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Most of the contributions offered in these pages come from outside sources, not our university. To hear in our Forum the voices of academics from a distance — from the United Kingdom, Nigeria and Canada — makes *Theoria* what we always want it to be: a journal serving the wider community of scholars. We welcome in particular an article from England from Professor G. K. Hunter. This is a record of the very full lecture series he delivered during a visit to Natal in August and September 1974.

Among the contributions of those nearby we mention sadly but gratefully the criticism of a Dickens novel by Dr Christina van Heyningen. This was the last literary commentary she wrote and was accepted only a short while before her sudden death. As it now appears, it is a movingly appropriate end to her long association with *Theoria* of which she was literary editor from 1955 till 1964. It reflects her warm concern for other people as individuals and the value she attached to the feelings and the imagination. Her last months were not unlike little Paul's, weakened as she was and usually confined indoors: an alert joy in quiet pursuits impressed anyone who was in touch with her. We are glad to be able to honour her distinction and to mark her departure by publishing the article on *Dombey and Son*.

THE EDITORS

# THE BEGINNINGS OF 'HAMLET' AND 'KING LEAR'*

*by* G. K. HUNTER

The pleasure of making startling statements has always to be tempered by the unfortunate discovery that such statements are seldom true. The most one can hope to get away with are startling half-truths. So if I begin today by indulging myself and telling you that the expositional patterns of *Hamlet* and *King Lear* are identical, I'm afraid that I will have to spend the rest of the lecture repenting at leisure, or at least explaining the specialized angle of vision in which these startling coincidences can be observed.

Let me begin with a rough description of why I am able to make such a statement at all. How in fact do the two plays begin? And already in that question I am caught in problems of definition. When I think about the 'beginning' of a play, what do I mean? I certainly do not refer only to the opening moments or even to the opening scenes of these two plays, but rather to the opening process by which we learn to place the various elements in the dramatic structure. In *King Lear* the first scene will in fact suffice; but in *Hamlet* the material of Act I scene ii is at least as relevant as that of Act I scene i.

Both *Hamlet* and *Lear* begin with what we may describe as conversational preludes between men of middle rank; and these preludes then give way to full exposition in court scenes of considerable splendour and some moral hollowness. Both King Lear and King Claudius begin these court occasions with speeches from the throne, in which they outline the business of this important day — the business for which they have assembled the whole court in some official kind of meeting. These are speeches of some rhetorical magnificence, but as we advance into the two scenes we discover that the magnificence is largely factitious, created to make an effect rather than effective because of what it creates. Lear announces his retirement, which no doubt is always in royal circles an occasion of great splendour. It is also, like the retirement of railwaymen after forty years in the service, an occasion for a great deal of hypocrisy. Lear is going to retire and divide his land and his sovereign powers among his three daughters, and he is staging — if that is the correct word — the present event so that his daughters can engage in an oratorical contest in which they will show, by oratory, who loves him

* This was given as a lecture on 20th August 1974 in the Department of English during Professor Hunter's visit to the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg.

best, and therefore who deserves to be rewarded with the largest grant of land. The contest is, however, a fake. The first line of the play, in the conversation between Gloucester and Kent, has told us that the land is already divided, no doubt in some conclave of civil servants totally lacking in magnificence. The fake nature of the contest is perhaps most crucially obvious when Lear turns to Cordelia and asks her

> what can you say to draw
> A third more opulent than your sisters?

The most simple of arithmetic will tell us that, two thirds having gone, only one kind of one third remains. The actual abdication also turns out to have something phoney about it. Lear tells us he will keep

> The name and all the additions to a king,

but his conception of what this 'reservation' means is obviously larger than the rhetoric of the occasion seems to imply.

But it is not really with the content of this scene (or the corresponding one in *Hamlet*) that I am concerned, but rather with the process by which Shakespeare uncovers what is happening — the process by which the power and limitation of the sovereign is exposed to our view. In *Lear* we see the King deal with three parallel claimants — the three daughters, Gonerill, Regan and Cordelia — and to each in turn he poses what is virtually the same question:

> Which of you shall we say doth love us most?

The first and second claimants conform to the fake ritual and support the terms in which the question is proposed. But the third answerer, Cordelia, denies the whole premise on which the scene is set up. She refuses to accept the meaningfulness of the question, and restates the relationship between herself and her father in terms completely outside the prevailing frame of reference. The ritual has to change its nature before it can deal with this impediment, and Lear soon reveals, of course, in his response to Cordelia (as, in a reinforcing form immediately afterwards, in his response to Kent) the ingrained habits of authority that the ritual was designed to conceal. The audience is caught by the problem of the honest answerer, more or less confined to monosyllables, in the context of an established language of some attractive magnificence, but morally hollow.

If we turn now to *Hamlet* Act I scene ii we find a closely parallel process. This scene also begins with the King's speech from the throne, and Claudius (like Lear) immediately establishes his command over the business being transacted. In what seems to be the first (rather than the last) speech of his reign he brilliantly balances the various roles he has to perform: he feels deeply the loss of his brother (the former sovereign) — or at least he says he does — and he excuses the haste of his marriage to his brother's widow, 'the imperial jointress to this warlike state'. In both these cases, he implies, *raison d'État* has compelled him to restrain his natural human emotion. And for the same reason he has to proceed now to state-business. Claudius's business is, like Lear's, presented in terms of three parallel claimants. This time the three parallel figures are male, but they are not Claudius's sons, to make an exact match against Lear's daughters. Fortinbras, Laertes and Hamlet are paralleled, however, as the sons of deprived fathers, carrying parallel burdens of revenge for their fathers throughout the length of the play. In the scene we are considering Claudius first of all shows his exemplary authority and expedition in disposing of the problem of Fortinbras. The problem we already know about, for Horatio has outlined it to us in Act I scene i. And what Horatio described there as so complex in its nature and so difficult to understand, Claudius now deals with in a few curt sentences and quick orders. In respect of the first claimant on his attention the King of Denmark seems to be in total control. One line after sending the ambassadors to Norway Claudius turns to another young man, Laertes. And in respect of Laertes he is no less expeditious in his command. Again, the effect is partly made by contrast. Set beside Polonius's wordy and convoluted

> 'A hath, my Lord, wrung from me my slow leave
> By laboursome petition; and at last
> Upon his will I sealed my hard consent

(that is, I told him he could go) Claudius seems to offer us a model of decisive activity.

Claudius now turns, however, to the third 'son'; but, as with Lear, the co-operation of the persons being required to accept their orders does not last beyond two. Claudius's first line to Hamlet is marked by the cleverness we have already come to expect of him:

> But now, my cousin Hamlet, and my son.

He makes a double claim for relationship, both as uncle and as

step-father, with the implicit but tactfully unstated extension of Hamlet's role into 'heir-apparent'. Hamlet is, however, no more moved by rhetoric than Cordelia was. His replies seem designed to avoid giving Claudius any leverage for the manipulations he so obviously excels in. He speaks only of 'seeming' or 'acting' as the modes of behaviour that might be expected in the scene. When Claudius made his opening claim that he had acquired his crown and his wife as a result of his selfless pursuit of duty rather than inclination, we in the audience may have had our suspicions. Our recent experience of Nixon rhetoric gives us, of course, an unusual advantage. But there is very little to go on. It is not until the counter-rhetoric of Hamlet establishes itself that we begin to identify the quality of our suspicion. The relationship between regal authority and acting only then becomes a question. The orotundity and complexity of Claudius's rhetoric, the protestation about what he feels, the elaboration of what he tells us is his delicate emotional balance between contrary impulses — all these seem to be downgraded by Hamlet's riddling refusal to conform. If Claudius has the energy to control his emotions in this elaborate way, we seem to be told, the question must arise whether he has these emotions at all.

In *Hamlet*, then, we have the same three-stage response to royal command as we have in *King Lear*, the same design of two conformists followed by one non-conformist who brings the whole meaning of the royal display into question. In *Hamlet*, however, the confrontation ends in a compromise, which is really the most that the situation will yield at this point. Claudius is anxious, above all, to save the appearances. The Queen casts herself into the role of mediator and effectively achieves her end. And Hamlet is at this stage better equipped to be a spoiler than an antagonist. The presence of the Queen allows him both to ignore Claudius and to obey him, while pretending to obey his mother. Hamlet has in fact nothing very precise to set against Claudius at this point in the play, except the sense of a rather nasty smell which, like nasty smells the world over, is hard to define and impossible to trace to its source. This sense of an undefinable moral unease is of course equally present in Cordelia. She cannot be precisely sure about the purpose of the question she is bringing into doubt by her refusal to answer. Many commentators have felt that she is, in scene one, a bit emotionally obtuse, and, however justified morally, more than a little priggish. Why does she continue to be so pig-headed in refusing to say the kind of nice things that old men like to hear? I think that we must allow that the pressure to compromise is present here no less than in *Hamlet*. But in *King Lear* the pressure not to back a hunch, not to go after absolutes is present only in *our* perception of

the potentials in the situation; compromise is nowhere endorsed inside this play.

Shakespeare uses the opposition between hollow public rhetoric and private truth-telling in different ways in the two plays. In *King Lear* his eventual concern is with the King and with the consequences that stem from commitment to hollow formulation. In *Hamlet*, on the other hand, his interest lies with the individual nay-sayer. As soon as Claudius can find a formula for compromise, the court breaks up and we are left alone with Hamlet. In his command of public rhetoric here Claudius is very much of the type of the public relations expert, and his final speech has all the marks of a P.R. handout at the end of a difficult and quarrelsome meeting, telling the world that everyone is satisfied:

> Why, 'tis a loving and a fair reply.
> Be as ourself in Denmark. Madam, come;
> This gentle and unforced accord of Hamlet
> Sits smiling to my heart; in grace whereof,
> No jocund health that Denmark drinks today
> But the great cannon to the clouds shall tell *etc.*

This successful disengagement leaves Hamlet alone on the stage with nothing to bite on, while Claudius's primitive but effective Danish Broadcasting Service thunders out its untruths. The first soliloquy explores what he can feel — the sense of a bad smell — but there is nothing of his own he can formulate. Both Hamlet and his story are characterized by the painfulness of rejecting what is around one, a natural environment and the modes of communication that seem accepted and effective in it.

*King Lear*, on the other hand, deals with the painfulness of taking the falsities of one's environment as natural. The two plays begin, I have suggested, by using the same expository formula; but Shakespeare's eyes are fixed on different eventual goals, and this pushes the material of the exposition in different directions. In each case the effect of the initial conflict is deprivation, but the two deprivations are sharply opposite. For Hamlet, deprivation comes from the requirement that he stay in the court; he is not to go back to Wittenberg; he cannot escape from the situation building up around him. In *King Lear*, the deprivation of Cordelia comes from her being exiled from the court. But in each case — and this is a further parallel — the deprivation is followed immediately by an unexpected new reinforcement, offering support to the embattled but ill-at-ease individual. Thus Cordelia is no sooner disinherited by her father than she is adopted into another royal family: the King of France

chooses her as his queen. And Hamlet no sooner announces, at the end of the first soliloquy, that he is condemned to silence, there being nothing outside himself to give support to his feelings, than Horatio appears and tells him that his father is still, in some sense, a member of the community. In each case the sentence of deprivation suddenly opens up a positive way into the future.

* * * * *

At the beginning of this lecture I spoke of my need to manipulate the viewpoint in order to produce the startling coincidences. The time has now come to confess the methods by which this has been achieved. Many of you will not have failed to notice one element in the manipulation. Both *Hamlet* and *King Lear* begin, I have said, with private conversations which then give way to large state rituals. I have concentrated attention on the state rituals, and given comparatively little space to the private conversations. They are, of course, remarkably unlike. The conversation in *King Lear* is a short prose section of thirty-three lines only. The 'private conversation' in *Hamlet* is, however, a full scene of some hundred and seventy-five lines. These figures are not presented as particularly significant in themselves; but they do point to a radical difference of balance between the two sections, between the prelude and fugue, as it were. The identity of pattern I have been discussing is not, however, falsified by this difference; indeed the variation can be used to point to the different pressures exerted on the pattern by the differing subject-matter. In *King Lear* the opening conversation between Gloucester and Kent prepares us for the action to follow in a perfectly straightforward way. We are waiting to see the action which the opening lines refer to — the division of the kingdom — and though the conversation moves from the political to the personal, from the King's sons-in-law to the Earl of Gloucester's two sons, we are never completely engaged with the Gloucester material as the full foreground of the play. The level of the prose discourse does not rise into passion or excitement. The characters are established, but within a framework that needs the King and court to fill it out. In *King Lear*, then, the prelude is preparative only; it gives us our bearings while the major actors gather in the wings.

In *Hamlet*, on the other hand, the prelude is complex, and on the face of it remote from what follows. It is set in the open. It is midnight in a northern latitude.' It is cold. In the darkness isolated individuals search for one another and demand passwords before accepting identity. And they are conscious, it would seem from their language, of an inner darkness no less than an outer one.

'Tis bitter cold
And I am sick at heart

says Francisco, conveying a sense of more than merely physical discomfort. The whole scene supports an impression of metaphysical unease. The characters cohere together, even when their identities are established, around a frightening mystery:

What, has this thing appeared again to-night?

We may notice that this is the first full blank-verse line in the play, the first line to give us a sense of having 'arrived' at the linguistic norm. But the line is not a very fulfilling norm to have arrived at. The significance of 'this thing' is not to be made explicit; we are to be permitted to explore what men say about it rather than what it is. The ghost that appears on the battlements has the shape and the habiliments of the late King of Denmark, and the consensus view is that he is offering them some kind of warning. The preludic nature of the scene is established by the forecast of dire events that the ghost seems to indicate. But the nature of the warning remains frighteningly unfocussed. Horatio, who acts throughout the scene as the articulate intellectual and ready interpreter, explains to the others and more particularly to us the classical background of ghostly walking:

A little ere the mightiest Julius fell,
The graves stood tenantless, and the sheeted dead
Did squeak and gibber in the Roman streets . . .
And even the like precurse of feared events,
As harbingers preceding still the fates
And prologue to the omen coming on,
Have heaven and earth together demonstrated
Unto our climatures and countrymen.

'Feared events' certainly seem to be implied by the ghost, but what these feared events may turn out to be is shrouded in the darkness which surrounds everything in this scene. Horatio has the good scholar's ability to discover parallel examples, but he has also, I fear, the scholar's usual inability to say precisely what the function of these parallels may be. Are we to be expecting something like the murder of the mightiest Julius? Even Horatio does not say so. He is, however, able to offer us a series of alternative explanations, with more than tutorial rapidity. He has scarcely recovered from being, as he says, 'harrowed with wonder', unable to believe the evidence

of his own eyes, when he begins to offer explanations. Clearly the course on *Spoekwissenschaft* at Wittenberg was not wasted on him. He keeps talking, and soon the facts have begun to cohere into a totally plausible explanation. The armaments that are being constructed, the preparation of ships, and indeed the whole state of watchfulness that has caused these men to pace around the battlements in the middle of a cold night — everything that has been mentioned — begins to fit together in a neat cause-and-effect pattern. But Shakespeare's purpose in this scene is not aimed at defusing the ghost by the powers of reason. Rather the contrary. As soon as Horatio has crowned his explanation with the classical exemplum I have quoted already ('In the most high and palmy state of Rome' etc.) the Ghost enters a second time. Horatio's apostrophe to it is allowed to twist through a despairing spiral of new alternative explanations. What is the ghost really doing here? No-one in fact knows. Perhaps he is seeking some good deed that will release him from torment. Perhaps (as before) he is making some point about the fate of the nation. Perhaps he is held by the memory of some buried treasure. As Horatio's explanations proliferate, the fact that he is not really in touch with the ghost at all becomes more and more evident. The quality of the event seems to be placed beyond the capacity of any explanation. And yet it is clear that the ghost has something to say. It was about to speak, it wanted to speak, and then the cock crowed and it fled away to hell. What was it trying to say? The explanations of confident scholarship have evaporated; the mystery is, indeed, even more looming at the end of the scene than at the beginning. The ghost has been seen earlier as a revered figure, as a representative of the splendour of the nation's history; but now he is seen as a figure from hell, afraid of Christian daylight. This paradox (neither aspect cancels its opposite) seems to place the ghost beyond the normal categories of explanation. But it has a more immediate effect on the relationship between Act I scene i and Act I scene ii. The first scene has moved in time from midnight to cock-crow or daylight. It begins in the dark, with people who cannot recognise one another, and ends in the Christian daylight, from which the ghost has to fly away. What kind of a Christian daylight is this that banishes the ghost of the late king? The court-assembly of Act I scene ii seems to be conducted in the daylight. It is, presumably, safe from hellish visitation. But, as my discussion of it has suggested, it is a daylight which conceals one from another, deceives, and darkens counsel. We may have to break back into the ghost-infested darkness to pick up the kind of clues that may be available for us there. It can hardly surprise us that Hamlet says at the end of Act I scene ii, when he hears of the events on the platform,

Would the night were come!

The clarity of daylight has been, in some sense, devalued by the events which precede it.

The different qualities of these two preludes can be seen, I suggest, as related to the different natures of the plays to which they belong. *Hamlet* begins, if I can return to my musical analogy, in an elaborately supported remote key. We circle round an event largely disconnected from what follows. We have in the course of the night moved round a mystery. We have the sense of a truth almost revealed to us and then adventitiously withdrawn. We have been given explanations which seem to turn back on the nature of the explainer rather than the quality of the thing explained. The very nature of truth and explanation seems to be at issue. And this is confirmed when we come to the main body of the exposition in the second scene. The prelude deals with honest individuals searching through extraordinary experience for a truth they cannot find. In the main movement we see facts exposed in such a form that the truth cannot be known. *Hamlet* is a play which returns again and again to the inadequacy of our understanding of what we do or propose to do. The two scenes I have been dealing with relate to one another clearly enough as expositions of this issue, and the extraordinary length of the opening conversation (as against that in *King Lear*) presumably derives from the need to show human understanding engaged in searching, achieving and failing.

*King Lear*, however, is not concerned with the questions, 'What is going on here?' or 'What is the meaning of this statement?' The question which its opening movement raises is rather, 'What will happen when these events (sufficiently clear in their meaning) mature into their consequences?' As a result, the exposition in *King Lear* can afford to be forward-pointing in a simple way that would be wholly inappropriate to *Hamlet*. At the end of Act I scene i of *King Lear* the important characters of the play have nearly all had their situations radically transformed: Kent is exiled, Cordelia is both exiled and married (or about to be married), Lear has given away his kingdom, and his two elder daughters have divided the royal power between them. At the end of *Hamlet* Act I scene ii, however, nothing substantial has been changed: ambassadors have been sent to Norway and Laertes has permission to go to Paris — a poor harvest of consequences, one must allow!

In an argument related to that advanced here[1] I have suggested that Shakespeare's first tragedies, *Titus Andronicus* and *Romeo and Juliet*, share an expository skeleton having much the same function as that found here in *Hamlet* and *King Lear*. This may reveal no

more than that I have an unhealthy obsession with expository skeletons. But it may show something else — that Shakespeare was liable, as one would expect a busy professional to be, to use again the structures that had been successful in the past. One would expect him to repeat himself, and it has always seemed surprising that he does so little. Perhaps we have been looking in the wrong places, for content rather than form. If my arguments are correct, we can see him wringing totally different effects out of identical structures. His responsiveness to the nature of the material in the particular play so encrusts the underlying pattern that the very existence of the pattern becomes problematical. But 'looking in the right place' and so finding the deep structures we are searching for must always be a problematic procedure, attaching to the critic as much as to the work; and this is particularly the case (I should warn you) when we deal with critics who seek to secure their audience's attention by making startling statements.

*University of Warwick.*

NOTE

[1] Now published as 'Shakespeare's earliest tragedies: *Titus Andronicus* and *Romeo and Juliet*', *Shakespeare Survey 27* (1974), 1-9.

# DOMBEY AND SON

*by* C. VAN HEYNINGEN

When Uncle Sol and Captain Cuttle join Walter Gay in toasting 'Dombey and Son', Walter adds 'and Daughter' — and indeed in the book as a whole, Dickens pays at least as much attention to Florence as he does to Son. Florence, in her very first appearance, at her mother's deathbed (she dies in giving birth to Paul), has been most movingly presented:

> 'Mama', said the child.
>
> The little voice, familiar and dearly loved, awakened some show of consciousness, even at that ebb. For a moment, the closed eyelids trembled, and the nostril quivered, and the faintest shadow of a smile was seen.
>
> 'Mama!' cried the child, sobbing aloud, 'Oh dear Mama! Oh dear Mama!'
>
> The doctor gently brushed the scattered ringlets of the child aside from the face and mouth of the mother. Alas how calm they lay there; how little breath there was to stir them!
>
> Thus, clinging to that slight spar within her arms, the mother drifted out upon the dark and unknown sea that rolls round all the world.

Here Dickens, by the pure intensity of his compassion, moves us for Florence as much as he ever does for Paul. And here, for the first time (it is very early in the book, only at the end of Chapter I) he uses the image of the 'sea that rolls round all the world'. This image is to haunt the story like a refrain in poetry, especially until Paul is dead, but also afterwards. The illustrator, Phiz, suggests this in his frontispiece, drawn with exquisite poetic delicacy, of the encircling sea, binding all the disparate parts of the book together — including even Walter's shipwreck and rescue. But it does not, of course, distinguish between the true and the false elements in Dickens's story. And as both are very strongly present in the book, it behoves us to examine them closely.

We don't need to bother about the false in the first seventeen chapters, in which our interest in Paul and concern for him, push almost everything else out of the way. I remember how a very discriminating friend of mine once remarked that he couldn't like Trollope because there was too little poetry in him. This remark suddenly and brilliantly illuminated for me the truth that Dickens *is* a poet. This is nowhere more evident than in the first part of *Dombey and Son.*

Paul is the object of his father's most passionate love and concern. This is real always, even in the midst of Mr Dombey's coldness to most people, and his quite overweening pride and snobbery — in fact, though very seldom, it slightly modifies those qualities. Actually, Mr Dombey may be said to have unwittingly caused Paul's early death. Yet that he really loves Paul is shown in many a passage, where, having received bad news of Paul's health from Mrs Chick and others who keep the truth from him as long as they can, he sits alone and silent for a long time trying to digest the news. Mr Dombey was not responsible for Paul's first deprivation, for the poor baby loses his mother at birth. Then he is as suddenly deprived of his wet-nurse, the kind and wholesome 'Mrs Richards' (really Mrs Toodles). That second deprivation is directly due to Mr Dombey's pride and snobbery: he has forbidden Richards to allow any contact between the baby and her family; yet she has secretly disobeyed him (after the ordeal of the icy christening) in order to visit her own family in their humble but pleasant home. How Paul was fed we are not told: we know that Mr Chick's suggestion that 'perhaps something temporary might be done with a teapot' is ignominiously rejected. A baby's bottle is nowhere mentioned (if such a thing existed in those days). And yet he *is* fed, though probably by no means as comfortably, naturally and wholesomely as when he lay at Mrs Richards's breast. Next, when he is still very small, he is sent for sea-air to Brighton, and becomes the third of Mrs Pipchin's unfortunate little boarders of the moment. The other two are no company for Paul, being Master Bitherstone (an embittered little boy from India) and Miss Pankey, who is always being ruthlessly shampooed almost out of existence. Mrs Pipchin's house, with its dark chamber of correction, is a dreadful place, and Master Bitherstone and Miss Pankey are, not to put too fine a point on it, treated no less than brutally. But Paul, though in danger because of Mrs Pipchin's reputation as one who knows how to treat children, is protected partly by her awe of Mr Dombey, and chiefly by his own character.

For Paul has a wonderful way of unconsciously vanquishing the redoubtable Mrs Pipchin. 'Well, Sir', says Mrs Pipchin to Paul soon after his arrival, 'How do you think you shall like me?'

> 'I don't think I shall like you at all. I want to go away. This isn't my house'.
>
> 'No, it's mine', retorted Mrs Pipchin.
>
> 'It's a very nasty one', said Paul.
>
> 'There's a worse place in it than this, though', said Mrs Pipchin, 'where we shut up our bad boys'.

'Has *he* ever been in it?' asked Paul, pointing out Master Bitherstone.

Mrs Pipchin nodded assent; and Paul had enough to do for the rest of the day in surveying Master Bitherstone from head to foot, watching all the workings of his countenance with the interest attaching to a boy of mysterious and terrible experiences.

He is not nearly as frightened as Mrs Pipchin intended him to be. 'Berry's very fond of you, ain't she?' he remarks on another occasion, when he and Mrs Pipchin are sitting, as is their wont, at her hearth, with the cat (Berry is Mrs Pipchin's much-exploited, but fanatically loyal niece).

'Yes', said Mrs Pipchin.

'Why?' asked Paul.

'Why', returned the disconcerted old lady. 'How can you ask such things, Sir? Why are you so fond of your sister Florence?'.

'Because she's very good', said Paul. 'There's nobody like Florence'.

'Well', retorted Mrs Pipchin shortly, 'and there's nobody like me, I suppose'.

'Ain't there really, though?' asked Paul, leaning forward in his chair, and looking at her very hard.

'No', said the old lady.

'I'm glad of that', observed Paul, rubbing his hands thoughtfully. 'That's a very good thing'.

Mrs Pipchin didn't dare to ask him why, lest she should receive some perfectly annihilating answer.

And when she threatens him with a mad bull that gored to death a child who asked too many questions, Paul asks how the bull would know that the child has asked too many questions, if he was mad. 'I don't believe that story', he adds with authority.

'Not if it should happen to have been a tame bull, you little infidel?' says Mrs Pipchin.

As Paul had not considered the subject in that light, and had founded his conclusions on the alleged insanity of the bull, he allowed himself to be put down for the present. But he sat turning it over in his mind, with such an obvious intention of fixing Mrs Pipchin presently, that even that hardy old lady deemed it prudent to retreat until he should have forgotten the subject.

In fact, the child is unconsciously witty. The wit in his case is more devastating than adult wit, for it comes from a sharp intelligence acting on an innocent mind, and is not intended to hurt.

When he has grown in understanding and reached the ripe age of six, poor little Paul is taken to Dr Blimber's cramming school, also in Brighton. When Mr Dombey says 'You'll soon be a man now' Paul does not protest. Beyond saying once 'I had rather be a child', he accepts his father's will, and we are made to feel the cruelty of his parting from Florence (though he will be with her at weekends) by the detail of his hot little hand clinging to hers as long as possible.

Dickens makes us feel how much too young Paul is to be subjected to Cornelia Blimber's forcing, by telling how at the beginning of dinner-time that day all that could be seen of him above the table cloth was his eyebrows, and that he had to be raised up on his chair by being placed on several large books which he had to carry to and fro every meal time 'like a little elephant and castle'. As this is a very exclusive and expensive school, with only ten pupils, the appointments are excessively genteel. When a pupil is being punished by having to do without his supper, a slice of dry bread is taken up to him with a folded napkin and a silver fork.

Dickens manages this extremely delicate part of the story with masterly skill and control — skill and control so masterly that they seem to come of themselves, not to be willed by anyone. Dickens shows us Dombey (as he is now called) cruelly treated by 'them Blimbers', as Susan Nipper indignantly calls them. They don't mean to be cruel, but for all their learning (Mrs Blimber only pretends to be learned, which does just as well) they are shockingly ignorant. They have no idea how to teach. They merely set passages to be learned by heart out of books — and so many books! Paul's very first homework is 'a little English and a deal of Latin — a trifle of orthography, a glance at ancient history', and so on and so on. He is not told how or where to begin, and of course soon becomes thoroughly confused. 'Oh Dombey, Dombey', says Miss Blimber, 'This is very shocking'. Paul suggests that he might learn better if he could sometimes talk to old Glubb (the old salt who used to push his chair). This piece of advice shocks the Blimbers, but it shows us how desperately lonely and homesick poor Paul is.

The Blimbers have neither the sensibility nor the imagination to gauge a child's capacity. Paul, who is barely six, of course does not understand his lessons in the least. No wonder the poor child, who tries very hard, constantly has a headache. It is Florence who, by first mastering the lessons herself (and this takes some effort, for girls in those days were seldom taught), teaches him everything that

he finally knows. The effect of this is to make Paul overflow with gratitude. 'Oh, Floy', he calls out from his bedroom at Mrs Pipchin's, 'How I love you! 'How I love you, Floy'. And I you, dear!'. 'Oh, I am sure of that, Floy'.

As his physical weakness rapidly grows (he has 'a great lack of vital force', the Apothecary later diagnoses) our insight into Paul's nature strengthens, and as it grows deeper, so does our regret deepen, with our anxiety for this dear child. Everybody has become gentle and kind to him. All his mercilessly harried fellow-pupils forget for long moments their troubles, and think of him. The very Apothecary whom Dr Blimber has called in to see Paul, when he can hardly, for the time being, walk, or hold his head up any longer, treats him with a marvellous tact and kindness; when he sits on the bottom step of the stairs watching the workmen take to pieces the wise clock that used to ask 'How-is-my-lit-tle-friend' over and over again to the beating of Paul's pulse, the workmen and servants take a tender interest in him. His great object is to be universally loved at last by everybody in the school, so that Florence can believe that he has been happy there. And by his innocent interest in all the people and all they do, and his eagerness, as long as he is well enough, to perform little services for them, he earns the affection and goodwill of everybody.

How skilfully Dickens makes us feel at the end-of-term party as if we were Paul himself, sitting up in a nest of cushions watching the party with great interest. But, with the child's, our consciousness fluctuates — now it is quite sharp and bright, now it fades, now it revives and finally, when the time comes for Paul and Florence to go, it is confused and darkened so that he can't stay at Mrs Pipchin's for only one night as planned, but we learn that he has to be there for several days and nights before he is sufficiently restored, for the time being, to be able to travel on to London.

He has long mysteriously and very vaguely known that he will die. 'When I grow up', he says in talking lightheartedly of his plans — then pauses and corrects that to 'If I grow up'. He is of course suffering from extreme lassitude, a vague and placid acceptance of his own coming death; yet, with almost unconsciousness, the idea of never again having to repeat a lesson to Cornelia Blimber must be very welcome to him. But even at home in his own bed, he proves to be an 'old-fashioned' child, that is, with an intelligence and imaginative insight far beyond his years. He is troubled by penetrating to the suffering of his silent father. 'Don't be so sorry for me, dear Papa', he calls out over and over again. 'Indeed, I am quite happy.' And we believe him.

Everything around and about Paul towards the end is bathed in

a mild golden circumambience of interest and affection. This seems to be expressed also by the golden light of the gradually sinking sun day after day on the wall of his bedroom, and our sadness, as we read, though deep, is gentle too. Only Mr Dombey is not calmed by that light. Though Florence's grief is at least as great as his, we can share hers, but not his, because he proudly rejects all sympathy.

This early part of the book is pure poetry. There is never a word too much, and every word tells. We breathe that lovely air in its sadness and beauty, and are only roused out of it towards the very end by one or two extremely false touches. Dickens cannot be content at this stage of his development as a man and a writer, to let Paul merely die. He must offer himself and the reader some conventional comfort, and this is so thoroughly out of key with the absolute sincerity of his feeling in the rest of the death-scene, that it jars for the moment, horribly. 'Mama is like you, Flo', Dickens makes him say with his last breath. 'But tell them that the print upon the stairs at school is not divine enough.' Unlikely words! All the night after he had written this otherwise beautiful chapter, Dickens paced the streets of Paris alone trying in vain to comfort his heart for the loss of Paul, who had become, in one way, as real to him as a child of flesh and blood, and, in another way, even more real.

For a little while after the end of this chapter Dickens remains under the spell of his own genius and its gentle mood. But presently he tries to shake this off and transfer the interest, as he says, from Paul to Florence, and a little later, much worse, to a new character, Mrs Edith Granger. His genius deserts him there, however, completely.

Florence we cannot believe in when she goes every night in solitary misery to knock at her father's door, and not having the courage to knock or go in, kisses the wooden panel. Dickens has made Mr Dombey so utterly unfeeling, so unbending to everybody, so unmoved by people like Captain Cuttle and Walter, as well as Florence, that the faint beginnings of dislike that we have begun to feel for him are tremendously heightened into positive hatred. When at last after many barren chapters in which Mr Dombey behaves with incredible scorn and stupidity and when his wife has left him (apparently with Mr Carker), he strikes Florence to the ground, we rejoice. Afterwards he doesn't even know that she has fled him and left his house for ever. But we are delighted that Florence has reacted naturally at last by simply running away to the only friend she has left, Captain Cuttle. Sol Gills has vanished, Walter is in the Bermudas, or drowned, Susan Nipper has long since been sacked by Mr Dombey, and Florence, who has always had a good deal of natural-

ness in her, is greatly strengthened in this quality by living unconventionally in Captain Cuttle's house (it is really Sol Gills's) for the rest of her maiden life.

But oh, the dull chapters in between! — in which Mr Dombey's incredible pride is met by Mrs Dombey's equally incredible pride and self-control! Mr Carker is a convincing villain in Dickens's best style: with his 'myriads of teeth', as a friend of mine once put it, and his malign, almost supernatural, power over Rob the Grinder, we believe in him absolutely. The only proper reaction to him is Diogenes', the dog's, who barks furiously at him from upstairs and would like to tear him to pieces. 'You have a good scent, Di' is Dickens's comment — 'Cats, boy, cats!'.

The only thing we enjoy about Carker is his death, fittingly reflected in the frontispiece; the glaring headlights of an express train and a figure staggering in front of it. We are delighted by his fate and have a comfortable feeling about it. The children who used to love looking at the pictures in my *Dombey and Son* used to identify him. 'That's the Wicked Man', they would say. 'He was killed by a train'. This comfortable feeling is not in the least disturbed by such details as Carker's blood and fragments of him being licked up by the heat of the engine and by dogs that are driven away.

But to return to Florence. She is, except in the greater part of the middle chapters, a true-to-life character. And it is Paul's reaction to her that has partly made her so. He is at his window at Blimber's with Mr Toots, when suddenly he breaks off in great excitement. 'There she is! — there she is, she sees me — she sees me!' cries the child in excitement. 'Goodnight, dear, goodnight, goodnight.' His quick transition to a state of unbounded pleasure, as he stood at his window, kissing and clapping his hands; and the way in which the light retreated from his features as she passed out of his view were too remarkable to pass — even Mr Toots's notice. Such details as these give Florence more life than is ever vouchsafed to characters like Agnes Wickstead, for example. Then, having run away after her father's cruel blow, she takes refuge with Captain Cuttle, settles down with him in a very practical way, and sleeps in old Sol Gills's deserted room. The details of how Captain Cuttle puts his quite inappropriate treasures on the chest of drawers and makes various dainty arrangements to make her feel at home give her a certain solidarity. He calls her 'Heart's Delight' or 'My lady lass', and his affectionate gallantry to her and the equally natural delicacy of her behaviour to him, though both are thoroughly out of date, help to give them both substance. So do the snatches of information we gain about the Captain's housekeeping with Florence an additional inmate (he keeps everything ship-shape, of course — he is a sailor). When Diogenes

adds himself to the household and meets the Captain's overtures graciously, we thoroughly rejoice in this happy change in Florence's circumstances. Soon all the reality that has been removed from Dickens's creation of her by the idea that she can still long to embrace her father seems to be restored.

Only slightly less villainous than Carker is the egregious blue or purple Major — Major Bagstock. He is as real to the reader and a great deal more amusing. He is clever, and he is brilliantly depicted with all the creative intensity of Dickens's energy, as the kind of person who would take in a man like Mr Dombey. Of course his treatment of his dark-skinned servant, the Native, who sometimes lives in a rain of clothes brushes and violent undeserved abuse, is unspeakably brutal. But Dombey is not the man to notice that. Over-eating and bad temper have made the major apoplectic. Nevertheless he is a wonderful actor. He condoles with Mr Dombey in his apoplectic way by implying explosively that he is too much moved to utter a coherent word, and he makes his obsessive self-praise sound interesting by constantly varying his references to himself with a good deal of skill. He is Bagstock, Joey B, the Bagstock breed, old Josh, rough and tough J.B., a worn-out, dried-up old soldier, and so on and so on. But, for all his liveliness, he is a shallow fellow, malicious and spiteful. For example, simply because Miss Tox *seems* less interested in him than she used to be, he instantly proceeds to sow suspicion and dislike of her in Mr Dombey's mind. As for flattery, he is an adept at compliments, varying their kind to suit the subjects of them. To Dombey his flattery is fairly subtle, but to Edith Granger's mother, Mrs Skewton, it is as gross and false as it can possibly be.

For Mrs Skewton is an empty-headed, mercenary, and disastrously withered Society Beauty who has become, with time, a mere mass of affectations. As the book goes on, she is brought face to face with the enemy she can least bear to look upon — Death. This situation Dickens handles with some rather grudging pathos, and a convincing mixture of satirical ridicule and horror. After her inevitable stroke, her first words are unintelligible. Her attendants help her to write them down somehow on a slate: 'rose-coloured curtains' — to flatter her complexion for the behoof of the doctors! Edith's reaction to her dreadful mother slightly softens her character in our eyes — she feels some pity — but it is cold pity.

Mr Toots is a triumph of creation. He excites only the warmest feelings, for Dickens, who is anything but weak of intellect, has a remarkable fellow-feeling for those who are. His marriage to Susan Nipper is an excellent device. Her devotion to Florence would make Toots fall in love with her, and Susan would, without any felt

pressure, restrain not only his own follies, but keep off greedy characters like the Chicken and Captain Cuttle, who, besides his simple-minded conceit about his own cunning and diplomacy (encouraged by the smiling Mr Carker with every gum lit up) would have done Florence and Walter a great deal of harm with Mr Dombey had not Paul died when he did. It is interesting that Captain Cuttle, for all his ludicrous qualities, has a great deal of natural dignity, as he shows in his dealings with that snivelling, treacherous Rob the Grinder. Sol Gills, though 'chock-full of science', is not the most competent of tradesmen. But he is almost as welcome to the reader when he turns up towards the end of the story as he is to Walter and Captain Cuttle. Perch, Mrs MacStinger and that fraudulent Sage, Captain Bunsby, whom she so easily entraps into marriage, Alexander, who is always having to cool his bottom by sitting on the paving stones, and his sisters who have been trained from baby-hood to entrap sailors — all these and many more have their own places in the book and add to its charm. But not even Florence, not even the scores of living people (like Tomlinson and the housemaid, the Cook and all the other Dombey servants) can take the place of Paul and console us for the loss of him. He remains, even after his death, the still beating heart of the book, and Dickens's attempts to distract our interest are in vain.

*Pietermaritzburg.*

# LANGUAGE AND CURRENCY IN 'TIMON OF ATHENS'

*by* W. H. BIZLEY

It is the last part of *Timon of Athens* that takes the major thrust of critical attention. Such interest as the play receives is almost always centred on the final travail and endurance of its leading character. The symbolic bareness, the Lear-like simplicity, in the last pages of Timon's career are undoubtedly of the class of the great tragedies. With that estimate we haven't any quarrel. But we regret, nevertheless, that these good things lead almost without exception to an undervaluing of the first part of the play. The widespread feeling that this work only 'launches' itself after the tragic reversal, and that only after he is 'fallen from grace' is Timon an adequate representative of the 'human condition', seems to us culpably to neglect the resourcefulness and insight of the opening acts.[1] *Timon*, it is true, is not one of Shakespeare's most successful things — it is in part demonstrably incomplete — but it has more substance to it than is usually conceded, and the frequent playing down of its 'non-tragic' opening prompts us to attempt a critical redress.

In this play Shakespeare offers us a significant and even prophetic analysis of the relation between language and money. He speaks in an era when 'economics' isn't quite the remote and esoteric science that, for the awed student of the humanities at any rate, it tends to be today. His is a time when there is still — even if only in memory — an observable connection between language and currency, between the speaking of a word and the guaranteeing of a coin, and *Timon*, we believe, is of particular interest because of the way it senses drama in that very fact. Thus it offers to measure, for instance, by cultural means and in cultural terms, the analogous, or strictly derivative nature of 'use', that economic technique which became more and more pertinent to the rise of capitalism.

It will surely be no surprise to us that Shakespeare had acute and significant things to say on the large evolution that Weber and Tawney have made us familiar with, and that he was uniquely aware of the increasing size of 'accommodated time' in the era that produced him. It would be a false reverence, however, that latched on to his work for the wrong sort of information. What we have in a Shakespeare play is not an 'analytical wisdom' or a 'history of the times' in any sense but the wide-ranging portrayal of the destiny of a mind and a language — a 'sensibility', as T. S. Eliot might say, signifying an evolution more primary in impulse and motion than could be the invention of self-conscious intellect.

What 'evolves' in a culture's broad course is inevitably less conscious than can be ascribed to 'one man only'. Eliot argues the point in certain central essays; perhaps we can extend his viewpoint in a brief example related to our theme. Consider for a moment the extraordinary etymological propensity of the word 'Frank', a word which, when it hasn't been making its original tribal designation, has from time to time produced all the connotations we presently accept in 'frankness', 'franking', 'a hundred francs', 'frankly', 'enfranchisement' etc. Could even a Charlemagne, colossus though he was, have ever produced the elaborate cultural history these designations imply? What sort of history is it, let us ask, that lies behind the possibility that 'Charlemagne', say, was sufficiently illustrious to call such and such men Franks, to 'frankly' grant them title, to 'frank' the seals that granted the title, to 'enfranchise' those who were not yet Franks, and all with such royal backing and 'assurance' as had as yet no need of monetary 'francs', the national exchange that the word now signifies? The fact is of course that even Charlemagne couldn't have inaugurated the half-historic, half-mythical development of this 'Frankish' evolution, or foreseen the permutations that 'enfranchisement' would undergo in the broad course of French history. 'Sensibility' thus defined is the pretext of our interest in Shakespeare's *Timon*.

What is fundamental to the drama of *Timon*, we suggest, is the way the language of money is played off against a more primary language, the language that is in fact its source. The first indications we have of an essentially dramatic impulse in the play lie not in the personality or career of the Athenian Lord Timon, but in the conflict of languages that is pressed upon us, a conflict suggesting a deep ambiguity in the cultural border-line between 'currency' and 'exchange'.

1. *The Question of Value*

For those who are attuned to the thematic presentation of dramatic material the lack of any leading character in the long preamble to Timon's entry won't be a problem. The elaborate conversation we first enter between artists and an art-dealer is in fact raising a central question: 'Where, in the field and community of "exchange", does value actually reside?' This pregnant line of interest is presented, as usual, in an oblique and masterly way:

> *Poet:* I have not seen you long; how goes the world?
> *Painter:* It wears, sir, as it grows.
> *Poet:* Ay, that's well known.
> But what particular rarity, what strange,
> Which manifold record not matches? (I i 2-5)

In the first five lines, the 'rub' to the drama is already apparent! The 'world', says the opening jest, offers such small currency, such weak exchange, that it 'wears' as it grows. Can art 'outmatch' this 'manifold record'; can it offer something of such 'particular rarity' as outlasts the dwindling utility of worldly exchange? If the world is so solid a creature as to 'wear as it grows', then can't the product of art outstrip that parity, be exceptional and 'strange' (that potent Shakespearean word! — see line 4) so that it staves off the fate of becoming a mere 'solid' like the world, dustily permanent, taken for granted?

The 'arty' discussion is certainly remote from the economist's entry into the problem of exchange. There is surely little doubt, though, that curiosity as to the 'thingness' of an artistic product raises most pointedly the question of 'coinage', the question whether it is the 'solid' unit in the transference of value that is actually the potent criterion. Can what 'transfers' itself in the nature of true exchange, and what in artistic terms might be seen as luminous, 'living' or 'current', ever really be solidified? Are there cultural terms sufficiently powerful to establish a 'non-solid' criterion for what is valuable in itself, and not subject to the equivalence of money?

Attributing value is a two-edged process; at the first mention of Timon (who, we discover, is widely praised) the dramatic ambiguity is stretched even further. The speakers agree that Timon is 'worthy', 'incomparable', and that this opinion is 'most fix'd' (line 9), but there is nothing 'fix'd' at all in the quality they admire. Timon is

> breath'd, as it were,
> To an untirable and continued goodness.
> He passes.
>
> (I i 10-12)

A man who is 'breath'd' in goodness, 'untirable' and 'continuate', can surely make value out of the very stuff of transient life. He isn't the sort to be 'solidified' by the enclosing circuit of wealth, and it is no surprise that 'fix'd' opinion of him is rendered in words that deny all fixity, words such as 'breath'd', 'continuate' or 'passes'. It is in word-play like this that the co-ordinates become clear for a drama of currency. The linguistic excitement by which words that are flowing and 'current' are played off against a 'solid' vocabulary of equity and exchange is our ticket-of-leave, so to speak, to the enjoyment of the work.

It is an excitement sparked off at this very point in the scene with an excellent juxtaposition. No sooner are the words 'He passes' spoken in regard to Timon than a jewel is brought forward, that

most beckoning and most ambiguous of mankind's 'solids'. When the jeweller says 'I have a jewel here' (l. 12) it is not the point of the play to simply raise our anti-materialistic suspicion. A jewel, after all, is the most exquisite symbol there is for 'value-transience', and in nothing else more valuable than that it might at any moment be treated as 'coin' merely, and clutched to as an object without any luminousness. As a symbolic instance it throws up excellently the whole ambiguity in value that *Timon* is structured on. The merchant might agree as he looks at it that 'Tis a good form', (I i 17), but then the very word 'form' raises a question as to what is shape, merely, and what 'real being', or what the mysterious element is that 'substantiates' its value. A further twist to the controlled ambiguity is contained in the word 'water' which expresses the gloating approval of the jeweller:

> Here is water, look ye.
>
> (I.18)

What a metaphor that is, for locating the 'rub' to the question of value! In 'water' the genius of the language insists that it is the intangible flowing motion of a jewel that creates its value, not its possessibility as a unit.

The point of the metaphor is only carried, of course, if we agree that there is an emanating force behind the form of the jewel. If the value of something is sufficiently 'in itself' to make its power 'current' out of sheer 'presence', sheer 'being' and not through exchange, then money, the medium of exchange, won't determine the interpretation of its value. But alas! — nothing is more susceptible than a jewel to being taken for coinage, nothing is more liable to being kept lustreless and unflowing in a shut-off vault. Discussion of a jewel, then, anticipates the ambiguity in value that is thrust before Athens when Timon can no longer back his word with immediate coin.

Artists, of course, should be more sensitive than anyone to the ambiguity in the nature of value. They should be aware of what is unique and 'unexchangeable' in their work, so that they might say with the poet (when he discusses the nature of artistic creation)

> the fire i' th' flint
> Shows not till it be struck.
>
> (I i 22-3)

These Athenian artists are rendered all the more guilty for their subsequent behaviour by the fact that they *do* understand the 'Promethean' element that is seminal to art, the 'fire i' th' flint' that

is intrinsic to it in a way that coinage can't buy or parallel. (Coinage is essentially imitative, a second step, not a first. Thus our expression 'coining a phrase'.)

The distinction that has been drawn between what is intrinsic and what is exchangeable in the nature of value prepares us in the audience for the presentation of Timon. The playwright must present him, let us remember, in such a way that his riches don't forfeit his claim to a tragic role. As it happens, Timon does not strike us on arrival as someone ludicrously inaccessible through wealth, so commodiously 'interested' as to be the very type of 'accommodated man'. Rather, he is portrayed as someone who, by the very use of wealth, creates freedom about him and a bounteous 'presence'. Not in the commodiuos terms of 'quittance' does he possess wealth, but in a way that appreciates and promotes 'intrinsic' value. The sort of exchange he upholds is expressed in the praise we hear for the latest work of the painter, of which Timon says approvingly:

> The painting is almost the natural man;
> For since dishonour traffics with man's nature,
> He is but out-side; these pencill'd figures are
> Even such as they give out.
>
> (I i 160-3)

The worth of the painting is spelled in the fact that it transfers inner meaning rather than traffics with an 'out-side' (the jewel-like emanation being suggested in 'Even such as they give out', line 163).

The theme is taken further when the jeweller (somewhat hypercritically, as it turns out) denies that there is fixed 'equivalence' in the value of the jewel. It creates its value rather, as Timon does:

> Things of like value, differing in the owners,
> Are prized by their masters. Believe't, dear lord,
> You mend the jewel by the wearing it.
>
> (I i 172-5)

The value of the jewel, which is suggested more in 'prize' than in 'price', is attested in the wearing of it. Brought thus to its 'real presence' the jewel is 'mended'— its form is actualised, it is open now to an 'appreciation' of an un-monetary order. This is the sense of value that Timon reiterates later when, pressing a gift on a friend, he tells him to

> . . . advance this jewel; accept it and wear it.
>
> (I ii 166)

'Advance', we remember, was the word that was used when bishops or nobles were brought to high office. When a friend wears a jewel it is, so to speak, 'granted title'. And until it is 'advanced' a jewel is as good as unborn, its power and its luminousness not really realised.

2. *The 'Sovereign' Standard*

That there was once available to the common psyche of Europe an 'act' or sense of the self 'presented' that scorned the dualism of 'exchange', a time when a man might 'back' his appropriate standing in words that were the immediate seal of intention — this is the sort of phenomenon that Shakespeare's language can remind us of. It would take a larger essay than this to give force to the contention that the word 'sovereignty' once applied to a vision and rhythm of life more wide-ranging than is appropriate to 'kingship' only, one that reached deeply into the individual psyche and into each man's address. We must propose such a phase, though, if we are going to vindicate our sense that the language of *Timon* has certain presuppositions to it, certain underlying components that must be observed if the play isn't going to be set in a cultural vacuum. The norms we propose will, no doubt, appear somewhat 'mythical' and based on too selective a view of history, but it is only in their terms, we believe, that we can suggest the 'attack' of Shakespeare's work.

Let us go back to the word 'currency' for a moment. What is 'current' in art is a quality that is specifically related to language in such an instance as the following, where the poet first sets eyes on the latest portrait by his friend the painter. As in the case of the jewel, the impact of the work is so striking and compelling that it can be said to be 'current' in itself, and not liable to 'exchange'. So expressive is the 'non-verbal' art here that it 'speaks' in its own right, calling forth the astonished admiration of the poet:

> How this grace
> Speaks his own standing. What a mental power
> This eye shoots forth! How big imagination
> Moves in this lip. (I i 30-3)

'Speaks his own standing' — that is the sort of formula that gives basis to the claim that before Shakespeare settles down to a tale or parable of 'fallen wealth', he is already carefully defining the true nature of 'currency', of actual 'presentment' (l. 27). It takes more than 'equivalence', 'law', 'exchange', to make reality eloquent; 'grace', we might say, following line 30, even more than technique. The sheer 'speaking power' of the presented subject creates its own value, its own 'standing' (l. 31) — a standing more fundamental than financial standing.

Etymological curiosity should lead us to note the way 'standing' is related to 'backing' in this order of things — a man of 'standing' should be able to 'back' his address and his posture, and that not by money alone! In 'sovereign' society, where currency 'knows no shuffling' and is free of 'traffic', words demand a 'backing' as immediate as a physical guarantee. Such is the dispensation that is still open for portrayal in a play like *Richard II*, where we find it for example in Bolingbroke's challenge to Mowbray:

> Now Thomas Mowbray do I turn to thee,
> And mark my greeting well: for what I speak,
> My body shall make good upon this earth,
> Or my divine soul answer it in heaven.
>
> (*Richard II* I i 35-8)

Virulent stuff, certainly, but it has nevertheless the immediacy and purity of a real concurrence in effective meaning. The combining in a single station of both stance and word is a cultural resource that Shakespeare returns to as primary and normative.

Considerations of this sort lead us to resist the note quoted in the Arden edition on these lines, to the effect that

> . . . the language of all these would-be artists is obscure precisely because it is 'pretentiously affected'.[2]

This merely indicates how frequently the dramatic strategy of the opening scenes is missed. There is nothing affected at all in the poet's praise — if there were, the subtle corruption that overtakes him later wouldn't show up. In the fifth act he won't value things with the unobscured appreciation of what is eloquent and immediate that he shows us here:

> What a mental power
> This eye shoots forth! How big imagination
> Moves in this lip.

The value of the picture lies in a mobility of 'presence' that could never be bartered or treated apart from its actual impact. The language of 'presentment' here takes us back to a vocabulary more primary than a fiscal one; in the 'transference' rendered in that 'shooting forth' (line 32) we are back in the metaphysical era of palpable 'presence' that for Shakespeare's medieval characters was the very mark of sovereignty. How close to these words of the poet,

for example, are those of the Duke of York in *Richard II*, who exclaims on seeing the defeated Richard:

> Yet he looks like a king. Behold, his eye,
> As bright as is the eagle's, lightens forth
> Controlling majesty.
>
> (*Richard II* III iii 68-70)

The power of sovereignty to 'present' itself, to make the 'equivalence' of value in an undivided posture, is portrayed here unforgettably, portrayed in the language of an era prior to the one in which mercantile exchange swallowed up the 'real presence' of royal address. (It is a point that isn't fully made, however, without the qualifying admission that it is Richard himself who is the first 'magnate' in England liable to exchange the sovereignty of 'this sceptered isle' for 'inky blots and rotten parchment bonds' — see *Richard II* II i 64.)

The history play offers good foundation material, then, for a study of *Timon*. It is in a world comparatively innocent of 'abstract money' or 'capital' that Richard, in the famous Deposition Scene, prefaces a request for a mirror to be brought to him with an ironic

> . . . if my word be sterling yet in England,

confirming thereby the essential metaphor in 'sterling', which belongs first to a king's language and only later to finance. And why, after all, does Richard want the mirror? To make a bitter play with terms:

> That it may show me what a face I have,
> Since it is bankrupt of his majesty.
>
> (*Richard II* IV i 264-7)

The prospect of there being a time when one's coin could be as 'sterling', guaranteed, or 'current', as one's spoken word is what we shouldn't forget. In saying that we are certainly not trying to deny that there was incipient capitalism in medieval times; our point is simply that there was a time when the derivative or analogous nature of its vocabulary was still comprehended. For Timon in his native Athens, the currency operating between friends is, ideally, so continuous, so little requiring of 'commodity' to back it, that its present tense, like that of Sovereignty, is stronger than any future. The metaphor of the musical instrument aptly sums it up; the constancy of friends shouldn't have to be reckoned:

> They were the most needless creatures living
> should we ne'er have use for 'em, and would most
> resemble sweet instruments hung up in cases that
> keep their sounds to themselves.
>
> (I ii 94-7)

The 'music' metaphor squarely puts the 'bond' between men in the eloquent environment of 'present' intercourse. It is thus the same one as that used by Mowbray in *Richard II* when he receives the sentence of banishment:

> And now my tongue's use is to me no more
> Than an unstringed viol or a harp,
> Or like a cunning instrument cased up —
>
> (*Richard II* I iii 161-3)

Such are the clues to the ethical background to *Timon*. Music speaks in a present exchange, a mutual 'touch' that the language of money is without, and it is in *that* medium that friendship should operate.

The interpretation we have offered gives us a case for suggesting a precise and important place for Act III scene v of *Timon*, the scene so often taken as evidence of a disorganised total conception.[3] It is the one in which Alcibiades pleads before the Athenian senate the case of one of his soldiers who has been arrested and sentenced to death for his part in a brawl, one which he didn't initiate, but where the 'call to honour' saw him rise and cause the death of his violent adversary. The senate sees no reason to make distinctions in what is just another 'mess brawl', but it is in fact their very loftiness on the issue that gives the scene its place in the play, since it soon turns out to be a telling sketch of the *mores* that proceed from usury. Alcibiades defends his fellow soldier, now suffering under 'time and fortune', for having risen to arms to defend his reputation. Discipline he deserves, but he is now sentenced to death, and Alcibiades's case is clear-cut: the 'fortune' that spurred him on wasn't a monetary one, the reputation he defended wasn't a concealed exchange, the 'argument' for which he took up arms had no 'traffic' or 'means' to it, thus

> He did behove his anger, 'ere 'twas spent
> As if he had but prov'd an argument.
>
> (III v 22-3)

We make a point about the sort of ethic this play upholds when we suggest that we are just as likely to be discomforted by the line of

argument here as is the Athenian senate (and as indeed we usually are whenever the Medieval 'honour' system raises its head in Shakespeare!). Are we not all subscribers in one way or another to an individualism that shies off 'proving an argument' in such public terms? Are we not just as likely to take offence at Alcibiades's story of 'street justice' as does the senatorial spokesman, who now comments with impressive restraint (— mercantile restraint)

> He's truly valiant that can wisely suffer
> The worst that man can breathe,
> And make his wrongs his outsides,
> To wear them like raiment, carelessly,
> And ne'er prefer his injuries to his heart
> To bring it into danger.
>
> (III v 31-6)

Does this most reasonable advice, then, not receive Shakespeare's acquiescence? — is this not a voice, then, that we can reasonably take as a moral 'spokesman' in the play?

Alas for us, the nervous protectors of exclusive privacy! — the fact is that the 'private' virtues upheld here against the noise and dishevelment of the soldier's misconduct are not subscribed to as normative. If anything, they are shown up as part-and-parcel of that cossetted self-righteousness for which the senate is so bitterly indicted. The senator's doctrine is that one should treat one's wrongs as 'outsides', wear them like 'raiment'. But this egotistical mobility can only be based on a very protected, 'unadvanced' version of the self: the august posture that it offers must have money to keep it intact. It implies, in other words, a purchased concealment, an abstract system delaying 'presentment' such as the poor soldier had no recourse to.

Our reading suggests, then, that it is the more uncouth, rough-edged, more 'yeomanly' virtues of the soldier that have the playwright's sympathy. The senators, of course, concede nothing at all to the 'sworn rioter' that Alcibiades defends. Alcibiades realises all too late that the virtues he pleads are no longer the texture of Athenian society. It is not long before he himself is banished, and the defiant exclamation with which he takes his leave shows us forcefully where he puts the blame:

> 'Banish me?
> Banish your dotage, banish usury,
> That makes the Senate ugly!
>
> (III v 98-100)

One is not, then, cocking an eye on the play's behalf at industrialists or magnates when one speaks of its discomforting effect. No doubt they are the 'capitalist' virtues that feed the unalloyed sanctimoniousness of the senate, but they are all too familiar as the virtues we ourselves plead when we try to delay and put aside the incisiveness of the present, or keep reality from 'coming at us' as it did to Alcibiades's soldier. 'Sinning man', by contrast, has the purity and directness that Alcibiades can rely on; he remembers the soldier as one who

> Through his right arm might purchase his own time
> And be in debt to none.
>
> (III v 78-9)

That 'time' and that 'purchase' are what the senate have forgotten, and they are deeply presupposed in the framework of the play.

3. *Time and Fortune*

Our insistence on the 'presentness' of true exchange — the fact that it is only in the stream of 'sovereign' time that exchange is 'current' — leads us to remark further on some of the fascinating things this play has to tell us about the 'market of time', that changed orientation that so ravaged sensibility in the Elizabethan epoch. To do this, let us embark on yet another question of etymological curiosity. At what stage, let us ask, in the long course of 'alteration in sensibility' did 'fortune' lose its medieval connotation, stop being thought of as the high and remote 'wheel of fortune', and take on the strictly financial aspect that marks a private destiny, the sense of 'a private fortune'? The question is valid, we believe, even if there is no real 'dating' to such an evolution, even if the two meanings are historically simultaneous. (It is interesting though that the Oxford English Dictionary dates the first entirely financial use of 'Fortune' at 1596, before which its meaning was dominated by the Latin 'Fortuna'.)

In Shakespeare's play, the implications that such a change has for the common awareness of time are again and again registered; the one sort of 'fortune' is played off against the other. It is an ambiguity that is explored in the opening scene: discussion as to whether Lord Timon really is 'Fortune's child' leads to an elaborate representation or parable of 'fortune' on the part of the poet, a sort of earlier *Pilgrim's Progress*:

> Sir,
> I have upon a high and pleasant hill
> Feign'd Fortune to be thron'd. The base o' th' mount

> Is rank'd with all deserts, all kinds of natures
> That labour on the bosom of this sphere
> To propagate their states . . .
>
> (I i 64-7)

The student of Shakespearean metaphor will guess that rather more is wrapped up here than is at first apparent. The 'hill' metaphor for fortune has a different emphasis from the entirely cyclical symbol of the 'wheel of fortune'. Hills, after all, can be climbed, and we realise that the landscape here offers us a more accessible destiny, a more 'abstractable' or 'useable' field for identity than does the indifferent motion of the older variety. The 'hill' soon becomes, however, a 'mount' — at line 77, a 'steepy mount' — and reminds us of what happened to the 'wheel of fortune' metaphor in *Hamlet*, where a wheel on a 'mount' is the figure used as the rationale for Claudius's state. Why must Claudius's 'majesty' remain secure and impregnable? — because (says Rosencrantz)

> It is a massy wheel,
> Fix'd on the summit of the highest mount,
> To whose huge spokes ten thousand lesser things
> Are mortis'd and adjoin'd . . .
>
> (III iii 17-20)

The similarity leads us to speculate on the more abstract vision that is 'landscaped' here (more abstract, that is, than the 'sovereign' one that would be appropriate to Hamlet's father). The alteration in metaphoric usage is itself a commentary on the changing meaning of 'state'. Thus in the *Timon* piece, 'all kinds of natures' now labour to 'propagate their states' (line 67); there is a swing to individualism, individualism of a sort whose fragmenting effect might not be, unambiguously, 'a good thing'. The 'hill' or 'mount' symbolises the more abstract identity that each private man takes on when life is individualised on, for example, a mercantile basis. The moral ambiguity that underlies this vision is all too well suggested by the *Hamlet* parallel; it is in terms of this model, or rationale, that Rosencrantz agrees to spy on Hamlet, and in the *Timon* piece, the 'pleasantness' of the hill, we are soon told, is fraught with possible doom.

To say that is to make a point on the changing nature of sensibility. The pleasantness of that 'hill', promising salvation 'over there' to each man in turn, has a duplicity to it that it would take a Bunyan to observe. What is 'throned' in this landscape is not so much a medieval sovereign as the beckoning goals of new-world indi-

vidualism. When the painter takes up the metaphor at line 75, the Puritan touch to the device is even more discernible; the hill doesn't beckon 'Everyman' in the old sense, but each hard-working burgher:

> This throne, this Fortune, and this hill, methinks,
> With one man beckon'd from the rest below,
> Bowing his head against the steepy mount
> To climb his happiness, would be well express'd
> In our condition.
>
> (I i 75-9)

No longer has fortune a cyclical motion! It is now the forward horizon of each man's progress, the towering hill before each single imagination, speaking now to 'one man beckon'd' (l. 76). The sense of private vocation is dramatised in an entirely new landscape, with the eminence of 'fortune' marking the arrival at 'happiness' (line 78) in the same way as, for example, one might arrive at one's plotted financial success. The grappling with individual destiny is symbolised, Puritan-like, in that 'bowing of the head' against a 'steepy mount' (l. 77), and 'happiness' sternly interpreted in Puritan nomenclature as something to be 'climbed', with that stress on 'becoming' rather than 'being' which is so much the nerve of the post-monarchical world.

One person who doesn't belong to this industrious order — 'our condition' as the painter calls it — is Timon himself. It is not in his nature to put on the *mores* and uniform of this straitened logic. His impulsive generosity and overspilling 'grace' not only cause his tragedy, but require that he be judged with the tragic compassion that literature doesn't seem to reserve for those whose first regard is for 'fortune'. The gods who overlook the tragic theatre don't spill tears for those who feast on 'abstract' time, and it is Timon's distinction that the aura he creates about him isn't tensed with abstract goals. As the poet says, one might

> through him
> Drink the free air . . .
>
> (I i 84-5)

and the metaphor finely suggests a wealth that liberates, a prosperity that isn't hampered by 'propagating one's state' or psychological hill-climbing. One critic likens Timon to a renaissance prince,[4] and it is surely true that his bizarre and nonchalant munificence hasn't the thoroughness, or the industry, of 'mercantile man'. Perhaps it is because he subscribes to the older, less 'personalised' Fortune that

Timon's life-style has to it an attractive carelessness (attractive, that is, to the onlooking gods! — we lesser fry in the theatre can hardly suppress a certain burgherly alarm at its lavishness!). The poet warns us, though, that if Fortune should now dethrone the man of bounty and 'free air', his fall will have the peculiar loneliness, the 'abstract' isolation, of the new 'individualism':

> . . . all his dependants
> Which labour'd after him to the mountain's top
> Even on their knees and hands, let him slip down,
> Not one accompanying his declining foot.
>
> (I i 87-90)

Such are the ambiguities that attend the revised metaphors for fortune.

As the play continues we don't take long to discover that Shakespeare's diagnosis of a 'monied' discourse and of the relation of language to exchange is very much taken up with the effect on 'time' when it is no longer kept intact in a cultural contract. It is in terms of time that he looks steadily at 'use', proliferating capitalism, and refuses to allow that its bonds are binding in the same way as that 'great bond' which is still felt (though from opposite points of view) by Cordelia and Macbeth. Following the theme of time, let us keep in mind a point that is made by R. H. Tawney in *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism*, when he explains the resistance of the medieval church to the practice of usury. What was heinous in 'taking usury' was that it was

> to sell time, which belongs to God . . .[5]

It fragmented the spaciousness of time overlooked by God; it threatened to splinter 'sovereign' consciousness.

This becomes particularly relevant to the interpretation of the play that asks how it is that we can class as 'tragedy' the fall and ruin of a rich man. The tragic dimension, in the tradition of the Rise and Fall of Princes, will only be guaranteed if we acknowledge that the time of 'traffic', and the time that Timon creates, are two different things. The time of 'traffic' emphatically does not 'belong to God'. It offends an older piety to the extent that even the cynical Apemantus growls at a complacent merchant:

> Traffic confound thee, if the gods will not.
>
> (I i 236)

'Traffic', and 'gods', are in inverse proportion. Traffic creates its own sphere of conduct, confounds its adherents in its own time. The merchant in question is most offended at the charge, and hotly disclaims the dualism it implies:

> If traffic do it, the gods do it.
>
> (l. 237)

It is a rejoinder that must have been typical, we suspect, of many in Shakespeare's period who were raised by 'use' to an equanimity of conscience. But the dry Apemantus is one of the 'voices of truth' in the play, and drives his point home:

> Traffic's thy god, and thy god confound thee.
>
> (l. 238)

Timon's wealth, we must insist, is not of this order. It is undoubtedly lavish, lavish to the point of carelessness, but it 'uses' itself always in an expanding present that is open for mutual enjoyment. It is thus quite dissimilar to the fragmented stream of 'atomies' (as Donne might say) that makes up 'traffic', the stream in which each man *is* an island. By contrast, the current of time that Timon creates is broad and inclusive and receives any man at hand:

> Right welcome, sir.
> Ere we depart, we'll share a bounteous time . . .
>
> (I i 252-3)

Whatever else that is, it is not the attitude of commodity! Indeed there is a case for saying that Timon's disregard for 'equivalence' or 'solid' exchange has to it a defiant or even ecstatic quality. Thus it is said of him

> . . . no gift to him
> But breeds the giver a return exceeding
> All use of quittance.
>
> (I i 277-9)

The organic, even prolific, word 'breeds' shows Timon generously 'exceeding' what is 'use' merely, the exacting exchange of 'quittance'.

Shakespeare's grasp of what happens when shared time is shattered, when 'exchange' rears its head and 'great occasion' barges like a panic into all that is present and continuous, is, as we might expect, unparalleled, and always worthy of study. The dissolution of

true currency into a proliferation of private streams puts unwarranted pressure on each individual to seize on to his own 'now' and make it his life and centre. This is the possibility that Timon is confronted with when his steward announces his bankrupt condition:

> My lov'd lord
> Though you hear now, too late, yet now's a time . . .
> (II ii 147-8)

It is a 'now', however, that slips through his grasp. And indeed we can say of Timon that in terms of 'traffic' and 'occasion' he is constantly defeated of his hold on time. The 'now' of 'occasion' is not created by cultural time, but by the iron co-ordinates of 'financial' time. Part of Timon's greatness, however, is in the fact that as his disaster grows in financial proportion, he grows more and more steady in his spoken 'now', in that quietness and intactness of his actual 'present' which at the end of the play is so pungent and simple. Such is the 'now' that he takes with him to the desert, where 'occasion' is steadily dissolved in the angry fire of his sincerity.

But it does not offer him economic salvation — in economic time, the tenses fall apart! The self-same steward who has just said 'now's a time' follows this ominously with 'The future comes apace' (l. 152) and asks, as the corollary,

> What shall defend the interim?
> (II ii 153)

The analysis of the components that time falls into when it is assailed by 'occasion' couldn't be more threatening, or more precise. What the steward doesn't guess, though, is the cultural resource of his master, who will bitterly resolve to keep discourse going in an area where the 'now', the 'interim', is the only time!

4. *Tragic Reversal and the Test of Language*

When we come to the moment of tragic reversal the two 'languages', or two sorts of currency that we have traced, are put to dramatic test. Timon's steward can see clearly that his master's word isn't 'backed' any longer in a financial sense. His 'advancement', the present he creates, is, in monetary terms, no longer viable,

> Being of no power to make his wishes good.
> His promises fly so beyond his state
> That what he speaks is all in debt; he owes
> For every word . . .
> (I ii 194-6)

The generosity that has launched so many Athenians and to which so many are indebted is, as the steward now sees, open to question, subject, now, to popular interpretation. In these circumstances the very fabric of a culture is brought to judgement, tested by the fact that the 'market of time' is first and foremost a human growth, and only secondly a commercial one. If this is conceded, the mercantile community should show a certain deference to 'origins' and relax a strict equity when exchange is thus offended by a man like Timon. The goodness of a man's word is the primary unit of trust, the essential ingredient to the emergence of 'market', and at a time when it can't financially sustain itself it surely deserves 'common sufferance'. The cultural sense of origins that measures 'contract' and 'value' in a more primary bond than 'exchange' is a faculty that should be able to stretch out time, expand the present until Timon's word can re-establish itself. But such a concession is not forthcoming. Timon's embarrassment is a signal to the lords and dignitaries of Athens to put an iron wedge between words and coins, and to stick fast to the latter as the medium of exchange.

In the face of his plight, Timon is surprisingly calm, maintaining the belief that friendship is current, honourable and consistent, and not likely to wilt before the threat to 'parity'. Thus the terms in which he defends himself:

> No villainous bounty yet hath pass'd my heart,
> Unwisely, not ignobly have I given.
>
> (II ii 177-8)

His recourse here to a language of 'honour' is no sudden leap in the pattern of his career (though, with the ambiguities of 'exchange' in the background, it does, we must confess, look unduly innocent!). And in the 'reversal' scene, Act II scene ii, the friction between the 'honour' code and the code of 'commodity' becomes, in Shakespeare's hands, the very spark to the poetry. Thus the continual punning: if Timon calms his steward with 'Secure thy heart' (l. 180) we can be sure that it isn't *that* sort of security which at the moment will give much comfort to the steward! But Timon is adamant, and in some memorable lines pleads the primary bond that he relies on:

> If I would broach the vessels of my love,
> And try the argument of hearts by borrowing
> Men and men's fortunes could I frankly use
> As I can bid thee speak.
>
> (II ii 181-4)

Here we find compressed the remarkable play on terms that should be more familiar to students of this work. 'Use' here is as 'frank' as speaking, 'borrowing' is 'argued' through the 'heart', and one can broach 'men and men's fortunes' (the two aren't distinguished) in the free accessibility of 'love'. Little wonder the steward replies limply

> Assurance bless your thoughts,
>
> (I. 184)

— a wry pun, quite lost on poor Timon! Timon's philosophy is undauntedly based on the ethics of honour, with its frank recourse to the human heart. The 'bond' he begs has a sacramental connotation; the 'vessels' that are his friends are 'current' and 'flowing' in no commoditied sense; they are

> the vessels of my love,
>
> (I. 181)

potent and accessible, so that he well might feel that the 'liquidity' he can fall back on has a truly 'current' motion.

But alas for Timon! — the texture of money is one of fragmented fixities, solids, coins, everything that splinters time, 'occasion' without context, all that is heavy and uncurrent. Thus his outraged response to the first news of ingratitude:

> Their blood is cak'd, 'tis cold, it seldom flows.
>
> (II ii 220)

What is 'cak'd' against 'flowing' is the security of 'coinage' — Timon's friends fix to the material backing and shun the cultural debt; they revert from a shared discourse to the solid matter of exchange. But, says Timon, it is a stopped, lumpish gravity that they plump for. Giving over what is 'current' for the secure 'heaviness' of money, they lose flight to their souls:

> 'Tis lack of kindly warmth, they are not kind;
> And nature, as it grows again toward earth,
> Is fashion'd for the journey, dull and heavy.
>
> (II ii 221-3)

Instances such as this show us that Timon's tragedy, like that of Hamlet, is representative and symbolic and can become the very texture of a total dramatic language. It is 'personal', certainly, but

not in a way that limits it to being one man's problem or one man's eccentricity.

Shakespeare records vividly the consequences for a language when exchange has no other 'quittance' than simple hard coin. Consider, for instance, the way he puns on the word 'use'. What is diabolical in usury, the play shows, is its cool indifference to any sense of belonging, its uncommitment to the unified stream of time. The senator who, alarmed by rumours of Timon's fall, exclaims heatedly

> My uses cry to me,
>
> (II i 20)

obviously hears them as more 'human' voices than he ever will the pleas of a friend. His nervousness and impatience betray a mind that commodity has deprived of the sense of 'mutual' humanity. There is a touch of hysteria in the way he instructs his servant to have no use for words:

> Immediate are my needs, and my relief
> Must not be toss'd and turn'd to me in words,
> But find supply immediate.
>
> (II i 25-7)

That repeated 'immediate' suggests excellently the abyss of future time that the senator feels tugging him down. His 'immediate' is, we must insist, a very different version of 'presentment' from the 'free air' we've associated with Timon. What is 'immediate' to the senator, it turns out, is nothing that actually 'is' — nothing 'at hand', no common experience, no mutual belonging, no common time. It is an entirely negative and subjective thing, a fear for the future, the abstract monetary future. It asks only one question: 'Does the future equivalence of my money still hold?'.

In Shakespeare's diagnosis, the monetary event that has no real context to it, no 'present' or cultural substance, is often called 'occasion'. 'Occasion' is created not by cultural interchange but by the awesome co-ordinates of money-activity alone. Timon is confident that the 'time' he has initiated and built up between friends is of such 'bond' and endurance that it won't be dominated by 'occasion'. In a dramatic inversion of terms, he instructs his servant to tell his friends

> I am proud . . . that my occasions have found time
> to use 'em toward a supply of money.
>
> (II ii 195)

The compact word-play here can easily be missed. To have 'found time' by the very means of 'occasion' is Timon's daring, rendered almost defiantly in the posture of 'I am proud . . .' It is a stance that will seem illegitimate only to those who forget that Timon has spent all his life 'finding time' in that sense, creating about him a 'present' powerful enough to swallow 'occasion', the importunity of financial affairs. It is no surprise, therefore, that the reversal he performs is done particularly on that word 'use' — he will 'use', not money, but his friends! Their past together vindicates it.

Timon's faith in the unruffled continuity of friendship can be recognised in his way of speaking; the trenchant economy in his speech becomes more and more noticeable from this point on. But this is not the case with the creditors! — Shakespeare captures unforgettably the frenetic tone and lack of syntax in their broken sense of time. Thus his servant's report on them:

> . . . they are at fall, want treasure, cannot
> Do what they would, are sorry; you are honourable,
> But yet they could have wish'd — they know not;
> Something hath been amiss — a noble nature
> May catch a wrench — would all were well — 'tis pity —
> And so, intending other serious matters . . .
> They froze me into silence.
>
> (II ii 209-17)

It is this uncommunicating deviousness that Timon continually comes up against — a refusal to be 'there' in any place that can properly be addressed. The speech of these Athenians is bitty and self-interested; it shows by its disjointedness how without 'presentment' is the traffic of 'occasions'.

The moral connotation we have attempted to register about that word 'presentment' establishes, we hope, a thematic relation between the opening acts of the play and the last. The tragedy of Timon is not to be mitigated by any sense of Utopia and there is no 'dialectical' answer in the play to the misuse of time by usury. Timon goes to the desert with the 'free air', simply, of his own 'real presence'. There is no romantic resolution to the plot, no 'back to nature' consolation. If anything, Nature itself is too suborned to 'original sin' to have any such promise:

> The sun's a thief, and with his great attraction
> Robs the vast sea. The moon's an arrant thief,
> And her pale fire she snatches from the sun. . . .
>
> (IV iii 443-7)

But at the height of his bitterness, Timon's curse on trafficking mankind does have to it a relevant criterion, one that the play has prepared for. Thus if he tells Man to

> Go great with tigers, dragons, wolves and bears;
> Teem with new monsters, whom thy upward face
> Hath to the marbled mansion all above
> Never presented!
>
> (IV iii 191-4)

the force of that 'presented' should be clear. What is cursed is what isn't presented! If we are receptive to this we will understand the moral ardour of Timon's long vigil. In his desert surroundings, Timon, at least, is a 'man presented'. The emissaries from Athens who come to plead with him sound superficial and compromised next to the bare economy of his utterances. And as for the poet and painter that we met in Act One, whose highest praise for Timon was that one might

> through him
> Drink the free air,
>
> (I i 84-5)

in Act Five they show nothing of such a standard. Publicity and 'art-traffic' have made them scornful of 'presentment', and the 'air' they now breathe is as fashionable as their talk. 'Promise', as against 'presence', is the way money keeps men hopeful, and it is 'promise', here, that keeps the artists chattering:

> Promising is the very air o' th' time; it opens
> the eyes of expectation. Performance is ever the
> duller for his act. . . .
>
> (V i 22-4)

The decadence of Athens couldn't be better summed up! When 'expectation' scorns 'performance', when there is disbelief in 'act' then it is obvious that the 'very air' of Athens is not so much 'free' as 'promissary'. To this monied optimism Timon grants only his contempt. Isolated in the desert, it is Timon who keeps fluent the primary currency, the medium in which communication is truly achieved.

*University of Natal,*
*Pietermaritzburg.*

## NOTES AND REFERENCES

[1] A more complex case, however, is that presented in the famous Wilson Knight essay on the play in *The Wheel of Fire*. This author shows most memorably how, after the reversal, Timon 'severs all contact with the finite world and, like some majestic liner, cleaves the dark seas of infinity . . .', but he also gives high value to the visual colourfulness of the first acts. It is a view that would seem to us to miss something of the analytical stress that we find in the language of the first part, in preparation for the second. We shall hope to demonstrate why it is that, remarkably though he illuminates the 'imaginative element' in the first part, we must diverge from this author's opinion that 'Only by subduing our more independent faculties in abeyance to the imaginative quality of these early scenes will we receive the play as poetry and know its meaning'. The poetry is more 'philosophic' (dare we say) than this concedes. See 'The Pilgrimage of Hate' in *The Wheel of Fire* (p. 207f. in the Methuen edition, 1965).

[2] See the note to Act I, sc. i in the Arden edition (Methuen), ed. H. J. Oliver, the edition used for all quotations in this article.

[3] One critic quoted in the Arden edition says that the scene 'has not the slightest reference to Timon or the remotest relation to anything whatsoever that takes place in the half of the play preceding' (p. xv). We, in the meantime, may be said to be extending the rather slender defence of the Arden editor, viz. that it is there in accordance with 'the dramatic principle on which *Timon of Athens* is constructed — that of counterpoint' (p. xlviii).

[4] Thus Hardin Craig, quoted in the Arden edition, p. xliv, who adds 'Let us not intrude any bourgeois parsimony into the tale of *Timon of Athens*'.

[5] R. H. Tawney, *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism*, London, John Murray, 1926, p. 43.

# CHILD DEVELOPMENT IN A CROSS-CULTURE PERSPECTIVE*

*by* W. H. O. SCHMIDT

In this discussion of 'child development' I shall focus on *cognitive* development, always bearing in mind that one cannot speak about cognitive (or 'intellectual') development without referring at the same time to other aspects of development. In speaking of a *cross-cultural* perspective, I shall be referring to research carried out in Africa.

Activity in cross-cultural research was sporadic for a long time. However, it has accelerated in the last ten to fifteen years, and an international Society for Cross-Cultural Research has recently been formed. In historical context, the earlier lack of serious and sustained interest in cross-cultural studies becomes understandable, as does the recent thrust towards research in this field.

Psychology as a separate, systematic and scientific field of enquiry is itself a comparatively recent phenomenon. Historians of psychology generally mention the names of psychophysicists of the nineteenth century (Weber, Fechner) and the founding of the first laboratory of experimental psychology by Wundt et the University of Leipzig in 1877 as marking the emergence of psychology as a separate discipline in its own right. The first great names in psychology were German or English or French. Up to 1914 American post-graduate students and scholars made their pilgrimages to Wundt's Institute of Psychology in Leipzig and many of them competed for honorary (unpaid) assistantships there. When they returned to America, they founded departments of psychology, initiated new developments in psychology, and nearly all of them became prominent. Notable among them was Stanley Hall, who is remembered as the initiator of the Child Study Movement in the U.S.A. and as the author of the first books on adolescence. Since World War II, the centre of gravity has shifted to North America. There are some departments of psychology in the U.S.A. in which more professors are working than in all of the universities of France taken together. European psychologists, particularly those from West Germany, usually do not consider their training completed until they have spent at least one or more years of post-doctoral study and teaching at an American university.

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* A public lecture delivered at the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, September, 1974.

These well-known facts are worth repeating, simply to emphasize the following point: psychology and the systematic study of child development had their origin in particular societies and particular cultures, viz. Western European and North American. Whatever it was that observation of children in these societies revealed about the development of perception, or of intellectual abilities, or of 'intelligence', was taken as the self-evident norm for development everywhere. The *notion* of a natural development, introduced by Rousseau in the 18th century, and much later elaborated into theories of maturation, which often failed to distinguish clearly between biological facts and the complex psychological development of children in a particular social and cultural matrix, helped to create and to perpetuate what one might call the grand ethnocentric bias.

Because psychologists do not live in a social and political vacuum, the ideas they express often turn out to be sophisticated versions of the prejudices of people of their time. The time during which psychology emerged as a separate discipline was also the time during which Africa and Asia were colonized. In 1862 a British liberal described the 'Chinaman' as an 'inferior race of malleable Orientals' (Chomsky, 1972). The National Institute for Personnel Research in Johannesburg has published an annotated bibliography, *Attitudes and Abilities of the Black Man in Sub-Saharan Africa, 1784-1963*, which documents the varied views of White settlers, travellers, missionaries, politicians, social anthropologists, and, of more recent date, educators and psychologists, on the mind of the African. Apart from the extreme views, there is a recurrence of the view that Africans are like children and that their development is arrested at puberty. While at first the assumption of an 'essential inferiority of the Negro mind' is very popular (Sommering in 1784 had concluded 'that in general the African Negroes resemble the genus Simia more than the Europeans'), social, cultural and educational factors came to be invoked more and more as explanations of the Black man's alleged inferiority. Hoernlé, who was professor of philosophy at Witwatersrand University, was far ahead of what most psychologists the world over were writing, when in 1927 he wrote (*Journal of Philosophical Studies*, 1927, 2, 52-61):

> ... The development among ourselves, in recent times, of a scientific attitude of mind, and the persistence among the Bantu of a non-scientific, or pre-scientific, attitude, are primarily *social* phenomena, not necessarily caused, even in part, by a profound difference in type, or at least in degree of average intellectual capacity.... The difference, which is undeniable, between the average white man's mind and the average black man's mind is

> a difference of social heritage rather than a difference of constitution or capacity between the average individual minds as such. . . .

Notable here is Hoernlé's identification of an attitude of mind in Western civilization which also developed only 'in recent times'. It reflects an awareness of the dependence of *our* ways of thinking on historical innovations. I shall refer to this again later.

Psychologists started the systematic collection of data concerning the abilities of the black man in Africa in 1915. They used various methods, intelligence tests playing an important part. In 1915 A. L. Martin used the Binet-Simon test, with some modifications, to test Zulu children. The results of this and other studies were used to support or refute the view that African children suffered from an arrest of development at puberty. Generally speaking, there was little psychological theory guiding the research. Very soon criticisms of standard measuring instruments began to be voiced. Psychological techniques were used more and more, not for the purpose of making comparisons between Whites and Blacks, but for the purpose of psychotechnical selection of Black workers for industry or of children for schooling. In this connection Simon Biesheuvel's work at the National Institute for Personnel Research (selection of workers) and Ombredane's contributions in the former Belgian Congo (selection of workers for industry and of children for school) have become well known. The aim was pragmatic; the broader theoretical issues about the conditions under which abilities are developed were side-issues. As Ombredane wrote:

> As far as my own research is concerned the practical purpose is simple. It is to estimate to what extent black men, brought up in their customary environment, are capable of responding to the demands of work in a white environment, and to see at what precise stage they can reach the level of white men in this undertaking.

And Biesheuvel explains:

> For short term educational and occupational purposes we are not concerned with what could have been made of a man, had he been differently conditioned during his childhood. The teacher and employer merely want to know how he can best be trained and utilised within the limits set by his cultural antecedents.

I do not wish to leave the impression that this was all that concerned Ombredane and Biesheuvel. The cross-cultural side-issues, to which I referred, were followed up by Biesheuvel in many ways. The Hoernlé memorial lecture which he delivered in 1959 had the title 'Race, Culture, and Personality'. Ombredane also wrote perceptively on the influence of western-type schooling on the development of intellectual abilities.

The characteristic of the studies listed in the 1950s and early 1960s is that they are concerned more and more with identifying effects of specific environmental factors on the development of abilities. The number of publications dealing with personality development in its relation to social circumstances and education increases.

This sketchy overview of some of the views and prejudices, and of some of the psychological research which emerged as a direct result of contact of Whites with Africans must suffice. The mainstream of psychological theorizing in Europe and America was not affected much by it. Not that *social* conditions were not seen as affecting the development of human abilities. The fact of individual differences in mental functioning and abilities became a focal point for investigation in the first two decades of this century, and led to the whole of the nature-nurture controversy, which is with us still. But in defining 'nurture' or 'environment', the emphasis was on environmental differences *within* a society. I refer only to the controversy aroused by Arthur Jensen as late as 1969, when he published an article in the *Harvard Educational Review*, purporting to show that American Negroes, as a group, perform as well as White Americans on tests involving memory, but less well on tests involving abstraction, and attributed the difference (at least a residue of the difference) to genetic factors. I refer also to the study of children from different social classes, which engaged the attention of psychologists in Europe in the 1920s and 1930s (Buehler, Descoeudres, Langeveld) and has been pursued with great vigour in Europe and North America since the late 1950s. Psychologists were far too embedded in their own culture really to give much thought to what constitutes 'culture'. How much of the development of children in Western Europe or North America is not 'natural' and not inevitable at all, but possibly due to the impact of as yet unidentified cultural factors, therefore escaped them.

By 'culture' I here mean that whole complex of ways of experiencing, seeing, thinking, interpreting, ordering, and influencing events and the world around them that characterize groups of people with a more or less common history in a shared environment. These ways are evident not only in the artifacts and products, but above all are embodied in living persons, who see, think, order, and

influence the world around them. With these the children are in close interaction, learning from the adults and peers by processes of participation, empathy, identification, modelling and deliberate instruction.

The particular societies and cultures where modern scientific psychology originated (Western Europe, North America) all have a great deal in common: in their approach to understanding and harnessing nature, in the cosmologies they develop, in their thrust towards ever greater technology based on what we can loosely call 'scientific' thinking. This thrust, and the ever greater momentum it has gained, is (and here I remind you of what Hoernlé said in 1927), a relatively recent phenomenon. It dates back to the Renaissance, to Galileo, Kepler, Newton and others. It relies heavily on a particular way of questioning nature: the mathematical ways of thinking and the experimental method are powerful tools in doing so. The world in which we live is shaped by these ways of seeing and ordering and changing the world around us. Even if you as an individual may regard yourself as an illiterate in mathematics and science and technology, much of your way of thinking has been shaped from birth onwards by the same forces that structured the kinds of cities and buildings in which you live, the kinds of foods from which you select those that you like or that (allegedly) are good for your health or your figure, by the same forces, in other words, that created and continue to structure the technological world in which you move. So powerful is the resulting view of nature and the world, that most people see this as the only true or valid conception of the world and cannot visualize alternative constructions of reality. They hold, implicitly and without realizing it, what von Bertallanfy, in his book *Minds, Robots and Men* (1967), has caricatured as the theory of immaculate perception. Von Bertallanfy intended this caricature to represent a great deal of modern psychological theorizing.

I mentioned earlier in my introductory remarks that cross-cultural research has become important to psychologists in the last ten to fifteen years. One reason for this is undoubtedly that the number of psychologists and the number of countries in which they work have increased enormously. But more important, I believe, are the political events: the emergence of independent states in Africa and Asia, and the involvement of the U.S.A., Canada and European nations in all kinds of aid projects (particularly educational) for the newly independent nations. As a simple example: the University of Alberta has been involved in a five-year project for training senior teachers in Thailand and in helping to improve the educational system there; it regularly receives teachers from Tanzania for further training;

it regularly has doctoral students in education and educational psychology from various African countries; it is involved in helping to develop technical education in Kenya; it has supplied personnel to Nigerian education. There is a regular flow of students from these countries to Alberta, and of Canadian professors to those countries. What is happening in a university as remote from the African scene as that in Alberta is happening in numerous universities in North America and in various European countries. There is simply more contact, more confrontation with cultural differences. This cannot but lead to new questions being asked.

Let me now deal with some of the new questions that are being asked and how these affect our conceptualization of child development. I shall deal first with a study by Gay and Cole: *The New Mathematics and an Old Culture: a Study of Learning Among the Kpelle in Liberia* (1967). The Kpelle are a relatively small tribe, at the time of the study served by schools but otherwise fairly remote still from Western influences. I present only a small part of the very extensive study, and I offer my own interpretations of the data.

Note first that the study is concerned with the teaching of mathematics. In their own culture the Kpelle do not have a highly developed system of mathematics; they have as much as is necessary in the context of their daily trading and other activities. The school is a Western-type school, attempting to transmit ways of thinking and looking at the world that have been developed in our technological culture. It is, to begin with, an alien institution. The traditional education of the Kpelle is by participation in activities of the adults plus the so-called Bush school; the latter, though removed from the village, is again largely a replica of the village: adults and children together build a village in the bush, make farms, hunt and engage in all the activities of village life (Gay and Cole, p. 17). By contrast, in Western society the school prepares its young for future participation as adult members of society only partially by direct participation during childhood; to a very large extent it does it by introducing the child to highly abstract symbolic systems. Even when the school uses such 'participatory' methods as activity methods, project methods or whatever name they go under, knowledge as we conceive it is knowledge at a high level of conceptualization, generalization and symbolization — available out of context of actual, concrete, ongoing activity. A high level of reflectiveness and abstraction and verbalization is intended, even if it is not always attained. But the intention itself, the struggle to meet the demands of a school that has this intention, pushes and pulls the cognitive development in a direction that for human development is only one of the possible ones, not the only naturally given and inevitable one. In particular,

modes of categorizing, inferring, abstracting, grouping and ordering arrays of information which in our culture we associate with a certain age of a child, and use as indices of intelligence or of cognitive level attained by the child, may in fact be heavily dependent on Western-type schooling.

Gay and Cole describe an experiment in classification — forming a set of objects according to certain attributes. The task chosen was a very simple one for children who have grown up in America; indeed the authors feared that it would be much too easy for their older Kpelle subjects. There were eight cards, on which were pictured triangles and squares, either red or green in colour and either two or five in number on each card. The task was to sort the cards into groups with common attributes — the attributes which could be chosen were, of course, either colour, or form, or number. Gay and Cole found, to their amazement, that the task was almost impossibly difficult, not only for illiterate children and for adults, but also for school children. They improved the instructions, thinking that perhaps these were at fault. But this did not help. Then they suspected that the cards might not be culturally relevant. So they prepared cards for sorting, identical to the earlier ones, but using pictures of a woman beating rice, with a baby on her back, and a man carrying a bucket of water on his head, followed by a dog. The subjects understood the pictures. The cards could be grouped according to the picture (whether there was a scene with a woman or a man), or according to colour, or according to number. There were no significant differences between the ability to sort the second, allegedly more culturally relevant, cards. Only a small proportion of the Kpelle subjects completed a sort according to more than one criterion and they took a great amount of time about it.

We cannot be sure whether the Kpelle child could not perform this task if it were embedded in an activity in which it was important for him to be able to group items according to the attributes of colour, form or number. In his own culture it is not important to do so. In contrast to his failure on this task, compared with the American's excellent performance, the Kpelle can estimate the number of cups of rice in a bowl remarkably accurately, whereas Americans who were tested could not. Rice growing is important to the Kpelle. What seems to be important is that the Kpelle, even the adults, found the abstraction of such attributes as colour, or form, or number, *out of context* of meaningful ongoing activity (such as might be involved in buying articles in a shop) exceedingly difficult.

In co-operation with Professor Nzimande of the University of Zululand I carried out a study of classificatory behaviour and of colour/form preference among Zulu children and adults (Schmidt

and Nzimande, 1970). This gave us some data which we could compare with what Gay and Cole and other investigators had found. In classification tests of the type already described, preference is determined by the criteria for sorting — colour or form — which is used for the first sorting into groups. A shift from colour preference (in the pre-school years) to form preference (already in the elementary school) is regarded by most investigators as usual in European and American children. When Brian and Goodenough published a paper on 'Relative Potency of Color and Form Perception at Various Ages' (1929), the issue seemed to have been settled. When Suchman in Nigeria tested Hausa children who were attending traditional Moslem schools (1964), he found that there was no shift at all from colour to form preference, the colour preference remaining overwhelming from age three to fifteen years.

In our research we used a test which was identical with that employed by Gay and Cole, and two others which were almost identical with two used by Suchman, thus enabling us to compare the data. We selected five different groups for testing: (a) rural Zulu children, with no western-type schooling, aged from 5 to 14 years (as near as we could determine age!); (b) rural Zulu children with western-type schooling, of the same age range as the previous group; (c) illiterate farm workers; (d) illiterate urban workers; (e) literate urban workers, literacy being defined as 4 to 6 years of schooling.

We included the samples of illiterate farm and urban workers because we hypothesized that the mere fact of living and working in an urban environment would bring about a certain shift away from colour preference towards form preference, and also be associated with a tendency to be able to classify according to more than one criterion.

With regard to the influence of western-type schooling, we hypothesized that this would show up in the following tendencies:

1. that with increasing age there would be a shift in colour/form preference for the rural school children, but not for the unschooled children;
2. that the literate urban workers would show a greater shift away from colour preference than the illiterate urban workers;
3. that with increasing age, the ability to classify the cards according to more than one criterion would develop more rapidly in rural school children than for rural children not attending school;
4. that the literate urban workers would show more ability in classifying the cards according to more than one criterion than the illiterate urban workers.

All the hypotheses were confirmed, both those relating to the

influence of working and living in an urban environment and those relating to the influence of the western-type school.

The results are remarkably similar to those reported by Gay and Cole among the Kpelle, where we also find a clear difference between the schooled and the unschooled children. There are also many similarities to the results reported by Jerome Bruner and his associates at Harvard (1966), who carried out extensive investigations in West Africa, in Mexico and among the Eskimos.

It is true that with regard to both colour/form preference and flexibility in switching from one criterion for classification to another, even the 14-year-old schooled Zulu children do not compare with typical American children at a much younger age. But in America the findings of Brian and Goodenough of 1929 also do not apply any more. Corah (1966) found that five out of six groups of American pre-school children attending nursery school showed more form preference than colour preference. Corah's conjecture that the differences between her results and those of Brian and Goodenough may be due to the greater exposure of young American children nowadays to toys focusing on geometric forms sounds plausible. I would expect even more of a shift in American children today. One needs only to watch the children's programme *Sesame Street* on television to realize how much children in North America are exposed to classificatory activity of many kinds at a very early age. There isn't just a maturational process which makes certain cognitive developments inevitable. The ways of ordering arrays of information to which the child is exposed in daily activities and through the socializing agencies of a society (the school and educational programmes on television), so it appears, help to form the cognitive abilities and to channel them in certain directions.

Let me turn now, very briefly, to another example of research that illustrates the increasing awareness of the role of cultural factors in cognitive development. I refer to David Olson's book *Cognitive Development — The Child's Acquisition of Diagonality* (1970). It concerns itself with what at first seems a very specialized and not very promising problem, and ends up with a theory of cognitive development which has been described by a very prominent psychologist, Smedslund in Sweden, as offering the first real alternative to the currently most widely acclaimed theories of cognitive development, viz. those of Piaget and Bruner.

From the old Binet test of intelligence we have known for a long time that the average European or American child of four years can copy a square, and that he can copy a diamond-shaped figure only at age seven. We know that the average child of five in North America cannot copy a diagonal but a seven-year old child can.

Instead of being satisfied with these facts as providing norms of development, Olson asked the question: what is it that makes a child of seven able to construct a diagonal, when only two years earlier he was not able to do so?

It is impossible to present the whole sequence of very varied experiments which Olson undertook to explore possible answers to the question and which he describes in eight chapters. All I can do is to summarize first some of the causes of failure that he eliminates, and then to go on to his positive suggestions.

Failure at the task is not due to lack of sensory-motor co-ordination — children of that age can draw lines in all directions. Failure is also not due to lack of perceptual discrimination — children may be able to discriminate perceptually between the lines called diagonals and other lines, but this does not mean that they can copy the diagonal. Children may have a correct verbal definition of a diagonal, and nevertheless not be able to copy a diagonal.

The task of constructing a diagonal is a conceptual task. The child has to identify the criterial attributes that turn a line into a diagonal and not into something else. He has to know not only what constitutes a diagonal but also what does not. The child has to use the feedback that he gets either through perception or through a verbal definition or through his attempts actually to draw the diagonal in order to get enough information about the criterial attributes. But where does a concept of the diagonal come from? Is it something that every child invents for himself? It would be more correct, I think, to say that he re-creates it. Olson sees the concept as a part of a whole system of Euclidean geometry. Concepts, like theories, are not 'in nature'. Theories are imposed on objects or events to represent or account for them, rather than the events themselves or our organised perceptions of them. It is because in our culture Euclidean concepts of space are part of the warp and woof of our structuring of space (e.g. in the cities and houses we build) and because we are used to thinking in terms of Euclidean conceptions of space, that the child can rediscover or re-create the concept of a diagonal. He does this through experience in what Olson calls a variety if different performatory domains — through simple perception, through actual attempts at drawing or at placing checkers on a checkerboard, or through verbal descriptions, but none of these would be sufficient if the concept were not already available in the culture. Or rather: each child would have to be a genius, not unlike Euclid, to be able to create such a concept.

As part of his explorations, Olson collected data, through a collaborator in the research, on the ability of children in two tribes in Kenya to copy the diagonal. These were all rural children, some

without schooling, the others with varying amounts of schooling. Again the effects of schooling are very marked even though schooling consisted of only one to three years. However, schooling is not the only factor, for the boys (not the girls) of the one tribe (the Logoli) are clearly more able in constructing the diagonal than those from the other tribe. Olson analyzes differences in the early experience of these boys which would account for the difference: factors related to the rearing of children and to what the tribe regards as important.

Allow me only one concluding remark. I have tried to give some impression of the important part which cross-cultural research is now *beginning* to play in the mainstream of psychology. Western psychologists have become much more aware of the social and historical origins of their own ways of thinking. They are no longer so preoccupied with alleged genetic differences in abilities between groups, or with making odious comparisons in order to boost their collective egos. They are taking a fresh look at the factors and forces that account for the formation of abilities. In studying children in radically different cultures their old conceptualizations of child development are being challenged. The western psychologist doing research in Africa, however, is still more or less in the same position as the missionaries were in the early days, when they first met Africans speaking strange languages that no White man had recorded. When they learnt those languages, they proceeded to write grammars for those languages. All that they could do at first was to impose grammatical categories that had proved useful in the description of Greek or Latin. The western psychologist today is still using the only categories he knows, viz. those from his own culture, to describe and analyze cognitive processes and abilities in other cultures. Every culture, it seems, develops the potential abilities of its children selectively. We do not know what potential abilities in our culture are allowed to atrophy, nor the price we may be paying for our emphasis on mathematico-logical-scientific ways of thinking. The western psychologist has a great deal to learn from those he is trying to understand, not only about the others but also about himself.

*University of Alberta,*
*Canada.*

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# THE EARL OF ORRERY AND SWIFT'S 'GENIUS'

*by* G. J. FINCH

The Earl of Orrery's Remarks on *The Life and Writings of Dr. Jonathan Swift* (London, 1752) has had a mixed reception over the years. In its day it was the most popular of all the eighteenth-century biographies of Swift, although, at the same time, many critics considered it slandered him. The nineteenth century found Orrery's portrait of a misanthropic Swift congenial to their view, but in recent years, since the revaluation of Swift, Orrery's biography has been neglected and its assessment regarded as unnecessarily jaundiced. This is a pity, because in spite of its many defects, Orrery's work is the best of the early Swift biographies and the one which reinforces some of the most recent insights into Swift's art and character.

It is true that from what we know of Orrery he does not seem to have been a very likeable man. Johnson, among others, regarded him as superficial, and it was widely thought that he had written on Swift simply to show off his literary ability.[1] But apart from examining the Houghton manuscripts, Paul J. Korshin has shown that Orrery conceived his work not as an attempt to win his literary spurs at the expense of his friend's reputation but as a corrective to current notions about Swift.[2] On occasions, it is true, Orrery does take a smug delight in parading his knowledge, but I want to argue that the work itself was a serious effort to understand what Orrery termed the 'motions' of Swift's 'genius'.[3]

What is most refreshing about Orrery's biography after reading those of Delaney, Deane Swift and Sheridan, is that he alone of the early biographers — apart from Johnson — does not try to accommodate Swift to specific social norms. His ambition for power and position in the world Orrery sees as part of an essential natural drive in Swift — part of his 'genius' — whereas other biographers had to say he was ambitious for the spread of Christianity or 'from a desire of serving the public'.[4] They were also forced to explain his relations with women as either admirable examples of his self-control or as absolutely normal but hampered by social inequalities. Orrery's Swift comes closer to the proud and coldly austere man of whom Nigel Dennis has said, 'Men like Swift are never husbands. They are priests, they are teachers, they are celibates, they are homosexuals'.[5] It is true that Orrery's limited moral stance often forces him to condemn Swift's treatment of women, but he did at least realise that Swift was different.

Most critics have noticed the shortcomings of Orrery's biography, his lack of sympathy with *Gulliver's Travels* and the discrediting remarks he made generally on Swift, but few notice his emphasis on Swift's great natural ability. In trying to explain his treatment of Stella, Orrery comments 'A great genius must tread in unbeaten paths, and deviate from the common road of life'.[6] He was a man of 'exalted genius',[7] a Caesar to the Tories, a Jupiter to the Irish, 'Had he lived in the same age with HORACE, he would have approached nearer to him than any other poet',[8] and again 'he appears, the greatest master through a greater variety of materials, than perhaps have been discussed by any other author'.[9] But Orrery suggests that unfortunately Swift's immense powers did not mature as they should have done. Instead of being a 'fixed star' and illuminating 'a whole planetary system' he chose to appear as a 'wandering comet'.[10] Swift emerges as a man unable to find the true fulfilment of his talent, an example of the dangers inherent in genius, of the power of subversive passions to overthrow the moral, artistic and mental order of man.

'Genius' was one of those shifting terms during the eighteenth century that inhabited the borderland between psychology and art. Traditionally it was a character word meaning 'disposition' or 'natural bent' but it came to mean, increasingly during the period, native ability or talent. Both senses are implied by Orrery. When he describes Swift's genius as 'irregular' he is referring to him as man and artist. But also included in Orrery's usage is the notion of originality. Swift's was an 'expansive genius'[11] that did not tread in 'the common road',[12] and it was here that the danger of his talents lay, for Orrery's biography reflects the common mistrust of genius in the first half of the eighteenth century; the fear that by following his own inner promptings the artist might overshoot established literary and social decorums. It is understandable that from Orrery's vantage point Swift should appear a threat. He was after all a man of uncertain temperament, often violently passionate but yet strangely cold and removed, who hated vulgar and obscene language but exploited it with gusto and imagination, who often seemed devoid of sexual passion and yet who needed not only the love but the adoration of women. Similar tensions appear in his satire. Swift goes to the sensitive quick of Augustan culture, to the point where the imagination strains against restricting social norms. Satire is a way of admitting by the back door everything which is officially censored in a high literary culture, but in Swift's case, as Denis Donoghue has pointed out, it is a case of how much the tree can be pruned before it dies.[13] Recent studies of *A Tale of a Tub*, for instance, have argued for a much closer link between Swift and the Hack.[14]

In particular, Gardner Stout has persuasively argued that the excremental vision involves the satirist,[15] in other words, that Swift is implicated in his own satire. He sees the Hack not as a carefully created persona distinct from Swift's own character but as part of Swift's consciousness welling up into the total drama of the *Tale*.

Orrery's analysis of Swift, then, as an unfulfilled genius, as the man who whilst aspiring to the highest sinks to the lowest, reflects in a negative sense our current critical uncertainties. Orrery's Swift is a man lacking any firm centre to his life and work, a man of contradictory passions, sometimes proud, sometimes humble, a master of disguise, baffling his would-be biographer, 'of all mankind, SWIFT perhaps had the greatest contrasts in his temper',[16] and again 'you must never look upon him as a traveller in the common road. He must be viewed through a *camera obscura* that turns all objects the contrary way. When he appears most angry, he is most pleased; when most humble, he is most assuming. Such was the man, and in such variegated colours must he be painted'.[17] Orrery's method of describing Swift's character in these difficult circumstances is to balance his virtues and vices against one another. Here, for example, is his first description of Swift:

> He was sour and severe, but not absolutely ill-natured. He was sociable only to particular friends, and to them only at particular hours. He knew politeness more than he practised it. He was a mixture of avarice and generosity: the former, was frequently prevalent, the latter, seldom appeared, unless excited by compassion. He was open to adulation, and could not, or would not distinguish between low flattery, and just applause. His abilities rendered him superior to envy. He was undisguised and perfectly sincere. I am induced to think, that he entered into orders, more from some private and fixed resolution, than from absolute choice: be that as it may, he performed the duties of the church with great punctuality, and a decent degree of devotion. He read prayers rather in a strong nervous voice, than in a graceful manner: and altho' he has been often accused of irreligion, nothing of that kind appeared in his conversation or behaviour.[18]

Although the predominant image of Swift here is that of an austere and disagreeable man, Orrery is striving hard to be fair. Swift may have been 'sour and severe' but he was not a hypocrite and he performed the duties of his office properly. But already the dominant characteristics of Orrery's portrait are emerging. His Swift is an authoritarian, a man needing and loving the exercise of power.

'His perpetual views' Orrery says 'were directed towards power'.[19] The tragedy of his life, he argues, is that his strongly passionate nature was denied fulfilment. 'His pride, his spirit, or his ambition, call it what name you please, was boundless: but, his views were checked in his younger years, and the anxiety of that disappointment had a visible effect upon all his actions'.[20] The effect of prolonged frustration was to deprive his life and art of any cohesive power.

> Upon a general view of his poetry, we shall find him, as in his other performances, an uncommon, surprising, heteroclite genius: ... The restlessness of his imagination, and the disappointment of his ambition, have both contributed to hinder him from undertaking any poetical work of length and importance. His wit was sufficient to every labour: no flight could have wearied the strength of his pinions: perhaps if the extensive views of his nature had been fully satisfied, his airy motions had been more regular, and less sudden. But, he now appears, like an eagle that is sometimes chained, and at that particular time, for want of nobler, and more proper food, diverts his confinement, and appeases his hunger, by destroying the gnats, butterflies, and other wretched insects, that unluckily happen to buzz, or flutter within his reach.[21]

Although perhaps of limited use as an assessment of Swift's poetic achievements, this passage gives a revealing insight into the nature of Swift's satire generally. Orrery comes close to suggesting that it was a cathartic release of frustrated natural ability for Swift. He rightly perceived, although he could not fully appreciate the importance of this, that Swift was tied to satire by the needs of his authoritarian nature. But in addition, Orrery's image of the chained eagle suggests what is frequently felt in reading Swift, that the force of his attack often goes beyond its immediate target. In the great satires, Swift pursues human folly in his moral corrective role until the absurdity of all moral pretensions, even his own, becomes clear. At the darkest moments of his work Swift implicates all mankind in a vision of deep-seated irrationality, and at the same time holds it all the more guilty for being unmendable. But if it really is unmendable then this makes Swift's satiric role futile — it becomes an outlet for his anger at the basic intractability of experience. At such moments, as the logic of his satire is pushing him further, we feel the leash that ties Swift to the Augustan social and moral norms. Evil threatens to slip out of the moral sphere into the psychological, but Swift cannot allow this, he strives hard to keep it in a form which is manageable and which he can control.

But the further implication of Orrery's chained eagle image is that prolonged frustration habituates the victim to his confinement; he comes to enjoy 'the gnats, butterflies, and other wretched insects' that he devours. Swift makes a similar point about his own satiric activity. In his *Meditation on a Broomstick* he says of the moralist's delusion 'And yet, with all his Faults, he sets up to be a universal Reformer and Corrector of Abuses; a Remover of Grievances; rakes into every Slut's corner of Nature, bringing hidden Corruptions to the Light, and raiseth a mighty Dust where there was none before; sharing deeply all the while in the very same Pollutions he pretends to sweep away'.[22] As Stout has argued, what does Swift do in *A Tale of a Tub* but to rake 'into every Slut's corner of Nature'? On one level the *Tale* is a discussion by Swift of his own art. Like the original race of critics the satirist has to acquaint himself with society's excrement and still try to avoid its taint. In the event, however, Swift is much more like Jack than Martin, violently stripping off false prejudices but in danger of tearing the fabric of truth. However limited, then, Orrery's understanding of Swift's obscenity was, his condemnation is far more helpful than those who try to accommodate it to a moral norm.

Orrery firmly connects Swift's talents with his social aspirations and with his lack of internal discipline. The deep drives of his nature, thwarted by repeated disappointments, shattered his art into an assortment of brilliant fragments. The disorder, Orrery argues, is reflected everywhere — in the arrangement of his works in Faulkner's edition, for instance, which Orrery claims Swift neglected to supervise properly:

> We have less pleasure in looking at a palace built at different times, and put together by ignorant workmen, than in viewing a plain regular building composed by a masterly hand in all the beauty of symmetry and order. The materials of the former may be more valuable, but the simplicity of the latter is more acceptable.[23]

The lack of order in Swift's character explains for Orrery why he often oscillated between extremes, why he 'enjoyed the highest, and the best conversation', and yet was 'equally delighted with the lowest and the worst',[24] why he could write both brilliant satiric pieces and yet still indulge in literary trifles. The effect of Swift's pride was to diminish the middleground. Apart from a very select group, Orrery argues, Swift's acquaintances fell into two categories. They were either buffoons who amused him or statesmen whom he honoured.[25] In his work, he comments, 'he has written miscellaneously and has

chosen rather to appear a wandering comet, than a fixed star'.[26] Such are the 'seeming contradictions' of Swift's character that Orrery invokes the 'Manichean heresy':

> He often put me in mind of that wild opinion, which PLUTARCH says was entertained by the sages of old, 'that we are subject to the influence of two principles, or deities, who are in constant opposition to each other: the one directing us to the right hand, and through the right road, the other driving us astray, and opposing us from pursuing the tract pointed out by his adversary'.[27]

There can be little doubt that Orrery is describing here the element of strain or contrariety that we often sense in Swift. There was an anarchic streak both in Swift's life and in his work. Angus Ross, for instance, has recently said of *Gulliver's Travels* that 'the total impression left with the reader is rather a tension between personal uncertainty and traditional pictures of order, or between rebellious wit and acceptance'.[28] Putting it in Orrery's terms, the book reflects 'the influence of two principles'. There is also a good deal of substance to Orrery's argument that this tension increased in his later years as a result of personal frustration. Swift's exile from England, his sense of being ill-treated by the Walpole regime, all helped to increase his feelings of isolation. Critics of the Kathleen Williams school have tended to see Swift's misanthropy as an intellectual and moral stance rather than as a result of the frustration and consequent fearful concentration of 'violent passions'.[29] Orrery's Swift is much closer to being a human being and, one suspects, closer to the real man.

Even in his portrait of Swift's final madness Orrery is careful to describe the exact nature of his malady. In so doing he comes closer than subsequent biographers to understanding the causes of Swift's mental decay. His senility, Orrery suggests, was principally caused by the repressed violence of his nature; 'perhaps under a less constant rotation of anxiety, he might have preserved his senses to the last scene of his life',[30] he comments. But more particularly, Orrery invokes Locke's notion of the *idée fixe* to describe Swift's disturbance:

> Lunacy may in general be considered as arising from a depraved imagination, and must therefore be originally owing to a fault in the body, or the mind. . . . MR LOCKE, if my memory does not deceive me, defines madness as arising from some particular idea, or set of ideas, that make so strong an impression on the mind as to banish all others: . . . from hence it is evident, that

> we ought to consider the strength of the mind in the pursuit of knowledge, and often to vary our ideas by exercise and amusements; constantly fixing a strict guard against any passion, that may be prevalent in too high a degree, or may acquire an habitual strength and dominion over us. Passions are the gales of life; and it is our part to take care, that they do not rise into a tempest.[31]

Orrery is suggesting that Swift's imagination was finally dominated by, instead of controlling, the passions, a condition he thought genius particularly prone to because of its strongly passionate nature. The end result in Swift's case was an intensification, but also a narrowing of his artistic range, and the consequent drying up of his 'fountain of ideas'.[32] Nigel Dennis has described this state in slightly different terms. Talking of Swift's growing sense of alienation and bitterness in his final years he says 'We realise that he imposes on everything that comes his way, from deity to trifles, a fixed shape or nature that must always remain unalterable . . . In the last analysis all facts were subject to Swift's power of fiction: he could see the world only in imaginative shapes of his own making. Nietzsche sums up this sort of man very nicely when he says: "A sign of strong character, when once the resolution has been taken to shut the ear even to the best counter arguments. Occasionally, therefore, a will to stupidity" '.[33]

Understandably, those who loved and admired Swift most, heartily condemned Orrery's portrait; nevertheless, his work became the standard critique of Swift with which all future biographers had to come to terms. Their chief problem was to erect a moral framework that could adequately contain Swift and neutralize the comments of Orrery. Deane Swift was the first to attempt this in his *Essay upon the Life, Writings, and Character of Dr. Jonathan Swift* (London, 1755). Like Orrery he also used the notion of genius, but this time to justify Swift's life and work. Very simply, he argued that Swift was different from other men because he was a superior being. He emerges from the *Essay* as a natural genius, a man with an 'exalted force of spirit which raised him almost above the whole world'[34] and which allowed him prerogatives that will only appear 'wild, strange, and amazing' to 'all the inferior classes of wretched human kind'[35] — of whom presumably Lord Orrery was one. Swift emerges from this long eulogy as a 'consummate genius'[36] who could blithely set aside both in his life and art the rigorous self-training that others needed and trust to his own inner resources.

Deane Swift comes close to suggesting that a different set of moral rules applies to the genius; Sheridan, writing thirty years later, was

more careful. He concentrated not on Swift as genius but on Swift as a type of the Christian hero. His character, Sheridan argued, was 'a pattern of such perfect virtue, as was rarely to be found in the annals of the ancient Republic of Rome, when virtue was the mode'. His Swift was,

> a man of the most disinterested principles, regardless of self, and constantly employed in doing good to others. In acts of charity and liberality, in proportion to his means, perhaps without equal in his days. A warm champion in the cause of liberty, and support of the English Constitution. A firm Patriot, in withstanding all attempts against his country, either by oppression, or corruption; and indefatigable in pointing out, and encouraging the means to render her state more flourishing. Of incorruptible integrity, inviolable truth, and steadiness in friendship. Utterly free from vice, and living in the constant discharge of all Moral and Christian duties.
> (The Dedication)

Less devoted worshippers of Swift occasionally attempted some synthesis between the Swift-as-devil-or-God dilemma, but could only do so by avoiding the real problems. Hawkesworth's neat picture of Swift as a good man avoiding extremes, for example, is only arrived at by a highly personal selection of details.[37] Johnson's *Life* is similarly highly selective, but it was the only work to continue Orrery's searching analysis, and despite its faults, Johnson's view of Swift's character as a condition of arrested development deserves more appreciation than it has received.

Most of the quarrels about Swift in the eighteenth century resulted from the inadequacies of the neat moral patterns into which he was forced. Swift had too many edges to his character to fit into the either/or debate which characterised his biography. All the biographers were ultimately blinkered. Orrery's sympathy with Swift, for instance, was often severely limited by his moral stance. He gives us an interesting insight into Swift's neurosis, but he had no understanding of the way in which Swift drew creatively on his own neurotic tensions to explore those of all men. For him, Swift was simply a flawed giant. Nevertheless, his work registers more accurately than subsequent biographies the contrasting elements of Swift's character, the paradox of a man espousing the 'common Forms'[38] of the Houyhnhnms with all the passion of a Yahoo, the strange mixture of radical and conservative we know to be Swift. The 'uncommon, surprising, heteroclite genius'[39] of Orrery's biography confirms our

feeling that Swift was ultimately much larger than the social context in which he flourished.

*University of Ibadan,*
*Nigeria.*

NOTES AND REFERENCES

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2 'The Earl of Orrery and Swift's Early Reputation'. *HLB*, XVI (April, 1968), 167-177. Also levelled at Orrery was the criticism that having only known Swift for about six to eight years he was in no position to write authoritatively on him. Phillip S. Y. Sun, however, in an unpublished diss. 'Swift's Eighteenth Century Biographies' (Yale, 1963) has argued that from manuscript letters of Orrery's and two interleaved copies of the *Remarks* at Harvard it is clear that he relied extensively on information from George Faulkner, Deane Swift and Mrs Whiteway.
3 John, Earl of Orrery, *Remarks on the Life and Writings of Dr. Jonathan Swift*, 1st ed. (London 1752).
4 Thomas Sheridan, A. M. *The Life of the Rev. Dr. Jonathan Swift, Dean of St. Patrick's Dublin*, 2nd ed. (London, 1787), p. 226.
5 *Jonathan Swift: A Short Character* (London, 1965), p. 65.
6 *Op. cit.*, p. 24.
7 *Ibid.*, p. 283.
8 *Ibid.*, p. 66.
9 *Ibid.*, pp. 214-5.
10 *Ibid.*, pp. 64-5.
11 *Ibid.*, p. 44.
12 *Ibid.*, p. 252.
13 *Jonathan Swift: A Critical Introduction* (Cambridge, 1969), p. 38.
14 See Claude Rawson: 'Order and Cruelty: A Reading of Swift (with some comments on Pope and Johnson)'. *EIC* XX (January 1970), pp. 24-57; and Edward W. Said, 'Swift's Tory Anarchy'. *Eighteenth Century Studies*, III (1969), 48-66.
15 'Speaker and Satiric Vision in Swift's *Tale of a Tub*'. *ECS*, III (1969), 175-99
16 *Op. cit.*, p. 87.
17 *Ibid.*, pp. 252-3.
18 *Ibid.*, pp. 4-5.
19 *Ibid.*, p. 5.
20 *Ibid.*, p. 4.
21 *Ibid.*, pp. 121-2.
22 *Gulliver's Travels and other Writings by Jonathan Swift*, ed. R. Quintana (N.Y., 1958), p. 414. All subsequent quotations are from this edition.
23 *Op. cit.*, p. 82.
24 *Ibid.*, p. 67.
25 *Ibid.*, p. 125.
26 *Ibid.*, pp. 64-5.
27 *Ibid.*, pp. 87-8.
28 *Gulliver's Travels, Studies in English Literature*, No. 38 (London, 1968), p. 52.
29 *Op. cit.*, p. 210.
30 *Ibid.*, p. 124.
31 *Ibid.*, pp. 267-9.
32 *Ibid.*, p. 280.
33 *Ibid.*, pp. 145-6.
34 *Ibid.*, p. 25.
35 *Ibid.*, pp. 321-2.
36 *Ibid.*, p. 185.
37 Hawkesworth's 'Account of The Life of The Reverend Jonathan Swift D.D.' is in vol. I of his ed. of *The Works of Jonathan Swift* (London, 1755-1779).
38 *A Tale of a Tub*, p. 341.
39 *Op. cit.*, pp. 121-2.

# PHILOSOPHY, EDUCATION AND THE UNIVERSITY *

*by* J. MOULDER

According to Wittgenstein, a philosopher assembles reminders for a particular purpose.[1] Although this may not be the last word on what philosophers do, it is all that I hope to accomplish in this exploration of some of the connections between philosophy, education and the university. And I have set my sights on this target because philosophy, education and universities each have such a long history, and have been such very different things at different times, that, if one has to be brief, it is impossible to characterise any of them accurately.

My aim, therefore, is simply to remind us that whatever else philosophy is, it is also an attempt to explore those questions which we are intelligent enough to ask but neither clever nor wise enough to answer. And whatever else education is, to become educated is to learn to be a person.[2] I have assembled these reminders about what philosophy and education are because there is a general tendency to over-emphasise those aspects and benefits of a university education which have a tangible and obvious social utility.

For these reasons I want to advocate a particular set of answers to the following three questions: What is a university education? Why should anyone go to a university? And how should universities educate people? But the answers I want to advocate are not as important as the questions themselves. They are, in fact, nothing more than an attempt to focus attention on my reminders of some important aspects of philosophy and education; and to convince you that at least these three questions deserve serious consideration from anyone who teaches philosophy, or anything else, at our universities.

*What is a university education?*

There are, broadly speaking, two kinds of answer to this question. The one tends to equate education with going to school. More specifically, it tends to equate education with the acquisition of knowledge or of some professional skill or other. If this equation is made, then university education will tend to be regarded as an attempt to enable people to prepare themselves for a career. Furthermore, anyone who makes this equation will tend to complain that the universities do not produce sufficient people to maintain their society's need for various kinds of professionally qualified graduates.

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For example, in a recent survey on university education in South Africa, David Pincus observed:

> There can be no argument over the fact that universities are falling so far behind in graduate output that the prospects for the future are frightening. The number of dentists and doctors they turn out is pathetically small by comparison with the country's present needs. . . . The picture for . . . geology is as desperate, from an industrial point of view, as is the medical and dental picture. All the universities combined are turning out 30 of the 150 trained geologists the country's mineral industry needs a year to keep going at its present rate.[3]

On the other hand, the less one equates university education with preparation for a career, the less one will expect universities to provide professionally qualified graduates, or, in other ways, to remedy our economic, political and social ills. On this view, education leads to understanding; it does not have a 'practical' aim like the acquisition of knowledge or of some professional skill. And, therefore, it does not aim to 'produce' Calvinists, Catholics, Communists, citizens, dentists, doctors, geologists, students, scholars, workers or businessmen. Instead, it is interested in the development of human beings through the development of their minds and their emotions. Its aim is well expressed by Comenius in *The Great Didactic*:

> He gave no bad definition who said that man was a 'teachable animal'. And indeed it is only by a proper education that he can become a man . . . The education I propose includes all that is proper for a man, and is one in which all men who are born into this world should share . . . Our first wish is that all men should be educated fully to full humanity; not any one individual, nor a few nor even many, but all men together and singly, young and old, rich and poor, of high and lowly birth, men and women — in a word all those whose fate it is to be born human beings; . . .

Comenius's wish that all men should be educated fully to full humanity is, of course, more inspiring than it is clear. In fact, it is not so much an answer to the question, 'What is a university education?'; it simply enables us to focus more sharply on that question and to raise a host of others.

One of these questions is, 'What counts as education?' Although I do not have a short and uncontroversial answer to this question, Robert M. Hutchins is close to the heart of the matter when he writes:

> The mind is not a receptacle; information is not education. Education is what remains after the information that has been taught has been forgotten. Ideas, methods and habits of mind are the radioactive deposit left by education.[4]

This warning reminds us that education leads to understanding; and understanding must not be confused with the acquisition of knowledge or of various professional skills. On this view, therefore, if philosophy is an attempt to explore those questions which we are intelligent enough to ask but neither clever nor wise enough to answer; and if a university education is one of the ways in which someone can learn to be a person, then it seems as though philosophy should not be a university's Cinderella department.

Unfortunately, it is not as simple as this. And it is not as simple as this because a technologically developed or developing society needs professionally qualified people of all kinds. And its educational resources are limited. Consequently, the more impressed we are with the hints we have received from Hutchins and Comenius, the more obliged we are to tackle two other questions which arise when we begin to ponder on the connections between philosophy, education and the university. One of these questions is, 'Why should anyone go to university?' The other is, 'How should universities educate people?'

*Why should anyone go to a university?*

A straightforward answer in the spirit of Comenius is this: people are not entirely incapable of being educated; and if they are not educated, then they will not be fully human; and a university is one of the ways in which someone can learn to be a person; that is, learn to be fully human. This answer, however, is somewhat stark. It also has some rivals. I therefore want to provide a more substantial version of this straightforward answer; and I want to do so in the process of considering two rival but, in my opinion, inadequate convictions about why people should go to a university.

## I

One broad view of why people should go to a university is that this is a means towards economic prosperity. Some advocates of this view declare that the economic prosperity which university education is supposed to improve is that of the individual being educated. More commonly, it is maintained that university education, like all other education, is a means towards national prosperity, and therefore, towards international power and prestige.

This conviction underlies a great deal of talk about 'investment in man' and 'the knowledge industry'. Both these phrases are useful clues to what motivated many educational establishments and programmes during the 1960s. During this decade many people were convinced that the greater a person's knowledge or professional skill, the better off he would be; and the larger the proportion of educated people a country had, the stronger and richer it would become. John F. Kennedy stated the prevailing view in a message to Congress in 1963:

> This nation is committed to greater advancement in economic growth, and recent research has shown that one of the most beneficial of all such investments is education, accounting for some forty per cent of the nation's growth and productivity in recent years. In the new age of science and space, improved education is essential to give meaning to our national purpose and power.

In 1965 and in similar vein, Lyndon B. Johnson urged businessmen to support expenditures for higher education on the grounds that they were a good investment. He claimed that a college graduate would earn, on average, $300 000 more in his lifetime than a man who had stopped at the eighth grade. And, he concluded, prosperous citizens mean a prosperous country.

These convictions are still held. And they are particularly common in developing countries like South Africa. This is why David Pincus has warned us that our

> . . . universities are falling so far behind in graduate output that the prospects for the future are frightening.

And this is why Professor A. M. Spandau, head of the Department of Business Economics at the University of the Witwatersrand, has argued that a university education is a means towards economic prosperity:

> Students don't use the university properly. They feel, for example, that when they have taken their honours degree they can get about R10 000 in commerce, so they leave immediately and go into commerce or industry. But their honours degrees qualify them to become junior lecturers at the university. If they would stay on, therefore, they could study and eventually get their doctors' degrees, and then go on to the market and demand salaries that are almost astronomical by comparison with what they could be earning at the university . . .[5]

There is, of course, some connection between university education especially when it is conceived of as the acquisition of knowledge or professional skill — and the economic prosperity of either an individual or of a nation. On the other hand, it is becoming increasingly clear that people who claim that education is an adequate means of promoting the economic objectives of an individual or a nation are guilty, as Kennedy and Johnson were, of a gross oversimplification.

The plain truth is that nobody has yet managed to disentangle what is cause and what is effect when it comes to the interaction of education and economic growth. Although a country's gross national product and its level of university education tend to grow together, this is not necessarily so. Brazil, for example, has one of the fastest growing economies in the world. But its level of education is lower, in proportion to the population, than it was before its economic expansion began.

There is, however, a more serious objection to the view that a university education is a means to an individual's or a nation's economic prosperity. This view is not only too simple; it is also out of date. And it is out of date because automated and cybernated industries no longer require a large number of highly knowledgeable or highly skilled people. In fact, apart from a minority of scientists, engineers and skilled artisans, workers in automated industries hardly require any education for their work. For their work, they do not even need to know how to read, to write, or to do simple arithmetical calculations. The ordinary worker in a highly automated or cybernated industry only needs to be able to see, say, whether a red light is on, or to hear whether a whistle is blowing. Illiterate Spanish migrants, for example, are supervising automatic bakeries in West Germany. They ride back and forth on bicycles in front of the ovens. When the warning signal goes on, they report to a repair man. Since they cannot speak German, they do so by pressing a button.

If, therefore, industrial and commercial enterprises were more highly automated and cybernated than they now are, they would need far fewer knowledgeable or skilled people than they do now. And, consequently, a university education would lose its point if, under these circumstances, it was conceived of as a means to improve economic prosperity. In other words, it is not that obvious that universities either can or should be regarded as the means by which industry and commerce will be able to satisfy their desire for increased growth and productivity. In fact, those who are bewitched by slogans which claim that a university education is a means towards greater economic prosperity will soon discover (as more and more university graduates are discovering) that their university

education does not even guarantee them employment, let alone the kind of employment their educational experiences promised or led them to expect.

II

Another broad view of why people should go to a university is that this is a means of remedying, or of learning how to remedy, the various economic, political and social ills of our society. In opposition to this view I want to argue that a university education which is motivated by this aim is neither effective nor completely harmless.

It is not effective for the same reason that primary and secondary education programmes which are organized with the same end in view are not effective. In very general terms, this reason is that no educational system can escape from the society in which it operates; it must reflect what the society wants it to reflect. More specifically, all educational institutions have to contend with the environment in which it is given: with the family, the community, the media of mass communication, advertising, propaganda; in short, with the culture. No educational institution, therefore, is in a position to remedy, or to teach people how to remedy, the handicaps of and the injustices to socially and economically under-privileged people. It is simply naive to expect an educational system, university or otherwise, to develop intelligent human beings if all the forces of the culture are directed, for example, to the development of producers and consumers. Consequently, there is no reason to believe that a university education is an effective means of remedying, or of learning how to remedy, the social and economic inequalities of our society.

Furthermore, it is not at all clear that it is completely harmless to believe that a university, or any other kind of educational institution, is a means towards remedying, or learning how to remedy, our economic, social and political ills. Someone who proclaims the salvation of his society through education runs the risk of failing to do something effective about the social and economic ills of his society. For example, those who talk of education as a means of improving race relations often seem as though they have no great desire to inconvenience themselves in this area.

Is a university education therefore of no relevance to society? Should it aim to be of no earthly use? Not at all. And especially not if the aim of a university education is to enable someone to learn to be a person. The central thrust under this view of the matter is to enable people to understand what it means to be human. And because we live in a particular society at a particular period of its development, it is impossible to understand what it means to be

human without understanding the nature, the limitations and the possibilities of our society.

An essential aim of a university education, therefore, should be to provide people with the ideas, methods and habits of mind which they need to evaluate their society; to appreciate everything which makes their lives and the lives of others worth living; and to reject everything which dehumanises them and the other members of their society. Such an understanding of one's society is, of course, no substitute for an involvement in the means which it provides for its improvement and change. But it is a necessary condition for an intelligent involvement in this area of one's existence.

## III

In opposition to these two views of why anyone should go to a university there stands the stark, straightforward one inspired by Comenius. On this view someone should go to university because it offers another opportunity to learn to be fully human. Unlike the two rival views which I have considered, this view of the matter does not aim university education at a particular section of a society or at a particular set of problems with which human beings have to wrestle. For example, it does not aim a university education at those who want to improve their own or their nation's economic position; nor does it aim a university education at a society's economic, political and social problems.

Comenius's view, however, distinguishes itself from its rivals by more than its universality. His view does not rest on a dubious declaration that a university education is a means to some other end. It does not promise those who go to university that they will learn how to remedy the injustices of their society; or that they will be able to obtain more interesting or more lucrative forms of employment. On the contrary, it warns that there is nothing to be gained from a university education except an opportunity to try to understand what is involved in having been born a human being.

But the main attraction of Comenius's view is that anyone who adopts it as his reason for being involved with university education cannot escape two questions which are all too often ignored by educational institutions, by educators and by those who want to be educated. These two questions are: 'What is education?', and 'What is it to be human?' In fact, if we were able to answer these two questions satisfactorily, we would have a better idea of what a university education is and how universities should educate people. Although I am not able to answer these questions to my own satisfaction, I want to conclude with some reflections which may include the ingredients for a more satisfactory answer. At the same

time I want to say something about the connection between philosophy and a university education.

*How should universities educate people?*

I began my exploration of the connection between philosophy, education and the university with some reminders that universities are falling so far behind in their output of professionally qualified graduates that the prospects for the future industrial and commercial success, as well as the future social well-being, of our society are frightening. I then questioned whether people should go to a university as a means towards their own or the nation's economic prosperity; or as a means towards remedying, or learning how to remedy, the economic, political and social ills of our society. And I assembled these reminders and raised these questions because I am suspicious of the general tendency to overemphasise those aspects and benefits of a university education which have a tangible and obvious social utility.

Nevertheless, problems remain. More specifically, it may still seem as though I want to maintain that a university education should be of no earthly use. And someone may want to argue that, because our educational resources are limited, they ought not to be deployed on educational programmes which simply aim to provide the individual with an opportunity to learn to be a person. Consequently, someone may argue that, because they are all short of money, there is hardly a South African university that has a full complement of academic staff; and therefore we may simply have to close departments like philosophy which contribute *neither* to the nation's economic prosperity, *nor* to its search for economic, political and social arrangements which are more just.

This is a formidable line of attack. And all I have with which to meet it is a quotation, a distinction and an observation. But I want to maintain that these are the ingredients from which we may be able to discover what education is; what philosophy is; what it is to be human; and, therefore, how universities should educate people.

The quotation comes from Michael Oakeshott's superb discussion of the problem of trying to understand one's society. He writes:

> As civilized human beings, we are the inheritors, neither of an inquiry about ourselves and the world, nor of an accumulating body of information, but of a conversation, begun in the primeval forests and extended and made articulate in the course of centuries. It is a conversation which goes on both in public and within each of ourselves. Of course there is argument and inquiry and information, but wherever these are profitable they

> are to be recognized as passages in this conversation, and perhaps they are not the most captivating of the passages . . . Conversation is not an enterprise designed to yield an extrinsic profit, a contest where a winner gets a prize, nor is it an activity of exegesis; it is an unrehearsed intellectual adventure . . . Education, properly speaking, is an initiation into the skill and partnership of this conversation in which we learn to recognize the voices, to distinguish the proper occasions of utterance, and in which we acquire the intellectual and moral habits appropriate to conversation. And it is this conversation which, in the end, gives place and character to every human activity and utterance.[6]

A recent example of what Oakeshott has in mind was the conversation on and by Die Sestigers which the University of Cape Town's Department of Extra-mural Studies arranged for its 1973 Summer School. By all accounts, this was an unrehearsed intellectual adventure which contributed as much to the education of the authors engaged in conversation amongst themselves and with their audiences as it did to those who merely listened or read the published collection of papers. Conversation, then, is an essential part of what education is; of what it is to be human; and, therefore, of how universities should educate people.

The distinction which must be included in any adequate view of how universities should educate people is the distinction between two kinds of question to which a university or any other kind of educational programme can introduce us. On the one hand, there are questions which can be answered by acquiring further information or a certain expertise. Problems are very common. In fact, a great deal of ordinary schooling and university training aims at enabling people to acquire the information or expertise which they need to deal with problems of various kinds. For example, a university's commerce, professional and science departments all aim to equip people with the information or expertise which they need to deal with problems of various kinds.

Problems, however, are not the only kind of bothers which we have. There are also what I will call 'puzzles'. And puzzles are not like problems because a puzzle is a question which we are intelligent enough to ask but neither clever nor wise enough to answer. All we can do, therefore, about our puzzles is to engage ourselves and other people in a conversation about them. But instead of trying to describe or define a puzzle, I simply want to say that puzzles arise because of our beliefs about attitudes towards ourselves, towards our personal and formal relationships with other people, towards

politics, economics and our society in general. For example, one of the most puzzling questions anyone can ask is 'What does it mean to be happy?' But as soon as one begins to wrestle for an answer one discovers that this question has some peculiar features.

*Firstly*, this question cannot be answered simply by obtaining further information or by employing a particular procedure or technique. In fact, when one begins to gather information on how one can be happy one is more likely than not to become more confused and anxious than before one began. This is because when one sets out to gather information about what is required to be happy, one encounters a bewildering variety of opinion. For example, priests of various kinds claim that happiness comes from worshipping the god which they worship. Stoics assure us that the best way to secure happiness is through intellectual pursuits and by a complete control of our emotions. On the other hand, Hugh Heffner believes that if you want to be happy, you should allow your feelings and emotions to express themselves in the enjoyment of beautiful things — especially beautiful bunnies! Even Snoopy and the people who write advertisements have opinions about happiness.

*Secondly*, there are no experts you can go to for an answer to the question, 'How can I be happy?', because this question cannot be answered simply by obtaining further information. And there are no experts because every human being is interestingly different from every other. A person's way of being human, therefore, is his way of being happy. On the other hand, almost anyone may help you discover how to be happy. And they may do so even though none of them are experts at answering this question; and even if they themselves have not discovered how to be happy!

*Thirdly*, if an answer is to silence this question then it must satisfy, not only one's reason, but also one's feelings and emotions. Which would you prefer: to be happy, even though you don't understand what happiness is, or to understand what happiness is, even though you yourself are not happy?

*Fourthly*, the question, 'How can I be happy?' raises questions about the nature of being human. For example, should people who are as strangely constructed as we are expect to be happy?

*Fifthly*, although we cannot completely understand or come to terms with a puzzle, it has a remarkable capacity to illuminate other areas of our existence. For example, although we don't understand what happiness is or how to be happy, few, if any of us, would approve of a society in which it is difficult or impossible for anyone to be happy!

I have by no means exhausted this distinction; nor can I. And although philosophers are not the only people who wrestle with

puzzles, it seems to me that this is essentially what philosophy is; namely, an attempt to explore those questions which we are intelligent enough to ask but neither clever nor wise enough to answer. Furthermore, although universities should not ignore problems, it is important to remember that we do not exist only and mainly to solve problems; we also need to be given the chance of discovering that there are no completely satisfactory answers to puzzles. In other words, a university should not only introduce people to those questions which some teacher or textbook can answer, but to those far more interesting questions that neither teachers nor students are clever or wise enough to answer satisfactorily.

And if someone objects that to be introduced to questions that seem to defy an adequate answer is very frustrating, then the point must be granted. On the other hand, if someone objects that to be introduced to this kind of question doesn't have any social utility whatsoever, then the point must be disputed. And in reply it needs to be said that there is something comforting about our relative stupidity. Can you imagine how depressing it would be if we were wiser than we are and still managed to complicate things as much as we do? And can you imagine how refreshing it would be if our politicians and social reformers were not quite so certain that they know what is wrong with our society and what we have to do to improve things?

Finally, the observation which must be included in any adequate view of how universities should educate people is that our development as human beings has become dangerously one-sided. For example, although we have managed to put some of our fellow human beings on the moon, our understanding, as distinct from our knowledge and our technical expertise, is so limited that we don't know what it is that we have put there — except, of course, that they were Americans!

What, then, is the connection between philosophy, education and the university? Quite frankly, I don't know because there are so many connections between these three things. But I hope that the reminders which I have assembled will enable someone to remind me of all the other important connections which I have forgotten or ignored.

*Rhodes University,*
*Grahamstown.*

NOTES

[1] *Philosophical Investigations*, translated by G. E. M. Anscombe (Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1958), p. 50.

[2] Glenn Langford, 'The Concept of Education' in *New Essays in the Philosophy of Education*, edited by Glenn Langford and D. J. O'Connor (Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973), p. 3.

[3] 'Business Times Survey on Higher Education', *Sunday Times*, September 29, 1974, p. 7.
[4] *The Learning Society* (Penguin Books, 1970), p. 44. Anyone who reads Hutchins's book will discover how much this paper owes to him.
[5] 'Business Times Survey on Higher Education', *Sunday Times*, September 29, 1974, p. 7.
[6] *Rationalism in Politics and Other Essays* (New York and London, 1962), pp. 198-9.

# EDWARD THOMAS: POETIC PREMONITIONS IN THE PROSE

*by* P. PIENAAR

Today, fifty-seven years after his untimely death in 1917, both Edward Thomas's later poetry and his earlier prose, out of which the poetry was distilled, are at last getting the recognition that they deserve. There are few contemporary anthologies which do not contain at least one, and usually more than one, of his evocative poems; and usually compilers differ in their choice of what is best — from a slender collection of 141 published poems I estimate that to date no less than thirty are represented in various anthologies. Critics, too, are now belatedly following the lead of men of the stature of F. R. Leavis and C. Day Lewis in acknowledging the elusive excellence of both Thomas's poetry and prose. The student of twentieth-century literature should pay more than passing attention to the productions of Edward Thomas.

He practised assiduously what he praised so succinctly in Keats, 'exceptional fidelity to his own thought, feeling and observation'.[1] Yet one critic remarks 'I do not think there is any prose work of Edward Thomas of which we can say that the quality is sustained'.[2] This statement, though true, is little more than a truism. If the best is very good, as it is in Thomas's prose, the writer's more pedestrian passages may be forgiven him. It is precisely this unevenness in Thomas's prose which throws into bold relief its many excellences. The converse holds true, too: his vivid images tend to show up the more prosaic passages in his books and essays.

Coombes quotes a lengthy passage from 'Isoud', one of the papers in *Cloud Castle*, and claims that there are 'poeticisms and cliches and showy imagery' in it. Yet he does not specify one image or phrase which is fanciful or ornate. The last sentence in the passage reads: 'With an imposing promise of the far away spring, a great poplar, in a spurt of delicate rain, rose up in magically aggrandized magnificence into a lustrous pane of sky'.[3] The phrase which stands out is 'magically aggrandized magnificence'. At first glance — and Coombes apparently did not give it more than one glance — it sounds pretentious. But when its meaning is analysed, the metaphor is seen to be both precise and fine. The length of the words, and the aggregation of 'g' sounds, creates an impression of grandeur. The sounds of the words strongly reinforce their meaning. In its context this image has an exciting, uplifting effect. Framed in a 'lustrous

pane of sky', and invigorated by a 'spurt of delicate rain', the poplar seems to draw itself up to its full height and stretch out its branches as wide as they will go; it is a grand sight and grandly described. Coombes refers to this as 'heightened writing', an impressive phrase which implies that Thomas's imagination was running away with him. But there are no redundant words in this sentence and it is difficult to think of other simpler words, with the same meaning, which would do as well. It would also be difficult to equal a metaphor at once as compact and vivid as 'a lustrous pane of sky'.

Thomas's prose is always clear and sensible. There is much meaning behind even his most resplendent descriptions. In an essay entitled 'Home' he skilfully depicts man's puniness in the face of inimical natural forces: 'The wind hissed as though through closed lips and jagged teeth. The mist wavered over the polished ripples of the lake that resembled a broad and level courtyard of glass among the rough hills. The men were silent and the sounds of their footsteps were caught up and carried away in the wind'.[4] In a passage from *Oxford* thought and imagery are fused without fuss. A truth is revealed and a feeling of drowsiness evoked at the same time: 'Few of the costless luxuries are dearer than the hour's sleep amidst the last chapter of the night, while the fire is crumbling, grey, and murmurous, as if it talked in its sleep'.[5] These examples hint at the great variety of good things to be found in his writing. In one place he can state with charming simplicity: 'Breakfast was almost at an end, and the first cigarette had just been lit; which is as much as to say it was one of the sweetest moments of life'.[6] Elsewhere he can be aphoristic: 'But, says one, your knowledge is nothing until another has acknowledged it'.[7] Or he can sketch a scene deftly and delicately: 'On a sharp November night, when the sky is swept broad and clean, and garnished with stars that wink as if the wind fluttered them . . .'[8]

I quote these last three examples from *Horae Solitariae* because it is his earliest published work and therefore the furthest removed in time from his poetry. But here his prose is as polished as it is in *In Pursuit of Spring*, published twelve years later in 1914, though it must be admitted that the language of the later work is less elaborate. The following extract from 'February in England' is an example of his early style: 'The whole countryside of grassy level and rolling copse was like a shell put to the ear. For the shore was never still. A little way out the fisher boats might be curtseying on the tranquil tide; but reaching the shore, the same tide came upon fantastic rocks that were an organ out of which it contrived an awful music. Under the beams of the rocking moon those tall, cadaverous crags rose up like stripped reapers, gigantic and morose, reaping and

amassing the dolorous harvest of wrecks, waist-deep in a surge whose waves seemed not to flow and change, but to turn, turn ceaselessly in the contracted corridors among the rocks, like wheels revolving, and bespattered by the foam that huddled yellow, coagulate, quaking, in the crevices'.[9] Thomas is striving — almost straining — for an effect. He tends to overload his description with alliterations, and consequently some of his phrases appear glib. He first presents the rocks as an organ, and then in the next sentence they become stripped reapers. The transition is too abrupt because these two images, both vivid in themselves, are too dissimilar. The 'cadaverous crags' being likened to 'stripped reapers' is not fitting. Put like this 'cadaverous' is attributable to the reapers as well as the crags, and reapers are not generally sickly-looking. The young Thomas — and he was only twenty-two when he wrote *Horae Solitariae* — was probably carried away by the fine sound of 'cadaverous crags'. 'Dolorous' is a trifle archaic and pedantic. (However, when it is added to 'cadaverous' and 'coagulate', it does suggest the sonorous sound of breaking waves.)

But the most striking thing about this passage is the way that Thomas has captured the movement of the sea in the long concluding sentence. Each phrase suggests another wave coming in and the eternal restless turmoil of the sea is evoked by the accumulation of phrases of different length. In nearly seventy words there is no full stop to break the rhythm of the sea dashing ceaselessly on the rocks. Though the sentence is so long it is not awkward or ungrammatical. It surges forward. This is a scene vividly visualised and graphically presented, in spite of the extravagance of some of the devices used. Thomas writes so painstakingly that his effects sometimes appear contrived. His style borders on the florid, but nevertheless this is the sort of writing which, in a young author, gives promise of very good things to come. It is more difficult to invigorate a prosy style than it is to moderate a high-flown style.

His writing in the much later *In Pursuit of Spring* is less self-conscious. He is more economical in his choice of words and less impulsive in his choice of images. He writes with more assurance without sacrificing originality or vitality. 'As it was Sunday no white and black teams were crossing these spaces, sowing and scarifying. The rooks of Joan-a-Gore's flew back and forth, ignorant of the falconer; the pewit brandished himself in the air; the lark sang continually; on one of the dead poplars a corn bunting delivered his unvaried song, as if a handful of small pebbles dropped in a chain dispiritedly'.[10] Here his use of alliteration is less obtrusive and slick. It strengthens the connection between ploughing and sowing. The separation of the alliterated 'd's' in the phrase 'small pebbles dropped

in a chain dispiritedly' is a subtle device which quietly draws attention to 'in a chain'. These words would have been lost had he said 'dropped dispiritedly in a chain'. He joins the notes together and makes a plaintive little melody out of the bird's song. He has juxtaposed vivid metaphor with simple statement, thus linking the pewit with the lark. This prose is more subtle than that in *Horae Solitariae*. Thomas has matured considerably, and is unconsciously refining his writing preparatory to writing poetry.

Again, however, it is the movement of the prose, more than anything else, which prefigures the poetry. Thomas constructs his last sentence so as to suggest the traveller's quick perception of sights and sounds in the country around him. His eyes dart from one object to another; his ear registers different attendant sounds; his mind immediately interprets what he sees and hears. Each phrase is nearly equivalent to a line of verse and the whole sentence corresponds closely to a complete stanza.

There are many descriptive cameos in his prose but none finer than the opening paragraph of 'Snow and Sand': 'The wind has as many voices as men have moods, and more. It can whimper like a child hiding alone. It can rave as if it was one of the gods of the early men, running wild in the night over a diminished world. It can whisper love and hate and satiety. It will breathe of doubt, apprehension, trepidation. Now it seems the youngest thing between earth and heaven, new made and fresh as bubbles on the brook. And now again it is an old wind. Hundreds of times it is an old wind, so old, that it has forgotten everything except that it is old and that all other things among which it wanders are young and have changed and will change; and it mumbles fitfully that what is young now will in a moment be old, and that to be old is nothing, nothing; and then in one breath it scatters the last handful of the dead tree's dust and flutters the first leaf of spring'.[11] The various moods of the wind are delineated with great sensitivity. The 'm' sounds echo down the first sentence, evoking the sometimes mournful soughing of the wind. Then follows the sharp, unequivocal image of the 'child hiding alone', whimpering. It is a small, painful, lost sound, totally different from the euphonious, lulling notes of the wind in the first sentence. The wind which follows is dark, primeval and irresistible. Then it drops to a sibilant whisper which can breathe of 'love and hate and satiety', according to the mood of the listener. As it continues to blow it can magnify uncertainty into dread. The nuances of meaning between 'doubt', 'apprehension' and 'trepidation' are very fine. Then with a sudden change of mood it becomes a young, frisky wind, 'fresh as bubbles on the brook'. Finally the ancient, unchanging wind of the last sentence is vividly evoked. The

long sentence flows on effortlessly and inexorably like the wind itself. The wind is made older by the simple, deliberate statement that 'all other things among which it wanders are young and have changed and will change . . . and that to be old is nothing, nothing'. There is a hint of scorn in the emphatic last two words. This wind works by attrition and even reduces language to bare affirmation of its tireless, eternal activity. To this wind years are but brief moments: 'what is young now will in a moment be old'. Then, as though in a fit of impatience, 'it scatters the last handful of the dead tree's dust and flutters the first leaf of spring'. Rebirth always follows death in the endless pattern of the seasons, and the wind is an agent of renewal in spite of being so old itself. If it destroys it also builds. As Thomas expresses it elsewhere: 'And the winds were husbandmen; reapers and sowers thereof'.[12] The wind itself always remains immutable and indestructible.

There is an undertone of omniscience and prophecy in this description, something at once elusive and yet palpable. It recalls Coombs's discovery of 'portentousness' in the passage from *Horae Solitariae* which ends, 'the birds were full of prelusive dark sayings about the approaching night',[13] and it prefigures F. R. Leavis's delicate definition of a similar elusive quality in Thomas's poetry: 'It is as if he were trying to catch some shy intuition on the edge of consciousness that would disappear if looked at directly'.[14]

All Thomas's books contain many striking images. 'Then the canvas of a boat creeping like a spider down the glassy river pouted feebly'.[15] 'The hangings indeed were sad, with a design of pomegranates; but the elaborate silver candelabra dealt wonderfully with every thread of light entering contraband'.[16] 'Nevertheless, we paced in fancy down umbrageous, overtraceried cathedral aisles'.[17] (The grand latinity of 'umbrageous' is apposite to a cathedral aisle.) 'Now and then a leaf fidgeted'.[18] 'The larches in the plantations seemed to have been dipped in pale fire'.[19] 'The great tree against the sky was exalted'.[20] 'Her hair was flaxen, her face as much weathered as it was possible to be without ceasing to be pink and fresh, her thin mouth at once childlike and shrewd, her eyes of a sparkling grey, so that in each of them seemed always to be a drop of quicksilver sliding'.[21] 'He was sitting in a high-backed chair, as stiff and as rugged as a tree . . .'[22] 'It was a grey, weedy churchyard, far too large for the few big ivy-covered box tombs lying about in it like unclaimed luggage on a railway platform'.[23] '. . . and compact masses of beeches (stood) on certain ridges, like manes or combs'.[24] 'Nevertheless, stumping along on a shoeful of blisters is not bad when you are out of Royston and have Pen Hills upon your left . . .'[25] 'Letchworth was still in sight, like so many wounds on the earth and so

much sticking-plaster'.[26] 'The moon is something which resembles a hundred different things, from a shaving of silver or a dried Honesty seed to a dinted golden shield'.[27] 'I pass through it at night and hear its noises like the wrath and sorrow of lions raving in bondage, and when I look up the starry sky is like a well in the forest of the city . . .'[28] (His dislike of cities is strongly evidenced in this description of London.) 'His large long grey hands wriggled and twitched like two rats cleaning themselves'.[29] ' "Have you the key?" he asked in a voice that made my throat itch into a cough'.[30] His images are so vibrant that it is difficult to resist the temptation to go on quoting and quoting.

Thomas notices so many small things which escape most people's attention. The sensitivity of his observation, 'Twice again I saw her in the wood . . . alone and undisturbed, at ease and at home there like a bird questing among the dead leaves when it has no fears of being disturbed'[31] foreshadows the deceptively casual vision, 'I like the dust on the nettles, never lost/Except to prove the sweetness of a shower'.[32] On at least one occasion two lines from a poem are almost the same as the lines of prose in which the image was born: 'The swift with wings and tail as sharp and narrow/As if the bow had flown off with the arrow';[33] '. . . in the flight of the swift which was as if the arrow and bow had flown away together'.[34] There are many other images in Thomas's prose and poetry which correspond: 'that day/When twenty hounds streamed by me'[35] harks back to 'the hounds had just streamed past me';[36] 'and overhead/Hang stars like seeds of light'[37] recalls 'the star-sown sky';[38] 'Oh,/They have killed a white bird up there on her nest,/The down is fluttering from her breast!'[39] is reminiscent of 'snow fell . . . (as) if a white bird had been plucked by a sparrow hawk'.[40]

But Thomas's prose and poetry are not merely accurate in point of detail. Beneath the coruscating imagery there is a great deal of hard sense. The poet is always searching for the meaning in what he sees. The subtle ambiguity of statements like 'but in a life of disappointments, the advent of the thing expected is really the finest of surprises'[41] and 'The footpath by the mill was fading away for it now led nowhere — whither few cared to follow it . . . And who took the first step? Someone in the days when, wherever you went you came to nowhere',[42] herald paradoxical truths like those in 'Liberty':

> There's none less free than who
> Does nothing and has nothing else to do,
> Being free only for what is not to his mind,
> And nothing is to his mind. If every hour
> Like this one passing that I have spent among

The wiser others when I have forgot
To wonder whether I was free or not,
Were piled before me, and not lost behind,
And I could take and carry them away
I should be rich; or if I had the power
To wipe out every one and not again
Regret, I should be rich to be so poor.[43]

Thomas was well aware that very few emotions are simple and unmixed with other conflicting emotions: 'Her whole expression was one of wistfulness, but changed ceaselessly and even contradicted itself, like a picture seen again in other days: it was full of the sorrow there is in laughter, the joy in tears'.[44] An ambivalence, a subtle tension of opposites, is suggested in the titles of two of his books, *Rest and Unrest* and *Light and Twilight*; it is reflected, too, in oxymorons like 'wild peace', which is used to describe the effect of 'rain falling for ever upon rock and upon water',[45] and 'superb brutality', which refers to the builders of medieval castles where 'every stone owes its place to human blood'.[46] Similar penetrating antitheses occur in his poetry. In 'Health' he remarks, 'This is the best and worst of it/Never to know,/Yet to imagine gloriously, pure health',[47] while in 'There was a time' he says, 'I sought yet hated pity till at length/I earned it.'[48]

There is much that is wise in Thomas's prose. But his percipience is never gratuitous or obtrusive. In 'Hengist: A Kentish Study' he discusses an old gardener: 'The old man, rather than the young man, can plant (and not water with tears) a tree that will never be glorious to his eyes'.[49] He is aware of the fine distinction between crying in grief and crying with relief: 'I hoped that perhaps his tears were sweet by this time, and that he was crying more for luxury than for sadness . . .'[50] Dog owners should find food for thought in Thomas's discovery that he could not cure his dog of the hunting habit by beating him, so 'I began to laugh at the folly of lashing myself into a fury at the vice of disobedience under the pretext of improving the morals of an excellent dog. He forgave me so readily that it took me some time for me to forgive myself'.[51] The same quiet wisdom is to be found in Thomas's poetry. Rhyme renders aphoristic 'The past is the only dead thing that smells sweet,/The only sweet thing that is not also fleet',[52] while the simple truth of 'To name a thing beloved man sometimes fails'[53] is undeniable.

Some ideas which first appear in Thomas's prose are later restated in his poetry: 'It was his delight to choose a plain common word, and fitting it into a line, to evoke its divinity'[54] forms the central

theme of his poem 'Words'.[55] In 'November' Thomas anatomises mud and finds that it is compounded of clean, wholesome ingredients:

> Few care for the mixture of earth and water
> Twig, leaf, flint, thorn,
> Straw, feather, all that men scorn,
> Pounded up and sodden by flood,
> Condemned as mud.[56]

This is a poetic expansion of an idea originally expressed in 'Rain': 'But it is characteristic of modern poetry, as a criticism of life by livers, that it has left the praise of rain to hop farmers and of mud to shoeblacks'.[57]

His prose characters often correspond to his verse characters. Lob's prototype is to be found several times in Thomas's prose, but nowhere is he more graphically portrayed than in *The Country*: 'I looked round, and there, sitting on a beach-stump in the sun, was an old, old man, and he was leaning on a stick. His face was like a wrinkled red apple, and yet I have seen boys of twelve with older faces. It told you the boy he had been eighty years before — the dullest of boys at his books . . . All the mischief had not yet gone out of his face, though his eyes were a rheumy blue and resembled shell-fish . . . I should like to live another seventy years to see if this generation produces anything as fit for living on the earth . . . When a poet writes, I believe he is often only putting into words what such another old man puzzled out among the sheep in a long lifetime'.[58] He goes looking for this same patriarch, the father of mankind, in 'Lob':

> At hawthorn-time in Wiltshire travelling
> In search of something chance would never bring,
> An old man's face, by life and weather cut
> And coloured, — rough, brown, sweet as any nut —
> A land face, sea-blue-eyed — hung in my mind
> When I had left him a mile behind . . .[59]
> Yet Lob had thirteen hundred names for a fool,
> And though he never could spare time for school
> To unteach what the fox so well expressed,
> On biting the cock's head off, — Quietness is best, —
> He can talk quite as well as anyone
> After his thinking is forgot and done.[60]

The dry humour expressed in 'Lob' is typical of Thomas the poet and Thomas the prose writer. Having fallen from a high poplar, the

old man in 'Man and Dog'[61] gets the nickname of 'The Flying Man' in hospital. When he meets Thomas he comments wryly, 'If I flew now, to another world I'd fall'. In the same way the humour in 'Lovers'[62] reveals the characters of the two men, Jack and George. 'Seven Tramps: A Study in Brown' begins in a whimsical manner: 'We were a close-knit and easily divisible covey of seven tramps — a woman, two boys and a girl and three men; there was, too, an ass, but he was a gentleman and belonged to a great house that lay near our path one summer'.[63] There is Dickensian irony in the lowly ass coming from the great house and joining the tramps. In *In Pursuit of Spring* Thomas enters Epsom 'between high walls of advertisements — yards of pictures and large letters — asserting the virtues of clothes, food, drugs, etc., one sheet for example, that by eating or drinking something you gained health, appetite, vigour and a fig-leaf. The exit was better.'[64] The irony here is more pungent than it is in the previous example. Wit would be out of place in most of Thomas's poetry, as it would be in much of his prose, but if it is consonant with the theme of a poem or an essay, and if it enhances the characterisation, he uses it deftly.

In many instances Thomas's poetic inspiration undoubtedly sprang from his earlier sensitive expression in prose. He recorded his lively observations of people, sights and places in his prose writing; in this way he inscribed them indelibly on his memory so that when he came to write poetry about them they were sharply recollected. Often they are so vividly described that they seem to be immediately present before him. Then, too, working constantly with words in his prose works, and always striving for colour and lucidity, and authentic, rhythmic speech, he evolved a naturally poetic style. His long apprenticeship in prose manifestly stood him in good stead when he finally came to write poetry.

*University of Durban-Westville.*

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[21] 'The Maiden's Wood', *Rest and Unrest*, p. 152.
[22] *Ibid.*, p. 157.
[23] *In Pursuit of Spring*, p. 147.
[24] *Ibid.*, p. 156.
[25] *The Icknield Way*. London, Constable and Co. Ltd., 1913, p. 119.
[26] *Ibid.*, p. 125.
[27] *The Country*. London, B. T. Batsford, 1913, p. 5.
[28] *Ibid.*, p. 6.
[29] 'Saved Time', *Cloud Castle*. London, Duckworth and Co., 1922, p. 182.
[30] *Ibid.*, p. 183.
[31] 'The Maiden's Wood', *Rest and Unrest*, p. 154.
[32] 'Tall Nettles', *Collected Poems*, London, Faber and Faber Ltd., 1956, p. 70.
[33] 'Haymaking', *Collected Poems*, p. 71.
[34] 'The Artist', *Light and Twilight*, p. 133.
[35] 'Tears', *Collected Poems*, p. 23.
[36] *The Country*, p. 7.
[37] 'The Dark Forest', *Collected Poems*, p. 101.
[38] 'Cloud Castle', *Cloud Castle*, p. 7.
[39] 'Snow', *Collected Poems*, p. 171.
[40] *In Pursuit of Spring*, p. 23.
[41] 'A Colloquy in a Library', *Cloud Castle*, p. 131.
[42] 'Isoud with the White Hands', *Horae Solitariae*, p. 179.
[43] *Collected Poems*, p. 78.
[44] 'On the Evenlode', *Horae Solitariae*, p. 172.
[45] 'The Queen of the Wastelands', *Rest and Unrest*, p. 181.
[46] 'February in England', *Horae Solitariae*, p. 135.
[47] *Collected Poems*, p. 168.
[48] *Ibid.*, p. 160.
[49] *Horae Solitariae*, p. 160.
[50] 'Cloud Castle', *Cloud Castle*, p. 8.
[51] 'Mike', *Cloud Castle*, p. 170. Cf. 'Man and Dog', *Collected Poems*, pp. 181-182.
[52] 'Early One Morning', *Collected Poems*, p. 48.
[53] 'Women He Liked', *Collected Poems*, p. 47.
[54] 'Felix', *Cloud Castle*, p. 141.
[55] *Collected Poems*, pp. 94-5.
[56] *Ibid.*, p. 79.
[57] *Rose Acre Papers*. London, Duckworth and Co., 1910, p. 108.
[58] *The Country*, pp. 8-9.
[59] Cf. 'The New Year' and 'May the Twenty-third', *Collected Poems*, p. 172 and pp. 62-3.
[60] *Collected Poems*, p. 54 and p. 56.
[61] *Collected Poems*, pp. 181-2.
[62] *Ibid.*, p. 147.
[63] *Cloud Castle*, p. 103.
[64] *In Pursuit of Spring*, p. 50.