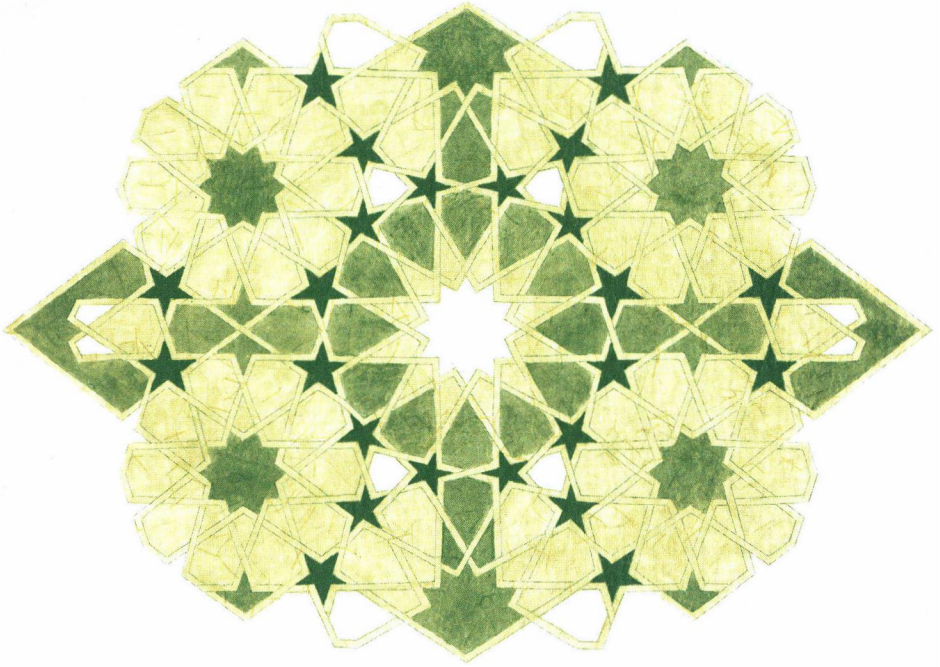


TEMENOS



HRH The Prince of Wales, John Allitt, Thetis Blacker, Robert Bly,
George Mackay Brown, John Carey, Gerard Casey, Noel Cobb, Agnes Gergely,
Sisirkumar Ghose, Michael Gilkes, Joscelyn Godwin, Brian Keeble,
Jean MacVean, James Madge, Keshav Malik, Jean Mambrino, John Matthews,
John Michell, Joseph Milne, Harold Morland, Piloo Nanavutty,
Rafael Martinez Nadal, Muhammad Salim-ur-Rahman, Kathleen Raine,
Peter Redgrove, Jeremy Reed, Svetoslav Roerich, Rosemarie Rowley,
Peter Russell, Sima Sharma, Philip Sherrard, Karan Singh, Arseny Tarkovsky,
William Irwin Thompson

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A REVIEW DEVOTED TO THE ARTS OF THE IMAGINATION

Editorial Office
Temenos London
47 Paultons Square
London SW3 5DT

Publishing Office
47 Paultons Square
London SW3 5DT

Distribution
Element Books Ltd
Longmead Industrial Estate
Shaftesbury, Dorset SP7 8LP
Telephone Shaftesbury (0747) 51339

North America
Phanes Press
P.O. Box 6114, Grand Rapids
Michigan 49516

The Lindisfarne Press
P.O. Box 778
195 Main Street
Great Barrington
Massachusetts 01230

Australia
Astam Books Pty Ltd
250 Abercrombie Street
Chippendale
N.S.W. 2008

Quest Book Agency
121 Walker Street
North Sydney
N.S.W. 2060

India
Heritage Publishers
4C Ansari Road
Daryaganj
New Delhi 110002

France
Calignani
224 Rue de Rivoli
75001 Paris

All manuscripts, correspondence and books for review should be addressed to the editorial office. Provision for return postage should accompany all manuscripts which will not otherwise be returned.

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Dancing Bird

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British Library CIP Data

Temenos 12

1. Arts-Periodicals

ISSN 0262-4524

Printed in Great Britain

Typesetting in Joanna by Nene Phototypesetters, Northampton
Produced by the September Press, Wellingborough,
and printed by Stanley Hunt (Printers), Rushden.

EDITORIAL

Twelve is the number of completion and at the end of a decade *Temenos* can take pride in the excellence of the work it has been our privilege to publish, both illustrating and affirming meanings and values of the Imagination, which Blake calls 'the True Man'. We have the honour of publishing, in this issue, the lecture read by His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales on the anniversary of Shakespeare's birthday, April 22nd 1991. In this paper His Royal Highness, going to the heart of the matter, himself calls for a return in the field of education and of culture to those values in whose absence all that is human in a life or a society will wither.

The Prince's plea is timely in itself and especially so for *Temenos*, not because we have reached an end but because we have come to a beginning. When in the year 1980 we decided to publish *Temenos* in order to reaffirm in our own time the timeless values, to challenge the premisses of a materialist civilization, we found ourselves the focus of a gathering of artists and scholars from the four quarters of our one world – from India and the United States, Japan and the USSR, Australia and the Caribbean. In the course of ten years *Temenos* has come to exist as an 'Invisible College', a family united by the strong ties of shared and living thought. The *Temenos* Academy is the beginning we have reached, and whose existence was declared and consecrated at a ceremony of kindling the sacred Fire, during the Christian season of Pentecost, on May 23rd 1991. Besides the eighty or so present in the beautiful Pre-Raphaelite Church of All Saints, Margaret Street, on that occasion, as many again of our friends and contributors unable to be present in person, sent assurance of their supporting participation in thought. The fire of Agni was invoked in Vedic chant, and in India a block of sandalwood was offered on our behalf in the Zoroastrian temple in Delhi, where also the sacred fire of the Lord Shiva was invoked in blessing of our work.

The *Temenos* Academy will consist of a body of Fellows elected for their contribution to 'the learning of the Imagination', and of Friends who wish to be kept informed and to participate in our future work. This will be in the sphere of education: we intend to open the

doors of the Temenos Academy in the autumn of 1991, at first offering series of lectures and classes, besides events in music and the other arts from time to time. Within a few years it is our hope that the Temenos Academy will have become a full-time College of Higher Education in those subjects which relate to the order of meanings and values, as understood in terms of the Perennial Philosophy. That knowledge 'coeval with the Universe itself', is the norm to which humanity will always return, this being the ground of the cosmos, in which we are and which is in us; as the drop is in the ocean, and the ocean in the drop, microcosm and macrocosm indivisibly one, a world in a grain of sand.

Please write to us if you wish to receive information about our proposed courses and activities, and to become a Friend of the Temenos Academy. Also, we need funding – large sums and small, to feed the Fire. Our future depends on your support.

One thing more: such is the abundance of excellent material we have received that we intend to publish one more issue of *Temenos*. Later we hope there will be a *Temenos Academy Review* but no longer edited by

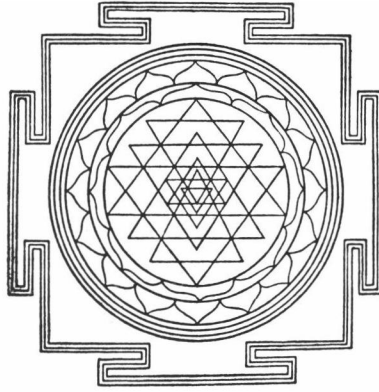
Kathleen Raine

* * *

It is with great sadness that we have learned of the death of two valued contributors to *Temenos*. **Jan Le Witt**, painter in the poetry of abstract colour, whose work we illustrated in *Temenos* 3, died in Cambridge on January 21st 1991. As a poet he valued both beauty and wit – two virtues seldom to be met with in contemporary English poetry. Jewish and European, he came from Poland (where his work is valued and exhibited) by way of Paris, and brought with him to England European standards both of execution and of a profound universality. We published poems by him in our first issue, and in *Temenos* 5 a long poem 'Encounters with Shadow'. He used to say that you could not have a cake without currants, and that he provided *Temenos* with the currants – his aphorisms and those harlequin-like lovable absurdities that have always peopled the studios of artists of the Imagination. His values were those of the great world of the arts, not of the transient.

It must have been more than one flower
I believe –
that Rilke hammered
into gold leaf.

Sisir Kumar Ghose (his paper on Ontic poetry appears on p. 54) was a contributor whose fine Indian sensibility discerned in poetry a dimension to which most modern secular critics are blind. It is this spiritual insight which we most value from Indian and other critics from Traditional cultures, who are able to illuminate for us aspects of our own literature lost to our materialist 'single vision'. He was enthusiastically in support of our proposed Temenos Academy and in his last letter asked if he could send a message to honour the occasion of its consecration. That message never came, but instead the news that he had left his body on April 16th 1991 at the Sri Aurobindo Nilaya at Santiniketan where he was for many years Professor. As a writer on mysticism (both in itself and as a dimension of poetry) he wrote as a devotee, of a world he knew from within. He was a dear friend, and I remember he wrote to me, before we had even met, in that very Indian way of acknowledging a recognition of affinity and sympathy, 'I think we must have known one another in a former life'. Former or future, his presence remains in the unbroken Now.



So perfect the design a quiet mind
Can meditate;
And yet man in his reeling days
Is doomed to find
Perfection more bewildering than a maze.

Harold Morland

Annual Shakespeare Birthday Lecture

delivered by

HRH THE PRINCE OF WALES

at the Swan Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon,

Monday 22nd April 1991

Ladies and Gentlemen, it may prove to be exceptionally opportune – in view of what I have to say to you today in this theatre – that I take off for Brazil as soon as I leave Stratford, probably never to return until found in the last remaining patch of rainforest by a tribe of hunter-gatherer environmentalists. ...

Now, I imagine that it is bad enough being asked to deliver the annual Shakespeare lecture if you are one of the many experts on the subject – a frighteningly large number of whom seem to be gathered in the theatre here this morning. I have no claim to such scholarship and find it hard to decide whether I feel more humble or just downright stupid standing before you today. ...

Of one thing at least I am certain. This year you will have a rest from scholarly expertise.

I am no orator as Brutus is,
But (as you know me all) a plain blunt man.
... And that they know full well

(– at least I certainly hope they do –)

That gave me public leave to speak of him.

I have to confess that my acquaintance with Shakespeare began in singularly undistinguished fashion. You have probably already guessed that the 'O'-level text we ground our way through at Gordonstoun was 'Julius Caesar'. The experience left me largely unmoved. That is perhaps not surprising, since it became only too apparent to me that I was a late developer – of a particularly virulent kind. It was only quite recently that I re-read the play and appreciated for the first time the fascination of that complex character Brutus, the reluctant revolutionary; the excitement and rhetoric of Anthony's great speeches, and the

extraordinary timelessness of Shakespeare's presentation and analysis of riot, revolution, intrigue and internecine strife which is at the heart of the play.

One of the problems, I suspect, was that I failed to realize just what fun Shakespeare could be.

Brush up your Shakespeare
Start quoting him now.
Brush up your Shakespeare
And the women you will wow.

Just declaim a few lines from Othella
And they'll think you're a helluva fella.
If your blonde won't respond when you flatter 'er
Tell her what Tony told Cleopater-er.

And if still to be shocked she pretends, well
Just remind her that 'All's well that ends well'.

Such was the advice given by Cole Porter, that Twentieth Century master of popular culture, in his musical 'Kiss me Kate'. Cole Porter's teasingly affectionate acknowledgement that Shakespeare can actually be fun seems to me to be something which each generation has to discover anew for itself.

All of us who have been fortunate enough to develop an acquaintance with, and love of, Shakespeare – and that is a thought to which I will return later – have our favourite plays. One of mine happens to be 'Henry V'. This probably has something to do with the fact that it was the first Shakespearean play in which I was able to play a part. As the Duke of Exeter, I was allowed one rather splendid speech at the French Court, but then faded from view, apart from a couple of reappearances on the battlefield at Agincourt and a modest walk-on role in the final scene.

I have seen the play a few times since then. I was spell-bound by Kenneth Branagh's performance at Stratford (how on earth did he manage it at the age of 23?) and I have seen his film of 'Henry V' at least three times. Some find it a rather jingoistic play, glorifying war. Certainly there are great speeches of resolute action. But each time I have seen or read the play, it has been the humanity of the King that has moved me most.

Upon the King! Let us our lives, our souls,
 Our debts, our careful wives,
 Our children and our sins lay on the King!
 We must bear all. O hard condition,
 Twin-born with greatness, subject to the breath
 Of every fool, whose sense no more can feel
 But his own wringing! What infinite heart's-ease
 Must Kings neglect, that private men enjoy!
 And what have Kings, that privates have not too,
 Save ceremony, save general ceremony? ...

'Tis not the balm, the sceptre and the ball,
 The sword, the mace, the crown imperial,
 The intertissued robe of gold and pearl,
 The farced title running 'fore the king,
 The throne he sits on, nor the tide of pomp
 That beats upon the high shore of this world,
 No, not all these, thrice-gorgeous ceremony,
 Not all these, laid in bed majestical,
 Can sleep so soundly as the wretched slave,
 Who with a body fill'd and vacant mind
 Gets him to rest, cramm'd with distressful bread;
 Never sees horrid night, the child of hell,
 But, like a lackey, from the rise to set
 Sweats in the eye of Phoebus and all night
 Sleeps in Elysium.

When I re-read this play nearly 20 years after performing in it at school, I found myself wondering in amazement at Shakespeare's insight into the mind of someone born into this kind of royal position. When I was at school I was too young and inexperienced in life to appreciate such subtleties. But now that I have lived life, made mistakes and suffered a bit here and there, I realize how profoundly wise and ageless is Shakespeare's perceptiveness.

Of course, that speech from 'Henry V' is not just about the innermost concerns of Kings. It is about the loneliness of high office, the responsibilities and stresses which afflict all those who shoulder great burdens, run industries or schools – or perhaps nurse invalided relatives.

And, then, what about Henry's speech before Agincourt? Visiting British troops in Saudi Arabia just before Christmas last year, and knowing that a friend of mine was commanding a regiment in the

desert, the words that Shakespeare puts into the King's mouth became even more poignant to me. They say everything that ever needs to be said in such circumstances, no matter what age we live in:

This day is called the Feast of Crispian.
 He that outlives this day and comes safe home
 Will stand a-tiptoe when this day is named
 And rouse him at the name of Crispian.
 He that shall see this day and live t'old age
 Will yearly on the vigil feast his neighbours
 And say 'Tomorrow is Saint Crispian'.
 Then will he strip his sleeve and show his scars
 And say, 'These wounds I had on Crispin's day'.
 Old men forget; yet all shall be forgot,
 But he'll remember, with advantages,
 What feats he did that day. Then shall our names,
 Familiar in his mouth as household words –
 Harry the King, Bedford and Exeter,
 Warwick and Talbot, Salisbury and Gloucester –
 Be in their flowing cups freshly remembered.
 This story shall the good man teach his son,
 And Crispin Crispian shall ne'er go by
 From this day to the ending of the world
 But we in it shall be remembered,
 We few, we happy few, we band of brothers.
 For he today that sheds his blood with me
 Shall be my brother; be he ne'er so vile,
 This day shall gentle his condition.
 And gentlemen in England now abed
 Shall think themselves accursed they were not here,
 And hold their manhoods cheap whiles any speaks
 That fought with us upon Saint Crispin's day.

One of the unique qualities of Shakespeare – which has, like every other aspect of his genius, survived almost 400 years – is his all-encompassing view of mankind. All human life really is there, with an extraordinary range and subtlety of characterization, of historical setting, of place. His understanding of domestic life, of the minds of soldiers and politicians, of the fundamental relationships between men and women was so vast that it remains eternally relevant. Contrast this passage from 'Hamlet' –

What a piece of work is a man! How noble in reason,
 how infinite in faculty, in form and moving how express
 and admirable, in action how like an angel, in
 apprehension how like a god – the beauty of the world,
 the paragon of animals!

with this more recent statement from Francis Bacon, proclaimed by the media as the greatest English painter since Turner:

I think that man now realizes that he is an accident, that he is a completely futile being, that he has to play out the game without reason. ... You see, all art has now become completely a game by which man distracts himself; and you may say that it has always been like that, but now it is entirely a game.

Which do you think will ultimately be more relevant?

Time and again in Shakespeare's characters we recognize elements of ourselves. Othello's jealousy, Hamlet's indecision, Macbeth's ambition are all horribly familiar. Shakespeare has that ability to draw characters so universal that we recognize them alive and around us today, every day of our lives.

The evidence shows wonderfully clearly that Shakespeare was a consummate technician and psychologist, with a remarkable ability to understand what makes us all what we are. But it is worth remembering that it is not entirely coincidental that he confronts us so often with such eternal truths, such blunt reminders of the flaws in our own personalities, and of the mess which we so often make of our lives.

His plays are a direct inheritance of the humanism of the Mystery plays, so popular in later Medieval Europe, which deliberately set out to hand on to future generations essential knowledge and experience under the guise of entertainment. No formal education – just the communication of wisdom through the evocation and study of human emotion, thought and behaviour.

Shakespeare plays a similar game. He has a moral standpoint: his plays helped people to understand themselves, and to recognize the laws of emotion and nature which govern their lives. Listen to Prospero in 'The Tempest':

... Our revels now are ended. These our actors,
 As I foretold you, were all spirits, and
 Are melted into air, into thin air;

And like the baseless fabric of this vision,
 The cloud-capped towers, the gorgeous palaces,
 The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
 Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve;
 And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,
 Leave not a rack behind. We are such stuff
 As dreams are made on, and our little life
 Is rounded with a sleep.

Shakespeare holds up a mirror for us to see ourselves and to experience ourselves, so that we gain in the process a more profound understanding of ourselves and others, appreciating right and wrong, and the factors which make us behave as we do.

Art in its broadest sense provides us with the most remarkable access to some of the essential truths about the meaning and significance of life. Poetry and drama are the forms in which, from the most ancient times, human values have been expressed, if not created. In every age of our history, poets and painters, musicians and dramatists have transformed crude fact into human meaning, adding new regions to the kingdom of the imagination.

Artists – and, again I use the term in its widest possible sense – have a unique capacity to illustrate, to educate, and to inspire. It is the poet who reveals to us true beauty. Think back, for example, to Enobarbus's glorious description of Cleopatra:

The barge she sat in, like a burnished throne
 Burned on the water. The poop was beaten gold;
 Purple the sails, and so perfumed that
 The winds were love sick with them. The oars were silver,
 Which to the tune of flutes kept stroke, and made
 The water which they beat to follow faster,
 As amorous of their strokes. For her own person,
 It beggared all description.

In the same way, it is the painter who gives depth to those everyday items so familiar that we fail to appreciate them. It is the pen of the cartoonist or satirist which lays bare the hypocrisy and deceit with which we all, politicians and individuals alike, seek to camouflage our real intentions. Such is the truth and morality which springs from art. Shelley had it right 200 years ago: 'Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world'.

I am one of those who do not believe, as the scientific rationalists seem to, that human consciousness is the product merely of brain processes, or that the cosmos is a huge machine to be examined, experimented with and manipulated by man for his own all-knowing purposes. There is more to mankind, in my view, than a mere mechanical object functioning in a mechanistic world, which has evolved from the clockwork universe of Newton to the computer models now deemed to possess artificial intelligence.

Despite all the dramatic changes that have been wrought by science and technology, and the remarkable benefits they have brought us, there remains deep in the soul of each of us, I believe, a vital metaphysical ingredient which makes life worth living. This awareness of a spiritual dimension greater than, and beyond, the confines of our everyday self, and of a purely superficial perception of the physical world in which we exist, has a particular link to aesthetic experience, and to literature.

Great literature offers one of the keys to understanding these truths, and to understanding ourselves. Shakespeare understood this point very clearly. There is a marvellous, definitive rejection of the rootless, soulless, mechanistic view of man in *The Merchant of Venice*:

The man that hath no music in himself,
Nor is not moved with concord of sweet sounds,
Is fit for treasons, stratigems and spoils;
The motions of his spirit are dull as night
And his affections dark as Erebus:
Let no such man be trusted.

It is our enormous good fortune that the world's greatest playwright – perhaps the world's greatest poet – wrote in our own language. The truths he illustrates are universal. In this sense we can read not only a good story into all his plays, but also psychological insights and archetypes with all their engaging interplay. There are also insights into the contemporary political climate, heavily overlaid with symbolism. But, above all, as with all mature art of any civilization, Shakespeare gives us his own version of the journey of the soul from differentiation to unification. Just listen to Lorenzo talking to Jessica in 'The Merchant of Venice' –

Sit Jessica – look how the floor of heaven
Is thick inlaid with patens of bright gold.

There's not the smallest orb which thou behold'st
But in his motion like an angel sings,
Still giving to the young-eyed Cherubins:
Such harmony is in immortal souls,
But whilst this muddy vesture of decay
Doth grossly close it in, we cannot hear it.

Shakespeare's message is the universal, timeless one, yet clad in the garments of his time. He is not just our poet, but the world's. Yet his roots are ours, his language is ours, his culture ours – brought up in this gentle Warwickshire countryside, educated at the Grammar School in Stratford, baptized and buried in the local parish church.

For us all, roots are important: roots in our landscape and local communities; roots in our cultural and literary heritage; roots in our philosophical and spiritual traditions. If we lose touch with them, if we lose track of where we have come from, we deprive ourselves of a sense of value, a sense of security and, all too frequently, a sense of purpose and meaning.

Today's world is changing rapidly; too rapidly, sometimes, for the human psyche to adapt. International barriers are coming down. Economic and political integration are getting ever closer. At the same time peoples all over the world remain as conscious as ever of their national and cultural identities. Look at the fragmentation of the Soviet Union, the resurgence of nationalist sentiment in Central and Eastern Europe, the situation of the long-suffering Kurds – even the anxieties of many Western Europeans not to allow their national identities to be subsumed in some characterless, grey, multinational bureaucracy.

Hanging onto our cultural roots is one way of preserving those identities, and indeed the stability of our civilizations. Other countries, particularly those with a strong cultural tradition of their own, understand the importance of this and the value of acquainting each new generation with their literary inheritance. In France, the curriculum for all students doing the baccalaureat obliges every student to study a major dramatic work of the 17th century, a philosophical work of the 18th century, a poetical work or novel of the 19th century, and a selection of poetry, novels and drama of the 20th century.

Why is it, then, that we in this country seem to see things differently? There are now several GCSE English Literature courses

which prescribe no Shakespeare at all. There is at least one 'A'-level English Literature syllabus on which Shakespeare is not compulsory. Thousands of intelligent children leaving school at sixteen have never seen a play of Shakespeare on film or on the stage, and have never been asked to read a single word of any one of his plays. Even the Bank of England has caught the disease, with last week's news that the bard's picture is to be removed from the £20 note!

I find all this difficult to understand. In an age when we are bombarded, perhaps saturated, with instant information of every bewildering kind – the sort of information which, if we are not careful, can overwhelm and deeply depress us (only to be forgotten a few days later) – has anyone stopped to consider whether all this actually helps to make us wiser human beings? Wisdom comes through insight, and our greatest poets and literary geniuses are invariably the means by which we can obtain this insight into the workings of the Universe and into the timeless imperatives to which we, as individuals, are subject.

I am not, of course, suggesting that great classical literature and art can be set up as a completely separate alternative to the culture of our times. As a practical man, with practical human concerns, Shakespeare doesn't ask to be canonized, but to live alongside and illuminate the modern realities of life. Look how school groups can respond to live experiences and experimentation! Six year old children can be enthralled by 'Twelfth Night', slightly older children become frenzied at the sword fights in 'Hamlet'. And during school matinees children call out 'Don't do it!' when Romeo is on the point of committing suicide, not knowing that Juliet is still alive.

Shakespeare may be less than fully appreciated in his native land. But he is studied and admired the world over. I shall never forget the number of Danes who came to see 'Hamlet' performed at Elsinore three years ago, when I was also present. Their knowledge of this foreign play was remarkable and it was worth going all the way to Elsinore just to hear the audience's reaction to the statement that – 'Something is rotten in the State of Denmark!'

Whether we realize it or not, Shakespeare is a part of our daily lives. We all shake our heads in despair 'more in sorrow than in anger'; all weddings, we hope, are built on 'the marriage of true minds'; and gardeners like me throughout the country wonder why even the

fullest respect for organic principles produces 'things rank and gross in nature' in our flower beds.

It is easy to forget how close we came to losing much of Shakespeare's genius. He made no provision for publication during his lifetime so it is largely his friends and admirers whom we must thank for collecting his writings together after his death. In the first Folio dedicated to his work in 1647, Messrs Heminges and Condell wrote in their Preface of Shakespeare:

Who, as he was a most happy imitator of Nature was a most gentle expresser of it. His mind and hand went together: And what he thought, he uttered with that easiness that we have scarce received from him a blot in his papers. But it is not our province, who only gather his works, to praise him. It is yours that read him. . . . Read him, therefore; and again and again: And if then you do not like him, surely you are in some manifest danger not to understand him.

It ought not to be beyond the ability of our schools and our teachers to protect their pupils from that 'manifest danger'. For the aids to understanding today are such that it should be easier than ever to ensure that all the young are able to appreciate their cultural inheritance. Just as Peter Schaffer's magnificent film 'Amadeus' introduced Mozart's music to millions who had barely a passing acquaintance of it before, so films and practical theatre workshops are there to open a window to Shakespeare for untold numbers of the uninitiated, and to make it comprehensible and contemporary. And here, let me say how much I admire the work in this area of the Royal Shakespeare Company, whose guests we are today, and of the Renaissance Theatre Company of which I am a non-acting Patron.

As we move towards a National Curriculum for our schools – sometimes known as an entitlement curriculum – I find myself wondering why the students of our schools are not as entitled to Shakespeare as to other parts of the syllabus? Do those who disapprove of Shakespeare, arguing for some extraordinary reason that he is elitist, wish to deprive those not already familiar with his work from acquiring an understanding of it – or of other great literature?

This marginalizing of Shakespeare seems to be symptomatic of a general flight from our great literary heritage. Do we really want to

sanction a situation where children are rarely introduced nowadays to the literary masterpieces of bygone ages; where the overwhelming majority leave school without any awareness of Chaucer, Donne, Milton, Pope, Austen, Wordsworth, Keats, Tennyson, Hardy, Dickens ...? Are we all so frightened and cowed by the shadowy 'experts' that we can no longer 'screw our courage to the sticking place' and defiantly insist that they are talking unmitigated nonsense? You forget – I have been through all this before with the architects! I've heard it all over and over again, and it is high time that the bluff of the so-called 'experts' was called. If our newspapers rose to the challenge and conducted a survey amongst their readers, the silent majority might finally be able to say what it really thought on this subject ...

I am sure that most teachers would willingly rise to the challenge of introducing their pupils to an experience which, whilst perhaps initially difficult, will be with them for the rest of their lives – although I am only too aware that there are many teachers who have so despaired of the hostility and indifference of some of the pupils confronting them in their classrooms that they have felt it better to teach them something, rather than nothing at all. Isn't this an area where the National Curriculum should be helping them? I know that the Attainment Targets for English state that children should be introduced to – and I quote – 'some of the works which have been most influential in shaping and refining the English language and its literature, e.g. the Authorized Version of the Bible, Wordsworth's poems ... the novels of Austen, the Brontës or Dickens ... some of the works of Shakespeare'. This is an encouraging injunction, but I do seriously wonder whether it is enough to counteract what many consider to be an accelerating erosion of serious literary study over the last 20 years.

There are terrible dangers, it seems to me, in so following fashionable trends in education – trends towards the 'relevant', the exclusively contemporary, the immediately palatable – that we end up with an entire generation of culturally disinherited young people. I, for one, don't want to see that happen in this country. Nor, I suspect, do countless parents up and down the nation, who probably feel utterly powerless in the face of yet another profession, this time the 'educationists', which I believe has become increasingly out of touch with the true feelings of so-called 'ordinary' people.

Many 'ordinary' parents, I suspect, would agree that education is not about social engineering, but about preparing our children as best we can for all the challenges in front of them. This means not only training them for work through the acquisition of knowledge, but also giving them an understanding of themselves and of the deeper meaning of life. The process is of course complex – and I think it worth underlining that it is every bit as much the responsibility of parents as of teachers – not least because it begins at a very early age.

Here in Britain, we seem to get it wrong almost before we have begun. In France, Italy and Belgium every child under 5 receives nursery education from the state. Here, less than half of our children have that right. When they reach primary level, what awaits them? Certainly a great many devoted and committed teachers, many no doubt inspirational, but as often as not too great an emphasis on the child-centred approach, the open-ended learning situation, and too much stress on process rather than content. Of course, this can engender enthusiasm and interest in the classroom, but seems correspondingly less likely to instil fundamental standards of accuracy in the basic skills.

It is almost incredible that in Shakespeare's land one child in seven leaves primary school functionally illiterate. Moreover, it appears to be an increasingly common impression that standards of handwriting, spelling, punctuation and numeracy are not at all what they should be. In most schools children are deemed incapable of learning foreign languages before the age of 11 – yet by the age of 14 half of them have given it up. As if that wasn't enough, present indications are that after the age of 14 children will not be required by the National Curriculum to study any aesthetic subject.

Perhaps most alarming of all, only a third of our 16–18 year olds are still in full-time education. In France the figure is 66 per cent, Japan 77 per cent, the United States 79 per cent, the Netherlands 77 per cent. Forty per cent of children leave full-time schooling with no significant educational qualifications at all.

On reflection, it is not all that surprising that so many leave school as soon as they can. Sixth-form education is, after all, geared mainly to preparing pupils for universities, polytechnics or other forms of further education. This inevitably frightens off those who are less academically-minded, if it does not simply disqualify those who would like to do so from staying on.

Meanwhile, those of our pupils who do stay on for the sixth form study three, or at most four, subjects. The advantage of such specialization is that those subjects tend to be covered in a depth which gives our undergraduates a strong start when they begin their university studies. The disadvantage is that they often miss out on education in a whole range of other subjects. Are we sure that mathematicians do not need to learn to write English, or speak foreign languages? Or that our historians can survive without an understanding of economics and philosophy? It is almost unknown in other countries (including Scotland, where the advantages of a broader education seem to be much better understood) for there to be this exclusive concentration on such a limited range of subjects.

It would be encouraging to think that an attractive programme of vocational training was available for the large numbers of our young people coming out of full-time education at sixteen. In Germany there is virtually no labour market for 16–18 year olds outside the appropriate system. Moreover, employers are legally obliged to give all young adults at least one day off a week for off the job training.

Here at home it is a sadder story. Most of those who leave school the moment they can go straight on to the labour market – or more depressingly – onto the register of unemployed. What a way to begin adult life! Only now are we coming to terms with the price we have paid for allowing the apprenticeship system to wither away. Only now are we putting in place arrangements to give our young people the vocational qualifications which they – and the country – needs.

It is heartening that commercial firms are increasingly involved in such training schemes, and are partners with government in the Training and Enterprise Councils set up two years ago. But, as a nation, we have been appallingly slow in bridging the huge gulf between the start we give our young people and the preparation for work which they receive in other countries. We have also been slow to see the disadvantages of forcing our children to choose between either an academic education or a technical, vocational one – a divisive practice almost unknown in other countries. What worries me so much is how we are going to survive in the Europe of 1992 and beyond shackled with such manifest handicaps.

We must have missed a few tricks when, at the beginning of the last century, Napoleon set up the Lycée system in France together with

the prestigious state-run *Grandes Ecoles* accessible to anyone able to satisfy the rigorous entry qualifications. In Prussia Prince William Von Humboldt was doing the same thing with the *Gymnasien*. We persevered, instead, with our reliance on the ancient universities and public schools as centres of excellence.

In our own times education has suffered badly from the process of lurching from one set of policy initiatives to another, as governments change, and a seemingly endless squeeze on resources. The result – sadly, at a time when education faces greater challenges than ever before – has been a major onset of innovation fatigue, a teaching force which invariably feels underpaid and demoralized, and inadequate attention being paid to their accommodation and equipment needs.

Encouragingly, there is now a greater consensus perhaps than ever before that education is the number one priority for the future. The overall concept of a National Curriculum seems to be agreed by all political parties – and most teachers. So, too is the need to do something about the education – and training – of our 16–18 year olds. There is talk of the establishment of a new National Commission to look into educational opportunities for *all*. And last week's announcement of a new pay review body for the teachers could go a long way towards encouraging more first-rate people to choose teaching as a career. The prospects for getting things right may therefore be better than they have been for a long time.

Let us, therefore, grasp this opportunity and resist the temptation to deny the cultural heritage of our country to so many young people simply because of expediency or because of a mistaken utilitarian approach. We live in an age obsessed with the tangible, with discernible results and with that which is measurable. While applauding the stress that has to be placed on the technical, the practical, the vocational and the commercially viable, I would like to stress, again, that I believe that education is more than just training. After all, there is little point in becoming technically competent if at the same time we become culturally inept.

In pleading for a restoration of sanity, I have to admit to a feeling of profound sadness that a very great deal of damage has already been done; and that in the unlikely event of anyone taking serious notice of what is said by those of us who care deeply about the value of a grounding in our greatest literature, it will take far too long to put

things back on course. I feel an overwhelming shame that in a country like Britain we should have allowed such a short-sighted approach to prevail. As Parolles says in 'All's Well that Ends Well' –

I shall lose my life for want of language.

If we fail to change the present situation, from what roots shall we produce our future poets, playwrights and authors? What, then, will become of

... This royal throne of Kings, this sceptred isle,
This earth of majesty, this seat of Mars,
This other Eden, demi-paradise,
This fortress built by nature for herself
Against infection and the hand of war,
This happy breed of men, this little world,
This precious stone set in the silver sea,
Which serves it in the office of a wall,
Or as a moat defensive to a house,
Against the envy of less happier lands;
This blessed plot, this earth, this realm, this England,
This nurse, this teeming womb of royal kings,
Feared by their breed and famous by their birth,
Renowned for their deeds as far from home
For Christian service and true chivalry
As is the sepulchre, in stubborn Jewry,
Of the world's ransom, blessed Mary's son;
This land of such dear souls, this dear dear land,
Dear for her reputation through the world.

I don't want my children – or anybody else's – to be deprived of Shakespeare, or of the other life-enhancing elements which I have suggested should be part of the schooling entitlement of all the children of this country. And I don't want our future generations to be the poor relations in a Europe in which there will be less and less room for those who can't keep up. But I fear that these are real dangers if we evade those key questions about the nature and purpose of education which I have touched on today, and if we fail to give our schools and our teachers the resources, and the philosophical framework, they need to produce the right results.

ARSENY TARKOVSKY

Summer has gone
 As if in a dream.
 In the sun it was warm.
 Only that's not enough.

What could come true,
 Like a five-fingered leaf,
 Lay right in my arms,
 Only that's not enough.

Neither evil nor good
 Passed by in vain.
 All was bright as a flame,
 Only that's not enough.

Life kept me under her wing,
 Took care of me, saved me.
 I was lucky, indeed.
 But that's not enough.

Leaves were not burned.
 Branches not broken ...
 The day clear as glass,
 Only that's not enough.

Before Poetry

When, still half-wakened, the body
 Burned my soul and onwards
 Fate flew like a fire before me,
 – A bush burning in the wilderness, –

From nowhere came the sound of flutes
 And in my ears fanfares rang
 And on the violin bows the net
 Of earth's miracle sang,

And in each colour, in each sound
By a thousand rainbows and tunes
The surrounding world stood crowned
Amidst its seas and towns.

Yet strange: from all that was alive,
I took only light and sound,
As yet the future not a word
Had let fall into this round . . .

Translated by Peter Norman

I was born so long ago
That every now and then
I hear the sound of freezing water
Passing over me.
But I am lying on the river-floor,
And if one is to sing a song –
Let us start with grass,
Scoop up some sand,
And seal our lips.

I was born so long ago
That I cannot talk,
And on the stone-strewn shore
In a dream I saw a city
But I am lying on the river-floor
And through the water I can see
A tall house and a far-off light
And the green ray of a star.

I was born so long ago
That if you were to come
And place your hand upon my eyes,
It would not be true,
But I cannot hold you back,
And if you were to go away
And I did not blindly follow you,
It would not be true.

My vision grows dim – it is my strength,
Two diamond spears invisible;
My hearing grows dull, filled with the thunder of old
And the breath of my native home;
The knots of hard muscles have weakened,
Like oxen grown grey on ploughland;
And no longer shine by night
The two wings behind my shoulders.
I am a candle, I have burned in the feast,
Gather my wax of a morning,
And this page will prompt you,
How you should weep and of what be proud,
How the last third of gaiety
You should give away and die with ease,
And beneath the shelter of a chance roof
After death blaze up, like the word,
Blaze up, like the word, after death.

Translated by Peter Norman

I am a shade of those same shades, whose thirst,
After drinking earth's water, was not slaked,
And who retrace their flinty path,
Disturbing the dreams of those who live, to taste the water of life.

Emerging like the first bark from the bosom of the ocean,
And the sacrificial urn from the burial mound,
I shall ascend the rungs to that step,
Where your living shade will be awaiting me.

What if that's a lie, a fairy-tale,
And if no face, but some plaster-mask,
Stares up at each of us from underground
Through the harsh stones of tearless eyes?

In the last month of autumn,
In the twilight,
Of a most troubled life,
I entered,
Full of sorrows,
A leafless and nameless wood.
A mist of milky-whiteness,
Like a glass,
Lapped it to its edge.
Along the grey branches
Pure tears flowed,
Such as
Only trees weep on the eve
Of winter's blanching.
And lo! A miracle occurred:
In the dusk
Blue sky shone forth from a cloud
And, as though in June, a bright ray
From days to come pierced my past.
And the trees wept on the eve
Of great deeds and the gay abundance
Of happy storms swirling up in the azure sky,
And bluetits sang a round dance,
As though hands had touched a keyboard
From the earth to the very highest notes.

I hear you, I do not sleep, you call me, Marina,
You sing to me, Marina, threatening with your wing, Marina,
As over the town trumpets of angels sing,
And only with unassuagable bitterness
You take our poisoned bread to the day of Judgment,
As the exiles took their ashes from the walls of Jerusalem,
When David composed the psalms
And the enemy pitched their tents on the slopes of Zion.
But your death cry rings in my ears,
Beyond a black cloud your wing burns
Like a prophetic fire against a wild horizon.

First Meetings

We celebrated every moment of our meetings,
As if they were God's manifestation and we,
Alone in all the world. You were there
Bolder and lighter than a bird's wing,
Running down the stairs, two steps at a time,
Like a whirlwind, through the dank lilac,
Led me to your own domain,
The other side of the looking-glass.
When night came on a grace
Was granted me, the gates of paradise
Were opened and in the darkness
There shone and slowly over me inclined a nakedness,
Awakening: 'Be blessed!' I said,
And knew my blessing was impertinent: you slept,
And the lilac bent towards you from the table,
To touch your eyelids with the blue of heaven,
And your lips kissed with this blueness
Were tranquil and your arm was warm.
And rivers pounded in the crystal,
Mountains misted over and seas broke day,
And in your palm you held a crystal sphere
And slept upon a throne,
And – God in Heaven! – you were mine.
You wakened and transformed
The everyday speech of man,
And words surged into my throat
In sonorous strength, and the word 'thou' revealed
Its new sense and signified: Tsar,
In the world all was transfigured, even
Simple things – like bowl or jug – when,
Between us, as though on watch,

Stood many-layered, frozen water.
We were led, one knew not where.
Whole towns, built by some miracle,
Parted before us, like mirages,
And about our feet lay mint,
Birds flew with us on our way
And fish swam up the river
And the heavens were opened before our eyes ...
When fate did follow in our footsteps
Like a madman, with a razor in his hand.

The Wind

My heart grew heavy in the night.

But I loved the darkness torn to tatters,
Whipped to frenzy by the wind,
The stars that glimmered in their flight
Above the wet September gardens,
Like butterflies with viewless eyes,
And on the oily Gipsy river
The tottering bridge, a woman in a kerchief,
Slipping from her shoulders above the turgid water,
And those her hands as though before disaster.

It seemed she was alive,
Alive as once, she was, but all her words
From moistened 'I's' no longer signified
Nor happiness, nor sorrows, nor desires,
No longer were they bound in sense,
As is the wont for those alive on earth.

Her words were burning, like candles in the wind,
And died away as though upon her shoulders
Had fallen all the grief of all the ages.
Side by side we walked but no longer did her footsteps
Touch this bitter wormwood earth,
No longer did she seem to be alive.

She did once have a name.
The September wind bursts into
My dwelling – rattles the locks
And ruffles my hair with its hands.

The Spiritual Significance of *Macbeth*

JOSEPH MILNE

Why do we find *Macbeth* so extraordinarily fascinating? Wherein lies its power? After all, it is the darkest and the most sinister of Shakespeare's plays. Yet for generations it has been considered one of his greatest.

We might reply that it conveys some universal truth about man, or about the nature of evil, that it probes the very darkest human passions, ambition, lust for power, madness and despair, or absolute corruption. But if pressed to explain what we mean by all these things, then we find it very difficult to explain them precisely.

Before exploring the play in some detail I would first like to point out a fact so simple that we can easily miss its far-reaching implications. Because *Macbeth* is a drama set before us simply to witness, we are able to see the relationships between all the characters, and observe how they each relate to the central action of the unfolding drama. This is not how we normally see life, for we are not usually in the privileged position of seeing the 'plot of life' unfolding before us. Our usual view is much more limited and fragmentary. But the master-playwright places us in the privileged position of seeing the laws governing characters and events. He shows us that the central plot of life turns upon man's relation to, or movement towards, good or evil, truth or falsehood, knowledge or ignorance, understanding or delusion, God or Satan, Heaven or Hell. Thus the scale of our view is immensely enlarged. We are, while the play lasts, omniscient. But this is also one way in which the very finest art makes special demands upon us. By elevating our vision to a level above the normal and enabling us to perceive and contemplate the connections and unity of things, it also demands that we see them on their several planes.

From this high vantage-point we see all the characters of darkness and evil ranged about Macbeth: the Three Witches, Lady Macbeth and the Three Murderers. About Duncan are ranged all the characters of light and good: his two sons Malcolm and Donalbain, King Edward of England, Macduff, Siward and his son, the English and Scottish

Doctors. Finally, all Scotland suffers under Macbeth's tyranny. Thus the whole of Scotland, from King down to commoner, is directly involved in the drama.

But more than this, nature herself is thrown into chaos with the murder of Duncan. The moment before Macduff discovers the death of Duncan, Lennox says:

The night has been unruly: where we lay,
Our chimneys were blown down; and, as they say,
Lamentings heard i'th'air; strange screams of death,
And, prophesying with accents terrible
Of dire combustion, and confus'd events,
New hatch'd to th'woeful time, the obscure bird
Clamour'd the livelong night: some say, the earth
Was feverous, and did shake. (II:III:53)

And when Macduff re-enters to announce the deadly deed, he declares:

Confusion now hath made his masterpiece! (II:III:65)

In the following scene Ross and the Old Man catalogue nature's disorders. A falcon is killed by an owl. Duncan's horses have turned wild and eat one another. The order of nature is turned to confusion, indeed it is *reversed*. Thus the words of the weird Sisters, 'Fair is foul, and foul is fair', uttered in I:I show their underlying significance, of reversal of all values and of the natural order, and they reverberate throughout the play to the last Act, when finally Macbeth is slain and the natural order is restored through crowning Malcolm true King of Scotland.

I suggest that this chaos, this reversal of the natural order brought on by the murder of Duncan, symbolizes a spiritual event underlying the moral event, and that this is central to the inner meaning of the play; but first we need to see that Shakespeare consciously applies in his plays the allegorical method of the Middle Ages. With this he conveys three distinct and concurrent levels of meaning, the *literal*, the *moral*, and the *spiritual*. We know Dante employed this method in his *Divine Comedy*, although he speaks of four levels. Edmund Spenser also employed the same allegorical method in his *Faerie Queene*, a work to which Shakespeare makes numerous allusions. Indeed, a key line in Macbeth, 'Fair is foul, and foul is fair', is a direct allusion to the *Faerie*

Queene (IV.VIII.32) and, most pertinently, in that work forms the defining notion of the passing away of the Golden Age. But perhaps more important than its employment as a literary device in the Middle Ages is the origin of the allegorical system as a method of early biblical exegesis. For example, the two great Alexandrian Fathers, Clement and Origen, applied it to interpret both the Old and New Testaments. They adopted it from the Jewish Platonist Philo, who adopted it from the Platonists who applied it in their interpretations of the Greek myths and the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* of Homer. Although it was later frowned upon by the official Church, nevertheless the allegorical method remained fundamental to biblical exegesis throughout the Middle Ages, especially in the monasteries. Its final great blossoming was in the stained glass windows of the Gothic cathedrals. Thus it is essentially in the provenance of the mystics, poets and artists – those concerned to perceive the metaphysical reality veiled by material appearances.

Clement and Origen liken the three levels of Scriptural meaning to body, soul, and spirit. The 'letter' or literal meaning is the 'body', the 'moral' or rational meaning is the 'soul', and the 'anagoge' or mystical meaning is the 'spirit'. Further, the 'letter' reveals the outer or historical events, the 'moral' reveals the Law, and the 'anagoge' reveals divine Grace. These three levels are not perceptible to all. They represent an ascent in understanding, a movement from sensory knowledge to rational knowledge, and from rational knowledge to spiritual knowledge or 'gnosis'. It is the Word, the Logos, that leads the soul on its ascent through these levels, bringing it finally to mystical union with God. This is the state of Grace.

This early Christian conception of Grace is vitally important to an understanding of Shakespeare's plays. It is the revelation of Grace that distinguishes the New Testament Covenant from the Old Testament Covenant, which revealed the Law. Grace supercedes and transcends the Law exactly as Love, Charity and Mercy supercede and transcend the Old Testament conception of Justice – 'an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth'. This is a fundamental theme in Shakespeare's plays, one that provides the key – one might say the golden key – to Shakespeare's Christian philosophy. For him, the qualities of love, grace and mercy always represent divine regenerative powers, and they are placed in direct opposition to the qualities of justice and

vengeance or any 'worldly' standards. *Hamlet* and *The Merchant of Venice* are major representations of this great theme.

In *Macbeth*, I suggest that Duncan symbolizes in his kingship all the divine qualities of Christian grace. Two brief quotations from Duncan will illustrate this. In his first meeting with Macbeth and Banquo, Duncan says to Macbeth:

I have begun to plant thee, and will labour
To make thee full of growing. (I:IV:28)

At the literal level this clearly signifies the conference of the title Thane of Cawdor upon Macbeth, yet there is a clear allusion to Jesus's parable of the Sower, in which 'men' are called 'seed' that are cast by the sower, some falling by the wayside, some on stony ground, and some on good ground (Mark 4:3–20). Further, the words of Duncan to Banquo:

let me infold thee,
And hold thee to my heart,

and Banquo's response,

There if I grow,
The harvest is your own,

extend the symbolism of the parable to include the image of Christ the 'harvester' of men.

It may perhaps be thought that these allusions are somewhat too tentative for the implications I have drawn from them. But Shakespeare, especially in his mature plays, often makes the most subtle points with very great concision and economy, and so demands of us very careful attention to each word. This is certainly the case within any one play, where internal allusions abound, quite apart from allusions to other sources. This is, indeed, the mark of the true poet – great meaning is stored in few words. But we can confirm our suggestion with the words of Macbeth himself, in the description he immediately gives of his relation to Duncan – words made all the more pregnant here because we know that, though true, they are uttered falsely by Macbeth:

The service and the loyalty I owe,
In doing it, pays itself. Your Highness' part
Is to receive our duties: and our duties

Are to your throne and state, children and servants;
 Which do but what they should, by doing everything
 Safe toward your love and honour. (I:IV:22)

Mark here the words 'love and honour'. Along with the word 'grace' in Shakespeare's symbolic vocabulary we have three words which signify in his plays the spiritual dimension. And Duncan's own words to Lady Macbeth in praising her husband conclude:

We love him highly,
 And shall continue our graces towards him. (I:VI:29)

The spiritual significance Shakespeare conveys through the symbol of kingship is clearly demonstrated by a passage from Act IV:III. Here, at the turning point of the drama where Macduff has gone to England to seek a remedy against Macbeth's tyranny from Malcolm and King Edward, a Doctor enters and describes the spiritual qualities of King Edward:

there are a crew of wretched souls,
 That stay his cure: their malady convinces
 The great assay of art; but at his touch,
 Such sanctity hath Heaven given his hand,
 They presently amend. (IV:III:141-145)

Macduff asks Malcolm what disease the Doctor speaks of, and Malcolm replies:

'Tis call'd the Evil:
 A most miraculous work in this good King,
 Which often, since my here-remain in England,
 I have seen him do. How he solicits Heaven,
 Himself best knows; but strangely-visited people,
 All swoln and ulcerous, pitiful to the eye,
 The mere despair of surgery, he cures;
 Hanging a golden stamp about their necks,
 Put on with holy prayers; and 'tis spoken,
 To the succeeding royalty he leaves
 The healing benediction. With this strange virtue,
 He hath a heavenly gift of prophecy;
 And sundry blessings hang about his throne,
 That speak him full of grace. (IV:III:146-159)

Here the conjunction of Christ-like powers and kingship is explicit. The language is itself full of biblical allusions. The disease he miraculously cures is 'the Evil'. It is of particular interest also that King Edward has a 'heavenly gift of prophecy' linked with 'this strange virtue'. Such a heavenly gift of prophecy stands in direct contrast and opposition to the predictions of the 'seeds of time' that the Weird Sisters annunciate, with which Macbeth is associated. We shall have more to say of this scene in England later. But now we must turn to the dark side of the play and examine the Three Witches in some detail.

Whenever Shakespeare introduces supernatural visitations into his plays they always represent either heavenly powers, as in the scene just quoted, or demonic powers – visitations from Hell. Likewise, just as Shakespeare symbolizes in kingship a spiritual dimension above a merely moral one, so also he symbolizes in demonic powers something more than moral evil. Such powers represent spiritual death, negation of being, chaos and destruction throughout the whole order of existence. Critics have offered all sorts of interpretations of the Three Witches. Some suggest they are merely for dramatic effect, some say they are an objectification of Macbeth's inner state, and others take them to be symbols of temptation. The first of these, that they are merely for dramatic effect, we may dismiss as being wholly out of accord with Shakespeare's consistent precision in the employment of symbols. Whatever the Three Witches signify, it is certainly not something vague or merely atmospheric. After all, they are the cause of Macbeth's fall and of all the chaos and evil that follows, not only for Macbeth himself but for the whole of Scotland.

Where sighs, and groans, and shrieks that rent the air
Are made, not mark'd; where violent sorrow seems
A modern ecstasy: the dead man's knell
Is there scarce ask'd for who; and good men's lives
Expire before the flowers in their caps,
Dying or ere they sicken.

(IV:III:168–173)

What powers could inflict such maladies as these? Once again we may resort to early Christian and Judaic interpretations of the Fall as described in Genesis for explanation. We recall that before the creation of Eve, Adam was created 'male and female'. This description of androgynous man drew various allegorical interpretations from the

ancient commentators. One interpretation says it signified the unity of two principles or aspects of Adam; 'Mind' and 'Heart'. In the light of this first state of Adam, the later description of the creation of 'woman' was understood to signify the 'passions' drawn out of the flesh of Adam, and God's command after the Fall to the 'woman' that 'the man' should rule over her was understood to signify that 'reason' should rule the 'passions', for the passions tend towards 'matter' or corporeal things, while reason cleaves to 'spirit'. Put another way, the senses, personified in woman, if unchecked by reason, will be drawn and bewitched by the multiplicity of created things, while reason is naturally drawn to the unity of the One above all creation. Thus Eve looks outwards towards generation and time, while Adam looks inwards towards the uncreated eternity of God. When Eve ate the fruit of the forbidden tree, and drew Adam to do likewise, 'passion' then prevailed over 'mind', enticing it away from the One to the many, for the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil symbolizes knowledge of 'duality', of all the pairs of opposites that belong to the realm of time and becoming. Hence the tree is called the Tree of the knowledge of *Good and Evil*, the primary pair of opposites. The Tree of Life, on the other hand, symbolizes knowledge of Divine Unity – the One above all plurality.

The temptation of the woman by the serpent, saying to her that she would become like God if she ate of the forbidden Tree, is a temptation to gain mastery over the Creation, to usurp the power and sovereignty of God and claim for oneself lordship over all His works. Giving way to this temptation signifies 'mind' becoming subject to 'passion' – a reversal of the ordained order of Adam's inner being. According to this interpretation of the Genesis story, the Fall of Adam signifies man identifying himself with the temporal powers of creation, and through this identification he subjects himself to the law of birth and death. Cast out of Eden, from the state of Grace, he must now 'labour' to sustain his separated existence.

We cannot be certain whether Shakespeare knew of this kind of interpretation of Genesis, but from abundant evidence within the plays we can be certain that he was aware of the fertile religious and philosophical speculations of the Renaissance. As yet, few Shakespeare scholars have explored in any depth the presence of the new Christian Platonism or Hermeticism in Shakespeare's works,

although in her *The Occult Philosophy in the Elizabethan Age* Frances Yates has shown how fruitful such exploration can be in interpreting the poetry of Spenser, Chapman and Shakespeare.

Be that as it may, elements of this exegesis of the Genesis story are clearly echoed in *Macbeth*. The first thing we notice about the Three Witches is that they are concerned with time and fate, qualities directly opposed to honour and Grace. Fate has three aspects; past, present, and future. The Old English word for these powers is 'weird', as we find in *Beowulf*. The three Weird Sisters are equivalent to the Norns of Scandinavian myth, and to the Three Fates of Greek myth. The Three Witches are associated with the darker aspects of nature – desert heaths, mists, thunder, lightning, night, caves. These associations are not merely atmospheric, but are directly contrasted with the qualities of light, order and harmony. Fate is opposed to the healing and regenerative powers of Grace and kingship, as it is also to the power of 'heavenly prophecy' of King Edward. Thus Shakespeare's conceptions of fate and destiny differ profoundly from the late Romantic conceptions of them. To Shakespeare they are always demonic powers, the powers of delusion that imprison man in Time and mortality, closing him off from the heavenly order of Grace, from Eden and the Tree of Life. They are more akin to the Indian concept of Karma, with its threefold aspect of past, present, and future, the 'seeds' of past deeds that must bear fruit in time, in *samsara*, the recurring cycle of birth and death. In the Christian tradition, the words of Paul in Galatians, 'Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting', are clearly an expression of this law.

In *Macbeth* the Weird Sisters are related to Hecate, famed in Greek myth for enchantments and illusions, and power over the fate of kings. She is associated with 'crossroads', symbolizing alternative paths for the soul to choose between. However, Hecate's entry in IV:I is an interpolation which disrupts the symbolism of the Three Witches, as does the music in this scene. Shakespeare never associates music with demonic powers, but always with love and heavenly influences, as is abundantly clear in the love Comedies.

In the light of these observations, let us examine the first meeting of

Macbeth and Banquo with the Three Witches on the heath. Macbeth's first words in the play:

So fair and foul a day I have not seen. (I:III:38)

clearly echo the Witches' own words in I:I, and indicate that Macbeth's state is already associated with them, is cast in their direction. He is ripe for temptation. Note particularly that Macbeth *commands* the Witches to speak to him – even as Hamlet commanded the Ghost to speak to him. Banquo, in marked contrast, asks them:

I'th' name of truth,
Are ye fantastical, or that indeed
Which outwardly ye show?

In Shakespearean language this is the authentic response, the response that Macbeth ought to have made, to distinguish reality from appearance, 'truth' from 'outward show'. We may be sure that Shakespeare has deliberately placed Banquo's authentic response directly alongside Macbeth's here. Banquo represents the voice of discriminating reason in this play, and may be taken to symbolize that aspect in Macbeth – the rational aspect of Adam that we looked at earlier – and this is why Macbeth so fears him, and why he finally murders him. For it is this spiritual 'reason' that begets true 'kings', even till 'the crack of doom'. But the question Banquo asks them is not answered. He probes further:

If you can look into the seeds of time,
And say which grain will grow, and which will not,
Speak then to me.

Mark here the allusions to Duncan's words which we referred to the parable of the Sower, but here it is not 'growing' in Duncan's 'heart' that is meant, but the 'seeds of time' that will be harvested by Fate rather than by Grace. Fate and Grace are set at variance right from the outset of the drama.

A further vital contrast may be observed in Macbeth's response to the Witches' prediction of his becoming King when Ross delivers him the news that Duncan has named him Thane of Cawdor:

If Chance will have me King, why, Chance may crown me,
Without my stir. (I:III:144)

The meeting with the Weird Sisters has kindled his faith in Chance, has drawn his mind from the path of loyalty, honour and Grace that he falsely declares to Duncan in the following scene. From this moment forth Macbeth speaks insistently of Time. His very next words are:

Come what come may,
Time and hour runs through the roughest day.

Time, Fate and Chance, then, come to be seen by Macbeth as the all-pervading powers that will shape his good. How terribly he is deluded in this misplaced trust only gradually dawns on him after he has murdered Duncan until, in the final Act, the moment of dreadful realization comes fully home to him:

To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day,
To the last syllable of recorded time;
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
The way to dusty death. (V:V:19)

Here at last he realizes with the full horror of it the folly of his choice in trusting Time and Fate, for Time lights only 'fools the way to dusty death'. Far from being a noble speech full of wisdom, as some critics have said, this famous soliloquy is Macbeth's final utterance of despair and disillusionment, for it is only fools that tread the way to dusty death, not wise men, not honourable men. They tread the way of Love and of Grace, of Loyalty and of Honour, as is clearly shown in this and many of Shakespeare's plays.

Now let us turn to Lady Macbeth. Bear in mind what we have already said about Eve symbolizing the powers of passion and of generation. Her nature is revealed to us fully in the scene in which she reads the letter from Macbeth which announces the coming of Duncan and describes the encounter with the Three Witches. She is in no doubt what to do: 'the nearest way' is to murder Duncan. Yet she sees that the obstacle to the crown lies in Macbeth's nature, in his goodness, in the virtues Duncan has nurtured in him:

Yet do I fear thy nature:
It is too full o'th'milk of human kindness,
To catch the nearest way. (I:V:16-18)

This is Macbeth's 'true' nature she is speaking of, the nature that discerns the good, the nature that would go the way of honour and Grace 'safe toward your love and honour'. To 'catch the nearest way' this nature must be confounded and overthrown. It is the means of attaining this that Lady Macbeth concentrates upon:

Hie thee hither,
That I may pour my spirits in thine ear,
And chastise with the valour of my tongue
All that impedes thee from the golden round,
Which fate and metaphysical aid doth seem
To have thee crown'd withal. (I.V:25-30)

The means she is to employ are to make that which is good in Macbeth seem bad, that which is his strength seem his weakness, the confounding of opposites. Macbeth is not an evil man, therefore the only way to make him take the evil course is to make it seem good in his eyes, and to make his present virtues seem weaknesses or even vices. This subtle reversal of values is reflected in Lady Macbeth's use of words here. The phrase 'chastise with the valour of my tongue' turns the virtue of 'chastity' into poison, while her use of the word 'valour' destroys the honour that makes it what it is. Implicit also in these reversals is a subtle denial of Lady Macbeth's own feminine nature. She will likewise cause Macbeth to deny his own nature and turn his noble sense of duty into avarice. That Macbeth already regards the crown as desirable is the sign of weakness here. In Shakespeare's symbolic conception of kingship, to desire the crown for oneself is to deny its very essence, which is to serve. True kingship comes from above, symbolized by the divine line of succession. Thus Macbeth's desire for the crown is in every sense illegitimate.

But if Macbeth is to be led to seize the crown through confusion of his sense of good and evil, Lady Macbeth has no compunctions whatsoever in her grasping desire for it, nor has she any justifying self-delusions:

Come, you Spirits
That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here,
And fill me, from the crown to the toe, top-full
Of direst cruelty...

Come, thick Night,

And pall thee in the dunnest smoke of Hell,
 That my keen knife see not the wound it makes,
 Nor Heaven peep through the blanket of the dark,
 To cry, 'Hold, Hold!' (I:V:40-54)

The defiance of Heaven is here explicit. The reign of Grace shall not even 'peep' through the dark at the deed she has conjured in her 'mortal thoughts'. We have an important and recurring theme here: the world of light shall not see or know the evil deed. It shall be conceived and performed entirely under 'the blanket of the dark'. The divine order of light shall be supplanted by the demonic chaos of the dark. Heaven and earth shall be divorced and regenerative Grace shall be nullified – even as Lady Macbeth's own powers of generation shall be stopped up.

Understood allegorically, Lady Macbeth may be seen as an aspect of Macbeth himself. She is the Eve side of him, the 'passions' which, given rein, would overthrow the rational. We may also regard the Wierd Sisters as aspects of Macbeth. Understood in this way, we see that it is Macbeth's own nature that sets before him the ultimate choice between Grace and Fate. The 'seeds of time' are in man's nature. But to Shakespeare man has access to another order in his being, the order of Grace that comes through self-knowledge, and which gives birth to an order of action outside time, actions such as those King Edward performs, which have their origin in Heaven. Macbeth chooses Fate, and thus he falls under what we may call the Shakespearean Law of Consequence. It is this great law of consequence that Shakespeare traces through *Macbeth*. Even before he murders Duncan, Macbeth has intimations of these consequences, expressed in his conflicts of doubt, the intimations that Lady Macbeth will 'chastise with the valour of her tongue'. The solitary voice that might lead Macbeth the other way is Banquo, the discriminating aspect of Macbeth. Seen in this light, two curious things strike us about Banquo. The talk he and Macbeth are to have about the predictions of the Three Witches never takes place; indeed Macbeth always disregards whatever Banquo says, and he can never understand him. Secondly, Banquo never appears in any scene with Lady Macbeth – as though in her presence he were cancelled out. Even when Banquo's ghost appears at the feast in Act IV Lady Macbeth does not see him, nor even

suspect his presence. She attributes Macbeth's response to him to a malady he has had since his youth. That is something to ponder.

To return to the law of consequence. Many critics suggest that the agonies Macbeth and Lady Macbeth suffer in Acts IV and V are the torments of their consciences, of remorse for what they have done. But this is to misread the play's central theme, which is to trace in detail the consequences of the overthrow of Grace. Never once do they speak in terms of guilt, rather their minds are set continually on securing the position they have usurped, and they multiply crime upon crime to attain this end, despite their misery. They have stepped beyond all morality and entered the deepest regions where no ray of light may even 'peep through'. Their pains are not the pangs of conscience, but the torments of Hell. With the overthrow of divinity it is not vice and immorality that rules, it is darkness, chaos, disruption of nature, famine, delusion, despair, confusion, so that Macbeth can only say of the evil he has ushered in:

Nothing is but what is not,

and,

To know my deed, 'twere best not know myself,

and,

Had I but died an hour before this chance,
I had lived a blessed time; for, from this instant,
There's nothing serious in mortality;
All is but toys: renown, and grace, is dead;
The wine of life is drawn, and the mere lees
Is left this vault to brag of.

These are not words of conscience or penitence, rather they express Macbeth's realization of the consequences of the deed in his own soul. Through the deed he has *changed state*. The deed has blocked the way to self-knowledge, the great symbol in Shakespeare's plays of spiritual perfection, as it is for the mystics the key to divine illumination. Macbeth has become an empty vessel, an automation, for in murdering kingship he has murdered his own spirit or soul. By falsely taking the crown he has become King in name only. By murdering loyalty he has gained only pretence of loyalty. He neither loves nor is

loved. Rather, he fears his subjects, as they fear him. In grasping for the future, he lives only to be ruled and tormented by the past. Step by step Shakespeare is exposing to our view the inward destruction of Macbeth, and his vain struggles to make his kingship real, to bring an appearance of order to the chaos he has wrought. All this is far from remorse. On the contrary, his course is that of 'multiplying villainies'.

So much, then, for the dark side of the play and the great law of consequence that sweeps Macbeth down into Hell. We must now consider another important character in the play, Macduff, and especially the discourse between him and Malcolm in Act IV, which I believe holds a major key to the underlying spiritual meaning of the play.

Act IV in Shakespeare's Tragedies and Comedies is always the moment when all the contrary forces of the drama come to their climax and turning point and determine the nature of the resolution of the whole play in Act V. In *Macbeth* the fourth act is very like a recommencement of the drama. It begins again with the Three Witches, and again Macbeth receives predictions, this time in the form of the apparitions, and again there is murder, now of Lady Macduff and her children. Again there is a meeting with royalty, between Malcolm and Macduff. But this time the whole direction of the drama reverses, and the Heavenly powers of kingship and Grace now come into ascendancy. This extraordinary reversal takes place during the discourse between Malcolm and Macduff. This dialogue represents a spiritual 'trial' or 'test' of Macduff, and so stands as the spiritual counterpart to the demonic temptations scenes in Act I and II.

We recall that Macbeth was renowned for his great courage and honour in Act I. Here, in Act IV, Macduff is suspected of being a coward and a traitor. Macduff has come to England to seek aid from Malcolm and King Edward (who significantly remains unseen) to liberate Scotland from the tyranny of Macbeth and to restore the crown to its rightful successor, Malcolm. Macduff's motive is compassion. But just as Macbeth could not seize the crown before being wholly ruled by Fate, so Macduff cannot restore the crown before being wholly ruled by Grace. This is the significance of Malcolm's search for any treachery in Macduff's soul. The great catalogue of vices Malcolm attributes to himself is a test of Macduff's faith. If England and Malcolm should prove to be devoid of goodness, will Macduff resign

himself to evil and ally himself with it? Malcolm ends his list of assumed vices with the words:

had I power, I should
 Pour the sweet milk of concord into Hell,
 Uproar the universal peace, confound
 All unity on earth ...
 If such a one be fit to govern, speak:
 I am as I have spoken. (IV:III:97–102)

Macduff is being challenged to discern between 'truth' and 'outward show'. He responds:

Fit to govern?
 No, not to live ...
 Thy royal father
 Was a most sainted King: the Queen, that bore thee,
 Oft'ner upon her knees than on her feet,
 Died every day she liv'd. Fare thee well!
 These evils thou repeat'st upon thyself
 Hath banished me from Scotland. – O my breast,
 Thy hope ends here! (IV:III:103–114)

If Malcolm is indeed such as he says he is, then Macduff is 'banished' from Scotland, both in the obvious sense that he cannot return to Scotland for fear of Macbeth, and in the deeper sense that the hope he had in Malcolm for Scotland's regeneration is lost. His despairing words, 'O my breast, Thy hope ends here!', seems to signify that surrender of all self the soul must pass through, before it can receive the light of regenerative Grace. It is to this same self-surrender that Macduff refers with his words about the Queen, who 'died every day she liv'd'. Here is a stark contrast with the nature of Lady Macbeth, the 'fiend-like Queen' as Malcolm calls her in the last scene of the play.

But Malcolm perceives the total purity of Macduff and responds with the first healing words of the drama:

Macduff, this noble passion,
 Child of integrity, hath from my soul
 Wip'd the black scruples, reconcil'd my thoughts
 To thy good truth and honour ...
 but God above
 Deal between thee and me! for even now
 I put myself to thy direction (IV:III:114–122)

Precisely at this moment of 'good truth and honour' the Doctor enters and speaks of the miraculous healing gifts of King Edward. This juxtaposition of Macduff's honour, Malcolm's true kingly nature and King Edward's regenerative Grace represents the moment when Heavenly powers enter the play, and are henceforth in the ascendancy. Malcolm now tells Macduff that Edward will lend his forces to liberate Scotland:

Gracious England hath
Lent us good Siward, and ten thousand men;
An older, and better soldier, none
That Christendom gives out. (IV:III:189)

Malcolm offers himself as Scotland's servant:

What I am truly,
Is thine, and my poor country's, to command. (IV:III:189)

We may wonder why Malcolm has waited for Macduff to come to him for Scotland's aid before he decides to act himself, especially as King Edward has already put his forces at his disposal. But this again is a Shakespearean principle, that Grace must be *called upon* by the pure in heart before it may act upon them or through them. There must first be *metanoia*, a turning about of the mind. This is precisely what Macduff represents. He has lost, or forsaken, all for the sake of Kingship, truth and Scotland. His function in the play is to call forth the power of Heaven to defeat the power of Fate. If we cast our minds back to Act II:III, when Macduff is about to discover Duncan's murder, we observe that his task is to wake the King:

I'll make so bold to call,
For it is my limited service. (II:III:50)

On that dire day his *call* discovers the King dead, murdered, but on this day his call is answered by Grace. In Act II he was the unhappy conveyer of the news of the fall of a Kingdom, of the death of Grace. In Act IV he is the honoured harbinger of the restoration of a Kingdom and the rebirth of Grace. What was once 'limited service' has now become great sacrifice.

This scene, I believe, represents Shakespeare at his most subtle and profound. The powers of darkness and evil may indeed be more

dramatic from a limited aesthetic point of view, but a deeper reading of the play reveals that it is the work of Grace that most interests Shakespeare. Macbeth himself finally realizes that a life without Grace is a life where all deeds ultimately 'signify nothing'.

In the Shakespearean scheme we have tried to elucidate here, Macbeth's famous soliloquy does not express some great truth about life, for life is not 'a tale told by an idiot', nor is it a 'brief candle'. This is what it has become to Macbeth in his fallen state, reduced to a mere mortal round of Time, chained to the past, ending in 'dusty death'. Nor do these words express a hint of remorse. The last moment for repentance has long passed, and Macbeth has already absolutely rejected it. Two scenes previously Macbeth had consulted with a physician about the sickness of Lady Macbeth:

Canst thou not minister to a mind diseas'd,
Pluck from the memory a rooted sorrow,
Raze out the written troubles of the brain,
And with some sweet oblivious antidote
Cleanse the stuff'd bosom of that perilous stuff
Which weighs upon the heart? (V:III:40-45)

The Doctor answers with immense significance:

Therein the patient
Must minister to himself.

To 'minister to himself' is Shakespearean language for tending to the soul. Notice that, although they are speaking of Lady Macbeth, the Doctor says 'minister to *himself*', surely confirming that Lady Macbeth is an aspect of Macbeth himself, and that it is the 'rational' aspect that must minister to the sick soul. Macbeth's rejection of such a cure is emphatic:

Throw physic to the dogs; I'll none of it.

And what is 'that perilous stuff which weighs upon the heart'? Surely it is the past, the 'written troubles of the brain', the fruits of the evil seeds that have been planted in the heart and grown into 'rooted sorrow'. To this there is no 'sweet oblivious antidote'. The only remedy is repentance, or surrender of self. With the rejection of this, moments later Lady Macbeth is dead, she by her own 'self and violent hands took off her life'. These are the same hands from which she

could never remove the spots of Duncan's blood, the same hands with which she would have dashed out the brains of babes.

This reference to the symbol of Eve, or of passion born of Eve, relates again to Macduff, but here in reverse. The second apparition said to Macbeth, 'none of woman born shall harm Macbeth'. Macduff is of course such a man. He was 'from his mother's womb untimely ripp'd'. I suggest this symbolizes being born of 'mind' rather than of 'passion', that he is a child of Adam. Hence Malcolm, as we have already seen, calls him 'Child of integrity'.

The play ends with the final restoration of light and Grace and true Kingship.

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The interpretation of *Macbeth* offered in this paper is largely the product of research into the history of biblical exegesis and Christian Platonism as well as the *philosophia perennis* generally, rather than the literary studies of Shakespeare. Hence no references to authorities have been made in the text. Of the many works that have contributed to the present study in one way or another, the following are suggested to the interested reader.

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PETER REDGROVE

Two Interiors

I

It is the fusion of the leonine heat
With the cold-blooded fluid of the reptile

Which generates the rainbow. His mother,
She trusted, would be his symbol. Each point

In this imperial superspace is
A complete cross-section through one universe,

All the galaxies and stars condensed in this one point,
In this fly, in this solitary tear-drop, bent leaf,

This perfume in superspace an altar-top in Hagia Sophia
For she copulated with the atmosphere more than once,

Until the stars shone and could not be ignored.

II

She wanted to make Caesar. Quite right.
The foetus quaffing its nectar and its mother's,
Drinking its own urine continually,
Drinking nectar deep in the mother-flower,
The straw-hued amniotic champagne, Caesar
Deep among the powers, his tiny fists
Clutching furrows in his birth-membrane,
Lost among the petalled pelts,
The embryonic pelt with its hair turned in,
The petals whose nectar springs everywhere inside,
Caesar in the ultra-scan disappears, appears
Among the folds of the magic curtains, as the genes twist
Like fingers tugging the hair, his longbones shining
Like fluorescent tubes, his face a saint's.

The Mountain

The beefarm on her sloping meadows, the sweet
 Exacting spaces spinning honey;
 Under the elms and the sycamores

The light leaves cherish many flowers,
 The light air under the boughs threaded
 With the vivid bees who return

Speaking excitedly by dance
 Like soldiers in armour yellow with pollen
 Instead of bloodstain from the battlefield,

Buttercup field. On higher slopes
 The banks of pines with their silent smell
 In serried batallions, their needles

In thick hushing carpets; here only
 The solitary wasp lives, or the rotund
 Humble bee, under that dark green light

In that cherished silence as under
 A thick fabric gathered up and pleated
 Into trees on the skirts of the mountain.

Enterprise Scheme

My job is reading to the spirit in the sacred rock;
 I camp in the tent, and read
 To the boulder-ghost from nine o'clock to five.

The post is unpaid; I have been here
 Only fifty years; I did not visit
 Fortune's fountain, I am reader

To the spring in the rock, Reader
 In Water at the University of Rock;
 These ancient stones were placed as residence

For the fluctuating spirit of the water
 By the stone-stiff apparition of the glacier
 Which vanished, strewing stones.

I read to rock and water, who drink
 My voice; how learned the water is!
 How the earth contains its own planets!

How spirit piles up in underground reservoirs!
 And the great theatres in the moon
 Listen, for it is mother o'pearl

And a luminous conch whose galleries
 Listen; I am *répétiteur*; and my reward?
 An apron of the tressy water

At an elbow of the torrent mumurs
 'I am thy double sister' over the stones.
 Is that man coming with his tractor

To dig the sprites out of the ground, level my valley?

Poetry Teacher

The teacher shows us a hornstone vessel. Horn Stone.
 A material which is neither one thing nor the other
 But both at once. Chert. Her description was a tune

Entitled 'Stonehornpipe', which will be tintured always now
 With her yellow shirt, her sandalwood aura,
 For as she spoke I saw in the tiny pollen-gathering fly

Scaling the extraordinary glass abyss
 Of the window next to my desk,
 How the veins of its vitality streamed

In the long wings like a shirt, like the grain of chert,
 And the reason why it visited us, for, clustered
 In the class room with such a teacher, we

Were like ripening stamens to her yellow pistil, a classroom-flower
Moved by her imagery to return amazement-scent
In our astonished breaths. Outside

The trees moved like visionaries, since
The merest breath of wind shifted
Great masses of green landscape. Now

She held up her little finger with the moonstone ring:
'My crystal ball, children, which is both
Light and substance, and has a faint smell

Of good silver cutlery, it is a light
Which takes me by the hand;' no wonder
She had a reputation for witchcraft

With all that poetry on her little finger.

Morgawr

The deep sea arm in arm with its relaxed consort,
The salt lagoon. I know there is
A water-dragon or sea-serpent, the lurker
In the waters, the Morgawr, who carries
The fruit of night under her heart.

We walked a long time admiring the heaps
Of crystals which with wooden rakes
They pulled out of the languid waters
And let lie to drain their liquor; and there were
Small thunderflies swarming, nibbling the salt,
Like black-leather bandits among the stately panes,
Which made her smile and stretch and look up
For the storm, for they were called so because
When thunder was nearby they gathered like sooty wheat
And hummed like rain coming;

But this was more than thunder; it was the dragon rising;
There was gathering a certain noiseless sound
That smelt of the whole aeon, as if the earth

Was an apple ripening in a planet-orchard,
A global apple covered with orchards, parks,
And salt-lagoons in which the dark-muscled
Maggot had begun to champ with thunderous jaws;
This baby of a moth destined to open up
Subterranean water-parks and fountains of
Black oil and red gold and wings of rivering silver.

Holy Week

Truro Cathedral loomed
Over me like a stone

Waterfall, a condition
Of continuous purification,

But over the stone flowed
A skin of actual waterfall

Of dew pulled out of the wind
By cool stone. The glass

In the great windows was gone,
The air blew organ music on the traceries;

In the side aisles, great
Swatches of cobweb, I wondered

At the priestly spiders
Ministering at the altars,

And what was now worshipped
At the high altar

Which was now the low altar;
I stood at the edge of the collapsed floor

Savouring the darkness on which
The church was founded, alive

Darkness populous with water
Combed out by pinnacles

And returned to the depths
Into which I climbed

Following the music
Of the stone-and-water choir,

The dripping surplice, the opened
Heartway into the stone

Summoning like Orpheus
On his sculptured harp.

Ayr

The sharp stimulus of frankincense
Is as if all the trees of paradise

Were on fire in fragrant portals
Of flame and smoke. The Ayr

In God is a lovely pleasant still breath,
Or voyce blowing. The Original of the Ayr

(In which the Holy Ghost riseth up)
Is the exit going forth of the powers.

And the water in God is also of another kind;
It is the source of fountain in the powers

Not of an elementary kind, as in this world;
It is most like the sap of an apple, the juice,

But it is very bright and lightsome,
Like heaven; like a flame, but cooling

As water is, and petal-fragrant.

Towards Ontic Poetry

SISIRKUMAR GHOSE

'Why Poetry?' is a good, basic question. There are several answers. Here is one, closer to our inner being. All things take us back to the source, the origin, even to the unknowable. So does poetry. As the poets of the Vedas, and the other traditional cultures knew, the roots of Reality were 'yonder', in the Archetypal. Behind every form, 'the forms of things unknown', is an idea. If you call this view magical and pre-scientific, the choice is yours. The creation of the creative self is man's manhood. This loyalty to the Archetype is India's priceless heritage. Poetry can be studied in several ways, but the best way to study it is under the aspect of evolving consciousness. When all is said and done the poetry of the soul is the soul of poetry. It recovers for us the lost language of ecstasy and illumination.

The scientific, or the pseudo-scientific, is not the last word in human wisdom and perception. 'Nowhere, my love, will be world but within.' Between the without and the within amphibian man needs and demands poetry, a link language, the lost language of poetry. When Heidegger called poetry the establishment of Being with the help of the rhythmic word, he was but repeating a Vedic idea. True, there is an element of mystery in the whole creative process. Poetry is not about itself but about man's relationship with reality.

Not a rational programme, poetry carries its quota of amazement and anonymity. As Shelley understood, a man cannot sit down and say, I will compose poetry. Poetry comes, happens, is given. To believe Valéry, the first line is God's gift, poets fill up the rest. Most poems are composed, or de-composed *after* inspiration has left. The poetic act is spontaneous, unpredictable, unrepeatable and may not be sustained too long. To endure poetry is not easy. Just as men are but part-men, poets too are part-poets, except only a few, who not only write but live poetry. For them it is the very function of their being. That is where the answer to the question lies: part of the mystery of Being, poetry comes from and takes us back to the creative

urge and consciousness of the universe. The verb of creativity is 'to be': to become what we are. 'In the energy of the earth is the essence of the soul'. The creative consciousness operates in and out of time and precedes the created. Can mere chronology measure it? As a sage of the Sung dynasty saw it, it antedates Heaven beyond history. In a Tagore poem when the child asks its mother: 'where was I before I was born?' she gives the right answer: 'You were my heart's dearest wish.' As Kabir tells us, echoing an ancient thought, there is a secret One within us. In brief, poetry is ontology. If we have lost the sense of glory, the glory of pure being, that is because we have lost the habit of faith, of authentic experience. For those who live without the presence that makes life worth living, nothing can bring back the hour of splendour in the grass, of glory in the flower. Then, for aught we know Nature is dead and so are we.

To be born physically is not enough. One must also be born symbolically, metaphysically. The Muses are the midwives of our second birth. To deny man the immortality of his ideal world, the city of his imagination, is to deny his humanity. Poetry never dies. Mira Bai will outlive the Moghuls, Rilke the Nazis, and Tagore, Robert Clive. Beauty and truth, aesthetics and eternity may balance each other. Creative freedom is part of the phenomenon of man, the phenomenon that does not exist without the noumenon. The vertical cutting the horizontal, that point of intersection is where poetry is found. If poetry's redemption of the human situation implies a metaphysics of the beyond – that is as it should be. We redeem time through time. The perennial waters flow for ever. In the words of Seferis:

And the beautiful river still flows,
And flows in time and makes us
Part of it and part of him.
That, children, is what is called
A sacramental relationship.
And that is what a poet is,
Children, one who creates
Sacramental relationship.

The birth of the psyche is the most important event in our history. For the making and remaking of man there must be poetry. Poetry in this sense is another name for the human aspiration. Our homecoming

will not be complete without it. Poets alone have lived, we but exist. One of our earliest poems is a prayer and a meditation (all poetry is a prayer and/or meditation): 'Lead me from the unreal to the real, from darkness to light, from death to immortality.' To say that this is subjective does not take away its reality. Man is a dreaming animal. His dreams define him best.

Where poetry has not been de-natured, it is magical, mythical, mystical and metaphorical. There is a connection between these, a connection worth examining. Poetry has its enemies too. The chief of these is the ordinary consciousness, a mechanistic science – happily dead or dying – mass media, a manipulated society and other forms of vulgarity in an industrial society. The dilemma of the modern imagination arises from its inability to decide whether the imagination is an artifice, an empress of illusion (Kant's phrase), or the source of being. Victims of the profanity of an absolute determinism, we have failed to sanctify our being.

Poetry has many levels, at its highest it is a sacerdocy. The poetry of vision is the best criticism of life, the life we have lost in the living. Simply, today we have technology without transcendence, a disastrous separation that has given us Two Cultures instead of One.

What would be the marks of genuine poetry, as we are trying to define it? Coleridge had identified a seminal factor: the reconciliation of opposites. His putative disciples, the New Critics, tell us that the language of poetry is the language of paradox, but they cannot tell us why. The 'why' will take us to another world-view familiar to the perennial philosophy. Listen to the sufi (Attar, *The Flight of the Birds to Union*):

Into the Blaze
And the Centre of the Glory, there they
beheld the Figure of – Themselves –
As transfigured –
They That, That They: Another, yet the same;
Divided, yet One.

This poetry of poetry, the poetry of the peaks, of which the sensuous mind has a certain fear, has been encountered and established by the great hierarchy at all times and places. Voices are not wanting even today. The peak, 'the Centre of Glory', is at once far and near. At its inmost, as we have hinted, poetry is the miracle of the One and the

Many. The birth of Being out of Non-Being, as in the *Nasadiya Sukta*, is the beginning of poetry. It can also be the end, as in Tagore's last question uttered on his death bed: Who are you? *Ke tumi?*

Mediating between opposites, poetry cannot but use paradox as device and disguise. With mysticism it shares *coincidentia oppositorum*. Travelling between the height and the abyss, the finite and the infinite, time and the timeless, it has cast the shadows of its dreams, dreams more veridical than facts, dreams that follow us beyond the grave. In our days Sri Aurobindo, poet and thinker, has reasserted the Vedic thought: he speaks of the possibility when matter shall be the spirit's willing bride. The world is for ever waiting for the poet and the hour for the holy marriage to be celebrated. This will be when body and soul come together, the age of the Third Eye. That would be the moment when, as Blake proclaimed, poetry helps us to see and restore the divine idea of things to a fallen world. Maybe this will be proved one day. Before that it will have to be imagined.

This will be to realize once again that pure poetry is but the Energy of the Transcendent. The Indian people, essentially poetic because of their belief in the Archetype, the Feminine Mystique, are lucky in that they look upon creation as the projection of sacral Energy, the awesome shadow of some unseen power (*shakti*). The Muses are sacred, and feeders of life everlasting:

Earthly Mothers and those who suck
the breasts of earthly mothers are mortal,
but deathless are those others who have fed
at the breast of the Mother of the Universe.

It is only when we recognize this, the power of the Light Invisible, that we shall be able to equate the free self with the delight self. 'I am the one Being's sole unmoving Bliss/No One I am, I/Who am all that is.' This reality therapy of self-expansion, Advaita's incalculable bonus, is a discovery of the poets, who are also seers. One day poets may even help in closing the quarrel between science and religion. It is the heart of culture. The gap between Truth and Poetry (*Wahrheit und Dichtung*) may close.

Did not a romantic call poetry the finer breath of knowledge and another all knowledge as Remembrance, in fact, a form of self-discovery? The Muses are the daughters of Memory. Is not the Word, *Vak* the idiom of *Prajna*, *Sophia Perennis*?

The unacknowledged legislator's task is not over, also it is not confined to individual salvation. Is there any gesture in history more civilized than the Bodhisattva's vow to renounce a personal salvation in favour of collective emancipation? The day we listen to that voice will be the day of our next higher development.

Poetry is not an entertainment, nor is it an expertise, much less the display of a disordered sensibility. Where it is true to itself, it is an existence-clarification, indeed an enlightenment. A heroic traveller, the poet has crossed the secret and perilous pass that takes us from fate to freedom.

As self-exploration and self-discovery, the highest poetry charges life with meaning, gives it a purpose to live for, to live by. Poetry is the power of our human evolution. It is also a great healer, in terms of the harmony of the whole. Tagore called harmony the mother tongue of our soul. The corruption of consciousness that we see everywhere knows no other cure. Shall there be unity of being and unity of culture again? When and how will the *mandala* of man, cosmos and history, be alive? Hope for poetry is hope for man. Celebration of experience, it teaches the free man how to praise:

Cry anything you please.
But praise. ...
Doubt all else. But praise.

At the end of all praise, the last paradox: poetry brings us to the borders of silence. Only when one has gone beyond poetry to reach the frontiers does one know poetry. Its other name is ecstasy, the sense of the holy and the unseen. When this happens – life becomes poetry, poetry life. In our days ontic or vertical poetry has gone underground. But once we touch the roots, it will spring again. The poetry of the Self cannot be denied too long. Without the Self man is nothing.

PETER RUSSELL

Coming up to the Finish

How many faiths have I lost, how many loves?
But faith and love still urge and stay with me.

Now at the Veda's end I can't begin,
Nor dare avert my eye from flying clouds.

The lead weight too is flying from me, – fast,
The molten lead poured down the Martyrs' throats.

Giant forms, as though the Gods had gone away,
Yet they are always at your front and your back door,

And cold moon landscapes that cut your feet,
Whimper of progress, are covered over with tulips.

In the dust and smoke of my room I have grappled with Angels.
Weakness made me fight, cruelly I was thrown.

Words: huge moths, in my room, butterflies in my garden –
Every stone is an altar to lay a head on.

And under the stones always there are larvae,
Pale and blind and fearful, like the dead.

The Divine Quill, Angel-held, scratches the living tissue,
Veda's initial is a world-conquering vaccination.

The world chants OM, Intellect's antiphon, MOO
Makes the invisible visible, – the inaudible, many waters.

Faiths and loves pass away, convertible particulars;
Love and Faith are everywhere, unmoving, still.

It's not the light that moves, only the soul's imperfections
Quiver and dart like fish, in peaceful ocean.

Valdarno, 17 July 1989

KALIDASA

The Seasons Round

Versions by

HAROLD MORLAND.

SUMMER

1

The hot, hot days return
With the sun on fire;
But a delicate moon in the night
On the mirroring pool
Shivers with quick delight
As we dive into cool
Kissing water, hissing where we burn,
Quenching the embers of desire.

2

Night's deep umber is barred
 With slivers of silver;
 The palace lies open, bared
 To the fingering breeze . . .
 To the syllable-murmuring streams that lip
 A soft name, and slip
 Through a maze of flowers . . .
 . . . and wheels that raise
 The water clank, then drowse.
 These
 And the jewel-gleams, the stars' cool fire,
 Return, my love, return
 For your desire.

3

Strange with elusive lights
The palace quivers;
And a perfume floats
Like wine
That under quiet breathing wavers;
Music pulses, and the notes
Tremble up to the divine . . .
Now, oh now is the hour of lovers.

4

The fevers of Summer thicken
The blood in my veins –
You can assuage it, quicken
Relief with the Rains,
Charm-weaving girl whose loins
Are in clouds of silk, whose nipples
– With sandal sweet –
Are set in pearl,
Whose hair with fragrance flows, whose feet,
Curved like a rippling stream,
Bear rings that chime
Like the song of a rose flamingo, and their lines
Upward dream.

5

Let me grow weary with woman, whose breast
With crimson sandal is wet,
Whose garment of pearl sways
With jasmine scenting its fold;
To be wearier yet
I raise
Love's crest
To take her haunches girt with gold.

6

She sheds her robe from proud
Assertive breasts, oh quick
Her body endowed
With statements only of truth
In the candour of youth.

7

Fans that softly kiss the air
Awake;
Guitar that gently weeps;
A far
Calling bird – and love that sleeps
Till glances break from out her eyes
At moonrise.

8

As in the palace, deep
With sleep their only veil
The lovers lie – the moon, still white
With shame, whispers their tale
And now the night
Grows pale.

9

Hot dust blinds the eye
Of the wanderer whose lust
Makes his heart dry;
'Will there be water', cry the deer
'At the wood's edge?' – their fear
Searching the sky.

10

The limp snake fails,
And her chin falls
In the fiery dust. Forgetting hate,
She lies in the shade
Of the peacock's tail, displayed
That the feathers may vibrate.

11

The breathless lion is dying;
Birds pant on the drooping trees;
The buffaloes, their muzzles thick
With a hot spume, are lying
Where the lake is all uneasy slime;
The shrivelled grasshoppers have fallen
On the baked earth of that last cistern.

12

We are afraid. We are afraid. One flower
Blooms there, past the parching fields,
Scattering its golden pollen in a shower
Till the whole forest yields
A crop no farmer could desire . . .
The trees will set the very sky afire.

13

Leaping and hungry it crunches
The writhing branches
And juicy lianas; and the grasses
Swither and hiss as it passes.
Trunk after trunk, the great trees crack
As it raises with its might
A fan of wind. It roars out its delight
As the maddened beasts lose track
Of themselves, and kin and kind,
And blunder to the riverbed.

But the mud reflects that red.

14

A lion with a flickering mane,
A monkey screaming with the pain
Of its burnt paws; a leaping deer –
And all with one hot, linking fear;
As enemies in the face of death
With only prayer exhaust their breath.

15

But to you – my dear, dear friend –
Long nights of love, that end
In a quiet sleep;
And a moon that seems to linger
Only that her long white finger
Can delicately reveal
Some half-forgotten treasure
For your new-roused body's pleasure.

Then, like the hungry Lord of Fire,
You'll burn the night with your desire.

THE SEASON OF RAINS

1

Like elephants in rut, whose loins
Are overcharged, the clouds
Advance – enormous, full of rain.

Like kings, when the battle joins
With thunder for drums and lightning-jags
For the swift silk of their flags,
Again and again
They charge the ramparts of the mountain . . .
To be repelled into disordered crowds.

2

The clouds mass slowly over the plain
Like the dark blue petals
Of the lotus; like the full round breasts
Of a nursing woman; and like fard
On the face of the sky.

3

Then like an army dispersed and retreating
The ceaseless patter, then heavier beating
Of battalion-raindrops. And high
– With the caution of an unsure ally –
The peacocks raise their crests;
And the desperate *chātaka*-bird
Lifts its gaping throat
And sings a note unheard
In praise of this
Delirious armistice.

4

The red-tipped mushrooms burst from the dissembling
Inhibition of the earth;
The young grass-shoots are trembling
With beads of lapis – their first toys.

Like diamonds on a woman in the night
Are the fireflies – golden shepherd-boys
Of Indra. Quiet is delight.

5

The peacocks spread like flowers;
Then, at the ground-beat of the showers,
They dip and begin to sway
And with a courtly pride display
Their grace and beauty. Seeing these,
The marketing bees
– Thinking them flowers indeed –
Alight, and bustle in a housewife greed.

6

The bloated rivers, bruised and blue
As drunken harlots, rave
In their broken beds. They snatch the upright tree
In the grip of a wave
To the salty death of the sea.

7

But the forest-pool is still, under the smells
Of flowers fretted only by gazelles.

8

On paths lit only by the silent flare
Of summer lightning, women dare
The watching night. And when they slip
To a lover's bed, fearing the thunder,
They find new cause for trembling, under
The secret safety of his thighs' hard grip.

9

But the lonely woman turns and twists
On her unstained bed;
She beats with her fists
Her nipples that unwanted harden;
And remembering other days
Her fingers walk their ways
Through an unattended garden.

10

How thick is the yellow flood
That rolls along

Corpses of creatures, earth, and eddying trees
 In its strong
And sullen anger. Like a rearing snake.
 The frog, in its deep throat, sees
Devouring death, but cannot make
That last wild leap from this quaking mud.

11

But the rocks are wet again
 With the kiss of the cloud;
The peacock lifts his head
 And begins to dance;
The pleasing whisper of the rain
Makes the shyest blossom proud
 Of the evening's quickened glance.
Who is unmoved, my love, is still unproved.
 Why should delight
Wait for the go-between of night?

12

We are at one with nature. Rivers flow
And our blood too; the rustling rain
Is my fingers in your hair; the gleam
Of moistened leaves, your eyes that show
In the dusk. And heavily the fruit
Weighs in your hand.
 Two linked particulars
Of the worshipped and perfecting Absolute.

AUTUMN

1

The earth is covered with a blue lace
Of flowering kâshas, and the night
With a muslin of dew catches the light
– Oh slight
Over the slow drift and the grace
Of the stream . . .
The islands seem
 the roundness of sleeping thighs
And the white birds on the shores
Are pearls
Delight has given to the girls . . .
As to the wise
The mind's unprompted metaphors.

2

The soil there – look! – is dusted
With red pollen.
Can't you hear
The very heart-beat in the stem that thrust
Up from its sleep?
Who knows

– Which of us knows? –
The glory within the rose?
And shall our innocence suffice
To measure all the harvest in the rice?

3

The dark rebellion of the storm
Is over. Clouds are white
As the lacy fibres of a lotus-leaf,
And form
A fan to cool the coming royal night
Of the sky.
There's silver in the air.
And a flower's belief
Can silence any fool that's asking 'Why'.

4

The night, a ripening girl prepared
For delight, has bared
The innocent white
 curve of her moon;
And round her throat are the stars.
Her whole dark beauty's thought
In particulars.
 And her dress
Is this seen-through darkness
From the subtle silk of nought.

5

The kiss of the water.
 And this
Red lotus, and even the shadows are stained
With the blood's desire;
And the banks that should lie
With an artist's limning stillness
Stir
And the birds – how quiet they were! –
Are pained
And restless, trivially enquire.
But even in sleep
The river in between flows deep.

6

If I were lost from you,
 you'd find me again
In the quiet fall of the rain.

7

Listen.
 In the dark, can you not hear
– Not thinking we are near –
What little tales they tell each other,
Shy girl to girl, brother to boasting brother.

8

And we remember in your laughing faces
The joys that left their little traces.

What lover lives without the stain
And shining blemishes of pain?

Love is its own self's comfort, but not peace,
A prisoner praying never for release.

9

And Autumn here is sleeping on a swan
That moves over water of emerald glass;
Or the night himself her oarsman
Ferries her through the stars.

10

The rising sun.
The scarlet water-lily
Opens her lips like a young girl coming awake.

11

Autumn be kind to you, my love, who smile
Where the lotus is white, and kiss
Where it's red;
and the glistening dew
Is the light of your eyes when I find the lotus blue.

WINTER

1

If in the winter,
 if in white
The world is covered with a shame,
And the same
Ripeness of harvest promises now
Neither flower nor seed,
Quietly we plead
Not for delight
But answers to our When? and How?

2

Fling gold away. Destroy this flaunting
Frippery of silk, and colours, and the ching
Of bracelets. Birds don't sing
In the heart of winter. Something haunting,
Something without name – absurd,
A word –
Not seed, not flower, nor root . . . but the air
Has eyes, has eyes that stare.

3

Look at me. I am wearied
With love.
Not 'of' but 'with' you.
Give me a sleeping winter to forgive you
My blundering replies
To where I know you're wise.
And yet I know my body's truth is queried.

4

As open as the fields they lie,
And still the curlews cry.

5

Stay quiet by this pool. The leaves
Are kindly to the wind's scurry,
As my green mind believes
That God is underneath the stillness of this hurry.

6

And yet I love you.
Water rippled by birds.
Your body's silence.
My clamouring words.

7

This dancing tree. This mango. Chorus with flowers
To the drumming kiss of showers,
This fingering beat, these fingers of the rain
This rain this rain this beat
Where it seems my spirit has cool feet
On the bodies bodies bodies of white flowers.

8

But her whole life long the swan restrains
The whiteness of her pains,
Until in autumn she can tear the sky
With one heaven-slitting cry.

9

Yet the quiet wind is dancing, dancing on the leaves,
And restless in their beds the girls
Listen, and maybe blame the silly
First gold-pollen shedding of the lily.

10

But have you seen the white breast of a swan that glides
Through waters, and creates its own dark tides?

11

Time is in love with us.
It brings in the rain
Its happiness, and with its kiss
Pleads that it can't explain
Minutes like this.

12

The sky is full of thousands of delight,
Yet some would think it all one night.

THE SEASON OF DEWS

1

The dew is cold. And this is the night,
Star-heavy and alone.
The terrace has a silver light
But is cold stone.
My clothes are suddenly thinned . . .
I feel not you, not you, but the wind.

2

Into this room, my love, into this room
And the sleeping air
Aware
Of nothing more than lovers whom
It sheathes in perfume and in silence there,
Yet leaves them bare.

3

The dawn's too soon. But not my eyes
Complain against their sight,
Just my two thighs
Still blundering with delight.

4

They bathe with me in the river, these young men,
And wash their bodies clean
Of the saffron-marks and all the heavy scent
Of something 'then' . . .
For nothing must be seen
Of the one thing meant.

5

Defeated. In their manly pride
They see this radiant bride
With the empire of her world require
The endless tribute of desire.

6

And still you move, and still you stir the air
And the stars surround you
And my earth is where?
Yet when I've found you
I need a time for patience, and for prayer.

7

Darkness delights you.
But the whitening day
Brings one truth only.
Who shall say?

8

This time for tiredness. This hour
Of the drooping flower
Is praise of the heaviness of seed.
And every time has need
Of its own blessing, blessing that it gives –
For the living dies, but also the dying lives.

9

Farmer of love, take even this crumbling earth
And know its worth;
And feel inside its soil a beating birth.

10

Dew on the rose.
On every flower
Feed to the root its life and power.

SPRING

1

Look, my dear, it's spring. And on his bow
Love stretches a string of bees,
Each arrow
Tipped with a scarlet mango bud,
And sees
Us as his trembling quarry.

2

This pool is spring,
This laughter of water
Is time's young daughter
With a jewelled plaything.

3

Love is leaping in his rage,
Panting to engage . . .
And the faces of the young he blesses
With the petals of caresses.

4

After love's conquest, lovers are calm
And by their women they must rest;
But these are again possessed
And shaken by a new desire.

5

Desire is rising like a lotus through water;
The shooting boughs are bursting with red carelessness;
The open cups of the buds are ravished
By drunken bees;
And a man's heart is no different from these.

6

Who could be calm, my darling of the golden voice,
When every bird sings out his choice?
And each red flower is tipsy with the truth
Of the wine in the heart of youth?

7

If the grove – that laughs with the white
Teeth of a girl – troubles the anchorite,
How shall it be with sinners? How?
Their Paradise is now.

8

What is the soul, weighed down with the wine
Of the lotus, but a wraith?
Or faith,
Against red nipples and gold haunches?
Answer me, divine!

9

Each season be dear to you above
Past hours of love.
If man has any powers to rise
When even the flesh seems wise,
He has it now. He has it now.

Yeats, Homer and the Heroic

PHILIP SHERRARD

Readers of Yeats's poetry and plays cannot but be struck by the number of times that he invokes the figure of Homer. These invocations occur more frequently and with greater emphasis as the poet grows in maturity. The first invocation that I am aware of comes in the volume, entitled *The Green Helmet and Other Poems*, which Yeats published in 1910, when he was already 45 years old. In several of the poems in this volume he is celebrating Maud Gonne, whom he had loved all the years of his youth. He was 23 when he first met her: 'I was a Romantic,' he writes, 'my head full of the mysterious women of Rosetti, and those hesitating faces in the art of Burne-Jones.'¹ 'I thought her supernatural,' he later said.² In the poems in *The Green Helmet* he is recalling his love for her; and in so doing he invokes Homer and the Homeric world for the first time in such positive terms, for he sees her as a woman such as Homer would have sung:

For she had fiery blood
When I was young,
And trod so sweetly proud
As 'twere upon a cloud.
A woman Homer sung,
That life and letters seem
But an heroic dream. (CP, p. 100)

Two poems later he is seeking to justify her involvement in Irish nationalist politics, though it pained him deeply. Yeats was also committed to Irish freedom; but he did not share her restless craving for action for action's sake, and he distrusted the abstract fixations of politics, which prevent men from recognizing greatness intuitively and teach them to love and hate according to their party allegiances. 'Neither religion nor politics,' he wrote, 'can of itself create minds with enough receptivity to become wise, or just and generous enough

* This paper was read to The Yeats Society of India, in 1987.

to make a nation.³ Yet now, when he seeks to justify her, it is again by invoking her in Homeric terms because, being the type of woman Homer sung – and here he indicates some of the qualities of such a woman – she cannot help provoking violence and destruction, just as Helen could not help provoking the burning of Troy:

Why should I blame her that she filled my days
 With misery, or that she would of late
 Have taught ignorant men most violent ways,
 Or hurled the little streets upon the great,
 Had they but courage equal to desire?
 What could have made her peaceful with a mind
 That nobleness made simple as a fire,
 With beauty like a tightened bow, a kind
 That is not natural in an age like this,
 Being high and solitary and most stern?
 Why, what could she have done being what she is?
 Was there another Troy for her to burn? (CP, p. 101)

A few poems later when he is remembering her beauty and the marks time has left on it, it is again in terms of the Homeric ideal of womanhood that he celebrates her:

Ah, that time could touch a form
 That could show what Homer's age
 Bred to be a hero's wage.
 'Were not all her life but storm,
 Would not painters paint a form
 Of such noble lines,' I said,
 'Such a delicate high head,
 All that sternness amid charm,
 All that sweetness amid strength?'
 Ah, but peace that comes at length
 Came when Time had touched her form. (CP, p. 103)

Such invocations of Homer, of the Homeric world, of Homeric qualities increase, as I said, from this time on in Yeats's work down to the time of his death. Indeed in his last work, *The Death of Cuchulain*, written as he lay dying in the Hotel Idéal Séjour, when the old man who introduces the play promises to teach the musicians, it is the music of Homer that he promises to teach them: 'There is a singer, a piper and a drummer. I have picked them up here and there about the

streets, and I will teach them, if I live, the music of the beggar-man, Homer's music.' Yet the strongest affirmation, perhaps, of Yeats's allegiance to Homer comes a few years before this, in the final section of a poem entitled 'Vacillation', written in 1932. In it, Yeats addresses the contemporary Christian philosopher and apologist, Baron Von Hügel, and explains why, though they are 'much alike', he cannot quite go along with him:

Must we part, Von Hügel, though much alike, for we
 Accept the miracles of the saints and honour sanctity?
 The body of Saint Teresa lies undecayed in tomb,
 Bathed in miraculous oil sweet odours from it come,
 Healing from its lettered slab. Those self-same hands perchance
 Eternalized the body of a modern saint that once
 Had scooped out Pharaoh's mummy. I – though heart might find relief
 Did I become a Christian and choose for my belief
 What seems most welcome in the tomb – play a predestined part.
 Homer is my example and his unchristened heart.
 The lion and the honeycomb, what has Scripture said?
 So get you gone, Von Hügel, though with blessings on your head.

(CP, p. 285)

These invocations of Homer are not therefore casual or a kind of poetic convention. They are there because Homer represents a standard – a significance – which Yeats as he developed increasingly recognized as central to his own life and thought, to which consequently he increasingly aspired, and with which he increasingly sought to identify himself. What I want to try and do in this short paper is to give an indication of what this standard or significance is, why and how it became so important for Yeats and why perhaps it should be important for us as well.

'Inside every man there is a Homer who goes on muttering his own rhapsody. He is blind and he cannot see us; we again do not hear him except in very rare moments.' So wrote the Greek poet, George Seferis, in Cairo during the Second World War.⁴ The blind rhapsode Homer, author of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, the fountain-head, one might call him, of European poetry, must rank, with Dante and Shakespeare, as one of the three greatest poets of the European tradition. His blindness, like that of the prophet Tiresias, or like that of Oedipus or Milton, has itself something symbolic about it, as if the

visionary insight of a seer or prophet or great poet is a gift incompatible with the physical sight of ordinary men and women, or as if it is something imposed upon him externally, by the blindness of ordinary men and women who cannot share his vision and so, out of fear, resentment or ignorance reject it and stamp its messenger as blind.

Be that as it may, Homer and the Homeric world is in the literary, not to say spiritual imagination of Europe synonymous with all that is heroic, and it is this that Yeats had in mind when he invoked them. Yet in itself the category of the hero or of the heroic can be a vague category, and must mean different things according to different cultures. If we are confining ourselves to the concept of the hero in the ancient Greek world, the typological features are fairly well attested. To start with, Greek heroes are superhuman, yet not fully divine. They occupy as it were an intermediate status between the gods and mankind. This status is often implicit in the fact that they are of mixed parentage, having, for instance, a mortal father and a divine mother, or vice versa. The area of their activity is also intermediate, in the sense that it lies somewhere between myth and history, partaking of both but not identified with either; and this activity itself is concerned with the shaping of landscapes, the founding of human institutions, the formulation of legal codes and the establishment of athletic contests.

Because of their semi-divine status Greek heroes are also associated with initiation rites – in fact, the recital of their adventures in epic form is generally no more, or no less, than the transposition of these rites into a narrative form. This means that they are connected with the Mysteries. But the most striking characteristic of the Greek hero is that he dies a violent death – practically no Greek hero dies naturally. Of course, this death itself can be interpreted as one more phase, perhaps the final phase, in the initiatory process, in keeping, for instance, with the meaning implicit in the phrase of Herakleitos to the effect that immortals are mortal, mortals immortals, the one living the other's life and dying the other's death. On another level it is the consequence of actions or ways of behaviour which violate the norms of human or divine life, a violation which some see reflected in the physical deformities, such as blindness, excessive height, a hunched back, with which the hero is often afflicted.

Death, however, is not the end of the hero's activity, for after death he can become the focus of a cult, and his figure, or the site of his entombment, continues to emanate a protective or strengthening power. In addition, the accounts of his exploits and his death enshrined in epic and recited or sung from generation to generation by storyteller and minstrel not only keep his memory alive; they also offer paradigmatic images in which are embodied the ultimate mysteries of mortal life and mortal death, and so can instruct those who receive them in the conduct of right living and right dying, and help them to confront with dignity whatever may be their human lot. In this way dead heroes attain a glory which, if it is not the full immortality of the Olympian gods, at least establishes them in a spiritual order in which they may continue to serve as talismans transforming mundane humanity into the likeness of their own exalted status.

Such are the main features of the heroic type within the Greek context,* as they are also the main features of the heroic type in India, even if, for example, in India the death of the hero appears to be more full of promise than that of his Greek counterpart, in the sense that it is usually seen as the point of transition from an impermanent, ephemeral condition to a permanent immortal one, and so is not the end of life but rather its true beginning. But this could be the same in the case of the Greek hero's death, if we possessed the key to interpret it aright. Even so, it may be that the accent in the case of the Greek hero is more on the attitude he adopts to his destiny in this present life than it is on the desire to transcend the impermanent and the ephemeral as such.

This is at least perhaps more as Yeats saw the focus of the Greek hero's *agon*. He writes, not of a Homeric hero, but of another Greek hero, Oedipus, whom he calls 'an image from Homer's age', in the following words; 'When it was already certain that he must bring himself under his own curse did he not still question, and when answered as the Sphinx had been answered, stricken with horror ... did he not tear out his own eyes? He raged against his sons and this rage was noble, not from some general idea, some sense of public law

* But for a deeper analysis of these features, see the article *The Shield of Achilles*, by Gerard Casey, which also appears in this issue of *Temenos* (p. 95).

upheld, but because it seemed to contain all life, and the daughter who served him, as did Cordelia Lear – he too a man of Homer's kind – seemed less attendant upon an old railing rambler than upon genius itself. He knew nothing but his mind, and yet, because he spoke that mind, fate possessed it and kingdoms changed according to his blessing and his cursing. Delphi, that rock at the earth's navel, spoke through him, and though men shuddered and drove him away they spoke of ancient poetry praising the boughs overhead, the grass underfoot, Colonus and its horses.⁵

It is, then, as if life on earth is purified and renewed through the hero's sacrifice, quite apart from this hero's individual destiny. And this for Yeats seems to be emphasised in the death of Oedipus, when he is received into the earth rather than taken up into the heavens: 'Oedipus lay upon the earth at the middle point between four sacred objects, was there washed as the dead are washed, and thereupon passed with Theseus to the wood's heart until amidst the sound of thunder earth opened, "riven by love", and he sank down soul and body into the earth. I would have him balance Christ,' Yeats concludes, 'who, crucified standing up, went into the abstract sky soul and body.'⁶

Yeats's concept of the hero has its typological paradigm therefore in the Homeric hero, or in the men of Homer's kind, at whose main features we have been glancing. But these main features are necessarily modified by the context within which the hero lives. How much this is the case can be indicated perhaps by the fact that for the Homeric world and even, it could be said, for the ancient Greek world in general the type of the hero constituted the norm: it represented the ideal standard for human life and activity and provided the model according to which man could best fulfill his mortal and immortal destiny. No one, that is to say, would have thought of questioning the excellence of this type or of proposing another type to take its place. It stood alone and virtually unchallenged in the centre of the imaginative, mythological and religious perspective of the whole ancient Greek world.

This was not the case at all for the world in which Yeats lived. The type of the Homeric hero was not the norm for this world; it did not constitute the standard *par excellence* of human behaviour. For close on two thousand years its place in the imaginative, mythological and

religious perspective had been not only challenged but actually taken by another type of human excellence: a type whose paradigm is to be found in the figure of Christ and whose representatives are the Christian saints and martyrs. And the presuppositions in accordance with which the saint or martyr pursues the path to perfection or to salvation are not those effective in the case of the Homeric hero. Indeed, in several respects they appear to be almost antithetical. Hence to affirm or to reaffirm the heroic ideal in the world in which Yeats lived was to run counter to the whole course of a cultural or religious pattern which had been dominant for some two thousand years.

In such circumstances one could not simply transpose the Homeric model, set him down in Dublin, and ask him to act out his part as he acts it in the *Iliad* or in a play by Aischylos. The reaffirmation of heroic values could not mean simply the replacing of one set of theories by another set, in the way that modern science accomplishes its successive revolutions. It meant that a whole framework of religious and philosophical presuppositions – a whole mentality – had to be challenged and shifted and replaced by another. And this in turn meant that the whole understanding of the hero's *agon* had to be redefined in terms of the predicament in which the hero finds himself in a world in which his type does not constitute the norm and for which it does not provide the standard.

To understand how this has come about one has to recall the process of extreme devaluation of the sphere of worldly action which has taken place in the West as a result of certain developments in Christian thought, especially in Christian thought strongly influenced by St Augustine. According to this thought only what possesses form possesses reality, or – to put this another way – only what possesses form possesses being. God, who is Being itself, is also the supreme formal principle. But the material world – the world of the senses and even history itself – is so far deprived of formal qualities that it can virtually be said to lack any true or intrinsic reality and can more properly be described as non-being. This is tantamount to saying that it can be more properly assigned to the sphere of the devil, since the devil is *par excellence* the negation of being. It is because of this that the world of materiality – the world of nature – and even man himself in so far as through his fall he has severed himself from God and

attached himself to this world and acts out his history within it, may be said to be sold into the captivity of the devil. This world, nature, and man within it, constitute a lump of perdition, dead and decaying carrion, possessed only by things rank and gross, and doomed to oblivion.

It was precisely the framework of religious presuppositions which produced this radical dichotomy between the order of salvation and the order of nature that was still effective for the world in which Yeats was born. Indeed it was perhaps even more effective in Yeats's particular Irish world of the late nineteenth century; for although the Irish people as a whole are Catholic and so direct inheritors of the tradition stemming from St Augustine, Yeats belonged to the Protestant minority; and for the Protestants the alliance between the world, the flesh and the devil is so close that together they constitute a kind of unholy trinity in which each in some way coincides with the other two. Moreover, the unbearable tension which results from the continual confrontation of this dichotomy had in certain artistic circles found a kind of release, or at least relief, by the mid-nineteenth century in an aesthetic doctrine so rarefied and sophisticated that it was possible for one of its adepts to remark, in all seriousness, 'As for living, our servants can do that for us'; and Yeats himself was not untouched by such rarefied aestheticism – the gospel of art for art's sake – during his early years.

In addition, this kind of 'otherworldliness' was strengthened in Yeats's case by his contact with various occult or esoteric schools of thought during this same period and also with what may loosely be called Eastern religion, in however inauthentic a form. These contacts included not only the theosophy propounded in works like *Isis Unveiled* and *The Secret Doctrine* by Madame Blavatsky, but also the type of Hinduism taught by one of her associates, the brahmin Mohini J. Chatterjee. According to Joseph Hone, one of Yeats biographers, Mohini Chatterjee 'taught us that everything we perceive, including so-called apparitions, exist in the external world; that this is a stream that flows on, out of human control; that we are nothing but a mirror, and that deliverance consists in turning the mirror away so that it reflects nothing';⁷ and on Yeats's own confession he certainly learnt from the brahmin that desire was in its nature evil and action unimportant: 'He spent more than half a day proving, by many subtle

and elaborate arguments, that art for art's sake was the only sinless doctrine, for any other would hide the shadow of the world as it exists in the mind of God by shadows of the accidents and illusions of life, and was but a Sadducean blasphemy. And I am certain that we, seeking as youth will for some unknown deed and thought, all dreamed that ... to think as he did was the one thing worth doing and thinking; and that all action and all words that led to action were a little vulgar, a little trivial.' 'Ah,' Yeats concludes, 'how many years has it taken me to awake from that dream.'⁸

Thus the religious thought-world that constituted Yeats's heritage, as well as the forms of religious thought that he absorbed during his youth, not only did nothing to encourage the heroic outlook on life in the Homeric sense; they also implicitly, even explicitly, denied that such an outlook, and a life lived in conformity to it, could possess any positive spiritual significance in its own right or could be an authentic form of personal spiritual realization, or could fulfill any spiritual purpose at all, whether individual or collective. The only doctrines, if one can call them that, which attributed any positive value to action were various materialist doctrines, from those of Adam Smith and Karl Marx down to those of scientists like Huxley, Tyndall and Darwin; and the kind of action they envisaged was connected purely with man's economic, political or moral well-being and had nothing to do with his spiritual destiny, as by definition heroic action must have; and Yeats hated all such materialist doctrines with what he called a 'monkish hate'⁹; he thought that they were not just limited, but also positively evil. In any case, the kind of action that they envisage, whether Marxist or scientific, is a total perversion of that typified by the Homeric hero, and depends upon a view of things that is no more than idolatry, lacking in all spiritual content. On the other hand, what Yeats did find in the immediate intellectual and artistic environment of his youth was the temptation, as strong as that which confronted Hamlet and promoted by the same religious presuppositions, to scorn the call to heroic action in a world in which evil rides roughshod, and to take refuge in the world, disincarnate and immaterial, of pure Being.

Yeats's early poetry – virtually all that he wrote up to his thirty-fifth year or later – naturally reflects all this. It is full of invitations to 'come away':

themselves – for the spirit of legend is action – were being dispersed by the inner power of the heroic life they mirrored.

At all events, already in the 1890's while he was still writing his poetry in a pre-Raphaelite vein, Yeats could tell the younger English imaginative writers gathered at the Rhymer's Club that all great art and literature depended upon conviction and upon the heroic life;¹⁰ and a few years later he was able to express in prose, in a way that was quite at odds with his early poetry, how the legends of Ireland, far from being a refuge from the world, were a concrete expression of the love of life and of the heroic virtues: 'They have no asceticism, but they are more visionary than any ascetic, and their invisible life is but the life about them made more perfect and more lasting, and the invisible people are their own images in the water. The gods may have been much besides this, for we know them from fragments of mythology picked out with trouble from a fantastic history running backward to Adam and Eve, and many things that may have seemed wicked to the monks who imagined that history, may have been altered or left out. ... These gods are indeed more wise and beautiful than men: but men, when they are great men, are stronger than they are, for men are, as it were, the foaming tide-line of their sea. One remembers the Druid who answered when someone asked him who made the world, "The Druids made it". All was indeed but one life flowing everywhere, and taking one quality here, another there.'¹¹

Moreover, this life – this type of heroic life – had survived among the people of Ireland in spite of the efforts of the Catholic priests to suppress it: 'In Ireland alone among the nations I know,' Yeats writes at about this time, 'you will find, away on the western seaboard, under broken roofs, a race of gentlemen keeping alive the ideals of a great time when men sang the heroic life with drawn swords in their hands.'¹² And it was not only the Irish people that kept these ideals alive; they were kept alive even among the English-speaking aristocracy who had succeeded the old Irish and the old Norman-Irish aristocracy after the end of that 'great time': for when the English-speaking aristocracy took the place of the old Irish aristocracy, 'it listened to no poetry indeed, but felt about it in the popular mind an exacting and ancient tribunal, and began a play that had for spectators men and women that loved the high wasteful virtues.'¹³

In other words, in spite of what the Christian religion, the English,

modern democracy and modern science had done and were doing, the old aristocratic Homeric spirit had survived and, raised to the imaginative level through great art, could again inform the religious life of the whole nation and perhaps of a world beyond that. 'It sometimes seems to one,' Yeats wrote, 'as if there is a day and night of religion, and that a period when the influences are those that shape the world is followed by a period when the greater power is in influences that would lure the soul out of the world, out of the body.'¹⁴ Now perhaps the time had come when the influences that lured the soul out of the world, out of the body, were on the decline and when the influences that shape the world could once again come into the ascendancy; and Yeats began to see more clearly that his task must be to embody the re-emerging influences in his life and in his poetry. He embraced, that is to say, no less than a religious mission. 'A new belief seemed coming that could be so simple and demonstrable and above all so mixed into the common scenery of the world, that it would set the whole man on fire and liberate him from a thousand obediences and complexities. We were to forge in Ireland a new sword on our old traditional anvil that must in the end re-establish the old, confident, joyous world.'¹⁵

Consequently Yeats resolved to remake both his life and his art – the second indeed was conditional upon the first. He resolved to turn away from the study of pure Being, if one can put it like that, to immerse himself in the destructive element and to celebrate life. The choice before his poetry, he explains, lay between the unqualified pursuit of visionary experience and full acceptance of the world, 'the way of the bird until common eyes have lost us' and 'the market carts', and he suggested that the right course is downward to 'delight in the whole man'. At the same time, he says, 'we must see to it that the soul goes with us, for the bird's song is beautiful'; the 'frenzy' of those capable of direct mystic vision must not be discarded but integrated into 'new unity, simplicity, solidarity'.¹⁶ 'I have myself by the by,' he wrote in a letter in 1906, 'begun eastern meditations ... with the object of trying to lay hands upon some dynamic and substantiating force as distinguished from the eastern quiescent and supersensualising state of the soul – a movement downwards upon life, not upwards out of life.'¹⁷ And already a few years later, in the play whose title, *The Green Helmet*, was given to the volume that

contained the poems addressed to Maud Gonne which I quoted at the beginning of this paper, he is exalting the type of man – Homer's man – and the qualities that go with him that is to constitute his ideal:

And I choose the laughing lip
That shall not turn from laughing, whatever rise and fall;
The heart that grows no bitterer, although betrayed by all;
The hand that loves to scatter; the life like a gambler's throw;
And these things I make prosper, till a day comes that I know,
When heart and mind shall darken that the weak may end the strong,
And the long-remembering harpers have matter for their song.

(CP, p. 243)

From then on the main thrust of Yeats's life and poetry was to affirm this aristocratic heroic ideal. It was no easy task. As I said earlier on, the affirmation, or re-affirmation, of heroic values could not mean simply the replacing of one set of theories by a better set. It meant that a whole framework of religious and philosophical presuppositions – a whole mentality – had to be challenged and replaced by another, and the dichotomy between the world of nature and the supernatural, the world of history and the world of eternity, could be seen as a false dilemma and a false dichotomy.

It may appear that the shift from the idea that life in time is life in a kind of negative dimension which man must escape in order to live the life of eternity, to the idea that man is responsible for making his life in time an embodiment of something that is eternal, is not a very drastic shift; but in the context of the European thought-world, whether this is represented by the metaphysics of Platonism or Neoplatonism, or by the Christian theology of the tradition which passes from St Augustine through St Thomas Aquinas and so into the theology of Calvin and Luther, or by the materialist scientific humanism of the last few centuries, the shift involves nothing short of a revolution, a whole transformation of consciousness: the displacement of a vision that opposes God and the world, eternity and time, uncreated and created, soul and body, and its replacement by a vision that sees the incarnate as the complement of the Absolute, creation as the manifestation of the uncreated, man as God seeking his own self-expression, the soul's quest fulfilled in the fullest possible realization in the world rather than in the disentanglement from matter, and life in time as more than a mere interlude between lives in eternity.

One can trace this transformation slowly being achieved through Yeats's writing – and a change in the language of his poetry was part and parcel of it: in the hammering out of his philosophy of man and history in his book *A Vision*, first published in 1925; in his 'will', in a volume of poems published in 1928;

And I declare my faith:
 I mock Plotinus' thought
 And cry in Plato's teeth,
 Death and life were not
 Till man made up the whole,
 Made lock, stock and barrel
 Out of his bitter soul,
 Aye, sun, moon and star, all,
 And further add to that
 That, being dead, we rise,
 Dream and so create
 Translunar paradise ...

(CP, p. 223)

One can see it in his recognition, in the 1932 poem which I have already quoted, that in the end his way is not the Christian way, however much he may 'accept the miracles of the saints and honour sanctity', and that Homer is his example – and, he asks in another part of the same poem, 'what theme had Homer but original sin'; in his refusal to include certain war poets of the First World War in his edition of the *Oxford Book of Modern Verse* published in 1936, because, as he says in his introduction, 'Passive suffering is not a theme for poetry. In all the great tragedies, tragedy is a joy to the man who dies'; until in a letter written three weeks before his death he can write: 'It seems to me I have found what I wanted. When I try to put it all in a phrase I say, "Man can embody truth but he cannot know it." I must embody it in the completion of my life. The abstract is not life and everywhere draws out its contradictions. You can refute Hegel but not the Saint or the Song of sixpence.'¹⁸

Moreover, this affirmation of the heroic, and of the aristocratic values that go with it, had to be made in the face of the realization that his early dream of a spiritual revival in Ireland – or elsewhere for that matter – based upon such a tradition was but a vain dream; it had to be made in the face of the realization that the present age – an age 'engendered in a ditch' and 'thrown upon this filthy modern tide' –

esteems anything but the heroic and the aristocratic. He had thought he had found esteem for these values in the 'big houses' of the Protestant landowning minority of Southern Ireland to which he belonged in spirit as Rabindranath Tagore belonged to the old ruling houses of Bengal. Although, as he said, this new aristocracy 'listened to no poetry', it had inherited, he thought, from the old Irish aristocracy many of the virtues of the older age: a heroic code summed up in the advice given to the Japanese Samurai: be generous among the weak, truthful among one's friends, brave among one's enemies and courteous at all times.

Yet above all he saw these virtues consummated in the love for personal freedom, in the worship of the creative energy of life springing fountain-like for its own delight and not accountable either to public officials or to equality before the law, and not asking any man's leave to express its own self-sufficient grandeur. Yet already before 1916 these big houses were being destroyed and the last of their glory was extinguished in the civil war – not put out of date by industrialism, but burnt down in the agrarian upheaval. And where were all the virtues they embodied now? 'Mere dreams, mere dreams,' Yeats writes in a poem written in 1923; but he adds:

Yet Homer had not sung
Had he not found it certain beyond dreams
That out of life's own self delight had sprung
The abounding glittering jet ... (CP, p. 225)

And in a poem written some eight years later, in which he interlaces the themes of the solitary soul, whose symbol is the swan, and the theme of the glory of the great ancestral house, he concludes:

We were the last romantics – chose for theme
Traditional sanctity and loveliness;
Whatever's written in what poets name
The book of the people; whatever most can bless
The mind of man or elevate a rhyme;
But all is changed, that high horse riderless,
Though mounted in that saddle Homer rode
Where the swan drifts upon a darkening flood – (CP, p. 276)

for, as Yeats saw it, with the fall of the great house and all it stands for

in human thought and life, three thousand years of the ordered imagination of European civilization are sinking into the dark.

As for the people, from whose book Yeats chose his themes and among whom he thought were some who still kept alive 'the ideals of the great time when men sang the hero's life': they were at best but stranded half-survivors of this time, and in any case they were rapidly being brought under the discipline of a commercial civilization and of an education whose purpose was to reduce everything to the kind of categories effective for scientific humanism and its political counterpart, modern democracy. Democracy, which makes the individual subordinate to the collective in man and which can tolerate privilege only in so far as the privileged can account to it in terms it understands – in terms of economics or the public good – is impervious to the values enshrined in the legends which have captured the common imagination of the last three thousand years. For those legends tell of a privileged class which exists in order to breed men and women of a wanton recklessness in courage, strength, love, eccentricity or beauty, who hold fast with their whole being to the behests of the soul, wherever they may lead them, and who certainly do not defer to public opinion or the common good. And in default of such a class, life must degenerate into a shambles in which men and women are pulled hither and thither by the manipulations of the industrialist and businessman, and the claptrap of the politician:

Nor self-delighting reverie,
Nor hate of what's to come, nor pity for what's gone,
Nothing but grip of claw and the eye's complacency,
The innumerable clanging wings that have put out the moon.
(CP, p. 232)

In such circumstances, Yeats's struggle to affirm the heroic had to become, like that of his main hero, Cuchulain, an increasingly solitary and individual struggle. It had to become increasingly a struggle to free his own soul from its fated mortality, the gage of his own spiritual worth, not that of a kingdom or a country. But is it of less significance on that account? If the possibility and virtue of heroic action are to be kept alive, then there must be those who bear witness to them, even if their courage and recklessness are weapons in a battle which they wage with themselves, not instruments of temporal power. And since

the heroism of the saint, the warrior, the visionary, the lover and the artist is one and the same thing, and cannot subsist without greatness of being, if a man is to write or paint greatly, he must first believe that greatness is real, and must realize it, not only in his writing or painting but also outside them. There must be excellence in life, whether it is ruling a kingdom or building a house, if there is to be excellence in art. Those who resent or scorn Yeats's invocation of the Homeric aristocratic and hierarchical standard in life and in art must tell us by what other standard will we be redeemed from 'the filthy modern tide', redeemed from the progressive brutality of the world and the uncouth mendacity that has engendered it.

For in fact what other standard is capable of releasing the springs of creative energy and imagination in us, of stirring in our soul the aspiration to the beauty which alone can transfigure the world, or of inspiring us with the courage to face the ordeal of truth and self-knowledge without which we will always remain ignorant of our identities as human beings, victims of our inexhaustible vanity and self-righteousness:

Conduct and work grow coarse, and coarse the soul.
 What matter? Those that Rocky Face holds dear,
 Lovers of horses and of women, shall,
 Form marble of a broken sepulchre,
 Or dark betwixt the polecat and the owl,
 Or any rich dark nothing disinter
 The workman, noble and saint, and all things run
 On that unfashionable gyre again. (CP, p. 337)

Notes

¹ See W. B. Yeats, *Memoirs*, edited by Dennis Donoghue (London, 1972), p. 33.

² W. B. Yeats, *Collected Poems*, (London, 1952), p. 383.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 530.

⁴ See George Seferis, *Dokimia*, vol. I (Athens, 1943), p. 212.

⁵ See W. B. Yeats, *A Vision*, (London, 1937), p. 28.

⁶ See W. B. Yeats, *A Vision*, loc. cit., p. 27.

⁷ See Hone, Joseph, *W. B. Yeats 1865–1939*, (London, 1942), p. 48.

⁸ See W. B. Yeats, *The Tree of Life (Discoveries, Collected Works)*, (London, 1908, vol. viii).

⁹ See W. B. Yeats, *Autobiographies*, (London, 1955), p. 82.

¹⁰ See Ellman, R. *The Man and the Masks*, (London, 1949), p. 144.

¹¹ See Lady Gregory, *Gods and Fighting Men*, (London, 1904), p. xviii.

¹² See Ellman, R. loc. cit., p. 116.

¹³ See Lady Gregory, loc. cit., p. xxii.

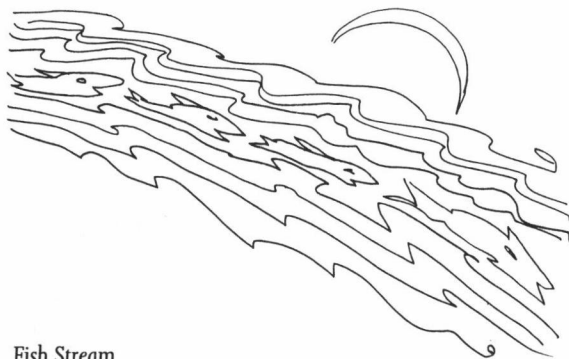
¹⁴ See Lady Gregory, loc. cit., p. xviii.

¹⁵ See W. B. Yeats, *Poetry and Tradition*, (Collected Works, loc. cit., vol. viii).

¹⁶ W. B. Yeats, *The Cutting of an Agate*, (London, 1919), p. 67.

¹⁷ See W. B. Yeats, *Letters*, ed. Allan Wade, (London, 1954), p. 469.

¹⁸ See W. B. Yeats, *Letters*, loc. cit., p. 922.



Fish Stream

WILLIAM IRWIN THOMPSON

Lindisfarne, 793

A sky without clouds,
the sea a bright green,
after our winter
it was no small thing
to be warm in light.
A day to chant Tierce
in the opening air
and catch the first sight
of the small white sail
still too far to read
more than its good lines.
How could I have known
that high cursive prow
held the beast I'd drawn
as initial sign
of the opening
Gospel of St John?



The Shield of Achilles*

GERARD CASEY

The reflection of the uncreated in the created necessarily presents itself under diverse aspects, and even under an indefinite variety of aspects, each of which has about it something whole and total, so that there are a multiplicity of visions of the cosmos, all equally possible and legitimate in so far as they spring from the universal and immutable principles.

Titus Burkhardt

To every shield, there is another side, hidden.

A. N. Whitehead

In the Hesiodic account of the world-ages, preserved in the ancient writing known to us as the 'Works and Days', the poet briefly describes the age of heroes. He tells us that the heroes were 'nobler far' than their immediate predecessors and in this they reversed for a time the downward drift of history to degeneration that he has been describing. The heroes reflected in their natures something of the integral wholeness of men in the Golden Age. It was as though for a moment the river of time flowed back on itself in brief eddies, caught up in memories of its source. And this act of remembrance wrought, as all such acts of remembrance do, happier destinies for many men than had been the common lot of those born into the age that had just passed away. For these earlier men of bronze, men insatiate of war and violence, had destroyed each other and gone down into Hades – 'terrible though they were, black death seized them: they passed from the light of the sun and left no name'.

Then:

The Son of Cronos made yet another race of men to live on the bounteous earth, and these were godlike men – a race of heroes. Many died in grim battle fighting for the flocks of Oedipus around seven-gated Thebes ... yet others, sailing over the great gulf of the sea to Troy, perished for fair-haired Helen's sake. Their death hid them. But to the

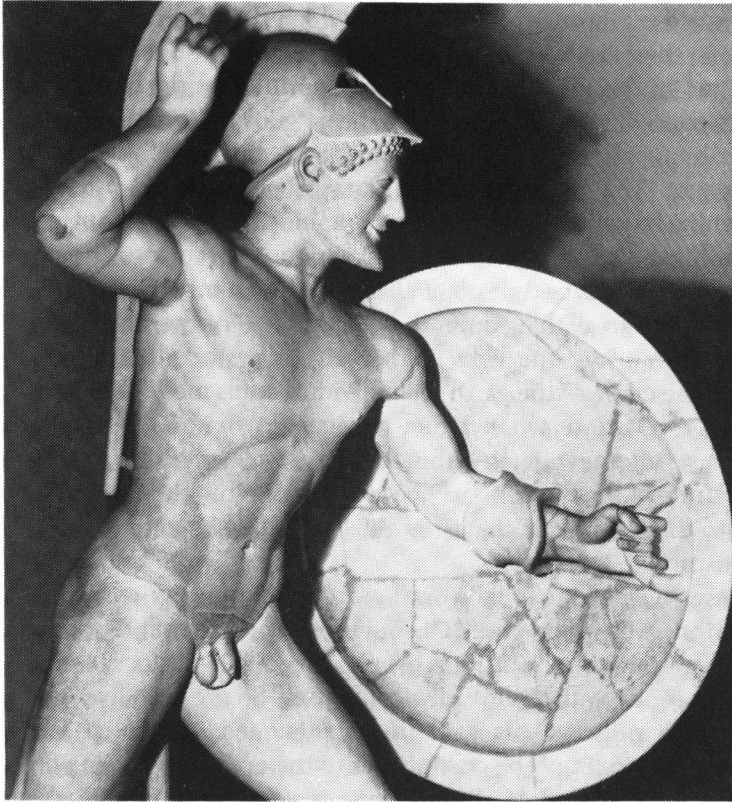
* Reprinted from *Echoes*, see review, p. 241.

rest Zeus, the Father of gods and men, gave a dwelling at the ends of the earth, where free from all care they live on the Islands of the Blessed in deep-eddying Ocean ... there untouched by sorrow, those happy heroes dwell ... and Cronos rules over them ...

The heroes were men born into a world disrupted by the violence of the Age of Bronze, and were necessarily warriors – yet warriors who were never forgetful of the gods that are forever; men who ‘lifted up their hands in prayer to the broad heavens’, and prayed ‘that war and strife might cease from among men’. They were men for the most part simple, passionate, unreflecting. Their virtues were the virtues of warriors – truthfulness and courage. Their vision of the world was the vision of the warrior – ‘God is day and night, winter and summer, war and peace, surfeit and hunger ...’ ‘War is father of all, king of all; some he makes gods, some men; some bond some free ...’ ‘The name of the bow is life: its work is death ...’ Such are some of the utterances of Herakleitos: the philosopher who saw most deeply into the heart of the hero. We shall have occasion in what follows to recall more than once, other of the fragmented sayings of Herakleitos that have come down to us.

In this world of war and peace, amid the issues of slavery and freedom a man’s character is his fate. The hero is the man who works out his destiny centring, in truth and courage, to the fiery element in his own soul: for this fiery element in his soul is the reflection of the divine creative fire that brings the worlds into being. In battle the body of the hero is protected by his shield. And his soul is protected by that which his shield symbolizes – the totality of his world vision. In seeking in some degree to share this vision we may turn to the description given in Homer, towards the end of the eighteenth book of the *Iliad*, of the forging of the Shield of Achilles.

The shield is wrought out of the elemental metals – gold, silver, bronze and tin – by the divine artificer Hephaestus, the God of Fire. Even so the cosmos is wrought by the ever-living divine fire eternally differentiating itself into the many, and the never-ending returning movement of the many to itself. This cosmic process of return out of the conflicts of the many and the restoration demanded by Justice, of equilibrium at the source, is war issuing in peace. The ever-living fire centred in itself beyond all worlds lies at the heart of all worlds: from it flow all movement, all life, all knowledge. It is the Eternal: ‘that



From the west pediment of the so-called Temple of Aphaia on Aegina: Warrior attacking. Marble from Paros, Munich.

which never sets', that which at the end of each world-age destroys the old and kindles the new. It may be truthfully called by other names such as Zeus, justice, wisdom, logos. It is both willing and unwilling to be so called. Willing in that such names reflect qualities in its nature: unwilling in that in essence it lies beyond all such qualities. This divine fire forges into existence the structured cosmos.

The cosmos is imaged by the Homeric warrior to himself as a sphere. Across the horizontal diametrical plane stretches the flat disc of the earth encircled by the vast streams of Oceanus – ever flowing back into itself. The earth is covered by the inverted bowl of the

overworld – a bronze¹ dome across which the sun, moon, and stars move in their risings out of Oceanus in the east, to their settings into Oceanus in the west. Earth rests on the underworld of Erebus and Hades rooted as its greatest depth in the gulfs of Tartarus. About the upper hemisphere of the overworld glitters the threefold light of the Empyrean. The brazen walls of Tartarus are enclosed by threefold darkening layers of night. The cosmic sphere is held in an outer wheel of darkness and light which in its rotations reflects into the cosmos the cycles of birth and death at all levels of existence, from that of the cosmos itself to all that comes to be within it. 'For the same cause that brings us out into the light of the sun, brings on dark Hades too.' Within the circle of the earth the individual souls move at death to the streams of Oceanus whence they gravitate down into the underworld to emerge into new states within the earth-cycle – or, after a sojourn in the Islands of the Blessed, may be attracted up into the overworld and on into the Empyrean; that is, to a state of being beyond the circles of the cosmos.

These journeyings of the soul are conditioned by its nature as a reflection of the divine fire. 'Of soul thou shalt never find boundaries, not though thou trackest it on every path; so deep is its cause ...' For its cause is one with the ever-living fire itself. So the hero lives and dies seeking to preserve his soul-fire unquenched, to return at death beyond the circles of the cosmic fires to the ever-living divine fire: the one source and end of all. His living seeks to be a continual act of remembrance of his source: an awakening from the sleep of forgetting, from the death of utter forgetting. And his dying, as return to source, is symbolized in his death-rite of immolation by fire.

In some such sort as this is the vision of the cosmos that served to protect and shield the soul of the Homeric hero and to preserve it into eternal life. And of this the Shield of Achilles as forged by Hephaestus is the symbol both in what it emphasizes and in what it omits.² The wrought shield in its structures holds no black iron. For the soul of Achilles is not destined to face the deadening weight of the age yet to come. His shield is made of gold and silver, of bronze and tin, for it must hold within itself, structured into protective shape, all the metallic influences inhering in the cosmic process up to and including the age in which he himself lives. Omitted too from the shield is any representation of the underworld. The attention of the

hero is to be directed to and concentrated on the earth wherein he is to work out his destiny, and to the underworld to which he aspires.

And what aspects of the world are imaged on the shield for the acceptance and delight and protection of the warrior? The broad earth itself: and over the earth the circlings of the unwearied sun, the moon at the full, and the constellations across the heavens. And, under these high presences, the cities of men wherein are marriages and torchlit feastings and dance and song. And the fields of men wherein are ploughing and seedtime and harvest and vineyards and honey-sweet wine and summer departing before approaching winter to the sounding lyre and the delicate voices of boys singing the Linos-song. The ways of peace.

But the paths of war also; men and dogs poised in a threatening circle around lions devouring a bull; ambushed youths slain as they play on their pipes among their cattle at the fords of swift-flowing rivers; women and children and old men at the walls of embattled cities.

And the protections of law – resolution of dissension in peace. The folk gathered to witness an issue of homicide and the mode of settlement – old men sitting on polished stones in a circle that images the circles of the cosmos, and rising to speak in turn – the staves in their hands recalling, to the remembrance of all who are present, Hermes the messenger of Zeus – as they seek fair judgement.

For all these things, the works and days of men on the earth, the shield as forged by Hephaestus for Achilles, enjoins a certain joyful acceptance – an acceptance of the natural order of things under heaven: an order arising from the attunement of opposite tensions as of the bow or the lyre.

And around earth – ‘around the uttermost rim of the strongly wrought shield’ – flows the ever-circling divine river Oceanus. Flows from its source at the risings of the sun: thalean³ water from the ever-living fire. Oceanus the begetter of all becomings initiator of all destructions, the generating waters of all possibilities flowing in the twilight where the down-reflected light of the underworld meets the upcast shadow and dark of the underworld. Oceanus: that unfathomably strange river into whose waters we cannot step twice for other waters are ever flowing on to us, in whose waters we both are and are not; waters flowing in that circle wherein every point on the circum-

ference is at once an end and a beginning, a forgetting, a remembrance and a regeneration.

Such was the Shield Hephaestus forged and laid at the feet of Thetis, the mother of Achilles. 'And like a falcon she swooped down from snowy Olympus' bearing it to her son. She finds him weeping beside the body of Patroclus. The black fires of Tartarus burning in the soul of Achilles have incurred retribution. He has sinned against justice, against the divine fire in his own soul. He has prayed that his own comrades suffer defeat in battle. He has brought bitter sorrow to himself and to his people. Now he is defenceless in soul and body. He has lost his armour to Hector: the armour given by the gods to his father. And Patroclus is dead.

Every man in every age – be it of gold or silver or bronze or iron – bears within himself the potentialities of all the ages. Any man may at any time turn his eyes back to the source. The virtues of the hero – truthfulness and courage – effect creative and redeeming transfigurations in all situations, in all wars both outer and inner, both visible and invisible. In his dereliction, Achilles – the man of war – prays 'that war and strife may cease'. He wills to return to source. But on his return he must follow the paths of his destiny. His pyre can only be kindled by the funeral fires of Patroclus and Hector. For Achilles is fated to die in battle himself as soon as he has slain Hector: even as Hector in the slaying of Patroclus brings on his own death at the hands of Achilles. So now for Achilles his acceptance of the Shield involves his acceptance of his own death in the near future fighting at the Scaen Gate. The Shield will protect him until his fated death which is yet self-chosen. He chooses the fiery death of the warrior rather than to live on into old age – for 'greater dooms win greater destinies' in a world where all movement is the movement of the one ever-living fire in all its transformations dying into rebirths – where life is not broken by death but perpetually renewed. So Achilles, the grief of the people, accepts the Shield and moves along the paths of return.

'The paths of return'. And with the return compassion will flow once more in the heart of Achilles. In the presence of Priam, as the old man stretches out his hands in supplication to the face of the man who has slain his sons, there enters into the heart of Achilles the desire for weeping – and he lifts up the old man by his hand and weeps and speaks to him: 'Ah, unhappy man, many and terrible are



East pediment of the so-called Temple of Aphaia on Aegina. Reconstruction. After Furtwängler, *Aegina* (1906).

The figures come from a Doric temple on a high mountain falling steeply to the sea on the northern headland of the island of Aegina. Most of the figures were found in 1811 in the immediate vicinity of the temple. The subject is mythical battles of Aeginian heroes before Troy. Athene stood armed in the centre of the pediment, to be thought of as invisible to those fighting. The figure of Hercules in the act of firing a bow is recognizable by the head of the Nemean lion, which he wears on his head like a helmet.

the woes thou hast endured in thy soul ... and now thou hast come alone to meet the eyes of him who has slain thy sons, so many and brave ... and we hear that of old thou too wast happy and blest ... but now ever around thy city are battles and slayings of men ...'

And, towards the end of the *Iliad*, we glimpse Achilles once more. Having returned to Priam his dead son, he promises to hold up the fighting until the funeral fires have burnt the body of Hector. Then in farewell he clasps the old man's right hand at the wrist – 'lest he should know fear in his heart'.

A last gesture: of acceptance, reconciliation and final restitution.

Notes

For the purpose of this essay readers may be referred more especially to the eighteenth book of the *Iliad*: lines 462 to the end of Hesiod's 'Works and Days': lines 109–201.

The Fragments of Heraclitus have also been freely drawn upon.

¹ Bronze: the third transmutation, as the world-ages unfold, of the Empyrean fire into the containing hemispheres of the cosmos. The cosmos as such cannot be other than limited and shaped.

² The Shield of Achilles may be compared in this respect with the Hesiodic Shield of Heracles in which the figure of Fear stands staring from the centre: a reflection of the Age of Bronze in the full tide of its cruelty and violence. In the '*Iliad*' the coming Iron Age is fore-shadowed by the iron tip of the arrow of Pandaros launched in violation of a sacred oath. *Iliad* Bk. 4, Line 123. This is the only occasion in which Homer describes an arrow or spearhead as 'made of iron'.

³ The thalean waters: the 'chaotic' waters flowing in the void separating the overworld and underworld, out of which arises by crystallization the islanded Earth-disc.

GEORGE MACKAY BROWN

The Grief of Island Girls

(1)

Why am I sad
of all the island girls?

I have brought my jar home,
empty from the hill.
Buttercup the cow
was sold last week at the mart.

(2)

No-one saw me
lifting my apron to my eyes
the day Thorf
was rowed out to the tall ship.

Darkness and dew.
Secretly, in silence, the dew falls.

(3)

I am not to be married
to Rob and his hundred acres
till the time of snow and stars.

I wanted
to walk across the burn to the kirk
through marigolds
and larks singing over Ernefea.

(4)

This the grandmother left me,
her spinning wheel
and I expecting a bag of crowns and sovereigns
to buy a sweetie shop in Hamnavoe.

(5)

His fiddle woke me,
 among the drunks in the village inn
 – their slurpings and howlings!
 I danced alone in my attic.

(6)

At first dawn of May
 I climbed Kringlafield,
 I soaked my face in the dew.

 'Merran', says the rockpool at sunset.
 'You're as plain as ever you were.'

(7)

Six silly girls
 sit in the new school
 learning letters and numbers.

 Soon they'll be prim
 as the lady and her daughter up at the Hall.

 Because I'm fifteen
 I mend creels at the sea wall, and spit

Nicholas Roerich: Brilliance and Barbarism

KESHAV MALIK

His work reflects the brilliance and barbarism of the east.

Phaidon Dictionary of 20th Century Art

There is some truth in the foregoing comment; for Nicholas Roerich, till the last, was an untamed man, a nomad of spirit. He seemed all his life to have been searching for his true home, but which he was to find only in the open sky, towering ranges, rock and snow, effulgent light. His vast repertoire of paintings testifies to this assertion, reflected as the Himalayas are in them. Those mountains in their upward pining symbolized the country of the soul:

Himalayas! Here is the abode of Rishis. Himalayas, treasure of the world. Himalayas, the sacred symbol of Ascent.

Everything from the highest, everything from above, naturally directing human imagination towards Light, towards the soul's sparkling, towards urgency.

Himalayas, Abode of Light (page 16)

They stood for states of solemnity, greatness, ecstasy, joy. But of course they also included the monastic civilization of Tibet, and even the inmost Asia beyond it. Roerich's five year trail to the heartland of Asia during the twenties was to leave a fateful imprint on the body of his paintings. He repeatedly visited innumerable monasteries perched on the slopes of mountains and where tall prayer flags still flutter in the breeze. It is these hermitages that are strongly reflected in the painter's later work so spectacularly in a ballet technique of sweeping impressions.

Clearly Roerich is not a modern in the accepted sense. His paintings are charged with a religious intimacy. He, like some other painters of the 19th century, preferred 'barbarism' to high civilization, placing

expression of the divine above the recognized conventional techniques. For this very reason it may understandably have been a bit difficult for many to appreciate his work, combining as it does the symbolism of the east in often glaring colours.

Now even though we have become used to elongated distortions in art, Roerich's brilliant colours and semi-cubistic style has been found indigestible in that he had an 'axe' to grind, namely to spell out the holiness at the heart of Being in his work. Roerich is all praise and thanks-giving, obsessed as he is with the symbol of the ascent. Here was a great synthesizer of the spirit of our day. Of course, a sage need not necessarily be a good artist, but one must not also forget that art is only of little value if it is trifling, or merely a faithful reproduction of nature and natural objects. It is for this that Roerich is justified in making his work the vehicle of his deepest aspiration, the task of transfiguration.

He, then, is not the usual sort of painter. He does not fit into pat categories, and in any case he had far too many dimensions to his personality. But to limit oneself only to his art, it is all so transparent that his work is charged with an unusual intensity. Even then, and oddly, the normal struggle of an artist with his daimon is nowhere reflected in any of his works. By and large, his paintings symbolize the moment when he had passed through cosmic uncertainty into the region of inner peace, and where everything has miraculously become as clear as sparkling crystal, the monasteries sitting on mountain ledges looking as if they had been washed by torrents of snow flakes into dazzling purity, the chilled moonlight casting a spell over the layers of brilliant colours. The startling tone of the painter's pink, mauve and blue masses of blocks takes our breath away. The spacious vastness of a scene in any of his works will seem to unroll itself before our eyes even beyond the picture in its restricted frame. It is this sense of space which gives us a feeling of the mystery and majesty of mother earth. Thus, one of the most salient features of the artist's genre is that it has a psychic atmosphere in spite of the fact that it is often done in almost rainbow colours. It is clear that browns, greys and floating mists will fail to convey the unusualness of reality. And Roerich was always after unusualness, if he was for anything! The secret of his work lies in its theme, its framework or foundation being so imaginal that no matter which way any of them have been individually painted they

invariably retain the element of mystery for us. And this, even when we may happen to be not too familiar with the themes taken from Indian epics or Tibetan legend. There is in the work a grandeur, no matter if this is manifested via firelight or the Sun itself. Either way, here are incredible and haunting dreams.

The clarity of Roerich's pictures is powerful, so sharp that they affect you physically, the layer of film lifting from over your inner eye, and you seeing more clearly and steadily than perhaps you ever have before.

If it is usual for the average artist to dig out things from a soil which is the common property of everyone, with Roerich matters are a little different. He seems to bring down his material as if from a higher sphere, and which we in our times find unreal. But for those who are still in touch his works are profound revelations. The known remark that they look like posters is as silly as to say that a great artist ought not use blue and red and yellow, because those are primary colours fit for illustrating children's books!

The spirit of greatness is a thing apart, being so complete that it can lodge itself in a plain as well as a more convoluted shell equally effectively. Some of the greatest and most moving ragas are very simple, and you can play them with one finger; the pauses in between sounds alone making them things of haunting beauty; no elaboration, no clever undercurrents, or subdued trills coming up to their profound simplicity. The impact of Roerich's work is so forceful that it can surely only be very simple and direct in technique. There appears no scope in it for technical complexities, for virtuosity. The artist proves himself outstanding as a visionary and not as a draughtsman in the realist line.

There is an essential contemplative mood to Roerich's work as makes it distinct from the genres being pursued now. It is dignified and aloof with all the wealth of a wise but exquisite beauty. To really know it one is obliged to establish a personal rapport with the man behind the man. Roerich knew nothing of originality at any cost.

Yet, many of us today having more of an affinity with clever artists than with the old time seers find it easier to understand the language of human figure and face or of naturalistically drawn flowers and vegetation than that of the stunning, vapourless light. In picture after picture Roerich's luminous clouds have such a golden depth they

seem to envelope the scene far below them. He, after all, aimed at no other than the region of our wildest dreams, those heights rising above the netherworld.

An adventurer in the rarer regions Roerich's spirit was ever at large. But of course he had first to master to perfection the art of creating a just harmony between colours and objects. This was really an oriental accomplishment associated with Chinese painting. Consequently it would be futile to look at Roerich's work in the accepted way. We ought always also remember that it was not the aim of this painter to create hostile factors in his compositions so as to catch our attention. Rather, he sought through the combined effects of each tone, what other artists have expressed by drawing attention to some obvious or sensational factor. The lines and tones of Roerich's paintings drift into each other by mutual agreement, and they do so with such grace and harmonious compactness as to become the keynote of his inner spirit. Each colour has been trained to show the other to its best advantage. That is why he is so amazingly successful. Many an artist would have made a hash of such daring colour schemes.

If there were a law against using the medium of painting for the expression of inner vision, much as Roerich did, all the paintings of the Holy Family or on the Buddha would have become disqualified at once. How can one keep one's philosophy or one's deepest convictions and aspirations out of one's art? – They are no more than the expression of the deepest self. A cool scientific detachment in the arts might produce excellent draughtsmanship, but shall not ever result in the incarnation of blinding light as is witnessed in Roerich's canvases. The vital thing for us is whether a work leaves a lasting impression or not.

Roerich's nomadic, roving eye was in keeping with the spirit of an earlier Russia of the last century. His uncanny awareness and prescience enabled him to see and understand his times as only few of his contemporaries did. Kandinsky was one of them, the one who tried his mightiest to spiritualize art. Surely the influence on Roerich of the vastness of his native land, the beauty and variety of its scenery, made him what he became – a crusader against the trivialization of life. Such awareness was of course not exceptional in the Russia of Roerich's youth, and so he looked for culture beyond its cursory manifestations. In this, he owed a debt to the great Tolstoy. It was he who taught

Roerich to toil for the renewal and regeneration of life. The painter once remarked that the unity of a work of art was achieved through the unity of one's moral passion. His art, as a corollary, was a means of uniting man with himself.

His poem 'Sacred Signs' gives us in a nut-shell a clue to the spirit that drove his life:

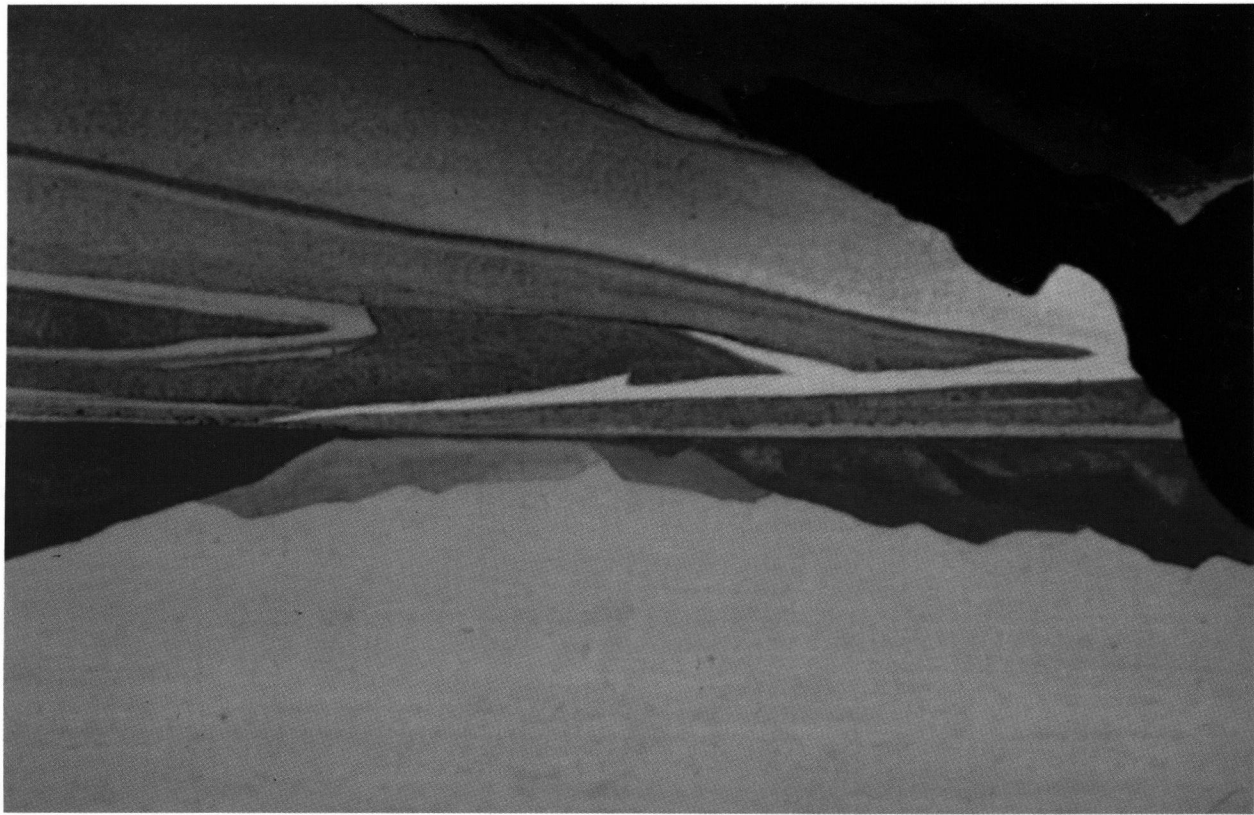
We do not know. But they know.
The stones know. Even trees know.
And they remember,
They remember who named the mountains
and the rivers.
They are filled with meaning!
To know and to remember,
to remember and to know
is to have a faith
that tides over death.

The paintings by Nicholas Roerich here reproduced come from India and are therefore not, like those in the Roerich Museum in New York, or in Russian collections, known in the West. In many of his well-known works figures appear but in all but the first of these here reproduced the mountains speak their archetypal presences without the need of any human figures to proclaim their numinosity. All are untitled.

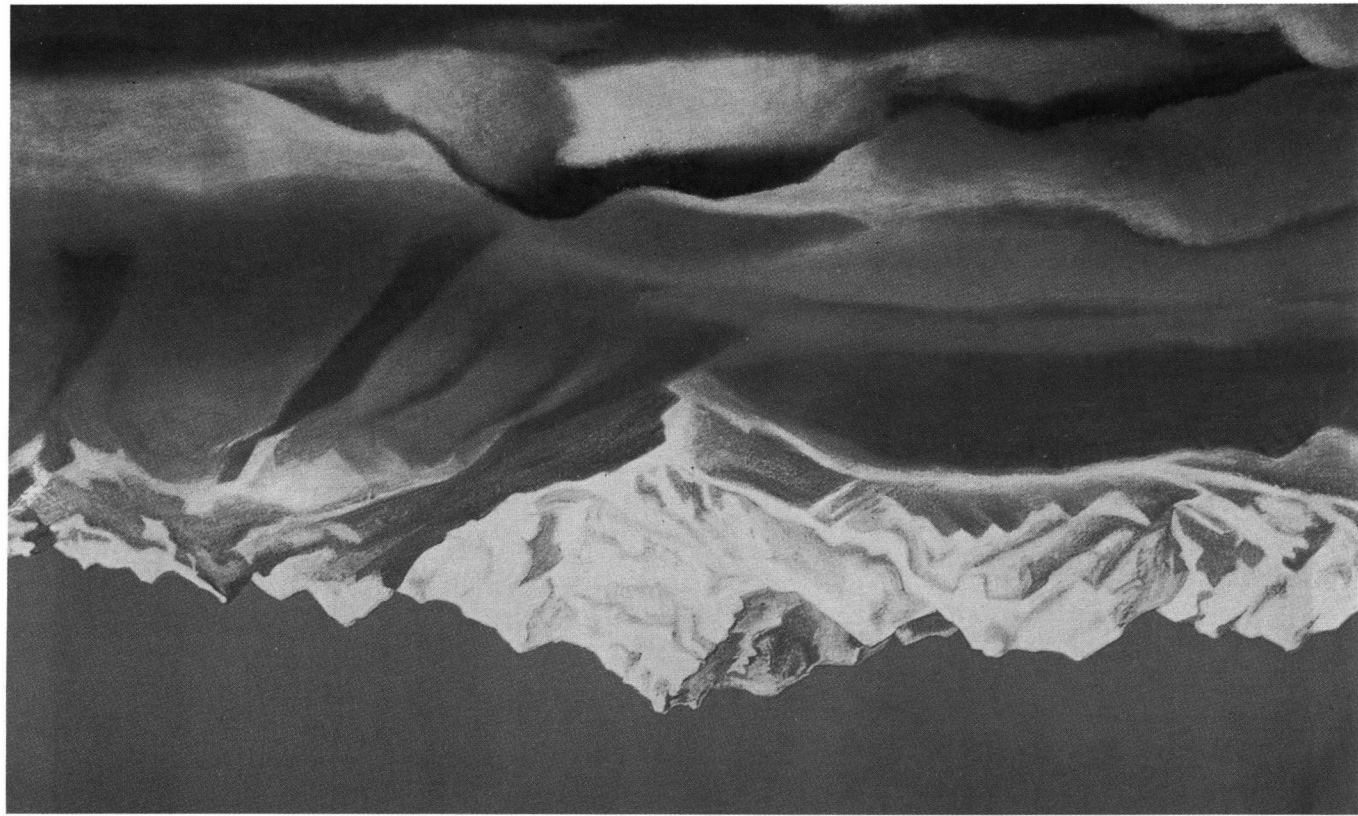
The first and the eighth were provided by the Russian culture-centre in New Delhi, the remaining six are in the College of Fine Art, Karnataka Chitrakala Parishath Art Complex in Bangalore, to whose Principal, Mr M. K. Nanjunda Rao, and to the Painter's son, Dr Svetislav Roerich, we express our thanks.

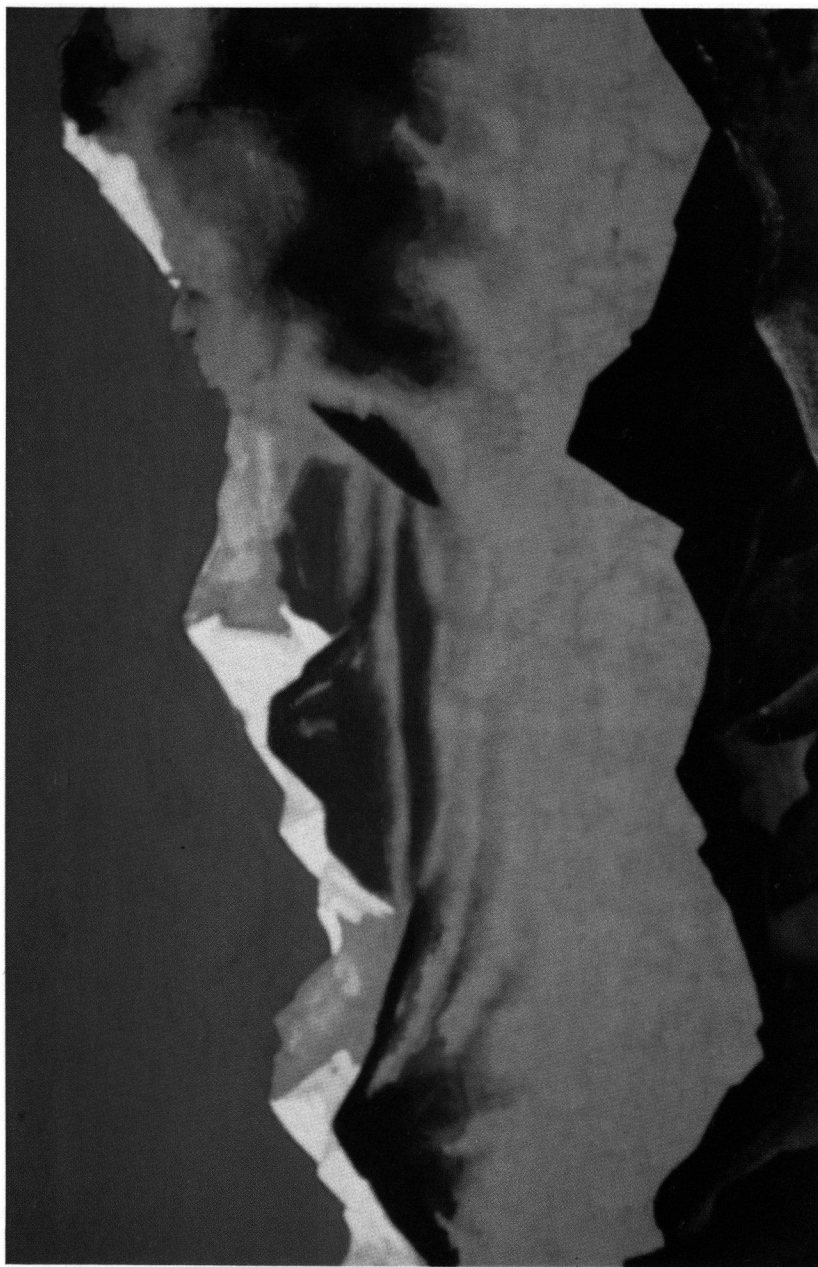


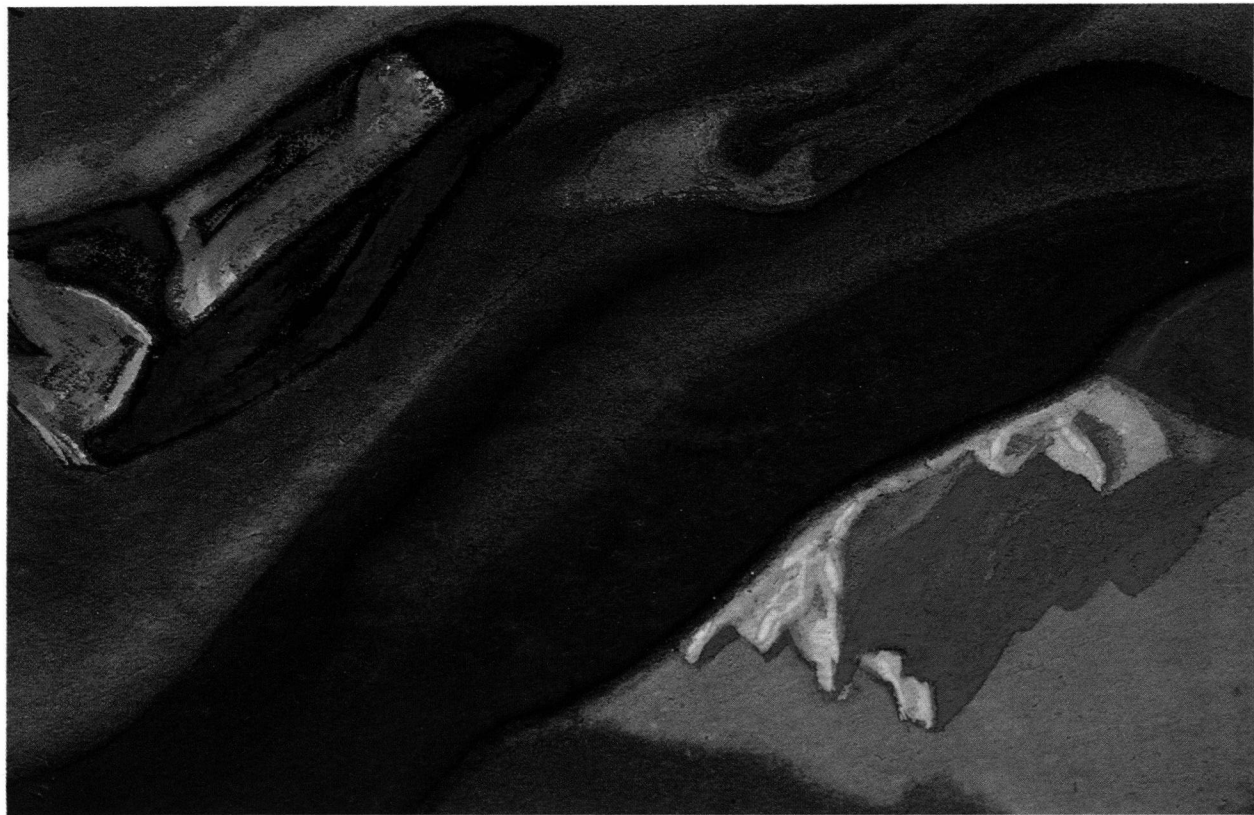














My Father

SVETOSLAV ROERICH

How to describe in mere words, how to define and how to pay tribute to a truly extraordinary Life? When I think of my father, when I recall my long intimate association with him, beside and above all his remarkable achievements and contributions to our cultural life, stands out his unique personality. Kind and patient, never wasting even a moment of his time, perfectly balanced in stress and felicity, always helpful and always mindful of the welfare of his associates, his personality stands out as a complete example of the 'Superior Man' for whom life has assumed the sublime aspect of greater service.

All his life he gave out freely of his prodigious gifts and it will indeed take a long time to fully appreciate and evaluate the great contributions made by him. When I think of my father, I am filled with the inexpressible riches of love and regard, for all he gave and continues to give me in an infinite way.

He was a great patriot and he loved his motherland, yet he belonged to the entire world and the whole world was his field of activity. Every race of men was to him a brotherly race, every country a place of special interest and of special significance. Every religion was a path to the ultimate. To him life meant the great gates leading into the future.

His beautiful painting the 'Hidden Treasure' is perhaps a profound symbol of his own great contributions and his own unusual life. Every effort of his was directed towards the realization of the beautiful and his thoughts found a masterful embodiment in his paintings, writings and public life. The subject matter of his paintings reveals a wonderful pageant of transcendental thought cast in sublime colours and compositions.

The latter half of his life was closely associated with the greatest mountain ranges of this, our world, the Himalayas. Against this wondrous background he revealed to us the legends and the spiritual

aspirations of the countless seekers after truth who came to these mighty ranges in search of wisdom.

The Himalayas were a source of constant creative joy to him and in thousands of studies he revealed to us a matchless, breathtaking panorama of the infinite moods which are such an integral part of these lofty peaks.

No one has ever portrayed mountains like my father. From his canvasses the Himalayas radiate upon us all their unbelievable wealth of colour, beauty and the inexpressible majesty of the great concept for which the very word Himalayas stands. Truly he earned the name given to him 'The Master of the Mountains'. Through all his paintings and writings runs the continuous thread of a great message, the message of the teacher calling to the disciples to awaken and strive towards a new life, a better life, a life of beauty and fulfilment. He fully exemplified the words of Plato:

From beautiful images we shall go to beautiful thoughts, from beautiful thoughts to a beautiful life and from a beautiful life to absolute beauty.

Both in my father and mother there was the unique balance and harmony of two perfectly synchronized beings who realized the great ideal of life and lived the chosen path as a perfect example of dedication and fulfilment.

It is rare for an artist to achieve greatness, but for a great artist to be an even greater Man is indeed something which can be found only with the greatest of difficulty. Fortunate indeed I was to have the living example and guidance of my father and mother and their radiant image always remains my greatest inspiration, my great source of happiness.

Though we are now celebrating my father's first birth centenary I know that in the vista of time every centenary will be marked by ever greater awareness and appreciation. Today we are only kindling the first flame of our tribute to a great life to be followed by ever brighter flames of gratitude and recognition leading into the distant beckoning future.

Written on the occasion of Prof. Nicholas Roerich's birth centenary in October 1974. To be included in the book on Nicholas Roerich by Roerich Museum, New York.

Shiva Nataraja – Lord of the Cosmic Dance

KARAN SINGH

Unlike in the Semitic tradition, where human representations of the divine are completely prohibited, as in Judaism and Islam, or severely restricted to one or two figures as in Protestant Christianity, the Hindu-Buddhist-Jain tradition presents an exuberant proliferation of divine images, male and female, human and zoomorphic. Based on the belief that this entire cosmos is a manifestation of the divine, there is logically no form in which it cannot appear to the devotee. It is this pluralism that makes for the incredible and often bewildering complexity of Eastern iconography. Among the many forms in which the divine had appeared in the Hindu tradition, perhaps most powerful and fascinating is the concept of Shiva – Mahadeva, the Great Auspicious Lord. He is represented in numerous forms, but the three most widespread are as the 'Lingam' a creative pillar of light, as the quintessential ascetic or Mahayogi seated on the peak of Mount Kailash in the Himalayas, and as Nataraja, Lord of the Cosmic Dance.

The Nataraja image is one of endless fascination, and has been the subject of detailed interpretation by scholars for many decades, including the pioneering work of Ananda Coomaraswamy, Vasudev S. Agrawal and C. Shivaramamurthy. It portrays in a most dramatic manner the kinetic nature of the cosmos, constantly in movement and yet with an inner core of spiritual repose. The nimbus surrounding him symbolizes the Cosmic wheel, constantly in motion. The drum in Shiva's right hand stands for the Cosmic Word from which originates all manifestation, and the fire in the left hand the equally certain destruction of all that comes into being. Within this tremendous cosmic drama the scope for individual realization and salvation is provided by the other pair of hands, one raised in the Abhaya Mudra or the gesture of reassurance, while the other points to his left foot as the path of salvation. Shiva wears a male and female earring; symbolizing divine androgyny in which the masculine and feminine concepts are integrated. He dances on a dwarf representing



The 7 ft. modern bronze statue of the Lord Shiva presented by Dr Singh to the Satchitananda Ashram, Yogaville, at Buckingham, Virginia, a centre where people of many faiths and backgrounds come together for the study of 'Integral Yoga'.

materialism or forgetfulness, which is our common state. The crescent moon, standing for the constant waxing and waning of Time is always on his head, and from his flying locks flows the sacred Ganges which brings solace and salvation to our world here below.

The entire form is so beautifully balanced that it must be looked upon as one of the great artistic achievements of human civilization. The anonymous craftsmen who have produced vast numbers of these statues of various sizes down through the centuries have drawn their inspiration from the classical Hindu sculptural tradition. The fact that such images, including the one pictured, continue to be made down to the present day is a clear indication of the fact that in India the cultural tradition is not merely archival or historical, but is still living and vibrant. A feature of special interest is that scientists, looking deep into the structure of matter, find the Nataraja to be an exquisite symbol of the dance of the electrons and subatomic particles. Thus Fritjof Capra chose a picture of Nataraja for the cover of his celebrated *The Tao of Physics*, and several other recent authors have found in this great image an ideal symbol of the kinetic universe that we inhabit and that, in turn, inhabits us.

In the broader context of the human crisis at this crucial juncture in evolution, the elements in the worship of Shiva that revolve around his association with objects which usually imply threat and evoke fear in human beings are particularly powerful and significant. We are afraid of death, but he is *Mahakāleshwar*, the Lord of death; we fear snakes, but he wears the greatest of snakes, *Bhujanga*, around his neck; we are terrified of ghosts and other beings of the under-world, but he is *Bhuteshwara*, the Lord of Ghosts; we dread poison, but he has *Garala*, the cosmic poison, integrated into his throat; we are ambivalent regarding fire, but that resides in his third eye; we generally avoid cremation grounds, but that is where his worship is particularly effective.

Thus Shiva combines the positive and the negative features of existence and consciousness into a high spiritual integration. Instead of brushing the negative elements deep into our subconscious minds, there to fester until they erupt, as is generally the case in most cultures, these are brought up into our conscious minds where we can face them with courage and wisdom. This integration of the opposites in the astounding majesty of Lord Shiva is a unique

dimension of Hinduism. In our times, when what Jung called 'the integration of the shadow' is so important, Shiva provides a unique focus of devotion and praxis which can be of tremendous value to aspirants and those on the spiritual path.

Hymn to Shiva

I am your plaything.
You can breathe into me
the fire of eternal life,
and make me immortal;
or you can scatter my atoms
to the far corners of the universe
so that I disappear for ever.

You can fill me with light and power
so that I shine like a meteor
against the darkness of the midnight sky;
or you can extinguish my spirit
so that I sink for ever
into the deep and fathomless ocean of time.

You can set me among the eternal stars
resplendent with your divine fire;
or you can hurl me
into the abyss of darkness,
so that I can never again be visible
to mortal eyes.

You can come to me
with the glory of a thousand cupids;
or You can turn from me
and leave me stranded
in a grey and ghastly desert of despair.

You can smile at me
with the radiance that kindles the universe;
or you can open your eyes of fury
and reduce me to a heap of ashes.

I am your plaything;
the choice is yours.

ROBERT BLY

A Private Fall

1

Motes of haydust rise and fall
with slow and grave steps,
like servants who dance in the yard
because some prince has been born.

2

What has been born? The winter.
Then the Egyptians were right.
Everything wants a chance to begin,
to die in the clear fall air.

3

Each leaf sinks and goes down
when we least expect it.
We glance toward the window for some-
thing has caught our eye.

4

It's possible autumn is a tomb
out of which a child is born.
We feel a secret joy
and we tell no one!

Hidden Things

What comes forth without making one sound
pleases some part of us, rain at dawn,
the perspiculum worm curling and uncurling
pleases us, and the ice melt
running blue from the glacier's tongue.
The stiff anther unfolds in silence;
the peony – rose and pink – opens in the dawn;
and only a hermit strolling alone sees it.

My Thirst

1

How much I long for the night to come again –
behind that world there are other worlds –
and the huge stars to come
all over the heavens – the black spaces between stars –
and the blue to fade away.

2

I worked for hours with my back to the window,
waiting, wanting the darkness I glimpsed one day
outside the cradle.
Opening the door when night has come,
I am a salmon slipping over the gravel into the ocean.

3

One star stands alone in the western darkness:
Arcturus. Caught in their love, the Arabs called it
the Keeper of Heaven. I think
it was in the womb that I received
the thirst for the dark heavens.

After a Week Alone

After writing for a week alone in my old shack,
I guide the car through Ortonville around midnight.

The policeman talks intently in his swivel chair.
The light from the ceiling shines on his bald head.

Soon the car picks up speed again beside the quarries.
The moonspot on the steel tracks moves so fast!

Thirty or so Black Angus hold down their earth
Among silvery grasses blown back and forth in the wind.

My family is still away, no one at home.
How sweet it is to come back to an empty house –

The windows dark, no lamps lit, trees still,
The barn serious and mature in the moonlight.

A Poem for the Moon

Weeping willows sweep their shadows
back and forth across the moonlit grass.
The wind, once caught under the right
horn of the moon, has gotten loose,
making the barn doors rattle.

One hermit man saw on a night like this
the moon break free from its hole in the sky,
descend, come down, grow larger ...
All at once he was a small boy
fainting in his mother's arms.

Resolving to Let It Go

Windows darken, desk, roof noise, the black stove
darkens. I go to the window. Hail-
stones bound up from below ... leap a foot
in the air, sink back to grass, leap up.

The lake goes gray at the end of the dock,
turns to archaic sea. Urgency, cold, concern,
Anglo-Saxon rage, hopelessness, too far
from land, death from ordinary water.

Ah well, let it go ... Why should I always
follow the thunderstorm to its hidden cave,
slip in, find grinding stones, and bone,
and return with a story to comfort others?

Let me be the walker who enters the cave
and finds nothing, and says not a word,
or the storyteller who ends his tale
with all in turmoil, before the wedding feast.

JEREMY REED

History

We're shocked to know that we participate
 in how the changes are described, get frisked
 by groundswell before a white wave
 lifts from the calm and dips over our heads,
 running its convex cliff-face for the shore,
 raking blue diamonds out across the beach.
 And yet we're in the continuity,
 and count the burn-holes in the black curtain
 and watch the fabric tear. We're hoping that
 the stage we never see is there,
 and that the children under the spotlights
 point to a house in the deep woods
 where gold stags kneel around a giant boar.
 And if we're aware we are history,
 the shock is immediate: the shower was bright,
 the sky lilac, I never realized
 so much had happened until that spring day ...

I wash my hands. The green soap tablet turns
 its smooth-edged ovoid in my palms.
 Political psychopaths wire a war
 into the listener's head. Media events
 are stains, chased out like blood whorls, swirling red
 filaments in a clear basin. The past
 swarms in our cells, the good, the bad,
 DNA spirals dancing round a scar.
 Living in time is like an illusion,
 too close, too far, and it's the personal,
 the inner illuminations which go
 into the unrecorded subjectivity
 by which we live. I buried a secret
 in soft earth as a child. When I went back,
 I knew the hiding place was in my head.
 A badger watched me, then slipped off the track.

Triple Night

The night I carry shut inside my head
 breaks up before noon, or it sits all day,
 a storm so centred, it's an iron ring
 humming before a hurricane
 that won't detonate with its shrieking whips,
 the buildings, cars and litter it carries
 for two or three nights, and its red-black dust

locks with the convolutions of a snake.
 I keep track of the dark which waits with me,
 the saturnine shadow which plays
 over the mind in breakdown. Night and day
 are no longer distinctions, but degrees
 of build-up, threatening intensity
 in which hallucinated bestiaries
 arrive, an armadillo with albino eyes
 a yellow horse with square red eyes
 a lizard with my father's eyes,
 they keep on coming from a lost country

that's occupied my head, moved boundaries
 into my own, and it wants more of me
 than I can give. Today the clouds break up at three,
 a lion stays sunning by a black tree.
 I'm clear for a short interlude, while they
 go about their quite different day
 and I make good the time before a storm
 breaks and sends creatures running clean at me.

Re-ordering

There's more light in the room; it puts to flight
 the half-tones, seeing everything through shades
 as though I couldn't face the sun,
 imbalanced on a drug, too long inside

myself to care. Now photons come alive,
the spray of sweet white viburnum
on my table blazes with the intensity
of surf breaking in a prismatic blaze
on an Atlantic beach with a rainbow
aquatinting a violet sky.

The haze
that blurred all detail, had me question sight
and touch and smell recedes, and now I ask
the dispensation of new occupants
to overtake my poetry –
I want the equatorial forests
to overlap my frontiers, exotic fauna
to crowd into my life, bizarre orchids
and aphrodisiacs to cling to words,
a lion's head to live inside a vowel,
a jaguar with a sun in its mouth
sprinting to connect associations.
The re-ordering of a universe.

I hope it lasts, this feeling I'm outside
the tunnel's drag – its insane graffiti,
and back to affirming a trust
in life, solid earth and a poetry
that doesn't burn. Rather I want gazelles
in liquid flight across a plain,
a scent of grasslands lifting on the wind
and me stable, looking out of a door
that opens into and out of light in the mind.

Respite

I keep imagining dark country lanes,
a tunnel under oaks, a sunken farm,
the friend's cottage I used, and how we stacked
the grate to roaring, one white-orange blaze,
a furnace-back, and how we forced
the new log on the old, watched its blue catch
sizzle and crack, while the first owls
oboed across the dark, and knew the night

contained by these stone walls and thatch
and guessed the weasel crossed the road,
stalking a scent, this slinkish, lithe
terror-inflictor sniffing blood
of a hurt rabbit like a shark
closing on prey. All the nocturnal things

advance so stealthily, the deer we know
by tracks, by hurried day flashes.
And lights around, they are familiar farms.
In days strung-out, my nerves gone up in flame,
hallucinated, hallucinating
even a water bottle to a hose,
a garden cat to twice my size, no shape
will stay constant despite the pills,
I think back to that refuge, the full moon
clearing the oak wood, placing a white blade
across the valley stream, and hope in time
I'll get back there, shut the door on one night
and watch the other arrive full of stars,
putting my fear, my imbalance to right.

Keepers of the Night

I bring them stories to propitiate
their watchful eyes. And we are so many
who take our allegories to a place
heaped with dead birds and multi-national flags,
a burnt piano, the life-size mannequins
of tyrants, dictators, universal
agents of ruin. Smoke drifts into space
above that threshold, and the keepers stay
like guards we never see. We know they're there,
and still demand we bring the old story
of life and loss to them; the warped spiral
of all our inconsistencies, the thread
that snaps while we approve its right tension,
the things that happen and seem without cause,
but alter us. They're not indifferent:

they seem to say the clue is in the tale,
but we can't find it or have forgotten
the meaning. We've left it to drown
like a white horse trapped in a quarry pool;
we thought it was an hour ago
it went missing, but it is years. The days
are like that, stabilizing round the night
when we elucidate the happenings
that take us to the edge of a city
so many wars have passed through. It is dark:
I've made the journey in a century
that's part of time. White ashes dust the air.
I hear a voice say, 'tell me if you dare ...'

Writing my Biography

I miss so much of what's happening to me
that I'm the other. Yesterday we met
and thought how much has been aleatory,
just given on the chance like a sunbeam
surprising by its blue and red smoky
arrival on the page. We're reconciled
on better days, at moments in the street
when we agree it's worthwhile going on
to claim the meaning chalked up by a dream
as it intersects with reality.
Last week the face that came at me through smoke
and rubble in natural scenic colour –
my house was smashed by looting troops, was there
the other day in a crowd flash,

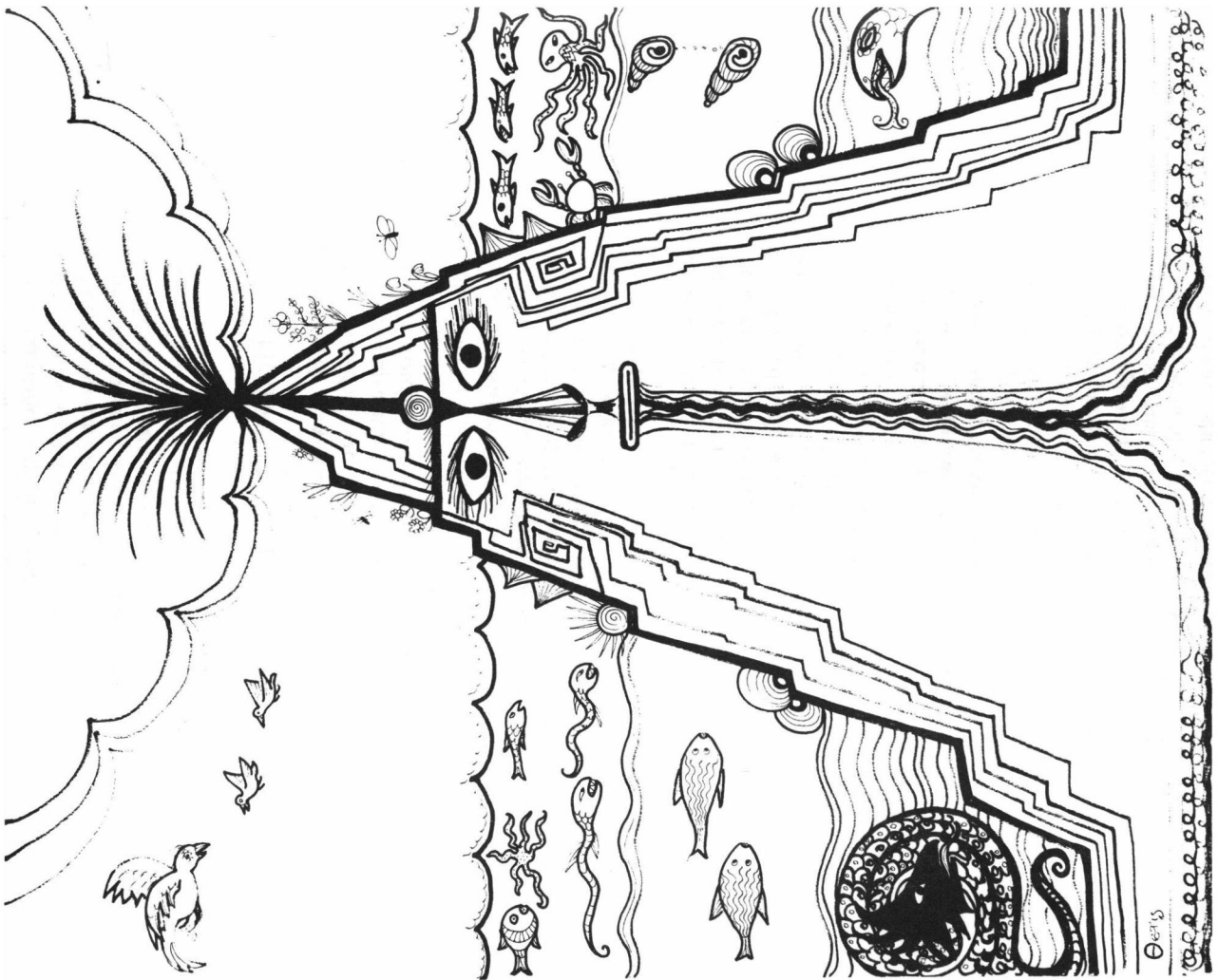
I recognized him; now he's gone again.
We're constantly surprised, this me and you
and not much wiser as to why we're here,
and that we share a secrecy
in what we're doing. We are really two,
the actor and the spectator
and the gap never narrows. Just turn round,
the other says: what do you remember
with authenticity; an autumn day
in a red blowy October,
faces of lovers, friends and incidents

which retain clarity? They're like fall-out
from a near planet; bitty, fractured stuff.
And what most stays is like a gold leaf stuck
to the road surface, then the foot,
something that clings because it is misplaced,
yet still gives intimations of a root.

House of Mirrors

It climbs back as a vertical smoke-plume,
a white waterfall's vaporous double,
and higher up a little mountain train
shows in snatches between dense conifers.
The house is somewhere. It is under rain
or clear, but we can't realize
its presence without self-identity.
I've passed it often, looking out not in
and missed the image that would see me through
to its interior. The hour speeds by,
the rapid days, the century;
the house is still there if the traveller stops

and lets the image stabilize; but where
and how is the location made,
and is there anyone inside? Perhaps
there'll be a double or an analyst,
or someone that I should have known,
but never got to, and a central room
in which to meditate; a red Rothko
prominent on one wall? I'll stay a time,
inquisitive, exploratory,
and meet in every room someone I've been,
the states of mind, the visual roles assumed,
and find my guide in the study alone,
impartial, white coated, a finger raised
to his thin lips, a file under one arm;
and there's no need to explain what you've done
he motions, pointing out to the garden,
its mirror lake, mirror trees, mirror chairs
awaiting two who'll sit and hear the train
so close, they might be on it going there.



In Praise of Darkness

THETIS BLACKER

The constant dilemma of the artist is how he can reveal what is inner by what is outer: how to reveal the inner essence of things by painting the outer forms of those things. The inner spirit is invisible, but the artist must make it visible. Colour, line, tone and form are but clues to the hidden realities which the artist attempts to paint.

Just as much, what is not shown in the way of colour, line, tone and form reveals the object which the artist is portraying. For example, a subject is painted as red by the painter omitting blue and yellow. A line goes in a particular way by the artist leaving every other way lineless. The shape of an object is formed by allowing space to be everywhere except where that object is. As for chiaroscuro, this should make the artist tremble.

The blackness of nothingness is the ink of chaos from which everything that exists is drawn. It is that most awesome matrix from which every work of art is created. God created light from darkness, whiteness from blackness. And with the whiteness came all the colours of and beyond the rainbow.

Remember that we as human beings can only see a small part of the spectrum with our physical eyes. But the eye-brain mechanism is not the only instrument of perception we can use. The eye-brain mechanism cannot see beyond ultra-violet or infra-red, but the eye of the soul can see infinitely, if it chooses to look. The blind man, we are told, can see the scarlet of the trumpet blast, the vibrations of which are not in the rainbow spectrum at all. But his ears and his heart can connect with the infinite spectrum of the soul's eye.

I was told by a friend of Picasso that he had said that every artist should have his eyes torn out, so that he could look with the inner eye. Whether or not Picasso really did say this, the remark haunted me. When I was in Peru I saw many blind people, many blind children. When I returned to England I did dozens of 'blind'

drawings. With my eyes closed, I would select random coloured crayons and draw on paper, the edges of which I could feel with my left hand. These blind sketches turned out curiously like Picasso drawings. When I opened my eyes I was often surprised by what I had drawn. The hands and feet and eyes and noses and mouths and ears of a figure may have been most curiously positioned, yet nevertheless, however topsy-turvy they might be, there did seem to be a unity and a strength and a quality of imagination in the drawing which was, at times, over and above what I had initially envisaged. Those early drawings were amongst my first, groping, fumbling attempts to look with the inner eye.

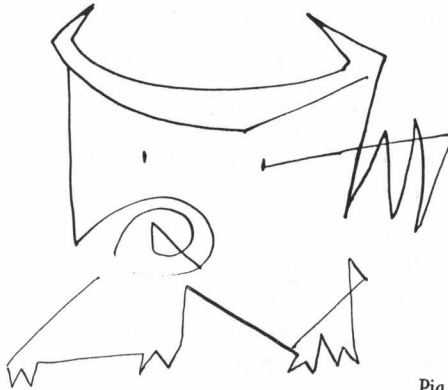


Fig. Blind Drawing 1960

We know that traditionally physical blindness was believed to develop prophetic vision. Tiresias was blind. Homer was blind. Milton was blind. The Delphic oracle spoke from out of the darkness. The bards of the Celtic countries composed their work in dark cells. The priests of the ancient Kogi tribe of Columbia have been and still are raised from birth, for the first nine years of their lives, in total darkness. To this day, in Japan, the mediums who prophecy in trance are blind.

In the night, in the darkness of sleep, we find a world of dreams, a real world of Imagination, vivid with light and with colour and forms that have no outer existence, but emerge from the inner realms of the psyche, from the many and varied depths of the unconscious human mind. The myths of the world form the *mappa mentis* of this inner

universe. Here be dragons and mantichores and basilisks and hippogriffs and sirens and unicorns and the phoenix in his nest of fire. And here, beyond the seventh valley, which is named Annihilation, lives the great Simurgh, that ineffable symbol of the Godhead, in his palace of many halls. It is here that at last the thirty birds, pilgrims in search of their king, arrive exhausted, wingless and featherless, having lost everything on their perilous journey. Here in the central hall they gather, eagerly expecting their monarch, and here it is that in amazement they look at one another and recognize that they are he, and he is each and all of them.

Jung spoke of the mind being like an iceberg. The conscious mind is that small tip which stands up out of the water and is visible. The unconscious is that far greater part of the iceberg which floats beneath the water, invisible. If the minds of men and women were indeed individual separate entities, that would be a good analogy. But to me it does not go deep enough. I see each human mind more as an island in an uncountable archipelago of other minds. Each person's consciousness is an island showing above the water, and upon it dwell many different creatures, herbs, flowers and trees which embody our thoughts, desires and feelings. But beneath the waters lie stratum upon stratum of coral, of mud, of ancient igneous rocks, from ancestral ages of ages, going deeper and deeper until, in the darkest, deepest depths of the sea, it becomes the ocean bed which links all other islands of the archipelago. At the deepest depths of the mind, the unconscious is the cosmic consciousness which is linked to every other mind and to all and everything. It is from these depths that the rumbling earthquakes of prophecies speak, volcanos of vision, oracular eruptions burst forth into the light of the conscious world. The fires of Imagination, like red-hot lava, rise up and create new strata, destroying the old vegetation and solidifying, adding new heights to the mountains and hills of conscious awareness above the waters. These are the great creative works of art that form the solid base of a civilization.

Look closely at the *mappa mentis* and we see that the different depths of water are inhabited by different kinds of fishes, different kinds of dreams. They live in the depth according to their profundity.

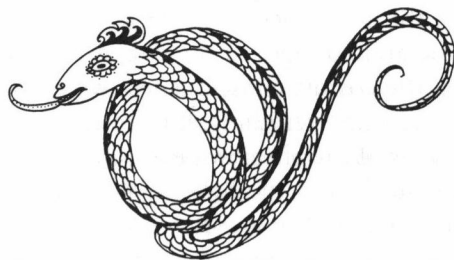
Around the shallows of the shore swim minnows, crabs of indigestion dreams; shoals of small, restless fish; crustaceans crawl about the

rocky crevices of the subconscious. Here swim the spiny complexes; the limpet inhibitions. Below there ebb and flow the sexual dreams of Freudian eels. Here on the craggy boulders sirens sit and sing and lure men to their doom; and mermaids comb their seaweed hair; and Scylla lurks. This is the place where Bosch and Ernst and Dali paint surreal creatures that no living eye has seen. Here would Thetis, loved by Poseidon, learn to change her many forms.

Beneath these sparkling, iridescent shallows lie deeper depths: the dragon-haunted caverns, and the secret place where oysters grow their pearls. Shell-eared, we listen to reverberating, telepathic dreams. From here the tides are moved that move the moons.

But, fathoms far deeper still, dreams are oracular. Kurma spreads his turtle shell; here churns the Sea of Milk. At this beginning of the world the serpent monsters of the watery deep awake. Jonah was here. From the Tehom Leviathan and Tiamat uncoil. Here all is darkness, chaos, nothingness. Yet here the Golden Fish awaits existence, the Ichthus has its being in this timeless realm.

Eyeless we see, earless we hear. We put a finger to our lips.



Opera and the Amorous Initiation

JOSCELYN GODWIN

As the last-born child of the Italian Renaissance, opera has always been one of the brightest stars in the constellation of Western culture. Of all the performing arts, it demands the most extravagant and variegated productions, calling on the resources of stage-design and machinery, costume, lighting, poetry, declamation, dramatic incident, dancing, vocal and instrumental music. But to what end? The superficial reason is obviously to create an alternative reality, and to make it as convincing as possible to the audience. In this regard, opera is the forerunner of the cinema; but only as one might call painting the forerunner of colour photography. The real justification for it, and for the enthusiasm and controversy it caused for three centuries, is that opera has always been concerned with archetypes. Like painting and sculpture, it presents them to the eye; like drama, it works them out in dynamic form; and to these opera adds the tremendous subliminal influence of music, to entrance the mind and mould the emotions in sympathy with these creatures of the Imagination. Its sole rival was the ritual of the Catholic Church, which acknowledged the power of the secular form by shamelessly aping its musical styles. Certainly opera could on occasion draw the audience into a kind of mystic participation, not resembling the Mass, perhaps, so much as the sacred drama enacted at the Eleusinian Mysteries. After an immersion of three or four hours in an altered state of consciousness, some might find themselves indelibly marked by the experience, while none would easily forget it. Such a meeting with the archetypes is an initiation, a milestone on one's journey through psychological integration to spiritual realization.

Among previous writers, the Rosicrucian Max Heindel has made some of these points in *Mysteries of the Great Operas*, but his book is now rather dated in its approach and its information. In a more sophisticated way, the musicologist Robert Donington has pursued the theme of Jungian individuation in his *Wagner's Ring and its Symbols*, and traced

the mythological themes of seventeenth-century opera in *The Rise of Opera*, a work that admirably combines scholarship with intuition. The mass of initiatic, esoteric, and occult interpretations that have been made of Wagner's work beggars description; likewise, the Freemasonry in Mozart's *The Magic Flute* has called forth half a dozen books. The following pages treat, of necessity, a very small number of operas, suggesting ideas that can be applied (or rejected) according to the reader's knowledge and taste.

Opera did not evolve gradually, but was deliberately invented at the end of the sixteenth century by a club of Florentine gentlemen-scholars, the Camerata, in an attempt to revive the powers of music to which ancient legends attest. Being, after its fashion, a scientific academy, the Camerata needed an experimental forum in which to produce the works that embodied its theories, and this was provided by the conventions of royal and aristocratic ceremony. Already in 1589, during the Florentine nuptials of Ferdinando de Medici and Princess Christine de Lorraine, certain mythological stories had been represented in music, scenery, and dancing, in a way that closely anticipated the coming form. The future creators of opera, Peri, Caccini, and Striggio, were among the soloists in these *Intermedii*: scenes given before, after, and in between the acts of a spoken play (*La Pellegrina*), without having any thematic connection with it. They were presented with the maximum of illusionary skill in the courtyard of the Pitti Palace in Florence. No expense was spared to show the Descent of Harmony from the Empyrean; the battle of Apollo with Python; the rescue of Arion by the dolphin, and other myths, set to music for soloists, multiple choruses, and a large and varied orchestra.

The *Intermedii* of 1589 seem to have had motivations beyond the obvious requirements of the occasion. The representation of Platonic harmony in the first scene, where the celestial beings (Necessity, Fates, Sirens, the planets, *Astraea*) are brought to life, clustered around the cosmic spindle, was perhaps intended as a conjuration, bringing down heavenly order and harmony to Florence and its rulers. Dame Frances Yates (in *The Valois Tapestries*) has suggested how, in a similar vein, the Valois court of France may have enacted quasi-magical ceremonies in the outward guise of court festivals. The *Intermedio* showing the conquest of the Delphic Python by Apollo was just as fitting, invoking upon the Grand Duke Ferdinand the virtues of the

Sun God: warrior, patron of music, lawgiver and oracle. Finally, the opening of the first Intermedio by the song of Harmony, and the episode of Arion's charming the dolphin with a virtuoso aria, related to the Camerata's investigation into the powers of music to reform character and control mind and body. It was music that made the whole magical process possible, infusing the incantatory words with the power of sound; which in the Pythagorean and Platonic tradition embodies the same numerical laws as soul and cosmos obey.

It was inevitable that the stories of several early operas had to do with this power. Jacopo Peri's and Giulio Caccini's twin operas *Eurydice* (1600), both composed to Ottavio Rinuccini's libretto, set the theme by choosing the myth of Orpheus. So did Claudio Monteverdi's more famous *Orfeo* (1607), on a libretto of Alessandro Striggio the Younger, in which the operatic genre was consolidated and defined, once and for all, by a musical genius. With these Orphic operas, attention turns from objective spectacle and civic magic into the realm of the individual. No longer the stunned witnesses to a gorgeously staged ceremony, the audience now identifies with the fortunes of Orpheus as he loses and regains his feminine soul. Since these operas were all written for weddings, the story had to have a happier ending than the various fates suffered by the bereaved hero in classical myth (and in Striggio's drama as separately published). In Rinuccini's libretto, he descends to Hades 'armed only with his lyre', and simply brings Eurydice back, to general rejoicing. Nevertheless, this is sufficient to symbolize the fall of the soul, its rescue by a saviour demigod, and its reinstatement in original bliss. On another level, but no less truthfully, it displays in a pre-psychological manner the establishment of an active relationship with the Anima that is essential to the integration of the male personality. Orpheus would have found this much more difficult if he had not already been a prophetic poet and musician.

Monteverdi's *Orfeo* takes the plot further than those earliest operas, staging Orpheus's failure and the second death of Eurydice, which from her standpoint is final. The hero alone remains for the happy ending, as he is taken up to Heaven by his father Apollo, who promises him that now he can enjoy Eurydice's image in the stars. Robert Donington says cannily that this represents the transition to the direct perception of the feminine archetype, which Orpheus had formerly projected onto his wife. For the Neoplatonists of Mon-

teverdi's time, it would probably have been expressed as the passage from profane to sacred love, or from the contemplation of corporeal to that of intelligible beauty. Under any interpretation, the Orphic myth concerns the destiny of a single figure and does not grant Eurydice any separate identity.

The case is quite different in Monteverdi's two late operas, *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria* (1640) and *L'Incoronazione di Poppea* (1642). Here the principal woman is fully as active as the man, and important in her own right, not just as a fragment of his being. Whereas in *Orfeo*, the Muse of Song, Apollo, and even Pluto cooperated with the hero and furthered his fortunes, in the late operas, as in Homer, the gods are a quarrelsome lot who only make more trouble for humans. Plato and Ficino, godfathers of the early mythological opera, would scarcely have approved of these paeans to profane love. But they were written for the public, not for the cognoscenti; they had to pay their way; and, as everyone knows, the way art appeals to the public is through sex.

The libretto of *L'Incoronazione di Poppea* was written by Giovanni Busanello, a member of the Accademia degli Incogniti, a group of Venetian freethinkers who cultivated a secular philosophy and held that pleasure was the only certain good. This least moral of great operas shows the adulterous passion of Poppea and the Emperor Nero riding roughshod over her husband, his wife, and Nero's philosophic adviser Seneca, until in the last scene they celebrate their union in a duet of exquisite tenderness. It is a puzzle why so noble a composer as Monteverdi should have agreed to set a story about such wicked people, and should have made them so sympathetic through the beauty of his music. I see him in his old age (he was 74 when he wrote *Poppea*) as a wise humanist who, having seen much and suffered much in the course of his life, felt that the mutual love of man and woman was the one unassailable value in a corrupt and hypocritical world.

At any event, the marriage of Animus and Anima is the constant theme of Baroque opera, serious and comic alike. Here pagan mythology survived, with all its profound psychological insights; here the gods, heroes and heroines of classical legend came to life in defiance of their Christian conquerors – so much so, that in Italy, the libretto would carry a disclaimer to the effect that the author had no truck with these pagan beliefs in Fate, the gods, etc., but was a good

Catholic. Then he was free to exploit the psychological truths embodied in polytheism, and to show his characters motivated by every good or evil impulse without having to conform to Christian ideas of virtue and vice, while as the mainspring of their activity he used sexuality, in all its noble and ignoble forms. For musical and mythological reasons, women play as important a part as men in these dramas, wielding an influence that they seldom enjoyed in society. Sexual ambivalence is rife in the multiple travesties, disguises, and in the regular casting of men (the *Castrati*) in female roles, and women in male ones. And above all, there was the spectacular element, which made the designer of scenery and machines often the highest-paid contributor to the enterprise. It was his illusionary skill that, like the conjuration of a magus, summoned the archetypal beings and their worlds into sensible existence.

Baroque opera went far to compensate for the psychological shortcomings of its time, notably for the imbalance between masculine and feminine, and for the Church's equivocal attitude towards sexuality. The opera house, like the early cinema in puritanical America, was an escape-valve for repressed emotions, but also an education of the soul. The theme of love and woman's worth needs constant reiteration in a culture suffering from hypertrophy of the masculine values of power and possession. Can one call this role of Baroque opera initiatic? Yes, if one can appreciate the importance of educating the public mind through symbolic images, and accept that loving and mutual sexual delight is likely to be the *summum bonum* of most mortals and their closest glimpse of the transcendent.

Of Mozart's most successful operas, three of them have plots (and music) saturated with sexual feeling: *Così fan tutte*, *The Marriage of Figaro*, and *Don Giovanni*. The latter work, however, heralds a new philosophic seriousness. Its black humour apart, the Don's career shows the negative side of the obsessive pursuit of transcendence through orgasm, sundering it from what most of us recognize as love. Figures like Don Giovanni or Aleister Crowley may become supermen, of a sort, but if they refuse the opportunity to 'repent', that is, to move to a further stage of development, their end is unenviable: they will continue in the grip of insatiable desire.

The Magic Flute goes further still, continuing where the operas of happy union leave off. It teaches that once the bond of love is secure,

a further initiation is attainable by 'Wife and man, striving for the divine'. I have written elsewhere on the multiple levels on which this Singspiel can be interpreted. Here I would link it to that stream of the Western esoteric tradition in which spiritual progress is made by a couple rather than by an individual. I would point to the practice in laboratory alchemy of working as a pair, the alchemist with his soror mystica like Nicholas and Pernelle Flamel, who achieved the Great Work in the fourteenth century; later, with the sexual alchemy that is hinted at in the works and life of Thomas Vaughan. Contemporary with Mozart, we have the figure of Alessandro Cagliostro, founder of the Egyptian Rite of Freemasonry, in whose life-story his wife Serafina plays so important a role; and, in contrast, the Comte de Saint-Germain as representative of the alternative path of solitary initiation and celibate life.

With *The Magic Flute*, opera transcends the psychological and attains the spiritual level for perhaps the first time since *Orfeo*. Mozart's music, like Monteverdi's, is not merely the representation of emotions or 'affects' (which is all that Baroque music ever pretended to be), but the authentic depiction of spiritual realities that lie beyond emotion. Because the mythology of *The Magic Flute* is drawn from Egyptian Freemasonry, not from Christianity or Neoplatonism, the protagonists are not obliged to choose between sacred and profane love. The initiation of Tamino and Pamina is as if Orpheus and Eurydice had been taken up to Olympus together. One flaw alone remains, in the too facile equation of the feminine with darkness and evil (the Queen of the Night). This would be redressed in the following century.

With Mozart, the torch of operatic development passed from Italy to the German-speaking domains. Nineteenth century opera continued to offer its audience the vision of an alternative reality, and subtly to propose alternative values to those dominant in ordinary life, but with a keener awareness of the evolutionary (or devolutionary) movement that was gradually affecting the whole of the West. Some of the greatest works were concerned less with individuals than with making a symbolic statement about civilization and its ills, with the chosen symbol: that of Woman as man's redeemer. Beethoven's *Fidelio* has Leonore heroically rescuing Florestan from his prison and certain death. In Weber's *Der Freischütz* it is Agathe who rescues Max. In those French tributes to the German mind, Gounod's *Faust* and Berlioz's *The*

Damnation of Faust, the roles of Orpheus and Eurydice are reversed: it is Marguerite who, having failed in the attempt to save her lover, is taken to heaven by angels. The culmination comes with Wagner, in the self-sacrificing heroines of *The Flying Dutchman* (Senta), *Tannhäuser* (Elizabeth), *Tristan und Isolde* (Isolde), *Die Götterdämmerung* (Brünnhilde), and even, in a way, *Parsifal* (Kundry).

It would be very naive to cling to a single interpretation of these or any other works, and my suggestions are not meant to be exclusive. In one respect, they all symbolize the grace offered to the Ego (the hero), by the higher Self (the heroine). The initiation, here represented as death, is to a state of existence where Ego and Self are united. On another level, the initiation in such works is no longer that of the individual, as in *Orfeo*, nor of the couple, as in *The Magic Flute*, but of a whole civilization in need of redemption. One is faced with the question of whether Nature (the woman) will have to be sacrificed, along with the human race (the man), in order for a fresh start to be made.

Only Wagner had sufficient staying-power both to ask this question and to answer it. In *The Ring of the Nibelung*, the ruler of the world, Wotan, is taken through a painful process of education as he discovers that his vaunted rule is based on duplicity and sustained by his refusal of feminine feeling and wisdom. He is the allegory of many a successful middle-aged man, as also of the Personal God of exoteric religion. When the initiative passes to Wotan's grandson Siegfried – that is, when mankind stops believing that a personal god runs the world, and takes responsibility into its own hands – the gift is squandered through the youngster's arrogance, his betrayal of love, and finally by his failure to grasp the seriousness of the situation. Siegfried dies, as our civilization may well deserve to die for identical errors. But the cosmic order is restored by Brünnhilde – now no longer a goddess, but a mortal woman – leaving as a legacy her example of self-sacrificing love: the only hope, Wagner suggests, in a world where the gods are dead.

Wagner's 'Ring' is a prophetic work, showing what may be the end of our world if we do not heed its message. But Wagner was not entirely a pessimist, and he offers two alternative endings to the story of our epoch. In *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*, Hans Sachs acts with an integrity and selflessness that Wotan never attained, and thereby

enables the little world of Nüremberg to be saved: not through religion, but through an art that unites (in the words of the Prize Song) 'Parnassus and Paradise'. In Wagner's last opera, *Parsifal*, the hero is like Siegfried reincarnated: but this time he does make the right choices, does develop compassion, and is thereby enabled to restore the plan on earth.

Jacques Chailley has shown in his book *Parsifal, opéra initiatique* how much of the symbolism of this drama and its music comes from high-grade Freemasonry, especially the Rose-Croix degree. Wagner built his house 'Wahnfried' next door to the headquarters of German Freemasonry (now the Masonic Museum) in Bayreuth, and it was his wish that *Parsifal* should never be performed outside his own opera-house there. He called the work not an opera but a *Bühnenweihfestspiel* ('Festival play for the dedication of a theatre'). In view of Wagner's expressed admiration for the drama of the Greeks, and for the social and spiritual order that he believed the Greek theatre to have brought to the populace, one might see the history of magical opera as having come full circle with his last work. *Parsifal* is an enactment of the possible and hoped-for destiny of the human race, intended to be celebrated in a quasi-religious atmosphere in the capital of German Freemasonry. Just as the Florentine Intermedii and the Valois festivals conjured celestial influences by the time-honored magical method of imitation, and just as the Rosicrucians, also active around 1600, worked subtly for the renewal of the world, so *Parsifal* is the legacy of a man who truly believed that his creative work might be the seed which would blossom into a new age.

An extraordinary number of people in occult circles thought that a new age was beginning between 1879 and 1882, the period of *Parsifal*. But in retrospect, it seems implausible. The message and the challenge of *Parsifal* have not yet been superseded, or even emulated. Most of Puccini's operas, which are by far the most popular post-Wagnerian works, also end with the death of the heroine, but the intention is not philosophical or redemptive: just a sadistic squeezing of every last drop of emotion from the characters. There are exquisite beauties on the way, but at the end they leave a nasty taste in sensitive mouths.

The operas that now delve deepest are those that depict the human being, or the human race, in its abandonment. Much of the vileness of modern art and music is excused as being an authentic expression of

this condition. Opera has escaped the worst excesses of the cult of ugliness, presumably because so expensive an art-form needs to keep its audience happy, and retain the loyalty of its singers. On the other hand, these very demands have stood in the way of its development and virtually excluded most modern works from entering the regular repertory – hence from affecting the collective psyche. It may be true that the cinema has now taken the place of opera (and other arts) as the vehicle for collective initiation and education. All but the sternest elitists will agree that film, television, and the video cassette recorder are among the best friends opera has ever had. But I will mention a handful of modern works, accepted masterpieces all, in which music of superlative craftsmanship and emotional strength supports a message of deepest pessimism.

Debussy's *Pelléas et Mélisande* (1893–7), on a play by Maurice Maeterlinck, shows at its most obvious level the human soul (Mélisande) falling into incarnation and marriage with the body (Golaud), then meeting and falling in love with the higher Self or Spirit (Pelléas). But the ending is not a happy one, as the Spirit is withdrawn again and Soul is left to live out its bereavement. Even its immortality is in doubt. No work more accurately or poignantly reflects the temper of its time, and of two intensely sensitive creators whose esoteric awareness never quite overcame their natural agnosticism. Debussy and Maeterlinck stand for a host of French intellectuals who haunt the antechambers of initiation.

Alban Berg's *Wozzeck* (1917–21) is still more pessimistic than *Pelléas*, for the suffering of its hero, or anti-hero, is almost unrelieved. Yet one does not have the feeling that Berg, like Puccini, has exploited his characters. *Wozzeck* arouses compassion, in one of the most soul-shaking experiences that the opera-house can provide. The climax of the work, and the only extended passage in which Berg abandons atonality for tonality, is the orchestral threnody that commemorates Marie's murder and Wozzeck's suicide. Berg's message comes through with heart-rending clarity: that these trodden beetles of the human race are no less precious, their deaths no less tragic, than those of any emperor or martyr. Still more: *Wozzeck* is about the inexplicable evil that besets the human race, written as with clairvoyant vision at the very time when the ending of one world war was sowing the seeds of another.

By the 1990s it should be obvious that the lesson of compassion contributes far more to spiritual growth than astral journeys or the acquisition of psychic powers; and *Wozzeck* is only the greatest of the twentieth-century operas that have taken this as their theme. Several of the others are by Benjamin Britten, whose first opera *Peter Grimes* (1944–5) is still, with reason, the public's favourite. Britten leaves us in no doubt that Grimes's tormented life is precious; in place of Berg's threnody, there is Grimes's key aria (words by Montagu Slater):

Now the Great Bear and Pleiades, where earth moves,
Are drawing up the clouds of human grief,
Breathing solemnity in the deep night.
Who can decipher in storm or starlight
The written character of a friendly fate?

Peter Grimes shows himself more cosmically attuned and philosophically inclined than anyone in his community. The passionate question with which he ends this song, 'Who, who, who shall turn skies back and begin again?' is the plaint of modern mankind. But it is too late for the return to innocence, and too bad for those who, like *Wozzeck* or Grimes, Billy Budd or Owen Wingrave (to mention two other of Britten's heroes), do not fit in with their cruelly virtuous fellows. Grimes shares with the philosophic initiate the tragedy of separation from the mass of humanity, whose aspirations no longer answer to his own.

Seen from another angle, several of Britten's operas are about the difficulties of homosexual love, posed both by society and, in the case of boy-love, by revulsion against corrupting the young. Britten's lovers – the ghostly manservant Peter Quint in *The Turn of the Screw*, the sadistic Claggart and the tender-hearted Captain Vere in *Billy Budd*, Peter Grimes, blind to his own condition – each represent a different aspect of the problem. (Others may be found in Britten's non-operatic works.) Only Gustav von Aschenbach, in Britten's last opera *Death in Venice*, reaches a sort of resolution, passing through a Dionysian agony then dying peacefully while worshipping at the spectacle of unattainable beauty. Britten's music is so admirable that it allowed him to be publicly adulated during his lifetime, while his choice of texts and subjects was tactfully sidestepped. Now he can be seen in his fullness as man and artist, and called as a witness to the question of whether

homosexuality disqualifies one from psychological integration and from spiritual growth. Neither Freud, Jung, nor those who pretend to speak for Christ can bring themselves to approve of it. Plato, apparently, was of a different opinion; and if that were not enough, I would find Britten's operas alone sufficient evidence that this very proclivity can be the basis for deep self-understanding, inspired creativity, and the gaining of compassionate wisdom.

Since the 1960s, esoteric or 'spiritual' themes have been in fashion in all the arts, which means that they can be grafted on to otherwise negligible works in order to make them seem important or meaningful. (No doubt we can expect a spate of ecological pieces to reflect current concern for the environment.) Recent opera, therefore, arouses a healthy scepticism towards its initiatic pretensions. One wonders, for example, how posterity will deal with the operas of Michael Tippett (*The Midsummer Marriage*, *The Knot Garden*, *The Ice Break*, *New Year*), Philip Glass (*Einstein on the Beach*, *Satyagraha*, *Aknaten*), or Karlheinz Stockhausen (the projected seven-opera cycle *Licht*). All of them are quite overt about their spiritual convictions, Tippett verging more to the Jungian and post-Jungian side, Glass to Buddhist and humanistic thought, and Stockhausen to cosmic history and messianism.

Not for me to pass judgment on works I may have heard, but never seen; yet I suspect that in the end it will be through their music that these men will either succeed, or be forgotten. Take away the music of any of the works I have discussed, and what is left? At best a poem, at worst a tract. The heart of opera lies in the music, and while one is listening to it, one does well to forget even the loftiest interpretations of the plot. If it were otherwise, one might as well spend the evening reading articles! The story is told of Maurice Ravel, who, when he finally attended a live performance of *Tristan und Isolde*, wept at the sound of that very first note, the open A of the cellos. I have had the same experience when the curtain rose on the first scene of *Die Meistersinger*, and have been suspended between tears and ecstasy for the next four hours. Only after the event can one understand why one was so deeply moved, and glimpse the transformative truth that underlay the experience. And even then, words and concepts are often redundant: it is enough that one had been an *epoptes*, a beholder of the Mysteries.

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Sirens. Plaster drawing

ROSEMARIE ROWLEY

Who has not felt whole from the time of birth, only to discover as childhood fled, we were broken by the world. As Yeats has written 'The years like great black oxen tread the world/and I am broken by their passing feet.' Many people refuse to accept their brokenness and look for 'bits' of love in different people, different places. The search for unity, which Camus considered paramount, is central to our secular times. Falling in love with the spirit of another brings unity, but very often the world will not tolerate this. I found parallels of the modern search for myth in the story of Osiris and Isis, the gods of ancient Egypt. In these feminist times, it is wonderful to read of a goddess so dedicated in wholeness through the Other.

I tried to indicate wholeness as not just 'myth' but, like true myths, grounded in reality.

Flight into Reality

CANTO 4

*Come ye forth,
Fallen fiends of Heav'nly birth
That have forgot your Ancient love
And driven away my trembling Dove
You shall bow before her feet;
You shall lick the dust for Meat;
And though you cannot Love, but Hate,
Shall be beggars at Love's Gate.*

William Blake, The Everlasting Gospel

Dawn. City of the dead. Graffiti
Scrawled on grey cement tell the legend
A girl in headscarf passing. Nefertiti

Without her consort. For a white second
Pregnant, she is held among the giving,
Beautiful, and The Necropolis fecund.

As a wreath at the funeral of the living –
But they're shut in, hopeless, dry-eyed
In your artist's scrawl, write misgiving.

The only release, death. Dry eyed
Born into a broken myth, an onion
Without its rich interior, lye-eyed

As the happy somnambulist is disproven
In the marks on his skin, now worn
Lush as the tale of some duped escutcheon

And the delivery vans blow the horn
Frozen nursery rhymes render deaf
'Greensleeves' – the classics dipped in scorn

How can he be punished, who left her bereft
Left her stretched, as if a preying bird
Had fed on her heart, and her spirit cleft?

Her true love writing in hieroglyphic word
Teeming creation mastered the stylus grip
And left neat decoration on the surd

His cosmic humour, and his astral trip
One eyed king in the country of the blind
Is he hiding in a comic strip

Or pop song, this stripling? But to find
Putrefaction, where living dead
Die from pride of a bacon rind

When supper refused? Who has bled
Inwardly through the ages, bondage on word
Orisons in millennia who led

Sister search for his corn body, round
As the men who walk now, chipped
Into portions like each raw piece found

While he dismembered and his sister shipped
On the banks of the Nile, searching
For trace and fragment, and her heart tripped

Each time a red corner showed, and she lurching
In reddish sands for the real story
Her soul failed at melody, unchurched

Still, in the wincing fragments of the whole glory
Of the song that trembled on the still river
And when she heard chords darken, saw the gory

Field and sleeping hut, their sundering, and the quiver
Of herself alone in the almost ochre
Soil the song become cacophony, and a shiver

Took hold of her, and lamentation. Some joker
He who jerked his wet dream of existence
Into fullness, tore her apart and woke her

To the separation of the night and the persistence
Of division and the eternal other
Where one must choose love or else subsistence

And on that choosing die for love of brother!
So wept, and she a fragment found
At each tear, and as a new-made mother

Is enraptured in creation's love and sound
She sang a song to Osiris, her true
And only love, her half, her round

And in her vestigial tear an image formed
Which remains now in the dream of every girl
Who first sees her true love. Confirmed

By pop song and the dancing whirl
Of a young imagination in a famine
He has the immortality of a pearl.

Just like the pearls that drag from the stamen
To mirror microscopically the web of life
He is pearl, shell-pearl, and her man.

'I wept tears, the shape of my eye. I, his wife
And he remembered me not, yet his nod
Was my eye, and truth and I were life.'

Vestigial intaglio of the golden rod
True love, first, only and last
He would be a fraction of a god,

For her God was broken on a cross, and past
His constancy she could see no diurnal
That was not filled with pain, so cast

Each mode into the day of eternal
And imperishable beauty, rich as Croesus
In tingeing with the miraculous the kernel

Of truth, which lay broken into scintillating pieces
So the lovers' beauty drew the pieces in
Each golden fragment was a coin for Jesus

Or Jesus' poor, to keep earth clean, to pin
A glance on healing, and beauty
Sealed up the magic jar of sin.

Such pennies shall be given as a duty
To kick the Devil, and to pester him forever
Until he disappears from the cutey

Pie notions of evil, his dust must never
Touch us, he took down the tree
The fruit, and love and God did sever.

In the act of creating there was me
Born, and you. And we are since apart
Sisyphus is toiling to find the key

Under the stone he is rolling from his heart
Inscribed by Lucifer who once loved light
And stole from Egypt their good destiny

Geography, and astronomy, a text of sight
Never inscribed on stone, and still he lurks
To render into ashes the alchemical light,

The arches of ages, and God's works
Until such time as he can be rolled
Up, and made do without his perks

Let him be sealed up, and as is told
He will be cast into fire, forever burnt
Giving God energy for what is foretold

So, the light-bearer loved night, sunburnt
The hopes of young girls, and the icon
Of love had to be painfully unlearned.

Love in action is when he has his bike on
The will to romance can make good turn ill
Confusing love and the image is a Reichian

Dissonance, an addict's desire, in the mill-
Race of being a sojourner is pert
Postponing the inclination of the will

To latch on to sensuous pleasure in the hurt
Of being ground to nothing in an also-ran
Drama of sex, not love, curt

Like a doorbell summons and the tables then
Laid, and forgotten, a hasty meal
Living objects strewn outside the pen

Of domestic cage desiring what must be real
We never can desire what others can desire
We never can fully accept what they feel

And so it ends when love dies in the fire
And dreams a butchery of what is becoming
Because others fasten on the widow's pyre

Of burnt up useless love, in that summing
Up there greens a dream of honour
Away from the useless history, the coming

Of those who hate women as lover
Who can only imprint their lust on broken
Daydreams, and stamp the seal of summer

In a hidden cache where sentiment is token
To take away a father's curse, a lyric
Fresh as her stress, unspoken

As before her first kiss, a rainbow empiric
Lit the page, put flesh on love's emotion
Open the tender, as if the pyrrhic

Dance of the first explosion and commotion
The billionth, billionth, billionth second before matter
Formed in the universe, and frozen action

Whose epitaph was beauty, and honour the latter
Day saint of greatness before entropy set in,
Spirit was. Before fusion and the batter

Of time and space stretched galaxies to thin
Spirals of coruscating light, cartwheels
Fizzling on existence like discarded skin

Of God's first protracted impulse and reels
Of love in his fishing rod and net
As souls are gathered in to rainbow creels

So this moment before love began. Yet
There was honour, resplendent pure and bright
Before even the mind began to get

Drunk with pain. Forget, beget, plain get, the blight
Of her father's curse a harpoon to inertia, the task
Of naming separation, discrimination, in dark night

Still honour stood fast, in time in galaxies to bask
With all the soul's intention upon God
To tear from the soul's demeanour the mask

Of material being, to be a shining rod
Where goodness is measure, sole
Impulse, measure itself and pod

To hold the deeds in, like the whole
Green case where peas bed down together
Separate, heads in a bed, yet whole

As the certainty as when the feather
Was weighed against the heart, a universe –
in Egypt a confident mood, no wether

Of imagining, but love then, to disburse
Throughout the ages infinite largesse
Between will and creation, came a curse

To fall upon the plans. Yet his caress
Was sent to mend separation, and the night
That followed day, a love to bless

Unite division between seen and sight
Man and woman, ugliness and beauty
To bring to creation a unity in right

But such love depends on chance, is no duty
And when we see our partners, we may choose
To love or leave them, mask our sooty

No. We may embrace, or choose the blues,
Be dissident, seek husband, wife, whether
To pour into one person our aspiration's cues.

In the hanging shadow of this tether
The preference for the real glitters
Constantly homeless, a desert tribe, rather

Like a sacred story whose bitters
Are annealed as a rhyme into logos
And the cataleptic calypso critters

Who burn the texts and cry a bogus
Holiness, who shirk the real encounter
Are more interested in gesture than in focus

The curse of her father an old counter
Flip side madonna, B side whore
Dropped into darkness – who would love her

A physical being where matter was the core?
Sweet form by the candle, true self by the door.

With acknowledgements to the Rowan Tree Press, 1989



Hans Baldung (1476–1545).
The Stages of Life, with Death.

Time and Dream in the work of García Lorca

RAFAEL MARTINEZ NADAL

There is probably no other Spanish contemporary poet so deeply imbued in the traditional imaginative vision of Spain as Federico García Lorca. It is a rich tradition whose terms of reference belong mainly, though not exclusively, to the Roman Catholic religion and whose landmarks are, amongst others less well known abroad, St John of the Cross, St Teresa of Avila, Calderón de la Barca, El Greco and, if one may mention him here, the sixteenth century composer Tomás Luis de Victoria.

It is St John of the Cross's vision of the mystical marriage. The soul-bride – lamenting the sudden departure of God – bridegroom calls him back in anguish:

Where did you hide
Beloved ...
Like the stag you flee
After wounding me.

And later, it is the bridegroom who calls the frightened bride:

Dove, turn back
For the wounded stag
Peers over the hill

It is Calderón's play *Life's a Dream*, a dream from which man awakens from the sleep of life; or St Teresa of Avila, not only in her superb flights of imagination, but when turning to the more prosaic toils of everyday life, who reminds her nuns that God is also to be found amongst the pots and pans. The same imaginative vision inspired El Greco's 'The burial of Count Orgaz' and the upward movement in practically all his religious pictures in the Prado Museum.

But not in the case of Lorca. His is the drama of a poet who has lost his religious faith and is left with a rich, powerful imagination in desperate search for truth in a void. And yet, love, tenderness and compassion are never absent for the dwellers of his infernos: humans, animals, plants, even shadows. A vision at once desperate and powerful.

In the difficult, uneven, perhaps unfinished 'Double Poem of Lake Eden' from the book *Poet in New York*, there are two lines which seem to reveal the core of Lorca's poetry:

For I am not a man, nor a poet, nor a leaf,
But a wounded pulse sounding things from the other
side.

The other side; this is how Lorca sometimes alludes to animals, plants, or to 'other systems' but more frequently to a time-devourer of life, a frontier place, if one may use the expression, beyond which only intuition, dream and imagination can provide some guidance. A few lines further on, we find some revealing lines:

In the labyrinth of folding screens it is my nakedness
which receives
The ash-ridden clock and the castigating moon.
Thus I spoke when Saturn halted the trains
And mist, Dream and Death were seeking me.

In the labyrinth of folding screens of pretence and simulation, which is life, what the poet receives as a reward for unmasking truth, is a 'castigating moon', sister of that 'sixth moon' which, in the poem 'Fable and Round of the three friends', he managed to see 'climbing a waterfall' after having witnessed his own assassination,

When pure forms sank
Beneath the chirp of the marguerites,
It dawned on me I was assassinated.
They searched cafe, cemetery and church,
Opened casks and cupboards,
Tore asunder three skeletons for their teeth of gold.
They found me no more.
Did not find me?
No. They found me not.
But it spread abroad that the sixth moon fled up
cascading waters
And that the sea, of a sudden,
Recalled the names of the drowned.

This moon is sister of the castigating moon in the previous poems; sister too of the moon in 'Casida of the impossible hand', the hand the poet wished might be 'guardian in the night of my passing, /

barring all entry to the moon'; sister, finally, of so many more emissaries or death itself in the work of Lorca.

In the poems written in New York, he spells Sleep and Time with capitals as he does in the semi-surrealist play *When Five Years Have Passed*. Sleep as Time, Time as Sleep; two themes frequently interlaced, always present in the poet's work. In most of his early work Lorca's concept of time is conventional: time is both the great destroyer and the great teacher, followed by the 'sic transit gloria mundi' and the 'vanitas vanitatum' of Christian tradition. Loss of religious faith led the future poet to youthful pessimism: 'All this will end because Love and Time and Eternity are also an infinite dream'. Naive pessimism indeed, but therein lies a concept of time as determined by man's birth and death. Beyond this span the poet sees nothing. 'Before God and Time, only silence flowed peacefully' he wrote in an early poem.

The word Dream has other connotations, one of these being, of course, life. This is already present in the juvenile prose piece 'Gardens'. Then, in 1923, in his first book of poems, we find three compositions entitled 'Dreams'.

The first is not real dream but youthful introspection of some beauty recalling the gentle romanticism of Juan Ramón Jiménez:

My heart brims over into the cold spring
(White hands from afar,
Held back the waters)
Singing with joy, the waters bore it along.
(White hands from afar,
Nothing remains in the waters).

The second and third dreams open the way to the visionary world of García Lorca, already pointing, though still somewhat self-consciously, to 'the other side'.

Riding was I
On a he-goat.
The old man said,
Said he:
'This is your path'.
'That one!', cried my shadow
In beggar's disguise.
'The one of gold!'
Answered my clothes.

A large swan with a wink
 Says: 'Come with me!'
 While a serpent bit my pilgrim's clothes.
 Looking up at the sky,
 'I have no path', thought I.
 'The last roses like the first shall be.
 Into mist will turn the flesh and the dew'.

The third dream which begins:

A swallow flies
 Into the far beyond! ...

brings to mind a disquieting picture of Van Gogh painted shortly before committing suicide. In this poem, dream, time and death start to appear interlinked:

Flowing of dew
 Over my dream,
 And my heart a spinning ...
 Roundabout taking Death's babes for a ride.
 Would that on these trees
 I could fasten time! ...
 How many sons has death?
 All in my bosom lie.

In 'Poem of *cante jondo*', no one poem bears the title 'Dream'. Nevertheless many, as also in the book *Primeras Canciones*, have a dreamlike atmosphere. Take 'Canción' or 'Malagueña' with its refrain: 'Death / enters and leaves / Death / leaves and enters the tavern'; or the song which starts: 'I took my seat / in a clearance of time. It was a backwater of silence'.

The link between the concepts of Dream and Time is clearly established in the early poem 'Herbarium' in which Lorca sees Man as wayfarer through his own time span. He carries within himself, unawares, the dreams which enhance the hours of transit through a life-dream. The Biblical apple may turn sour in the end, but it will still be preferable to the dried herbs tendered by moon-death.

The wayfarer through time
 Owns his herbarium of dreams.
 Where is the herbarium?
 There, in your fingertips.
 My ten fingers are free.

Dreams dance in your hair.
 How many centuries have been?
 But one hour holds my herbarium.
 ...
 Oh, garden of bitter fruit!
 More bitter is the herbarium of the moon.

We are already in the world of Poet in New York, *The Public*, of some of the poems gathered under the title *Casidas y Gacelas*, a world fitting for guests or dwellers of 'the other side'.

But nowhere is the theme treated more dramatically than in the play *When Five Years Have Passed: legend of Time in three Acts*. Title and sub-title are, respectively, plot and fable. At first the plot seems relatively straightforward: 'On fire, and bursting with a passion which grows daily', a Young Man has promised to marry a girl of fifteen when five years have passed. As the term draws to a close, the Young Man goes in search of his fiancée only to be told by her that she has known a man, a rugby player, with whom she is about to elope because love cannot wait. All at once the Young Man feels disinhabited and purposeless. In despair he seeks out his former typist, dismissed for being in love with him at a time when he was unable to requite her love because he was not free, because he was not 'feeling thirsty before fountains'. When he finally finds the typist who had loved him so deeply, she now takes revenge for past disdain and avenges his former fiancée for her long years of waiting. 'Yes, I will go with you – she says – when five years have passed'. This is the final blow and the Young Man returns home to die.

If the fable were as straightforward as the title suggests, the message would be no less simple. The time is set at six o'clock for the duration of the play. Whereas dialogue and action give the impression of the passing of time, the clock remains at six on a hot summer afternoon. The recurring death of the caretaker's little boy and of a cat stoned to death by some children, occurs always in the present. The actions of past and present will carry through into the future because there is only one time set on the clock of a man's life, equidistant between zenith and nadir, six o'clock in the afternoon. Only as the Young Man dies, an unseen clock strikes twelve, giving the death toll as he falls to the ground.

However, plot and fable undergo changes and transformations as

their respective levels intertwine, sometimes to great effect, at others showing careless or hurried solutions most probably awaiting revision.

Let us now look briefly at the structure of the play.

Act 1. The scene is set in the Young Man's library where the plot is outlined and the characters introduced in a rarefied and unreal atmosphere created not so much by what is being said as by the general tone. The conversation is abruptly interrupted. The Young Man and his four friends retire behind a folding screen. The lights are dimmed and a dead boy leading a dead she-cat by the paw, enters.

The dialogue between the dead Boy and the dead Cat is a lyrico-dramatic parenthesis using the theatre within the theatre technique, a change of lens allowing the spectator to view simultaneously two realities: one perceptible to the eye and the ear, invisible, inaudible the other. Lorca's well known love for children and animals reaches here, with echoes from children's songs, a very high poetic level. Let us look at the moving dialogue between those two dead creatures. The boy tries to comfort the dead, moaning she-cat:

Boy: Take my white handkerchief,
Take my white crown.
Don't cry any more.

Cat: My wounds hurt me,
The children broke my back.

Boy: I feel pain in my heart too.

Cat: Tell me, why does it hurt?

Boy: Because it will not go.
Yesterday, slowly, it stopped,
nightingale of my bed ...

Cat: What did you hear, Boy?

Boy: I heard bees and fountains around.
My hands were tied; so wrong.
The children stared at me through the window
While a man with a hammer
nailed paper stars on my coffin.
The angels did not come. No, Cat, no.

Cat: Ten stones
The children threw at me.

Boy: Heavy as the roses
which last night imprisoned my throat.

Would you like one?

(He tears a rose from his crown)

Cat: (Joyfully) Yes I would.

Boy: With your wax stains, white rose,
eye of broken moon,
fainting gazelle amongst the crystals
you seem.

In this dialogue the poet often changes rhyme and meter but preserves the precise image, the fusion of the popular and cult traditions, the looking towards or from death. And always the absence of an exit from a precarious life of the dead which so much obsessed Lorca.

Cat: Did you find the exit?

(The cat approaches door on right. A hand appears
and pulls her out).

Boy: A hand took her away.
The hand of God it must be.
Wait a moment,
do not bury me.

(Pulling the petals off a flower)

Alone I will go, slowly.
Allow me then to see the sun
Just one ray will do.

(Pulling the petals off a flower)

Yes, no, yes, no, yes.

Voice: No, no

Boy: (Disappearing)

No. As I always said.
No.

Act 2. The Bride's bedroom. Open balcony. Moonlight. 'A bed all hangings and plumes'; dressing table 'supported by angels holding bunches of electric lights', mild irony on the overburdened 'art nouveau' of the turn of the century. Against this caricatured realism the new characters move. Two belong to the world of Lorquian farce (the Father, an eighteenth century figure, and the Rugby Player, typical of the twentieth century) and two (the Bride and the Maid) to his brand of realist comedy based on memories of provincial life and on a deep understanding of the inner rebellion of Andalusian woman against her enslavement by the moral codes of the time.

The fact that the Rugby Player does not utter a word and limits his action to smoking, kissing or being kissed, does not break the realism of this Act whose atmosphere stands in sharp contrast to the preceding and the ensuing ones. Helmet, braces and knee pads are the adjuncts of this chauvinist 'robot', male subject conjured up by the Bride during her many years of waiting. Into this realistic, sensuous setting, the timid, lyrical protagonist enters. In the ensuing conversation with the Bride it is not his dreams which prevail but her real, pressing sensuality in the here and now.

The Bride escapes with the Rugby Player, the Father is totally engrossed in an eclipse and the Maid in her weeping. Only then does the author seem to recall that the play runs on two different levels of reality: The lights are dimmed to a bluish tone. Through the balcony the moonlight comes up again. A dialogue follows between the Young Man and a Mannequin who for five years has worn the wedding-dress presented by the protagonist to the Bride at his official engagement. It is an inner dialogue rather than an external manifestation of an invisible world as was the case between the dead child and the dead cat in Act 1.

The realistic side of the play ends with Act 2. Act 3 might be described as an epilogue to the plot and fable, in every respect much closer to the daring experiment of the play *The Public* and to Lorca's particular brand of surrealism.

The scene is set in a forest. Large tree trunks. In the centre a little theatre with steps leading up to the stage. Into the forest, antechamber of Death, the characters enter bewildered, entangled, aimless, unable to find the exit. The Young Man climbs onto the little stage and with his secretary re-enacts for the last time past situations, exchanging roles, voices and intentions in topsy-turvy fashion.

Theatre, Book of Memory, Last Judgment with no God or punishment? The way out of the forest – Hades, Inferos – can only be gained through the initial place of entry. It is a blank draw, a 'querencia' as in the case of the mortally wounded bull. Like the bull, the Young Man returns to his library of Act 1 to play out his last round with the emissaries of Death.

At first sight it would seem that Lorca intended only to portray prototypes of people living in the past, present or future. Conventional, vital, exuberant, a drinker and womanizer, though of homo-

sexual leanings, Friend 1 lives in the present.

Friend 2 lives in the past, craving to go back in time:

I return for my wings
 Let me return!
 I wish to die being
 Yesterday.
 I wish to die being
 Dawn.
 I return for my wings
 Let me return!
 I wish to die being
 Source.
 I wish to die not in
 The sea.

'Away from the sea'. Sea: death of all rivers. Inevitably there comes to mind the famous sixteenth century Elegy of Jorge Manrique to the death of his father:

Our lives are rivers
 which end up in the sea
 which is death.

The Young Man and the Old Man are so intertwined, so bound up in their feelings, the latter's physical response to the psychological failures of the former are so strong that one suspects the Old Man of being the Young Man's 'alter ego'. Both personify a type which lives in a tomorrow of constant, unrealized expectation. The reminiscences of the Young Man point to the future: 'I remember that ... I used to keep my sweets to eat later'. The Old Man does not object to the word 'remember' because he hears that word projected 'over a clear sky of dawn', over a sunrise of the future, antithesis to the sunrise of 'the past', of Friend 2. 'That is to say – adds the Old Man a little later – one must recall, but recall "in advance", recall towards the morrow'; a remembering that is a waking dream in no-man's-land of a morrow which never arrives because 'things are more alive inside the mind than out there exposed to the winds and to death'. This explains 'lets go ... to not go ... or to wait. Else to die now is the alternative ...' Stressing the idea of living in the future, when the Secretary in her dialogue with the Old Man protests vehemently that she will not wait,

the Old Man replies firmly: 'And why not? To wait is to believe and to be alive'.

Friend 2 becomes the most lyrical of the three, more than a mere personification of living in the past. He is not only a Peter Pan refusing to abandon the paradise of childhood and imagination, afraid of the passing of time, of growing old and of death. Friend 2 goes even further, towards being unborn as a final retrospective aim: 'When I was five – no, when I was two ..., one'. Aware of the plurality of ages and faces within himself tripping over each other, 'I want to live that which is mine and they take it from me', he says to the Old Man, 'my face is mine and it is being snatched from me ... now there is a man, a gentleman like you, wandering inside me with two or three masks handy ...' Masks of the visionary world of Lorca, alluding here to the ages of man or his states of mind, gathered together in that fleeting moment which is life.

Should we then be looking merely for impersonations of three attitudes or for the embodiment of conflicting but integrating facets of the protagonist as they were also of the author, perhaps of all human beings? Friends 1 and 2 do not appear again in the play and the Old Man will, from now on, be the inseparable 'alter ego' of the Young Man. Yet this Young Man, protagonist of the play, with the disturbing poetic reality of some of Lorca's other characters in plays and poems, is not a mere symbol. On entering the Bride's bedroom in Act 2, he gives the impression of a dream character breaking all of a sudden into a sharp glare of a hostile reality. The stage directions stress that effect: 'At the moment of his entrance the lights are fully up and the candelabra held aloft by the angels are also bright.' The protagonist seems to be a dream-soul on the brink of the materialization of his dream.

But to return to our central theme; nowhere in the play, seldom in his poems, has Lorca reached such heights in his obsession with time and dream as in the song danced by the sibylline Harlequin at the beginning of the last Act in *When Five Years Have Passed*, a play closely related to *The Public*. Juliet, in the latter surrealist play, leaps from her sepulchre in Verona calling for 'a little help and a sea of dream'. She then sings:

A sea of dream,
A sea of white earth

And empty arches in the sky.
 My train over sea and seaweed.
 My train through time.
 Beach of woodcutter worms
 And crystal dolphin between the cherry trees.
 Oh, pure amianthus of finality! Oh, ruin!
 Oh, bridgeless solitude! Sea of dream!

In this poem, and even more markedly in the one danced by the Harlequin, Lorca establishes not only the conflict between dream and time but their correlation and final fusion. What in Juliet's song is hinted at in a complex metaphor, in the later play becomes the very essence of the poem: a serene but desolate meditation on man's solitude and the fugacity of life. Juliet speaks as from death; Harlequin from a wood, threshold of death:

Dream flows over time
 Afloat like a ship sailing.
 Seeds cannot take root
 In the heart of dream.

Does he – or Lorca – see dream as a desirable but sterile desert of white earth where nothing bears fruit? If we remember that in both poems the word dream is used in all its connotations, one of them being life itself, Harlequin's and Juliet's first lines acquire an intensity and fullness of meaning difficult to assess on a first reading.

Harlequin continues:

Time flows over dream
 Submerged to hair brim.
 Yesterday and tomorrow eat
 Dark flowers of mourning.

Within the parenthesis opened and closed by death passes the fleeting day which is man's life. Yet it would seem that the last two lines did not altogether satisfy Lorca. The fugacity of life was to be enshrined in these four lines in a masterly way:

Round a single column
 As dream and time embrace,
 The new-born cry is broken
 By an old man's cracked voice.

Round the same column-tree, cross, man – dream and time are fused and old age catches up with the child in his very cot. Eternal theme!

Here follows the full text of Harlequin's solo:

(Enter Harlequin dressed in black and green. He carries two masks, one in each hand, held behind his back. He mimes in dance)

Dream flows over time
Afloat like a ship sailing.
Seeds cannot take root
In the heart of dream.

(He puts on a mask of joyous expression)
Oh, how dawn sings, how it sings!
What icebergs of blue it brings.

(He removes mask)
Time flows over dream
Submerged to hair brim.
Yesterday and tomorrow eat
Dark flowers of mourning.

(He puts on a mask of sleepy expression)
Oh, how night sings, how it sings!
What fields of anemones it brings.

(He removes mask)
Round a single column
As dream and time embrace,
An old man's cracked voice breaks
The faint cry of the new born.

(With a mask)
Oh, how dawn sings!

(With the other mask)
What fields of anemones it brings.

And if dream builds walls
In the thickness of time
Illusion is time's dream
That he has just been born.
Oh, how night sings, how it sings!
What icebergs of blue it brings!

Translated by Jacinta Castillejo

AGNES GERGELY

Prayer Before Turning
Off The Light

My Lord, keep me from perfection.
 As with the wedge-shaped burn
 on the ironing-board, leave my faults
 on me, the marks of Your hand. In this city,
 whose two shores stare at each other gnashing,
 draw a field of Dutch tulips on me. And if
 You write on Your things: 'Attention: High Voltage,'
 put me in Your circuit as Your accomplice. The evening
 star, that old caretaker of flocks of sheep, is seldom
 to be seen. We can't see each other
 amidst the cumulus of this disrupted world.
 Permit me to shed light through my singed,
 decaying bones, short-circuited by the memory
 of the ancient ones, until the darkness comes.

1976

Tr. Jascha Kessler with Maria Körösy

Magdalene

I was a coffin, and I became a flower.
 I was a maiden, and they gave me away.
 Chastity is a potential graveyard.
 Desire a waning moon.
 I've tried
 everything, Saviour, your trials nailed
 me up; my gate's opening
 knew blood, flesh, and bones,
 until
 the child-sized moral stumbled
 out of me: we must not judge, but
 endure. Nails, blood, moon configuration,
 cell-wall, covered cheeks, hoes, – are but
 possibilities. Treason and deathscreeams

are not fulfilments – only further possibilities.
 How long will
 the riches of your choices multiply?
 How deep are the wells of our patience? Oh, tell me
 that time itself is possibility! And that
 having been abandoned, so am I.

1976

Tr. Timea Széll

Imago 2

Focus

One kneels before the moment;
 another swings up and reaches the rim;
 both see with their own eyes
 what the world is like close to:
 water stiffened into a desire to flow;
 a window absorbing attention;
 stupor rising to the level of wakefulness;
 and space bending imperceptibly.
 Falling is no more than remembrance or recognition.
 Terror is worth just that.
 The falling body, like the falcon,
 is the extension of experience.
 Nothing is more than a source. Everything a source.
 We strive on this side of the image,
 the shadows would fill a ship,
 whereas you can grasp with your two hands
 the essence: Rembrandt's Night Watch
 or a tree scarred by the day.

1986

Translated by Elizabeth Szász

Imago 4

Perpendicular

The crossing of roads
 multiple or multiplied
 crossroads
 the meeting of churchyard and desert
 between palm and stone
 at the intersection
 a man-sized menhir
 a resonant god-statue
 untouched by human hand
 Hermes
 eternal perpendicular
 it can fall over yet it stays there
 a ladder without substance
 the poet if he has weight will ascend on it
 sooner than the rocket designers
 the wall of Jericho falls down never this one
 touch it if you've found it
 paralyzing love radiates
 from before the Flood
 weight and the swish of wings
 in the whirlwind
 whoever sets out steps in his own tracks
 the crossroad spins
 the leaf-veining desert wind sticks to it
 under pressure the dust particle is
 identical with itself
 the steps in thin air are seen
 as a row of solid pillars
 eyewitness witness
 bow deeply,
 intone as he intones
 'we are here to comfort one another'

1987

Translated by Elizabeth Szász

KATHLEEN RAINE

In Praise

1

If this were my last of days
I would praise all that is –
Oh sun's bright rays
That wake my eyes
Once more upon this world
That I and such as I
Have known and made
Beautiful by our love,
The leaves, the light!

2

Not death, but that I am,
Not void but blue sky
Not space and distances but this
Here and now, multiplied
By all the living who have been,
Are, and will be
Boundless in times and places,
Presence seamless, without end,
The mystery.

3

Friend, stranger,
However alone,
My secret is yours, yours mine –
Words are for telling
The knowable, the known
But the living, loving, sorrowing heart of all hearts'
Untold, untellable, we share.

4

Here on this threshold of mystery
Unknown, unknowable as this
Familiar commonplace where light from fiat falls
I in ignorance praise
This veil that is the holy face it veils.

5

Thinking of death, as befits me,
Being old, I see
My green shadowy garden overgrown
With vines and roses, clematis,
A young acacia-tree, self-sown,
A leafless amaryllis suddenly risen
With rose-pale flowers from underground
From all the garden's once-living
Leaves, wood-lice, blackbirds,
And fallen petals of all summers
From the beginning returned.

6

On this darkening day
As the strong winds blow ragged leaves
From the sycamore, and rain,
Earth receives again
All that is spent and spoiled, and I
Who must relinquish been and done,
Far, far as a star, discern
That point of joy, my origin
Undimmed, or is it music that reaches me?

7

The old woman prays to the chickweed flower
In a crack of the pavement where
Dust has gathered moisture,
Drinking beauty there.

8

All pray always, all ways are prayer,
To far or near find ways
To the hidden god who prays
In all prayer always,
All the ways of prayer.

9

Making of solitude my sanctuary, I enter
The alone all share
In sorrow and delight

Of the one heart, one thought
Travelling from state to state.
In ocean each wave touches other,
The bitter life-giving waters
Of tears and blood in all
Rise and fall.

10

Travelling slowly from day to day
I reach a joy
Known to the old, whose contours melt away,
Like water interflow
Mind with mind and world with world.
Times and spaces dwindle and grow
Infinite moment's infinite now
Where rise the mornings of long ago.

11

World's epiphany –
The one beauty
Reflected in ocean, in drop of rain,

Dream-rivers, pure
Waters of soul's country
We never find again.

River and dream
Have flowed away, yet I
Am carried still on an invisible stream.

12

Here on the surface of mystery (table and tablecloth, book and page)
World's untold inexhaustible heritage
Into the present rises, the unregarded familiar
Where, in ignorance and wonder, I receive and praise.

13

Beyond, no words to name the wonders, heritage of all
For whom these were,
And nothing lost in the telling over and over
Of sun and moon and stars and wind and water.
When I enter the untold, the untellable, our whence and whither,

I shall not be, or, being, will not know
And yet be whole, for there is only the one
Ceaseless ever-changing never-changing flow.

14

Is it too late to find
The unuttered word, or note
Of music, that will resonate
For ever in the pure space of the sky
Of this beloved world,
All that my heart would say or cry?

15

Vertiginous old-age, as I climb higher
Time's life-scape an diminished panorama
Stretches wide and far –
That rich plane
I shall not cross again.

16

It was all now, once,
And is
Myself ever after, presence
With no release.

17

Old, what do I care
For hopes and fears, desire has found
Its orient, distance into which the sound
Of a pure note dies away:
Desire follows, the desirer left behind.

18

Hearing, almost, their voices,
Do I know, even, that they are?
Imagination, where spirits travel,
Fathomless, terrible,
My ocean-drop a mirror
That cannot hold their presences.

19

Lost companion, will you come again?
When you spoke silently to me,

'Not now, but soon', I said.
Times and places have come and gone,
The moving stars never return, and yet
Are you not always?

20

In rank shade where death had hidden
Shabby feathers, dragged wings –
It was not a bird I buried in the loam –
Today I have listened to the voice I heard
In other gardens, in years gone:
Who is singing? Who composed the undying song?

21

My grand trine in fire has burned itself out,
I have come to nothing, or worse, and yet
When strings or voices tell of Paradise I rejoice
Not because I hope to repass that gate,
But some other in me, immortal in all that lives
Our multitudes that seek the light
Remembers in unbounded bliss.

22

Cheap Indian cotton tablecloth repeating-patterned
With flowers like bunches of flames flaring,
Agni's image of heart's fire burning
Numberless from the ground
Of the one mind here on my table flowers and flares.

23

Things grow transparent, overflow
Their mere selves – as now
Ferns on a Wedgwood jug lead into far hills,
A burn flowing over stones with glint and gleam
Under fine fronds' translucent sheen.

24

Where situate these epiphanies?
Can disembodied death undo
Memory of places where we have come and gone
Who have ourselves become
Timeless, placeless texture of dream?

25

As times and places dwindle, here and now
Grows infinite – bright cone of candle
Reminds of the light
Of light, discloses
Mystery itself, nearly is, would be quite
If I were still.

26

Only in silence and in solitude
Can love appalled confront this bestial war –
The infant corpses on the nursery floor,
The sea birds dying, their wings clogged up with crude,
The hollow pleas for peace (daily renewed)
As more marines, more guns, more missiles pour
On to the beaches of the Arabian shore,
And on the screen the unseeing eyes are glued.

Harden your hearts or how will you survive
The electric twilight of the age of iron?
Small fingers clutch their gas masks – how not fear?
Israel waits Babylon, old feuds are still alive.
Blind forces, or the priorate of Sion?
Sincerity itself is insincere?

Poppy-flower

Today a wondrous hundred-fold poppy
With muddled mauve and crimson petals
Has opened at my garden-door in once only
Miraculous epiphany:
And who am I that the creator of numberless worlds
Should send this gift from the inexhaustible treasury?

Today in Persia a mountain shook
Human multitudes with no more concern
Than fallen petals, or stars in galaxies –
And who are we
In that presence to whom large and small,
Many and one, are alike, are nothing, are all?

Words

(For Wendell Berry)

Falling so simply into place, as if given,
 At need, from elsewhere, words of a poem return
 First heard by a long-ago child
 In loved known voices of father and mother,
 Teachers and strangers, entrusted,
 Our human hard-won utterance
 Of heart's truth, mind's inheritance,
 From one to another told and retold,
 Names we have given to the creatures,
 Speaking the known unknowable meaning of the world
 From hearts of the ever-living created,
 Carried through time from the beginning, talismans, talents
 Exchanged, multiplied or lost, defaced, buried in the dust –
 This human language, so briefly mine, received and given
 Treasury of words, to praise, to understand,
 Remind, enchant, delight and know and comfort one another.

Memory-places

Memory-places – but not ours
 Those flashes of recollection: from what unknown elsewhere,
 An old wall, the corner of a stair, familiar,
 Yet when and where, to whom? For an instant
 I was that other's presence there
 In a country that is no where, a place
 Not vague or shadowy, but clear
 As a room painted by Chardin or Vermeer
 Or Bonnard's garden, or Sieneese balcony
 Where angel reflected from an inner heaven
 Communes with virgin reverie.
 Oh where are those gardens fragrant with basil and orange-trees
 In long-ago cities no archaeologist can disinter
 From this world's dust? Once and for ever they are,
 Though no path comes or goes, the numberless hours and days of the living!

An essence, breath of a life not mine
 From a here and now far as stars light-years away
 Whose past reaches our present when they no longer are:
 As unshed tears
 That sunlit wall, that corner of a stair.

Voices

MUHAMMAD SALIM-UR-RAHMAN

'I want to keep dogs.'

'What for?' the woman's voice flickered in the darkness.

'I want to keep dogs.'

'What for? Because we are lonely? Come to think of it, Suraiya hasn't written in a long time. Good, she must be happy with her husband. And Nasim – well, he's practically forgotten us. He never writes. What's that place in America? Sannata? Sansanata? That picture post-card ... it was so lovely, no? God knows where I put it away. He hasn't sent us anything since – has he? Tell me! You haven't been keeping his letters from me? God knows what time it is.'

It was pitch-dark inside the room. There had been a power failure. A chilly October night, with jumbled sounds drifting in from afar, like faint lines appearing and dissolving on a thick, darkened screen. The man felt he was lying on an ocean floor, splayed out among a profusion of oysters, shells, corals, sea-weed, smooth round pebbles, fish-eggs – splayed out like a fish, with his fish-wife, his fishette – could there be such a word, he wondered – right beside him. He caressed her thigh. 'My fish.'

The woman laughed softly. 'My dog.'

The man smiled. The woman couldn't see him smiling.

'Dogs!' he said.

'Wouldn't one dog be enough?' she asked.

'This too is a dream. Many dogs, all kinds of dogs: black, brown, white, chocolate, black-and-white, brindled, pied – even perhaps green, yellow, colorless – as colorless as water. I'm out hunting with them. Evening. A green expanse rolling out as far as eye can see, in which we are speeding along like splashes of so many colors, speeding along. I want to hunt down the moon.'

'You are mad,' the woman said.

There was a silence. 'Oh, still quite a while before daybreak,' the woman thought. 'The night is like a mountain. We are climbing down

... or up. Must be down. There isn't strength any more to go up. Down and down and down. Perhaps that might help in falling asleep.' Thousands of stairs – black-and-white, black-white. A hurricane lantern's moving right along, as if by itself.

'I'd go mad if you weren't with me,' she said.

'You are with me, all the same I'm mad,' the man said.

She plunged her fingers in the man's hair. It used to be so bushy, she reminisced with a twinge of sadness. Outside, a car sped by, crushing the gravel. Someone whistled along.

'We could be mad – really. After all who can tell. We've nothing. We are mad, really.'

'It isn't easy to be mad,' the man said. 'The likes of you and me can never be mad. We are too damn conscious of ourselves. Too self-absorbed. You are your own prisoner, and I my own. The mad are a free people. That's why the world fears them and puts them behind bars. Wants to forget them. But you may shackle a mad man however you will, he'll always be free. How strange: we who are captives walk around in the world unrestrained, and the truly free are put away!'

'Then what shall we do to become mad?'

'Keep dogs!' the man said. They laughed.

A long silence ensued.

'Can't sleep,' she said.

'Yes.'

'Power's out; can't even watch a movie on the VCR.'

'Yes. If we could just fall asleep, we may be able to have a dream.'

After a brief silence he said, 'Let's play.'

'In the dark?' she giggled like a teenage girl.

'I mean with words. I'll tell you a story, a short one, then you tell it back to me, changing it along.'

'Changing it along – how? When did I ever know any stories?'

'Just the day before yesterday after watching a TV play you said it should rather have been written in such and such way – remember? Well, think of my story as that TV play.'

She lowered herself upon him, supporting herself on her elbows. 'Here we go,' she said.

'Where?'

'Tell your story. That's all.'

'All right. Listen. Once upon a time there lived a man in a rundown

neighbourhood of Baghdad. He was a nice and pleasant man. He inherited a little money. Which soon ran out and he was reduced to dire straits. One night he had a dream in which he heard someone say: Get up and betake yourself to Cairo. There by the baker's on the western side of such and such bridge there lies buried a great treasure. Dig it up and make use of it. When the man woke up, he thought that a dream was, after all, a dream; it would be foolish to put one's trust in it.'

'Treasure reminds me to ask you to take out my jewelry from the bank locker day after tomorrow. I'm planning to attend the Friday wedding. So don't forget.'

'Don't interrupt! When the same message was repeated in a dream three nights in a row and the tone of the invisible interlocutor grew increasingly insistent and threatening, the man decided he could no longer ignore the matter. Then again, no compelling reason required him to stay on. So he left Baghdad and, after enduring great hardship, arrived in Cairo. There he found the bridge and, sure enough, the baker's shop on its western edge. However, there was a problem. The site was by a very busy thoroughfare. Traffic never let up on it, day or night. At night, with the rush over and only a few passersby around, there was always an armed squad patrolling the place. How in the world was he to dig out the treasure? The man was annoyed and regretted having been talked into such a profitless venture merely by a voice in dream. One day he sat by a corner on the edge of the bridge, his head hung low in disappointment. It had grown night. A few pedestrians still trekked along. Here and there a shop was still open. All of a sudden, one of the guardsmen, who sported a handlebar moustache, and who often joked around with his fellow guardsmen, approached the man. For some time now this guard had been watching the man loiter in the vicinity of the bridge. The man's garb and demeanour further gave him away as a stranger. Naturally the guard was intrigued. He asked the man why he wandered in the area and why he looked so glum. The man told him the whole story. Whereupon the former broke into a loud laughter and said, "You are an absolute idiot! You saw a dream and right away, without bothering to think twice, went dashing out. Now you sit moaning. Oh dear, I too had a dream last year and heard a similar voice urging me to set out for Baghdad. There, under the jujube tree in the courtyard of the house

of so and so in such and such neighborhood, I was told, lay buried the accumulated treasure of seven kings. Night after night the same voice frightened and threatened me, but I let the words drop in one ear and go out the other. So, man, listen to me and go back home. For nothing'll come of dreams." Saying this the guard moved along but the man was absolutely stunned. It was his own name which the guard had mentioned. The name of the neighborhood was also correct. And to top it all off, he had a jujube tree in the courtyard of his house. Right away he knew the meaning of his dream. He immediately returned to Baghdad and lost no time in digging out the treasure. All his problems were solved in one fell swoop.'

'That's all?'

"That's all" – whatever do you mean? This is mysticism, my dear. Quite beyond you!'

'Maybe.'

The stillness around them deepened further. They could clearly hear the clock ticking away in the adjoining room: as if a pair of tiny hands were pounding away, softly but incessantly, in an effort to dig out and pry open something from somewhere.

'You give up?' the man asked.

'No. Let me think,' she said. And the man tried to conjure up a face – a familiar face, especially when it was absorbed by deep thought: forehead creased with a couple of lines, dark, thick eyebrows, jet-black eyes, with a faraway look, mouth a little contorted, as if from the exertion of thinking. Would there still be lines on her forehead? – the man thought. He groped for the woman's hand and held it. Then locked his fingers into hers.

'No. The story didn't end that way,' the woman said, all of a sudden. 'Oh!'

'By the time the man returned to his home in the environs of Baghdad it was already night. He was wiped out from fatigue. He had bought some fried fish on his way home. He thought he'd warm it up, eat, and then rest. The treasure wasn't running away, after all. He'd worry about it tomorrow. He had warmed up the fish and barely taken the first morsel when there was a knock at the door.'

'Wow!'

'He got up and opened the door. And who did he see? The same moustachioed Cairene. They both were struck with amazement. Then

the guard said, "Oh I see, so you're the one who lives in this house. Well then, my dream was a true one." When the man's amazement wore off he said, "I've got this fish, not a whole lot, but you're welcome." The moustached guard didn't waste a minute. Promptly he sat down and began eating. When they'd finished eating, the guard said, "After I spoke to you I was struck by the thought that my dream might be a true one. Without further ado I set out for Baghdad. I already knew where I was headed for. I just asked for the address as I went along. The sight of the jujube tree in the courtyard reassured me and as soon as you appeared at the door I knew the days of want and indigence were over." The two shot the breeze for quite awhile. The guard recounted with great gusto all he'd endured. Evidently, some of the episodes were pure fabrications. All the same, he knew the art of making a story sound interesting. When sleep overwhelmed them, they retired for the night.

'When they got up in the morning, the guard said, "The treasure's as good as ours. No rush. Let's go out and see a bit of the city. I've heard a lot about Baghdad. And don't you worry about the expenses. I've got ten gold pieces on me." Happily, they went out for sight-seeing. Had it been a small place they might've tired of it in a couple of days. Not Baghdad. It was improbably large and full of attractions: carnivals, fairs, a hundred different amusements and entertainments, numerous promenades and recreation parks. Out before the crack of dawn, they never set foot in the house before dark: strolling in a park once, luxuriating in a meadow next. Or they went boat-riding on the river, or just wandered through the sprawling suburbs. They went through every neighborhood. Old, dilapidated palaces seemed to attract them the most. They felt a particular fondness for them. The new ones, full of splendour and magnificence, these they only looked at from outside with a transient joy. The fellow, he knew Baghdad like the back of his hand. Who lived where, what happened where, he knew every last thing about the city by heart. The guard, on the other hand, had a thousand stories at the tip of his tongue. Their tongues knew not how to tire, nor did their feet. Every night they went to bed firmly resolved to dig out a little treasure the next day. But the next day they consoled themselves saying that the treasure was, after all, theirs, so why the rush. "We still haven't seen such and such part of the city," they would say. "So let's go there today." And that's how the

days passed. Their clothes soon turned into rags. They'd make do by patching them up. When hunger overcame them they headed for a soup kitchen. Hand in hand they combed the streets of Baghdad all day long, or wandered amidst its gardens and ruins.'

'And the treasure?'

'Well, if they didn't dig it up – what can I do?'

'You've screwed up the story beyond all recognition.'

'You asked me to alter it as I went along. And so I did. I don't know what's good or bad.'

Neither spoke for a while. At last, the man said, 'Go to sleep!'

'How?' the woman shot back irritably. 'I would if I could. Seems I can't.'

'Well then, let's go out. We'll watch the stars. That'll help us fall asleep – at least that's what they say.'

'Nonsense!'

'Come on. We'll watch the stars. No harm in watching.'

They put their slippers on and stepped out into the small backyard. They stood on the grass and looked at the sky strewn randomly with innumerable stars, some shining brightly, others twinkling faintly. Their arms strung across each other's waist, they stared at the sky. The universe looked chopped up into unbelievable distances. God knows across what distances the light had to travel before it reached them.

'Grandpa knew all their names by heart,' the man said.

'How far are the stars?' she observed.

'How far? You mean how near?' the man said.

'Near?'

'That's why they're visible.'

'How perfectly cool is their light!'

'That's because the night is cool. It makes their light feel cool too. Merely an illusion.'

'What if we found an abandoned child here – wouldn't that be fun?'

'What's the use? We'll bring him up, worry our heads over him, he'll grow and one day leave us.'

'That's never stopped parents from bringing up kids.'

'A dog never leaves its master.'

'I'm feeling chilly.'

Slowly, they walked back in. The man felt as though some of the stillness of the sky, a deep, dark, far-stretching sky, had somehow

become entangled with their bodies and crept in right along. Still the space outside looked brighter compared to the pitch darkness of the room.

They laid down, one right next to the other, like they had just climbed down from a high place and, exhausted, had stretched out on a slope to catch their breath. Sleep, too, is a star – the woman thought. A dog barked in the distance.

‘This story ...’ she began.

‘Which story?’

‘Ours. What if we tried to change it?’

‘How?’

‘Like get up and leave. Chuck everything. The house. The things in it. Everything. Just keep moving. On and on. Sleep where night overtook us. Eat with contentment whatever we could find. No particular place to go. Only a road to walk on. Walk on and on. Nothing to own. Absolutely nothing. And no regrets either.’

‘We don’t have the guts for that!’

‘We don’t?’

‘Yes. It’s all very well to ramble on like this. But when you get up in the morning, you’ll be able to see this house clearly ... and all the things in it – then? Yes, then? Tell me! What do we have to show for a lifetime of toil except this great pile of material things. We can’t leave. We’re much too sensible for that. We couldn’t make such a terrible mistake. Neither you, nor I.’

The woman drew a long breath and then placed both her palms on the man’s cheeks, like trying to hold a great big bowl.

‘What a pity,’ she said, ‘that we can’t even go ... I mean, can’t even become free.’

Translated from Urdu by Muhammad Umar Memon

Marcel Proust: Explorer of the Unseen*

JEAN MAMBRINO

‘... to penetrate the mystery of a place beneath the outward appearance’.
(I 544)

‘It has long been maintained that while England had Shakespeare, Germany Goethe, Italy Dante, France had no one of equal stature. To judge by the number of works devoted to him, France now has and will always have Marcel Proust.’ Yves Tadié, the great specialist in Proustian studies, bases this observation not just on the worldwide influence of Proust’s work but on the depth and the universal quality of his genius. He calls attention to it again in his preface to the monumental new edition of the *Recherche*, which teems with treasures: outline sketches, groundwork, extensions, all flowing forth like inexhaustible springs and rivers, and which make of the ‘one book’ a Work truly without end. ‘*A la recherche du temps perdu* is the sum of its successive phases, earlier versions, rough drafts, scattered notes, books underlying the book; and in this way the work recapitulates previous tradition, from the Bible to Flaubert and Tolstoy, and all literary genres.’ And Yves Tadié goes on to enlarge on and clarify this remark: ‘Ultimately, he dreams, as did Mallarmé and Wagner, of a synthesis of all the arts: painting, music and architecture.’ And he concludes: ‘In this way are born all those works which go beyond their time and their author’ – those works, in fact, whose glory lies in their universality.¹

Proust himself, moreover, was aware of the singular greatness of his work,² as well as of its unity. He compares it to the construction of a cathedral, both in its breadth and in the richness and complexity of its symbolism. The whole of the *Recherche*, based on a ‘tiny and almost impalpable drop’ (not to say immaterial drop) rises up like ‘the vast structure of recollection’. This image occurs near the opening of the book,³ which culminates in ‘perpetual Worship’.⁴ The ambitiousness

* *Etudes*, January 1989.

and the transcendent scope of what he intended are made perfectly explicit, and especially so when we know that he wrote the last chapter of the *Recherche* immediately after writing the first.⁵

As we may guess, such an ambitious work makes great demands on its readers – it cannot be the object of mere cultural ‘consumption’. Among the rough drafts of *Le Temps Retrouvé*, there is a note which Proust himself calls *capitalissime*, and which is well worth pondering. He observes that with regard to the pleasure derived from painting, music and literature, most cultured people ‘concentrate only on the object of this pleasure’, and, when they have savoured it, they go on to the next. ‘Yet what is most interesting about our pleasure is not the object itself but the instrument which the object causes to experience this pleasure: it is ourselves that we should study’. And he concludes: ‘People who, after studying Beethoven, go on to Bach can carry on like this indefinitely, perpetually filling themselves up without ever achieving satisfaction’.⁶

In contrast to this, Proust suggests a form of reading which is a true activity of the spirit, drawing his readers into themselves and detaching them from himself in order to lead them into the most secret recesses of their own freedom: ‘For ... they would not be my readers but readers of themselves’.⁷ And within this inner world they will discover an immense universe, brimming over on all sides. Contrary to what has been said, he is not ‘one who grubs for petty details’: he wished to ‘carve within the temple’ the truths that he discovered; for his book is not like a microscope focused on tiny things, but more like a telescope exploring infinity.⁸ In this way the books written by great poets can contain a treasure-house of certainties which illumine a reality deeper than those realities which are purely external or physical.⁹

‘... real books must be the children ... of darkness and silence’. (II 1015)

We are thus enabled to understand the place occupied by contemplation in the work of Marcel Proust, his need of silence and of withdrawal to the source of creation and of writing. ‘Do not forget: books are the work of solitude and the children of silence (his own underlining). The children of silence must have nothing in common with the children of speech, with the thoughts that are born out of a

desire to say something, out of reprimand or opinion ...'¹⁰ The importance of these lines can never be too strongly emphasised, which he repeated in *Le Temps Retrouvé*,¹¹ especially in these days when literature and the arts are surrounded by such a frenzy of consumerism and such publicity campaigns. The noisy promotion of 'novelties' such as the launching of old masterpieces, the musical chairs of fashion and of ideology – everything works towards dispersion, neurotic curiosity, and desiccation of spirit.¹²

It is noteworthy that Marcel Proust expresses the same inner preoccupation, the same wish for contemplation, right from the start of his first book, where he employs a startlingly religious image. Speaking of the periods of illness which paralysed his youth, he invokes the reclusive life of Noah in his Ark, and adds: 'I realized that Noah could never see the world so well as when he was in the Ark, in spite of the fact that it was closed in and that the earth was in darkness'.¹³ It is the place of profound calm, where the true creator, in a solitude that is spiritual and not merely physical, is concentrated at the source of himself and proceeds 'downwards, into the depths, in the only direction that is not closed to us, along which we are free to advance'.¹⁴

One must write for everyone, without thinking of any particular person, out of 'that which within oneself is essential and profound', in order to bring to birth the particle of eternity which is contained in a simple impression, be it no more than 'a breath of may-blossom'.¹⁵ We are some distance away here both from the life of the world and from the private journal. Proust refuses to allow his book to be an exploration or a description of his own life: 'I see readers who believe that, putting my trust in the arbitrary and fortuitous association of ideas, I am writing the story of my life'.¹⁶ True creation is a stranger to this, and has nothing to do with the material elements of existence. On the other hand, the most admirable life is powerless to create a work.¹⁷

Once again, we must go deeper, go down to the stuff of grief and joy, to where there is 'a reserve after the manner of the albumen stored in the ovule of plants, from which it draws its nutrition in order to develop into a seed'.¹⁸ Suffering, of course, is one of the primary elements of creation, for pain, like the water in 'artesian wells', brings us a 'spiritual wisdom'.¹⁹ From this arises, in Proust's writing, what I

shall call the *blending*, the mixture of density and mysterious transparency which characterizes it, like Vermeer's palette which Bergotte speaks of before his death: "That is how I ought to have written," he said. "My last books are too dry, I ought to have gone over them with several coats of paint, like this little patch of yellow wall."²⁰ This is exactly what Proust did, to the point of death, when he added layer on layer onto his work with such inspired delicacy.

'... if God the Father had created things by naming them, it was by taking away their names or giving them other names that Elstir created them anew'. (I 628)

At the end of the *Recherche*, the Narrator (unknowingly repeating what Rimbaud said) states that 'the grandeur of real art' lies in rediscovering 'the true life' (*La vraie vie est ailleurs*), which is to be found not only in the artist but in every man. 'But men fail to see it because they do not try to get light on it.' It is disguised by self-love, by the passions, by habit, by the commonplaces arising out of a superficial intelligence. We must proceed in the opposite direction, towards the *depths* (again), so that 'the eternal secret of each of us' may not remain buried. The work of the artist should spring, not from a technique, but from a vision, which generates around him a multiplicity of unknown worlds. This is the birth of the poetry of style which is like the traces of the penumbra which the artist traverses, a light which persists long after the glowing centre from which it emanated has been extinguished, 'be it called Rembrandt or Vermeer'.²¹

This can only take place by means of a most secret alchemy, for 'nothing comes from ourselves but that which we draw out of the obscurity within us and which is unknown to others.'²² All things call to each other, signal to each other, come together in relationship, under the magician's wand. 'The sight of the cover of a book one has previously read retains, woven into the letters of its title, the moonbeams of a far-off summer's night.'²³ The work in question is not merely the result of aesthetic effort – it engages the artist's entire soul.

This is the origin of the transparent unity of Proust's style, in which things are stripped of their initial seeming and 'fall into a kind of order, penetrated by the same light, seen one within the other'.²⁴ Yet they are also continually moving off-centre and subtly re-forming,

their too-obvious natural frontiers being erased along with the obvious perceptions habitual to them, each thing taking colour from beside or above itself. The Narrator illustrates this in a musical comparison which wonderfully reveals the magic of Proust's phrases: '... those long-necked, sinuous creatures, the phrases of Chopin, so free, so flexible, so tactile, which begin by seeking their ultimate resting-place somewhere beyond and far wide of the direction in which they started, the point which one might have expected them to reach, phrases which divert themselves in those fantastic bypaths only to return more deliberately – with a more premeditated reaction, with more precision, as on a crystal bowl which, if you strike it, will ring and throb until you cry aloud in anguish – to clutch at one's heart.'²⁵

Yet this drawing-out of the phrase, which opens up an essential gap between our impoverished sensations and the richness of the world, does not prevent the occurrence of moments of surprise and tension which assail us abruptly with all the familiarity of a truly Dantesque image or a Shakespearian economy. Thus, at the end of a description of the church of Saint-Hilaire, the Narrator says of the steeple, 'If it could play the piano, I am sure it would not play "drily" (*il ne jouerait pas sec*).'²⁶ Or when he speaks of Giotto's cherubs in Padua, whom he describes as 'looping the loop';²⁷ or again, at the beginning of the book, where he speaks of Giotto's depiction of Charity trampling the treasures of the earth at her feet like so many sacks of grapes, and 'holding out her flaming heart to God ... exactly as a cook might hand up a corkscrew through the skylight of her underground kitchen to someone who had called down to ask her for it from the ground-level above.' Such boldness of compression is worthy of a Dante, and one does not expect to find it in Proust.²⁸

What I have called Shakespearian economy is everywhere to be found, sweeping away the clichés which impede access to the book. Thus, we see the old Princesse de Nassau, tottering and decrepit, hurrying off to have tea with the Queen of Spain. 'Even when she was near the door, I thought she was going to break into a run. As a matter of fact, she was running toward her grave.' Or certain half-paralysed women under the cowl of their white hair, who 'seemed unable quite to disengage their dress, caught on the stonework of their tomb ...' Or again, taking an example almost at random, the terrifying image of Berma, transformed by time into a statue of mineral-like rigidity: 'Her

dying eyes lived relatively by contrast with the horrible ossified mask and shone faintly like a serpent asleep among the rocks.' Such an art, piercing through all appearances, is truly visionary.²⁹

'... that invisible vocation of which these volumes are the history' (I 1002)

The word 'vocation' must be understood here in its original sense. Someone calls – someone anonymous and universal; we know his thoughts, but he is as obscure as ourselves. The 'I' who speaks, who is swallowed up in a dark bedroom at the beginning of the book, is also a 'we'. He has no age and all ages. Within his memory he re-lives each moment of his life, and in a few pages he goes quite naturally from childhood to maturity. The start of his stay at Balbec is full of childish emotion; then Saint-Loup appears on the scene, youthful friendship and sudden maturity. Age is therefore not something external to us: the ground of our being is immobile and outside time. The 'I' of the Narrator enables us to pass beyond the scenery, to the place where thoughts are created. (cf. Ruskin *Sesame and Lilies* p. 85 Note 1)

In the Narrator we hear a universal voice which resonates in the centre of our being and touches the absolute. We enter into the fulness of the 'sense of existence'³⁰ and become no matter who, no matter what, 'a church, a quartet, the rivalry between François I and Charles V'.³¹ The self into which each of us slides is so vast that at every instant it presents us with a different perspective and the possibility of becoming different, of infinite expansion. This is the meaning of the 'paperolles' (scrolls of insertions), in which the text proliferates, takes on shades of meaning, becomes richer and deeper, is indefinitely prolonged because one can always reach a part of oneself which is more ancient, more innate, and hitherto unknown. And in his turn, the reader holds out this inner dimension to the 'I' who speaks, drawing him on in an endless exploration, into the interior of a time which itself appears to be remembering, and which performs its task, like 'an invisible and tireless labourer', in a double movement of annihilation and resurrection.

'... the little person inside me, hymning the rising sun' (II 385)

If, in the *Recherche*, sleep is the door into the Dream which dislocates

the superficial surface of perception, makes us feel that Time is greater than itself³² and is able to bring us into the original shadow that existed before Creation,³³ one of the little-known beauties of Proust's book is his luminous love of the world, a perpetual celebration of things, an awe before all the forms of life, which he contemplates with a kind of burning accuracy. 'After sunset, the sea turned the blue-grey colour of a mackerel, so hard that the boats appeared to cut into it.'³⁴ Or there is his description of the downpour (which heralds the downpour of Ponge): 'A little tap at the window, as though some missile had struck it, followed by a plentiful, falling sound, as light, though, as if a shower of sand were being sprinkled from a window overhead; then the fall spread, took on an order, a rhythm, became liquid, loud drumming, musical, innumerable, universal. It was the rain.'³⁵ The aeroplane, so high up in the blue *without any alloy* of the sky that it resembles 'the buzz of a wasp'³⁶ joins forces with 'the dainty splashing of a bullfinch, enamoured of the coolness, bathing in the corolla of a white rose, shaped like an exquisite miniature bath tub.'³⁷

Everywhere there is a familiarity, a gaiety, an almost Franciscan tenderness in the contact between creatures, wonderfully exemplified in the young narrator's long conversation with the hawthorns in his garden, full of freshness and freedom, like the conversations that take place between children.³⁸ The same is true of his description of the noises of Paris, 'an Overture for a *jour de fête*', while the iron shutters which are raised at dawn evoke the creaking of a ship's tackle as it sets sail, together with all the noises of the marketplace, the street cries, the street scenes with their *liturgical* images and their good-humoured fair-ground counterpart.³⁹ It is true, to believe in things gives joy.⁴⁰

It is already clear that it is never a question of a real description, but rather of a transposition or metamorphosis: the visible is transmuted, shifts onto another level. Night pours 'its wineskins of forgetfulness' into our open mouths.⁴¹ In the last days of October we perceive the charm of a smile fading into silence. A kind of companionship, a timid friendship, springs up between the steeple of the little church and the old trees. There is a sacred beauty about everyday *still lifes*: the table resembles an altar 'at which were celebrated the rites of the palate, where in the hollows of oyster-shells a few drops of lustral water had gathered as in tiny holy water stoups of stone'.⁴² The images are frequently of an astonishing delicacy. The Narrator (so

snug!) dreams of sleeping in the open air 'like a titmouse which the breeze keeps poised in the focus of a sunbeam'.⁴³ And Jean Santeuil nestles in a solitude so deep that he can hear 'the breathing of a butterfly on a flower'.⁴⁴ In this way, the fingers of the spirit are endlessly refashioning what is offered to them by the world.

'... putting ... depth behind the colour of things' (I 607)

But we must go further in order to reach the spiritual function of poetry, which 'worldly' life conceals and thwarts. In the light shed by this spiritual function, the most commonplace realities acquire an unexpected grandeur. In our sleep, 'embarked upon the dark current of our own blood as upon an inward Lethe meandering sixfold', we traverse 'the arteries of the subterranean city'. Huge forms appear to us, 'approach and glide away, leaving us in tears'.⁴⁵

One step further, and the Myth rises up without warning out of an immemorial past. The sunset over the ocean, seen from the Hotel at Balbec, suddenly rolls back 'through the ages of ages' and lights up the landscape 'where Hercules slew the Hydra of Lerna and the Bacchantes tore Orpheus to pieces'. An impoverished suburban setting, lit up only by a tree covered in spring blossom, is transformed into a fabulous scene out of the Bible with an artistry of immense subtlety. 'Its houses were sordid. But by each of the most wretched, of those that looked as though they had been scorched and branded by a rain of brimstone, a mysterious traveller, halting for a day in the accursed city, a resplendent angel stood erect, extending broadly over it the dazzling protection of the wings of flowering innocence: it was a pear tree.' I, 830. Cf. I, 826: the orchard laid out in quincunxes separated by low walls, calling to mind a Palace of the Sun 'such as one might unearth in Crete'.

Sometimes the vision is reversed, and it is the mythological sea which becomes 'rural', revealing grey paths where the masts are like steeples. Or again, the apple trees stand out against the sea with so delicate and almost unreal a splendour that they resemble 'the background of a Japanese print', drawing apart 'to reveal the immensity of their paradise'. Tears come to the Narrator's eyes, because beyond this illusion of a refined art, he feels that 'this living beauty' is natural, 'that these apple-trees were there in the heart of the country, like peasants upon one of the highroads of France'.⁴⁶

'... a whole gigantic poem full of ... symbolism' (I 633)

In this way everything remains close to reality, like the curves of a motor car as it describes smaller and smaller circles 'round a spell-bound town', helping us to feel 'with a more fondly exploring hand ... the fair measure of the earth.'⁴⁷ But everything also leads further away. The sound of the bell is like 'a transcription for the blind, or ... a musical interpretation of the charm of rain'. The old people always gather together on one side, forming 'an entire segregated district of old people, the lamps in its foggy streets always lighted.' A telephone conversation evokes the voices of the world beyond. Mounted on the stilts of old age, the octogenarians who touch the sky waver and threaten at each moment to fall.⁴⁸

The porch at Balbec, on which Elstir gives a commentary, is a superb parable of the entire book, in which all the centuries, Christian and barbarian, cross and recross (as well as Chinese dragons and almost Persian sculptures!): the sublime, the carnal, the delicate, the grotesque, monsters and saints, images of mystery and the familiarity of every day, the angel who takes away the sun, 'and the one who is dipping his hand in the water of the Child's bath, to see whether it is warm enough' – humanity in its entirety, overwhelming and exquisite, brought together in 'a whole gigantic poem full of ... symbolism'.⁴⁹ The same note is sounded in the popular speech of Françoise, the maid, when she talks of her master's manuscripts, eaten away by time: the vast, proliferating, incomplete, never-to-be-completed Book. "It's all moth-eaten; it's too bad; here's a piece of a page that's all in ribbons." And, examining it like a tailor, "I don't think I can fix that; it's too far gone. It's a pity; maybe that's your finest ideas. As they say at Combray, there aren't any furriers who know their business as well as the moths do. They always get into the best materials." II, 1114.

'... underneath these signs something quite different which I ought to try to discover' (II 1000)

So we must resolve the meaning of the parable, decipher it, 'to penetrate the mystery of a place beneath its outward appearance'.⁵⁰ The three trees as you go down towards Hudimesnil conceal some-

thing that the mind has not grasped. They conceal 'a meaning as obscure, as hard to grasp as is a distant past', like 'the ghost ... of a beloved person who has lost the power of speech, and feels that he will never be able to say to us what he wishes to say and we can never guess.'⁵¹ This mysterious unity holds a promise. In truth, all roads are one, and lead to 'one of those indescribable happinesses which neither the present nor the future can restore to us, which we may taste once only in a lifetime.' Sitting in the jump seat of the car, the Narrator, 'chained like Prometheus', listens to the numberless songs of the invisible birds as the hero of the legend listened to the Oceanides.⁵² He attempts to understand the Cipher of things, in 'the unwearying, gentle flight of sea-martins', in flowers, clouds, pebbles, a steeple, a triangle, which are so many 'hieroglyphs' inscribed on the 'complicated, flower-bedecked medley' of the universe.⁵³ And, as we shall see, human beings, who say one thing and mean another, are no easier to understand. Their secret is to be read 'from a thousand outward signs, even from certain invisible phenomena' analogous to atmospheric changes! Like the Delphic Apollo in Heracleitus (as Tadié observes) they say neither yea nor nay; instead, they give a sign. 'Her eyes waxed blue as a periwinkle flower, wholly beyond my reach, yet dedicated by her to me'.⁵⁴

'... this study of the essence of things' (II 999)

We are now at the heart of the work, where all the great Proustian intuitions come together. As everywhere else, I can do no more than touch upon it lightly, briefly and delicately, using the author's own phrases, although by no means those which are invariably quoted. What is most striking is the movement with which the most ordinary, prosaic objects grow imperceptibly until they have achieved a sacred dimension. One example (among a thousand others) of this is the stiffly starched napkin handed to the narrator by the old steward of the Balbec hotel, in the library of the Princesse de Guermantes, with music coming through the closed doors. The reference to the *Thousand and One Nights* alerts our mind first of all, preparing it for the splendour of the first image, which evokes 'like a peacock's tail, the plumage of a green and blue ocean'. All the past returns, the resurrection of dead things, the memory of the little madeleine, the two unequal paving

stones in Venice (and the tinkling of a spoon conjures up the scent of smoke in the woods), until, some ten pages later, the napkin reappears, bringing with it 'the feeling of the linen like a thousand angels' wings' in the old dining-room at Balbec, where the damask linen resembled 'altar cloths (laid) to receive the setting of the sun'.⁵⁵

The joy experienced in thus attaining to the *essence of things*⁵⁶ lies in the fact that we are thereby freed from the transient nature of becoming, for 'the essence of things ... is ... entirely outside time', and allows us to glimpse a fleeting eternity.⁵⁷ The smell of petrol from a car (mingled with the horns of passing motors) overwhelms the Narrator by recalling to him the summer afternoons when Albertine went off to paint; then it fades, and through some mysterious alchemy is transformed into a Venetian springtime, glowing with the lost paradise of 'that fabulous garden of fruits and birds in coloured stone, flowering in the midst of the sea ...'.⁵⁸

What power, then, must be contained in the seven notes of the little phrase in Vinteuil's sonata, 'in which the very essence of the music is concentrated'! Associated as it is with love for Albertine, it ascends 'like the mystical crow of a cock, an ineffable but over-shrill appeal of the eternal morning.' It proves the existence of the soul, does away with the fear of death, and allows Vinteuil himself to attain to his own essence.⁵⁹ It is truly a joy 'removed from everything earthly'.⁶⁰

'... the tremor of an unknown element' (II 776)

In this book 'to which there is no one key',⁶¹ it is the characters who provide the keys both to their own secrets and to the inwardness of things. Some of them blend in with nature in a kind of magical oneness (the child says of a woman, 'It seemed to me that the beauty of the trees was hers also'),⁶² while others are crowded together in the author's darkness like the shades in the *Odyssey* 'who ask Odysseus for some blood to drink, in order that they may return to life ...'.⁶³

Hence the perpetual novelty each time they appear, their visionary nature which makes them impossible to grasp and frequently renders them terrible. Thus, Bloch enters 'leaping like a hyena', and the aged M. de Charlus, obese, purple-faced, monstrous, stealthily trails two young Zouaves in a public park. Prolonged and repeated advances, retouchings, infinite shades of meaning, and a good store of respect,

time and patience are needed if each person's inexpressible aspect is to be made manifest. Even the greatest of them (Elstir, Vinteuil) seem at first to be mediocre and petty. Their secret is well-hidden. Each person comes forward surrounded by his personal universe which conceals and in a certain way protects him.⁶⁴ They are all 'fragmentary and fugitive strangers'.⁶⁵ They are always surrounded by a kind of shimmer which makes it impossible to define their faces and leaves the Narrator 'hesitating like a schoolboy faced by the difficulties of a piece of Greek prose'.⁶⁶ Nothing could be more beautiful or more moving than this hesitation, this long-drawn-out advance, this ultimate failure to grasp a person who may in fact have yielded themselves up altogether from the first glance. '... in Albertine's case, they were essential questions: "In her heart of hearts what was she?"'⁶⁷ After so many meetings and exchanges, after so much passion between two people, nothing remains in the end but 'the tremor of an unknown element'.⁶⁸

'... each of us is not a single person, but contains many persons ...'
(II 754)

There is nothing strange about this, if it be true that our personality is multiple and that we contain within ourselves truths which are not simply successive (as Bernanos said) but simultaneous. In a vulgar reply of hers, Albertine (who is 'several persons') reveals 'the most mysterious, most simple, most atrocious' part of herself, yet without suppressing the precious virtues of her nature which the Narrator remembers after her death.⁶⁹ The Verdurins, whose snobbishness and mediocrity is evident with every word they speak, prove full of goodness in the case of the unfortunate Saniette, who could himself be simultaneously shady and gifted with fine moral qualities. His dealings with money always remain dubious, 'but the heart is far more rich than that, has many other forms that will recur, also, to these people, whose kindness we refuse to admit because of the occasion on which they behaved badly'.⁷⁰

Morel, who is such a composite personality, resembled 'an old book of the middle ages, full of mistakes, of absurd traditions, of obscenities'. He was bad, good, vulgar, engaged, an invert. '... his nature was just like a sheet of paper that has been folded so often in

every direction that it is impossible to straighten it out.'⁷¹ Robert de Saint-Loup who, beneath his innate elegance, exhibited so much frivolity (perhaps to mask his sexual inversion), and who revealed dark areas of jealousy, violence and blackmail, nevertheless offered up his life every day without a second thought, until his hero's death in the trenches. He always contained within himself a melancholy which was like the presentiment of his untimely end, known only to the gods.⁷²

Andrée, too, is not lacking in contradictions: she appears to be devoted, considerate, a marvel of goodness – but all this is on the surface and she never truly gives herself; whereas Albertine, though frivolous, selfish and a bit vulgar, is nevertheless capable, as we saw, of genuine goodness.⁷³ Again, Mademoiselle de Vinteuil allows her friend to spit sadistically on her father's portrait; 'and perpetually, in the depths of her being, a shy and suppliant maiden would kneel before that other element, the old campaigner, battered but triumphant, would intercede with him and oblige him to retire.'⁷⁴ Furthermore, the troubled relationship between the two girls is transmuted later on into pure friendship, and the girl who had spat on the musician's portrait undertakes, after his death, the task of deciphering his almost illegible papers, thereby restoring the miraculous phrase of the septet, 'the formula eternally true, forever fertile, of this unknown joy, the mystic hope of the crimson Angel of the dawn.'⁷⁵

'... we ought never to feel resentment towards other people, ought never to judge them ...' (II 607)

A vision at once so piercing and so sensitive, so able to see through appearances (or, rather, to feel that which it cannot see), will never, we may be sure, belong to a judge; for a judge, being always in receipt of incomplete evidence, can only come to uncertain and consequently unjust conclusions. The Narrator also stresses the foolishness of judging someone on hearsay. All behaviour is a reflection of the soul, which will always remain unknown to other people because 'there is no one who will willingly deliver up his soul'.⁷⁶

This being so, Proust, although he never passes judgement, is yet profoundly objective, precise and lucid in his depiction of the *comédie humaine*. His writing is devoid of sentimentality – it resem-

bles rather the inflexible lancing of a wound, a light, not cold but purificatory, which sweeps everything away.⁷⁷

This objectivity, which can sometimes seem cruel, goes hand in hand with a respect – a kind of distance – with regard to the characters. For example, he does not speak of the Guermantes as though he belonged to their world, but ‘in the tone of wonder of someone for whom all this is very far removed’, thereby demonstrating ‘the poetic aspect of snobbishness’.⁷⁸ In a similar fashion he descends into the hell which is the Baron de Charlus’ existence, and which makes up the blackest depths of his book.

He consistently enables us to perceive the various levels which make up the being of Charlus, who is as complex and many-sided as the other characters. An aspect of the baron which reveals the sadistic element in his nature is followed by a refined observation about the music of Chopin. Allusion is also made to his love of poetry and to the tenderness of which he is capable.⁷⁹ And in the increasingly distressing degeneration of his habits (which affect even his physical appearance, as we saw), the Narrator always seems to discern a mysterious grandeur, a kind of twilight gleam filtering out of this appalling kenosis. He is as kind to ordinary people as was Lear, the poor, mad, discrowned king. Furthermore, he is fastened to his rock like Prometheus being devoured by the vulture.⁸⁰ The Narrator is fond of this image, which he duplicates in an extraordinary way in the terrible scene where M. de Charlus has himself whipped by his valet Jupin. ‘... this willing Prometheus has had himself chained by Force to the rock of pure Matter.’⁸¹ And he recognizes his own madness, the almost non-existence of his fantasy: ‘... he understood clearly that the lad who beat him was no more to be blamed than little boys playing “soldier” who choose one of their number by lot to be “the Prussian” and they all throw themselves on him in a passion of ... pretended hate.’⁸² Has Proust’s visionary genius ever gone further?

Moreover, during the terrible time of war, this same Baron de Charlus always takes the side of the weakest and suffers the torments of all the prisoners. Morel alone knows his ‘profound goodness’.⁸³ And tottering on the threshold of death, his brain and marrow gangrenous, he still bows before Mme de Saint-Euverte, with a gentleness and a detachment which recall the greatness of Oedipus, blinded and humiliated by his crime.⁸⁴

‘... telescopes of the unseen’⁸⁵

In this way the immense and sumptuous variety of Creation and the even vaster network of human relationships, like a second limitless heaven spangled with stars and black holes, can be perceived only by a vision which goes beyond itself and touches the edge of a form of infinity. When we see something on which our gaze has rested before (a gaze which is itself laden with memories and dreams), it ‘brings back to us, along with the look we cast upon it, all the images it conveyed to us at that time.’ The experiences of the past are transformed into memories, and the memories into other memories, until it becomes ‘an immateriality within us’.⁸⁶

What is in question is a correspondence (which I referred to at the start of this essay in relation to Proust’s style), a reality which exists between things and sensations, which is elusive, neither one thing nor the other, equidistant from both, part of another order, and which expresses in our creation the mystery itself of freedom. Here, this immateriality forms a unique, irreplaceable whole, a blend of Combray, the taste of lime-blossom tea, Léonie, Balbec, the beach and the evening breeze, the laughter of girls, François-le-Champi and the paintings of Elstir, in an indefinitely quivering constellation of light and shadow.

Everything is somewhere else, is invisible. The beach at Balbec is not in front of the hotel as the director thinks. It is in the window panes of the bedroom, in the reflections of the sea in the mirror, in the depths of a look which nothing can touch. It is also in the face of Albertine, in her halo of hair, and in the paintings of Elstir where he captures another aspect of this immensity, an immensity which the eyes of the Narrator metamorphose into their very substance. Neither Combray nor Villiers exist – only the way from one to the other (which no one has seen). Thus the most elevated encounters in the *Recherche* take place not between the characters, but between a hero and the invisible world. It is as though time itself, in the remembering gaze, touches here and there a thing, a person, a face, and covers them with golden dust out of an enchanted casket. ‘They are depicted in pastel shades of such supernatural delicacy that you would think the colour was rather the lingering reflection on these miraculously poeticized beings, brought from a ride they had taken through the realms of the invisible.’ (*Cahier du Temps Retrouvé* p. 192)

*'These ashes, ennobled by having once been thoughts'*⁸⁷

What is there surprising, then, in the fact that the last movement of this vast and bold creation, which goes to such lengths in its attempt to apprehend the inapprehensible, should be a desire to pass on this death-resisting treasure in one supreme annihilation? The highest spiritual words (if the grain of wheat die not ...) ⁸⁸ are repeated here and are given a new resonance which sheds light on the work of the artist: 'one cannot reproduce what one loves without abandoning it.'⁸⁹ But Proust had long been aware that 'beauty should not be loved for itself, for it is the fruit of the collaboration between religious thought and the love of created things'.⁹⁰

That beauty itself must be renounced in order to be attained is a remarkable intuition, one which belongs only to the greatest works, which are themselves living embodiments – whether they know it or not – of the thought of Plotinus: the love of beauty goes beyond beauty, because beyond all the forms which Beauty animates, such a love desires the formless of which beauty is the shadow. This, no doubt, is the source of this lightness of detachment on the threshold of death, to the point where it puts on a tender and mysterious smile – a kind of gaiety at the heart of annihilation, since it is the law that 'we ourselves must die after exhausting the gamut of suffering so that the grass, not of oblivion but of eternal life, may grow, the thick grass of fecund works of art, on which future generations will come and gaily have their "picnic lunch", without a thought for those who sleep beneath.'⁹¹

Furthermore, this beauty, once achieved or recognized in the masterpieces of all time, moves on to 'a level which is more real than our life' – even in the case of the 'unbelieving' grandmother. This is why 'the poet who gives his life to a work which will win approval only after his death' is not worried about a glory he will never know, for it is 'an eternal part of him who works in this ephemeral dwelling-place'.⁹² The 'little phrase' is proof not only of the existence of the soul – it also heralds its immortality, expressed on the sublime page which Rilke judged to be one of the finest in the literature of the world, and which we quote in conclusion: 'Permanently dead? Who shall say? ... All that we can say is that everything is arranged in this life as though we entered it carrying the burden of obligations contracted

in a former life; there is no reason inherent in the conditions of life on this earth that can make us consider ourselves obliged to do good, to be fastidious, to be polite even, nor make the talented artist consider himself obliged to begin over again a score of times a piece of work the admiration aroused by which will matter little to his body devoured by worms ... All these obligations which have not their sanction in our present life seem to belong to a different world, founded upon kindness, scrupulosity, self-sacrifice, a world entirely different from this, which we leave in order to be born into this world, before perhaps returning to the other to live once again beneath the sway of those unknown laws which we have obeyed because we bore their precepts in our hearts, knowing not whose hand had traced them there ...'⁹³

Thus, we hear the heart of the 'explorer of the unseen'⁹⁴ beating with a strange emotion through the supple partitions of the long, endless phrases, where the intimacy of his breath lives and continues, in the three little taps which the Narrator, as a child, gives on the wall that separates him from his grandmother at Balbec, imagining that after her death she will forever reply to him from the other side of absence.⁹⁵ He wishes for no joy other than this invisible presence whose tenderness generates in him (and perhaps in us also) a fervency and a light even deeper than the ascent out of time of 'Vinteuil's little phrase', and which is like the supernatural apparition of Beauty. In the words of the unknown Hugo, whom the Narrator so often ponders and enjoys, '*Le temps est perdu que l'amour ne prends pas*'.

Translated by Liadain Sherrard

Notes

Translator's note: for reasons of space, only those notes have been included which appear to have a direct bearing on the text, or which provide a page reference.

¹ *A la recherche du temps perdu*, Gallimard, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 4 vols., 1987-1989, general editor Jean-Yves Tadié. Each volume contains the enormous and hitherto unedited material of the *Esquisses* and the *Notes*. The translation used is C. K. Scott Moncrieff's *Remembrance of Things Past*, Random House, New York, 2 vols., 1934 and 1932.

² Cf. the parallel with Tolstoy drawn by Proust in *Matinée chez la Princesse de Guermantes*, in *Cahiers du Temps retrouvé*, Gallimard 1982.

³ Vol. I, p. 36.

⁴ Vol. II, p. 1118.

⁵ This is stated by Proust in a letter to Paul Souday, *Correspondance* III, p. 72. The book, of which every detail is worked out, is an organic whole, the creation of a universe, but 'without overlooking those mysteries whose explanation is probably to be found only in other worlds and the presentiment of which is the quality in life and art which moves us most deeply.' (II 1112).

⁶ *Matinée chez la Princesse de Guermantes*, op. cit.

⁷ Vol. II, p. 1113. And he goes on to emphasize that 'through my book I would give them the means of reading in their own selves.'

⁸ '... I had ... used a telescope to perceive things which, it is true, were very small but situated afar off and each of them a world in itself' (II 1118).

⁹ Vol. II, pp. 1008–1009.

¹⁰ 'Notes sur la Littérature et la Critique', in *Contre Sainte-Beuve*, Pléiade ed. of *Recherche*.

¹¹ '... real books must be the children, not of broad daylight and small talk but of darkness and silence', (II 1015).

¹² Proust had such a clear perception of the danger of this attitude that he re-emphasizes the point in *Contre Sainte-Beuve*, op. cit. It is worthwhile quoting the whole of this little-known text, for it should become the guiding light of future writers as well as readers: 'Do not forget: the subject-matter of our books, the substance of our phrases, must be immaterial, not as it is in reality; likewise the phrases themselves and the events must be created out of the transparent substance of our best moments, when we are out of reality and out of the present. These are the light particles which make up the style and the story of a book.'

¹³ *Les Plaisirs et les Jours*, in Jean Santeuil (Pléiade ed.) Cf. II 272, where the Narrator compares himself to an owl, and 'like that bird begins to see things a little plainly only when darkness falls.'

¹⁴ Vol. I, p. 679.

¹⁵ *Contre Sainte-Beuve*, op. cit.

¹⁶ *Correspondance* III. All direct confession is not only shameless but false. Cf. the letter to R. Dreyfus, 10th September 1888: 'I am convinced that there are some things that it would be odious to say about oneself ...'

¹⁷ 'How many great ascetics there are, who, having lived an extraordinary and solitary life, are incapable of writing ten original pages about it.' From the preface to *Sésame et les lys*.

¹⁸ Vol. II, p. 1016.

¹⁹ 'One might almost say that works of art, like artesian wells, mount higher in proportion as the suffering has more deeply pierced the heart.' II, 1022.

²⁰ Vol. II, p. 509.

²¹ Vol. II, p. 1013. Cf. II 1015: '... this profundity is not inherent in certain subjects, as some materialistically spiritualist novelists believe because they themselves cannot go below the world of outward appearances ...' Cf. I 1019: the subject matter is of no importance, because all reality is equally precious in the eyes of the painter, be it a commonplace dress or the luminous sail of a boat.

²² Vol. II, p. 1002.

²³ Vol. II, p. 1008. Cf. p. 1005, where a name in an old book 'contains among its syllables the strong breeze and brilliant sunshine ...'

²⁴ Letter, 13th June 1904.

²⁵ Vol. I, p. 254.

²⁶ Vol. I, p. 49.

- ²⁷ '... we see them soar upwards, describe curves, "loop the loop" without the slightest difficulty, plunge towards the earth head downwards with the aid of wings which enable them to support themselves in positions that defy the law of gravitation, and they remind us far more of a variety of bird or of young pupils of Garros practising the vol-plane, than of the angels of the art of the Renaissance ...' II 837
- ²⁸ Vol. I, p. 61. Cf. Vol. II, p. 507: '... as soon as in his sleep it had grown sufficiently dark, nature arranged a sort of undress rehearsal of the apoplectic stroke that was to carry him off'.
- ²⁹ Vol. II, pp. 1075, 1044, 1087.
- ³⁰ Vol. I, p. 5.
- ³¹ Vol. I, p. 3.
- ³² '... the other life, the life in which (man) sleeps, is not – in its profounder part – included in the category of time.' II 272.
- ³³ Albertine's closed eyes impart a sort of innocence to her face, and her quiet mouth is like 'a garden still silent before the break of day', II 459.
- ³⁴ Jean Santeuil, *op. cit.*
- ³⁵ Vol. I, p. 77.
- ³⁶ Vol. II, p. 663. Cf. I 106, where the poppies in front of the cornfield are like boats cast up beside the sea.
- ³⁷ Vol. II, p. 885. Cf. I 498, the milkmaid's face rosy with happiness in the morning sunlight.
- ³⁸ Vol. I, p. 690.
- ³⁹ Vol. II, p. 459 ff. Cf. all the foods of the world transformed into sounds (*ibid.* p. 467), and the comparison between the melancholy voice of the snail vendor and the finale of Debussy's *Pelléas*: 'On les vend six sous la douzaine ...' (*ibid.* p. 460).
- ⁴⁰ Vol. I, p. 141.
- ⁴¹ Jean Santeuil, *op. cit.*
- ⁴² Vol. I, p. 653.
- ⁴³ Vol. I, p. 6.
- ⁴⁴ Jean Santeuil, *op. cit.*
- ⁴⁵ Vol. II, p. 116.
- ⁴⁶ Vol. II, p. 131.
- ⁴⁷ Vol. II, p. 288. Cf. II 866, where Gilberte and the Narrator halt before descending into the valley carpeted with moonlight 'like two insects about to plunge into the blue calyx of a flower'. Cf. II 141, where Albertine's laugh is like the scent of geraniums.
- ⁴⁸ Vol. II, pp. 436 and 1074; I 809–810; II 1123.
- ⁴⁹ Vol. I, pp. 632–633.
- ⁵⁰ Vol. I, p. 544.
- ⁵¹ Vol. I, p. 545. Cf. I 137: '... suddenly a roof, a gleam of sunlight reflected from a stone, the smell of a road would make me stop still ... because they appeared to be concealing, beneath what my eyes could see, something which they invited me to approach and seize from them, but which, despite all my efforts, I never managed to discover.'
- ⁵² Vol. I, p. 545.
- ⁵³ Vol. I, p. 607; II 1000–1001.
- ⁵⁴ Vol. I, pp. 760 and 136.
- ⁵⁵ Vol. II, pp. 992–997.
- ⁵⁶ Vol. II, p. 995.
- ⁵⁷ Vol. II, p. 995.

- ⁵⁸ Vol. II, pp. 666–668. Cf. p. 994, ‘The only true paradise is always the paradise we have lost.’
- ⁵⁹ Vol. II, pp. 554 and 558.
- ⁶⁰ Vol. II, p. 1000.
- ⁶¹ Letter to Marie de Madrazo.
- ⁶² Vol. I, p. 120.
- ⁶³ Letter to the Princesse Bibesco.
- ⁶⁴ This is so in the case of M. de Charlus, whose sado-masochism is nourished on medieval scenes of crucifixions and feudal tortures. ‘... his desire to be chained up and beaten, for all its ugliness, betrayed in him a dream as poetic as does in other persons the desire to go to Venice ...’ II 972–973.
- ⁶⁵ Vol. I, p. 540.
- ⁶⁶ Vol. I, p. 662.
- ⁶⁷ Vol. II, pp. 745 and 866.
- ⁶⁸ Vol. II, p. 776.
- ⁶⁹ Vol. II, p. 618. Cf. p. 754: ‘... if a vicious Albertine had existed, it did not mean that there had not been others, she who enjoyed talking to me about Saint-Simon in her room, she who on the night when I had told her we must part ... when she saw the emotion which my lie had finally communicated to myself, had exclaimed with a sincere pity: “Oh, no, anything rather than make you unhappy ...”’
- ⁷⁰ Vol. II, p. 607. Yet Proust dares also to speak of ‘a vice which Nature herself has planted in the soul of a child, perhaps by no more than blending the virtues of its father and mother ...’ I 114.
- ⁷¹ Vol. II, pp. 307–308.
- ⁷² ‘All of that, the good as well as the bad, he had given out lavishly every day and the last day, as he went to the attack of a German trench – had given it out through generosity, through a desire to put everything he possessed at the service of others ...’ II 977, 980.
- ⁷³ Vol. I, p. 691.
- ⁷⁴ Vol. I, 124.
- ⁷⁵ Vol. II, pp. 561–2, 563.
- ⁷⁶ Vol. II, p. 483.
- ⁷⁷ The Narrator expresses this in a striking image: ‘... when, in the course of my life, I have had occasion to meet with, in convents for instance, literally saintly examples of practical charity, they have generally had the brisk, decided, undisturbed, and slightly brutal air of a busy surgeon, the face in which one can discern no commiseration, no tenderness at the sight of suffering humanity, and no fear of hurting it, the face devoid of gentleness and sympathy, the sublime face of true goodness.’ I, 62.
- ⁷⁸ Letter to Lucien Daudet.
- ⁷⁹ Vol. II, p. 291. Charlus remarks elsewhere that ‘“vicious and rascally persons can have their better side, like certain characters in Dostoevski”’ – can be better than professional men of honour (II, 928).
- ⁸⁰ Vol. II, pp. 1032 and 995.
- ⁸¹ Vol. II, p. 971. Cf. the poignant description of the loneliness of homosexuals in the presence of God, II, 15.
- ⁸² Vol. II, p. 971.
- ⁸³ Vol. II, pp. 927 and 947.
- ⁸⁴ ‘Indeed, no chorus of Sophocles, chanting the humbled pride of Oedipus, not even death itself nor any funeral oration, could have proclaimed as effectively as did the

Baron's meek and obsequious salutation of Mme. de Saint-Euverte how perishable is the love of human grandeur and even human pride itself.' II, 987. Cf. the marvellous passage about the aged as Suppliants, p. 1102.

⁸⁵ *Contre Sainte-Beuve*, op. cit.

⁸⁶ Vol. II, p. 1005.

⁸⁷ Esquisse XXIII, in *Pléiade* ed. of *Recherche* (op. cit.).

⁸⁸ 'By forcing me, like a rude spiritual adviser, to declare myself dead to the world, illness had done me a great service – for, if the grain of wheat die not after it hath been sown, it will abide alone; but if it die, it will bear much fruit ...' II 1122.

⁸⁹ Vol. II, p. 1120.

⁹⁰ In *Marcel Proust* by G. Cattaui, Julliard 1952.

⁹¹ Vol. II, p. 1116.

⁹² *Pléiade* ed. of *Recherche*, op. cit.

⁹³ Vol. II, pp. 509–510.

⁹⁴ Vol. I, p. 269.

⁹⁵ Vol. II, p. 118.



Mountain Lion

Values of Permanence in Architecture and the work of Aldo Rossi

JAMES MADGE

Because of its particular nature, the art of architecture must, in relation to the notion of material permanence, confront a number of theoretical problems which other arts can more easily side-step or ignore. In common with many other forms of artistic activity, architecture in the twentieth century has been subject to a decisive shift in emphasis from a comparatively unselfconscious practical application towards a much greater reliance upon theoretical and ontological explanation to such an extent that it is often difficult to say of a particular work whether it is an example of architecture or merely the statement of a position with reference to it.

Certainly, it is the case today that the problems raised in architectural theory have provoked a condition of tension and anxiety in which practical action may seem increasingly to lack any real consensus or conviction. Many of these problems relate to the issues of permanence and the status of a work of architecture as a material object.

It is hardly necessary to be in every sense a Platonist to insist that those values which place mankind in a special position within the natural world must accord to ideas a special position in relation to things. To the extent that artistic activity is specifically human, it has no choice but to assert the primacy of concept over raw sensation. The *imagination* of Kantian philosophy provides a necessary condition for values to exist at all.

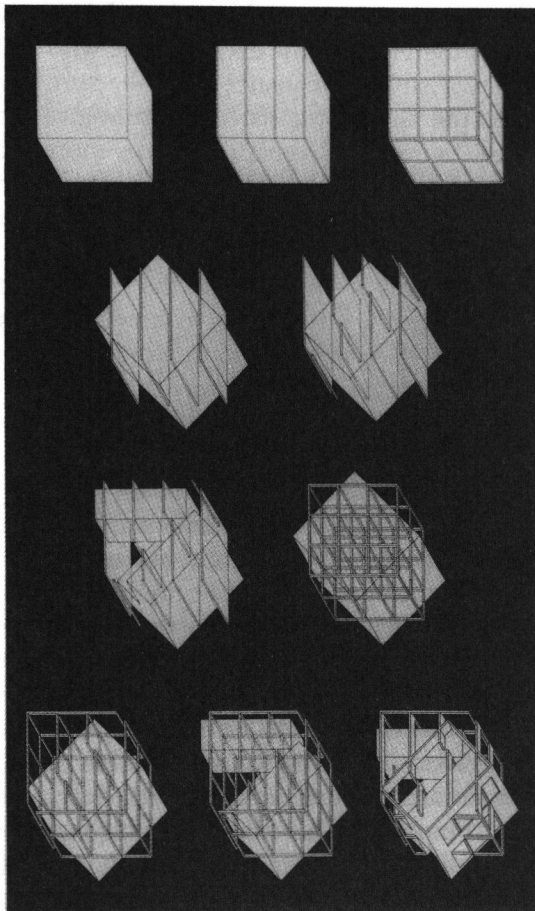
It is not surprising, therefore, that most of what has been said and much of what has been done in relation to the arts during the last two thousand years, has tended to emphasise the spiritual as opposed to the temporal, the ideal rather than the circumstantial as being the real justification of cultural production. Hence, the systematic rejection of naturalism in early Christian painting noted particularly by Max

Dvorak,¹ which was clearly mirrored in contemporaneous architectural attempts to deny the mass and solidity of structures² and which culminated in the apparently almost total de-materialization of structure so brilliantly achieved by the builders of the late Middle Ages.

Hence, also, the search in Michelangelo's later work for a purely 'spiritual' portrayal of the human body, the ghost-like portrayal of religious ecstasy in the work of Tintoretto or El Greco and hence, equally, the search for an ideal geometrical order in the architecture of Bramante or Palladio which reflect, in visual terms, pre-occupations very similar to those of poets from Spenser to Donne.

Moral and religious teaching as well as the successive reformulations of the nature and purpose of art have continually stressed the transitory nature of the sensible world – where moth and rust corrupt etc. – and have sought to locate the true goal of human endeavour in the realm of more transcendental values. Marxist or Hegelian theory, placing 'consciousness' above tangible reality, is no exception to this observation.

But, for architecture, it cannot be so simple. It is one thing to concede the futility and the arrogance of any attempt to endow any physical action on the world with absolute permanence ('look on my works, ye mighty, and despair') but another, entirely, to demand of architects that they would not seek to achieve, within the constraints of available technique, the greatest possible material permanence in their work. Like Proust's aunt Leonie³ an architect might prefer not to ascribe an exact duration to a particular work but would, none the less feel a professional duty to secure the greatest possible period of enjoyment of the building. Certainly there have been, since the earliest times, buildings erected for a strictly limited ritual or didactic purpose,⁴ for celebration or exhibition to survive only for a day, a week or a year. But one can hardly imagine that the people who built them did so with deliberate intent that they should be badly constructed. Even Cedric Price, whose Interaction Centre of 1957, still bears detailed instructions for its eventual demolition, must have felt the obligation to protect its occupants from a premature or accidental collapse; the very expression 'safe as houses' refers to a very deep rooted expectation that architecture will provide shelter, stability and protection. How deeply within the human psyche such expectations lie is brilliantly evoked by Gaston Bachelard in his *Poetics of Space* 1958.



1. Peter Eisenman. *House III*, Lakeville Con., 1971.

The images of the light at the window which guides and comforts the returning traveller, the peace and permanence of the interior preserved in the face of natural and human assault – these speak of an idea of architecture which cannot be separated from its physical continuity.

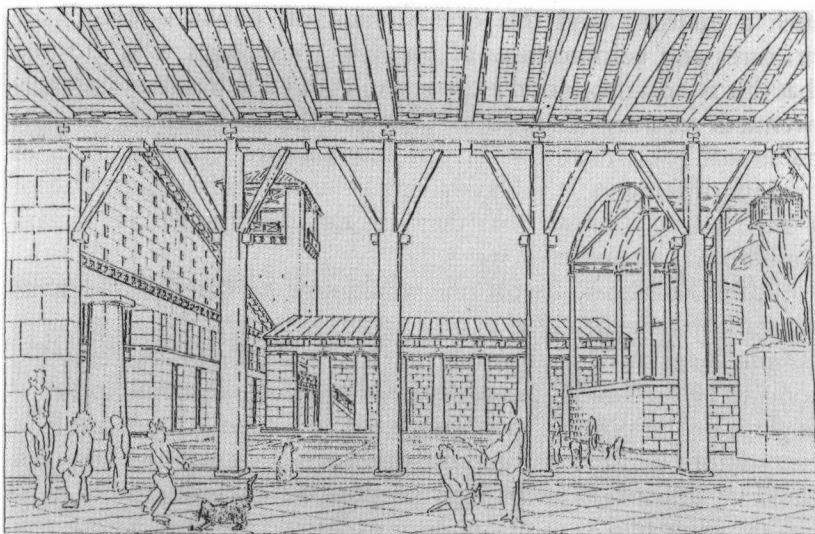
In the same way, at the scale of the city, it is the recognizable continuity of its elements which enables it to act as a setting for a coherent pattern of life. More particularly, the commemorative nature

of significant monuments cannot be limited in advance to a fixed term of years and must therefore, in the eyes of those who build them, be seen in perpetuity. Visible permanence in architecture is a measure of emphasis; when the Greeks translated the primitive wooden construction of Doric temples into marble, it was, more than anything else, to show that they *meant* it and the monumentality of such structures is a clear index of their importance in the eyes of those who built them.

And if these problems are inherent in the nature of architecture irrespective of its specific historical or cultural circumstances, the conditions under which an architect must work in the late twentieth century are such as to throw them into very sharp relief. The idea that a building site has a value independent of the structure which may or may not occupy it, that a building is not to be regarded as the final stage in an economic process – the end result and purpose of the creation of wealth – but rather as instrumental towards some other and ulterior economic objective; this notion has tainted the ideal of impermanence with the implication of a cultural debasement particular to our own times. Whatever may be the reality of earlier times, it is difficult in the present day not to see in them an exemplary phase of human culture in which buildings were accorded a proper value in their own right, constructed with care and love as a bequest to subsequent generations. The misgivings of Ruskin or Morris, in the face of an ‘instant’ architecture of mass-produced, interchangeable and replaceable components, have been amplified in a crescendo of protest against the cynical opportunism of modern building seen as the literal embodiment of the corruption of modern materialist society.

Permanence in architecture has, in other words, become equated with those values which confront materialism and much of the polemic which has accompanied recent condemnation of ‘modern’ architecture has been specifically concerned with this issue: ‘We have now to recognize the absolute value of the pre-industrial cities, of the cities of stone. ... The enormous work which awaits our generation in repairing the damages and destructions of the last thirty years, must be undertaken in a perspective of material *permanence*.’ (author’s italics).⁵

So that the practice of architecture in recent years has appeared to offer a limited range of choices; the proposals of Leon Krier and his



2. Leon Krier. Project: School at St. Quentin-en-Yvelines, 1978.

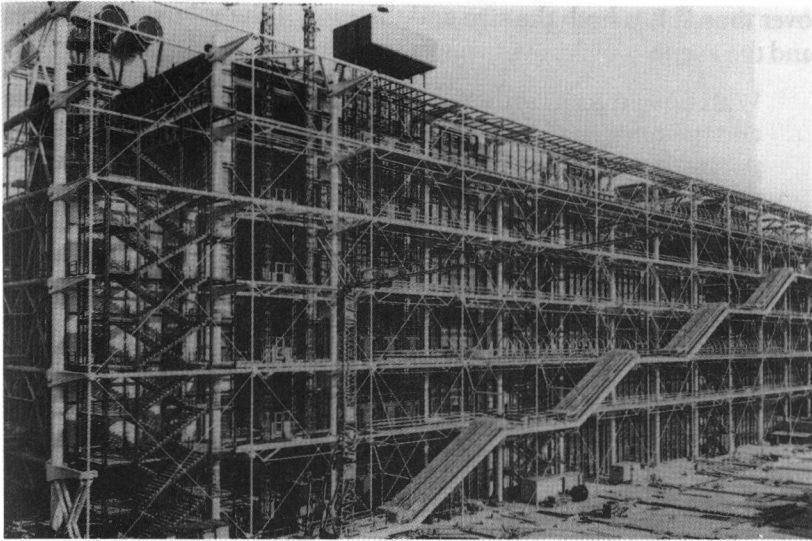
supporters – that the buildings of our times, if they are to deserve serious aesthetic attention, must literally adhere to manual craft traditions and the materials of pre-industrial production – represent an ostensibly ‘pure’ and morally irreproachable position whose principal drawback is the simple reality that such buildings are extremely unlikely to be realized when there are cheaper and quicker ways to achieve *almost* exactly the same visual effect and when the number of reckless idealists among those who pay for buildings is far exceeded by the number of reckless idealists within the architectural profession who might wish that they would do so.

For many architects and patrons, therefore, a more pragmatic and more specifically English response is adopted: when in doubt keep up at least the appearance of traditional building, complete with its visual overtones of permanence and continuity whilst accepting that a building which bears most of the outward signs of the eighteenth century Palladian style may nevertheless contain open plan office accommodation with air-conditioning, fluorescent illuminated ceilings and computer floors and where the visible external skin of brick and Portland stone is clipped to a steel frame, hoisted into place pre-assembled by the most up-to-date techniques available. To enter

such a building (and this orchestration of 'public opinion', the strictures and compromises of planning committees have ensured that this is no uncommon experience) is to experience an uniquely twentieth century disjunction between the external rhetoric of traditional good manners and the internal greed and cynicism of modern developers; it is like walking behind the illusionistic flats of a stage set to discover that they are nothing more than painted paste-board suspended on wires.

But the inheritors of what one would now have to call traditional modernism have persisted in treating the issue of permanence as an essentially technical problem. If obsolescence rather than decay has come to be the limiting factor determining the life of a building, then might it not be possible to make a building so perfectly adaptable to every future demand or circumstance, a structure whose every part could be adjusted to serve every purpose, where every future technology would find its natural place or pathway: a building, whose very nature was to exist in a state of perpetual change, achieving some sort of immortality? Renzo Piano and Richard Rogers' Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris is the most spectacular monument to this belief and, of course, time only can show to what extent it is justified. But allowing even the theoretical possibility of such a creation, one might still observe that it would be achievable only at the expense of all previously held architectural values: such a building must sustain a position of complete neutrality towards the culture and the life which it contains, the city of which it forms a part or the events which its composition might celebrate or deny. Permanence achieved through technology must entail the sacrifice of the very motives which would cause it to be desired in the first place – it can carry only negative values – like the twenty feet of concrete which must, with whatever permanence human endeavour can lay claim to, hold back the inescapably permanent disaster of Chernobyl.

If it is in the nature of architecture that such problems exist, then it has been equally within this art itself that Aldo Rossi has indicated a way of living with them. In the development of his ideas it is difficult (and probably misleading) to distinguish between his written work, his drawings and his executed works of architecture, though one might observe that his appearance as a major figure in the world of architecture followed the publication of *L'architettura della Città* in 1966.



3. Richard Rogers and Renzo Piano. Centre Pompidou, 1977.

While his literary style is obscure, often pretentious and self-indulgent, uneasily poised between the pseudo-scientific and the impenetrably subjective, and on the other hand, his drawings and executed buildings exhibit a clarity of intention and consistency of method which are instantly accessible, there is a continuity of purpose across the whole of his work which can only be appreciated if the whole is taken together.

Where Rossi's view differs fundamentally from those of the majority of contemporary critics of international Modernism is in the shift of emphasis which he makes whereby it is the city itself, rather than individual work of architecture, which is seen as the primary work of art – 'the human achievement *par excellence*'⁶ – and in seeing this as a collective artefact capable of representing a vital idea across time. Utopian theorists such as Le Corbusier had, equally, asserted the primacy of the city over its component parts but had nevertheless regarded it as a work to be designed once and for all, as an instrumental device in the improvement of human society. For Rossi, on the other hand, the city is 'both the natural and the artificial homeland of man'⁷ and 'a gigantic man-made object, a work of engineering and architecture that is large and complex and growing

over time.⁸ It is both the sign and the sum of the values, the choices and the events which have brought it into being.

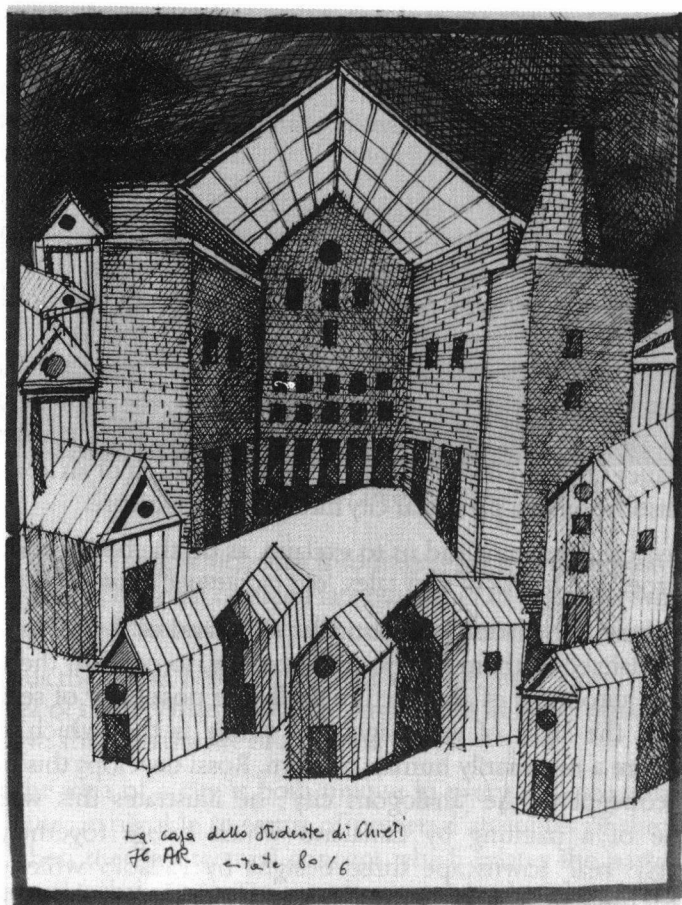
With time, the city grows upon itself; it acquires a consciousness and memory. In the course of its construction, its original themes persist, but at the same time it modifies and renders these themes of its own development more specific. Thus, while Florence is a real city, its memory and form comes to have values that are also true and representative of other experiences. At the same time, the universality of these experiences is not sufficient to explain the precise form, the type of object which is Florence.⁹

In this passage, Rossi brings together a number of themes which are basic to his understanding of the city: in particular, *memory* and *persistence*. If it is both the consequence and the sign of the events which have formed it, the city can be seen as the concrete and physical embodiment of a collective memory.

Memory ... is the consciousness of the city; it is a rational operation whose development demonstrates with maximum clarity, economy and harmony that which has already come to be accepted.¹⁰

That which has already come to be accepted may find its concrete expression in the principal monuments of the city (or equally, in their absence – e.g. the Bastille in Paris) recording the most decisive events in its development, in the dominant ‘urban artefacts’, its pattern of streets or squares, its adaptation to natural features of the site or, less dramatically, in the fabric of its residential areas and the pattern of daily life which they describe. The collective imagination of the city is formed by, and also forms, the specific signs of its history: individual and collective meanings sustain the singularity of its idea. Too rapid, too abrupt or too massive an intervention – military attack, fire or, notably in this century, large-scale reconstruction – can leave a city in a state of shock for some time but it is equally in Rossi’s view a characteristic of cities that they know how to recover their idea; the more general feature of urban change is the *persistence* of ‘that which has already come to be accepted.’

It is important to distinguish between Rossi’s notion of *persistence* and the ideology of *conservation*. The latter is founded in the conviction that buildings of the past are irreplaceable and that the values attached



4. Aldo Rossi. Student Hostel, Chieti. Competition Project, 1976.

to them are essentially concerned with their material or stylistic attributes. This is not to deny that certain artefacts within any city, acting at a certain time as essential carriers of the 'idea' of the city, ought not be sacrificed to the short-term objectives of greed or political expediency; it is, rather, to observe that the sustainable reasons for conservation would derive from an appreciation of the city as a collective achievement with a necessary future as well as a surviving past – that the choice involved in conservation would reflect

an aspiration towards renewal rather than archaeological or nostalgic preoccupations.

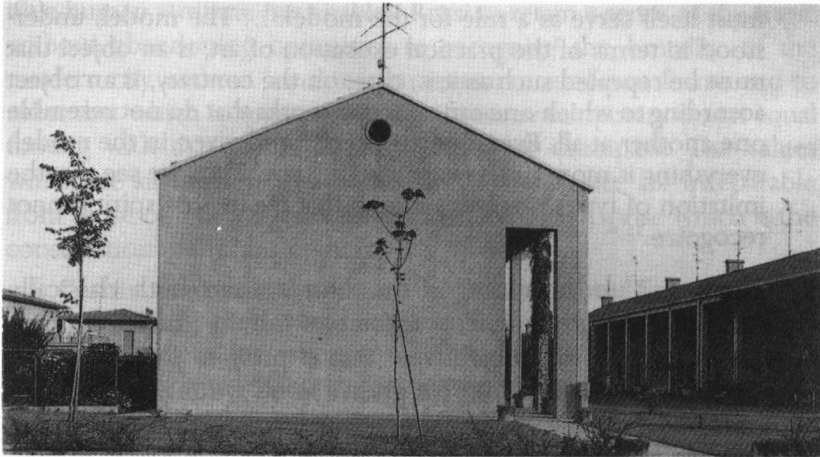
There is no clash between the various types of architecture in time, except the ridiculousness of architecture which is born of a more general cultural decline.¹¹

The city of the past survives in the present city necessarily in fragmentary form and these fragments can be seen as 'the remains of a larger work' even though such a large work might not have had a literal historical existence; the city of the past was equally, no doubt, formed partly from fragments of what had been previously. But the power of these fragments is precisely in their potential to sustain an imaginative concept of the larger work – literally, the architecture of the city. The persistence of an artefact as material fact is of minor importance compared with its rôle in the formulation of an *idea* which is the distillation of a particular city into pure architecture.

Physical fragments lead us to exclaim, as do the books about our heroes and books of fairy tales, '*cara architettura*', '*dear architecture*!'¹²

In this sense, the diversity of particular cities and of the ideas which are materialized in them serves, paradoxically, to confirm the singularity and autonomy of architecture itself. The possibility of seeing in fragments the signs of an imaginative whole is that which makes architecture a necessarily human concern. Rossi develops this notion in his concept of the 'analogous city'; he illustrates this with the example of a painting by Canaletto which brings together in a seemingly 'real' townscape three designs by Palladio which were made for quite different locations. The idea can exist independent of the geographical fact.

Quoting Jung (from a letter to Freud): 'I have explained that "logical" thought is what is expressed in words directed to the outside world in the form of discourse. "Analogical" thought is sensed yet unreal, imagined yet silent; it is not a discourse but rather a meditation on themes of the past, an interior monologue. Logical thought is "thinking in words". Analogical thought is archaic, unexpressed and practically inexpressible in words', he adds, 'I believe I have found in this definition a different sense of history, conceived of not simply as fact, but rather as a series of things, of effective objects to be used by the memory or in a design.'¹³



5. Aldo Rossi. *Single Family Housing*, Pergognana, 1979.

The values, then, which attach to fragments from the past are not measurable as material or literal fact but rather in their rôle within the collective imagination in the construction of the idea of the city.

Thus the union between the past and the future exists in the very idea of the city that it flows through in the same way that memory flows through the life of a person.¹⁴

But if the idea of a city is both unique in every instance and, at the same time, explicable in terms of universal attributes of the human mind, then the architectural concept which relates the particular to the general is that of *type*. The term has been employed in architectural theory and historical writing to cover a wide variety of intended meanings ranging from purely functional; all buildings for the care of the sick belong to the general type of hospitals, the representational: you can distinguish a theatre from other buildings because it looks (or ought to look) like a theatre, or the entirely topological or formal: buildings can be divided into those which are linear, cruciform, circular etc. Rossi is careful to avoid any of these interpretations, basing his understanding on the early definition proposed by Quatremère de Quincy:

The word 'type' represents not so much the image of a thing to be copied or perfectly imitated as the idea of an element that

must itself serve as a rule for the model. ... The model, understood in terms of the practical execution of art, is an object that must be repeated such as it is; type, on the contrary, is an object according to which one can conceive works that do not resemble one another at all. Everything is precise and given in the model; everything is more or less vague in the type. Thus we see that the imitation of types involves nothing that feelings or spirit cannot recognize.¹⁵

Type in Rossi's understanding of the term is, then, both classically Platonic and, at the same time, comparable with the Jungian concept of *archetype*. It is 'a logical principle that is prior to form and that constitutes it'.¹⁶ Rossi is somewhat evasive in his writings – rightly so, perhaps – in citing specific examples of architectural ideas which can be identified as clearly indicative of type, though arcades, corridors, monuments or isolated megarons are recurrent themes in his writing as well as in his projects and executed work.

Prior not only to form but also to specific appropriation within a particular culture-type, seen as that in architecture which establishes it as a uniquely human activity, it is not contingent upon artistic pretension. If it has always been the case that 'high' architecture is nourished by – is indeed, essentially a meditation upon – humble, everyday building; if the Greek temple commemorates the first wooden shelter, the villas of Palladio, the farm buildings of the Veneto or Katsura Palace the traditional houses of the 14th century Japan, then this is no more than to observe that the making of buildings is an activity in which humanity has always given material form to its mental and, specifically, imaginative life and that the rôle of the self-conscious architect is to condense in a work that which most clearly speaks for the idea of architecture itself. Rossi's work draws from a wide, though very personal repertoire of sources from fisherman's cabins on the coast of Maine, the farm buildings of his native Lombardy, the drawings of children, the text-books of 18th century theoreticians or the brick chimneys, cranes and sheds of a 19th century wasteland. In these, as much as in the work of Palladio, Schinkel or Le Corbusier, he has been able to discover the signs of 'dear architecture'.

Seeing architecture and the City as a human task which is never finished but one which will always exist as evidence of an indestruc-

tible human attribute has enabled Rossi to retain a sense of the tragic without abandoning optimism, to recognize the brutality of the modern city without invoking the reassurance of past forms and to value that which is apparently insignificant or temporary on an equal footing with that which is monumental or dominant. The values which are attributable to a particular 'urban artefact' are inseparable from those of a more general and continuing enterprise which is the construction of the 'analogous city':

Certain functions, time, place and culture modify our cities as they modify the forms of their architecture; but such modifications, have value when and only when they are in action, as events and as testimony, rendering the city evident to itself. We have seen how periods of new events make this problem especially apparent, and how only a correct coincidence of factors yields an authentic urban artefact, one wherein the city realizes in itself its own idea of itself and renders it in stone.¹⁷

And if Rossi's work has had an influence far out of proportion to the scale or prestige of the projects which he has been able to realize, this is precisely on account of the force and clarity with which they insist on the priority of type over form, of re-discovery over invention, of the art itself over its local variations.

Such a view of architecture can allow the value of that, not only, which is humble, hidden away from the path of the tourist or the art historian but also that which has no physical permanence:

I wish only to emphasize how a building, how architecture may be a primary element onto which life is grafted. This idea ... was made particularly clear to me by several 'urban artefacts' at Seville, especially the enormous encampment of the summer holidays, rigorously laid out like a Roman city, with its lots divided into the minimal dimensions for the little houses and with its huge triumphal portals. This encampment forms the weak but very precisely jointed skeleton of an unsettled and convulsive body, one that is destined for the short, intense life of the holidays.¹⁸

For the 1979–80 Biennale at Venice, Rossi was commissioned to design a floating theatre. This building constructed of scaffolding and timber clap-board on a pontoon base, formed a part of the architecture of that city only for a season. Referring in part to a tradition of temporary theatres in Northern Italy, to the 'scientific



6. Aldo Rossi. *Floating Theatre*, Venice, 1979.

theatre' and the 'Theatre of Memory' of which Frances Yates has written, this project nevertheless defies classification within any established group of buildings:

The tower of my theatre might be a lighthouse or a clock; the campanile might be a minaret or one of the towers of the Kremlin: the analogies are limitless, seen, as they are, against the background of this predominantly analogous city.¹⁹

Its power as an image is not that it 'calls to mind' other similar images or that it necessarily completes the visual composition of a particular view in Venice but, rather that it condenses the idea of Venice as a

piece of architecture, that, having seen it, it would be difficult to think of 'Venice' without it. Rossi admits to a particular fondness for this project and often, in subsequent drawings, it has joined his family of types – a shy presence in the background of later proposals. It is a design in which specific technical or stylistic references to its time or place have been carefully suppressed, where expression of any particular function is minimal and whose material presence makes no attempt to compete with that of the historic monuments of the city. But it carries with unusual clarity the sense of both the defencelessness and the indestructibility of architecture.

In the final analysis, architecture's substance, genesis and relatively short life seem so human that we cannot help but regard it with affection.²⁰

Notes

¹ *The History of Art as the History of Ideas* (1924) – Trans. John Hardy, RKP, London 1984.

² Sometimes with disastrous results; the desire to render the interior of S. Sophia in Constantinople apparently weightless led to its collapse at the first attempt. Lack of technical resources obliged the builders to compromise the principles and many of the openings in the structure are now merely represented in false-perspective mosaic.

³ Je ne demande pas a aller a cent ans, repondait ma tante, qui preferait ne pas voir assigner a ses jours un terme precis. *A la Recherche du Temps Perdu*. Part I.

⁴ C.f.: Joseph Rykwert: *On Adams House in Paradise* – Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1972, chapter 6, which discusses a variety of ancient rites involving the burning of small buildings.

⁵ L. Krier, *The Idea of Reconstruction*, Architectural Design Profile, Ed. D. Porphyrrios, London 1984.

⁶ Aldo Rossi, *The Architecture of the City* – M.I.T. Press, 1984, p. 33.

⁷ *Op cit* p. 27.

⁸ *Ibid*, p. 29.

⁹ *Ibid*, p. 21.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, p. 131.

¹¹ Rossi – *Architettura e città*: passato e presente – from Aldo Rossi – *Selected Writings and Projects* – Architectural Design, London & Gandon Editions, Dublin 1983.

¹² A Rossi – *Introduction to Aldo Rossi, Architect* – Electa, Milan, 1987.

¹³ *An Analogical Architecture* – Aldo Rossi, *Selected Writings*; p. 59.

¹⁴ *The Architecture of the City*, p. 131.

¹⁵ A. C. Quatremère de Quincey, *Dictionnaire historique d'architecture comprenant dans son plan les notions historiques, descriptives, archæologiques, biographiques theoriques, didactiques et pratiques de cet art*, Vol 2. Paris 1832. Quoted in *The Architecture of the City*, p. 40.

¹⁶ *The Architecture of the City*, p. 40.

¹⁷ *The Architecture of the City*, p. 162.

¹⁸ A. Rossi, *A Scientific Autobiography*, M.I.T. Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1981, p. 20.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, p. 67.

²⁰ Aldo Rossi, *Architect*, p. 13.



Bird

Reviews

'The Landscape of Dreams'

WILSON HARRIS: *The Four Banks of the River of Space*. Faber, 1990.

The 'Guyana Quartet' (*Palace of the Peacock*, *The Far Journey of Oudin*, *The Whole Armour* and *The Secret Ladder*) established Wilson Harris's startlingly original vision of the Guyana/South America rainforested landscape and its potential, as 'a living text', to alter and deepen one's perception of reality. In his work history, culture, myth, landscape and language become open-ended, multi-valent concepts. They are presented as partial and unfinished, since the individual human consciousness itself is, by definition, incomplete.

The Four Banks of the River of Space, the last of a trilogy (the other novels are *Carnival* and *The Infinite Rehearsal*), returns to that original landscape, the earlier vision transposed over the years to a richer, more polyphonic key. The musical analogy is apt. The thread of music, first heard in the bone-flute melody played by the young Carroll in *Palace*, weaves through the novels like an aboriginal motif, a reminder of vanished native Amerindian cultures, 'absent presences', which lie at the root of the South American landscape and language. A deeply organic – one is tempted to say shamanistic – relationship between language and landscape (and the play of a lambent and humane intellect upon it) is one of the most striking features of Harris's work.

Harris recalls a remarkable incident that occurred during his first expedition as a hydrographic surveyor into the Guyana interior. He and his crew narrowly escaped being capsized and pulled into the rapids of a dangerous waterfall by cutting loose the anchor which had become lodged in a sandbank. Three years later, in a similar mishap on the same river, the anchor was freed and, as it was pulled up, brought with it the previous anchor:

It is almost impossible to describe the kind of energy that rushed out of that constellation of images. I felt as if a canvas around my head was crowded with phantoms and figures. I had forgotten some of my own antecedents – the Amerindian/Arawak ones – but now their faces were on the canvas ... One could also sense the lost expeditions, the people who had gone down in these South American rivers. One could sense a whole range of things, all sorts of faces – angelic, terrifying, daemonic ... there was a sudden eruption of consciousness.

('A talk on the subjective imagination' in *New Letters*, Univ. of Missouri, vol. 40 No. 1. Oct. 1973 pp. 40–41)

That 'sudden eruption of consciousness', the result of a numinous, personal experience within the phenomenal landscape of the rainforest, provided the impetus for his first published novel, *Palace of the Peacock* (1960) and powers all of his subsequent work. *Palace* was, among other things, a deconstruction of the millennialist myth of El Dorado, the central myth of the New World: a look at the Imperial tradition of European conquest and discovery from a native standpoint. Harris set out to overturn the conquistadorial perspective, capsizing conventional perceptions, using language to subvert the traditional imperative of linear, logical discourse.

His experience of the Interior also led to a perception of the shared, shifting frontiers of language and landscape and the role of the Arts of the Imagination in keeping those frontiers open. A Harris novel is a multivocal discourse: a problematic, deconstructionist dialogue between fictional characters (who may include the author), but also between cultures, languages, genres and societies. It is a philosophical, fabular universe, a landscape of dreams, grounded, nevertheless, in a genuinely realised, physical landscape, often described in a magically lyrical prose:

The fantastic, planetary greenheart trees rose into marvellous silvery columns on every hand. Clothed in water-music ... The cracked silvery veil of greenheart possessed the texture of slow-motion rain falling within the huge Bell of a still Waterfall in which whispering leaves of fluid sound ran up into veil within veil of Shadow-organ gloom towards the highest reaches of the Forest and the slits of the Sky far above. Subtle fire-music.

(*The Four Banks of the River of Space*, pp. 132–133)

His style is elusive, however; a web of associations in which meaning is indirect and incremental, the language often seeming to change direction suddenly, words nudging each other, striking up unexpected associations:

When news came of my uncle's death I ran and curled myself into a body of newborn Shadow at the foot of Jacob's ladder in the great warehouse. I lay in a cardboard box there and sailed on the pavement of a great city towards a bush house on the tilted side of the oceanic Potaro which Proteus was ascending through inbuilt tidal rock and wave ... It stood half-way up the giant wave of the hill: half-way up from the Potaro to the ceiling of the sky reflected in stained-glass river cathedral Dream as if the river itself ran through the blue fire of heaven. He broke a loaf of bread and poured himself a glass of star-studded liquid.

(*The Four Banks* ... pp. 99–100)

The Four Banks of the River of Space deconstructs the concept of the classical epic with its god-like giant heroes, boldly tilting the perspective to look at the other side, confronting the epic's fixed, hierarchical universe with the

heterogeneous, 'problematical' context of the marginalized and dispossessed. The protagonist, Anselm, who has Amerindian antecedents, describes himself in his 'book of dreams' as:

Government Surveyor, Government Architect, Government Sculptor and Painter of the City of God, an Imaginary City within the fabulous ruins of El Dorado. (p. 13)

A revenant committed to a karmic 'rehearsal' of the past in order to come abreast of present reality, he is aware of 'parallel existences' ('how many quantum strangers does one hear in oneself?' p. 6). Anselm's 'eruptive life' and his awareness of 'alternative rhythms' allow him, as an invisible, floating consciousness, to adopt a variety of masks/roles in 'the play of a civilization'.

He is a composite hero in this 'Book of Dreams', bearing the cultural weight of conqueror and conquered, great civilizations and vanished tribes: a Ulysses who journeys backwards through time. The book's characters, Penelope and Ross George, the English missionaries, an uncle called Proteus, Simon 'the military ghost ... Black Pizarro or the king of thieves – whose antecedents came as much from Calvary as from ancient Greece –' are all historical/classical figures in Caribbean dress, 'live absences', 'fossil stepping-stones' who assist Anselm as 'linkages' in his tentative journey back through himself, to a reawakened ground of universal experience. It is a heroic undertaking; 'the formidable creative task of digesting and translating our age', as an earlier protagonist, Victor, puts it in *Ascent to Omai* (1970, p. 97), and Anselm is aware of the dramatic nature of his scenario:

The world was a stage for every walking tree and I advanced upon it.
Unsure of my lines, my part in the play of a civilization. For play it was.
Play of truth. (p. 3)

The stage is set in the rainforest of Guyana, on the banks of the Potaro river which pours over an 800 foot escarpment as the Kaiteur fall, an area first surveyed by Harris in the late forties, when an abortive scheme had been proposed for the resettlement there of refugees from the second World War. From that early linkage of a primitive, utopian scenario with the global theatre of war, the correspondences multiply. Encouraged in his dream-journey backwards to childhood by the ambiguous figure of Lucius Canaima, murderer and saviour ('Kanaima' is the Amerindian name of a Nemesis-figure held responsible for unexplained death or disaster), who, as alter-ego, serves as a guide in the realm of the subconscious, an apprehensive Anselm sets out on his epic journey:

... as a living dreamer, I was able to don – in true ancient epic style within the late twentieth century – the cloak of invisibility that I needed in retracing my steps and embarking upon my pilgrimage upon the first bank of the river of space. (p. 12)

Images from the past reappear charged with new significance. The masked Macusi bird-dancer (one of Canaima/Kanaima's victims) becomes a sacrificial figure, the necessary death of innocence. An Indian woodsman felling trees in the rainforest is a reminder of Columbus's epic mistake (he thought he had discovered India, hence the name, 'Indian' which the Aborigine bears), the continuing rape of the environment as well as of the wooden crosses planted by the Romans on Calvary; legacies of conquest. A surveyor's diagram of a stage-discharge curve of a river becomes a constellation of stars, then a child's join-the-dot drawing of a violin, linking mathematics, astronomy and music within the voice of the waterfall, a 'river in space' fed by the Potaro. The Dido orchid Anselm finds in the forest is an echo of epic tragedy, but also of the cross-cultural implications reaching into our own time:

Queen Dido built her own funeral pyre in Libya as though she had been bombed by fate when Aeneas abandoned her ... Jupiter forbade Aeneas to wed Dido and settle in Africa. All well and good to dally with her, sleep with her, but it was implied that 'miscegenation' would come of such a union. (p. 136 my italics)

The orchid is validating evidence of a 'living text', part of:

'the flora of the fourth bank of the river of space in which lies the ancient, unconscious, epic seed of modern botany and modern warfare. (p. 136)

The natural and the man-made, landscape and mandscape, are made to reflect each other. The river is mirrored by an underground, twin river (a characteristic of the landscape as well as of Harris's imagery), connected by the 'ladder' of the waterfall. Later, the city landscape of London or Paris will echo this as Anselm recalls his entry into 'the great underground, into a concrete riverbed beneath a fluid riverbed' (p. 71) with its ladder-like escalator. As the Dream-play begins, the Potaro/Macusi twinriver appears to be tilted sideways, as if seen from the perspective of a banking aeroplane, taking up a vertical position to become a river in space possessing four banks or rungs. The whole, complex interweaving of the natural and imaginative worlds becomes emblematic of the text, a lyrical, but also 'eruptive' dialogue; a musical scale between Reality and Imagination, landscape and language:

The tilted banks convert the river of space into a sieve that spills its contents. That sieve is the antiphon of the Waterfall, it constitutes a discourse between the rocks in the Waterfall and the clouds in the sky. The spilt water evaporates into cloud, evaporates into the promise of new rain ... And the voice of the spiralling flute mirrors within solid music the ascension of the spirits of the living and the dead. (pp. 44/45)

Anselm's journey, however, unlike the classical, epic voyage of discovery, is a voyage *imaginaire* of re-discovery through an extension of sensibility. The

childhood masking games played in 'aunt Alicia's garden theatre' with his uncle, Proteus (master of disguises), were, he now sees, a kind of preparation for the later unmasking of self-deceptions; the rediscovery of forgotten links and eclipsed memories. It was aunt Alicia's interest in theatre, arts and language that had nurtured Anselm's 'carnival temperament', making him vulnerable to a plurality of contexts. And it is through language that this extension of sensibility occurs, allowing him (as it had Alicia) to reconstruct this cross-cultural Theatre of Civilization, Play of Truth:

My parents, grandparents, great-aunts, uncles, cousins, etc., etc. ... stored their most secret dreams in the English language ... English was their mental tongue – it became their landscape of psyche – whatever the colour of their skin ... And as for Alicia ... English was her mansion, English was a stage, a ladder, a curtain to be lifted on a variety of objects ... [she] hears the buried voices within the English language, the voices of her mixed antecedents, her mixed ancestry, bringing a new quality of incantation into the language of object and subject. (pp. 28–29)

In fact, this has always been part of the stylistic strategy of Harris's prose, and the polyphonic approach is necessary because there can be no final word, no final truth. What Harris does with language is remarkably like what Carlos Fuentes claims for Gogol:

Gogol is a Perseus who cuts off the heads of the Medusas of certainty. Everything in him is deformed, refracted, postponed. We must not end: the gaze of certainty will transform us into stone. (*Myself with Others* Picador, 1988. p. 121)

Harris's work shares this dynamic with other great writers in the tradition of the polyphonic novel: Cervantes, Dostoevsky, Rabelais, Márquez. It is an approach to the novel as unfinished speech, 'where every discourse lives on the frontier between its own context and another, alien context' (Fuentes, p. 120). In Harris there is the added dimension of a living landscape which informs and keeps open the frontiers of the fictional text, extending the imaginative world as a kind of literary therapy against what Blake called 'Single vision and Newton's sleep'. It is a celebration of the literacy of the Imagination; language used as an organ of consciousness, an extension of sensibility, rather than for the consolidation of biases which lead to confrontation and disaster:

I caught a glimpse of marvellous books within the heart of bread through and beyond the meat of brute desire; marvellous dresses spun from a crumb of delicate craft and labour evolving across the river through and beyond all ruined, sacred fabric, ruined industrial fabric (ghost towns, the colonization of a civilization by ghosts), the ruined fabric of War (the governorship of a civilization by field marshals), ruined fabric of passion (proprietaryship of flesh and blood) ... (p. 69)

The novel ends, after Anselm's great spiralling journey of rediscovery, with the gently falling rain and the glow of a rising sun. It is a passage of great lyrical beauty, its finely crafted lines an echo of the frail harmony glimpsed at the heart of the landscape of dreams:

This rain of Night seemed to glimmer in the stars. Captors and captives began to loom in the new darkness of the Dream, the new guardian rocks, the new guardianship of sky and cloud at the heart of the Waterfall of space, a theatre of interchangeable masks and fates and elements upon savages and civilizations. The rain that fell upon us was so fine-spun and delicate that it seemed an impossibility when within it we discerned the burden and mystery of the rising sun. (p. 161)

Michael Gilkes

Note: A chapter from *The Four Banks of the River of Space* is included in *Temenos* 10.

David Jones's Art of Transubstantiation

NICOLETE GRAY: *The Paintings of David Jones*. Lund Humphries, 1989, £37.50.

The appearance of Nicolette Gray's monograph on David Jones's paintings has been long-awaited and is a most welcome event. It is the first monograph to adequately reproduce his paintings. Mrs Gray's publishers have wisely chosen a large page format and have kept the reproduction of the sixty-two colour plates (there are in addition reproductions of four wood-engravings, one line drawing and one copper line-engraving – giving us, obviously, only a small fraction of the artist's total output) as large as the page will permit. In the Foreword much is made of the care and effort, not to mention the technical resources, that went into achieving the utmost degree of fidelity to the originals when it came to printing the plates. Even so the results are not in every case an acceptable success. A handful of the plates seem sorely lacking in clarity. 'Tenby from Caldy Island' (1925), 'Out Tide' (c.1931), 'Piggots Farmyard' (1930), and especially 'Promenading at Sidmouth' (1940) suffer the most from a lack of sharpness of register – presumably at the photographic stage. But these are only minor flaws in what must, in the absence of anything remotely comparable, be regarded as a worthy and successful tribute to David Jones's work as a painter.

The author has for the most part kept her introduction within the terms required to deal with the pictorial, painterly and abstract qualities of the painter's art and more or less passes over the matter of its iconography. In this respect, and certainly in relation to the later works, her introduction presents

only one side of the story. In this matter the reader-viewer would benefit from having to hand Paul Hills' catalogue to the Tate Gallery Retrospective Exhibition of 1981, if only because of the valuable commentary on the iconography that supplements the plates. The author's claim that Jones's iconography 'is to my mind incidental and may even be unintelligible or unsympathetic' (p. 10) is an argument that, in the final analysis, goes against the terms of Jones's own understanding, both as to the nature of art in general and more specifically in relation to his own attempts to discover and 'show forth' images relevant as art to our own times and valid as signs of the Catholic faith, as well as being in some sense 'vessels' of the sacramental history of Christendom itself. This is to reduce the 'signs' and symbols Jones incorporated into his paintings – and which he certainly thought of as being more than decorative – to the level of ornaments. It is impossible to understand the full extent of Jones's achievement, if his iconography remains 'incidental' and 'unintelligible'. Mrs Gray's claim is lent a spurious support from the modernist premiss that the supreme values of art are aesthetic and abstract, and not rhetorical and cognitive. On this reading art remains something we may learn about but not learn from.

When Mrs Gray writes that 'it is seldom necessary to agree with an artist's ideas, or even to understand them in detail, in order to appreciate this art', one wonders for what purpose the note of caution has been sounded since in the case of David Jones his writings on art – not to mention his poetry (especially important and of an analogous unity with his late paintings) – form a most illuminating adjunct to what he attempted in visual terms, as well as demonstrating the closeness of his 'ideas' to his art-works. It is difficult to imagine being in a position to appreciate David Jones's paintings while not understanding and assenting to the distinctly un-modernist (and for that reason largely unfamiliar) ideas contained in his prose articles, themselves often an attempt to explain his ideas – to focus on them from another angle. Mrs Gray seems, by such remarks, to be reluctant to point to the fact that, except in a very nominal sense (in that his formative years were inescapably spent in the milieu of modernism, and in part determined his mature style) Jones was not in essence, any more than was his contemporary Cecil Collins, a modernist painter.

What the plates of this book demonstrate adequately well is the full range and development of David Jones's pictorial art. For posterity this development begins around 1924 since the artist destroyed in this year nearly all of his earlier work. Writing retrospectively the artist claimed that it was in 1925 that he saw more clearly the direction in which he wished to go. 'It was at this propitious time that circumstances occasioned my living in Nant Honddu, there to feel the impact of the strong hill-rhythms and the bright counter-rhythms of the *afonydd dyfroedd*.' Thereafter his work grew steadily in mastery

and complexity so that the last works could be said to be cumulative of all that had gone before. At all stages of his development Jones adhered to his own intrinsic vision, displaying a remarkable gift for assimilating what he needed from other artists, from all periods. He was for a few years a member of the Seven and Five Society alongside Ben and Winifred Nicholson, Henry Moore, Barbara Hepworth, Christopher Wood and John Piper. None the less his artistic affinities, in conjunction with his spiritual development placed him increasingly out of sympathy with the precepts of the modernist movement. He looked to a different order of things. Despite his deep faith he was not by temperament suited to a communal life of holy and right-livelihood as was his mentor Eric Gill. And his gifts were such as to lead him to a profound understanding of the dichotomy that confronts the artist (*homo faber*) in an age of the technics of power. His understanding of the nature and practice of art, and the relation of the artist to society and to collective values led him to a position whereby he found himself moving against the current of his time – a time that for him signalled the death-throes of civilisational, spiritual, and therefore cultural values. The implications of this radical displacement, in so far as it affected his art, led to his eclectic – though far from incoherent – style whose themes and images, form and content, are at once intriguing and bewildering, and more and more, with the passage of time, seeming to have not much in common with that type of knowledge which is the basis of the more or less autonomously conceived aesthetic of modern art based upon the imponderables of subjectivity. By contrast, David Jones's paintings involve the many and delicate strands of meaning, association, and affinity that interweave a seamless whole from artistic, historic, analogical, symbolic, religious, and metaphysical levels of reference.

If there is one key that unlocks the door to Jones's art it is perhaps notion of transubstantiation. For all his concern with the abstract values of pictorial representation on the one hand, and the formal meanings of iconographic content on the other, these were none other than the means by which the artist embodies or binds the substance of one order of reality in the substance of another order of reality. To achieve this Jones predominantly strove for two things in each of his paintings; first of all to secure for each work the integral unity that is proper to the being of a thing (or art-work); and secondly to invest that thing with a feeling of movement which is the infallible indication of life of that thing (or art-work). The pictorial technique that Jones employed to attain the former was transparency. Always in a painting by David Jones transparency serves the purpose of re-presenting the intangible, numinous mystery of the incarnate reality; in the latter case, that of movement, is rendered by means of line. In almost every painting we find an exuberant tangle of lines, and always it invests the painted surface with life-giving properties. The whole of Jones's work is cumulative in the sense that it

displays a gradual mastery of these techniques so as to bring them into a perfectly integrated relationship with one another. This perfection is most clearly evident in the series of large pencil and wash drawings of the '40's, beginning with 'The Four Queens' and 'Aphrodite in Aulis' (both 1941), and extending to 'Vexilla Regis' (1948), and then, later, in the 1950's in the series of floral paintings beginning with 'Flora in Calix-Light' (1950) to 'The Necklace and the Calix' (1954).

It is possible to see all the works that come before this series of late works as being preparatory to them. It was while working deep in the folds of the Black Mountains at Capel yffin, as we have noted, that Jones found his own direction, which landscape must have lead him to favour the high horizon line – he was seldom interested in skies. Already in 'Y Twmpa, Nant Honddu' (1926) we find the recurring features of that style; the flowing, energetic lines that criss-cross over the whole of the picture plane investing a current of rhythmic movement to a scene that could so easily become static in its monumentality. Here also is the avoidance of verisimilitude in the stylized animals and forms of nature, the transparent washes of colour sparingly applied to enhance the rendering of form. Even in this early work the transparency of colour serves, as it is hereafter always to do, to dissolve optical perspective, as if to release the features of the observed scene from the 'solidity' of corporeal distance, of near and far. Here is a different logic, for things now inhabit the abstract space that is the reality of the picture surface and where the particularity of things is rendered by detail and according to their contributions to the whole effect of the picture. This same transparency has the function of closing the distance and the difference between the picture plane and the picture surface. Thus, for instance, in 'The Hogget' (1946) the movement of the sky, the rhythm of the hills, the surfaces and boundaries of the fields, the trees and structures in the foreground are not objects on to which a light external to them falls. Here they all become a series of shifting lights, shimmering across the picture surface with the movement of the life that informs them.

This dissolving of optical space by means of transparency is no less evident in the very different series of still-lives, such as 'Violin' and 'Hierarchy – Still-Life' (both 1932) and especially 'Martha's Cup' (1932), reproduced here, and where there is almost no line at all. This picture, in which the posed arrangement of objects could so readily become lifeless is, on the contrary, full of flowing movement, directed by means of vigorously applied thin washes.

During the same period that he painted these still-lives, and beyond, Jones also painted a series of outdoor prospects seen from indoors, whether looking out onto the sea through the window of his parents' cottage on the beach at Portslade, or in various locations; Piggotts, Eric Gill's home in

Buckinghamshire or Rock Hall, Helen Sutherland's home in Northumberland. A characteristic picture of this type is 'Curtained Outlook' (1931), where by means of that same transparency and by the expedient of deploying more than one optical viewpoint, the difference between outdoors and indoors is once again dissolved. Distance is collapsed as the eye roams over the picture surface, stopping here and there to focus sharply on outlined objects none of which, though they have a perspectival relationship with one another, in relation to the viewer are neither near nor far: the window hinge, curtain hooks, a flower petal, the balustrade or the window frame of a nearby house, the bristles of a toothbrush, a crack in the plastered wall and so on, in all these details a fructifying energy is a work, with light flowing in and around objects. Everything is energized and unified by the limited tonal spectrum – mostly pale blues and browns – of the patchwork of thinly applied colours which themselves act as a counterpoint to each outlined object. This technique of counterpointing patches of colour and detailed line to unify the picture surface was later brought to its ultimate development in 'Aphrodite in Aulis'.

The extreme of transparency and compression of optical distance is pushed even further in 'Window at Rock' (1936), where the window frame is dissolved almost completely but for its jauntily angled latch, and where foliage amalgamates interior and exterior space by seeming to invade the room occupied by the viewer and suggested by nothing more substantial than the light falling onto a part of the window frame.

In all the paintings up to the late '30's Jones had made no reference to his experience as a soldier in the First World War, and no overt indication of his religious faith as they impinge upon his understanding of what constitutes a valid art-work. By now he had begun to write poetry and in 1937 *In Parenthesis* was published. For this he drew a frontispiece and a tailpiece. In these there is a renewed concentration upon line (in a style that suggests his accomplishments in the series of magnificent wood engravings for the Chester Play of the Deluge of the period 1927–8; 'The Bride' (1930), and especially 'He Frees the Waters in Helyon' (1932). This frontis- and tailpiece was conceived originally as designs for wood engravings, and with them Jones begins the final phase of his development as a painter. From this point he begins to incorporate in his paintings images and pictorial resonances of his War experiences as well as something of the rich store of learning that his reading had opened up to him, in addition to his sense of the sacramental quality of history in which all time is seen as contemporaneous in the redeeming light of Christ's incarnation and crucifixion, as it is recalled and re-enacted in the rite of the Catholic Mass. This conflation of historical time is analogous to the compression of perspectival space in the earlier paintings. But in the later works it has the added dimension of being depicted by the presence of objects, including cult objects, symbolic forms, military equipment, fragments of architectural

structures, human artefacts of many sorts, figures (both historical and mythological), from widely spaced periods of history. This synchronization of historical sequence is indicative of the simultaneity of all time and is complemented in the structure and imagery of these paintings by the existential numinosity of the things that have furnished cultural history. These two modes of transparency – temporal simultaneity and existential numinosity – signify the order and pattern of the archetypal reality that is beyond the flux of history: its abiding coherence and power to determine cultural history itself.

In these late pictures the numinosity of incarnate reality is rendered by a sharply focussed line which delineates with great care and attention to factual and historical accuracy the particularity of figures, animals and objects. The associative resonances of familiar religious symbols and cult objects are never drawn or painted with vagueness or imprecision. They are always pointedly exact. They are only obscure insofar as they are placed in unfamiliar juxtaposition by virtue of the simultaneity of differing times and places that form the context of the picture in question. Whereas in the earlier works these linear details serve more or less to integrate the picture surface – and as such are an expression of formal unity – in the later works what is depicted in detail seems to integrate cultural history with religious belief, to unite temporal and atemporal worlds. In such works as 'Aphrodite in Aulis', 'The Four Queens', 'Vexilla Regis' (1947), 'Eclogue IV' (1949), and 'Y Cyfarchiad i Fair' – 'The Greeting to Mary' (1943), we see the consummate mastery of David Jones's specific genius for realizing in pictorial terms analogies and resemblances between the world of observable appearances, the practice of human artefacture and the historic, mythological and symbolic domains of Western Christendom's cultural history. Here they coalesce in a moment of artistic purity and equipoise – perhaps, as we might surmise on the basis of Jones's own understanding of our historical condition, never to do so again given the fragmentary nature of these 'late times'.

Anyone who has had the opportunity to study these works at first hand will no doubt have noticed how, when studied at close quarters, it becomes quite difficult in places to determine where the objects depicted, the medium itself, and the picture surface have their separate existence so compellingly do they cohere. Moreover, a work like 'Aphrodite in Aulis' should be looked at from close up. Its multiple viewpoints are determined by several interlocking perspectives that function in two modes. In one the whole picture becomes a seamless reality, when the spectator is placed at a little distance from it, by the imposing central figure of Aphrodite. In the other the spectator is drawn into the picture by its elaborate secondary detail. Yet in each of these local areas of the picture the spectator is placed at the centre of the viewpoint for the given perspective of that area.

In these works, as well as in the tender exuberance of the series of late flower paintings; 'Mehefin' (c.1950), 'Tangled Cup' (clearly signed '49 but printed in the accompanying caption as 1951), and finally in 'Flora in Calix-Light', it is not too difficult to see an affinity with the intricately woven patterns of that other very Celtic art-work, the Book of Kells.

All admirers of David Jones's art – and, it is to be hoped, newcomers – must remain indebted to Mrs Gray and her publishers for making it possible (within the confines of printed reproduction, at least), to see how the artist achieved what he did, now that we have access to the plates that comprise this splendid book.

Brian Keeble

Vulgarization at Work

JAMES KING: *The Last Modern: A Life of Herbert Read*. Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 312 pp, £25.

Americans love 'movements,' in, as it often seems to my sceptical European mind, the simple faith that the label on the bottle can turn re-cycled tap-water into wine, or at least into coca-cola. More seriously, to think in terms of 'movements' is to think historically, in a horizontal dimension of temporal succession, whereas the imagination, at every period of history, represents the vertical dimension of the timeless values comprised in the classical Platonic trilogy of the Good, the True, and the Beautiful. The imaginative artist (in whatever art) thinks vertically; the 'full professor' would probably lose his tenure were he to stray from the order of fact into the order of values. I do not wish to single out Professor King for he is in all good faith only a representative of the received attitudes of the present time in Western and Westernized Universities, and literary criticism in general. Dare one invoke the concept of caste and say that this is a time when those for whom values are situated in the material order pass judgment on those for whom reality is situated in a world of ideas and values? Ignorance passes judgment on knowledge of a kind it is not capable of discerning. Herbert Read stood for the highest quality of Imagination, and for goodness. I don't doubt that Professor King's intention was to present a sympathetic picture of Herbert Read, but the man I knew – and other friends share my sense of disappointment – I do not find.

Certainly James King has collected any number of facts and strings of names as long as the chain of rings worn by the lady in the *Arabian Nights* who kept this tally of her lovers. Even so key names are missing of some of Herbert's closest friends and associates. But what is most of all lacking is any deep understanding of the motives and ideas which inspired Read's tireless and

lifelong devotion to the values which, with missionary zeal, he sought to serve. This does scant justice to the value of the life of that true, sensitive, hurt, gifted and searching man. Herbert's presence was a standard raised for a new spirit in the world, already manifest in Europe, and which he sought to kindle in England; in the work of his friends, Henry Moore, Barbara Hepworth, Ben Nicholson, the architects Maxwell Fry and Jane Drew (barely mentioned by Professor King) and a smaller group representing the Surrealist movement, Read played a leading part in bringing about a flowering of work of the finest quality in this country before the Second World War. Later he was instrumental in making known the transforming work and thought of C. G. Jung. Perhaps he was the last 'man of letters', a presence central to any civilized society, which now seems to have given place to the journalists and the media-persons. For many years Read defined standards respected (even when not agreed with) by an entire generation of artists and writers. He wrote always for his equals. Only T. S. Eliot exerted a comparable formative influence on the thought of his time. He was discerning, also, of emerging talent in the field of the imagination and generous in his support of it. Laurens van der Post recalls that 'Herbert was the first person of standing to recognize me as a writer. He was literary editor of the old *Nation and Athenaeum* at the time and every week picked a book for special review introducing the rest of the literary pages. He picked out my first book *In a Province*, and gave it a splendid salute which made a lot of other people take notice of it as well'. How many of us could tell a similar story and owe to Herbert that early support in whose absence no artist can realize an innate gift!

Read's defence of political anarchy was entitled *The Politics of the Unpolitical* and his dedication to the values of the Imagination might equally have been called 'The religion of the irreligious'. He was essentially a good and simple man. Perhaps Stephen Spender was right in thinking he did not take evil seriously enough – a failing of all idealists. Jung himself in later years warned him of the ambiguous nature of the unconscious forces which the Modern Movement in Europe was setting at large. Jung, who saw art with a psychologist's eye, saw in the art of both Picasso and of Joyce signs of the disintegration of a spent civilization; but for Read faith in the Imagination was the golden string which led him through a series of seemingly contradictory allegiances and abandonments. He sought always to discern the positive potentialities in some new work – the 'modern' was not for him some specific movement, but an orientation. In the creativity of art he saw an ever-renewed growing-point of human evolution, abstraction or surrealism or some other new vision being in no way incompatible among the inexhaustible possibilities of the Imagination. The theme of an exhibition he organized, 'Forty Thousand Years of Modern Art' expresses this faith in the innate creativity of the human spirit – there could be no 'last' modern.

Read very clearly understood a half-truth – or rather half a truth, of which his long-time friend T. S. Eliot understood and defined the other half. Eliot saw that creativity is as unavailing in the absence of tradition as trying to write poetry without a language. Yeats, likewise a traditionalist, declared that ‘unity of being’ is not possible in the absence of ‘unity of culture’ and wrote of an ideal Byzantium in which painter and craftsman were ‘almost impersonal, almost perhaps without consciousness or individual design, absorbed in their subject-matter and that the vision of a whole people’. The Modern Movement, at the opposite extreme, was above all a movement towards individuation, an exploration of the innate knowledge of the individual in the absence of a common design of any kind. Individuation Jung also stressed as the phase of spiritual development in which modern man is working at the present time. Tradition, in the sense of civilization and its long cultural heritage, Eliot proclaimed as clearly and uncompromisingly as Read proclaimed the innate imagination as the infallible touchstone: ‘We know more than the past – yes, and the past is what we know’ Eliot wrote. The split between the defenders of the inherited wisdom of humanity, and those who see in the ‘inner light’ the ultimate authority is at least as old as the Protestant Reformation. Later it was not Eliot’s essentially historical view of Tradition that challenged Read but that of Yeats’s one-time friend A. K. Coomaraswamy who defined Tradition in metaphysical terms, as the unchanging fundamental and universal principles which lie at the source of being and which are to be found at the heart of all religions. It is sad that this common ground of individual inspiration and inherited tradition seems so often obscured by conflict, for the root of truth is one, whether in the individual or in the ‘revealed’ tradition. Perhaps at certain times one or other of these half-truths demands affirmation, or perhaps the dialectic must always be sustained. In practice adherents of the ‘Traditional’ school seem often to be arid and uninspired and forever in conflict with those whose faith is in the inner light but who reject the age-old and universal language for any and every new experiment.

In a sense Read was the victim of his time and place. His concept of the Imagination was established in the thought of Coleridge and Wordsworth and Ruskin. But to affirm the supremacy of the Imagination in a secular materialist society is to betray the essentially sacred source of ‘inspiration’. However, when churches and other institutions which claim to represent ‘the sacred’ are, in Jung’s words, purveying a religion which is ‘all outside’, then

... the sneaking serpent walks
In mild humility
And the just man rages in the wilds.

Herbert Read was a just man. He lived to see his faith in ‘the modern movement’ of his day betrayed by a generation which did not share his own

high view of the dignity of man's innate spirit. But as I see it in retrospect he did succeed in forming a bridge between the Romantics and the new opening of the inner worlds accomplished in part by the Surrealist movement, but more fundamentally by Jung. Read as a Director of Routledge and Kegan Paul was instrumental in publishing Jung's works in England – a privilege that firm seems to have received with truly English indifference. Read's lifelong search, in the biological theories of d'Arcy Thompson, and finally in the psychology of Jung, for an ontological ground on which to establish the verities of the Imagination was in essence a religious quest of 'modern man in search of a soul.'

As to the 'simple faith' of his fathers – Herbert was the son of a yeoman farmer in Yorkshire, who died when Herbert was only eight years old, and whose memory he cherished all his life, – this he lost in the trenches of the First World War. In these same trenches David Jones (never mentioned by Prof. King) had become a Catholic convert; Herbert Read concluded that no beneficent God could have permitted the meaningless carnage he there witnessed, David that only the existence of God could make sense of it. When Herbert died, David said he missed him as his only remaining friend with whom he could share memories of the experience of that war. David Jones wrote the greatest of war books, *In Parenthesis*; Herbert Read too was a war poet, and a very fine one, whose life-long pacifism dated from those years. Some of his best later poetry was occasioned by the Spanish Civil War, and he supported in turn a whole series of political and non-political parties and activities, from the Anarchists to C.N.D., which denounced the evil and futility of war.

It was in the trenches (he was awarded a D.S.O. for bravery) that Read first gave evidence of the gift of assuming responsibility that made him for so many years the natural leader of the Modern Movement in England: he did not seek authority, he possessed it.

Professor King, child of a very different time, fails to understand the deep and serious values that inspired Herbert Read and his generation. Again, I do not wish to single out James King otherwise than as a representative of a coarser culture, in which values of the mind and the spirit are transposed into lower terms as into another key – that of the materialist world and its self-centred values. Whereas Herbert Read's generation was indeed 'in search of a soul', for the intellectual 'establishment' of modern Academia (as in other spheres) there is no question of the soul: love has been replaced by biological sex; the inspiration of the dedicated artist becomes a 'career' – a purely self-interest activity; the tireless search for truth and beauty becomes 'ambition'. If Herbert Read did not like Auden's poetry this could only be from personal jealousy – as if a disciple of Coleridge and Wordsworth could ever have shared Auden's outlook, who was, in the words of Rupert Doone of the

Group Theatre (who knew Auden well and produced his plays) an 'enemy of the Imagination.' Prof. King questions why Read should have preferred the work of Henry Moore above that of Barbara Hepworth (the statutory genuflexion to the women's movement?) as if this could only be a personal matter, and not Read's clear recognition of the monumental stature and fuller humanity of Moore as an artist. All is reduced to the personal – if over the years the friendship between Eliot and Read became at first strained and later cold, that too must be because Read felt 'overshadowed' by Eliot's greater genius as a poet. Innate incompatibilities of thought and commitment could only in the end estrange these two leaders of their generation.

As with the world of ideas, so with the world of feeling. Professor King describes as an 'obsession' Herbert Read's lifelong moral indignation against the outrage of war; (if this is 'obsession' what then is conviction?) he speculates on possible 'homoeoteric' tendencies in order to explain the close bond of the young officer with his men. Such nonsense belongs to another mentality altogether from that of a generation who together faced death in circumstances that made all flesh and blood, human or indeed animal, akin. The average expectation of life in the trenches was four days; and yet such poets as Wilfred Owen, Alun Lewis, Edmund Blunden, T. E. Hulme, and Read himself, with death breathing down their necks, still wrote poetry and so kept their souls alive.

Seen from the historical perspective Herbert Read's record is of an almost continual changing of position as he lived his life in his writings from book to book. But what might be seen as instability was, from another point of view, an inner honesty that could never accept any formulation as final and absolute. I was moved to read that Herbert never relinquished his quest to the day of his death, and continued to discover in his dreams imaginative meanings and values beyond, as he affirmed, any psychological theory. He lived and died in his faith in the Imagination.

His quest was punctuated by any number of successful activities, he organized exhibitions, sponsored manifestos, and was active in 'the politics of the unpolitical' in continuous practical efforts on behalf of the Modern Movement. To found a Museum of Modern Art in England was one dream he failed to realize because his flighty patron Peggy Guggenheim changed her mind. More unobtrusive and constant support he received from his fellow-Yorkshireman Eric ('Peter') Gregory, who endowed a Chair for a 'poet in residence' in the University of Leeds – another close associate not mentioned by Professor King. Another intimate friend not mentioned was distinguished man of letters Bonamy Dobrée. Neither did he record the important bond with the BBC formed by Leonie Cohn, a close friend over many years. The ICA did materialize, and for a time reflected Herbert's dream of a platform and meeting-place for living artists and writers. But he lived to see that dream

also turn into something of a nightmare. The purity of abstract art as it had been conceived by Kandinsky and the Russian constructivists, by Mondrian and Brancusi, and in this country by Ben Nicholson, Barbara Hepworth and Naum Gabo, gave place to the meaningless (Lichtenstein's 'Whaam!' and Warhol's cans of soup, and the obsessive and the sick in Francis Bacon, whom Read did not accept) not to mention the commercialism of a generation of artists and art-dealers cashing in on the 'modern' as a profitable commodity. C. S. Lewis, not a sympathizer with the Modern Movement, described the activities of so-called creative artists unilluminated by any higher vision, as 'making mud-pies'. Read, at the end of his life, used stictures not very different about the sheer rubbish he already saw usurping the name of art. Yet he had set out to promote all that was noblest and best: what had gone wrong?

I believe that had he lived now Herbert would have been with *Temenos* in our reaffirmation of the sacred source. That sacred source has been known to every religious tradition, and resides within every individual: tradition and inspiration spring from one root. As it is, I am but one among the many poets and other practitioners of one or another of the arts, to acknowledge my debt to Herbert Read that great devotee of 'the Arts of the Imagination'.

Kathleen Raine

New Version of Winnowing

ROBERT BLY: *American Poetry – Wildness and Domesticity*. Harper & Row, New York, 1990.

Although this book is called 'American Poetry', it would be a mistake to think that its relevance is confined to America. This is an outstanding collection of essays on the nature of vitality in poetry, written over a period of thirty years and covering a vast range of poetic aesthetics. In my opinion, this book deserves a place alongside the critical-poetic musings of such other twentieth century poets as W. B. Yeats, Wallace Stevens, Pablo Neruda and Federico Garcia Lorca. It is superb.

Wallace Stevens said that the poetic view of life is a larger thing than any poem, and 'to recognize this is the beginning of the recognition of the poetic spirit'. (*Adagia, Opus Posthumous*) This is, of course, what is usually missing from critics' writing on poetry. And, missing the poetic spirit, they miss everything.

A human body, just dead, is very like a living body except that it no longer contains something that was invisible anyway. In a poem, as in a human body, what is invisible makes all the difference. The presence of poetry in words is extremely mysterious. (AP33)

During an unplanned sojourn among Gujur farmers in the ancient mountain kingdom of Swat at the time of the India-Pakistan war of '71, I was invited to participate in the summer harvest and given a hand-sickle with which to cut the ears of wheat. Later, there were the mythic rituals of winnowing and threshing – all done without machinery. For the first time I really understood the expression: 'to separate the wheat from the chaff'. What is needed for this process is acute and discriminating vision, extraordinary powers of endurance and immense dedication.

'Separating the wheat from the chaff' is exactly what Robert Bly does in his best criticism. In a piece from 1978 ('Where Have All the Critics Gone?') Bly states the case for intelligent criticism:

... the country is full of young poets and readers who are confused by seeing mediocre poetry praised, or never attacked, and who end up doubting their own critical perceptions. When the older writers remain silent on what they despise, the younger ones get confused. (AP257)

The fighting spirit which infuses much of the writing in this book is very refreshing. In the piece called 'In Praise of Thomas McGrath', Bly blasts the insipidity and tameness which infests so much of American poetry:

Thomas McGrath has created his poetry out of the old love of conflict that invigorated literature until the universities shut it down in their search for deodorized and vinyl-coated tax dollars. That's one way McGrath might describe the change. We all see the new Yuppie flatness in the verse world, which amounts to muzzy mouthings about archetypes and grandfathers but nothing said about late capitalism, exploitation of trees, or opinions that infuriate the settled. Why should opinion have disappeared from poetry? Yeats built his foundations on opinion.* His opinions on the occult, on the value of Anglo-Irish aristocracy, on ghosts, on cycles of history make the polite scholars uncomfortable to this day. Or is it the readers who want poetry that is free of opinion? In any case we get what Donald Hall has called the McPoem, fast-food verse, packaged the same in all states, free of anger, made from contented steers. (AP139–40)

In the wonderfully incisive essay 'A Wrong Turning in American Poetry', Bly could be giving us a picture of himself when he describes the Spanish poet, Antonio Machado:

American poetry resembles a group of huge spiral arms whirling about in

* Evidently Bly is not using the word 'opinion' in Plato's sense, as contrasted with knowledge, but rather, as Blake would have said, 'many are not capable of a firm persuasion of anything'.

space. ... This island universe is rushing away from its own centre.

Let me contrast this picture with another. Spanish poetry of this century is moving inward, concentrating. Antonio Machado stands at the centre of Spanish poetry, standing at the centre of himself as well. His poems are strange without being neurotic. His thought is abundant and clear, near the centre of life. The younger Spanish poets can judge where they are from where he is. They can look in and see him standing there.

Encouraging poets to follow 'the secret corridors of the soul, the roads that dreams take' (Machado), Bly contrasts the wildness and inwardness of the European tradition with the prosaic domesticity and triteness of much contemporary American verse.

When he finds something worth keeping, some wheat amidst the chaff, Bly is quick to celebrate it, however. In the middle section of the book, 'The Bread of This World: Twelve Contemporary Poets', Bly finds much to praise. With James Wright it is his elaborate tenderness and quietness. In David Ignatow it is the poet's honesty in confronting the violence and death-energy of New York city. In Galway Kinnel it is his ability to sink into matter without losing touch with the world above the earth.

About Etheridge Knight, Bly says, 'How much sadness we feel because we have given up expecting truth. Every moment of our lives we exchange comfort or discomfort for statements we know are lies ... How abandoned our truth receiver is: a bag-man, who spends the day without hope. ... All of us who read Etheridge Knight know entire poems in which the truth receiver is able to live with dignity throughout the entire poem.'

With Denise Levertov it is her 'strength, her depth of feeling, sound cut out like granite, her feminine compassion, the rhythm able to carry grief, the images that rise from far down in the mind' and 'the clear resonant words ... set one next to the other like stones in a stream.'

Bly's book abounds with ideas. One is the importance of experiencing the face of 'the unknown'.

In art, I want to see the 'unknown' looking at me. I have a great thirst for that. ... If a man or a woman in art slowly creates a face we do not expect, we know that if we look at it closely, we will see the face of the unknown looking back. The face of the unknown is capable of many expressions – some so ecstatic we close our eyes, others that make the chest thump, as when an ant looks at us; and I am learning to judge poetry by how many looks like that I get in a book. If I get one or two, I am grateful and keep the book near me. (161)

Another idea is that political concerns and inward concerns are not opposites, nor are they incompatibles. Political poems can also be good poems, in touch with imagination. Few American poets write political poems. Bly has done so

and done it well. He points out that political poems impelled by hatred or fear are usually so heavy they sink out of sight. A poet needs to learn how to leave the personal realm, and this requires a great leap of imagination:

The life of the nation can be imagined also not as something deep inside our psyche, but as a psyche larger than the psyche of anyone living, a larger sphere, floating above everyone. In order for the poet to write a true political poem, he has to be able to have such a grasp of his own concerns that he can leave them for a while and then leap up into this other psyche. He wanders about there for a while and, as he returns, he brings back seeds that have stuck to his clothes, some inhabitants of this curious sphere, which he then tries to keep alive with his own psychic body. (249)

Bly is not sparing when he dislikes a poet's work. After praising James Dickey for pushing 'to the very edge of his perceptions' and driving 'for something infinite' in his early work, he writes that he finds *Buckdancer's Choice* 'repulsive'. In this collection 'the subject of the poems is power, and the tone of the book is gloating – a gloating about power over others.' The poem, 'Slave Quarters' is

one of the most repulsive poems in American literature. The tone is not of race prejudice, but of some incredible smugness beyond race prejudice, a serene conviction that Negroes are objects. It is not great life-enhancing poetry as the critics bumbled, but bad tasteless slurping verse. The language is dead and without feeling.' (179)

In 1966 when the American publishing world was grooming Robert Lowell for the post of Great Poet, Bly spoke out in anger over the lack of judgement among critics with respect to Lowell's recently published *For the Union Dead*:

Most of the poems in *For the Union Dead* are bad poems. Everyone writes bad poems at times, but advice from other poets is often a great help in keeping the worst of them from being published. Eliot, as everyone knows, sent *The Wasteland* to Pound. Pound also helped Yeats. Poets' criticism is harsh. Lowell seems to get none of it. He is surrounded by flatterers. Moreover, one has the sense that many of the bad poems in the book were written to satisfy demands – the demands of people like Jason Epstein, Stephen Marcus, and A. Alvarez, perfect examples of the alienated Establishment intellectual, none of whom knows anything about poetry. (146)

What Bly is saying, over and over, is that to stay alive poetry must stay in touch with inwardness. To do that a poet needs courage. Without courage he stays in the house of domesticity and does not set sail for the 'unknown'. In the 1978 interview with which the book ends, Bly tells the workshop teacher who

is interviewing him that the workshops are involved in some kind of lie. The lie is something like this: you can write good poetry without going against the sameness and tameness of the group mind, without knowing solitude and deep inwardness. You don't have to be 'wild' like Rilke or Neruda or Lorca or Machado, all of whom fought an intensely fearful battle with the angel of solitude.

The problem is, how does poetry maintain itself as a vivid, highly coloured, living thing? It's possible that originality comes when the man or woman disobeys the collective. The cause of tameness is fear. The collective says: 'If you do your training well and become a nice boy or girl, we will love you.' We want that. So a terrible fear comes. It is a fear that we will lose the love of the collective. I have felt it intensely. What the collective offers is not even love, that is what is so horrible, but a kind of absence of loneliness. Its companionship is ambiguous, like mother love. (325)

This is a book which English poets could learn from as much as American ones. More than that, it is a delight for anyone interested in the mysterious workings of the imagination.

Noel Cobb

The Voice of Orkney

GEORGE MACKAY BROWN: *The Wreck of the Archangel* (poems). John Murray, £11.95

GEORGE MACKAY BROWN: *The Masked Fisherman and other Stories*. John Murray, £12.95.

From the air the small green islands of Orkney look as if they have just emerged from the sea. Once ashore their history is everywhere apparent. Skara Brae, one of the few complete Stone Age settlements is not far from George MacKay Brown's home in Stromness. The Papae, the Celtic clergy, survive in the names of the islands, Papa Westray and Papa Stromsay. In Westray there is the ruin of a chapel dedicated to a Pictish saint, Triduana. It was the Norseman who named Eynhallow, where there was once a monastery, the holy island, and the monks' cells survive hollowed out of the rocks.

The Orkneyinga Saga is the history of Orkney in the time of the Vikings: stories of an heroic age, of earls and chieftains, and of the poet Arnor who wrote:

In helmstorm the high
heart made swords sweat

crimsoned ere fifteen years
 the claws of corbies.
 No stripling under sky-vault
 More steadfast, sure
 in conquest of his country
 than this kinsman of Einar.

Scandinavian domination, which lasted until the fifteenth century, and included two saints, Earl Magnus and Earl Rognvald, has been called the golden age of Orkney.

MacKay Brown's poem *Orkney: the Whale Islands* expresses something of the reactions of these early voyagers:

Dawn. A rainbow crumbled
 Over Orc. 'whale islands'.
 Then the skipper, 'The whales
 Will yield this folk
 Corn and fleeces and honey'.
 And the poet,
 'Harp of whalebone, shake
 Golden words from my mouth'.

The great red sandstone cathedral of St Magnus in Kirkwall, inaugurated by the saint's nephew, Earl Rognvald, in 1137, makes it impossible for an Orcadian to forget the unwarlike Norse Earl who turned from battle to a gentler faith. In his *Songs for St Magnus Day* MacKay Brown writes of the peace tryst which led Magnus to Egilsay and death. He foresees his end and utters this sinister warning:

If your good angel stands in a door
 With a song of greeting, be sure
 His dark brother is bidding, silent, inside.
 Today a long black coat stands at the pier.
 The welcomer
 Folds, with his cup of knowing, a cold fire.

The martyrdom eventually leads the blind and infirm to pray:

Saint Magnus, keep for us a jar of light
 Beyond sun and star.

In his sad poem *Greenpeace* MacKay Brown links Orkney's past with the threatening present:

I seek, I sing, the goodness of this land, said the poet,
 More lovely to me than a sweetheart.
 The kings of Pictland

Gave passage to his harp up the broken waters of the west –
 Now, being briefly troubled, it returns to purity,
 Always the blood and rust
 Are washed by sea and mist and rains.
 The kind mother
 Cleanses her children from cornsweats and slime of fish ...

But, MacKay Brown asks:

What bard now to strike
 The rock of elegy
 For sea, the lost mother,
 (The harp is flown,
 Carved ship-with-mariners
 A museum stone)
 Skuas, whale, herring
 Litter a rotted seashore.
 Cover mouth till the bell is struck.
 Our veins run still
 With salt and questing of ocean,
 Eyes to unlock horizon.
 New lucencies, new landfalls,
 Poets of machine and atom,
 A last bird at a tidemark
 Announces the death of the sea.
 Follow the harp, songless one.
 Find the bride
 Asleep, in lost Atlantis, beside the fountains of water.

MacKay Brown has four poems for the Orkney-born poet, Edwin Muir, who had influenced him when he studied at Newbattle Abbey College where Muir was Warden. Muir said of him that he had 'the gift of imagination and of words, the poet's endowment.' The first poem celebrates Muir's birth:

I expect, somewhere in Orkney, that day
 A soul slipped down to a boat
 And the tide bore a death into dawnlight ...
 Tide turns now. See, the women –
 Country welcomers round a wondering cry
 Are setting the new voyager in his crib.
 Far-off, far-off, against the headland
 Time surges, cries, celebrates.

Muir himself wrote in *An Autobiography*:

My mother was Elizabeth Cormack. There is in Deerness a ruined chapel which was built in the eighth or ninth centuries by an Irish priest called Cormack the Sailor, who was later canonised. Whether the names are connected over that great stretch of time in that small corner, no one can say; but it is conceivable and I like to think that some people in the parish, myself among them, may have a saint among their ancestors, since some of the Irish priests were not celibate.

MacKay Brown therefore has a delightful poem for *Cormack the Sailor*. In the last verse the gentle old man continues his paean of praise:

When I hear thunder, or raindrops,
I give praise to God.
I am an old man now, in a hood.
My fingers are twisted
And I have small taste for wine or fish.
As days and months and seasons pass
As I see my skull in a stone that shines after rain
O clear and pure as larks in a blue morning
I sing, *Deo Gratias*.

'Some cold and disagreeable evening,' MacKay Brown wrote, having added his homebrewed ale to *Recipes from the Islands of Orkney*, 'blow up the fire, open a couple of bottles, sip, swallow, and behold the squanderings of many of the miseries of the world.'

It is this side of Orkney life which the young boy sees in MacKay Brown's poem *The Horse Fair*:

I saw old Da in the crowd at last.
His face was like a barn lantern.
We stood and watched the tug-o'-war.
What red faces, bulging eyes, what staggerings!

and later

Three farmers,
Quoys, Graygarth and Longbeck,
Seemed like they had red patches sewn on their faces, coming out
of the whisky hut.

Among many winter poems with a Christian theme, MacKay Brown has included the mysterious *A Winter King*, which draws on the old Norse meanings. He sails with his death.

'Now', said the sea king
'Freight the death-ship
With jar and tapestry and gold.

I must sail alone, very far;
It is time for a new saga to be told.
The king was bronze-bearded, not sick
or meek-mouthed or old.
In the hull a beak had been cut,
Branch-beaked, a long gray wing.
Fishermen loosened the rope,
They sent the ship down the rollers
with a darkling shout
Under the voyager's star.

Since the composer Sir Peter Maxwell Davies settled on the Island of Hoy a kind of alchemy has existed between the two men. Maxwell Davies's musical imagination has been stimulated by MacKay Brown's work which has inspired beautiful Nordic music reflecting the skies, seas and natural sounds of the islands. Both men care as passionately about the dangers facing Orkney from uranium mining or nuclear waste as for its timeless beauty and tranquillity. They have both produced work for the St Magnus Festival of which Maxwell Davies is artistic director. It is held in the magnificent red sandstone cathedral in June, a month when the islands have no night, sunset merging into sunrise.

MacKay Brown's stories are made of the very stuff of Orkney by one who never leaves the islands. To paraphrase David Jones, one might ask: is the man the land or the land the man?

In his introduction he writes of the deeper layers of the islands' past:

There were the older tribes who built the brochs, Skara Brae and Brodgar; mysterious shadows on the skyline who came not too long after the melting of the ice. These anonymous people have left a few marks on their stones. Their stories perhaps survive in the remaining fragments of folk lore.

The Stone Rose is set in the time of the Pictish kings. It shows how a young man, isolated through injury, begins to make images on the walls of a cave.

Nothing like the pictures had been seen before on the mountain. The elders came to look at the pictures in the firelight. A few could only see meaningless scrawls. Others saw the fleetingness of their lives made into a kind of ceremony, a dance without music.

MacKay Brown shows how this primitive art is used as a method of communication to avoid conflict when a dragon ship lands.

The *Corn and the Tares*, the title taken from Edwin Muir's poem *One Foot in Eden* links Muir and the twelfth century poet Bjarni. Both were brought up on Wyre on the farm of The Bu. In a self-revealing comment MacKay Brown writes:

The mind delights to dwell on these two poets so far apart in time, breathing the same salt air and sitting perhaps at the same hearth-stone, and passing their 'angel-infancy' under that huge overreaching sky. Certainly, in their childhood they would have watched the sowing and the reaping of the same fields. It is in childhood and in such scenes that a poet is summoned.

Children appear very often in these stories, sometimes stepping as if from the unconscious with psychic powers. From Sophie in *The Tree and the Harp* acting as a kind of medium to a dead girl to the young boy in *A Winter Haul of Fish* who, during a time of great hardship, has a vision in which he sees strange men unloading fish at his father's pier. Next morning, the storm has passed and his vision becomes fact. The story ends:

From the neighbouring piers groups of fisher folk watched. They called – bright shivering words. They held out their hands towards the fish.

Only the boy slept in the box bed – the dreamer – as if he had been drawing in heavy lines all night long in a rough sea westward.

Anna's Boy has been hidden by his mother since his birth, driving the local women wild with curiosity. Only one has caught a glimpse of him and declares him 'more angel than bairn'. The hidden child does not appear until the island children are having a Christmas party at school. A storm blows up. The frightened children huddle together in the dark until

The outer door opened. A butterfly of light entered, and went wandering down the corridor between the rows of desks. Then it was petals, a folded flower of light. It lingered beside the Christmas tree and hung near it at last, tranquil and steadfast, a star.

'I'm Anna's boy', said the stranger who had carried the candle through the storm.

The stories are full of ghosts: the great Norse earl Rognvald, monks in the Viking-battered monastery of Eynhallow, the scholar who is finally seen in Tiran Og, the Island of the Young, and the old woman whose drowned lover comes to visit her at Yule. Many concern men and women from everyday Orkney life. The stories have nothing whatever to do with sophisticated, cleverness or coldheartedness. The spirit of St Magnus appears to survive in them and to create a poetic pre-lapsarian world of those who live in close knit communities, their characters formed by wind and wave.

In his introduction MacKay Brown writes:

The wheel of summer light and winter darkness always have influenced northern poets and story-tellers, their themes and styles. The seasons are not opposites, they are complementary. It is in winter barns and cupboards that the riches of summer are stored. Into the dark solstice

comes the light of the world. We know that our candles and fires are one with the corn-ripening sun. From the wheel of the year came, wavering and lovely, the dances of Johnsmas in summer and the boisterous reels of Yuletide.

A northern story-teller must try to order his words into the same kind of celebration.

The stories are indeed a celebration of Orkney, where storms can whip the sea until it appears to be boiling, but where on clear tranquil days one can hear the seals singing on the skerry.

Jean MacVean

Echoes and Resonances

GERARD CASEY: *Echoes*. Rigby and Lewis, 1990, £20 (available only through the publishers: 12 Landsdowne Place, Hove, East Sussex BN3 1HG).

Gerard Casey's book of essays and poems is a record of thoughts and verses with a strong imagery conveying to the receptive reader a rich field of consciousness. Today we are forced to build up inner worlds of defence in order to survive in our sad world with its apparent loss of Tradition's natural vitality. The orthodox may retire to the iconostasis and the Liturgy for comfort, but we in the West have a situation of confusion and the lack of obvious 'icons'. Therefore, to find a book like that of Gerard Casey is to find the testimony of a fellow traveller along the way.

In his introduction, Charles Lock makes a clear address to the reader, who in the pages to follow must be prepared to consider the work of a poet to whom the *philosophia perennis* is fundamental. Gerard Casey has been led to the exploration of 'the archaic roots of Christianity' and central to his work is Jacob Boehme's profound insight into the Incarnation as the key by which matter is seen to 'bear the signature of the Maker'.

The title 'Echoes' is intuitively understood by the reader, for here are resonances in the depths of a man's soul to thoughts and signs which have their origin in the eternal worlds. Their sound rehearses and awakens the mind to the myths and teaching of the saints over the ages. Their repetition, reconsideration and attentive reception by the mind in the heart is like a sacred litany instilling light into darkness. Too easily what is above dies like an echo in our being. To rehearse such matters helps performance in the realm of action.

The first section of poems is made up of translations, paraphrases, 'echoes' of Greek poets – Homer, Cavafy, Kabbadias, Gryparis, to name but a few. One

is reminded of the translations of Edmund Keeley, Philip Sherrard and Rae Dalven. But Casey has allowed verses in a language other than his own to sink deeply in his consciousness in order that word and idea may kindle a response within him. The result are poems which are indeed 'Re-Visions' and do not read as translations.

These first pages lead the attention to models known over the centuries, models which have inspired the West's art, music, poetry and inner life. In order to discover this world of forms the poet is urged to travel 'to another city better than this' for all about has become known as 'black ruin ... wasted years'. The inner voice prompts:

the city is within you, you take it with you
 you are the city
 ... you cannot escape
 for you there is no road out
 no ship to another land
 go as you will
 you will always reach again
 this city (after Cavafy)

Through recognizing the 'city within' the poet gradually begins to:

remember other suns
 suns nearer the light
 remember in my blood
 nearer to the light
 a smile atones for the flame (after Odysseus Elytis)

The reader has here a new final twist to the tale of the moth and the candle flame. Death is rapidly turned into an awareness that hears the call of Easter Day.

everyone of you
 gather in joy
 in bay-covered churches
 lift your arms
 before the icons
 gather in peace
 embrace – and – all of you –
 cry out
 'Christ is risen!' (after Dionysios Solomos)

The second section of verses entitled 'Between the Symplegades' are 'Re-Visions' of Seferis – in the author's words, 'a mythological story', that is, the knowing of models which have been shown in the verses and thoughts of

others. The reader discovers set before him a journey across a landscape wherein one is prompted with encounters with the Greek gnosis. For example, in order to escape the cave of mortality and illusion the prisoner must first unmask the nature of the Medusan head. Loneliness is also presented as the necessary purgatory by which one learns the meaning of exile. To escape the cave means to find increasingly a rehearsal of echoes within. 'South Wind' is a moving account of the ease by which the eternal worlds may be forgotten:

... who among the decimated villages
 will count the cost for us
 of our decision to forget?
 who will accept our offering?
 autumn moves to winter

Once more the sequence of verses concludes with the acceptance of death.

The first two sections of poems serve to prepare the reader for 'South Wales Echo' written for David Jones. This is a fine and moving sequence of words and evocative images based on a childhood experience, the haunting response to the realization that three men were to be executed, one of whom was believed to be innocent – a clear echo of Golgotha. Casey, like his master David Jones, gathers time and space into the palm of his hand and that which he gently holds before him becomes the stage of seen and unseen warfare. Christ's Passion reverberates from Golgotha to Cardiff, from the cheers of the mocking crowd to the cries of a newspaper boy. The woof and weft of word and image hold the patterns of history, myth and personal experience. This is a work which demands to be read out aloud in order to hear its full dramatic impact. As with David Jones the Liturgy is known as the deep field of consciousness which holds all the patterns in focus ... that deep knowing of the Incarnation in all events and things.

Casey's verses are written for reading and re-reading. They are written for those who have throughout the ages set out on the journey. It is a journey which has no two ways the same, though there are resonances to be shared and each traveller in his or her own way must allow their quality to echo within their own heart.

John Allitt

Bird of the Wilderness

The Wrong Music: the Poems of Olive Fraser, 1909–1977, introduced and edited by Helena Shire. Canongate, Edinburgh, 1989, hardback, £11.95.

I knew Olive Fraser during her student days at Cambridge (1933–6), though I was never a close friend. She was startlingly beautiful – a trim figure, deep set blue eyes, high cheekbones, a very determined chin, and above all, a mass of sun-gold hair. She seemed a veritable Scandinavian princess who had strayed into the world of humdrum mortals. To her, described by her Aberdeen University friends as ‘Not Florimal – more Atalanta’, Girton must have felt a cold and loveless place. Looking back on those years, she writes in bitterness of spirit:

Here does Love lose his wings
Where women are female things ...

Here, my blood, muffle thy drum
Lest the hangman come.

Here, my muse, as we had died,
Sleep or be crucified.

Here's not thy Parnassus bright
But Hecla's icy light ...

On a Distant Prospect of Girton College

Olive was of Scottish descent. Her father, Roderick Fraser, was a farmer's son from Flemington on the way to Inverness. Her mother, Elizabeth King, was also a countrywoman. They had married secretly, ‘before the Sheriff’, in Old Aberdeen in 1908. Very soon after, Roderick Fraser emigrated to Australia to try his hand at farming there. Olive was born in the gracious home of her great aunt, Ann Maria Jeans, on January 20, 1909, St Agnes’ Eve, cherished by Olive as ‘my romantic birthright, the one thing I would not change with anyone.’ Roderick Fraser failed in his venture, but invited his wife to join him and then, meanly, left her to fend for herself while he returned home. Eventually, she too returned, but they lived separately a few miles from one another, and the marriage was kept a close secret.

Meanwhile, Olive grew up in ‘the cobbled port’ of Nairn under the compassionate care of her great aunt who was her ‘love, lamp, light, home, fireside and star.’ The fact that she was an unwanted child burnt deep into her. This ‘un-love’ finds expression in several poignant poems. She remarked to a friend: ‘The family (the Frasers) gave me presents, books, lovely clothes, a gold watch – but no affection.’ She never met her father, and resented her mother's efforts to discipline her. Fortunately, she was happy at school and at King's College, Old Aberdeen, where she excelled, not only in English and History, but in Zoology, ‘Moral Phil’ and Greek Art and Thought. In her very

first year, she was awarded the Calder Prize for English verse. She shared the same prize in her third year for a poem, 'Fugue of Morning', written in twenty masterly Spenserian stanzas, two of which are printed in the volume under review. Here she made life-long friends who brought her comfort and affection during her long struggle against mental illness and 'desperate, faithful poverty.'

When she did enter Girton, she was nearly twenty-five years old, and found the restrictions of College life and the prevailing atmosphere of the day hard to bear. But here too, in spite of the oncoming mental illness, diagnosed as schizophrenia, she brought distinction to the College by winning the Chancellor's Medal for English Verse for her poem, *The Vikings*. She was the first woman to gain the award (1935).

She left Cambridge with an aegrotat, in wretched health and with little prospect of getting work. When the War started (1939) she obtained a post in the cypher department of the Royal Navy. She was posted from November 1940 to April 1941 on the staff of the Commander-in-Chief H.M.S. Cochrane II Rosyth and Western Approaches, Naval Intelligence. In May 1941, she left at her own request. Rank IIIrd Officer WRNS. It was at this period that she underwent a harrowing experience, during a night watch, when the Docks of Liverpool were bombed and a Maternity Hospital got a direct hit.

I have seen Sirius fly
It seemed, the ruined sky
And the babe in gobbets fall
By the burning wall.

In a Glen Garden (After War)

It was at this time too that she found the great love of her life who died around 1950, though there is no record of his name or of his death.

I had forgot, my love, that thou wert dead
And happily, happily said 'I must go home.'
And suddenly the stars strayed, sudden fled
Unto the towers like terrified birds, the foam
Of monstrous oceans broke over my head.
I had forgot, my love, that thou wert dead.

In a City Street

Twenty years later, 'the friend of whom I never speak' is still remembered in a deeply moving poem:

Through all the dark fields of absence
I love you yet ...
O friend of whom I never speak
Some stratum deep

Below my merry earthly heart
 That room doth keep
 With all its hopes and peace and pain untouched.

The Locked Door, 1971

After the brief spell with the Royal Navy, and another in hospital, Olive returned to Nairn to nurse her mother who was crippled with arthritis, and to care for her beloved great aunt. When the latter died in 1946, of cancer, Olive was distraught with grief. Her mental condition grew worse, but she made a heroic effort and fought back, left Nairn and found a post in the Bodleian Library, Oxford. She was happy for a while, renewing old friendships with men such as Oliver Zangwell whom she had known at Cambridge, and James Wylie with whom she had shared a desk when in the Navy. But the tenure ended with a violent quarrel and Olive resigned in high dudgeon.

In 1952, she was received into the Roman Catholic Church where at last she found a haven of peace and spiritual strength. There are several beautiful, devotional poems belonging to this period (1949–54), as also touching tributes to such friends as the Franciscan monk, Fr. Alexander Burgess, who had some of these lyrics set to music and sung at church services when Olive was present.

She now rented a small cottage in Greenwich and eked out a precarious existence, writing poetry, working part-time, and as ever, in dire poverty. The rest of her life is a series of episodes in and out of hospital. For a time, old friends lost sight of her. Eventually, she returned to Aberdeen where friends again gathered around her. The last three years of her life, 1973–6 (she died early in 1977), were, to quote her own words, 'the wonderful years', when she was restored to perfect health and her former good looks, and the poetry flowed. She died of cancer, penniless, in the Royal Mental Hospital, Cornhill, Aberdeen, where she had spent many years.

Turning to the poetry, one is surprised and delighted to find not only melody and mastery of verse form, subtle, learned allusions, but also the countryman's love of birds and flowers, all combined and raised to that eternal vision of Truth and Beauty which is man's spiritual birthright. As an oriental, deep-rooted in my ancestral faith, the devotional poems appeal most:

O I was once the night
 Around the Invisible, once the ecstasy
 Built into God. To Him my wounds now fly
 Through sickness, sadness, silences, slow hours
 My bridges of insensate mystery.

I have no song

I, for one, am deeply grateful to Helena Shire for the illuminating footnotes at the end of the volume. Without these, I would have been lost.

Then there are the War Poems and the poems written after and during her nervous breakdowns. These transmute the anguish of the hour into 'an other and organic whole.'

There is no night so deep as this
Inevitable mind's abyss,
Where I now dwell with foes alone.

Lines Written after a Nervous Breakdown (I)

They recall Hopkins'

O the mind,
The mind has mountains, no man fathomed ...

Olive had a masterly knowledge of Scots, was learning Gaelic and reading such books as Adamnan's *Life of Columba*, *Carmina Gadelica* as well as early lyrics of Ireland. The fruit of such studies found their 'exact felicity' of expression in such moving poems as *Harp song for Alban* and *The Eagle to his Children*. As for the poem *To Night*, Helena Shire describes it as 'cosmic in scope.'

The House of Night is raised by incantation, by subtle iteration of key words ... as by chime of rhyme and refrain. The wild hare and all homing birds *belong*, as do the mountain peaks and islands named. Man is incomer – with an exile's longing for home or the ardent desire of the early Celtic religious to seek sanctity in the wilderness. These two contrary impulses are reconciled in the poet's joy. (Intro. p. 40).

To appreciate her poetry to the full, it is important to follow her learned allusions to their source. For example, in *The Unwanted Child*, Betelgeuse, the star which brings talents, honour and fame to those born under its influence, is juxtaposed besides Algol, the most evil star in the heavens, the eye of Pegasus, causing mischief to those born under its influence. Olive felt she was torn between these two opposite forces throughout her life. Again, how many today would know that *dendron* is the Greek word for trees, and *dendrites* the moss-like, tree-like, markings on stones, such markings being considered the 'signatures' of God on His living creation? The zodiac sign of Virgo, which appears in August, is both star and the Virgin. Hence she is referred to as 'the pleading star,' the intercessor pleading for the relief of suffering souls, (*A Shelf of Books*). Further, it is essential to keep in mind that the constellation Cygnus, is in the form of a cross before one can enter fully into such a seemingly artless lyric as the following:

I have such joy to be alive
I am so happy to feel well.
All the sorrows lie outside
All the heavenly roses dwell

In this blest now which like a star
 Of holy Cygnus lights my way.
 I am more rich than princes are
 That I know this one day.

I have such joy

The reader should be grateful to Helena Shire for annotating all such allusions for our deeper enjoyment of these poems.

I conclude with what Olive might have described as her epitaph:

When I shall die, let there be mountains near,
 The milk-white ptarmigan, the wand'ring deer.
 When I shall die, let the poor dipper call
 Out of her foothills by the waterfall.

O let no human, festering, hating heart
 Come in that place with ignorance or art.
 Let there be none to mock my life with words
 But the bare mountains and the calling birds.

When I shall die

As I lay the book down, and close my eyes, that 'unforgettable voice' comes clear across the chasm of years. The resonance lingers – the passion and the pain.

Piloo Nanavutty

A Grand and Secret Art

ANTHONY ROOLEY: *Performance: Revealing the Orpheus Within*. Element Books, 1990, 142 pp. £7.99.

Followers of the prestigious Early Music group *The Consort of Musick* will be glad to see that its director, Anthony Rooley, has finally written the book they have all been waiting for. In the brief space of 142 pages he offers an astonishingly rich brew of possibilities, everything, indeed, which the performer could require.

However, performance means far more than the production of beautiful sounds or words on the stage of the theatre or auditorium. It can mean, more centrally, the production of a personal song, that aspect of the music of the spheres which is emitted by every individual.

From Marcilo Ficino to Karlheinz Stockhausen the presence of the Divine Breath has been acknowledged by composers and performers alike, each in his or her own way. Without it the most perfect technical performance will be empty and dull. It is, rather, as Anthony Rooley acknowledges, in the silences

between the notes, that this magical element is evoked. From thence it spreads, filling the vehicle prepared for it, into the performance of the whole.

As Ficino himself wrote:

The soul receives the sweetest harmonies and numbers through the ears, and by these echoes is reminded and aroused to the divine music which may be heard by the more subtle and penetrating sense of mind ... By the ears ... the soul ... is led back to the deep and silent memory of the harmony which it previously enjoyed. The whole soul is then kindled with a desire to fly back to its rightful home, so that it may enjoy that true music again.

All of this applies as fully to living. If we allow ourselves – as is too often the case – to be prescribed by the received impressions and dictates of our current soulless society, we lose the inspired wonder and unexpectedness of life, and are left with a neat, tidy circumspect existence which is as empty as it is valueless.

These factors can be evoked by the performer – whether musician or actor, shaman or clown, both in themselves and in their audience. Anthony Rooley lets us see some of the secrets – jealously guarded in many instances, and with reason for these are matters of power and magic – by which the performing artist reaches out to touch the hearts and souls of the audience. His book is short, pithy and sometimes profound, yet it wears its profundity with the same jaunty ease that followers of the *Consort of Musick* will have seen for themselves at concert after concert. The seriousness, or to give it its proper name, *decoro*, is always balanced by the *sprezzatura*, the ‘noble negligence’ of Castiglione’s *Courtier*. The two come together in the central principle of *grazia* – so much more than ‘grace’ – the true celebration of divinity by both performer and auditor.

Above all Rooley seeks to show us how we may contact ‘the Orpheus within’, the divine musician who is present, to a greater or lesser extent, in all of us. The search for his presence, and its manifestation in the performance of our lives, is both an ennobling and transforming act. It can, quite literally, evoke changes at the most profound levels of the soul. *Performance* makes the point that this is neither a lost nor totally forgotten art – though it may well be a neglected one – and that it is still present in the work of many performers today; not necessarily either the best known or the most highly paid. And it makes known another secret – that the radiant art of the performer is accessible to all – not only those with the skills of musician or actor, but everyone involved in the wonderful enactment of living.

John Matthews

The 'India of the Imagination'

KATHLEEN RAINE: *India Seen Afar*. Green Books, 1990, £14.95.

The Sanskrit word for philosophy, *darshan* barely conveys its nuances in the passive translation – 'to witness'. The unique relationship of the beholder to that which he beholds requires a reaching out and seeking that fulfills itself in receiving, as it were, the gift of a glimpse that empowers testimony.

In the very title of her book, Kathleen Raine evokes the dynamic process of vision whereby light connects with light, giving and receiving. What she saw and that only 'afar', is what she wishes to offer as communication which is not description. The hazard of blurring the distinction between the two is real in situating the book. The here-and-now does but reflect that which is apart from time and form, like stitches which work out a noble tapestry.

Her voyage is in the realm where inner spaces and the outer fuse in a flash of understanding, because the memory-city within lifts out its own shape from India's sights and sounds and smells. It is the image above that pre-exists all and imprints itself on conditional existence.

Why India? The cities of imagination have mirrored the paradise of poets since time began. Is the locale of a bewildering subcontinent necessary to seek out the universe of the soul? Perhaps it is, especially for the unique trajectory of life-experience that is named Kathleen. Perhaps also because that thread in the collective experience of mankind which is called India has much of our hope, including that of today's India and Indians, hanging upon it. The Indian strand in the great tradition of the human race has received much from others in the past and now has much to offer to man's legacy again.

The tension between the universal and the specific snaps in the moment's insight which grasps the essential identity of the two. The metaphor becomes reality. The poet's very personal ground of being is her own springboard to the vast and transcendental. Kathie of Bavington had to be the way she was and for her, it had to be India that her soul sought out for home. Bavington, in an instant's recognition, is connected to the dusty roadside village in Punjab, both throbbing with the impulse of the archetypal hamlet. The colourful throngs go in their procession towards church, temple or only village fair – to the same festive altar.

But Bavington has fled from the West and the dusty Indian village might vanish too. Layer by layer, the world has been stripped of its innocence. Ahead lie the terrifying vistas of vast negations. The diminished image of man cowering on this plain, is at its meanest dimension since the age of the naked ape. Others may well paint them, but not for her those landscapes of deprivation. If there is one realm in which Kathleen Raine cannot exist, it is that of negation. With the original vigour of the Western mind, she sets out to discover that which the woman in her knows exists.

Description and contemplation intertwine to delineate both, a country as well as 'a state of being'. She watches the Sun rise over the Bay of Bengal. What does she see? What does she listen for? Perhaps the sound of silence or the primordial word. Something stirring in the waters as if waiting to bring forth the image of the soul's universe, waiting for grace. The moment passes but she has glimpsed the light afar and felt the comfort of knowing that whatever 'is' can never 'not be'.

That, in essence, is India: the consciousness of the continuum that is existence over time, space, thought and emotion, something that still runs through the depths of all life in the great river valleys and the peninsula. The classical concept of *Rita* or cosmic order underpins the traditional Indian values – the sense of the sacred in nature, the reverence for all things living and, of course, the intuitive perception of the unity of all creation reflected in the ethics of *vasudhaiva kutumbakam* or the world as a family. Down the ages, these values flowed through the great poetry of India to irradiate the culture of this civilization. It is a culture that belongs to the high and the low, alike. The integrated vision and the continuing affirmation of the Vedic worldview is the essence of India, seen not only afar but also very near.

Sometimes, in the flow of history, energies somehow converge upon one or another location and the traveller is transfixed, silent upon a peak. The banyan tree casts its great shade upon sun-drenched earth. The heady scent of champak and jasmine mingle with the breath of grass on a summer's evening. The little oil-lamp glimmers in the rustic roadside shrine. Strangers meet, almost as brothers, and there is abundance in sharing all things – from food, to space, to the joys and sorrows of every-day life as well as larger mysteries – over the synaptic exchange of intuitions. All this she has seen and striven to recount, not in her native tongue of poetry but in prose, that our unborn grandchildren may not mistake the testament for fantasy.

The unique historical experience of the people of the land made it possible for an alternate worldview to survive through time. The ebb and flow of the political process took place on a stratum separate from that of the civilization. Its boundaries were not until recently the defined ones of the nation state. The long relationship between this land and its people embodied the myth of the great mother which is part of every sacred tradition of the earth, as opposed to the patriarchal principle of territory and its defenders.

Above all, it was the experience of inevitable suffering which shaped a deep understanding of life's realities as only pain can. What will survive of the tradition in the onslaught of change, political and technological, only time will tell. Kathleen Raine reflects this wide apprehension but also pins her faith upon that which having been must ever be. She says,

... things come into being only when a mind comes to bear on that unknown ... I pin my faith on ant and woodpecker. No matter if I were

to cease to be, the IT IS of every moment has been ... a part of what forever belongs to indivisible being.

She echoes the Rig Veda's creation hymn, 'Neither non-being nor Being existed then, neither air nor the firmaments above,' that is the crucible of all existence, 'whence the rising sun does come and into which it sets again.' It is also the realm of continual renewal, infinite resurrection, in which the seeing or *darshan* itself brings forth 'being'.

Sima Sharma

Warring Fragments

PHILIP SHERRARD: *The Sacred in Life and Art*. Golgonooza Press, 1990, 162 pp.

The word 'devil', Philip Sherrard remarks in passing in the first chapter of this book, comes from a Greek word meaning 'a throwing apart'; and indeed the sowing of dragon's teeth in the human spirit has from the first been Satan's strategy. In a cosmos in which all that is, is holy, evil thrives in the fomenting of oppositions: it seeks to shatter the unity of being into warring fragments, to pit one good against another in a struggle which can only lead to loss. Such conflicts rest ultimately upon delusion; but those so deluded can inflict incalculable damage upon themselves, each other, and their world.

In *The Rape of Man and Nature*, published by Golgonooza Press in 1987, Sherrard presented a cogent argument tracing the plight of modern civilization to a failure – originating in the Aristotelian tradition of Latin Christendom, evolving into the scientism of the Enlightenment – to recognize the intimate coinherence, the *perichoresis*, of temporal and divine. In the present collection of essays he discusses further aspects of our dangerously polarized mentality, a state of mind which he does not hesitate to label 'schizophrenia'.

In the first chapter, 'Presuppositions of the Sacred', Sherrard examines among other questions the mystery of the interdependence of immanence and transcendence, the doctrine that God and creation are in a sense aspects of one another by the very fact of their sheer ontological distinctness. This union is the wellspring of being, the fulcrum on which symbolism, art, religion, and indeed the essential destiny of humanity and the universe repose. In 'The Sacrament' he expands further on this theme, now in terms of its actualization in the liturgy, and discusses the preconditions of 'sacramental consciousness' in an individual or culture. The third and fourth chapters ('The Artist and the Sacred: Where the Battle Lies' and 'Modern Art and the Heresy of Humanism') look critically at the premises and rhetoric of modern secular art, as exemplified in the writings of Herbert Read; while in 'Art and Originality' the contemporary identification of originality with innovation is

contrasted with the traditional view that the truly 'original' is that which most faithfully reflects its origin, its archetypal source. In 'The Art of the Icon' and 'The Art of Transfiguration' Sherrard discusses some of the artistic implications of the reciprocity, more fully developed in Greek than in Latin theology, of the doctrines of incarnation (God has become human) and *theosis* or deification (humans are to become gods): the mutual mirroring of Deity and humanity is considered from another perspective in 'The Nuptial Mystagogy', where it is argued that the division of the sexes reflects a two-foldness in the Godhead itself, being in fact an expression of the wholeness, not the incompleteness, of our condition. The final chapter, 'Vision of the Sacred: The Choice Before Us', calls for the reconciliation of reason and imagination as an indispensable concomitant to the reopening of our eyes to the divine reality of things.

Hierarchy is inseparable from true unity, certainly from any conception of the sacred or transcendent: our human problem is to distinguish between the ladder of essential being on the one hand, and on the other our own preferences and schematizations. It is in this respect that I find there to be points on which I differ from the author. In the first chapter, speaking of the transcendental predicates of beauty, truth, and goodness, Sherrard singles beauty out as being 'double-edged', prone to seduce us into subjection to the senses (p. 18): but surely any of these supreme qualities can be perverted if it is pursued, for its own sake, in isolation from its fellows. In a discussion of the ways in which the human sexes reflect the androgyny of the Godhead, we are told that man represents 'the non-manifest creative energy of God' while woman corresponds to 'the "place" in which God manifests Himself' (p. 119): this might appear to come close to echoing, on a more exalted plane, the identification of man with spirit and woman with matter which has been the vehicle for so much of our culture's self-alienation. A wariness of the imagination, amounting at times to distrust, is a strand which runs throughout the book. In the final chapter this is expressed in a subtle argument which, if I have read aright, becomes involved in inconsistency: the position that reason and imagination 'run together in the same harness' in the service of the 'noetic intellect' gives place to a scheme in which the layered worlds of body, soul, and spirit (the last of these being 'the world of pure Intelligences' which is the noetic intellect's domain) are contemplated respectively by the senses, the imagination, and the reason (pp. 136-7).

Truth and beauty, man and woman, reason and imagination: we can scarcely help ranking them in our minds, as our individual temperaments incline us. But there is a danger here, the risk of pitting the good against the good; and times as oblivious and hostile to the spirit as our own can scarcely afford divisions of this kind. Sherrard writes here, as always, with courage and great clarity – qualities precious and sorely needed where all too much is compromised and muddled. I feel, however, that some of the matters treated

in this book cannot be clear to our mortal minds: pattern and hierarchy are surely there, but shrouded in the radiance of mystery.

In pursuing an issue which I believe to be important, I fear that I may have conveyed a distorted impression of the book itself. Taken as a whole, it is a sensitive and lucid affirmation of the overarching integrity of cosmos and Creator, the incarnate sanctity of sacrament and icon, the ineffable mutuality of God and man. At a time of transition, calamity, and promise, these are words to sharpen our minds and guide our lives.

John Carey

A Vision of this Holiest Earth

JOHN MICHELL: *New Light on the Ancient Mystery of Glastonbury*. Gothic Image Publications, Glastonbury, Somerset, 1990. pp. 180.

Ever since the publication of his book *View Over Atlantis* in 1969, John Michell has been producing a steadily growing oeuvre of fascinating work, dealing with the re-emergence of primordial traditions, which offer a balanced worldview and a means by which the ancient spiritual values once possessed by all humanity may once again be recognized.

In books such as *City of Revelation*, *Ancient Metrology*, *Secrets of the Stones* and *The Dimensions of Paradise* he has continued to explore and expand the themes of the ancient science, ably demonstrating that, contrary to received historical bias, our ancestors possessed an understanding of creation and its operations which has yet to be bettered.

His long involvement with the small market town of Glastonbury in Somerset, which has itself become something of a focus for work on the ancient traditions, has led to the writing of this latest book, which is not only a fascinating and stimulating account of the various mysteries associated with 'England's Ancient Avalon', but is also, in some sense, a summing up of many of the themes which have informed the author's previous books.

He deals at length with such vexed questions as the Glastonbury Zodiac, a vast terrestrial chart, believed by many to be etched into the very landscape around the town; the association of Joseph of Arimathea and the coming of the Grail to Glastonbury; and the legends concerning the giants who some believe may once have walked the earth of Somerset and left their marks upon it.

Other topics include the 'psychic' archaeology of Frederic Bligh Bond, whose remarkable results in uncovering the lost remains of the Lady Chapel at Glastonbury Abbey received considerable recognition until it was revealed how he had arrived at them through the use of talented mediums; and the ever-present Arthurian associations which continue to draw large numbers of pilgrims every year.

But Glastonbury is more than the sum of its parts. It has, as John Michell notes, 'many mysteries'; but there is far more to it than this. The heart of Glastonbury beats with a secret fire of its own, and it is to this fire that John Michell offers access through his perceptive writings.

In so doing he follows in the footsteps of a long line of mystical interpreters who have helped illumine the deeper mysteries of the inner Britain. Such visionaries as A.E., Yeats, Blake, William Sharp, Dion Fortune and Frederic Bligh Bond have recognized therein a lost Golden Age, perceiving it to be a mirror for the future. Thus, for John Michell as for many others, Glastonbury becomes 'a Somerset Elysium', a fragment of that lost Age of Gold which has remained somehow untouched, 'renewed ... in the instincts of every new-born child ... [haunting] the memory of every soul throughout life.'

Such was the world which A.E. believed we had only lost the ability to see, and which, in John Michell's words, was once recognized by the Dwellers in Avalon:

Theirs was the 'primordial vision', said by Guénon to be one of the two components of the Grail, the instrument of paradise on earth. The other is the 'primordial tradition', the addition of which makes it possible to obtain the ideal state wherein the comforts and culture of civilisation are combined with the spiritual perception of the old tribal wanderers.

It is this vision which John Mitchell continues to uphold and expound for a new generation which has, perhaps more than any in recent times, begun to search again for that lost world, even as they have been abjured to forget it forever.

John Matthews

Mystery Britain

CAITLIN AND JOHN MATTHEWS: *The Arthurian Tarot and Hallowquest: Tarot Magic and the Arthurian Mysteries*. The Aquarian Press, 1990.

It is unusual for learned authors to announce an important discovery through the medium of a pack of cards, but Caitlin and John Matthews are uninhibited in their use of media, for they are not merely writers but are effective as teachers and missionaries. They are Celtic idealists. They work in the traditional manner, through literature, music and the arts, to heal the modern mind with the influence of sacred types and images, and now they have adopted another approach, also traditional, of promoting knowledge and perception by means of the Tarot. The discovery on which this work is based is that the 22 Greater Powers and 56 Lesser Powers of the Tarot pack can be made to correspond quite precisely with characters and symbols in the Grail

Quest. The Emperor and Empress are, of course, Arthur and Guinevere, the Magician is Merlin, the Fool is the Seeker, and the Wheel of Fortune answers to the Round Table, and so on. Thus one more pillar is added to the temple of the Celtic Mysteries which Caitlin and John are so energetically restoring.

Some idea of their extraordinary productivity, in the literary field alone, is given by the list of their previous works in the bibliographies of these two new books. Individually, jointly or in collaboration with others, they have published eighteen books in the last five years, more than half of them since 1989, and further works are in the pipeline.

From the very beginning the Matthews have transcended the dry, quasi-historical view of Arthur as a British hero of the Dark Ages who resisted the Saxons, and have acknowledged the ancient and archetypal nature of the Grail legends. In these legends they see the components of a mythic cycle which paralleled the stages of the Celtic Mystery ritual and contributed to the former enchantment of Britain. The first Matthews book, *The Western Way* initiated their programme of reconstructing and renewing the sacred science of Celtic Druidry, and in subsequent writings they have accompanied their readers along the path which leads to initiation. Caitlin and John are quite unpretentious and make no claim to being adepts. This, they say, is a do-it-yourself age. Everything they have learnt comes from their wide reading followed by insights and revelations. Readers are invited to take part in their quest, and those who do so make the best possible approach to the Mysteries, in the company of honest, alert, well-informed contemporaries.

This present work comes in two parts. *The Arthurian Tarot* consists of the new Tarot cards, packed in a plastic box which is designed to look like a book and which also contains a real book on how the cards may be used. A separate volume, *Hallowquest*, amplifies the handbook, going deeper into the arcane significance of the cards, elaborating on their uses for divination, meditation and the elevation of the mind, and concluding with full details of magical ceremonies based on sequences in the Celticized Tarot pack.

Bearing in mind that these works are designed to have a wide influence among the victims of modern education, it hardly seems fair to make aesthetic criticisms. The 78 paintings by Miranda Gray, reproduced as cards, are probably just what the publishers wanted, for they reflect the bland, sanitized view of Celtic life, religion and landscapes which prevails within the New Age marketplace. They do not, however, seem very interesting as works of art, nor are they particularly striking or memorable as card images. Yet the publishers are no doubt attuned to their market, and if these cards prove widely appealing they will serve a genuinely worth-while purpose, exposing minds to the literary influence of Caitlin and John Matthews.

The Matthews phenomenon is surely one of the signs and wonders of the times through which we are now passing. They are times of crisis, of looming catastrophes and great changes impending – on all levels. As the speed of

events increases, old indulgences no longer seem relevant. W. B. Yeats dreamed of reconstituting the ancient ritual – or constant cycle of rituals – for the invocation of the Grail and the re-enchantment of Britain. In the same tradition, Jessie Weston in her revealing work, *From Ritual to Romance*, suggested that the pagan Grail ritual, accompanied by the Arthurian mythic cycle, passed into the early British Church and constituted the Mysteries of Celtic Christianity. Scholars ever since have languidly debated the validity of these perceptions, but the Matthews have no time for pedantry. They have come to understand for themselves that Yeats and the mystical scholars were right, that the Celtic culture was sustained throughout by priestly or monkish ritual, and that reviving the Western Mystery tradition is not only possible but necessary. Basic to that tradition is acceptance of this world as a living, divinely generated creature, sacred in all its parts. Potentially it is our earthly paradise. Realizing that potential is simply a matter of perception. The mystical understanding, as A.E. expressed it, is that paradise never departed from earth but that we became blind to it. The blindfold, of course, is the superstition of materialism, and now that materialism is discredited (largely on account of the ecological crisis for which it is identifiably responsible), normal sight is rapidly returning. Caitlin and John are among the notable symptoms of renewed vision. Their energies are flowing strongly with the tide of the present, and clearly they are well guided. Like all of us, they are caught up in a revelatory process, the climax of which is unpredictable but surely approaching. Modern education offers no preparation for the great changes, psychic, social and physical, which are now operating, and the task of opening the minds of the multitude to the existence of eternal truths and poetic images is left to writers such as these. Caitlin and John Matthews have proved their mettle and shown themselves equal to the responsibilities they have undertaken. Already they have accomplished a great deal, and the signs are that they are still in the early stages of a cumulative great work, the most important items of which are still to come.

John Michell

What is archetype?

MARTIN LINGS: *Symbol and Archetype*. A study in the Meaning of Existence. Quinta Essentia, 136 pp, £17.50 hardback, £7.95 paperback.

Sphinx 1, 2 & 3. *A Journal of Archetypal Psychology and the Arts*. Edited by Noel Cobb and Eva Loewe. Published annually by the London Convivium of Archetypal Studies.

It seems appropriate to review these volumes together since they represent two diametrically opposed schools of thought. Dr Lings, author of *The Life of the Prophet Mahomet*, and *The Secret of Shakespeare*, a revealing study in the light of

the *Sophia Perennis*, is a member of the 'Traditional' school of René Guénon, Frijthof Schuon, Titus Burckhardt (not to be confused with Jacob Burckhardt) Whittall Perry, and others of this group, to whom he makes frequent reference as authorities. The general thesis of this collection of occasional essays (beautifully produced, if expensive) treats the terms 'symbol' and 'archetype' within the limits of some one or another religious orthodoxy. (Dr Lings is himself a convert to Islam.) Studies of the three primary colours, the Seven Deadly Sins, or indeed the symbolism of mosque or cathedral, have value within their own traditions, but in what one is tempted to call 'real life' the numinous is a wind that bloweth where it listeth, man heareth the sound thereof and it is gone. Blake's grain of sand or wild flower, Traherne's pebbles on the path or ears of 'orient and immortal wheat', the burning bush in the desert, or Boehme's copper dish that reflected to him sacred light. Or our own dreams, and sudden unexpected encounters with another world, of what we recognise as 'the sacred'.

In this sense the entire world is a symbol of the sacred, and whatever cultural advantage comes from the selectivity of religious traditions, poet and mystic will find such things restrictive and so, it seems, does 'modern man in search of a soul'.

The best of the collection seemed to me one which the author might consider too slight to single out, a beautiful presentation of the retentiveness of oral tradition of sacred archetypal themes in 'The Symbolism of the Luminaries in Old Lithuanian songs'. The same could be found in many fairy-tales throughout the world whose beauty and universality comes from imaginative insights beyond human invention. In this paper Dr Lings's own love of poetry speaks.

It must be said that the author's insistence that the word 'archetype' takes its meaning only in relation to its transcendent source is one that *Temenos* fully supports, and which cannot be said too often. In this respect Dr Lings, in common with the rest of his school, criticises 'modern psychology':

The higher reaches of the universe are relegated to the realm of mere supposition, and the microcosm, soul and body, is isolated from all that transcends it. The soul is thus treated as the highest known thing. The average psychoanalyst may not deliberately set out to inflate it with self-importance, but in fact his so-called science acts like a conspiracy in that direction. Another closely related illusion inculcated by it is that of being self-sufficient and normal. The soul is made unrealistically expectant of freedom from problems which are bound to beset it, and the absence of which would be discreditable.

The point to be made here however, is that although modern psychology is eager to throw metaphysics to the winds, it is not prepared to impoverish its own vocabulary by abstention from high-sounding

words of metaphysical import. Consequently 'archetype' and 'transcendent', to mention only two examples, are currently used in relation to things which, while being higher than others, none the less belong to the domain of nature which is by definition untranscendent and therefore not capable of being the repository of archetypes.

We would disagree with Dr Lings, however who quotes from Titus Burckhardt, that 'Jung is particularly insidious in his use of this term', for Jung himself, discussing the use of the term 'archetype' comments that the word *τύπος* (imprint) implies an imprinter. But on transcendence James Hillman's school of 'archetypal psychology' is, to say the least, evasive. On the other hand the Traditional school tends to dismiss psyche's world altogether, (which Hillman has so constantly defended) as if Keats's 'vale of soul-making' were no more than an unfortunate result of 'the Fall' and the sooner we transcend the human comedy the better. A loveless creed, when all is said – 'What theme had Homer but original sin' – or Shakespeare, or Proust, or Dostoevsky, or any of us poor souls who encounter 'higher' worlds only through the soul? *Temenos* finds Henry Corbin's understanding of the 'Imaginal' realm, as the meeting-place of image with meaning, more in keeping with the living reality of soul's encounter with the numinous, the sacred. But the great Ismaeli scholar (and member of the Eramos group) is not one of the 'party members' of the Traditional school and they never mention him.

The excellent journal *Sphinx*, on the other hand, proposes an imaginative language which will do justice to the subtleties and enigmas of imaginative life. 'Sphinx is a journal in service of the return of the soul to the world and the world to soul'. *Sphinx* 3 is dedicated to Eros, to the *Fedele d'amore*, to Rumi, to Rilke; as was *Sphinx* 2 to the Dionysian *agon* of Lorca, and *Sphinx* 1 to 'the morbid and the beautiful' in the work of Edward Munch and others. Each number fills and refills (soul's) cup to the brim, with Munch's sighs, with the blood pulsing from Lorca's wound, with the wine of Rumi's love and the tears of separation from the beloved. The standard of poetry is excellent – the Review conforms rather to Continental and universal standards than to current English provincialism – and there are fine translations, by the editors, of Lorca's 'Sonnets of Dark Love', and from Rilke; from Robert Bly of Rumi and others, and from Robert Bly also the 'dragon-smoke' of American poetry. The visual material is imaginatively chosen from past and present, and many surprises await the reader from names less well-known, like the Australian Peter Bishop on 'The soul of the Bridge', Paul Kugler, Enrique Pardo, Corbin and Bachelard. *Sphinx* is a Review that offers in abundance 'the bread of sweet thought and the wine of delight'. We wish the editors well, and that they too may overcome the recurring crises of the printer's bill, and reach, as *Temenos* somehow has done, the twelfth issue, number of completion. 'That civilization may not sink/The great battle lost ...'

Kathleen Raine

Notes on Contributors

John Allitt has been a senior lecturer in Art History at the Central School of Art and Design and until recently at the Camberwell School of Art. He also worked for a time with the ILEA Art and Design Inspectorate. He has written books on Meyr and Donizetti and in 1981 President Pettioni of Italy conferred on him the Order of Cavaliere, 'Al Merito della Repubblica'. His most recent book is *J. S. Mayr (Life, Selected Writings, and Catalogue of Works)*, Element Books (1989).

Thetis Blacker is a painter, writer and dreamer. As a Churchill Fellow she has travelled to India and Indonesia and studied the fabric arts of South-East Asia. Her sixteen banners on the Creation were commissioned for the 900th anniversary of Winchester Cathedral and her dyed paintings have been commissioned for cathedrals and churches in Denmark and the U.S.A. as well as in England. She is the author of *A Pilgrimage of Dreams* and several television and documentary films have been made on her work. Four major series of her paintings have been based on mythical themes – 'Apocalypse', 'A Bestiary of Mythical Creatures', 'The Creation' and 'Search for the Simurgh'. Her fifth theme, on which she is at present working is 'the arbor cosmica'. She is currently involved in a scheme for preserving wall-paintings of Rajasthan. Served as artist-member of the Cathedrals' Advisory Commission for England. Is at present working on a Baptismal banner for the Cathedral Church of St. Machar, Aberdeen.

Robert Bly, born 1926, was educated at Harvard and the University of Iowa, but turned his back on the Academic world in order to affirm human and spiritual values that have no part in contemporary academia. Founded The Sixties Press, and in his magazine *The Sixties* entered the Great Battle against the cerebral and unimaginative world of American verse and criticism. He is a prolific translator and his 'versions' include poems by Kabir, Neruda, Rilke, Trakl, Ekelöf, Lagerlöf, Ibsen, Ibn Hazu, and the great South American poets of this century. He has published some ten or more volumes of his own verse, including *In the Snowy Fields* and *The Light Around the Body, Selected Poems* (Harper & Rowe 1986). *Iron John: A Book about Men* (1990) became immediately a 'best seller'. *American Poetry: Wildness and Domesticity* (Harper & Rowe 1990) is reviewed on page 231.

John Carey studied mythology and Celtic literature at Harvard University and the Dublin Institute of Advanced Studies. He is at present a Professor of Celtic Studies at Harvard.

Gerard Casey was born in South Wales in 1918. A student of religious ideas – he has published essays in various periodicals. Spent many years in East Africa including six years in Ethiopia and Somalia which left a deep and permanent impression on his religious thought. In 1973 the Enitharmon Press published *South Wales Echo* (dedicated to David Jones) a script for voices, and in 1982 *Between the Symplegades: Re-Visions of a Mythological Story* by George Seferis.

Noel Cobb. Practising psychiatrist in the field of 'Cultural Psychology', within the Jungian tradition. Co-editor of *Sphinx*, published by the London Convivium of Archetypal Studies.

Agnes Gergely, born in Endrőd, Hungary, 1933. Poet, novelist, essayist, translator. Lives in Budapest. Studied Hungarian and English literature at the Budapest University of Liberal Arts. Was a school teacher; a Radio producer; a writer for the weekly *Élet és Irodalom* (Life and Letters); an editor in a publishing house; Assistant Professor at the Szeged University of Liberal Arts, South Hungary; Head of the Third World Column at *Nagyvilág* (Great World), a monthly review for world literature. Honorary Fellow of the International Writing Program of the University of Iowa. She is now a freelance writer. Has published seven books of poetry, four novels. Translated English, American, African, Japanese writers, among them Chaucer, Blake, Yeats, Joyce, Dylan Thomas, Auden, Evelyn Waugh, Emily Dickinson, Edgar Lee Masters, Christopher Okigbo, Ryūnosuke Akutagawa et al. Her most recent book is on W. B. Yeats.

Sisirkumar Ghose, Professor of English, Santiniketan, West Bengal; National Fellow (1974–76), National Lecturer (1980–82). Publications include: *Aldous Huxley; The Later Poems of Tagore; The Poetry of Sri Aurobindo; Metaaesthetics and Other Essays; Modern and Otherwise; Lost Distinctions; For the Time Being; Mystics and Society* and an article on Mysticism in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*.

Michael Gilkes, Guyanese writer and critic, is Reader in English literature at the University of the West Indies, Barbados. Author of *Wilson Harris and the Caribbean Novel* (1975), *The West Indian Novel* (1981) and *Couvade, A Dream-Play of Guyana* (1974). He is currently writing a novel.

Joscelyn Godwin, Professor of Music at Colgate University (New York State), author of books on Robert Fludd, Athanasius Kircher, *Mystery Religions in the Ancient World*, *Harmonies of Heaven and Earth* (Thames & Hudson); *Three Approaches to the Musical Interpretation of Reality* (Lindisfarne Press); *Music, Mysticism and Magic – a Sourcebook* (forthcoming, Routledge & Kegan Paul) and an edition of Michael Maier's *Atalanta Furiens* (Magnum Opus Hermetic Sourcebooks). Many contributions to metaphysical and Hermetic journals.

Brian Keeble. Founder and editor of Golgonooza Press; co-founder of Temenos. Has contributed to journals in UK and abroad concerned with Traditional studies; has won many distinctions for his book-production; in 1983 published *Eric Gill: a Holy Tradition of Working*. Recent Golgonooza publications are: *Golgonooza*, *City of the Imagination* (Kathleen Raine), *Standing on Earth* (Wendell Berry), *The Vision of the Fool* (Cecil Collins, forthcoming).

George Mackay Brown, Poet, story-writer, playwright, has spent his life in Orkney, from whose history and life he draws his themes.

Jean MacVean, poet, radio playwright, novelist, Malory enthusiast. Her novel *The Intermediaries* was based on Gottfried von Strassburg's *Tristan*. Edited the *Poems of Thomas Blackburn*.

James Madge, born 1936. B.A. 7 Dip. Arch. Cambridge. Principal Lecturer in Architecture at Polytechnic of Central London, and in private practice.

Keshav Malik, Poet and critic. Has edited several journals of art and poetry in the past, now edits *Poetry Bulletin* (of the Poetry Society of India of which he is one of the founders). Art critic of *The Times of India*; recently awarded (by the President of India) the Padam Sri honour for services to literature.

Jean Mambrino, French poet and critic; has translated much English poetry including Milton, Donne, Herbert, Hopkins, de la Mare, David Jones, David Gascoyne and Kathleen Raine. He writes regularly on literature, film and theatre for *Etudes*. Has published some fourteen volumes of verse and *Le Chant Profond* (criticism, Corti 1985), and *La Poésie Mystique Française* (anthology, Seghers, 1973). His translation of poems by Gerard Manley Hopkins (Granit) was awarded *le prix de meilleur livre étranger* in 1981 (shared with Pierre Leyris). *Glade* (English translation by Jonathan Griffin) was published by the Enitharmon Press in 1986, and *L'Or Interieur* bilingually by the Menard Press in 1979. His latest collections of poems are *Le Palimpseste ou les Dialogues du Desir* (Corti 1991); *Le Chiffre de la Nuit* (Corti 1989).

John Matthews (born 1948) has written widely in the field of Arthurian literature, specializing in the Grail legends on which he has produced three books: *The Grail, Quest for the eternal* (Thames & Hudson 1981); *At the Table of the Grail* (Arkana 1987) and (with Marian Green) *The Grail Seeker's Companion* (Aquarian Press 1986). Also a volume of poems, *Merlin in Calydon* (Bran's Head 1981) and numerous short stories on Arthurian and related themes. *Warriors of Arthur* (with Bob Stuart) Blandford Press, 1987; *The Quest for Legendary Britain* (1989); *Gawain, Knight of the Goddess* (1990); *Taliesin: Shamanistic & Bardic Mysteries in Britain & Ireland* (Mandala 1991); *A Celtic Reader* (Aquarian Press, 1991); *The Celtic Shaman* (Element Books, forthcoming).

Muhammad Umar Memon was born in Aligarh (India) in 1939 and migrated to Pakistan in 1954. Educated at Karachi University, later at Harvard (USA) and University of California at Los Angeles. Now Professor of South Asian Studies, he has taught Arabic, Persian and Urdu languages and literature, Islamic religion and mysticism at the University of Wisconsin (Madison). Prolific writer on modern 'partition literature' and problems of Muslim South Asia; edited three collections of Urdu short stories, besides studies on the Urdu Ghazal, on the poet-philosopher Iqbal, etc. Associate editor of *Journal of South Asian Literature*, member of advisory board of *Edebiyat*, a *Journal of Middle Eastern Comparative Literature*, and Editorial Board of the *Toronto South Asian Review*.

John Michell. The author of some sixteen books, the best known being *View Over Atlantis*, *City of Revelation*, and *The Dimensions of Paradise* and other works on ancient science and learning, and their relevance today. Recent publications include *Twelve Tribe Nations* (Thames and Hudson) and *New Light on the Ancient Mystery of Glastonbury*, reviewed on page 254 of this issue.

Joseph Milne, born in Liverpool in 1946. Studied composition under Vincent Batts and is especially interested in the ancient principles of setting sacred words to music. His *Gloria* was performed in London in 1988. Now at Kent University in his final year of Theology and Religious Studies degree, after which he will research his Ph.D. in early Christian, Vedantic and Buddhist conceptions of the psycho-pneumatic nature of man.

Harold Morland, born 1908 on the edge of the Lancashire Witches country in north east Lancashire. Graduate of London University and now retired from teaching at a College of Education. Publications include books of poems from the Phoenix Press, Routledge, Scorpion Press, and contributions to *The Listener*, *Poetry Quarterly*, *New Age*, etc. Has translated from Romance languages, Old French, Provençal, Spanish and Portuguese. His long poem *The Matter of Britain* was published in 1984.

Rafael Martinez Nadal. Formerly senior lecturer in the Spanish Department of King's College, University of London. During the Second World War his weekly BBC 'Antonio Torres' London Commentaries' became a long controversial polemic involving the British Embassy in Madrid, the FO, MoI and BBC. Born and educated in Madrid where he became a trusted friend of Lorca and depositary of many of the poet's important manuscripts. Among his books stands out *El Público, Amor y Muerte en la Obra de García Lorca*, now in its fourth edition. (English edition by Marion Boyars, 1974), *Antonio Torres y la Política Española del Foreign Office* and his bilingual edition of Kathleen Raine's *On a Deserted Shore*. 'My penultimate book on Lorca, man and poet', with more than sixty pages of facsimiles and other unpublished material, is due to appear in Madrid, September 1991.

Piloo Nannavutty, Mrs P. N. Jungalwalla, educated in India and at Girton College, Cambridge, Blake scholar; has had her early work on Blake published in the *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* (Vol. X, 1947, Vol. XII, 1952, parts 3–4): *The Divine Vision*, ed. Vivian de Sola Pinto, 1957; William Blake, essays for S. Foster Damon, Brown University Press ed. Alvin H. Rosenfeld, 1969, as well as several articles in various issues of the *Aligarh Journal of English Studies*, ed. A. A. Ansari, Aligarh, U.P. Has written on Zoroastrian themes, and made an English translation of the *Zendavesta*.

Peter Norman. Studied Russian in Oxford. Worked for the Foreign Office for two and a half years in the British Embassy, Moscow, then switched to academic work at SSEES, University of London. Worked also for British Council as interpreter for visiting writers and poets, with many of whom he formed lasting friendships, including Akhmatova and Tarkovsky. He also met Lydia Chukovskaya (friend of Akhmatova and famous dissident writer), whose novel *Going Under* he translated into English. He has compiled a Russian-English dictionary for Penguin and written a textbook of the Russian language called *Russian for Today*.

M. Salim-ur-Rahman, poet, short story writer and translator, lives in Lahore, Pakistan. He has translated, among other things, the *Odyssey* and Chekhov's *The Three Sisters* into Urdu. His own writing is mainly in Urdu but he also writes book reviews and literary columns in English for *The Pakistan Times*, Lahore, and *The Friday Times*, a Lahore-based weekly.

Kathleen Raine (born 1908), poet, Blake scholar, literary critic defending 'the learning of the Imagination'. Translated into many languages. Works at present in print in English, *Selected Poems* (1989); *Golgonooza, City of the Imagination* (1991). Last papers on Blake, *Golgonooza Press. Porphry's Cave of the Nymphs* (introduction, Phanes Press) 1991. *William Blake* (World of Art series), *The Human Face of God* (on Blake's Job illustrations), both Thames & Hudson. *Blake and Antiquity* and (with George Mills Harper) *Thomas Taylor the Platonist*, Bollingen Series, Princeton. *India Seen Afar* (Green Books 1990). Forthcoming, *Autobiographies* (in one volume), Scoob Books. A new collection of poems (*Golgonooza Press*). At present occupied in the task of establishing the *Temenos Academy of Integral Studies*, in London.

Peter Redgrove (born 1932), poet, novelist, broadcaster, student of Hatha and Taoist yoga, took his Degree in Natural Sciences at Cambridge and worked as a research scientist, scientific editor and journalist. Trained, and practises, as a lay analyst. Author of an important book (in collaboration with Penelope Shuttle) *The Wise Wound*, on the female menstrual cycle. Numerous

volumes of poems, the latest being *Poems 1954–78* (Penguin), *The One who set out to Study Fear* (Bloomsbury). His apologia for the visionary standpoint, *The Black Goddess and the Unseen Real* was reissued in 1989 (Paladin) and there is a new book of poems forthcoming in 1992 (Secker).

Jeremy Reed was born in Jersey and lives in London. Amongst his books in print are, *Selected poems* (Penguin) *Engaging form*, *Nineties* (poems, Jonathan Cape), *Hymns to the Night* (tr. from Novalis), *Madness: The Price of Poetry* (essays, Peter Owen 1989), *Blue Rock* (novel, Cape 1988), *Red Eclipse* (novel, Peter Owen 1989).

Nicholas Roerich (1874–1947). Prolific artist, writer, educator, explorer and sage, born in Russia where he was a fellow-student and designer for Diaghilev's ballet, he was already a well-known painter of Russian historical themes when he left his native country for USA and finally settled in the Kulu Valley in the Himalayas, where he painted the mountains which for him had a spiritual presence. His work is to be found in museums throughout the world, in England in the Victoria and Albert Museum, and in the Ashmolean Museum (Oxford). Mickael Gorbachev has recently offered to sponsor a Nicholas Roerich Museum in Moscow. There is a Nicholas Roerich Museum in New York City.

Svetoslav Roerich (born 1904, son of Nicholas Roerich). Studied architecture at Columbia University but realized that painting was his true vocation. Left USA in 1923 with his family on their journey to India, where they ultimately settled. After returning from New York to settle with his parents in the Kulu Valley, ran a department of ancient Asian art and a Tibetan and local pharmacopoea. Best known as a portraitist, his portraits of his parents are well known. He married India's famous and beautiful film-star and producer, Devika Rani, and now lives in Bangalore, where the Karnataka Chitrakala Parishath Art Complex possesses most of the paintings reproduced in this issue of *Temenos*.

Rosemarie Rowley was born in Dublin in 1942 from West of Ireland parents. She won prizes as a child for her poems and at age eleven, she scored top marks in English in the Dublin Corporation scholarship. After leaving school she worked in the Agricultural Institute where in 1963 she first read Rachel Carson's 'The Silent Spring'. She moved to England in 1964 where she worked first for the BBC's then Third Programme and then became a teacher in Birmingham. following this she went to Trinity College Dublin where she graduated in 1969. Because of the law which refused work to married women, she went to work in Europe in 1972, returning in the 1980's to write an M.Litt thesis on the long poems of Patrick Kavanagh. She was Joint Coordinator for

the Green Alliance for a number of years. *The Broken Pledge* and other poems was published by Martello, Dublin in 1985 and *The Sea of Affliction* a work linking poetry and deep ecology, was published by Rowan Tree Press in association with Comark in 1987. Her interest in form is now developing and *Flight into Reality* is a work in terza rima of over 2,000 lines in twenty cantos. In a *State* (unpublished) is a verse play of a sequence of Crowns of Sonnets while *Betrayal into Origin* is a shorter work in terza rima, completed very recently. Rosemarie plans now to concentrate on writing full time and is writing a comedy in rhyming couplets. She has plans for a novel and a play also – both drafts have been in existence for quite a number of years. She also has plans to study further the Connaught poets and their tradition outside the mainstream of English literature.

Peter Russell, poet, translator, one-time editor of the Poetry Review Nine. Until the overthrow of the Shah he was teaching in association with the Imperial Iranian Academy of Philosophy in Tehran. His most recent collection of poems, *All for the Wolves* was published by the Anvil Press in 1984. He is at present engaged in a translation of poems of Novalis. He was a friend of, and is an authority on, Ezra Pound.

Sima Sharma, journalist, teacher and till recently editor of *IIC Quarterly*, an interdisciplinary journal in New Delhi, has edited *India: The Formative Years* (Vikas 1989), a deep and critical assessment of modern India's problems and achievements. She now lives in London working as freelance writer and researcher concerned primarily with the interconnected issues in culture, ecology and philosophy.

Liadain Sherrard studied at King's College, Cambridge, and the Courtauld Institute. Has worked as translator of important work by Henry Corbin, and others, translating from French, Italian and Greek. Lives in Greece.

Philip Sherrard, theologian and authority, and translator of, modern Greek poetry (with Edmund Keeley, Princeton University Press). Translator (with G. E. H. Palmer and Kalistos Ware) of the *Philokalia* (Faber & Faber). *The Rape of Man and Nature*, Golgonooza Press 1990). *The Sacred in Life and Art* (Golgonooza Press, 1991). He has just completed a new work on sacred cosmology.

Karan Singh (born 1931), well-known thinker and statesman of contemporary India. Hereditary heir to the princely States of Jammu and Kashmir, he was Regent of these States for eighteen years, and later held several Cabinet posts under Nehru and after, and was recently Indian Ambassador in Washington. He has turned increasingly to the spiritual quest, and in particular to aspects of global unity, and is now Chairman of the Governing Board of Auroville. He

was for many years Chancellor of the University of Jammu and Kashmir, and of the Indian Board of Wildlife, and of the successful Project Tiger, which has saved India's beautiful national animal from extinction. Author of many books on political science, philosophical essays, and songs in his mother-tongue, Dogri. He is author of an *Autobiography* and of many books, including a commentary and translation of the *Mundaka Upanishad* (Bharatiya Vidya Bhavani, Bombay).

Arseny Aleksandrovich Tarkovsky was born in 1907 in Elizavetgrad. From 1932 Tarkovsky translated poetry, mainly classical poetry from the Southern republics of the Soviet Union. Owing to the difficult political situation his own poems did not appear in print until he was over fifty years old. He was a friend of Akhmatova, who considered him to be amongst Russia's greatest poets. He kept apart from the official literary establishment. In 1966 he signed a letter, defending Sinyavsky and Daniel. His poetry, much of it of a philosophical bent, was influenced in particular by Tyutchev, Fet, the acmeists, Pasternak, Tsvetaeva and Mandelshtam. Like Blok he felt that poetry should make its humble contribution to universal, world harmony. Over some twenty years he published six collections of verse.

William Irwin Thompson, born in Chicago in 1938, moved to Los Angeles in 1945. Studied philosophy and anthropology at Pomona College in Claremont, California, and English literature and Irish history at Cornell University, where he took his Ph.D. in 1966. He has taught in various departments of the humanities and social sciences at Cornell, M.I.T., and York University in Toronto; Visiting Professor at Syracuse University, the University of Hawaii, and the University of Toronto. In 1972 he founded the Lindisfarne Association in New York City. Lindisfarne Scholar of the Cathedral of St John the Divine in New York City. Since 1967 he has published fourteen books, one of which, *At the Edge of History*, was nominated for the National Book Award in 1972; in 1986 he received the Oslo International Poetry Festival Award. His latest books are: *The American Replacement of Nature: The everyday Acts and Outrageous Evolution of Economic Life* (Doubleday). *Reintegration of the World: A Critique of the New Age, Science and Popular Culture* (with David Spangler, Bear & Co.); *Gaia Two* (Lindisfarne Press).

