THEORIA

A JOURNAL OF STUDIES

in the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences

NATAL SOCIETY
22. JUN. 1963
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PIETERMARITZBURG

THEORIA

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UNIVERSITY OF NATAL PRESS

PIETERMARITZBURG

15 JUNE, 1963

EDITORIAL COMMENT

Our correspondence column seems to be flourishing fairly heartily. Are there any other readers who would like to throw in a wholesome apple of discord ? Or pick it up ?

Though so many of our most gifted men and women have left us for happier shores, it is cheering to find that we are still remembered by some of them. We are happy to publish in *Theoria 20* an article from Winnipeg on Wordsworth's poem *The Idiot Boy* and Professor Durrant's discovery of the interesting part played in it by Wordsworth's early knowledge and love of classical poetry. One of our articles, on *Tragedy as Epiphany,* hails all the way from Uganda, and others come from as far away as Cape Town and Grahamstown—not to mention Johannesburg.

We hope to continue receiving good articles from so far away as well as from our own University.

THE EDITORS.

'THE IDIOT BOY'

by G. H. DURRANT

'THE IDIOT BOY', which was composed at Alfoxden in 1798, appears to be an extreme example of the naive or rustic style in poetry.[1] Wordsworth told Isabella Fermor that he had composed it 'almost extempore', without correcting a word, though one stanza had been omitted.[2]

> I mention this in gratitude to those happy moments, for, in truth, I never composed anything with so much glee.[3]

The story itself is a simple one, and the telling appears to be artless. An old woman is sick, her neighbour sends her idiot son to fetch the doctor; the idiot boy is lost all night; the mother goes herself to seek for him, but the doctor knows nothing, and is annoyed at being disturbed. The mother, dreading what may have happened to her son, is almost out of her mind with grief; she finds him at last by a waterfall, and, to complete the joy of the reunion, the old woman who was sick has recovered and comes to meet mother and son.

This appears to be realism after the manner of Crabbe. But the poem is very different in its effect from anything that Crabbe aspired to. There is a visionary quality in the whole story, and the dominant objects—the trees, the owls, the streams which reappear insistently, the 'green-grown pool' in which Betty fears she may drown herself, the 'roaring Waterfall' by which she seeks her Idiot Boy—all appear steeped in the transforming light of the moon. The doctor is commonplace enough, and even wears a night-cap; but he too is transformed by the moon:

> The Doctor at the casement shows
> His glimmering eyes that peep and doze !
> And one hand rubs his old night-cap.
>
> 249-251

Wordsworth told Isabella Fermor that the last stanza,

> The cocks did crow to-whoo, to-whoo
> And the sun did shine so cold,

'was the foundation of the whole'. He is also reported as saying:

> The words were reported to me by my dear friend, Thomas Poole; but I have since heard the same repeated of other idiots.[4]

Wordsworth, by insisting on the origin of the story in real life, as he so often does, once again seems to assert that the poem is social commentary, or social realism. Certainly this local and topical

inspiration discourages the reader from looking any further for an understanding of the poem.

But Wordsworth, by drawing our attention to the first lines of the last stanza as 'the foundation of the whole', also gives a valuable hint. The Idiot Boy has been lost all night in the moonlight, with the owls hooting round him. But he has experienced this as a happy day under the sun, with the cocks crowing. He has, through his very idiocy, permission to enter another world, a world that is barred to ordinary mortals.

We are not told about his journey, but follow it only in the fearful fancy of his mother.

> Perhaps he's climbed into an oak
> Where he will stay till he is dead.
>
> 222-223

Or perhaps he has joined the gipsies, or has gone into 'the dark cave, the goblins' hall', or is in the castle among the ghosts, or, finally, 'playing with the waterfall'.

224-231

The poet later imagines him (lines 316-340) as possibly meeting with 'strange adventures'; he may have climbed the 'cliffs and peaks' to

> Lay his hands upon a star
> And bring it in his pocket home.
>
> 315-316

Or he may be riding backwards, as a ghost-rider through the valley, or be hunting sheep, or he may have been changed into a demon rider, with 'head and heels on fire'.

332-336

We do not know where the Idiot Boy goes, or what he experiences during the long night he spends under the moon. But he is found

> near the waterfall
> Which thunders down with headlong force,
> Beneath the moon, yet shining fair,
> As careless as if nothing were.
>
> 346-350

It is his mother, and not the Boy himself, who takes a journey that we can follow. She goes 'through the moonlight lane', into the 'moonlight dale', and seeks Johnny everywhere:

> In high and low, above, below,
> In great and small, in round and square,
> In bush and brake, in black and green.
>
> 207-210

She then crosses the bridge, and pauses to wonder if Johnny has

> his horse forsook
> To hunt the moon within the brook,
> And never will be heard of more.
>
> 214-216

As with the fancy about the oak, Johnny is thought of not simply as dying, but as remaining for ever in the stream. Betty next calls on the Doctor, and is rebuffed; the Doctor is disgruntled; 'The Devil take his wisdom', he says of Johnny. Betty resumes her search, but she hears nothing but the sound of streams:

> 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.
>
> 283-286

She next comes to the 'green-grown pond' and hurries past it; and she at last finds Johnny near the 'roaring waterfall', which is strongly insisted on as part of the experience:

> The roaring waterfall she hears
> And cannot find her Idiot Boy.
>
> 360-361

She finds him, and her own joy is expressed in an image of the torrent:

> She looks again—her arms are up—
> She screams—she cannot move for joy;
> She darts, as with a torrent's force,
> And fast she holds her Idiot Boy.

The Idiot Boy then, is in another world; and his Mother seems to follow him there and save him. She has sent him happily on his journey, and he goes off on his horse with a 'holly-bough', which is insisted on twice in the stanzas that immediately follow:

> And with a *hurly-burly* now,
> He shakes the green bough in his hand.
>
> 50-51
>
> 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.
>
> 78-81

What is this strange journey that Johnny takes, and what is the significance of the 'green bough', the waterfall, and the moon?

This cannot be understood without recognizing the literary associations of these images. The 'green bough' must surely have carried for a reader of Virgil inevitable associations with Book VI of the *Aeneid*, where Aeneas descends into the underworld after seeking the golden bough which will protect him and bring him back safely:

> As in winter's cold, amid the woods, the mistletoe, sown of an alien tree, is wont to bloom with strange leafage, and with yellow fruit embrace the shapely stems:

> such was the vision of the leafy gold on the shadowy ilex, so rustled the foil in the gentle breeze.[5]
>
> (Aeneid VI, 206-211)

The scenes that Aeneas meets with in his underworld journey, after his visit to the 'deep cave' of the Sibyl, are strikingly similar to the perils that beset the Idiot Boy in his mother's fearful imagination:

> On they went dimly, beneath the lonely night amid the gloom, through the empty halls of Dis and his phantom realm, even as under the grudging light of an inconstant moon lies a patch in the forest, when Jupiter has buried the sky in shade, and black night has stolen from the world her hues.
>
> (VI, 268-272)

The oak which the mother fears her boy may stay in 'till he is dead' is paralleled by an elm, which, at the entrance to the underworld, 'spreads her boughs and aged arms, the home which, men say, false dreams hold here and there, clinging under every leaf'. (282-284). And in Virgil there are monstrous shapes, beasts, Chimaeras, and Harpies lying in wait; but Aeneas passes through their ranks unscathed, as the Idiot Boy is unharmed by the goblins and ghosts of his mother's terrified imagination. Similarly, the waterfall by which the Idiot Boy is found, and whose 'roaring' water 'thunders', like the 'hoarse-voiced' waters of the 'whirlpool' of Tartarean Acheron. (296-356).

But there is another underworld journey which has even more interesting parallels with 'The Idiot Boy'. In Book IV of Virgil's *Georgics*, the shepherd Aristaeus finds that his bees are sick, and pleads with his mother, the water-nymph Cyrene, to aid him. Cyrene is told by a nymph that the wailing she hears is her son's:

> O sister Cyrene, no idle alarm is thine at wailing so loud. 'Tis even he, thy chiefest care, thy Aristaeus, standing sadly and in tears by the wave of Father Peneus, and crying out on thy name for cruelty.
>
> (IV, 351-356)[6]

Cyrene causes the waves to part so that Aristaeus may come to her under the water:

> And lo, the wave, arched mountain-like, stood round about, and, welcoming him within the vast recess, ushered him beneath the stream. And now, marvelling at his mother's home, a realm of waters, at the lakes locked in caverns, and the echoing groves, he went on his way, and dazed by the mighty rush of waters, he gazed on all the rivers, as, each in its own place, they glide under the great earth.
>
> (IV, 360-366)

In her under-water bower, Cyrene tells her son how to find a cure for the sickness of his bees. He must go and find Proteus as he lies

asleep, bind him in fetters, and compel him to reveal the secret. He will change his shape many times, but he must not be allowed to escape, and he will finally return to his original shape and reveal the secret.

(Since Proteus is so ready to change his shape, we must perhaps not be surprised to find him appearing in Wordsworth's poem as a sleepy Doctor in a night-cap, with his eyes glittering in the moon.)

The passage which follows in Virgil describes, in Virgil's way, the power of a mother's love. As Cyrene sends her son on his journey, she gives him strength from her 'effluence':

> She spake, and shed abroad ambrosia's fragrant stream, wherewith she steeped her son's whole frame: and lo, a sweet effluence breathed from his smoothened locks, and vigour and suppleness passed into his limbs.
>
> (IV, 415-418)

Here we may compare Betty sending off her poor Idiot Boy, with all the effluence of her love about him:

> And while the Mother, at the door,
> Stands fixed, her face with joy o'erflows,
> Proud of herself, and proud of him,
> She sees him in his travelling trim,
> How quietly her Johnny goes.
>
> The silence of her Idiot Boy,
> What hopes it sends to Betty's heart !
> He's at the guide-post—he turns right;
> She watches till he's out of sight,
> And Betty will not then depart.[7]
>
> 87-96

This I believe to be the essential meaning of the poem. The power of a mother's love, which creates in the Idiot Boy a sense of utter security, leads him safely and serenely through perils, whilst the mother suffers fear and anguish on his behalf. The moonlight world of death and terror is lit as with the sun—the sun does indeed shine out all night for the Idiot Boy. It is the light cast on him from his mother's eye. The mother is the Sibyl who gives the boy the golden bough of innocent trust which safeguards him in his journey:

> There is no need of boot or spur,
> There is no need of whip or wand;
> For Johnny has his holly-bough,
> And with a *hurly-burly* now
> He shakes the green bough in his hand.
>
> 47-51

Neither the 'boot and spur' of punishment nor the 'wand' of the supernatural is needed; human love is the gift which cures all heart-sickness, fears, and self-distrust, and leads the child safely through the forests of the night and by the dreadful waterfalls.[8]

In Virgil's story, Aristaeus is told by Proteus that he has offended Orpheus, and that this is the cause of the sickness of his bees. The bees are restored only when he has appeased the anger of the god; then they are restored in the corrupted body of an ox:

> Throughout the paunch, amid the molten flesh of the ox, bees buzzing and swarming forth from the ruptured sides, then trailing in vast clouds, till at last on a tree-top they stream together, and hang in clusters from the bending boughs.
>
> (IV, 554-558)

And 'The Idiot Boy' ends with the sick woman, Susan, restored apparently by magic to sudden health:

> Alas what is become of them ?
> These fears can never be endured;
> I'll to the wood. In word scarce said,
> Did Susan rise up from her bed,
> As if by magic cured.
>
> 442-426

The 'magic' is in no way supernatural. It is the power of love that cures Susan—her own anxious love for Betty and Johnny. And at the end of the poem we are reminded that poor Johnny is a joyful hero, living in the glory that his mother's love casts round him, and in its sunshine:

> 'The cocks did crow to-whoo, to-whoo,
> And the sun did shine so cold !'
> —Thus answered Johnny in his glory
> And that was all his travel's story.
>
> 447-453

NOTES

[1] For the text, see *Poetical Works*, ed. E. de Selincourt and Helen Darbishire, 5 vols., Oxford, 1940-49, II, pp. 67-80.
[2] See *Poetical Works*, II, p. 478.
[3] Loc. cit.
[4] Loc. cit.
[5] *Virgil, Eclogues, Georgics, Aeneid* tr. by H. R. Fairclough, 2 vols., London, 1950, vol. I, p. 521. This is referred to in later notes as *Virgil*.
[6] *Virgil*, pp. 219-237.
[7] In the Underworld, the horrors of Tartarean Phlegethon and the hall of Rhadamanthus, judge of the wicked, are on the left. Aeneas, on his way to the Blessed Groves, passes to the right. So the Idiot Boy 'turns right'. (Aeneid VI, 548 ff.)
[8] For a comment of Wordsworth's, see *Early Letters*, ed. E. de Selincourt, Oxford, 1935, p. 297:

> 'I have, indeed, often looked upon the conduct of fathers and mothers of the lowest classes of society towards idiots as the greatest triumph of the human heart. It is there that we see the strength, disinterestedness, and grandeur of love . . .'

TRAGEDY AS EPIPHANY: A STUDY OF TWO GREEK PLAYS

by T. G. WHITTOCK

I

In an issue of *Contrast* Kees Greshoff, writing on tragedy and the novel, emphasised that the tragic vision is ultimately a religious one, and that it faces us with the inexplicable nature of man's situation. This is so, but there are innumerable ways in which tragedy may manifest this. A man confident in his wisdom and secure in his state is deposed and stripped; lovers find all circumstances aligned against them, or their love turned to hatred by the treachery of the friend they trusted; a man is called upon to do that which he abhors, kill his mother or execute his friend; a tiny flaw in character, an error of judgment, swells to destructive size; or a man comes to be guilty of the very deed his whole being has laboured to avoid. In many ways tragedy reveals the abyss at our side, and forces us to stare into its depth. The realm of man is shown to be insecure: at the mercy of forces divine or beyond our control and understanding. Though these forces may at times be completely embodied in human form, the fundamental theme of tragedy is, to use a phrase from *Oedipus Rex*, the encounters of man with more than man.

The unhuman powers may appear in many guises: as a *deus ex machina*, as 'Fortune', as circumstance, as heredity, as original sin, as retribution, as Love, Duty, Law, or some other abstraction given a capital letter. The form they take will depend upon what people believe, and it varies from age to age. But in all tragedy they are there and make themselves manifest. Only in some tragedies, however, are the alien powers explicitly claimed to be divine and accorded their own deliberate purpose: and of these only may we say they dramatise an epiphany.

In such plays we, the audience, feel we have glimpsed something supernatural and, within the scope of our human comprehension, experienced its nature. I lay this emphasis on feeling and experiencing because it is not sufficient for an actor to step upon the stage and claim he represents a god: conviction only arises when the play has possessed us with the emotions appropriate to the revelation of godhead. Indeed the god may make no overt appearance at all; in some cases, cannot: but may yet be made manifest to us. *Dr Faustus* is a play that illustrates what I mean.

The real epiphany occurs only in the final scene when, at the moment of his damnation, Faustus recognises his God. Then, through our awareness of Faustus's anguish, we apprehend the divine wrath: 'My God, my God, look not so fierce on me!' Marlowe could not show God's dark aspect directly, he could only evoke it by drawing forth our compassion and leading us, partially at any rate, to identify ourselves with Faustus's agony. Thus, how the playwright manipulates and directs the emotions of his audience is of prime importance in the dramatising of an epiphany.

The encounters of man with more than man need not, however, always demonstrate the ferocity of these powers or belittle the qualities of humanity. The gods may be benign, though we are overcome with a tragic awe before the immense mystery of their being or the grandeur of their grace. Conversely, where the supernatural agents are malignant and unjust, we may be led to feel man's superiority, his dignity, his endurance, his affirmation of finer values even in the moment of his suffering at their hands—a victory snatched from defeat. The two Greek plays which I shall now turn to, each the dramatisation of an epiphany, exemplify these contrasting modes of tragedy.

II

Earlier I used a very common image typifying tragedy, that of the abyss. But our first play may be characterised by a very different archetypal image: not the abyss, but mountain ranges disappearing into cloud and sky where, perhaps, we catch a last glimpse of the tragic hero as he attains a final, ineffable union with the divine powers.

> When we had gone a little distance, we turned and looked back. Oedipus was nowhere to be seen; but the King was standing alone holding his hand before his eyes as if he had seen some terrible sight that no one could bear to look upon; and soon we saw him salute heaven and the earth with one short prayer.
>
> In what manner Oedipus passed from this earth, no one can tell. Only Theseus knows. We know he was not destroyed by a thunderbolt from heaven nor tide-wave rising from the sea, for no such thing occurred. Maybe a guiding spirit from the gods took him, or the earth's foundations gently opened and received him without pain. Certain it is that he was taken without a pang, without grief or agony—a passing more wonderful than that of any man.[1]

The play, of course, is *Oedipus at Colonus.*

Since the play presents, not the fall of a hero, but his ascent and transformation, it is difficult to say why it is tragic unless we

accept that an epiphany may be the very essence of a tragedy. Through our apprehension of divine being, pity and fear are evoked: that the hero is raised, not destroyed, is just as much an occasion for awe. In this play the gods themselves cannot be directly shown (that would diminish their greatness); therefore Sophocles' dramatic problem is to manifest their power through the human beings depicted before us on the stage. We have to observe, and *feel*, Oedipus' change from a pathetic old man into something larger than human; what he is and what he becomes has to be contrasted with all the other, merely human, characters in the play. That we may peer beyond the boundaries of the human, this life with something of its full variety and range must be evoked. Sophocles, in fact, had to achieve the nigh impossible. That he succeeded, and that this play is the greatest of his to come down to us, are not matters of dispute. To consider how he succeeded, to clarify our understanding of what he packed into the play, are fit objects for literary criticism which endeavours to increase the delight and appreciation of great art.

When the blind old man enters with faltering steps he draws our pity and compassion. As the play proceeds, before our eyes, a terrible majesty and power will enter him and we will feel the touch of their emanations. But first we have to mark his frailty, comprehend what age and suffering do to a human being.

> Long life,
> And sorrowful, is written in your looks.

The dialogue, the care of Antigone, the attitudes of the chorus, no doubt the miming of the actor portraying Oedipus, achieve this. Then, gradually, a growing respect mingles with our compassion for the old man. Oedipus has suffered, morally and physically, to what seem the limits of human endurance. No man has so embraced anguish as he. 'My strength has been in suffering,' he says. The events of the earlier tragedy are briefly touched upon to remind us what this suffering has been. Also to emphasise Oedipus' greatness.

We must be clear that his suffering does not imply expiation, nor his greatness, innocence. In the Christian tradition what a man inwardly intends is all important. 'Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.' The intention is given precedence over the deed, and a man who unwittingly harms others may still be innocent at heart. Since the evil lies in the willing, not in the action, by repentance in the soul the evil can be washed away, and the past redeemed. In general this notion is alien to Greek tragedy. There a man is guilty, not in his intentions, but in his actions. In particular, in *Oedipus Rex*, the tragedy resides in Oedipus' discovery that he is guilty, that his very resourcefulness led him to commit in ignorance those things

he sought to avoid. His ignorance does not excuse his actions; instead he is responsible for the ignorance as well as the actions, despite the goodness of his intentions. (Indeed, error of judgment is what Aristotle referred to as 'harmatia'.)[2] The tragic hero accepts total responsibility for what he has performed: he *is* his actions. The Greek sense of guilt is existentialist. Oedipus' suffering is a proclamation of that guilt. In blinding himself he publicly assents to the role the gods have assigned him, and that he hitherto unwittingly performed.[3]

In *Oedipus at Colonus* we are reminded that Oedipus did not know what he was doing when he erred, and that the gods devised what happened. But we are not given to understand that by his sufferings he has expiated the past and cleansed himself. He is still the same unfortunate man, grown older, with one difference. His sufferings, which once proclaimed his guilt, now proclaim his greatness.

It is fitting that the gods should now take him unto them. It is what we wish for him, for we feel that one who has so endured and consented to the harsh will of the gods deserves their recognition. But, because he is still the man who killed his father and married his mother, the gods' action is gratuitous: the gift of infinite powers who need not deign to notice anything human and full of error. Repentance could warrant grace, but this is grace where repentance is impossible. Hence, all the more marvellous.

This discussion has brought us to the fundamental tension in the play: the opposition of two forms of being, of the divine to the contingent. The divine transcends human comprehension, and the ways of the gods baffle human understanding. Pursuing their purposes we bark and bruise ourselves against what seems arbitrary and irrational. Oedipus says:

> I am a holy man, and by holy ordinance
> My presence here is to bring this people blessing.

But why he has been elected to this holiness we cannot be sure. It is certainly not a matter of virtue, any more than it has been a matter of expiation. Oedipus, even as he becomes radiant with strange being, is not a figure of goodness. Sophocles has deliberately set Oedipus beside two figures whose virtues serve to emphasize his imperfections, and show that he is not morally admirable. Beside Theseus with his sense of reason and justice Oedipus' wrath is harsh and extreme; beside Antigone with her charity his malice is petty. Yet this is part of the mystery. We are awed to behold how an old man's faults fade and merge into the semi-divine being he becomes, with more than human power to curse and bless. In the contrast between Oedipus' imperfect humanity and the high destiny he is drawn to we feel the heart of the mystery.

Oedipus' progress towards his transformation does not proceed straightforwardly. He wavers between the two worlds. At one

moment he is old and weak, the next a powerful authority speaks through him, then once again we are reminded of his frailty. Sophocles achieves this by the suggestiveness of his poetry. Throughout *Oedipus at Colonus* the poetry has a melodious simplicity which strikes at once to the heart of things. Like the sacred grove to which Oedipus and Antigone come the play is 'full of the voices of many nightingales'. It is extraordinary how, even in translation, this is felt. Here, for example, the loyalty and love embodied in Antigone are given lucid utterance by Oedipus:

> Poor child, the partner of his vagrant life,
> Hungry and barefoot, she has roamed the wilds,
> Through sun and storm, unflinching, with no thought
> For home-keeping, so that her father should not want.

All things are rendered with a sure touch. But when Oedipus has to be semi-divine the verse swells with authentic power to meet the occasion. Particularly is this so in the following speech:

> Time, Time, my friend,
> Makes havoc everywhere; he is invincible.
> Only the gods have ageless and deathless life;
> All else must perish. The sap of earth dries up,
> Flesh dies, and while faith withers falsehood blooms.
> The spirit is not constant from friend to friend,
> From city to city; it changes, soon or late;
> Joy turns to sorrow, and turns again to joy.
> Between you and Thebes the sky is fair; but Time
> Has many and many a night and day to run
> On his uncounted course; in one of these
> Some little rift will come, and the sword's point
> Will make short work of this day's harmony.
> Then my cold body in its secret sleep
> Shall drink hot blood. If this is not to be,
> Zeus is not Zeus, and Phoebus is not true !

Oedipus speaks this in reply to a question of Theseus who has simply asked why trouble should ever arise between Athens and Thebes. The answer seems to go far beyond the question or the present moment: it possesses a cosmic resonance. But while the speech carries us out to thoughts about life itself, it is also carrying us back again to the centre of the play, the tension between the world of being and the world of flux.

Every element in the play works to this same end. The dramatic action itself is a product of that tension, a dynamic image of the opposition of two modes of existence. An epiphany is not necessarily dramatic. There has to be conflict, as in *The Bacchae* where the god's appearance is denied and his power denounced. Similarly the progress of a man to sainthood is not a

fit subject for tragedy, unless the exalted spirit and the temptation of worldly things are presented in dramatic opposition. The world well lost is not tragic, unless the world is shown to exert its full tug. In *Oedipus at Colonus* the clash is between the call to supernatural being, and the insistent demands of human existence. The conflict is most obvious in the attempt of Creon and Polynices to make use of Oedipus for their own ends. His wrath, the curses he pours upon them, spring not merely from his sense of the injuries they have done him; they come from his awareness that Creon and Polynices would interfere with his destiny. The rancour and acrimony of these scenes, too, contrast with the ultimate serenity to come. Through the figures of Creon and Polynices life in its more sordid aspects clutches at Oedipus.

The wish to pass beyond the baser elements of life does not call for wonder. But to renounce life at its best, to pass on to something even fuller, this does. Hence the subtler conflict in the play between what is fine in the world and what surpasses it in another world. Against the terrible figure of Oedipus approaching his destiny is set off much that is worthy of high admiration: the beauty of the country around Athens, the sanity and order of the city, the goodwill and rationality of its citizens. The virtues of the Athenians are demonstrated in their treatment of Oedipus, and their recovery of his daughters from the hands of Creon.

> Ours is a land
> That lives by justice, knows no rule but law.

It is a justice we can comprehend and approve, just as it is not in our power to comprehend or judge the actions of the gods who brought such suffering upon Oedipus. The virtues of here and now only serve to elevate the mystery of eternity. Again, Theseus is the epitome of his country's qualities. In him the good man and the model ruler unite. He is an admirable figure of generosity of spirit allied with confidence and self-control; in every way he exemplifies nobility. But the gift of holiness is withheld from him. Though he and the land he rules show life at its most flourishing, against them stands the greater mystery.

> I come to offer you
> A gift—my tortured body—a sorry sight;
> But there is value in it more than beauty.

Above all, against the figure of Oedipus is set that of Antigone. In all she does the displays an ethical purity possessed by no one else in the play. She epitomises human love. Her passionate regard for others emerges not only in her loyalty to her father and the years of sacrifice: it is seen too in her concern for her brother. When Oedipus refuses to listen to his son, Antigone pleads in words ringing with charity:

You *are* his father; and it cannot be right,
Even if he has done you the cruellest, wickedest wrong,
For you to do him wrong again.

Oedipus, in the names of the more ancient and dread deities, places a curse on Polynices; Antigone tries to avert her brother's doom. What she does is finer, but the authority is granted to Oedipus.

Through all that surrounds Oedipus, Sophocles evokes the range and fullness of life: its baser qualities as well as its higher. Yet we are led to accept that, inexplicably, Oedipus towers above all. In the closing scenes of the play, the various elements move to a consummation. The dread curses of the old man, the futile pleas of Antigone, the self-destroying resentment of Polynices, give way to an urgent ritual of sound and movement: the thunder peals, vigour flows into Oedipus, the gods summon him. The blind man becomes the pathfinder for others. And the messenger returns to communicate the wonder of Oedipus' passing. Attention now focuses on the grief of the daughters left behind, particularly on Antigone:

I never knew how great the loss could be
Even of sadness; there was a sort of joy
In sorrow, when he was at my side.
Father, my love, in your shroud of earth
We two shall love you for ever and ever.

When her grief has become restrained, her thoughts go out to her brothers, and her final endeavour is to save their lives. Thus, through the agency of Antigone, the play returns us, after the awe and wonder of Oedipus' death, to the alarms and loyalties of this world.

III

Another form epiphany takes in tragedy, perhaps the more common, is where the god appears in order to destroy some person who has broken his law, challenged his being or denied his due. Obviously *The Bacchae* is an example of this. But there is more to the epiphany in the play than this. It is true we do see Dionysus appear in a guise and wreak terrible punishment upon Pentheus. But the epiphany does not reside in the foregone victory of Dionysus over Pentheus: it resides rather in the audience's growing apprehension of the true and cruel nature of Dionysus. The real conflict in the play is not between Dionysus and Pentheus but between the Bacchic ecstacies and the rational morality which judges and opposes them. The play is in fact a protest against the god, and reason, apparently vanquished in the play, is asserted by the final judgment and condemnation the audience is forced to pass on Dionysus. Indeed, *The Bacchae* is one of those plays where the meaning depends as much on the audience's participation and

controlled responses as it does on the actual events in the play itself.

At the commencement of the play Euripides rapidly establishes in the audience an eagerness to see the god demonstrate his divinity and humble Pentheus. Dionysus' opening speech, which significantly is addressed directly to the audience, is calm, controlled, almost matter-of-fact. This suggests the confident success with which he will proceed, while at the same time it prevents any strong reaction to his statement that he has possessed the sisters of Cadmus with madness. The chorus of devotees who follow Dionysus celebrate with great lyrical power his wonderful, divine gifts. Though there is the occasional sinister note in these choruses, their effect as a whole exhilarates and enraptures:

> O Thebes, old nurse that cradled Semele
> Be ivy-garlanded, burst into flower
> With wreaths of lush bright-berried bryony,
> Bring sprays of fir, green branches torn from oaks,
> Fill soul and flesh with Bacchus' mystic power;
> Fringe and bedeck your dappled fawnskin cloaks
> With woolly tufts and locks of purest white.
> There's a brute wildness in the fennel-wands—
> Reverence it well. Soon the whole land will dance . . .
>
> (p. 185)

Think what we may, we must feel there is pleasure here. When Pentheus enters he soon alienates any sympathy that might be extended to him: he is arrogant and unstable. He is fascinated by the thought of the Bacchic women engaged in lecherous practices, and this prurient element in his character further reveals itself as the play proceeds. There is more than a touch of comedy in the way Euripides treats Pentheus from the start. He is, in fact, the perfect victim.

In his encounters with Dionysus, it is paradoxically Pentheus who is emotional and uncontrolled, not the god of enthusiasm. Indeed, the god appears to possess the qualities of Apollo rather than those expected in Dionysus: he is calm, restrained, balanced and pitiless.[4] 'For all his rage, he shall not ruffle me,' says Dionysus of Pentheus, 'The wise man preserves a smooth-tempered self-control.' This has its function in the play, maintaining the fundamental tension between passion and self-command. Pentheus, we feel, is the natural Dionysus type, all the more deluded because he is unaware of it. In his rage and ignorance Pentheus cuts such a sorry figure, becomes so manifestly impotent, that the conflict between him and Dionysus is scarcely a conflict at all. The god is in absolute command of the situation, and it is really the preparation for a sacrifice that we are witnessing.

A god of reason appears to be destroying a man of folly. Out of such a traditional situation Euripides goes on to one of the most startling reversals in Greek tragedy.

The two key scenes of the play are the ones where Dionysus finally wins control over Pentheus before despatching him to his death, and where Agaue discovers the truth about the beast she has killed. In the first a person is hypnotized into a trance, in the second the reverse, a person is led out of a trance. The two scenes balance each other, and hold the essential drama of the play.

As Dionysus attains ascendancy over Pentheus, the king becomes the man we have long suspected him to be. The process whereby the animal and unconscious parts of his nature emerge seems inevitable. His prurient disgust now becomes pleasurable lust: 'I can picture them—like birds in the thickets, wrapped in the sweet snare of love.' He is revealed. But the natural man is always less than man. Animal elements disguise his humanity, and this too is what happens to Pentheus. Forced now to dress like a woman, made incapable like a drunkard, obsessed with the prospect of observing licentious joys, he cuts a grotesque figure. But what laughter he evokes is uneasy: mixed with the pleasurable fulfilment of our expectation is too much revulsion. Euripides is most modern in a scene like this. Not only because he understands the part played in humanity by subconscious passions; more because of the way he, like contemporary playwrights, mixes pain and mirth. In the confusion of feelings called from us we do not quite know what we ought to feel, which strand to follow.

Irony further complicates the issue. In Sophocles irony usually clarifies the division between reality and men's misunderstanding of it. Here the Euripidean irony emphasizes the entanglement of truth and delusion. Pentheus cries:

> Why—I seem to see two suns; I see a double Thebes, and the city wall with its seven gates—double ! I see you leading me forward—you are like a bull, you have horns growing on your head. Tell me, were you an animal a little while ago ? You have certainly become a bull.

At the height of his blindness does Pentheus not see most clearly the nature of the god before him ?

By the time the messenger relates Pentheus' fate, horror predominates. The revulsion is painful and ugly, made so by the naturalistic technique used to describe what has occurred.

> She gripped his right arm between wrist and elbow; she set her foot against his ribs; and she tore the arm off by the shoulder . . .

Now, after all this whirling heterogeneity of emotions and the appalling terror it has steadied into, the audience demands in reaction a sweeter purity of feeling. Euripides provides it, and expresses by means of it the fundamental thought of the play.

Agaue returns. She bears the head of her son, in her delusion proudly exhibiting it as the head of lion she has killed. This is unbearable. She must learn the truth. The agony of grief is to be

preferred to the horror of this ecstasy. Compassionately Cadmus exorcises her. (Interestingly his method approaches the practice of modern psychiatry where the disorientated patient is brought back to reality by re-establishing habitual patterns of life.) And truth, though it brings anguish, also brings to the audience relief. We have been led to realise that the harshness of sanity is still preferable to the ecstasies of delusion.

The whole play, in particular the way its organisation guides the response of the audience, leads to this realisation. Affirmed in this is the recognition that Dionysus is in us, and must be fought, not by passion, but by understanding. Ostensibly the god has displayed his power and should be honoured; but the reversal Euripides brings about leads to a rejection of the god. The epiphany shows the god in his true nature, cruel, deluding, destructive. Because Pentheus has been not so much his opponent as his prepared sacrifice, and Agaue has been his devotee, we suspect that those who serve him and those who deny him may suffer alike. Even his joys are a miserable escape from reality. The human characters of the play are not presented as admirable. But at the end, in their defeat, Cadmus and Agaue possess a tragic nobility. We grant them a splendour we refuse the god. For they are humanity which, though tormented by passion and all-but destroyed by ecstatic desires, can still endure by fortitude and self-knowledge.

> I have had my fill
> Of mountain-ecstasy; now take who will
> My holy ivy-wreath, my thyrsus-rod,
> All that reminds me how I served this god !

says Agaue, in a dignified and quiet rejection of the god that transcends bitterness or complaint. She embodies the tragic stature of humanity.

NOTES

[1] The quotations from the plays are taken from *Three Theban Plays*, translated by E. F. Watling (Penguin), and *The Bacchae and other Plays*, translated by Philip Vellacott (Penguin).

[2] See Humphrey House, *Aristotle's Poetics* (Rupert Hart-Davis 1956) pp. 93-6.

[3] See *Hegel on Tragedy*, ed. Anne and Henry Paolucci (Doubleday Anchor Books) p. 69.

[4] See Kenneth Clark, *The Nude* (Pelican), Chapter II.

THE HUMANISM OF E. M. FORSTER

by A. WOODWARD

'HUMANISM' is a term that does varied service in the eclectic, secular culture of this century; in this it resembles a word like 'tradition' in literary criticism. And although I think both of them, along with other current value-words, would be the better for the kind of examination that, say, Lovejoy gave to 'Romanticism', there is small point, and no space, for doing so here. I hope the colouring of Forster's humanism will emerge from a discussion of (mainly) *A Passage to India*, and would only adumbrate its general tenor thus: Forster holds in solution metaphysical and religious agnosticism, belief in 'personal relationships'—a phrase that must be dwelt on—and a strong infusion of Pantheist Vitalism in the early books, for which there is substituted in *A Passage to India* a tentative metaphorical use of some aspects of Hindu theology to express a sense of some other world of mystery that lies behind the daylight prose of secular Humanist goodwill. I say 'tentative', and 'metaphorical'; but there is no doubt that Forster has been powerfully intrigued, and by seeking his 'exeunt in mysterium' from the East he aligns himself with other Western intellectuals who find Christianity indecently explicit and boringly familiar. Aldous Huxley and Christopher Isherwood come to mind. Forster, however, is, I think, genuinely embarrassed at reconciling his sensitive 'personalist' Humanism with the intuitions that come to him by way of a Hindu metaphor; and that may account for the evasiveness of the tone in the final section, 'Temple', of *A Passage to India*. First, however, let me place him in the context of ideas that dominate his early books; this is important, because the atmosphere of the *Passage* is notably different.

Forster grew to intellectual maturity in the Cambridge one thinks of now, so inevitably, as G. E. Moore's. (It could equally well, at the time, have seemed to be McTaggart's). Moore, a philosopher—however deviously—in the English empiricist tradition, was deeply hostile to speculative metaphysics, since for him and his associates metaphysics would be mainly identified with various brands—often exuberantly speculative—of Absolute or Personal Idealism, McTaggart's and Bradley's being the most notable. Moore, however, also wrote *Principia Ethica* in which, having demolished to his own satisfaction both Utilitarian and Metaphysical ethics, he ended by offering, on the basis of a pure intuition, 'personal affections and aesthetic enjoyments' as 'the greatest, and *by far* the greatest goods we can imagine',[1] since

each, on the grounds of Moore's previous analysis, are irreducible wholes. And in what follows, he describes the ethics of 'personal affections' in a way that makes them sound very like the valuable contemplation that 'aesthetic enjoyments' provide. That this is a rather narrow definition of the ethical life there can be no denying, but perhaps on the terms of Moore's own analysis none other was possible. That he felt a mildly embarrassed sense of its inadequacy appears when, having given a most acute and sensitive account of what constitutes aesthetic quality, strongly akin to Pater's in the essay on *Style*, he goes on to say in a phrase of endearing naiveté that personal affections present 'additional complications'; and the complications are by-passed by describing personal affections largely in terms of the aesthetic satisfaction that is to be gained by a contemplation of them !

The larger point here is surely this: that Moore—and in this he is like Forster, and like other Liberal Humanists—can count on certain sanctities of feeling about the unique value of the human person, and on the virtuous personal affections that these engender, having been bred into us after nineteen centuries of Christian culture; and hopes that they will persist, self-perpetuated, when the unacceptable religion and metaphysic which is their source has been jettisoned. (For remember that Moore has rejected also the Kantian Universal Law as being equally untenable, and even rather unworthy).

This, at any rate, was the theoretical background against which Forster must be seen as formulating his own imaginative intuitions in the early works, a background he shared with the group of intellectuals known as 'Bloomsbury', though it would be wrong to equate him with them: he was more hard-headed; and finer-grained, too—less arrogantly sensitive. Still it was into the G. E. Moore mould of Art and 'personal affections' in a sceptical ambience that his own intuitions were poured, where they glowed gently as 'personal relationships'. The latter term is a leitmotif in all Forster's work; and of course, as such, it is a blanket-phrase. One has to ask: What kind of personal relationships ? On the cultivation of what *aspects* of the human personality does Forster place the greatest value ? (One cannot ask on what grounds he does so, because that would open out into questions about the proper teleology of the human person, and in an empiricist atmosphere these could only be answered in terms of pragmatic utilitarianism or of linguistic convention, and neither is quite what Forster would adhere to, I imagine).

In traditional terms it would be judged, I suppose, that Forster favours an overbalance of feeling, as opposed to intellect:[2] Love, rather than Reason—but a Love vitalised by that strand of nineteenth-century thought which is more full-blooded in its imaginative possibilities than ethical agnosticism of the G. E. Moore type. I have in mind that emphasis on the intuitive morality

of the heart, whose main progenitor was Rousseau, and which was fed by the Pantheism of English Romantic poets like Wordsworth and Shelley—some of the less successful passages of lyrical afflatus in the early books of Forster do read rather like bad prose Shelley. In the structure of the three first novels—*Where Angels Fear to Tread, A Room with a View*, and *The Longest Journey*—all those characters who embody prudence, reason, restraint are satirised under the generic name of Sawston (and indeed they are genuinely detestable—but it is the emphasis in the scheme that is interesting); all the characters whom the reader is to admire embody intuitive affection, spontaneity, violence, sexual passion; in the middle there is usually a victim of Sawston who is to be redeemed by Romantic sexuality, or Romantic friendship, but who is sometimes (like Philip Herritor, or Rickie) inadequate to his finer impulses.

The drama is as simple as that, and the little surprises and symbolic equivalences that Forster loves to introduce do not alter its basic simplicity. The disconcerting thing about these early books always seems to me this: that the detailed texture, in tone and observation, seems extremely subtle and full of nuance—and indeed it is so—yet the cumulative effect of that nuanced, casually urbane tone is almost crudely schematic when we view the books as wholes. Yet they remain, I think, very satisfying works of art, in a minor key, since they illustrate to perfection the quality which Pater defined, in that same essay on *Style*, as 'soul'—'the way (certain writers) have of absorbing language, of attracting it into the peculiar spirit they are of, with a subtlety which makes the actual result seem like some inexplicable inspiration. By mind, the literary artist reaches us through static and objective indications of design in his work, legible to all. By soul, he reaches us, somewhat capriciously perhaps, one and not another, through vagrant sympathy and a kind of immediate contact.' On the level of what Pater here calls 'mind' these early books are not a success; they have too pirouetting a contrivance. In the way of 'soul' they have a most intimate organic unity; and it is created by the feathery deftness of Forster's style, that imbues the books with an utterly personal tone of wise charm, ironic yet tender.

I am not sure that *Howards End* has the same indubitable, if minor kind of success, however. It attempts more, of course: Forster diversifies the scheme in it by showing how the Schlegel sisters—Culture, Art, the Life of the Mind—need to enmesh the Sawstonian Wilcoxes into the net of their sensitive personal relationships; but the passion and the prose are connected at a cost, since Mr Wilcox is both detestable and incredible in his relationship with Margaret Schlegel—Lawrence was quite right[3] in his comment, Forster *was* straining after some symbolic unity which in fact does imaginative violence to the book—and Helen Schlegel's relationship with Leonard Bast, and her deciding to have an illegitimate child by him, makes a similarly arbitrary effect. Forster

distorts a genuine complexity of grasp for the individuals as such in order to harmonise them into an ultimately affirmative grouping. And one's feeling that the symbolic harmony is forced is perhaps an indication of the very different road Forster's imagination was inwardly preparing him to take in *A Passage to India*. I think a comparison of the earlier book's Mrs Wilcox with Mrs Moore may point the comparison:

Both are vatic gentlewomen, not unlike in social personality, but whereas Mrs Moore will end as a 'withered priestess' who delivers some very unconsoling messages, Mrs Wilcox symbolises the vital biological continuities of the earth; she is associated with an old house, a garden, English rural landscape. As such she might have appeared as a figure, or a force, in a novel by D. H. Lawrence—when younger, of course, and more active. Forster, perhaps realising in this book his lack of that Laurentian imaginative 'daimon' which, at its best, could ignite a character wholly as poetic symbol, wisely killed her off quite early on in the novel, where she continues to function only as a 'presence not to be put by', and does not embarrass its pages with her personal implausibility, as Stephen Wonham, George Emerson, and even Gino do the other books. Yet Mrs Wilcox, like those other figures, points to some possible source of poetic intensity—it may be Romantic passion, attachment to a place, the perpetuating of life—to be gained here 'in the very world, which is the world of all of us.' If we sense life with that degree of poetic intensity we cause the other world of mystery (which is not really 'other') to be present in this world, whose 'prose' is redeemed by our sense of its being connected to a significance intuitively glimpsed. It is a kind of double vision. Analyse it and it emerges as an abstraction which we label Vitalism or Pantheism; feel it, and it is a living joy.

That *A Passage to India* is also hinting at a dimension of mystery behind the world of prose, behind the world of sensitive, agnostic Humanism in which men and women of goodwill act out their well-meaning roles, seems clear; but the whole atmosphere of the novel is darker and more ambiguous, and no figure in it more so than Mrs Moore, if we compare her with Mrs Wilcox. There is a snatch of dialogue in the first section, 'Mosque', which will focus the matter; Mrs Moore and Fielding are talking:

> 'I like mysteries but I rather dislike muddles,' said Mrs Moore.
>
> 'A mystery is a muddle.'
>
> 'O, do you think so, Mr Fielding?'[4]

Fielding, Adela, even Aziz are all essentially of the temper which would see mystery as a muddle; Mrs Moore in the first part of the book, before her experience in the Caves, has only a very inadequate notion of what the mystery is, but she will gain a terrible, negative, 'Dark Night of the Soul' insight into it; Professor

Godbole is the serio-comic vehicle of an insight which sees what Mrs Moore sees, but sees it in a wider, serener perspective, though what he sees is disconcerting to Western Humanist (or Christian) eyes—so disconcerting that I think Forster himself suffers some imaginative tension between the featureless depersonalised Hindu Pantheism that Godbole and Mrs Moore jointly intuit and his feelings as a sensitive Humanist of the West. (The tension becomes most overt in the oddly evasive tone of the climactic 'Temple' ceremony.) The 'Caves' and 'Temple' sections will crystallise the implication of this mysterious ambiguous vision around which the whole book hovers; and although 'Mosque' foreshadows its presence by hints and mysterious shifts of tone, it is a section in which, on the whole, all the characters, including Mrs Moore, are trying to achieve harmonious 'personal relationships' on the purely human, Humanist level.

For instance, in Chapter 7 of 'Mosque', Fielding ('the world, he believed, is a globe of men who are trying to reach one another and can best do so by the help of goodwill plus culture and intelligence'[5]) is visited by Aziz, just before the disastrous tea-party which ends by Professor Godbole singing his strange song; there is confusion over a lost stud of Fielding, whose untidiness and informality soon melts Aziz; it is mentioned that Miss Quested is artistic—'Is she a Post-Impressionist ?' asks Aziz; Fielding bluffly makes fun of the question, but Aziz detects a snub—and all this is caught in dialogue that is so lively and natural-sounding that I was disconcerted to come across a remark by Mary Macarthy that 'there are no people in Forster' (she was writing against the dead hand of symbolism that lies across the modern novel[6]): the point would be valid about Forster's early novels, perhaps—but Aziz ? Surely Aziz is there, many-faceted, a 'round' character, to use Forster's own terminology. Take a piece of his dialogue from this 'collar-stud' scene:

> 'If I'm biking in English dress—starch collar, hat with ditch—they take no notice. When I wear a fez, they cry, "Your lamp's out !" Lord Curzon did not consider this when he urged natives of India to retain their picturesque costumes. Hooray ! Stud's gone in. Sometimes I shut my eyes and dream I have splendid clothes again and am riding into battle behind Alamgir. Mr Fielding, must not India have been beautiful then, with the Mogul Empire at its height and Alamgir reigning at Delhi upon the Peacock Throne?'[7]

Yes, he is undoubtedly caught in that, especially in the ironic rhythm of the third sentence ('Lord Curzon . . .'); yet—and perhaps this is simply to point out that Forster is not a type of the Olympian creator—he is caught in a way that is, let us say, very carefully edited, a *tour de force* of sensitive botanising in foreign parts; and it is rather through Forster's reflective comments

that his genuine complexity emerges. Take this, from the same scene: Aziz thinks he has had a snub, but is quickly reconciled:

> . . . because he felt Fielding's fundamental good will. His own went out to it, and grappled beneath the shifting tides of emotion which can alone bear the voyager to an anchorage but may also carry him across it on to the rocks. He was safe really—as safe as the shore-dweller who can only understand stability and supposes that every ship must be wrecked, and he had sensations the shore-dweller cannot know. Indeed, he was sensitive rather than responsive. In every remark he found a meaning, but not always the true meaning, and his life though vivid was largely a dream.[8]

The image that sustains the first two sentences is, admittedly, not a particularly fresh one, but reflective prose of Forster's muted, casual elegance can afford a certain banality of imagery if it is redeemed, as it is here, by an intensely individual tone of compassionate irony '. . . and he had sensations the shore-dweller cannot know'—it is the sudden, telling diminuendo coda of that rhythm which creates the individual tone. And then the extraordinarily perceptive little sentence that follows ('Indeed, he was sensitive rather than responsive.'); it is so casual, yet it defines Aziz with precision and profundity. Such natural-sounding wisdom is both rare and touching, and it is this kind of profundity, worn with a casual reflective grace, that gives, in Pater's term, such a moving organic unity of 'soul' to the book. Think of that short paragraph, describing the Anglo-Indians in the Club:

> Meanwhile the performance ended, and the amateur orchestra played the National Anthem. Conversation and billiards stopped, faces stiffened. It was the Anthem of the Army of Occupation. It reminded every member of the Club that he or she was British and in exile. It produced a little sentiment and a useful accession of will-power. The meagre tune, the curt series of demands on Jehovah, fused into a prayer unknown in England, and though they perceived neither Royalty nor Deity they did perceive something, they were strengthened to resist another day. Then they poured out, offering one another drinks.[9]

Whenever in this book Forster chooses to work purely and simply in the satiric range of those first four sentences he cannot be faulted: the targets are hit with a deft virtuosity—even though they are rather sitting ducks for a satirist. But it is the fifth sentence of the paragraph that diffuses a quality similar to that which I have been trying to place: by the rhetorical emphasis in the wording and by the 'caesura' in the rhythm after 'something' the irony gains a weary sympathy; and so the pathos of these people is rendered, objectively, in a way that avoids the extreme sentimentality and contempt. And it is just by such casual glancing shifts

of rhythm, very often, that this personal 'organic' tone is being sustained.

One sees the same device—if that is the word for the perfectly achieved informality so far considered—in passages where an effect is being more artfully contrived; and it is here that one moves a little closer to the more mysterious concerns of Forster in this book. Such an attempt at 'personal relationships' of the kind described in that scene between Aziz and Fielding was enacted wholly, as it were, on the naturalistic level; other attempts, in 'Mosque', at contact and connection are fringed with an ambiguous halo that Forster evokes as much by tenuous but sustained 'image-patterns' as by shifts of tone. And in this binding together of his book through recurrent images—quite simple ones like that of flickering light on darkness, or of a sky whose concavity suggests further and yet further arches behind it—he is at one with a considerable trend of modern fiction which seeks to unify its structures as 'dramatic poems', often lifting character to the level of poetic or prophetic symbol; and unless the writer has genuinely got the kind of imagination which can compass vivid symbolic effects, like Lawrence, or Hardy, or Emily Brontë, it may be a pernicious trend.[10] Forster is aiming at such a dimension in two ways in this novel: the first—successful on the whole—is by using natural description symbolically, but in a delicate, ironically hinting tone that always manages to keep it within his own imaginative scope—this is true even of the actual scene at the Caves; the second—dubiously successful, I think—is by violently breaking the carefully sustained natural-sounding mystery of Mrs Moore's character and presenting her, *after* her experience in the Caves, as a 'withered priestess' in a vein of portentous depression. What she says will be fascinating in itself; but the dramatic effect is one of a kind of Sibylline grumbling, and by straining after that effect I think Forster may have marred the imaginative unity of the book.

But I anticipate: in the section 'Mosque', Mrs Moore is still just a kind, slightly fey old lady who tries to practise her Christian beliefs, and one occasion which tests them sorely is the Garden Party convened by the Turtons. The opening of that Chapter—Chapter 5—is one of Forster's best satirical set-pieces: Mrs Turton and Ronnie mingle her arrogance with his obsequiousness, the Indians are assembled in a degraded heap at the other end of the lawn, Mrs Moore and Miss Quested are bleakly unhappy. It is another occasion on which attempts to 'connect', to make sensitive contacts between individuals, are frustrated by—by what? Ultimately (though this is a smaller vehicle for it) by the same spirit that inspired Adela to her false accusation of Aziz, by the urge to aggressive nullity which frustrates and must ever frustrate any attempt on the all-too-human level to clarify and harmonise human life: ' "no, not yet," and the sky said, "no, not here" '—that is how the book will end. And into this present scene of vicious

social embarrassment Forster modulates an image of the sky, by way of a gradual heightening of the tone:

> . . . at least more ladies joined the English group, but their words seemed to die as soon as uttered. Some kites hovered overhead, impartial; over the kites passed the mass of a vulture, and with an impartiality exceeding all, the sky, not deeply coloured but translucent, poured light from its whole circumference. It seemed unlikely that the series stopped there. Beyond the sky must not there be something that overarches all the skies, more impartial even than they ? Beyond which again . . .
>
> They spoke of *Cousin Kate.*[11]

Here, the second short sentence ('It seemed . . .') by its casual tone nicely controls the lyrical expansion; though the ending of the passage is perhaps excessively stylised—one feels the writer giving himself a little pat on the back for the neatness of the 'turn'. But it is Sense rather than Tone that is the special concern here. Put abstractly the effect made seems to be saying this: that there hangs over all human action some ultimate, mysterious ambiguity that refuses any easy account of its significance for good or evil; it precisely refuses the Either/Or—the expected categories elude us, that surely is the implication of this 'arch upon arch' effect. Similarly, in the book's opening 'set-piece' description of Chandrapore there is a comparable symbolic hint in the description of the sky:

> . . . But the core of blue persists, and so it is by night. Then the stars hang like lamps from the immense vaults. The distance between the vault and them is as nothing to the distance behind them, and that farther distance, though beyond colour, last freed itself from blue . . .[12]

That passage goes almost for nothing when one reads it first; but Forster works, not in great symbolic blocks, but in small, light 'wash' effects that cumulatively give imaginative density to the vision that he will formulate more abstractedly through the mouth of Mrs Moore and of Professor Godbole. Take the scene which concerns Ronnie's and Adela's attempt to make up their quarrel as they ride in the Nawab Bahadur's car. A consummate paragraph of Forster's casually ironic mysteriousness[13] rises to this, after their hands have forgivingly touched:

> . . . a spurious unity descended on them, as local and temporary as the gleam that inhabits a firefly. It would vanish in a moment, perhaps to reappear, but the darkness is alone durable. And the night that encircled them, absolute as it seemed, was itself only a spurious unity, being modified by the gleams of day that leaked up round the edges of the earth, and by the stars.

'Modified', notice, not overcome; it would be wrong to ask if Forster means this to be a moment of light *or* of darkness, for here the 'arch over arch' has modulated into a similarly ambiguous image that recurs in the book: that of light and darkness intermingled. Even in the 'poetic-Baedeker' chapter (Chapter 12) that describes the Caves there is an expansive lyrical passage on the match-flames that light their darkness, only to be expunged; similarly at the very end of the book when the boats collide after the ceremony of Krishna, and benevolent harmony degenerates into 'ragged edges of religion', then—'gusts of wind mixed darkness and light' in 'the upper regions of the air'. By that stage, however, the ambiguity of vision around which Forster is hovering will have been much more explicitly formulated. This car-ride of Ronnie's and Adela's is sign-posted on either side by two other little symbolic incidents;—it is remarkable the effect this book gives of the characters living their normal lives of tentative goodwill and inevitable frustrations against a background frieze of mysterious symbolic *décor,* rather than the symbolic suggestiveness working *through* the characters themselves. This need not be taken as an adverse criticism because—quite apart from the fact that when Forster tries to give a greater prophetic intensity to Mrs Moore, he fails—his purpose is surely to show that most human life is not and cannot be lived on the level of awful mystery that nearly destroys Mrs Moore and in which even Professor Godbole is only an acolyte. For the rest of us there are only hints and guesses, though the hint half guessed, the gift half understood, is Incarnation. But what kind of incarnation ?

Adela, just before the car-ride, had broken off her engagement to Ronnie, who did not press her to an engagement because he believed, like herself, in the sanctity of personal relationships. (I do not think Forster is playing fair here, we could never for one moment believe that of Ronnie; he has been characterised in too flat and Sawstonian a manner altogether). There is one of those awful moments of resentful decency between them, and then Adela—

> . . . frowned up at the tree beneath which they were sitting. A little green bird was observing her, so brilliant and neat that it might have hopped straight out of a shop. On catching her eye it closed its own, gave a small skip and prepared to go to bed. Some Indian wild bird. 'Yes, nothing else,' she repeated, feeling that a profound and passionate speech ought to have been delivered by one or both of them.[14]

The bird incident makes an effect that is vital, mysterious, playful, if perhaps done in a little too pixified a tone—that is a fault of Forster's. They wonder what the bird is—'but nothing in India is identifiable, the mere asking of a question causes it to disappear *or to merge in something else*'.[15] Hard upon this image of hearten-

ing vivacity they make up their quarrel in the car; but at the climax of *that* paragraph recurs the ambiguous imagery of some overarching chiaroscuro ambiguity.

And then the car crashes. It was some mysterious hairy criminal, a hyena perhaps, and as the torches create 'high lights on black shadows'[16] . . . 'they forgot their abortive personal relationship, and felt adventurous as they muddled about in the dust.' 'A Ghost!' shivers Mrs Moore, when she hears of the incident; for a moment she is already vibrating to the suggestiveness of these incarnations (the tender, mindless riveting of her attention on a little wasp is the most notable earlier example), though her full initiation and her dark night of the soul is yet to come.

That Mrs Moore is still only on the very fringes of the ultimate mystery throughout the 'Mosque' section was most apparent, perhaps, in her attitude towards Aziz, when she actually met him in the Mosque, soon after her arrival in India; she was evoked as a pillar moving into full moonlight, saying 'God is here': she thinks that her Christian Love can bridge all gaps and separations. And later when Professor Godbole insists on singing his song at the climax of Fielding's disastrous party for Aziz, Mrs Moore and Adela, her radical innocence is almost as evident. That scene is worth a comment, both for the sake of its sense, and because it is introduced by such a miraculous transition of tone.

The party has ended with a patter of embarrassed 'goodbyes', Aziz commits some final, consummate tactlessness; then Miss Quested says:

> 'Goodbye, Professor Godbole,' she continued, suddenly agitated. 'It's a shame we never heard you sing.'
>
> 'I may sing now,' he replied, and did.
>
> His thin voice rose and gave out one sound after another. At times there seemed rhythm, at times there was the illusion of a Western melody. But the ear, baffled repeatedly, soon lost any clue, and wandered in a maze of noises, none unpleasant, none intelligible. It was the song of an unknown bird . . .[17]

That 'I may sing now,' he replied, 'and did' is both charmingly comic, and hence sustains the social comedy tone, and at the same time, by its syntactical isolation and its little sharp caesura, leads us mysteriously into the scene that follows. First, that 'unknown bird': is one meant to think of the mischievously vital green bird? Quite possibly, I think. It is like Forster's method to work in such diagrammatic hints. The song of Professor Godbole is moving in a direction analogous to that region of insight of which the green bird was a fleeting incarnation. Then, the passage continues:

> The man who was gathering water chestnuts came naked out of the tank, his lips parted with delight, disclosing his

> scarlet tongue. The sounds continued and ceased after a few moments as casually as they had begun—apparently half through a bar, and upon the subdominant.

The mysterious image of the man is a detail that renders vivid the vitality and joy of Godbole in his song, while the concluding phrase gives a perfect, cool—yet not distractingly 'ironic'—control to the tone. Godbole goes on to tell them that he has been invoking Krishna, who 'refuses to come'; and Krishna, I gather, is the traditional incarnation of Vishnu, the beneficent aspect of the Hindu Absolute or Ground of Being, that Absolute itself being wholly featureless, neither good nor evil; what we know in this world are merely its phenomenal, ultimately distracting manifestations. Mrs Moore (and this is the point to which I have been working round) hopes that Krishna *will* come, 'in another song'; she hopes still that Love, Goodness will prevail, those are still the categories in which she thinks, but:

> 'Oh, no, he refuses to come,' repeated Godbole, perhaps not understanding her question. 'I say to him, Come, come, come, come, come, come. He neglects to come.'
>
> Ronnie's steps had died away, and there was a moment of absolute silence. No ripple disturbed the water, no leaf stirred.

Godbole is serene. He knows that Good in the human sense will never triumph—he does not understand the question. At the core of life there has to be a silent point of utter non-attachment, and an awareness that human life is part of a process that eludes the Either/Or of good and bad—hence the minglings and the ambiguities of the book's imagery, the green bird and the hairy animal co-existing, underlying all attempts at personal relationships, creative and destructive at once; *but*, we have to go on praying for the good and in our limited terms trying to enact it. So Godbole prays to Krishna, though not expecting Krishna ever, effectively, to come, because the Good is only a phenomenal category of a Reality that is beyond good and evil—or rather, that is Good-Evil. To know this (humanly) terrible double vision may destroy one—it almost does Mrs Moore; but it may also bring its own gift of a totally depersonalised joy of communion with that featureless Reality; and that is what Forster tries to render in the Temple scene.

It may now be clear that Forster, in the first section of this book, is showing his characters, clad in their categories of Humanist Good Will or Christian Love, acting inadequate parts like dwarfs brushed by the wing of some over-arching mystery; and it should be possible, I think, to be more summary in the account of 'Caves' and 'Temple'.

What does Mrs Moore feel, as she sits outside the Caves, whence Adela, overcome by that urge to negation which frustrates

all human endeavour toward harmony, will soon emerge to make her terrible accusation of Aziz? As the party had journeyed to the Caves by elephant there had been several carefully worked-in incidents symbolic of mirage, illusion—a false sunrise, a tree-stump that looked like a snake; when Mrs Moore had entered the Caves she had been overcome by the smell and the noise, and 'a vile naked thing struck her face and settled on her mouth like a pad'—afterwards it had turned out to be 'only a poor little baby, astride its mother's hip'; and now, finally, it is the equivocating echo that haunts her: 'Pathos, piety, courage—they exist, and are identical, and so is filth.' She has had a vision, in fact, of that absolute featurelessness which underlies experience. The horror of the Caves is not that they are a symbol of positive Evil, which is manageable, redeemable, even romantic; it is that they are *blank*, a neutral, negative substrate. Thus inducted into her visionary status, Mrs Moore recedes from the narrative for a while. When she re-appears it is in this vein:

> '. . . everything sympathy and confusion and bearing one another's burdens. Why can't this be done and that be done in my way and they be done and I at peace. Why has anything to be done, I cannot see. Why all this marriage, marriage? . . . The human race would have become a single person centuries ago if marriage was any use. And all this rubbish about love, love in a church, love in a cave, as if there is the least difference, and I held up from my business over such trifles!'
>
> 'What do you want?' (Ronnie) said, exasperated. 'Can you state it in simple language? If so, do!'
>
> 'I want my pack of patience cards.'

I am sure that this stylised rhetoric—and it is the usual idiom of Mrs Moore in these sections—is really grafted on to her social personality by the comic deflation of the last sentence; it is an effect repeatedly tried, and shows, I think, that once Forster tries to move too far from his more diminuendo modulations of tone, he fails. With Professor Godbole he is more circumspect. Into all the flurry of the Trial scenes there is woven an interview between Fielding and the Professor, where the latter, in dialogue whose demurely comic intonations save it from portentousness, gives a more positive account of Mrs Moore's 'dark night of the soul':

> 'Good and evil are different as their names imply. But, in my own humble opinion, they are both of them aspects of my Lord. He is present in the one, absent in the other, and the difference between presence and absence is great, as great as my feeble mind can grasp. Yet absence implies presence, absence is not non-existence, and we are therefore entitled to repeat, "Come, come, come, come" . . .'

Elusive stuff, this; but does it not amount to a sublimated way of saying 'whatever is, is right', and that if we guard such a fine

point in our souls we are at one with all things? Think how memorably Forster weaves an image suggestive of this into the tension of the Trial scene itself, where once again he achieves that effect of human figures in the foreground playing their parts against a symbolic frieze. This time the actors are full of fury and litigation, by no means are they trying to achieve harmonious personal relationships; but all is dominated by the figure of the strange and beautiful Indian who pulls the 'punkah':

> . . . pulling the rope towards him, relaxing it rhythmically, sending swirls of air over others, receiving none himself, he seemed apart from human destinies, and male fate, a winnower of souls . . .

At the end of the scene, Aziz is acquitted. Right triumphs. But—

> . . . unaware that anything unusual had occurred, he continued to pull the cord of his punkah, to gaze at the empty dais and the overturned special chairs, and rhythmically to agitate the clouds of descending dust.

This hieratic and mysterious figure seems to me successfully rendered, on the imaginative level, and absolutely central to the sense of these concluding sections of 'Caves'. For what is their upshot? After Aziz has been acquitted there are some ragged demonstrative outbursts by the Indians—soon quelled; there is a scrappy, bleak reconciliation between Fielding and Miss Quested; and this causes Aziz' and Fielding's own relationship to peter out in misunderstanding and recrimination: all in all an effect of dwarfs, of 'agitated clouds of dust' whirling in their brief phenomenal shelves on the edge of some mystery whose true dimension only Mrs Moore and Professor Godbole have touched. And 'Caves' ends with Fielding's return to Europe by way of that Mediterranean 'which is the human norm' to 'the buttercups and daisies' of an English June. It is like a nostalgic hindglance on Forster's part to that symbolic world of vital Southerners and faun-like Englishmen who were the Saviours of his early novels, now so inadequate to the India of this novel, with its darker vision of purely human possibility.

* * *

The short 'Temple' section that concludes the book takes place fifteen years after the events of 'Mosque' and 'Caves', and this in itself, as a structural feature, may suggest two things, one intentional, the other possibly not: Forster may intend us to feel what a spiritual distance there is between the 'hints and guesses' of the two first sections and the kind of joy that may be their strange apogee; further, however, this break may show some imaginative uneasiness on Forster's part at integrating that very affirmation with the concerns of the two earlier sections. Hence, by making a great pause, and plunging into what, for him, is a very

fortissimo effect at the beginning of 'Temple', he hopes to bridge the gap by shock tactics.

I call it a 'fortissimo' effect; even so the total effect of that first scene in which Professor Godbole stands in the presence of that God who 'transcends human processes' is still deeply ambiguous, even if one does not call it—yet, at any rate—evasive.

Forster contrives a tone that carefully puts him at a distance from the experience: the scene is typically oriental in its confusion, it lacks dignity, and he highlights the comedy of this; and yet there is both beauty and imaginative commitment on the writer's part in a passage like this:

> The assembly was in a tender happy state unknown to an English crowd, it seethed like a beneficent potion. When the villagers broke cordon for a glimpse of the silver image a most beautiful and radiant expression came into their faces, a beauty in which there was nothing personal, for it caused all to resemble each other in the moment of its indwelling, and only when it was withdrawn did they revert to individual clods. And so with the music. Music there was, but from so many sources that the sum-total was untrammelled. The braying, banging, crooning, melted into a single mass which trailed round the palace before joining the thunder. Rain fell at intervals throughout the night.

Even in the second last sentence of that passage, however, there is an ironic distance preserved; and the emphasis on the depersonalised beauty of the worshippers is an important one, for it is taken up again as the ceremony reaches its climax. Godbole and the other old men 'singing into one another's moustaches' are described thus:

> . . . the singers' expressions became fatuous and languid. They loved all men, the whole universe, and scraps of their past, tiny splinters of detail, emerged for a moment to melt into the universal warmth. Thus Godbole, though she was not important to him, remembered an old woman he had met in Chandrapore days. Chance brought her into his mind while it was in this heated state, he did not select her, she happened to occur among the throng of soliciting images, a tiny splinter, and he impelled her by his spiritual force to that place where completeness can be found. Completeness, not reconstruction. His senses grew thinner, he remembered a wasp seen he forgot where, perhaps on a stone. He loved wasp equally, he impelled it likewise, he was imitating God. And the stone where the wasp clung—could he . . . no, he could not, he had been wrong to attempt the stone, logic and conscious effort had seduced, he came back to the strip of red carpet and discovered that he was dancing upon it.

Now this seems to me a very interesting passage. I shall waive for the moment the degree of literalness which we may see in Forster's attitude to this Hindu ecstasy; but even if it is principally a metaphor—as I am sure it is—its literal quality is going to affect its metaphorical significance. Because if a writer draws the metaphors for his own deepest meanings from the mysticism of the East, he has to pay the price of some of its implications.

The trend in all Eastern mysticism is on the total merging of the individual soul into the Absolute which is its source; in that it is like the Gnostic and neo-Platonic mystical tradition of the West which, compared with the orthodox tradition of Christian mysticism, is a form of self-deification—That Art Thou—wholly lacking any emphasis on the fact that the greatest mystic is still a dependent creature in relation to a Creator, and that he is a unique person—therein lies his value—in communion with a Person: a dialogue of I and Thou. By such an assault on the Absolute as is here described, however, one loses all quality as a person; nor is that Absolute itself a Person; hence it is not moral, in the acceptable human sense. And all throughout the earlier sections of the book has not a solution for the problem of evil been adumbrated in a form which would give one a *point d'appui* above and beyond the all-too-personal phenomenal confusions of good and evil, which is precisely what the Hindu God offers to the soul: this Absolute is supremely *Ironic*. It manifests itself through things, persons, rocks, wasps; Good and Evil are merged and serenely counterpoised in it. Fusion with it gives the possibility of a joyful irony (think of the tone of those remarks of Godbole cited earlier), a *gaya scienza* paradoxically to be gained by the very act of divesting oneself of the clogs of personality, of consciousness, and of logic. So let us note three emphases that are to be extracted from such a passage at this: it negates reason and logic; it posits, in an extended sense, an 'ironical' solution to the problem of good and evil; and it offers a kind of self-deification. With whatever ambiguity of tone this Hindu ceremony is described, these are important emphases, and I shall return to them when trying to sum up the total implications of Forster's double vision in this book when it is divested of the literal trappings of Hinduism.

That there is ambiguity is clear from the memorable little joke 'God si Love'. Now in one sense this fits into the account just given of the quality of the Hindu Absolute: it is not possible to say of it that It is Love, as, by the process of analogy, Christianity says of its God. The joke draws attention to the moral ambiguity of the Hindu Absolute. It also, however, bolsters up Forster's own recurrently playful tone throughout the whole scene; we do not know quite where to have him; and he would not care to know where he has himself, one feels, for the scene ends with a little ironic agnostic flurry of 'perhaps' . . . and qualifications, which in

their turn point forward to the ambiguity of the book's concluding incidents:

Fielding has returned to India, having married Mrs Moore's daughter in his absence; he brings with him Ralph, Mrs Moore's son, a fey, intuitive boy, intended to remind us of his mother's visionary qualities. Ralph, after some misunderstandings, makes friends with Aziz, who takes him in a boat on the river by night, and just as the worshippers are launching the emblems of Krishna on the water, Aziz' boat collides with another one bearing Fielding and Stella Moore. Under a sky that reiterates the image of darkness and light intermingled, the expedition ends in chaos, ('ragged edges of religion . . . unsatisfactory and undramatic tangles . . . "God si Love" . . .') all very evocative of that other collision on Adela's car-ride with Ronnie, similarly hedged with ironic *décor*. The book's concluding passage gives a final underlining to this uncertainty: Aziz and Fielding ride together, friends in need and hope, but not in total fulfilment:

> 'Why can't we be friends now?' said (Fielding), holding him affectionately. 'It's what I want. It's what you want.'
>
> But the horses didn't want it—they swerved apart; the earth didn't want it, sending up rocks through which riders must pass single file; the temples, the tank, the jail, the palace, the birds, the carrion, the Guest House that came into view as they issued from the gap and saw Man beneath: they didn't want it, they said in their hundred voices, 'No, not yet', and the sky said, 'No, not here.'

A tone, this, of gently optimistic despair about the possibilities of 'personal relationships' on the purely human level, and evoked with that casual, plangent grace Forster is so much a master of. But what is the final relation of this attitude to that other dimension of mystery which the Hindu religion's terminology has been accreting throughout the book? Ralph is here, remember; and Fielding, the man of simple agnostic good will, has married Mrs Moore's daughter. This, I feel sure, is a little diagrammatic hint of great importance, although, just for that reason, a little brusque imaginatively. Not that one expects something crude like having Fielding turn guru, sitting on a mat eating nuts; but it suggests that Forster, in the final analysis, finds it very difficult to make imaginatively vivid and precise the relationship between the Humanist-realistic and religious-symbolic levels of the book. Tentatively, however, might one not suggest this to be the intended meaning, when it has been translated—as far as is possible—from the Hindu theological imagery that is its vehicle.

Let it first be said, however, that when all necessary 'translation' has been done, there still remains something intractably embarrassing to Forster in the degree of 'de-personalising' that Hindu mysticism involves; one felt this in his use of epithets like 'fatuous and languid' for the expression on the worshippers' faces

during the ceremony. He is so very much a man of the West with its Christian heritage—transmitted to Liberal Humanism—of reverence for the unique value of the person; but, having lost the religious beliefs that gave purpose and redemption to persons in their earthly relationships and which refused to solve the problem of Evil by merging it in some way with Good, he is left only with a dim, tender hopelessness about human possibility. 'Only undefeated because we have gone on trying'; but those trials have no issue and no ultimate reference, as they have in Eliot.

There is, however, just one other possibility that makes them bearable; and this is where the Hindu metaphor is more helpful to Forster, I think:

Fielding marries Stella Moore; he marries into the Mrs Moore possibility, let us say, which is also the Godbole possibility; thereby he, and all like him, may keep in their souls, *however full their involvement in the active pursuit of good*, a point of reference that is wholly non-attached to good and evil, and hence can run no risk of disillusionment. That is the point of all the ironic air of mystery that hovers in symbols around the incidents of the book, whether they be good or evil. Having achieved this ultimate irony, which expresses itself most fully in the good-evil equivocations of a Godbole, you have become all things by the extent to which you see all things 'sub specie aeternitatis'—hence the metaphorical aptness of the soul's joyous fusion with the Absolute. But, that eternity, that Absolute, that God is not something which defines *you*. You *are* that God, defining and resolving all conflicts by your ironic acceptance of paradox—if I am right, that is, in thinking Forster has used Hinduism wholly as symbol and has 'interiorised' its attitudes. Resting thus on the intuited paradox, you are also exempted from using your reason in any attempt at ultimately solving the antinomy of good and evil; and this is the emotional attraction, for an agnostic, of the rejection of reason in the Hindu religious tradition. Irony holds all things in an ultimately equable solution; such an irony is the most complete self-transcendence possible for a human being, and is one logical conclusion of the process of self-deification which, viewed in traditional terms, Secular Humanism has fostered.

Put so, it sounds a glib and crude summing-up of the gentle, the modest and the wise Forster, but therein for me lies precisely the imaginative tension and fascination of the book; quite apart from its accomplishment as a work of art, it shows one variant of the Western mind in its search for mystery, and for mystery's source.

NOTES

[1] *Principia Ethica*, C.U.P., 1959, p. 189.

[2] I see no reason to abjure this kind of terminology, on the grounds that the personality is a whole, a 'Gestalt', and that 'to employ an outmoded faculty psychology etc.'; provided that one knows one is talking about

perfectly discernible *emphases* in human motivation, and not about separable *entities*, no harm is done. Whereas, simply to affirm that the personality is a whole, and leave it at that, eludes all discussion of human action.

[3] 'Think you *did* make a nearly deadly mistake glorifying those *business* people in *Howards End*. Business is no good.' Letter to E. M. Forster, 20 Sept. 1922: quoted in *Selected Literary Criticism*, ed. Beal, Heinemann, 1955.

[4] E. M. Forster, *A Passage to India*, Penguin Edition, p. 68.

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 62.

[6] Mary Macarthy, *On the Contrary*, Heinemann, 1962.

[7] E. M. Forster, *A Passage to India*, Penguin Edition, p. 65.

[8] *Ibid.*, p. 66.

[9] *Ibid.*, p. 26-27.

[10] This was the subject, broadly, of two fascinating pieces by Mary Macarthy, to which reference was made earlier; they are included in the collection *On the Contrary*.

[11] E. M. Forster, *A Passage to India*, Penguin Edition, p. 40.

[12] *Ibid.*, p. 10.

[13] *Ibid.*, p. 85-86.

[14] *Ibid.*, p. 82-83

[15] *Ibid.*, p. 83-84. [My italics].

[16] *Ibid.*, p. 87.

[17] *Ibid.*, p. 77.

WORDS AND ETYMOLOGIES FOR THE OXFORD ENGLISH DICTIONARY

by M. D. W. JEFFREYS

THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION may be useful for the Editor at present compiling the New Supplement to the *Oxford English Dictionary*.

AGGRY BEADS. The earliest reference to this type of bead given in the O.E.D. is dated 1819 from Bowditch, but Astley, T., in *A New General Collection of Voyages and Travels* (London 1745-1747, vol. III., p. 120), publishing a translation from the voyages of Jean Barbot and of John Grazillier, who were on the coasts of Guinea between 1680 and 1700, writes: 'The Portuguese trade most at Forcados. Their cargoes are the same as are proper for the Benin trade . . . They get here also some Jasper stones and Akkory (or Aigris).' These two latter names are variants of *aggry*.

The Oxford English Dictionary states: *'Aggry, aggri*—A word of unknown origin and meaning, applied to coloured and variegated beads of ancient manufacture, found buried in the ground in Africa; . . .' However, in a recent article, 'Aggrey Beads', *African Studies* (Vol. 20. 2. 1961. M. D. W. Jeffreys), it was shown that the origin of the word *aggry* and its variants can be traced back to the Hindustani word *kauri*, from which derives the English word *cowry*. It is also shown that the original *aggry* was a blue bead.

ALKATRAS. In the O.E.D. under the word *albatross* one reads '. . . algatross . . . Apparently a modification of *Alcatras,* applied to the Frigate-bird, but extended through inaccurate knowledge to a still larger sea-fowl, and in this sense altered to *albi-, albe-, albatross* (perhaps with etymological reference to *albus* white), the *albatross* being white, while the *alcatras* was black. *Algatross* in 17 C. may be an intermediate form; *albatross* has not been found before 1769 . . .'

There is no example of the spelling *alkatras* in the O.E.D., and the example I am giving seems to refer to the Frigate-bird and not to the albatross. A. Tootal translated *The Captivity of Hans Stade,* (Hakluyt Society's publication 1st Ser. Vol. LI, London 1874, p. 39). In it are annotations by Burton whence the following quotation: 'On the said island were many seabirds, which are called Alkatrases . . .'

ANGBAR. This word is not in the O.E.D. It is a word used on the Guinea coasts for a measure of palm oil, and attention is drawn to the word *BAR* below where, among a list of similar words, occurred the word BAR as a measure of value. A BAR was a shortened form for IRON BAR and it may be that ANGBAR is a corruption of IRON BAR. C. N. de Cardi, in his appendix to Mary Kingsley's *West African Studies* (London 1899, p. 472) wrote: 'She would carefully hoard this and all subsequent bits of miscellaneous property until he had in his fostermother's hands sufficient goods to buy an angbar of oil—a measure containing thirty gallons.'

Referring to the word *bar* as a measure of value Mary Kingsley (op. cit., p. 623), quoting from Barbot, states that on the Gold Coast the natives 'measure iron bars with the sole of the foot . . .'

ANINA. This word is not in the O.E.D. and it appears to derive from the Hausa *anini*, meaning 'a metal button'; the coin is valued at one tenth of a penny. (G. P. Bargery, *A Hausa—English Dictionary and English—Hausa Vocabulary*, London 1934, p. 32). This meaning of one tenth of a penny came into existence as follows: 'When in 1909 the [Nigerian] Government recognised this need [for small change in the local markets] and introduced a small nickel coin, the "anina" valued at one-tenth of a penny, the natives everywhere took to its use . . .' (Thorp, E. *Ladder of Bones*, London 1956, p. 149.)

BAR, as a form of currency or a measure of weight, is not in the O.E.D. Greenlee notes that it was used by the Portuguese in 1500. Thus he writes in his translation: 'This [a baar] is the price which spices and drugs are worth in Calicut and also the method of weighing the money. A *baar* of nutmeg, weighing four cantavos, is worth 450 favos. One ducat is worth 20 favos. A *baar* of cinnamon is worth 390 favos'. Footnote: *'Baar, bacar* and *barchara* are forms of the Indian *bahar.'* (Greenlee, W. B. *The Voyage of Pedro Alvares Cabral to Brazil and India* 2nd Ser. Hakluyt, London 1937, p. 91.) Cabral visited Brazil in 1500 on his way to India. The earliest use of the term occurs in the *Roteiro de Vasco da Gama*, p. 78.

BIRNS. This word is not in the O.E.D. '. . . Chapman rode on ahead . . . to obtain birns fit for the innoculation of those (cattle) we have now with us . . .' (T. Baines. *Explorations in South West Africa.* London 1864, p. 93).

BLACK IVORY. This term is not in the O.E.D. and is a euphemism for a Negro slave. 'Originally it [Lagos, Nigeria] was a notorious haunt for slavers, the numerous lagoons running parallel to the coast enabling the merchants of *black ivory* to run cargoes without much danger of interception by the cruisers watching the coast.' (H. A. Leverson. *The Forest and the Field.* London 1874, p. 205.)

BROUZE. No example of this spelling is given in the O.E.D. for the nineteenth century. 'The stage called Mentjies Hoek offered a few rushes and abundance of succulent plants, among which the bullocks of Africa are accustomed to brouze for want of grass . . .' (J. Barrow. *Travels into Southern Africa.* London 1801, p. 87.)

CAPASHIERS. This word is not in the O.E.D. but a variant of it, CABOCER, appears with the date 1836. T. Philips as Captain of the *S.A. Hannibal* was at Cabo Corse Castle in the Gold Coast in February 1694 and he wrote: 'Each of Castle Capashiers having one as his badge of office.' (Churchill's Voyages, vol. VI, London 1732, p. 208.)

CHOCK BOX. This term is not in the O.E.D. and is, I think, a corruption of *CHOP BOX*, which see. It was used in 1896 thus: 'The usual supply of what is known as "chock boxes" for stations in East Africa, is one per month . . .' (G. F. Scott-Elliot. *A Naturalist in Mid-Africa.* London 1896, p. 362.)

CHOP BOX. This term, under the date 1921, appears in the *Supplement* to the O.E.D. The term was in use somewhat earlier. 'Stores are carried in "chop-boxes", i.e. deal boxes, with hinged lids, hasps and padlocks and with handles. For size, 18in. x 10in. x 8in. is about right . . .' (C. Larymore. *A Resident's Wife in Nigeria.* London 1911, p. 63.) The earliest use I have traced is: 'Pretty cram full with 100 bits of luggage, "chop boxes" mountain high . . .', from J. F. Fremantle's Journal of Dec. 10th, 1904. (A. F. Fremantle. *Two African Journals and other Papers.* London 1938, p. 30.)

CROW-CROW. This word, under the form Craw-Craw, appears in the O.E.D. dated 1863. The quotation given below is earlier. 'Passing onwards they came to a black rock which . . . if anyone touched he would have a disease called crow-crow.' (Anonymous. *Missionary Records: West Africa.* London 1835-39, p. 158.)

CURTAL DOG. The expression is found in Shakespeare's *Comedy of Errors* III, 2, 142. '. . . she had transformed me to a curtal dog and made me turn in the wheel.' The O.E.D. derives *curtal* from curt, curtail, to shorten. The derivation overlooks the 'curr dogge', the 'runner' dog that could be used for running in turnspits. Such 'currdogges' had 'curled tails' much after the manner of pigs. 'Curtal' may therefore derive from the 'curled tail' of the curr (i.e. courier or runner) dog rather than from 'curt' meaning to shorten. There is no reason to suspect that the curtal dog was a dog with a shortened tail. (See also Jeffreys, M. D. W. The Basenji or Kur-dogge. *Nigerian Field.* Vol. XIX. April 1954.)

FUGGER. This word is not in the O.E.D. 'At present almost the whole traffic in foreign merchandise is in the hands of the people of Ghat and Agadis, especially in those of Mohammed

Boro, my friend the fugger of Agadis . . .' (H. Barth. *Travels in Africa.* Vol. IV. London 1858, p. 175.) [*Perhaps a derivation from the proper name 'Fugger', the surname of the Renaissance German banking family. Editor.*]

GONG-GONG. The following use of this onomatopoeic word is not given in the O.E.D. Captain John Adams writing of Lagos, Nigeria, remarked: 'His [the devil's] avocation is to run through the different avenues of the town disguised in a mask, and to destroy all who may chance to fall in his way; but as notice is given by the Gong Gong, or bellman, of his intended nocturnal visit, it is but seldom any person loses his life.' (Adams, J. *Remarks on the Country extending from Cape Palmas to the River Congo.* London 1823, p. 108.)

GRAYMALKIN. This word is recorded in the O.E.D. under the date of 1630, but Mr Rose of the Normal College, Johannesburg, drew my attention to the fact that it occurs in Shakespeare's *Macbeth* which was first published in 1606.

GROMETTAS. The form, gromet, meaning a cabin boy aboard ship, occurs in the O.E.D. As meaning Negro servants it was not used. Mr Atkins, a surgeon on the Guinea coast, in 1721, discussing the settlers at Sierra Leone, remarked that 'they all keep Gromettas which they hire from Sherbro river at two accys or bars a month.' (T. Salmon. *Geography: The Present State of Africa.* Vol. III. London 1746, p. 115.) The spelling *grumettas* is also found: 'There were also four other houses belonging to the factory, as well as four grumettas, or servant's houses.' (Anonymous. *Missionary Records: West Africa.* London 1835-1839, p. 93.)

HONURS. The use of this American spelling occurs in the preface written by C. R. Drinkwater Bethune, Captain R.N., to *The Observations of Sir Richard Hawkins, Knt., in his Voyage into the South Sea in the Year 1593,* and published in London for the Hakluyt Society in 1847. P. vii.

JIGGER. This word occurs in the O.E.D. but not with the meaning of 'to copulate', though in Partridge's *Slang Dictionary* 'jig' is listed with this meaning. J. D. Bold in his *Fanagalo (Kitchen Kaffir) Dictionary,* Cape Town 1947, p. 6, explains that 'Fanagalo is a very much simplified form of Nguni (Zulu, Xhosa) and related languages with adaptations of modern terms from English and Afrikaans.' Under the verb 'copulate' one finds 'hlangana, jiga.' As *jiga* is neither an Nguni word nor an Afrikaans one, it is presumably an English slang word. [*There is a Zulu word* jika (*pron.* jiga) *meaning 'to turn', 'to swing'* (Bryant: *Zulu-English Dictionary*). *There is also a Zulu word* jiki-jiki, *meaning 'of hurling', 'of flinging'* (Doke: *Zulu-English Dictionary*). *The ideophone* jiki-jiki *also has a slang meaning, of up-and-down movement, copulation. Editor.*]

LEVIRATIC. The last instance of the use of this word re-

corded in the O.E.D. is 1849. Here is an up-to-date reference. 'Sororal and leviratic marriages are secondary marriages in Schapera's sense of the term.' (Gibson, G. D. 'Herero Marriage'. *Human Problems in British Central Africa.* No. 24. Dec. 1958, p. 11.)

LIBATTES. This word is used by J. Leyden as an alternative for village: 'Besides the inhabitants of the libattes, or villages, there is another class who wander in the fields, sleep under the trees, and live almost in a state of nature.' (Leyden, J. *Historical Account of Discoveries and Travels in Africa.* Vol. I. London 1817, p. 110.)

MAN'S MEAT. This term meaning a nubile woman is not in the O.E.D. 'When she was grown man's meat, and a pretty girl, Vanhukeline by bribes and presents corrupted her mother Taguba . . . to steal her away and bring her to him . . .' T. Philips, Captain of the S.S. *Hannibal* was at Succundy on the Gold Coast in February 1694. (*Churchill's Voyages.* Vol. VI London 1732, p. 202.) 202.)

MASK. The derivation of this word is discussed by Elsworthy in *Horns of Honour,* John Murray, 1900, p. 138, where he refers to the derivation offered in his earlier book *The Evil Eye,* p. 147. He holds that the word is 'a corruption of the older Greek *baska,* whence *baskania,* fascina or amulets.' While accepting possible Arabic derivations for some meanings, one would like to be sure that the Greek derivation does not lurk behind others. Elsworthy in his claim for a Greek rather than an Arabic origin continues, 'but for the information of those who believe the word to be Arabic he refers them to Boettiger, *Kleine Schriften,* Dresden 1938, Ueber das Wort "Maske", vol. iii, p. 402; also ib. ii., p. 366.'

See also Boettiger, *Opuscula,* Dresden 1837, p. 222 n., 'De Personis Scenicis: vulgo Larvis.'

'Lobeck, Aglaophamus, p. 973 n., says of "Graeci novitii *maskaremata* appellant i.e. larvas" "Nomen romanicum Maacas Mascara s. Talamasca cum latino fascinum (unde fescennium derivant) et graeco *baskein=katalogein, baskainein, baska,* cognatum esse veterum Etymologorum conjectura est haud improbabilis; quanquam Reiskius in Act—Jenens, t. iv, p. 160, arabium putat." Boettiger, however, writes decidedly and ridicules the Arabic theory.' (F. T. Elsworthy, *Horns of Honour,* London 1900, p. 138.)

MORES. This word is not in the O.E.D. Professor A. Muntsch in his book *Cultural Anthropology,* New York 1934, p. 191, stated that W. G. Sumner 'has given a wide currency to the terms "mores" and "folkways" . . .' Now Sumner died in 1910 and the earliest reference that I have found to the use of this term 'mores' occurs in Sumner's book *Folkways,* New York 1906, p. 30, where he writes: 'when the elements of truth and right are developed into doctrines of welfare, the folkways are raised to another plane. They then become capable of producing inferences, developing into new forms, and extending their constructive influence over men and

society. Then we call them the mores. The mores are the folkways, including the philosophical and ethical generalization as to societal welfare which are suggested by them, and inherent in them as they grow.' The word *mores* has now become part and parcel of the 'jargon' of anthropological terminology. Thus in the *Dictionary of Anthropology,* ed. C. Winick (London 1957, p. 369) one finds: '*Mores.* Behaviour patterns that are accepted, traditional and usually change slowly. A *mos* is generally believed to be conducive to the society's welfare. The breach is punished more severely and formally than the breach of folkways.'

OBSQUATULATED. This word is not in the O.E.D. and I am inclined to think that it was invented by I. M. Orpen, who, in his book *History of the Basutos of South Africa,* Cape Town 1857, p. 35, wrote: 'The Griquas obsquatulated, the Cape Corp Totties shirked, and their officers and the remaining troops charged pell-mell upon the rocks.' [*The* Shorter Oxford English Dictionary *gives the form* Absquatulate *with date 1837 and describes it as 'U.S. formation of joc. use'. Editor.*]

PALM-OIL CHOP. The name of a favourite dish on the Guinea Coast is not in the O.E.D. H. A. Leverson under the pseudonym of Old Shekarry in his book, *The Forest and the Field,* London 1874, p. 196, wrote: ' "Palm-oil chop", the African curry made with palm oil instead of butter and eaten with "kankie" Native bread (somewhat like the corn-cake of the Southern States of America) as well as rice cooked "Pilau" fashion . . .'

PALM-OIL RUFFIANS. This term descriptive of the European traders of the nineteenth century on the Guinea coasts is not in the O.E.D. H. A. Leverson in his book *The Forest and the Field,* London 1874, p. 158, describing the various types of Europeans found on the Guinea coast writes: 'Thirdly, the commercial; traders usually known as "Palm-oil Ruffians" or "Coast Lambs", a class of men much calumniated.'

PISMIRE. This word is in the O.E.D. meaning an ant of the *formica* type. In the following quotation it refers to the white ant and its termitary. 'The country over which we passed was usually covered with dome-shaped mounds of clay, thrown up by the pismire . . .' (Captain William Cornwallis Harris. *The Wild Sports of Southern Africa.* London 1839, p. 300.)

REVIVISCENCE. The last reference to this word meaning 'revival' is dated 1875. Here is an up-to-date reference: 'Although current reports from industry indicate that there has been no reviviscence in market conditions . . .' (*The Standard Bank of South Africa Review,* September 1960, p. 5.)

SCOAT. The O.E.D.'s last example of the use of this spelling is dated 1678. W. J. Burchell in his diary of 6. 8. 1811 wrote:

'Accordingly, two Hottentots followed each waggon with large stones, ready to scoat the wheels the moment they began to run backwards.' (*Travels in the Interior of Africa.* Vol. I. p. 180.)

SHAKES meaning *shooks* of casks or barrels is not recorded in the O.E.D. 'The casks which receive it [the palm oil] are carried out in shakes, and set-up in the country . . .' (J. Adams. *Sketches Taken During Ten Voyages to Africa.* London 1822, p. 114.)

SLOOT. The only example given in the O.E.D. of this spelling is dated 1889. I give a more modern example. 'There was a 30ft. sloot or donga running through the site . . .' (Dan Minnaar, ed., *Arrive at Windhoek.* Pub. by Reco., Windhoek 1958, p. 24.)

SNO. This spelling of *snow* meaning a type of sailing vessel is not given in the O.E.D. 'Novmr. 2d 1758. Yesterday arrived from Liverpool the Bee Sno, Capt. Potter, where I sould 3 slaves . . .' (E. Martin, ed. *Journal of a Slave-Dealer: Nicholas Owen.* London 1930, p. 103.)

THUNDER-BOX as a name for a movable privy seat and pail, often used on safari in Nigeria, does not occur in the O.E.D. but is in use: ' "What about that thunder-box", I asked.' (Bernard, J. *Black Mistress.* London 1957.)

TICKLER. This term for the clitoris is not in the O.E.D., but Barth uses it. He, listing African words, gives against them the German and English equivalents, thus: 'Deutsch und English clitoris tickler.' (Barth, H. *Collection of Vocabularies of Central African Languages.* Gotha 1862, p. 266.)

TITTIE with the meaning of prostitute in West Africa is not in the O.E.D. 'Daddie want to see tittie (tittie, little sister); um berry liller piccaninny; too much young; give me dash; I go bring; . . .' (H. A. Leverson. *The Forest and the Field.* London 1874, p. 181.)

WHITE ANTS. This term was used in 1690 to describe wood-lice which, however, are not termites or white ants. The use of this term to designate termites is in the O.E.D. dated 1849. I can give an earlier example. Prior was in Port St Louis, Mauritius, in January 1811, and he wrote: '. . . myriads of white ants likewise infest it [the harbour], whose ravages and numbers in the bottoms of uncoppered vessels are truly astonishing.' (J. Prior, *Voyage in the Indian Seas in the Nisus Frigate.* London 1820, p. 41.)

ZAMBOZE. This spelling for *sjambok* is not given in the O.E.D. 'In a small hole . . . we saw about six inches of the folds of a snake, but had no weapon with which to kill him . . . as he was evidently too large to be hurt by a zamboze.' (T. Baines. *Exploration in South-West Africa.* London 1864, p. 30.)

CORRESPONDENCE

Gentlemen,

Mr Neville Nuttall suggests, in *Theoria 19*, that Shakespeare, like Homer, sometimes nods. No doubt he is right, though as often as not, when we think Shakespeare is nodding, it is we who are dropping off over his work.

I will not argue about 'your eye I eyed'; though taste has changed radically since Shakespeare's day, and we cannot be sure that our own taste in puns is not a limitation of our sense of language.

But it seems certain that Shakespeare was not nodding when he made Isabella speak the line:

'More than our brother is our chastity.

Certainly this grates upon a sensitive ear, and still more upon a generous heart. But must we suppose that Shakespeare means us to love and admire Isabella ? If so, he has gone about it in a strange way. Isabella's first appearance in the play shows her about to join a sisterhood, and, before she is even admitted, suggesting that the rules ought to be stricter !

This, and the rest of her conduct and language in the play, show her to be an insensitive, priggish, and cold-blooded woman, who has the self-assured virtue of the frigid. The words Mr Nuttall quotes are not an accident; they reflect quite precisely Isabella's own hierarchy of values. Her chastity really is more important in her eyes than her brother's life.

This is not to say that this is an illegitimate attitude; we could respect it if it grew out of a full understanding of all that is involved both in chastity and in death. But the quasi-regal 'our' indicates, together with the brisk finality of the utterance, the lofty coolness with which Isabella looks down, from the heights of her own sanctity, on her brother's agony of fear.

In short, I believe that Shakespeare knew exactly what he was doing when he imagined this female Pharisee, and gave her this line to speak. It is a fit reward for the Duke—who irresponsibly leaves his dukedom to Angelo as an 'experiment'—that Shakespeare makes him commit the error of proposing to Isabella. But whatever he may have deserved we must in all charity hope, for his sake, that she turns him down.

The line is indeed an ugly one; it is the quintessential expression of the moral ugliness of the 'unco guid'. Shakespeare, I think, would have agreed with Mr Nuttall about that.

G. H. DURRANT,
University of Manitoba.

Gentlemen,

'The above letter', as some examiners like to say, was courteously referred to me by Professor Durrant before publication, and my comments were invited.

Of course I accept the argument that the ugly line in question is characteristic of the priggish Isabella.

My point was that even Shakespeare can write bad verse; Professor Durrant shrewdly agrees that he can—*when he wants to!*

I wonder, incidentally, whether the same observation could be made about some of Wordsworth's apparent lapses?

NEVILLE NUTTALL,
Natal Training College,
Pietermaritzburg.

Gentlemen,

The paper *Some Medieval French Attitudes to Love* in the last issue of *Theoria* contains some extraordinary statements about the attitude of the official Christian Church to love. In the interest of truth some closer examination of the teaching of representative theologians should be made.

First the position of P. Royle may be summarized. But here a difficulty arises: some statements in the paper can scarcely be literally meant ('in medieval France love was a rare emotion'); and perhaps the account of the Church's attitude is meant to have the same Thurberesque quality as the description of the personalization of some of the men of Provence by the women. On the other hand this account is given plainly enough, it looks like an historical account, and demands examination even at the risk of 'dialectical futility'.

We are told, then, that the Church of France in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries held that love was sinful. Since the Church had not forgotten the clear teaching of the Gospels that love of God and love of neighbour are the fulfilment of God's law (v. Aquinas: S.TH.II-IIae 23, 6 & 25, I), it must be presumed that 'love' is being used here in a specialized, restrictive sense that does not translate the *amor, dilectio, caritas* of the medievals. This presumption is confirmed when we read: 'To the Christian schoolmen, for whom even passionate love of one's wife was sinful, love was the work of Satan exploiting that human concupiscence which was the sign and consequence of the Fall . . .' Presumably the 'even' is misplaced here, since it is also stated that: 'the passions were held to be evil', and so passionate love of anyone or anything would be wrong. But this is not Aquinas's view of passion: 'Peripatetici (and Aquinas certainly wishes to number himself among them here) vero omnes motus appetitus sensitivi passiones vocant.

Unde eas bonas aestimant'. (I-11ae 24, 2). Perhaps, then, we can interpret 'love' to mean 'passionate love of a man for a woman (or a woman for a man)'. There is one further important qualification made in the paper in relation to this: Christian sex (='love', 'sexology'?) though a paltry thing, conceived in terms of species and procreation, had, nevertheless, a less negative side that somehow, and paradoxically, distinguished the Christian position from that of the Catharists, though both equated sex with life and regarded it as evil.

The actual teaching of the medieval theologians is infinitely more subtle and complex. In order to understand it we should remember that the idea that marriage is evil is as old as as the Church. It is condemned in the New Testament itself (I Tim. 4, 3), and by a synod at Toulouse in 447, by another there in 1119, and by the II Ecumenical Council of the Lateran in 1139. Further, from the time of Abelard onwards, the statement of *Ephesians* (5, 32) that the union and love of marriage was a *musterion* (in the *Vulgate, sacramentum*) of the union and love of Christ and the Church, was interpreted to mean that marriage was one of the sacraments of the Church along with Baptism, the Eucharist, and the others.

As a sacrament, marriage was considered a remedy for sin, but it was one thing to be a remedy for sin and quite another to be sin: the incarnation and cross of Christ were considered to be *remedia peccati* too. Marriage though, unlike the other sacraments, did not begin as a Christian sacrament: it was thought of as part of the lives of the first, and originally perfect, human beings, Adam and Eve. In their discussion of this first institution of marriage by God, the approach of the schoolmen is certainly biological ('for the multiplication of the species', says Anselm of Laon, who died in 1117), and this approach colours also their discussion of the sacrament. But this does not mean that marriage does not imply love for them: Anselm said that marriage had three ends: to procreate, to avoid fornication, to multiply love; and these corresponded to three goods: children of fertility; faithfulness, the bond of chastity; sacrament, the sign and representation of the union of Christ and the Church. (These last three go back to Augustine and always form part of medieval theological theories of marriage.) The equivalence between the crude notion of the avoidance of fornication and the ideal of faithfulness is typical: in terms of their own teaching that negation can only be understood through that positive of which it is the negation, there can be no doubt that faithfulness comes before the avoidance of sin in the minds of these theologians.

Peter Lombard, whose *Sententiae* were the textbook of theology throughout the period under discussion, said that marriage was a symbol of the union in love between Christ and the Church, since it is a *copula spiritualis per charitatem* from the moment the

marriage vows are pronounced, and that this symbol, image, was perfected in the bodily union *(copula)*.

Aquinas, who taught in Paris in the mid-thirteenth century, and whose *Summa Theologiae* eventually replaced the *Sententiae* of Peter Lombard as the received textbook, said that marriage was a union of man and wife for the begetting and rearing of children, and for the leading of a common life in the home. Union of bodies and souls followed on marriage (Suppl. 44, 1) and implied friendship (Suppl. 42, 2), for him the superior kind of love, contrasted with *amor concupiscentiae* (I-IIae 26, 4). Passionate love in act for one's wife was good and meritorious (Suppl. 41, 4) when related to the begetting of children or the request of the other. But to ask for the use of marriage apart from a general and habitual desire for children was considered a giving way to human weakness and therefore sinful—not simply speaking sinful, but venially sinful (Suppl. 49, 5, c & ad. 1). Aquinas's reason is that passionate love involves a loss of rationality: 'The mind is bound by the intensity of delight' (Suppl. 41, 3, ad. 2); and loss of rationality is only reasonable where there is some good purpose in view to compensate. This subjection of the mind to the vehemence of delight was for him a consequence of the fall, but is not sinful, but shameful (Suppl. 41, 3, ad. 3).

These statements, though far from the simplicities of the paper under consideration, are certainly, if a personal note may here be permitted, shocking. But there is a mystery here, a mystery experienced, in his own way, by the civilised man of the paper. The civilised man possesses his love (while the uncivilised man is possessed by it); yet he nevertheless finds his refreshment in the forgetting of civilised (hypocritical) manners, and allows himself to be possessed by love. Any thought of compensation, justification, is justly abhorrent; yet there is a mystery to be understood, so far as is possible. Perhaps one could say that the giving of the self in passion, which touches the quick of personality, is noble when it is part of self-giving to the loved one ? At least we may admit that the medieval theologians, not children in any meaningful sense, were at grips with a genuine difficulty.

JEROME SMITH,
St Peter's Seminary,
Donnybrook.

Gentlemen,

Father Smith has totally misunderstood my article. It was my purpose to discuss, not the medieval Church's attitude to marriage, except incidentally, but its attitude to love. In so far as this attitude was determined by its attitude to the passions in general (an attitude which I justify on historical grounds), it was also necessary to give a brief statement of this. This statement was accurate as

far as it went. It would, of course, have been possible to amplify it, for the Church's teachings, being far from coherent, have given rise to numerous theological debates and differing interpretations. Such an undertaking, except to reduce the reader to distracted boredom and to cast a fog over the whole discussion, would have served no purpose whatsoever. For my statements, far from being extraordinary, as Father Smith claims, are echoed by every competent authority on the Middle Ages, one of whom, C. S. Lewis, is cited in my article in a way which shows that a knowledge of his book, *The Allegory of Love*, was part of the knowledge I assumed (mistakenly, it seems, in the case of this correspondent) in my readers. Furthermore, this whole theme was developed at some length in *Theoria* 14 by Mr T. Whittock (who goes far beyond me, yet seems to have escaped attack).

But first let us look at Aquinas's view of the passions. He wishes, according to Father Smith, to number himself, in the context of the sentence he quotes, with the Peripatetics. 'In the interest of truth' I propose to quote the whole passage of which this sentence is a part. As it is my aim to be understood by as many people as possible (and, oddly enough, I do expect to be taken seriously), I shall quote from the Dominican English translation.

> *I answer that*, on this question the opinion of the Stoics differed from that of the Peripatetics: for the Stoics held that all passions are evil, while the Peripatetics maintained that moderate passions are good. This difference, although it appears great in words, is nevertheless, in reality, none at all, or but little, if we consider the intent of either school. For the Stoics did not discern between sense and intellect; and consequently neither between the intellectual and sensitive appetite. Hence they did not discriminate the passions of the soul from the movements of the will, in so far as the passions of the soul are in the sensitive appetite, while the simple movements of the will are in the intellectual appetite: but every rational movement of the appetitive part they called will, while they called passion, a movement that exceeds the limits of reason. Wherefore Cicero, following their opinion (*De Tuse Quaest* iii) calls all passions *diseases of the soul:* whence he argues that *those who are diseased are unsound; and those who are unsound are wanting in sense.* Hence we speak of those who are wanting in sense as being *unsound.*
>
> On the other hand, the Peripatetics give the name of *passions* to all the movements of the sensitive appetite. Wherefore they esteem them good, *when they are controlled by reason; and evil when they are not controlled by reason.** Hence it is evident that Cicero was wrong in dis-

*My italics. Father Smith's quotation shyly stops short at the words 'they esteem them good'.

> approving *(ibid.)* of the Peripatetic theory of a mean in the passions, when he says that *every evil, though moderate, should be shunned; for, just as a body, though it be moderately ailing, is not sound; so, this mean in the diseases or passions of the soul, is not sound.* For passions are not called *diseases* or *disturbances* of the soul, save when they are not controlled by reason. (*Summa Theologica*, II-I, 24, 2.)

Does not Aquinas here make it abundantly clear that he can side with the Peripatetics purely on account of their definition of the term 'passion'? And is it not equally clear from my article that this is not the sense in which I am using the term? 'Love', I write, 'is a passion'. 'Love, by definition, meant a capitulation to the dark, enslaving forces of unreason.' 'One can neither make oneself love nor prevent oneself from loving. Love is magic, transcending the sphere of responsibility and divine law.' And the passions, in this sense, were held to be evil, although not morally evil. Passions were acceptable only when voluntary (D. H. Lawrence, despair!); and then only when in accord with reason.

Worse still, however, Father Smith employs the same tactics in regard to the word 'love'. 'It must be presumed', he writes, 'that "love" is being used here in a specialized, restrictive sense that does not translate the *amor, dilectio, caritas* of the medievals.' Excellent! (This disingenuousness is made doubly inane by the fact that the schoolmen themselves were in the habit of using the term *amor* on occasion to mean what Father Smith tentatively interprets 'love' as meaning here, and triply so by the fact that I distinguish clearly between love and *caritas* in my article itself.) But why, then, does he go on to say: 'But this does not mean that marriage does not imply love for them: Anselm said that marriage had three ends: to procreate, to avoid fornication, to multiply love'? Really? Love in my sense? Come, come, Father Smith! Let me quote from the Parson's Tale in Chaucer:

> Trewe effect of mariage clenseth fornicacioun and replenysseth hooly chirche of good lynage; for that is the ende of marriage; and it chaungeth deedly synne into venial synne bitwixe hem that been ywedded, and maketh the hertes al oon of hem that been ywedded, as wel as the bodies.

Love is a passion which demands sexual expression, and the 'marriage act' was held to be sinful except when performed with the precise object of begetting children or in payment of the debt; and even then it was said to be accompanied either by sin, even though this sin was only venial, or by evil. The multiplication of love of which Anselm speaks has nothing to do with this love, but with the love of God (although God could best be loved by celibates) and the 'replenishment of holy church of good lineage' referred to by the Parson as the end of marriage.

As for Peter Lombard, his teaching has been admirably summarized by C. S. Lewis. I quote:

> Peter Lombard was much more coherent (than Hugo of St Victor). He located the evil in the desire and said that it was not a moral evil, but a punishment for the Fall. Thus the act, though not free from evil, may be free from moral evil or sin, but only if it is excused by the good ends of marriage. He quotes with approval from a supposedly Pythagorean source a sentence which is all-important for the historian of courtly love—*omnis ardentior amator propriae uxoris adulter est*, passionate love of a man's own wife is adultery.

Aquinas was scarcely more enlightened. I quote:

> *I answer that*, Just as the marriage goods, in so far as they consist in a habit, make a marriage honest, and holy, so too, in so far as they are in the actual intention, they make the marriage act honest, as regards these two marriage goods which relate to the marriage act. Hence when married persons come together for the purpose of begetting children, or of paying the debt to one another (which pertains to *faith*), they are wholly excused from sin. But the third good does not relate to the use of marriage, but to its excuse, as stated above (A.3)*; wherefore it makes marriage itself honest, but not its act, as though its act were wholly excused from sin, through being done on account of some signification. Consequently, there are only two ways in which married persons can come together without any sin at all, namely in order to have offspring, and in order to pay the debt; otherwise it is always at least a venial sin. (III, Supp., 49, 5.)

I repeat: Christian sex (no, not love, which it precludes, nor sexology) was a paltry thing. The Christian position was distinguished from that of the Catharists not by a less negative side, as Father Smith imagines me to have affirmed, but by a reluctance on the part of most theologians (not all) to carry their hostility to sexual intercourse to its logical conclusion. Whereas Catharists simply forbade it, the schoolmen forbade enjoyment in it. The former repudiated it; the latter enjoined it to repudiate itself, while admitting that in practice this was impossible. As Aquinas puts it:

> By these words *(that they . . . who have wives, be as if they had none)* the Apostle did not forbid the marriage, as neither did he forbid the possession of things when he said *(loc. cit., verse 31)*: *'They that use this world* (let them be) *as if they used it not.'* In each case he forbade enjoyment; which is clear from the way in which he expresses himself;

*This excuse was human frailty and the necessity of avoiding fornication.

> for he did not say *let them not use it*, or *let them not have them*, but let them be *as if they used it not* and *as if they had none*. (III, Supp., 41, 3.)

Everything Father Smith says about marriage is either irrelevant or helps to prove my point. I did not say that *marriage* was held to be sinful, but that *love* was. And could this be otherwise in an age when marriages were business deals, frequently dissolved when the interests of the parties changed ? Love and marriage are by no means synonymous, and to regard them as such is to be guilty of that scholastic prosaicness which drove lovers to equate love with adultery. Love is a passion upon which marriage must be based, not the ornament of a sanctified business deal. But in medieval France, where love was a rare emotion (this proposition is borne out by absolutely everything we know about the Middle Ages, their literature, their theology, their social practices, and is as 'historical' as any judgment concerning the quality of life, the *Empfindungsweise*, of an age can ever be), this demand was never made. Love and marriage, on account of the attitude of the Church, were felt to be mutually exclusive.

We come to Father Smith's last paragraph. 'Any thought of compensation, justification, is justly abhorrent; yet there is a mystery to be understood, so far as is possible.' There is indeed: what does Father Smith mean ? One of the dangers of confusing clarity with simplicity is that this promotes incoherence. Can he seriously be invoking my 'civilized man' in defence of the medieval Church's attitude to love ? But I made it quite clear that, while I had some sympathy with the scholastic attitude to the passions in general, I *approved* of love expressing itself passionately in private; whereas to the schoolmen *even this* was evil. If there is a mystery it is, like the mystery of predestination to damnation, of the Church's own making. 'The crude notion of the avoidance of fornication' is not in the last analysis the negation of a positive. It has nothing to do with being 'at grips with a genuine difficulty': it comes straight from I *Corinthians*, Chapter 7, which provided the basis of the whole deplorable teaching, a teaching reinforced by the celibate prejudices it helped to create. Medieval theology was a futile, childish, but at least honest attempt to make sense of the Bible and the pronouncements of the Fathers of the Church, and to reconcile them with Aristotle. This attempt to harmonize so many discordant voices did, indeed, lead to infinite subtlety and complexity. But the complex ramifications of scholastic doctrine do not preclude the possibility of stating it succinctly. However subtle might have been the efforts to justify, to explain the scholastic sexual teaching and the doctrine of predestination to damnation (and in the general framework of Christian belief both can be abundantly justified), the fact remains that the Catholic Church *did* (and does) believe in predestination to damnation, and *did* teach that sexual activity could be justified only by the marriage goods.

On one point I must acknowledge defeat: the position of the adverb 'even' in the sentence quoted by Father Smith, although called for by the sense, context, and rhythm of the sentence, is, according to the strictest syntax, incorrect.

P. ROYLE,
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University of Natal,
Pietermaritzburg.

Gentlemen,

Since Mr Colin Gardner, in his essay on *Twelfth Night* in *Theoria 19*, begins by saying that the play 'needs to be' 'continually interpreted and reinterpreted', he will not, I am sure, mind if I discuss two of his points, with many of which I do not fully agree.

It seems to me dangerous to apply Perdita's phrase 'great creating Nature' to this much earlier comedy, because it implies too much; and it seems to me also that the total effect of Mr Gardner's discussion of Viola and Duke Orsino leaves an unbalanced picture of the Duke. It is difficult to deal even with these two points alone without a close discussion of the whole play, but I will try to sketch briefly what I want to say.

First, then, *Twelfth Night* is a comedy whose background is entirely social, whereas in the Romances, *Cymbeline*, *The Winter's Tale*, and *The Tempest*, Shakespeare shows a profound view of Nature as a force which carries man to his right conclusions almost against his will. In these plays it is a tremendous, ever-present power, and against it man with his sins, passions and furies seems a puppet. Nature as a creating and healing power is constantly discussed, sometimes directly, sometimes by implication.

The phrase, 'great creating nature' itself occurs in *The Winter's Tale*, Act IV, Sc. iii, in the argument between Perdita and Polixenes, about whether man ought to interfere with nature so as to improve on its products. Polixenes leaves Perdita unable to answer him when he says 'nature is made better by no mean, but nature makes that mean'; that is, all man's 'art' is really only a use of potentialities already in nature. The early part of this scene, the very centre of the play, is infused with the feeling of nature's benevolence and fertile goodness. In *Cymbeline* the same atmosphere is felt, most clearly in such passages as Belarius's soliloquy on his two foster-sons, in Act IV, Sc. ii, 1.170:

> O thou goddess,
> Thou divine Nature, how thyself thou blason'st
> In these two princely boys . . .

But all these late plays are so fraught with a feeling for nature as the great creating, healing, and restoring force that it seems un-

necessary to point to particular expressions of it, and, not to belittle *Twelfth Night*, which is great comedy in quite a different mode, I think that to use Perdita's phrase of anything in that play is to weaken some of its rich suggestion.

Secondly, I think that Mr Gardner, in his dwelling on Viola, has made the Duke lose his attractiveness. He discusses especially Act II, Scene iv, and gives it the 'minute critical attention' which Shakespeare certainly 'deserves', and which he surely gets from all of us who read seriously.

He has already said that Orsino's 'inability to recognise the femininity' of Viola indicates his blindness and insensitivity, overlooking, it seems, Orsino's speech in Act I, Scene iv, where he tries to persuade Viola that she will be a successful pleader for him:

> Dear lad, believe it;
> For they shall yet belie thy happy years
> That say thou art a man: Diana's lip
> It not more smooth and rubious, thy small pipe
> Is as the maiden's organ, shrill and sound;
> And all is semblative a woman's part.

Could anything show more clearly Orsino's intuitive perception of Viola's 'femininity' ? Surely it is from his love for this 'lad' that his indignation in Act II, Scene iv, springs, when he declares that anyone his own age is 'Too old, by heaven' for this boy.

There is no conceit or pompousness in his tone, but real concern for Viola. This affection, turned to love, is crystallised in that sentence at the end of the play where he acknowledges Viola as 'Orsino's mistress and his fancy's queen', a handsome admission, and humble, that his 'fancy', so misleading in the past, has now a worthy object.

One of the great joys of this play is to see Orsino's love grow and bring him inescapably face to face with reality.

Yours faithfully,

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University of Natal,
Durban.

PLATO AND OUR REPUBLIC

by R. A. NORTON

PLATO DIED IN 347 B.C. His ideas, however, live on as a major element in the political philosophy of the world. This lasting influence stems from a variety of factors—the depth and nature of his perception, the power and extent of his following, and more probably from the fact that he was the first political philosopher of the Western academic tradition to write down his answers to the perennial questions of why the state exists and how it can best be governed. His ideas, by their chronological primacy, have provided a starting point for later speculations and have influenced, in varying degrees, the direction of political thinking in the twenty-three centuries since his death. His ideas find expression in many varying ways and in many varying societies, but there is one state in particular where many of his ideas have a validity and content of their own, namely the Republic of South Africa.

The intention of this brief article is to attempt to assess how many of Plato's ideas on government and the nature of the state can be recognized in the political thinking of the citizens of South Africa. By 'citizens' I mean those entitled to vote in general elections.

To begin with, Plato believed in the organic nature of the state and in the need for all citizens to sacrifice their own selfish desires in the more glorious and greater interests of the state. This idea of the state as something more than a collection of self-interested individuals has been developed by later writers, notably Hegel, to its highest level where the state has a life and personality of its own, and where the needs of the state are paramount even if they infringe the rights of individuals or minorities, or the accepted *mores* of civilized men generally. I think it fair to say that this type of thinking is now operative amongst the citizens of South Africa. The outworks of these ideas can be recognized in the intensely self-conscious nationalism of South Africans, and in their jealous guardianship of the shrines of internal and external sovereignty.

Plato divided society within the state into two main classes, each clearly differentiated on the criteria of function and power. There was to be a ruling class and a ruled class, and all political power was to lie with the rulers. As Andrew Hacker points out;

> The power structure of the Utopia is to be a politics of absolute rule. The Guardians . . . are placed in a position

> where they, and only they, are capable of understanding what is best for the society. As their politics are based on an awareness of the long-term good of the commonwealth, there is no provision—nor need there be—for dissent or opposition on the part of the average citizen. The question of self-government never arises in the Utopia: the Guardians are good governors and their wise rule obviates the need for elections, parties or popular discussion. (*Political Theory*, p. 33.)

The parallel with South Africa here is not exact but there is sufficient overlap to allow for comparison. It is definitely a part of both past and present South African political thought in general that the decision-making power should be in the hands of one section of the population, namely the Whites, and that their rule has been and will be an enlightened one. The ruled masses therefore have no legitimate cause for complaint. A similar line of thought was pursued by the Belgians in the Belgian Congo prior to 1960 and this has led Thomas Hodgkin to rename their policy of 'paternalism', 'Platonism.' (*Nationalism in Colonial Africa*, p. 48.)

There is an important corollary to Plato's ideas of a state divided into rulers and ruled and this centres on the different types of education which are to be given to each group. The rulers are to be given an extensive and exhaustive education to fit them for their important role in the state, while the ruled are to be taught enough to make them useful but obedient. The different systems of education for Whites and non-Whites which have been prescribed by law in South Africa, now even at the university level, are in step with this kind of thought. There is, however, one qualification here: the members of our ruling group are let off lightly in the field of education when compared with Plato's rulers. Plato would, I fear, say that they are let off too lightly.

Apart from education, Plato devoted considerable attention to the general techniques of control within the state, a problem which the South African Government has shown itself to be determined and efficient in tackling. The executive in South Africa has at its disposal a large number of levers with which to prise dissidents out of the hard wood of liberalism and other forms of deviant thought.

Plato rightly pointed out that the crude forms of social control such as imprisonment are at best only temporary measures. What is needed is something more subtle, something which will change the values of people in the state to make certain steps not only necessary but desirable. To this end Plato put forward the idea of a political myth—a folk-tale of the origins of the state and its necessary stratification into layers (gold, silver, bronze, etc.). This myth helps to induce the appropriate conduct in any state in which

the rulers retain all the political power. Since it is, however, only a myth,

> effective communication of the myth requires deception; it calls for conjuring up a distorted picture of reality which, once accepted, will preclude any embarrassing questions being asked about the power structure in society. (D. Hacker, *op cit.* p. 44.)

Mythology of a sort is part of the daily diet of the citizens of South Africa. Their myths are, however, more complex than the Platonic one and relate, *inter alia*, to a carefully shaded view of the history of the state, and also to a jealously guarded myth of innate White superiority with regard to intelligence, capacity for work, and so on. The South African myth extends not only to the past but also to the future with the image of a Bantustan millenium —a happy association of carefully cultivated differences under White control.

As Plato advocated, myth in South Africa is not directed only to the ruled classes; it is also aimed at the ruling group. Thus state action is acceptable to all members of the state. As an outrider of this idea of necessary myth-acceptance we find both in the Platonic Utopia and, to a lesser degree, in South Africa, the acceptance of state censorship or control of mass media as necessary.

Plato's ideas about the nature of the state and the best system of government within the state seem to have more than a little application to the South Africa of today. I do, however, feel that Plato would immediately disown South Africa as even approaching his Utopia. This is because many of the vital conditions which he prescribed as essential for the full and proper working of his ideas are lacking in this country.

The most important of these conditions is the need for fluidity between the ruling and ruled classes. In Plato's Utopia a child which did not meet the standards of the ruling group in character and intelligence was to be grouped amongst the ruled irrespective of his parentage. This idea would not find acceptance in South Africa where membership of the governing or governed classes depends upon race which in turn depends on parentage. Plato insisted, almost inhumanly, on the primacy of the criterion of merit in determining the upper stratum of political society. Race as a criterion would seem indefensible to him.

Another reason why Plato would disown South Africa as his Utopia is the fact that members of our ruling class are possessed of deep social and economic interests in the future of the state which, as Plato pointed out, must warp their view of the common good. Plato's ruling class would be divested of property and also of their children. He writes:

> 'None of them possess any private property beyond the barest necessities . . . If they should come to possess land of their own, and houses and money, they will give up their Guardianship,' and later, 'Wives are to be held in common by all; so too are the children, and no parent is to be known to his own child, nor any child to his parent.' (Cornford's translation of *The Republic*, pp. 108-9, and p. 156.)

Conditions such as this would be unacceptable to the ruling group in South Africa even if they were modified somewhat. The institution of private property and the *mores* of family life are too strong to make room for Plato's ideas here.

It is generally recognized that, in the light of human nature, Plato's Utopia is pitched beyond the boundaries of human achievement. It is, however, interesting to note how several of the more important features of his thought find expression in South Africa. But it is even more important to remember that many of Plato's vital ingredients are missing in our political cake. I do not think that Dr Verwoerd qualifies as a Philosopher King, nor do I think that the ruling group in South Africa would conform to the ascetic standards required of them by Plato. We fall short of the Platonic ideal state and I feel that Plato would be justified in saying that here a miss is as good as a mile.

TO SEE OURSELVES . . .

by C. J. JUTA

A LETTER WRITTEN BY LORD HARLECH TO LOUIS ESSELEN IN 1943

SOMEBODY ONCE ACCUSED English-speaking South Africans of worshipping three gods: the Royal Family, General Smuts and Comfort. Two of these are still with us, but the third left a vacuum after his death that nobody has ever since been able to fill. General Smuts's fall from power in 1948 was foreseen five years before by an English politician who had come out to the Union as High Commissioner of His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom, and who was therefore in a special position to study and evaluate Smuts's War Cabinet. He was disturbed by the unpopularity of the South African Government in the country, and his concern prompted him to write a 'personal and confidential' letter to the late Louis Esselen, General Smuts's close friend and confidant, in which he expressed his dismay at the way the government was losing ground because of the ineptitude and incompetency of some of its members. Today, twenty years later, this letter is of particular interest to us, for Lord Harlech's prophecies proved to be only too accurate, and his forebodings only too true.

The letter is dated February 4, 1943, only two days after the remaining German forces had capitulated at Stalingrad, where '146,700 dead Germans were picked up on the field and burned' (Stalin).

> 'I am a "politician" from birth,' he writes, 'and not an "official". I fought ten general elections as a candidate in my twenty-eight and a half years in the English House of Commons (my majorities varying from 8(!) to 10,000). I've been talking to a wide variety of South Africans lately and I am appalled at the unpopularity of the government here.'

He found that everyone expressed loyalty and admiration for General Smuts personally, and that most people, too, recognised his uniqueness for South Africa and the Allied cause in the war. He conceded that General Smuts was essential to Churchill and the United Kingdom Government for war strategy and world politics, and he was, therefore, all the more unhappy to witness the growing unpopularity of General Smuts's subordinate colleagues, 'and the obvious departmental inadequacy of the majority of them'.

> Their personal shortcomings, unpopularity and inefficiency is . . . a quite unfair burden on Smuts who has got a string of millstones round his neck. Smuts *(sic)* one failing is excessive personal loyality to old dudds *(sic)* and a distrust of youth and untried men. Yet if he goes to a general election with such a burden and no 'new faces', no new hope, he's going to be damn nearly sunk in spite of his own tremendous stature and prestige.

He then launches out against the Minister of Finance.

> . . . the most serious trouble of all that I see is that the most unpopular, the narrowest, the most lacking in vision, initiative and any sense of humour and political values is one of the youngest of the 'old gang', viz. Hofmeyr.

Lord Harlech did not know whether Hofmeyr had any 'pull or prestige in Afrikanerdom' but he was clear about the fact that Hofmeyr had no following or prestige left amongst English-speaking South Africans outside 'Johannesburg Jewry and not even all the Jews are as solid for him as they were although he contrives to be "their man", and plays up to them.'

It was not what he DID that irked the High Commissioner, but what he did NOT do. It was what he was as a man that lay at the root of the trouble.

> He is shrinking to the position of a narrow departmental official unable to see the wood for the trees, losing any political sense much less any broad statesmanship in external or internal affairs he ever had.

Hofmeyr's speeches about the war being over that year (i.e. 1943) were as inept as they were wrong and harmful. He had no vision for either the future of South Africa or the world.

> Of course he is as intellectually arrogant as many an academic prodigy and other Balliol scholars ! Always able to score off his intellectual inferiors—i.e. most of the human race—with intellectual points. He is a mixture of Sir John Simon and Mr Amery—two of the ablest but most unpopular and disastrous of English politicians. But he has even less humanity than either.

Lord Harlech relates his bitter memories of Geneva when he attended the Assembly of the League of Nations as 'No. 2 Minister to John Simon'. The effect of Sir John's personality on those assembled there still caused him to squirm in 1943. The impact of Sir John, who was both the cleverest and the most hated man there, was tragic for Britain, and Harlech felt that a similar situation existed in South Africa. Hofmeyr, he felt, lacked the common touch; it was his outstanding failing, and as a result no common man could have any love for him much less an inclination to follow him or vote for him.

> Whether we any of us like it or not the war has involved all democracies in a move to the 'left' in social economics and a demand for a better place in the sun for the 'common man, for the ordinary human damned fools like you and me included' . . . As long as Smuts goes on making him heir apparent and Acting Prime Minister the more dangerous the position of the United Party and all the great and noble causes that Smuts stands for.

But if Hofmeyr was 'Millstone No. 1', Col. C. F. Stallard, Q.C., D.S.O., M.C., Minister of Mines, was a 'political and departmental disaster'.

> . . . a charming delightful antidiluvian *(sic)* early Victorian gentleman—harking back to the days of Melbourne and Palmerston—anathema to youth and the forward outlook, an embarrasment *(sic)* to the United Kingdom and good relations with the Dominions, the U.S.A., Russia, India, etc.—and if what mining people tell me is true the worst departmental chief in that particular department they've ever had !

Stallard had apparently been corresponding regularly with Lady Milner who, for some reason best known to herself, had had her knife into Churchill and Smuts, but Lord Harlech does not tell us more about this correspondence. However, Stallard was doing a great deal of harm in England; he was no electoral asset to any party in South Africa, and but for Smuts's personal backing

> . . . this outworn Dominion Party would be swept away even in Natal and the Eastern Province where all but a few cranks over 65 want none of it !

Col. Collins, D.T.D., D.S.O., Minister of Agriculture and Forestry, was dismissed as a clever farmers' politician who was watchful of the farmers' votes;

> . . . but to have made him food controller—a most tricky administrative responsibility in any country—and, as we found to our cost in England when we started the job in the 1914-1919 (war), one that cannot be combined with a Ministry of Agriculture.

Lord Harlech's general observations and remarks on the cabinet are also of interest as we look back with the knowledge of hindsight. It was necessary, he felt, that Smuts should reconstruct his cabinet drastically before any general election if he were not to throw away thousands of votes. It was better to have an untried man in a ministerial job—'the younger the better'—than an old familiar failure, for people wanted change and new blood.

> Of course in England we've got used lately to the unexpected in high places. No one had hardly heard of Bonar

> Law when Arthur Balfour went, Baldwin became prime minister out of the blue. Ramsay MacDonald whom the bulk of the nation rather laughed at and universally hated and despised during the last war was three times Prime Minister. Who will succeed Churchill after this war. (?) Personally I doubt if it will be any of the present members of the War Cabinet. It never pays politically to shrink from getting rid of a failure because there's no obvious successor.

Harlech wanted an infusion of new blood. It was a pity that the United Party was unable to get more ex-soldiers and university men and industrialists into Parliament and Government, men who had 'done something' outside politics.

> The younger men in the United Party feel they've no chance of early promotion—no chance of *doing* something for South Africa in public life which is regarded as a job for old men.

The overworked Minister of Justice, Mr Harry Lawrence, who had 'enough jobs to break a Churchill', inspired him to suggest the introduction of more ministers and a few Parliamentary Under-Secretaries. It was vital to the whole future of the world and mankind that General Smuts should be free to go to Europe and America for the final stages of the war, and for making peace.

> But unless there's a new team to hold the show in South Africa he'll be tied here or blown sky high in his own country in his absence.

Smuts, he thought, was one of the Big Five men in the world. It made him 'sick to see him have to do everything himself', because his colleagues were letting him down so badly. Hofmeyr and others were slowly but surely breaking him and good men in the United Party were 'chucking up the sponge with disappointment and chagrin'. Smuts, the leader, was revered, but the team was rotten.

The letter ends on a political note:

> 'Better the devil I know than the devil I don't know' is the worst possible motto in political life in any country—as bad as the adage 'safety first' in any walk of life . . . and you, who know this country so well, can possibly tell me I am all wrong and needn't worry. Or if I'm right, you are the one man that may be able to do something.

But even Louis Esselen was unable to 'do something' and the dire prophecies proved only too true in the days to come.

SEVEN LETTERS OF W. B. YEATS

by R. AYLING

THIS ARTICLE is intended as an introduction to seven letters of the Irish poet, four private and three public, which are to be found neither in Allan Wade's *Bibliography* nor in his edition of *The Letters* of W. B. Yeats. Two of the public letters appeared in the Dublin daily newspaper, *The Irish Times*, while the other one was published in the London weekly journal, *Time and Tide*; none of these contributions has, to the best of my knowledge, been re-printed since the original publication.

* * *

The first private letter is addressed to a Mrs Boughton whose identity is unknown to me. The entire letter, apart from the printed address, is in the poet's handwriting; the envelope has not survived:

18 Woburn Buildings, W.C.
January 27, [1917 ?]

Dear Mrs Boughton,

Forgive me for having kept your photographs so long but I have been very busy of late. You may have noticed that I am engaged in a struggle with the English National Gallery about some pictures and as I am trying for Parliamentary action my time has all been taken up. As I have no business habits I have forgotten most of the things I should have done except those concerning the pictures.

I am greatly interested in your photographs. I would like to keep one if I may—'The Round Table'—because of the use in it of screens. I have worked with Craig's screens in Dublin and your use of them is full of suggestion. I would be glad to know if you have any proscenium or simply play on a raised platform and if you light from the auditorium (you have no footlights). If you ever succeed enough to have a proper theatre you will look back as I do to early days of struggle as the best. The bigger the audience the less one's freedom.

Yours,

W. B. YEATS.

The photographs to which the poet refers were no doubt pictures of stage scenery used in what were most probably amateur productions. *The Round Table* is evidently the name of a play whose scenery was the subject of one of the photographs. The work of Edward Gordon Craig, the stage designer and producer, was much admired by Yeats. In 1902, in a letter to *The Sunday Review*, he wrote of Craig's art that it was

> 'the only admirable stage scenery of our time for Mr Gordon Craig has discovered how to decorate a play with severe, beautiful, simple effects of colour, that leave the imagination free to follow all the suggestions of the play . . . Mr Gordon Craig's scenery is a new and distinct art.
>
> It is something that can only exist in the theatre.'

W. B. Yeats, who was always fascinated by stage lighting, was highly appreciative of Craig's early experiments 'with streams of coloured direct light.' Craig also designed for the Abbey Theatre early in its existence a series of all-purpose screens for use in simplified stage setting; these screens were highly successful and were often used in productions of verse plays where Yeats wanted a simple and stylized background which would not distract the audience's attention from the words.

Yeat's letter to Mrs Boughton is merely dated 'January 27'; no year is indicated, but from internal evidence it is likely that it was written in 1917. The 'struggle with the English National Gallery' is almost certainly over the Lane pictures; the letter therefore could not have been written earlier than 1915 when Sir Hugh Lane's death started the dispute as to the ultimate destination of his famous collection of French paintings. W. B. Yeats fought to bring the pictures back to Dublin from the National Gallery in London. He raised the issue publicly many times from 1915 until 1937, in letters to the press, and to private individuals, and in speeches in the Irish Senate. The most likely year for the letter to Mrs Boughton is 1917 because the date given is January 27th and the letter implies ('you may have noticed') that there was public interest in his actions at the time. In fact, the poet contributed a number of letters and articles on the Lane pictures to the general controversy on the subject which took place during December 1916 and January 1917.

He contributed to the following periodicals: *The Observer*, December 10th, 1916; *The Spectator*, December 23rd; *The Observer*, December 24th; and *The Times* on December 28th. In particular, a long essay-letter of his was published in *The Observer* on January 21st, 1917 (Wade's edition of *The Letters*, pp. 616-623): this article summed up all his earlier arguments and urged the Trustees of the English National Gallery to make 'an

act of generosity', adding that 'we shall ask Parliament to make that act possible.' It thus seems most likely that the letter to Mrs Boughton was written soon after his contribution to *The Observer*.

* * *

The second and third letters need a certain amount of background information to introduce them. They were written to the late Mrs Cherrie Hobart Houghton of Killiney, Umtata, South Africa. Before her marriage in 1902 Mrs Houghton (née Matheson) had lived in Ireland and had been a friend of the playwright, J. M. Synge; indeed, Synge had made an unsuccessful proposal of marriage to her in June 1896. (An account of their friendship, though it is inaccurate in certain minor details, is to be found in the recent biography, *J. M. Synge 1871-1909*, by David H. Greene and Edward M. Stephens.) In 1924 Mrs Houghton wrote an interesting, if impersonal, article entitle 'John Synge as I Knew Him', and sent it to W. B. Yeats, Synge's great friend and colleague at the Abbey Theatre. The poet liked her memoir and it was published, together with a preface by him, in the *Irish Statesman*, Dublin, on July 5, 1924.

Before her memoir was printed, however, Yeats wrote the following two letters to Mrs Houghton. The first letter is dated April; its envelope is post marked "Dublin April 5, 1924"; the address on the envelope is in Yeats's handwriting and, indeed, with the exception of the printed address on the writing paper, the whole letter is in the poet's handwriting.

82 Merrion Square, S,
DUBLIN.
April 5.

Dear Madam,

Your letter and memory of Synge reached me a few days ago. Very interesting, and I will try and get your memories printed somewhere here, where they will be seen by Synge's readers and friends. I will write later.

Yours,
W. B. YEATS.

The second letter is undated and the envelope has not survived; one can only guess the date, but it is most likely to have been written late in June, 1924. The entire letter, with the exception of the poet's address and the most illegible 'Yours ever, W.B. Yeats', is typewritten.

82 Merrion Square.
DUBLIN.

Dear Mrs Haughton [*sic*],

I have arranged for the publication of your little essay on Synge, in the *Irish Statesman*. It will appear, I think, on July 5th, and I will send you a copy. I have done a few introductory sentences to it. I thought it better to send it to the *Irish Statesman* than some English or American Review, because I thought the essential thing was to put it on record for future use in a paper where it would be remembered. More of Synge's friends and readers will see it in the *Irish Statesman* than they would anywhere else. I return to you the photograph, for the *Irish Statesman* has no way of publishing illustrations. It was the very fact of the photograph that made me hesitate for some time, for I would have liked to place the article where the photograph also could have been used.

Yours ever,

W. B. YEATS.

The 'few introductory sentences' appeared in the Irish journal as 'A Memory of Synge', recorded in Wade's *Bibliography* on page 337. It might be of interest to reproduce the note in the present context.

A MEMORY OF SYNGE

A correspondent has sent me the following little essay with the comment 'A short time ago I read Synge's life, and it seemed to me rather lacking in the personal touch, so I wrote down these few memories.' Where we have so little with that 'touch', I am grateful as an old friend of Synge's, and I have asked the *Irish Statesman* to put the essay into print that it may remain for some future biographer. John Synge was a very great man, and in time to come every passing allusion that recalls him, whether in old newspaper articles or old letters, will be sought out that historians of literature may mould, or try to mould, some simple image of the man. Even before the war, invention had begun, for a tolerably well-known American journalist, who had never been under the same roof with Synge, or even set eyes upon him, published scenes and conversations, that were all, from no malicious intention but because of his gross imagination, slander and travesty. He based all upon what he supposed the inventor of so many violent and vehement peasants must be like, knowing so little of human character that he described, without knowing it, Synge's antithesis. I have left my correspondent's notes as they came from her unpractised hand, trivial and important alike. That praise of Wordsworth, for instance, is nothing in itself. To say that

'Wordsworth is more at one with Nature' than some other, is too vague to increase our knowledge, but it recalls some early work of Synge's, certain boyish reveries, that I excluded from his collected edition but not from material that his biographers might use, in which he described minutely brook or coppice—I have forgotten which—a shadowed, limited place, such as children love. I had not known of his passion for Wordsworth, and to know it completes the image. Then again, his liking for Patrick Street has reminded me that a little before his death he planned to make it the scene of a play. I remember that 'little house' in Paris; it was one room which cost him two or three francs a week, yet was not in a slum, but had its own front door and even, I think, some kind of little hall between the front door and room door, and was at the top of a decent house full of flats near the Luxembourg. Paris, as an old astrologer said to me once, is a good town for a poor man or so it was twenty years ago. I do not know why I have not crossed out that allusion to *Dana*, a very short-lived but delightful paper . . . 'too remote from the world of thought', except that it might give pleasure to Dana's embittered editor. C. H. H. has lent me the photograph she speaks of, but the *Irish Statesman* has no means of publishing such things. It shows a face less formed and decisive than the face of later years.

W. B. YEATS.

The 'early work . . . certain boyish reveries' of the playwright, to which Yeats refers, have since been published in the *Collected Works* of J. M. Synge (*Vol. I, Poems*, edited by Robin Skelton, O.U.P., 1962.) *Dana: An Irish Magazine of independent thought* was published monthly by Hodges Figgis and Co. in Dublin from May 1904 until April 1905; contributors included Padraic Colum, Oliver St John Gogarty, James Joyce, George Moore and George W. Russell (A. E.). Its 'embittered editor', as Yeats calls him, was John Eglinton, author of several books on Anglo-Irish literary topics.

* * *

The fourth letter addressed to an individual was written in answer to a query raised by Joseph Holloway, the architect who helped convert the old Mechanics' Institute into the Abbey Theatre. Mr Holloway was a regular patron of the Abbey Theatre, attending almost every first night for the first three decades of its existence, during which period the Abbey attained and maintained its peak of artistic achievement. Holloway kept a diary which, by the time he died, had attained phenomenal proportions: the National Library of Ireland possesses very many bound volumes comprising

several hundred thousand pages of closely printed and almost illegible handwriting. Holloway had very little literary or theatrical sensibility; his diaries are only of interest for the gossip in them. But what gossip it was ! He saw and spoke to most of the prominent people who attended the theatre either as spectators or the artists who wrote, acted, or directed for the Abbey Company. He also copied into his diaries the letters written to him by Abbey directors like Lady Gregory and W. B. Yeats and other Abbey playwrights and actors. With playwrights like T. C. Murray and actors like Frank Fay he attained a degree of friendship and intimacy; but the letters of Lady Gregory and Yeats to him were always written in answer to specific enquiries about theatre policy or their own work.

The following letter is no exception as we see from the opening sentences. It was, apparently, undated but was copied into the diary on July 31st, 1935, and was probably received by Holloway that day.

Riverside, Willbrook,
Rathfarnham,
DUBLIN.

Dear Mr Holloway,

It is impossible to date the composition of *The Player Queen*. Mrs Patrick Campbell immediately after her performance of Deirdre commissioned me to write a verse play in three acts on a plot which I told her. The plot roughly resembled that of *The Player Queen*, and though I worked on it for several months every year for I don't know how long it got into complete confusion. Then in 1913 Ezra Pound and I were staying in a cottage near Forest Row. I told him I was obsessed with a tragedy I couldn't write, and I thought I could lay the ghost by turning it into pure farce. I asked him to listen and explained the plot of *The Player Queen* very much as it exists today. He was the necessary critical audience compelling me to be objective.

Yours,
W. B. YEATS.

When I showed Mrs Campbell *The Player Queen* about ten years after she had ordered the verse play, she said she was too old.

This letter is of interest mainly because of its account of Ezra Pound's influence on Yeats's revision of *The Player Queen*. Richard Ellman, in *Yeats: the Man and the Masks*, has given a different version of the story in which Pound plays a more active part:

During the winters of 1913-14, 1914-15, and 1915-16, Pound

> acted as Yeats's secretary at a small cottage in Ashdown Forest in Sussex, reading to him, writing from his dictation, and discussing everything. It was Pound who, hearing that Yeats had spent six or seven years trying to write *The Player Queen* as a tragedy, suggested that it might be made into a comedy, with such effect that Yeats completely transformed the play at once.

The poet began the play in 1907 as a tragedy in verse but it became, finally, a fantastic comedy in prose.

In 1908 he wrote of Mrs Patrick Campbell's interest in the writing of *The Player Queen:*

> She wants me to write, as she phrases it, with her at my elbow. I am rather inclined to try the experiment for once as I believe that I shall be inspired rather than thwarted by trying to give her as many opportunities as possible. At the worse we can but quarrel.

The following year, Yeats wrote of *The Player Queen* to his father:

> I think it will be my most stirring thing . . . There is a dramatic contrast of character which can be philosophically stated.

Ellman goes further and says that in the early draft of the play, Yeats came close to 'a tragedy of humours'. Certainly, the original version, when completed, was an abstract play set in a purely mythical world. Yeats's dealings with Mrs Campbell, however, were exasperatingly human. Joseph Hone, in his biography of the poet, describes a visit that Yeats made to her London house in 1909.

> She had invited him to read his new play, *The Player Queen*, to her. He went to her house and was kept waiting in the drawing-room for several hours before luncheon, while he received messages of apology saying Mrs Campbell was not yet ready. After luncheon Mrs Campbell listened with enthusiasm to Act I, as far as the interruptions of a parrot allowed. Then a musician arrived, then a dressmaker, and lastly relations. Yeats went home, came back at six, and was still waiting in the drawing-room at midnight. At half-past twelve Mrs Campbell came in so tired that she had to lean on her daughter's arm for support. 'But this is absurd,' Yeats cried, 'you must go to your bed and I must go home.' 'No', she replied, 'I must hear the end of the play on the same day as I have the beginning.' He began to read, but it was evident that Mrs Campbell could scarcely follow a word. She started to quarrel with him, taking up certain of the heroine's remarks as though she thought them meant for herself. At intervals, in an exasperated

sleepy voice, she repeated, 'No, I am not a slut, and I do not like "fool".'

After drastically revising the play in 1913, Yeats returned to it once more in September 1914, when he wrote to his father: 'It is a wild comedy, almost a farce, with a tragic background—a study of a fantastic woman.'

In 1919, another letter shows why the poet even at that late date was anxious for Mrs Campbell to take the part of Decima in the play: 'Everything depends upon the actress. It wants a dominating personality with very varied powers, a woman full of animal force.' Mrs Campbell refused the part, however, and in the first production of the play in London—by the Stage Society on May 25th and 27th, 1919—the part of Decima was played by Maire O'Neill, sister of Sara Allgood. *The Player Queen* in its final form was first published in 1922; the original tragic version has never been published.

* * *

The following two public letters show the poet's lively encouragement of younger artists. The first is a tribute to the then leading lady of the Abbey Theatre, Dublin; it was printed in the *Irish Times* for January 19th, 1924, accompanied by a drawing of the actress by P. Tuohy. The second letter is a defence of the Abbey playwright, Sean O'Casey.

MISS SARA ALLGOOD

Miss Sara Allgood is a great folk-actress. As so often happens with a greater actor or actress, she rose into fame with a school of drama. She was born to play the old woman in *The Well of The Saints*, and to give their first vogue to Lady Gregory's little comedies. It is impossible for those of us who are connected with the Abbey management to forget that night in December, 1904, when for the first time she rushed among the stage crowd in *The Spreading of the News*, calling out, 'Give me back my man!' We never knew until that moment that we had, not only a great actress, but that rarest of all things, a woman comedian; for stage humour is almost a male prerogative.

It has been more difficult in recent years to supply her with adequate parts, for Dublin is a little tired of its admirable folk-arts, political events having turned our minds elsewhere. Perhaps the Spaniard, Sierra, who in his plays expounds a psychological and modern purpose through sharply defined characters, themselves as little psychological and modern as Mrs Broderick herself, may give her the

opportunity she needs. I am looking forward with great curiosity to seeing her in his *Two Shepherds*, which is now just going into rehearsal, and one of our Irish dramatists, Mr Casey [*sic*], has, in his new play, *Juno and the Paycock*, given her an excellent part.

Miss Allgood is no end of a problem, and the sooner our dramatists get that into their heads and write for her the better for them and us. If we knew how to appreciate our geniuses, they would not have wasted her so scandalously.

W. B. YEATS.

Spreading the News, by Lady Gregory, was first produced at the Abbey Theatre on December 27th, 1904; *The Well of the Saints* by J. M. Synge on February 4th, 1905. *The Two Shepherds* by G. M. Sierra was first produced at the Abbey on February 12th, 1924 and Sean O'Casey's *Juno and the 'Paycock'* was first performed there on March 3rd of the same year.

* * *

The defence of the Abbey playwright was addressed to Lady Rhondda, the editor of *Time and Tide*, and published in that journal on May 27, 1933. Several weeks earlier Lady Rhondda had complained that the printers had refused to print a short story, *I Wanna Woman*, by Sean O'Casey although she had approved of its inclusion. The situation where a magazine's printers were able to censure or veto the editorial policy of the journal was not only 'intolerable', as Yeats called it, but an extremely rare, if not unprecedented, case. Despite the protests of many other writers and intellectuals—including Desmond MacCarthy and Wyndham Lewis (whose *Time and Western Man* and other works greatly stimulated Yeats), both of whom had read O'Casey's story, and others such as Arthur Waugh and Harold Laski, who had not—*I Wanna Woman* was never printed in *Time and Tide*. A highly moral story, it was published in book form in *Windfalls* later in 1933 and reprinted in another anthology of O'Casey's miscellaneous writings in *The Green Crow* of 1957.

Riversdale, Willbrook,
Rathfarnham,
DUBLIN.

The Editor,
Time and Tide,
LONDON.

Sir,

That public opinion should permit, or encourage, the censorship of printers is intolerable. What is there in their trade to guarantee their judgement? Where is such judge-

> ment to stop? Is some new *Origin of Species* or *Madame Bovary* to be forbidden by some combination of printers? The issue is between Lady Rhondda and her public. If she cares to risk her popularity and the circulation of her paper, no mechanic, or employer of mechanics, should be allowed to interfere. I am glad that Mr Sean O'Casey has broken his long silence; he has moral earnestness and great dramatic genius. Perhaps if I am permitted to read his story I may dislike it, but that is not the issue.
>
> I am, etc.,
>
> W. B. YEATS.

The great importance of Yeat's letter lies in the fact that it was the first sign of the poet's friendliness towards the younger writer after their acrimonious public controversy in 1928 over *The Silver Tassie*. In an interview in the Press on October 12th, 1932, on the occasion that O'Casey refused Yeats's invitation to join the Irish Academy of Letters, the poet was quoted as saying:

> I greatly regret Mr O'Casey's refusal, for I am a sincere admirer of his genius. But it did not come as a surprise to me. I half expected it. Mr O'Casey has never forgiven us for our rejection at the Abbey Theatre of his play *The Silver Tassie*. I am afraid I played a leading part in the rejection of that play.

Yeats writes in his *Time and Tide* letter of O'Casey's 'long silence' since 1928. He seems half-afraid that the criticisms of *The Silver Tassie* made by the Abbey directors—his own letter may be seen in Wade's edition of *The Letters of W. B. Yeats*, pp. 740-742—had affected O'Casey's confidence in his own creative power. The poet need not have worried. In the interval, O'Casey had written three short stories, two one-act plays and a full-length one. Yeats's letter to *Time and Tide*, however, was gratefully received by the younger man and led, eventually, to their reconciliation. O'Casey's moving account of their subsequent meeting in London is to be found in *Rose and Crown*, the fifth volume of his autobiography. There, he concludes with a tribute to the sick poet: 'His greatness is such . . . that the Ireland which tormented him will be forced to remember him forever.'

* * *

The Abbey Theatre produced *The Silver Tassie* in Dublin in August 1935 and completed O'Casey's reconciliation with Yeats. The poet was soon called upon to defend the play, for it was attacked by bigoted priests and pietists even before it reached the Abbey Stage. One of the newly-elected Abbey directors, Brinsley Macnamara (the late John Weldon) was influenced by the clerical

opposition. He publicly attacked both the play and his fellow-directors, and, in reply, the Directors of the Abbey Theatre issued the following statement for publication in the Irish Press. It was printed on September 3rd, 1935 and Yeats's signature headed the list of directors.

STATEMENT BY ABBEY DIRECTORS

Mr Brinsley Macnamara writes in a statement to the Press of August 29th: 'I was not at any time in favour of the production of *The Silver Tassie*'. At no Board Meeting did Mr Macnamara state his objections to the production of this play. There is not one word in the minutes on this subject. His protest against the production of the play was only made when attacks in the Press began. Comment seems unnecessary. His whole statement is an obvious breach of confidence, according to the procedure of all public and private boards. He then goes on to attack the players for speaking the author's words as they had been given them. All players are expected to speak the words that are given to them, and the charge receives a touch of comedy precisely because it is made by Mr Macnamara.

Owing to representations made by him at a recent meeting of the Board instructions were issued to the company that no word of a play's text should be altered or omitted by a player. As any breach of this regulation would have caused serious consequences to the player, it is obvious that the Directors of the Theatre alone are responsible for what is spoken on their stage. Mr Macnamara goes on to state that the players in performing Mr O'Casey's plays 'have shown a reverence for his work which has not been given to any other author who has ever written for the Theatre', and this vague sentence means, we suppose, that they act O'Casey better than they act anyone else. This is a matter of opinion, but in our opinion our players have played whatever work has been put into their hands to their utmost ability.

He complains that our audience for the last ten years 'has shown a wholly uncritical . . . almost insane admiration for the vulgar and worthless plays of Mr. O'Casey.' We do not consider our audience uncritical, and we point out that it is this audience which had made the reputation of his own plays.

(Signed), W. B. Yeats, Richard Hayes,
Walter Starkie, F. R. Higgins,
Lennox Robinson, Ernest Blythe.

Mr Macnamara resigned from the Board the day on which the letter was published. *The Silver Tassie* was subsequently revived in Dublin by the Abbey Company in 1947 and 1951.

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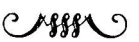

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