THEORIA

A JOURNAL OF STUDIES

in the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences

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EDITORIAL

POLICY STATEMENT

The editorial board is pleased to announce the appointment of two new co-editors to fill the vacancy created by Elizabeth Paterson's retirement. They are Francois Hugo and Audrey Cahill, of the English Departments in Pietermaritzburg and Durban respectively.

In discussing the present nature and future policy of *Theoria*, the new editorial committee has tried to examine the role of the journal in relation to the changing needs of the community it serves. Much has changed since its inception in 1947; and still more will change, and more rapidly, in the future. The academic community is no longer either stable or homogeneous: there are new students with new needs, new departments with new thrusts; and new circumstances that demand a closer and more visible connection between academic thinking and practical life. We are all more conscious of the theoretical foundations of our practice, and of the conflicting theories often contending within a single discipline. We are also much more specialized, and in speaking the languages of specialists, are often less able to communicate effectively with one another.

What place does a journal as general as *Theoria* have in a community of specialists? We believe that the very factors which make it difficult for *Theoria* to retain its general character are those which make it important for it to do so. If the academic community is to remain a community, it is important that it should be addressed as one, rather than as an assembly of narrow specializations. That *Theoria* has in recent years developed rather a literary image is due more to the nature of the contributions submitted than to editorial policy or intention. Without discouraging our literary contributors, we should like to receive a higher proportion of articles relating to other fields, and we should like those articles, as far as possible, to be intelligible across several disciplines. If a good article seems to us to address too small a section of our readers, we believe that, whatever its merits, we should try to direct it to a journal aimed at a more narrowly defined readership. To facilitate mutual understanding within the diverse disciplines of the Faculties of Arts and Social Sciences is one of our most important aims.

A second is to encourage critical debate and creative disagreement. We invite and expect to publish articles representing a variety of theoretical positions, and in spite of the inevitable interval between issues, we hope that our contributiors will in some measure respond to one another and provoke some critical engagement in our readers.

Finally, we envisage a constructive role for *Theoria* in focusing

attention on specific issues that are relevant to our current social and political situation. We hope to bring direction and unity to the variety of contributions we expect by selecting a general topic and inviting from all disciplines articles which have some bearing on that general topic. We propose that, initially, the first issue of the year should be directed in this way, while the second should remain open for contributions on any topic.

Articles for the May 1989 issue should be submitted before 15 January 1989; the selected topic is

The Role of the Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences in South African Universities.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

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Theoria,
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They are asked to send typescripts which are double-spaced. The beginning of each paragraph must be indented. Single quotation marks should be used for quotations, and double quotation marks only for a quotation within a quotation. When the title of a book is given it should be underlined. Notes should be consolidated at the end of an article, not inserted as footnotes. An abstract not more than 200 words in length should accompany an article. *A style sheet is available on request.*

Theoria is recognised by SAPSE as a subsidy-earning journal

MR. SUFI CLIMBS THE STAIRS: THE QUEST AND THE IDEAL IN AHMED ESSOP'S 'THE VISITATION'*

by EUGENIE R. FREED

> 'Come see what I bought yesterday.'
>
> Gool went towards a shelf, opened a cardboard box and carefully removed a statuette of Apollo.
>
> 'I was passing an art shop yesterday when I saw it in the window.' He placed the statuette on a small semi-circular table.
>
> 'I would give anything in the world to look like him,' Gool said in admiration.
>
> Mr. Sufi looked at Gool. The man was obviously obsessed by an image. But it occurred to him that perhaps Gool's good fortune in life was a result of his adoration of an idol. With a feeling of personal inadequacy he examined the statuette.
>
> 'That's Apollo,' he whispered.
>
> The beauty of the god, of the ideal human form thrust itself upon his awareness.
>
> 'Whenever I look at Apollo I think of lamps,' Gool said.
>
> (*The Visitation*, pp. 92–3)[1]

Essop's first novel, *The Visitation* (1980), is a moral allegory whose central symbols coalesce in the passage quoted above from the final chapter. Apollo, Greek god of the sun's light, represented as the embodiment of perfection in human beauty, is associated in the novel with lamps which bear the god's name and image on their label — electric lamps, thousands of them, and all stolen property. They are presented to Mr. Sufi — who can neither refuse nor dispose of them — by Gool the gangster, 'don' of the Fordsburg underworld and self-appointed 'protector' of its wealthy property-owners. This gift of Gool's, made on the occasion of one of his monthly 'visitations' to Mr. Sufi's home, eventually transforms his victim's life into a waking nightmare.

Mr. Sufi's 'feeling of personal inadequacy' when he examines the image of 'the ideal human form' represented in the statuette of Apollo[2] is understandable. Essop describes Mr. Sufi as 'an undersized man who had grown obese over the years because of his penchant for sweetmeats'. (p. 1) In one of the scenes of the novel he is compelled to appear on a cinema stage, flanked by several muscular competitors, to present the prizes in a 'Mr. Apollo contest' sponsored by a local gymnasium. While the organiser (who

*This essay is an expansion of a brief paper read at the colloquium on 'Emerging Literatures' held at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, on 7th June 1986, under the sponsorship of the Departments of Comparative and African Literature.

is about to exact a large cash donation from him) fulsomely describes him to the audience as 'a man who has shown the keenest interest in the perfection of the human body, in health, strength and beauty' (p. 22), Mr. Sufi,

> a short corpulent figure in the glare of the stage lights, failed to discern the hundreds of faces in the dim auditorium looking at him ironically. (p. 22)

The radiant sun-god of early Western religion[3] is significantly associated in Essop's novel with the electric lamp in the form familiar to his late-twentieth-century readers: an incandescent filament, radiating brilliant light, enclosed in a clear glass globe. The relevance of this image is more clearly suggested when, at one point in the course of his misfortunes, Mr. Sufi is returning from the 'crepuscular world' of the cinema within whose protection he seeks refuge from the rising tide of troubles in his life outside. He stops at 'Kashmiri Flats', a building owned by his friend Abu-salaam (whose name, inappropriately enough in the context, means 'Father of Peace'). Its stairs are brightly lit. It happens to be a fundamental principle of Mr. Sufi's never to put lights on the stairs or in the foyers of any of the many apartment buildings *he* owns, not even those of 'Orient Mansions', in which he himself lives with his family. In fact, when Gool leaves after making that discomfiting gift of electric lamps, before descending into the gloom of the stairs he says pointedly to Mr. Sufi: 'Now your flats and stairs will never be without lights. Your tenants will be grateful.' (pp. 5–6) When Mr. Sufi sees the illuminated stairs of Abu-salaam's buildings,

> he looked up at the lamp as though he had seen it for the first time. His eyes filmed with tears and the lamp seemed to splinter. (p. 17)

Here is implied a second image underlying that of the electric lamp with the brand-name 'Apollo'. Its source is a famous passage of the Koran known as 'Nur', meaning 'light', a passage which is a focus of Islamic mystical thought:

> 'Allah is the light of the heavens and the earth. His light may be compared to a niche that enshrines a lamp, the lamp within a crystal of star-like brilliance. It is lit from a blessed olive tree neither eastern nor western. Its very oil would almost shine forth, though no fire had touched it. Light up light; Allah guides to His light whom He will . . .
> As for the unbelievers, their works are . . . like darkness on a bottomless ocean spread with clashing billows and overcast with clouds: darkness upon darkness. If he stretches out his hand he can scarcely see it. Indeed the man from whom Allah withholds His light shall find no light at all.[4]

The Koran's simile for the light of God, 'a lamp within a crystal of star-like brilliance' lit from the oil of 'a blessed olive-tree neither eastern nor western', is transformed by Essop in the novel into the electric light bulb bearing the name of the Western god who embodies both light and beauty. It is a stroke of artistry that amplifies the concept into a theme of universal significance, 'neither eastern nor western', and which reveals to the reader the significance of Essop's having given to his protagonist in *The Visitation* the far-from-common Islamic surname of 'Sufi'.

The unifying principle upon which Essop has constructed this fine novel is the Sufi quest.[5] The work is unusual, if not quite unique, in its use of this particular form of quest as a structural element. It turns out to be the perfect vehicle for the complex perspectives of this moral fable.

The name of 'Emir Sufi' is a pointer towards the underlying meaning of the events of the narrative. The title 'Emir', used by Moslem rulers, was given originally to male descendants of the Prophet himself. Essop confers it ironically upon this wealthy, self-indulgent little man whose unprepossessing appearance in the brown business suits he always wears conceals a proclivity for women — Gool describes him as 'an emir with a harem' (p. 7) — for luxurious cars (also in shades of brown) and for escapism in the twilit environment of the cinema. From this mode of life, in which he is 'blessed with all he need[s]' (p. 1), Mr. Sufi is dragged ineluctably away. At the end of the novel, as he ascends the stairs of 'Orient Mansions' — now as brightly illuminated as those of Abu-salaam's 'Kashmiri Flats' — it is no longer possible for him to 'cocoon' himself. The time has come when he is obliged to emerge from the shrivelled chrysalis of his wealth to confront naked reality. He recognises that through Gool and Gool's lawyer Mahomed, he has been permanently relieved of all his material possessions. In view of the imminent seizure of Fordsburg under the Group Areas Act,[6] he has signed over to these two the right to sell all his properties. It is clearly implied that he will never see the properties again, and that the proceeds of their sale will go directly to Gool and the shark-like Mahomed (an ironic namesake of the Prophet).

When Gool descends the gloomy stairs of 'Orient Mansions' in the first chapter of the novel, leaving his horrified host with thousands of stolen lamps, Mr. Sufi

> returned to his residence, looked at his bewildered wife and his four daughters, and said he was going to bed.
> Mr. Sufi's life-pattern had been so suddenly and severely torn that he felt he had been sucked into another world. But slowly, in the silent darkness, he came to himself . . . (p. 6)

Like 'the man from whom Allah withholds His light' in the Koranic image, he feels at this time of terror that he is completely alone, tossed about in stormy darkness 'on a bottomless ocean'. Mr. Sufi's action in turning abruptly from his family to 'go to bed' at such a moment reflects his usual attitude towards them:

> Preoccupied with his pleasures outside the home and his role as a landlord, he had relinquished his family to the periphery of his life. (pp. 15–16)

In the final moments of the novel, Mr. Sufi, now destitute of worldly possessions, wakes up screaming from one of the 'dreams in morbidly garish colours' (p. 98) that have forever driven away the pleasant brown tones of his former existence:

> His wife found him lying helplessly on the floor, his face contorted. She flung herself down beside him and held him.
>
> 'What's the matter?' she cried. 'What's the matter?' He clung to her, breathing convulsively, sweating profusely, seeking solace, compassion and love.
>
> His cry awakened the children and they came into the room, frightened.
>
> 'Your father is ill,' their mother said. She caressed her husband's forehead tenderly for a while, and then held his hands. He sat up, called his daughters to sit near him and touched them fondly.
>
> 'My children,' he said, looking at their beautiful faces. (p. 98)

Only in this closing sentence of the work does Mr. Sufi *really* perceive, as it were for the first time, the beauty and innocence of his daughters. In doing so, he 'awakens' at last, finally achieving the epiphany to which he has been led by that ludicrously unlikely 'spiritual' guide, Mr. Mahomed the predatory lawyer acting as agent for Gool, the gangster who longs to resemble the god Apollo. In Sufism,

> the role of the spiritual master . . ., who continues to reflect the Divine Grace bestowed upon the Prophet, is to guide the initiate through Divine Revelation towards the straight path in the journey to God.[7]

The situation in the novel's final chapter approaches an outrageously comic travesty of the Islamic declaration of faith, 'There is no god but God, and Mahomed is his prophet.' But by whatever means, Mr. Sufi finally perceives the ultimate goal of the Sufi quest: a knowledge and understanding of the true nature of the Self, and a recognition of true Beauty.

The Sufi of Islam, an ascetic and a mystic, undertakes a spiritual quest whose object is 'for the Self to step aside and let the Absolute

know Itself through Itself.'[8] The true Self whom the Sufi seeks to know is God, and the final illumination towards which he strives is the certainty that God is within him; that the Divine fills his own soul and is, in essence, his true Self. In approaching this knowledge the seeker must make his way through the spiritual 'darkness' of the materialistic outlook that sees all things as separate from, or independent of, God. He must 'orient' or direct the self towards the Divine through the word of God, the Koran, in the same way as every Moslem in his daily prayers 'orients' himself eastward towards the source of divine enlightenment, turning physically and spiritually to face the earthly Centre of his religion, the Ka'abah in Mecca. Hence the many-voiced resonance of the word 'Orient' as the name of the building in which Mr. Sufi lives in the novel, for in the course of its events he is progressively, though unknowingly, 'oriented' towards the path of enlightenment by being deprived of this and all his other properties, and is forced, quite against his natural hedonistic bent, into a kind of asceticism through the loss of all his material wealth.[9]

The novel depicts three principal phases of Mr. Sufi's 'quest', each being marked by a false epiphany. The first occurs on the darkened stairs of Orient Mansions. After a day of terror spent with Gool, Mr. Sufi goes into Das Patel's cafe on the ground floor of Orient Mansions. In the course of a conversation there that begins on a relatively light-hearted note, Mr. Sufi asks some school-boys whether they know the meaning of the name 'Gool'. One offers the notion of the Eastern 'ghoul' that preys on corpses; Mr. Sufi, suddenly angry, insists that the name is derived from the Arabic word 'goolam', meaning 'slave'. As he climbs the dark stairs to his apartment he ponders 'the significance of the singular irony that a man named slave was the master of his life.' (p. 33) Instantly he 'sees' a vision of his persecutor as 'an agent or embodiment of some occult evil . . . standing on the second floor landing, surrounded by a livid aura . . . He was coming down towards him step by step . . . He was a ghoul!' (p. 33) The phantom springs upon Sufi and grapples with him, while 'explosions of raucous laughter' erupt on the stairway. The victim comes to consciousness lying on the steps; he gathers together 'some superhuman energy', rises and rushes up to his apartment, where his family, hearing the demented laughter echoing up the dark stairwell, has anxiously gathered at the gate at the top of the stairway. In the comfortingly illuminated safety of his bedroom, Mr. Sufi decides after this experience to put lamps along the stairways of Orient Mansions, though he is determined that this will not set a precedent. 'He would never agree to any request by tenants in his other buildings to have stairs lit.' (p. 34) Mr. Sufi has thus not been greatly enlightened by his encounter with this demonic figure (or *jinn*)[10] associated with corpses and the grave; if

anything, he is merely reiterating the reply he has been accustomed to give to tenants who complained about the difficulty of using stairs in the dark, that 'the grave [is] a murky place'. (p. 2)

In a second phase of his 'quest', Gool drags Mr. Sufi to a wild party at his own premises, insisting that he persuade two of his former concubines to accompany him. (Financial and emotional stringencies have by this time obliged Mr. Sufi to 'divorce' all the concubines he formerly kept in rent-free apartments, one in each of his buildings.) While jealously observing Gool's overtures to one of these ladies, Sadia — who responds eagerly, to the anguish and disgust of her former lover — Mr. Sufi is forced to drink liquor until he is virtually insensible. Lying on a bed in a drunken stupor, he feels his body being lifted and deposited on the floor:

> He heard voices and opening his eyes saw in the livid light that entered through an open window Gool's form above that of Sadia on the bed. Nausea and horror seized him . . . he seemed to be fighting against a macabre darkness. Then, abruptly, his consciousness blew out. (pp. 52–3)

There is an obvious parallel between this situation, with Gool's form silhouetted against 'livid light' as he usurps Mr. Sufi's sexual privileges, and the hallucinatory assault by the 'ghoul' which appeared 'surrounded by a livid aura' on the stairs of Orient Mansions. One notable difference, however, is the absence of the supernatural: where in the first experience Mr. Sufi believed that he was being assaulted by a creature of the underworld, a demonic 'ghoul', in this second incident whatever takes place is earthy in its nature and has to do with the flesh of the living rather than that of the dead. The woman who attaches herself to Sufi at this party, a fearsome creature 'adorned with fiercely blackened brows and . . . a three-tiered wig' (p. 51), is called Eve; she becomes 'demented' (like the ghoulish laughter on the stairs) and 'serpent-like' when she compels Mr. Sufi to dance with her, and ultimately, having induced him to become blind drunk, renders him sexually impotent. As in the earlier phase, Mr. Sufi must once more find his way in darkness to the light, though this time he does not have to climb upward to reach it. He gropes through darkened rooms full of recumbent bodies slumbering in orgiastic satiety on floors. He edges apologetically through a billiard-room in which the players — 'august personages' — look at him with contempt. (It was Mr. Sufi who had paid for their billiard-table, which now assumes in his eyes the earthy appearance of 'a brilliant green pasture' on which 'a white bull grazed among a herd of red and black cattle' [p. 53]). He feels his way along a 'dark tunnel' and finally emerges in the street where 'lamps were burning in the grey light of morning'. (p. 53) Like his rush up to his own apartment from the underworld of the

darkened stairs where the 'ghoul' prowled, this journey too results in a false epiphany. Immediately after this ghastly wallow in the flesh-pots it occurs to Mr. Sufi to attempt to free himself from the oppression of Gool by making use of the flesh in its most highly developed and muscular form — by exploiting his patronage of the 'supermen' of the Spartan Gymnasium (to one of whom he had awarded the 'Mr. Apollo' crown on the cinema stage). He attempts to convince them, while feeding the flesh in a splendid procession of courses during a meal at an expensive restaurant, that they should move into action on his behalf and kill Gool. He fails abysmally. Suddenly the 'supermen' are reduced to the scale of ordinary mortals; clearly their fear of Gool is not much less than Mr. Sufi's. At the end of the debacle, 'Mr. Apollo' himself (who after winning the contest had crushed the bones of Mr. Sufi's fingers in shaking hands with him) offers his patron 'a limp hand'. (p. 58)

In these two episodes Mr. Sufi has been confronted and overcome by figures representative respectively of the underworld and of this earth — the 'ghoul' on the stairs, and Eve at Gool's party. He has as a result of the first experience compromised his 'doggedly courageous' (p. 2) insistence upon dark stairways to the extent of lighting only one building (while the rest remain in darkness; he shows no concern for his tenants). In the aftermath of the second, he has turned to a fleshly version of Apollo, 'the ideal human form'. He learns that despite his muscularity and his bone-crushing handshake, Brutus Gabo, winner of the 'Mr. Apollo' contest, is as cowardly as any other man, and no match for the dark force embodied in Gool.

In a third phase, Mr. Sufi yields to an impulse he had consciously suppressed earlier in the novel:

> Where could he find solace? He thought of the mosque . . . [but] the small devout congregation would be startled to see him. They would guess that a troubled mind had driven him there . . . He started his car and drove to the Lyric cinema. (p. 16)

Brooding over his broken life, Mr. Sufi becomes convinced, after many months of increasing misfortune, that he is the object of a supernatural visitation, and that his only defence against it is 'to enlist the aid of men who were capable of pacifying the forces of evil.' (p. 74) He turns to Molvi Haroon, the priest at the Newtown Mosque. In an amusing contrast with the muscle-bound Apollo-like 'saviour' previously visualised by Mr. Sufi in 'superman' form, the Molvi is 'dwarfish' and 'physically stunted'. But he agrees to provide Mr. Sufi with amulets and prayers to remedy his troubles. In gratitude Mr. Sufi donates generously to Moslem charities, and also gives the Molvi a personal gift of a box of Apollo lamps. He even gathers the courage to remove the remaining boxes of lamps

from Orient Mansions one night, and to dump them in an abandoned hut far from the city. For a short while it seems that his affairs and his life are returning to something like normality; but no sooner has Mr. Sufi, 'in a mood of almost hysterical benevolence' written out cheques to every charity that has ever appealed to him, than he discovers that the Molvi Haroon has placed his Apollo lamps in the chandeliers of the mosque.

> Mr. Sufi looked up at the glittering crystal chandeliers hanging above him, and gazed at them as though he saw, at a great height in the heavens, the glowing fires of hell. (p. 84)

The incident is actually a parody of part of the "Nur" passage of Sura 24 of the Koran —

> His light is found in temples which Allah has sanctioned to be built for the remembrance of His name. In them morning and evening His praise is sung by men whom neither trade nor profit can divert from remembering Him, from offering prayers, or from giving alms . . .

In this case the light in Allah's temple comes from Gool's 'Apollo' lamps, and it is now Gool from whom nothing can divert Mr. Sufi's mind. Even when he had first resolved to ask the Molvi's help, and had attended the Friday noon service with the intention of inviting the Molvi for lunch so as to speak to him privately, he discovered that Gool had been praying beside him and that it was Gool who invited the Molvi for lunch 'before Mr. Sufi could gather himself and articulate his invitation'. (p. 76)

In this third phase of Mr. Sufi's 'quest', having experienced false epiphanies related first to the underworld and next to the earth whose clay gave rise to man's flesh, he has undergone a third such experience arising from man's concept of heaven and his relationship with it. Seeking in his religion a solution to his problems, Mr. Sufi turns away from Apollo and the worship of 'the ideal human form', since the agent of consolation and hope is the 'physically stunted' priest. At the same time he tries to reject the sub-human in himself, as embodied in the demonic 'ghoul', and after an entire lifetime of indulging himself while being mean in his dealings with his fellow-creatures, tries frantically for a few weeks to redeem himself by a ridiculous excess of zeal. He goes on a wild splurge of almsgiving, and takes a vow, after disposing of his burden of lamps, 'that he would take the obligatory pilgrimage to Mecca as soon as his affairs were settled'. (p. 79) But, predictably, this attempt to cleanse himself through generosity also fails. Mr. Sufi's next recorded act can be seen as a mocking caricature of his 'hysterical benevolence': with absurd recklessness he gives Gool a

blank cheque, allegedly as a reward to the police officer who, Gool claims, at his behest tore up the warrant for Mr. Sufi's arrest. Wherever he looks — in the underworld below the earth, in earthly life, and in the heavens — Mr. Sufi is confronted by his transgressions. The stolen lamps glittering from the chandeliers of the Newtown Mosque finally proclaim to God on high the extent of his involvement with that creature of darkness, his alter ego, Gool.

After his catastrophic failure to escape from his evil genius by means of priestly intervention, Mr. Sufi is summoned again by Gool. On this occasion, as on others, it seems that the dual motives are extortion and terrorisation: Gool informs him that the police have arrested the men who delivered the lamps to Mr. Sufi's apartment, and that a warrant of arrest is out against him. Mr. Sufi, already distraught, feels as if he is literally falling apart:

> He shouted, 'No! No! No!' and rushed round the room, feeling weirdly legless, a torso whirled in a surrealist tempest. Broken, blinded, imprisoned in some torture chamber without hope of release, he pleaded miserably: 'No . . . Don't let them . . . Gool . . . I beg . . . Don't let them.' (p. 86)

By the time he returns to his car (after giving Gool a blank cheque), Mr. Sufi feels like the corpse preyed upon by the demonic 'ghoul':

> All the sap seemed to have run out of his body, leaving him like a bleached corpse rolling down a sand dune. (p. 87)[11]

Paradoxically, the death-like condition attained by Mr. Sufi at this juncture is, in terms of the Sufi journey to enlightenment, a sign of progress. The 'orientation' of the Sufi must lead him ultimately towards a kind of death — spiritual, not physical; he must achieve a state of emptiness and total receptivity in which he can be filled with an awareness of the divinity that inhabits his soul, to the exclusion, almost, of any other consciousness.

The journey to God can only really begin when the pilgrim withdraws from the material world, for worldly things obscure and impede the path to spiritual illumination. Hence Mr. Sufi's final achievement of true perception is presaged by his feeling, following the certainty of having reached 'the end of his days as an affluent landlord' (p. 98), that

> only as a derelict, freed of responsibility, of being, would he be able to evade determination by worldly things, pre-occupation with his own fate, regret at times past, yearning for the nebula of the future, the power of Gool, the cunning of Mr. Mohamed. Like flotsam driven by currents out at sea, he would go wherever life took him. (p. 98)

His 'urban doom' thus becomes his salvation.

The Koranic imagery of lamps and their light extends throughout the novel, and is contrasted with its converse, Mr. Sufi's preference for brown suits and motor-cars, and for women's company only in the seclusion of the bedroom, as well as his attraction to the perpetual twilight of the cinema. Essop adds to this penchant for darkened shades his protagonist's almost obsessional insistence on keeping *un*lit the stairs, passages and foyers of the buildings owned by him. Twinned with the Koranic concept is the Western notion of the god Apollo, embodiment of the sun's light, and an appropriate companion for the lamp which in the Koran represents the spiritual light of Allah — the more so because in Sufi teaching 'the sun which lights the day is the symbol of the Spirit which lights the next world'.[12] Mr. Sufi's lifelong choice of the darker side parallels the ironies arising from the other aspect of Apollo's image, that of an ideal of beauty expressed in bodily perfection. This is continually juxtaposed in the novel with the personal physical shortcomings of Mr. Sufi — not only those induced by his previous life of self-indulgence, but also additional handicaps — such as sexual impotence — acquired in the course of his debilitating association with Gool. Again, it can be related directly to Sufi teachings.

One aspect of the goal sought by the Sufi mystic is the recognition of true beauty. This is a spiritual quality, but it is perceived through the medium of earthly beauty. The Sufi sage Ibn 'Arabi taught that the Absolute is seen through a concrete living being, and that 'it is more perfectly seen in a human form than any other, and more perfectly in a woman than a man'. 'Woman,' Ibn 'Arabi says, 'is the highest form of earthly beauty, but earthly beauty is nothing unless it is a manifestation and reflection of the Divine qualities.'[13] As Mr. Sufi's ordeal approaches its climax, and he withdraws further and further from his former life — to the extent of retreating for days at a time to his bedroom — his values begin subtly to change. Gradually an awareness grows in him of the importance of his family: he realises that 'only in relation to them did his life take on meaning'. (p. 89) He begins especially to become conscious of 'the beauty of his wife and children — not only of their physical beauty but also of the primary beauty of their beings to which he was emotionally, spiritually and organically united.' (p. 89) When in the novel's final moment Mr. Sufi looks into the faces of his daughters and perceives how lovely they are, he is confronted with the beauty of the Divinity manifested and reflected in the innocent faces of these young girls who are his own flesh and blood. Mr. Sufi may have scanted his family of his attention during the course of the novel, but the reader has never been permitted to lose sight of them, and knows how beautiful they are. Moreover, the reader marks the development in Mr. Sufi of an increasing sense of his own need of

family life — something that had impinged not at all on his previous hedonistic existence. This gradual opening up of an appreciation of beauty accompanies a growing recognition of the human needs and the sufferings of other people: in particular, those of his own tenants, under the violent persuasions of Gool's bullies. Mr. Rahim — whose name means 'mercy' — is beaten up by Gool's henchman Akhbar for refusing to pay an increase in the rent. Mr. Sufi astonishes himself by showing compassion and refusing to accept the increase when Rahim appears, battered, bruised, and penitent, to pay. Mr. Hafiz (the name is the word used for an enlightened Sufi sage, a teacher) is assaulted by Akhbar in the presence of his family and of Mr. Sufi, ironically in the building called 'Nirvana Mansions'. The scene appalls Mr. Sufi, but it teaches him something about himself — that in certain essential ways he is no better than the gangsters, and his way of life no less parasitic than theirs:

> He and they lived parasitically off others, spending their lives with playthings — billiards, women, motor-cars — and eternally seeking entertainment in cinemas. He and they had never accomplished a day's work, work that contributed to the sum of man's creative labour. His money-minting properties had been acquired through inheritance; the income of the gangsters was a sort of inheritance received from those who were weak and fearful. (p. 49)

The development of Mr. Sufi's spiritual perceptions is traceable in the novel partly in the symbolism of birds — traditional symbols in both eastern and western cultures for the faculties of the soul.[14] The birds encountered by Mr. Sufi in the course of his involuntary pilgrimage range across a spectrum from ugliness to the greatest beauty. At the former extreme they include avian monsters like the shrieking harpy — the form assumed by two different women who 'attack' him in different situations — and something like a cross between a gargoyle and a pterodactyl- 'the spawn of some foul brute and nasty sprite . . . perched on the balustrade, flapping his arms' (p. 71 — a description of Faizel Adil, the scurrilous journalist who seduces Mr. Sufi's eldest daughter and blackmails him). The 'barbaric laughter' (p. 31) of the raucous hadeda ibises Mr. Sufi notices while at the Zoo Lake with Gool is echoed by the terrifying laughter of the demon which assails Mr. Sufi on the dark stairs of Orient Mansions. The song of sweet-voiced birds fills the air as Mr. Sufi, in the brief interval of euphoria while he believes that the Molvi's amulets may help him, picnics out in the country with his former concubine Olga, for the first time realising her 'as a person whose worth transcended the pleasure she could give'. (p. 81) Just before being efficiently stripped of his remaining worldly goods by Gool and Mr. Mahomed, Mr. Sufi observes a beautiful long-tailed widow-bird of paradise in the 'rain-blessed sunlit fields' of paradisal

Elysia, as yet untouched by human interference and exploitation — an experience foreign to his 'urban soul'. The gradation of these bird images from ugliness or monstrosity to beauty runs counter to Mr. Sufi's journey from wealth to destitution, or from his old life of total self-centredness to his new awareness of the being and the needs of others.

The structure of *The Visitation* finely exemplifies Essop's conception of the creative imagination as 'a unifying principle of consciousness [which] perceives the identity between . . . the psyche of man and the material universe.'[15] His choice of the Sufi quest as the principal structural element of the work bears out his belief in the moral responsibility of the artist:

> The impact of creative writing is not only immediate: it reaches beyond the emotional and intellectual sensibilities into the deeper reaches of the human psyche. It is perhaps there that the possibilities of authentic moral renewal lie. In this age, the morally unevolved consciousness, with its claustral notions of racialism, nationalism, patriotism, together with religious fantasy and dogma, still throws its penumbra over the world. But a time may come when it shall evanesce. Then the work of writers may come to be seen not only as a testimony of the times and a revelation of the human condition with its potentials and possibilities, but as an important contribution to the metamorphosis of society into a rational, humane and compassionate one.[16]

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NOTES

I would like to record my gratitude to Ahmed Essop for valuable discussions of his work, for providing supplementary material, for assistance, encouragement and support in my readings and analyses, and for the hospitality extended by himself and his wife Farida.

1. Ahmed Essop, *The Visitation*, published by Ravan Press, Johannesburg, 1980.
2. Ahmed Essop has told the present writer that the representation of Apollo that he had in mind was the classical 'Apollo Belvedere'.
3. It is worth recalling that Apollo's ideal image of youthful masculine beauty was imposed upon representations of Christ in the earliest Roman and Greek Christian art.
4. *The Koran*, translated by N.J. Dawood; Penguin Books, Ltd., Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1956; fourth revised edition 1974. Sura 24 ('Nur'), verses 35–40; p. 217.
5. Ahmed Essop has confirmed, in personal discussion with the present writer, that he was, in fact, using the notion of the Sufi's quest for insight in his allegory woven around a personage named 'Emir Sufi'. He added that it was originally his intention to quote the 'light upon light' passage from the 'Nur' sura of the Koran on the titlepage of the published novel, as an epigraph, but had changed his mind shortly before publication.
6. Fordsburg, once a colourful and mainly Indian residential quarter of Johannesburg, had by the late 1970's (when *The Visitation* was being written) become largely an inner-city industrial and business area in which the

ownership of property was (and still is, at the time of writing) restricted, under the South African Group Areas Act, to the White population group. The events moving in the backdrop of the final chapter of *The Visitation* are historical: properties owned by members of the Indian ('Asiatic') population group were indeed expropriated by order of the Government and sold to White businessmen, or to companies owned by Whites. The Indian community was, in fact, compelled to move *en masse* to the newly created satellite town of Lenasia — the 'Elysia' of the novel — twenty kilometres south of Johannesburg. The Fordsburg where Essop himself had lived and of which he wrote with such affection in the *The Hajji and Other Stories* (Ravan, Johannesburg, 1978) as well as *The Visitation*, was little more than a memory by the time the collection was published.

7. Laleh Bakhtiar, *Sufi: Expressions of the Mystic Quest*; Thames and Hudson, London, 1976; p. 41.
8. Bakhtiar, p. 10.
9. Essop also gives the name 'Orient House' to a building in his short story *The Hajji*. (*The Hajji and Other Stories*, Ravan Press, Johannesburg, 1978; pp. 1–13.) The name 'Orient' here, as in *The Visitation*, reminds the reader of the central tenets of Islam to which the faithful turn back with each act of prayer.
10. The perils encountered by the mystic on his journey are often described in traditional myths as demons (*jinn*).
    '*Jinn* are both the hostile forces of nature, still not subdued by man, and the means whereby one achieves salvation ... All their activities take place at night, and it is the *jinn* who inflict illnesses both physical and psychic.' Bakhtiar, p. 45.
11. From the 'Nur' passage in Sura 24 of the *Koran*:
    'As for the unbelievers, their works are like a mirage in a desert. The thirsty traveller thinks it is water, but when he comes near he finds that it is nothing. He finds Allah there, who pays him back in full. Swift is Allah's reckoning.' (Dawood translation.)
12. Bakhtiar, p. 59.
13. Ibn 'Arabi, *The Mathnawi*, translated by R. Nicholson; quoted in Bakhtiar, p. 21.
14. From the 'Nur' passage, Sura 24 of the *Koran*:
    'Do you not see how Allah is praised by those in heaven and earth? The very birds praise Him as they wing their flight. He notes the prayers and praises of all His creatures ...' (Dawood translation, p. 217)
    '... the spiritual faculties of intuition ... are symbolized by the birds, whose language is the language of self and contains knowledge of the higher states of being.' Bakhtiar, p. 37.
    From 'Naml' ('The Ant'), Sura 27 of the *Koran*, verse 16:
    'Solomon succeeded David. He said: 'Know, my people, we have been taught the tongue of birds, and endowed with all good things. Surely this is a signal favour.' (Dawood translation, p. 83)
15. Ahmed Essop, untitled brief essay; included in a symposium in *Momentum: On Recent South African Writing*; edited by M. Daymond, J.U. Jacobs and M. Lenta (Pietermaritzburg, University of Natal Press) 1984, pp. 19–21; p. 20.
16. *Momentum*, p. 21.

OPPOSING APARTHEID: DEMOCRATS AGAINST THE LENINISTS

by MERVYN FROST

The opponents of apartheid both in South Africa and abroad for the most part focus their attention on influencing the South African government to change its policies. The measure of success in this enterprise is the extent to which the National Party may be shown to have been pushed towards relinquishing power or reforming its policies. In this article I argue that a focus on moving the government towards reform is far too narrow and that although ending apartheid is important, it ought not to obscure the equally important task of creating a democratic culture which will support a post-apartheid democracy. By focusing exclusively on the government and its policies and on the whole question of how to end these, opponents of apartheid are often in danger of advocating the use of means which may well result in replacing one autocratic state with another. In particular their policies might bring about an autocracy of a Marxist/Leninist kind.

The way in which opponents of apartheid set about bringing about an end to this unjust system depends on their understanding of the target state and the people in it. Many white South Africans and many foreign powers who actively oppose apartheid have a very good understanding of ways in which members of the governing National Party think. What they are less well acquainted with are the theories which inform the thinking of the oppressed black majority. Black opposition politics is not dominated by one group, instead there is a multiplicity of groups guided by a range of ideologies. Within this diversity are two major approaches to politics competing for dominance. The one mode informs a practice which if it is encouraged and if it is successful, will lead on to a democratic civic culture. The other approach, a Leninist one, will inevitably lead on to a political culture even more authoritarian than the present one.

The latter view asserts that what is called for is democratization from above. The state must be forced to introduce democratic reforms or, indeed, the state must be taken over and its apparatus used to push through major political, economic and social reforms. On the other view the power of the state must be eroded from below by a popular democratic movement. Each of these approaches to reform is based upon a theory about the state and a theory about how the state relates to the social and economic order.

I want to consider these two possible understandings which the disenfranchised majority in South Africa might have about their position and what is required for reform in a democratic direction.

Before outlining the two approaches let me mention what is common to them both. It seems safe to say that both approaches are premised upon the following rough characterization of the present situation in South Africa: Over the past few years there has been a concentration of political power at the centre. South Africa is (and has been since its inception) a unitary state with all that this implies with regard to the concentration of power. The power already thus concentrated was further focused over the years by the operation of the Broederbond. More recently the new constitution fine-tuned the concentration of power by establishing a three-chambered parliament which it was claimed would distribute power, but which in fact further concentrated power in the hands of the Cabinet and more particularly in the hands of the President. The party's hold on the Cabinet and the President was weakened. The establishment of the National Security Council ensured Presidential control over a wide range of departments with an interest in security. Dismantling the Provincial Council system and the establishment of the Regional Services Councils has had the effect of devolving functions while concentrating power. Television too has had a role in establishing the predominance of the power-wielders at the centre. The whole formal political education of South Africans has been directed towards teaching South Africans that important decisions are taken at the centre. Unswerving loyalty and obedience to the political masters has been encouraged at every turn. Criticism is presented as unpatriotic: where power is concentrated at the centre it is from thence that reform must emanate.

Both approaches opposing apartheid are concerned to answer the question: Given the highly centralized powers of the present state how might reform in a democratic direction best be achieved? This is not a question about what sort of democratic institutions ought to be introduced (i.e. it is not a question about constitutional blue-prints), but about what ought to be done to move the polity in a democratic direction.

* * *

Lenin argued that democracy is only possible in a classless society. In order to achieve this the state and its bureaucratic/military machine has to be smashed (Lenin 1977:255) for on his view the state is the instrument of the ruling class. During the interregnum between the abolition of the old order and the establishment of communism something like the state must be used to demolish the last vestiges of capitalism. The immediate task of the working class then is to capture the state and to use it to create a new social, economic and political order. In order to do this the proletariat is called upon to follow the lead of a disciplined vanguard party.

I want to discuss the relationship between two of the features of the bourgeois state which according to Lenin need to be abolished by the party: the system of parliamentary representation and the bureaucratic system. He understood parliament to be a sham form of representation; a place in which the people are given the illusion of participating in guiding the affairs of state. The bureaucracy he understood as an apparatus within which the bureaucrats are able to follow their own careerist self interest. The way to solve the bureaucratic problem on his view is to replace it with a system of administration run by elected officials who are paid workman's wages and who are subject to recall by the electorate at any time.

Lenin failed to understand bureaucracy and the relationship between it and political institutions. The problem of bureaucracy is not simply to be found in the careerist motivations of bureaucrats. The modern bureaucracy is a particular way of organizing public administration. Of particular importance are the functions which this mode of organization fulfils. Max Weber listed the well known features of the legal rational form of organization peculiar to modern bureaucracies which include inter alia that office holders are appointed on merit, that there is a hierarchical chain of command, that tasks are carried out according to general rules, that office holders are paid a salary, that there is security of tenure for bureaucrats, that there is a rational division of labour, that modern filing systems are used, and so on (Weber 1970:196–198). Weber noted how efficient this mode of organizing was compared to previous systems in which offices were bought and sold. He noted that without this efficient form of administration industralization and the accumulation of wealth would not have been possible. Looked at from this point of view then bureaucracies are a boon.

There are however negative features of bureaucracies (Weber 1970:232–235). The application of legal rational control has an inhuman aspect in that both the administrators and those being administered are, as it were, cogs in a huge impersonal machine. Furthermore, the bureaucrats might develop an interest which is different from the common interest. Thus Weber sees that modern bureaucracies bring undeniable advantages, but they also have negative consequences for the people subject to them. Lenin, in contrast to Weber, only saw the negative features.

In order to remedy the negative aspects of modern bureaucracies Weber made a strong case for the establishment of representative institutions which would enable the wider common interest to act as a counter to the sectional interest of the bureaucrats. For Weber, far from being a sham, parliament is one of the few ways of countering the negative features of the bureaucracy (Albrow 1970:48).

To sum up this section: Lenin's analysis of bureaucracy and

parliament shows them both up in a negative light whereas Weber's shows how a modern industrial state is not possible without an efficient bureaucracy and how the negative consequences of a bureaucracy can only be countered by an efficient system of parliamentary representation. It is not fortuitous that the only state which came into being guided by Leninist principles has a massive oppressive bureaucracy and a very weak representative system.

In spite of the weakness of Lenin's analysis of parliament and bureaucracy which we have discussed above there are many reasons why the disenfranchised majority in South Africa find Lenin's analysis *prima facie* plausible. First, this majority experiences the bureaucracy as coercive in that it is manned by the powerful, privileged and rich group. It also implements laws which obviously do not further the interests of the majority. Second, the wealth generated through the workings of the bureaucracy in government and the economy conspicuously benefits those with the vote more than those without it. Third, with regard to parliament the majority do not experience it as acting as a check on the bureaucracy in a way that benefits them. Fourth, the majority having been excluded from participating in parliament thus have no experience of its benefits. The majority see the bureaucracy and parliament as part of a single coercive apparatus which works against their interests. For all these reasons the over-simple and erroneous analysis provided by Lenin easily finds adherents in the polity of South Africa today. We can thus understand that the majority have good reasons for accepting a wrong-headed theory.

To the extent that Lenin's theory about the bureaucracy and parliament is accepted by the majority in South Africa it will have three obvious deleterious effects. First, it will lead to a generally negative attitude towards the design and implementation of representative institutions. Second, it will also lead to a negative attitude towards the whole question of balancing the power of the bureaucracy (which is a *sine qua non* for industrial growth) with the power of representative institutions. Third, the Leninist analysis calls for a strategy of destruction of that which makes the well-being of all possible (i.e. a highly efficient economy dependent on an efficient bureaucracy) and for the destruction of parliamentary institutions which alone can curb the dysfunctions of the bureaucracy.

One of the beauties of Lenin's analysis from the point of view of the political activist in South Africa is that it relates closely to the everyday experience of the disenfranchised majority and dictates in a clear-cut manner what ought to be done (*viz* smash the system).

For the Leninist, bureaucracy and parliament have to be destroyed by the working class party, for they are both the tools of the capitalist class. In the new society there will not be a

bureaucracy which needs controlling by parliament. The administrators will be directly elected and members of the only class, i.e. the working class. Thus the bureaucracy could not work against the common interest. What is called for, according to the Leninist view, is thus not a modification of the institutions, but a wiping out of the class which needed the protection of the institutions in the first place. Where everybody belongs to the proletariat it is not at all clear why, on Lenin's view, democratic institutions would be necessary at all. Politics, defined as argument about the ends to be pursued, would have ceased (Polan 1984:182–206).

But just how on the Leninist view is class conflict to be ended? The answer is: By means of the dictatorship of the proletariat. This involves taking over the central apparatus of the state. However, once the proletariat has done this, if the Weberian model of bureaucracy is correct then some people in the proletariat will develop interests closely associated with their positions in the bureaucracy, i.e. interests opposed to the interests of the whole. Thus in seeking to gain control of an instrument to destroy class domination the proletariat will have set up a new domination. And the one thing which could have counter-balanced that domination (*viz* parliament and a democratic political culture) would have been destroyed already in the name of furthering the interests of the proletariat.

* * *

What guidance for action does the Weberian model offer in the South African context? It starts by demanding that activists realize that an efficient bureaucracy is a *sine qua non* for economic prosperity but warns that in order to defend themselves against the self-interest of the bureaucrats the people must establish a strong and vital parliament. It calls therefore in the South African context for the reform of parliament rather than the destruction of it. It says that in order to preserve the well-being of all what is called for is not the destruction of the bureaucracy, but its control. It recognizes bureaucracy as performing certain essential functions. In short the Weberian model shows us that a given individual can have both an interest in an efficient bureaucracy *and* an interest in a countervailing institution designed to control that bureaucracy.

Far more crucial for our purposes is the import of the Weberian model when it comes to thinking about what might be done about the present dominant bureaucracy and parliament without falling into the same trap into which Leninists fall, i.e. the trap of using measures to topple a dominant bureaucracy and parliament which measures themselves in turn become dominant in exactly the same way. The implication of the Weberian model for action is fairly

obvious. The opposition movement which is used to bring pressure to bear on the dominant state must not itself be so constituted that it in turn becomes a new tyrant. The movement to establish democracy must itself be democratic. It is here that I think the example of Solidarity in Poland is pertinent.

How is it possible for a movement organized on democratic lines to oppose a monolithic and autocratic state which itself is supported by a massive bureaucratized super power? Solidarity self-consciously followed a non-Leninist strategy. Rather than seeking to overthrow the state directly (which may well not have been possible and which would surely have brought the might of the USSR down on Poland) Solidarity sought to create a society in which autocracy is not possible. This was done by assembling a broad front of groups into the organization itself. Included were trade unions, student groups, parish groups, women's groups, area-based organizations and so on. Within this broad front people experienced meaningful democratic participation. It provided people with a counter to the impersonal rule of the communist-run bureaucratic leviathan. Crucially the solidarity of the members also placed constraints on what the government of the day could do. However, the leaders were only too aware that if they sought to topple the state directly they would have to form into a party of such massive conformity and discipline that the form of the party itself would undermine the chances of the kind of democratic state which they desired ever emerging. Solidarity deliberately maintained diversity within the movement and it did not practice democratic centralism. It is essential to point out though that Solidarity was aided by the fact that its membership came from a culturally homogeneous group (bound together by the Roman Catholic Church which provided a very powerful initial support base) and Solidarity could build on a political tradition many hundreds of years old.

In recent times a Solidarity-like strategy emerged in South Africa in spite of the attractions of a Leninist strategy. A political force emerged which initially pursued a strategy which stressed the importance of using only those methods of opposition which keep a democratic political culture alive during the struggle and which resisted the democracy killing centralization of a Leninist approach. I am obviously talking about the United Democratic Front (UDF).

The UDF emerged as an organization opposing the exclusion of Blacks from the new constitution. It is a broad-based popular movement consisting of hundreds of small organizations allied in a loose federation. The creeds of the different participating groups are widely divergent and the UDF central organization is not very strong. At the outset the UDF clearly committed itself to a policy of non-violence. It did not seek to take on the state's military might

with force of arms. Instead it turned to conventional lobbying, boycott strategies, civil disobedience, and passive resistance. The strategy was very successful in the following four areas: First, in securing a major Black rejection of the new constitutional proposals. Second, in wringing concessions from the government with regard to the schools' boycott in specified areas. Third, in undermining the legitimacy of the Community Council system. Fourth, in mounting partially successful consumer boycotts in certain areas. In short the UDF has been remarkably successful in opposing an anti-democratic state in a way that involves introducing democracy from below.

More recently, however, a very worrying tendency has emerged in the UDF; a tendency to understand itself and its role in South Africa in a Leninist way. Increasingly the task of the organization is being described as the smashing of the state. With regard to the UDF/AZAPO fued it is being said that the UDF's aim is to achieve hegemony. Even more worrying is a political culture which is emerging which stresses the need for unity above all. Any form of opposition meets with violent response. There is even support for forms of para-military activity. In short the rhetoric is increasingly Marxist-Leninist.

In spite of all this I am convinced that the UDF is not a thorough-going disciplined revolutionary party. Its populist roots are still strong. It still does not have a strong centralized control system. It is still made up of a diversity of groups. Many in the UDF are still committed to non-violence. Prior to the state of emergency there were still many avenues of participation open to the ordinary supporters. Even under the state of emergency there is a remarkable democratic ethos underpinning the thinking of many of its supporters, and so on.

Were it allowed to operate freely the UDF could develop in either of the two directions which I have spelled out above. What direction it takes depends largely on the reactions of the National Party government and of the enfranchised group as a whole. Reactions which make it difficult for a democratic culture to emerge and grow will inevitably push the progressive movement in the Leninist direction. Heavy-handed military action, the bannings of meetings, the arbitrary arrests of leaders, curbs on the freedom of association, the bannings of organizations and many other types of anti-political reactions will strengthen the hand of those pushing the beautifully simple Leninist account of the present South African situation. Conversely all attempts to allow politics to thrive will work against the Leninist tendency, if 'politics' is defined as a form of co-operative action based on consent reached after full discussion.

To avoid the emergence of an autocratic or totalitarian order in

South Africa it is essential that a democratic culture be nurtured. That there is any such culture left to nurture is little short of miraculous. For years it has been systematically opposed by the minority government. It is crucial that all concerned with the future of South Africa realize that the nurturing of a democratic culture does *not* depend on grants and dispensations from central government. A democratic culture can emerge in the most authoritarian kinds of state, *e.g.* Poland (as discussed above). It requires that individuals participate in a wide set of voluntary associations. It requires that citizens always seek a better understanding of their present position through in-depth discussion with as many people as possible. It requires people not to surrender their political judgement to any vanguard which purports to speak on their behalf. Finally it requires an appreciation that the voicing of different opinions is crucial to the well-being of all.

The direction in which the opposition movements of the black majority develop will not only be determined by the reactions of the National Party government, but also by what support the movements get from foreign countries. There are many different kinds of recognition and aid which can be given to the black opposition groups which will ensure that they move in a democratic direction rather than a Leninist one.

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From what has gone before, it is clear that Leninists must seek to take over the bureaucratic/military state with its built-in anti-democratic and anti-political structures, whereas those acting on a Weberian analysis of the state and society must seek to counter-balance the might of the state with a strong political and democratic culture which in the long run will ensure that oligarchy will no longer be possible.

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NOTE

In this article I apply to the South African polity the important theoretical insights developed by AJ Polan in *Lenin and the End of Politics*.

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'PARADISE LOST', GENESIS AND 'JOB': A RECONSTRUCTION OF AUTHORIAL CHOICES

by HAROLD P. MALTZ

Theodicy — and anti-theodicy — may be legitimate concerns, not only of philosophy (for example, Leibniz, *Monadology*) and theology, but also of literature, as may be seen in *Paradise Lost* (and Voltaire, *Candide*). The narrative poet of *Paradise Lost*, who refers to himself as a poet and who may in this poem be taken as the mouthpiece of the author, declares his aim to be the justification of the ways of God to man.[1] To do so, he recounts and recasts the events of Genesis 1–3. The one book of the Old Testament which seriously questions the ways of God to man is *Job* — yet this text, though alluded to, is not utilized in any significant manner in *Paradise Lost*. In this article I wish to explore why Milton in his poem utilizes Genesis but not *Job*.

In the Old Testament, Milton could have turned to many of the books for source material for his theodicy, although these books are themselves not theodicean. In spite of recording a catalogue of disasters — the Flood, the destruction of countless cities, frequent wars, national slavery, national exile — the Old Testament portrays a God of love, justice and mercy, the redeemer and the saviour. Although divine justice is at times questioned, the idea of vindicating God, of justifying God's ways, implies a philosophical temperament and a methodology alien to the Old Testament: theodicy belongs to a world which debates atheism, even if only to deny it. In the Old Testament, in contrast, it is assumed that God exists and is loving, just and merciful, so that the multitude of disasters may be the consequence — that is, the punishment — of specific sins, or may be part of God's redemptive plan the wisdom of which is divine, hence unknowable. In his works, Milton does indeed utilize other books of the Old Testament apart from Genesis, particularly in Books XI and XII of *Paradise Lost*, and also in *Samson Agonistes*. *Paradise Regained* makes explicit use of *Job*. Milton also utilizes New Testament material, particularly in *Paradise Lost* Book XII, and in *Paradise Regained*.

As stated, this article attempts to clarify why, of all the material in the Old Testament available for theodicy, Milton chose to utilize that in the first few chapters of Genesis, and why there is no significant exploitation of *Job*. Critics generally concern themselves with what a writer does, not with what he does not do. This article concerns itself with both questions: in focusing on the argument of *Paradise Lost*, an attempt is made to reconstruct the considerations that Milton may have had for utilizing Genesis and for not alluding significantly to *Job*. If it seems odd to ask why Milton does not

utilize *Job*, the oddness should disappear if one considers its main themes.

A moment's reflection reveals that *Job* is indeed a singular work, and is so for a reason that should have caught Milton's eye, and have made him peruse it with tremendous interest. For of all the books in the Old Testament, it is the one that comes closest to being read — perhaps even to being written — as a work of theodicy. It is true that Abraham, for example, asks, 'Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?' (Genesis 18:25),[2] but the question is a rhetorical one and the passage reveals that God is just: indeed, Abraham is renowned as a man of perfect faith. In contrast, Job seriously questions the ways of God to mankind, questions at length and in elevated poetry; the topic is passionately debated until God himself, in his sublime theophany, reveals his glory. With the theophany, the text abandons the problems caused by the sufferings of Job, perhaps of all humanity, to glory in the infinity of the universe and the distant stars, so that Job's questions dissolve and wither away.

One would think, therefore, that Milton — sophisticated, highly intelligent, well-versed in Hebrew — would regard the author of *Job* as a soul-mate; one would think that the blending of poetry and philosophical argument found in *Job* creates a genre after Milton's own heart, for Milton's poetic genius rivals that of the *Job* poet, while his philosophical genius and facility with argument exceeds the other's. As Genesis could be incorporated into Christian doctrine (as indeed all the Old Testament books may be, according to the theory of typology), so too presumably could *Job* be, so that it were capable of bearing a specifically Christian theodicy, to produce which is the aim of the narrator of *Paradise Lost*.

Yet inspection of the text of *Paradise Lost* reveals, surprisingly, a studious avoidance of the central concerns of *Job*; there are many allusions to that text yet all are to relatively insignificant details. Certainly one finds no allusions which focus on the argument of *Job*. Nowhere does the narrative poet acknowledge *Job* as an early work whose themes are close to his own chosen topic, an omission particularly strange in a persona extremely conscious of literary tradition and of his debt to earlier writers, a persona who acknowledges as sources of his inspiration classical, biblical and other literature. Thus in the opening lines of Book I he invokes the heavenly muse — source of poetic wisdom — who inspired Moses, and he alludes to the classical muses who inspired the Greek poets, as well as to Pegasus, winged-horse of classical poetic inspiration (ed. Fowler, *Paradise Lost* I:6–13).[3] He alludes to Ariosto's epic, *Orlando Furioso* (1:16), by quoting a line from it. (He also invokes the spirit of God, that source of creative energy utilized in the creation of the earth and a power required for the creation of a great poem, so that God is the supreme poet and the poet, Platonically, a

god-like creator.[4]) In the opening lines of Book III the narrative poet alludes to Orpheus, mythical poet who descended to the underworld, as, figuratively, the persona does in Books I and II of *Paradise Lost*, and to the poets of the bible, whose writings he reads for refreshment and inspiration. His blindness leads him to identify with the poets Thamyris and Maeonides (Homer) and the prophets Phineus and Tiresias and to hope that, as with them, celestial light may shine inward and irradiate his mind (III:15–55). Strangest of all, Job the man is not mentioned among the heroes of faith in Book XII of *Paradise Lost*,[5] although his confession of faith, 'Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him' (*Job* 13:15), has become a byword for unflinching, indomitable faith.

It is true that Genesis is extraordinarily succinct and it is not surprising that it should engage and stimulate the literary imagination, whereas *Job* has, relatively, exploited its material to its full potential — although, notwithstanding, Goethe, Kafka and MacLeish have been inspired by the text.[6,7] Nonetheless the studious avoidance in *Paradise Lost* of significant allusion to *Job*, to its argument and central concerns, does warrant explanation.

There are many reasons why the narrative poet of *Paradise Lost* utilized Genesis 1–3. These chapters were to prove an excellent source of poetic inspiration, and their theological and moral principles were to be absorbed into the argument, even into the very fabric, of *Paradise Lost*. In addition, these chapters were particularly amenable to Christian doctrine, had proven so from the days of Paul, and hence were judged excellent material for theodicy. In contrast, I argue, *Job*, and with it a set of beliefs and moral principles, was not adaptable or even amenable, was in many ways contradictory, to the beliefs and moral principles displayed in *Paradise Lost*.

If the poet in Milton was attracted to the somewhat bare description of the Garden of Eden in Genesis, he must have revelled in the literary parallels of Eden in the poetry of the Greco-Roman world — poetry depicting the Golden Age, Arcadia, Elysium, the Isles of the Blessed, and pastoral poetry. Such literature served as a rich source of inspiration to him in his depiction of the beauties and splendours of Eden, as may be seen in many passages (for example, *PL* IV:264–287, 'The birds their choir apply . . .').

Milton the theologian and moralist in search of material for a theodicy must have been struck by the theological and moral assumptions implicit in Genesis. It postulated that God is the creator of the universe and of all matter.[8] A corollary of this principle is that God is the creator of the heavens and the earth, and of all living beings, a principle inspiring Milton in his composition of Book VII ('. . . in his hand/He took the golden compasses . . .'

(224–225)). This principle in Genesis in turn implies that the creator possesses both the authority and the power, the divine mandate, to issue law to Adam and Eve, and thence to all human beings. The divine injunction in Genesis (2:16–17) not to eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil is repeated in *Paradise Lost* (4:421–427). Implicit in the imperatives in Genesis enjoined upon Adam and Eve to obey divine injunctions in the concept of free will. In *Paradise Lost*, God himself asserts this momentous doctrine, valid alike for angels and humans (III:95–128; '. . . I formed them free . . .').

The moral structure of Genesis is crystal clear, its clarity deriving from the morally simple situation described in the work. There is a sharp contrast between obedience and disobedience to God's ordained decree. The divine injunction in Eden not to eat of the fruit of the particular tree may either be obeyed or disobeyed: there are no half-measures, no mitigating circumstances, no consideration of motives as in more complex moral situations. Furthermore, this moral structure appears to have been devised for the idyllic Garden of Eden, a world in which suffering did not exist. Here moral good is conceived of as obedience to divine law, moral evil or sin as its transgression. In such a simple situation (a child world), moral principles are clear-cut: obedience or goodness warrants reward, disobedience or evil or sin warrants punishment. Both reward and punishment are dramatized in symbolically significant landscapes: Eden is to remain the abode (an appropriate setting) of the virtuous, the morally obedient, while the sinner, morally disobedient, is to be banished to the Fallen World of thorns, thistles, and hard — and painful — labour. Proximity to the divine presence, the reward for virtuous Adam and Eve in Eden, is conceived of as a state of paradisal bliss (akin to that which in *Paradise Lost* the angels enjoy in heaven); separation from the divine presence, the punishment of sinful Adam and Eve in the Fallen World, is conceived of as a condition of suffering, alienation and unhappiness (akin, in *Paradise Lost*, to the torment which the fallen angels endure in hell). These concepts of proximity to ('union' with) or alienation from God as prime factors in the human spiritual condition are fundamental to religious psychology in Genesis. Finally, Genesis postulates that, human violation notwithstanding, and in spite of the punishment of transgressors, divine law remains eternal and immutable, and divine justice is tempered with mercy.

These principles of reward for virtue and punishment for sin are found not only in Genesis 2–3 but also in other books of the Pentateuch in which they now apply to the real (the 'fallen') world, for example, Deuteronomy 30:15–19 ('I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil . . .') and Deuteronomy

11:13–17, a biblical version of the wasteland myth ('I will give you the rain of your land in his due season . . .'). In the light of these two passages, both extensions of Genesis 2–3 and in their moral structure totally consistent with that account, it is understandable that, reading Genesis 2–3, one should in general come to equate the concept of suffering with that of punishment for sin. No categories other than those of reward and punishment are implied in Genesis 2–3, and the concept of punishment contextually implies that of preceding sin. The narrative poet of *Paradise Lost* generalizes these principles, applying them to all mankind, whose suffering, it is argued, is to be understood as punishment of imputed or Original Sin, and of actual sin since committed. Such an argument is a vital link in the chain of premisses and propositions whose end is the vindication of God's justice. (If it is just for mankind to suffer in the Fallen World, it can only be just if deserved. Hence all suffering should be seen as punishment for sin.)

The simple moral situation of Genesis 2–3 obviously appealed to Milton. In *Paradise Lost* the world is organized in terms of dualism and correspondence; the dualism of the terrestrial Eden and the Fallen World corresponds to that of the extra-terrestrial heaven and hell. As in Genesis so in *Paradise Lost* the moral principles are clear cut and concepts of moral reward and punishment determine the symbolism built into the landscape.

In *Paradise Lost*, Milton reveals himself to be not merely a poet whose theodicy concerns itself with theological and more principles: his theodicy was to be a specifically Christian one. Learned in Christian hermeneutic principles — that the 'Old Testament' is revealed by the 'New', that its figures 'pre-figure' Christ, that prophecy alludes to Christ — he found in Genesis material interpretable Christologically, to provide him with a Christian reading not only of Genesis, but of God and human history as well, hence with principles which underpin his theodicy.

In his argument Milton was to follow in the footsteps of the Apostle Paul: Paul's epistle to the Romans provides the guidelines for the reading of Genesis which Milton develops in *Paradise Lost*. Paul propounds the outlines of the doctrines of Original Sin and of Christ as the second Adam: when Adam and Eve sinned and fell, human nature altered, became tainted with sin, a taint which thereafter was imputed — transmitted — to all their descendants, a taint which only Christian faith may redeem. In the words of Paul:

> For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous. (Romans 5:19)[9]

Milton was also able to bring to bear on Genesis the teaching of Revelation (12:7–9), which identifies the serpent of Eden with

Satan, a figure in turn implicitly identified with Lucifer who rebelled in heaven and was expelled. In partially following this tradition — even dramatizing the battle against Lucifer and depicting a heavenly fall which anticipates the earthly fall in Eden — Milton was enabled to extend the time-span of the events described in Genesis to an era prior to the creation of the earth. In associating (but not identifying) the serpent of Eden with Satan, Milton was thereby able to ascribe to the tempter of Eve a history and motivation that is absent from the simple tale in Genesis. Further, by the hermeneutic principle of prophecy alluding to Christ, Milton was enabled to interpret the prediction of enmity between the 'seed' of Eve and the 'seed' of the serpent as a prophecy of both the crucifixion and, eschatologically, of the final battles of Christ and the serpent-Satan. Accordingly, the relevance of the events in Genesis was extended forward in time to the last events to be enacted on earth.[10]

These considerations — poetic, theological and moral, Christian — may have served to influence Milton in his choice of Genesis 1–3 as material for his theodicy. It is true that they have been extrapolated from the text of *Paradise Lost*, yet extrapolation from the text provides a more reliable guide to the reconstruction of Milton's considerations than, say, announcements of intention outside the text, statements always notoriously fallible. Besides, extrapolation as a guide to reconstruction of the author's considerations in utilizing a text is probably more justifiable methodologically in analysing *Paradise Lost* than in most other texts:[11] Milton's poem has a number of unusual features. In it one finds a conscious statement of narratorial intention: the narrative poet wishes to 'assert eternal providence,/And justify the ways of God to men' (I:25–26). He also refers to his text — self-reference, as in metafiction — as 'this great argument' (I:24). The use of such terminology ('justify' and 'argument') points to the text as a theodicy, yet the poetic narrative which follows — albeit interspersed with passages of argument — implies that the narrator hopes to persuade his readers by his narrative. The narrative, therefore, must have logically appropriate features, must display or contain implicitly principles, whereby the reader may be persuaded. Another unusual feature of *Paradise Lost* is its utilization of an earlier text — in this instance, Genesis 1–3. If so, it follows that the earlier text must itself have been examined carefully, otherwise how could it have been selected as logically appropriate (in addition to having the inspirational features that in other cases lead a writer to utilize an earlier text)? The purely literary considerations inducing Shakespeare, say, to utilize North's translations of Plutarch are thus compounded in Milton's utilization of Genesis 1–3 in *Paradise Lost*: Genesis, if chosen, must be able to

sustain an argument, be appropriate for a theodicy. Therefore it must have been assessed and selected on these grounds. But if Milton cannot be present in the text, the persona cannot exist out of it: Milton read, assessed, selected Genesis for utilization by the narrative poet.

Whereas Genesis could be utilized in *Paradise Lost, Job* proved to be not amenable. As stated, *Job* contains a set of beliefs and moral principles unadaptable, sometimes even contradictory, to the beliefs and moral principles displayed in *Paradise Lost.*[12] There is every likelihood that the narrative poet in Milton's poem deliberately did not, could not, allude significantly to *Job*. True, there are allusions to the marvel of creation, to the glories of the universe, as portrayed by the poet of *Job*, and there are verbal echoes of its striking poetry. There are also — several times — allusions to Satan compassing the earth (*PL* III:440–441; 9:58–59).[13] One may find Adam described as '. . . comfortless, as when a father mourns/His children, all in view destroyed at once . . .' (*PL* XI:760–761). Nonetheless these allusions are peripheral to *Job*; they skirt and enable the narrator of *Paradise Lost* to view as from a distance the central propositions of *Job* that are so remarkable. They certainly prove his familiarity with that work, but they make his lack of significant allusion all the more striking. If it be true that the narrator of Milton's poem deliberately abstained from significant allusion to *Job*, the reasoning implicit in this abstention may possibly be deduced from a comparison of the principles and other elements of these two works. (Indeed, the contrast of *Job* and *Paradise Lost* is worth exploring for its own sake, even if detached from speculations about Milton's reasoning processes.)

It should be noted that *Job* and Genesis are themselves not entirely unrelated. *Job* renders in sublime poetry the marvel of creation so starkly and succinctly described in Genesis. Further, Job may be looked on as kin to prelapsarian Adam if one is to believe, as there is every reason to, his protestations of innocence of sin.[14] Indeed, it is likely that there is in *Job* an implicit allusion to Genesis, a play or variation upon that work: in *Job*, both God and Satan are present on opposite sides — although Satan is God's emmissary and the opposite sides are taken but in wager — with Job their field of dispute.[15] May not such a structure remind the reader of God and the serpent in opposition in Eden, the heart and soul of Adam and Eve the field there to be won?

To Milton, *Job* must have been an embarrassing text, for example in the fact of Satan's presence. *Paradise Lost* asserts that Lucifer and his cohorts fell from heaven, Lucifer who in falling became Satan, and that their fall antedated the creation of Adam and Eve. Further, Satan contemplates his and his cohorts' return to heaven

but the idea is rejected; instead he establishes himself as king of hell and, since his separation from God is eternal, he proclaims that hell is where he, Satan, is. God himself announces that unlike the progeny of Adam and Eve, Satan can never be forgiven nor ever return to heaven (*PL* III:129–132), and Satan concurs (IV:93–104; IX:123–125). Yet lo and behold in the opening chapter of *Job*, Satan is firmly established in heaven, one of the "sons of God" summoned to the heavenly court. The reader fresh from *Paradise Lost* is bewildered and wonders why Satan was ever re-admitted to heaven, for neither Satan nor God seemed even to contemplate that possibility let alone assent to it.[16] It is clear that Milton's mythology in *Paradise Lost* follows a tradition different from the Jobian: his identification of Lucifer and Satan follows the tradition of the Church Fathers but does not square with that in *Job*, according to which Satan neither fell nor was expelled. Indeed, Satan in *Job* is portrayed as an obedient emissary of God and irreconcilably different to the proud and defiant rebel of *Paradise Lost*, opponent of God and would-be usurper and ruler of heaven. Folklore may account for the popular view of Satan as the enemy of mankind and the opponent of God, folklore which becomes Christian orthodoxy, so that Revelation identifies Satan with the serpent of Eden and postulates his fall from heaven.[17]

Milton would have been further embarrassed by Job's exclamation to his wife: 'What? Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?' (2:10). Job adds:

> For the arrows of the Almighty are within me, the poison whereof drinketh up my spirit: the terrors of God do set themselves in array against me. (6:4)

Job's insistence — and the events of chapter one prove Job to be right — on God as the source of the 'evil' which afflicts Job contrasts vividly with the whole tenor of Milton's argument in *Paradise Lost*: its narrative poet denies that God is the source of evil, arguing that the presence of evil is due to Satan, is due to Adam and Eve's fall and to its 'natural consequences' — but is not the responsibility of God, unless punishment is warranted.

Furthermore, Job philosophically accepts death as ordained by God: he responds as follows to the report that his sons and daughters were killed when a whirlwind struck their house:

> . . . the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD. (1:21)

In contrast, *Paradise Lost* presents death as a grotesque and hideous ogre, incestuous offspring of Satan and his daughter Sin.

So, God's hands are clean; God is held to be the source of life, but not of death. (It may be noted that in *Paradise Lost* the narrator's conception of death in relation to God is problematic: possibly for the reason that Satan appears to have too much power in his dominion over the earth, the narrative poet attempts to demonstrate that God is in control of the power of death after all, and so death is one of God's 'hell hounds' summoned to earth, a creature whose function is to consume the 'filth/Which man's polluting sin with taint hath shed/On what was pure . . .' (10:630–632).)

Job's presentation of Satan as God's emissary, its notion of God as the source of the evil befalling Job, its notion of death as ordained by God — all these principles, then, negate the possibility that *Job* be utilized in *Paradise Lost*. Even more fundamental an opposition in the principles operative in these two texts is implied in the revolutionary Jobian moral principle that suffering is not to be equated to punishment for sin.

The text of *Job* dramatizes Job's great suffering, yet Job never ceases, when challenged, to proclaim his innocence of sin. However, his friends cannot accept such a declaration, for the reason that Job's very suffering must indicate sin: suffering, in their view, constitutes punishment for sin. Thus Eliphaz the Temanite argues '. . . who ever perished, being innocent?' (4:7). Bildad the Shuhite is equally insistent that if disaster struck Job's sons, they too must be guilty: '. . . doth the Almighty pervert justice?' (8:3). In a lengthy speech (chapter 18) Bildad asserts his conviction that if Job suffers, it is because he is wicked and has sinned; the same argument is given by Zophar the Naamathite (chapter 20). Against the persistent accusations and insinuations of his friends, Job steadfastly maintains his innocence of sin, an assertion culminating in chapter 31 in his listing a catalogue of virtuous deeds which he has performed, vices which he has avoided. Indeed, Job's impassioned plea is for a fair trial, one in which he may summon God to court to hear God's charges against him (9:16, 19). Throughout the dialogue Job's tone has been bitter in the extreme, from his first speech starting 'Let the day perish wherein I was born' (3:3), to the concluding chapters which express dejection and disappointment:

> When I looked for good, then evil came unto me: and when I waited for light, there came darkness. (30:26)

Job's great question to God, then, is why do the innocent suffer? He also asks, why do the wicked prosper? (chapter 21).

Prior to his test, the divine wager between God and Satan, Job's innocence of sin is proclaimed by both the omniscient narrator and the absolutely omniscient God. Job's assertion of innocence is again

vindicated by God in the final chapter, while his friends are rebuked. Throughout the text of *Job*, then, the protagonist has pleaded, among other things, that his suffering is not the consequence of sin. He has pleaded for a conceptual distinction between suffering and punishment. He argues for the recognition of a third category — suffering which is innocent, which is not the punishment or the consequence of sin — to add to the two which have long been recognized, the reward of virtue and the punishment of sin.

In contrast, Job's friends remain faithful to their belief that suffering is always the punishment for sin.[18] The narrative poet of *Paradise Lost* espouses the same doctrine; as said, his unit is not (as in *Job*) the individual, for his doctrine involves the entire human race. Yet the thrust of his argument, the association of concepts, is the same as that of Job's friends, for in *Paradise Lost* the suffering of mankind is argued to be punishment deserved both for the inherited taint of Original Sin which is transmitted to all of Adam and Eve's descendants, and for actual sins subsequently committed. This is the equation of suffering and punishment which the narrator of *Paradise Lost* has worked so hard to establish. However, such an idea is contradictory to the principles implicit in *Job*, for Job pleads that suffering is not the consequence of sin. If so, if an individual's suffering is not the punishment of his or her own sins, how much the less is an individual's suffering to be understood as punishment for the sins of parents, let alone of remote ancestors?[19]

Unlike Genesis 2–3, the setting of which is Edenic, one in which suffering has not yet been experienced, the setting of *Job* is not only that of the real — perhaps the fallen — world, but one in which great suffering consumes the lives of many. It is not surprising that the moral principles advocated in such an environment should differ from those of Genesis, and indeed the third category of innocent suffering distinguishes the moral principles of *Job*. It is interesting that Milton derives the moral structures of *Paradise Lose* from Genesis rather than from *Job* — from the text which embodies the simpler situation with its correspondingly simpler moral principles.

The presence in *Job* of the third category of innocent suffering establishes an opposition between the moral principles of *Job* and those of *Paradise Lost*, and so it is evident that its moral structures cannot be accommodated in Milton's poem. Milton was wise, then, in not having the narrative poet allude significantly to the central concerns of *Job*, let alone utilize that text. Whether he acted consciously or not, the soundness of his logic is impeccable. Significant allusion to *Job* would not only not strengthen the argument of Milton's narrative poet but would present a counter-

example which would tend to subvert the entire argument of *Paradise Lost*.

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NOTES

1. There are good grounds for regarding the narrative poet of *Paradise Lost* as mouthpiece of the author, although such an assertion is always problematic. Justification for doing so is beyond the scope of this article.
2. The Authorized Version is used throughout this article since it is the translation with which Milton was familiar.
3. All further references to *Paradise Lost* (*PL*) are given in parentheses in the text.
4. Michael Lieb explores the notion of poet as creator in *Paradise Lost* (37 ff).
5. I am indebted to a colleague, Julia Shum, for this observation.
6. Barbara Lewalski explores 17th century works based on, alluding to, or modelled on *Job* (Lewalski 28–36).
7. Nahum Glatzer cites Martin Buber's contention that Kafka's works are 'the most important *Job* commentary in our generation' (Glatzer 48).
8. A S P Woodhouse argues that Milton postulated 'de deo' rather than 'creatio ex nihilo' creation (149–154).
9. On Original Sin in *Paradise Lost*, see III:95–96 and X:822–828. In *Paradise Regained* Milton dramatizes the doctrine of the second Adam.
10. Milton relies heavily on the Authorized Version for his Christological interpretation of the prediction of enmity (Genesis 3:15). In this translation the enemy of the serpent is in the singular: '. . . thou [the serpent] shalt bruise his heel.' In contrast, in the New English Bible, the serpent's enemy is in the plural: '. . . you [the serpent] shall strike at their heel.' The modern translation does not sanction the interpretation in *Paradise Lost* which the Authorized Version appears to permit.
11. A similar argument is given by A S P Woodhouse (182). Woodhouse quotes Dr Johnson: 'The moral of other poems . . . is incidental and consequent; in Milton's only it is essential and intrinsic.' ('Milton' in *Lives of the English Poets*).
12. Typological comparison of Job and Christ (see Lewalski 26–27) is not relevant to this article.
13. Milton was again to use this description of Satan in *Paradise Regained* I:33–34.
14. Nahum Glatzer discusses the parallels between Adam and Job (Glatzer 8–9).
15. Barbara Lewalski cites the existence of 'an exegetical tradition beginning in patristic times and continuing through the seventeenth century, according to which Job's encounter with Satan is a heroic combat of cosmic significance . . .' (17).
16. In an attempt to reconcile Satan's fall from heaven with his reappearance there in *Job, Paradise Regained* has Satan explain (weakly) that he 'sometimes' resorts thither (1:363–370).
17. Possibly motivated by an attempt to reconcile Satan's fall from heaven with his presence in heaven in *Job*, one folk tradition has it that Satan was expelled after losing, and because he lost, his wager with God about Job (Ginzberg 2:242).
18. Nahum Glatzer cites Kant's view that Job's friends represent speculative reason: '. . . their reasoning explains evil in the world as punishment for sins, and by so doing asserts divine justice . . .' (Glatzer 38).
19. Job's thought, implicit in the Authorized Version, is stated clearly in the New English Bible: each person is responsible for his or her own sins. Job charges his friends as follows:

> You say, 'The trouble [a man] has earned, God will keep for his sons'; no, let him be paid for it in full and be punished. Let his own eyes see damnation come upon him, and the wrath of the Almighty be the cup he drinks. (21:19–20)

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TUMULT OF FEELING, AND RESTRAINT, IN 'MANSFIELD PARK'

by J.A. KEARNEY

The central stress of *Mansfield Park*, in my view, is on intense and powerful feelings; the need for these to be reflected on and understood for the achievement of healthy restraint and self-command; and the disastrous consequences when restraint is merely superficial. The task of reflection is to consider the feelings in relation to firmly-held principle, a sense of obligation that lies beyond egoistic satisfaction. In fact, in one of the most significant formulations of *Mansfield Park*, Jane Austen implies a virtual equivalence between the facets of the moral process involved:

> . . . that higher species of self-command, that just consideration of others, that knowledge of her own heart, that principle of right . . .[1]

This quotation is taken from the Sotherton episode of the novel when the groupings of the assembled party have caused Julia to be separated from Henry Crawford. In the midst of her frustration she is forced to be polite, but the constraint, in itself, offers her no adequate way of coping with her feelings. In the absence of those qualities referred to in the quotation, her politeness acts merely as an external cover for sheer misery. What seems fairly comic at the stage of the Sotherton visit becomes serious indeed at the time of the *Lovers' Vows* rehearsals. Julia, by now passionately in love with Henry, is forced to endure the signs of his flirtation with her sister. For the sisters' mutual alienation and Julia's wish that Maria might be punished, Henry is certainly much to blame, but the deeper, primary cause is that:

> . . . the sisters, under such a trial as this, had not affection or principle enough to make them merciful or just, to give them honour or compassion. (162–163)

At a time when it is still possible for Maria to break her engagement to Rushworth, she remains in a state of agitation, knowing that Crawford is about to leave Mansfield and waiting for him to declare herself. As she remembers the way his hand pressed hers to his heart at that final, interrupted rehearsal, we're told that 'the agony of her mind was severe' (193). In the final moments of his stay, as her expectations are steadily crushed, she is forced to 'bury the tumult of her feelings under the restraint of society' (193). Jane Austen's unusually heightened vocabulary leaves us to infer how dangerous are such powerfully aroused, and forcefully suppressed,

feelings when genuine personal restraint is lacking. This burying of feeling is of no help to Maria in coming to terms with and understanding herself; we have no difficulty, therefore, in believing in the eruption of her feelings later in the novel when more serious temptation occurs.

In the case of Fanny Price, frequent deprivation and humiliation from her earliest years at Mansfield Park, have caused her much distress. Initially she 'crept about in constant terror' and 'ended every day's sorrows by sobbing herself to sleep' (15). Edmund's very thoughtful and sustained acts of friendship have, however, enabled her to grow 'more comfortable', to be less fearful and to participate with better spirits in the family's activities (17). Although detailed attention to Fanny's room is given only as late as I.xvi, one infers that what takes place there in relation to the pressures on her to act in the play, is consistent with a gradually developed habit of reflection. This is brought out indirectly through her possessions:

> Every thing was a friend, or bore her thoughts to a friend; and though there had been sometimes much of suffering to her — though her motives had been often misunderstood, her feelings disregarded, and her comprehension under-valued; though she had known the pains of tyranny, of ridicule, and neglect, yet almost every recurrence of either had led to something consolatory . . . (152)

The room then offers touching evidence of Fanny's past struggles and of how she has come to terms with them. Although a good deal of self-pity has been involved, and understandably so, the room seems chiefly to represent a place where there are opportunities for feelings to be thought over, and self-command achieved in terms of hopes and consolations.

The episode when Fanny observes Edmund's attentiveness to Mary Crawford during her prolonged ride on the mare (which occurs before the Sotherton visit), introduces us to Fanny's cause for bitterness and jealousy — she has feelings to contend with which are every bit as difficult to manage as Julia's. But at the end of the chapter it is pointed out that Fanny 'had been feeling neglected, and been struggling against discontent and envy for some days past' (74). Implicit here is the belief, expressed directly later by Edmund when he comments on the value of family prayers, that it is possible to 'rouse better feelings than are begun with' (88). Greater difficulties, however, await Fanny during the period of the theatricals. When Fanny retires to her room to 'try its influence on an agitated, doubting spirit' (152) after Mrs Norris's vindictive urgings that she ought to take a part, we see how far she is from any sort of self-righteousness. She wants desperately to be loyal to

Edmund and to support his moral position. But she fears, on the other hand, that her refusal to participate might be construed as selfishness; there *is* no straightforward moral line for her. Before reaching a decision she is consulted by Edmund who eagerly desires Fanny's approbation to remove his uneasiness — and how can she refuse *him*, of all people, especially when he reminds her of Mary's open kindness after Mrs Norris's attack. For the over-sensitive, timid and anxious Fanny, a most complex moral situation thus arises. Nevertheless, despite the fact that Fanny's mind 'had been never farther from peace' (159) and that she was 'full of jealousy and agitation' (159), we find not only that 'reflection brought better feelings' (160), but that she is capable of noticing and pitying Julia's kindred suffering.

Much worse still for Fanny is the aftermath of her 'longing and dreading' to see how Edmund and Mary would perform their scene in the play. For when coincidence brings them both in turn to her room to rehearse their parts, '*her* spirits sank under the glow of theirs' (170). So agitated is she, especially by the 'increasing spirit of Edmund's manner' (170) with all that it implies, that she is scarcely able to sustain her prompt's part. Yet her later reflections show to a remarkable extent what Julia lacks ('that higher species of self-command, that just consideration of others, that knowledge of her own heart'):

> . . . when again alone and able to recall the whole, she was inclined to believe their performance would, indeed, have such nature and feeling in it, as must ensure their credit, and make it a very suffering exhibition to herself. Whatever might be its effect, however, she must stand the brunt of it again that very day. (170)

The introductory comments on Edmund's attentions towards his cousin suggest that he will have done a great deal for her education, and in as encouraging, cheerful and gentle a way as possible (16–17). This is confirmed explicitly in the poignant scene where Edmund and Fanny stand at an open window looking out on the twilight while Mary Crawford plays her harp.[2] Since her eulogy of nature follows directly upon his praises of Mary, we guess that she has to use this way of expressing in sublimated form the delight *he* gives her. My particular stress, however, is on the way knowledge, interest and enthusiasm are shown to combine in Fanny's approach to the world, a result of the harmony between feeling and reason in Edmund's tutelage.[3] And it's this kind of integrated responsiveness that blossoms into her love for Edmund.

Not that Jane Austen turns Fanny into a paragon of balanced rationality in her love. That should be clear enough from aspects of the play rehearsals that I've commented on, but it is shown yet more

emphatically in the prelude to the Mansfield Park ball. Edmund appeals to her not to return Mary's gift of a necklace because he is anxious not to have any ill-feeling '"between the two dearest objects I have on earth"' (264). What this implies of his relationship with Mary causes Fanny a 'stab', and the word is repeated to indicate just how severe the realisation is. Certainly this is no example of someone who is so well-armed with reason as to be able to bear such a blow with equanimity. And then, in what follows, Jane Austen offers one of her most touching and endearing, yet comic, glimpses of Fanny:

> She had all the heroism of principle, and was determined to do her duty; but having also many of the feelings of youth and nature, let her not be much wondered at if, after making all these good resolutions on the side of self-government, she seized the scrap of paper on which Edmund had begun writing to her, as a treasure beyond all her hopes ... Two lines more prized had never fallen from the pen of the most distinguished author ... This specimen [of handwriting], written in haste as it was, had not a fault; and there was a felicity in the flow of the four words, in the arrangement of 'My very dear Fanny,' which she could have looked at for ever.
>
> Having regulated her thoughts and comforted her feelings by this happy mixture of reason and weakness, she was able, in due time, to go down and resume her usual employments near her Aunt Bertram, and pay her the usual observances without any apparent want of spirits. (265)

How different is this 'happy mixture of reason and weakness' from Julia and Maria's evasion of their deepest, passionate feelings.[4]

No such harmony as we find in Fanny's response to Edmund is possible for her in relation to Henry. However attractive and entertaining he seems, his lack of firm principle proves a stumbling-block to the development of a relationship between them, at least for a very long while. What Fanny registers as lack of principle is shown by Jane Austen to involve corrupted, fake feelings and a steady refusal to reflect honestly on his motives. Henry's observation of Fanny's greatly improved appearance (soon after Sir Thomas's return), together with her grave, withdrawn manner, are what initially prompt him, as he informs his sister, to attempt to 'make a small hole in Fanny Price's heart' (229). Later, through his observation of her lively affection for William,[5] however, Henry finds himself more strongly drawn towards her:

> He was no longer in doubt of the capabilities of her heart. She had feeling, genuine feeling. It would be something to be loved by such a girl, to excite the first ardours of her young, unsophisticated mind! (235–236)

It's curious indeed that he should be attracted by her 'genuine feeling'. Possibly an inner weariness of sophisticated insincerity offers a partial explanation — an irresistible yearning for genuineness; but mostly his wish seems to be a form of possessiveness. His ego will receive special gratification from exciting love in a heart which he assumes (wrongly) cannot ever have experienced passionate love before.

That possessiveness, flourishing in a condition of inadequate self-understanding, is the basis of Henry's interest in Fanny, is confirmed by his response to William. Some activity of reason does enter into the contrast he draws between William and himself:

> The glory of heroism, of usefulness, of exertion, of endurance, made his own habits of selfish indulgence appear in shameful contrast; and he wished he had been a William Price, distinguishing himself and working his way to fortune and consequence with so much self-respect and happy ardour, instead of what he was! (236)

But we learn from the very next paragraph that 'the wish was rather eager than lasting' (236) and the reference to 'reverie of retrospection and regret' (237) indicates how little strenuous and sustained self-examination took place. The thought of being 'a William Price' is not merely due to the desire to play another role (thinking of his enthusiastic declaration earlier in the novel: 'I feel as if I could be any thing or every thing'), although that tendency is clearly present. The main reason why his wish does not last is precisely those 'habits of selfish indulgence' he recalls in making his contrast: 'he found it was as well to be a man of fortune at once with horses and grooms at his command' (237).

The reasons which Henry eventually sets out to Mary for wanting to marry Fanny suggest that he really *has* fallen in love with her, and that he has a surprisingly full recognition of her merits. His description of Fanny shows excellent powers of observation as well as very full admiration and involvement. Unfortunately, his next speech referring to the Bertram sisters (' "I care neither what they say, nor what they feel" ', 297) rather undermines the unexpected tenderness he seems to have gained: it emerges that part of his motive for marriage to Fanny is to teach Maria and Julia a lesson. His avowed intention of rescuing Fanny from her cousins' ' "abominable neglect and unkindness" ' is also to serve as a means of impressing them by his success in gaining Fanny. Underlying spitefulness and a total failure to perceive the sisters' suffering turn out to be very much bound up with Henry's devotion to Fanny. We're made to register in him, then, a certain advance in thoughtfulness and appreciation of what is genuine, still mixed with a great deal of confusion about his unchecked and unexamined

emotional tendencies. Only a very egoistically determined person such as Henry could suppose that a kind deed (his ensuring a lieutenancy for William) could be used as a bribe to gain affection. How clearly and wisely Fanny perceives this matter despite being in the most acute emotional turbulence she has ever known: torn between ecstasy over William's promotion, and angry that this service should be exploited as a lever to ensure a favourable reply to his proposal. She is justified in deciding: such were his habits, that he could do nothing without a mixture of evil (302).

To lead up to a consideration of the scene in which Fanny tells Sir Thomas that she cannot accept Henry's offer of marriage, I need to give some attention to the idea of 'feeling as one ought' in this novel. When Fanny gives a conditional answer to Mrs Grant's dinner invitation, Sir Thomas pronounces that she 'appears to feel as she ought' (219). Although he doesn't approve of Mrs Norris's methods, he also wanted Fanny to be aware of her inferior status from the start; what he commends here, therefore, is Fanny's sense that she may not decide for herself. She shows herself to be just as compliant on this occasion as he would like her to be. In ironic contrast, Fanny decides at the dinner itself that Henry can 'feel nothing as he ought' (227) because Edmund has clearly been pained by Henry's mockery of his future preaching. Fanny is objecting, not so much because Henry doesn't feel as she does, but because he doesn't appreciate or anticipate what Edmund's feelings might be on this matter, as he should do if his friendship is sincere. This 'as he ought', then, does not merely reflect what suits and gratifies herself, as in Sir Thomas's case. Through this contrast Jane Austen suggests that to feel 'as one ought' may only too easily become a matter of showing feelings that are convenient to someone else's interests. What is needed therefore in the one who expects such feeling of another, is that full array of qualities in which the Bertram sisters are deficient: 'that higher species of self-command, that just consideration of others, that knowledge of [one's] own heart, that principle of right' (91).

When Fanny discovers that she must lead the way and open the ball at Mansfield Park, her sensation of horror enables her to look Sir Thomas 'in the face and say she hoped it might be settled otherwise' (275). The formulation immediately preceding this, 'to be urging her opinion against Sir Thomas's, was a proof of the extremity of the case', prepares us in an amusing way for Fanny's much more daring opposition to Henry's proposal conveyed via Sir Thomas. It's the real *moral* extremity of this latter case that gives her the necessary courage and independence. When Sir Thomas comes to reveal Henry's offer, Fanny's difficulty in refusing him is increased by the particular kindness he has just shown concerning her lack of a fire in her room; the circumstances thus closely

resemble her predicament on discovering the instrument of William's lieutenancy. Fanny's utterly simple reason for her refusal, '"I — I cannot like him, Sir, well enough to marry him" ' (315), may seem to set feeling against reason till we remember what Sir Thomas's version of feeling as one ought implies, and also how much scrupulous consideration of her own feelings and those of others has preceded this assertion by Fanny. Sir Thomas's speech of rebuke is a formidable trial for her since he is wrong in all his accusations. Most unbearable of all for her is the accusation of ingratitude. Nevertheless, extreme as her grief is at being so profoundly misunderstood, she has no inclination to yield in order to retrieve his good opinion.[6] His exhorting her 'to reason [herself] into a stronger frame of mind' (322) could hardly be more beside the point since Fanny, at this moment, is already an example of integrity and self-command tested to the utmost. Here too is the finest example in the novel of 'that just consideration of others' and 'that knowledge of her own heart' which Julia lacked. For Fanny has been unable to explain her objection to Crawford's character without betraying Sir Thomas's own daughter and so, naturally, it becomes impossible to satisfy or convince him. And her decision also is based on a most intimate and persistent enquiry into the state of her heart.

Edmund, taking a more perceptive line than his father, agrees that Fanny could not have accepted Henry if she didn't love him. Her claim that Henry will never succeed, however, leads Edmund to suggest that she is not behaving like her usual 'rational self' (347), and when he actively begins to persuade Fanny to accept Henry, his argument that they will complement each other very well, does make a plausible case (especially in terms of temperament). However, when Fanny states her objection to Henry's character and her reasons for it (which she could not do with Sir Thomas), Edmund commits a significant fallacy:

> 'Crawford's *feelings*, I am ready to acknowledge, have hitherto been too much his guides. Happily, those feelings have generally been good. You will supply the rest; and a most fortunate man he is to attach himself to such a creature — to a woman, who firm as a rock in her own principles, has a gentleness of character so well adapted to recommend them.' (351)

This involves a grave misunderstanding (surprising too, for Edmund, whom one can only conclude to be too much influenced by his love of Henry's sister) of the point the entire novel has been at pains to emphasise: feelings and principled judgement must be fully integrated within an individual, coming into ever closer unity through reflection. The idea of complements cannot be applied in the way Edmund suggests.

But in any case, Henry is learning with some speed what Fanny is likely to approve of, so that during her Portsmouth visit his attentiveness and signs of wide-ranging sympathetic concern persuade her to contemplate a 'wonderful improvement' in him (413). Ironically, by the time this point has been explicitly made, she has had the chance, in her own quiet way, to criticise the fallacious belief already expressed by Edmund that *she* could have judgement or principle on *his* behalf:

> [Henry has asked Fanny for her advice on whether he should return to Norfolk to deal with interference to his property rights]
> 'I advise! — you know very well what is right.'
> 'Yes. When you give me your opinion, I always know what is right. Your judgement is my rule of right.
> 'Oh, no! — do not say so. We have all a better guide in ourselves, if we would attend to it, than any other person can be.' (412)

Very unobtrusively, this inability on Henry's part to understand the need for principle and inclination or feeling to be integrated *within* the individual prepares us for the ultimate collapse of all his attempts to woo Fanny.

In contrast, Sir Thomas's eventual conclusions regarding the upbringing of his daughters, show growth in such understanding. When he consulted Maria about the possible termination of her engagement, he assessed her state of mind as follows: '[her] feelings probably were not acute, he had never supposed them to be so' (201). The narrator's further comment. 'Such and such-like were the reasonings of Sir Thomas' (201) suggests, however, that he actively wished to evade deeper consideration of Maria's state of mind, and that concern for profound feeling, or its absence, could not spur him at that stage to overcome the pressure of social respectability. He comes, very rightly, to fear that:

> . . . principle, active principle, had been wanting, that they had never been properly taught to govern their inclinations and tempers, by that sense of duty which can alone suffice. (463)

But this awareness is the culmination of his self-accusations of neglect:

> He saw how ill he had judged, in expecting to counteract what was wrong in Mrs Norris, by its reverse in himself, clearly saw that he had but increased the evil, by teaching them so to repress their spirits in his presence, as to make their real disposition unknown to him, and sending them for all their indulgences to a person who had been able to attach them only by the blindness of her affection, and the excess of her praise. (463)

Sir Thomas's bitter discoveries act, therefore, as a significant final endorsement of that vital relationship which should exist between judgement and principle on the one hand, and passionate, intense feelings on the other.

When Fanny hears of Henry's elopement with Maria, her agitation is so great as to seem to exclude the possibility of control or reasoned consideration:

> Fanny seemed to herself never to have been shocked before. There was no possibility of rest. The evening passed, without a pause of misery, the night was totally sleepless. She passed only from feelings of sickness to shudderings of horror; and from hot fits of fever to cold. The event was so shocking, that there were moments even when her heart revolted from it as impossible — when she thought it could not be. A woman married only six months ago, a man professing himself devoted, even *engaged*, to another — that other her near relation — the whole family, both families connected as they were by tie upon tie, all friends, all intimate together! — it was too horrible a confusion of guilt, too gross a complication of evil, for human nature, not in a state of utter barbarism, to be capable of — yet her judgment told her it was so. *His* unsettled affections, wavering with his vanity, *Maria*'s decided attachment, and no sufficient principle on either side, gave it possibility — Miss Crawford's letter stampt it a fact. (441)

One of the most striking features of this passage is the absence in Fanny of any form of self-righteousness; she has even to struggle to persuade herself that the event could have happened. Her suffering is moreover too great for any self-centred moral comparison to be possible. If one compares her feelings here to those of Marianne Dashwood in *Sense and Sensibility*, after she realises that Willoughby has forsaken her, it's clear too that Fanny is not engaged in a similar indulgence of grief and shock; after the initial stage of hot and cold fits of fever (her involuntary reaction to the discovery), her judgement, having convinced her of the reality of the event, begins to regain its force gradually and to hold sway with her highly wrought feelings. There is no resolution on her part, such as on Marianne's, voluntarily to sustain and even to amplify her misery. The natural tendency of reason, Jane Austen suggests, is to attempt to interpret, guide and assuage very agitated feelings unless it is actively prevented from doing so. If one feels that Fanny's agitation is excessive in the first place — and certainly Jane Austen's reference to 'utter barbarism' involves a gently ironic distancing from Fanny's mode of perception — one needs to remember that Jane Austen's concern is to mirror Fanny's individual sensibility responding to her uniquely distressing circumstances. In particular, at this stage, one needs to remember Fanny's earlier distress at Henry's behaviour; her agonising conflict on account of his

attempts to gain her favour; and her most recent inclination to believe that Henry really *does* love her after being convinced for so long of his insincerity. Furthermore there is the context in which she learns of the elopement: her disillusionment at finding her real home so totally unlike what she had hoped and imagined.

Fanny *is*, perhaps, morally over-sensitive but what Jane Austen affirms and offers for admiration in her is the possibility that reason may reach vigorous and fruitful accord with feelings even when these have been most powerfully disturbed.

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NOTES

1. *Mansfield Park* (Vol. III of 6-volume collection, ed. R.W. Chapman, OUP, 1975), p. 91. Further reference will be given in the text.
2. Barbara Hardy's claim (*A Reading of Jane Austen*, London, 1979), on the basis of such passages, that Fanny is 'one of the most complete Romantic heroines' (pp. 64–65) certainly deserves further debate. Even Marvin Mudrick is left rather puzzled at Jane Austen's approval of Fanny's 'rhapsody' in contrast to the indifference of Mary Crawford (*Jane Austen: Irony as Defense and Discovery*, University of California Press, 1968, p. 152). Neither critic gives attention to the full context of Fanny's situation at this point, however.
3. In a recent article, Elaine Jordan, supporting her claim that Jane Austen is as much a feminist as Mrs Inchbald (though differing significantly from her in other ways), observes trenchantly: 'Fanny owes her education to Edmund but finally knows better than he, a dependence acknowledged in his letters and in his outpourings about his disappointment in Mary' ('Pulpit, Stage and Novel: *Mansfield Park* and Mrs Inchbald's *Lovers' Vows*' in *Novel*, Vol. 20, No. 2, Winter 1987, p. 142).
4. At the time of my initial encounter with this novel, I found very little critical opinion that was in agreement with mine. At the furthest possible extreme from mine are the views of Mudrick who traces 'something persistently unpleasant' in her (op. cit., p. 161); Bernard Paris (*Character and Conflict in Jane Austen's Novels*, Sussex, 1978) who insists that Fanny's goodness is that of a 'terrified child who dreads total rejection if she does not conform in every way to the will of those in power' (p. 49); and M.W. Fosbery ('Jane Austen's Fanny Price' in *The Cambridge Quarterly*, Vol. 8, No. 2, 1979, pp. 113–138) who attempts to make her seem mean and snobbish. P.J.M. Scott (*Jane Austen: A Reassessment*, London, 1982) offers a somewhat more balanced account: 'Being significantly deprived' he decides, 'while it may convey important virtues and strengths, will also seriously cramp the personality' (pp. 154–155). Although Lionel Trilling ('Jane Austen and Mansfield Park' in *The Pelican Guide to English Literature*, ed. Boris Ford, Vol. V, 1957), Tony Tanner (Introduction to the Penguin edition of *Mansfield Park*, 1966) and Pamela Steele ('In Sickness and in Health: Jane Austen's Metaphor' in *Studies in the Novel*, Vol. 14, No. 2, 1982, pp. 152–160) all offer what they regard as positive evaluations of Fanny, their criterion, the idea that 'the traditional Christian heroine is often depicted as sickly, enfeebled, even dying' — to use Tanner's formulation (p. 148) — runs directly contrary to my reading of the novel, and my sense of Jane Austen more generally. D.D. Devlin (*Jane Austen and Education*, London, 1975), who makes this novel a subject of particular focus, was the first critic to confirm my own reading. Margaret Kirkham's awareness (*Jane Austen: Feminism and Fiction*, Sussex, 1983) of the literary context in which *Mansfield Park* was written leads her to a crucial distinction and, at the same time, a reply to the Trilling type of approach to Fanny: 'Fanny's feebleness is not a mark of Clarissa Harlowe-like saintliness, but it alludes to it and mocks it' (p. 105). Jordan, while inviting an interesting reappraisal of Jane

Austen's views on *Lovers' Vows* such as Kirkham has suggested, affirms this critic's general approach to Fanny and thus suggests that the tide of critical opinion is now shifting towards a more genuinely positive conception of Fanny (op. cit.).

5. Gilbert Ryle's perceptive suggestion ('Jane Austen and the Moralists' in *Critical Essays on Jane Austen*, ed. B.C. Southam, London, 1970) that 'it is [Fanny and William's] brother-sister love which is the paradigm against which to assess all the others' (p. 11) is followed up forcefully in Kirkham's reflections: 'What ought to be, and sometimes is — as in the relationship between Fanny and her brother William — the paradigm of equal, affectionate relationships between men and women is always held up as an ideal, having implications beyond the literal meaning of "brother" and "sister"' (op. cit., p. 119). This point enables one to appreciate how far from insipid is the relationship between Fanny and Edmund. (Cf. the views of Mudrick who believes that Jane Austen could give them 'only a mechanical heart', op. cit., p. 170; and Fosbery, who makes their eventual union seem rather perverse, op. cit., pp. 125–126).
6. Devlin makes the point that seems to me essential: 'at the crucial moment [Fanny] does not submit, she does not obey' (op. cit., pp.96–97). It is Mudrick's failure to notice or recognise this fact that most of all undermines his interpretation of the novel (op. cit., especially pp. 173–176).

THE CONCEPT OF NATURE IN CLASSICAL JUDAISM

by I.A. BEN YOSEF

The concept of Nature in early Judaism, as expressed predominantly in the Bible and the Talmudic-Midrashic literature must be seen in the context of other meanings of the term in classical and later Western literature. Lovejoy and Boas have established sixty six definitions of the term 'Nature' — in Greek *physis* and in Latin *natura* — in literary and philosophical usage (Lovejoy and Boas 1980, 447–456); a daunting number of definitions which would seem to render the undertaking impossible. However, the two most essential meanings of Western Man's usage of the term 'Nature' can be revealed by establishing their common denominator.

The first denotes Nature as the genesis or birth of things; the second denotes it as the totality of things. These two essential meanings of 'Nature' were noted by R.J. Collingwood in his book *The Idea of Nature* (1945): the one was dominant in antiquity, especially in the Classical world, and the other is common and prevalent in modern European languages. In the latter, 'the word "Nature" is most often used in a collective sense for the sum total of an aggregate of natural things' (Collingwood 1945, 45). If we were asked the question 'What is Nature?' in modern European understanding, we would interpret it as 'what kind of things exist in the natural world' (ibid.) and we would embark 'on a descriptive account of the natural world.' (Collingwood 1945, 45). Western Man's understanding of Nature as a totality or aggregate of things must preclude that which bears the mark of Man or Man's handiwork, meaning art, technology and religion. However, in the broadest sense of the word 'Nature', i.e. whatever is subject to natural law, Man and Man's artifacts belong to Nature. Nature can then be contrasted only with the supernatural (Passmore 1974, 5).

On the other hand, if a Pre-Socratic philosopher were asked 'What is Nature?' he would have 'converted it into the question "What are things made of?" ' (Collingwood 1945, 43). For him the meaning of 'Nature' is its origin. It is to the principle and not to the collection that he turns — to the *principium* or source of things. In this second sense, 'the word "Nature" refers to something which makes its possessor behave as it does. This source of its behaviour being something within itself' (Collingwood 1945, 43). Accordingly, 'natural' means whatever has its characteristic in itself. For the pre-Socratic, Nature never meant the world or the totality (*cosmos*), but something inherent in things which made them behave as they do,

physis. In his understanding of Nature as *physis* the Greek held three views: Firstly, he believed that there is such a thing as Nature, that Nature is real; it is ontological. Secondly, he believed that Nature is one; that there is one principle explaining all natural phenomena. Thirdly, he believed that the source of Nature i.e. its *principium*, is substance or matter (Collingwood 1945, 46).

The distinction between *physis* and *cosmos* may be useful in the examination of the Biblical concept of Nature.

* * * *

It seems that the Hebrews did not know of the concept Nature in a collective sense for the aggregate of natural things. They did not possess a Hebrew parallel to the concept '*cosmos*'. Classical Hebrew reveals this phenomenon. In the Bible, there is no term for 'world' or 'universe'; although there are several words in Hebrew that could be understood as 'world' or 'universe'. The word *beriah* denotes in later Hebrew 'creation'. It appears once in the Bible, in *Numbers* 16:30 and, there, it means 'miracles' or 'unnatural' things (Koehler and Baumgartner 1958). The term *yekum* which appears three times in the Bible (in *Genesis* 7:4,23 and *Deuteronomy* 11:6), means in this context 'every living substance', but not the entire reality, world or universe. The term *olam* is the most common word in modern Hebrew for the 'world'. In the Bible, however, the term *olam* denotes 'eternity' — a very long time. It is the dimension of time which is described and not place (Ben Yehuda 1948, Solieli and Barkus 1965) and it denotes 'long time' or 'duration', either 'all the future' or 'all the past'. Only at a later stage was *olam* transformed in Hebrew from the meaning of 'time' to mean 'place'.

In the Bible the term *tevel* denotes the planet Earth, especially the continents (Madelkern 1972; Koehler and Baumgartner 1958). It does not mean 'the entire world'. The term *heled* in one of its meanings denotes 'the duration of life' and in another it means 'age, perpetuity or eternity' (Koehler and Baumgartner 1958). The term *eretz* denotes once again the planet, Earth, and is therefore synonymous with the term *tevel* (Koehler and Baumgartner 1958). In other usage, it means 'piece of ground or land, territory'. It could also be the 'whole of the land', meaning the continents. The term *shamaim* is 'heaven' or 'sky'. The Bible also speaks of the combination *shamaim vearetz* which denotes neither the totality of Nature nor the universe. The ancient Hebrews distinguished between Earth as Man's habitation and Heaven as God's abode (Cassutto 1953, 9). If the absence of a term is proof, then it seems doubtful whether the Hebrews had a concept of the totality of reality or Nature. The conceptual understanding of the totality of existence is therefore absent both in pre-Socratic Greece and amongst the Hebrews.

Although the Hebrews did not possess a concept of Nature as *cosmos*, they had a clear idea of Nature as *physis*, as the intrinsic characteristics of Nature which stem from its origin. The Bible views Nature as 'creation'. In reading the Biblical source (*Genesis*1) the question arises as to whether the Bible conveys the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo* or not. In order to observe that the Bible does not convey an explicit rejection of primal matter, one should methodically ignore the later theological and philosophical interpretations within or outside Judaism. One could interpret some words in *Genesis*1 as alluding to *prima materia*. It seems, however, that the Ancient Narrator has endeavoured to eradicate mythological and paganistic concepts of creation including the notion of primal matter (Sarna 1970, 2; Speiser 1964, 12–13) thereby avoiding the danger of dualism, i.e. of the existence of entity or substance independent of the Creator (Urbach 1979, 164–166, 168–169). The cryptic Biblical account states that the world was created by word or speech (*Vayomer Elohim*). This may indicate that the Bible views the essence of the world as spiritual and not material. If this is so, then a marked distinction exists between the Greek understanding of the ultimate essence of reality — substance or matter — and the Jewish notion of the origin of reality borne out by the account 'that creation has come about merely at God's command' (Morgenstern 1965, 41).

The story of creation specifies that in most cases the individual things or phenomena in the universe were created or generated directly by God. In several cases, that is in the creation of grass, plants and in the self-propagation of animals, God endowed one thing with the power to cause another to emerge (Morgenstern 1965, 42 V.11). This implies that God is not just a first cause Who deals with the totality and the general, but also with the particulars; He is the Creator of details and there are no uncreated things.

It seems that the Ancient Narrator is more concerned with establishing the relationship between the Creator and creation than with a comprehensive description of creation (Speiser 1964,8). Firstly, he is eager to convey the message that by creating the universe the relationship of master and servant between God and universe is established. Secondly, he is concerned with the distinction or cleavage between God and the universe. 'Creation' for him rules out any ontological continuity between the Creator and creation; that is, the difference between God and any existent thing is one of kind and not only of degree. This radical ontological difference between God and all finite, creaturely existence could be described as one between Being and Becoming. Whilst the Greeks assumed that the source of reality is immanent to it, the Hebrews believed it is transcendental.

In its attempt to liberate Man from the deification of Nature

prevalent in paganism, Ancient Judaism relegated it to a subordinate or secondary place.

> The pagan gods were usually personifications of some aspects of nature — the sky, the sun, the ocean, the Nile, the grain crop. This applies also to the so-called monotheism of Ikhenaton. He worshipped Aton, described as the sole deity; universal and beneficent, but actually identified with the visible disc of the sun. The God of the Bible, however, is Lord of all nature. He is never confused with any specific natural phenomena. 'The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handiwork' (*Psalm* 91). Again, 'Praise the Lord for the earth, ye sea monsters and all deeps, fire and hail, snow and vapour, stormy wind fulfilling His word', (*Psalm* 148: 7–8), (Bamberger 1955, 31–32).

Thus the attempt to de-deify Nature established it as totally dependent on God, without self-sustenance or inner *principium*. No reality independent of Super-reality exists or is possible. All reality, the entirety of natural phenomena known to the ancient Hebrew, is the product of the ultimate reality to which it is subservient.

The de-sanctification of Nature is seen clearly inter alia in the evolvement of the Jewish festivals, especially in their denaturalisation. 'The historical tradition is coming to stand in antithesis to the nature background of the worship . . . It is after the Exile that Judaism's religion of the law developed and the original nature elements are stifled' (Kraus 1966, 6, 45–47; Koehler 1973, 147; Heschel 1956, 88–100).

What are the consequences of such a pattern of relationship between the Divine and the Natural? Firstly, for the Hebrews, Nature as such is inanimate or dead (Guttmann 1955, 265). It cannot act since its life is given to it from the outside. It can only be acted upon by God, and Man, His messenger on earth. Independent natural order as such, does not exist. There is only chaos and havoc, moulded by the Creator. Thus the order of Nature is imposed by an external force. The *principium* of Nature is not immanent i.e. inherent and intrinsic but transcendental. 'To the Hebrews the world was not an organic unity, but a collection of disparate phenomena, individually controlled and collectively disposed at the will and pleasure of their common creator' (Buttrick 1962, 702). This implies that in order to trust Nature and live in it unharmed, the ancient Hebrew must seek the appeasement, benevolence or grace of God. He overcomes anxiety and the threat of natural calamities by trusting in God's support which rules and dominates Nature.

> 'An eagle stirs up its nest; it hovers over its young' (*Deut.* 32:11). It teaches them to fly. It hovers not from fear but because only so can it

> hold itself over the helpless young who are making no headway. When they grow tired, it sweeps under them as they fall, catches them and carries them into the nest. Exactly so the Spirit of God hovered anxiously 'over the surface of the waters' when God created heaven and earth (*Genesis* 1:2). Why did the Spirit of God hover anxiously? We must go back to the Babylonian myth which is here echoed, in order to understand. In the myth the world was wrested from the primeval waters. It is assailed by the forces of chaos which threaten to engulf it. This story ... is in fact of great significance. Neither the coming into existence of our world, nor its continued existence is automatic. But the earth, the firm land, has its existence continually threatened by the onslaught of the sea. Evidence of this runs right through the Old Testament. 'I have placed the sand for the bound of the sea by a perpetual decree that it cannot pass it' (*Jeremiah* 5:22). 'Who stealest the roaring of the sea, the roaring of their waves' (*Psalm* 65:7). These quotations are neither outworn mythology nor mere poetic figures of speech. They are facts in the consciousness of the Hebrew. The world of man is continually threatened and assailed by the destructive powers of chaos. If God were not there, chaos might become master of the earth and disaster would be upon us. Thus, deep in his consciousness, there slumbers a continual insecurity and one which sometimes becomes wakeful and alive. Whether it is a suspicion of clear consciousness; whether it is an echo of the past or a foreboding of future fear which will one day be real, this very awareness of cosmic insecurity forms the basis of the Hebrew's feeling about the world. (Koehler 1973, 127–129).

In the light of this cosmic insecurity, Man's survival is conditioned by the correct relationship with the source of Nature. He worships the One who created it and is able to contain the sea from engulfing the dry land. The laws of nature are thus legislated and promulgated by God, and the natural order is based on the divine order. It is only a derivation, an implication or application of the divine order and thereby any possible dualism is warded off. There is no independent natural order to be deciphered, but, through this secondary order, one may decipher the original one which is divine. Thus, the Hebrew was looking into Nature in order to reveal the greatness of God. Biblical Man was seeking God; not Nature.

The Biblical God is a righteous One. The Hebrew term *tzedek* refers to God's sovereign and judicial governance. Therefore, the true order which governs Nature is the order of morality vindicated by God's interference in Nature and in history. The dependence of the natural order on the moral one is an idea implied in the Bible and seems to fall into two categories. Firstly, Man's immortality may bring about God's punishment of Nature, for example punishing the soil for Adam's sin; and punishing the earth for human-kind's sins by flooding it in Noah's time. Secondly, Nature serves as a means or a messenger to punish Man for his sins, for example Sodom and Gomorrah, the Korah story, and *Psalm* 11.

Thus the connection between Man and Earth is based primarily on morality and not on direct-spontaneous contact. (*Joel* 2:23; *Psalm* 85: 12–13) (Fohrer 1977, 170).

Nature as such is God's manifestation, His revelation. 'Nature, as a whole and in all its elements, enunciates something that may be regarded as a self-communication of God to all those ready to receive it. This is what the psalm means, that has heaven and earth "declare" wordlessly, the glory of God' (Buber 1967, 221). Undoubtedly, the Hebrews admired Nature greatly, both the organic and the inorganic. They were sensitive towards its beauty and grandeur. The *Psalms*, the *Song of Songs* and the Book of *Job*, (indeed the entire Bible) are full of admiration for the poetic beauty and majesty of Nature. But this poetic beauty simply reveals something other than Nature itself, something which shines through it. And it seems as if this is the reason that there was not a direct and earnest attempt to explore or examine Nature closely as a datum for investigation. There was no attempt to analyse or experiment. Ancient China and Ancient Greece were the cradles of natural science, not Ancient Israel. The Hebrew, accepting the fact that Nature is a manifestation of something greater than itself, considered it a vehicle for the mystery. Whatever is intrinsic in Nature is *olam*, i.e. hidden, unknown, mysterious.

* * * *

The humanitarian attitude towards Nature expounded by the Bible and taught through the injunctions also testify to the divine role in Nature and to the moral dimension with which Man has to endow it. Since the bed-rock of the entire natural order is on the religious-ethical, Man should strive to implement ethical behaviour in Nature. This humanitarian attitude is best illustrated in the Biblical ideas about animals, which are based on a sense of responsibility towards God's creation. The laws of the Torah forbid cruelty to animals and demand compassion and mercy towards them. It seems that this attitude towards animals is not a result of a regard for their intrinsic value but reveals an aspect of the relationship between Man and God. It is Man's duty towards the super-natural which is at the root of his compassion towards the natural. In *Exodus* 20:10 and again in *Deuteronomy* 5:14 it is stated: 'Thou shalt not do any manner of work, nor thine ox nor thine ass, nor any of thy cattle, on the Sabbath'. Thus the Biblical Sabbath is not only for Man but also for animals. There is a call for compassion and help to an animal under burden or stress in *Exodus* 23:5. 'If thou seest the ass of him that hateth thee lying under its burden, thou shalt surely release it with him'. So, even if the animal belongs to an enemy, still one should help it, because it is befitting to do so. One further example is the idea that animals should be treated well

according to their work. It is inscribed in the prohibition against muzzling an ox as it threshes: 'Thou shalt not muzzle an ox when he treads out corn' (*Deuteronomy* 25:4). The context of this and other laws implies that Nature is cherished because it is God's creation. Thus a paradox seemed to emerge in the monotheistic battle against paganism. The Hebrews extract Nature from the realm of holiness by extracting holiness from Nature. In bringing back into Nature an attitude based on human morality, Man endowed Nature with a new extra-natural dimension.

In order to gain a fuller understanding of the concept of Nature in the Bible one needs to discuss also Man's role in Nature, i.e. with his self-portrait. The Hebrew maintained that Man was created in six days of creation and as such he is part of Nature. However, according to the Biblical narrative, he is also the purpose of creation and stands above it as the image of God. As part of Nature, he is bound to fail (the Fall). As one created in God's image, he is redeemable. Being superior to Nature, Man has the task to rule and civilize it. In the Biblical narrative, this is described as Man's role in giving the animals names. 'The giving of names is in accordance with the ancient belief that the name of a thing is an essential part of its being. Not until a thing had received its name was it considered really complete and existent. Hence, the giving of the name here is the very last step of each act of creation' (Morgenstern 1965, 45 V.5).

That Man is part of Nature, we see from the fact that he is made from soil and that his name is that of soil. 'Soil' in Hebrew is *adamah*; the name of Man is 'Adam': Adam from *adamah*. Moreover, he is tied to the soil, a bond which may be a curse for him but is still a very strong one. He is either condemned or urged to work the soil and to be the civilizator. Hence, the numerous usages of activity and deed in *Genesis* chapters 1–3 (Buber 1945, 16–17). He is a co-worker with God and should be an active agent of will and purpose in the same way as God is. This implies that Man and Nature are somewhat at odds and that Man should rise above Nature. The way to do so is by transcending his own natural inclinations, thereby ascending to a position above the entire realm of Nature and subjugating himself to the supernatural.

Thus the Bible is implying through narrative a tripartite relationship between God, Man and Nature. The three are interrelated in the following way: Nature is totally dependent on God; Man is of necessity partially dependent on Nature but totally accountable to God; God uses Nature, according to His will, amongst other things as a means to moralize Man.

* * * *

Post-Biblical literature has amplified and augmented the Biblical

attitude to Nature. Thus, there is very little to support the view that the Rabbis had a concept of the totality and unity of Nature. The term employed in the Talmud for 'earth' and 'heaven' seems to be *yetzirah* meaning creation, and it is synonymous with *beriah* in the Bible. The biblical *beriah* originally denoted miracles or unnatural things: in the Talmud it has been transformed into natural things. However, while it seems that the Talmud lacks a clear concept of *cosmos*, it advances an elaborate theory about the source and principle of reality, i.e. about Nature as *physis*.

It seems that only late in post-Biblical literature, probably not before the end of the Talmudic period and the beginning of the Gaonic one, was the Hebrew term for Nature in general, coined: the word *teva*, which seems to be the exclusive term for 'Nature' in Hebrew. It does not appear in the Bible or Talmudic literature, but in the late Midrashic post-Talmudic literature. Its meaning is telling. The verb *tava* denotes 'to shape'; 'to coin'. The noun *teva* denotes that which is shaped. Thus, the concept of Nature in Judaism up to the present day is marked by the notion of being shaped, moulded, made or created by something or someone else, probably superior. Nature is creation.

The first main theme in the Talmudic and Midrashic pronouncements on Nature is that the source of reality is Divine; and the creation is discussed extensively. However, in the Midrash there are allusions to the fact that theogony, an evolvement of the divine power within itself in the realm of the supernatural, has preceded creation. And thus theogony is the stepping stone, or the first stage in the creation of the world (Ginzberg 1946–1955, Vol. 1, 135). In Jewish mysticism, this aspect of theogony which preceded cosmogony was developed and extended to become a major facet of the mystical tradition, involving more essential speculations about creation. The second theme in the Talmudic and Midrashic pronouncements is the relationship between God and Nature ever since creation, predominantly under the heading of 'Providence'. The third is the relationship between Man and Nature.

The Talmudic sages and Rabbis spent much time debating the major issues concerning creation. They discussed the order in which heaven and earth were created. On this matter, there was a constant dispute between the school of Shammai and the school of Hillel (first century A.D.). The school of Shammai said the heavens were created first, while the school of Hillel said the earth was created first (*Genesis Rabba*, 1:15). Another issue was the manner of creating the world; the time distribution between planning and performance. Here again, there was a difference of opinion between the school of Shammai and the school of Hillel. The school of Shammai said the plan was formulated during the night and the work was carried out by day. The school of Hillel said both the

planning and execution took place during the day. On the other hand Rabbi Simeon bar Yohai claimed: 'I am surprised that the fathers of the world (the school of Shammai and the school of Hillel) should differ about the creation of heaven and earth. The planning took place both by day and by night and the execution was carried out at sunset' (*Genesis Rabba*, 12:11).

Another issue of concern was whether the world was created *ex nihilo* (out of nothing) or out of primal matter (*prima materia*). 'A certain philosopher once raised the following question before Rabbi Gamaliel, saying to him "Your God was a great artist, but he has at his disposal fine ingredients to help him". The patriarch asked what these were. The philosopher replied "*tohu v'bohu*, darkness and water, wind and the deep". In his reply, Rabbi Gamaliel rejected it completely, defending the idea of creation out of nothing. He said to the philosopher "Creation is stated in respect of all of them" ' (*Genesis Rabba*, 1:4).

How did God create the world? There are various views in the Talmud. The most common is that He created it by word, in the ten words of God: *Bemamar* (in word) (*Avot*, 5:1; *Genesis Rabba*, 1:4). The second, and less common view is that He created it by light. Light is creation and order against the darkness of chaos. A third view close to the first, is that God used His divine ineffable name in order to create the world, and the last view is that He created the universe by His own hands. These four hypotheses concerning creative energy have been developed and elaborated by Jewish mysticism. What are the materials He used for creation? Some of those mentioned are fire, dust, water and snow. Concerning the size of the worldly creation, the Rabbis could not reach a decision. However, they accepted one thing as certain. In the Midrash, the moon asks God: 'O Lord, which of the two worlds is the larger — this world or the world to come?' and the answer of God is: the world to come is larger (Midrash *Konen*, 25–26; Ginzberg 1946–1955, Vol. 5, 34–36, Note 100). Is creation eternal and if not how long will it survive? God revealed to Enoch that 'the duration of the world will be seven thousand years and the eighth millenium will be a time when there is no computation, no end, neither year, nor months nor weeks nor days nor hours' (Ginzberg 1946–1955, Vol. 1, 135). Another source maintains that the kingdom of heaven will come after seven thousand years (Ginzberg 1946–1955, Vol. 4, 28; Vol. 6, 184, Note 20). Thus the calculation of the duration of the world is associated with the concept of the millenium and is based on the notion that God's day is a thousand years of Man and that seven days are the time of creation. Seven is also traditionally a holy number. It seems that at least one sage (Rabbi Abbahu) believes that there were previous worlds created before ours which were destroyed. So, it is not impossible that the fate of our world would

be similar to previous ones (*Genesis Rabba*, 3).

It seems the Rabbis feel more secure in discussing the theme of the relationship between God and Nature since Creation. They are absolutely firm about their views: God is master over His creation. Accordingly, the power of God is evident not only in the creation of all things, but equally in the limitations which He imposed upon each of them. The heavens and the earth stretched themselves out in length and breadth as though they aspired to infinitude and it required the word of God to call a halt to their encroachments (*Genesis Rabba*, 46:3). God dominates the elements because He is the source of their energy and activity.

According to the Talmud, the mastery of God over the universe has been delegated to Man. He is a co-worker with God in the work of creation. Man's domination over Nature stems from the contention that the world was actually created for Man; it was made for him, although he was the last amongst its creatures to arrive. 'This was design: he was to find all things ready for him. God was the host who prepared dainty dishes, set the table and then led his guest to his seat' (Ginzberg 1946–1955, Vol. 1, 49). 'The superiority of Man to other creatures is apparent in the very manner of his creation, altogether different from theirs. He is the only one who was created by the hand of God' (Ginzberg 1946–1955, Vol. 1, 49). 'This assertion that Man was created by the hand of God, in contra-distinction to all other creatures, is found frequently in Christian sources' (Ginzberg 1946–1955, Vol. 5, 63). The idea that the world was created for Man is also expressed in a different way. According to the Midrash there are several persons whose merit brought about the creation of the world, thus 'the world had been created for the sake of Abraham's merit'. (*Genesis Rabba*, 12:9). The sages believed that God had created the world for the sake of the pious in general. (Ginzberg 1946–1955, Vol. 2, 33). Moreover, many species of animal were only created because some special historical mission was assigned to a single specimen. For instance, the gnat which lives only one day, was destined to cause the death of Titus by creeping through his nose into his brain (*Gittin*, 56b). Their views are anthropocentric, the raison d'etre of Nature is Man. Nature is dependent on history.

Did the Talmudic sages have a knowledge and interest in natural science? The idea of Man's domination over Nature could have led to the exploration of Nature in order to use its resources and to exploit its energy so that Man's life might be enhanced. On the other hand, the primacy of the supernatural and religious over the natural meant that much speculation was not directed to Nature as such. It could therefore be assumed that there was an inner conflict in the Rabbinic mind as to how much interest and preoccupation in natural phenomena was permissible. It is difficult to ascertain how

much the sages knew of biology (Feliks 1981) or physics (Roth 1945); we assume a relatively fine degree of knowledge in medicine (Rosner 1977; Roth 1945). It seems that the study of mathematics was encouraged not for its own sake but 'for the purpose of solving *Halakhic* problems' (*Encyclopaedia Judaica* 1972, Vol. 11, 1121). The interest in astronomy was essential in order to calculate the calendar and to establish the correct dates for festivals (Roth 1945; *Encyclopaedia Judaica* 1972, Vol. 3, 795–799). The names of specialists in this field are known. Thus Samuel, the Talmudic sage, was known as the Lunar or Moon Man Samuel on account of his speciality in astronomy. He said: 'I know the paths of heaven as I know the roads of my hometown', and he added something very pertinent to Halley's Comet: 'I know all this except the comet which I do not know what it is' (*Berakhot*, 58b). Another indication of the knowledge of Halley's Comet comes from Tractate *Nezzikin*; Rabbi Gamaliel on a journey to Rome in the year 95 was accompanied by Rabbi Yohashua ben Hannania, sailing in a ship which was beset by storms and went off course owing to faulty navigation. Gamaliel had taken only bread with him, but Yehoshua had also taken a reserve supply of flour which he shared with his companion, when Gamaliel's bread ran out because of the delays. 'Did you know that we would be so delayed that you brought flour with you?' the Talmud quotes Gamaliel as asking. Yehoshua replied: 'A certain star rises once in seventy years and leads the sailors astray, and I suspected it might rise and lead us astray'. The high esteem of astronomy is indicated by the fact that the sages ascribed the origin of astronomy to no less a person than Adam. Adam had learned the course of Nature by the setting and rising of the sun (Ginzberg 1946–1955, Vol. 1, 89).

The ultimate decisive expression of Man's superiority over Nature is the basic foundation of the *Halakha* (legal tradition). In Talmudic Judaism, the way of transcending Nature and reaching out to the supernatural is through observance of the *mitzvot* of the *Halakha*. The *mitzvot* are conscious and intentional acts of emulating God. By observing laws and regulations, the Jew may attain holiness (supernaturalness) and avoid impurity (naturalness). These laws and regulations are based on the concept of Man's readiness to act from choice in his decision-making. However, the choice is not multi-dimensional or multifarious; it is a choice within a duality: Godliness as opposed to naturalness which is instinctual or belongs to the evil inclination. In its historical development *Halakhic* Judaism has reduced the personal consideration, evaluation or spontaneity towards natural phenomena. The entire realm of Godliness is minutely detailed and enshrined in the legal code which has ensured through reward and punishment the breaking away from the natural. Thus the Jew is

expected to follow the divine way as a duty, aspiring to God and thereby transcending Nature.

* * * *

The discussion of the concept of Nature in the Bible and the Talmud could be concluded with the observation that normative Judaism preserves, by and large, the concept of transcendental divinity which is above and beyond Nature. The monotheistic worldview is clear: on the one hand stands the absolute spirit (God) and on the other, the absolute matter (created Nature). Between these two there is an abyss. The purpose of Man is to rise above matter and to transcend it towards spirit, from Nature to Godliness. Man can do so because he is a combination of flesh and spirit and his ability to rise stems from his spirit. This concept is one of the foundation stones of pure monotheism. It ought, however, to be added at once that absolute transcendentalism is hardly known at all since it implies the impossibility of contact between the divine and the mundane, thus rendering major doctrines such as revelation, providence and reward and punishment meaningless. Even the concept of God's domination over Nature, as its Creator, may imply the immanentisation of the transcendental God. Therefore, transcendence seems to be relative and the pure abstract divinity should also be immanental, within the world.

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RELATIONSHIPS IN 'THE MERCHANT OF VENICE'

by A.H. GAGIANO

'Since you are dear bought, I will love you dear'.[1]
(MV III.ii.313)

In *The Rape of Lucrece*, lines 1424–28, the speaker describes the depiction of Achilles in a painting of the Trojan War —

> . . . for Archilles' image stood his spear,
> Grip'd in an armed hand; himself behind,
> Was left unseen, save to the eye of mind:
> A hand, a foot, a face, a leg, a head,
> Stood for the whole to be imagined.

This serves as an appropriate analogy for Shylock's brief reference, in *The Merchant of Venice*, to a certain ring:

> . . . Thou torturest me, Tubal. It was my turquoise; I had it of Leah when I was a bachelor. I would not have given it for a wilderness of monkeys. (III.i.110–13)

There is no later allusion to this ring in the play but, although brief, this extraordinarily suggestive reference can influence our understanding of the play in much the same way as the nearly imperceptible yet looming presence of Achilles dominates the painting in *Lucrece*: it draws attention to what is *not* depicted. In *The Merchant of Venice* that which is not depicted is wholesome relationships. Instead, it exhibits intense racial and class hatred; marriages remarkable for the extent to which they are tainted by flippant, cynical or mercenary attitudes; a dying homoerotic or homosexual attachment between Antonio and Bassanio; and several instances of broken commitment: Jessica's abandonment of her father, her race and her religion and theft from the father who gave his goods into her keeping; Launcelot's desertion of his master Shylock; Portia's — admittedly a much debated point — 'management' of her dead father's will to get the man of her choice; Launcelot's 'getting up of the Negro's belly' (III.v.34–5) in Lorenzo's ugly but telling phrase; Bassanio and Gratiano's relinquishment — under pressure from their own disguised wives — of the rings they swore solemnly to keep.

The tone and timbre of Venetian and Belmontian society is most aptly represented in the following slick interchange between Salerio and Gratiano:

Sal. O ten times faster Venus' pigeons fly
To seal love's bonds new-made than they are wont
To keep obligéd faith unforfeited!
Grat. That ever holds. Who riseth from a feast
With that keen appetite that he sits down?

. . . All things that are
Are with more spirit chaséd than enjoyed.
How like a younger or a prodigal
The scarféd bark puts from her native bay,
Hugged and embracéd by the strumpet wind.
How like the prodigal doth she return,
Lean, rent, and beggared by the strumpet wind.
(II.vi.5–19)

That this quotation vividly captures the conversation of young men-about-town by no means allows us to ignore the evidence of that 'grossness' which is obscured by the 'fair ornament' (III.ii.80) of the perpetual social whirl in which they live: the near-relish with which they consider their subject.[2] It indicates the permeation by infidelity of this prosperous community — the extent to which it is a *consuming* society.

Yet to all appearances, Venetian society (and soon this includes Belmont) seems highly cohesive, with even such mob men as Salerio and Solanio — the Rosencrantz and Guildenstern of this play — displaying much interest in and knowledge of Antonio's most private commercial and emotional affairs. The two of them disappear with ostentatious tact when Bassanio shows up, in I.i. 57–61, and frequently sing Antonio's praises, or decide that it is their duty to cheer him up.[3] Evidently, Antonio is regarded as a (or the) leading figure in this society: impressively wealthy, hugely philanthropic and extremely popular — much like an 'early' Timon of Athens. Nevertheless this fortunate man is introduced to us beset by unspecified melancholy ('In sooth I know not why I am so sad', I.i.1), raising a query to which the whole of the play is an answer. The immediately following 'cheering' conversation is sufficiently brittle and stilted to make clear the narrowly mercenary focus of the minds of these dubious friends (Salerio and Solanio). The play begins to unfold the underlying reasons for Antonio's condition in showing their shallowness and dismissive flippancy, although 'It wearies me . . . I *caught* it' (I.i. 2–3, my emphasis) identifies it as an ailment of his soul. The glamour and power of Antonio's wealth evidently blind these toadies so far that their gestures of comfort are bumblingly insensitive and touch Antonio on the raw ('Fie, fie!' — I.i.46) of that inadequately requited devotion to Bassanio which is demonstrated a little later in this scene.

As the play proceeds, it becomes recognisable that a feature of the 'friendliness' of Venetian society is an instinctive or deliberate

shying away from human hurt. There seems to be a common determination in those around Antonio, and even in himself, *not* to face, or to find evidently inadequate reasons for his gloom. In lines 88–99 of this scene Gratiano, even more crudely, echoes Salerio and Solanio's sly and mean suggestion (I.i.47–56) that Antonio's melancholy is a mere pose to impress others:

> There are a sort of men whose visages
> Do cream and mantle like a standing pond,
> And do a wilful stillness entertain,
> With purpose to be dressed in an opinion
> Of wisdom, gravity, profound conceit,
> As who should say, 'I am Sir Oracle,
> And when I ope my lips let no dog bark' . . .
> O, my Antonio, I do know of these
> That therefore only are reputed wise
> For saying nothing . . . when, I am very sure,
> If they should speak, would almost damn these ears
> Which, hearing them, would *call their brothers fools*.

He himself proceeds to call Antonio fool (by implication) in lines 101–02:

> But fish not with this melancholy bait
> For this *fool* gudgeon, this opinion.
>
> (My emphasis in both quotations)

Yet Gratiano declares that his own aim in life is no more elevated than to 'play the *fool*' (my emphasis, line 79). Shylock catches this giddy quality of Venetian society when he refers in II.v.32 to 'Christian fools with varnished faces' — but more is at stake here than the incidental echoing of one word. An important Biblical context is brought to bear on the play in those of Gratiano's words quoted in lines 98–99, above. This is Matthew 5, verse 22:

> But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca [= worthless], shall be in danger of the council: but *whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire*.
>
> (my emphasis)

This quotation warns against dismissive attitudes to those among whom we live, emphasizing that both causeless anger and contempt towards others are as evil and destructive as manslaughter or murder (also, eventually, in their effect upon the very people who hate or despise others: 'danger of hell fire'). If 'angry with his brother without a cause' seems applicable to the anti-Semitism of the Gentile Venetians, then considering or treating their fellows as

fools seems vividly demonstrated *within* the circle of Gentiles, in the whole of scene one. It is a society as 'unkind', in other words, to those within its bosom as to its aliens, for all its apparent bonhomie. Indeed, Gratiano in his turn is contemptuously discussed by his 'friends' as soon as he has left, in I.i. 113–18:

> *Ant.* Is that anything now?
> *Bass.* Gratiano speaks an infinite deal of nothing, more than any man in all Venice. His reasons are as two grains of wheat hid in two bushels of chaff: you shall seek all day ere you find them, and when you have them they are not worth the search.

— another example of calling a 'brother' both worthless and a fool.

Gratiano's 'friendly' advice —

> I tell thee what, Antonio,
> I love thee, and 'tis my love that speaks . . .
>
> (I.i.86–87)

— likens 'the good Antonio'[4] to a stagnant pool (in I.i. 88–89, quoted above), an image tellingly opposite to 'the gentle rain from heaven' (IV.i. 182) which represents true 'mercy' and creative human intercourse. Moreover, Antonio's ostentatious saving and redeeming (words with clear Christian echoes) of those in debt to Shylock seem disturbingly like that sort of limelight-loving almsgiving which is condemned in Matthew 6:1–4.[5] The exploration of the many varieties of deficiency of 'care' for others in Venice and in Belmont gives the play its density and its subtle cohesion.

* * *

When scene one proceeds to show us the adroitness with which Bassanio implicates Antonio, to whom he is already in debt for a substantial loan, in a yet further financial risk, the exploitative nature of the relationship is glaring. Each of the many later references to how 'dear' a friend Antonio is to Bassanio becomes laden with heavy financial irony — 'The *dearest* friend to me, the kindest man, . . ./In doing courtesies . . .' (III.ii.292–94, my emphasis). Antonio is, it seems, wholly or half conscious of the emotional entrapment in which he finds himself ('You . . . wind about my love with circumstances', he says in I.i.153–4). If Bassanio banks (almost literally: 'from your love I have a warranty', I.i.132) on the love of his wealthy friend to support his spendthrift habits (euphemistically and coyly referred to in lines 123–25), we have in *him*, long before Shylock makes his notorious offer to Antonio, a man who cuts another to the heart for money — callously,

frivolously, and not in outraged vengeance as in Shylock's attempt. Antonio's obscure recognition of this 'murder' shows up in the language of suffering, destruction and torture that he uses: 'my extremest means' (line 138); 'my uttermost' (line 156); 'made waste of all I have' (line 157); 'racked even to the uttermost' (line 181). Can this be described as either ideal Christian love (a common interpretation) or as resembling the feelings explored in Shakespeare's Sonnets?[6] This is most doubtful — Sonnet 125, line 12, speaks of 'mutual render only me for thee' as the ideal lovers' exchange, and such love is also said to be 'poor but free' (line 10). The glaring inappropriateness to its context of Bassanio's expression 'pure innocence' (I.i.145) serves to highlight the tarnished nature of his attitude. On Antonio's part the commitment is pathologically over-abundant or masochistic — he seems to be inviting Bassanio to destroy him. In this aspect of his yearning Antonio himself forestalls Shylock's embroilment in their affair, as is later confirmed in Antonio's *desire* to be seen to die for this unworthy friend (IV.i. 261–278). It is an impression also confirmed by Salerio and Solanio's sentimental report of the farewell between Antonio and Bassanio as the latter sets off on his quest to win Portia:

Sal. . . . he answered, 'Do not so.
Slubber not business[7] for my sake, Bassanio,
But stay the very riping of the time.
. . .
And even there, his eyes being big with tears,
Turning his face, he put his hand behind him
And with affection wondrous sensible
He wrung Bassanio's hand; and so they parted.
Sol. I think he only loves the world for him.

(II.viii. 39–50)

I am suggesting that Antonio is 'sad' because his love for Bassanio is suicidal rather than unselfish, and that Shylock's role is a merely incidental one in this development. Moreover, the relationship between Antonio and Bassanio is deeply mercenary. This is made evident, for instance, in the significant order of the words in which Bassanio smoothly admits to being much in debt to Antonio 'in money and in love' (I.i. 131). I want to suggest that this is 'bought love', and even that, because Antonio's coffers are running dry, Bassanio is moving on to his main chance: the seductively wealthy Portia, the 'angel in a golden bed' (II.vii.58) with her *three* tantalising caskets. Pathetically, Antonio makes a casket of himself in I.i. 138–9:

My purse, my person, my extremest means
Lie all *unlocked* to your occasions. (my emphasis)

Yet the deep sense of loss and of betrayal[8] to which he virtually encourages Bassanio, sounds through. Bassanio's easy and predatory transference of 'affections' to Portia shows in the way he 'sells' his project to Antonio. The significant listing of Portia's attractions[9] hardly indicates a mistress who, 'when she walks treads on the ground'[10]. Against this background Shylock's anguished outcries ('My daughter! O my ducats!'), so mockingly and callously reported by Salerio and Solanio in II.viii. 12–24, assume a different aspect. The Jew's grief and fury are unselfconscious and natural compared to the transactions the other two make of their relationships. That he is profoundly unable to detach himself emotionally from Jessica even after her desertion is shown in his inadvertent exclamation in IV.i. 292–94:

> These be the Christian husbands! I have a daughter;
> Would any of the stock of Barabbas
> Had been her husband, rather than a Christian.

It is Jessica who in her abandonment of Shylock deprives him also of his ducats, and who thus associates herself with Shylock's gold. By a similar process Bassanio's first words about Portia associate — almost equate — her with the bait of the golden fleece (to which her golden hair is likened)[11].

* * *

When Portia is introduced, bored and playful like some Hollywood goddess, Shakespeare gives us (in words of Nerissa which at first appear to have only 'local' application) the most important evaluative image of this play: 'they are as sick', she tells Portia, 'that surfeit with too much as they that starve with nothing' (I.ii. 5–6). Portia is immediately identified (being so fortunate) as one of those who 'surfeit'. The word recurs at III.ii. 111–14 when Bassanio has chosen the right casket. Portia feels an 'excess' and fears to 'surfeit'. Her plea ('in measure *rain* thy joy', my emphasis) contrasts her experience implicitly with the falling of 'the gentle rain from heaven' mentioned in IV.i. 182.

Nerissa's image of sickness in I.ii. 5–6, mentioned above, links Portia with Antonio, made sick in the midst of his wealth and good fortune by the loss of Bassanio, and contrasts both of them with Shylock, whose 'desires/Are wolvish, bloody, *starved*, and *ravenous*' (my emphases, IV.i. 137–8). Throughout the play Shylock is associated with suggestions of a deep hunger, such as Antonio's 'explanation' in IV.i. 73–74:

> You may as well use question with the wolf
> Why he hath made the ewe bleat for the lamb.

The extraordinarily numerous references to dining and feasting in the Venetians' conversations[12] indicate how central the idea of eating was to Shakespeare's conception of such a flourishing community. He shows us a society deeply lacking in any sense of fulfilment, though unconscious or incapable of understanding the nature of the emptiness of its prosperity — the death's-head within its golden casket. That 'carrion Death' (II.vii.63, another 'food' image), is, it seems, the shallow inhumanity of their interpersonal relationships. Again by contrast with the glittering 'wealthy curléd darlings of [their] nation' (*Oth.* I.ii.68), Shylock's anguish and hatred show up as a profoundly-felt need of love and acceptance.

The well-known Latin derivation of the word 'companions'[13] (identifying them as those with whom one shares bread) is used by Shakespeare to focus the 'boon companion' quality of Venetian society — their chauvinistic practice of Christianity and their deliberate exclusion of Shylock from their company. Thus, Bassanio's invitation to Shylock to join the Christians' for a business dinner is a novelty to which he responds with dour suspicion:

Shy. . . . May I speak with Antonio?
Bass. If it please you to dine with us.
Shy. Yes, to smell pork, to eat of the habitation which your prophet the Nazarite conjured the devil into. I will buy with you, sell with you, talk with you, walk with you, and so following; but I will not eat with you, drink with you, nor pray with you . . . (I.iii.29–35)

His sacramentalisation of food may sound as exclusivist as the Christians, but that it masks a yearning, even a naive eagerness, is betrayed by the rationalisation he feels compelled to add when he decides — despite all his premonitions — to accept the invitation:

But yet I'll go in hate to feed upon
The prodigal Christian . . . (II.v. 14–15).

In the end it is again, of course, the Christians who make a meal of Shylock by using the occasion to deprive him of both daughter and ducats while Jessica 'hold[s] a candle to [her] shames' as torch-bearer (II.vi. 41).

Towards the end of the play some of Launcelot's teasing of Jessica picks up (satirically) the notion of economic greed informing the exclusivist attitudes of the Christians, again using food imagery:

This making of Christians will raise the price of hogs;
if we grow all to be pork-eaters, we shall not shortly
have a rasher on the coals for money. (III.V.21–23)

Launcelot's little joke ties tightly into the recurrent impression of feasting Christians who 'cit[e] Scripture for [their] purpose' (I.iii.95), ending the play as evident 'winners' (against Shylock) who have lost their own souls, as the brittle amity of the final act lightly suggests. In I.iii.87 Shylock says that 'Thrift is blessing *if men steal it not*' (my emphasis), and their thriving literally at his expense, having effected the eventual transfer of all his funds to their coffers (IV.i.377–87 and V.i.290–93), is evidently a legalised form of theft — 'protection money' of a sort (the Duke's threat in IV.i. 388–89 illustrating the point)[14]. Despite the obtuse or sentimental accounts of many critics, it is evident that the trial depicted in scene (i) of Act IV has little to do with justice (let alone mercy). In the trial scene the ironies are generally more glaring, though, and have been much discussed.

* * *

A society that functions by shutting out 'aliens' inevitably uses all sorts of propagandist devices (such as the many vilifications of Shylock, 'the dog Jew[15],') to boost its own unity, and such solidarity reflexes are a symptom of the shallowness of that unity.[16] The Venetian/Belmontian society depicted in this play is inherently racist. Shakespeare's touch in exhibiting this aspect of its life is, throughout the play, a light one — it is often in jokes or in 'witty' remarks, in the 'cheery' conversation of these people, that he exhibits their prejudice.[17] Portia's exclamation early in the play when she hears that her next suitor is a prince who comes from Morocco, shows her refusal to take seriously the worth of a man whose skin is dark —

> . . . If he have the condition of a saint
> and the complexion of a devil, I had rather he
> should shrive me than wive me. (I.ii.123–25)

The same remark demonstrates her ready, even jocular, association between a black skin and (the look of) a devil. In Act two scene one, the stage direction emphasizes that the Prince of Morocco is 'a tawny Moor', who opens his speech with the plea that Portia should not 'Mislike [him] . . . for [his] *complexion*' (my emphasis). Exactly like Shylock in the famous speech in III.i.48–66 ('Hath not a Jew eyes?' etc.), Morocco emphasizes the common human redness of his blood under the 'different' skin. Portia's 'courteous' reassurance in II.i.13–22,

> Yourself, renownéd Prince, then [stands] as *fair*
> As any comer I have looked on yet
> For my affection (my emphasis)

is shown to be mere glibness, even cynical dishonesty, in the context of her former private sneer. The Freudian slip in that word 'fair' is the equivalent of contemporary awkwardness in attempts to use such words as 'black' and 'white' neutrally. The suggestion of Portia's racial contempt is confirmed at the end of II.vii in the smug little couplet which is her final comment on Morocco:

> A gentle riddance. Draw the curtains, go.
> Let all *of his complexion* choose me so.
>
> (my emphasis) (II.vii. 78–79)

Again there is a pun, 'gentle' recalling 'gentile', and (like 'fair', above) often functioning so in the Christians' conversations. That Portia has been 'read' so commonly as a heroine, seems ironic confirmation of the similarities between ourselves and the Venetians.[18]

Portia's association of a dark skin with demonic alienness links her with Launcelot Gobbo who parodies a soul-searching conflict of loyalties (either literally serving a Jew, or 'serving' Christ) in II.ii.1–28. The joke relies on the audience recognising, as clearly as Launcelot does, that he serves only Mammon, and himself:

> . . . To be ruled by my conscience, I should stay with the Jew my master who . . . is a kind of devil; and to run away from the Jew, I should be ruled by the fiend, who . . . is the devil himself. Certainly the Jew is the very devil incarnation; . . . . . The fiend gives the more friendly counsel. I will run, fiend; my heels are at your *commandment* . . .
>
> (my emphasis) (II.ii.19–28)

The last word is an example of the sub-text of Biblical terms which Shakespeare incorporates into the play, much like a dark lining to the rich and glossy fabric of Venetian conversation. Another such echo occurs in Morocco's introductory speech in II.i.3 (my emphasis):

> To whom I am a *neighbour* and near bred.

— a subliminal reminder of the question which introduces the parable of the Good Samaritan:

> And who is my neighbour? (Luke 10:29)

The parable itself, of course, contains oblique reference to racial prejudice.

The elopement of Jessica and Lorenzo is sometimes seen as a romantic interlude meant to arouse enthusiastic sympathy for a 'love conquers all' idyll (a kind of light overture to the tragedy of Othello and Desdemona). The Jew who has been made out to be a

devil, first by Antonio ('The devil can cite Scripture . . .', 1.i.95) and then by Launcelot (II.ii.1–28), is also pilloried by his own daughter: 'Our house is hell' (II.iii.2). It turns out, though, that the torture inflicted by her father is nothing worse than 'tediousness', intensely resented by a Jessica itching to join the feasting, masquing Christians. Her pios

> . . . I shall end this strife
> Become a Christian and thy loving wife (II.iii.20–21)

is glib, and tarnished by the company she keeps — Launcelot (another selfishly motivated deserter of Shylock)[19] and Lorenzo (who tells Jessica 'we will *slink away* in supper-time' — my emphasis, II.iv.1).

The mirroring ironies of the play are compounded by Jessica's calling Launcelot 'a merry devil' in II.iii.1. The sort of fun Launcelot enjoys emerges in his teasing of his half-blind old father in II.ii. 29–92 and in his getting 'The Moor' (evidently a black servant girl or slave) 'with child' in Belmont (III.v.33–43). When Lorenzo charges him with this offence Launcelot easily fobs off the accusation as Lorenzo's thoughts turn to 'dinner', and so wretches suffer that petty officals may dine.

* * *

Perhaps the most important word in the play to typify and subversively expose the Christians' heartlessness is the recurrent pun on 'kind', as so often in Shakespeare combining the meanings 'akin' (related) and 'merciful' with the suggestion that mutual concern should be 'natural' to human beings. It thus telescopes two of the most important concerns of the play: who and what should be acknowledged as belonging to the same (human) kind as oneself, and what mercy should be rendered to them? Pre-Christian and pre-Judean, more ancient and natural than cultural, racial, and religious alienation, people know in the blood that they grow on the common stem of mankind. Perhaps it is this obscure awareness itself that informs the vehemence and ugliness of denials of human bonds. As with the terms 'fair' and 'gentle', the Venetians are fond of *divisively* applying the word 'kind' to themselves, and especially to Antonio ('A *kinder gentleman* treads not the earth', my emphasis, II.viii.37).[20]

The word 'kind' is most prominently used in the notorious conversation to negotiate the terms of the 3 000 ducats' loan (the sum seeming Shakespeare's deliberate inflation of the 30 silver pieces paid to Judas). On being presented with the startling opportunity of an actual conversation with his arch-enemy Antonio, in a situation (moreover) where he has the bank

manager's power of either granting or withholding a loan, Shylock responds quite naturally, first by (mildly) taunting Antonio on his formerly proclaimed, principled abstention from and opposition to loans involving interest. To this Antonio responds with a show of astongishingly arrogant obtusity ('I do never use it', he says — I.iii.67 — when he is in the very act of 'borrow[ing]/Upon advantage' — I.iii.66–67). As a second attempt Shylock tells the Laban-Jacob story, intended evidently as an opportune demonstration of the fact that interest-taking and naval trade are but different versions of the same *legitimate* capitalist venturing — 'thrift is blessing if men steal it not.'[21] But the very suggestion of any similarity between his own way of doing business, and Shylock's, is anathema to Antonio, stinging the supposedly mild merchant to deliver his frigid denunciation of Jewish 'otherness':

> Mark you this, Bassanio,
> The *devil* can cite Scripture for his purpose.
> An *evil* soul producing holy witness
> Is like a *villain* with a smiling cheek,
> A goodly apple *rotten* at the heart.
> O what a goodly outside *falsehood* hath!
>
> (my emphasis) (I.iii. 95–99)

The vehemence of Antonio's vocabulary shows that another raw spot in his psyche has been touched. For we have, here, a further source of Antonio's 'sickness' — that insane self-deception which insists on 'creating' a superiority by degrading another — ego-boosting through vilification.[22] When, after his diatribe, Antonio turns back smoothly to Shylock with

> Well, Shylock, shall we be beholding to you? (I.iii. 102)

the usurer protests unforgettably in the voice of that 'honest indignation' which Blake calls 'the voice of God':

> . . . You come to me and you say,
> 'Shylock, we would have moneys,' you say so,
> You, that did void your rheum upon my beard
> And foot me as you spurn a stranger cur
> Over your threshold, moneys is your suit.
> What should I say to you? (I.iii.112–17)

All that this achieves is a coldly taunting rebuff from Antonio. He is seemingly incapable[23] of admitting — recognising or responding to — the appeal for human understanding in Shylock's utterance. Shylock retreats into self-protective irony, though he attempts yet a

fourth strategy for reconciliation: meeting Antonio on his own terms by offering an interest-free loan —

> This is *kind* I offer. (my emphasis) (I.iii.139)

Besides 'dutifully' and ironically mimicking Antonio's definition of 'friendly' lending (i.e. by not charging any interest on the loan) Shylock has, of course, a more mercenary meaning of 'kind' in mind — he is (as he frankly admits in line 165) attempting 'To buy [Antonio's] favour'. In offering to forego the income (in interest) from the loan, Shylock hopes Antonio will 'pay' him 'in kind' by ending his persecution of the Jew — a fair exchange and no robbery. It is worth noting that Shylock arrives at this point of trading 'friendship' for financial 'favour' only as a last resort. By contrast, Antonio all along attempts to 'buy' the 'favour' of Bassanio, who is about to go and gamble for Portia (funded by the money Antonio borrows from Shylock, spent copiously in decking out all the servants in his retinue in new liveries — II.ii.101; 107; 143–44 — and in 'feast[ing]' his 'best-esteemed acquaintance' — II.ii. 159–60). Surely the echo of 'portion' *was* intended in Shakespeare's choice of Portia's name[24] — nor does it seem unlikely that Bassanio's name hints at the baseness of his procedures. By contrast, the name Shylock[25] suggests not only a reluctance to part with money, but indicates someone who is slow to the emotional profiteering and public displays of feeling to which most other characters in this play are given.

Bassanio immediately (with unconscious smugness) 'translates' Shylock's openly mercenary term 'kind' (I.iii.139) into 'kindness' (I.iii.140) — sentimentalising Shylock's intention and again 'infantilizing'[26] himself. But Bassanio's smug misappropriation of the term 'kindness' is so evident that Shylock displays his sarcastic perception of their 'impenetrable'[27] complacency in his choice of the pound-of-flesh proviso. This detail functions as a *metaphor* because of its evidently 'demonstrative' purpose only (at this point in the play). It is a 'sign' to Antonio, another (and final) attempt to indicate the hurt which Antonio (especially) has inflicted on him over many years. It is the 'physical' equivalent (in language) of the heart's-pain their degradation of him causes. It means many things — also, for instance, that his offer is *not* made 'in a bondman's key' (line 120), because he might have refused, in spite, to grant the 'bond'. For entering into a *bond* with another person necessarily indicates a relationship and some mutual recognition, even if this is merely a financial transaction. Shylock shows that he is now lending the money freely, scornfully and in human dignity. Above all, any implication of mere greed as a motive is contemptuously dismissed when he explains (patiently and sardonically) that 'A pound of

man's flesh' (I.iii.162) has little monetary or culinary value. The hunger of his soul is at this stage still 'benign' as he hopes to buy a sort of 'friendship' (line 165). It is Jessica's betrayal and theft and the Christians' complicity in this, as well as their taunts at the sight of his hurt and humiliation (II.viii. 1–24) that goad Shylock to the point where he hungers for Antonio's flesh to 'feed [his] revenge' (III.i.49).[28] Like Jessica in II.vi.49–51 ('. . . a gentile and no Jew!') Shylock is called, purringly, a 'gentle Jew' (I.iii.174) when there is profit to be made.

Antonio is being much less than candid (though it is impossible to determine whether he is knowingly or merely compulsively dishonest) when he declares in III.iii.20–24 that Shylock has no other reason for hating him than that Antonio paid off betimes other Christians' debts to the usurer. In contrast Shylock is honest and not intransigent when he claims at the trial that he cannot explain his obduracy, declaring that *anyone*

> Must yield to such inevitable shame
> As to *offend*, himself being *offended*.[29] (my emphasis)

In Antonio's own images in IV.i. 70–80 lie an inadvertent acknowledgement of the naturalness, even inevitability of (what he is at pains to present as) Shylock's inexplicable persecution of himself. He likens the force of Shylock's hatred to the resurgence of flood tide, to the groaning noise of wind-blown trees and to the hunger of wolves. Throughout the play the subtle jarring of such metaphors against the overt intention of speeches occurs with telling frequency, bearing 'silent' witness to the qualities of Venetian justice and mercy.

* * *

Although the Venetians seem to dismiss Shylock from their minds after the trial, Shakespeare does not allow us to do so. The memory of what has been done to the Jew creates an uncomfortable, obscure echo, as of some false note disturbing all the subsequent 'happiness' and 'harmony'. *Frivolity* is the keynote of the last act. Two of Shylock's parting utterances are particularly troubling in their effect — one ('I am content', in IV.i.391) because it is poignantly inappropriate to his condition, the Christians having forced him to kiss the rod that broke him, and the other because it is a moving understatement of *his* 'sadness' (I.i.6) — 'I am not well' (IV.i.393). The triumphant Christians immediately prepare for 'dinner' (l. 398) after the excitement of the trial — *panem et circenses*. After this, Bassanio offers to pay 'Balthasar' with 'Three thousand ducats *due unto* the Jew' (IV.i.408, my emphasis). In a gross parody of Christ's symbolic death, Portia speaks in line 413

(IV.i) of having 'deliver[ed]' Antonio[30], for (as she says in line 415 with glaring, unknowing aptness) her 'mind was never yet more *mercenary*' (my emphasis). This last word is the Venetian Christians' revised version of the quality of 'mercy'.

As the last act opens, Lorenzo mentions (in the 'company' of other doomed and short-lived loves, like that of Medea) that 'Jessica [did] *steal from* the wealthy Jew,/And with an *unthrift* love did run from Venice' (my emphasis, V.i.15–16) — indeed, 'thrift is blessing *if* men steal it not'! (I.iii. 86–87, my emphasis). When Portia, with mock indignation, declares Gratiano 'to blame'

> To part so lightly with [his] wife's first gift
> A thing stuck on with oaths upon [his] finger (V.i.166–68)

Shylock's grief at the loss of Leah's betrothal ring comes irresistibly to mind. Yet the play retains its strange, oblique perspective on the Christians' lives, for *un*awareness has always been a necessary condition of their existence. 'The world *is* still deceived with ornament' (III.ii.74, my emphasis) by the music, promises, and rings of the final act.

To be a 'cannibal' means, literally, to eat one's own kind. King Lear mentions one 'that makes his generation messes/To gorge his appetite' (*Lear* I.i.119–20) as the furthest extreme of barbarous cruelty. In a brief section of *The Merchant of Venice*, Bassanio's exploitation of Antonio is juxtaposed with Shylock's vengefulness as if to ask — who is the cannibal here? Bassanio confesses

> I have engaged myself to a dear friend,
> Engaged my friend to his mere enemy
> To *feed* my means

and a few lines further Salerio denounces Shylock:

> . . . Never did I know
> A creature that did bear the shape of man
> So keen and *greedy* to confound a man.
> (my emphasis) (III.ii.261–63 and 274–76)

When Nerissa in V.i.289–93 is asked by Portia to bring the 'good comforts' (cf. gospel!) to Lorenzo and Jessica, of 'a special deed of gift' 'From the rich Jew . . . /After his death, of all he dies possessed of', Lorenzo's reply is in more than one sense blasphemous. What he says is

> Fair ladies, you drop *manna* in the way
> of starvéd people. (my emphasis) (V.i.294–95)

The reference to manna combines the ideas of daily bread and of the 'gentle rain from heaven' (IV.i.182), contrasting shockingly with the legal 'compulsion' (IV.i.180) which they contrive in destroying Shylock 'to feed [their] means' (II.ii.263). So, too, does the word 'starvéd', above, serve to remind us of Shylock's suffering, indicating their obscene insensitivity to his needs and their disregard of his mere humanity.

But what degree of happiness, and what kind of love, do these Christians manage to achieve amongst themselves? Despite their frequent reassurances to themselves and to one another of their state of fulfilment (for instance 'He is well paid that is well *satisfied*/And I delivering you am *satisfied*' — my emphasis — in IV.i.412–13; the manna image in V.i.294; and Antonio's 'Sweet lady, you have given me life and living' in V.i.286), the play ends with a prospect of 'inter' gatories' (line 298). Portia's last speech ironically includes the utterance

> And yet I am sure you are *not satisfied*
> Of these events at full. (my emphasis) (V.i.296–97)

Compulsive greed such as this cannot produce 'content'. Over the whole of the 'gaiety' of the last Act arches the irony of Nerissa's declaration:

> . . . they are as sick that surfeit with
> Too much as they that starve with nothing. (I.ii.5–6)

That the malaise of the privileged and the pain of the ostracised members of a single society are inextricably linked has seldom been as subtly depicted as in this play.

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NOTES

1. New Penguin Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice*, ed. W. Moelwyn Merchant (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd., 1967). Subsequent references to this text occur in parenthesis.
2. Nowhere in the plays does Shakespeare endow the idea that love is inevitably short-lived with any respectability. Such speakers as Claudius (in Ham. V.i.110–23) and Iago (in Oth. II.i.224–39) use the idea to manipulate others.
3. II.viii.31–53 or III.i.12–18 as well as Lorenzo's words in III.iv.5–7, illustrate this point.
4. III.i.12 — the term becomes almost synonymous with his name, 'honest Iago' in *Othello*.
5. The whole of the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5–7 has all too numerous ironic links with the play, some details of which reflect uncomfortably on the promises made in the biblical utterance (or on commonly-held 'hopeful' interpretations of its promises and exhortations).

6. For the latter suggestion see Lars Engle, 'Thrift is Blessing': Exchange and Explanation in *The Merchant of Venice*,' *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 37 (Spring 1986), 25.
7. Cf. the recurrence of this word ('business') in another reference to the forthcoming marriage, this time by Portia, in III.ii.322.
8. As indicated, in such a dehumanising self-image. Engle, p. 24, comments perceptively on 'The wistful homoerotic suggestion' in this utterance. Yet Shakespeare is, I feel, showing not only the kind of sexuality involved but also evaluating the 'financial' nature of this relationship.
9. In I.i.161–63. Yet Bassanio is told in III.ii.131 on opening the leaden casket that he 'choose[s] not by the view'! Jessica's 'good qualities' are praised in II.vi.49–55 with similar irony, Lorenzo's marriage being another financially advantageous undertaking.
10. Sonnet 130 line 12.
11. Portia is also, here and elsewhere, associated with the ruthless figure of Medea: in I.i.169–72; III.ii.241; and V.i.12–14, which link up with III.ii.92–98 and III.ii.120–23. Ovid's account of the myth of Medea and Jason (including the ghastly ending of the marriage) in the first half of Book VII of the *Metamorphoses* would have been well known to Shakespeare and his contemporaries.
12. There are too many to list, but here is a sampling: I.i.70; I.i.104–5; I.iii.30; II.i.44; II.ii.159–60; II.ii.193; II.iv.1; II.vi.8–9; III.v.43–59; III.v.81–85; IV.i.398; IV.ii.8.
13. This word occurs e.g. at I.i.108; at III.iv.11 and at IV.ii.8.
14. Shylock is threatened with execution should he not give up his ducats and his faith:

    > He shall do this, or else I do recant
    > The pardon that I late pronouncéd here.

15. II.viii.14. So, too, the Duke's words in IV.i.30–32 are tellingly racist and smug.
16. The conversation in III.iv.1–23 ff. is an example of the extent to which theirs is a mutual admiration society.
17. An ironic and subtly 'hidden', implicit comment occurs at the opening of Act III (III.i.2–6). Discussing the miscarriage of one of Antonio's ships, Salerio mentions that this happened at the strait called 'the Goodwins'. This name punningly echoes the claim that 'the good [man] wins', and these lines seem an ironic demonstration of the Venetian Christians' complacency. For the ship of 'the good Antonio' has in fact been 'wracked' in 'these narrow seas', an expression which recalls the 'narrow . . . way' of Matt. 7:14, or the needle's eye through which the wealthy will hardly enter into heaven — appropriately, Antonio's ship was 'of rich lading' (line 3).
18. The satirical light that flickers around Portia is often overlooked — the updated version of Portia-as-saviour seems to be Portia as master-mistress of both legal and erotic contests, e.g. in such recent studies as Karen Newman's 'Portia's Ring: Unruly Women and Structures of Exchange in *The Merchant of Venice*,' *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 38 (Spring 1987), 21–33 and Keith Geary's 'The Nature of Portia's Victory: Turning to Men in *The Merchant of Venice*,' *Shakespeare Survey*, 37 (1984), 55–68.
19. Shylock acts fairly towards Launcelot by arranging for him to join Bassanio's service, unaware that the youth has decided to abandon him (II.ii.1–28 contrasts with II.ii.133–37), and he speaks quite kindly of Launcelot in II.v.44.
20. Similarly, his 'courtesies' are mentioned in III.ii.294, a term sarcastically employed by Shylock in I.iii.125 in a context which conveys the information that Antonio the gentleman is given to shouting insults at, spitting on, and kicking (out of his house) Shylock the Jew. See also n. 22.
21. I.iii.87. Shakespeare elsewhere demonstrates the similarity between their economic attitudes by making Shylock's words in IV.i.371–74 a virtual echo of Antonio's in IV.i.264–69. Both men use money as prop in an unloving environment.
22. It is worth noting that Shylock's most natural responses are called 'strange' by the Venetians — e.g. in II.viii.13; IV.i.21; and IV.i.174.
23. Just as his financial charity comes to be seen as compulsive behaviour: a (successful) public demonstration of his 'difference' from the despised usurer, Shylock.

24. A detail touched on by both Engle (p. 33) and Karen Newman (p. 23).
25. Here one may again recall, by contrast, Antonio's declaration that all of his 'Lie[s] all *unlocked* to' Bassanio's needs. Shylock's normal reticence (a privacy of feeling) needs the goad of extreme anguish before he reveals his stressed emotion in public (II.viii.12–22).
26. I derive the term from Engle's commentary (p. 25) on I.iii.140–52.
27. A term they apply to him in III.iii.18.
28. Shylock could and does not contrive the miscarriage of all Antonio's 'ventures'. It is, to quote Antonio himself, 'a thing not in his power to bring to pass/But swayed and fashioned by the hand of heaven' (I.iii.89–90). Interestingly, both Antonio's 'friends' and Shylock's 'friends' (Tubal) seem bent (in III.i) on forcing a showdown between the two 'leaders' — baying for blood.
29. IV.i.57–58; vaguely echoing, perhaps, (and ironically inverting) the plea in The Lord's Prayer that our trespasses may be forgiven as we for give those that trespass against us.
30. Portia's self-regarding complacency is also evident in remarks which occur in V.i.90–91 and 94–95. Antonio in his turn makes of himself a financial 'saviour' in III.iii.22: 'I oft delivered from [Shylock's, i.e. the devil's] forfeitures/Many that have at times made moan to me.'