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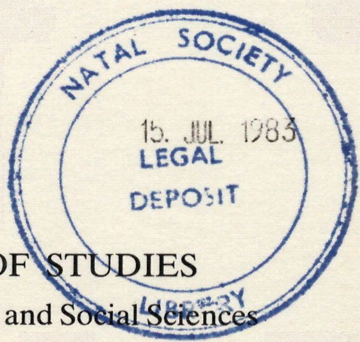
THEORIA



A JOURNAL OF STUDIES

in the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences

Vol. LX

May 1983

R2,50 (+ 15c GST)

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Published twice yearly by the
UNIVERSITY OF NATAL PRESS
PIETERMARITZBURG

In the past *Theoria* was at risk from one half-year to the next. When we selected articles by our standards for the forthcoming issue, we had hardly enough to spill over and allow an excess for later publications. That situation has gradually changed to one where we have a healthy reserve: we can look to the future and plan in advance of deadlines. There are still setbacks, of course, like an unexpected drying up of a source which was fresh and promising; or the discovery that what seemed a pure flow is, unhappily, not undefiled. But for the most part we have greater security in our supplies and we like to think that this gauges a certain depth of life and strength in our academic world. Perhaps we are slightly less isolated and less stagnant in southern Africa than we feared.

Notice must be given that the price of *Theoria* will be raised from the beginning of 1984. As this will come six years after the last increase, it will not seem unjustified; and details on the next page show that it is not immoderately high.

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The Editors,
Theoria,
P.O. Box 375,
Pietermaritzburg 3200,
South Africa.

Articles intended for the May issue should reach the editors not later than 15th March and articles for the October issue not later than 15th August.

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These should be sent to:

The Secretary,
University of Natal Press,
P.O. Box 375,
Pietermaritzburg 3200,
South Africa.

The annual subscription for *Theoria* is R5,00 (+30c G.S.T.)

New subscription rates from January 1984
Individuals R7,00 per annum
Institutions R10,00 per annum
These prices do not include GST

Editors: ELIZABETH H. PATERSON, DOUGLAS McK. IRVINE

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CRITICAL RESPONSES AND THE FICTION OF PAULINE SMITH

by MICHAEL GARDINER

Historicism has nothing to do with eclecticism.

ERICH AUERBACH[1]

Two decades of published criticism on Pauline Smith's fiction have done little more than reinforce the view that her work is and will remain an unobtrusive monument in South African prose without sufficient intrinsic interest to merit full critical attention. Many of the articles commenting on her work after the publication of the only book-length study[2] have been occasional;[3] and her work is perceived as so irrevocably minor in quality that even in those articles prompted by a disinterested desire to share insights which the writing itself has generated, there is a critical holding back, a general lightness of touch. Critical discussion of Pauline Smith's fiction has accepted and emphasised consistently the consolatory, pietistic and resigned elements in the writing because critics have regarded Pauline Smith as more of a medium, a transmitter of the restricted lives of an Afrikaner community than as a deliberate artist: as a passive rather than an active intelligence.

Two observations on the well-known story 'The Pain' will serve as representative examples. Geoffrey Haresnape says:

> The reader is left to wonder what Juriaan will do when his beloved inevitably dies. And he too must die soon. It is frustrating that a couple so loving and wise should be ignorant and vulnerable to inferior, if more sophisticated people.[4]

Cherry Wilhelm, describing two contrasting styles of speech in the story, writes:

> the narrative simply keeps close to [the two old people], shares their experience and surrounds them with its gentle, mournful cadences.[5]

'The Pain' offers the reader a good deal more than a mild emotional experience which ends in sad speculation, as it has a particular and specific point to make about the relationship between life and death.

The two central characters in 'The Pain', Juriaan and Deltje van Royen, have sustained their married life of nearly fifty years on three unfailing sources: each other, water from the stream be-

hind their house, and words from the Bible. The Biblical words — given form by Deltje's readings to her husband, a form which is expressed in the religious faith that lifts them above isolated subsistence — create for Juriaan a trust in the written word which, when his wife is afflicted by the pain, he transfers to the claims made by the wrapper on a bottle of all-purpose nostrum. Deltje's pain has the effect of changing their life from a quiet triumph over circumstances to a tenacious clinging to what remains. Pauline Smith uses a series of triads[6] to suggest that the pain, as a third presence in the house, signifies the end of the childless couple.

Belief in the words on the label of the bottle of medicine and despair at finding a means to cure or even to ease Deltje's pain when the 'Grandmother's Drops' no longer provide relief, lead Juriaan to believe in the chauvinist and bizarre claims made for the hospital in Platkops dorp. And the world in which Juriaan and Deltje have lived and which has sustained them in despite of circumstance, cannot endure such a breach of faith. It is the tension between the apparent completeness of their world and the accumulating need to reach beyond it into another realm that generates the emotional force of the story.

The horror of their attempt to find a cure for Deltje's pain at the hospital is not to be read as an attack on the inability of modern medicine to accommodate or answer the needs of the spiritual and poetic in human experience. Nor is the bewilderment of the old couple to be seen as a compassionate rendering of the unfitness of rural Afrikaners to deal with industrial society.[7] The sensations experienced by Juriaan in the hospital make it clear that the entire basis of his existence has been denied him:

> It was now that for the first time the old couple realized that the hospital was to part them, and that Deltje's cure was not to be immediate. God knows what the little old woman thought as, clinging to the red-and-white handkerchief which held her Bible, her mug, and her shell-covered box, she was led meekly away by the nurse; but for Juriaan it was as if the end of the world had come. Stunned and shaken, groping his way like a man suddenly blinded in paths that are strange to him, he went out into the dazzling sunshine and out-spanned.
>
> (*The Little Karoo* pp. 29–30).

Having lived a life in which the ordinary and the miraculous have not always been distinguishable, Juriaan has expected instantaneous conjuring tricks from a hospital which, in their fantasies on the journey there, becomes a transfiguration of the picture of the Crystal Palace on Deltje's mug. Out of the context of the world that has sustained him, Juriaan's beliefs become fetishistic

and their 'treasures' transform into kitsch.

To suggest that Pauline Smith endorses all the actions and decisions of the two old people so as to sustain the reader's steady sympathy is to denigrate the complexity of her emotional intelligence and her subtlety as an artist. There is no doubt in my mind that Pauline Smith is a highly deliberate and remarkably intelligent writer despite the modesty of her personal statements.[8] 'The Pain' renders the validity of the faith exemplified by Juriaan and Deltje at the same time as it reveals the desperate limitations and vulnerabilities of that faith. Juriaan's unselfish desire to spare Deltje the pain is, at the deepest level, a desire to preserve himself. He has no coherent self in the face of her imminent death. Despite the ordinary closeness of death in his normal life — poverty, isolation and the precariousness of life in his position — it is the truth of death that he attempts to deny. Pauline Smith's story acknowledges all the justifications for Juriaan's desire to save Deltje from suffering and to prevent her death, but the story sternly and disturbingly reveals the betrayal and breach of faith implicit in that desire. The decision of Juriaan to take Deltje back to their valley and to their death completes a story which moves the reader beyond the realm of pity (of whatever kind) into that of the tragic.[9]

In an article on 'The Schoolmaster'[10] I have argued that the healthy, vigorous and loving grandmother who provides a secure and generous centre for her entire family is shown to have had a crippling effect upon the emotional growth of her granddaughter Engela. The story draws a clear distinction between the experience of a robust and fulfilled grandmother and that of a timid and sickly young girl. When that girl's one intensely personal experience is thwarted by ghastly catastrophe, she is nursed to a health that gives her longevity during which she lives only in the emotional world left to her by the grandmother. The horror of that predicament, I argue, is the point of the story. Far from accepting her fate resignedly, Engela has submitted to circumstances painfully and awkwardly — the images of a harness and of callosity on the chest of her beloved are emblematic[11] — achieving in her old age not a serenity but a near-grotesque totality of recall of the one significant event in her life.[12]

Discussing aspects of stories from *The Little Karoo,* Cherry Wilhelm adopts what is the more orthodox but to my mind more limiting view when she writes:

> As the story is also about the tutelage of a young child by a wise grandmother, and the question the girl asks — 'Is love then such sorrow?' — is a variation of all such questions traditionally asked of the one by the other, the use of the grandmother's endearments by the girl at the end of the story indicates her spiritual growth.[13]

It is important to insist that the experience of reading Pauline Smith's writing as fiction points decidedly away from the adequacy of regarding her method as fundamentally descriptive. Critical assumptions about Pauline Smith's relationship as author to her characters, their community and its circumstances govern what commentators are prepared to admit can take place in her prose. I would like to draw an example from *The Beadle.*

In their chapter on this novel, the authors of *Perspectives on South African Fiction* make this observation:

> The good angel of Harmonie is Mevrouw, who is characterised by her unfailing devotion to the command 'my little children, love one another' (p. 14). . . . By an internal logic, Mevrouw's goodness is complemented by that of the pastor. . . . The loving faith of Mevrouw converges with that of the pastor at the great dramatic climax where Aalst Vlokman makes his confession.[14]

The entire passage (of which I have quoted only three sentences) is a representative example of the orthodox critical attitude which is inimical to Pauline Smith's art.

The most obvious limitation of this account of the 'loving faith' of Mevrouw and the pastor is to be seen in the repeated word 'good' which not only suggests an uncritically bland view of the situation but implies that the authors are oblivious of the treatment which that word receives in the text of the novel:

> The talk drifted to those who had already arrived for the coming Sacrament and camped out in the church-land. Old Tan' Betje Ferreira was mentioned. Many, many months, the pastor explained to the Englishman, had Tan' Betje lain helpless on her bed, and now, in answer to prayer, her pain had been so much eased that it had been possible for her son Hans to bring her to Harmonie for the Sacrament on a swinging bed-frame in a borrowed wagon. Hans was a good son and in young Betje he had a good daughter as old Betje had a good grandchild. Poor they were, as so many Aangenaam people were, but rich in their affection for one another. Young Betje would make a good wife, and he, the pastor, hoped there was truth in the report that Jan Beyers wished to marry her. Jan Beyers was an upright and well-doing young man, and Betje, for her kindness to her grandmother, deserved a good husband. 'But others also deserve good husbands,' cried Tan' Linda, smiling archly across the table to Andrina. 'Others also!'
>
> (*The Beadle* pp. 73–4)

The comfortably undiscriminating and complacent level of conversation invites a near-satirical response to the pastor. The account of his near-sighted view of the members of his flock, while he dines with the 'aristocracy' of Harmonie, stops short of satire

because the pastor is speaking in a language unusual to him. Even so, he manages to be condescending both about the poor and to the Englishman. We have here in miniature, as well, an example of how self-justifying myths about a people are propagated. It is important to remember at this point that the 'upright and well-doing young man' Jan Beyers has had difficulty in choosing between Toontje with her three sheep, and Betje who has a sewing machine. It is the pastor's failure to perceive the role of necessity in the lives of people that also highlights the level of personal convenience in his attitudes.[15]

Curiously enough, on a different occasion, Geoffrey Hutchings, when commenting on the related attitudes of the pastor and the beadle towards Andrina, says the following:

> What is most significant about the contrasting reactions of the two men is that they are based, not upon knowledge of Andrina, but upon their own characters and experience: the pastor's simple piety, the beadle's guilt.[16]

Here lies a neglected clue to discovering Pauline Smith's authorial stance towards her fictional characters, characters whose qualities cause critics to suspend normally alert judgement and thereby to fall into an orthodoxy of attitude which fails to see what is so clearly suggested. Mevrouw's attitude to members of the Harmonie community as 'little children', with the best will in the world, cannot cope adequately with the full range of human experience. Mevrouw's reaction to the letter from her son Cornelius, in which he gives a self-justifying account of his wife's expulsion of the pregnant Andrina, is critically placed by its own evident limitations:

> All this did Mevrouw read sitting quietly in the window with tears trickling down her cheeks. Sorrow for her was not anguish, and sin brought her no horror. In both sin and sorrow she saw but the passing ills of those little children whose duty it was to love one another, and who, in sin or in sorrow, were safe in the keeping of a compassionate Father. Sin would pass, sorrow would pass, but the compassion which had sent the Redeemer into the world to forgive and to heal — this would never pass.
>
> So were her thoughts moving slowly to the slow, unnoticed tears of her serene and gentle old age when Classina October burst into the room.
>
> 'Mevrouw, Mevrouw!' she cried. 'Down by the Steenkamp house they cry that Juffrouw Jacoba lies dead.'
>
> (*The Beadle* p. 172)

Particular care should be taken not to grant uncritical credence

to views which happen to be religious. Terence Edgecombe's remarks are useful here:

> The authoress's total grasp of her subject . . . allows the reader to participate completely in a dimension of experience normally very difficult of imaginative access. This is because her interest in the religious life of her characters is not doctrinal but directed towards an illumination of the human aspirations of which it is an expression and the human hungers which it satisfies.[17]

Mevrouw's religious attitudes are consonant with her position as the dominant woman in the Harmonie society, her selfish attitude towards Andrina (a view which Jean Marquard corroborates)[18] and are among the factors which make the Harmonie society a closed one.[19] The connexion between Mevrouw and the grandmother in 'The Schoolmaster' is evident in a number of ways.

* * *

The basis for much inappropriate and inaccurate opinion about Pauline Smith and her writing is not to be found in the apparently small range of her fictional interests nor in what might be seen as the restricted aspirations and circumstances of her characters. Current opinion has been shaped, I believe, by the assumptions that have been made consistently by critics about her religious convictions, her ethical concerns and, most particularly, about the relationship between characters and author. Evidence from Pauline Smith's fiction points strongly to her acute awareness of the relative nature of human beliefs, convictions and commitments. The skill with which she represents and understands the values and aspirations of her characters within their communities should not be mistaken for her vision as a writer of fiction. The following account of the history of the people from whom the Harmonie community derives will serve to make the point:

> In that strange new land of their adoption it was to the Bible that they turned for help, guidance and comfort in all the crises of a life which, in its simplicity and in the physical conditions of the country in which it was led, closely resembled that of the Patriarchs of the Old Testament. . . . Together they were, like Israel of old, a people chosen of God for the redeeming of this portion of the earth.
>
> (*The Beadle* p. 28)

Why assume that a passage like this (and the whole reinforces the point) carries full authorial approval when its rhythms are so evidently those of the religious and political spokesman, and when the context makes it plain that this sense of nationhood is both a

simplification and a self-perception in which discomforting historical events (like the freeing of the slaves) are labelled as 'injustices' to themselves and mere confirmation of the conveniently self-generated myth?

> The freeing of the slaves by the English was for him, and remains for many of his descendants, an incomprehensible act of injustice towards himself and of indifference to the warnings of the prophets. And with each succeeding act of injustice towards himself the Dutchman has been driven to a deeper, fiercer belief in his race as a persecuted but chosen people whose pilgrimage is not yet over.
>
> (*The Beadle* p. 28)

John Coetzee's remark that 'the historical consequences of this myth . . . have been serious' is obvious enough. But to imply that Pauline Smith actively collaborates in the perpetuation of that myth is to blame her for the critical misinterpretations of her fiction and to deny the validity of her novel. Is it just and valid to ignore the ferocious egotism suggested in that account of racial history? — we should notice the repeated 'him'. Does Pauline Smith share that belief in 'the warnings of the prophets'? I don't believe that she does: instead, it is this element in Pauline Smith which links her to Herman Charles Bosman. How can the reader of *The Beadle* reconcile the steady analyses in the novel of customary, communal, emotional, circumstantial and religious oppression and its effects with the critical assertion that Pauline Smith propagates such myths?[20]

A more transparent example of Pauline Smith's flexibility of authorial stance is reflected in Andrina's notion of God:

> Andrina's God was a serene and beneficent being who bore a perfectly natural resemblance to Mevrouw van der Merwe.
>
> (*The Beadle* pp. 31–2)

Only the most literal-minded of readers will refuse to see the irony and wry humour beneath the startling directness of Andrina's innocent complacency. We ordinarily expect, and comment quite easily upon, the subtleties of the relationship between author and fiction in the writing of American and English authors. The refusal of critics to perceive irony[21] and humour in Pauline Smith's fiction suggests that they regard her writing as dealing only in reverential solemnity.

One reason for the limitations imposed by critics upon the fiction is a preoccupation with the author as a reflector and not as an artist. The writing is not read as fiction but as many other things, such as the revelation of the humanity of an Afrikaner community,[22] as the exemplification of the author's personal

values,[23] as Pauline Smith's wish to 'assert certain myths about the Afrikaner'.[24] These attitudes towards the author are accompanied by a general agreement among critical commentators about her 'objectivity' and her detachment, coupled with the belief that Pauline Smith never judges her characters.[25] The consequence of these attitudes has been the acceptance of the fiction's concerns at a comfortable face-value with the inevitable inability to link insights of detail (many of which are very perceptive and suggestive) into anything like a coherent point of view. As Lukács has pointed out, 'the premature closing of the circle' causes the 'form to disintegrate into disparate, heterogeneous parts'.[26]

By positing both authorial objectivity and immediacy, criticism has made decisions about the writing which inhibits its full fictional impact. Criticism has sought to account for qualities sensed in the writing by linking details, events and episodes to Pauline Smith's biographical data and journal entries. Comparisons with other writers have been mildly attempted; schemes of relationships, diagrams and image-chasing have represented sporadic attempts to account for what can be only adequately perceived within the fiction once critics are prepared to recognise that in this case, as in others, the artistic intentions that underpin the fiction determine the ethical and compositional structure of the whole.

* * *

If one looks at the precise points at which references are made in *The Beadle* to coffee (to take an example of significant detail), most occur, expectedly, as part of hospitality in the tradition which the Harmonie homestead exemplifies. However, coffee is sold at a 'coffee-house' in Platkops dorp, three days and nights inland, to which Klaartje, Andrina's mother, fled when she made the break from the Harmonie community. Klaartje embodied a spirit which sought expression other than that possible in the Aangenaam valley: her spirit represents a challenge to the attempts by the community leaders (like the Van der Merwe family) to prevent change by retarding the effects of time and history. The coffee-house in Platkops dorp is part of a movement from an enclosed rural community to an urban society with very different social relationships. That movement suggests a development from the closed, circular view of landscape and of time (in which the recurrent gives the impression of the eternal), towards a linear conception of time and history,[27] which ends in this novel with the birth of Andrina's son in the toll-house on the Cortes-Losberg road. Immediately afterwards, the nucleus of a community is established when the bond between father and daughter is acknowl-

edged, irrevocably outside the circle of the Harmonie community.

The suggested shifts in societal development and the tensions between individuals and the community are elements which contribute to a controlling and signifying context for the attitudes and beliefs of Andrina, as without it they would be merely idiosyncratic. Initially, Andrina seems entirely part of the Harmonie community, but as the novel develops she expresses in her private experiences of love and religion values that the community endorses in the abstract but which it denies in practice. Andrina represents an affirmation of the ideals of her community — in her selfless desire to serve, her incarnation of the godhead, her trust in life and in her sense of the miraculous immanent in the everyday — but she transgresses its laws in her expression of religion and love.

As assistant-cum-servant to Mevrouw van der Merwe, and not 'one of the family', as Mevrouw conveniently rationalises her use of Andrina because of the distinctions between bywoner and farm owner,[28] Andrina is seen at work in kitchen, pantry and dining-room, frequently dispensing coffee. The intimacy associated with this beverage in early-morning bedrooms and with the family around the dining-room table eventually develops to the point where the serving of coffee to the Englishman is a prelude to Andrina's making love with him and suggests most powerfully the fusion of the erotic and spiritual in Andrina's natural experience:

> Up at the homestead, Andrina, left alone in the yard, went slowly back into the house to make fresh coffee for the Englishman. She was troubled and happy, happy and troubled. The native servants had gone to their huts, as was their custom, and silence hung about the quiet, half-darkened rooms like a drapery. She went into the larder to get the little red cakes which the Englishman loved. They were kept in a deep, brown canister which she had to unlock. She spent some time in choosing the lightest, the crispest of these. To do so gave her a strange, almost physical pleasure. It gave her the same pleasure to wash again the spotless cup and saucer which he would use for his coffee. He would never know with what care she had chosen his cakes, with what care she had polished his cup and saucer, yet this service brought her so exquisite a joy that her heart cried out in thankfulness to heaven for it. There was so little she could do for her dear love, and not anything that she would not do! Alone in that quiet, darkened house her heart cried out for service to him as it had never cried before, her body trembled at the thought of his caresses, her soul sang its innocent magnificat of humility and desire . . .
>
> (*The Beadle* pp. 124–5)

Of course it is not coffee nor the serving of coffee which indicates a major cultural shift in the historical evolution of a people, or

which can express adequately Andrina's erotic spirituality. Although the tracing of references to the deliberately repeated motif can lead to a perception of Pauline Smith's technique of exploring an aspect of the domestic fabric of a community to depict the social and personal significance of the habitual and traditional, that significance is only discernible in the full context of the novel provided that the underlying forces at work in the novel are acknowledged.

Despite her intimate association with it, Andrina is as tenuously connected to the Harmonie community as her father, Aalst Vlokman is. Having violated its laws, he attempts vainly to gain re-admission. The inability to acknowledge his fatherhood of Andrina cannot be seen in this context merely as his refusal to admit the truth to that community. The religious and social laws which govern the community in practice make no provision for such truth. Vlokman's bitterness, loneliness and grotesque anxieties are as much part of his own incapacity to admit a dimension of life that is within him as they are manifestations of the ethos of that community. His eventual confession to the congregation quite logically leads to his leaving that community altogether.[29]

This partial reading of *The Beadle* points, I suggest, to Pauline Smith's intentions in this novel. For the purposes of my argument it is not agreement with this reading that I seek as much as a willingness to recognise that Pauline Smith's fiction gives rise to, and is capable of sustaining, critical discussion of this kind.

> It is the novelists and dramatists who have the hardest task in reconciling their metaphysic, their theory of being and knowing, with their living sense of being. Because a novel is a microcosm, and because man in viewing the universe must view it in the light of a theory, therefore every novel must have the background or the structural skeleton of some theory of being, some metaphysic. But the metaphysic must always subserve the artistic purpose beyond the artist's conscious aim. Otherwise the novel becomes a treatise.[30]

The implication of Lawrence's statement for those who write and talk about the fiction of Pauline Smith is that both the 'metaphysic' and the 'artist's conscious aim' must be given full attention. To lose sight of either is to do her and ourselves less than justice.

Johannesburg College of Education

NOTES

1. Auerbach E. 1965. *Literary Language and Its Public.* London. Routledge and Kegan Paul.
2. Haresnape G. 1969. *Pauline Smith.* New York. Twayne Publishers.
3. I have in mind, for example, Ridley Beeton's contribution to Rene de Villiers' *Better Than They Knew* (1972), which affirms the achievements of English-speaking white South Africans to this country's development; the published lectures to teachers of Terence Edgecombe (1975) and Geoffrey Hutchings (1980); the article commissioned from John Coetzee (1981).
   My article is equally occasional, being an amended version of a paper delivered at the AUETSA Conference in 1982, the centenary year of Pauline Smith's birth.
4. Haresnape G. op cit p. 49.
5. Wilhelm C. 'The Style of Poverty: The Language of Pauline Smith's Little Karoo'. *English Studies in Africa,* vol. 20 no. 1. February 1977, p. 69.
6. Smith P. 1925. *The Little Karoo.* London. Jonathan Cape, pp. 17–19.
7. Nadine Gordimer makes claims of this kind in her essay, 'English-Language Literature and Politics in South Africa' in Heywood C. ed. 1976. *Aspects of South African Literature.* London. Heinemann, pp. 105–6.
8. 'I could not *make* situations to suit the needs of a story as a story — all I could do was describe, often after a long waiting, that slow development in the lives of my characters which lay outside my will.' in *A.B. '. . . a minor marginal note'.* London. Jonathan Cape, p. 62.
9. Van Heyningen C. 1963. *Clarissa, Poetry and Morals.* Pietermaritzburg. University of Natal Press, p. 155:
   In tragedy we are made to think clearly and fully, exercising emotions and imagination, of the worst that can happen; at the same time (and this simultaneity is very important) we are made to realise quite fully and as clearly that life and human beings are capable of a beauty that we would not give up, no matter what the cost. It is this simultaneous realisation that reconciles us to life and the death, pain and guilt that are inherent in it.
10. Gardiner M. 1979. A weakness of the chest: a reading of Pauline Smith's 'The Schoolmaster' in *Quarry '78–'79.* Johannesburg. Donker, pp. 91–107.
11. *The Little Karoo,* p. 64.
12. See also 'The Pastor's Daughter', *The Little Karoo,* pp. 121–40.
13. Wilhelm C. op cit p. 74.
14. Christie S., Hutchings G., Maclennan D. 1980. *Perspectives on South African Fiction.* Johannesburg. Donker, p. 61.
15. I am indebted to Francis Faller and Lettie Gardiner for contributions to this point.
16. Hutchings G. A miracle of daily occurrence: the art of Pauline Smith's *The Beadle.* 1980 Rank Xerox Schools Festival of English. *A Collection of Lectures. No. 1.* Grahamstown. 1820 Foundation, p. 47.
17. Edgecombe T. '*The Beadle* by Pauline Smith', *Crux.* November 1975, p. 34.
18. Marquard J. 'Pauline Smith and her Beadle: chosen or fallen?' *The English Academy Review,* 1981, pp. 23–4.
19. By building a church for the community at Harmonie Stephan van der Merwe not only fulfils his role as 'gemeente voogd' (Marquard op cit pp. 19–20). He also diminishes the number of reasons for the poor to go out of the Aangenaam valley. Pauline Smith depicts the factors that limit the freedom of the poor to think, move and act with astonishing completeness.
20. See Coetzee J.M. 'Pauline Smith and the Afrikaans Language'. *English in Africa,* vol. 8 no. 1. March 1981, p. 27.
    Gordimer N. 'English-language literature and politics in South Africa', in Heywood C. ed. 1976. *Aspects of South African Literature.* London. Heinemann, pp. 105–6.
    Roberts S. 'A Confined World: a Reading of Pauline Smith'. *UCT Studies in English.* Issue 12, October 1982, pp. 39 and 42.
21. Jean Marquard is something of an exception here.
22. Edgecombe T. op cit p. 33.
23. Haresnape G. op cit p. 141.
24. Coetzee J.M. op cit p. 26.

25. Beeton R. Pauline Smith, in De Villiers R.M. 1972. *Better Than They Knew.* Cape Town. Purnell, p. 210.
    Marquard J. op cit pp. 17 and 18.
    Haresnape G. op cit p. 141.
26. Lukács G. 1971. *The Theory of the Novel.* London. Merlin Press, p. 72.
    Despite the disclaimers and caveats in the Preface, chapter 4 is of great interest and value.
27. Josipovici G. 1977. *The Lessons of Modernism.* London. Macmillan.
    He refers on p. 127 to *English Landscapes* by W.G. Hoskins: 'The linear landscape replaced a circular one', and on p. 139, Note 3, to David Boorstin's 1975 Reith Lectures in which reference is made to the part played by the emptiness of the American landscape in the development of a linear view of time and history. The suggestive nature of these ideas for a perspective on South African literary, social and historical development is evident.
28. Jean Marquard makes a similar point, op cit pp. 23–4.
29. See, for example, Lawrence's comments on the fate of 'pioneers' who escape from convention, in the novels of Thomas Hardy, in Inglis A.A.H. ed. 1971. *D.H. Lawrence: a selection from Phoenix.* Harmondsworth. Penguin, pp. 195–6.
30. Lawrence D.H. op cit pp. 216–7.

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WORDSWORTH'S IMAGINATION OF CONTRARY STATES

by F. J. HUGO

In the view of Kenneth Clark the contrast between Wordsworth and Byron reflects an essential division of the Romantic imagination.

> Nature, the goddess of the early eighteenth century, had, like most divinities, two aspects: the ferocious, vengeful and destructive and the tranquil, comforting and creative. We may call them (with reservations) the Byronic and the Wordsworthian.[1]

Kenneth Clark's main interests are not literary, but he succeeds here in expressing with striking simplicity a common assumption about Wordsworth. The sense that Wordsworth's art issues from a single, somewhat exclusive approach to experience has affected the critical attitudes of such diverse figures as Shelley, Arnold, and Leavis.[2]

In order to escape the apparent partiality of Wordsworth and Byron one might possibly turn to Blake. The poem *The Lamb* in the *Songs of Innocence* brings out the appealing, child-like qualities of the lamb and in the second stanza explicitly links those qualities with Jesus and with the poet's own youthful sensibility. Amongst the *Songs of Experience* we are given the contrary image of *The Tyger.* Blake does not attempt, in this context, to reconcile the Lamb and the Tyger; he simply asks

> Did he who made the Lamb make thee?

It becomes apparent to us that the Tyger cannot be regarded as an aberration or botch of nature. As an embodiment of terror it is unmatched in dynamic balance and precision, hence the phrase 'fearful symmetry'. Nor can the Tyger be regarded as a remote and exotic phenomenon: we see in its eyes the presence of the universal destroyer, fire. We have no choice but to accept the Tyger as an enduring principle of existence.

Blake was constantly preoccupied with the dramatic tension between contraries. In *The Sick Rose* he explores the relationship between the rose and its seeming opposite, the worm that flies in the night. The terror of this poem lies in the sense that the rose inevitably and insensibly attracts its opposite to itself and in so doing brings about its own destruction.

> O Rose! thou art sick!
> The invisible worm,

That flies in the night,
In the howling storm,

Has found out thy bed
Of crimson joy;
And his dark secret love
Does thy life destroy.

The spatial conception heightens our experience of dramatic tension. The worm flies out of the remote distance of the howling storm, but it is undetectably invasive and so is able to enter into an intimately destructive relationship with the rose.

These two poems by Blake seem to me to offer suggestions of a productive approach to Wordsworth. Everyone is familiar with the quotation 'Without contraries is no progression', and is accustomed to think of Blake in the light of his perception of contrary states; but the theme of contrariety plays a significant role in Wordsworth's imagination also. The treatment of the theme in *Nutting* does not have the abrupt dramatic impact of some of Blake's poems, but the gradually evolving theme generates a dramatic effect of an essentially no less powerful kind.

In the opening stage of *Nutting* Wordsworth evokes a mood which one naturally associates with the innocent joy present in *The Sick Rose.* A day is described which by virtue of the qualities of unity and perfection seems inviolable.

It seems a day
(I speak of one from many singled out)
One of those heavenly days that cannot die;

Wordsworth may have been recalling Herbert's 'bridal of the earth and sky', which also seemed complete in itself. Certainly the image of the day introduces, as it does in Herbert's poem, a number of images which poignantly reflect the full enjoyment of life. We appreciate the expansive joy which the boy expresses in detailed, fanciful preparations for the expedition.

a Figure quaint,
Tricked out in proud disguise of cast-off weeds

The secret nook he eventually reaches seems to correspond to the tranquil self-sufficiency of the boy's mood.

not a broken bough
Drooped with its withered leaves, ungracious sign
Of devastation; but the hazels rose
Tall and erect,

However, paradoxically, it is exactly that quiet perfection which threatens to disturb his mood, as it succeeds in calling out a submerged destructive impulse.

> A little while I stood,
> Breathing with such suppression of the heart
> As joy delights in; and with wise restraint
> Voluptuous, fearless of a rival, eyed
> The banquet;

No longer is the joy simply innocent: the force of gathering emotion dramatically registers the growing tension between seeing and possessing. In *The Sick Rose* we are made aware of corruption as an accomplished fact; here, by contrast, we watch the uneasy balance of opposites approach a critical point of tension, and then subside. Not only do we sense the strange attraction of opposites, but participate at the same time in the disturbing ambiguity of that attraction.

As the tension unexpectedly relaxes in the following passage, the boy's innocent unity and peace of mind is restored. However, we have been prepared and cannot read these lines without being aware of how intimately close the principle of destruction is; and so the seeming perfection of pastoral quiet actually refines our sense of a deceptive counter-presence. This passage brings home to us that however spontaneously it flows, Wordsworth's verse is capable of defining precise gradations of dramatic development.

> or beneath the trees I sate
> Among the flowers, and with the flowers I played;
> A temper known to those who, after long
> And weary expectation, have been blest
> With sudden happiness beyond all hope.
> Perhaps it was a bower beneath whose leaves
> The violets of five seasons re-appear
> And fade, unseen by any human eye;
> Where fairy water-breaks do murmur on
> For ever;

The passage of time is so even that it virtually ceases to be felt, except in the far-spaced reappearances of the violets of five seasons. So smoothly flowing a rhythm may, however, gently change, giving no warning, into its opposite. We watch the boy's mood change, easily recognising, but never quite believing, the significance of what we see so smoothly happening. Our unbelief mirrors the unpreparedness of the boy and gives us a direct access to the moment of approaching shock.

In that sweet mood when pleasure loves to pay
Tribute to ease; and, of its joy, secure,
The heart luxuriates with indifferent things,
Wasting its kindliness on stocks and stones,
And on the vacant air. Then up I rose,
And dragged to earth both branch and bough with crash
And merciless ravage:

This is a small event, but its unlimited imaginative significance is indicated in the word 'merciless'. The boy discovers a capacity for destruction and hence a conflict of principles within himself which he was perhaps only vaguely aware of before. As in the case of Blake's *The Tyger* there can be no doubt that this is no aberrant or exceptional phenomenon: the clash of contrary principles has an enduring significance.

Like *Nutting*, the sonnet *Westminster Bridge* deals with deceptive peacefulness and tranquillity; only in the sonnet the quality of deceptiveness carries a hint of movement, not to a destructive principle, but to the unexpected discovery of creative possibilities. Wordsworth presents a moment in which he is held by the ambience of dawn enveloping London. He responds to the distinctive expressive power of the light: especially because it reveals that the city, when unusually still and open, can be 'touching in its majesty'. This crowded centre of civil and public life now takes on an inward as well as a majestic quality. In this way a fusion of qualities is achieved which one tends to assume is only possible in the world of nature.

This City now doth, like a garment, wear
The beauty of the morning; silent, bare,
Ships, towers, domes, theatres, and temples lie
Open unto the fields, and to the sky;

However, the fusion is evanescent: it is like a garment in producing a temporary effect as well as in fitting closely. Our first sense of the play of contraries arises because the peacefulness of dawn reveals a passing resemblance between country and city. The peacefulness also hints ambiguously at another relation. The peculiar intensity of the dawn stillness conveys, by contrary suggestion, the latent energy of the city.

Dear God! the very houses seem asleep;
And all that mighty heart is lying still!

The benefit of this insight is that, instead of noting only the surface activity of working hours, one responds to the mighty heart of the city itself. Stated a little more broadly: we have glimpsed

through the ambiguous play of contraries the possibility that the country and the city may not be as alien to one another as they often seem to be.

It appears reasonable to claim that in both *Nutting* and *Westminster Bridge* meaning arises out of a play of contraries. It is possible, looking further afield, to note that the dramatic swing from the bright world of the sun to the contrary world of hidden anxiety in *Resolution and Independence* also suggests a dialectical principle. Some of the 'Lucy' poems may be approached from a similar point of view: for example the tension generated by the simultaneous attraction and resistance to the significance of the descending moon in 'Strange fits of passion' could very profitably be presented in dialectical terms. However, it seems better, at least for the moment, to reserve the term dialectical for those poems in which that quality of movement draws attention to itself as a generative resource of the mind. The movements of thought in *Resolution* and 'Strange fits of passion' do, of course, provoke a great deal of interest, but in each case the outcome is so dramatic that they appear more as psychological aspects of a specific dramatic event than as demonstrations of a common human resource. Accordingly it is above all the suppressed or deceptive quality of the play of contraries in *Nutting* and *Westminster Bridge* that sets them apart and draws our attention. In these poems it is through tentative inclinations, shadowy movements back and forth, that our attention is alerted to the creative possibilities embodied in dialectical tension.

So far reference has been made to Blake and Wordsworth, but Coleridge also illuminates the discussion of the latent energy of contraries. The phrase 'Extremes meet' appears surprisingly often in Coleridge's notebooks. A similar preoccupation reveals itself when he exclaims in admiration over the following quotation from *Hamlet.*

> There lies within the very flame of Love
> A kind of wick or snuff, that will abate it.

'Merciful Wonder-making Heaven! What a man was this Shakespear! I know no better epithet than . . . myriad-minded.'[3] In this instance the protean Shakespearian range seems to prove itself for Coleridge in the capacity to recognise that even (or especially) in the sacred flame of love extremes can be seen to meet. It is sometimes important to stress the divergence between Wordsworth and Coleridge, but these notebook entries help in the understanding of Wordsworth's own approach to the contraries of experience and so indicate, once more, the affinities that subsist between the two poets. Wordsworth imagines the relation be-

tween contraries as deceptively fluid in *Westminster Bridge*: in some other poems (following the hint offered by Coleridge's notes) we become aware that contraries seem to meet or to enter into one another in a highly paradoxical way.

The sonnet *Composed on the Beach near Calais* opens with broadly tranquil images of the day sinking towards the restfulness of night. But among them an image stands out which expresses the capacity of the human mind to distinguish, and so intensify by clarification, the quality of tranquillity in the world of nature.

> It is a beauteous evening, calm and free,
> The holy time is quiet as a Nun
> Breathless with adoration; the broad sun
> Is sinking down in its tranquillity;
> The gentleness of heaven broods o'er the Sea:

The intense apprehension of stillness is taken to an almost unbearable extreme, approaching indeed a suggestion of vacancy or negation of life. That vacancy demands to be filled, and so the extreme of stillness proves to be transitional to the everlasting thunder of the sea. Out of the extreme of stillness emerges its contrary, thunder.

> Listen! the mighty Being is awake,
> And doth with his eternal motion make
> A sound like thunder — everlastingly.

The sense of sharp extremes in this sonnet owes as much to the distinguishing activity of perception as to sources in the natural world. In a notable poem 'A whirl-blast from behind the hill', the natural world reveals a quickening of dynamics that inspires an unprecedented resourcefulness in the perceiving mind. The poem begins with a surprise attack.

> A whirl-blast from behind the hill
> Rushed o'er the wood with startling sound;
> Then all at once the air was still,
> And showers of hail-stones pattered round.

The violent onslaught yields suddenly to stillness, but the stillness strangely crystallises into pattering hail-stones. The dramatic wizardry of these transforming contraries inspires the onlooker's imagination. He is now more alert to distinctions and more ready to respond to them with full imaginative presence of mind. He notes and dwells on the incongruity apparent between the perpetual green of the holly trees and the floor of dead leaves underneath them.

Where leafless Oaks towered high above,
I sate within an undergrove
Of tallest hollies, tall and green,
A fairer bower was never seen.
From year to year the spacious floor
With withered leaves is covered o'er,
You could not lay a hair between:
And all the year the bower is green.

In the next section of the poem the onlooker gazes with particular intentness at the fantastic dance of dead leaves, created by the falling hail-stones.

There's not a breeze — no breath of air —
Yet here, and there and every where
Along the floor, beneath the shade
By those embowering hollies made,
The leaves in myriads jump and spring,
As if with pipes and music rare
Some Robin Good-fellow were there,
And all those leaves, that jump and spring,
Were each a joyous, living thing.[4]

A dance that takes place without a breath of air might have been interpreted as macabre, unnatural animation, a dance of death as in *The Ancient Mariner*.

About, about, in reel and rout
The death-fires danced at night;
The water like a witch's oils,
Burnt green, and blue and white.

But the onlooker's imagination has been prepared: first by the dance of contraries, and then by the vital image of the perpetually green holly trees. With the help of this guidance he imagines the contraries of green and brown meeting in the fantastic re-animation of the withered leaves: the dance of contraries becomes the dance of life. In other words we owe to the imagination of contraries a sense of direct perception of the principle of creative energy.

The aura of the fantastic generated in 'A whirl-blast' reflects an extraordinary quickening of events and of perceptions. One recalls a similar quality of illusion or fantasy being conveyed in the climactic stage of *A Night-piece*. But in neither of these poems does quickened and amplified vision encompass recognition of resistant tension. Any incipient tensions undergo either swift transformation or quiet conciliation. These poems belong to the early part of 1798; a period in which (as suggested in my article in

Theoria 52) the imagination of tension was only beginning to emerge in Wordsworth's poetry.

The quality of drama, associated with tension, which one misses in these poems is vividly suggested in a description of a storm in Coleridge's notebooks.

> The stedfast rainbow in the fast-moving, hurrying, hail-mist! What a congregation of Images and Feelings, of fantastic permanence amidst the rapid Change of Tempest — quietness the Daughter of Storm.[5]

The dramatic quality is complex as well as being intense: genuinely, that is, an exacting congregation of images and feelings. There is the tension of extreme opposition: storm set against quietness. At the same time these extremes meet in a unified whole which does not reduce their respective differences. More important, we watch the image of peace being continually regenerated by the forces of its contrary, the storm. We seem to be watching creative energy actually enacting the wonder of contrariety before our eyes. As a consequence Coleridge's image prompts a re-phrasing of Blake's aphorism to give greater significance to the idea of progression than to the idea of contrariety. From the point of view of Blake's concern with the transition from innocence to experience, contrariety may well appear to be primary. But for Coleridge (and Wordsworth) contrariety plays a secondary role: it is an expression rather than the motive force of the stream of creative energy. Clearly the rainbow vanishes unless it is continually re-created out of the conditions for the existence of its contrary, the storm. Professor Roger Sharrock, in an article on Coleridge,[6] takes the view that Coleridge's description in the notebooks of Valletta harbour is suggestive of an emerging poem. If Coleridge's description of rainbow and storm is approached in a similar way, the incipient poem may perhaps be regarded as fulfilled in his friend Wordsworth's poem *The Simplon Pass*.

However, in the opening stage of *The Simplon Pass* Blake seems a more helpful reference than Coleridge. We are immediately faced with a tension of diverse elements. The forbidding spatial exigency created by the pass forces brook, road and human beings into a strange partnership as fellow-travellers.

> Brook and road
> Were fellow-travellers in this Gloomy Pass,
> And with them did we journey several hours
> At a slow step.

We feel compelled to compare the turbulent swiftness of the stream with the tortuous stillness of the road, and to measure

both against the human experience of protracted strain implicit in the image of advancing at a slow step. We compare various spatial rhythms and glimpse an underlying unity; but this is a fleeting, unsteady perception, achieved under conditions of duress and tension. The aura of fantasy associated with amplified vision involves in this context an undercurrent of fear and doubt.

The next stage of the poem is clearer, and the sense of oppression lessens somewhat as we respond to that clarity.

> The immeasurable height
> Of woods decaying, never to be decayed,

Still there is an awareness of spatial duress. We seem compelled to look upward and to attempt to take in the great height — and the corresponding stress on the imagination — of the hanging woods. That upward-reaching perspective brings home through the force of contrary suggestion a downward perspective of perpetually decaying woods. However, at the last moment we catch at the possibility of progression out of contrariety in the thought that the decaying woods never finally decay, since they are continually being re-created. The sense of release from contrariety is clearer here than in the opening lines of the poem, but the notion of regeneration is not conveyed with enough emphasis for it to seem wholly accessible.

An expectancy has been aroused in us, but so far we have only glimpsed the possibility of the unity of contraries. The overpowering imaginative impact inherent in that unity is brought home to us in the following line:

> The stationary blasts of waterfalls,

Here tumult and peace are fused in an explosive but steady tension of contraries. The onrush of falling water expresses violent power but, at the same time, suggests an image of 'fantastic permanence'. In order to grasp Wordsworth's intention sympathetically one needs to draw on experience of a special optical effect. From a specific distance a waterfall tends to convey an illusion of frozen stillness, yet the sheer whiteness so powerfully suggests energy that the image as a whole becomes a dramatic fusion of opposites. Coleridge described the illusion in question in these words: 'Distance abstracting motion *painted* the waterfall.'[7]

At this stage the vision of contraries has come to resemble that of Coleridge more closely than that of Blake. The image of the hanging woods indicates the beginning of the change, as it conveys the mutually sustaining contraries of growth and decay. But

the climactic moment of the perception is reached in the image of 'stationary blasts'. The contraries seem both more hostile and more dependent than before: we watch them continually regenerating one another within a state of extreme tension. Blake, focusing on the Tyger, presents the expression of creative power in one of his contraries separately; Wordsworth, focusing on both contraries at the same time, presents creative power expressing itself in the regeneration of contraries by a simultaneous co-operative activity.

In one sense we are carefully prepared for the reception of the climactic blasts of waterfalls, but no amount of preparation could make the image easy to assimilate. The vision is therefore precarious, but more as a reflection of our incapacity than as a reflection of uncertainty in the vision itself. It seems to me that the next stage of the poem acknowledges that precariousness and attempts to involve it in the dialectical conception of the poem as a whole. Because 'human kind/Cannot bear very much reality', we descend by stages into a world of severe spatial constraint and accumulating violence.

> And in the narrow rent, at every turn,
> Winds thwarting winds bewildered and forlorn,
> The torrents shooting from the clear blue sky,

The phrase 'from the clear blue sky' conveys a momentary, phantasmal glimpse of a contrary world of light and peace and implies the persistent human need to bring the contraries of experience 'under a hoop'. One remembers how in *Resolution and Independence* the reflexive impulse of the mind moves in the opposing direction, demonstrating in another way and in another context the importance of attempting to unify contraries.

However, for the time being balance seems illusory as violence returns with redoubled intensity. One should note that the following passage represents a culmination of the sense of violence in the natural world which Wordsworth earlier conveyed in the opening lines of *Resolution and Independence.*

> The rocks that muttered close upon our ears,
> Black drizzling crags that spake by the wayside
> As if a voice were in them, the sick sight
> And giddy prospect of the raving stream,

The power of destruction invades the cliff-faces. They seem to press inward, yielding to the force of a possession which finally declares its fundamental nature in a terrifying oracular voice. The hypnotised onlooker feels himself drawn into the vortex of disintegration, as he looks down to the raving stream.

However, the halcyon image of the sky returns in an expansive, self-substantiating form.

> The unfettered clouds and region of the heavens,

That airy freedom opens appealingly before us but, though it seems approachable, remains a distant prospect. Perhaps this image is meant to suggest a loss in viewing peace at a far remove from its contrary and so, once more, indicates the need to unify contraries. Accordingly we feel impelled to call back the early climactic fusion of 'stationary blasts'. It is significant that no equivalent of the earlier image appears in the concluding stage of the poem. Instead we are given a forceful but generalised statement of the unity of contraries. The early image seems to act as an informing memory of a vision not easily re-attained.

> Tumult and peace, the darkness and the light —
> Were all like workings of one mind, the features
> Of the same face, blossoms upon one tree,
> Characters of the great Apocalypse,
> The types and symbols of Eternity,
> Of first, and last, and midst, and without end.

Something more needs to be said about those critical assessments which represent Wordsworth as almost consciously a one-sided poet. Those views seem, at least, not easily supportable in the face of the repeated attempts on Wordsworth's part to express the motive principle of contraries. Nor must we forget that these imaginative encounters were often deeply troubling; as for example in the experience of decisive alternation presented in *Resolution and Independence.* The 'Lucy' poems would also be a valuable reference, especially if one hopes to counter Dr Leavis's view that limitation is implicit in Wordsworth's poised, contemplative outlook. In the course of his account of Wordsworth, Dr Leavis poses the following questions.

> Is the tranquillity of this wisdom really at all close to any 'spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings'? Are the feelings, as recollected, so very powerful?[8]

Wordsworth often shows himself subtly aware of the relation between tranquillity and its contrary. What Dr Leavis describes as a 'glassy serenity' of mood in 'Strange fits of passion' is a deceptive surface calm, concealing an intense underground conflict of emotions. A similar comment could be made about 'A slumber did my spirit seal'. Nor do the experiences of peace in *Tintern Abbey* suit Dr Leavis's account very well. They need to be distinguished

from one another as various experiences and viewed in relation to the regenerating emotions from which they arise.

The most striking instance of Wordsworth's interest in the connection between tranquillity and its opposite remains *The Simplon Pass*, but that poem is also significant in approaching another aspect of Dr Leavis's assessment of Wordsworth. He notes the absence of any 'cult of the instinctive and primitive' and of 'the specifically sexual in any recognisable form'. The centre of this aspect of his case seems to be reflected in the following sentence.

> For if Wordsworth was too inveterately human and moral for the 'Dark Gods' (how incongruous a phrase in connexion with him!) to be invoked here, he none the less drew strength from his sense of communion with the non-human universe.[9]

It has already been noted that Wordsworth presents violent energy and peaceful stillness in a constant creative tension with one another. Wordsworth, further, makes it possible for us to recognise that the contraries, as they differentiate themselves from one another, imply their source in non-categorical creative power. A related perception of an indeterminate underdark is conveyed to us by the transition from the image of the huge stone to the image of the sea-beast, emerging from the unknown medium of the sea, in *Resolution and Independence.* One's imagination moves in a similar way in passing from the immemorial darkness of the single yew-tree of Lorton vale to the pillared shade of the four of Borrowdale and, finally, to the mountain river flowing from Glaramara's inmost caves. In comparison with the significance of these images the Lawrentian 'Dark Gods' may seem circumscribed by specifically sexual connotations. However, it is possible to regard Lawrence as approaching a non-categorical vision in his last poems. In *Bavarian Gentians*, Persephone dissolves to no more than a voice in the indeterminate darkness when she undertakes her annual descent into Pluto's gloom.

> Down the darker and darker stairs, where blue is darkened on
> blueness
> Even where Persephone goes, just now, from the frosted
> September
> To the sightless realm where darkness is awake upon the dark
> And Persephone herself is but a voice.

Perhaps these lines are enough to suggest the splendour with which the poem as a whole evokes the region of 'rich dark noth-

ing' to which life in due course descends and from which life in due course returns.

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NOTES

1. Kenneth Clark: *The Romantic Rebellion.* John Murray, London, 1973.
2. In the chapter on Wordsworth in *Revaluation,* Leavis quotes long sections from Shelley's 'Peter Bell the Third', including the following stanza.

   But from the first 'twas Peter's drift
   To be a kind of moral eunuch,
   He touched the hem of Nature's shift,
   Felt faint — and never dared uplift
   The closest, all-concealing tunic. (p. 192)

   He also quotes the following lines from Arnold's 'Obermann'.

   But Wordsworth's eyes avert their ken
   From half of human fate. (p. 188)
3. *The Notebooks of Samuel Taylor Coleridge,* ed. Kathleen Coburn. Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1957. Volume 3, entry 3285.
4. The early version as printed in *The Lyrical Ballads* ed. R.L. Brett and A.R. Jones, Methuen, London, 1965.
5. Op. cit. Volume 1, entry 1246.
6. Published in *Theoria* 59.
7. Op. cit. Volume 1, entry 1559.
8. F. R. Leavis: *Revaluation.* Chatto and Windus, London 1956, p. 176.
9. Ibid. p. 175.

Quotations are taken from *The Poetical Works of Wordsworth* (Oxford Standard Authors) revised by E. de Selincourt, 1966.

OF TRIBES AND HORDES: COLERIDGE AND THE EMANCIPATION OF THE SLAVES, 1808

by CHARLES S. DE PAOLO

A twenty-five year struggle for the emancipation of the slaves in the British West Indies began in 1808 and continued to a legislative conclusion in 1833 with the passage of the Emancipation Act.[1] The dramatic efforts of abolitionists like Granville Sharp and Thomas Clarkson led to the passage of the Act for the Abolition of the Slave Trade, which, in May of 1807, prohibited the importation of blacks into colonial slavery. But, despite substantial fines for any violation of this Act, the slave trade prospered illegally.[2] Because of frequent violations, and for the sake of the slaves who still remained in colonial bondage, the anti-slavery proponents of the post-abolition period, among whom were William Wilberforce and Thomas Fowell Buxton, engaged for a quarter of a century in a struggle with their pro-slavery adversaries.

Coleridge's moral stand on the subject of slavery from 1792 to 1807 is well known;[3] however, his views on the subject of manumission in the period immediately following the 1807 Act require some further treatment. In this paper, I will argue that Coleridge gave considerable thought to the means of emancipation and that his views amalgamated many diverse sources, including Kantian ethics, abolitionist literature, and German social anthropology. He believed that emancipation was a moral necessity, but that the process towards black freedom, in order to avoid social chaos, had to be predicated upon the Christian enlightenment of each individual, an illuminative process that would take place under para-military auspices on the West Coast of Africa. I will examine his 1808 *Edinburgh* review of Thomas Clarkson's *History of the Abolition of the Slave Trade* (1808) and contemporaneous notebook entries to suggest that he held a mixed view of black emancipation: as a Christian altruist, he advocated manumission, basing this on religious and on ethical grounds, yet, as a conservative, he had little faith in the blacks' ability to create a self-sufficient society. In order to fulfill his moral belief in manumission, he renovated Granville Sharp's Sierra Leone experiment (1787–1808) in the form of 'commercial magazines' or forts that were militarily-secure centres for education and for trade.

The ethical basis of Coleridge's anti-slavery position centred upon the distinction between 'persons' and 'things' (the former actively determined his own end whereas the latter was controlled by an external influence), a critical distinction he derived directly from Kant's 1783 *Groundwork of a Metaphysic of Morals* and from related contexts. In this work, Kant articulated a concept of

moral autonomy, an *a priori* humanistic imperative: '. . . every rational being, *exists* as an end in himself, *not merely as a means* for arbitrary use by this or that will . . . Beings whose existence depends, not on our will, but on nature, have none the less, if they are non-rational beings, only a relative value as means and are consequently called things' (*GMM*, 95–6).[4] In the state of 'heteronomy', according to Kant, man no longer controlled his destiny: 'the will does not give itself the law, but an alien impulsion does so through the medium of the subject's own nature as tuned for its reception' (*GMM*, 112). By virtue of his rational nature, every human being, Kant continues, is innately an autonomous being, whereas non-rational creatures are important in so far as they relate to man's needs, for they are 'things'. In a heteronomous state, man has been reduced to servitude and has become the means to another's self-aggrandizing end. That the 'alien impulsion' which reduces man from autonomy to heteronomy insinuates itself into domination through the subject's own nature suggests that the subject has somehow surrendered, or was pre-disposed, to servitude by some flaw in his nature.

Coleridge incorporated almost verbatim this Kantian ethic into the heart of his social criticism and applied it directly to slavery, which he thought to be an egregious example of the subversion of moral autonomy by an 'alien impulsion' and of the subsequent reduction of human beings to 'things'. For Kant's 'rationality', he substituted 'the Reason' as the *a priori* and co-equal faculty of man and the signature of his divine inheritance. In the 1809–1810 *Friend*, he discusses the inviolability of the right of self-determination and that it is forfeited either by an act of free will or, ironically, in the violation of the humanist imperative itself:

> . . . all morality is grounded in the Reason. Every Man is born with the faculty of Reason: and whatever is without it, be the Shape what it may, is not a Man or PERSON, but a THING. Hence the sacred Principle, recognized by all Laws human and divine, the Principle indeed, which is the ground-work [the underscoring is Coleridge's; an allusion to Kant's *Groundwork*?] of all Law and Justice, that a person can never become a Thing, nor be treated as such without wrong. But the distinction between Person and Thing consists herein, that the latter may rightfully be used, altogether and merely, as a Means; but the former must always be included in the End, and form a part of the final Cause . . . as the faculty of Reason implies Free-agency, Morality (i.e. the dictate of Reason) gives to every rational Being the right of acting as a free agent, and of finally determining his conduct by his own Will, according to his own Conscience: and this right is inalienable except by guilt, which is an act of Self-forfeiture, and the Consequences . . . to be considered as the criminal's own moral election. In respect of their Reason all

> Men are equal. The measure of the Understanding and of all other Faculties of Man, is different in different Persons: but Reason is not susceptible of degree.
>
> (*F*, II, 125)[5]

In an 1811 *Morning Post* article, he directly equates heteronomy to enslavement: 'A Slave is a *Person* perverted into a *Thing:* Slavery, therefore, is not so properly a deviation from Justice, as an absolute subversion of all Morality' (*EOT.*, III, 235).[6] One year later, he would tie the Kantian imperative in with domestic politics in order to explain the immoral, self-perpetuating cycle of conservative repression and of civil unrest: '. . . the Working Classes did not substitute Rights for Duties . . . till the higher Classes, their legitimate protectors, had subordinated *Persons* to *Things,* and systematically perverted the former into the latter' (*EOT.*, II, 393). For Coleridge, civil unrest resulted not only from the failure of the higher classes to alleviate the distresses of the lower orders, but also from their exploitation of the poor. Repudiating Rousseau's social idealism in *On the Constitution of the Church and State* (1829), he formulated a neo-Kantian counterstatement which he called an 'ever-originating social contract' — an evolutionary social law emerging from the sanctity of the individual:

> But instead of the *conception* or *theory* of an original social contract, you say the *idea* of an ever-originating social contract, this is so certain and so indispensable, that it constitutes the whole ground of difference between subject and serf, between a commonwealth and a slave-plantation. And this, again, is evolved out of the yet higher idea of *person,* in contra-distinction from *thing* — all social law and justice being grounded on the principle, that a person can never, but by his own fault, become a thing, or, without grievous wrong, be treated as such: and the distinction consisting in this, that a thing may be used altogether and merely as the *means* to an end; but the person must always be included in the *end:* his interest must form a part of the object, a *means* to which he, by consent, *i.e.* by his own act, makes himself.
>
> (*CCS*, 15)[7]

In a note on a letter to Viscount Goderich (*c.* 1832), one which pertained directly to the manumission issue, Coleridge equated slavery with the perversion of persons and things and implored Christians to 'labour . . . for its ultimate removal from the Christian World'.[8] And, writing to Thomas Pringle, an emancipationist, he makes the important point that heteronomy could only be reversed by religious education; freedom, in the fullest sense of the word, varied in direct proportion, he thought, to enlightenment and to self-government:

> [Slavery] is a body of Death into which Religion alone can awake the spirit of life — it must be the great Truths of the Gospel, which . . . correspond to and evoke the essential constituents of our Humanity, the ideas which subsist *potentially* in every man, however bedimmed by unblest circumstances & the absence of education . . . for they form the Image of God, in which God *created* men, and by which he contra-distinguished from all the creatures, whom by the life, his spirit had given, & the Law which his Word had imposed, he had enforced the Chaos to become.
>
> (*CL*, VI, 940)[9]

'Freedom', he continues to say, is that state in which, '. . . Control from without must ever be *inversely* as the self-government or control from within, unless men are to fall abroad into the state of wild beasts, or more truly of wild Fiends' (*CL*, VI, 940). This is the crux of Coleridge's moral dilemma: man is, at once, invariably a child of God, but, without the reformative influence of Christian education, he would inevitably fall into a primitive condition.

Undoubtedly, Coleridge assimilated this Kantian ethic into his social thought and linked it directly to the slavery issue. In the contexts above, and elsewhere in his works, he posited the following points: (1) that by virtue of the invariable faculty of the Reason all men were equal; (2) that by virtue of the variable faculty of the Understanding all men acted as individuals, following their own volitions; (3) that which is without Reason is a 'thing'; (4) to treat a person as a thing was morally subversive; and (5) that he who violated this imperative by reducing a human being from autonomy to heteronomy automatically forfeited his own humanity. With these criteria in mind, let us turn to Coleridge's earliest explicit comments on the emancipation issue, which appeared in his July, 1808, review of Clarkson's *History*.

Coleridge's *Edinburgh* review of Clarkson's *History* was meant as an encomium to a friend and compatriot — 'a Benefactor of mankind' who was motivated neither 'by the fears & hopes of selfish superstition' nor by the 'feverish Power' of collective fanaticism (*CL*, III, 119). Continuing in a 16 July 1808 letter to Francis Jeffrey, he further dissociates Clarkson from radical and dissenting cliques bent on rabble-rousing in the name of emancipation. On the contrary, he affirms, Clarkson remained self-assured throughout the crusade, '. . . in the native Strength of his own moral impulses' (*CL*, III, 119). Besides offering the chance to praise Clarkson, the review provided Coleridge with a perfect opportunity to air his own ideas on both abolition and manumission. Structurally, the review is modelled on the *History:* it contains an informative synopsis of the history of the abolition movement, one that is punctuated by praise for other major abo-

litionists alternating with moral denunciations of the trade and theoretical sections that deal with the logistics of emancipation.

Describing the trade as some 'strange nondescript in iniquity', Coleridge stresses the fact that slavery threatened the moral foundations of European society. The paradoxical effect of slavery — that the enslaver by reducing human beings to heteronomy unknowingly forfeited his own autonomy — is given special emphasis:

> [Clarkson's work] contains the history of the rise and progress of an evil the most pernicious, if only because the most criminal, that ever degraded human nature. The history of a war of more than two centuries, waged by men against human nature; a war too carried on, not by ignorance and barbarism against knowledge and civilization; not by half-famished multitudes against a race blessed with all the arts of life, and softened and effeminated by luxury; but, as some strange nondescript in iniquity, waged by unprovoked strength against uninjuring helplessness, and with all the powers which long periods of security and equal law had enabled the assailants to develop, — in order to make barbarism more barbarous, and to add to the want of political freedom the most dreadful and debasing personal suffering. Thus, all the effects and influence of freedom were employed to enslave; the gifts of knowledge to prevent the possibility of illumination; and powers, which could not have existed but in consequence of morality and religion, to perpetuate the sensual vices, and to ward off the emancipating blow of Christianity; and, as if this were not enough, positive laws were added by the best and freest nation of Christendom, and powers entrusted to the basest part of its population, for purposes which would almost necessarily make the best men become the worst.
>
> (*ER,* XII, 355–56)[10]

Echoing Clarkson's assertion that '. . . we must conclude that no evil more monstrous has ever existed upon the earth' [*HAST,* I, 26], he emphasizes not only the immorality of slavery, which was the 'most criminal' of all human degradations, but also its erosive effect upon the national character.[11] To Coleridge, the slave trade was waged by the forces of civilization against helpless, primitive people. Thus, instead of helping to fulfill what he believed was the civilizing obligation of Christian Europe to help so-called barbarous states to advance culturally, the European maritime powers betrayed their divine trust, making 'barbarism more barbarous', and bereaving the blacks of their moral and social autonomy. In this way, he thought, a consummate social heresy had been committed: '. . . all the effects and influences of freedom were employed to enslave; the gifts of knowledge to prevent the possibility of illumination.' Worst of all, the colonists used their power, not to proselytize, but, paradoxically, to 'ward off the

emancipating blow of Christianity'. This blatant betrayal of the proselytizing imperative and of Christian humanism was exacerbated by *laissez-faire* economic theory, the furtherance and pursuit of which had taken precedence over basic human dignity and which had reduced men to 'things'.

In an illuminating notebook entry of June, 1810, Coleridge treats the proselytizing imperative in greater detail. He explains, first of all, that political and social rights existed in direct proportion to moral development. On the basis of this premise, he reasons that the moral development of black slaves, through which they would learn their duties and obligations to the State, was a prerequisite to the enjoyment of civil rights. For Coleridge, acculturation was, in essence, an inexorable and necessitarian imperative, one that obliged Christian Europe to convey western government and religion to underdeveloped countries:

> All right being founded exclusively in the moral Being, Men in a state that confessedly precludes the development & progression of *Humanity*, of which the moral Being is the evidence, can . . . have no *moral* claims, beyond those which we owe to all sentient nature, Birds, & [Beasts], encreased by the duties to our own moral feelings — thus it would be a greater crime to drive away wantonly a *herd* of New Holland *Savages* than *wantonly* to injure a flock of wildfowl, because we ourselves should be more injured — even as by wildfowl more than by killing a swarm of flies — This I affirm of Tribes & Hordes, without Government or any possible means of progression. The murder of each or any *Individual* among them is *murder*, because his Savagery does not *take away* the *posse* of a moral Being — now this *Posse* is the essence of morality — and he who *murders*, i.e. kills wantonly, might perhaps have improved. But I speak of occupation of Territory: and I do affirm spite of the Howl & Whoop of Hypocrites and Mock Cosmopolites, that if it be an absurdity to affirm, that two or 3 hundred naked bloody Savages have by the accident of pre-occupation a fair right of property in the whole of that immense Island or Continent, it must be likewise absurd to affirm, that the colonists of a civilized nation have not the same right to secure themselves & the (*rightful*) Objects of their Colonization, tho' Coercion of those Savages, or even compelling them into a form of civilization were a necessary means, provided 1. that in truth of conscience the moral [&] good & personal Happiness of the Savages themselves were part of the End — 2. that the means be *appropriate*, both *morally*, and *prudentially*. (N.B. I have said, *Savages* — not nations under what we may deem less perfect forms of Government & civil & religious Institution than our own/) — and if this be denied, I do not see how we can justify the coercion of Children, or of Lunatics — and at all events call upon the opponents to shew any other way, which it has pleased Providence to appoint for the (extended) cultivation of the human Race. Can they mention any one savage Country christianized, even by the

> Apostles, even in the miraculous Ages of the Church, till the Roman Arms & Colors had preceded them? All the *cry out* against this system arises from the absurdity of *General Consequences,* of which I have shewn in the *Friend* the gross contradictions.
>
> (*CN,* III, 3921)[12]

Social coercion and control could be sanctioned temporarily, he thought, in the cases of proselytization or of emancipation, provided that such measures did not violate the moral autonomy of the enslaved and that they were implemented for acculturative purposes. Unlike slavery, the temporary heteronomy implied by social control was meant, ironically, to preserve the '. . . good & personal Happiness of the Savages themselves. . . .' Although we wince at the derogatory language (e.g., 'naked bloody Savages'), we need to realize that Coleridge, in his own way, was attempting to distinguish between 'Tribes & Hordes' — that is, what, in the former sense, the blacks might be returned to, or what, in the latter sense, they might become if appropriate transitional measures for self-sufficiency were not taken.[13]

Believing that two centuries of slavery represented for British and for European social history a regressive moral epoch, Coleridge, in his Clarkson review, reaffirms the paradoxical effects of heteronomy upon its agent or, to use Kant's terminology, upon 'the alien impulsion':

> Nor are the effects of this strange war less marvellous than its nature. It is a war in which the victors fall lower than the vanquished; in which the oppressors are more truly objects of pity than the oppressed; while, to the nation which had most extensively pursued and most solemnly authorized it, it was an eating ulcer into the very vitals of its main resources as to defence, and a slow poison acting on that constitution which was the offspring, and has continued to be the protection, of its freedom and prosperity. In short, the present work is the history of one great calamity, — one long continuous crime, involving every possible definition of evil: for it combined the wildest physical suffering with the most atrocious moral depravity.
>
> (*ER,* XII [July, 1808], 356)

His execration of slavery would be echoed in a September 1808 notebook-paraphrase of Henry Hutchinson's (Sara's brother) account of his experiences in 'the Guinea trade' (see *CN,* III, 3368n.), which was originally intended for publication in the Clarkson review; however, the account proved too lengthy and, as Kathleen Coburn has noted, it was published in less detail in Hutchinson's *The Retrospect of a Retired Mariner* . . . (1836).

Coleridge's genuine compassion for black slaves was tainted by his absorption of German race theories. J. H. Haeger has com-

petently established the fact that Coleridge subscribed not only to the concepts of moral progress, a master race, and the white man's burden, but also to the idea of racial degeneration from original 'white purity'.[14] And Barbara Taylor Paul-Emile has rightly suggested that Coleridge endorsed Blumenbach's racist scale of ethnic classification, which descended from the Caucasian through the Malay and Indian down to the Negro and the Asian.[15] Undoubtedly, Coleridge's genuine compassion for the black slaves was compromised by his subscription to derogatory race theories.

Several factors, however, mitigate the derogatory aspect of Coleridge's speculations on emancipation. One of these was his belief that Christianity reversed heteronomy, a belief held by Thomas Clarkson as well:

> But independently of the quantity of physical suffering and the innumerable avenues to vice in more than a quarter of the globe, which this great measure [i.e., the Abolition Bill] will cut off, there are yet blessings, which we have reason to consider as likely to flow from it. Among these we cannot overlook the great probability, that, Africa, now freed from the vicious and barbarous effects of this traffic, may be in a better state to comprehend and receive the sublime truths of the Christian religion.
>
> (*HAST,* II, 585–86)

Like Clarkson, Coleridge also thought that, by virtue of the coequality of the Reason, the so-called barbarians could undergo a moral and an intellectual transformation. Further qualifying the derogatory aspect of his views is the paradoxical effect slavery had upon the parasitic culture. Not enough stress, he points out, has been placed upon the moral condition of the enslaving culture itself:

> The sufferings of the Africans were calculated, no doubt to make a more rapid and violent impression on the imaginations and bodily sympathies of men; but the dreadful depravity that of necessity was produced by it on the immediate agents of the injustice; the almost universal corruption of manners which at the present day startles reflecting travellers on passing from the Northern States of America into those in which slavery obtains; and further influence of such corruption on the morals of countries that are in habits of constant commercial intercourse, and who speak the same language; these, though not susceptible of colours equally glaring, do yet form a more extensive evil, — an evil more uncertain, and of a more measurable kind. These are evil in the form of guilt; evil in its most absolute and most appropriate sense . . . and which . . . on a well disciplined spirit, will make an impression deeper than could have been left by mere agony of body, or even anguish of mind. . . . To

> this may be added, the fatal effects on national morals, from the public admission of principles, *professedly* incompatible with justice, and from the implied disavowal of any obligation paramount to that of immediate expediency, compared with which even state-hypocrisy may not have been without its good effects. Those who estimate all measures, institutions and events, exclusively by their palpable and immediate effects, are little qualified to trace . . . the ceaseless agency of those subtler causes to which the philosopher attributes the deterioration of national character. . . .
>
> (*ER*, XII [July, 1808], 357)

Having established the morally detrimental effects of slavery upon both slave and master, Coleridge turns to more pragmatic concerns — namely, to social plans for manumission. How precisely might gradual manumission and social order be attained simultaneously? This question was the source of heated debate in Parliament in the early 1830s. In order to implement his social and ethical theories, Coleridge reinvigorated Granville Sharp's colonial experiment in emancipation in Sierra Leone, Africa, a colony that, from 1787 to 1808, sought to provide commercial independence and prosperity for relocated slaves. Coleridge writes that:

> The Africans are more versatile, more easily modified than perhaps any other known race. A few years of strict honesty and humane attention to their interests, affections, and prejudices, would abolish the memory of the past, or cause it to be remembered only as a fair contrast. The Legislature of Great Britain having once decreed that no territorial conquest shall be made in Africa, this law having been made public there, and enforced by correspondent conduct on the part of our mercantile agents, there would be less difficulty in buying up the tributes hitherto levied by the African chieftains on the great rivers, than William Penn found in purchasing the more important possession of Pennsylvania from the American Indians. . . .
>
> (*ER*, XII [July, 1808], 376)

In keeping with Herder's thesis that Europe was the cultural matrix of humanity, Coleridge's plan called for the supplantation of indigenous African cultures by European culture and religion. He affirmed that since the Africans were particularly tractable, or 'versatile', their conversion to Christianity could be easily effected through gratuitous humanitarianism. But the ulterior motive to this tactic, according to Coleridge, was to eradicate 'the memory of the past, or cause it to be remembered only as a fair contrast'. This kind of social pragmatism, the derogatory overtones of which were symptomatic of his reliance upon Herder and Blumenbach, was intended to convince the colonial blacks that any transitional phase leading to complete emancipation was infinitely

preferable to the bondage they had suffered for so long.

Presumably, Coleridge considered short-term coercion as a necessary evil, one that was sanctioned ethically since its aim was the restoration of black autonomy. In his quest for freedom, he understood that the viability of post-abolitionary black society depended upon the blacks' ability to govern themselves. But autonomy, in the Kantian sense of the term, he thought, had to be relearned. At the point of abolition, the blacks, anticipating their freedom, were spurred on by liberal missionaries of every ilk towards a precipitate, if not a violent, resolution.[16] For this reason, Coleridge, and responsible politicians of every affiliation, saw the need for immediate and cautious action. Understanding that a transitional plan for emancipation was necessary in order to preserve the dignity and autonomy of the slaves, as well as the socioeconomic structure of the West Indies, he turned to Granville Sharp's recently defunct Sierra Leone colony, which he probably encountered through his study of Clarkson's *History*.

E. L. Griggs has related that, as early as 1787, Granville Sharp had organized a settlement in Sierra Leone, Africa, to which he transported free North American Negroes for the purpose of moral education.[17] In his 'Short Sketch of Temporary Regulations . . . for the Intended Settlement of the Grain Coast of Africa', Sharp's 'Community of free Africa', as it was called, would be grounded, economically, on an indentured system of labour that would, hopefully, lead to free labour and to material and to spiritual autonomy. Advocating gradual manumission facilitated through a programme of moral and religious education, Sharp explains:

> [The settlers of Sierra Leone] must be careful . . . *not to establish* any *Religion* that is *inconsistent* with the *religious Establishment of England,* though, as individuals, they are certainly entitled to a *perfect liberty of conscience,* and to a *free exercise* of their several modes of worship in *private* assemblies; but not as *public,* or equal establishments. For the *Common Law* of England, and the *established Religion* of England, are really more closely connected together than is either generally conceived by the good people of England at large, or than is ordinarily apprehended even by the learned professors themselves, of the two excellent establishments. . . .[18]

Though the Sierra Leone experiment was to be deemed a failure in 1808, it received a charter in 1791. Under the auspices of Sharp and Wilberforce, the colony strove to mitigate the plight of the slaves, materially and spiritually. As Griggs has explained, Nova Scotian blacks who had been freed after the American Revolution were transported by John Clarkson (Thomas's brother) to Sierra

Leone in order to establish a self-supporting colony.[19] But the colony failed to reach its material goal; a reputed lack of productivity and of security, as were reported in a belated 13 July 1830 Resolution of a Select Committee of the House of Commons, ended this twenty-one year experiment (*EHD*, XI, 805).

Was it coincidental that, in his 1808 review of Clarkson's *History*, Coleridge outlined plans for emancipation outposts that were reminiscent of the Sierra Leone prototype — plans that would redress the problem of material deficiency? Subsequent to the projected re-location of West Indian blacks to the West Coast of Africa, he proposes that:

> Permission would in time be gained to raise commercial magazines, so armed and manned, as should be found necessary for the security of our countrymen. Privileges, both useful and flattering, should be held forth to such of the African tribes as would settle round each of these forts; still higher honours should be given to the individuals among such settlers as should have learnt our language, and acquired our arts of manufacture or cultivation. Thus, each fort, instead of being, as hitherto, a magazine of death and depravity, would finally become a centre of civilization, with diverging lines, the circumference of which would join or pass through similar circles. The intercourse with every part of Africa would not only be rendered secure in relation to the natives, but, from their friendly dispositions, rendered less dangerous to the health of European adventurers, no longer compelled to remain unsheltered, exposed to the vertical sun by day, or the destructive dews of the night . . . [We] are certain, that if African industry were awakened, few indeed are the articles necessary for our manufactures or consumption, which might not be raised in Africa, and come to us more cheaply, including the first cost and the freightage, than from any other part of the world.
>
> (*ER*, XII [July, 1808], 376–77)

That the review coincides chronologically with the demise of Sharp's colony, and that Coleridge gives particular emphasis to matters of security, survival, and productivity, suggest that his plan was a proposed reinvigoration of the Sierra Leone experiment in acculturation.

As for the teaching of Christian dogma in these forts, Coleridge sets forth a seemingly paradoxical strategy, calling for the 'systematic repression of all religious proselytism'. With both Kant and Blumenbach in mind (that heteronomy could only be reversed through willful assent), he stresses that self-determination was necessary to the conversionary process:

> It cannot be denied that the superstitions of the Africans will occasion great difficulties and embarrassments; but, by a systematic repression

> of all religious proselytism, except indeed the most effective instrument of conversion, the Christian conduct of our agents; by a prudent and affectionate attention to the wishes and the comforts of the chieftains, and the Mandingo priests and by sedulous endeavours to enlighten them *as men;* this obstacle might gradually be removed, — at all events greatly lessened. Every individual employed in the different forts or settlements, should act under the conviction, that knowledge and civilization must, in the first instance, form the foundation, not the superstructure, of Christianity.
>
> (*ER*, XII [July, 1808], 377)

Although certainly coercive in nature, this re-location plan, thought Coleridge, could never be successful if the blacks were indoctrinated forcefully. Realizing that a fine line separated the ethically-sanctioned imposition of external controls from actual heteronomy, he seems to be evoking the idea that redemption required a purgatorial interval or passage — an idea many Christian apologists for the slave trade used in order to justify the blacks' middle-passage from slavery to Christianity. Coleridge, too gave credence to this paradoxical idea, as we see in a June 1810 Notebook entry: 'The famous Apostle of the Indies, Xavier, said: That Missionaries without Muskets did never make Converts to any purpose' (*CN*, III, 3920). Irrespective of his sympathy for the slaves, Coleridge subscribed to the belief that British imperialism and Christian proselytization were necessarily interdependent: without Christian morality as a check, imperialism would inevitably become heteronomous, but, without imperialism, Christian proselytization was impossible.

The imperious aspect of this ethic needs little elaboration. However, it is important to understand that his colonial and social philosophy was one aspect of his epistemology. The interrelationship between the physical and social environment and the human mind is dealt with in an 1811 Notebook entry. In this paragraph, Coleridge articulates a principle of environmental determinism: man develops within biological and sociopolitical matrices until, having reached self-consciousness through a synthetic interchange with nature, he rises from organic interdependence with the world to precedence over it. According to M. H. Abrams, Coleridge, particularly in his later work, saw the enslavement of the mind to empirical perception as the legacy of post-Lockean sensationalist psychology and aimed to liberate the human mind, not through hostility to nature, but rather through the primacy of the imagination over any perceivable aspect of nature that either threatened or that impeded its free play.[20] If we translate these cognitive terms, all of which were drawn from German *Naturphilosophie,* into emancipationist ones, then we might say that, for Coleridge, the slave trade resulted in the heteronomy of the body and the mind and that the only way of revers-

ing the negative effects of this 'alien impulsion' was not to threaten the social matrix of the West Indies through precipitate manumission, which could lead to race war and to economic collapse, but to reorder moral and social priorities by elevating the blacks to their rightful position as self-conscious and self-determined principles in their environment. He writes, in his 1811 Notebook entry, about the 'individuality of Man':

> The individuality of Man, how wonderful. No one merely man, as every Tyger is simply Tyger — little more than numerically distinguishable — but this man, with *these* faculties, *these* tendencies, [this] peculiar character — His wishes, Hopes, Actions, Fortunes, spring out of his own nature . . . — But on the other hand, however, this very nature appears conditioned & determined by an outward Nature, that comprehends his own — What each individual *turns out,* (Homo Phainomenon) depends, as it seems, on the narrow Circumstances & Inclosure of his Infancy, Childhood, & Youth — & afterwards on the larger Hedge-girdle of the State, in which he is a Citizen born — & inasmuch as this again receives a stamp & signature from the Zone, Climate, Soil, Character of Country, mountainous or champaign, inland or maritime, intersected with navigable streams or . . . purely pastoral or woodland, he seems to be . . . influenced & determined (caused to be what he is, qualis sit = qualified, *bethinged*) by . . . Universal Nature, its elements & relations. — Beyond this ring-fence he cannot stray, of these circummurations he can seldom overleap the lowest & innermost, and the outermost is his apparent horizon, & . . . insurmountable — from this . . . Skein of necessities he cannot disentangle himself, which surrounds . . . with subtlest intertwine the slenderest fibres of his Being . . . while it binds the whole frame with chains of adamant —. And yet again, the more steadily he contemplates this fact, the more [deeply] he meditates on these workings, the more clearly it dawns upon him that this conspiration of influences is no mere outward nor contingent Thing, that rather this necessity *is* himself, that that without which or divided from which his Being can not be even *thought,* must therefore in all its directions and labyrinthine folds belong to his Being, and . . . evolve out of his essences. Abstract from these — and what remains? A general Term, after all the . . . conceptions, notices, and experiences represented by it, had been removed — an Ens logicum which instead of a *thought* (or Conception) represents only the . . . act and process of Thinking; or rather the form & condition, under which it is possible to think or conceive at all. The more he reflects, the more evident he finds it, that the stimulability determines the existence & character of the Stimulus, the Organ the object . . . the Instincts, or the germinal Anticipations . . . in the Swell of nascent evolution. . . .
>
> (*CN,* III, 4109)

This is not the place to establish the philosophical provenance of this idea from Spinoza through Hartley to German *Naturphiloso-*

phie. To do this, one should consult Thomas McFarland and Gian N. G. Orsini, respectively.[21] Suffice it to say, that, in postulating the evolving primacy and integration of the self-conscious mind with creation, Coleridge has certainly advanced his social philosophy beyond the passive and mechanical confines of empirical and rational thought. The implications of this cognitive and anthropological idea in the context of manumission was profound: the 'ring-fence', or commercial magazines on the West Coast of Africa, appear to be the matrices in which black consciousness and industry would be developed through Christian education and the ownership of private property. At the point of self-consciousness, or when the heteronomy of the mind had ended, the blacks would have theoretically attained emancipation. Within the context of a conservative Christian State, then, the acculturated and autonomous blacks, according to Coleridge, would learn their duties to the Establishment and, in turn, receive their rights as citizens. In his treatise, *On the Constitution of the Church and State* (1829), he would refer to the dynamic reciprocity of the individual citizen and the Establishment as 'Civilization with Freedom' — a reconciliation of opposites that would preserve the rights of the citizen and the collective integrity of the body politic. He envisioned the work of the National Church in Great Britain as achieving the very same end as that of the educators in his new Sierra Leone of 1808: the propagation of 'civility':

> [The final cause of the National Church is] . . . to form and train up the people of the country to obedient, free, useful, organizable subjects, citizens, and patriots, living to the benefit of the state, and prepared to die for its defence. The proper *object* and end of the National Church is civilization with freedom; and the duty of its ministers, could they be contemplated merely and exclusively as officiaries of the *National* Church, would be fulfilled in the communication of that degree and kind of knowledge to all, the possession of which is necessary for all in order to their CIVILITY. By civility I mean all the qualities essential to a citizen, and devoid of which no people or class of the people can be calculated on by the rulers and leaders of the state for the conservation or promotion of its essential interests.
>
> (*CCS*, 54)

Coleridge's views on the emancipation of the slaves in the British West Indies are, at once, eclectic yet paradoxical. Although he adopted the Kantian ethic that distinguished 'persons' from 'things' and although he asserted the inherent co-equality of all men, he subscribed, nonetheless, to the belief that heteronomous blacks were incapable of re-constructing West Indian society without strict Establishment control, without which, he thought, econ-

omic and social collapse were inevitable. Hence, with the doctrines of German anthropologists like Blumenbach and Herder and the epistemological concepts of German *Naturphilosophie* in the background, he revitalized Granville Sharp's acculturative experiment on the West Coast of Africa and postulated that emancipation could be achieved gradually, and socio-economic chaos avoided, if forts were constructed under para-military and Anglican direction. Through a programme of moral education and property ownership, he believed, the blacks could become self-sufficient and productive citizens. Although Coleridge's manumission ideas were undermined by his adherence to German race theories, his ameliorative and altruistic intentions identify him as a unique and important anti-slavery theorist.

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NOTES

1. I am indebted to William Law Mathieson, *British Slavery and its Abolition, 1823–1838* (London: Longmans, Green, 1926), for an incisive history of the emancipation period. See also Earl Leslie Griggs, *Thomas Clarkson: The Friend of the Slaves* (1936; rpt. Westport, Cn.: The Negro Universities Press, 1970); and James Pope-Hennessy, *Sins of the Fathers: A Study of the Atlantic Slave Traders, 1441–1807* (New York: Knopf, 1968).
2. See 'An Act for the Abolition of the Slave Trade' (47 Geo. III, c. 36), *Statutes at Large*, LXI, pp. 140–48; rpt. in *English Historical Documents, 1783–1832*, ed A. Aspinall and R. Anthony Smith (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1969), pp. 803–4.
3. Coleridge's abolitionist works from 1792 to 1807 have received considerable attention, particularly from Eva Beatrice Dykes, *The Negro in English Romantic Thought* (Washington: Associated Publishers, 1942), pp. 75–80; from Barbara Taylor Paul-Emile, 'Samuel Taylor Coleridge as Abolitionist', *Ariel,* V, No. 2 (April, 1974), pp. 59–75; from J. R. Ebbatson, 'Coleridge's Mariner and the Rights of Man', *Studies in Romanticism*, XI (1972), pp. 171–206; from Robert F. Fleissner, ' "Kubla Khan" as an Integrationalist Poem', *Negro American Literature Forum*, VIII (1974), pp. 254–56; from J. H. Haeger, in a very important article, 'Coleridge's Speculations on Race', *Studies in Romanticism,* XIII (1974), pp. 333–57; also noteworthy are commentaries by Malcolm Ware, 'Coleridge's "Spectre Bark": A Slave Ship?', *Philological Quarterly,* XL, p. iv (October, 1961), pp. 589–92; John Colmer, *Coleridge: Critic of Society* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1959), pp. 44–45.
4. Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals,* ed. and trans, H. J. Paton, 3rd ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1964).
5. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *The Friend,* ed. Barbara E. Rooke, 2 vols. (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1969), Vol. IV of *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge,* ed. Kathleen Coburn and Bart Winer, 17 vols., Bollingen Series LXXV (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1969–).
6. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Essays on His Times in 'The Morning Post' and 'The Courier',* ed. David V. Erdman, 3 vols. (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1978), Vol. III of his *Collected Works.*
7. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *On the Constitution of the Church and State,* ed. John Colmer (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1976), Vol. X of his *Collected Works.*
8. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, 'Note on a Letter to Viscount Goderich', in *Notes, Theological, Political, and Miscellaneous,* ed. Rev. Derwent Coleridge (London: Moxon, 1853), pp. 221–22.

9. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *The Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge,* ed. E. L. Griggs, 6 vols. (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1956–1971).
10. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, 'A Review of *The History of the Abolition of the Slave Trade,* by Thomas Clarkson', *The Edinburgh Review or Critical Journal,* XII (July, 1808), pp. 355–79.
11. Thomas Clarkson, *The History of the Rise, Progress, and Accomplishment of the Abolition of the African Slave-Trade by the British Parliament,* 2 vols. (1808; rpt. London: Frank Cass, 1969).
12. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *The Notebooks,* ed. Kathleen Coburn, 3 vols. Bollingen Series L (New York: Pantheon Books, 1957–1973), III.
13. The mode of manumission was a significant item on the parliamentary agenda during the 1830s. To the pervasive fear that if procrastination continued a violent revolution was inevitable, the Duke of Wellington responded with what would prove to be moderate Tory, and Coleridgean, policy on emancipation:

> The proper way [to secure manumission] would have been to induce the Colonial Legislature, to take means for improving the social and moral condition of the slaves, so as to bring them to such a state in which it would be safe and advantageous for all parties concerned, to do away with slavery altogether. Without this discipline, it would be fatal to all parties to emancipate the negroes. . . . [S]uch a hazardous measure as the emancipation of the negroes ought to be very gradual in its operation. The first point should be to conciliate the colonists, so as to ensure their co-operation. Nothing should be done hastily in a matter which involved such immense public and private interests, and in which the negroes themselves were so deeply concerned. . . .
>
> (Hansard, *Parliamentary Debates,* XX [1833], 518)

This preoccupation with gradual and controlled manumission, one that Coleridge had expressed as early as 1808, would win out. Coleridge's annotations of An Analysis of the Report of a Committee of the Commons on Emancipation [See *The Marginalia of Samuel Taylor Coleridge,* ed. George Whalley (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1980), part 1, pp. 31–6, Vol. XII of his *Collected Works.*] are, in many ways, adumbrations of the actual 1833 Act in that they point to the need for gradual emancipation of the older slaves and immediate freedom for the new-born, for moral education and the study of Anglican doctrine, and for property ownership. These annotations, along with his manuscript notes on Brougham's *Colonial Policy of the European Powers* (see Colmer, *Coleridge,* p. 168), should be considered in conjunction with the Emancipation Act, which they antedated.

14. Haeger, p. 355. Haeger also makes the important point that Coleridge should not be considered a racist in the conventional sense of the word. For Coleridge, 'like his contemporaries', he points out, 'simply took for granted the superiority of Western "white" culture. Yet to attempt to incorporate such limited knowledge, and to employ such complacent assumptions', he justly warns 'in a scheme of cultural history intended to have the force of a philosophical system, was certainly an error' (p. 357). An interesting aside to this is that Herder, who postulated that Europe was the cultural matrix of humanity, execrated white slavers: 'And what right have you [i.e., Europeans], monsters! even to approach the country of these unfortunates, much less to tear them from it by stealth, fraud, and cruelty?' (Johann Gottfried von Herder, *Reflections on the Philosophy of the History of Mankind,* ed. and abridged by Frank E. Manuel (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1968) p. 12. In his Reflections (Vol. VII, Bk. xx, Chap. 6), Herder did indeed argue that Europe was the cultural matrix of humanity, ascribing the causes to both chance *and* to certain inborn qualities of Europeans. R. G. Collingwood [in *The Idea of History* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1946), p. 90] explains Herder's complex cultural historiography this way:

> As a natural being, man is divided into the various races of mankind [argued Herder], each closely related to its geographical environment and having its original physical and mental characteristics moulded by that environment; but each race, once formed, is a specific type of humanity with permanent characteristics of its own depending not on its immediate re-

> lation to its environment but on its own inbred peculiarities. . . . The sensuous and imaginative faculties of different races are thus genuinely differentiated; each racè has its own conception of happiness and its own ideal of life. But this racially differentiated humanity is, once more, a matrix in which there arises a higher type of human organism, namely the historical organism, that is, a race whose life instead of remaining static develops in time into higher and higher forms. The favoured centre in which this historical life arises is Europe.

Needless to say, the negative connotations of such a theory of white supremacy need little elaboration.

15. Paul-Emile, p. 73; Haeger, pp. 336, 339.
16. Mathieson, pp. 111–14.
17. Griggs, *Clarkson,* pp. 96–7.
18. Granville Sharp, 'A Short Sketch of Temporary Regulations . . . for the Intended Settlement on the Grain Coast of Africa, Near Sierra Leone', 3rd ed. (1787; rpt. New York: Negro Universities Press, 1970), pp. iv–v.
19. Griggs, *Clarkson,* pp. 96–7.
20. M. H. Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism: Tradition and Revolution in Literature* (New York: Norton, 1971), p. 366.
21. G. N. G. Orsini, *Coleridge and German Idealism* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois Univ. Press, 1969); Thomas McFarland, *Coleridge and the Pantheist Tradition* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1969).

NADINE GORDIMER'S 'FAMILY OF WOMEN'

by SHEILA ROBERTS

> What he had seen for the first time was woman's nakedness, all stages of change and deterioration, of abuse and attrition by pain, loving and unloving use . . . What he was feeling was deep distasteful awe at the knowledge of their beauty and its decay.
>
> *A Soldier's Embrace*

Nadine Gordimer is distinctive among women writers in that her work has as its central concern an examination of the events and processes that have shaped and still shape a political reality. Had she not been a South African writer and one who possesses a highly informed political sense, she might well have written novels that allowed her to be classed among contemporary feminist writers. There is certainly a penetrating awareness of the condition of women — black and white — in her work, an awareness that sometimes informs single short stories to the exclusion of the politics of government, for example, 'Siblings' and 'Time Did' in *A Soldier's Embrace.*[1] But, to generalize, I would say that the female characters in her novels are all more troubled about their moral position as citizens in a racist country than they are about their position as women relating to men. Not that these two positions do not interlock at times: they do. Nevertheless, in those novels with female protagonists the strongest focus is not on their status as women but on the moral validity of action as women in various circumstances in an overall political ambience.

Of Nadine Gordimer's eight published novels, the four that I wish to discuss here all have female protagonists: *The Lying Days* (1953), *Occasion for Loving* (1960), *The Late Bourgeois World* (1966), and *Burger's Daughter* (1979).[2] What immediately strikes the reader as the strongest similarity between these protagonists is that their ideological commitments or political convictions are frequently in conflict with their personal needs and their place in the family.

Helen Shaw in *The Lying Days* achieves political awareness and sophistication slowly and painfully. In the process she is estranged from her conservative parents and even, conversely, from her politically concerned lover. The book constitutes in effect Helen Shaw's quest for self-education as a political human being and wholeness as a woman, a quest that like Rosa Burger's in *Burger's Daughter* will involve a journey overseas. Both Helen Shaw and Rosa Burger are in their twenties when their stories end, Helen Shaw leaving South Africa and Rosa Burger returning to it.

In a study of Nadine Gordimer's work published in 1974, Robert Haugh claimed that *The Lying Days,* Gordimer's first novel, was her best partly because, although Helen Shaw does 'wither into the truth', she does not assume 'the dry harshness, the weary passivity and the scepticism which approaches misanthropy' evident in the characters of later novels.[3] When Haugh wrote this, *Burger's Daughter* had not yet been published but I doubt whether he would have wanted to alter his contention in light of this recent work. Although Rosa Burger is close in age to Helen Shaw, she does possess a certain harshness, passivity, and scepticism evident in the personalities of Gordimer's older protagonists, Jessie Stilwell and Elizabeth van den Sandt, and arguably for good reason.

When we are first introduced to Jessie Stilwell in *Occasion for Loving* and Elizabeth van den Sandt in *The Late Bourgeois World,* these women are in their thirties. They are experienced, self-actualizing, and politically educated. But their ability to act warmly or even tolerantly towards those who are closest to them has been inhibited or frozen by their experiences as young girls and by their disenchantment with society, politics, and ordinary human relations. It is in these books that 'the dry harshness, the weary passivity, and the scepticism' are most strongly in evidence. For instance, even though Helen Shaw quarrels bitterly with her mother over social and racial issues, she herself suffers cruelly from the disaffection, especially in the knowledge that both parents love her. Unlike Jessie Stilwell and Elizabeth van den Sandt, she eventually succeeds in accepting her parents for what they are. She learns (as Rosa Burger does after her) that she can only free herself of her parents by acknowledging their presence in her. As Joel Aaron so astutely advises her:

> 'Making them over would be getting rid of them as they are. Well, you can't do it. You can't do it by going to live somewhere else, either. You can't even do it by never seeing them again for the rest of your life. There is that in you that is them, and it's that unkillable fibre of you that will hurt you and pull you off balance wherever you run to — unless you accept it. Accept them in you, accept them as they are, even if you choose to live differently, and you'll be all right. Funnily enough, that's the only way to be free of them . . .'[4]

More importantly, Helen Shaw learns in her teens to oppose her mother when her own legitimate emotional and intellectual needs are at stake, and out of her opposition grows her sense of identity and her capacity for tolerance. In contrast, Jessie Stilwell in *Occasion for Living* allows her mother to dominate her until the day when, herself a young widow with a baby, she realizes bitterly that

> she had been handed from mother to husband to being a mother herself without ever having had the freedom that does not belong to any other time of life but extreme youth . . . Her husband was dead, but she was alive to the knowledge that, in the name of love, her mother had sucked from her the delicious nectar she had never known she had — the half-shaped years, the inconsequence without fingerprint, of the time from fifteen to twenty.[5]

The consequence of this realization is that Jessie becomes suspicious of and repelled by the demonstrativeness of love: 'Love appalled her with its hammering demands, love clamoured and dunned, love would throw down and tear to pieces its object'.[6] About her fifteen-year-old son Morgan she decides, without any evidence except her own discomfort in his presence, that no love exists between them. She treats her aged mother with quiet consideration but no affection, and her husband hears with bewilderment her step-father complain that Jessie had never been much like a daughter to him.

What redeems Jessie Stilwell is her uneasiness with her own inability to be spontaneously loving, and her sharp self-analysis. She also tries to act in a morally valid way, particularly in response to the love affair between the Englishwoman, Ann Davis, and the black man, Gideon Shibalo. The reader finishes *Occasion for Loving* with the intimation that Jessie will strive for wisdom, gentleness, and the capacity to stretch to meet new demands. Even if she and her husband Tom will never break out of the moral dilemma of political liberalism in which they are entrenched, they will at least contemplate action that will be effective as well as morally valid. Towards the end of the book, Jessie says to Gideon Shibalo, 'Well, if you want to live like a human being you've got to keep on proving it. It's not a state automatically conferred upon you because you walk upright on two legs, any more than because you've got a white skin'.[7]

Elizabeth van den Sandt in *The Late Bourgeois World* shows no such potential for mental expansion and emotional growth at the end of the book. She arouses the reader's dislike from the first paragraphs of the narration by her egocentric response to news of her former husband's suicide. When Graham Mill, her lover, asks why Max van den Sandt would have done such a thing, she replies, feeling 'immense irritation break out like cold sweat . . . "Because of me!" '[8] When the reader learns that Elizabeth and Max have been divorced for over six years, this motive for suicide becomes unconvincing, increasingly so as Elizabeth mentally reconstructs for the reader the political events of the twelve years since she first met Max.

The novel, which covers one day in the life of the protagonist, is narrated in the first-person so the reader has only Elizabeth's

memories, thoughts, and opinions on which to base his understanding. But Elizabeth is hardly reliable: her cool, critical, and self-satisfied voice itself creates 'an immense irritation', and the reader is left wondering whether Gordimer intends to convey the all-pervasive influence of the late bourgeois world by providing us with a narrator as unequal to the demands life makes on her as the bourgeois world is to increasing social disintegration and change.

Elizabeth is complacently irrational and self-deluding. She congratulates herself on the fact that her son Bobo was *not* conceived in one of the middle-class white suburbs of Johannesburg but instead in the back of a car out in the veld, and she is proud that neither she nor Graham 'makes money out of cheap labour or performs a service confined to people of a particular colour'.[9] Graham, a lawyer, sometimes defends people on political charges, and she spends working hours in a laboratory analysing stools, urine, and blood. She fails to realize that holding such professional jobs on 'white' salaries does not exonerate either Graham or herself from their guilty participation in a whites-only hegemony.

Of her parents, Elizabeth has some passing thoughts to the effect that they 'were extremely gratified to have [her] "marry into" the Van den Sandts' because not many families in her small town could boast of a daughter married to the son of a wealthy Member of Parliament. But she also assumes that her parents would be 'equally gratified, now, to know that he is dead'.[10] The reader cannot take such a reaction on trust even if he accepts that Max's political activities had been an embarrassment to Elizabeth's parents, as they were to his own. Yet embarrassed or not, Max's parents never did disown him: Elizabeth states that when Max was arrested on a charge of sabotage, he 'died' for his parents but the facts are that his father paid for his defence and his mother attended his trial several times. The reader simply cannot believe Elizabeth; she is too harsh, too dry, too sceptical.

The reader also loses faith in the durability of Elizabeth's relationship with Graham. Later in the day when she wishes she could have lunch with him, she decides not to do anything about it 'because we make a point of not living in each other's pocket, and if I were to start it, I'd have to expect him to make the same sort of use of me at some time when it might not be convenient'.[11] That evening Graham asks suddenly, 'How would you say things are with us?'. Elizabeth chooses to misinterpret his question and successfully hedges it. At this point the reader must assume that things are not well with them and can never be well with Elizabeth, certainly not in the sense of her ability to love. Michael Wade's interpretation of Elizabeth's behaviour is that, having

learnt to reject liberalism because the preconditions for its existence are not available in South Africa, she must perforce reject the traditions of romantic love as well and merely 'bide her time':

> . . . Unfortunately, mature liberalism of all ideologies can least afford — or is least able — to live in a vacuum; it needs the nourishment of an established romantic tradition, in art and in life. So Graham's (and to an extent Elizabeth's) life is reduced in stature by the necessity of having to learn to 'sit still' in South Africa.[12]

In composing *Burger's Daughter,* Gordimer returned to the form of the *bildungsroman* which she was so successful with in *The Lying Days.* Although the structure of *Burger's Daughter* is non-linear and the story is built up unchronologically by means of the interwoven narrative voices of the implied author and of Rosa Burger, Gordimer has here reverted full circle to the matter of her first novel — the life and growth towards maturity of a young girl. But *Burger's Daughter* has this fundamental difference from *The Lying Days:* Rosa Burger achieves an astute political awareness very early in life through the influence of her activist parents. The crisis of her own personal needs in conflict with the political commitment that has been thrust upon her, surfaces partly when her parents force her to pretend to be engaged to a detainee so that she can have visiting rights to him, and then comes to a head in her twenty-fifth year. But the conflict is resolved within the space of ten months. Yet for all her closeness in age to Helen Shaw, Rosa Burger seems closer in personality to Jessie Stilwell and Elizabeth van den Sandt. Like them, Rosa communicates to the reader an emotional distance or detachment from the crucial events of her life, and possesses a drily critical attitude, a cool evaluating vision, towards her family, her lovers, and even towards those on the periphery of her life.

The richly imagined and finely constructed portrayal of the mental and emotional life of a young woman in *The Lying Days* demonstrates that Nadine Gordimer could have presented her entire 'family' of women in as warm and complexly human a way as the most exacting (perhaps romantically liberal) reader would have desired. The reasons why she did not choose to do so in later books must be sought in the fluctuating situations of freedom and subordinacy from which her protagonists try to extricate themselves.

Before continuing this discussion, I think it would be useful to digress briefly and refer to the remarkable parallels between *The Lying Days,* published in 1953 and Marilyn French's best-selling novel *The Women's Room,* published more than twenty years later. Helen Shaw, like Mira in *The Women's Room,* is the only child of careful, conservative, middle-class parents. Both daughters have mothers who express strong distaste at any manifest-

ation of female sexuality; both achieve a measure of self-sufficiency through education and exposure to political liberalism; and both for a time submerge their own intellectual needs in the interests of those of 'the man'. Both authors take pains to illuminate not only the mental and emotional lives of young women but also 'the carefully-contrived pattern of reversal of appearance and reality that constitutes the design'[13] of the novels.

However, Helen Shaw — unlike Mira — has loving and reasonably happily married parents who will ultimately allow her to have her way. Her mother's expressed distaste for sexuality — she refers to women who live with men to whom they are not married as 'filthy beasts' — has no real crippling power over Helen's own passionate nature. Helen, moreover, has a stubborn courage that Mira only acquires in middle-age.

Perhaps these differences between Helen and Mira's personalities constitute important clues not only to why Helen Shaw might be viewed by critics as Gordimer's most successful female protagonist but also to why there is, if at all, merely a thin strand of feminism in Gordimer's work. Having started her novelistic career with the successful depiction of a free woman and one who is conceivably autobiographic to some extent, it is understandable that Gordimer would have continued in this fashion. In relation to the Miras of contemporary feminist fiction, Gordimer's protagonists all enjoy a large measure of personal freedom. Even those like Jessie and Elizabeth who are emotionally inhibited are capable of deeply satisfying sexual lives. They all shun political conservatism: in fact, their active political lives are both cause and effect of their prevailing over the oppressive dependency of the women of their generation. They exhibit no lack of self-esteem in the presence of men; they make their own decisions; and they all enjoy professions out of the home.

While admitting these similarities between Helen, Jessie, Elizabeth, and Rosa, I still contend that Helen's is the happiest situation. However narrow and misguided her parents may be, they certainly love Helen and express deep concern about her well-being. Their early indulgence gives Helen the confidence to assert herself. In contrast, as I have pointed out, Jessie Stilwell's youth is paralysed by her mother's unhealthy possessiveness. The woman pretends to Jessie for years that she, her daughter, has a 'heart condition' which prevents her from leading the normal, active life of a school girl. Whereas Helen Shaw chooses capriciously *not* to go to university, then chooses to go; decides to live with her boyfriend, then leaves him and heads for Europe, both Jessie and Elizabeth marry young and become pregnant. And Rosa Burger, while obviously loved by her parents, has her own individual needs, even her desire for romantic and sexual love,

subjugated to the greater demands of the communist party to which her parents owe undeviating allegiance. Thus, of the four women — all only daughters of their parents — only Helen Shaw has multiple options available to her in her youth, including the tacit support of well-meaning if uncomprehending parents. Because Helen has physical freedom, she can live at will in an environment of students and intellectuals and consequently arrive at some understanding of the reality behind the appearance of white middle-class life in a racist South Africa. Because she has freedom of movement at an age when Jessie Stilwell and Elizabeth van den Sandt are in early marriages and Rosa Burger is denied a passport, she is able to act on her assessment of the authenticity of her own life, of the significance of her intimacy with men like Joel Aaron and Paul Clark, and of the necessity to leave South Africa to gain a wider perspective of the demands of the self against those of society. Although Rosa Burger ultimately achieves her own wide perspective, her initial impulse in leaving South Africa is purely that of escape.

Helen's age is perhaps the crux of the matter. She truly 'escapes' very young and the reader may assume that she has had no time in which to grow drily harsh, wearily passive, or sceptical. And it is only with the publication of *Burger's Daughter* that Gordimer forces the reader to question what it was that Helen escaped to and what it might be that she would return to.

What emerges from Gordimer's novels after *The Lying Days* is that life in a monolithic Nationalist South Africa succeeds in disillusioning and hardening those frustrated in their work for social and political change, especially work based on an inadequate European tradition of liberalism. Whether work based on some other foundation would be more effective is doubtful from the evidence of *Burger's Daughter:* that does not reduce the moral validity of such work — even ineffectual work is justifiable as a form of 'witnessing'. But when the novel opens, Lionel Burger is in prison. He dies in the course of the narrative, and the book ends with Rosa Burger herself in jail, a matter of months after she has been told by a black man that his people don't need the help of a Lionel Burger and that her father's personal sacrifice was insignificant in the face of *his* people's constant persecution.

Even Helen Shaw does not evade some of the effects of the two years (1948 to 1950) during which she lives under the Nationalist Government. Her relationship with Paul Clark, while remaining actively sexual, becomes one of vigilance, tensions, and evasions. She watches her own and Paul's reactions constantly and is totally absorbed in the importance, as she sees it, of his social work among Africans. She eventually becomes conscious of a sense of loss:

> . . . as if there is discovered to be another person in you who mysteriously wrests you from yourself and takes over, thrusting you back to yourself in confusion when the fancy takes it — the thought of it made me sick with dismay. I had the instinct to clutch, searching at my life, like a woman suddenly conscious of some infinitesimal lack of weight about her person that warns her that something has gone . . .[14]

Rosa Burger is, of course, the most tragically affected of all Gordimer's female protagonists, although the reader only accepts intellectually that Rosa's life is a tragedy. Rosa herself does not convey an extent of personal pain, fear, or terror sufficient to wrench at the reader's emotions.[15] I would argue, however, that had she done so, had her suffering been desperate, she could not convincingly have been the trained daughter of Lionel Burger, the loyal communist who devoted his life to the cause. During his trial, Lionel Burger had said:

> '. . . If I have ever been certain of anything in my life, it is that I acted according to my conscience on all counts. I would be guilty only if I were innocent of working to destroy racism in my country'.[16]

Rosa, who all her life has witnessed the comings and going of party members — black and white — in her home, and who even as a young child learnt to live with the threat and the actuality of her parents spending time in jail, does temporarily lose conviction in the usefulness of continuing to fight racism in South Africa. Her growing scepticism and her drily critical vision of all facets of life in South Africa and, later, in Europe make her seem to the reader much older than her twenty-five years. Secretly she visits an influential Afrikaner and succeeds in obtaining a passport valid for one year's travel. In joy and trepidation at her chance to 'know somewhere else',[17] she leaves the country. In the south of France she joins her father's first wife, Katya, a former ballet dancer who had found herself unequal to the task of being married to a devoted communist. There Rosa enjoys life in all its easy sensuality, amorality, and physical freedom. She has an affair with a married Frenchman and plans to join him permanently in Paris after her expected visit to London. She will ignore the conditions of the passport granted her by the South African government.

Yet, paradoxically, it is in the sensuous paradise of the French south coast that Rosa becomes distressingly aware of the inevitability of old age, senility, and death. Her experience here is similar to, but more intense than, the moments that both Jessie Stillwell and Elizabeth van den Sandt endure confronted by the

fact of ageing. Rosa sees the signs of physical disintegration in Katya and her friends, listens to their talk of diets, menopause, and mastectomies, and is accosted one day in the street by a very old, disoriented woman standing in her night dress. The woman asks her urgently, 'What time is it?', a question of similar import to the one Elizabeth van den Sandt's grandmother asks, 'What happened?'. Elizabeth's silent response is:

> There is nothing to say.
> She asks now only the questions that are never answered. I can't tell her, you are going to die, that's all. She's had all the things that have been devised to soften life but there doesn't seem to have been anything done to make death more bearable.[18]

And so, in the midst of pleasure, leisure, and freedom, Rosa achieves new certainties, not those handed to her by her father, but her own. She must acknowledge the unavoidability of decay and death and recognize that life as the Frenchman's mistress in France would be 'un paradis inventé', like a Bonnard landscape or the unicorn tapestry she sees at Cluny. In such a life, self-indulgent and useless, the thought of old age and death would become obsessive and terrible.

While she is in London, Rosa receives a midnight call from Basie, a black man who as a child lived in the Burger household. What she learns in this bitter conversation with Basie is that, just as her father's beliefs could not be bequeathed to her unquestioningly, her father's achievement could not be laid at her door without her own continued, independent action. Moreover, she sees that only by accepting that which in herself derives from her father, can she act as a fully free person. These truths are the final goads that send Rosa back to South Africa, determined to prove each day over again that she wants to live like a human being.

In her decision to act 'according to [her] conscience on all counts', Rosa goes several steps further towards a life of personal austerity, reduced freedom, and danger than Jessie Stilwell ever contemplates or than Elizabeth van den Sandt considers when she decides at the end of *The Late Bourgeois World* (while thinking the words 'afraid, alive, afraid, alive, afraid, alive . . .'[19]) to use her grandmother's banking account for depositing sums sent from overseas to anti-government groups.

Thus Rosa decides consciously to deny herself personal, romantic affiliations, freedoms, and pleasures in the commitment to fight racial oppression. Her conscious actions are more rational, more humanly creditable than the dry, pessimistic responses of Jessie and Elizabeth, poorly understood even by themselves and obviously arising out of the infectious scepticism of life in South Africa. Rosa hoped for a full life of the body, the senses, and the

intelligence, but sees that such a life, exclusive of commitment to others, is not justifiable, particularly not for a South African who does not want to be 'just like the others'.

I have mentioned Ann Davis, the young Englishwoman who lightly enters a sexual relationship with a black South African, Gideon Shibalo, in *Occasion for Loving.* Ann is a secondary and not very interesting character. The reader has difficulty believing that Gideon could love her to the extent that he is prepared to give up his political work, his family and friends, and leave South Africa with her. (The reader has comparable difficulty believing that Rosa Burger does indeed love the Frenchman, Bernard Chabalier, and is therefore not greatly disturbed when Rosa rejects him and returns to South Africa.) It seems to me that Gordimer's intention in drawing Ann Davis's frivolous, entertainment-loving character, with its lack of any real sense of the vulnerability of others, was to demonstrate how dangerous such a person can be in a country like South Africa. When Lionel and Rosa Burger break the country's laws it is with full awareness of the possible consequences or the expected gains: their behaviour is knowledgeably planned. Ann, however, has neither the political interest nor the self-discipline to analyse the effects of her actions on people like the Stilwells, on her husband Boaz, and particularly on men like Gideon. Rather grandly, she simply ignores apartheid when it suits her, her bright spontaneity being part of her attractiveness for Gideon. But when the full significance of her helpless position as consort to a black man in South Africa finally strikes her, she summarily abandons Gideon — as she can so easily, being a white Englishwoman — and leaves the country with her husband for an extended tour of the islands in the Indian Ocean.

Ann's lack of substance, of seriousness, is emphasized in the language used by the other characters in reference to her. She is called 'the pretty little dear' and Boaz's 'little wife'. Her husband describes her affair with Gideon like that of 'a child picking daisies', and she is always called a 'girl', never a woman. This is not to say that Ann, in her way, does not love Gideon but simply that in a country like South Africa love without responsibility is not enough. The reader remembers Ann Davis when he reads Part Two of *Burger's Daughter:* Ann belongs in the richly personal but trivial world of the Côte d'Azur with Katya Bagnelli, Didier, Manolis, Pierre, Gaby, and all the others who survive leisurely without ambitions, professions, or political commitments.

For me Gordimer's portraits of women are generally much more vital and memorable than those of men with the possible exception of that of Gideon Shibalo. Max van den Sandt, Graham Mill, Tom Stilwell, Bernard Chabalier, and even Meiring in

The Conservationist, retain shadowy edges: their physicality is not created with the solidity and immediacy granted to Helen Shaw, Jessie Stilwell, Rosa Burger, Clare Terblanche, the black woman, Marisa, and Katya Bagnelli. Even the number of old women in Gordimer's novels, although mostly minor characters, are drawn very sharply, perhaps too sharply, their corporality conveyed with a detectable element of disgust. Jessie Stilwell's mother, for instance

> . . . scarcely existed in the moment. Her carefully powdered face was a mummification of such moments as the girl's [i.e. Ann's] eager experiences; layer on layer, bitumen on bandage, she held the dead shape of passion and vitality in the stretch of thick white flesh falling from cheekbone to jaw, the sallow eyes and straggling but still black eyebrows holding up the lifeless skin round them, and the incision of the mouth. The lips showed only when she spoke, shining pale under a lick of saliva.[20]

When Elizabeth van den Sandt visits her grandmother in a nursing home, she stares at the other patients one of whom 'has a reckless drinker's face that diabetics sometimes have, and looks as if she had once been good-looking — like a finished whore'; another is a 'monster with the enormous belly . . . sitting on a chair with her legs splayed out, like a dead frog swollen on a pond'.[21] Elizabeth focuses on the 'painted mouth' of her grandmother as she did on that of Max's mother, and as Rosa Burger does in her scrutiny of the lives of Katya Bagnelli and her friends: it is almost as if there is something shameful in an old woman putting on make-up.

I have already referred to Elizabeth van den Sandt's unlikeable egocentricity and coldness. She and her husband Max further repel the reader by their treatment of Felicity Hare, the naïvely obliging young Englishwoman. They both call her 'Sunbun' and concentrate unflatteringly on her physical attributes. Elizabeth sees her legs as 'enormous, marbled . . . doubled up in a great fleshy pedestal', and remarks at one point that 'she needs a man, our Sunbun' and derides 'her bloody great tits'.[22]

Rosa Burger's cool evaluating vision of others can also seem harsh. She assesses Clare Terblanche, her contemporary, in the following way:

> She's something sad rather than ugly, a woman without sexual pride — as a female she has no vision of herself to divert others from her physical defects. The way she stood — it irritated me. Clare Terblanche has always stood like that, as if someone plonked down a tripod, without the flow of her movement behind her or projected ahead of her! There's an ordinary explanation: knock-kneed . . .

> The dandruff, and the eczema it caused, they were of nervous origin. Why did we pretend not to notice this affliction? It was 'unimportant'. She knew I was seeing her clumsy stance, the tormenting patches of inflamed and shedding skin, stripped of familiar context. Poor thing; and she knew I thought: poor thing.[23]

At this point Rosa wants to escape the apparent repetitive uselessness of subversive activity and is angered because Clare, unquestioningly following in her parents' footsteps, wants Rosa to assist in copying some political documents. But the reader remembers how Rosa's mother herself was 'a woman without sexual pride' or vanity. The difference — one out of Clare's control, however — is that Rosa Burger's mother was beautiful.

It is probably unfair to lay at Gordimer's door the sexist attitudes of her characters, yet it is noticeable that the less attractive aspects of men's bodies are not frequently emphasized. It is also surprising that Gordimer allows Rosa Burger no indignant reaction when Bernard Chabalier calls Basie 'a cunt' for making an upsetting telephone call to Rosa.

In their resemblance to one another Gordimer's female characters form for the reader a recognizable kinship; they become members of a 'family' or 'families'. In this they are comparable to Faulkner's or Patrick White's characters. And Gordimer, like Faulkner and White, has recorded the ethos of a nation and established a twentieth-century historiography for a country. In the relatedness of theme, character, and preoccupation with moral issues, her books like theirs form a unified canon. It is to Gordimer's great credit that she, more than Faulkner and White, depicts both men and women, black and white, equally significantly involved in the processes and events of politics and equally caught in the dilemma of the moral validity of action. Her women characters can think as well as her men do, work as well as they do, manifest an equal physical courage, and are by no means 'second-class' citizens. In her fiction Gordimer has, it would seem, by-passed the decades of the feminist movement's greatest literary activity and has since the fifties established female protagonists whose lives must be taken seriously.

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NOTES

1. New York: Viking, 1980.
2. All page references are to the following editions:
   The Lying Days. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1953.
   Occasion for Loving. New York: Viking, 1960.
   The Late Bourgeois World. New York: Viking, 1966.
   Burger's Daughter. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1980.

3. *Nadine Gordimer.* New York: Twayne, 1974, p. 94.
4. *The Lying Days,* op. cit. p. 109.
5. *Occasion for Loving,* op. cit. p. 42.
6. Ibid. p. 62.
7. Ibid. p. 257.
8. *The Late Bourgeois World,* op. cit. p. 6.
9. Ibid. p. 44.
10. Ibid. p. 75.
11. Ibid. p. 40.
12. *Nadine Gordimer.* Modern African Writers. London: Evans Brothers, 1978, p. 131.
13. Michael Wade, *Nadine Gordimer,* ibid. p. 6.
14. *The Lying Days,* ibid. p. 258.
15. There is, however, a mood of humour, defiance, and gaiety infusing the final chapters dealing with Rosa and Marisa's incarceration. The reader is reminded of the lines in Yeats's poem 'Lapis Lazuli':

    All perform their tragic play,
    There struts Hamlet, there is Lear,
    That's Ophelia, that Cordelia;
    Yet they, should the last scene be there,
    The great stage curtain about to drop,
    If worthy their prominent part in the play,
    Do not break up their lines to weep.
    They know that Hamlet and Lear are gay;
    Gaiety transfiguring all that dread.

16. *Burger's Daughter,* op. cit. p. 27.
17. Ibid. p. 185.
18. *The Late Bourgeois World,* op. cit. p. 77.
19. Ibid. p. 120.
20. *Occasion for Loving,* op. cit. pp. 106–7.
21. *The Late Bourgeois World,* op. cit. p. 71.
22. Ibid. pp. 61–4.
23. *Burger's Daughter,* op. cit. pp. 123–4.

THE EAST GRIQUALAND LAND ISSUE: CONFLICTING CLAIMS IN APARTHEID SOCIETY

by CHRISTOPHER MERRETT

The Committee of Inquiry into the Possible Incorporation of East Griqualand into Natal was appointed by the Cape and Natal Provincial Administrations and sat in 1976 under the chairmanship of M. T. Steyn. It had as a brief a recommendation on the administrative future of that area known as East Griqualand, the magisterial district of Mount Currie and a remnant of Matatiele under the control of Cape Province. The 'independence' of Transkei in October 1976 would effectively isolate East Griqualand from its Cape links (Figure 1), giving the area a common boundary only with Transkei, Lesotho and Natal. The Committee was faced with two direct options: continued control from Cape Town, or incorporation into Natal; though there was a third, to which it addressed itself only indirectly: absorption into Transkei.

The case for incorporation into Natal, which was eventually recommended by the Committee and implemented on 1 April 1978, centred on economic linkages which had already developed. The contiguity of Natal and East Griqualand and the distance of less than 200 km from Pietermaritzburg to Kokstad make these understandable. The extension of the boundary of the Cape Province northwards along the east coast of South Africa had been largely a function of geopolitical conflicts of the late nineteenth century. Under the pre-1976 arrangements, East Griqualand was removed from some of the Province's administrative functions by great distances. For example, regional court cases were administered from Pietermaritzburg, although other cases were heard in Queenstown, Aliwal North or as far away as Grahamstown (Steyn 1977: 95–97). The controlling authority for the Black population, the Eastern Cape Bantu Affairs Administration Board, was housed in Queenstown (Steyn 1977: 108–109). Economic imperatives acted in a reverse direction. Agricultural products, mainly milk, cheese and meat, found a market in Pietermaritzburg and the East Griqualand Farmers Union was affiliated to the Natal Agricultural Union. Veterinary and agricultural extension services were supplied from Pietermaritzburg (Steyn 1977: 113). The Committee found a need for vigorous conservation policies in East Griqualand and stressed that the Natal Parks Board, with its experience in the Berg area, was the logical agent.

Figure 2 shows the extent to which both road and rail links emphasize the Natal connection, although two main roads lead southwards into Transkei. Steyn's recommendations stressed the

perceived need for routes independent of possible Transkei control. In the case of roads the route from Swartberg to Underberg was suggested for improvement and by late 1982 this road, R394, was being metalled at what will be a total cost of R25 million by 1985 (Natal Witness 29 December 1982: 3). Steyn also mentioned a new railway to connect Swartberg and Underberg (Steyn 1977:118). Existing rail links centre on the Pietermaritzburg–Franklin line with its feeders to the railheads at Kokstad and Matatiele. Given geographical and communications factors, in a commercial sense East Griqualand had become closely linked to

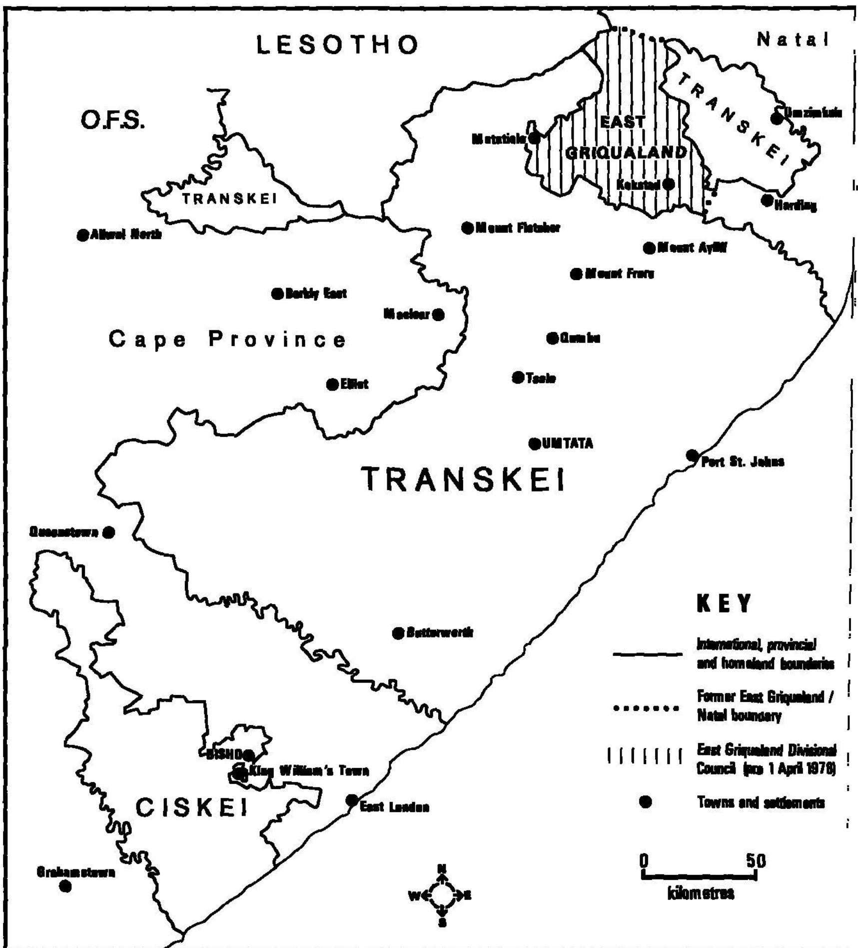

Fig. 1 East Griqualand in its South African setting

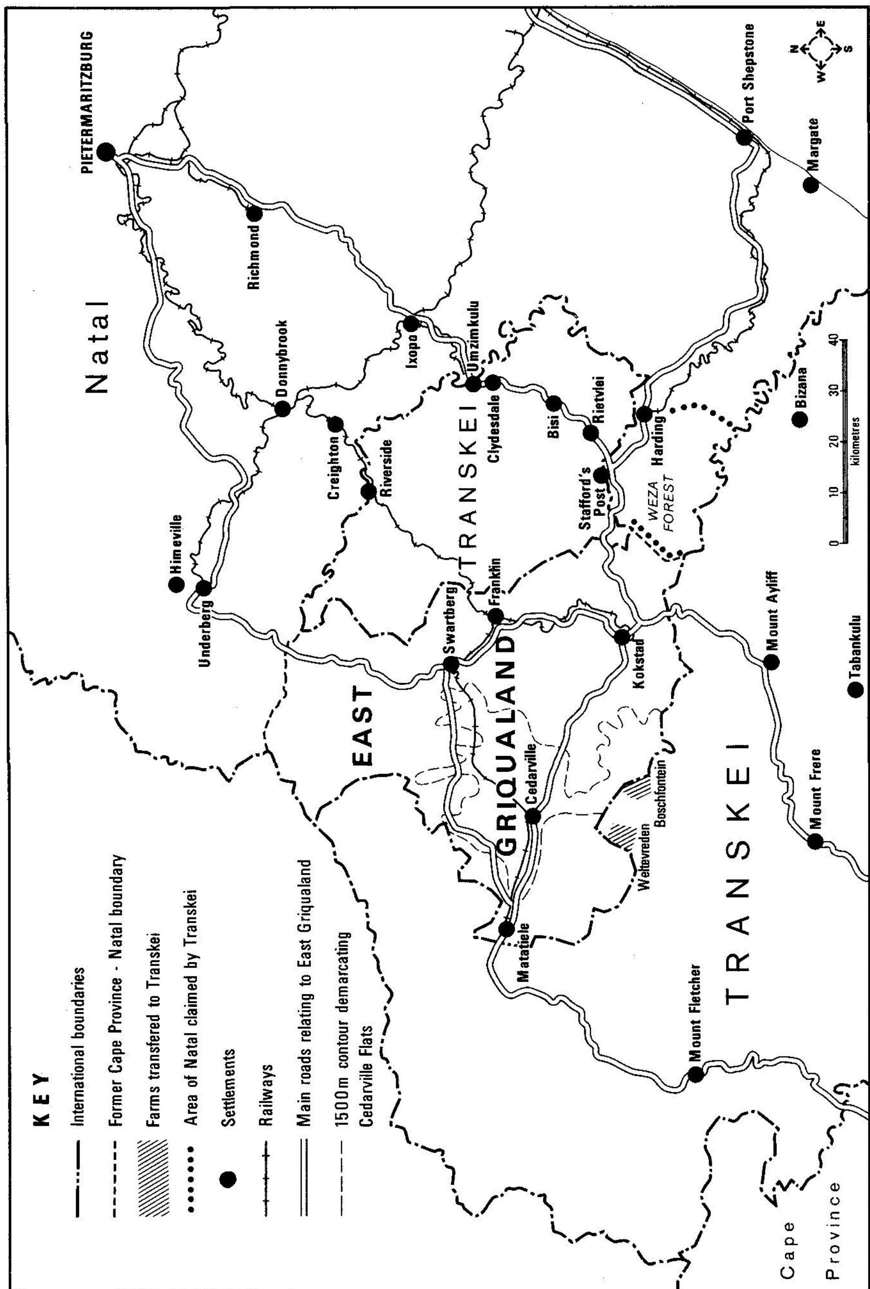

Fig. 2 East Griqualand in its regional setting

Natal by 1976, with a focus upon Pietermaritzburg. Many commercial and financial concerns treated East Griqualand as part of Natal and Steyn could thus say, 'It appears very evident, therefore, that almost all the commercial links in East Griqualand are already with Natal. . .' (Steyn 1977: 121).

Objections to incorporation, which tended to fly in the face of geographic and economic reality, centred on the Griqua community, which had arrived in the area from 1861 onwards. Between two and three thousand Griqua with 20 000 cattle had come from Philippolis and by 1872 had founded the town of Kokstad. The Griqua divided the area into 3 000-acre farms and established Black locations. East Griqualand constituted a semi-independent state, though its people were considered subjects by the British. The state was powerful enough at its zenith to harbour designs on the areas later known as Maclear, Mount Frere, Mount Fletcher and Mount Ayliff (Steyn 1977: 33). In 1874, the Cape, fearing Natal expansion, annexed East Griqualand as part of its policy of bringing settled conditions to the trans-Kei lands. Legal annexation was not completed until 1877. The Cape tended to administer East Griqualand as an area distinct from the Colony, for example, ruling by proclamation. Links with Natal were deliberately weakened: a customs post at Umzimkulu symbolized the new arrangement (Steyn 1977: 53).

An influx of Whites and the vulnerable status of land held under individual title led to rapid land alienation such that by 1879, when the area was incorporated into the Cape Colony, the Griqua had lost 50% of their farms (Steyn 1977: 52) and were experiencing a decline in socio-economic status. By 1905 only 10 Griqua farms remained (Steyn 1977: 61) while the original cadastral survey had shown 503 farms. The railway link established after the Great War (and extended in 1924 to Kokstad and Matatiele) tied the area into the wealthy White farming economy. Land alienation had reached such an extent by 1918 that an abortive trek was made to Touwsrivier. In the 1920s, though, a number of farms, for example Eastland, Dawn and Dawn Annexe, reverted to Griqua ownership.

By the close of the century East Griqualand was considered to include a wide area covering the magisterial districts of Maclear, Mount Fletcher, Tsolo, Qumbu, Mount Frere and Umzimkulu. However, in 1963 self government for Transkei resulted in East Griqualand contracting to Mount Currie and the eastern portion of Matatiele, to create the East Griqualand Divisional Council. The possibility then became apparent that Griqua settlements at Rietvlei and Clydesdale in the Umzimkulu district would be stranded in Transkei. Griqua identity in the recent past had been represented by the Pioneer Council (Steyn 1977: 68) which in

1974 suggested the establishment of a rural settlement focusing on Bultfontein in the Mount Currie district, an area of excessive land fragmentation, overstocking and soil erosion.

The 1970 census had enumerated only 589 Griquas but the community itself claimed 5 171, including 235 at Rietvlei, based on membership of the Griqua Independent Church. The Steyn Committee took the view that a Griqua community had little meaning in the 1970s and tended to subsume it under the general description 'Coloured'. Furthermore, while changes of provincial boundary in South Africa require the agreement of the administrations concerned, Steyn suggested that this did not invest local groups with any right to veto such a transfer. The events of 1874 had amounted to *force majeur* and legal annexation in 1879 conferred no rights on the Griqua, nor obligations on the Cape, to maintain the status quo.

Griqua fears of incorporation into Natal revolved around two factors: absorption into an English-speaking province; and worries about commercial competition from 'Indians'. The entrepreneurial success of the latter had not presented itself as a problem previously since 'Indians' had been prevented from settling in East Griqualand since 1904 (Steyn 1977: 61). Steyn recommended that this ban remain, as it had in the case of Utrecht, Vryheid and Paulpietersburg on their incorporation into Natal in 1903. It is evident that by 1976 the strength of the Griquas as a pressure group was not sufficient to withstand economic and indeed spatial realities, even by invoking the time-honoured South African predilection for reserving specific areas for given 'racial groups'. On this occasion, administrative and economic expedience replaced the demands of a local group.

An alternative possibility, virtually ignored by Steyn, was that of adding East Griqualand to Transkei. The Transkei claim is one of several such demands for peripheral areas which have thus far been met only by farm transfers to regularize boundaries. (For example, the Boschfontein and Weltevreden areas comprising four farms were given to Transkei in 1976.) Transkei invokes historical factors which precede the Griqua arrival. In 1844 the British acquiesced in the founding of a Pondo treaty state ruled by Faku, occupying all the land between the Umzimkulu and Umtata rivers, from the Drakensberg to the sea. This was seen as securing the Natal border (Cragg 1975: 150). It is a matter of contention how effectively Faku controlled the Berg foothills, known as Nomansland, where he is reputed to have told Uys he would assent to a buffer state between Zulu and Pondo (Steyn 1977: 14). Faku's control over this sparsely settled area, which suffers from environmental extremes, was probably tenuous, although it was used for grazing purposes (Saunders 1974: 7). (One may speculate

on the alternative history of the area had Britain annexed it in response to continued Sotho claims from 1859 onwards, adding the region to a greater Basutoland rather than being administered from Cape Town.) In 1866 Faku also ceded a coastal strip between the Umtamvuna and Umzimkulu rivers, known as Alfred County, to Natal (Ross 1976: 41). However, like Umzimkulu, much of East Griqualand (especially to the west in the Mount Fletcher area) had never been farmed by anyone but Blacks, mainly Sotho, Hlubi and Tlokwa (Ross 1976: 43), although the East Griqualand Divisional Council as constituted in 1976 reflected nineteenth-century land alienation similar to that of Maclear and Elliot.

Further justification for the transfer of East Griqualand to Transkei could be seen in the isolation of Umzimkulu and its implicit communications problems (Pienaar 1979: 237), with the main connecting road passing through both the Harding and Kokstad areas (see Figure 2). In this connection it is relevant to note long-standing Transkei claims to Harding, particularly the Weza Forest area. Matanzima felt his case reinforced by the fact that East Griqualand had been administered as part of Transkei until 1963 (Thomas 1978: 14). By 1976 Matanzima feared that the transfer of East Griqualand to Natal would eventually result in its inclusion in KwaZulu (*Relations between South Africa and Transkei* 1978: 46), some of whose many parcels of land abut Transkei.

Transkei has good reason to claim more land. The Status of Transkei Act (1976) placed mandatory citizenship on all Xhosa and some Sotho speakers originating from the Transkei area. Apart from the moral question of deprivation of South African citizenship, there remains the fact that of a *de jure* population of 4 157 269 (1980 estimate) (*Survey of Race Relations* 1981: 288), 1 665 192 are permanently resident outside Transkei. Over 40% of Transkeians are permanently attached to an area outside the confines of the homeland. Yet all could technically be expelled to Transkei, an area with a population density of 73,6/km^2 in 1970, four times the average for South Africa. Transkei's 42 240 km^2 constitute only 3,5% of the area of the Republic, but already accommodate 11,5% of South Africa's Black population (Stultz 1980: 17). Transkei's land resources are limited in quality and quantity (a function of environmental factors), land tenure practices rooted in political vested interests, and the inevitable inability of an economically peripheral area to generate employment opportunities other than agricultural. In 1976 there were only 50 000 wage-earning jobs in Transkei (Stultz 1980: 33). In spite of favourable climatic conditions and 23% of South Africa's runoff, steepness of slope, poor transport structure and remoteness re-

duce the available dry farming land to 20,9% of the total area (Lemon 1975: 11). It has been estimated (Cave 1976: 3) that of Transkei's 3,9 million ha, 75% are hilly or mountainous and only 11% flat or undulating. An adequate average rainfall, with more than 75% of Transkei receiving 760 mm, is obscured by years of great variability. For example, the drought years of 1967 to 1969 resulted in maize yields of only one bag per hectare, half of the normal yield. 79% of the economically active are working in agriculture (Cave 1976: 5), which is characterized by maize monoculture. Industrial development has been limited to the town of Butterworth and the doubtful benefits of border industry have not been available since the nearest industrial node, East London, is 60 km from Kei Bridge. The present land tenure system underpins the power of the chiefs (Streek and Wicksteed 1981: 30) who have obtained a more politico-bureaucratic role than Nguni tradition suggests (Stultz 1980: 50–51), and provide the ruling elite with a power base. The concept of independent farmers working freehold land is neither politically expedient, nor economically feasible, given that the best educated and most progressive of the labour force become migrant workers.

The Transkei claim was nevertheless rejected for two reasons. Firstly, East Griqualand is an area of high pastoral potential, given efficient husbandry. With an area of 3 823 km^2 and a population of 43 178, 5 284 of them 'White', it contains 508 farms, the two municipalities of Kokstad and Matatiele, and the small service centres of Cedarville, Franklin and Swartberg. As has already been described, its transport infrastructure, comprising the rail link to Natal and 870 km of roads, has locked the region firmly into the hinterland of Natal. Basically East Griqualand is an extension of the Natal Midlands, occupying terraces of the Drakensberg range cut by the Cedarville Flats. It is well watered, although prone to summer drought and low winter temperatures, a region of highveld sourveld with mixed grassveld at lower altitudes. Drastic though the actions of the South African government have been in altering the political map of the Republic, alterations have not been noted for their economic munificence.

Secondly, such a transfer would have destroyed the foundation of separate development as enshrined in the 1936 Bantu Trust and Land Act, which removed limited franchise rights from Black South Africans and added to the scheduled 9,19 million hectares of the 1913 Natives Land Act another 6,21 million hectares of released land. Together, these inalienable lands account for 13,7% of the area of South Africa. This land division has remained a rigid tenet of apartheid policy and transfers of land have been of a compensatory nature or used to regularize boundaries within the as yet untransferred quota of the 1936 Act. In spite of academic

suggestions (e.g. the 1955 Tomlinson Commission) that the homelands be developed as economic entities, and more recent rumours stemming from the Central Consolidation Committee in 1979 (*Survey of Race Relations* 1979: 303) concerning a joint venture area around East London to be shared by Transkei, Ciskei and 'White' South Africa, and the transfer to Transkei of part of East Griqualand for consolidation purposes, there has been none of the wholesale transfer of 'White' land to Black homelands which a radical solution to the East Griqualand question would have implied. Indeed the political and economic needs of a White-dominated South Africa suggest the very opposite.

The geographical manifestations of apartheid include the drawing of boundaries around reserves, now called 'independent states', across which labour flows are regulated, and within which economic conditions are such as to assure the economic heartland of a ready supply of migrant workers (Meer 1976: 19). The labour reserve concept is implicit also in the 'constellation of states' idea (Smith 1977: 261). In these circumstances it makes no sense, political or economic, to increase the size of the homelands at the expense of 'White' South Africa. It is possible to categorize types of space in South Africa (Smith 1974: 42): racially integrated economic space; and segregated socio-political space, of which Transkei is an obvious example. The homelands are the areas of greatest deprivation in South Africa, measured by any of the criteria of social welfare: wage levels; life expectancy; infant mortality; educational facilities; pensions; housing; electoral participation; environmental quality. South Africa's racial income distribution shows a Gini coefficient of 55,9, abnormally high and hardly changed since the 1930s. It can be stated convincingly that: 'the well-being of Blacks is held below the position that might be attained in a normal free-market economy, by discriminatory laws and practices relating to job reservation, wage differentials, limitations on unionization of labour, unequal expenditures, and so on.' (Smith 1977: 252). One of the discriminatory practices concerns the rigid control of land ownership, a push factor involved in the migrant labour system. Concurrently the homelands in their role as rural ghettos act as safety valves or dumping grounds for discarded 'labour units', within the legality of the citizenship laws. The labour force is thus likely to be more docile given its new 'foreign' status, and South Africa externalizes its welfare obligations by endorsing out the unwanted (Wolpe 1975: 248). The extended family of the homeland exercises a social security function at no cost to South Africa, absorbing a centripetally displaced unemployment factor.

'Independence tends to legitimize and thereby permanently fix territorial boundaries, as confirmed by the failure thus far of

Transkei's efforts since independence to engage Pretoria on the question of additional land. The time for boundary adjustments clearly is before independence . . .' (Stultz 1980: 136). Independence has thus made permanent for Transkei an inequitable division of resources. The distribution is codified in terms of land allocation, but implies, of course, wider issues such as the division of high quality farmland, industry, and communications infrastructure. In this context the findings of the Steyn Committee were a foregone conclusion.

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NOTE: The use of race classification terminology and the term 'independence' does not imply acceptance of the concepts they represent by the writer. It is, unfortunately, impossible to describe the contemporary South African condition without their use.

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CORRESPONDENCE

A FEW ADDITIONAL (FRENCH) THOUGHTS ON THOMAS BECKET

The Editors,
Theoria.

I was very interested to read M.G. Spencer's *The Transformation of Thomas Becket* in the May 1982 issue of *Theoria.* May I be permitted to offer a few comments sparked off by this stimulating article, and which I trust will be relevant. My credentials are not those of a specialist historian, but rather derive from my literary interest in French historical drama of the 20th century, which led me to make a critical study of Jean Anouilh's use (and misuse!) of historical data for his play *Becket* (1959). Essentially the dramatist's sources are French.

It may be of interest to mention that besides the various *Vitae* of Becket, Benoît de Peterborough's *Passion of Saint Thomas* and the *Quadrilogus* of 1198/99 which was rather a hotchpotch of history and legend, there exists a most important document, one of the very first *Vitae*, written in French (which was, in itself, a novelty, since the other biographies were written either in English or in Latin) by Guernes de Pont Saint-Maixence between 1172 and 1174, therefore very soon indeed after the murder in Canterbury Cathedral in December 1170.[1] In fact, this work was completed just after Henry II had gone to Canterbury to do his penance on the 12th of July 1174. (Guernes describes the king's painful experience when he had to endure some 235-odd strokes of the 'discipline', i.e. birch, at the hands of the Canterbury chapter of monks.)[2] Admittedly Guernes, as well as any other historiographer of the period, can be suspected of some bias, as he wished to defend the Church and therefore favoured Becket against the King, on the whole, although he can be quite scathing about Becket occasionally. In any case, he also had to keep a reasonable balance in his interpretation, since the king was still very much alive and in power in 1174. Above all, one ought to commend Guernes for his original initiative: instead of relying on hearsay, which the other writers of *Vitae* mostly did, Guernes set out to do a veritable chronicler's job, by visiting Canterbury and all the other monasteries and places where Becket had stayed in England and also in France during his six-year exile, in order to gain first-hand, varied and authentic information from visual, oral and written testimonies about his subject. Only when he had painstakingly gathered his material did he settle down to write his

'sermo' from his 'journalist's' notes, as 'scientifically' as circumstances and conditions of the period permitted. It is interesting to note that it was this 'poem' which was to be read constantly as the accepted version in front of Becket's tomb (until its desecration by Henry VIII), with pilgrims assembled there. Of course, this in itself could be somewhat suspicious, as it smacks of official (royal) propaganda, since the king had repented and acknowledged Becket's martyrdom and sainthood for political reasons. However, it is more reassuring, although no absolute guarantee, to learn that Becket's sister, Abbess of a convent at Barking from 1173, gave Guernes her approval for his *Vita* of her brother. Guernes' document is extraordinarily lively, candidly amusing, surprisingly modern in outlook at times, in short a little gem of reporting.

As M.G. Spencer mentions in his article, Becket seems to have faded from the scene, or rather perhaps become integrated, as a legend, to the fabulous stories of the Crusades after the Middle Ages. One has to wait for 'the 19th century for the revival of interest in medieval studies',[3] in France as well as in England. In France, the renewed interest in the historical events, and even more so, in the historical *characters* of those far-away times came in the wake of the Romantic movement, which endowed the Middle Ages with both an awesome and a mythical aura. Thus it was that two great French historians, Michelet and Thierry, turned their passionate attention towards that period. In Thierry's *History of the Middle-Ages*,[4] a whole volume is devoted to the *History of the Conquest of England by the Normans*,[5] in which a great place is reserved to the study of Becket and Henry's complex relationship. In passing, it is a great pity that Thierry either was not aware of or chose to ignore Guernes' lively account, for he could not then have made of Becket a Saxon, hence the champion of the Saxon serfs oppressed by the conquering Normans, as Guernes states quite plainly: 'Saint Thomas, the archbishop, of whom I preach, was born, in truth, in the city of London, born and bred of well-to-do people of the city; and his father was called Gilebert Becket and his mother Mahalt (Mahaut or Mathilda), and he was born of an honorable family'.[6] Be that as it may, Thierry was indeed so obsessed by the premise that: '. . . the cause which [Becket] had defended with admirable constancy was that . . . of the weak against the strong, and specially that of the people vanquished by the Norman conquest',[7] that he favoured the legendary and oh! so romantic aspects of Becket's story. According to this dubious account, and by some fanciful twist due no doubt to the impact of the Crusades, Becket's father Gilebert was made out to be a wealthy Saxon, who had been converted to Christianity, had gone to the Holy Land, had been taken prisoner

and had fallen in love with a Saracen girl. The latter had helped him to escape from her father's gaol, and later on, had travelled all on her own, although she was with child (Thomas), to join and marry her beloved in London. To support his contention, Thierry in his index of 'pièces justificatives' n°3,[8] quotes a ballad of the 13th century, found in Jamieson's *Popular Songs* where the lady is called Susie Pye, supposedly renamed Lady Jane by Gilebert Becket, when she became his wife and a convert! The very preposterousness of such a tale should have been enough to make Thierry realize that this story is not only apocryphal but pure invention on the part of some street balladeer! Indeed it constitutes but very flimsy evidence for a serious historian, who is thereby discredited. One should add in mitigation that, in a later edition of Thierry's works, the editor states that when Thierry wrote his book, very few positive notions were known about Becket, and that the historian had thought he could 'infer' Becket's Saxon origin from the available data, but when further discoveries contradicting his interpretation were made, 'Monsieur Thierry was very shaken'! (Renan, in the edition of 1866).[9]

At this juncture, it may be of interest to recall that it was this highly fanciful version of Thierry's which Anouilh followed blindly, because he found in the Saxon Becket the pivot of his own dramatic interpretation, together with the other theme of the love/hate relationship between Henry and Becket. Regarding the latter, as M.G. Spencer says, the early phase of their friendship 'merits deep treatment, because here are to be found the crucial origins of the quarrel',[10] and I would surmise that, when Becket provoked his King on the many occasions recalled in the article, he was perhaps searching less for the Honour of God than for the Honour of Becket. I am inclined to think that the dramatist Anouilh comes near to the truth of the matter when he suggests that the explanation of his death lies in his life-story, that of the evolution of a rather brash, fun-loving, irreverent youth who became first an authoritarian chancellor and eventually a mature, fearless, stubborn Defender of the Faith; in the process, he had methodically divested himself of his earthly and mundane trappings detrimental to his honour, to embrace only the Honour of God which he identified with his own. But, in truth, he sought his real integrity of spirit and soul, during his life-long agonizing quest for the whole self, in the defence of the cause of reconciliation (in God and Man) of two racial enemies, the lowly Saxons and the Normans; the ultimate sacrifice on such an altar was Death, and the glorification was Becket's. His inner motives will remain forever bewilderingly ambiguous and manifold, 'whether ambition, love of resistance, or stubbornness in his determinations, or conviction of religious duty, or a dim and ill-defined

consciousness of national hostility, or a mixture of all those passions and dispositions'.[11] By joining the cause of the oppressed at the time, through his steadfast refusal to bend when faced with difficult choices, Becket raised 'this great intrigue to a higher rank than the ordinary disputes between the Crown and the Mitre'.[12] At all events, it was Thierry's biased version which suited Anouilh, as he could re-vamp it to fit the modern trend of championing the underdog, thus perpetuating yet once more the confusing jigsaw puzzle of the Becket story.

However, it is a sobering thought to ponder the caution issued to those who read too much in historical events and/or exploit them for their own particular end, in an article entitled 'The Suspect Martyr' which appeared in *The Spectator* of December 1970, on the occasion of the 800th anniversary of Becket's murder. The writer, Patrick O'Donovan, after discussing the various interpretations of the Becket story/legend concludes: 'He (Becket) may [now] owe his popularity to the fact that he was in opposition. He was someone with whom the poor and the ordinary could identify, magnificent and yet on their side against the arbitrary power of the State. But all this is dangerous, putting a modern gloss on the past.'[13]

For eight centuries, at the hands of a host of commentators of conflicting convictions and bias, Becket has suffered again and again a thousand deaths and risen in as many resurrections, which is surely the hallmark of the great mythical figures of all times. Indeed, in myths, the human relationships do not appear only in their abstract, but in their vital, concrete manifestations, universally understandable through the streamlined features of an individual 'persona'.

Thus History and its many interpretative forms — albeit erroneous sometimes — bridge the gap between Time and Abstract Credibility by fulfilling man's yearning for perennity. Despite all its vicissitudes, Becket's story will remain one of those enduring myths, whose essential worth is, in R.G. Collingwood's words, 'inferential and mediate'.[14]

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NOTES

1. Guernes de Pont Saint-Maixence. *La Vie de Saint Thomas le Martyr*, ed. E. Walberg, Lund, London-Paris, 1922.
2. Ibid., vv. 6004, 6026, 6030.
3. Spencer, M.G., in *Theoria*, May 1982, pp. 25–32.

4. Thierry, A. *Oeuvres complètes* (4 vol.) Paris 1866 (vol. III. L'histoire de la conquête de l'Angleterre par les Normands).
5. Ibid. English translation of above vol. III published separately in 2 vol. *History of the conquest of England by the Normans*, Dent & Co, London (undated).
6. Guernes, op. cit. vv. 166–170.
7. Thierry, op. cit. (English version) p. 404.
8. Ibid. Appendix in the Paris edition of 1866.
9. Ibid. cf note n°1 in book IX, Renan's (ed.) comment.
10. Spencer, op. cit. p. 27.
11. Thierry, op. cit. p. 93.
12. Ibid.
13. O'Donovan, P. 'The Suspect Martyr' in the *Spectator*, December 1970.
14. Collingwood, R.G. *The Idea of History*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1945.