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The University of Natal Press regrets that the price of *Theoria* has been raised. New subscriptions and renewals will be at the rate of R5,00 per annum.

We issue this number of our journal in a mood of reflection. To have reached the fiftieth volume is perhaps notable when we consider the short life-span of many periodicals and the distance separating us from larger centres of the academic world (a distance which widens as this country becomes more isolated). In the first issue of *Theoria* in June 1947, the editors stated that their aim would be to 'try to build bridges' and 'promote an outlook of humane criticism in as many fields, and as many groups of people, as possible'. Whether we can uphold such an ideal is sometimes in doubt. We have support in a growing amount of articles sent in year by year. But there are stumbling-blocks like the difficulty of interpreting laws of censorship and the possible muzzling of contributors. Above all, material resources are meagre and we know that every page counts, only too literally. Having resources at all is cause for gratitude.

Whatever happens in future, it seems fitting that we can announce the revision and updating of an Index to all previous numbers, first published in *Theoria 37*. We plan to include this in our next issue.

THE EDITORS

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF THE INCHANGA VIADUCT

by W. H. BIZLEY

I realise that I take certain professional risks in agreeing to talk to you on this subject, not only in that I move into a territory that isn't strictly my own, but in that I must lay bare before you a certain naive enthusiasm that I've never been able to rid myself of. I would like to think that I don't exude the air of an obvious antiquary or eccentric, but nevertheless I find that I retain my loyalty to a certain set of memorable sensations that used, some decades back, to wheeze into life at Durban station at the good solid hour of ten of the clock, and make way down to the points that eventually set one on that most picturesque route in the Union of South Africa, the Natal South Coast. In a world of green leather and wooden panelling and piled suitcases, let alone faded photographs of exotic spots ('Swimming bath at Roodepoort', 'Post Office at Beaufort West') I had my first experience of really thrilling motion. In the late 1940's and early 50's it wasn't so axiomatic as it later became that every family have its own car, so the highroad to the tropical Garden of Eden, rambling over lagoons and sneaking behind sugar mills, was the iron road of the S.A.R. And if it took some time to get there, the fact was that for the sheer variety of sights and sounds that entered one's window per minute — monkeys on the siding, Indian temples buried in reeds, let alone pieces of soot and smells of molasses and oil and coal — the journey just wasn't long enough.

I have since, I hope, become a reasonably contemporary sort of man, one who has travelled many of the world's principal air routes, and who couldn't be more appreciative of those marvellous machines that Messrs. Boeing and Douglas have made available to us. Yet, since all speed is 'relative', and experience, after all, related to intensity, I have to record that for me the most thrilling experience of raw locomotion ever was performed by the diminutive little garratt engine on the South Coast Flyer, nearly bursting its valves getting up to 45 miles an hour on the Clairwood flats, the coaches rocketing along and swaying drunkenly on the points, and accompanied by that incomparable music up front that was never matched again in the history of technology. At last one reached the Umbogintwini Hill and the 'express' section was over, the engine bellowing its heart out to keep ten miles per hour.

A University Lecture delivered at the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, on Wednesday, March 15th, 1978.

(Time to shut the window, then, one knew if one was a regular traveller, for now the coal really came pouring in!)

The steam engine I call 'Queen Victoria's third thing' — a rather crude shorthand that will be understood by those who are familiar with the Great Queen's fairly complex introduction of herself to 'the Natives' in various parts of the world. (You know — first she sent the missionaries, and converted them, then she sent the soldiers, and whacked them.) Well *then*, you see, she sent the steam engine, and hypnotised them — such a box of fireworks, coming after all else, settled the question of 'dominion' once and for all!

In Natal, however, after all the flagwavings and festivals were over, complete with buns and bands and bishops, and the iron horse was firmly established on the landscape, we reach a stage early in the 1880s (the line up to Maritzburg being only two or three years old) when a certain sober stock-taking set in amongst the colonists, and it was found that the brand new ribbon of steel that coiled up from the coast was not quite such a boon and herald of a new era as the colonists had hoped. The colonial railway, the N.G.R. (irreverently nicknamed 'Never Goes Right') was subject to a good deal of satire, if not out-and-out criticism, from the very first. For instance there was the fairly astounding fact that the first trains only knocked off half an hour from the schedule for Mr Welch's horse-drawn mail service, and seeing these were days when railway coaches were of a peculiarly unsprung and boxy variety, there was no guarantee that the journey behind the iron horse was necessarily going to be the more comfortable experience.

Since the speeds attained on what was called the 'Cape' gauge of 3'6" (as against 4'8½" in most of Europe and America) have never been particularly glamorous, we might pause here to ask why those first shrieking little tank engines, who weren't allowed to hit it beyond fifteen miles per hour, couldn't give a better account of themselves. In answering that we have to make one or two points about the topography of Natal, not so obvious to the human eye, but all too obvious to railway engineers, who of course have to restrict gradients and curvature to certain limits.

The fact is that African terrain is of such a vast scale that it swallows height, its huge horizons tend to erase the great altitudes that are contained within them. No-one would claim of Natal that it is 'Alpine' country. Yet that first train to Ladysmith that the Governor and his wife up there at Government House heard whistling its departure at 11 pm, back in 1889, would, by the time it reached Hilton, be only 80 feet lower than the Gotthard pass, and by the time it reached Lidgetton, would be higher than any point on the Gotthard route, or on the Arlberg route, the main line from Zurich to Vienna.

Now I am not trying to claim that Natal *is* in fact Alpine country, or that Swiss and Austrian branch lines don't reach altitudes rather higher than our own. But we are talking after all about what was to become a chief trunk railway, one that for thirty or forty years was to be the chief artery for the Witwatersrand goldfields, until the easier-graded lines were built. What these figures really explain is that the European engineers had far more capital to sink into their broad-guage routes, and so could afford all the elaborate bridging and tunnelling necessary to avoid having to top the crown of the Alps. The Gotthard route, opened in 1882, required a capital outlay of £9 million, the Pietermaritzburg- Ladysmith route, opened in 1886 (20 miles longer than the Gotthard) had to be built and equipped with £1½ million. The drivers of those first trains to Ladysmith, toiling around the curves at Sweetwaters and Winterskloof (even on the electric service today you can hear the flanges squealing) must have felt really taxed to get their trains into Ladysmith by six-thirty next morning.

Small surprise then, that, while Mr Welch's horse cart that disappeared down Polly Shortt's every day had only 54 miles ahead of it, the brand new line from Durban to the capital was in excess of 70 miles. (I hope, by the way I'll be forgiven for using imperial measures for what was after all a thoroughly imperial institution.)

These apologetics for the railway, though, I must confess, only explain half the case. The other half lies wrapped up in the principle of what I call SAR amnesia, a principle rather well expressed by Mr Pinson in the Natal Colonial Assembly in 1888, when he complained —

> The time and expenditure in wages and coal lost in waiting at stations must be very considerable indeed. There is no necessity for it . . . There is not a single thing done, and nothing to stop for, and you look out, and wonder what is the meaning of it.

It's a mystery that remains intact to this day. And it probably explains why the N.G.R. became the butt of all sorts of satire and invention from the day of its inception. Thus for instance the 'Man in the Moon' a gossip columnist in the Natal Mercury, writing in July 1884, gives us this little sketch:

Scene: 1st Class Carriage between Durban and Maritzburg.
Characters: A visitor to the colony and a railway manager.

Visitor: Does the management of this concern allow passengers to give them advice, if it is rendered in a respectful manner?
Manager: The Management is very glad to receive suggestions for the improvement of the railway.
Visitor: Well, it occurs to me it would be well to detach the cow-

catcher from the front of the engine, and hitch it to the rear of the train, for you see, we are not liable to overtake a cow; but what is to prevent a cow trotting up to the rear and butting us off the line?

Collapse of manager.

The colonists were not the breed of men, it seems, to grant 'Romantic License' to a frontier railway. Romanticism really enters railway building with the career of Cecil Rhodes, who instructed the engineers to plan the line over the Zambesi River, (at no matter how much extra cost) to cross at Victoria Falls — 'the passengers must be able to feel the spray on their faces.' But back in Natal in 1884, the colonists were not so enchanted with their new toy, and reviewed it with a very steady realism. True, the citizens of Maritzburg gave a rapturous greeting to the first train, but you can't spend a million or two of public money without certain consequences, and it was in fact when the railway was built that the colonists of Natal, for the very first time, became subject to direct taxation (that prop of government which today, alas, we take for granted.) This was at least one reason why the Colonial Assembly, which met in June 1884 (they used to meet then in Maritzburg's fine old city hall, that was burnt down at the turn of the century) drew such eager public interest. Mr J. Robinson, Member for Durban Borough and founder of the Natal Mercury (and later of course Sir John Robinson and first Prime Minister of Natal) ushered in a vote of no confidence in the government 'as regards the construction and control of railways'. And as he said, 'If you tax the pocket of the people, you raise the keenest interest'.

Now this particular debate proves an excellent portrayal of our little ancestor colony, so we must take a little time to unravel some of the undercurrents to the parliamentary session. Perhaps the vote of no confidence was something like a little bout of sour grapes setting in after an early enthusiasm — that, at any rate, was the tenor of Robinson's speech. 'For years', he said,

> a large majority of the people of this colony believed that railway construction would prove the salvation of this colony. For years a large proportion of the people of this colony believed that the first shriek of the locomotive would be the trumpet call to progress, and that all our difficulties and depressions would vanish with the iron horse. These expectations were not at all unusual. They were not a matter for surprise. Looking to other parts of the world, and seeing what railways have done there, people might well be excused for believing that similar results would be attained here . . . It cannot be said that railway enterprise so far has altogether revolutionised the conditions of this country. As we travel along the railway we still see the same or almost the same stretches of unoccupied coun-

> try, while we see travelling by the side of the railway along the old road the same long lines of heavily laden wagons toiling through the dust and the mire.

This is perhaps a rather stern judgement on something that was only three years old. But it happened that in June 1884, anyone with an axe to grind over the new railway had splendid ammunition for his attack. Natal had proved to the frustrated engineers that it was a less tractable land than its sunny looks gave out. No less than six bridges had failed in the first few years of the small system's career, five of them on the main line itself. The situation was picturesquely summarised for the benefit of the Colonial Secretary by Mr Binns, Member for Victoria County:

> I recommend the hon. gentleman to take passage in an open truck between Camperdown and Botha's Hill, and he will then be able to take a very deliberate survey of those bridges. He will find them, one and all, in a very poor, rotten, decrepit state, standing in every position but the right one, and altogether presenting a most miserable spectacle. He will find some in plasters, the next in splints, and the next in bandages.

And of course, the number-one target for public apprehension was the N.G.R.'s notorious masterpiece, the Viaduct at Inchanga. Now there are a handful of people still living who actually traversed the Inchanga Viaduct (no mean feat, since the last train probably travelled over it in 1894) and no doubt some of the details of the 'notoriety' of the bridge could be checked by oral tradition. It used to tremble so tangibly if any wind sprang up that the long journey across its 571 feet must have been a fairly exquisite torture, especially at that moment when it reached its maximum height of 90 feet. Trains were instructed to stop and wait for a signalman before they actually entered the viaduct, a point at which many passengers elected rather to climb out, and walk across the bridge. It must in fairness be recorded that in fact no train ever did come to grief at Inchanga in the one and a half decades of the viaduct's existence, — the only casualty being a drunk signalman who set off merrily across it one Christmas morning, never to reach the other side . . .

Still, you weren't to know its subsequent safety record back in 1883, when your train launched out from the cliff on to the bridge. What you *did* know was that, unlike American and Canadian viaducts that had the good psychological sense to straddle wide at the foundations, the Inchanga bridge was the same width at the top as at the bottom, so you had no visible assurance of security whatsoever. John Robinson lost no time in labouring this point. 'With reference to these celebrated viaducts', he said, looking meaningfully at the Colonial Secretary,

> I would only ask the honourable gentleman to read the report of the Commissioners in South Australia, to see what iron viaducts ought to be like. He will find that the iron viaducts in that colony, as they are in America, have a width at the top in all cases many times less than the width at the base . . . The breadth of this viaduct of ours is exactly the breadth at the top, and that is what strikes every passenger over it with such a sense of fear.

Another contributing factor in the ordeal of the crossing the viaduct was vividly put by Mr Escombe:

> the frail, fragile, spider-like bridge . . . (is) approached by a sharp curve instead of a straight,

a detail which, he claimed, had the effect of 'throwing the end of the bridge out of plumb, and in an unnatural direction'.

Later, when public pressure grew more strident, the N.G.R. graciously mounted a few buckets of water along the side of the bridge, on the comforting principle that if they shook so much as the train went over that water spilt out of them, then you *knew* the driver was going too fast. But as I say, back in 1883 such reassurances were not to hand, and you launched out over the viaduct knowing not only that six bridges on this miniscule system had failed, but that the consulting engineer who designed the thing was an emanation from that same office that had erected the Tay Bridge, that unfortunate link bridge in Scotland whose collapse in 1879 caused such a stir among the British travelling public. (It happened after the Inchanga Viaduct was built, and when the main line had nearly reached Maritzburg.) Part of the jitteriness that followed the Tay Bridge disaster had of course to do with the fact that the Queen herself had travelled over it only a few months before it came down. But more to the point for Natalians was the fact that it had been violent wind that brought down the Tay bridge, and it was wind that delayed trains at Inchanga, sometimes for two or three hours, while everyone waited for the jangling in the metal structure to subside.

Well, with factors like these in the background, the *Witness* and the *Mercury* who reported the great Railway debate of June 1884, had a field day. One report in the *Mercury* says:

> All eyes are turned towards our railways at present. The public mind has at last been fully awakened to the gravity of the deplorable exposures that are now being made . . .

and it claims to have captured some tell-tale telegrams, found in a public office:

> The district Engineer wires me from Durban that twelve iron bands are broken at Inchanga viaduct.

'Who are "the women" in the railway scandal?', asks the gossip column in the *Witness*. Answer: '*Mis*construction and *Mis*management.'

One editorial says:

> The interest taken is signally demonstrated by the crowded condition of the galleries. It is seldom nowadays that our Senators reach the small hours . . .

The newly taxed public was out to get its money's worth — though actually it turns out that not all the spectators in the public gallery were taxpayers. One columnist, complaining acidly of the crowded house at the railway debate, says

> it's very annoying to find a good portion of the visitor's gallery occupied by boys too young to understand anything . . . some alone, and some brought by thoughtless parents.

I must say that I respectfully differ from this opinion, judging that a Colonial Parliament that could draw the Huck Finns and Tom Sawyers of Pietermaritzburg must have been good stuff — I can hardly imagine our present House of Assembly being the venue for illicit breakaways.

What the public sensed of course was that the 'bridges' controversy floated on a larger current than railway affairs. The entertainment-value of this particular session had to do with the subterranean presence of a larger issue, one all too ready to let Inchanga Viaduct be its symbol. It was an ambiguity spotted soon on by Mr. Green, Member for Durban Borough, who said:

> It would be impossible to exaggerate the importance of the principle which is contained in this bill. Its object is simply to take entirely from the government the most important department under that government, . . . It is in short the old, old story over again. It is Responsible Government dressed up in a new guise.

So John Robinson might claim that

> The Railway Question has eclipsed the Constitutional Question in public interest

but it soon became apparent that the Railway debate provided a

wonderful entrée for the constitutional question in more virulent form.

Now it has to be admitted that the subsequent shape of Natal history has not exactly raised our little local bid for responsible government in the 1880's into a leading South African theme. I'm afraid Natal hasn't cut such a figure on the pages of history that the names of Escombe and Robinson could ring with the same heroic echo of a Washington or a Jefferson. Yet one reason why the Viaduct at Inchanga deserves to be part of the 'lore' of Natal is that the passions that raged round it for a few far-off years were something like those that saw the birth of the great Republic. Not that the colonists were Republican in tendency, but they did want political autonomy, and they did believe they could do a better job with the railway than engineers from some select office in London. So the unfortunate Colonial Secretary, Sir James Mitchell and his four Home-appointed ministers, had to sit squirming in the House under the full blast of colonial criticism.

The Responsible Government faction fielded some very impressive speakers, and none more so than that principle force behind them, Mr Harry Escombe, whose biting style led to intense excitement in the gallery — this becomes clear for example in his reference to the Khat's Kop viaduct on the North Coast line. 'This viaduct' said Escombe

> is unique in its character. It appears to have been built as an experimental bridge, and I suppose on the principle that experiments have to be made on vile bodies, these experimental bridges are built in Natal. There is apparently something so insignificant about the Colony of Natal that engineers are allowed to make experiments here for their own use in years to come.

And in reference to the fact that this structure was at the moment out of operation, he went on

> In the case of this viaduct we find that instead of the girders being made to rest on the ordinary stone abutments, which one would expect they would be, they are made to rest on sloping banks of earth . . . It would seem that in this case the engineers have shown complete ignorance of the ordinary laws of gravitation. They did not seem to understand that the sloping banks would have a tendency to slide in towards the gorge.

Gradually both Robinson and Escombe made it clear to the benches of the government (and of course to the gallery) that there was a real live villain to the piece so far as the bridges were con-

cerned, an unfortunate by the name of Mr Berkley, the Consulting Engineer sent out by the Colonial Office. One hopes that in 1883 he lived in happy ignorance of the way his name was hounded by the galleries and Press offices of Victorian Pietermaritzburg. The tactic was to suggest (of course) that a resident engineer would be a more trustworthy sort of fellow (a good Natal man, etc., etc.). Mr Berkley had made a tour of inspection after the line was completed, but the Report he had submitted was small consolation for those who had to entrust their lives to the N.G.R. and the viaduct at Inchanga. (And we must remember that by this time the Durban members travelled up to Maritzburg by train!)

For Robinson, playing heavily on the word 'responsibility', poor Mr Berkley's efforts more or less made the case for constitutional change:

> . . . as regards the letters of the Crown Agents and of the Consulting Engineer Mr Berkley, a more miserable attempt to evade responsibility and shunt it to other shoulders has seldom been submitted to a deliberative body . . .

and he quotes items from Berkley's report:

> 'Another possible cause of a slight movement of the bracing might be that a clip at the bottom of the columns in piers 1, 4 and 5, where they and the strut are not carried down to the foundation as they should have been, may have a slight tendency to move upwards.'
>
> That, Sir, is a fair sample of the manner in which Mr Berkley deals with the questions submitted by this house last year. He says that if certain things were done, if certain precautions were taken, if certain steps were adopted, then this structure might be safe. But then as a matter of fact there is too much reason to believe that in many cases these precautions and these steps were not adopted, and therefore the whole theory on which Mr Berkley rests his defence falls to the ground . . .

Escombe was even more deft at using the most niggling details to make a very broad point. I quote him at length, because the parliamentary manner here is so accomplished:

> If Mr Berkley is of any value at all as a consulting engineer (said Escombe) he would have found that Nos. 1, 2, 3 and 8 bridges on the main line were all in exactly the same position as No. 5, which had failed, and Khat's Kop, which had also failed. Nos. 1, 2, 3 and 8 were all bridges of the same kind . . . and after Mr Berkley left the colony, they gave way, and they gave way for the same reason that Khat's Kop failed. And is it to be

supposed that we are going to retain the services of a Consulting Engineer who does his work like that? Mr Berkley states that he did not come out here to inspect, but he took a very big fee. And if he did not come out here to inspect he came out to brag, because it is a matter of notoriety that he stood on the Inchanga Bridge with an air of importance that only an engineer can assume, and said 'It requires an office like mine to produce a structure of this character'. I admit it . . .

The colonial secretary interrupted at this point: 'Is it on record?'

It is a matter of public report. The attitude, the words, and the manner of the man could not help impressing themselves upon those who heard the conversation. What shall we say, then, about the bridge which only Mr Berkley's office could produce? Before the Tay Bridge disaster happened there was not a word said about it. But after that disaster, Mr Berkley seemed to have got a little nervous about the structure, because he sent out word that it might be well to look at it, and suggested that the bridge might possibly require some staying. And the Bridge, which was an ornament of engineering, which was referred to as being of a beautiful design because of its simplicity, was found *after* the Tay Bridge disaster to be of doubtful strength . . . The facts are that after the Tay Bridge disaster there were instructions sent out by Mr Berkley for stiffening the bridge with wire stays or some such extraordinary supports. The idea was to put up some sort of rigging to prevent the bridge tumbling over . . . a bridge which could only emanate from the office of Mr Berkley . . . There cannot be any question as to the safety of the bridge when the speed of the trains passing over has come down to two miles an hour, and the trains positively imperil the bridge by coming to stop upon it. The resident engineer, Mr Carr, complains to the General Manager that the engine drivers are actually bringing the trains to stop upon the bridge. Mr Speaker, it is like the story we heard about the other day of a man who went to a fashionable bootmaker, and bought a pair of boots. The next morning he went back and showed the man that the boots had all burst up the sides, when the bootmaker said 'Good God, I believe you have actually been walking in them'. And so the engine drivers have been actually stopping on the bridge. If they travel over it at the rate of ten miles an hour it will tumble to pieces, and if they stop on it, it will tumble to pieces. And for this safety we are indebted to Mr Carr, Mr Berkley, and their experienced staff. The railways in Natal are not the first railways that have been made. There have been other lines of railways constructed, and, if Honourable Members will believe

> me, there is such a thing as well understood rules as regards railway maintenance.

The solution to the whole problem (this came inevitably at the end of an Escombe speech;) was

> to make the men in those five seats responsible to this Council instead of to Downing Street. Until that course is followed there will be no good government of railways or anything else.

Now if the whole bent of Escombe's speech was to persuade 'the gentlemen opposite' that (as he put it) 'the child is out of long frocks', i.e. that the colony was now mature enough to manage its own affairs, it mustn't be thought that he carried all the colony with him. Mr Kershaw, Member for Pietermaritzburg City (the man after whom Kershaw Park is named) was the equal of Escombe in a resounding parliamentary style, and he had no doubt where a vote for Escombe on Railway Affairs might eventually take them. Not that he could ever defend the Government for the bridges it had made. As he said:

> The bridges which have been foisted upon this colony are bridges of a very unique character. They are bridges which were never intended to stand, and could not by any possibility stand. Therefore no one can be surprised that they do not stand . . .

But Kershaw would nevertheless not vote with the motion because, as he said,

> I have a doubt in my own mind as to whether this motion does not assume a far greater political significance when it has tacked to it the support of the Hon. and learned gentleman to whom I have referred. (Escombe.) It aims at destroying the present form of government, with the view of substituting a form peculiar to his own ideas. And because I have no sympathy with the particular form of government which the honourable member has placed before the country, because I have no confidence in the honourable member himself and because I believe that the country has no confidence in him as its political leader, I cannot conscientiously support this motion. With regard to the condition of the railways, it cannot be doubted that there have been blunders committed . . . but supposing that a Responsible Government were in power, would they be free altogether from liability to commit the same blunders . . .?

In the midst of the to-and-fro of the great Railway debate I suddenly discovered, as a complete by-product, the date for the invention of margarine . . . something I had complacently believed to be a twentieth century production. Mr Binns, Member for Victoria County, said he would like to call the Colonial Secretary's attention to the new invention called oleomargarine:-

> He has told us that the torrent of words of the two members for Durban has put his hair on end. I advise him to put it down again by the application of that same oleomargarine.

Now the great Railway debate ended on a note of polite truce; — responsible government was not to come to the colony for another ten years, and when it did come it couldn't quite figure as a vastly significant event in a land where, after all, Cecil Rhodes seemed to be able to rouse fierce ardour for the colonies in the Home Country simply by calling them 'Empire' and yet could manoeuvre with remarkable independence in the sphere of colonial action. One fact that did emerge, though, from every quarter of the House as the debate continued, was that the new General Manager of Railways, straight out of the box from Scotland, had lost no time in becoming the colony's mightiest Civil Servant, and that mere governments could only gain facts and figures about bridges, etc., according to the whim of this Durban-based colossus. As Mr Robinson pertinently noted towards the end of the debate:

> I am afraid that the General Manager does not fully realise that he is managing a department which is a public department, and that he is in every sense of the term a public servant.

Now as it was entirely by the decision of this officer that the Inchanga Viaduct was kept standing, and entirely by his decision that it eventually came down, we ought to take a closer look at him. David, later Sir David Hunter, had come up the ladder of life the noble 19th-Century way, all the way from the loco-shop floors back in his native Scotland, but with his technical thoroughness he brought a solid rhetoric that tended to confound his seniors, and must even put us somewhat in awe, who have no longer that confidence that technological advance and cultural advance are necessarily bedfellows.

I notice that, on the night that saw the great Railway debate opening in Maritzburg, the General Manager, wonderfully indifferent to the wrangles of his bosses, was attending a Railway Reunion and Concert, in the Philharmonic Hall, Durban. The *Mercury* reported it next morning:

> Mr Hunter was the ever genial host to the occasion. The concert was quite a success throughout. It opened with a quartette by the Orpheus Glee Club, whose members seem to improve with each public performance. Lorenzi's 'Love Serenade' was sung with remarkable fidelity of expression. 'The British Lion' was sung by Mr Lewis, while Mr Watt rendered the fine song 'The Flying Dutchman' like the true artist he is . . .

It's a happy image, but as a matter of fact it might not have been every man's dream to serve under David Hunter. The recent Railway budget endorses the system whereby if a state organisation runs at a loss then the whole country must pay for it. Not so with nineteenth-century Mr Hunter. As an exponent of the hard puritan line in economic affairs there was under him no question but that if railway revenues went down, then so did wages (what must look to our century a sort of sentimental old-world fad!) As he said in his Report for the lean year of 1886, when revenue dropped to £148 000, the depression had required throughout the payroll of the N.G.R., 'in every case, personal pecuniary sacrifice.' On the other hand, it was probably only in the Nineteenth century that those huge windfalls could occur, that might change a whole economic picture overnight. In 1887 the first goldfields were consolidated in the Transvaal, and N.G.R. revenue was up to £257 000, an increase of 75% in one year, entailing, one hopes, in every case, 'personal pecuniary gain.'

I don't know that Natal possesses a comparable instance of that sort of monumental ability to combine Puritan ethics and the Spirit of Progress, those twin horses of the dynamism of the Victorians. This point can be made (a little paradoxically perhaps) if we listen to Sir David Hunter on the speed of his trains. There was a never-ending chorus of complaint from both public and government on this score, and as Mr Murray said in the House in 1888:

> The General Manager of Railways is, like myself, a Scotchman, and I believe it takes 24 hours for a Scotchman to see a joke, and no doubt if we pound away at the General Manager in time he will meet the requirements of the country . . .

(Those were the happy days, by the way, when 'the country' meant Natal!) Well, making a joke of anything is one way of letting oneself off the hook, a method quite foreign to David Hunter, but one used by his over-lord in the House, the Colonial Minister of Railways. In reply to the member for Eshowe, for instance, on the extraordinary slowness of the train down to Durban, the Minister answered in this vein:

> What I would say to the Honourable Member for Eshowe is that we regard that part of the country as so beautiful that we do not like to hurry through it too much, knowing how the beauties of the North Coast line are advertised. We like to give passengers time to view these beauties . . . The Honourable Member may have been playing cards, and he may not have known what shunting was going on when there was delay. . .

Now a David Hunter reply was a very different sort of thing. The issue came to a head when an Imperial Commission visited Natal at the end of the Boer War, and put in a report that took the N.G.R. to task on several counts, not least the speed of its services. I wonder if the Commissioners could have foreseen the splendidly weighty response they would draw from the General Manager, obviously going to take more than 24 hours to see any joke in this . . . He starts by saying that

> A more unfavourable time for an enquiry into the organisation and working of the railways could hardly have been chosen . . . (it was made) during three months when the heaviest traffic that was ever carried over the Main Line had to be dealt with, and great irregularity occurred in the handing of trains over the Border from the Transvaal, naturally disarranging our services.

And on the question of Speed:

> I cannot help expressing regret (he wrote) that the Commissioners should have seen fit to satirise the great principle of working these Railways which has secured so large an immunity from serious accident, as the opinion of every responsible officer who has been connected with these lines is absolutely unanimous as to the propriety and security of the speed regulations prescribed by the management. Since the original lines were laid down, the maximum speed on the best portions of the main line has been gradually increased from 15 to 30 miles per hour, such action being *progressively* taken as the *improvements* on the line warranted.

You will notice that this slow and stupendous locomotion through the hills of Natal is defended in the characteristic language of 'progress' and 'improvement'. From 15 to 30 miles per hour — there you saw the unfolding design so dear to men of David Hunter's stamp. The myth of empire endorsed the Darwinian philosophy. I am inclined to say that he was a 'social Darwinist' as the disciples of Herbert Spenser were called. But before I sum him up by any neat label or category, I'd better heed the advice with which he closes his letter to the Imperial Commis-

sion — he does it in that grand manner that only the Victorians could muster. He says:

> Scattered throughout the Commissioner's Report, I find expression given to numerous maxims, principles and watchwords, with which I have no desire to quarrel; they are the friends of my youth, and I do not wish when I am old to depart from them. But in my judgement, there is nothing quite so mischievous in the practical conduct of affairs as the adoption of *doctrinaire* methods, and the application of 'principles' and 'maxims' to circumstances to which they are not applicable, and my experience has taught me not to 'deal in watchwords overmuch' . . .

Now while I doubt that I would have been bold enough to correct to his face a General Manager of such solid proportion, the fact remains nevertheless that the chief literary production of Sir David Hunter's railway, the *NGR Magazine* (journal of the Natal Government Railways Lecture and Debating Society) quite abounds with 'maxims' and 'principles' and little pious homilies that, even in Edwardian times, keeps its readership on a sound 19th century path. An epigram over the first edition, quoted from John Bright, says disarmingly 'Railways have rendered more services, and have received less gratitude, than any other institution in the world'. And it is full of little pieces in such vein as 'The honest and upright performance of individual duty is the glory of manly character.' 'Grumbling is the grit that makes hot boxes on the wheels of enterprise'. To those who had no hope of ever becoming General Manager there was this little piece of comfort:

> Do what you can, being what you are;
> Shine like a glow-worm if you cannot be a star,
> Work like a pulley if you cannot be a crane,
> Be a wheel greaser if you cannot drive a train.

These bits of wisdom aside, the actual contents of the magazine can only raise admiration for the way the doctrine of self-betterment infused a working-man's journal. I'd like to know whether any modern counterpart could product anything like it. In one 1905 edition for example there is an article on X-rays, (illustrated with bony pictures of the General Manager's hands), a Lecture by Mr J. McConnochie on the working of a large Goods Depot, Prize Essay entitled 'The Relative Importance of Distance, Grade and Curvature in Railway Working', an article on *Human Physiology*, Part One of a series, from Cassell's new 'Popular Educator', and one in a series on the Union-Castle Royal Mail Steamships — 'this month RMS Kenilworth Castle.'

In March of 1906 there appears an article by John William James (fireman) entitled 'Thrift. Should it be encouraged among Railway Employees', and of course there is no question as to Fireman James' reply — it jolly well should! He sorts out mankind in a pretty robust manner, one which must have made him beloved of the N.G.R. management. He says

> Society mainly consists of two classes, the savers and the wasters, the provident and the improvident, the haves and the have-nots.

It's rather like a sort of secular doctrine of the elect, but with the strange added authority of coming from a fireman.

David Hunter's own philosophy, in the same vein, is there in the first edition, the inaugural lecture of the Natal Government Railways Lecture and Debating Society. This lecture is a marvelous hunting-ground for anyone wanting a taste of that ethos that had taken railway entrepreneurs from the Atlantic to the Pacific, from South America to the wastes of Siberia. For instance, we find that leading tenet of Victorian mythology, the notion that humble beginnings might lead to mighty ends, no small moral after all, in a tale that was being told by the General Manager himself!

> . . . I should like all the lads in our Natal Railway Service to acquaint themselves with that great Railway hero — the father of us all — George Stephenson, and to emulate the splendid courage and industry of one who, first a herd-boy, and afterwards stoker of a colliery engine at a shilling a day, came by his genius, and his patience, and application, to be the virtual creator of the vast railway systems of the world as they exist today. . . . we ought ever to recall with honour the name of (he) who, with grim valour, fought our early battles . . . put to flight legions of unprogressive and retarding influences and bequeathed to us a noble heritage —

I must say I fairly held my breath at this stage to see if it would come, and yes, there it came, absolutely on time

> — the greatest civilizing agency the world has ever known.

Well! Sir David Hunter, I might say, was chairman of the South African Congregational Union and President of the Caledonian Society, but apparently those mystical forces were entirely outrivalled! It was an era no doubt when you could feel that the visible signs of commercial expansion and your own ethical demeanour all tied up in one holy knot. No wonder it was Bishop Colenso, with his new 'evolutionary' way of reading the Pentateuch, who blessed the first train into Pietermaritzburg. Since Sir David's

railway was charged with such philosophic splendour, we don't feel surprised to hear him pronouncing that the railway system 'had of course to depend for its development and working upon those who, *by natural selection*, had become allied with it.' (I can't help remarking that in these Darwinian terms, natural selection on the N.G.R. had a very Scots appetite — as Professor Brookes used to say, if you shouted out 'Mac' on an N.G.R. platform, you'd have heads popping out from every office.)

And if you wanted to see 'natural selection' determining the survival of species, you didn't have to travel to one of the newly founded game-reserves. It was all happening at the loco sheds at Greyville:

> 'In the time of Mr Milne, (said the General Manager) our first Locomotive Superintendent, we had the advance, from the original small but capable engines of Kitson and Stephenson, to the well-known Dubs engine. Then Mr Reid, successfully, and in the face of many difficulties, (always the important clause) produced the powerful machine which bears his name, and which pulled us through a very critical period; and now Mr Hendrie has given us the fine tender-engines which we know as the Hendrie 'A' and 'B', engines designed to cover, and giving every promise of covering, the fresh developments in front of us. Each successive step has been the result of much discussion and consideration and, it may be added, has occasioned much anxious thought and care.

(I may add here by way of giving some vindication to the Hunter scheme of things that some of these Hendrie engines gave over 70 years of service, and have only just been retired. Can you imagine a modern machine for public transport being built for such a life-span!)

A public servant like David Hunter was perhaps fortunate in that his retirement came before 20th century economics made it clear that railways would increasingly have to be justified in other terms than natural selection. Even as he spoke the Natal government was debating the maintenance of non-profitable branch-lines, and had come to a conclusion hardly in line with old-style mercantilism — namely that they were of the sort of social benefit that couldn't be measured in revenue, and would have to be supported by taxation. Besides, natural selection was beginning to close in on the General Manager himself, not only because he was fast reaching retirement age, but because the government of 1904 was getting thoroughly alarmed at the size of its major public servant. Hunter seemed to have outlasted the whole succession of ministers and prime ministers, and his words were more sought

after by the press than those of the gentlemen of the legislature themselves.

In fact if one reads between the lines of the assembly debates concerning the building of the Engineer's office in Pietermaritzburg, the Loop Street building that is now the Central Charge Office (some of you may know it), one soon realises that this fine period building was meant originally not as an Engineer's office at all, but as a sort of Maritzburg blandishment to bring the General Manager up here and break him in gently to the idea of government direction. This issue led to some marvelous Durban-versus-Maritzburg faction fighting in the House. The eloquent Mr O'Meara (Member for Pietermaritzburg City) asked of the Minister for Railways:

> Now I would like my honourable friend to tell us what is lost in Durban by the general manager not residing there. These Durban gentlemen pay none of the railway carriage. Not a single merchant in Durban pays one single sixpence in railway rates . . . I tell these gentlemen they pay nothing at all, they simply pay upon what they use in their own houses for their own consumption. What did we find Sir David Hunter doing (and this is why I want the general manager removed from that unholy influence with which Sir David Hunter is surrounded in the *town* of Durban.) We find him carrying sugar for the planters for 15 years and *giving* them threepence a ton for sending it to the railway to carry. Is that a management this country is prepared to put up with? No sir, I hold that the proper place for the General Manager is in this *city*, where he can be controlled by the Government . . .

(Note the emphasis put on the technical fact that Durban is 'town', Pietermaritzburg 'city'.) Natural selection was favouring Durban so strongly that it was really the Maritzburg faction who were building attractive buildings to try and alter the centre of gravity of the N.G.R. To further Durban protests Mr O'Meara finally replied:

> I want to know who is running this country. Are these few gentlemen from Durban going to govern this country, or are we to be governed through the general manager of railways? — Now we have had some experience of this great gentleman, Sir David Hunter, that we hear so much about . . . I have the greatest respect for Sir David Hunter as a private gentleman, but as a public servant that gentleman ought either to have been pensioned off ten years ago or he ought to have been brought to Maritzburg and controlled by the government of the day.

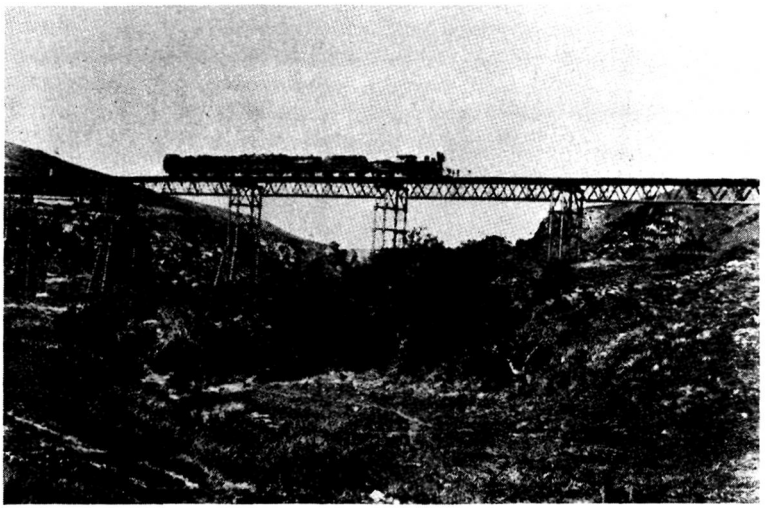
Sir David retired before this little saga had played itself out, but that the 'unholy influence' of Durban was still powerful is suggested in the fact that the building became merely the Engineer's Office, prior to becoming, eventually, what I might call a citadel for foreign rule.

Well, some years before this, the process of natural selection was, I'm afraid, closing in on the Inchanga Viaduct. Members of the public still suffered little chill spasms of apprehension when their trains were held up one or two hours at Inchanga, but the Government reply to any complaint (following the instructions of the General Manager) was to assure them that there was no cause for danger (one parliamentary response assured the assembly that the maximum deflection in a strong wind was two inches! — which I must say I don't find too comforting a reassurance.) The godlike office of the General Manager of Railways is perhaps demonstrated in the fact that even as the appropriate minister was making these claims in Parliament in May 1889, Hunter had already penned in April of 1889 the words that eventually brought the Inchanga Viaduct down. We find this in his Report for that year, where, after solemn assurances that it is in good order in every respect, he goes on (rather saving face, we can't help thinking)

> Having in view the serious embarrassment which would arise were the Viaduct to be rendered unfit for use from any cause, and looking to the greatly increased weight of traffic and to the employment of heavier engines, it was felt that a structure of this character, although possibly fit enough for the light work for which it was originally intended, was hardly one to be relied upon as a permanent link in the Main line under the present changed conditions.

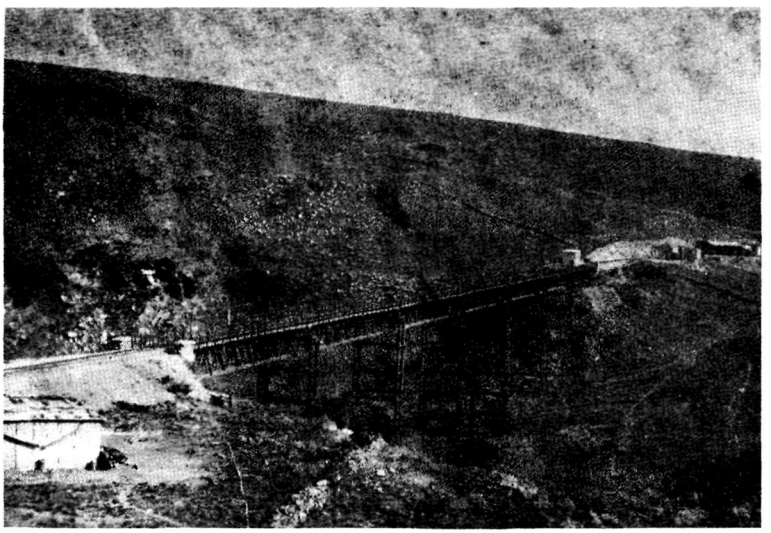
There is some confusion as to when it was eventually closed to use, although the deviation that was built, and which you can see as you go past on the National road, was supposed to have been opened for use in 1893. A Supply Bill of 1896 recommends its dismantling and stacking, with the result that there are bits and pieces of the Inchanga viaduct incorporated into many bridges throughout the province. At the moving of this Bill, there were spoken the only words I've ever come across that actually said something complimentary about the bridge. These came from Mr Baynes, Member for Pietermaritzburg:

> I now wish to say, at the risk of incurring another personal lecture from the Minister of Lands and Works, that I would suggest the Vote be struck out. I think it would be a pity to remove such a beautiful feature in the landscape, and I move



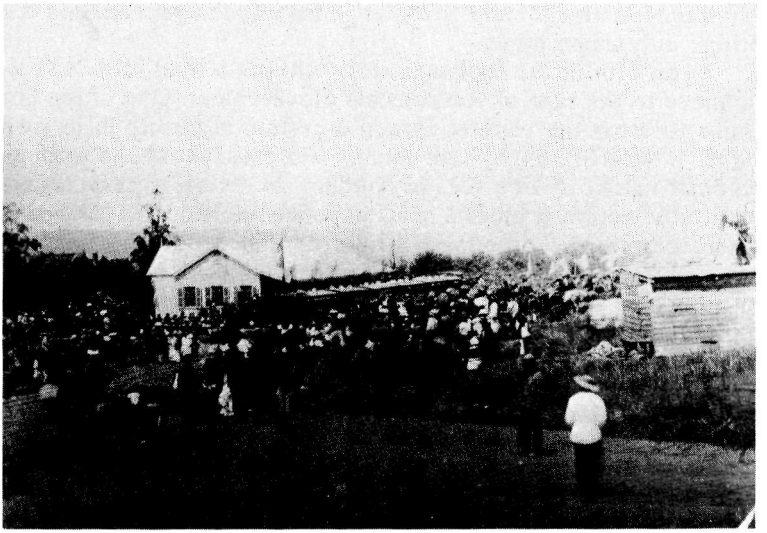
Natal Archives

The viaduct buttressed up with extra iron stays after the Tay Bridge disaster.



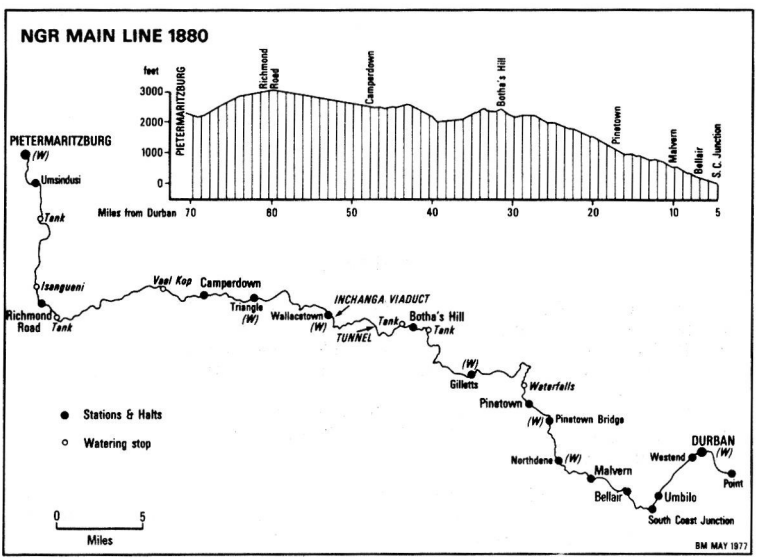
Natal Archives

The brand new viaduct, with Wallacetown station at the far end. The Inchanga valley has been heavily excavated to accommodate the present two-lane national highway, but earthworks at the station site can still be seen.



University of Natal Library, Pietermaritzburg

A very rare photograph. The ceremony to greet the first train into Pietermaritzburg, 1st December 1880. In the back left the brickwork of the Governor's Residence can be seen — today's Teachers' Training College.



that the item be struck out.

Mr Baynes's amendment, I regret to say, was negatived, and the bridge duly came down.

I can't finish the Inchanga story without a final little N.G.R. tailpiece to the saga of Responsible Government. One of the last trains to cross the viaduct earned a certain notoriety in its own right. It was driven by one Jimmy Hargreaves (sound enough colonial name) driving Kitson Number 26. Mr Hargreaves gave 'natural selection' a bit of a head start one afternoon in June 1893 when, despite the time-table strictures that he do the Durban-Maritzburg trip in four hours and fifteen minutes, he took things into his own hands and rattled it off in two hours and eighteen minutes, four minutes faster in fact than the electric mail trains of today. The General Manager, it was reported, was greatly perturbed, but there were special circumstances to this journey that checked his wrath. 'Responsible Government had been granted to the colony and documents in connection therewith were required to be taken to the capital by special train, to ensure early delivery.' This seems to have softened the General Manager's first reaction, and he decided not to enforce his original order to 'sack the driver!'

University of Natal
Pietermaritzburg

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[2] 1884 Railway Debate: *Legislative Council Debates for the Colony of Natal, Vol. VI* (Thereafter see debates under 'Railway Management Bill' in volumes for consecutive years).
[3] *The N.G.R. Magazine* (Journal of the Natal Government Railways Lecture and Debating Society), Editions of 1905 and 1906 available in the Natal Archives, Pietermaritzburg.

Note: The photographic research, preparation of prints and the map were the work of Mr Bruno Martin of the Cartographic Unit, Department of Geography, University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg.

AMABILIS INSANIA:

THE IMAGERY OF POETIC INSPIRATION IN HORACE'S ODES

by A. H. GOSLING

> 'For the poet is a light and winged and holy thing, and there is no invention in him until he has been inspired and is out of his senses, and the mind is no longer in him: when he has not attained to this state, he is powerless and unable to utter his oracles.'[1]

It is no mere convention of Greek and Latin poetry that some divine source of inspiration is regularly invoked, and that the creative process is seen as 'divine madness'. Poets have ever sought to understand their own craft, and to communicate their understanding, so that an invocation is not only an appeal for inspiration, but also a statement of the poet's belief about the source of his inspiration. This goes deeper than religious feeling (though it no doubt has its origin in the tendency of the early Greeks to see every aspect of life in divine terms) and beyond religious understanding. Not only is the poet taken out of himself by the act of creation; he is set apart, also, from the rest of mankind.

The imagery of this 'separateness' is frequently the imagery of nature, particularly nature that is wild and remote. Lucretius' invocation of Venus at the beginning of the *De Rerum Natura* is a celebration of the urgent, joyous life force, of creation and regeneration. The Homeric poems surge with images of the sea, vast, grey and lonely; light and dancing and fish-filled; wine-dark, loud-roaring, deep-eddying. Homeric landscapes are often wild and remote: stony little islands, bare craggy peaks, lonely caves, dense forests that are alive and secret with the shimmering movement of leaves and light and the silent presence of wild creatures. Vergil has not only absorbed the Homeric touch, but has added a new dimension with his close observation of the Italian countryside. There is, in fact, despite a schoolroom tradition that 'the ancients were not very interested in nature', scarcely a poet of Greece or Rome who cannot supply examples of imagery drawn from nature, and while some are no more than set-pieces, many achieve the sublime.

Two things should be remembered in any consideration of nature imagery in a classical writer — particularly Horace, in a sense the most conformist of classical poets. One is that the influence of literary tradition is far more compelling than we, with our modern cult of individualism, can readily comprehend, so that to a great extent the classical appreciation of nature is literary and

derived, rather than personally observed. The second is that there is no romanticism in classical poetry, no Wordsworthian nature-worship. Nature, for a writer like Horace, is not seen and enjoyed for itself, and does not of itself instil rapture. It is rather as background to some intense emotional experience that nature is apprehended. We are back where we started, with the association of nature imagery and the divine madness. Let us look, for illustration, at two passages where Horace speaks directly of his poetic inspiration.

(i) Descende caelo et dic age tibia
regina longum Calliope melos,
seu voce nunc mavis acuta
seu fidibus citharaque Phoebi.

auditis, an me ludit amabilis
insania? audire et videor pios
errare per lucos, amoenae
quos et aquae subeunt et aurae.

Descend from heaven, and come, play on your flute, Queen Calliope, a lingering melody; or sing, if you prefer, with clear voice, or to the strings and lyre of Phoebus. Friends, do you hear, or does some lovely madness mock me? I seem to hear, and to wander through hallowed groves, where the lovely waters slip by, and the breezes stir.[2]

(ii) Quo me, Bacche, rapis tui
plenum? quae nemora aut quos agor in specus,
velox mente nova? quibus
antris egregii Caesaris audiar

aeternum meditans decus
stellis inserere et consilio Iovis?
dicam insigne, recens, adhuc
indictum ore alio. non secus in iugis

exsomnis stupet Euhias,
Hebrum prospiciens et nive candidam
Thracen ac pede barbaro
lustratam Rhodopen, ut mihi devio

ripas et vacuum nemus
mirari libet. o Naiadum potens
Baccharumque valentium
proceras manibus vertere fraxinos,

nil parvum aut humili modo,
nil mortale loquar. dulce periculum est,
o Lenaee, sequi deum
ingentem viridi tempora pampino.

> Whither, Bacchus, do you snatch me away, filled with yourself? To what groves or grottoes am I driven, swift with new inspiration? In what caves shall I be heard, thinking how to set among the stars and in the council of Jupiter the eternal glory of illustrious Caesar? I shall sing of what is noble, fresh, unsung as yet by other lips. Just as the sleepless Bacchanal stands in rapture on the mountain-ridge, looking out over Hebrus and Thrace, glistening with snow, or Rhodope, traversed by alien feet, so do I love to leave the beaten tracks and gaze in wonder at river-banks and unfrequented groves. O Lord of Naiads, and of Bacchanals that have the power to uproot mighty ash-trees with their hands: nothing small, or in lowly strain, nothing mortal will I sing. Sweet peril it is, O Bacchus, to follow the god, wreathing my brow in green-growing vine leaves.[3]

It is a truism that Horace invites and yet defies translation. His precision in choice and positioning of words, his perfect rhythmic control, his exploitation of sound and sense and of rhetorical colour, tend to be pedantic if imitated in English, while his directness and (often deceptive) simplicity of thought can end up as prosaic in translation. This is not the place for translators' excuses, though in passing I would urge even the reader with no Latin to try reading these extracts aloud, to feel something of their sound and rhythm. The major problem in translating, from the point of view of our present consideration, is the phrase 'amabilis insania', Horace's version of the Greek *theia mania,* 'divine madness'. 'Fond illusion', which is generally preferred by translators, misses the sharpness of the oxymoron: 'amabilis' is all that is gentle, lovely, pleasing, while 'insania' is harsh, plain 'unsoundness of mind'. The contrast in meaning is echoed by the contrast in the sound of the two words, an effect which is enhanced by their position, the gentler 'amabilis' at the 'dying fall' of one line, and 'insania' starkly emphasized at the beginning of the next. It is just this contrast, this paradox, that seems to me to lie at the root of Horace's understanding of his poetic art, and therefore to be reflected in his imagery of separation.[4]

Similar intensity is to be found in Odes I.23, where again the imagery of the wild speaks of a depth of emotion outside and beyond the normal and everyday emotion, so all-engulfing that the poet is taken out of himself and set apart from his ordinary surroundings.

> Vitas hinnuleo me similis, Chloë,
> quaerenti pavidam montibus aviis
> matrem non sine vano
> aurarum et silvae metu.
> nam seu mobilibus veris inhorruit

adventus foliis seu virides rubum
dimovere lacertae,
et corde et genibus tremit.
atqui non ego te tigris ut aspera
Gaetulusve leo frangere persequor:
tandem desine matrem
tempestiva sequi viro.

You shun me, Chloë, like a fawn, seeking its timid mother in the pathless mountains, with needless panic at the breezes and woods. For it quivers at the approach of spring, with the quivering of the leaves, or when the green lizards thrust aside the bramble; it trembles in its heart and in its limbs. Yet I do not pursue you like a savage tiger, or a Gaetulian lion, to crush you. Leave off following your mother at last, now you are ripe for a man.

Many of Horace's evocative glimpses of nature are closely intertwined with allegorized myth. His use of mythological themes and mythological creatures, besides reflecting his involvement in the literary tradition, adds a further dimension to his understanding of the whole creative process. One of his best-known Odes starts with a description of the coming of spring, in just such a blend of closely-observed physical detail and imaginative personification and allegory.

Solvitur acris hiems grata vice veris et Favoni,
trahuntque siccas machinae carinas;
ac neque iam stabulis gaudet pecus aut arator igni,
nec prata canis albicant pruinis.
iam Cytherea choros ducit Venus imminente Luna,
iunctaeque Nymphis Gratiae decentes
alterno terram quatiunt pede, dum graves Cyclopum
Volcanus ardens urit officinas.
nunc decet aut viridi nitidum caput impedire myrto
aut flore, terrae quem ferunt solutae.
nunc et in umbrosis Fauno decet immolare lucis,
seu poscat agna sive malit haedo.

Keen winter is relaxing its grip, with the welcome change of spring and the west wind. The winches are hauling down the dry keels to the water, and no longer now do the beasts delight in their stable, or the ploughman in his fire, and the meadows are not white with hoarfrost. Now Cytherean Venus leads her dancing bands, with the moon overhead, and the comely Graces, joining hands with Nymphs, strike the earth with dancing feet, while glowing Vulcan makes the mighty forges of the Cyclopes blaze. Now is the time to wreath the gleaming head

> with spring-green myrtle, or with flowers that the earth, newly-released,brings forth. Now too is the time to make offerings to Fannus in shady groves, whether he demands a lamb, or prefers a kid.[5]

Another instance of the interplay of myth, allegory and imagery of which Horace is so fond is Odes III, 4. After the invocation to the muse (quoted above), the poem goes on to relate miraculous happenings in Horace's youth, indicative of the protection of the Muses, which set him apart from danger, or rather let him pass unscathed through danger, as part of the creative experience. The fact that similar marvellous experiences are attributed to numerous important personages of Greek mythology, and that the whole Ode bears a close resemblance to one of Pindar's[6], has embarrassed some critics, and caused others to take Horace too lightly. It must be understood that a myth is not a static, established thing, but a vital, creative force. With its own past associations, it is a direct way for the poet to evoke a mood or response, while at the same time, with each new association, the myth itself grows and evolves. Thus, in drawing on an old fable, and setting it in his native Apulia, or at Baiae, the Roman Brighton, or in the Battle of Philippi (at which he fought, with small personal credit), Horace is not plagiarising, but is trying to convey his own understanding of the creative possession that dominates him and sets him apart.

The reader who knows his Horace may wonder at the choice of this apparently staid, conservative poet of the establishment, for a discussion of 'divine madness'. All too often the judgement passed on Horace is that he is a careful, skilful craftsman, but 'amabilis' rather than inspired. He himself could laugh at arty excess:

> Because Democritus believes that native genius is worth any amount of piddling art, and will not allow a place on Mount Helicon to poets with rational minds, a good many will not take the trouble to trim their nails and their beards; they haunt solitary places, and keep away from the public baths. For they will gain the repute and title of poets, they think, if they never submit to the ministrations of the barber Licinus a head that all the hellebore of all the Anticyras in the world could never reduce to sanity.[7]

Yet of all Roman poets, it is Horace who, as I have tried to show, is most explicit about his inspiration and his awareness of being set apart by his creative genius, and who best understands the eternal process by which a created work is never finished, but goes on shaping and inspiring fresh creativity. The Ode with which he closed his collection[8] shows unequivocally the seriousness of his approach to his work.

Exegi monumentum aere perennius
regalique situ pyramidum altius,
quod non imber edax, non Aquilo impotens
possit diruere aut innumerabilis
annorum series et fuga temporum.
non omnis moriar multaque pars mei
vitabit Libitinam: usque ego postera
crescam laude recens. . . .

I have finished a monument more enduring than bronze, and loftier than the royal structure of the pyramids, which not eroding rain, not raging north wind, can destroy, nor the innumerable procession of the years, nor the flight of the ages. I shall not wholly die; the great part of me shall escape the goddess of Death. Still I shall grow, ever fresh with the praise of time to come.[9]

University of Natal
Durban

NOTES

[1] Plato, *Ion* 534[e], translated B. Jowett.
[2] Odes III.4.1-8. Unless otherwise stated, translations are my own.
[3] Odes III.25.
[4] There is, for most Roman writers, a further dimension to the concept of the poet whose inspiration isolates him from ordinary men. The 'vates' is to be 'utilis urbi' (Hor. Epist. II.1.124). Thus what for the modern reader is something of an embarrassment — namely, that Horace frequently uses his lyric verse as a vehicle for public or political comment — would for Horace himself be the main justification for writing poetry at all.
[5] Odes I.4.1-12.
[6] The First Pythian Ode. The parallels, and Horace's creative use of his Greek sources, are fully discussed in Eduard Fraenkel's *Horace*, (Oxford), 1957, pp.273-285.
[7] Ars Poetica, 295-301, translated T. S. Dorsch.
[8] Books I-III of the Odes were published together and were clearly intended to be regarded as a unity, representative of Horace's achievement as a lyric poet. He then turned to a completely different sphere of poetic expression, the homespun philosophy of Epistles I. It was with reluctance, and at the prompting of Augustus, that he again attempted lyric poetry. Book IV of the Odes was published more than ten years after Books I-III.
[9] Odes III.30.1-8

THE IMPORTANCE OF 'VOORSLAG':

ROY CAMPBELL, WILLIAM PLOMER AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOUTH AFRICAN LITERATURE

by ROBIN HALLETT

A photograph[1], taken exactly fifty years ago, of three young men on a beach south of Durban. On the left, William Plomer, bespectacled, short dark wavy hair, a large open face, the mouth firm yet mobile, hinting at ironical humour, the eyes gazing concentratedly at some object to the right of the photographer. On the right, Laurens van der Post, the only one of the three to be wearing a tie, short tousled hair, a strong fresh boyish face, the eyes deep seated. And in the centre Roy Campbell, drawn back, shoulders sagging in comparison to the erect posture of his companions, bush hat in hand, neatly bearded, a large dome of a forehead, hair receding, eyes narrowing as if to gaze against the glare of the veld, faint droop to the edges of the mouth, giving to the face a certain mark of sternness, of hardness. A historic photograph in the annals of South African literature, for these three young men — Campbell the oldest was no more than twenty five, while Plomer was twenty three, van der Post only twenty one — each possessed in their different ways that 'instinctive and extraordinary capacity for imaginative creation' implied by the term 'genius'. Sooner or later all three of them were to abandon the land of their birth but not before they had marvellously enriched the literature of English-speaking South Africa. Their coming together during the Natal winter of 1926 in one of the literary backwaters of the English-speaking world, represents one of those conjunctions, apparently coincidental, in reality magnetic and creative, that occur in the development of all literary cultures. Their conjunction bore fruit in the establishment of the literary magazine, *Voorslag*, whose first appearance in June 1926 may well be regarded as one of the few really exciting events in the history of South African literature. To understand how this came about, something must be said of the early life of both Campbell and Plomer.

Campbell came of a family that had already left its mark on the colony of Natal. His grandfather, a Scots railway engineer, had come out in the 1840's as a pioneer settler. One of his uncles, Marshall, had played a prominent part in laying the foundations of the sugar industry. Roy's father, Samuel Campbell, became one of Durban's leading doctors — a Zulu newspaper described him as 'the most popular gentleman in Natal' — and was one of the founders of the Technical College in Durban, later partly incorporated into Howard College for the training of engineers. 'We have never', Roy Campbell proudly proclaimed, 'had a

shopkeeper, lawyer, politician or parson in our family, only soldiers, scholars, athletes, poets, doctors and farmers'. 'My father', he remarked of his boyhood, 'educated us primarily so that we should be able to enjoy our lives. We had the run of vast tracts of wild country both on the Natal estates and in Rhodesia, with horses, guns and as many books as we wanted to buy, except novels.' Poetry formed a significant strand in the family tradition: Roy's grandfather produced 'very lively verse', while his father was unusually sympathetic to his son's literary ambitions. For an aspiring poet these early years in Natal were marvellously stimulating. Campbell's luck held, when at the age of eighteen he came to England for the first time. It was certainly fortunate for him that he failed to gain admission to Oxford — a conventional academic education would have cramped his wild romantic style — but he lived near the university long enough to meet and make friends with some of the most original young men of his day, among them the composer William Walton and T.W. Earp, then 'the uncrowned king of Oxford' and esteemed by Campbell in later life as 'the finest wit and most exquisite literary critic alive'. Walton introduced his exotic friend 'Zulu' to the *avant-garde* of literary London, the Sitwells, T.S. Eliot and Wyndham Lewis, while Earp took him to Paris and made him aware of Rimbaud and Baudelaire. Failing to get into Oxford, Campbell began reading on his own with that passionate voracity that is a sure index of a vigorous and original mind. Nor were his interests confined to poetry: Darwin, Freud and Nietzsche were devoured with as much relish as the Elizabethan dramatists and the French symbolists. From Oxford he went to London and plunged into what he later described as that 'strange underworld of indigence and folly known as Bohemia'. To his English contemporaries he seemed 'a wild dominion boy making rather too big a noise for himself in the bars'[2]. London he abandoned from time to time for the south of France where he was able to indulge his taste for such hyper-virile pursuits as water-jousting and bull-fighting. This legendary youth ended appropriately enough with a romantic marriage to a talented art student of exceptional beauty and a retreat to a cottage in a remote part of Wales where Roy supported his wife and baby daughter by poaching, used his father's allowance for buying books, and set to work on a long narrative poem, *The Flaming Terrapin*. Few modern readers are likely to have the patience or the inclination to work through these fifteen hundred lines of rhyming couplets, but, sampling the poem in small doses, one can understand why T.E. Lawrence, whom Campbell had met at Augustus John's, should have declared in recommending the poem to the publisher Jonathan Cape: 'Normally rhetoric so bombastic would have sickened me. But what originality, what energy, what freshness and enthusiasm, and what a riot of glorious imagery

and colour! Magnificent I call it.' Many reviewers shared Lawrence's enthusiasm. It was a marvellous antidote to what one English critic described as the 'shabby gentility' of contemporary English poetry; while in France, Campbell was compared to Marlowe and Rimbaud. It was an intoxicating overture to the poet's career.

No wonder, then, that in returning to South Africa in 1925 Campbell could grandiloquently proclaim:

> My words, O Durban, round the world are blown
> Where I alone, of all your sons are known.
>
> *The Wayzgoose*

But poetry is rarely a money-spinner and Campbell at first was faced with the necessity of supporting his family. At this point a wealthy young South African, Lewis Reynolds, the son of a local sugar magnate, came up with a practical suggestion. Reynolds had been at Oxford, developed a taste for modern literature and was prepared to put up the money for a literary journal, which Campbell was to edit. At the same time he helped the Campbells to find accommodation in a seaside bungalow, sometimes occupied by the painter, Edward Roworth, close to the Reynolds family estate, Umdoni Park. Campbell's friend, Wyndham Lewis, had already launched a number of tough satirical journals, the latest of which was provocatively entitled *Blast*. Wyndham Lewis's example must have been at the back of Campbell's mind when so aggressive a title as *Voorslag* (Whip-lash) was chosen for the new magazine. To help with the business side Reynolds drew in a Durban printer of progressive views, Maurice Webb. And Campbell happened to meet a young Englishman, William Plomer, whom he persuaded to join the Campbell ménage and act as assistant editor.

Plomer's family roots went much less deep into South African soil than Campbell's. Both his parents came from what he whimsically described as the 'stranded gentry'. His father had arrived in South Africa as a young man in search of adventure in the 1890's, had taken part as a trooper in the Jameson Raid, and later after the Anglo-Boer war, entered government service in the Transvaal. Plomer had been born in the northern Transvaal but a large part of his youth had been spent in England. On coming back to South Africa after the First World War, he had had some further schooling in Johannesburg, worked for a time on a sheep farm in the Eastern Cape and later joined his father, who had resigned from government service, in running a trading store in Zululand. South Africa was certainly not a cultural wilderness: from friends in Johannesburg Plomer had learnt of Joyce and Proust at a time when many Englishmen could hardly have been aware of their names. Nevertheless Plomer had never enjoyed an experience

comparable to Campbell's, of plunging into the middle of the literary world of his day. But in his 'teens he developed the ambition to be a writer and by the time he was twenty one he had finished a novel, *Turbott Wolfe*, based largely on his experiences in Zululand, the pencil-written manuscript of which was accepted for publication by Leonard and Virginia Woolf at the Hogarth Press. When Plomer's novel appeared in South Africa, early in 1926, it created an immediate furore. The narrator of the novel fell, though only platonically, in love with a Zulu girl; an Afrikaner woman married a Zulu man; African characters were shown as beautiful and dignified, while many of the Europeans were depicted as the vicious specimens of an 'obscene' civilization. All this was presented not in crude propagandist terms but with precise and subtle artistry. By the complacent Englishry of Natal Plomer's novel was — quite rightly — regarded as a deeply subversive book. After reading it, one Durban newspaper editor had been seen 'his jaws chattering together with rage', while in the mild but damning reproof of another local paper *Turbott Wolfe* was dismissed as 'not cricket'.

> Plomer, 'twas you, who though a boy in age,
> Awoke a sleepy continent to rage,
> Who dared alone to thrash a craven race
> And hold a mirror to its dirty face.
>
> *The Wayzgoose*

So, with typical hyperbole, Campbell hailed his new friend. Temperamentally — as their association was soon to show — the two men were poles apart. But as Plomer wrote later, 'Campbell and I had in common a sense of isolation and alienation and we were both high-spirited. Each was dedicated to imaginative writing and to the recognition and perpetuation of the first-rate in literature'. 'The cultural pretensions of English-speaking South Africa' struck both of them as 'mostly absurd, mediocre or contemptible'. The title of their magazine was intended to be symbolic of their satirical intent: it would 'sting the mental hindquarters, so to speak, of the bovine citizenry of the Union.'

The first issue of *Voorslag* appeared in June 1926. It opened with an editorial headed 'Why Voorslag?', to which the initials, M.W. — Maurice Webb — were discreetly appended. 'Voorslag', Webb grandiloquently declared, 'will be devoted to the Life and Art of South Africa and the development of the South African people'. The magazine would 'attempt to keep in contact with contemporary thought in Europe and America': it would present original work of South African writers, accept contributions both in English and Afrikaans and offer 'an open platform for the consideration of questions free from party or racial prejudice'. The

choice of title, Webb admitted, had aroused 'some little concern'. But it 'must not be taken too literally . . . It must not be taken to imply that Voorslag will be content to lash: Voorslag will, necessarily, be critical upon occasions; it hopes, however, to be genuinely constructive as well.'

Campbell and Plomer must have ground their teeth with irritation at so vapid an apologia; but at least they could console themselves on having kept most of the contents of the first two numbers to themselves. General Smuts — to whom Reynolds had served as an aide at the Peace Conference, contributed an article on 'Beauty in Nature', putting forward ideas to be elaborated more fully in his philosophy of Holism; Edward Roworth wrote stimulatingly on Cezanne for the first issue and Gauguin for the second; and van der Post, then working as a journalist in Durban, had a brief piece on the development of Afrikaans culture. But the remaining contents came either from Campbell or Plomer, a fact disguised by the use in some articles of pseudonyms: 'Mary Ann Hughes' and 'Lewis Marston' for Campbell, 'Pamela Willmore', as an anagram for William Plomer.

Plomer's main contribution took the form of a long short story, 'Portraits in the Nude'. 'I was not the kind of person', Plomer said of himself later, 'who takes to political action or propaganda: my business in life was to write and I conceived of writing as the making of images'. 'Portraits in the Nude' might be described as a slide-show of images: it presents — with a marvellously precise observation — certain incidents in the life of an Afrikaner farming family. The father, in a religious frenzy, appears naked at *nagmaal,* the sons beat up a black servant, the wife goes off to a lover and then returns, the governess dances naked in front of a mirror. Frank, sensitive and humane, the piece retains the freshness, the undated quality of all good art. Plomer's other contributions consisted of a satirical poem, 'The Strandlopers', and a number of reviews which gave him a chance to reveal his own views more explicitly. He had grown up, he explained in his autobiography, feeling a warm admiration and affection 'for Africans; I wanted to be with them and to get to know them as fellow-beings'. So, reviewing Norman Leys's book on Kenya — a colony which Plomer described as 'a frankly disgusting experiment in Imperialism' — he could roundly declare: 'It will be necessary to learn to recognize every man's human qualities as a contribution to the building up of an indestructible future, to judge every man by the colour of his soul and not by the colour of his skin. Otherwise the coloured races of the world will rise and take by force what is denied them now by a comparatively few muddle-headed money-grubbers'. As for his literary tastes, a review of that *fin-de-siècle* novelist, George Moore, whom he regarded as effete, showed the qualities and the writers that Plomer admired: 'the

physical zest, the tremendous vitality and the freedom from sentimentality' of the English eighteenth-century novelists, the 'organic vitality' of modern writers such as Doughty, Conrad and Hardy.

Campbell's contributions to the first two numbers of *Voorslag* were like Plomer's, both imaginative and critical: two poems, 'The Albatross' and 'To a young man with pink eyes', two satirical articles, 'Fetish worship in South Africa' and 'Eunuch Arden and Kynoch Arden'[3], a study of Tolstoy and Dostoievsky, and reviews of *Turbott Wolfe*, anthologies of South African verse and Eliot's *Poems*. In later life Campbell was to adopt a swaggeringly anti-intellectual pose but one's immediate reaction on reading his contributions to *Voorslag* is that here was a mind, a remarkably wide-ranging and well-stocked mind, capable of expressing ideas with passionate clarity and magnetic force. Take, for example, his remarks on Eliot. Campbell saw *The Waste Land* as 'marking a new era in English Poetry': fifty years on, that has the ring of platitude, but only a handful of critics could have seen the significance of Eliot's poem so soon after it had been published. Campbell welcomed Eliot as a revolutionary: 'to read Mr Eliot's poems is to realize the necessity for new values in modern life. There must be a great destruction in human consciousness; we must swear and ridicule our venerable reviewers into epileptic fits; we have plenty of muck to clear away before we can start the great work of reconstruction'. In South Africa, he pointed out in a brief notice of an anthology of South African verse, 'the general attitude to poetry is that it should be something genteel, quiet, touching or otherwise soporific'. Such an attitude was totally absurd; 'true poetry has no connection with drawing rooms or drawing room modesty', and he quoted with relish Nietzsche's dictum: 'The soul of the poet is pride, the pride of the peacock. The poet would spread himself out and glitter like the sea, even if it were only to daze the bloodshot eyes of buffaloes'.

Campbell's attitude towards Africans tended, Plomer remarked later, to be typical of that of white South Africans generally, 'an amalgam of tolerance, contempt and impercipience'. Plomer, by contrast, saw Africans as human beings 'with vast potentialities' but 'frustrated and wronged'. Under Plomer's influence Campbell began, at least for a time, to change his ideas. His new attitude towards his fatherland was most wittily expressed in the opening lines of his satirical poem, *The Wayzgoose:*

> South Africa, renowned both far and wide,
> For politics and little else beside:
> Where, having torn the land with shot and shell,
> Our sturdy pioneers as farmers dwell,
> And, twixt the hours of strenuous sleep, relax,
> To sheer the fleeces or to fleece the blacks.

Colour-prejudice Campbell now saw as the 'fetish' that ruled South Africa. And he went on to contrast official 'Christianity' which could reconcile itself so easily to such abominations as the slave-trade, the War and the Colour-bar, with the 'inspired and fiery logic of Christ'. 'I believe', he declared in his article on 'Fetish-worship', 'that the power behind the universe is something better than an omnipotent old person, a predikant with a colour prejudice and a dirty puritanical mind. I believe it is genius, the genius of Leonardo, Christ and Goethe rolled into one, a genius eternally striving towards some unattainable perfection, eternally coming short of it, and eternally striving towards it again . . . The human soul is not a thing that can be set on by Governments and officials'.

The third issue of *Voorslag*, dated August 1926, opened with a brief note:

> I have much pleasure in announcing my resignation from 'Voorslag'. Roy Campbell.

What had gone wrong to mar so apparently promising a venture? Plomer's reminiscences — Campbell's autobiographical writings have little to say on this period of his life — make it clear that three areas of conflict had emerged — within Campbell himself, between Campbell and Plomer, and between the two writers and Webb and Reynolds. According to Plomer, Campbell was suffering from what was then termed 'neurasthenia', a state of tension brought on by a number of factors — uncertainty about the future of himself and his family, grief at the recent death of his father and a revulsion against his environment. 'The whole of this country', he remarked to Plomer, 'has an acid smell and all the white people have khaki faces'. He was also — a point not mentioned by Plomer but stressed by Alan Paton in a recent article in *Contrast* — drinking very heavily. Yet this period of strain was also one of intense creativity. Within the space of a few weeks Campbell produced some of his most famous poems, including 'The Serf', 'The Zulu Girl' and 'Tristan da Cunha'. Campbell had, as a brief extract from this last poem reveals, a Byronic capacity for self-dramatisation.

> Exiled like you and severed from my race
> By the cold ocean of my own disdain
> Do I not freeze in such a wintry space,
> Do I not travel through a storm as vast
> And rise at times victorious from the main
> To fly the sunrise at my shattered mast?

'One must be theatrical at all costs', Campbell told Plomer and the younger man recalled afterwards that he had felt a 'sudden chill' at these words. 'It seems unlikely that we should have been

mutually attracted at Oxford or in London', Plomer said of his relationship with Campbell at this time, 'the differences in our backgrounds, temperaments, outlooks, ambitions, and tastes were great'. According to a close friend, Plomer was 'reserved in youth to an almost pathological degree'; as a literary artist, he had come to develop a beautifully precise sense of irony. Little wonder then that he should have felt ill at ease in the face of what he described as Campbell's 'tendencies to rodomontade and fantastication'. Nevertheless, just as Campbell's range of awareness had been extended by contact with Plomer's liberal views, so Plomer found himself acquiring new insights into the meaning of poetry through his close association with so remarkable a practitioner. For him too the months spent at Umdoni Park was a time of great intellectual excitement when 'every moment seemed fertile'. Among the stories he wrote there, published later in *I Speak of Africa*, was 'Ula Masondo', a deeply empathic account of the impact of a spell of life in Johannesburg on a young Zulu migrant worker.

More serious for the future of *Voorslag* than any differences between Plomer and Campbell was the increasing sense of dismay felt by Reynolds and Webb at the progeny their munificence had brought to birth. The reaction of the local press to the first number of the new magazine had been, in Plomer's words, 'respectful, bewildered and slightly cautious'. 'Nothing remotely like this had ever appeared in South Africa before', Plomer wrote in his article 'Voorslag Days' published in the *London Magazine* of July 1959. 'It was too much for South Africa at that time — too European, too cultured, too forceful, too ironical, too direct, too confident, too young, too strange . . . Reynolds and Webb were a little rattled, Campbell and I were enjoying ourselves greatly'. But Reynolds and Webb, paying the piper, could call the tune. They began to take unpardonable liberties — altering texts, cutting out paragraphs that struck them as offensive. There was a deep temperamental difference between the two sides. Campbell saw himself and Plomer in terms that must have struck their contemporaries as absurdly bombastic.

> True sons of Africa are we,
> Though bastardized by culture,
> Indigenous and wild and free,
> As wolf, as pioneer and vulture.
>
> *Poets in Africa*

Webb, on the other hand, with his vapid moralizing, his loquacious Fabianism was an obvious target for Campbell's savage wit.

> A Socialist thou art in thought and act,
> And yet thy business flourishes intact:

> A Boss in trade, thou art securely placed
> And only art a Bolshevik in taste.
>
> *The Wayzgoose*

To Webb, on the other hand, Campbell and Plomer must have appeared as two increasingly disreputable, indeed potentially subversive young lay-abouts. Matters came to a head when Reynolds told Campbell that Webb was to act as editor-in-chief. 'You yourself confided to me at the beginning', so Campbell told van der Post he had said to Reynolds, 'that we must take care not to let Voorslag develop *Webbed*-feet, now you want it to develop a *Webbed*-head. You have my resignation here and now'.

Before closing his association with *Voorslag*, Campbell was able to have one last swipe at his enemies. The second issue had contained a letter from a certain Erich Mayer who had expressed his disappointment at the failure of the first number to give expression to 'the virile spirit of our young South African culture'. 'God forbid', Campbell wrote in his reply (published in the third issue), 'that art should ever express the "soul" of such a small, rancidly racial nation as ours. The soul of our nation is always being expressed in Eistedfodds, exhibitions of paintings by South African artists and anthologies of bad poetry. If this is art, then the soul it expresses must be suffering from senile decrepitude'.

Voorslag lingered on for another year after Campbell's and Plomer's departure. It contained some interesting material — a study, for example, by the radical missionary, C.F. Andrews, of Rabindranath Tagore and some acutely observed sketches by Pauline Smith. It also contained some excruciatingly bad verse, whose publication strikes a modern reader as providing ample justification for Campbell's arrogant strictures. Plomer ironically described post-Campbell *Voorslag* as 'a dulcet dinner-bell regularly summoning old women of both sexes to a lukewarm collection of accepted ideas'. Put more tersely, one may say that with the withdrawal of Plomer and Campbell *Voorslag* lost its fizz.

No contemporary could have realized the significance of *Voorslag*. An interval of several decades was needed before it could be seen as a major landmark in the development of English-speaking South African culture. 'Campbell and I do seem', Plomer wrote at the end of his life, 'to have been the forerunners we felt ourselves to be in those days. Forerunners of what? Of a stronger consciousness of the functions, status, durability and influence of imaginative literature than had (for obvious reasons) been conspicuous in South Africa — in English-speaking South Africa at least; and forerunners of fine and various and courageous efforts made by South African writers to apply themselves to the hidden forces in the heart as well as to the patent conflicts and complexities of their country'.

But the significance of *Voorslag* can be pushed further than that, for it brought together two writers whose respective works can be taken as representative of literature's two great poles. The point has been made by Laurens van der Post in the deeply perceptive introduction he wrote for the 1965 reprint of *Turbott Wolfe:* 'Campbell's greatest gifts were romantic and Dionysian. He was naturally a wild person . . . His talent was impetuous from birth'. 'Plomer's talent, on the other hand', van der Post saw as being 'classic and Apollonian, in love with proportion and the art of shaping and containing the shapeless and uncontained. Instinctively and inevitably his talent was committed to the increase of civilization, and charged to remain when the wild and the wilderness had been swept away and the hunter gone.'

It is not easy to appreciate to the full both Campbell's poetry and Plomer's prose. Indeed their works may be taken as a litmus paper, infallibly betraying the reader's personal taste. But how fortunate anglophone South Africa is to have two such marvellously compelling young writers standing at the entrance gates of its modern literary tradition and how shamefully ignorant of its good fortune.

University of Cape Town

NOTES

[1] This photograph is reproduced in the 1965 edition of William Plomer's novel, *Turbott Wolfe*.

[2] Laurie Lee's description given in his introduction to the Penguin edition of Campbell's autobiography, *Light on a Dark Horse*.

[3] '"Eunuch" Arden and "Kynoch" Arden', an article which derived its title from a satirical work by Osbert Sitwell, *Who Killed Cock Robin?*, allowed Campbell an opportunity to expound, with characteristic wit and passion, his view of the development of English poetry. After the death of Byron, Campbell saw the great tradition of English poetry descending 'almost vertiginously' through the Victorians, down to 'the puddle of Georgian poetry', 'a vast bath of treacle to which Rupert Brooke added a faint sting of peppermint'. The true tradition had survived in France with Victor Hugo, Baudelaire and above all Rimbaud, 'one of the most phenomenal writers in history'. 'Today', Campbell declared, 'all English writers and artists who are doing anything worthwhile have their eyes on Europe . . . With such a vigorous forerunner as D.H. Lawrence there should be hope for the future.'

SOURCES

Copies of *Voorslag* may be found in the major South African libraries. An enterprising publisher ought to bring out a reprint. Even more important, he should turn his attention to Campbell's poetry, particularly *Adamastor* (1930), and Plomer's *Turbott Wolfe* (1926) and *I Speak of Africa* (1927). *Turbott Wolfe* was reprinted with an important introduction by Laurens van der Post in 1965. Campbell's Autobiography, *Light on a Dark Horse* (1951), is easily available in a Penguin edition; Plomer's *Autobiography* was brought out shortly after his death in 1973; it incorporates much material from his earlier autobiography, *Double Lives* (1943). J.R. Doyle's study of him in the Twayne World Authors' series, entitled *William Plomer*, was published in New York in 1969. There are some touching personal recollections of Plomer in the December 1973/January 1974 issue of the *London Magazine*. A Canadian scholar of South African origin, Rowland Smith, has written a study of the 'literary personality of Roy Campbell, *Lyric and Polemic* (Montreal, 1972). Alan Paton, having abandoned his projected biography of the poet, has written frankly about Campbell in *Contact*.

THE 'CULTURE OF POVERTY' AND THE SOUTH AFRICAN POOR

by GEOFFREY H. WATERS

The existence of a 'culture of poverty' which transcends national boundaries was first suggested by the anthropologist Oscar Lewis on the basis of a series of studies which he undertook amongst the poor first in Mexico (1959; 1961), then later in Puerto Rico and New York (1966a; 1968). These investigations led Lewis to conclude that the poor in societies in 'the free-enterprise, pre-welfare-state stage of capitalism' (1966b:24) develop a distinctive way-of-life which he terms the 'culture of poverty':

> It is both an adaptation and a reaction of the poor to their marginal position in a class-stratified, highly-individuated capitalistic society. (Lewis 1966b:21).

More specifically, Lewis (1968:4-5) maintains that the culture of poverty arises in societies characterized by:

1. a cash economy, wage labour, and production for profit;
2. a persistently high rate of unemployment and under-employment of unskilled labour;
3. low wages for unskilled work;
4. minimal social security and welfare services for the poor;
5. a stress upon the values of the accumulation of wealth and property, upward mobility, and thrift.

Modern South Africa exhibits all of these features in extreme form, and is thus one society in which — in terms of the Lewis theory — the culture of poverty should be pronounced amongst the poor. It is the aim of the present paper to examine existing evidence on the South African poor in an attempt to establish whether or not this is the case.

According to Lewis (1966b:21), the culture of poverty is composed of some seventy interrelated traits. Grouping related traits into clusters yields the following six as the major trait-complexes of this distinctive way-of-life:

1. low levels of literacy and education; non-affiliation to political parties and labour unions; minimal use of banks, hospitals and cultural facilities;
2. an absence of savings and a chronic shortage of ready cash;

the pawning of personal effects and borrowing from local money-lenders; use of secondhand goods and clothing; absence of food reserves in the home coupled with a pattern of frequent buying in small quantities; chronic debt and mismanagement of available funds;

3. crowded living conditions and a lack of privacy; gregariousness; drunkenness and alcoholism; violent behaviour manifested in quarrels, wife-beating, and an emphasis upon physical punishment in child-training; early initiation into sex; a high incidence of free-unions and consensual marriages, as well as of abandoned mothers and children;
4. low life expectancy; high death and infant mortality rates; predominantly young populations; widespread child labour and an absence of 'sheltered childhood'; parental authoritarianism;
5. a strong present-time orientation; inability to defer gratification and plan for the future; resignation and fatalism; little sense of community; male chauvinism and a 'martyr complex' in women;
6. a hatred of the police; mistrust of government and people in 'high places'; cynicism as regards organized politics and religion; a critical attitude towards many of the values and institutions of the dominant classes.

Lewis (1966b:21) maintains further that, once the culture of poverty has become established amongst the poor of a society, it has a marked tendency to persist, with each successive generation being socialized into this way-of-life by the previous one. This is so even if the conditions which were originally responsible for the emergence of the culture of poverty are dispelled. Thus, according to Lewis, the culture of poverty is both remarkably tenacious and resilient in the face of attempts to eliminate it.

It is widely believed that the Whites in South Africa constitute a uniformly affluent stratum within the society and enjoy a very high standard of living. However, a recent observer has commented on the existence of:

> . . . a forgotten class of South African — the poor whites . . . Each South African city has its crumbling poor white ghetto. In Johannesburg it is the southern part of the city . . . The streets of ramshackle wooden bungalows are only one stage up from the better-off parts of the Black township (of Soweto). Here live the failures in a system which was openly designed with them in mind. They have few excuses except their own personal inadequacy; yet they are bitter and blame others for their plight . . . Reporting on a succession of fires, stabbings and

> street brawls I met these people often and saw them at their worst. (Paterson 1976:792).

South Africa's 'poor white problem' in fact dates from the 1890s, by which time large-scale exploitation of the country's mineral resources had already commenced. As early as 1893, the Dutch Reformed Church held a conference at Stellenbosch specifically to consider the question of poor whites, while Reitz (1929:50) recalls in his description of the Boer siege of Ladysmith during the South African War (1899-1902):

> Our commando had of late been receiving reinforcements of inferior quality, mostly poor whites from the burgher-right 'erven', the slum quarters of Pretoria, a poverty-stricken class that had drifted in from the country districts after the great rinderpest epidemic of 1896. They had become debased by town life, and had so little stomach for fighting that their presence among us was a source of weakness rather than strength.

In the early years of the present century, poor white numbers increased rapidly, and in 1906 the Transvaal Indigency Commission was established to inquire into both the extent and the causes of the problem in the territory, while a similar investigation was carried out in the Cape at the same time. In the ensuing decades, poor whites continued to attract attention, and were the subject of numerous commissions, congresses and conferences, culminating in the late 1920s in the American Carnegie Corporation funding a large-scale interdisciplinary investigation into the poor white problem in South Africa.

According to the Carnegie Commission (1932:vii), by 1931 there were approximately 300 000 poor whites in South Africa, representing 17,5% of the country's white population which at that time totalled 1 800 000. The Commission's findings were many and varied, with individual contributors concentrating on different facets of the problem. Nevertheless, from their combined report, it is possible to reconstruct a fairly comprehensive picture of the poor white way-of-life as it then existed. For example, commission-member Albertyn (1932:21-22) lists the South African poor white's 'weak traits' as being:

1. improvidence — '. . . little conception of thrift and of making provision for the future . . . provisions and clothing are squandered in a short time';
2. lack of ethical conceptions — '. . . usually dishonest . . . is not self-reliant . . . marked sense of inferiority';
3. irresponsibility — '. . . averse to discipline and order';

4. ignorance and credulity;
5. indolence and dependency — '. . . lack of ambition and dislike of personal effort . . . indolent, lazy, apathetic and untidy'.

Albertyn (1932:32:40-44) found poor white families to be generally large, averaging 6,57 children per family, and their members — especially in the case of those who had gravitated to the cities and the diamond diggings — to be prone to indulgence in drink, gambling, petty crime and 'immorality'. In his report, Albertyn (1932:66-77:73) also notes that many of the poor whites whom he interviewed were hostile to the government and to the established churches of which they were nominal members. These conclusions were supported and supplemented by the commission's other investigators. All agreed on the basis of their separate inquiries that poor whites:

1. were generally poorly-educated, with many being only semi-literate;
2. had a high birth rate, an equally high death rate, and a high incidence of child mortality;
3. lived in overcrowded and generally squalid conditions.

(Carnegie Commission 1932:viii-xviii)

Viewed overall, South Africa's poor whites emerge from the evidence as virtually a classic case of the culture of poverty: their way-of-life exhibits an overwhelming number of the distinguishing features of the culture of poverty; they first began to appear in significant numbers as South Africa entered 'the free-enterprise, pre-welfare-state stage of capitalism' (Lewis 1966b:24); and, as Lewis suggests is the case with the culture of poverty, their way-of-life has shown a marked tendency to persist despite concerted efforts to eliminate it.

In the final analysis, however, the white poor have never amounted to any more than a very small part of South Africa's total poverty problem. Rather, the majority of the country's poor have always been drawn from the 'black' or 'non-white' segment of the population, consisting of Africans, Coloureds and Indians. Despite this, concern over black poverty is comparatively recent, effectively dating only from the 1930s. Since then, numerous localized surveys of black poverty and related phenomena have been undertaken by South African social scientists, and these remain the primary sources of information on the topic as, to date, there have been no large-scale investigations into the extent of black poverty in the country as a whole. The concept of the 'poverty datum line', deriving originally from Rowntree and providing 'a conservative indication of the amount of poverty in a

community' (Maasdorp & Humphreys 1975:19), has been central in much of this research. Without exception, these 'poverty datum line surveys' have revealed that the overwhelming majority of South Africa's blacks fall below this level which:

> . . . allows only for the indispensable minimum quantities of food, clothing, fuel, lighting, cleaning, housing and transport to and from work. It allows nothing for amusements, sports, hobbies, education, medicine, medical and dental care, holidays, newspapers, stationery, tobacco, sweets, gifts or pocket-money or for comforts or luxuries of any kind or for replacement of household equipment and furniture or for hire-purchase or insurance or saving. (Batson 1952:1).

When it is realized that, according to the 1970 census, blacks combined constituted 83% of the total population of 22 000 000, and that this proportion is one which has remained fairly constant for decades (Hattingh 1977:163), the magnitude of black poverty in South Africa becomes fully apparent.

Of the three main black racial categories, Africans have always been in the majority. In 1970, they numbered some 15 000 000, or 85% of the entire black population and 70% of the all-race total (Rep. of South Africa 1970). Survey estimates of the proportion of the poor in specific local African communities are all startlingly high. For example in the case of the city of Durban, in the period between 1950 and 1970 when the city's African population ranged between approximately 250 000 and 300 000, a number of studies variously estimated that between 70% and 80% lived below the poverty datum line (Young 1965:68; Watts & Lamond 1966:7-8). Judging from similar surveys undertaken amongst Africans in other parts of the country, such figures are not atypical, and assuming this to be generally the case, the total number of chronically poor Africans in South Africa today would be in excess of 10 000 000, or roughly 45% of the total population.

While Africans remain the least urbanized of the country's four racial groupings (in 1970, only 33% were urban-based), those resident in urban areas have attracted by far the most attention. In an early essay on 'the urban native', Rheinallt Jones (1934), while pointing to the existence of a small urban African middle-class, catalogues the following as common amongst the impoverished majority:

1. free-unions and irregular marriages, immorality, sexual promiscuity, prostitution and illegitimacy;
2. illiteracy, child-labour, violence, drunkenness, petty crime and juvenile delinquency;
3. debt, uneconomic buying in small quantities at frequent in-

tervals and general mismanagement of funds;
4. overcrowding, insanitary conditions, high infant mortality rates, reluctance to use hospitals, and hostility towards authority as well as a hatred of the police.

The parallels with the poor studied by Lewis are obvious. Later investigations have served to both support and supplement Rheinallt Jones's findings. Thus Hellman (1956) points to a high incidence of irregular unions, illegitimacy and infant mortality within urban African communities. Maasdorp & Humphreys (1975) offer detailed information of a similar nature on Africans in Durban in both the city's shantytowns and the purpose-built townships to which many have subsequently been removed. Surveys conducted by Maasdorp and his associates in the Cato Manor shantytown in the late 1950s, when its population was estimated to be in the region of 120 000, showed that:

> the median P.D.L. cost for Cato Manor households amounted to R7,35 per week compared with median household wage of R5,60 per week, thus leaving a shortfall of R1,75 per week. (Maasdorp & Humphreys 1975:34).

However, their investigations also revealed marked discrepancies between stated incomes and claimed expenditures and, as a result, they subsequently inquired into the 'informal sector' in an effort to track down sources of undisclosed income. The picture which emerged from this later survey was one in which illegal liquor-brewing, speakeasy-type 'shebeens', prostitution, gambling, local moneylending, theft, and traffic in stolen goods figured prominently. Widespread drunkenness and violence were associated with these, while children were found to be frequently employed in many illegal and semi-legal activities related to the informal sector (Maasdorp & Humphreys 1975:44-58). The findings of this survey are similar to those in recent studies of urban African communities in other South African cities and towns (Roux & St. Leger 1971; Edwards & Horner 1974) and — taken collectively — lend very strong support to Lewis's contention that:

> . . . (the culture of poverty) can also occur in the process of detribalization such as is now going on in Africa where, for example, the tribal migrants to the cities are developing 'courtyard cultures' remarkably similar to the Mexico City *vecindades*. (Lewis 1961:xxv).

However, there is no simple dichotomy between urban and rural Africans in South Africa. According to the 1970 census, 24% of the entire African population was located on white-owned farms and

engaged in wage-labour (Quoted in Lipton 1972:260), while in a pre-World War II investigation Robertson (1934:143) reached the conclusion that 'by no means all of the reserve natives are tribalized'. The situation is further complicated by the institution of migrant labour which results in large numbers of Africans regularly circulating between the cities and the 'tribal' areas. Information on Africans in rural areas remains scanty, but that which does exist strongly suggests that poverty, overcrowding, ill-health, high birth and death rates, abandoned wives and children, and general social disorganization are widespread (Schapera 1934; Wilson *et. al* 1952; Meer & Clark 1975). The indications are, therefore, to the effect that a distinctive way-of-life bearing the hallmarks of the culture of poverty has become increasingly well-established amongst the African poor in rural areas of South Africa as well as in the cities.

Coloureds and Indians constitute the two remaining major racial categories within the South African population. According to the census, in 1970 there were approximately 2,1 million Coloureds and 640 000 Indians in South Africa, representing 9,6% and 2,9% of the total population respectively — proportions which have not altered significantly over the years (Hattingh 1977:163). However, whereas the members of these two racial groupings were both predominantly rurally-based, by 1970 74% of Coloureds and 87% of Indians were resident in urban areas, with the former concentrated largely in the cities and towns of the Cape Province (most notably in Cape Town itself), and the latter in Natal and especially in the Durban conurbation (Rep. of South Africa 1970).

South Africa's Coloureds are surpassed only by the country's poor whites in terms of the amount of public and official concern which they have aroused over the years. The government-appointed Theron Commission, which submitted its final report in April 1976, is the latest in a long line of studies of the Coloured people, albeit the most extensive and authoritative to date. It reached the conclusion that almost 40% of present-day Coloureds are chronically poor, and that a further 20% are only marginally less poor. The Commission's report further states that Coloureds today have a low life-expectancy, a very high infant mortality rate (at approximately 120 per 1 000 it is higher than the 101 per 1 000 of Africans), a high dependency ratio, and a very high illegitimacy rate (43% of all Coloured births). Consensual marriages are common, the Coloured population is predominantly young (45% less than 15 years of age), most are poorly-educated, illiteracy is widespread amongst adults, and there is extensive unemployment and underemployment. Furthermore, a high incidence of crimes of violence as well as of drunkenness and alcoholism is reported. The Commission found all of these phenomena to be particularly prevalent amongst the chronically poor 40% and, to quote van der Horst (1976:122):

> . . . found that this group maintains a life-style and attitude which is markedly different from those of both the white and Coloured middle-class.

In fact, the majority of the Commission's members reached the conclusion that the Coloured poor live in the culture of poverty:

> The Commission . . . noted that the lower group (and in some measure the lower half of the middle group) lived in a state of chronic poverty and were characterized by a high degree of deviant behaviour, lack of motivation and discipline, lack of planning for the future, lack of participation in community organizations, and poor and unstable family life. The lack of finance, of power, and of a feeling of social usefulness enhanced the depression of the limited milieu and caused tension, frustration, estrangement and even fatalism . . . Members of the lower group were, from their early childhood, exposed to the culture of poverty which constituted a vicious circle in which poverty and a poverty mentality were transferred from generation to generation. (van der Horst 1976:122-123).

Over the years, a number of independent observers have remarked on the similarity between the way-of-life of South Africa's poor whites and that of the Coloured poor. Thus, for example, after pointing to the 'natural indolence', 'lack of perseverance', and the 'improvidence' of the Griqua Coloureds during the nineteenth century, J.S. Marais (1939:45) comments:

> The Griquas, in fact, were but one stage further on the way to that condition which in the descendants of the Boer frontiersman is called 'poor whitism'.

Marais makes the same point repeatedly in discussing the social history of other segments of the Coloured population. More obliquely, in writing of poor whites, Albertyn notes:

> . . . sexual intercourse between white and Coloured exists to a greater degree now than in the past . . . In this way it has come about that there are whole families who bear the names and surnames of Europeans, but who are Coloured. The 'poor white' problem here appears under a different form, because such families may be indeed 'poor' but are no longer 'white'. Were it not that some of the lower types of Europeans disappear in this manner, the problem of poor whitism would undoubtedly loom larger than it does today. (Albertyn 1932:37-38).

The members of the Theron Commission similarly agreed that there are marked parallels between the ways-of-life of the Coloured poor and the poor whites. This common conclusion, arrived at by independent investigators at different points in time, entirely accords with Lewis's view that the culture of poverty transcends all differences, including racial ones.

Indian South Africans, in marked contrast to the country's Coloureds, present a serious challenge to the Lewis theory. Most of the present-day Indian population is directly descended from indentured labourers recruited during the latter part of last century and the first decade of the present one, mainly to work on the sugar plantations in the Natal coastal belt. A small proportion, between 10% and 15%, are the descendants of an independent class of merchants and traders who followed closely on the heels of the indentured Indians to establish businesses in the towns of Natal and, to a lesser extent, the Transvaal (Palmer 1957). Controversy has always surrounded South Africa's Indians, with whites continuously seeking to limit economic competition from this quarter over the years (Maasdorp & Pillay 1977:80). Those originally recruited as labourers were contracted to serve a five-year period of indenture, after which they could re-indenture themselves or take up other forms of employment. After ten years, they were given the option either of returning to India or of settling permanently in Natal. Most opted for the latter course. Mahatma Gandhi, who first came to South Africa in 1893, later recalled of the indentured workers in Natal:

> I have not the space here in the present to narrate how they broke through all the restraints which religion or morality imposes, or to be more accurate, how these restraints gave way and how the very distinction between a married woman and a concubine ceased to exist among these people. (Quoted in Meer 1969:65).

General social disorganization appears to have been widespread amongst the indentured during the early days. On the other hand, the trading class rapidly reproduced their traditional way-of-life in the South African context, with the extended family as its cornerstone (Kuper 1960). However, once freed from their indentures and established in agricultural communities in the Natal coastal belt, the labouring class reinstituted many customary life-ways. Thus the majority of the ex-indentured and their descendants became re-encapsulated in the various Indian sub-cultures from which they were originally drawn. The Indian trader class, centrally located in the cities and towns, succeeded in similarly insulating themselves from other cultural traditions. In this regard, Kuper (1960:xv) remarks:

> A house in an Indian area is never an isolated dwelling; it is integrated into the street, neighbourhood, and community. Kinsmen often live near each other.

But, despite the existence of a trader class and a degree of upward mobility amongst those of indentured origin, South African Indians have remained predominantly poor. In Durban in the mid-1960s, it was estimated that 64% of Indians lived below the poverty datum line, and a further 28% just above it (Meer 1969:85). Kuper found most of Durban's Indian population having to contend with '. . . acute shortage of housing, gross overcrowding, poor sanitary conditions, widespread unemployment, and chronic poverty' (1960:236). South African Indian families have always tended to be large, and this has been accompanied by a generally low level of education and a high proportion in the younger age categories. Nevertheless, the Indian infant mortality rate has remained consistently low, as have the crime, illegitimacy and divorce rates, while life-expectancy has remained relatively high. In fact, in these latter respects Indian social statistics have always closely approximated to those of the more-affluent White population. This runs counter to the culture of poverty thesis for, while the majority of Indians remain poor, social disorganization has been at a minimum. Moodley (1975:251-252) notes:

> Though the Indian and Coloured castes are economically and legally at the same level of discrimination by the Whites and relative privilege vis-á-vis the Africans, several important differences between these two groups exist, among which the most decisive is the socio-cultural cohesiveness of the Indians as compared with the virtual anomie of the Coloureds. This is reflected in a vast discrepancy between the two groups in crime rates, illegitimate births, alcoholism, and other indicators of social integration.

Until very recently, South African Indians generally maintained traditional, essentially pre-industrial patterns, with the extended family forming the primary productive unit. The 'family business', be it a large merchant house, a small store or an agricultural smallholding, was commonplace. Latterly, however, as manufacturing industry has developed in South Africa, Indians have been drawn increasingly into Western-style industrial employment:

> In 1960 only 4,9% of Indian women were economically active, whereas in 1970 the figure has more than doubled to 10,8% with the accelerated entry of Indian women into manufacturing jobs. This merely highlights social changes within the group at large. Communal life, the extended family, and the

> family business have been the fundamental building blocks upon which Indians were able to accumulate initial capital. However, the trend is now towards the nuclear family and stronger emphasis on individualism, including women's emancipation. These developments reflect those of transitional societies moving from traditional means of production to industrialization. Similar changes have affected the traditional, relatively undiversified occupational structure of the Indian community. There is now a high concentration of Indians in manufacturing, commerce and services. (Moodley 1975:255).

These tendencies have coincided with the implementation, particularly since 1960, of the Group Areas Act, which has resulted in the disappearance of many old-established Indian communities and neighbourhoods, along with such traditional occupational opportunities and cultural facilities as they afforded (Meer 1975). In their place, large suburban dormitory-type housing estates have been built by the authorities to house workingclass Indians, while a limited amount of land has been made available to the more affluent for private housing development. This large-scale removal and relocation of Indians has had far-reaching effects:

> From the perspective of 'community development' these changes ironically enough seem to have been more efficient at community destruction, eroding the traditional South African Indian way of life . . . This haphazard resettlement resulted in large-scale social disorganization . . . the common indicators for degrees of social anomie, such as rates of divorce, illegitimate births, and crime showed a marked increase. (Moodley 1975:263-264).

Meer (1975:16-18) maintains that almost all South Africa Indians have been further impoverished as a result of the Group Areas Act removals. Certainly recent evidence is to the effect that, as traditional avenues of employment have disappeared and the poorer elements in the Indian population have been obliged to enter the expanding industries as wage-labourers, distinctive features of the culture of poverty have become increasingly common amongst them. In short, the indications are that, far from controverting Lewis's theory, developments amongst the South Africa Indian poor lend further weight to it.

Viewed overall, the evidence on the South African poor, taken in their entirety, would appear to support two related conclusions: First, that there has been a marked convergence in the ways-of-life of the country's poor, regardless of race, to the point where it is possible to regard them as sharing a common way-of-life which differs only in degree rather than in kind; and secondly, that this

bears all the hallmarks of the culture of poverty — as a way-of-life, in the coincidence of its development with industrialization, and in its tendency to be perpetuated in successive generations.
The first point has been made before. For example, Hellman (1949:268) remarks:

> . . . there are no grounds for regarding 'European', 'Coloured', or 'Native' poverty as differing in kind or producing effects which differ according to racial group.

However, the second conclusion contradicts others based on recent evidence on the poor in other parts of the world, most notably in the United States, which have led to severe criticism of the whole culture of poverty thesis (Valentine 1968). The supportive nature of the South African data suggests that the Lewis theory warrants further consideration and test, ideally in the context of societies exhibiting the characteristics which Lewis himself identifies as fostering the development of the culture of poverty. These are not, as most of Lewis's critics seem to assume, advanced industrial nations like the United States but, rather, consist of contemporary industrializing and urbanizing societies of which South Africa is but one example.

University of Natal
Durban

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ODYSSEUS AS AUDIENCE

by THOMAS SCALLY

In Book VIII of the *Odyssey*, Odysseus is challenged to participate in the Phaeacian games. The activities of these games are significantly punctuated by the songs of the Phaeacian bard, Demodocus. The songs of the minstrel and Odysseus' reactions to them provide important clues for determining how Homer wants Odysseus to be seen by two different audiences, namely, the readers or listeners of Homer, and the listeners of Demodocus who eventually became the dramatic audience for Odysseus himself. The songs give the hearer access to some relatively submerged aspects of Odysseus' character as well as reveal one of the central motifs of the entire poem, the image of the god Hephaestus.

It is crucial to keep in mind the various levels of poet-audience relationship which are operative both directly and indirectly during this sequence of songs in the Odyssey. 1. Demodocus is singing for Odysseus and the Phaeacians; at the most elementary level they comprise his audience. However, the reactions of Odysseus are those which are specified most completely, and so in a fuller sense he becomes the prototype of the good listener. 2. The songs of Demodocus will be followed in the next book by the tales of Odysseus; at that point Odysseus will become the poet and the Phaeacians his audience. 3. At the same time that this transfer of singers is taking place we are listening to Homer's poem; thus we first of all see Odysseus respond to Demodocus, but we also experience a kind of abdication of the poetic muse on the part of Homer when he allows Odysseus to take over the song.

This abdication is of course only an image to bring us as close as possible to Odysseus but it does suggest a sense in which Homer can be poet (in the sense that he really is singing the song) and audience (in that he imagines Odysseus to be doing so) at the same time. In all of this we remain audience, but the suggestion is strongly made that we are not bound to be so indefinitely because the way in which Odysseus listens to Demodocus provides him (and so by analogy ourselves) with an avenue by which to enter the world of the singer. With these suggestions before us as the echo to which we must try to respond, I would like to look closely at the songs of Demodocus and try to specify in what ways we learn about Odysseus as we hear him listen. The purpose of this analysis is not textual exegesis, but in a partial way to uncover the multiple suggestiveness inherent in Homer's attempt to speak for all time.

The first song[1] of Demodocus is only briefly described by Homer; it concerns the quarrel of Odysseus and Achilles at Troy. The details of this episode are not elaborated, but the reaction of

Odysseus is to weep and hide his face. It is possible that this reaction is created by Odysseus for its immediate dramatic effect since the entire book is building toward Odysseus' revelation of his own identity to the Phaeacians. It is also possible that Odysseus already has gifts in mind. Whether the reaction is genuine or not, the song itself is significant in a prophetic sense because it prefigures the coming conflict between Odysseus and Euryalus concerning Odysseus' participation in the games. Or perhaps it would be more appropriate to say that Odysseus and Euryalus will eventually re-enact the quarrel and the characters described in Demodocus' song; this is very important because I think it suggests that the songs about the past are to be used as a mirror for the events of the present. Odysseus must play himself in the drama of the present and confront Euryalus, yet weep for himself in the drama of the past as well as for Achilles. In the real time of Odysseus' journey home he has just returned from a visit to Hades where he has spoken with Achilles and heard him reject the life of honour and war. Odysseus' reaction is that of a mourner but the grief is many-sided; he weeps not only because he regrets the quarrel of which the poet sings, but also because he knows what the real situation of Achilles is. Finally, he knows that the world of the warrior is a world of futility on the larger scale; thus he weeps for the self he has been forced to overcome.

The athletic contest in which Odysseus throws the discus beyond the marks of the other competitors follows this first song of Demodocus. Euryalus, who is responsible for the insult which finally moves Odysseus to action, is said to be as beautiful as a god, yet without the gift of speech which shows intelligence.[2] Odysseus proves to be a match for him intellectually (e.g., it is Odysseus' bragging which is persuasive) as well as physically. The important thing about this episode for our purpose is to notice that the one sport at which Odysseus claims to be unsure of himself is running.[3] He says he has been incapacitated by his journey's hardships and no longer feels confident about his legs. Later, of course, we are to learn of the episode in his youth involving the hunt for the wild boar which at least scars, if not lames him, for life.[4] It is probably unlikely that he is in fact lame to any significant extent because he does say that his inability at running is a late development; in any case he has compensatory skills as he will later tell Athene[5] in his first Cretan tale where he says he killed Orsilochus, the great runner, by means of an ambush. Yet he clearly does say he is handicapped in this particular sport.

I think it is interesting to notice this limitation which Odysseus attributes to himself in view of the fact that Demodocus' next song, which follows almost immediately, is the tale of Ares and Aphrodite and how their love is discovered by the lame god Hephaestus. Hephaestus complains to Zeus that Aphrodite has

always despised him for his lameness and that she is the slave of her passions.[6] Ares is also described as being the swiftest of the gods, yet he has been caught and imprisoned by the god whose mobility is most impaired but who has the quickest of wits.[7] So Hephaestus and Odysseus share the common experience (if we can believe Odysseus' story to Athene has some degree of truth in it) of having trapped great runners while not being such themselves. At least this is the image Odysseus later wants to project for others. Odysseus has also quarrelled with Achilles who is called a great runner many times in the *Iliad*.[8]

This is only one case among several in the poem where Odysseus is implicitly compared with the lame god Hephaestus. The comparison not only focuses on the common incapacity of the legs and the talent for contrivance, but also on several other similarities as well. For instance at the end of Book V when Odysseus hides among the dry leaves under the olive bushes, Homer compares him to a crofter covering a glowing coal to keep his fire alive.[9] Odysseus is both crofter and firebrand in this comparison; he is the 'seed of fire'. Of course the association of Odysseus with the image of fire suggests other levels of his character; he does not really sleep, but smoulders (this is again implied in Book XX where he tosses in his bed like a roasting paunch on a grill as if he were being consumed by his own substance).[10] He is never quite extinguished, but flares into his former glory at appropriate moments, as Euryalus and later the suitors will discover. He has the power of destruction, but also of purification (it is by means of fire and sulphur that he finally cleanses the palace defiled by the suitors). Fire is the medium of Hephaestus; he works with it, creates with it, and is marked by it.[11] It is equally emblematic of the inner dimensions of Odysseus.

The clearest image of Odysseus as akin to the god Hephaestus occurs in Book XVIII[12] where Odysseus takes up his night watch by the burning braziers, his beggar's garb smeared with ashes; he tends the fire while scheming vengeance on the suitors. Here is the very picture of Hephaestus at his forge contriving a trap in which to catch the elusive Ares.

The connection of Odysseus with the god Hephaestus is completed in Demodocus' third song where he sings of the Trojan horse and Odysseus' plan to get it into Troy. This theme is proposed by Odysseus himself (as if giving the Phaeacians fair warning of the type of man they are dealing with). The 'net of Odysseus' is as fabulous as the one with which Hephaestus catches gods. The comparison becomes the more complex by the end of this song because there Demodocus compares Odysseus, not with Hephaestus, but with Ares. When Odysseus leaves the horse he 'looks like Ares himself.' Obviously the image of Hephaestus, appropriate as it is for illuminating aspects of the character of

Odysseus, does not exhaust all his potentialities. Odysseus is as much Ares as Hephaestus, depending upon what the circumstances require. In the stories he will soon begin to tell he will take the part of each god several times, combining strength with foresight.

As Demodocus finishes his third song Odysseus again breaks into tears and '. . . wept as a woman weeps when she throws her arms around the body of her beloved husband . . .'[13] Exactly how this comparison connects with Odysseus' present situation is somewhat obscure. It would seem that the fallen 'husband' is the Odysseus of Troy, the warrior, about whom the song was sung. The woman must then be the Odysseus who has heard the song, the traveller who has undergone a 'sea change.' In this reaction to the third song we can see a further aspect of Odysseus' character, namely he has the sympathy and emotional fragility of a woman; he is capable of an uncontrolled emotional response to a situation (or at least he can pretend to possess such qualities, depending upon exactly what one thinks Odysseus is up to in the Phaeacian court). He, like Aphrodite, is a victim of his passions at several points in the poem (the first and last songs of Demodocus being examples). He not only weeps here, but 'later' taunts Polyphemus in a rash impulse, talks back to the suitors, insists on hearing the sirens, and loses his temper with the women servants of his palace.[14]

In short, the three gods in Demodocus' second song are not only an image of the home situation in Ithaca, but are also images of separate aspects of Odysseus' character: the shrewdness of Hephaestus, the wrath of Ares, and the rash compassion of Aphrodite are all elements in his essential make-up. Demodocus is in some sense a psychologist, though perhaps unwittingly, because he sings songs in which Odysseus can see himself and he laughs and weeps at what he sees.

Homer finally has Alcinous compare Odysseus to a poet in Book XI[15]; in this respect Demodocus is also an image of Odysseus, but Odysseus the story-teller who takes up the task in Book IX. Demodocus, as well as his songs, give us access to Odysseus and his harlequin psyche. On the most interesting level the characters and the words of the Phaeacian court are inside the self of Odysseus, they are beings of memory which must be assembled and comprehended if he is to be truly home.[16]

Such a variety of images for the character of Odysseus is more than a literary technique; the variety and ease of transformation from one image into another provides the key to Odysseus' constitution — he is adaptable, he changes shape by disguise and pretence, he shifts his own account of himself to suit the situation.

The concrete image of Proteus in Book IV has now been elaborated into Odysseus himself who appears in multiple forms in the songs within the primary song.

Champlain Regional College,
Quebec

NOTES

[1] *Odyssey*, VIII, 72-78. Citations in my text are from Homer, *The Odyssey*, Loeb Classical Library (London: Heinemann, 1953). Translations are by E. V. Rieu, *The Odyssey* (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1974).
[2] *Odyssey*, VIII, 166-185.
[3] *Odyssey*, VIII, 231-233.
[4] *Odyssey*, XIX, 428-466.
[5] *Odyssey*, XIII, 260.
[6] *Odyssey*, VIII, 308-311.
[7] Howard W. Clarke, *The Art of the Odyssey* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1967), 55, claims that the song distils the themes of love and justice central to the *Odyssey*. Ares seems to correspond to Aegistheus and the suitors, while Aphrodite is somewhere between Penelope and Clytemnestra. This constellation of allusions seems to me to supply the key to Odysseus' inner psychic structure.
[8] It is of interest in passing that the *Iliad* does mention a man called Orsilochus who is said to be killed by Aeneas. Homer, *The Iliad*, translation by E. V. Rieu (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1974), p. 152.
[9] *Odyssey*, V, 486-493.
[10] *Odyssey*, XX, 25-30.
[11] I must take strong exception to C. Whitman's claim in *Homer and the Heroic Tradition* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1967), p.145.
'One would look in vain for any such associations in the *Odyssey*, where fire plays no very great role, and is in part supplanted by the continuing motif of the sea.'

This seems to me to be a serious oversight on Whitman's part; fire and the god of fire supply central images for comprehending the character of Odysseus.
[12] *Odyssey*, XVIII, 343-345.
[13] *Odyssey*, VIII, 521-531.
[14] Charles H. Taylor, 'Obstacles to Odysseus' Return', in *Essays on the Odyssey*, Charles H. Taylor, ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1965), p. 98 claims that Odysseus' struggle is identical with the struggle of the conscious with the unconscious mind and that the unconscious is generally given feminine characteristics. Thus Odysseus' quest for identity is deeply involved with the feminine and with female characters. This view is reminiscent of Euripides' *Bacchae*, 918-929, where Pentheus emerges from the palace to see a double world and a double self. For Odysseus' personal relationships with the various women in the *Odyssey*, see B. Stanford, 'Personal Relationships', in Taylor, *op. cit.*, pp. 11-35.
[15] *Odyssey*, XI, 363-369.
[16] The evolution of Odysseus toward self-identity is nicely described by George De F. Lord, 'Odysseus and the Western World,' in Taylor, *op. cit.*, pp. 36-53.

RESILIENCE, VIRTUE AND TRAGIC EXPERIENCE:

A READING OF WORDSWORTH'S 'MICHAEL'

by SUSAN A. WOOD

Coleridge's Ancient Mariner 'stoppeth one of three' and thus singles out the Wedding-Guest. We are left in no doubt from Coleridge's description of the Mariner with his clutching 'skinny hand' and the 'glittering eye' demonically possessed by the experience he has to recount that the Mariner's telling of his story comes as a compulsive disburthening of unendurable experiences. The Mariner does not intend to teach his fellow men anything at all. Indeed, the lesson of simple faith pointed out by the Mariner serves to reveal the depth of the trauma that makes him revalue those traditional human ideals:

> To walk together to the kirk,
> And all together pray,
> While each to his great Father bends,
> Old men, and babes, and loving friends,
> And youths and maidens gay![1]

If men are 'sadder and wiser' for their encounter with the Mariner it is because their imaginative horizons have been widened to include a vision of Hell that conventional Christian didacticism might protect us from (the 'goodness' of the Hermit makes this point) but it cannot prepare us to confront. For the Mariner's Hell is within consciousness itself, generated by the mysterious dictates of the ego that are both unreasoning and unexpected:

> God save thee, ancient Mariner!
> From the fiends that plague thee thus! —
> Why look'st thou so? — With my cross-bow
> I shot the Albatross.[2]

The Albatross's death is avenged through the Mariner's consciousness being forced to survive when death might have been more merciful:

> The many men, so beautiful!
> And they all dead did lie:
> And a thousand thousand slimy things
> Lived on; and so did I.[3]

The very nature of the Mariner's experience excludes him from possessing a place in the 'goodly company' he has come to value: the Wedding-feast carries on without him and he literally wrests his listener out of the ordinary fabric of existence so that he may hear him. In this way the Mariner's Hell of 'aloneness' continues even when he has reached the safety of land, and his compulsive telling of his own tale stands as an attempt to free himself, if only

momentarily, from the prison of appalling self-knowledge. His imaginative and moral identity *is* the experience of the tale, and what is recounted as past event is, in effect, a present and continuing psychic reality.

Coleridge's report[4] of the way in which he and Wordsworth envisaged their distinctive tasks in the 1798 edition of the *Lyrical Ballads* is misleading in its juxtaposition of 'supernatural' 'incidents and agents' against 'subjects . . . chosen from ordinary life'; the former being Coleridge's task and the latter Wordsworth's. Coleridge's terms underplay the greater area of shared assumptions about the unique powers of the mind and imagination which made the original co-operative effort viable. For Wordsworth, concerned in both the 1798 and 1800 editions of the *Lyrical Ballads* to speak of 'the things of every day', drew anything but common conclusions about the nature of those daily and perpetual human events. Such poems as 'The Thorn', 'Ruth', 'The Female Vagrant' and 'The Mad Mother' reveal the poignant and terrifying truth that extremity of need and feeling is experienced uniquely and anew by every man and woman. As the Ancient Mariner is, inescapably, the sum of his experiences, so Wordsworth's 'mad' figures express in the very quality of their madness a particular and distinctive manner of encompassing what is essentially unendurable. Desertion, hardship, age and incapacity do not break up the identity and inner integrity of Wordsworth's subjects. They are, indeed, changed by the pressures of their experience: Martha Ray of 'The Thorn' and Ruth exemplify the horror and the pity of such change. Wordsworth, unlike Coleridge, finds in the flux and energy of men's feelings a redemptive element, for — even in the violent world of 'The Thorn' — the heart's reasons are cogent and meaningful, whereas the Mariner's killing of the Albatross is both wilful and arbitrary. Coleridge, then, sees no self-righting dynamism at work from within the Mariner. He repents without being able to either purge or order the horror that forces him to bless the 'living things'. Thus the Mariner learns to value the salvation of a regulated and godly life in a way that none of Wordsworth's oppressed and suffering figures ever need to do. The health and robustness of Simon Lee's youth gives sweetness and resilience to his mind in old age and the Old Cumberland Beggar's impulse to 'travel on' gives energy of purpose to the extreme helplessness of age. Where Coleridge proclaims the necessity of salvation, Wordsworth explores the human capacity to resist and survive. Virtue has a central place in Wordsworth's account of resilience, and unlike Coleridge's sense that such a quality either shelters the mind from complex experience (as it does the holy Hermit) or remains valued but inaccessible to the Mariner in his 'wisdom', virtue is taken by Wordsworth to be the very mediator of individual experience. In 'Michael'[5] Wordsworth's claim for the

spontaneous roots of a virtue that creates an ordered and feeling personal life reaches its climax in his most consummate art.

As the poem begins, the scene of Michael's endeavours and hopes is set in such a way that not only do we learn of the intractable, lonely and savage mountain-sides that begrudgingly support and shelter Michael, but we are also made to feel the utter inevitability and naturalness of the spot's apparently untouched wildness. It is a place in which the hope and work of men would seem to be made insignificant by the great and sweeping indifference of the mountains and the eternal energy of 'the tumultuous brook of Greenhead Gill'. In order to reach the spot the usual paths and roads must be forsaken, the traveller must leave 'the public way', and adventure into a place that belongs to the natural world. It is a veritable sanctuary of wildness:

> 'No habitation there is seen; but such
> As journey thither find themselves alone
> With a few sheep, with rocks and stones, and kites
> That overhead are sailing in the sky.
>
> ll. 9-12

Yet the 'utter solitude' is not entirely relentless in its discouragement of human visitors; the mountains that 'front you face to face' have a secret, gentler spot:

> . . . beside that boisterous Brook
> The mountains have all open'd out themselves,
> And made a hidden valley of their own.
>
> ll. 6-8

Wordsworth here suggests an unexpected yielding in the austere defences of the rock-faces, and at this spot the mountains seem to court and invite human intrusion. The 'straggling heap of unhewn stones' that are to be found in this place of unexpected gentleness give us no hint of their purpose or origin. They are simultaneously part of the rugged scene, characterised by the roaring brook, and yet their disarray seems to indicate that their significance sets them apart from the potent grandeur of the valley. They are but a 'straggling heap', incomplete, vulnerable and out-scaled by the huge mountains enclosing the valley. Wordsworth introduces us to the story of Michael, then, by implicitly creating the perspectives that place the courage, grief and loss of Michael's life against the vitality and seeming permanence of the natural world. Wordsworth, however, dedicates his imaginative energies to affirming the unique value of the life and goals exemplified by Michael. For although he sees Michael contending with natural forces and circumstantial factors that dwarf his simple courage and love, Wordsworth never allows such a perspective to belittle, or make less valuable, the achievement of Michael's life. Equally such a perspective might be used to heighten and ramify the tragic aspect of the poem, and it is the startling achievement of

Wordsworth's creative tact that without the need to exaggerate, over-emphasise or preach he teaches us to value Michael's strengths, to be moved profoundly by his misfortune and yet remember the slow, tragic ending of Michael's old age with equanimity and a peaceful acquiescence.

The dramatic tension of the poem is generated by the nature of Michael's decision to send his only son Luke away to the city in order that the inherited land might remain free, and free not only for Michael but for the generations that follow him. Michael is caught between two loyalties, that of his love for Luke who stands in Michael's life as an immediate and enriching presence, and the love of his lands that epitomises both the toil and effort of Michael's entire life and the promise that such effort would be continued and extended beyond Michael's own death. Wordsworth creates the living and felt qualities of the bonds that tie Michael to his fields and flocks and to his only son with consummate attentiveness.

Michael's skills are emphatically not those learnt from either books or the experience of other men. His expertise as a shepherd brings him into a real and personal relationship with the caprices and warnings of wind and weather. Wordsworth talks of Michael as

> . . . prompt
> and watchful more than ordinary men.
>
> ll. 46-47

yet this watchfulness is not generated by distrust or fear, but a wry sense of the continuous challenge that his natural opponents are always placing before him. When he hears the south wind making 'subterraneous music' Michael's response to the warning suggests the confidence that comes from intimacy, and there is an almost affectionate acknowledgment of his protagonist:

> The Shepherd, at such a warning, of his flock
> Bethought him, and to himself would say
> The winds are now devising work for me!
>
> ll. 53-55

Wordsworth indicates that although shepherding a flock of sheep might be a common task it makes a truly uncommon man of the shepherd himself. Storms that are shunned by the 'Traveller' call Michael to his work and in that work he is confronted by the grandeur and mystery of the natural world's imperative moods:

> . . . he had been alone
> Amid the heart of many thousand mists
> That came to him and left him on the heights.
>
> ll. 58-60

These lines suggest how Michael actually experiences his necessary tie to the caprices of the weather, and it is his isolation when in the closest contact with 'the heart of many thousand

mists' that denies Michael either ease or reassuring understanding. It is courage rather than skill or knowledge that finally makes Michael a good shepherd. Because of the perpetual demands made on Michael's own personal resources by his care of the flock, shepherding is inevitably more than mere employment or a way of supporting himself and his wife. The prosperity of his fields and flocks is eloquent statement of the quality and tenacity of Michael's whole life-time of endeavour, and their peaceful continuation is a hope and necessity to Michael:

> . . . these fields, these hills
> Which were his living Being, even more
> Than his own Blood — what could they less? had laid
> Strong hold on his affections, were to him
> A pleasurable feeling of blind love,
> The pleasure which there is in life itself.
>
> ll. 74-79

Wordsworth suggests here a possessiveness that is supremely honourable and which springs instinctively out of the very nature of Michael's life.

While in his house, Michael leads an existence that continues his perpetual watchfulness when out in the fields. He and his family are habitually busy:

> . . . Yet when their meal
> Was ended, LUKE (for so the Son was nam'd)
> And his old Father, both betook themselves
> To such convenient work, as might employ
> Their hands by the fire-side; perhaps to card
> Wool for the House-wife's spindle, or repair
> Some injury done to sickle, flail, or scythe,
> Or other implement of house or field.
>
> ll. 104-111

Such habits come from the realisation that there can be no hours of undirected leisure. The family work together to keep the simple effort of their life abreast of the deterrents and mishaps that must ever shape the reality of Michael's livelihood. Wordsworth describes Michael as 'intense and frugal', and we are made aware that neither of these qualities stem from penny-pinching or a self-righteous practising of virtues. Michael could not survive, let alone prosper, if he was not virtuous, for his life's work would fail if excess, frivolity or laxness marked his impulses. His domestic existence is, then, wholesome and shaped by an unself-conscious restraint. Wordsworth epitomises these qualities in his description of 'their cleanly supper-board'. Mean or meagre sufficiency is certainly not characteristic of the menu; it is plain, but plentiful:

> . . . Each with a mess of pottage and skimm'd milk,
> Sate round their basket pil'd with oaten cakes,
> And their plain home-made cheese . . .'
>
> ll. 121-124

He reinforces this sense of the living, steady and quiet quality of the family's virtue by drawing our attention to its embodiment in the cottage light shining far into the valley at night. The constant light high up on 'a plot of rising ground' is a familiar companion and outstanding example to those who live near Michael:

> And from this constant light so regular
> And so far seen, the House itself by all
> Who dwelt within the limits of the vale,
> Both old and young, was nam'd The Evening Star.
>
> ll. 143-146

In this way we see that the very steadiness of Michael's virtue earns him affectionate and appropriate recognition. His self-reliance, although directed towards wholly personal and private concerns, also has its impact on the wider world of men.

Michael's love for his son Luke is finely and sensitively depicted by Wordsworth. His affection stems partly from instinct

> . . . the same
> Blind Spirit, which is in the blood of all . . .

but more tellingly Luke promises to Michael the continuation of all his life's effort. At a time when Michael would have considered that his work was drawing to a close, Luke comes to give renewed purpose and direction to Michael's life:

> . . . a child, more than all other gifts,
> Brings hope with it, and forward-looking thoughts,
> And stirrings of inquietude, when they
> By tendency of nature needs must fail.
>
> ll. 154-157

The intensity of Michael's joy in his son is such that he can cast off the image of his own masculinity and assume a woman's tasks, unselfconsciously and graciously, and his manly feelings are thus touchingly affirmed. His gentleness and humility in serving the little child speak of dignified self-effacement:

> Old Michael, while he was a babe in arms,
> Had done him female service, not alone
> For dalliance and delight, as is the use
> Of Fathers, but with patient mind enforc'd
> To acts of tenderness; and he had rocked
> His cradle with a woman's gentle hand.
>
> ll. 163-168

Michael begins very soon to mould Luke to the ways and skills of a shepherd's life. When he makes for the boy 'a perfect Shepherd's Staff' we feel from the care that is given to making this perfect miniature that Michael is now beginning to hand to his son his own

goals and endeavours. The staff cut 'from a winter coppice' marks the start of an apprenticeship that can only be finished at the death of Michael. As the boy grows, his daily companionship with Michael offers hope for the future, while the constant and living presence of that hope serves to enrich and vivify Michael's actual life. Michael is made more alive and more aware through the dear presence of Luke:

> . . . from the Boy there came
> Feelings and emanations, things which were
> Light to the sun and music to the wind;
> And . . . the Old Man's heart seemed born again.
>
> ll. 210-213

These, then, are the forces that bind Michael to his land and his son in a deeply-felt tie of love, hope and pride in the value of his own endeavours.

Michael's decision to send Luke away to the city when he is required to pay the bond of surety on his nephew is dramatically rendered in Michael's own thought and speech:

> '. . . I have been toiling more than seventy years,
> And in the open sun-shine of God's love
> Have we all lived, yet if these fields of ours
> Should pass into a Stranger's hand, I think
> That I could not lie quiet in my grave.
> Our lot is a hard lot; the Sun itself
> Has scarcely been more diligent than I,
> And I have liv'd to be a fool at last
> To my own family . . .
> Our Luke shall leave us, Isabel; the land
> Shall not go from us, and it shall be free,
> He shall possess it, free as is the wind
> That passes over it . . .'
>
> ll. 238-246, 254-257

Michael has been working through those many years not only for the tangible results seen in his flocks and fields; above all, his efforts have been to establish the freedom of his own enterprise. The fields had come to him 'burthen'd' as he tells Luke at their parting exchange. To Michael, another man's ownership of the fields he tends, watches and depends upon is felt to thwart and flaw his living relationship with that land. Wordsworth directs us to the passionate and instinctive roots of Michael's possessiveness. Lands which are 'unburthened' allow Michael the freedom of self-responsibility and the expression of a love that, like all passionate feeling, needs to call that which bears his commitment his own. For Michael, therefore, to once more give his lands to a 'Stranger's hands' would be to destroy the achieved ideal of his life's effort. He wants to give to his son a means of fulfilment that is complexly related to his absolute possession of the family lands:

He shall possess it, free as is the wind
That passes over it . . .

In this sense Michael wants to leave Luke an inheritance the value of which could not be estimated by the acres of land or the number of sheep he hands on to his son.

Wordsworth traces the emotional struggle of Michael and Isabel in such a way that we see both their courage and their vulnerability. The 'hope' they cherish about Luke's success in the distant city is essentially naive, for the seclusion of a shepherd's existence, while exposing them to the wiles, caprices and treacheries of wind and weather, has also protected Michael and Isabel from the subtle and complex dangers of town life. In the wind, mists and storms Michael knows the nature of his relationship to a truly difficult antagonist, but the world beyond his fields and valleys is seen through innocent and trusting eyes. Isabel bolsters her courage through reminding herself of the success of 'Richard Bateman . . . a parish-boy', and the story is full of the magic found in a fairy-tale transformation of a poor boy to a 'wondrous rich' merchant.

And with this Basket on his arm, the Lad
Went up to London, found a Master there,
Who out of many chose the trusty Boy
To go and overlook his merchandise
Beyond the seas, where he grew wond'rous rich,
And left estates and monies to the poor,
And at his birth-place built a Chapel, floor'd
With Marble, which he sent from foreign lands.
ll. 273-280

Isabel's quiet and industrious life has given her a childlike wonder at the unknown glamour of 'Beyond the seas', 'foreign lands' and London, where merit and worth are discovered and rewarded. Although the tale tells us how little real contact Michael and Isabel have with the world into which they are sending Luke, its very naiveté prevents us from feeling that Michael's decision is either a culpable misjudgment or self-protecting illusion. Wordsworth shows us that hope for Michael and Isabel means turning to their own resources of courage and trust, the simple virtues that their lives have developed and strengthened. It is not easy for either Michael or Isabel to be confident about matters and places that stand so distant from their own hard-won sense of life, and Wordsworth shows us how they each swing from despair to a desperately generated hopefulness:

. . . when she lay
By Michael's side, she for the last two nights
Heard him, how he was troubled in his sleep:
And when he rose at morning she could see
That all his hopes were gone . . .
And Isabel, when she had told her fears

Recover'd heart. That evening her best fare
Did she bring forth, and all together sate
Like happy people round a Christmas fire.
ll. 299-303, 310-313

Here we are made aware of the tensions and uncertainties that underlie the evening of unseasonal celebration, for Wordsworth implies that their 'happiness' is merely a reaction to hopelessness and not a sustained feeling that will carry them through the departure of Luke.

Michael's last words to Luke as they stand before the chosen place for the sheep-fold dramatise in a moving and direct way the conflict of Michael's feelings for his family lands and his only son. With Luke's departure so near, Michael is at pains to give to Luke a guiding sense of family continuity. This, in effect, is all that Michael can give his son to take away into the unknown and incalculable differences beyond their own valley.

I will relate to thee some little part
Of our two histories; 'twill do thee good
When thou art from me, even if I should speak
Of things thou can'st not know of . . .
ll. 346-349

Yet as he speaks of their 'histories' the very recounting of Luke's childhood and boyhood becomes an affirmation of the love he has given. Michael values the past with the same feelings with which he lives out the present, and because of this he cannot give Luke superficial precepts for living, like Polonius gives to Laertes. Michael takes his leave of his son by movingly re-iterating the small and irregular ways by which his love grew, and such a history can lead to no neat and useful guide-lines that Luke might turn to 'When thou art from me'. Luke's history bears no significant achievements or high-lighting features for, to Michael, each day and every month bears the continuous significance of a steadily growing love for his son:

. . . Day by day pass'd on,
And still I loved thee with encreasing love.
Never to living ear came sweeter sounds
Than when I heard thee by our own fire-side
First uttering without words a natural tune,
When thou, a feeding babe, didst in thy joy
Sing at thy Mother's breast. Month followed month . . .
ll. 353-359

Michael's own 'history' implicitly suggests that the self-same bond of love that lives between himself and Luke is a common and shaping force that joins and directs the lives of past generations, all giving in love a future life to their sons, that has been sustained and preserved by the work of their own hands and spirit:

I but repay a gift which I myself
Received at others' hands, for, though now old
Beyond the common life of man, I still
Remember them who lov'd me in my youth.
Both of them sleep together: here they liv'd
As all their Fore fathers had done, and when
At length their time was come, they were not loath
To give their bodies to the family mold.
I wish'd that thou should'st live the life they liv'd.

ll. 373-381

Luke's leaving the place that holds 'the family mold' is a threat to those continuities of love and work which have given a 'history' to individual lives of courage and endeavour. Goals and ideals have been preserved across time and misfortune by those whose strength lies in their love and knowledge of how their fathers and forefathers lived in that very spot. It is the paradox of Michael's dilemma that in order to give to Luke his rightful inheritance, 'that thou shouldst live the live they liv'd,' Luke should leave the place and traditions which have insured a living continuity between father and son. Michael has no way of preparing Luke for or protecting him from the dangers of the unknown life he is to take up, yet he attempts to give to Luke a sense of the continuity between his own shepherd's life and whatever might be Luke's experience in the town. The Sheep-fold beside Greenhead Gill epitomises Michael's hope that out of the scope of the family's hills and fields his son might still be guided and motivated by the ideals and courage of the shepherd's life:

. . . let this Sheep-fold be
Thy anchor and thy shield; amid all fear
And all temptation, let it be to thee
An emblem of the life thy Fathers liv'd . . .
When thou return'st, thou in this place wilt see
A work which is not here, a covenant
'Twill be between us . . .

ll. 417-420, 423-425

The 'work which is not here' and must be completed after Luke has left the valley is to stand for Michael as tangible affirmation that his son continues and prospers in the spirit of his father and ancestors.

The outcome of Luke's new life is essentially of small importance to the poem, and it is, indeed, dealt with by Wordsworth with a brevity that is almost dismissive. Luke gives himself to 'evil courses' and is driven 'beyond the seas'. Michael's hopes have been both naive and courageous, and Wordsworth has defined and dramatised the value of both qualities throughout the poem. For we have seen that Michael's seclusion, although it cuts him off from active experience in the world of men and cities, also allows

his instinctive feelings to move powerfully, and the desolate hills nurture a self-reliance and courage that together make Michael a man of unique and outstanding qualities. In this way Michael's sending away of Luke takes place within the only contexts of hope, trust and assurance that his life, and the lives of his forefathers, have given to him. Wordsworth's poetic concern is not to suggest how wrong that decision was, but to present us with the absolute emotional and moral rightness of its being made in that particular way.

Michael's grief after he has lost both his son and the hope of possessing the family lands unencumbered by debt gives us a final definition of his strength. Wordsworth speaks of Michael's ability to endure the pain of his personal tragedy, and, as is consistent with the tenor of Michael's long life, we see that rather than an avoidance of feeling on Michael's part, he confronts and lives through what is uppermost in his heart:

> There is a comfort in the strength of love;
> 'Twill make a thing endurable, which else
> Would break the heart . . .
>
> ll. 457-459

Michael's emotional integrity allows him neither the stance of deliberate stoicism nor the sapping indulgence of self-pity. Therefore he can and does continue his existence as before, almost as he had done when he had no son as a hope and companion:

> . . . Among the rocks
> He went, and still look'd up upon the sun,
> And listen'd to the wind; and as before
> Perform'd all kinds of labour for his Sheep,
> And for the land his small inheritance.
>
> ll. 464-468

Michael now has no hope that all he works to maintain will continue in his own spirit and love after he has died, yet his passion for 'the land his small inheritance' is essentially unabated and Michael remains true to an expression of this love for the remainder of his life. This, then, is the 'strength of love' that survives the grief of Luke's loss and gives point and meaning to Michael's existence. It is, indeed, a 'comfort.' Yet while Michael finds a real comfort in that which he still possesses, this does not prevent him from making a profound acknowledgment of his loss. Wordsworth presents Michael's confrontation of his pain and disappointment with a starkness that is dramatically incisive. This, rather than Luke's corruption, is the poetic and human climax of the poem:

> And to that hollow Dell from time to time
> Did he repair, to build the Fold of which
> His flock had need. 'Tis not forgotten yet
> The pity which was then in every heart

For the Old Man — and 'tis believ'd by all
That many and many a day he thither went,
And never lifted up a single stone.

ll. 469-475

To Michael the building of the sheep-fold beside Greenhead Gill can never be one of the many tasks he continues to do after Luke's loss. It was a work that spoke of the promised continuity between Michael and his son, and in its building with Michael's hands the sheep-fold epitomised the ideals and values, the flocks and hills that would one day be given into Luke's own hands. Here, the shock of Michael's idleness:

And never lifted up a single stone.

reveals to us the depth and intensity of his loss. In this place alone Michael makes the most fitting and expressive acknowledgment of the grief that tempers but does not destroy the coherence and integrity of his shepherd's existence.

All that Michael feared in his life comes to pass after his death:

. . . the estate
Was sold, and went into a Stranger's hand.
The Cottage which was nam'd The Evening Star
Is gone, the ploughshare has been through the ground
On which it stood . . .

ll. 483-487

Wordsworth here suggests how completely the life that Michael upheld, cherished and loved is ultimately destroyed. The 'ploughshare' breaks open and annihilates the very spot that once stood as a sanctuary of human love and virtue. Nothing of Michael and the value of his simple existence seems to remain amongst the indifferences of time and change. Yet the poem does not end on this bleak and comfortless note. The natural world that generated and fostered the moving strengths and virtues of Michael remains and is essentially unaltered:

. . . yet the Oak is left
That grew beside their Door

ll. 488-489

Above all, the sheep-fold that we saw at the beginning of the poem placed in that gentle opening out of the wild hills, still stands where Michael left it unfinished. The conclusion of the poem brings us back to the opening perspective where the sheep-fold, 'a straggling heap of unhewn stones', seemed barely distinguishable from the encircling scenery. The very placing of those stones in relation to the grandeur and savagery of the hill-side epitomises the courage and endeavour that define the nature of Michael's life. Their straggling incompletion holds for ever an image of Michael's ruined hope and profound loss, and as the stones of the sheep-fold belong more lastingly to the world of natural things than to the passing hands of mankind, so Michael's story is seen

to achieve a more than human permanence among the features of the quiet valley. Yet, as the opening passage suggests, the passer-by might not even see the remains of Michael's sheep-fold as it is so unobtrusive in the wild scenery. In the first line of the poem Wordsworth takes it upon himself to draw us aside from 'the public way', and then continues to alert our attention to a secret, unvisited spot. He, as a poet, undertakes to reveal the meanings and significances which are not apparent to the ordinary and passing gaze. It is the creation of Michael's living being that gives meaning to the opening scene and ensures that his 'tale' achieves a fully human permanence in the imaginative world of man and his art. In 'Michael' Wordsworth's stance as a creative artist possesses an assurance, steadiness and penetration that makes it one of his greatest poetic achievements. Here we see Wordsworth wholly given to the integrity of his art and confident of the perspectives within which he places his insight into Michael's strength and tragic vulnerability. We are left at the end of the poem with the rush and surge of 'the boisterous brook of Greenhead Gill' running beside the sheep-fold and telling us of a vitality that has no ending, which meets no challenging resistance and which therefore has no event or circumstance to distinguish its history. The brook's 'boisterousness' suggests limitation as well as unceasing energy. Against this perspective Wordsworth has created the figure of Michael who exemplifies a fully human vitality which is triumphantly capable of tragic experience.

University of Natal,
Durban

NOTES

[1] *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* ll. 605-609.
[2] *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* ll. 79-82.
[3] *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* ll. 236-239.
[4] S. T. Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, Chapter XIV pp. 5-6 *ed* J. Shawcross, OUP.
[5] Wordsworth and Coleridge, *Lyrical Ballads ed* R. L. Brett and A. R. Jones, Methuen, pp. 226-240.

CORRESPONDENCE:
THE MYTH OF ADAMASTOR

The Editors,
Theoria.

Dear Sirs,

Dr Paton's reaction to my article on 'The Myth of Adamastor in South African Literature' *(Theoria 48)* implies that there is a personal feud between us, or should be. As a long-standing admirer of Dr Paton, and a deeply respectful scholar of his work, I should be distressed if this were so.

My distress would be caused by the fact that a secondary theme in the article was the quest for arriving at a context in the field of South African literature in which sound literary judgements could be made. In arriving at this context I explained in some detail why I thought literary feuds with all their biographical-circumstantial evidence, dragged into the so-called argument at the critic's convenience, were unhelpful.

At no time in the article did I refer to Dr Paton's decision with regard to his Roy Campbell biography; it would have been less than relevant to my case. I merely stated that what Dr Paton occasionally poses as literary criticism in the various pieces cited is, in fact, frequently no more than an adept's very humorous, if unilluminating, series of character assassinations which are irrelevant to our interpreting of his victim's poems.

It was not my intention to pass judgement on the quality of Dr Paton's moral judgements (which I would take to be distinct from his literary judgements), and I did not do so. Neither did I pass judgement on his opinions about liquor and deviant sex; they are his own opinions, and my point was that I wished they would stay his own.

But I shall hold my right as a critic of Campbell and Plomer to maintain that such turgid issues should not be used to cloud or distort the business of the interpretation of the text. If in maintaining such an opinion I in turn have laid myself open to some pretty awesome moral judgements from Dr Paton, I can only deduce that my original point was not made clearly enough.

S. GRAY

P.O. Box 86,
Crown Mines,
2025 South Africa.