shop, I said to myself, "This is one of the finest flowers of English civilization, Eton and Christchurch"'



to record a typical day of this agony from first-hand participation. The quotation is lengthy, to give the reader full control.

When I arrived he would sometimes be in bed writing, or else sitting close to the window, with that writing-table tray on a card table in front of him. If he was at the height of his euphoria in later years most of the morning would be taken up with uproarious accounts of his most recent practical joke. He would read me some extraordinary anonymous letter, or show me the all but equally extravagant responses of his friendly victims. One day, shortly before the war, he told me how he'd had a fantastic mock quarrel with a lady, as a climax, he got Hammond the maid who by then attended on him to buy a dead cat from the dustman and throw it into the lady's garden.

'At first I would try, as tactfully as I could, to get him down to the job in hand, but I soon learnt that these vapours must be allowed to escape of their own accord. At last, however, work would be started.

'He would produce a wad of writing paper, fixed together on a stick-pin, and start reading. My job was to make every criticism however captious, which came into my head, to almost all he listened patiently, and if for instance, I pointed out an ugly repetition of words or of sounds, he would probably say "Of course!" and correct it. Or I might suggest cutting out some words. "Quite right", he would usually answer, "look how it improves a sentence to shorten it!"

'Sometimes he was held up for the right word. If I could give it him out of my head, he would often say "That's worth a penny" (or threepence, or sixpence, I think the most I ever got was a shilling), and hand me the sum. But if my suggestions were unacceptable, the search began, Roget's *Thesaurus* was consulted, then that golden poetic dictionary of the seventeenth century, Poole's *Parnassus*, a glittering collection of gem-like epithets arranged alphabetically under appropriate nouns. If these failed he turned to his notebooks, where, carefully indexed, he had a huge collection of epithets collected during his enormous reading. "That's it!" he would say at last, lovingly, one might almost say lasciviously, murmuring over and over again the desired and delectable adjective.

'Sometimes, but rarely, he would pass over a suggestion with the faintest hint of pique, "This is only a rough draft", he would say, "I shall go over it again." But, in general—so serious and honest was his attitude to literature—he would consider any suggestion, as happily as a great naturalist might receive some otherwise unattainable information from an amateur.

'It was a curious situation—the master seeking and receiving advice from the apprentice. I suppose he used on the whole about half, or rather more, of my suggestions. But to leave that statement unqualified would seem to be claiming impertinently

and over-proudly a large credit for his finished work. In fact, I can do nothing of the kind. He worked in prose very much as Gray worked in poetry, his writings are a mosaic of other men's phrases, so sought after, so chosen and so disposed that the resulting arrangement became an original composition, and the voice entirely his own. That I could help him was due to a capacity partly my own already and partly acquired from him for noticing and retaining the sort of words and epithets which he could use also, as I assisted at his labours, I came to know the effect he would be trying for, and thus to notice when he was falling short of it.

This is surely the Higher Quilting! And yet this is how the masters did it. Smith would explain. 'Our older writers were lovers of language, they were fine gentlemen, even dandies sometimes in their use of words, they read old books and studied dictionaries in their search for apt expressions.'

Mr Gathorne-Hardy insists that here and here only we find the complete man. Smith himself wrote that, 'when you are older you will realize that a beautiful phrase is the most important thing in the world—that nothing else really matters'. This, at least was no mere phrase. Smith subordinated everything to the cult of words. First of all to be sacrificed were his own deep feelings. Mr Gathorne-Hardy thinks that Smith had such feelings but dared not express them. 'Numberless are the similes of Man's life. May I liken it now to a raft floating upon unplumbed, yet transpicuous deeps?' Some men spend their lives on the edge of the raft, gazing down into those infinite waters. Logan sat plumb in the middle, intent on his letter game, and facing no more of that unfathomable ocean than the occasional flurries of surf that sometimes flashed inevitably across his vision and these he didn't like. To gaze out upon the breadth, or to search probingly into the profundities of that ocean, was to him an unspeakable horror'. He was content to take his principles of life from others and uncritically. 'He shrunk, shudderingly, from the fullness of life, and didn't care to question overmuch convenient carelessly accepted, and comfortable assertions'. Other people were correspondingly opaque. 'The inner feelings of other people were for him a dead world'. 'On the whole Logan didn't like people he only really liked those who spoke his own language and acknowledged his own system of values, people among whom his wisdom was esteemed, and his wit comprehended'. He remained throughout his long life a spoilt child, expecting the universe to arrange itself for Smith's comfort, in great and small things alike.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>'The three women in his household, Mrs Russell, his sister, Mary, the cook and Hammond, sacrificed themselves continually to him. If eggs came to the house, he had them all. Admirers from overseas sent him a steady succession of food parcels. Only leavings went to the others. He took these things as a right.'

One of Smith's aphorisms runs 'People say that life is the thing, but I prefer reading' *Recollections* brings home to us that it wasn't a matter for choice—reading was a daily necessity. When he was more than usually incapable of conducting his life, he withdrew from human contact and took to reading as to a drug. On one such occasion, 'he read straight ahead through a large part of the Dictionary of National Biography. Being apparently incapable of living in the real world, Smith seems to have spent most of his non-working hours in make-believe, playing not always pleasant jokes on other people. He enjoyed the pleasures of *Schadenfreude* to an immoderate extent'<sup>10</sup> Childish, too, it seems, was his minor cult of obscenity, which took on a pathetic note as his mind decayed. Towards the end, 'I want', he said dreamily, 'to be old and gay and obscene'. Mr Gathorne-Hardy writes 'He had neither the robust bawdiness of the public school or the public house, nor quite the unhealthy, evasive, dirty mind of the sex-starved. (I cannot assert with authority that Logan died a virgin—though the fact, if proved, would not surprise me. But he did not seem to me dangerously repressed—I was never afraid that he'd get himself into trouble in the park.) No—apart from the classical and familiar sort of impropriety that none but the mealy-mouthed eschew—Logan's naughty stories frequently took the form of enormous, and, I am sure, quite unreal fantasies about the private life of actual people'

The list of childish traits to be found illustrated in *Recollections* is long: the collecting of old books merely to raise envy in friends who coveted without being able to procure copies, boasting in company, the naïve admiration of fashionable or titled people. L. P. Smith was evidently so very much less distinguished a person than the eminent members of the 'set' to which he can claim to have belonged that his interest for the sociologist is limited: he is an extreme case: what is overt and central in his predicament appears fitfully and as it were on the underside of the greater figures. But it appears there nevertheless, this unhealthy streak, and the signs of it would no doubt be more abundant if we had similarly outspoken 'Recollections', by qualified observers, of the lives of James, Edith Wharton, Santayana, Adams, and Berenson.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup>E. Marsh in *A Number of People* cites a mild example (in a letter from Smith) 'I was inordinately solaced to find that you had detected a misprint of Chapman's own. We are all human, and those of us whose pasts are spotted and pimpled with misprints delight in derelictions of this kind in the supposedly impeccable. But you point out his slip with great kindness, and I do not think that it is on this account that he has taken to his bed'

<sup>11</sup>Except, perhaps, as providing further illustration of the theme of these remarks, Janet Adam Smith's *Henry James and Robert Louis Stevenson* must be dismissed as a piece of unrequired book-making. It is an attempt to treat the two figures as of the same order of merit—and there is, it must be admitted, excuse enough

Mr Gathorne-Hardy was obliged by his sense of loyalty to the facts to devote the greater part of his book to the ugly breakdown which ended in insanity. Before taking leave of L. P. Smith, I should like to recall that he is the author of *Words and Idioms*, a book that for many years to come will prove useful to students interested in a use of words quite different from that exhibited in

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on James's side. In all his writings on Stevenson, James never came near 'placing' his friend. There is no echo of Stevenson's own self-criticism. 'My skill deserts me, such as it is or was. It was a very little dose of inspiration, and a pretty little trick of style, long lost, improved by the most heroic industry. I cannot take myself seriously, as an artist the limitations are so obvious.' Instead James's pen provided, as each work of Stevenson's appeared, material for the most extravagant blurbs. 'For the said *Catriona* so reeks and hums with genius that there is no refuge for the desperate reader but in straightforward prostration. If it hadn't been for *Catriona* we couldn't this year [1893] have held up our head. It had been long, before that, since any decent sentence was turned in English.' James makes it clear that for him Stevenson 'before all things . . . is a writer with a style' and he evidently also appreciated him as a rare critic of style. 'I can't (spiritually) afford *not* to put the book under the eye of the sole and single Anglo-Saxon capable of perceiving—though he may care for little else in it—how well it is written' (Stevenson countered with extravagant praise for *Roderick Hudson* but confessed, 'I can't bear *The Portrait of a Lady*', and in 1892 wrote, 'I am now reduced [for reading] to two of my contemporaries, you and Barre'). But it was after Stevenson's death that James expounded the grounds for his effusive 'I love so your divine prose'. In a long review of *Letters to His Family and Friends*, published in 1900 and reprinted in *Notes on Novelists*, James singled out for praise 'a passage so richly charged with imagination as that in which the young lover recalls her as he has first seen and desired her, seated at grey of evening on an old tomb in the moorland, and unconsciously making him think, by her scrap of song, both of his mother who sang it and whom he has lost, and

"of their common ancestors now dead, of their rude wars composed their weapons buried with them, and of these strange changelings, their descendants, who lingered a little in their places and would soon be gone also, and perhaps sung of by others at the gloaming hour. By one of the unconscious arts of tenderness the two women were enshrined together in his memory. Tears, in that hour of sensibility, came into his eyes indifferently at the thought of either and the girl, from being something merely bright and shapely, was caught up into the zone of things serious as life and death and his dead mother. So that, in all ways and on either side, Fate played his game artfully with this

*Anna* and that for the part he played in bringing to light the Burley MS (which was destroyed by fire soon after he found it) the name of Smith will be remembered with gratitude as long as Donne has scholarly readers

H A MASON

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poor pair of children. The generations were prepared, the pangs were made ready, before the curtain rose on the dark drama."

'It is not a tribute that Stevenson would have appreciated, but I may not forbear noting how closely such a page recalls many another in the tenderest manner of Pierre Loti. There would not, compared, be a pin to choose between them'