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The new formula for the State's subsidy to South African universities has occasioned much controversy. One aspect which concerns us directly is the list of officially approved periodicals, publication in which will earn subsidies for the authors' universities — a practice which gives its own peculiar edge to the concept of the material production and reproduction of culture.

Theoria is included in this list, for what that's worth. Nevertheless, while our contributors cannot ignore the financial implications, we hope that the bank and capital of scholarship and discussion built up by *Theoria* over the years will continue to be its primary attraction for authors and readers alike.

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SOCIETY, SPACE AND PERSPECTIVE

by MARK ORKIN

A crucial problem in the sociology of art or literature is the relation between text and context. It has been much more widely debated for works of literature than art. Notable contributions to the latter, such as Jean Duvignaud's *Sociology of Art*,[1] have taken a while to be translated into English; others, such as Pierre Francastel's,[2] are still only available in French.

In this paper I shall address the problem in a limited fashion, by using insights from Francastel to take issue with Duvignaud in respect of just one intriguing example: when and how did the technique of perspective representation come to be used in painting? The example has two advantages. In addressing conspicuous developments in the form of painterly presentations, I can avoid arcane iconographic disputes about content, in which — as a sociologist already straying dangerously far from his territory — I am conspicuously ill-schooled; and I can allude to illustrative instances which readers in various disciplines will either be familiar with, or can easily find in any standard one-volume history of Western art. Indeed, my treatment of the example will mainly occur on the level of the empirical and particular, in the hope of plausibly exemplifying rather than competing with Raymond Williams's[3] suggestive but programmatic and obscure pronouncement that cultural phenomena are to be accounted for by a 'process of setting limits and exerting pressures, whether by some external force or the internal laws of a particular development'.

My argument, in outline, will be this. Artists in classical times were quite evidently already attempting to convey the appearance of depth in their murals. But did they actually master the controlled use of perspective technique, or was this only to be achieved during the Renaissance? The question is crucial to the logic of a sociological account of how the discovery came about. For if the Greeks did master perspective, the sociologist must look to relevant similarities between the two eras; if they did not, to relevant differences. Duvignaud[4] takes the former view. I would defend the latter. My considerations are in three parts. In the first I assess evidence from the history of Greek art and geometry, which suggests that perspective could not have been mastered by the Greeks. What, then, made the discovery possible for the first time in fifteenth century Italy? In the second part I trace the necessary developments within artistic, philosophic and scientific traditions; and in the third I outline some of the socio-economic changes which enabled them. The outcome was a unique historical conjuncture, ripe for Brunelleschi's seminal contribution.

Let us turn, then, to the preliminary question, which shapes the rest of the investigation. Is the use of perspective by Renaissance painters anticipated in the work of their Greek and Roman precursors? More precisely, the issue at stake is whether vase and mural painters of antiquity understood and applied the technique of focussed plane perspective, in which an object must be painted as if viewed through a flat, transparent projection plane from a single point of sight, so that all receding orthogonals converge to one vanishing point.

The weight of expert opinion is quite divided. We may, for convenience, label the two camps. The 'nays', e.g. Carter,[5] Panofsky,[6] and Gombrich,[7] argue that antiquity did not in this sense master perspective. Against them, the 'ayes' include Gioseffi[8] and Duvignaud.[9] Two writers specifically concerned with antique artefacts, Richter[10] and White,[11] likewise take opposing sides.

The archaeological evidence initially overwhelmingly favoured the 'nays'. It is quite evident from vase decorations that after 500 B.C. the Greeks quickly mastered the foreshortening of limbs, and were experimenting with receding planes. But the convergence was unsystematic, and never applied to the picture as a whole. The receding parallel edges of a table in the foreground, say, were mostly drawn parallel or divergent.

But some Roman murals dating from about 80–30 B.C., more recently uncovered in Pompeii, Boscoreale and Rome, seem to be fairly clear examples of plane, central convergence, i.e. perspective. It is argued by the 'ayes' that these murals 'could only be achieved by artists who were thoroughly conversant with the *laws of perspective*'. They imply 'a thorough grasp of *theory* of perspective based on the concept of projection'.[12] However, the phrases I have italicized go well beyond the evidence on three counts. Firstly the pictures display irregularities, although it must be allowed that these could be slips of the hand. But, secondly, as even White[13] concedes, there is no archaeological evidence of a tradition of experiment into central convergence. In fact the available material points the other way: the perspective panel at Boscoreale is flanked by other panels which have vanishing points all over the place. Thirdly, if indeed the technique was being deliberately applied in these instances, there is no evidence of the technique catching on, as it did like wildfire in the Renaissance.

These three objections could, of course, all be countered by some future archaeological findings. So the dispute shifts its ground. White[14] argues further for the 'ayes' that independent evidence of a developed tradition is found in Vitruvius (1, 2, 2), who wrote, in about 24 B.C.:

> Item scaenographia est frontis et laterum abscendentium adumbratio ad circinique centrum omnium linearum responsus.[15]

If the 'ayes' are right, 'scaenographia' is here used to refer to the technique of perspective, since the Latin word 'perspectiva' was used, up until the Renaissance, to refer to geometrical optics. They further want to argue that 'responsus', which usually means 'correspondence', here means 'exact convergence', even though Vitruvius could have used the more usual Latin 'concursus' for the latter. They point also to Lucretius (*De Rerum Natura*, IV) who describes how a colonnade may appear to 'vanish into the obscure apex of a cone': 'donec in obscurum coni conduxit acumen'.[16] This does indeed suggest that the convergence of receding parallel lines was envisaged by philosophers as a phenomenon of the appearance of single or unified objects. But the key omission is that none of the passages envisages a common vanishing point for the receding edges of parallel but discrete objects scattered about in a picture. It is this which is essential to the controlled use of focussed plane convergence. The three murals must thus be regarded as isolated and fortuitous occurrences of the construction. This position will later be supported by the finding that, by contrast with the Renaissance, artists would have had little reason to be acquainted with such philosophy anyway, being practitioners of more menial occupation altogether.

In fact, there are other texts that work directly in favour of the 'nays'. According to Euclid, in his *Optics* of the 3rd century B.C., the apparent size of a given object diminishes with distance in proportion to the decreasing angle it subtends at the eye; and his eighth theorem quite explicitly states that 'the apparent difference between equal magnitudes seen from unequal distances is by no means proportional to these distances.'[17] His optics, then, considered our sphere of vision literally as a sphere. As regards the physiology of perception, this is nearly correct. But what is at issue is the geometry of perspective representation, the central projection of objects onto a plane mural. And for this, Euclid's results must be neatly reversed! The size of the plane projected image *is* in inverse proportion to the distance of the object from the eye, and *not* in direct proportion to the angle which the object subtends at the eye. Gioseffi, batting for the 'ayes', revealingly gets this quite wrong.[18] He equates the two kinds of ratio, and claims that Euclid did so. Thus, if indeed the painters of the three murals did use any 'laws of perspective', they cannot have been based on Euclid.

The other major theory of optics at the time was that of the Epicureans. It held that objects threw off thin films which impinged on the eye with infinite speed — so that objects had to be whatever size they appeared. Any artist appealing to this theory could certainly not co-ordinate the relative size of the representations of objects in the way perspective demands. We may thus conclude

with the 'nays' that 'The first complete rationalisation of the picture space seems to have been the achievement of the 15th century'.[19]

That achievement was made early in the century by Brunelleschi. It was a painting, seen from within a doorway of the Florence cathedral, of the nearby octagonal baptistery. The painting was reflected in a mirror, and the reflection viewed through a peephole drilled in the painting itself, at the vanishing point. Thus, nearly all the requirements of strict perspective viewing were met at a stroke. As Manetti records with wonder, it 'made the scene absolutely real'.[20] The reversed outline of the painting had probably been traced directly on burnished metal. But Manetti and also Vasari record a later panel, to be viewed from the front, suggesting that Brunelleschi had mastered the geometrical projection techniques whose optical equivalents had been exploited by his earlier device. The later panel, they tell us, showed the Piazza della Signoria, where a regular pavement grid of coloured sandstone allowed the artist to flaunt his virtuosity.

It is likely that the means of spatial planning afforded by perspective was what enabled Brunelleschi to master the unprecedented problem of putting a dome on the vast cathedral then being completed in Florence. His novel solution — which was to manage without scaffolding by having the builders work within two concentric vaults — demanded an advance conception of the final result, whereas previous construction methods had been piecemeal. Evidently, 'un plan est, pour lui, non seulement une surface mais un "lieu", où les différentes distances peuvent être projetées et rassemblées'.[21]

The first fresco to use focussed perspective was painted by Masaccio, a friend of Brunelleschi's, in 1422. Alberti wrote his treatise on perspective, *Della Pittura*, in 1436. This develops the theoretical ideas behind the graphical construction. In it, the 'emancipation' of space is complete. It 'now contains the objects by which it was formerly created'.[22] Orthogonals converge with explicit accuracy, and the spacing of transversals diminishes at the appropriate rate. Clearly, 'the space is theoretically measurable in relation to the observer ... and one may say that it has material form'.[23]

* * *

How may one account for this concept of a material or substantial space and its representation by perspective technique? Williams's warning cited above is that one must expect to allow appreciable independence to the unfolding developments within the particular cultural traditions; even though these might be on the one hand constrained by the limits of what at any moment is technically possible or theoretically conceivable, and on the other hand shaped

by what is socially desired. I trace the one facet of the process in this section, in identifying the comparatively autonomous artistic, scientific and philosophical developments leading up to perspective; and the other facet in the last section, where I point to some likely socio-economic pressures and the ways in which they may have interacted with the traditions.

Alberti vividly defined a plane perspective projection as an 'intersegazione della pirimide visiva'.[24] Artistic practice provided the 'intersegazione', optical theory the rest. I take the former, the developments in artistic practice, first. The usual picture surface of classical murals was indeed a window onto the world, but not one filled with a substantial space. The depth cues are unco-ordinated, as I have argued; and the background, if it is depicted at all, is treated as a vague ambient medium. 'Space and things do not coalesce into a unified whole, nor does the space seem to extend beyond our range of vision'.[25] The Renaissance window, by comparison, opened onto a space that was infinite, as suggested by the vanishing point at which parallels meet, and continuous, i.e. homogeneously specificable. So stability and coherence seem to prevail. The window in effect is filled with what Alberti called a 'vetro tralucente': a transparent but firm plane, 'thus able to operate, for the first time in history, as a genuine projection plane'.[26]

Between these two epochs under discussion, the Middle Ages evidenced an apparent regression in the way figures were depicted. It transpires, however, that this process was indispensable in the development towards representing figures and objects as being concretely located in space. The process was split into two aspects: the one transformed the neutral classical surface into a material component of the picture, and latently divided it into the basic planes of tridimensional space; the other restored the 'transparent' picture plane. The influence in the first case was architectural. For a century and a half before the Trecento, France was the cultural centre of Europe. The current of influence ran from North to South, conveying the Romanesque conception of 'mass consolidation'.[27] Reliefs and jamb statues appear to grow out of the material of the walls and embrasures, whereas for all but low reliefs the classical procedure had been to insert separate metopes of foreign material. The counterpart effect in pictorial art was 'surface consolidation': the picture plane was regarded as a material surface, out of which two-dimensional representations were picked by firm contours: for the first time in the history of European art, there was consubstantiality between the solid objects and their environment. With the advent of Gothic architecture sculpted relief figures were partly detached from the backdrop, but remained confined to the horizontal width of the slab, as if on a small stage. The counterpart

in pictorial art was the development of the rudimentary planes of stage space. The backdrop is distinguished by being patterned, like a tapestry. But contrary to what one tends to read into it now, High Gothic art remained unalterably non-perspective. The figures are arranged on a horizontal line, not a receding plane.

On the other side of the Alps however, the Gothic style did not catch on completely. Italian craftsmen looked to Constantinople as much as to Paris, and had upheld the tradition of church murals and mosaics which had gone out of fashion in France. So the Italian painter was also heir to Byzantine and early Christian painting, which had retained modelling in light and shade, overlapping, and rudimentary foreshortening. The tradition was rejuvenated by contact with the Byzantine tradition in Jerusalem during the Crusades of the 12th century. The outcome was a balance of influence in Italy, which began to fuse in the Trecento in the empirical attempts at perspective made by Duccio in Siena and Giotto in Florence. The classical ways of representing depth, present or revived in 'the substantial and inconsistent, but, after all, "perspective" representations' of the South, were 'reorganised and disciplined according to the principles exemplified by such emphatically non-perspective . . . but perfectly solid and coherent Gothic reliefs'.[28] Of course, this was only a beginning. The inside of a building was still shown from without, as a box with its front removed. Or arcades were used to define the front 'transparent' surface. It was actually left to Jan van Eyck in the North to remove this frame altogether, as in the painting *Arnolfini and his bride* (1434). The space the artist captures is triumphantly reflected in the famous convex mirror.

We can now turn to the second aspect of Alberti's definition of perspective projection: the scientific tradition behind the 'pirimida visiva'. Francastel explains that classical optics had been developed and then re-transmitted by the Arabs, as confirmed by the artist Ghiberti's frequent quotations of Alhazen.[29] Yet, as Francastel suggests, 'en soi aucune géométrie ne conditionne nécessairement aucun art . . .; ce qui est révolutionnaire, c'est l'interpretation plastique des formules'.[30] So there must have been something else at work: 'La clef de la nouvelle peinture, c'est le souci d'analyser expérimentalement . . . le monde'.[31] This was a new relation between man and the world. Brunelleschi's device for depicting the baptistery, for example, was quite clearly an instrument of research. This was much more novel than it now seems. After all, in the Church of the time, male chicks were still known (quite independently of any observations in the coop) to come from the rounder shape of egg, because both the circle and the male were divinely accredited forms.

The new experimental mood was increasingly reflected in

philosophy. Late Scholasticism, which developed out of Ockham's teaching and flourished in the latter Trecento, was empirical and subjectivist.[32] In focussing directly on the multiplicity of individual things and psychological processes, the Quattrocento enquirer no longer sees a logical contradiction in the idea of an infinite physical universe, in which parallels could seem to converge to a point. And in trusting to his 'intuitus' for access to the empirical world, 'il place des dieux, les hommes et les choses dans le mème univers'.[33] But nature itself is still divine; made to be measured by man, to be sure, but not made to man's measure. So while this is indeed an anthropocentric conception of the universe, it is not yet — contrary to Barbu's suggestion[34] — the peculiarly modern one in which man considers the universe 'comme formé d'objects à plier à sa volonté';[35] in short, the constructed universe of the post-Kuhnian[36] view of science.

* * *

These accounts of how the requisite artistic and scientific traditions unfolded have so far only incidentally invoked the external, socio-economic facet of our model of cultural productions. We may find help in this respect in Jean Duvignaud's *Sociology of Art*, provided that it is applied carefully and selectively. For Duvignaud explicitly employs Georges Gurvitch's typology of societies and their characteristic kinds of knowledge, in applying which Gurvitch agrees with the 'ayes' that the Greeks had arrived at perspective from their concepts of geometry.

If one were to grant it this premise, that the Greeks and the Renaissance alike had a theoretical command of perspective, Gurvitch's typology would present an alluring symmetry. It divides knowledge into various types, and the types into various forms. It then argues that in both the Greek city states and in the Renaissance towns perceptual knowledge of the external world was dominant over other types of knowledge, inter alia, commonsense knowledge and knowledge of others; and that the same forms of perceptual knowledge were emphasised at both times, i.e., the rational, conceptual and collective forms were emphasised over their mystical, empirical and individual counterparts. In feudal society, by contrast, perceptual knowledge was the least prevalent type, as evidenced by 'the absence of perspective in art, . . . the phantasmagoric way in which the universe and the earth were represented, and also in the popular saying that "all roads lead to Rome".'[37] The emphasised forms of feudal perceptual knowledge were mystical and individual rather than rational and conceptual.

I have argued, however, that the premise of these elegant antitheses is false. In part one we saw, on art-historical and geometrical grounds, how unlikely it is that the Greeks knew how to

use perspective. In part two I outlined the sequences of cultural innovation which culminated in an 'intuition sensible entièrement nouvelle . . . une sort de *vision* commune à Brunelleschi, à Donatello, parfois à Ghiberti . . . la plus grande revolution qui se puisse à cette époque concevoir . . .'.[38]

Because he draws on Gurvitch, Duvignaud is led to underestimate this qualitative change in the respective spatial conceptions of the Renaissance and antiquity. For he only offers an explanation of the common fecundity of the two eras, i.e. the emergence of the city as a new form of social organisation. This is a valuable insight into what they did have in common, an emphasis on *realism* in art. But in considering *perspective* I have suggested that one needs to know why the two city situations differ. Duvignaud's conflation of the two is surprising from someone who criticises the imposing of 'coherence and unity on forms which are susceptible of very different meanings'.[39]

In his account the free city-state, set in a contradictory context of patriarchal or feudal relations as the case may be, had 'all the impact of a scandal or a rape in the eyes of the world in which it appeared'. In classical Greece and in Italy of the Trecento, the concentration of activities into small areas profoundly changed people's way of life: 'violence was replaced by judicial procedure, war by trade, and domination by diplomacy'. The response of Greek art to this dialectic was a demand, according to Duvignaud, for freedom in art instead of mere imitation. Man was for the first time aware of the relation between imagination and reality. Likewise, in Venice and Florence, 'the intense concentration which predominated in the city gave to plastic representation the power of becoming the methodical exploration of a certain space'.[40] Since both were times of great upheaval, the idea of the artist as an atypical individual, torn between rejecting and affirming the prevailing norms and function of art, provides the mediating link.

Apropos *realism*, the comparison is suggestive. But it not only conceals the distinctions that the history of perspective requires; it is also, I shall show, wrong in essential details. On my account, so far, one may say that in both cases cities will have provided the demographic incentive to think and organise and to be able to plan in terms of space. But only in the Italian cities of the early Renaissance did the necessary balance between Byzantine and Gothic art coincide with the new experimental attitude of polymaths like Brunelleschi, and the revival of classical science via the Arabs, to make perspective possible. It remains to seek the mediating factors that turned the possibility into a likelihood. They derive from the novel circumstances in which the new Renaissance cities had developed.

The system of social relations in the Middle Ages hinged on the

fixed and hereditary status of the feudal nobility. The system was decentralised, being replicated in innumerable rural, self-subsistent principalities. These coalesced in Northern Italy around a handful of developing major cities, each a centre for the buying and selling of commodities and labour by money payments. The drive for this development was the rapid extension of trade, made possible by available surplus. This in turn was due 'to the effect of the technical improvements introduced in the later Middle Ages, particularly those in agriculture and cloth-making'.[41] Until the navigation successes at the end of the 15th century, Asiatic trade was land-based and flowed to Europe through the cities of North Italy. This saw the rise of a class of wealthy, independent and self-reliant merchants, on whose support the ruling princes depended — if they were not in any case ennobled merchants, like the Medicis. The rejection by this class of the feudal ideas of hierarchy and ordination implied the more secular attitude I have already noted, and a conception of man as an 'acteur efficace sur la scène du monde'.[42] This concern with the life of the present was reflected in a shift of the function, if not yet the content, of art, away from religious expression. Part of the new point of art was the intrinsic pleasure of viewing it, of savouring, say, the way the composition of a painting expressed the 'Rule of Three' (of which, more below). But it was only a small part. As Baxandall puts it, 'The 15th century was a period of bespoke painting'.[43] The merchant was a man of means; he intended, and was intended, to show it.

At a crude level, a patron could literally commission a mural at ten lire per square *pede*, to advertise his wealth. At a more sophisticated level, there developed the pleasure in owning privately what was publicly esteemed. Indeed, many private commissions were explicitly for public display, like frescoes in a church, and were actually expected of a wealthy man as a repayment to society — a combination of tithe and tax. As informant there is one Giovanni Rucellai, a Florentine merchant who owned works by Lippi, Verocchio and Ucello; a sort of Guggenheim collection of the art of his time. He aptly summarised the mixed motives of his commissions: they 'serve the glory of God, the honour of the city and the commemoration of myself'.[44]

For such reasons, then, a lot of money was available for art. In Greece, by contrast, the high costs of production had meant that the city-state was the only large-scale patron of art, and competition for work was secure. Moreover, any specialised expertise, especially that which involved dirtying one's hands, offended against the heroic ideal of kalokagathia — the all-round exercise of the faculties in conditions of leisure. The plastic or graphic artist was unlike the poet in that 'from the beginning to the end of the Graeco-Roman epoch . . . (he) remains a banausic artisan who, with his wages, gets

all that he is entitled to'.[45] In the Middle Ages, such artists were freemen, but of humble origin. In mediaeval Florence, for example, painters were subordinate members of the major guild of doctors and spicemakers, and sculptors languished in the minor guild of masons and bricklayers. But by the time of the Renaissance artists had risen to serving directly the new merchant princes.

Moreover, given the values of their employers, money payments constituted not only a means to art, but a social recognition of the artist's role in providing it. This new status of the artist was confirmed in other ways. Hauser observes that Brunelleschi was the first artist to have his life written by a contemporary; 'such a distinction had previously been confined to princes, heroes, and saints'.[46] The self-esteem of artists rose accordingly. Ghiberti was the first artist to write his autobiography, the signing of work became common, and artists took to painting themselves in as bystanders in group portraits of their patrons. At this stage of the Renaissance, then, Duvignaud's vision of the artist as an anomic individual, at odds with the prevailing evaluation of art and the artistic, hardly applies.

In fact, if Hauser is right, the vision does not apply at all during the Renaissance proper. Leonardo became the favourite friend of the King of France; Raphael led the life of a grand seigneur; Titian was made a hereditary member of the court of Emperor Charles V. The Renaissance evidently recognised and exalted the achievement of the artistic genius. It even began to see genius as the capacity to achieve, and a taste developed for the drawing or sketch, as evidence of a process of creation which was never wholly realizable. And so it 'never made (the) one step from the inability of the genius to communicate himself fully, to the misunderstood genius'[47] that is Duvignaud's prototype. Only towards the end of Michelangelo's life, when he rejected payment and refused honours, do we find a first example of Duvignaud's image of the artist as lonely and demonically impelled.

There is a final strand to be described in our mesh of mediations which links several of the others in an intriguing way. Patrons were not necessarily philistines. The artist's manipulation of implicit space, for example in the disposition of figures in groups, would draw a ready and explicit response from an audience whose livelihood derived from the facility with which they estimated the amount of grain in a mound on the quay. Both parties would be skilled in gauging irregular volumes by reducing them to underlying simple forms like cones or oblongs. Moreover, the merchants would probably have learnt their skills from texts of geometry and arithmetic written by the artists themselves. The stock geometrical examples, as in Piero della Francesco's *De Abaco*, involved the same paved floors, columns and cloth pavilions as feature in the

stereotype Renaissance annunciations. The calculation of arithmetic proportion was done by 'the Rule of Three', also called the Merchant's Key. Examples were often expressed not in linear dimensions, but in commercially relevant units of weight. The mental equipment is the same for calculating a deal as for assessing the pictorial play of intervals and the internal proportions of a human figure, or—as in Leonardo's famous drawing in the collection at Windsor—the features of the face. 'There is a continuity between the mathematical skills used by commercial people and those used by the painter to produce the pictorial proportionality and lucid solidity that strike us as so remarkable now.'[48]

In other words, painters were rewarded for their 'conspicuous skill'[49] in perspective. Both noun and adjective are important in recalling the injunction of Williams concerning the relation between text and context, with which we have been concerned. I have argued that the innovations within artistic, philosophic and scientific traditions presumed by the development of the technique of perspective were enabled and directed, rather than predictably determined, by changing economic and social conditions. So long as the intricacy of this relation is recognised, to set Brunelleschi and his contemporaries in their context is only to enhance their creative achievement.

* * *

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NOTES

1. Jean Duvignaud, *The Sociology of Art* (London: Paladin, 1972).
2. Pierre Francastel, *Peinture et Société* (Lyon: Audin Editeur, 1951); and *Études de Sociologie de l'Art* (Paris: Denoël/Gauthier, 1970).
3. Raymond Williams, 'Base and superstructure in Marxist cultural theory', *New Left Review*, 82 (1973), p. 4.
4. Duvignaud, *op. cit.*, pp. 109–13.
5. B.A.R. Carter, s.v. 'Perspective', in H. Osborne (ed.), *Oxford Companion to Art* (Oxford University Press, 1970), p. 885.
6. Erwin Panofsky, *Renaissance and Renascences in Western Art* (Copenhagen: Russak, 1960), p. 122 and n. 1.
7. Ernst Gombrich, 'Visual discovery through art' (1965), in James Hogg (ed.), *Psychology and the Visual Arts* (Penguin, 1969), pp. 134–5.
8. D. Gioseffi, s.v. 'Perspective', in *Encyclopedia of World Art* (New York: 1966), Vol. XI, cols. 196–7.
9. Duvignaud, *loc. cit.*
10. Gisela Richter, *Perspective in Greek and Roman Art* (London: Phaidon, n.d.), pp. 55–61.
11. John White, *The Birth and Rebirth of Pictorial Space* (London: Faber, 1967).
12. Gioseffi, *op. cit.*, cols. 197–8.
13. White, *op. cit.*, p. 262.
14. Quoted in White, *op. cit.*, p. 251.

15. 'In like manner, scenography is the sketching of the front end and of the receding sides, and the correspondence of all lines to the centre of a circle'.
16. Quoted in Richter, *op. cit.*, p. 59.
17. Quoted in Panofsky, *op. cit.*, p. 128.
18. Gioseffi, *op. cit.*, col. 196.
19. Carter, *loc. cit.*
20. Quoted in Carter, *op. cit.*, pp. 859–60.
21. 'A plan is for him, not only a surface but a "place" in which various distances can be projected and organised'. Francastel, 'Naissance d'un espace: myths et géométrie au Quattrocento' (1951, Ch. 2 in his *Études de Sociologie de l'Art, op. cit.*, p. 148.
22. White, *op. cit.*, p. 123.
23. Francastel, 'Naissance d'un espace', *loc. cit.*, p. 179.
24. 'A cross-section of the optical cone'. Quoted in Panofsky, *op. cit.*, p. 129. Alberti is saying, in effect, that if one imagines taut threads stretching from the vertices of the object being depicted to the pupil of the artist's eye, the points at which the threads would pass through a plane surface perpendicular to the artist's line of sight define the perspective projection of the object on the surface. The experiment is beautifully depicted in a woodcut by Dürer, reproduced for example in Ernst Gombrich, *The Story of Art* (London: Phaidon, 1966), p. 264. 25.
25. Panofsky, *op. cit.*, p. 121.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 138.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 131.
28. *Ibid.*, pp. 136–7.
29. See also Panofsky, *op. cit.*, p. 138.
30. 'A geometry does not of itself necessarily determine a corresponding art form; what is revolutionary is the translation of equations into material form'. Francastel, 'Naissance d'un espace', *loc. cit.*, p. 151.
31. 'The key to the new approach to painting is a concern to analyse the world experimentally'. *Ib.*, p. 144.
32. Erwin Panofsky, *Gothic Architecture and Scholasticism* (New York: Meridian, 1960).
33. '... he locates gods, people and things in the same universe'. Francastel, 'Naissance d'un espace', *loc. cit.*, p. 176.
34. Zevedei Barbu, *Problems of Historical Psychology* (New York: Grove Press, 1960), p. 25.
35. '... as consisting of objects subject to his will'. Francastel, 'Naissance d'un espace', *loc. cit.*, p. 176.
36. T.S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 2nd edn (University of Chicago Press, 1970).
37. Georges Gurvitch, *The Social Frameworks of Knowledge* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1971), p. 170.
38. . . . an entirely novel mode of perception . . . a sort of *vision* shared by Brunelleschi, Donatello, occasionally Ghiberti . . . the greatest imaginable revolution of the time'. Francastel, 'Naissance d'un espace', *loc. cit.*, p. 145.
39. Duvignaud, *op. cit.*, p. 117.
40. *Ibid.*, pp. 109–10 and p. 113.
41. J.D. Bernal, *Science in History, Vol. II: The Scientific and Industrial Revolutions* (Penguin, 1969), p. 380.
42. Pierre Francastel, *Peinture et Société* (Lyon: Audin Editeur, 1951), p. 104.
43. Michael Baxandall, *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth Century Italy* (Oxford University Press, 1974), p. 3.
44. *Ibid.*, p. 2.
45. Arnold Hauser, *The Social History of Art* (London: Routledge, 1962), Vol. I, p. 102.
46. *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 58.
47. *Ibid.*, p. 64.
48. Baxandall, *op. cit.*, p. 102.
49. *Ibid.*

WORDSWORTH AND THE IMPAIRED MIND

by F.J. HUGO

The evocation of Lucy's sensitive girlhood in Wordsworth's 'Three years she grew' reminds us of the other poems of the Lucy cycle, except that in this poem she is portrayed growing to 'stately height', without a hint of death becoming an antagonist of her quality of being. In the last stanza the lover quietly accepts the completeness of Lucy's life, and whatever personal grief he may have felt at an earlier stage is not mentioned. The calm view of death is implicit in the theme of oppositional harmony which runs through the poem.

> Myself will to my darling be
> Both law and impulse; and with me
> The girl, in rock and plain,
> In earth and heaven, in glade and bower,
> Shall feel an overseeing power
> To kindle or restrain.

The theme of law and impulse does not remain abstract, since it develops through images which blend various expressions of physical existence. Lucy's speed 'across the lawn' changes into another rhythm, when she 'up the mountain springs', in just the same way as the movement of a fawn would. Later the poem conveys how 'murmuring sound' becomes subtly transformed into an equivalent facial expression.

> The stars of midnight shall be dear
> To her; and she shall lean her ear
> In many a secret place
> Where rivulets dance their wayward round,
> And beauty born of murmuring sound
> Shall pass into her face.

'Three years' may not be abstract, but it is significantly impersonal. The balanced theme of law and impulse is voiced by an overseeing power. The lover speaks only in the last stanza, as if to suggest that his calmness has been achieved by emulating the overseeing view of Nature.

The unified vision established in 'Three years' is philosophical and impersonal and suggests comparison with that attained by Yeats's Chinamen in *Lapis Lazuli*. In his poem *Ruth*, Wordsworth in effect modifies the philosophical vision of 'Three years' (written at about the same time) to take in the personal truth of 'human fears' and the oppositional tensions implied in them. Ruth is a child of the woods and like Lucy responds to both the energy and the calm

of Nature. She lives as a stranger in her father's house: 'her thoughts her own'; but that self-sufficiency is prompted in the first place by her father's neglect, and so Wordsworth from the start indicates a reservation in presenting Ruth's happiness and freedom.

The next section of the poem deals with the young man from 'Georgia's shore', whose life in America seems to have developed and strengthened his boyhood love of Nature. He conveys to Ruth that in the new world her childhood of the woods would be fulfilled in a freer landscape and by closer family ties.

> And then he sometimes interwove
> Fond thoughts about a father's love:
> 'For there', said he, 'one spun
> Around the heart such tender ties,
> That our own children to our eyes
> Are dearer than the sun.

Though this stanza may not quite convince us that the youth is able to speak in 'finest tones', as Wordsworth claims he can, there is no hint of insincerity; and Ruth has sufficient reason to believe that her prospect of joy will become a reality.

> Through dream and vision did she sink,
> Delighted all the while to think
> That on those lonesome floods,
> And green savannahs, she should share
> His board with lawful joy, and bear
> His name in the wild woods.

The phrase 'lawful joy' echoes the balanced theme of law and impulse in 'Three years', yet only to prepare the way for a sceptical variation. Ruth's new husband had found in the wilderness of America a 'kindred impulse' which he had been tempted to regard as an endorsement for his 'impetuous blood'. The expression of the poem (not at all times wholly adequate) gains something in vitality now, perhaps because Wordsworth is moving closer to his chief motive for writing it.

> The wind, the tempest roaring high,
> The tumult of a tropic sky,
> Might well be dangerous food
> For him, a youth to whom was given
> So much of earth — so much heaven,
> And such impetuous blood.
>
> Whatever in those climes he found
> Irregular in sight or sound
> Did to his mind impart

A kindred impulse, seemed allied
To his own powers, and justified
The workings of his heart.

Wordsworth is not conceding that Nature can only make a lady of her own in an English setting: the significant opposition lies not between England and America but between Ruth's husband and the Lucy of 'Three years'. In comparing them we are reminded that the influence of Nature arises from an interchange with the human mind and, therefore, depends finally on personal willingness and responsiveness. In marrying Ruth he consciously chooses to be 'more happily set free' than when he imagined himself 'loose from chains' in America. Wordsworth does not examine the reasons why the husband soon reverts to his lawless life; he is more concerned with the effect on Ruth. She who was half-desolate in childhood is now left completely desolate.

God help thee, Ruth! — Such pains she had,
That she in half a year was mad,
And in prison housed;
And there, with many a doleful song
Made of wild words, her cup of wrong
She fearfully caroused.

Yet sometimes milder hours she knew,
Nor wanted sun, nor rain, nor dew,
Nor pastimes of the May;
— They all were with her in her cell;
And a clear brook with cheerful knell
Did o'er the pebbles play.

The images of nature she enjoys in her milder hours ought not to be regarded as mere consolatory fictions: rather they intimate the approach of some relief from her suffering, and the re-emergence from its source in childhood of the 'master-current of her brain'.

Among the fields she breathed again:
The master-current of her brain
Ran permanent and free;
And, coming to the Banks of Tone,
There did she rest; and dwell alone
Under the greenwood tree.

In other words though Ruth has finally lost the harmony of law and impulse and the corresponding conception of a life of lawful joy, this poem is not wholly a tragic complement to 'Three years'. It may be that we fear the second childhood of madness or senility, especially because it appears to entail the loss of identity; but

Wordsworth suggests in his portrayal of Ruth a saving aspect to those afflictions. If the master-current of Ruth's brain grew out of the creative sequence of childhood experience, then the second childhood of her madness retains at least the primary integrity of her mind. Organic coherence sustains itself at more than one level; and perhaps Ruth's life, regarded as a whole, may be held to represent a retracted, self-conserving form, whereas Lucy's may be held to represent an extended or fulfilled form. Accordingly it may be possible to interpret Ruth, in her madness, as offering a more significant and more illuminating antithetical image to the Lucy of 'Three years' than her husband, through his defection, does.

In *The Thorn* Wordsworth tells another story of a woman who loses her mind, as a consequence of being deserted by the man she loves. Martha Ray is pregnant at the time of the desertion, and the bitter mystery of what happens to her child is the main subject of the poem. We are helped in approaching this issue by a narrator who honestly observes the distinction between what he clearly knows and what he only vaguely guesses. Wordsworth himself suggests that we think of him as a retired sea-captain who has become 'credulous and talkative from indolence'.[1] That comment alerts us to the cautious, literal aspect of the style of the poem but may divert our attention from the, equally significant, cumulative or balladic aspect. For the most part these aspects are interwoven successfully enough for us to adjust to guidance through the poem according to the 'slow faculties' of someone whom Wordsworth further describes as capable of 'deep feeling' and a 'reasonable'[2] degree of imagination. But it must be conceded that at first the exceptional psychological approach Wordsworth adopts for this poem provokes some resistance in us: it takes time to grasp how appropriate the approach is to the nature of the story. In this respect, as in others, *The Thorn* and *Resolution and Independence* are mutually illuminating.

The narrator begins cautiously, keeping to simple elements, a tree, a pond, a hill of moss, which are associated with the story. They seem to have a hypnotic grip on his mind, as though dwelling on their plain actuality helps him to move gradually nearer to the frontier of unknowable things. He reminds us of Lockwood in *Wuthering Heights* who is drawn by fanciful curiosity to the edge of a world which threatens to overpower the capacity of his mind. The narrator of *The Thorn* is not as passive as Lockwood, and we sense in his hesitant repetitions, especially at the beginning of the second stanza, a real attempt to direct his imagination more decisively.

> 'There is a Thorn — it looks so old,
> In truth, you'd find it hard to say
> How it could ever have been young,

It looks so old and grey.
Not higher than a two years' child
It stands erect, this aged Thorn;
No leaves it has, no prickly points;
It is a mass of knotted joints,
A wretched thing forlorn.
It stands erect, and like a stone
With lichens is it overgrown.

II

'Like rock or stone, it is o'ergrown,
With lichens to the very top,
And hung with heavy tufts of moss,
A melancholy crop:
Up from the earth these mosses creep,
And this poor Thorn they clasp it round
So close, you'd say that they are bent
With plan and manifest intent
To drag it to the ground;
And all have joined in one endeavour
To bury this poor Thorn for ever.

Gradually the narrator's imaginative intuitions outdistance his understanding, and he produces the effect of saying more than he knows. This is especially clear when he dwells with appreciative curiosity on the delicate patterning and glowing colours of the hill of moss. He senses that the network, woven as if by 'hand of lady fair', expresses unwavering, devoted love.

'Ah me! what lovely tints are there
Of olive green and scarlet bright,
In spikes, in branches, and in stars,
Green, red, and pearly white!
This heap of earth o'ergrown with moss,
Which close beside the Thorn you see,
So fresh in all its beauteous dyes,
Is like an infant's grave in size,
As like as like can be:
But never, never any where,
An infant's grave was half as fair.

The poem has now moved far enough to make some of the functions of the narrator reasonably plain. The tree, and the other symbols of the poem, emerge naturally and convincingly out of the narrator's present need for them and not as pre-conceived literary devices. They function rather like religious symbols in helping him to approach a truth of experience which would otherwise lie beyond his reach. Meanwhile we as listeners are being prepared by the mediatory character of these symbols for the unfolding of a theme

which will make exceptional demands on our powers of understanding and imagination.

One of these demands appears when the narrator, caught by a storm, runs for shelter only to come face to face with Martha Ray.

'Twas mist and rain, and storm and rain
No screen, no fence could I discover;
And then the wind! in sooth it was
A wind full ten times over.
I looked around, I thought I saw
A jutting crag, — and off I ran,
Head-foremost, through the driving rain,
The shelter of the crag to gain;
And, as I am a man,
Instead of jutting crag I found
A Woman seated on the ground.

'I did not speak — I saw her face;
Her face! — it was enough for me;
I turned about and heard her cry,
"Oh misery! oh misery!"

The narrator runs from one elemental force to be faced with another, more psychologically formidable. The unrestrained violence of the storm directs the narrator's imagination so that he is able to perceive the unrestrained grief in Martha's face. Again one thinks of Lockwood who was terrified by the vision, in or through the window, of Cathy's unending suffering. Another demand made by Wordsworth's poem is hinted at in the image of tenacity and endurance represented by the crag. We are told that Martha is fanatically loyal to the spot marked by the tree and that she visits it in all weathers and in all seasons. The full meaning of that loyalty and tenacity involves an inversion of conventional expectations, which the narrator is not quite capable of making. He gropes in that direction, as we can see from his careful recording of the comments of Wilfred of the glen.

Sad case for such a brain to hold
Communion with a stirring child!
Sad case, as you may think, for one
Who had a brain so wild!
Last Christmas-eve we talked of this,
And grey-haired Wilfred of the glen
Held that unborn infant wrought
About its mother's heart, and brought
Her senses back again:
And, when at last her time drew near,
Her looks were calm, her senses clear.

The narrator gropes towards the possibility that Martha drowned her new-born child in a lucid, not a confused, moment of love. The organic tenacity and consistency of love can only express itself in these circumstances in a tragic, paradoxical form. Our discovery as readers that we need to overleap the imaginative shortfall of the narrator consolidates the tragic paradox that Martha's most extreme moment actually demonstrates the enduring power of love. In the poem discussed earlier, Ruth recovers a version of coherence of being in her second childhood which is not attainable by Martha Ray, yet the bitter persistence of the master-current of love in Martha's life, in its own way, also vindicates the power of organic coherence.

It is more difficult for us to accept a continuity between ourselves and Martha Ray than between ourselves and Ruth, and so Wordsworth employs a narrator in *The Thorn* to help overcome that resistance. It is perhaps still more difficult to accept a continuity between ourselves and Betty Foy's idiot son who not only forgets his errand to fetch the doctor from the town, but also forgets how to get home. Wordsworth adopts a humorous attitude and cheerfully relates the absurdity of Betty Foy's belief in her son's ability to fetch the doctor to help Susan Gale. We tend not to expect any exceptional demands on our imagination, as we accustom ourselves to the sprightly 'John Gilpin' movement of the poem. The humorous mood is sustained through the account of Johnny's setting out but, in unmodified form, only until we come across his ecstatic joy, and we find ourselves strangely touched, as though by childhood memories of intense, elementary experience.

> But when the Pony moved his legs,
> Oh! then for the poor Idiot Boy!
> For joy he cannot hold the bridle,
> For joy his head and heels are idle,
> He's idle all for very joy.

Evidently the humorous mood was not as safe as it appeared, and tends to subvert complacency in a way that echoes the experience of those who seek to patronise Dostoyevsky's Prince Myskin, only to betray themselves into disconcerting self-exposure. Keller, for example, who mockingly believes himself able to exploit the prince's simple-mindedness, is trapped into the exclamation:

> "Well, that's how you stump a fellow completely! Why, Prince, your simplicity and innocence are such as were never heard of in the golden age, and then, all of a sudden, you pierce a fellow through and through, like an arrow with such profound psychological insight.[3]

In Wordsworth's poem the transition to insight is not so sudden:

at this early stage the possibility of a reflection of ourselves in the idiot boy is just beginning to emerge, and through the stanzas that follow a humorous attitude remains uppermost.

> And, while the Pony moves his legs,
> In Johnny's left hand you may see
> The green bough motionless and dead:
> The Moon that shines above his head
> Is not more still and mute than he.
>
> His heart it was so full of glee
> That till full fifty yards were gone,
> He quite forgot his holly-whip,
> And all his skill in horsemanship:
> Oh! happy, happy, happy John.

It is amusing that Johnny's happiness should turn him into a dead object on the horse's back but his stillness, as well as being comic, hints at a mythical correspondence, linking him with the holly branch and the moon. This communal stillness accentuates and reconciles the happiness of Johnny, the greenness of the holly branch and the mute secrecy of the moon.

These mythical images remain suggestively in the background, when Wordsworth turns to another approach to the idiot boy—through maternal sympathy. In Betty's eyes, Johnny's stillness indicates clarity of purpose, something neither comic nor mysterious, and she is proved correct to the extent that he turns right at the first guide-post, as he ought to do. Her confidence seems to be confirmed, when she catches from a distance the burring sound he makes in his happy moods.

> Burr, burr—now Johnny's lips they burr,
> As loud as any mill, or near it;
> Meek as a lamb the Pony moves,
> And Johnny makes the noise he loves,
> And Betty listens, glad to hear it.

The comic quality of the style in no way undermines the happiness of Betty and her Johnny. However, the confidence that in Betty's mind is involved with that happiness proves not to be well-founded; and she soon begins to have serious doubts. For a moment it appeared that the only barrier between the idiot boy and ourselves was our unwillingness to interpret his capacities for rationality with loving-kindness: the hope for rationality (and the approach to Johnny implied in it) fades; but we retain a sympathetic expectancy regarding the outcome of his journey. A premonition grows in our minds, as we recall such things as the suggestive correspondence between Johnny, the holly branch and the moon, that the comic

appearances of his journey may entail a surprising illumination. The way our situation as readers is being carefully poised by Wordsworth becomes perhaps even more evident when we reach Betty's brief exchange with the doctor. We balance Betty's partiality against the doctor's dismissiveness; recognising that, though Johnny may lay claim to wisdom only in some exceptional sense, it is a sense rich in imaginative suggestion.

'Oh Doctor! Doctor! where's my Johnny?
'I'm here, what is't you want with me?
'Oh Sir! you know I'm Betty Foy,
And I have lost my poor dear Boy,
You know him — him you often see;

'He's not as wise as some folks be:
'The devil take his wisdom!' said
The Doctor, looking somewhat grim,
'What, Woman! should I know of him?'
And grumbling, he went back to bed!

In the end it is Betty's maternal anxiety, a more elementary imaginative force than maternal sympathy, which guides us into the speculative region of Johnny's wisdom. While straining her utmost to hear the sound of horse or man, she hears the softest sound of water and even the grass growing. These keen perceptions develop into a synaesthetic consciousness of the spacious nocturnal world around her and, as the drawn-out calls of the owls fuse sound, space and colour in 'the long blue night', Betty's imagination seems to draw closer to the world of her son.

She listens but she cannot hear
The foot of horse, the voice of man;
The streams with softest sound are flowing,
The grass you almost hear it growing,
You hear it now, if e'er you can.

The owlets through the long blue night
Are shouting to each other still:

At last Betty finds her son, sitting quite still on his horse beside the waterfall which seems to have drawn him like a magnet. Her pent-up love and anxiety release a 'torrent's force', as though to balance and neutralise the dangerous power of the waterfall. However, Johnny appears to be perfectly safe.

Who's yon that, near the waterfall,
Which thunders down with headlong force,
Beneath the moon, yet shining fair,

As careless as if nothing were,
Sits upright on a feeding horse?

Near the beginning of the poem, Johnny's still happiness brings him into correspondence with the holly branch and the moon; now his fearlessness brings him into correspondence with the waterfall. If the two instances are compared, then the first seems unobtrusively conveyed whereas the second carries a certain dramatic emphasis. It is helpful at this point to recall from another stage of the poem Betty's anxiety that Johnny might be drawn to 'hunt the moon within the brook' or to 'play with the waterfall'. Now, as the poem approaches its conclusion, that anxiety is fully realised but also surprisingly transcended. Betty has assumed, as adults generally would assume, that Johnny would be drawn by the attraction of the waterfall but would fail to sense its underlying treachery. Yet, as though effortlessly performing an exploit, Johnny yields to the attraction without suffering the fatal consequences foreseen by the rational mind. Johnny, free from the mesmerism of fear, is able to perform the prodigy of balancing serenely on the edge of destruction. As we take in the scene, recognising that though it might seem absurd it is concretely real, the mythical aura which has until now been rather uncertainly associated with Johnny, becomes centralised and stabilised.

The conjunction of Johnny and the waterfall reminds us of a similar dramatic effect in *The Simplon Pass*. In that poem the waterfall is seen as combining within itself the contraries, tumult and peace. They are fused for a moment in a vision transcending the everyday perception of divided reality but which soon yields to 'the giddy prospect of the raving stream'. Johnny in his own peculiar way creates a similar imaginative significance during his poised association with the waterfall, and so anticipates the adult insights of *The Simplon Pass*. He seems to enjoy a pre-rational and strangely relaxed access to the breadth of organic coherence which the adult mind only reaches in exceptional, intense flashes of vision, an access which is expressed in another way in Wordworth's comment in a letter: 'I have often applied to idiots, in my own mind, that sublime expression of Scripture that "their life is hidden with God".'[4]

If we refer back to the organic coherence which Ruth eventually recovers, it appears as a merciful regression to a childhood or infantile stage and implies the deliverance embodied in the interrelation, and possible interchange, of various levels of consciousness. The reductive yet conserving notion of organic coherence expressed in *Ruth* contrasts with the expansive conception in *The Idiot Boy*, which not only links Johnny in elemental partnership with the still holly branch and moon, but also with the dangerously active waterfall.

David B. Pirie in his lively account of the poem[5] suggests that Johnny represents the lost imagination of childhood and, accordingly, he sees *The Idiot Boy* as subordinated to the pessimistic notion of human development expressed in the *Immortality Ode*: '... the rest of us, unlike Johnny, are pushed irresistibly towards a bleakly emptied world where "nothing can bring back the hour/ Of splendour in the grass, of glory in the flower".' To my mind, such comprehensive authority ought not to be attributed to the *Ode*: it expresses a platonic melancholy which emerged some time after *The Idiot Boy* was written, and which conflicts with the animating motive and, one might add, the gleeful manner of the earlier poem. The subtle evocation of childhood memory in the course of the poem is one of the chief means by which we are enabled to feel ourselves in sympathy with Johnny; but his experience not only echoes childhood, it also points forward to the exploration of the challenges of adult perception. Perhaps Wordsworth's conception in 1798 of Johnny's relaxed relationship with the waterfall prepared the way for the later confrontation, in his own adult person, of the intense opposition of tumult and peace in *The Simplon Pass*.

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NOTES

1. Note to *The Thorn* printed in *The Poetical Works of Wordsworth* ed. Thomas Huchinson, rev. Ernest de Selincourt, O.U.P., 1959.
2. Ibid.
3. Dostoyevsky *The Idiot* translated by David Magarshack, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1958.
4. *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth: The Early Years 1787–1805*, ed. Ernest de Selincourt, rev. Chester L. Shaver, O.U.P., 1967.
5. David B. Pirie *William Wordsworth: The Poetry of Grandeur and Tenderness*, Methuen, London and New York, 1982.

'SOUTH AFRICA'S BEST FRIEND': SIR BARTLE FRERE AT THE CAPE, 1877–80*

by FRANK EMERY

Historians have shown strong feelings over Sir Bartle Frere (1815–84) because of his role in precipitating the Zulu War of 1879 and thus in destroying the Zulu kingdom: one historian recently criticised him as 'a sanctimonious, pig-headed, officious, self-righteous, ambitious villain'.[1] Professor John Benyon is nearer the mark, in fewer words, when he calls Frere 'a formidable, Machiavellian personality', full of fatal over-confidence, too used to having his own way and to ignoring the magnitude of obstacles confronting him.[2] The facts of what happened during Frere's governorship of Cape Colony between 1877 and 1880 are not in dispute, any more than the policies he followed simultaneously as High Commissioner for South Africa. They have not been looked at, however, from the perspective of Frere's statesmanship as it evolved prior to 1877.

It was natural that he should draw analogies from his long experience of administration in India between 1834 and 1866. His high reputation as a proconsul of empire rested four-square on his achievements in the Deccan, in Sind, as Governor of Bombay (1862–66), and as a member of the Supreme Council of India at Calcutta. Indeed it is difficult to see how far Frere's creation of a confederation in South Africa, had it come to pass, would have obscured his Indian reputation. Not even all the controversy and opprobrium that flew about him when he failed to engineer a confederation could detract from that. His obituary in *The Times* (30 May 1884) said he would be permanently remembered as an Anglo-Indian statesman and administrator of the highest ability. History has decreed otherwise, but one must argue that his Indian and African spheres of action should not be studied in isolation, one from the other.

For instance, Professor Colin Webb sees the challenge facing Frere when he reached South Africa as 'the crowning moment of his career'.[3] But for the previous ten years, since leaving India, he had not enjoyed executive office. In 1866 he relinquished his governorship of Bombay under a cloud when the bank of Bombay failed disastrously after the slump in cotton prices. All he could do at home was to keep himself in the public eye, and then in November 1872 make the most of a new opening when he headed the special mission to Zanzibar, to persuade the Sultan to stop the

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* This paper is based on a lecture given on 6 March 1984, when the author was Visiting Lecturer in the Department of Historical Studies, University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg.

export of slaves from his domains. This was achieved successfully in 1873, and permitted Frere to translate himself to the East African environment, a natural transition because Zanzibar, together with the Persian Gulf and Aden, had been under his authority as part of the Bombay government.

Thus his appointment to the Cape in 1877 gave him a second start at his interrupted career in imperial affairs, at the age of sixty-two: little wonder he was tempted to work hastily. Nor had he relinquished his interests in India, more specifically in British policy towards Afghanistan. He was asked by Lord Salisbury, while accompanying the Prince of Wales on his state visit to India, to report on frontier affairs and British relations with the Emir of Afghanistan. This took Frere to Peshawar, whence he wrote at length to Salisbury in February 1876. In these and other published letters he encouraged the forward policy that culminated in the Afghan War of 1878, sharing views with Lord Lytton, whom he met at Suez in 1876 as the new Viceroy made his way out to India. Did Frere think that, in a less imperfect world, he could have become Viceroy of India, and would such thoughts incline him all the more to hasty over-confidence at the Cape? At any rate this field of enquiry should be explored before any final assessment of Frere's individual judgements on the road to war in 1878, and certainly before suborning his actions to any specific set of economic imperatives.

Initially it is plain that from first to last Frere's career in India was suffused with acceptance of the influence of capitalist enterprise. This is also clear in the circumstances by which he transferred his interests to Africa. Evidence of his opinions comes to light from his association with the Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures, and Commerce. For example, he was the chairman of a conference in 1870 to discuss the influence of the Suez Canal on trade with India. He claimed it would be commercially competitive with the Cape route; it would 'give an increased sense of the value of time' and lead to a search for even more direct routes; it would bring India into closer contact with British influence in such matters as improved systems of agriculture; and he thought the canal should be under international control in peace and in war.[4] Frere was also in the chair in 1871 when a Parsee businessman, D. Naoriji, addressed the Society on the commerce of India, arguing that under the terms of trade India was paying a large money balance to Britain each year, presumably for the privilege of good government. Frere defended Naoriji against his critics, pleading for open debate of how this problem should be resolved under a proposed Board of Trade for India.[5] Again, in 1873 he spoke at the first meeting of the Society's Indian Section, his careful analysis of how to combat famine in Bengal later appearing as a short book.[6]

More to the point here, Frere also delivered an inaugural address to the African Section of the society when it was established in January 1874. He spoke with the confidence of a man who had recently negotiated the anti-slaving treaty at Zanzibar, and as a friend of Livingstone, news of whose death had just reached London. He argued the case for a more active exploitation of African resources. The external trade of the entire continent, he said, was less than that of a third-rate European power. This had not always been the case: Africa enjoyed higher status in the ancient world, and its resources were vast. He explained this paradox as 'a defect of political cohesion': the elements of African civilisation, however separately promising, 'do not combine in the crystallised forms of national existence'. In turn he interpreted the deficiency in terms of various causes, including 'ethnology', pleading for research into the numbers, languages and history of black Africans 'to illustrate the real capabilities of the negro race, and the best mode of developing and increasing them'. Nevertheless, he refers openly to the negro population whose labour formed 'a mine of wealth to the employer'.[7]

In Frere's view, the best prospects for trading lay on the west and east coasts of the equatorial region, and particularly so far as Britain was concerned in a southern temperate belt reaching to the Cape. Here he saw much potential because of its fertility, climate and accessibility to the world's markets. Other powerful inducements to growth were its mineral riches in diamonds, gold, and (above all else for Frere) the coalfields that stretched southwards to Natal, which could supply fuel for steamships in the Indian Ocean. All these attractions acted together to encourage a new process of what Frere termed 'welding together the loose elements of a great South African Empire'.[8] We see here, as early as January 1874, Frere going on public record in favour of a policy of confederation, which was to be championed by Lord Carnarvon, the Colonial Secretary who entered office in 1874. Frere seems to have been on stage from the outset of what was to prove for him the tragedy of attempted confederation in South Africa.

Nevertheless, in 1874 Frere was also adamant that he was not urging an indefinite extension of British influence through 'equivocal and entangling engagements' in Africa. All he sought was the moral obligation of government to protect British subjects going about their business in distant places, whether they were Hindu Banians trading on the Zanzibar coast or those many Englishmen 'pervading every accessible part of Africa'. Where they worked among savage nations, the right way to protect them was by diplomatic persuasion of the native authority through consular agents, always backed by a determination to use force when all else failed. Frere believed that the Ashanti campaign then being fought

under Wolseley in West Africa could have been avoided if his style of penetrative influence had been followed there. Likewise he castigated the Portuguese for allowing the slave-trade and corruption to go unchecked in their colonies. They should grant to their subjects, 'black or white, the same freedom which the constitution of Portugal secures to all native-born Portuguese'. Norman Etherington has shown that hostility to the Portuguese in Mozambique was an essential tactic for any programme designed to extend British commerce along the East African coast, especially in the shipment of freed slaves as native labour to Natal and elsewhere in South Africa.[9] Frere was well aware of this objective.

It was not necessarily the over-riding objective with him in 1874, however, as he itemized the 'raw produce' of all kinds for which there was an expanding demand from developed nations. He made no bones about it: the advance-guard of exploitation would be the explorer, 'the pioneer of the merchant and the missionary'. Frere's commitment to the principle is symbolised by his friendship with Livingstone, the missionary-explorer, and with the shipping magnate William Mackinnon (1823–93). His association with Mackinnon also reflects his own transition from Indian to African affairs. They met in Calcutta in 1862, and the following year Frere granted him a government subsidy for his British India Steam Navigation Company, trading around India and with Zanzibar. 'Look out for a little Scotsman called Mackinnon', said Frere to the political resident in the Persian gulf, 'he is the mainspring of all the British enterprise there'. By 1872 he had the government contract for a mail service between Zanzibar and Aden, and a member of Frere's mission was urging him to develop trade along the East Coast. This he did, although John Kirk advised him in November 1873 that there was little future in extending his shipping line to Natal. By 1878 he was negotiating a huge concession with the Sultan of Zanzibar, and by 1888 he was chairman of the Imperial British East Africa Company. The chartered company failed badly, but it represents a transitional kind of indirect imperialism, prior to formal colonial rule which came when the British government bought it out in 1895.[10]

Immediately before Frere went to South Africa his association with Mackinnon was particularly close. They both attended, in September 1876, an international conference convened by King Leopold at Brussels, as members of the British delegation. From this emerged the International African Association, with Leopold as its president, to co-ordinate the European nations in following up the explorers' work in Africa with a civilizing humanitarian effort. Frere supported the formation of a British national committee, recruited largely from the ranks of the Royal Geographical Society, of which he was president in 1873–74. Mackinnon and other

businessmen in the Glasgow Chamber of Commerce hoped to form a Scottish branch of the committee, and in November 1876 Frere attended their meetings, where discussion included Mackinnon's project for a commercial route striking from the East African coast (possibly at Dar-es-Salaam) inland to the region of the Great Lakes.[11]

Frere and his family disembarked at Cape Town on 31 March 1877, and a note of almost carefree optimism runs through their early letters to a close friend, Dr. Henry Acland. He was the Oxford pioneer of public health, and from the outset Frere wanted him to go out to Cape Town to initiate improvements: to stir up its hospitals, to assess its climatic attraction for people escaping an English winter, and to bring out a young physician who would open a sanatorium. Acland was also bombarded with more-or-less scientific questions by Mary Frere, the governor's talented daughter. She drew from the environment a range of queries—'Why do people get old so fast? Why does the climate suit feeble people better than the strong? Why do bulldogs lose their fierceness here?' She also tells Acland 'We are not all black people, though some of the most interesting of us are so'.[12] Despite these temptations and being informed that the voyage by Union or Castle steamship cost only a penny a mile ('a return ticket allows you six months' absence from England for £54'), the Aclands did not go to Cape Town.

One reason was Frere's involvement in a series of crises that took him to the distant frontiers of the colony. Mary's letters illuminate these events from within the family circle, especially as she felt Acland's presence would prevent her father from ruining his health by over-work. An air of disenchantment gradually creeps in. By November 1877 she complains that Frere, then at Kingwilliamstown, was burdened with anxiety over the Ninth Frontier War then being waged in the Transkei against the Gcaleka and Ngqika people. 'He writes that he has been very hard at work, more than even in the days of the Mutiny', a comparison with his prestigious role in India during the upheavals of 1857–58. Nor was he helped by differences between British India and the Cape: 'The whole country is disorganized as to internal local administration, and needs much patience and re-arrangement'.[13]

She returns to this theme with greater emphasis in July 1878, by which time Frere had closed the eastern frontier of the colony. But the effort had taken its toll of an ageing man in a hurry: 'He is *very worn* with the last eighteen months' work, and as bent as ever on knocking nails into his coffin'. She implies that Frere had felt isolated: 'Think of having had no contemporary to measure your mind against for eighteen months, no one who understands *our home language*, no one who generally speaking cares more for ideas

than for bread and butter'. Lady Frere paints a similar picture on 8 December 1878, just before the notorious ultimatum was made known to the Zulu. Again it was a case of the Natalians failing to comprehend the potential threat of the armed might of Cetshwayo kaMpande, the Zulu king, until Frere's sharper perceptions pointed it out for all to see. More imperial troops were needed, to forestall the risk of disaster if Cetshwayo attacked the colony: 'at home you seem to forget Natal is a Crown Colony, and has as much right to be defended from horrors as the Isle of Wight'.[14]

After the catastrophic opening phase of the Zulu War, followed by Frere's official censure on 19 March 1879, his wife's bitter reaction can be imagined. She angrily denounced critics who saw him as 'a very bad villain in a novel. they seem really to have believed two years in South Africa completely changed his character'. He would get no credit for dealing with the volatile Boers at Pretoria, nor for what he had done on the Cape frontier, 'which he acknowledged to me was harder work than any he went through in his life, not excepting the Indian Mutiny'.[15] Lady Frere may not have realised that his Indian experience had figured far more directly and positively in the war-making policies on which he was engaged in the closing months of 1878.

The key issue here was the Afghan crisis. Frere's views on Britain's political relations with Afghanistan commanded a great deal of respect in official circles and with the general public. He set them out in detail in a long letter to Sir John Kaye, written in 1874. He believed that 'masterly inactivity' should be replaced by firm action to check Russian advances in Central Asia. Referring to himself as an old Indian Warden of the Marches, his chief recommendation was the establishment of an intelligence network of British officers in Afghanistan, and, if possible, a preponderating influence within the Emir's government. He went on to explain how the process of annexation might proceed. 'If the frontier commander is ambitious, his uncivilized neighbours give him constant and apparently justifiable cause for hostilities, which in the end must always lead to the victorious advance of the stronger and more civilized power'. Although Frere had Afghanistan in mind in saying this, his views have an awful relevance to Zululand in the context of 1878–79, as he manipulated and pressurized Cetshwayo in the direction of an imperial war. 'The one power is urged to grow aggressively', he went on, 'while the other has no inherent form of resistance, unless he gives up his antiquated arms and indiscipline, and takes to himself the powerful weapons and military array of civilized nations — which are of no avail'.[16]

All this became widely known when *The Times* printed Frere's letter to Kaye on 17 October 1878, almost filling a whole page. The significance of its publication rests on its place in the chronology of

Afghan events. We have noted how Frere and Lord Lytton, the Viceroy, were in agreement over forward policies as early as 1876. To counter the presence of Russians in Kabul, a British mission was sent to Afghanistan but was refused admission by the Emir's order, on 19 September 1878. Between then and 5 October Lytton's action was condemned in letters to *The Times*, but they were countered by others supporting it. On 17 October Frere's memorandum of 1874 was published, later described as 'a remarkable state paper which will be permanently quoted and referred to'.[17] By 26 October the cabinet had instructed Lytton to send an ultimatum to the Emir: unless he apologised and agreed to receive a British mission, military operations would be mounted against him. No reply was forthcoming by the deadline of 20 November (Lytton had not expected one), so three columns of British troops invaded Afghanistan the next day. A successful campaign was completed by the end of December, which brought congratulations for Lytton.

This sequence of events, on which he had exerted some influence, must have appeared to Frere as an ideal blueprint for his own handling of the Zulu situation, the epitome of what he hoped to achieve as a necessary step towards confederation in South Africa. The neutralisation of any possible threat from Cetshwayo's military strength was a vital proof of British credibility and authority in the colonies of Natal and the Transvaal. But Frere had to contend with a serious complication that had no parallel in British-Afghan policy. The boundary commissioners who sat on a territorial dispute between the Zulu and the Transvaal Boers had settled largely in favour of the Zulu, and Frere's handling of their report is crucial in his approach to hostilities with Cetshwayo. It arrived on his desk in July 1878; he sent it on to the Colonial Office, where it arrived in August; the Colonial Secretary's comment did not reach him until early October. By then he had been at Pietermaritzburg, the colonial capital of Natal, since 26 September, and *The Times* was carrying speculative reports on the possibility of a Zulu war 'in the cloud of uncertainty in which we seem to be enveloped'.[18]

Frere did all he could to sustain that cloud. His letter on Afghanistan, with its dogma of the inevitable expansion of 'civilised' over 'barbarous' states, had been published long before he told Cetshwayo, on 16 November, that he would not reveal the boundary decision until 11 December. By mid-November the Colonial Secretary was admitting that he no longer exercised any control over Frere; and the Emir of Afghanistan was facing an impossible British ultimatum. That, too, was Cetshwayo's fate on 11 December, when he discovered that the boundary decision was bracketed with a set of demands that he could not possibly meet. Lieutenant Nevill Coghill, an officer on Frere's staff since September, declared on 18 December that acceptance of a British

resident with large powers (one of the demands made by Frere) would reduce Cetshwayo 'to almost a cipher. I only hope something may turn up to *cause* hostilities', Coghill continues, 'for I believe it will be the speediest method of securing our peaceful relationship with *all* the coloured races in South Africa, and thus conduce to a more perfect and speedy confederation'.[19] The emphasis here on 'speed' is noteworthy. Coghill gave up his staff appointment to rejoin his regiment, and he was killed with the rest of them at Isandlwana on 22 January 1879, when the Zulu wiped out one of the three invading columns. Frere wrote a letter of sympathy in which he says 'we never expected more than the ordinary chances of war'. Presumably he meant by that the easy victory by then achieved in Afghanistan.[20]

He ordered the invasion of Zululand without the backing of Disraeli's cabinet. Basil Worsfold in 1923 attempted to shift some of Frere's culpability to the Colonial Secretary, and persuaded Lord Milner to read the proofs of his book. It is a telling point that Milner had a great regard for Frere: 'by all the traces I found of his work, he was the only big man among my immediate predecessors', possessing 'a real grasp of the South African question'. Even Milner, however, whose role in precipitating the Anglo-Boer War in 1899 is well known, refused to exonerate Frere over his handling of the ultimatum to Cetshwayo. Despite the evidence of letters newly published by Worsfold, his action was 'over-hasty and aggressive'. It was no wonder, in Milner's opinion, that the cabinet — especially those who knew nothing about South African conditions — complained that he had taken them by surprise. Nevertheless, they should have supported the man on the spot when, in pursuit of an absolutely right policy, he had put himself into a tight corner — 'even if he had been guilty of some minor error of judgement'.[21] The costliness of the Zulu War and its aftermath, even though Frere could not have foreseen it, makes nonsense of Milner's 'minor error of judgement'.

Contemporary criticism of Frere went deeper on his unwillingness to face the magnitude of obstacles in his path, or to judge the possible consequences of what he did. Alongside his letter on Afghanistan, a leader in *The Times* for 17 October 1878 pointed out that Frere's preferred policy had been followed over the past few years, but now it had led to a crisis situation. If the Emir refused to accept British agents at Kabul, Kandahar, and Herat they would be introduced by force, and Britain would undertake to defend Afghanistan against the Russians. But Frere should have outlined more clearly, said *The Times* leader, the nature of the risks attached to his policy, which was then escalating to military commitment. When *The Times* printed a long obituary notice on 30 May 1884, the day after Frere's death, a leader alongside it made quite open

criticism of his part in what proved to be a difficult, costly, and unpopular war in Afghanistan. It also faulted him over his role in South African confederation, for failing to see 'that the practical difficulties in the way of its realisation made it prudent to proceed by slow degrees'.

Nor could it have been helpful for him that, at different levels, his thoughts on Afghanistan (with others, farther back in time, on Sind) and Zululand ran together or overlapped in the later months of 1878. At a minor level, it shows again in his writing (then or just a little later) a personal memoir on the Indian soldier-statesman Sir James Outram. It was written for Sir Frederick Goldsmid's biography, published in 1880. Frere knew Outram from work among the Bhils in the 1830s, later succeeding him as resident at Satara, then serving with him from 1860 to 1862 on Canning's Indian Council. For him Outram was the epitome of a political officer, with service in Afghanistan in the 1840s. Outram's personal influence, Frere suggests, could have induced the Emirs 'to do all that the government of India could reasonably require of them'. Men of Outram's stamp were an essential part of the policies advocated by Frere, under which it was impossible for 'a barbarian power to exist alongside the advancing influence of British government'.[22]

A revealing vignette of Frere in eclipse comes from *The Times* war correspondent, William Howard Russell. In January 1880 he stayed at Cape Town with Frere, who kept a brave face and still held stubbornly to the rightness of his policy, despite having lost to Wolseley all his offices except the governorship of Cape Colony. Driving about the town with him in his carriage, Russell records 'the dear old codger looking out right and left for people to bow to — he quite understands popularity-making'. Shrewdly and concisely he sums up Frere's strength and weakness, as evidenced throughout a long imperial career: 'He has as much real nobility of governing about him as anyone I ever met, but he is also bigoted in his belief that he can do no wrong'.[23] Even so, when news of his death reached Natal the colonists flew their flags at half-mast for 'England's most courageous proconsul and South Africa's best friend'.[24]

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NOTES AND REFERENCES

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2. John A. Benyon, 'Isandhlwana and the passing of a proconsul', *Natalia*, 8, 1978, 38–45. The quotation comes from page 38.

3. Colin Webb, 'The origins of the Anglo-Zulu War: problems of interpretation', Duminy and Ballard, *op. cit.*, 1981, 1–12. The quotation comes from page 3. The only reasonably comprehesive survey of Frere's career is J. Martineau, *The life and correspondence of Sir Bartle Frere*, Murray (London, 1895), two volumes.
4. *Journal of the Society of Arts*, 18, 1870, 363–372.
5. *Ibid.*, 19, 1871, 239–248.
6. *Ibid.*, 21, 1873, 358–381. Frere's book was entitled *On the impending Bengal famine: how it will be met, and how to prevent future famines in India*, Murray (London, 1874).
7. *Ibid.*, 22, 1874, 201–211: Opening Meeting of the African Section, 30 January 1874, Inaugural Address by Sir Bartle Frere.
8. *Ibid.*, 204. Frere advances similar views in his paper on 'Zanzibar: a commercial power', *Macmillan's Magazine*, 32, July 1875, 275–288, written for the Sultan of Zanzibar's visit to London. See, for instance, his advocacy of commercial exploitation along the East Coast of Africa (288): 'It is clear that any Government which could ensure protection of life and property in such a position, and allow capitalists to attract the abundant labour of the continent by freedom and fair wages, might aspire to a great position among nations. Our South African colonies possess some of the elements of such a dominion'.
9. Etherington, *op. cit.*, 1981, 25–26.
10. John S. Galbraith, *Mackinnon and East Africa, 1878–1895: a study in the new imperialism*, Cambridge University Press (Cambridge, 1972); *Dictionary of National Biography*, article on Sir William Mackinnon.
11. Galbraith, *op. cit.*, 1972, 43. According to a report in the *Glasgow Herald*, on 10 November 1876 Frere addressed the Glasgow Chamber of Commerce on this theme. See also Frank Emery, 'Geography and Imperialism: the rôle of Sir Bartle Frere (1815–84)', *Geographical Journal*, forthcoming (1984).
12. Bodleian Library, Oxford: MS. Acland d. 77, Letters to Sir Henry Acland, 231–238, Mary Frere from Government House, Cape Town, 30 July 1877, but continued into August. It may be noted here that Frere and Acland were friends since childhood, and furthermore Acland was a close friend of Lord Carnarvon from the 1850s.
13. *Ibid.*, 267–270, Mary Frere from Government House Cape Town, 5 November 1877, but not completed until 13 November.
14. *Ibid.*, 273–280, Lady Catherine Frere, from Government House, Cape Town, 8 December 1878.
15. *Ibid.*, 281–295, Lady Catherine Frere from Government House, Cape Town, 20 May 1879.
16. In the first instance Frere's letter was written (12 June 1874) privately to Kaye, the historian of British involvement in Afghanistan, but it appeared in *The Times* of 17 October 1878, and was reprinted in Frere's *Afghanistan and South Africa: a letter to the Right Hon. W. E. Gladstone regarding portions of his Midlothian speeches*, 1881.
17. *The Times*, 30 May 1884.
18. *The Times*, 15 November 1878.
19. Bodleian Library, Oxford: MS. North d. 36, 63–70, Lieutenant N.J.A. Coghill, 1/24th Regiment, from the 'High Commissioner's Office, Pieter Maritz Burg Natal S. Africa. 18 December 1878'. The letter, sixteen pages in all, was written to Colonel the Rt. Hon. J.S. North, M.P., whose mother was a Coghill.
20. Ibid., 71–74, Frere to Colonel North, from Pietermaritzburg, 9 February 1879.
21. Basil Worsfold, *Sir Bartle Frere: a footnote to the history of the Empire*, Butterworth (London, 1923). Milner's correspondence with Worsfold, from which the quotations are taken, is in Rhodes House Library, Oxford: MSS. Brit. Emp. s. 402, Box 2/5.
22. F.J. Goldsmid, *James Outram: a biography*, Smith, Elder (London, 1880), two volumes. Frere's reminiscences of Outram are in vol. 2, 390–396. It so happens that a bronze statue of Outram stands alongside an equally magnificent statue of Frere, clad in his robe of the Order of the Star of India, in the Embankment Gardens, London. The Prince of Wales unveiled Frere's statue on 5 June 1888, four years to the day after his funeral cortege had passed that spot. It is significant that in his unveiling address the future King Edward VII paid full tribute to Frere's worth in India, but (as reported in *The Times*) he did not mention South

Africa. The memorial fund, a fraction of which was used to pay for the statue, stood at nearly £13 000.

23. Quoted from Russell's diaries by Alan Hankinson, *Man of Wars: William Howard Russell of The Times*, Macmillan (London, 1982), 249.
24. *The Times*, 31 May 1884. This sentiment is echoed in the inscription on Frere's marble bust in the City Hall, Pietermaritzburg, which concludes: 'The People of Natal would thus testify to the high qualities of one esteemed by them not only as an experienced administrator, but also as a kind friend'. At Frere's funeral, on 5 June 1884 at St. Paul's Cathedral, a wreath from 'The Colony of Natal' was placed on his coffin. Another floral tribute came (notwithstanding memories of Isandlwana) from 'The Officers of the First Battalion, 24th Regiment'.

HEANEY: POETRY AND THE IRISH CAUSE

by J.A. KEARNEY

One of the interesting features of Heaney's development as poet is the changing relationship between his sense of himself and his sense of the Irish predicament, historically and in the present. I propose to trace the major phases of this relationship in his collections of poems up to, but not including, *Field Work*, thus confining myself mostly to the material covered in *Selected Poems* (1965–1975).[1]

Initially Heaney's concern with his self as poet seems separate from a broader historical or political consciousness. Though two sharply opposed ways of life are implicit in the opening image of *Digging*, first poem in *Death of a Naturalist*, Heaney's proposal to engage in poetic digging does not appear here as a commitment to unearth anything more than his family part in order to define the ironic continuity of his new role with that of his father and grandfather:

> The cold smell of potato mould, the squelch and slap
> Of soggy peat, the curt cuts of an edge
> Through living roots awaken in my head.
> But I've no spade to follow men like them.
>
> Between my finger and my thumb
> The squat pen rests.
> I'll dig with it.
>
> (*Death of a Naturalist*, p. 14)

At a Potato Digging, placed after seven poems dealing with personal or family experience, reveals an implicitly agonised awareness of how tragic elements in Irish history have been perpetuated, yet Heaney does not make himself directly present in the poem. After the recurrent first-person narrative stance of these poems it's rather a surprise to find that the narrator of *At a Potato Digging (Death of a Naturalist*, pp. 31–33) is not in any way a participant in the activity described. The observer's vision penetrates through the labourers' immediate 'fumbl[ing] towards the black/Mother' (lines 11–12) to perceive, sardonically, how the famine victims of 1845 seemed to have been made in the very image of the potatoes that poisoned them: 'live skulls, blind-eyed.' (II, line 13 and III, line 1). But we don't encounter the observer himself any more closely as a result of this stark and bizarre focus. Even in the final section, however, as the workers' relaxed lunch break seems also to mirror:

> Centuries
> Of fear and homage to the famine god
>
> (I, lines 13–14)

there's no move on the observer's part to include himself in these reflections. *The Diviner*, offering an apt image of the uncanny intuitiveness required for what Heaney calls the 'technique'—as against the 'craft'—of poetry,[2] involves no hint that the poetic equivalent of such a skill will be directed towards the problems of Ireland. 'I rhyme', he announces at the end of *Personal Helicon*, last poem in the collection:

> To see myself, to set the darkness echoing.

The mysterious richness and variety of that darkness is suggested by the progressive complexity of the sensuous appeal which wells held for him as a child. But the analogy between wells and the self as source of inspiration or Helicon, nowhere hints at growing concern with, or insight into, the Irish predicament.

Nevertheless, the placing of *Personal Helicon* hints that it does have retrospective relevance for all the poems in the anthology. Poems such as *At a Potato Digging* may thus be taken, implicitly, as ways in which the poet attempts self-understanding in terms of understanding the forces which have shaped, and continue to shape, himself. What intrigues me is the degree of implicitness involved. Is it diffidence that Heaney experiences at this stage, in rhyming to create a dramatic relationship between Ireland and himself? In his book, *Seamus Heaney*, Blake Morrison comments on Heaney's early inhibitions about the writing of poetry, and suggests that this state of mind must be derived from the traditional reticence of his people, their 'siege mentality', the feeling that language constitutes 'a kind of betrayal'.[3] This insight *may* help to explain why Heaney found it difficult, in his first two collections at least, to permit himself a first-person stance in poems dealing with historical or political issues. But it may also be that the relationship hasn't yet been fully thought out. If this is the case, and the later collections can be taken to represent stages in such thinking, not merely a reduced sense of diffidence or reticence, then a fascinating process is revealed, of growth mainly through interest and belief in poetry and what it can achieve. For the purposes of this paper, I shall concentrate on the implications of the second, more easily verifiable, hypothesis. In this process I would suggest that the Northern Ireland political crisis in 1969, acting upon tendencies already strongly present in Heaney's poetic consciousness, proved to be a determining factor in fusing his explicit sense of himself as poet with his sense of his society. (I speak of 'a' rather than 'the' determining factor because the element of violence and unrest had been present all along in Heaney's social/historical context, though not in so extreme or sustained a form.)

The image, 'Door into the Dark', which provides the title of

Heaney's second collection and the basis of the first poem from this collection used in *Selected Poems, The Forge*, is an extension of that resonant darkness with which *Personal Helicon* concludes. It's intended, Heaney informs us, to evoke the idea of 'poetry as a point of entry into the buried life of the feelings or as a point of exit for it.'[4] Blake Morrison makes the following useful assumption about Heaney's purpose in this collection:

> Having been preoccupied with 'finding himself', with placing himself in relation to both family and literary traditions, Heaney recognizes that a deeper and darker plunge is necessary.[5]

The image certainly provides a clearer, more defined focus on his broader intentions than do *Digging* and *Personal Helicon*. But still there's no direct hint in the idea of a 'door into the dark' that the feelings he has in mind embrace national as well as personal consciousness. In the light of the major civil disturbances of 1969 the title of this collection may well seem prophetic yet Heaney's acknowledgement, in relation to the poem, *Requiem for the Croppies*:

> I did not realize at the time that the original heraldic murderous encounter between Protestant yeoman and Catholic rebel was to be initiated again in the summer of 1969, in Belfast, two months after the book was published.[6]

reveals that what Heaney meant at that stage by 'the buried life of the feelings' had no particular *contemporary* focus.

Before I go any further with this second collection, I need to point out that the *Death of a Naturalist* collection includes several poems which reveal the chosen theme of *Door into the Dark* already at work in Heaney's attempt to capture the intensity of childhood fears (*The Barn, Death of a Naturalist*). Both these examples are strongly imbued with a sense of latent violence that is surely derived from the particular heritage of Northern Ireland. The relevance of those fears for the present is, however, left to the reader—the poems proceed no further than the evocation of childhood consciousness itself. *Vision*, final poem in *A Lough Neagh Sequence*, an unusually personal one in this collection and perhaps the most disturbing of all these poems about early terrors, does not have direct undertones of political violence in its imagery but suggests in its final lines that the state of terror, first summoned up by the lice threat then apparently turned from fantasy into horrifying reality in the field full of moving eels, is what he—as inhabitant of Northern Ireland—is doomed to:

> Time
> Confirmed the horrid cable.
>
> (*Door into the Dark*, p. 45)

This 'vision' is as bleak and pessimistic as that of *At a Potato Digging*.

Requiem for the Croppies, on the other hand, with its staccato tension and urgency, shifts finally from stark requiem to a forthright, semi-jubilant sense of resurrection:

> Terraced thousands died, shaking scythes at cannon.
> The hillside blushed, soaked in our broken wave.
> They buried us without shroud or coffin
> And in August the barley grew up out of the grave.
>
> (*Door into the Dark*, p. 24)

Heaney points out that the poem was written:

> . . . in 1966 when most poets in Ireland were straining to celebrate the anniversary of the 1916 Rising. That rising was the harvest of seeds sown in 1798, when revolutionary republican ideals and national feeling coalesced in the doctrines of Irish republicanism and in the rebellion of 1798 itself—unsuccessful and savagely put down. The poem was born of and ended with an image of resurrection.[7]

The earth, seen only as a 'black', treacherous and unappeasable mother in *At a Potato Digging*, becomes here the startling source of new life, giving fresh, enduring significance to the barley that the desperate croppies carried round in their pockets during their guerilla tactics. Heaney's device of using the spirit of one of the croppies as persona doesn't, however, put him into a direct relationship with the *contemporary* Irish version of the croppies. Yet the very absence of commentary relating past to present suggests that Heaney's hope *is*, analogously, for his own era. That kind of dramatic, quasi-autobiographical realism has yet to be forged in a poem such as *Tollund Man* (in *Wintering Out*) but the aspect of paradoxical hope, dependent on an earth-resurrection myth, is a prelude to the later approach.

Earth in terms of bog is, of course, the final image summoned in this collection. *Bogland*, through its position, seems consciously intended to broaden the perspective of *Personal Helicon* through its suggestions of an entire past preserved intact in the Irish unconscious mind.[8] Heaney's final use of the saying he remembers from childhood:

> The wet centre is bottomless
>
> (*Door into the Dark*, p. 56)

ambivalently evokes a sense of the limitless resources of memory, somewhat undermined by a sense of hollow, frustrated lack of achievement. But whereas *Personal Helicon* is directly

autobiographical, *Bogland* gives no entrance to Heaney as individual; he writes as an impersonal, slightly ironic representative of Irish historical consciousness, securely transmitted from generation to generation. As Malcolm McKenzie has pointed out,[9] it's hard to believe that when *Bogland* was written, Heaney had not yet heard of the Danish bog burials: the piece is an unwitting forerunner of what seem to me the far more interesting poems inspired by those burials. My point is that the possibilities present in *Requiem for the Croppies* and *Bogland* seem to help engender the later fascinating tendency for Heaney to offer himself an explicit role within his poems, one that is concerned with political/historical consciousness on a national level.

It's the title of this second collection, naturally, which makes us aware that the bog, for Heaney, is a metaphor for access to buried feelings. In this last poem of *Door into the Dark* one is thus able to glimpse how the poems concerning buried childhood fears have contributed to this wider concern with apparently dormant, yet still vital, Irish feeling and memory; facets of consciousness which, for Heaney, are available for unfolding, layer by layer.[10] Perhaps in this first stage of enlarging the scope of darkness Heaney felt it necessary to adopt a stance opposite to that of *The Barn or Vision*, one which permits him to distance himself from his material.[11] My purpose is to chart the way he sustains his larger horizon while creating opportunities for himself to enter such poems in an active, first-person capacity.

Wintering Out, Heaney's third collection, was published in 1972. Could one justifiably expect Heaney, by this stage, to be grappling with the complex, awesome task of reconciliation facing Irish writers as a result of three years of mounting bloodshed and escalating bitterness? The task might, of course, have proved too momentous, or too burdensome for the creative spirit. Or the poet might not have wanted to allow poetic attention to the immediate political strife to interfere *too soon* with the kind of imaginative development of connections between language and history that I intend to trace below.

Morrison points out that Heaney was:

> . . . a determined campaigner for civil rights, taking part in marches and being moved by the Derry clashes to write, on 24 October 1968: 'Two years ago, in an article on Belfast, I tried to present both sides as more or less blameworthy. But it seems now that the Catholic minority in Northern Ireland at large, if it is to retain any self-respect, will have to risk the charge of wrecking the new moderation and seek justice more vociferously'.[12]

Heaney himself acknowledges, in explicit commentary on his poetry, that from the summer of 1969: '. . . the problems of poetry

moved from being simply a matter of achieving the satisfactory verbal icon to being a search for images and symbols adequate to our predicament.'[13] But he warned, in an earlier article entitled 'Belfast' (written for the *Guardian* in 1972), that:

> You have to be true to your own sensibility, for the faking of feelings is a sin against the imagination. Poetry is out of the quarrel with ourselves and the quarrel with others is rhetoric. It would wrench the rhythms of my writing procedures to start squaring up to contemporary events with more will than ways to deal with them.[14]

And his admiration of what he refers to, in his lecture on Yeats, as the earlier poet's 'intransigence . . . that protectiveness of his imaginative springs'[15] also helps to make a clear distinction between his sense of himself as campaigning citizen, and his sense of his task and capacities as poet.

The evidence of the collection as a whole confirms Heaney's general standpoint in relation to poetry in *Preoccupations*: one sees that he has not allowed himself to be shifted dramatically into intensive crisis preoccupation but that, nevertheless, he *has* succeeded in finding at least one image/symbol adequate to [the] predicament. *Gifts of Rain* in particular—a poem that I shall look at fairly closely—offers the most striking testimony possible to a spirit of fruitful detachment. On the other hand, Heaney shows himself ready, in the set of poems entitled *A Northern Hoard* and, I think, more profoundly in *The Tollund Man*, to engage at the most complex level of his poetic resources with the drama represented by:

> . . . gunshot, siren and clucking gas
> Out there beyond each curtained terrace
>
> (*Wintering Out*, p. 39)

In a radio interview Heaney offered the following explanation of the title, 'Wintering Out':

> It is a phrase associated with cattle, and with hired boys also. In some ways, it links up with a very resonant line of English verse that every schoolboy knows: "Now is the winter of our discontent." It is meant to gesture towards the distresses that we are all undergoing in this country at the minute. It is meant to be, I suppose, comfortless enough, but with a notion of survival in it.[16]

Though Heaney did not say so in the quoted interview, the particular relevance of this title for his 1972 collection is surely derived from the period 1970–71 which he spent as Visiting Professor at the University of California, Berkeley.

Metaphorically, then, it could well suggest the idea of sharing in the plight of his people from a detached position, one of the spirit, rather than one dictated by geographical separation. On this basis I shall argue that this third collection represents Heaney's act of faith in the rhythm and pace of his own poetic development by keeping himself free from persistent, nagging attention to the political crisis.

What, then, are the characteristic features of Heaney's poetic development in this collection? Further attention to the metaphorical aspect of the title offers, in my view, the vital hint: the fertility-resurrection theme initiated in *Requiem for the Croppies* now comes to have pervasive importance. This theme is indeed developed with special vividness and directness in poems such as *Servant Boy, The Last Mummer* and *A Winter's Tale*. Recreative power in these poems is imaged in terms of the seasons as well as ancient, associated superstitions. But it's through belief in the recreative power of *words* that the most significant stage of Heaney's new first-person involvement within his poems is attained.

Historical consciousness, aroused through the sight of a piece of oak rescued from the bog in *Bog Oak*, culminates in Heaney's identifying himself with the Irish poetic spirit of the sixteenth century in contradistinction to that of Spenser, the foreign, invading poet. More satisfying however, is Heaney's sense of contact with the pristine origins of language in *Anahorish*:

> My 'place of clear water',
> the first hill in the world
> where springs washed into
> the shiny grass
>
> and darkened cobbles
> in the bed of the lane.
> *Anahorish*, soft gradient
> of consonant, vowel-meadow,
>
> after-image of lamps
> swung through the yards
> on winter evenings.
> With pails and barrows
>
> those mound-dwellers
> go waist-deep in mist
> to break the light ice
> at wells and dunghills.
>
> (*Wintering Out*, p. 16)

This contact, aroused initially through sensuous love of the place and simultaneous relish of its name, makes him feel himself in

harmony with the neolithic dwellers at the hill-site and thus, implicitly, with life free from what Coleridge calls the 'film of familiarity'. Here then, Heaney moves away from the detached stance of *At a Potato Digging* and *Requiem for the Croppies*, and begins to perceive himself in relation to the Irish past in a general sense. The crucial medium of apprehension is a special interest in words.[17]

In *Gifts of Rain (Wintering Out*, pp. 23–25) the language and history connection is amplified while at the same time the self comes to greater prominence. A flood provides an only partly impersonalised Heaney with the chance to trace his real connections with the place where he lives: literal soundings turn into metaphorical ones; the words needed to express these links become ways of 'fording' his life. But it isn't merely a question of place: Heaney's awareness extends to further aspects of his condition sensorily aroused by the flood. Through a startlingly original use of the traditional Irish emblem ('Moyola harping on its gravel beds') Heaney summons up the sounds and calls of the past. The river offers Heaney a powerful image of continuity:

IV

The tawny guttural water
spells itself: Moyola
is its own score and consort,

bedding the locale
in the utterance,
reed music, an old chanter

breathing its mists
through vowels and history.
A swollen river,

a mating call of sound
rises to pleasure me, Dives,
hoarder of common ground.

(p. 25)

Its sound, always provoking men to find an equivalent for it in language, but especially now when its swollen state makes it seem omnipresent, suggests to the poet the mysterious yet close and living bonds between language and history. (A flashback to the 'clean new music' of *Personal Helicon*, effective as it is in context, will indicate how much denser and richer is Heaney's use of imagery by this stage.)

That somewhat distanced 'he' of the first two sections in *Gifts of Rain* has already, and unobtrusively, been elided into the 'I' of Section III, as if personal identity becomes stronger in terms of his

awareness of ancestral voices made present, paradoxically, through registering their absence. By the final stanza of Section IV Heaney is therefore able to offer an affirmation of the rich experience and consciousness of the individual that becomes possible through a sense of profound time-space relatedness. On account of the flood the 'common ground' has been made to seem distinctly *un*common in its full implications. But the alternative meaning of common, i.e. 'shared', (anticipated in the phrase, 'shared calling of blood', line 16 Part III), is equally important: what Heaney wishes to hoard or treasure is, paradoxically, what belongs to all—that fully alive historical consciousness epiphanised through the transforming power of this particular flood experience.

While he remains passive, in a way, during this experience of illumination and joy, in *A New Song* the image of flood is used purely metaphorically to suggest an *active* recovery by Irish poets of what is Irish:[18]

> But now our river tongues must rise
> From licking deep in native haunts
> To flood, with vowelling embrace,
> Demesnes staked out in consonants.
>
> (*Wintering Out*, p. 33)

In this case it's the name of the town, conjured up by the girl whom he meets, together with the strength of the associative process stirred up in this way, which gives Heaney confidence in the task for his fellow-poets and himself, of a creative recovery of Ireland through language. *Anahorish* and *Gifts of Rain* on the one hand, and *A New Song* on the other, may thus represent two stages of an important shift in his alertness to the possibilities available to him as poet: the first, pleasurable but active mostly in the sense of sensuous and metaphorical responsiveness; the second, more consciously active in terms of the invitation to conduct a kind of poetic war of liberation.

The order of poems in *Wintering Out* seems to support my suggestion that Heaney, while not allowing himself to be overwhelmed by the pressures of the Northern Ireland situation, *has* negotiated a creative response to them: *Gifts of Rain* and *A New Song* precede *A Northern Hoard* and *The Tollund Man* as if to demonstrate, through the very structure of the collection, the process he required before something like *The Tollund Man* became possible. *The Other Side* which directly precedes *A Northern Hoard* and *The Tollund Man* in *Selected Poems*, suggests that Heaney felt the need to recall a childhood sense of religious division in his world before taking the crucial step that follows from *Gifts of Rain* and *A New Song*, of being his own protagonist in a poem explicitly focused on the Civil War. Through his childhood

fascination with the strangeness and otherness of the family's wealthier Protestant neighbour, Heaney registers, with steadily balanced humour and sympathy, the man's conflict: he is scornful and condescending on the one hand yet, on the other, he recognises that the Catholics *do* belong to the same Irish 'house' and is driven by the need to communicate with them from an ordinary, neighbourly point of view, despite the obtrusive obstacle of Catholic family prayers. The attitudes implicit in the poetry suggest how valuable a force for reconciliation such a piece could be. And it is precisely this kind of poised blending of sympathetic and ironic vision that underlies Heaney's self-presentation in *The Tollund Man*.

The Tollund Man (Wintering Out, pp. 47–48) seems to me more memorable and imaginatively complex than *Bogland* or *Requiem for the Croppies*, yet both earlier examples are essential preparations for the profound vision which Heaney presents in *The Tollund Man* of his relationship to the Irish predicament. The recovery of the perfectly preserved two thousand year-old corpse of Tollund Man suggests to Heaney the way in which, metaphorically, the contemporary victims of the Irish Civil War may be made to 'germinate' (II, line 4, p. 48) i.e. to undergo a form of resurrection in terms of the memory of their deaths, and of the understanding that might grow—like the croppies' barley—from their brutal slaughter. In comparing these victims to Tollund Man as ritual sacrifice, Heaney does not, in my view, infer fatalistically that the 'man-killing parishes' (III, line 10, p. 48) of modern Ireland simply perpetuate the barbarism of Iron-age Denmark: his emphasis is rather on the potential for tragic affirmation, akin to Yeats's 'terrible beauty' in *Easter 1916*, that is present in these deaths. But this point requires ampler discussion.

That *The Tollund Man* and Heaney's other 'bog burial' poems might involve a spirit of fatalism or determinism is not merely a theoretical possiblity for interpretation. Malcolm Mackenzie takes the following view:

> [Heaney] appears to be suggesting that events in Northern Ireland are locked in to a pattern of endless repetition, that there is nothing that can be done to ease the problems of his country. I find it impossible to square this with the picture painted in the second half of *North*. Heaney's concept of history in the bog poems seems to deny the possibility of a plurality of histories. And it is this, I think, which leads to a strange passivity, almost a quietistic lassitude, on the part of the speaker in these poems.[19]

And, although there's no such explicit passage in Morrison's book, his comments on various 'bog' poems in *North*, especially *Punishment*, give the impression that he would share Mackenzie's

view.[20] Heaney himself perhaps invites a fatalistic view when he claims that the similarities between the Danish burials and the tradition of Irish political martyrdom point to 'an archetypal pattern'.[21] It would be misleading however, to stress this passage at the expense of the one at the conclusion of 'Feeling into Words':

> I began by suggesting that my point of view involved poetry as divination, as a restoration of the culture to itself. In Ireland in this century it has involved for Yeats and many others an attempt to define and interpret the present by bringing it into significant relationship with the past, and I believe that effort in our present circumstances has to be urgently renewed.[22]

The wish to bring the present into significant relationship with the past in the context of cultural restoration, surely makes it clear that Heaney's purpose in juxtaposing archaic and contemporary deaths by violence involves not fatalism but an underlying hope. Mackenzie's own difficulty in trying to reconcile his account of the 'bog' poems with what he found in the second half of *North* should, one feels, have stirred him to look further and see whether he was not involved in a misunderstanding and limiting of Heaney's purposes. The starting-point for such a reconsideration would seem to me to lie in closer attention to the implications of 'germinate' in the second section of *The Tollund Man*. For if the manner of death is the starting point of Heaney's analogy, it's the possibility of a form of metaphorical resurrection for the Irish 'sacrificial victims', an *imaginative* parallel, that is of greater eventual importance for him.

In the final section of the poem Heaney goes even further, though:

> Something of his sad freedom
> As he rode the tumbril
> Should come to me, driving,
> Saying the names
>
> Tollund, Grauballe, Nebelgard,
> Watching the pointing hands
> Of country people,
> Not knowing their tongue.
>
> Out there in Jutland
> In the old man-killing parishes
> I will feel lost,
> Unhappy and at home.
>
> (p. 48)

P.V. Glob, the Danish archaeologist whose book, *The Bog People*, seems to have had unique value for Heaney in his search for 'images and symbols adequate to [the Irish] predicament', offers the

following explanation of two similar bog-preserved bodies, referred to as Tollund Man and Borremose Man, and discovered in 1950 and 1946 respectively:

> The men from Tollund and Borremose lived at a time in the Iron Age when fertility cults were of great importance and when the goddess of fertility was worshipped as the principal deity. It is possible that the two men were sacrificed to her and deposited in the bogs in connection with the main fertility festivals in the spring which were designed to ensure the forthcoming harvest.[23]

Through Heaney's identification of *himself* with Tollund Man he suggests that the poet is involved in an analogous ritual sacrifice: imaginatively, as he tours through modern Denmark, he feels himself to be Tollund Man driven to his death in the tumbril. The poetic 'death' of the self in terms of compassionate understanding is crucial in the process of renewal and hope perceived by Heaney. In conveying the stark, desolate reality of Irish 'winter', the poet's faith is akin to that of the worshippers of the Earth goddess whose devoted offering of a strangled victim was meant to induce her to create a new Spring. In *Gifts of Rain* Heaney sees himself as 'hoarder of common ground' (IV, line 12, p. 25); that perception deepens in *Tollund Man* to allow him to envisage himself as both vicarious victim and priest of Ireland's 'common ground': her persistently tragic history and her equally persistent, passionate aspiration towards freedom. Heaney's preoccupation with the theme, 'buried life of the feelings', here at its most intense and powerful, enables him to fuse the two explorations that have tended to feature independently in his early poems, that of his personal psyche and that of his country's psyche.

The second part of *Wintering Out* seems resolute in its disengagement from any direct political involvement. Nevertheless, while poems such as *Shore Woman* and *Summer Home* may be seen to extend Heaney's preoccupation with the 'buried life of the feelings' in new directions — predominantly those of woman's consciousness and marital awareness — they may also be thought of as new ways for Heaney of rhyming to see himself, ways that enable him without any forcing to arrive at a new sense of his role as Irish poet.

By the time of *North*, published in 1975, the intricate process of poetic development revealed in *Wintering Out* seems to make it possible for Heaney, not only to engage more frequently with material relating directly to the worsening troubles of the North, but to articulate more extensively his sense of what it means for him to be a poet in such a context. Comments on two poems will, I hope, suffice to indicate the variety and complexity of his achievement in this collection, and to conclude this discussion.

Before I look at these poems, however, I must comment briefly on the structure of *North* as a whole. Morrison, reminding us of Heaney's repeated view that there are two kinds of poetry and two kinds of poet: '[amongst other categories] the instinctual or the rational; the feminine or the masculine; the "artesian" or the "architectonic"; the epiphanic or the crafted. . .',[24] points to Heaney's own explanation of the binary structure of *North*:

> The two halves of the book constitute two different types of utterance, each of which arose out of a necessity to shape and give palpable linguistic form to two kinds of urgency — one symbolic, one explicit.[25]

However, Morrison insists rightly, I think, that the book's structure is 'altogether more complex, and altogether less rigid, than has been supposed: the division between the private and the public, the instinctual and the willed, and so on, is not at all as stable as it might appear.'[26] Yet he rather confuses the issue by suggesting that *Selected Poems* involves a 'niggardly representation of *North*', inferring thereby that Heaney has 'lost faith in its binary structure and has begun to play down its more conscious side'.[27] Part II of *North*, however, involves only nine poems to begin with, as against twenty in Part I. It is, of course, a pity that *Whatever You Say, Say Nothing* should have been omitted from *Selected Poems*, but since the bulk of the sequence, *Singing School*, is included, the proportionate representation of poems from each of the two parts turns out to be reasonably fair. The 'explicit' poems whose omission Morrison notes with disappointment come, in any case, from Part I, and can therefore not be used to support his view that 'Heaney has lost faith in the binary structure of *North* (at least if we accept Heaney's own sense of that structure as expressed in the quotation above).

The two poems I've chosen to consider from this collection, the title poem *North* and *Act of Union* — both from Part I — can perhaps more satisfactorily be labelled 'symbolic' than 'explicit' and this aspect, together with the great difference in their symbolic complexity, suits my purpose admirably. For I have aimed all along to demonstrate how it is through a largely symbolic process that Heaney gradually succeeds in creating for himself a direct relationship within his poems between his sense of himself as poet and his sense of the condition of Ireland. It is not possible, though, within the scope of this article to elaborate the argument by attending more comprehensively to the kind of presences or roles Heaney offers himself in his later poems.

The oracular voice that seems to come to Heaney from a Viking longship in the title poem of this collection, invites him to:

'Lie down
in the word-hoard, burrow
the coil and gleam
of your furrowed brain.

Compose in darkness.
Expect aurora borealis
in the long foray
but no cascade of light.'

(*North*, p. 20)

Imagination, triggered off here by a sense of the old and new resemblances between his own people and the Vikings, offers Heaney another form of figurative burial — that of the Viking war hero. The spirit of the Viking past (Irish and Scandinavian) with all its contradictions, violence, sordidness and with the possibility of peace only through exhaustion, first offers Heaney, via the image of 'Thor's hammer', a revelation of the pointlessness of the contemporary Irish feud: it's *as if* nothing has changed. Yet the message that comes to him as a result of his sense of self-defeating, contradictory energies *is* buoyant with a kind of resoluteness and hope. Just as the ancient warrior must lie in darkness, surrounded by his treasures, so the poet must compose in darkness nourished and sustained only by words, the treasures which fit him for creative participation in life. That tranquil period of recollection without which, Wordsworth insists, no poetry can be written is thus given by Heaney a fuller, paradoxical dimension: the process is for him as cut off, apparently, from everyday, external reality as death; as passive, apparently, as mere lying down yet it's this composing in darkness which is infused with regenerative potentiality. To recover and communicate 'buried' feeling the poet must, in a sense, bury himself with it. An important further implication of 'Lie down/in the word-hoard' is surely that the poet should avoid any attempt at direct, active intervention in the political struggle of his people; his more fruitful role will make him *seem* to be uninvolved.

In *North* the swords and boats of the Vikings inspire Heaney to a new idea of passionate force and *dis*passionate concern, one that is not undermined by sectarian feeling:

Keep your eye clear
As the bleb of the icicle
trust the feel of what nubbed treasure
your hands have known.

(p. 20)

That treasure, revealed as words, involves the poet's keeping intimately in touch with his own experience and background (cf. 'licking deep in native haunts', *A New Song*); *because* he is so

involved in fact and sees himself as sharing in responsibility for the condition of Ireland, his perspective must be free from any partisan, retaliatory spirit.

'Dives, hoarder of common ground'—that is how Heaney conceives of himself in *Gifts of Rain*. And it is his capacity to be just that kind of Dives which makes the idea of 'word-hoard' in *North* so meaningful. The resurrection myths (Classical and Christian) that underlie a number of Heaney's poems from *Requiem for the Croppies* on, provides him at this point with a convincing means of integrating his passionate relish of words and his devotion to the cause of Irish renewal in imagery that is both sombre and splendid.

A more daring and even more satisfying kind of integration is undertaken in *Act of Union* (*North*, pp. 49–50): the extended analogy in this poem between Ireland's historical–political situation (Act of Union) and Heaney's relationship with his wife and expected child (act of union) bring together his imaginative engagement with his own experience and with his country's predicament in wryly moving, intriguing and searching way.

Part I ironically makes his role as husband/father correspond to that of the English conqueror, a conqueror who has failed in terms of total, secure possession. This analogy immediately suggests the breadth of tolerant understanding that has produced the poem. If we accept that Heaney is working here through a telescoping of historical time, the child-to-be-born can be seen as the rebellious spirit of Ireland, the Ireland that had separation imposed on it and that has fought against the separate rule of North and South since 1690. Heaney's recognition is that, just as the child growing in the womb is the inexorable result of the act of conception, so the present situation of Ireland (especially of the North) is the direct result of that original seizure by force. The understanding shown in *The Wife's Tale*[28] is extended here to include realisation of his own wife's prolonged suffering and simultaneously that of England's oldest colony. The understanding shown in *Follower*[29] of his relationship with his father underlies Heaney's sardonically humorous vision of the coming rebellion of his own unborn child. At the same time he perceives without rancour yet with considerable force, the inevitability of Irish resistance to English domination and control. Heaney's sympathetic, ironic understanding encompasses here not only the suffering that gives birth to revolt but the suffering that will always remain for Ireland, whatever peace treaties the conqueror makes and, more tellingly still—via the way he envisages his own role as husband and father—the suffering of England in having, more and more, to accept and cope with the tragic consequences of her own initial actions. Those independent concerns of Heaney's early poems emerge here, indeed, in vigorously active union.

While this poem seems to embody a more pessimistic, tragic vision than *North*, the wit *and* humour that arises from each extension of the basic conceit provides a balancing, even a lifting, force. One is left then, not in a state of gloom, but feeling assured—on a more complex level than in *The Other Side*—of the potentiality for reconciliation in such poetry. The truth Yeats wished to affirm, Heaney informs us, is that:

> The end of art is peace.[30]

The same aim, I would suggest, gives impetus and significance to Heaney's efforts to forge for himself, via a 'door into the dark' and an acceptance of all that's meant by 'wintering out', a particular kind of poetic identity in explicit, first-person relation to his awareness of Ireland.

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NOTES

1. *Field Work*: the most recent Heaney collection, published in 1979. Although most of the poems I refer to are to be found in *Selected Poems, 1965–1975* (Faber and Faber, 1980), page references are to individual collections, and the name of the collection is given each time in the body of my text as a reminder of the context of each poem.
2. See the essay (originally a lecture), 'Feeling into Words', in Heaney's *Preoccupations* (Selected Prose: 1968–1978), p. 47.
3. Blake Morrison, *Seamus Heaney* (Contemporary Writers Series), Methuen 1982, p. 23.
4. *Preoccupations*, p. 52.
5. Morrison, op.cit., p. 34.
6. *Preoccupations*, p. 56.
7. Ibid, p. 56.
8. Heaney's own introduction to the poem is helpful:
   > I had a tentative unrealized need to make a congruence between memory and bogland and, for the want of a better word, our national consciousness. (*Preoccupations*, pp. 54–55).

   I have also found useful the suggestion offered by Jay Parini in his article, 'Seamus Heaney: The Ground Possessed', *The Southern Review* (Winter 1980): 'As a symbol of the unconscious past which must be unfolded, layer by layer, the bog image will prove indispensable.' (p. 109).
9. Malcolm Mackenzie, a paper entitled 'Seamus Heaney's Bog Politics', presented at the AUETSA Conference, Pietermaritzburg, July 1982, p. 4.
10. See the quotation from J. Parini, note 8 above.
    Morrison offers the following fascinating comments on the poetic form which Heaney uses for *Bogland* and a number of later poems (though, unfortunately, he does not quote his source):
    > Some of William Carlos Williams's and Robert Creeley's poetry looks rather like this, and Heaney had read their work while in California in 1969–70. He thought of the form which dominates *Wintering Out* and *North*, as nurturing his 'arterial' imagination: the poems are to be seen as drills, wells, augers, capillaries, mine-shafts, bore-holes, plumb-lines. These analogies might appear rather fanciful; and there is no self-evident reason why the form in itself should enable a poet to go 'more deeply' into his subject. But it does seem to have served this purpose for Heaney. (op. cit., p. 45).

11. Morrison surely goes too far when he refers to this tendency as a 'renunciation of personal identity'. (op. cit., p. 34).
12. Morrison, op. cit., p. 38.
13. *Preoccupations*, p. 56.
14. Ibid, p. 34.
15. Ibid, p. 108.
16. Heaney, interview, 'Mother Ireland', *The Listener*, 7 December 1972, p. 790.
17. In 'Feeling into Words' Heaney emphasises how much his early development as poet had to do with being 'in love with words themselves', a love which must have done much to break down the tribal inhibition about speech (see Note 3 above). (*Preoccupations*, pp. 41ff.)
    Morrison provides some interesting information on Heaney's particular interest in dialect and pronunciation, pointing out, for example, that the Belfast poetry group to which Heaney belonged, was: 'part of a larger movement among Northern Irish intellectuals in the 1960s towards the rehabilitation of Ulster's cultural traditions. (op. cit., p. 30).
18. In his 1978 lecture on Yeats ('Yeats as an Example?') it's interesting to find Heaney commenting on his poetic predecessor's cultural 'campaign' in terms that bring *A New Song* vividly to mind:

    > . . .it was pursued with the idea of conquest, not of territory perhaps but of imagination—though a successful awakening of the people's imagination would allow them to repossess their territory with a new conviction.
    > (*Preoccupations*, p. 104)

19. Mackenzie, op. cit., p. 6.
20. Morrison, op. cit., pp. 63–68.
    It would take too long here to enter into critical debate with Morrison concerning his sense of Heaney's attitude to IRA atrocities as revealed in *Punishment* and *Kinship* (both from *North*). Perhaps it will be sufficient to indicate that I think he fails to appreciate, in either case, Heaney's self-critical and paradoxical irony. Yet how he could miss, in particular, the sardonic tone that pervades most of Heaney's address to Tacitus in Part VI of *Kinship* ('report us fairly/how we slaughter/for the common good') remains a puzzle to me.
21. *Preoccupations*, p. 57.
22. Ibid, p. 60.
23. P.V. Glob, article, 'Lifelike Man Preserved 2,000 Years in Peat', *The National Geographic Magazine*, March 1954, p. 425.
24. Morrison, op. cit., pp. 53–54.
25. Ibid, p. 54.
26. Ibid, p. 57.
27. Ibid, p. 56.
28. *The Wife's Tale* from *Door into the Dark* (pp. 27–28) but not previously considered in this paper. Heaney's use of persona in the poem permits us to share in the wry consciousness a farmer's wife has of her carefully circumscribed, traditional role. Cf. my comment on *Shore Woman (Wintering Out*, pp. 66–67), pp. 10–11.
29. *Follower* from *Death of a Naturalist*, pp. 24–25) also not previously considered in this paper. *Follower* is, of course, one of the poems preceding *At a Potato Digging* which I refer to in a general way on p. 1.
30. *Preoccupations*, p. 112.

ALADDIN'S PALACE AND THE BOWER OF BLISS: MELVILLE AND SPENSER

by MINNA HERMAN MALTZ

Herman Melville's *Redburn* (1849) purports to be an autobiographical account by the narrator, now grown to manhood, of his first sea-voyage many years earlier.[1] The verisimilitude of this narrative technique is enhanced by the reader's knowledge that the adult Redburn's reminiscences are, in fact, based on Melville's own experiences as a young sailor on his first voyage to England.[2] The ostensible realism of the novel is also reinforced by Redburn's description of the hard lot of the sailor on American merchant ships, as well as by the social criticism that recurs throughout the work, most notably in Redburn's graphic, eye-witness account of the appalling poverty and misery found in the slums of Liverpool.

Yet these aspects of the novel are somewhat misleading, for *Redburn* is a far richer and more complex work than is evident at first. Divested of the guise that it assumes as an autobiographical sea-novel or quasi-documentary social study, it is revealed as a bildungsroman in which Melville uses the motif of the voyage embarked on by a young man to represent Redburn's development from youth to adulthood. Merlin Bowen makes this point succinctly when he notes: 'The voyage which gives the book its outward shape is itself a metaphor for a more significant movement, the young man's painful journey to maturity.'[3] Above all, the novel charts Redburn's passage from innocence to experience as he is exposed to the harsh and disillusioning reality of life for the first time and confronted with the iniquity of his fellow man.[4] As Newton Arvin so perceptively observes, in his discussion of *Redburn*, it is this which constitutes the central theme of Melville's work:

> The outward subject of the book is a young boy's first voyage as a sailor before the mast; its inward subject is the initiation of innocence into evil — the opening of the guileless spirit to the discovery of 'the wrong' as James would say, 'to the knowledge of it, to the crude experience of it.'[5]

This theme, a quintessential one in so much nineteenth century American fiction, is closely bound up with the internationalism of the novel (a crucial point but one frequently overlooked by critics);[6] for Redburn's voyage of discovery is figuratively, as much as literally, a voyage from the New World to the Old. Admittedly, Redburn's exposure to the wickedness of his fellow man begins in America when, impoverished, friendless, and ignorant of the world, he leaves home to earn his living, and it continues aboard the *Highlander,* where he incurs the enmity of the malevolent Jackson.

Nevertheless, Redburn's initiation into the knowedge of evil culminates in England. The episodes that are set in Liverpool and London dominate the novel, dramatizing the confrontation of American innocence and European[7] corruption, of American virtue and European vice. In this respect, *Redburn* is a seminal work of international fiction which prefigures both Hawthorne's *The Marble Faun* (1860) and James's international novels.

In portraying the moral contrast between the Adamic American[8] and the fallen Old World, Melville uses Redburn's adventures in Liverpool and London to illustrate two disparate aspects of evil. The young man's wanderings in the squalid, dock-side area of Liverpool present him with a horrifying vista of human depravity. He discovers that the slums are the breeding-grounds, not only for disease and death, but for the moral decay that is the inevitable concomitant of the degradation and brutalization of man. Vice, crime, and perversion of every variety are rampant in the lower depths of the city, so much so that the scenes he witnesses seem to him to depict a vision of Sodom, or even of Hell.

Redburn's excursion to London exposes him to a more subtle facet of evil — one that has particular significance within the context of international fiction, as will be shown subsequently. It is Harry Bolton, the charming but dissipated young Englishman whom Redburn encounters in Liverpool, who organizes their mysterious night-time visit to London in order to introduce his American friend to one of the pleasure-houses of the West End. In Aladdin's Palace, which is identified only as a 'semi-public place of opulent entertainment,'[9] Redburn glimpses the secret life of the fashionable English gentleman, with its decadent pastimes and dissolute morals.

Outwardly, Aladdin's Palace displays a semblance of beauty and 'splendor' (p. 229); it is described as 'brilliant' and 'superb' (p. 228). In the grand set of rooms which Redburn first enters with Bolton, the rich furnishings, painted frescoes on the walls and ceiling, and lavishly spread tables around which fine gentlemen are seated, all appear to him to be a 'magnificent spectacle' (p. 228) which dazzles the beholder. Yet from the first, Redburn feels misgivings when he surveys the scene, sensing an echo of despair which seems to mock the elegant array before him. He soon realizes that the adjoining rooms visited by Bolton are private ones set apart for gambling. When his friend returns, flushed and excited and somewhat inebriated, he conducts Redburn upstairs to an even more richly decorated and luxuriously furnished room, with numerous closed apartments which are apparently used for gambling, leading off from it, and bids Redburn wait there for him until he returns.

Despite its opulent, sumptuous beauty, this room, too, makes Redburn feel strangely uneasy and fearful: '. . . all the time, I felt ill

at heart; and was filled with an undercurrent of dismal forebodings' (p. 231). The imagery that he employs in describing the exotic furnishings conveys the disparity he senses between their apparent beauty and the taint of evil that they seem to exude: he alludes to 'the Persian carpeting, mimicking parterres of tulips, and roses, and jonquils, like a bower in Babylon' and to the 'oriental ottomans, whose cunning warp and woof were wrought into plaited serpents, undulating beneath beds of leaves . . .' (p. 230). His use of 'Babylon' and 'serpents' makes the aura of corruption unmistakable.

Above all, it is the panorama of mythological paintings on the walls which dominates the room, serving to bring the decadence of Aladdin's Palace into sharper focus:

> They were such pictures as the high-priests, for a bribe, showed to Alexander in the innermost shrine of the white temple in the Libyan oasis; such pictures as the pontiff of the sun strove to hide from Cortez, when, sword in hand, he burst open the sanctorum of the pyramid-fane at Cholula: such pictures as you may still see, perhaps, in the central alcove of the excavated mansion of Pansa, in Pompeii . . . such pictures as Martial and Suetonius mention as being found in the private cabinet of the Emperor Tiberius: such pictures as are delineated on the bronze medals, to this day dug up on the ancient island of Capreae: such pictures as you might have beheld in an arched recess, leading from the left hand of the secret side-gallery of the temple of Aphrodite in Corinth. (pp. 230–31)

The eroticism of these paintings compels the reader to view Aladdin's Palace from a somewhat different perspective, for it suggests that the palace is not only a gambling-house but an elegant, expensive brothel for the English gentleman. The vices practised in its hidden rooms, as discreetly advertised by the scenes arrayed on the walls, include the licentious indulgence of all manner of sexual proclivities.

* * *

Whether intentional or not on Melville's part, his account of Redburn's visit to Aladdin's Palace presents some fascinating parallels to Book II, Canto xii of Spenser's *Faerie Queene*—the section recounting Guyon's visit to the Bower of Bliss.[10] It is worth looking again, for example, at Melville's choice of diction to describe the 'cunning[ly] . . . wrought' furniture and the flowers of the carpet 'mimicking' those of 'a bower'. It should be noted, too, that Redburn refers to the ornate decoration of the first room that he enters in a similar manner: 'The walls were painted so as to deceive the eye . . . and groups of columns . . . supported a resplendent fresco ceiling, arched like a bower, and thickly clustering with mimic grapes' (p. 228). Even if the repetition of the

word 'bower' in both instances is taken as coincidental, there is nonetheless a striking resemblance to the Bower of Bliss in Melville's conception of a place where art and artificial adornment are skilfully employed to imitate nature[11] in order to provide a luxuriant setting for pleasure. Melville also makes it clear that there is something wrong with this art: it is false and deliberately misleading, as is shown by his use of words such as 'deceive the eye' (p. 228), 'mimic' (p. 228), 'mimicking' (p. 230), and 'cunning[ly] . . . wrought' (p. 230).

So, too, is this the case in Acrasia's Bower of Bliss. As C.S. Lewis has emphasized in his classic study, *The Allegory of Love,* Spenser is explicit in stating that Acrasia's garden is art, not nature; and by art, as Lewis shows, Spenser means artifice,[12] 'the artificial in its bad sense — the sham or imitation.'[13] Spenser indicates that the garden is situated in

> A place pickt out by choice of best aliue,
> That natures worke by art can imitate. . .[14]

Even where the garden appears to be natural, Spenser discloses that nature is, in fact, augmented and embellished by art. It is, he notes,

> . . . goodly beautifide
> With all the ornaments of *Floraes* pride,
> Wherewith her mother Art, as halfe in scorne
> Of niggard Nature, like a pompous bride
> Did decke her, and too lauishly adorne . . . (II. xii. 1. 4–8)

Moreover, the art in the garden, like that in the rooms of Aladdin's Palace, is deceptive, contriving as it does to counterfeit the real thing. The artificial ivy, for example, is disguised to mislead the observer:

> And ouer all, of purest gold was spred,
> A trayle of yuie, in his natiue hew:
> For the rich mettall was so coloured,
> That wight, who did not well auis'd it vew,
> Would surely deeme it to be yuie trew . . . (II. xii. 61. 1–5)

Even Acrasia herself is referred to as an enchantress who 'Tryde all her arts, and all her sleights . . .' (II. xii. 81. 9).

There is also a correspondence of specific details between Melville's description of the decorations in Aladdin's Palace and Spenser's description of Acrasia's garden. Like the mimic woven flowers in the carpet that Redburn refers to earlier, the garden has 'painted flowres' (II. xii. 58. 5). Like the painted bower thickly clustered with mimic grapes, on the ceiling of the room, the second

gate in the garden is arched overhead by a grapevine with branches weighted down by the abundance of their fruit. And here, too, among the real grapes are imitation ones '. . . of burnisht gold, / So made by art, to beautifie the rest . . .' (II. xii. 55. 1–2).

Commenting further on the negative attitude to art which is expressed by Spenser in his description of the Bower of Bliss—namely, his view that art, unlike nature, is spurious, lifeless, and sterile[15]—Lewis notes that Spenser's detailed descriptions of pictures and tapestries throughout *The Faerie Queene* are significant: '. . . he usually puts such artefacts in places which he thinks evil.'[16] Turning again to *Redburn,* the reader is cognizant that art serves an analogous purpose in Aladdin's Palace. For all their beauty and richness, Redburn is strangely repelled by the furnishings and decorations of the rooms he enters; they seem to him to have an inexplicably sinister quality. Moreover, it is the collection of erotic mythological paintings which becomes the visible symbol of the vice that Redburn senses around him.

Another point of resemblance between Aladdin's Palace and Acrasia's garden is found in the luxuriant beauty and sensuous appeal of both places. The opulent furnishings and ornate decorations of Aladdin's Palace provide a sumptuous setting for the entertainments which are offered there. Although the rooms possess a sybaritic splendour and magnificence that are absent from the garden, Spenser's description of that place conveys a corresponding impression of voluptuousness, abundance, and lushness. The Bower of Bliss is referred to as a 'daintie Paradise on ground' (II. xii. 58. 1), a place where 'all pleasures plenteously abound . . .' (II. xii. 58. 3). It is also a place

> In which what euer in this worldly state
> Is sweet, and pleasing vnto liuing sense,
> Or that may dayntiest fantasie aggrate,
> Was poured forth with plentifull dispence,
> And made there to abound with lauish affluence. (II. xii. 42. 5–9)

Yet the very lushness of adornment is, in both cases, shown to be excessive. Melville conveys Redburn's awareness of the surfeit of richness and luxury surrounding him: as he sits in the upstairs room waiting for Bolton, he acknowledges that '. . . a terrible revulsion came over me . . .' (p. 233). Spenser is even more explicit, using words such as 'too lauishly adorne' (II. xii. 1. 8) and 'ouer-wrought' (II. xii. 60. 6) to describe the garden. It should be noted, too, that the words 'sweet' or 'sweetly' recur sixteen times in Canto xii. One of the most striking instances of this over-ripe and cloying beauty found in Acrasia's garden is that of the grapes. Spenser refers to the grapevine whose '. . . weake bowes, with so rich load oppresst, / Did

bowe adowne, as ouer-burdened' (II. xii. 55. 5–6). The grapes tempt all who pass by to taste their 'lushious wine' (II. xii. 54. 4). However, in the porch over which the vines grow, sits Excesse, and the sweet wine that she prepares is made from 'the riper fruit' (II. xii. 56. 2), the fruit 'that with fulnesse sweld . . .' (II. xii. 56. 3).

Another clue to what is subtly wrong with Aladdin's Palace and Acrasia's Bower of Bliss is, in both instances, found in the suggestion of corrupt sexuality—in the fact that both places contrive to arouse lascivious desires. In Aladdin's Palace, this is done by means of the erotic paintings so prominently adorning the walls of the room upstairs. In the Bower of Bliss, these pictures have come to life, so to speak, and the tableau enacted before Guyon's eyes opens with the two naked girls bathing in Acrasia's pool:

> Two naked Damzelles he therein espyde,
> Which therein bathing, seemed to contend,
> And wrestle wantonly, ne car'd to hyde,
> Their dainty parts from vew of any, which them eyde. (II. xii. 63. 6–9)

That their sportive play is intended to titillate the observer is stated even more explicitly in the following stanza when we are told that, after plunging beneath the water,

> Then suddeinly both would themselues vnhele,
> And th'amarous sweet spoiles to greedy eyes reuele. (II. xii. 64. 8–9)

Their actions are deliberately provocative, designed to kindle Guyon's lust and arouse his desire. Indeed, when one of the girls sees Guyon watching her, she

> . . . rather higher did arise
> And her two lilly paps aloft displayd,
> And all, that might his melting hart entise
> To her delights, she vnto him bewrayd:
> The rest hid vnderneath, him more desirous made. (II. xii. 66. 5–9)

Guyon subsequently arrives at the Bower itself, where Acrasia is displayed beside her sleeping lover after having satiated her lust. Spenser notes that she

> . . . was arayd, or rather disarayd,
> All in a vele of silke and siluer thin,
> That hid no whit her alabaster skin. . . . (II. xii. 77. 3–5)

Lest we miss her resemblance to the girls bathing in the pool, Spenser adds that, 'Her snowy brest was bare to readie spoyle / Of hungry eies . . .' (II. xii. 78. 1–2).

Again, Lewis succinctly sums up Spenser's evident intention when he points out that, despite the erotic imagery used to describe the Bower of Bliss, there is actually no passion enacted there, no sexual activity at all:[17]

> The Bower of Bliss is not a picture of lawless, that is, unwedded, love as opposed to lawful love. It is a picture, one of the most powerful ever painted, of the whole sexual nature in disease. There is not a kiss or an embrace on the island: only male prurience and female provocation.[18]

In this sense, the scenes that Guyon witnesses correspond in function to the paintings that Redburn sees, since what is emphasized in both instances is the attempt to arouse the sexual desire of the beholder. Thus although Melville implies that sexual pleasures are among the entertainments offered at Aladdin's Palace, Redburn's growing awareness of being surrounded by wickedness and vice is enhanced, not by any specific indication that this is so, but rather by the nature of the paintings themselves.

It is evident that the incitement to lust and the deliberate provocation of lewd desires are of central importance in the Bower of Bliss, whereas in Aladdin's Palace, the paintings merely serve to intensify the general atmosphere of corruption that Redburn senses there from the moment he enters. However, Lewis makes an interesting comment about the Bower of Bliss that is relevant to this discussion, enabling us, once again, to relate Acrasia's Bower to Aladdin's Palace. He contends: '. . . the Bower is the home not of vicious sexuality in particular, but of vicious Pleasure, in general . . . The Bower is connected with sex at all only through the medium of Pleasure.'[19] He notes, too: 'The Bower is not the foe of Chastity but of Continence . . .'[20] Although Lewis's statements are somewhat categorical, there is evidence to support his claims. He cites the description of the Bower of Bliss as a place 'Where Pleasure dwelles in sensuall delights . . .' (II. xii. 1. 8). Equally significant, one should add, are Spenser's allusions to Acrasia earlier in Book II, when he states that, 'Her blisse is all in pleasure and delight' (II. i. 52. 1) and refers to her as

> The vile *Acrasia,* that with vaine delightes,
> And idle pleasures in her *Bowre* of *Blisse,*
> Does charme her louers. . . . (II. v. 27. 2–4)

Melville uses the term 'entertainment,' instead of 'pleasure,' but his attitude to Aladdin's Palace resembles that of Spenser to the Bower of Bliss. Moreover, in the sense that Lewis uses the term 'vicious'—that is, to denote that which is a vice or is morally evil—this term may also be applied to the drinking and gambling that the patrons of Aladdin's Palace engage in, since these activities represent the

intemperate, self-indulgent gratification of man's baser appetites.

Spenser also alludes to the fact that pleasure and delight are the means used by Acrasia 'Wherewith she makes her louers drunken mad . . .' (II. i. 52. 2); he tells us that her former lovers, who succumbed to the spell of her enchantment, have been transformed by her into '. . . wild-beasts, that rag'd with furie mad' (II. xii. 84. 5). In this context, it should be recalled that, after a night of dissipation (spent drinking, gambling, and possibly participating in other unspecified entertainments) Bolton bursts into the room where Redburn is waiting for him and reveals himself to be in a state near madness — wild, delirious, hysterical, and shouting 'with the foam at his lips' (p. 235).

Finally, a comparison of Spenser's Bower of Bliss and Melville's Aladdin's Palace reveals more general thematic correspondences as well. The second book of *The Faerie Queene* recounts the allegorical journey of Guyon, the Christian knight of temperance, as he finds his virtue assailed by various temptations which he resists with the aid of the palmer's counsel. Of all of these, the sensuous beauty and the sensual delights of the Bower of Bliss are the most seductive so that when Guyon at last binds Acrasia and destroys her Bower, refusing to allow himself to succumb to the spell of her enchantment, he achieves his most difficult moral victory.

The dominant motif that recurs throughout Canto xii, the section describing Guyon's visit to the Bower of Bliss, is that of the disparity between appearance and reality. Spenser tells us that near the gate, at the entrance to the garden, sits Genius,

> That secretly doth vs procure to fall,
> Through guilefull semblaunts, which he makes vs see.
> He of this Gardin had the gouernall,
> And Pleasures porter was deuizd to bee . . . (II. xii. 48. 5–8)

The deceptiveness of outward appearances in the garden is illustrated, not only by the fact that what seems to be natural is really artificial, as noted earlier, but even more important, by the fact that what is beautiful is nonetheless morally corrupt.

Guyon is surprised by the loveliness of Acrasia's garden: 'Much wondred *Guyon* at the faire aspect / Of that sweet place . . .' (II. xii. 53. 1–2). Yet he does not allow this to blind him to its wickedness. He resists its appeal: '. . . [he] suffred no delight / To sincke into his sence, nor mind affect . . .' (II. xii. 53. 2–3). Even though the garden appears to him to be a veritable 'Paradise' (II. xii. 70. 4), with sweet music harmoniously blended to include 'all that pleasing is to liuing eare' (II. xii. 70.7), he is aware that it is a false Paradise. It should be recalled, too, that when first approaching the island where the Bower of Bliss is situated, Guyon is warned by the palmer that

before them, '. . . a perlous passage lyes, / Where many Mermayds haunt, making false melodies' (II. xii. 17. 8–9). Indeed, Acrasia herself is referred to as 'a false enchaunteresse' (II. 1. 51. 3). To avoid evil when it is ugly may not constitute much of a moral triumph, but to reject the alluring beauty and enticing erotic pleasures which are displayed in the garden, as Guyon does, is to offer convincing proof of moral virtue.

There are obvious points of corespondence between Guyon and Redburn. Like the Christian knight, Redburn is innocent, virtuous, and temperate; like Guyon's journey, his own voyage represents a series of encounters with evil in its various guises. James E. Miller, Jr., notes: 'If in Liverpool Redburn finds that evil is repulsive . . . he discovers in London that evil can also be attractive . . .'[21] Whereas the scenes that he witnesses in the slums of Liverpool reveal vice in its most sordid and degrading forms, his visit to Aladdin's Palace can be seen as a temptation or test of character which is analogous to that which Guyon faces in the Bower of Bliss. Moreover, it is one from which he, like Guyon, emerges uncorrupted even though he lacks a moral guide such as the palmer and is, in fact, in danger of being led astray by his companion, Harry Bolton.

Redburn also resembles Guyon in readily acknowledging the fair aspect of the rooms in Aladdin's Palace; he is cognizant of their superficial beauty, their richness and elegance. Nevertheless, like Guyon, he refuses to be beguiled by outward appearances, perceiving as he does that the attractions of Aladdin's Palace represent a kind of enchantment of the senses: he speaks of being 'enchanted . . . fast to my chair; so that, though I . . . wished to rush forth from the house, my limbs seemed manacled' (p. 233).

It is this notion of enchantment, a quality that is also present in Acrasia's garden, which helps account for an otherwise puzzling aspect of the episode portrayed in Melville's novel—its unreal, dream-like quality. When Redburn first enters the house, he fancies that it is, as its name suggests, a veritable palace of Aladdin, for its gorgeous and exotic splendour seems to him to evoke a fabulous scene from the Arabian Nights. Moreover, the entire episode has a strange and mysterious phantasmagoric quality. On his arrival in London, Redburn discloses that '. . . I thought . . . myself somebody else: so unreal seemed every thing about me' (p. 227). After entering Aladdin's Palace, he adds that, '. . . my head was almost dizzy with the strangeness of the sight . . .' (p. 229); and shortly afterwards, he refers to 'the delirium of the moment' and to his 'confused visions' (p. 229).

The atmosphere of enchantment which Redburn feels in Aladdin's Palace has pejorative associations: it suggests that which is unreal, illusory, and spurious. Sensing that the splendid façade of the palace is deceptive, Redburn is not enticed by the

entertainments which are offered there but, on the contrary, is made increasingly uneasy by the sinister quality of his surroundings. As he sits in the magnificent upstairs room awaiting Bolton's return, his dream-like state takes on the characteristics of a nightmare, and he is suddenly overwhelmed by a strong presentiment of evil:

> I shuddered at every footfall, and almost thought it must be some assassin pursuing me. The whole place seemed infected; and a strange thought came over me, that in the very damasks around, some eastern plague had been imported. And was that pale yellow wine, that I drank below, drugged? thought I. This must be some house whose foundations take hold on the pit... (p. 233)

The dominant imagery of this passage is that of danger, disease, and damnation, attesting to the fact that the opulent beauty of Aladdin's Palace does not blind Redburn to its iniquity. Instead, he realizes that even artifice and adornment cannot effectively disguise the true nature of evil:

> But... spite of the metropolitan magnificence around me, I was mysteriously alive to a dreadful feeling, which I had never before felt, except when penetrating into the lowest and most squalid haunts of sailor iniquity in Liverpool. All the mirrors and marbles around me seemed crawling over with lizards; and I thought to myself, that though gilded and golden, the serpent of vice is a serpent still. (p. 234)

Despite his unworldliness, Redburn is able to discern the presence of vice, however richly it is caparisoned with beauty; despite his lack of experience, he is able to recognize the similarity between Aladdin's Palace and the low haunts of sailors in the slums of Liverpool. That he can do so attests to his moral virtue. Furthermore, his ability to withstand the appeal of Aladdin's Palace without succumbing to the temptation which it represents constitutes an important moral victory. In both respects, Redburn's resemblance to Guyon, Spenser's knight of temperance, is confirmed.

* * *

In his account of Redburn's excursion to Aladdin's Palace, Melville dramatizes the contrast between American virtue and European vice, exposing the decadence of upper-class English society beneath its brilliant façade. In doing so, he portrays a type of situation found, in various and sundry transformations, in numerous works of nineteenth-century American international fiction. This episode can be seen, in fact, to encapsulate the American's journey to Europe insofar as that journey represents the American innocent's discovery that the Old World, for all its

outward aesthetic appeal — its art and civilization, its elegance and refinement, its polish and sophistication — is nonetheless tainted by an insidious moral corruption.

At the same time, there is a striking congruity between this distinctively American rendering of the international situation and the dominant motif found in the section of *The Faerie Queene* dealing with the Bower of Bliss — namely, Guyon's repudiation of the beautiful for the good. More specifically, it is the same motif used by Spenser which reappears, in new configurations, not only in *Redburn,* but in Theodore Fay's *Norman Leslie* (1835), Nathaniel Park Willis's *Paul Fane* (1857), Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Marble Faun* (1960), and William Dean Howells's *The Lady of the Aroostook* (1879), as well as in the international novels of Henry James, where the conscious affirmation of moral values over aesthetic ones reaches its finest, most subtle treatment in all of American fiction. A comparison of *Redburn* and *The Faerie Queene* thus confirms that the polarity of the New World and the Old emphasized in Melville's work, and in nineteenth-century American international fiction, in general, is as much an archetypal literary theme as it is an expression of a particular cultural attitude.

Durban

NOTES

1. Since there is considerable controversy over the question of point of view in *Redburn,* it should be emphasized that the evidence of the text supports Merlin Bowen's contention that the controlling centre of consciousness in the work is the mature Redburn, a retrospective narrator looking back to the time of his youth. See Merlin Bowen, '*Redburn* and the Angle of Vision,' *Modern Philology,* 52 (1954), 101–02.
2. For a detailed study of the extent to which *Redburn* is actually autobiographical, see William H. Gilman, *Melville's Early Life and 'Redburn'* (New York: New York Univ. Press, 1951).
3. Merlin Bowen, Introd., *Redburn,* by Herman Melville (New York: Rinehart Editions-Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971), p. xxi. Page numbers in the text refer to this edition.
4. Cushing Strout, too, stresses this interpretation of the novel: '. . . *Redburn* is not only a prosaic narrative of a young sailor's first voyage; it is also the story of an innocent's initiation to experience . . .' See Cushing Strout, *The American Image of the Old World* (New York: Harper and Row, 1963), p. 87.
5. Newton Arvin, 'The Author of *Typee, Omoo,* etc.,' in *Herman Melville* (New York: William Morrow, 1950); rpt. as '*Mardi, Redburn, White-Jacket,*' in *Melville: A Collection of Critical Essays,* ed. Richard Chase (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1962), p. 27.
   Arvin also contends that Redburn's voyage is 'a metaphor . . . of the passage from childhood and innocence to experience and adulthood . . .' See Arvin, p. 29.
6. Arvin, for example, ignores the internationalism of the novel even when he compares it to works by Hawthorne and James. He writes: 'The subject [the initiation of innocence into evil] is a permanent one for literature, of course, but it has also a peculiarly American dimension, and in just this sense, not in any other, *Redburn* looks . . . forward to *The Marble Faun* and to so much of James himself.' See Arvin, p. 27.

7. The term 'European' is used here in the general sense to denote an aspect of the Old World.
8. Arvin maintains that '. . . Redburn sets out from his mother's house in a state of innocence like that before the Fall . . .' See Arvin, p. 27.
   For a more detailed discussion of Redburn as an Adamic figure, see R.W.B. Lewis, *The American Adam: Innocence, Tragedy, and Tradition in the Nineteenth Century* (1955: rpt. Chicago: Phoenix—Univ. of Chicago Press, 1958), pp. 136–38.
9. Herman Melville, *Redburn: His First Voyage: Being the Sailor-boy Confessions and Reminiscences of the Son-of-a-Gentleman, in the Merchant Service,* ed. Harrison Hayford, Hershel Parker, and G. Thomas Tanselle (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern Univ. Press; Chicago: Newberry Library, 1969), p. 228. All further references to this work appear in the text.
10. It is reasonable to suppose that Melville was familiar with Spenser even though the list of Melville's reading compiled by Merton M. Sealts, Jr., indicates that he only acquired a copy of Spenser's *Poetical Works* in 1862 (more than a decade after the publication of *Redburn*). See Merton M. Sealts, Jr., *Melville's Reading: A Check-List of Books Owned and Borrowed* (Madison, Wis.: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1966), p. 95.
    In this context, it is useful to cite Nathalia Wright's comments on Melville's use of Spenser in *Mardi:* 'The last episode in Herman Melville's *Mardi,* the meeting of Taji and Hautia on the island of Flozella, contains several notable parallels with Canto xii of the second book of Spenser's *Faerie Queene,* wherein Sir Guyon visits Acrasia's Bower of Bliss.' Since *Redburn* was written directly after *Mardi,* Wright's discovery lends credence to the idea that the parallels to Spenser's Faerie Queene found in *Redburn* are deliberate. See Nathalia Wright, 'A Note on Melville's Use of Spenser: Hautia and the Bower of Bliss,' *American Literature,* 24 (1952), 83.
11. Although the parallels between Aladdin's Palace and the Bower of Bliss have generally been overlooked by critics, they are noted briefly by John Seelye. Seelye alludes to the fact that Aladdin's Palace 'is an Acrasian bower, planted with insinuating diction which suggests deception, mimicry, similitude—"sculptured . . . vine-boughs," "mimic grapes," and "porcelain moons"—hints that all is counterfeit, illusory, false' (p. 51). However, Seelye does not explore the significance of the parallels between Melville's work and Spenser's. Contrasting the artificial garden of Aladdin's Palace to the garden in the fort which Redburn's ship passes as it first sails out of the Narrows into the open sea and which is intended to represent a symbol 'of the past, of childhood, a kind of Eden or Arcadia' (p. 50), Seelye maintains that, in Aladdin's Palace, Redburn 'reaches the nadir of his experience, a polar opposite to the idyllic garden of youth' (p. 51). See John Seelye, *Melville: The Ironic Diagram* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern Univ. Press, 1970), pp. 50–51.
12. C.S. Lewis, *The Allegory of Love: A Study in Medieval Tradition* (1936; rpt. London: Galaxy—Oxford Univ. Press, 1968), pp. 325–28.
13. C.S. Lewis, p. 327.
14. Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene,* Vol. I of *The Poetical Works of Edmund Spenser,* ed. J.C. Smith (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1909), II. xii. 42. 3–4. All further references to this work appear in the text.
15. C.S. Lewis, pp. 326–28.
16. C.S. Lewis, p. 326.
17. C.S. Lewis, pp. 330–32.
18 C.S. Lewis, p. 332.
19. C.S. Lewis, p. 339.
20. C.S. Lewis, p. 340.
21. James E. Miller, Jr., '*Redburn* and *White-Jacket:* Initiation and Baptism,' *Nineteenth-Century Fiction,* 13 (1959), 284.

OUT-HERODING HEROD: HYPER-HYPERBOLE IN *KING LEAR* AND DONNE'S *NOCTURNAL*

by R.S. EDGECOMBE

When Hopkins begins one of his Terrible Sonnets with the words 'No worst, there is none', he means I think to convey the desolate inanition of feeling taxed beyond the limits of human endurance. Yet the unexpected superlative 'No worst', wrenched against the groove of idiom from the comparative degree, suggests that even at the outer limits of suffering, a sufferer can glimpse still further provinces of ineffable misery. It is this sense of extending sorrow beyond the limits of the conceivably sorrowful that I wish to examine here. Although neither the effect nor the means used to secure it occurs only in *King Lear* and Donne's 'A Nocturnal upon S. Lucy's Day, being the shortest day' (the works on which I shall be focussing), they *do* feature in a concentration convenient to criticism.

The passage through horror to further horror is of course central to the experience of *King Lear*, with its almost unendurable prolongation of anguish in the storm scenes, the rapidity with which it drives us on, emotionally exhausted by the spectacle of Lear's derangement, to the equally horrific scene of Gloucester's blinding, and the kink in its peripeteia, which extends hope only to snatch it back. Indeed, Edgar's response to his father's plight might be taken as an epigraph (curiously prefigurative of the Hopkins sonnet) for the whole rhythm of the play:

> And worse I may be yet; the worst is not
> So long as we can say 'This is the worst'.
>
> (IV, i 27–8)[1]

In a way that reflects the investment of a horrible absolute with a still more horrible relativity, several images in *King Lear* register suffering by re-extending an already extended utterance. The strategy — though not of course its profoundly reverberant implications — is first glimpsed in the devious way Goneril beggars description during the love test:

> A love that makes breath poor and speech unable;
> Beyond all manner of so much I love you.
>
> (I, i 59–60)

This is naturally a mere rhetorical convenience — the absolute is set beyond the limit of articulation, and so enables the speaker to sink back voluptuously into the cushion of the hyperbole, exempt from having further to whip up her non-existent emotions. But once the

figure comes to canalise real passion, it can provide a vehicle for a truly terrible intensity of feeling.

When Lear renounces Cordelia, the Cordelia in whom he had invested his geatest love — 'I loved her most' (I, i 122) — he conveys his fury by an image of impossible displacement. She is disinherited to admit instead the most unfeeling instance of inhumanity that her father can conceive:

> . . . The barbarous Scythian,
> Or he that makes his generation messes
> To gorge his appetite, shall to my bosom
> Be as well neighbour'd, pitied, and reliev'd,
> As thou my sometime daughter.
>
> (I, i 115–9)

The operative word here is 'sometime', since it gives the Scythian (already invoked in flagrant hyperbole) usurping precedence over a favourite daughter, and so pushes the auxesis further still. One might note in passing that this image of embracing a parricidal cannibal gains an added charge of irony in the light of Lear's invective against his 'pelican daughters' later in the play (III, iv 74). The king's first withdrawal from Goneril is marked by a similarly relative presentment of an absolute image of treachery, where he likewise slides toward a new sense of outrage through a seam-opening comparative:

> Ingratitude, thou marble-hearted fiend,
> More hideous, when thou show'st thee in a child,
> Than the sea-monster.
>
> (I, iv 257–9)

And again:

> . . . that she may feel
> How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is
> To have a thankless child!
>
> (I, iv 285–7)

A variant on the same rhetorical tactic can be seen in the impossible hypothesis with which Kent rebukes Regan:

> Why, Madam, if I were your father's dog,
> You should not use me so.
>
> (II, ii 131–2)

Here the force of the rhetoric inheres in the unlikelihood of the absolute which the speaker invokes to judge the aberration. The most sensitive Elizabethan would I think have had few qualms

about shutting out a dog for a day and a night, but granted such a putative (and therefore impossible) sensitivity, how much more wicked and culpable the exclusion of a man. An interesting sidelight is cast on this image by a sentence from William de Pagula's *Oculus Sacerdotis*, with its arraignment of unworthy priests, ('More freely do they offer food to a dog than to a poor man'),[2] and another from John Bromyard's *Summa Predicantium*, where the rich are shown to provide for their dogs more readily than for the poor, more abundantly and delicately too.[3] Here what is only hypothetical in Kent's remark is advanced as a literal measure of inhumanity. A comparable slip from impossibly enlarged rhetoric into something very like its realisation can be seen in Lear's indignant cry, 'I could as well be brought/To knee his throne' i.e. France's (II, iv 211–2) matched as it is by his humility before the Queen of France later in the play — 'No, Sir, you must not kneel', (IV, vii 59).

Returning to our list of hyperbolic impossibilities, we can observe how, in III, i 12–14, the Gentleman addressed by Kent helps us gauge the enormity of Lear's derangement by summoning up emblems of hardiness and bestiality only to show the animals securely housed while the old man runs wild:

> This night, wherein the cub-drawn bear would crouch,
> The lion and belly-pinched wolf
> Keep their fur dry, unbonneted he runs,
>
> (III, i 12–14)

Here again an already strained hyperbole is racked further still, for bears which are 'cub-drawn' are presumably more ursine still, and so doubly lupine are 'belly-pinched' wolves, yet the storm is such that it quells their impulse to roam abroad. Later, tautening the idea over several scenes, Shakespeare has Kent establish the unprecedented violence of the storm — 'Since I was a man/Such sheets of fire, such bursts of horrid thunder,/Such groans of roaring wind and rain, I never/Remember to have heard; man's nature cannot carry/Th'affliction nor the fear' (III, ii 45–9) — only to have Lear scale it down in comparison with his own internal storm:

> Thou think'st 'tis much that this contentious storm
> Invades us to the skin: so 'tis to thee;
> But where the greater malady is fix'd,
> The lesser is scarce felt.
>
> (III, iv 6–7)

Once again Shakespeare has re-adjusted the boundaries of superlative fixity in order to disclose yet wider vistas of suffering 'in the country of the mind'.

Gloucester later endorses the inconceivable nature of the elder

daughters' treatment of their father in a way that almost replicates Kent's reproach to Regan, though *his* imagery substitutes a wild for a domestic animal, and so intensifies both the improbability and the aberrant behaviour it serves to chart:

> If wolves had at thy gate howl'd that dearn time,
> Thou should'st have said 'Good porter, turn the key.'
>
> (III, vii 61–2)

And yet again Albany rebukes Goneril with an instance of auxesis screwed up beyond the pitch of credibility:

> A father, and a gracious aged man,
> Whose reverence even the head-lugg'd bear would lick,
> Most barbarous, most degenerate! have you madded.
>
> (IV, ii 41–3)

Even in the relative calm of Act IV, Cordelia introduces into her tender, berceuse-like monologue over her sleeping father a dissonance reminiscent of the over-taxed hyperbole of previous scenes:

> . . . Mine enemy's dog,
> Though he had bit me, should have stood that night
> Against my fire.
>
> (IV, vii 36–8)

Kent's final epitaph on Lear — 'he hates him/That would upon the rack of this tough world/Stretch him out longer' (V, iii 312–4) — crystallises the sense we entertain throughout the play of human capacity stretched to a point where death alone supplies relief. The instances of surcharged hyperbole listed above play their part, I believe, in fixing this pervasive anguish.

A similarly intense anguish — even though it is much less passionately figured forth — seeps through every line of Donne's 'A Nocturnal upon S. Lucy's Day'. It opens with images of exhausted, numbed ultimacy, concentring a figurative midnight on a literal one, and so superimposing one absolute upon another:

> 'Tis the year's midnight, and it is the day's,
> Lucy's, who scarce seven hours herself unmasks,
> The sun is spent, and now his flasks
> Send forth light squibs, no constant rays;
> The world's whole sap is sunk:
> The general balm th' hydroptic earth hath drunk,
> Whither, as to the bed's-feet, life is shrunk,
> Dead and interred; yet all these seem to laugh,
> Compared with me, who am their epitaph.[4]

The trudging movement from one absolute to another, from 'the world's whole sap' (draggingly spondaic) to 'The general balm', reaches a kind of finality in the near-hendiadys of 'dead and interred' and the world-weary caesura. And yet, even at this pitch of extremity, Donne opens up his extreme with a concessive conjunction, and pushes the sense of misery still further. Every detail of the scene in all its darkly absolute vacuity is subsumed to the poet himself, no longer a sentient being, but an inanimate acknowledgement of death — 'who am their epitaph'.

It is this idea that provides the nodal centre for the following stanza:

> Study me then, you who shall lovers be
> At the next world, that is, at the next spring:
> For I am every dead thing,
> In whom love wrought new alchemy.
> For his art did express
> A quintessence even from nothingness,
> From dull privations, and lean emptiness
> He ruined me, and I am re-begot
> Of absence, darkness, death; things which are not.

The very statement, 'I am every dead thing', carries its own cancellation within itself, for the personal pronoun is countervailed by the neuter noun; being, by deadness. Here Donne has realised the impossible extension of an ultimate state in paradox, a paradox restated in the yoking of procreation and nullity — 'I am re-begot/ Of absence, darkness, death; things which are not'.

Whereas in stanza three 'All others, from all things, draw all that's good' (that strumming on the absolute 'all' is typical of Donne), the poet simply 'is' their grave, the purposeful active voice displaced by a nullifying passive, which engulfs those absolutes once again in the vacancy that lies beyond them. The same vacancy is vividly dramatised in the fourth strophe, where a syllogism is shorn of its expected conclusion in such a way as to convey the poet's lamely defective sense of reality:

> . . . all, all some properties invest;
> If I an ordinary nothing were,
> As shadow, a light, and body must be here.

But the projected 'ought' has no 'is' to match it, as the opening of the next stanza makes clear — 'But I am none'.

Such persisted extensions of the inextensible, while they do not have the anguished, raw immediacy of those in *King Lear*, do share a recognisable strategy of stretching metaphor as far as it can go, and beyond. The result in Donne's lyric is dogged and sullen,

showing little of the dash and flourish that usually characterises his use of hyperbole. (Brian Vickers in an essay on the subject refers to its expression of 'energy and intensity'.)[5]

It follows that language, if it is dragged beyond the point of inanition into nullity itself, will drain its energy into lassitude.

In his Devotion XIX Donne toys rhetorically with the idea of boundless suffering, only to banish it in a celebration of Grace:

> But wherefore, O my God, hast thou presented to us the afflictions and calamities of this life in the name of waters? so often in the name of waters, and deep waters, and seas of waters? Must we look to be drowned? are they bottomless, are they boundless? That is not the dialect of thy language . . .[6]

It is however the dialect both of *King Lear* and the 'Nocturnal', the 'bottomlessness' and 'boundlessness' of whose suffering the hyper-hyperbole of their languages help to chart.

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NOTES

1. William Shakespeare, *King Lear* ed. Kenneth Muir (London: Methuen, 1952, rev. and reset 1972). All subsequent references are to this edition.
2. Quoted in G.R. Owst, *Literature and Pulpit in Medieval England* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1933, rev. and rept. 1966), p. 279.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 327.
4. John Donne *The Complete English Poems* ed. A.J. Smith (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971), p. 72. All subsequent references are to this text.
5. Brian Vickers "The 'Songs and Sonets' and the Rhetoric of Hyperbole" in *John Donne: Essays in Celebration* ed. A.J. Smith (London: Methuen, 1972), p. 139.
6. John Donne *Devotions upon Emergent Occasions* (Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Press, 1959), p. 126.

CORRESPONDENCE

'THE GREAT DIVIDE'

The Editors,
Theoria.

My reactions to the response from Grahame Hayes to my article, 'The Great Divide' were twofold: I appreciated that he *did* respond and in so doing, initiated a discussion. But the hostility of his reply and the fact that he chose to respond critically rather than substantively, caused me dismay.

He regards my article as an 'intervention' in an area where I have no right to be ('. . . had she attended to the current debates and literature in the field in which she intervenes' p. 81) and twice (p. 79 and p. 81) chastises *Theoria* for printing it. Although he claims to be constructively motivated, he uses various devices to demolish the argument without (I suggest) taking it seriously. He discredits ('her argument is basically incoherent' p. 77); he disallows ('it is not adequate theoretically to deal with the problem of politics and personality by simply making an analogy' p. 78); he belittles ('It would be argued in most significant discussions . . .' p. 79); and he patronises ('I don't doubt that Stewart intends a positive contribution' p. 80). In displaying his scholarship, which is clearly impressive, Mr Hayes implicitly lays claim to an exclusive theoretical territory. If one is precluded from approaching a problem except by established paths, one is by definition an intruder if one approaches it from another, unfamiliar direction.

In his final, throw-away line, Mr Hayes states: 'Incidentally, some of my own work — published and unpublished — has been an attempt at a social scientific analysis of the articulation of political, social and economic practices with individual development and human attributes.' In this may lie an explanation for his surprisingly scathing attack on someone else attempting the same thing, who does not claim to be a social or political scientist. However, Mr Hayes would probably concede that no theory is sacrosanct, and if 'the literature and discussions which have accompanied the theoretical and practical work pertaining to the particular problem at hand' (p. 80) have not as yet provided solutions, then I submit that it is not defiance or ignorance (as he implies, p. 80) to throw in ideas from the sidelines. Brainstorming is a healthy and stimulating exercise, to be welcomed by openminded thinkers.

If the idea I put forward turns out to be invalid, so be it. But what if it is true? After all, it is *what* is true (or valid or 'right') that matters, not who says it.

He offers one substantive criticism, challenging the role of the

family. Even in this he states that I manifest an 'unproblematic acceptance of family life as the mediating site and socialising agent par excellence . . .' (p. 79) whereas I acknowledged four ways in which the family could fail in its task. It is true and very important, that if the family fails to be both loving enough and firm enough the child may not achieve mastery over his destructive impulses. These can then be acted out overtly in anti-social behaviour or show up as hostile social attitudes. The struggle against one's unconscious destructive impulses continues throughout life, but these are more likely to affect our personal relationships than the society around us. There is a need for education in parenting. It is a most difficult task.

But this is part of the substantive debate. Mr Hayes is clearly qualified to respond substantively, and I hope will.

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