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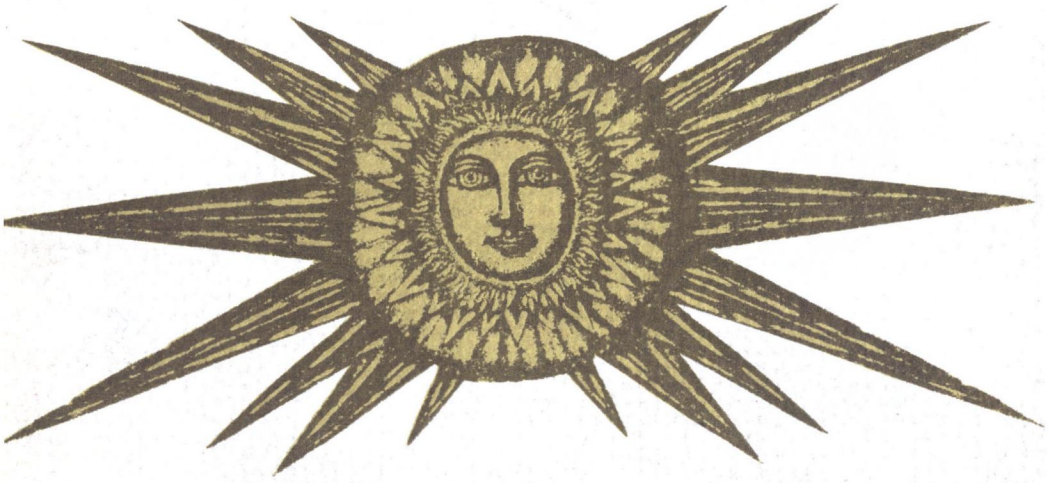

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A REVIEW DEVOTED TO THE ARTS OF THE IMAGINATION

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Why are we not ashamed that vulgar curiosity about natural law can take precedence over a mystical love for the universe.

The scattered aphorisms printed in italics in this issue of Temenos *are from O.V.de L. Milosz'* Maximes et Pensées *translated by Robin Waterfield.*

EDITORIAL

KEITH CRITCHLOW

It may be true that we are biologically what we eat, as we change almost the total physical body every seven years. But this fact does not explain inheritance on the one hand or choice of diet on the other.

By analogy we could say that the question of diet is also implicit in such statements as 'we are what we think' or 'we are what we identify with'; or in the view that simply states 'we are'. In each case the issues of nourishment as maintenance, and inheritance, as genesis or genetics, become vital.

The biological view insists on the food of natural phenomena; the last or contemplative view insists on the question of 'what or who is it that believes it is experiencing life?'

Temenos, it would be fair to say, is concerned not only with balance in diet but also with the availability of certain kinds of nourishment that make balance possible. Not least is it concerned with inheritance. Confucius once said, not without a certain sweet-and-sourness, that we cannot choose our parents but we can choose our ancestors.

For too long, in recent time, we have made easy reference to east and west as mirror images of each other's attitudes toward reality, the west taking the outer extreme and the east taking the inner. It may not be without good basis but this attitude tends to deny both the traditional scientific understanding of the eastern traditions and the western contemplative traditions. The trap appears to be a reduction to a duality; and may not the intrinsic problem lie in this lazy habit that shirks the effort to discover the intrinsic unity on the one hand or the essential third factor of relationship on the other?

Duality is the basis of the mechanistic logic of the computer which

operates on a 'yes or no' logic, and 'on or off' principle. Yet is not the difference between our human-ness with all its suffering, compassion, affections, bewilderments, exaltations and wisdoms, and the on/off action-reaction world, one of self-consciousness – beyond mere conditioned reflex?

Maybe we could define sensibility, like responsibility, as triadic, and mere reaction as dyadic. We, as human beings, have the privilege as well as the burden of *knowing* that we are knowing (hence we can conceive of such a thing as a conditioned reflex) whereas the rest of the animal domain with whom we share a family association merely knows and reacts accordingly.

The advent of human consciousness carries with it as extensive a mystery as almost any we can contemplate – not least our ability to formulate the spoken word. Nevertheless, human consciousness appears to be founded on a triad or threesome of Knower, Known and Knowing.

Despite years of effort by certain modern evolutionist scientists to extract repeated words from chimpanzees, the conclusions were the same – only humans can 'speak' in the proper meaning of this term. This result gives a fascinating new dimension to the translation of the opening words of St John's gospel. 'In the beginning was the word' can now be taken both as an accurate 'modern' scientific statement, and as descriptive of the vast mystery of the genesis of our human world.

To return to our first proposition: having reminded ourselves of the responsibility of being able to speak, what do we say? Is this not the prime metaphor for the Arts?

On the basis that continuity of life depends on intake, digestion, and output, light, air, water and food, may we not be subject to a physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual diet – or is this too obvious? The first three levels of energy or nourishment tend to be obvious: we know we need to breathe at frequent intervals, to drink less frequently and to eat less frequently but as inevitably. But what about light? And the impressions that are presented to the eyes? Are not these nourishment too? In terms of our 'word' analogy,

what are all these intakes saying to us and what do we choose to listen to? And, further, what do we make of it or out of it?

If this appears to be becoming too simplistic, we ask tolerance, as we are convinced that an awareness of the condition of the human arts is both simple at root as well as highly complex in expression.

Firstly we could propose that a traditional art be defined as one that links the subjective with the objective as a goal. Or maybe more accurately as one that uses the subjective to reveal the objective. Secondly we could propose that the more effectively or penetratingly art accomplishes this the more sacred it becomes. Which is to say that subjective and objective intensify each other, thereby giving immense significance to the historical moment whilst at the same time forming a vehicle for spiritual presences which are unaffected by time. In short, creating a transparency of sensory experience which becomes animated by a joy and beauty and shines with a self-evident truth.

Even so we see words such as subjective and objective as if they automatically held an objective or universal value. There are likely to be at least three orientations or angles on such basic concepts as subjective and objective: the dogmatic or assertive, the sceptical or analytical, and the contemplative or reconciliatory. By exploring these three views, which we see as normal to each other whilst in balance, we may find a way of understanding our present conditions. Not only in terms of the arts but in terms of our major problems of distrust, armaments, ecological denudation, natural resouce failures and so on. If so many of us find ourselves in an atmosphere of desensitization, polluted sensibilities, false indifference and apathy – a hardening on the one hand and an ocean of triviality on the other – then we cannot be the only ones to feel acutely the need for taking stock or adopting the contemplative mode.

The increase in media in no way guarantees an increase in meaning or understanding. In fact Socrates's story of King Thamus's response to Theuth's invention and advocacy of writing is no less significant today than when it was first uttered: 'What you have discovered is a recipe not for memory, but for reminder. And it is no true wisdom

that you offer your disciples, but only its semblance, for by telling them of many things without teaching them you will make them seem to know much while for the most part they know nothing, and as men filled not with wisdom, but with the conceit of wisdom, they will be a burden to their fellows.'

On the pretext of recovering some of the balance or central ground of normality, let us examine the proposition that the triadic view was taken as basic and normal by the ancients, and that so much of our mechanistic, black-and-white, conflict-based recent history, with its rifts between Art and Science, religion and technology, mind and body and so on, is rooted in the error or myopia of dyadic thinking.

We can characterize the dyadic approach, with its resultant extremism and horizontality, by the model of the pendulum. The action of the pendulum *is* horizontal basically; and it is also oscillatory or dyadic as it swings from right to left. It also sets up naturally opposite extremes, yet it is controlled by a static point above these extremes. The whole action is a triangularity or threesome, from the two extremes to the controlling apex of the arm or cord of the pendulum. The apex is the controlling cause in relation to the dyadic action below it, and this pure action is only possible because of the stability of the pivot. The arm or cord represents the possible extent of the activity, and although in itself it is a singularity, it becomes the vehicle for the polarity of the action of the suspended mass. Finally it is the mass, and the impetus imparted to this mass, which express and sustain the swing or oscillation. Although we choose to call the action dyadic, in itself it 'hides' or holds the potentialty of its own triadicity in a twofold way. Firstly, the initial action which causes the swing is followed by a reaction that in turn is described as having a resultant which is the whole oscillation. Secondly, the swing has a neutral point that is neither to the right nor left of the swing which again represents a triadicity: in this case the point is directly below the controlling apex and is the final point of inertia for the mass when the pendulum comes to rest. Horizontal vision will see the activity as a polarization. Vertical

vision will appreciate the triadicity and the necessary threeness of the whole action with its two extremes and a controlling proportional.

Evidence of the ancients' approach to triadicity lies in many examples. In particular in the structural philosophy of one of humanity's oldest texts, the *I Ching* or classic Book of Changes of the ancient Chinese.

Founded in a unitary principle called the Way or Tao, the unfolding is dyadic in terms of the full and broken lines representing the oscillation of the Yang activity and Yin passivity of the universal rhythm. As if to reassert the fundamental triadicity of Yang, Yin and Tao, the first assembly that is considered valid is the trigram: an arrangement of three such lines. The trigram, we are told, is representative of Heaven, Earth and Mankind. These are regarded as constituting the minimal set of conditions to represent the totality of our conditions of existence. From such a trigram is built up a comprehensive set of sixty-four hexagrams or assemblies of six full or broken lines. These sixfold forms can be read as three domains: one above (the heavenly), one below (the earthly), while two, representing the Human relationship, participate in both. From this principle a total cosmology is built up based on the permanence of change.

Plato in his *Timaeus* posits that the fundamental relationship out of which 'our world' emerges, or is built, is triadic. This is in the geometry of the molecules of the elements of our world, although earlier in the dialogue he has established the more general principle of sameness, otherness and mixture. Plato is usually translated as talking of triangles; this is not wrong, but Plato's word is tri*gon*. This is related etymologically to *gen*eration, *gen*esis and *gon*ads, clearly placing the word in a cosmo*gon*ical relationship. Consideration of the angle or corner of a triangle reveals that in itself it has a triadic nature: the point of the corner and the two divergent lines which define the angle. For the first shape to emerge, three such corners are required: hence our word triangle for the prime shape (and incidentally the only shape that all other shapes can be reduced

to). Shape is the minimal requirement for visual cognition in the perceptual domain.

It is a curious coincidence (or more) that modern physicists in their effort to appreciate the innermost nature of the atom (itself a monist concept) have also arrived at a triadic model. This is the threefold nature of the 'Quark', the current hypothetical ultimate entity. This entity is described as having an 'upness', a 'downness' and a 'strangeness'. At the time of writing the Quark lies on the border between physics, or thingness, and metaphysics in the sense of being 'above' matter, since, as it has not been recorded, it only fits the necessary facts conceptually.

Although we are assured that 'upness', 'downness' and 'strangeness' are only metaphors, nevertheless this triadicity is a remarkable step. One cannot avoid remarking on the parallel with the traditional geometrical metaphor for the three domains of heavenly 'upness', earthly 'downness', as levity and gravity respectively, and the human mediating domain of 'strangeness'.

Obviously to establish an 'upness' and a 'downness', which we would normally take as opposites, a central point of measurement is necessary. Only at this point can strangeness occur, in the normality of our three-dimensional spatial experience, since any other direction in the central axis would be 'upness' or 'downness'. Hence the only movement or direction possible is 'outness' or 'strangeness' to the central axis. We can visualize this by using the image of the planet earth. 'Upness' we can place on the north pole, 'downness' on the south pole. Hence 'strangeness' is the equatorial plane. As we would say, anything to do with 'upness' is anything north of the equator – and with 'downness' anything south of the equator – so the movement circularly *out* from the equatorial central point of the earth is 'strangeness'. Human existence and the social dimension is thereby arranged around a central sacred axis or point. This axis becomes the *axis mundi*, and the concentric circles around the central point or axis become varying degrees of *temenos*.

If we seem to be taking analogy beyond its legitimate limits, then we can resort to the concept of spin which also answers so adequately

to the model. Spin immediately establishes an invisible axis of rotation through a body – exemplified in a sphere. The two ends of the spin are the North and South poles respectively and the movement of the spin is equatorial or at ninety degrees to the axis – answering to 'strangeness' in our analogy. Spin is not only a fundamental axiom of modern physics but it is the seventh of the six movements of the ancients. The previous six of front and back, right and left, up and down, all necessitate a change in *place* of the object in question: spin alone stays put in space, that is to say the centre point of the sphere does not go anywhere.

Our task in the diet we choose to present in *Temenos* is not merely a point of view in opposition to other points of view (although this is bound to arise), but rather an attempt to recover a value system which is more inclusive and allows our world to be viewed, or participated in, from a spectrum of valid relationships of correspondence.

If we now return to our earlier proposition that human consciousness requires at minimum a triad to take place at all, we can now explore the possibility of a relationship between this idea and the three orientations we touched on when positing basic attitudes.

Firstly, there has to be a knower or subject of consciousness. Secondly, there has to be the known or object of consciousness (this is the dyad); but, thirdly, there needs to be a conjunctive or participative relationship which is the act of knowing. The study of the knower is the inward mode of self-consciousness. The study of the known is the outward or empirical. The participatory act of knowing is the balancing mode, the proportional mean between the two extremes, and can be described as being *per se*. It is the root of the understanding of paradox.

This relates to our immediate concern for the arts and for the imaginal and multi-dimensional view of existence, as the unfolding of our three orientations suggests conditions which deeply affect human society when they are both in balance and out of balance.

The three attitudes or conscious angles we have characterized as being predominantly sceptical, dogmatic, and contemplative or

mystical (we use this latter word in its traditional sense of an acknowledgement of the mystery and unity of existence, not in its modern inverted sense of negative mystification).

Each view taken on its own is correctly and healthily in contrast to the other two. If, however, this results in a claim to exclusivity then all the dangers of imbalance ensue and through some divine cybernetics the complementary or contrary truths emerge to dislodge it.

To be conclusive but not to be exclusive would be in the nature of understanding this mutual triadic relationship. Each angle is self-sufficient yet simultaneously supporting the whole. Each of us would appear to utilize all three attitudes to a greater or lesser degree, knowingly or otherwise. Each angle can also be seen to characterize whole social groupings. The dynamism of duality is most apparent between the dogmatic and the sceptical, yet the experience of certainty is the domain of the contemplative or reconciliatory mode.

Traditionally the dogmatic mode is the domain of the priest or guardian of tradition; the sceptical mode is the domain of the discriminating scientist and all who wish to penetrate the nature of experience for themselves. The mystical or contemplative mode is embraced by those who acknowledge the unitary and paradoxical nature of both existence and experience and who are inspired and fascinated by the constant mysteries of both.

The sceptical mode insists on careful discrimination, precise categorization of the differences between experiences and the uniquenesses of discontinuity. It represents a careful and watchful eye on all that is not true.

The dogmatic mode insists upon the orderliness of the ordinary and ordered norms; the continuity of customs and culture through pattern, habit and the transmission of 'permanent truths'. It protects the axioms upon which a traditional culture or civilization rests. It promotes social harmony as social structure and institutions.

The mystical mode is poised between a heightened perception of the differences between things and the appreciation of the ultimate unity of things as a wholeness. It is contemplative by nature, hence

uniqueness is viewed as an access to the unified, not as an end in itself. It tends towards the unconventional, nurturing insight and inner revelation, and is concerned with the principles behind appearance as the representatives of the unified order.

To point out that modern times have been overwhelmed by the sceptical mode would be to say the least. In a similar way we can observe the overwhelming disasters to compassion and justice which the Inquisition represented as an unbridled dogmatic authority. We must not lose sight of the fact that a dominating sceptical mode can also harness the negative aspect of dogmatism in an attempt to suffocate traditional dogma on the one hand and the contemplative and mystical mode on the other.

Temenos is aware of the imbalances in contemporary life, and is certainly not alone. At the time of writing a Sunday paper's television review of the week blazons the headline 'Brilliant Banality' – what more need be said?

The sceptical mode, when unchallenged by the maintaining principle of permanent certainties and the balancing influence of the reconciling compassion of the contemplative mode, gives rise to incredible propositions that attempt to grant the relative an absolute value when the two terms are opposite and mutually definitive as well as co-exclusive in meaning. If scepticism does not remain healthily sceptical about its own position it leads to error upon error, just as *un*certainty must have certainty as its basis. In a similar way there must be pre-existent possibility for the natural world to evolve into. Evolution cannot, obviously, become the impossible, as necessity (*ananke*) and the natural are inextricably linked. Between possible and perpetual lies another immense mystery.

A further reason why we believe the diet of *Temenos* is valuable in our times is the current massive over-emphasis on activity and action for its own sake, with the consequent confinement of the word 'energy' to the merely mechanical level.

The contemplative or mystical mode is most suspect to a mechanistic attitude or viewpoint, which in itself is the logical descent of pure scepticism. The contemplative understanding springs

from the knowledge that movement can only arise from stillness, and that passivity and activity are mutually co-defined and therefore equally important to cultivate.

Heraclitus could be cited as the master of the positive philosophical marriage of the sceptical and mystical modes. His statement that 'nature loves to hide' is the clue to the inner and multi-dimensional meaning of the concept of energy. The essential unity and embracing reality for Heraclitus was the Logos. It was the reconciling principle between opposites, hence also the third factor. All else was taken as a dynamic balance or even conflict between four irreducible elements functioning as pairs of opposites. It is also unity that loves to hide in his unity-duality triad.

The moderns, influenced by Aristotelianism, take *enērgia* as act and actualization and choose thereby to remain, as the Vedas would say, amongst the residue. The contemplative mind, on the other hand, nourished more by Plato, is concerned with the motivating power that initiates act or actualization. It is because contemplatives concern themselves more with the subtle and causative realms of the inspiring inner energies that they have never found it easy to 'clad' their understandings with the garb of actualization, preferring symbols, metaphors and analogies which are indications of layers of meaning rather than literal descriptions.

Plato, whilst acknowledging the 'powerful forces' associated with the elements of our world, was more inclined to use the term *dynamis*, as it is expressive of both power and potentiality and avoids the reduction of the idea to the merely outward act. Aristotle was willing however to associate *enērgia* with intelligence, as distinct from these moderns who attempt to grant only a physical reality to energy – yet claim a genealogy to Aristotle.

Proclus summarized the platonic succession by identifying *enērgia* with the coming-out or proceeding phase of the universal triad: *proödos* or proceeding, *menon* or remaining or maintaining, and *epistrophe* or returning. These simultaneously co-existent aspects of creation reflect the philosophic succession from the Pythagorean *harmonia* as the principle of the soul's restoration through the

platonic *katharsis*, *eros* and *dialektike*, which were all considered aspects of *anamnesis* or the return to assimilation with God or the One.

If we are to recover or reclaim the original meaning of terms that were considered so vital to the old masters, not merely for linguistic accuracy but for psychological and spiritual health, then we have to be aware of the contemporary invasion and pollution of meaning inflicted on these terms. This in turn indicates that we need to join with such as Henry Corbin in the regeneration of terms with such vital meaning as the 'imaginal', to rescue it from the imaginings of contemporary usage. In doing so we perform an act of identification which opens up an access to the genuine state of incredible and indescribable inspiration and energy. True imagination, like visualization on a different level, is an inward opening to a reality that is clearly charted by the great artists, poets, musicians and contemplatives of all time; yet the force of unbalanced scepticism has attempted to reduce it to the imaginary as the *un*real. Should we be surprised at the resultant banalities? In geometric analogy this is like attempting to reduce the whole of human experience to the horizontal and to deny the vertical – the inevitable result of reducing sensibilities to a mechanistic model.

As all the words we utter have a prior reality in the intention of our minds, so the perennial philosophers found no difficulty in formulating a causative and maintaining reality in Intelligence *per se*. As we choose our diet, we might say, so we have the choice to live and develop our inheritance in an intelligent and sensitive universe or merely in a soulless machine.

'Art' is etymologically related to 'are' in the sense that 'you are' is an outer assertion of the essential presence of a person, as 'I am' is the corresponding inner assertion. The function of art in its intrinsic sense then can be seen to be an affirmation of being: an affirmation of being that is not only an individual or personal experience but an affirmation of the totality of being – *in* being in contrast to *a* being. A magnificent totality of being of which our individuality is but a part and a small reflection.

Due to our conviction of the value, vitality and crucial necessity of maintaining our links with the inspirational energies in the integral sense, *Temenos*, rather than presuming to know the answers, raises the question by paraphrasing Aristotles' commentary on a lecture by Plato his teacher: Is our art taking us away from first principles or drawing us nearer to them?

In the dark of the moon, in flying snow, in the dead of winter,
War spreading, families dying, the world in danger,
I walk the rocky hillside, sowing clover.

Wendel Berry

'One power alone makes a Poet: Imagination, The Divine Vision' – so Blake commented on Wordsworth's enumeration of 'the powers requisite for the production of poetry' – observation, description, sensibility and so on. There are indeed many legitimate lesser or incidental modes of writing (and this of course applies equally to the other arts, the visual, the sonorous, and the arts of gesture). Nor are the arts the only modes through which the Divine Vision can be experienced and expressed; indeed the excessive emphasis in our society on 'doing' rather than on 'being' is to be regretted. But it remains true that the essential, the immemorial function of all the arts is to express the inner universe of the human spirit, Blake's 'world of Imagination', the *mundus imaginalis*. It is in that world, as Henry Corbin has written, that sensible images take on meaning, and meaning clothes itself in imaginal forms.

At a time when, the soul being denied, the arts, cut off from their living roots, have fallen into decadence and discredit, it is the purpose of *TEMENOS* to reaffirm the traditional function of the arts as the vehicles of the human spirit, illuminating regions of consciousness of which our materialist culture is increasingly unaware. In this sense the arts are properly to be found within the precincts of temple or shrine (the *temenos*) be such places visible and public or (as more often in our present world) invisible and secret sanctuaries of refreshment and renewal.

DAVID JONES AND THE LITURGY

MICHAEL STANCLIFFE

The word 'Liturgy' has both a broad and a narrow sense. The latter is certainly the original and probably the commoner: 'The service of the Holy Eucharist: properly applied to that of the Eastern Church' (O.E.D.) and then extended to the Roman Mass and the Church of England service of Holy Communion. In the broader sense the Liturgy is the whole of the Church's prescribed public worship – the forms of all its services; the fixed patterns of prayers, readings, psalms and hymns, together with such movements and actions as accompany them; the rubrics that govern them; and the Calendar that modulates them through the different seasons of the year. Thus the Book of Common Prayer has been called 'the Liturgy of the Church of England'.

But when the word is used in its narrower sense I do not use it with the very restricted meaning of simply a 'service' as that word has come to be commonly understood – a religious and meditative exercise in which a number of individuals worship God by thinking their own more or less holy thoughts in each other's company. A celebration of the Liturgy of the Holy Eucharist is essentially a performance of a piece of 'sacred theatre' – like the mystery plays of the Middle Ages or the drama of classical Greece. It is a ritual action in which all have a part to play, in which ear, eye, tongue and limbs are all employed, and in which the action itself is so ordered and developed that those taking part are prepared for, and led stage by stage to, the climax of experiencing, with angels and archangels and all the company of heaven, the presence of God.

In what follows the word is used both in its narrow and its broad sense and it is hoped that the context will make clear which is being employed.

I

Other poets, both past and present, have shown themselves aware of the Liturgy – but not all that many: medieval writers, of course, such as Venantius Fortunatus, Cynewulf, Thomas Aquinas, William Langland – and above all Dante who used the Liturgy, its hymns and its prayers, so significantly in the structure of *The Divine Comedy*. But in Reformation and Post-Reformation times they have been few – George Herbert, Herrick, Bishop Ken, Wordsworth in his Ecclesiastical Sonnets, John Keble, T.S. Eliot throughout his work, W.H. Auden in his *Horae Canonicae*. But for none of these, not even for Dante or Eliot, did the Liturgy have the influence that it had on David Jones – both upon the substance and the form of his poetry. What other poet can we envisage writing a lengthy poem under the title *The Kensington Mass* 'in affectionate recalling' of his own parish priest and beginning with seventy-five lines of detailed description of that Irishman performing the ritual movements and praying the prescribed prayers with which the Mass begins?

But that was at the end of the poet's life, and *The Kensington Mass* was never finished. Yet even at the beginning, even in *In Parenthesis*, the Liturgy was exercising a powerful influence. I say 'even in *In Parenthesis*' because it is not immediately obvious that a faithful record of the thinkings, doings and swearings of the rank and file of a battalion of Royal Welsh Fusiliers on the Western Front between November 1915 and July 1916 will be likely to have much in common with what the word Liturgy normally calls up in our minds. But even in the author's Preface the reader is alerted to the fact that the Liturgy is of no ordinary significance to the poet. After telling of some of the difficulties he has encountered in trying 'to make a shape in words' he goes on:

> I have been hampered by the convention of not using impious and impolite words, because the whole shape of our discourse was conditioned by the use of such words. The ready repetition of them made them seem liturgical, certainly deprived them of malice, and occasionally, when skilfully

> disposed, and used according to established but flexible tradition, gave a kind of significance and even at moments a dignity, to our speech . . . Because of publication, it has been necessary to consider conventional susceptibilities. Some such expressions nevertheless of necessity become part of the form this writing has taken . . . the 'Bugger! Bugger!' of a man detailed often had about it the 'Fiat! Fiat!' of the Saints.

Thus alerted, the reader has only to read the first three pages to discover a number of references to, or echoes of, the Liturgy. Those pages describe the battalion falling in on a wet and windy late autumn morning on the parade ground of a hutted camp on the outskirts of Winchester and then marching off out onto the road *en route* for Southampton Docks and France. But those matter-of-fact and rather dreary happenings are given a new dimension by references to the Bible, monastic life, the Sacrament of Baptism, the Last Judgement: 'The officer commanding is calling his Battalion by name – whose own the sheep are . . . he continues the ritual words by virtue of which the regiment is moved in column of route . . . Corporal Quilter intones: 'Dress to the right . . .' This opening section ends with echoes of Exodus and the Epistle to the Hebrews and with a specific mention of Liturgy: 'So they came outside the camp. The liturgy of a regiment departing has been sung.'

And so it goes on through the one hundred and eighty pages of the poem's text and the further thirty pages of notes. There are references to at least seventeen different books of the Old Testament (The Book of Psalms has sixteen references alone); to all four Gospels, the Acts, a dozen Epistles and the Book of Revelation. There are references to, and quotations from, both the prayers and rubrics of the Mass; to the Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, Ordination, Penance, Holy Unction; to the Little Hours, Tenebrae, and to the Good Friday Office; to the Book of Common Prayer; to hymns, canticles and carols; to churches and their furnishings, their ornaments, their vestments; to the liturgical seasons of Christmas and Easter, and in

particular of Advent, Passiontide and Holy Week.

Most of these references are little more than fleeting allusions, brief echoes – but the cumulative effect of them upon the reader who has some acquaintance with Christian worship is considerable. They give a stimulating and strangely moving flavour to this carefully observed and detailed account of trench warfare, and the reader gradually realises that he is beginning to see both the Liturgy and the soldier's life in a new light. We are all familiar with the device of using earthly stories to convey heavenly meanings – whether it be the Christ telling his parables or our local parish priest using some homely exemplar in his sermon. What I find of particular interest in David Jones is that he also reverses the process : he both uses the soldier's experience to illuminate our understanding of the Liturgy, and the Liturgy to deepen our appreciation of the soldier's experience. To sum up a description of men coming on parade, standing at ease, coming to attention, dressing to the right, forming fours, right-turning and marching off – to conclude all that with the sentence 'The liturgy of a regiment departing has been sung' tells us something about the Liturgy. But it also sheds a new light on military life, and prepares us for David Jones's description of it in terms of monastic life. The silence of the parade ground is the silence 'peculiar to parade grounds and refectories. The silence of a high order, full of peril in the breaking of it.' The sergeant who has been out in Flanders since 1914 is 'long professed', the newcomers are 'catachumens' serving 'a harsh novitiate'. The man posted as night sentry in a trench section buries each hand in his great-coat sleeves, 'habit-wise'; the sagged headers sloped the parapet 'for a stall'. By day they sat or crouched in the mud 'and round their legs, and about their necks, like tied amices, were hessian coverings. So quickly had they learned the mode of this locality, what habit best suited this way of life.'

In one remarkable passage (*In Parenthesis*, pages 71-4) is described the arrival and sharing out of the day's rations by the Lance-Corporal to the men of his section in terms that recall a priest

carefully giving, an individual worshipper reverently receiving, the consecrated bread and wine. One commentator, Thomas Dilworth, to whose article *The Parenthetical Liturgy of David Jones* (University of Toronto Quarterly, Spring 1973) I am particularly indebted, has spoken of it as a parody of the Holy Communion. Certainly the poet means us to recall the Eucharist, but I question the word 'parody' with its suggestion of burlesque and ridicule. For all the ribaldry – and even, at first sight, the blasphemy – of the passage in question, its irony is almost intolerably poignant:

> In a little while they came again, the Lance-Corporal with his file of two, carrying a full sack.
>
> No. 1 section gathered, bunched, in the confined traverse; that lance-jack balances carefully his half mess-tin of rum . . .
>
> Come off it Moses – dole out the issue.
> Dispense salvation,
> strictly apportion it,
> let us taste and see,
> let us be renewed,
> for Christ's sake let us be warm.
> O have a care – don't spill the precious
> O don't jog his hand – ministering;
> do take care.
> O please – give the poor bugger elbow room.
>
> There – what did I tell you – can you beat it – have you ever seen such a thing in your life.
>
> Would you bloody-believe-it – some old cows fetch from their bellies proper hobbadehoys.
>
> Is this the blest cruse at Zarephath that you should make so free with it . . .
>
> Each in turn, and humbly, receives his meagre benefit. This lance-jack sustains them from his iron spoon; and this is thank-worthy . . .
>
> Each one turns silently, carrying with careful fingers his own daily bread. They go, as good as gold, into the recesses

> of the place and eat what to each would seem appropriate to breakfast; for that dealing must suffice till tomorrow at this time. You could eat out of their hands.

II

The influence of the Liturgy on David Jones can also be seen in the actual way in which he wrote, the way he put words together. All manner of other forces were, of course, at work – his mind's meanderings, the echoes which words and images aroused by sound and sense – but it is hard to resist the conclusion that the rhythms of phrases, sentences and even whole paragraphs were in their making often influenced by the rhythms of the Bible, the Book of Common Prayer and above all, the Missal. David Blamires in his *David Jones; Artist and Writer* makes the point that his 'repetition of words and phrases has a liturgical quality about it, echoing the versicles and responses of community worship.' (p.111) Elsewhere Blamires writes:

> the key to the prosody of *The Anathemata* is to be found in the development of antiphonal structure and parallelism on the basis of verses and responses in the Catholic liturgy and the antiphonal singing of the Psalms, which are themselves constructed on the principle of parallelism. The essential feature of these two forms is that the whole utterance is divided and the parts balance each other, sometimes by similarity, sometimes by contrast. When one is reading large sections of the poem to oneself, one feels almost a necessity for two voices to give expression to this division and balance. (p.137)

That is an acute observation well worth remembering by newcomers to David Jones's poetry who may find themselves confused and distracted by the actual layout of the page – long lines, short lines, indented lines. But it helps to recall that that is precisely the way in which the Order for Morning Prayer, for example, is set out in the Book of Common Prayer, and how Priest and People, or *Decani* and

Cantoris, respond to each other turn and turn about as they recite the Psalter or pray the Liturgy. In several poems the Liturgy has a more extended influence on the writings. For half a dozen pages at a stretch we can sense that some particular pattern from Missal, Breviary or Prayer Book lies below what we are reading. In *The Book of Balaam's Ass* wounded soldiers, delirious and dying of thirst as they lie untended in the mud-holes and craters in the no-man's-land of Paschendaele, cry out for water in a kind of Invocation of the Saints. In *The Sleeping Lord* there is a superb Anamnesis when King Arthur's household chaplain, in saying grace before dinner in the King's Hall, bows his head and then in silence, inly to himself, and but for a brief moment, makes remembrance of all the departed. The recalling is 'silent, brief and momentary' in the head of the priest, but it runs to eight and a half pages in the poet's text and is modelled on those parts of the Mass in which the saints are commemorated and the dead remembered.

In *The Tutelar of the Place* there is an echo of the Lord's Prayer and a louder echo of the Litany in the Book of Common Prayer. A peasant woman is calling the children and putting them to bed in some faraway mountain valley where life is still simple, honest and wholesome but increasingly threatened by the inquisitive, encroaching, levelling and soulless power of the busybody bureaucracy in the distant megalopolis:

> . . . Say now little children:
> Sweet Jill of our hill hear us
> bring slow bones safe at the lode-ford
> keep lupa's bite without our wattles
> make her bark keep children good
> save us all from dux of far folk
> save us from the men who plan.
> Now sleep on, little children, sleep on now, while I tell out
> the greater suffrages, not yet for young heads to under-
> stand . . .

and there follow three pages which are a prayer addressed to the

Great Mother and modelled on the Prayer Book Litany. That Litany is not often heard these days, the more's the pity. Its language of an earlier age, its length, its measured supplications, its often repeated and little varied responses – all these are apparently intolerable to many who prefer their prayers to be quick, slick and unmistakably relevant to the world at one this someday lunchtime. But some of us treasure it for those very qualities which the majority find tedious, and I cannot read it now without being reminded of this magic poem, which in its own way is a gloss on the Collect with which the Litany ends:

> O God, merciful Father, that despisest not the sighing of a contrite heart, nor the desire of such as be sorrowful: Mercifully assist our prayers that we make before thee in all our troubles and adversities, whensoever they oppress us; and graciously hear us, that those evils, which the craft and subtlety of the devil or man worketh against us, be brought to nought; and by the providence of thy goodness they may be dispersed; that we thy servants, being hurt by no persecutions may evermore give thanks unto thee in thy holy Church; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

III

I turn now to *The Anathemata*, David Jones's greatest work. Great in every way. Great in length, being divided into eight parts and running to two hundred pages, with a forty page Preface and hundreds of notes. But great too in its poetry, its imagery, in the depth of its content, in the scope of its subject matter. And what is it all about? The question reminds me of a passage early on in Charles Williams's *Descent into Hell*:

> There was a story . . . that the *Times* had once sent a representative to ask for explanations about a new play, and that Stanhope, the author, in his efforts to explain it, had found after four hours that he had only succeeded in reading it

through aloud: 'which', he maintained, 'was the only way of explaining it.'

Similarly, the only way to say what *The Anathemata* is all about is to read it completely through – and aloud. It is impossible to give a short answer to the question, because it is about practically everything. Any short answer therefore will be either as unintelligible to the beginnner as a Euclidean theorem or the Athanasian Creed – or it will be one-sided. But I am being one-sided in this paper; David Jones and the Liturgy is our subject; in no other poem is the influence of the Liturgy so apparent; and for our present purpose we can say, without being wildly inaccurate and misleading, that *The Anathemata* is a meditation upon and around the Mass – both *upon* the Mass and also *around* the Mass.

To some, such a definition will be supremely discouraging. It will suggest a poem stuffed with all manner of liturgical technicalities and churchy pieties and paraphernalia. Well, yes – many of these are mentioned, and those who don't know what they are can receive this information to their comfort, that they are explained with both erudition and wit in the Notes. But let none of this put anyone off, that is, unless he is one of those rare persons for whom the Liturgy has no interest whatever. For what is the Liturgy? Dom Gregory Dix put it like this: 'The Christian Liturgy is not a museum specimen of religiosity, but the expression of an immense living process made up of the real lives of hosts of men and women in all sorts of ages and circumstances.' It was such a definition that David Jones had in mind when he wrote in the Preface to *The Anathemata*:

> In a sense the fragments that compose this book are about, or around and about, matters of all sorts which, by a kind of quasi-free association, are apt to stir in my mind at any time and as often as not 'in the time of Mass'. The mental associations, liaisons, meanderings to and fro, 'ambivalences', asides, sprawl of the pattern, if pattern there is – these thought-trains (or, some might reasonably say, trains of distraction and inadvertence) have been as often as not initially

> set in motion, shunted and buffered into near sidings or off to far destinations, by some action or word, something seen or heard, during the liturgy. The speed of light, they say, is very rapid – but it is nothing to the agility of thought and its ability to twist and double on its track, penetrate recesses and generally nose about. You can go around the world and back again, in and out the meanders, down the history-paths, survey *religio* and *superstitio*, call back many yesterdays, but yesterday week ago, or long, long ago, note Miss Weston's last year's Lutetian trimmings and the Roman laticlave on the deacon's Dalmation tunic, and a lot besides, during those few seconds taken by the Presbyter to move from the Epistle to the Gospel side, or while he leans to kiss the board or stone (where are the tokens of the departed) or when he turns to incite the living *plebs* to assist him.

And with that paragraph in mind, David Jones subsequently wrote in a letter to a friend:

> When I say somewhere in the Preface that one can think of a lot of things in the brief moment it takes the celebrant of the Mass to move the missal from the Epistle to the Gospel side of the *mensa domini*, I literally meant that. The action of the Mass was meant to be the central theme of the work, for as you once said to me, 'The Mass makes sense of everything.'

The poem opens with an impressionist picture of elderly priests faithfully saying Mass, because they 'intend life'; saying Mass in historic churches of many periods; wearing ridiculously outdated garments; heedless of the fact that they are hopelessly outnumbered and themselves outdated; that what they are doing is regarded by their fellowmen as a wholly irrelevant, useless and superstitious relic of an age that has been left far behind by the onward march of man's mighty and majestic progress towards the twenty-first century. Nevertheless, there the priest stands, obediently and courteously

'saying Mass' with his little congregation chipping in now and then with their bit, and it's all very quiet. 'There's conspiracy here' . . . and the picture of priest and people in church fades as in a film and gives place to 'a high room where few are, and one gone out'. When all has been made ready and everything is shipshape, the Master makes and creates the greatest of all signs, 'works of art' you could say – the Eucharist; does this at a particular time on a particular hill, both for the sake of all the generations to come and in fulfilment of all that has been preparing in ages past, right back to 'before the mountains were brought forth, or ever the earth and the world were made', the age of Oreogenesis, the birth of the mountains . . . and the Upper Room on Mt Sion gives place to the world's uplands, the rising and falling of mountains and hills and all the geological earth-forming process which gave birth to Ararat and Sinai, Parnassus and Ida, the hill on which Troy stood and the seven hills of Rome, the Alps and the Pyrenees, the Sussex Downs and the Cotswolds, Bredon and Orcop and all the hills and mountains of Wales – and back to that crucial hill shaped like a skull at Jerusalem

> at the turn of time
> not at any time, but
> at this acceptable time.

All that is a bald prosaic summary of only the first eight pages. Clearly time would fail to tell in like manner of where the meditations of the remaining 192 pages take us. But every one who takes the trouble (and it will be a trouble, but a trouble in which there is little tedium and very much fascination) to study and get to know the work will, I think, begin to see the Liturgy in a new and altogether vaster perspective. For in the course of the poem we meet Paleolithic and Neolithic man, Egyptian and Jew, Greek and Roman, Celt and Teuton, Jutes and Angles and Saxons and Norsemen. We encounter Melchizedek and David, and Homer and Virgil, Malory and Milton, Coleridge and Hopkins, Joyce and Eliot. We visit Lascaux and Chartres, the Acropolis and St Paul's, Celtic shrines and hill forts; the Tower and the churches of the City of London. We

voyage the Aegean and the W. Mediterranean, cross the Bay of Biscay, and round the British Isles. We see Cape Sunium, the Wolf Rock, the Goodwin Sands, the Dogger Bank. We put in to the harbours of Piraeus and Marseilles, the Port of London, the Docks of Swansea. We hear Gregorian chant and *Greensleeves*, a Strauss waltz, and nursery rhymes, the harsh cries of seabirds and the cuckoo in the woods. We are shown what is revealed by the archeologist's spade and the geologist's hammer. We attend Midnight Mass on Christmas Eve in mid-Wales, the Masses of Christmas Morning at their proper churches in Rome. There is ship-building and surveying, ploughing and shepherding, the operations of siege engines and the disputations of scholars. There are Romulus and Remus, and Mars and Jove and Odin; Lud and Lear; Pontius Pilate and Augustine of Hippo; Arthur and Merlin; Jason and Nelson; Macbeth's witches and the witches of Gloucester. There are the Queen of Heaven and the Earth Mother; Athene and Persephone; Helen of Troy and Dido of Carthage; Guinevere and Blodeuedd and Britannia – and a lavender-selling woman of the London streets. Mountains and hills have already been mentioned, but we must now add glaciers and fens, Rhine and Danube, Thames and Severn, Welsh streams and the sallow-lined waterways of the English shires; woods and flowers; May-pole and Yggdrasil; birds and butterflies, dinosaurs, dogs, whales, worms. There's water and wood and stone; bread and meat and wine; sun and moon; fire and light; seas and stars; – and from start to finish, man and woman, young men and maidens, old men and children:

– and all this (though only a representative selection of the periods, places, creatures and creaturely doings appearing in the text)

– all this arising out of, and brought back into, the context of the Mass, into the presence of Christ,

He who, in the same night that He was betrayed
inaugurated the great Rite;
and on the morrow, on that hill, on the Cross that is
also a tree, and a ship's mast,
performed what the Rite signifies:
– the redemption of man, and the freeing

of the waters to renew the wasteland;
– of which things the Liturgy is the sign;
– of which Liturgy *The Anathemata* is a celebration.

Note

The substance of the above paper was first given at a conference held at the Royal Foundation of St Katherine's, Stepney, London, under the auspices of the Community of the Resurrection and of the Deaconess Community of St Andrew.

Overleaf: 'Paul taking bread in the boat', wood-engraving. From a proof of a design for an ordination card drawn by David Jones and engraved by Eric Gill in 1937. Taken from the forthcoming edition of the complete engraved works of Eric Gill to be published by Skelton's Press in 1983.

TOLKIEN AND THE PRIMORDIAL TRADITION

JOSCELYN GODWIN

When it becomes normal for people to cease believing in what they cannot reach with the senses, and when the established authorities on the supersensory are as contradictory and ignorant as is the case in our present civilization, then the truths that belong to all mankind – the Perennial Wisdom – must find other ways into the hearts and minds of men. Fortunately those who have been born into Western civilization have not been deserted entirely by the powers which look to the education of the human race (education in the original sense of drawing out the wisdom innate in every man). Like so much good teaching, their work may take place unconsciously, but its effect is not thereby diminished: rather the contrary, since society and upbringing have imbued many people so strongly with modern prejudices that the conscious entertainment of traditional wisdom is an almost unthinkable heresy for them. In such cases it is sometimes the Arts that take on an instructive, even an initiatory role. Not everyone is aware, for instance, that much well-known poetry, music and painting embodies elements of pure mysticism – and I use the word not as a critic's label, but as something literally and experientially true. But through these and other arts the liberally educated Westerner, however profane his conscious beliefs, has actually received a subliminal education in realms that might surprise him. Shakespeare's dramas have introduced him, all unknowingly, to the Hermetic Tradition. In classical architecture his soul has experienced the Divine Proportions and the geometry that lies at the foundation of the manifested universe. The French Impressionists have taught him something of the Metaphysics of Light, and of the mystery that underlies the very perception of an external world. Music has opened up to him new dimensions of time and space; and in the secondary worlds of the great epics and

fantasies he has learned of cosmoi which may well be closer to the truth than the world of his daily experience and superficial convictions.

Grounded as it is in the metaphysical, the Primordial Tradition also took for granted the irrational, the invisible, the esoteric and the occult; with which it prescribed the means for a satisfactory relationship through symbolism and ritual. The Arts of traditional civilizations, so vividly recreated for our time in the writings of A.K. Coomaraswamy and Eric Gill, always had something symbolic and ritualistic about them; and one could say as much for traditional Crafts, for Science, and even for Real Life, to mention four divisions whose very existence as separate domains is entirely a modern phenomenon. Every sort of human creativity was recognized as a vehicle for the symbolic embodiment of archetypal truths, which human skill could then imprint upon humble matter in word pictures, sound patterns, colour, stone or ceremony. The artist worked in harmony with society and with his own gifts and destiny, content to express universal Truth and Beauty for the benefit of his fellows. He had no need for innovation or ego-expression: for what can be new, what personal, about the Archetypes? He imitated the best masters, reproduced with all his skill the traditional models, and gave society what they both wanted and needed.

It is consequently only in the post-traditional period that the artist has had to take on the novel role of Outsider. The very notion of artists feeling at home with the collective values of our own times is laughable: it evokes, at best, visions of vast murals in Workers' Palaces, or of television performers summoned to the White House. That is because collective values are no longer a fit subject for human creativity. The place of a true artist in a world as publicly insane as ours can only be that of a rebel, overt or covert, recalling to their senses those who will hear, read or see.

So we come to J.R.R. Tolkien, the Oxford professor who in his spare time wrote one of the manifestos of the Aquarian Age. Did he know that the *Silmarillion* and *The Lord of the Rings* are replete with traditional wisdom and esoteric lore? Was he as knowing as

Dante or Blake, or was he more of a mouthpiece, as we may assume Shakespeare to have been? I leave the answer for his biographers: it does not matter greatly. Questions of influence and of intentionality are fascinating to pursue, indeed are essential if a full picture of the subject is to emerge, but they have been somewhat overworked by modern scholarship, one of whose major shortcomings is the lack of a vertical dimension in its tracing of sources. What matters most is that the cosmic and world view set forth in Tolkien's fiction accords remarkably with that of the Primordial Tradition, and that through its great popularity the souls of millions of readers have been instilled with certain universal truths. If this is escapist literature, then the escape is only from the false into something approaching the real. In what follows I will merely give some examples of the ways in which Tolkien has embodied this ancient wisdom. Each one would suffice for a paper on its own; and no doubt these papers will be written some day.

His epic begins, as it should, at the Beginning of all things (*The Silmarillion*, London, 1977, p. 15; hereafter *S*). Eru or Ilúvatar is the One whose Mind contains all things manifested and unmanifested. He is not the Absolute – not Brahma Nirguna, or the Ain Soph, or the Thrice Unknown Darkness – but the supreme Deity in its active mode: Brahma Saguna; Eheieh; the Universal Mind. This is clear from the fact that he emanates the Ainur, 'the offspring of his thought'. The Ainur whom Ilúvatar instructs and who make him glad with their song are the Demiurgic Powers (now called archangels or gods, depending on one's tradition) entrusted with the creation of the Universe, both formless and formed.

Tolkien is by no means the first to describe a Creation through sound or song. This is a very widely distributed metaphor, found on the one hand in all theologies of a creative Word or ordering Logos, and on the other in the image of Music of the Spheres. Tolkien resembles speculative music theorists of the Renaissance (Fludd, Kepler, Kircher, etc.) in likening Evil to a discord through which the cosmic music as a whole is enriched: for as a skilful composer knows how to resolve dissonance into consonance, so Ilúvatar causes

the evil intentions of Melkor to evoke harmonies still more wonderful from the Divine Mind (*S*, p. 17). This explanation of evil, difficult to accept when one is suffering from it, is nevertheless the only one intellectually acceptable to esotericists. The Indian sage Ramakrishna, asked by a disciple why God allows evil, replied disconcertingly: 'To thicken the plot!'

The four stages of Creation in *The Silmarillion* accord well with esoteric cosmogony. The first act of the One was the emanation of the Builders, the Ainur. Secondly, there followed in their music the idea of a possible cosmos, created according to their own nature and limitations, with a definite beginning and a definite cadence marked by Ilúvatar himself (*S*, p. 17). Thirdly came the vision in which the Ainur saw the World that their music had made: a world as yet unmanifested, 'For the Great Music had been but the growth and flowering of thought in the Timeless Halls, and the Vision only a foreshowing' (*S*, p. 20). Fourthly Ilúvatar himself gave substance to the ideal, resulting in 'Eä, the World that Is', on which the Ainur had to labour afresh. Do we not find here the four degrees of Archetypal, Intellectual, Imaginal, and Physical existence; or, equally, the Four Worlds of the Kabbala: the Atziluthic World, in which dwell the archetypes or the aspects of Deity; the Briatic World of the Archangels and their 'musical' emanations; the Yetziratic World of their 'visionary' creations; the Assiatic World of physical formation?

Obedient to the purpose of realizing their vision in Time and Matter, certain of the Ainur descended to Earth, henceforth to be called the Valar. Yet apart from them Ilúvatar had created directly his own Children, Men and Elves, whose ultimate destiny not even the Ainur knew (*S*, p. 18). Compare the Gnostic cosmogony, according to which the Supreme God made Man as an essentially divine being, yet placed him in the world seemingly beneath the Aeons – or Ainur – to whom the business of physical creation and overseeing was entrusted. Melkor, the Evil One who enviously wished to subdue to his will both Elves and Men (*S*, p. 18), rejects this arrangement, like the Satan of Islamic teaching who refused homage to

Adam. The Valar themselves, who are able, should they wish, to assume human shape (*S*, p. 21), recall the Demiurge of *Genesis*, the anthropomorphic Lord God who walks in the Garden and makes rules for Adam and Eve. We are in a very Gnostic atmosphere with these early chronicles.

The Valar, like certain of the Gnostic Aeons, have their queens, who in the Hindu theology would be called their Shaktis, the creative powers through which they act. Subsidiary to them are the Maiar, who seldom appear in visible form (*S*, p. 30). Here are the uppermost links of a Great Chain of Being: from the One, to the gods and goddesses to, shall we say, the angels? Beneath the Maiar (though in some mysterious way transcending them) come Men and Elves, the highest of them godlike, the lowest little more than beasts. As demiurgic creations there follow the Dwarves, made by Aulë, one of the Ainur who most resembles the classical Vulcan (*S*, pp. 27, 43). Beneath them are animals, plants and stones, even the humblest links in the chain showing, by their virtue and in some cases intelligence, that they are anything but dead stuff. Such a hierarchy of beings, or of states of being, is a universal postulate of the traditional cosmos, as is the special position of Man on the chain.

As regards the planets, I will only mention that the Earth's creation, as in *Genesis*, preceded that of the Moon and the Sun (*S*, p. 99). The Moon was placed first, the Sun shortly after, and both were guided by Maiars: the planetary intelligences acknowledged in almost all traditional cosmologies. The planet Venus appeared much later (*S*, p. 250), which will please only Velikovskians.

Tolkien accords to Man a unique position and a relationship with death that seem to find their closest echo in Buddhism. Of all the beings of the Universe, according to Buddhist doctrine, only Man can achieve Enlightenment and final liberation from the Wheel of Existence. Even the Long-Lived Gods who dwell in bliss, for a myriad of years must eventually descend and take on human incarnations in order to become enlightened, or else must continue to be reborn on the Wheel in inferior and even hellish states. When Ilúvatar

decided to make Men he promised to give them a new gift: 'Therefore he willed that the hearts of Men should seek beyond the world and should find no rest therein; but they should have a virtue to shape their life, amid the powers and chances of the world, beyond the Music of the Ainur, which is as fate to all things else . . .' (*S*, p. 41). 'It is one with this gift of freedom that the children of Men dwell only a short space in the world alive, and are not bound to it, and depart soon whither the Elves know not . . . Death is their fate, the gift of Ilúvatar, which as Time wears even the Powers shall envy.' (*S*, p. 42).

This gift of death, with its mystery and its sense of transcending even the imagination of the Ainu, suggests at least the possibility of it bringing a supreme release in its wake. 'Some say,' in a later passage, that Men when they die 'go to the halls of Mandos (the dwelling of the Plutonic Ainu, Namo); but their place of waiting there is not that of the Elves, and Mandor under Ilúvatar alone save Manwë knows whither they go after the time of recollection in those silent halls beside the Outer Sea. None have ever come back from the mansions of the dead . . .' (*S*, pp. 104-5). The language with which Tolkien describes the sojourn of Men in these halls is reminiscent of the Catholic Purgatory, and the whole question of the posthumous fate of Men as he envisages it could be treated again as a reflection of a Catholic point of view. Much would hinge on the precise way in which a sympathetic critic himself reconciled the Eastern and Western doctrines on this matter, presuming that a single tradition and a single truth underlie them all.

The Elves, unlike Men, are coeval with the Earth (*S*, p. 42). Their ultimate fate is unrevealed, too, but one doubts that it is the same as that of Men. They may leave the Earth for the Halls of Mandos if their bodies are destroyed or if they are particularly world-weary; but they may return again (*S*, p. 42). One cannot avoid wondering what is the posthumous fate of Hobbits, and whether Frodo's taking of the path to the West was not his supreme sacrifice, like a Bodhisattva's vow, binding him to the world as long as it should last.

The cosmos spun out of song and then built by the Ainur is only

one possible one, and it has a definite end. Allusion is made once to a Second Music of the Ainur (*S*, p. 42) in which Men shall join; could this be a 'new heaven and a new earth'? The implication seems to be one of successive creations, similar to the manvantaras of Hindu doctrine: the great cycles after which all things return to pralaya, non-manifestation. Within such a period the Purāṇas calculate an elaborate hierarchy of cycles within cycles, whose principle also occurs in Tolkien's books as the various Ages of the World. His is a cyclic view of history, though within each turn of the wheel time seems to be linear and progressive. The First Age ended with the overthrow of Melkor in his incarnate form as Morgoth; the Second with the downfall of Númenor and the first dissolution of Morgoth's vassal, the Maiar Sauron; the Third with the achievement of Frodo's Quest; and in the Fourth, we are given to understand, you and I are still living.

Each manvantara is divided in the Purāṇic system into four Ages: the Kṛta, Tretā, Dvāpara and Kali Yugas. The Greeks used the more evocative epithets of the Golden, Silver, Brass, and Iron Ages. Both mythologies relate that the sanctity and pleasantness of the Earth and its inhabitants are at their height during a Golden Age, after which they decline with accelerating rapidity until the Iron Age, shortest and most wretched of all, during which human life, correspondingly abbreviated, is beset by wars, plagues, famines, and all the disasters that impiety brings upon the planet. Then at the very darkest hour comes the Apocatastasis and the Age of Gold returns once more. Tolkien's Ages each witness the growth of evil, leading to a bloody confrontation, after which a season of peace and plenty ensues. The closing chapters of *The Lord of the Rings* certainly seem to usher in a new Golden Age. But of course evil is never vanquished for ever: these cataclysms mark the periodic resolutions of discord into temporary concord. Only at the end of the manvantara will all conflict cease, but how and when this will be, not even the Ainur can tell.

Occult prehistory, elaborating upon tradition, has had much to say about the former ages of our Earth, to which it attributes a

cataclysmic rather than a quietly evolutionary habit. The fall of the Morgoth at the end of the First Age (*S*, p. 252) was accompanied by terrestrial upheavals and the disappearance of the River Sirion. In the next Age there arose from the sea the land of Númenor as a dwelling for the Edain between the undying land of the Valar and Middle-earth (*S*, p. 260). When we hear later of Númenor's inundation (*S*, p. 279-80), we scarcely have to be told that in the Eldarin tongue it bears the name 'Atalantë' (*S*, p. 281) in order to remember the Atlantis legend: the geographical situation is the same, as is the reason for the cataclysm – the corruption and hybris of its inhabitants. Traditional authorities apart, there are few revelations of occult seers that enjoy so much consensus as the story of the Atlantean civilization: of the unsurpassed splendour at its height; the division between the followers of the Left-hand and the Right-hand Paths; the flight of the chosen ones to found colonies and, eventually, new civilizations in the continents to East and West of the doomed island; the Deluge that swallowed up the last of the Atlantean islands, as recorded by Plato. All of this is closely reflected in Tolkien's account of Númenor. Moreover, he describes how the Numenoreans came to the lands of Middle-earth bringing gifts to the Men who dwelt there in a benighted state. They introduced corn and wine, taught crafts and skills, and their new subjects revered the memory of the tall Sea-kings, and when they had departed they called them gods, hoping for their return' (*S*, p. 263). Occult lore similarly suggests that the man-gods Manu, Osiris and Quetzalcoatl were Atlanteans who, coming respectively to the Himalayas, Egypt, and Mexico, brought such gifts to the inhabitants and were later deified in popular memory.

The corruption of the Numenoreans is described by Tolkien as it proceeded gradually from their rejection of the Gift of Death, leading to the practice of mummification (*S*, p. 266), through the 'worship of the Dark', (*S*, p. 272), to the institution of a satanic Moon-temple and its rite of human sacrifice (*S*, p. 273). Whether or not Tolkien drew the Numenorean episode from the reading of occult writers such as Blavatsky and Steiner, his account agrees

both in outline and in details with theirs.

In the course of the post-Atlantean Age, Man has become less and less sensitive to the immaterial denizens of Earth, all but losing the clairvoyant faculties which must formerly have allowed him knowledge of, and commerce with, the elementals and nature spirits whom we might well assimilate to Tolkien's Elves. In this sense, we live truly in an Age of Men. But some of the inhabitants of Tolkien's Third Age still enjoy a degree of extra-sensory perception akin to that of certain atavistic, or purer, races of our own time; and for all his characters, good or bad, Magic is a fact of life, even if a rare one. The supernatural world impinges on them in prophetic and telepathic dreams, visions, synchronous events, and above all in the magical powers of objects: sword, stone, staff and ring. Such was the condition of archaic man, living in a time when the physical world was more transparent, matter less solidified. This, too, is a state which the Primordial Tradition takes for granted.

The ancient wisdom teaches that in every Age there take place descents of divine beings from another plane who voluntarily take on the burden of human incarnation for the good of Men. They are called variously Avatars, Saviours or Bodhisattvas. I would be inclined to see this doctrine reflected in Tolkien's Wizards, who came over the Sea when Sauron began to stir again in the Third Age (*S*, pp. 299-300). The Elves said that they were messengers sent by the Valar. The perversion of Saruman, of course, does not fit the avataric parallel, but rather reminds one on a smaller scale of the arrogant gnostic demiurge, Ialdabaoth, who became convinced of his own supremacy and denied that there were any gods above him, enslaving mankind for the satisfaction of his own greed for power. Gandalf, on the other hand, like so many saviour-gods and heroes, lives a life of service devoid of personal ambition. Like Hercules, Orpheus and Christ he passes through the gates of death; like Dionysus and Attis he is reborn in transfigured form, after which he does not die as a mortal but, his task fulfilled, departs forever from the circles of Middle-earth. Such a being is both god and man: he has superhuman powers and knowledge, but is not permitted to use them for

his own benefit, nor to attempt to change the destiny of others. (Gandalf could, for example, have warned Boromir of the dangers into which ambition was leading him.) He cannot compel, only attract followers who recognize his superior wisdom and virtue, and follow him of their own free will. In drawing the Wizard's character, Tolkien has managed in a marvellous way to show what such an enlightened being can be like. No one can fail to be profoundly stirred by Gandalf's humility, his compassion, sense of humour, and the tragic background of the immense burden he is carrying.

Certain monarchs who have held crucial positions in the destiny of humanity may also be regarded as avatars of a minor order. Such is certainly Aragorn: the type of the perfect Ruler working in consort with Gandalf, his spiritual adviser, as it were, each managing his own domain for the good of the world. Aragorn is the man of action, called to a warrior's hard life and the heavy duties of kingship; Gandalf's is the way of insight and contemplation, only occasionally erupting into magical action when physical means have failed. Yet this pair, so exemplary in their representation of spiritual authority and temporal power, are not set within any tradition, for religion is kept severely out of *The Lord of the Rings*. Gandalf may be a Magus: he is certainly not a Pontifex. Obviously any attempt to supply the inhabitants of Middle-Earth with a religion would have foundered on the shores of parody, or even, to Tolkien's Roman Catholic conscience, blasphemy. To have written a work of spiritual value dissociated from any religious tradition is an achievement peculiar to modern times. (One could name quite a number from the past two hundred years.) This again is an example of the extraordinary function taken on by the Arts in our time. If their task is subtly to infect people with the seeds of spiritual knowledge, they must do so autonomously, not trailing the banner of any tradition. For those who are already drawn to a tradition, there are of course more explicit means, and the arts to go with them.

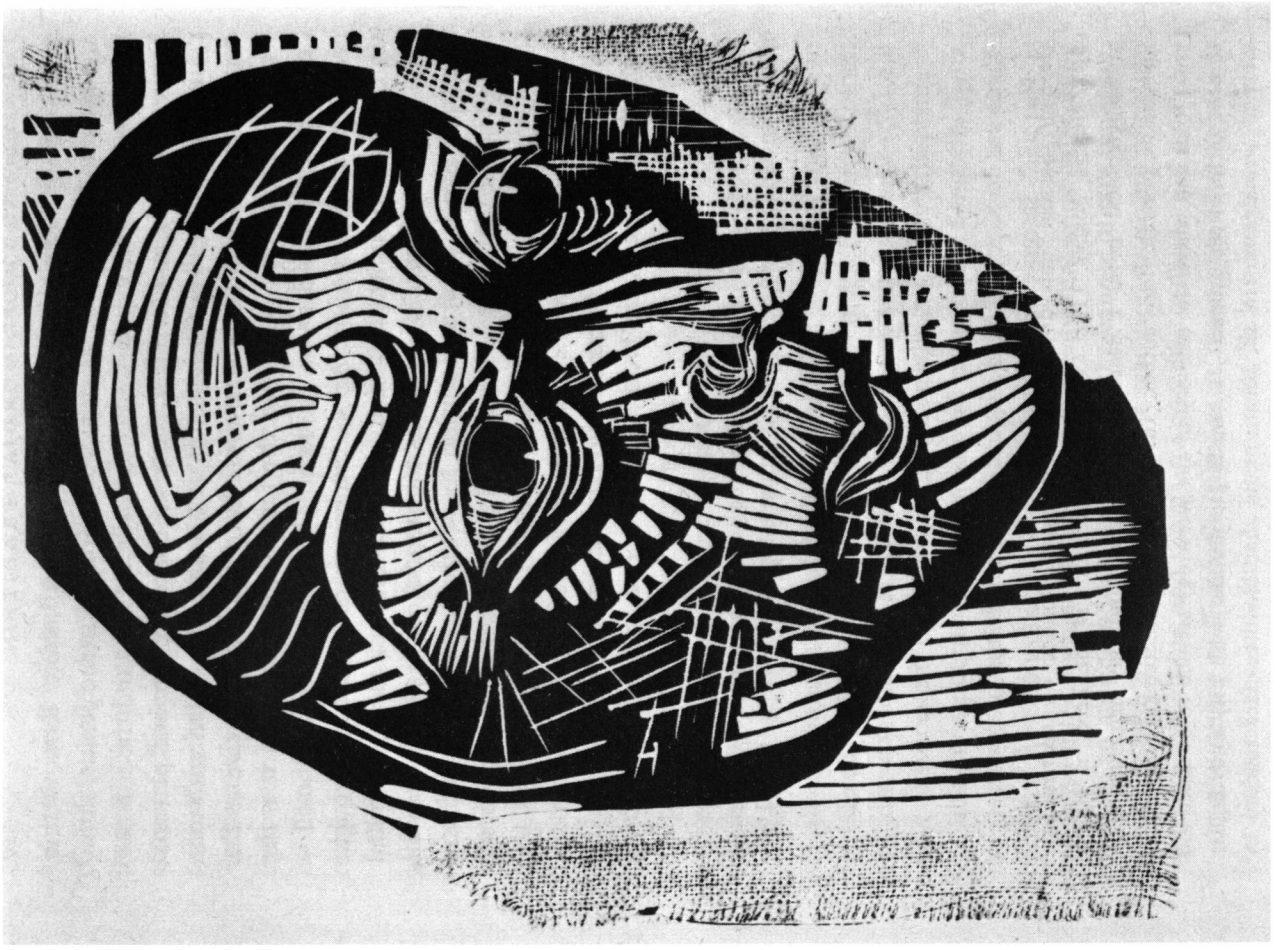
At the centre of Tolkien's epics, as at the centre of our own, is the quest of the individual. The cosmos he has imagined, with its hierarchies and cycles, is nought but a setting for the exercise of

individual freedom, be it that of a god or a hobbit. Remove this, and it would be as dead as clockwork. Tolkien's true genius, to my mind, resides in his capacity to convey the tension, and the balance, between destiny and free-will, between collective fate and personal choices. As one moves through this vast expanse, crowded with incident, one senses most powerfully what I can only describe as the web of Karma. This is not just the fate one is born with: it is the fate one constructs at every moment. The human condition itself – even the succession of the Ages – are karmic circumstances brought about by aeons of wilful activity; yet however much an individual may seem a prisoner of these circumstances, he is still free in his reactions, which in turn condition his future state, thereby influencing the course of the whole world. The scope and scale of Tolkien's story are what enable him to bring such a feeling to life in the reader. If his work has a single theme at its core, I would say that it is the relationship between individual action and cosmic event. And that is high praise of any work of art.

Note

This is a revised version of a paper read at the Second International Conference on the Fantastic in the Arts, at Florida Atlantic University, March 18-21, 1981.

Overleaf: 'Sassolo Sinibaldo, Comte de Pinamonte.' Linocut on Japanese paper by Zibuntas Mikšys. (The Comte de Pinamonte is the hero of Milosz' autobiographical novel *L'Amoureuse Initiation*, and the engraving is an imaginative portrait of the author. 'His physiognomy, whereon age had worked great folds and where the memory of the worst day seemed to be fixed in a sort of bitter-sweet grimace . . . made me shudder with pity and disgust. Worried wrinkles ran in all directions on that bloodless face marked by misfortune.')



THE NOBLE TRAVELLER

An Introduction to the Life and Work of O.V. de L. Milosz

CHRISTOPHER BAMFORD

The naught is the Noble
Travellers' watchword. It
is the beginning and the end
of the labyrinth.

— *Les Arcanes*, v. 46

— And we live in the fifth day,
my sister,
Of which the Book of Revelation
treats, the day of *Conjunction*.
The sixth day approaches!

Sunday, March 14, 1915

There is a sense in which no life is accidental and the course of each journey taken conforms to the essence of the soul concerned. Certain lives, however, are providential, initiatic, and their apparent contingencies coincide rigorously with the secret aspirations of the pilgrim or adept. Oskar Milosz was of this kind; but more than this he was a poet whose soul was poetry. Whatever he undertook he transformed by magic into poetry, which for him was the prophetic affirmation of the mystical destiny of all things, their final restoration or *apocatastasis*. Doubtless he was born to it, and worked for it, but he was also given a vision of the Spiritual Sun. Thereafter he could write and act only as one who has seen. Thus his was not a theoretical spirituality, an armchair metaphysics, but an inspired and realized knowledge. This differentiates him from most of his twentieth century contemporaries, placing him in the timeless company of such as Dante, Paracelsus, Swedenborg, Hölderlin and

Goethe, to name but some of those he recognized as his precursors.

To tell the story of this man, Oskar Vladislas de Lubicz Milosz, for whom 'the most ancient memories' and 'the shadowy lordship of ancestors' were so important, one must begin at the beginning, for the past was always of decisive significance for him, and he had an uncanny ability to seize upon precisely that aspect of his history which would, if properly transmuted, guide him to his destination. To understand him the reader must do the same, and so must begin by penetrating, if only for an instant, the living mystery – part personal history, *genius loci*, and a sense of the 'folk soul' – of the palimpsest of Eastern Europe.

In 1199 in Lusatia, after a bloody battle with Prussian troops, King Leszek of Poland knighted one Budzilas, giving him his coat of arms and the heraldic name of Lubicz-Bozawola, *Bozawola*, meaning 'Will of God'. This branch of the poet's name, therefore, is Polish; while the name Milosz, first appearing about 1580, with reference to estates in Labunava, near Kaunas, Lithuania, is Lithuanian. The idea of Lithuania and the scenes of its landscapes were to provide his poetry and his imagination with a perpetual source of inspiration, – 'My little Lithuania', as he called it, – finally coming to represent for him in actuality as in history the forgotten homeland of humanity, 'a country where all things have the dull colour of memory.'

However, he never really lived there. In 1795, Labunava was annexed by Prussia and in 1802 Joseph Milosz, the poet's great grandfather purchased the estate of Czereia in Byelorussia. Here, in 1811, the poet's grandfather, Arthur Milosz, was born, followed in 1838, in Vilna, by Vladislas Milosz, the poet's father, who inherited the family taste for art and for adventure, but was unbalanced, twisting his gift into madness and self-destruction. This was the man who, passing her in the street, falling in some way captive to her, upon a whim carried away the poet's mother, Maria Rosalie Rosenthal, the daughter of a poor Warsaw teacher of Hebrew. In Lithuania at that time Jews were subject to the cruellest hatred and oppression. The mother of the poet thus found herself sentenced to the

vast Milosz estates at Czereia where, on the 28th of May 1877, Oskar Milosz was born, a Lithuanian Jew of, as it has recently been revealed, unmarried parents and an unbaptised mother pretending otherwise – an exile from the start.

One may only guess at the invisible qualities of a poet's childhood, and so we do not know for certain why Maria Rosenthal appeared cold and distant to her son. Perhaps it was because of his father's madness or because of the life of duplicity she was forced to lead. But more likely it was the result of ineffable distance, a simple, almost 'allergic' psychic disaffinity or reaction. Such, anyhow, is what the,poet himself suggests when he writes: 'My mother's materialistic and incomprehending fondness irritated me, and I very early acquired the habit of hiding in the most secret parts of the parks and gardens in order to escape the feelings which her presence inspired in me.' Solitude, in other words, was the only true mother the poet ever had:

> Welcome, you who come to meet me
> In the echo of my footsteps, from the bottom of
> the cold, dark corridor of time.
> Welcome, solitude, my mother . . .
> You fed me with humble black bread and milk
> and wild honey;
> It was sweet to eat from your hand, like the sparrow,
> For I had never had, O Wet-Nurse, mother or father
> And madness and coldness wandered endlessly in
> the house . . .
>
> *Symphonie de Septembre*

Left to himself in 'the country of childhood' the poet grew close to nature, his perceptions sharpened by his own peculiar realization of exile, need and desire. Thus infant suffering, grown conscious, became the womb for poetry and illumination. Solitude, his mother, took on the lineaments of Czereia, 'the house of the past':

I say: My Mother. And it is of you that I think,
O house!
House of the beautiful, obscure summers of my
childhood . . .

Insomnie

Here, in the eighteenth century mansion in the Empire style, everything loved him, for everything had witnessed his suffering. Here, the 'odour of earliest times' suffused the memories of the present:

And I was alone in the house you never knew,
The house of childhood, the dumb, dark house,
Deep in the leafy parks where the
chill bird of morning
Softly sang for the love of the long-since dead in
the sombre dew.

Symphonie Inachevée

Here, above all, Nature – daughter of solitude and memory – began to gather around her the spiritual form of the Soul of the World, the primordial, feminine principle of manifestation, Sophia. At the age of twelve, 'a strange young girl encountered in a dream by a secret spring in the midst of deep and shimmering solitude' entered his world. 'I gave to my little unknown one', he writes in a fragment from his autobiographical novel *Les Zborowsky*, 'the name of a flower. She became the childish lady of my thoughts, the companion of my endless wanderings through woods and plains. The charm of her invisible presence clothed as with a misty and caressing gauze all the things of nature.' This gentle figure, so suggestive of Novalis, did not, however, free him of his obsession with his father whom he loved 'with a strange, mixed passion of admiration, fear and pity', and this double allegiance of love troubled him deeply until in a moment of supreme metaphysical and symbolical insight he found a remarkable solution to his quandary:

> Lilia, the little girl of my thoughts, visited me
> often in my dreams; one night therefore I gave
> her the silent order to declare herself solemnly
> my sister; which she did, as you might imagine,
> with the best grace in the world.
>
> *Les Zborowsky*

Here is prefigured the poet's itinerary: a female figure, assimilated to nature, is invoked and addressed as sister, or partner in the quest for a father. Thus the smile of the ancient Egyptian Queen Karomama will call the poet 'brother', knowing only too well that his

> Soul is as ancient as the song of the sea
> And solitary as the sphinx in the desert . . .
>
> *Karomama*

Nature, woman, memory – from the beginning Milosz is possessed by a half-recollection of a mysterious, chaste passion wherein he will later recognize the mystery of reciprocity and conjugal love, full memory of which will lead him painfully to understand that primordial passion of Adam for Eve and of God for his Creation:

> To the sphere where love but calls to Love.
>
> *Le Retour*

Czereia, the scene of the unveiling of this mission, the soil wherein its seed was planted, thus became in every way 'the Haunted House', the garden of memory, melancholy and original nostalgia, whose mnemonic key the poet was to seek, like Seth the Oil of Life, beyond the confines of this fallen world. Childhood as always, then, constitutes the first stage in the ascension of the poet, giving him his directive and his yearning for a home. Already, that is, Milosz's heart beats in the insoluble rhythm of what will become for him the principal question: Where am I?

In 1889, at the age of twelve, his parents brought him to Paris, where his father was to receive treatment for a serious nervous disorder from Dr Charcot. However, for whatever reason, the treatment

was not extended and his parents, having installed Oskar in the Lycée Janson-de-Sailly as a boarder, returned almost immediately to Lithuania. The poet himself was not to return for a number of years. The die was cast. He was called upon to meditate the problems of time and space. Memory, the simultaneous sensation of loss and recollection, impressed itself more deeply on his soul as a vocation.

By now, too, Milosz was predestined for poetry. Poetry was already his life and, indeed, it was his love for the Hebrew poetry of the Bible – echoes of which we may find in his own verse – that drew him to study Hebrew and Assyriology with Ledrain, the famous translator of the Bible. Lamartine, Baudelaire, Poe, Mallarmé were his teachers now, appropriate guides for one who felt that poetry was, as a later statement makes explicit, the sacred art of the Word, the Logos, 'surging forth from the very depths of Universal Being'. For Milosz, who prided himself upon writing with 'the very soul of words', poetry was 'the passionate pursuit of the Real', and seemed called upon 'as organizer of the archetypes, to survive, not only our mechanical civilization, but Space-Time itself'. Names, words, were for him of the archetypal realm, only the spirit of things had a name.

In 1899, his first volume of poetry was published, *Le Poème des Décadences.* Appearing to some as a late flower of symbolism, a few discerning readers sensed its unique, spiritual tenor. Paul Fort, who at Milosz's funeral was to speak of 'our French Goethe . . . the finest gift Europe ever gave France', recommended it for review. The task fell to Francis de Miomandre who, not knowing the poet, wrote of the astonishing 'interiority' of the verses, of the resonance of the images and their power of evocation, of a magical sense of rhythm which seemed to place them in syncopation with some universal heartbeat.

These first poems are poems of the soul in search of soul; of soul becoming aware of its groundlessness; of soul's longing for its true ground, its real other.

Take my heart, O sister dear, and rock it!
Gardens, rivers, mountains in your eyes I see,
A whole landscape disappearing, growing distant,
A whole kingdom foundering in blue silence.
Take my heart, O sister dear, and rock it!

O Lilia, mist of the garden of Thoughts, you are
sweet
As a music heard in half-sleep
– Tomorrow the waking of wood flowers amidst
the mosses will be beautiful
And in the young sun bees will sing!
O Lilia, music heard in half-sleep!

Berceuse

Elsewhere, she is Lalie, Egeia, Elliné, Celiane, Annie, Alienor, Marie . . . figures that drive the poet deeper and deeper into himself. At once ascetic and sensual, hermit and profligate, he is pushed to search where he can. The need seems greater than a human can bear, so the search too must be extreme, overwhelming, self-destructive. The search is for love, of course, yet for God too, for God is love. So, to begin with, the poet searches human love, all too human, for vestiges of the divine and, as always in Milosz, there is an ambiguity, a paradoxical identity, between soul and nature, nature and woman, woman and soul, flesh and spirit. The soul is indeed a garden, but its principle is asleep:

I am a great November garden, a distressed
garden
Where the forsaken of the old suburb shiver . . .

Mists

There is no dew yet, as there will be, on the tender briar, but the aim, the symbolic intent is clear, unhesitating: the poet conceives his life entirely in spiritual terms. That this is so, and that by interpreting them thus we are not reading anything into these early

poems which is not there, is confirmed by Milosz's own treatment of them. As he collected them in later life, he revised and edited them, removing redundant, transient stanzas and adding others that helped bring out their full meaning. In other words, we must not mistake the reality of these early poems, with their pain, suffering and melancholy, for fin-de-siècle mannerism. Decadence and ennui are there, yes, but in a religious sense, and to the uttermost depth of the soul. The next years were dark, in many ways, but gradually Milosz achieved flexibility and spiritual self-confidence.

In 1902 he returned to Czereia and remained there with only occasional trips abroad until 1906 when, his father deceased, mother and son settled the estate, thus sealing the poet's fate to be exiled upon earth. A period of ripening ensued. In the summer the poet rode on horseback composing verses; in the winter he rode his sleigh, sucking his pipe, reading Kant, Schopenhauer, Plato. As he wrote to Christian Gauss: 'One can get used to everything: the important thing is to live as little as possible in what is called the world of reality.' In this spirit, he composed a Don Juan, the first of three, wherein the hero, 'an unfortunate philosopher in life and an artist happiest in his dreams like all seekers after the absolute', 'wants the absolute in this love of love which satisfied his ancestors but no longer suffices for him.' The result is 'horrible, disgusting (human, in a word)', as Milosz says, a violent tortured drama sustained by the more-than-human passion of his longing.

These are apprenticeship years; but they are not years of disorientation or lack of direction. The poet is clear; he knows his is a certain mission. Indeed, he saw himself as destined to open a new moment in human evolution. In 1905, at the summer resort of Rigi Kaltbad in Switzerland, he met Leon Vogt, the sculptor who was to become his closest friend. It was an 'initiation'. The two men enjoyed a magic moment of sympathy and inspiration – Goethe, Nietsche, Wagner were among affinities shared – and Milosz confessed the role he felt called upon to play 'in the renewal of Christian metaphysics'. He defined his 'mission' as an 'annunciation of a future Christianity'. Following this moment, the poet probably travelled to Russia where

he witnessed the Revolution of 1905: thus his metaphysical vision was honed on the stone of historical reality.

In 1906, a second collection of poems, *Les Sept Solitudes*, appeared in Paris, containing several magnificently musical and much-anthologized poems, but not evidently advancing the quest otherwise. There was a deepening, a reaching further into most interior places, but no new level of consciousness or understanding was achieved. The poet's life then became more mysterious – nomadic, solitary, disorganized. He travelled much: Germany, Russia, Italy, Sweden, Poland, Denmark, North Africa and particularly England, above all Kent, whose trees and melancholy enchanted him. English poetry he found the most beautiful of all; English the language of the gods. He began translating – Shelley, Byron, Coleridge, Goethe, Schiller, Mickiewicz, Slowacki, Pushkin, Lermontov. Goethe was his God now, above Shakespeare even, and for the moment Dante; but Byron is not far behind; and soon he will discover Hölderlin. But besides this work of study and translation, the poet's life seems sterile and there is an abeyance of poetic activity. There is no abatement, however, in the ardour of his devotion. Poetry is still supreme: 'It alone is a beautiful and true thing, or better still, it alone is a thing in itself.' The other name for this is Love. Writing to Vogt (1910), Milosz affirms he will never cease from 'seeking the Mystical Kingdom wherein to be seated, in a Palace of Love, upon a throne of Glory and of Beauty.' He continues: 'Priest-King I am, was and will be. Even my power grows from hour to hour; I am the Abode of Love and speak to God face to face.' The reference here is to his great, confessional novel, *L'Amoureuse Initiation*, published in 1910, a work marking the watershed between the so-called sacred and profane in his life.

Written in a single breath, *L'Amoureuse Initiation* takes the form of the recollections of an eighteenth century count, Pinamonte, as he recounts these to a younger acquaintance, Benjamin. Both, it turns out, had loved a woman, Clarice-Annalena who, to get rid of Benjamin, had feigned death, and then taken up with Pinamonte. These two now meet, when Clarice-Annalena is truly dead, and

expiate their mistaken love. In Pinamonte, as a critic has said, Milosz confesses; in Benjamin he judges and renounces himself.

The story is an old one. Pinamonte never knew love and to fill his need, sought love in a million places. His search was thus not for love, but to fill the void that the lack of love left within him. Seeking love, not finding it, his only recourse is to vengeance on himself. Indeed, his is a systematic derangement of the imagination, an obsessive self-destruction, in the telling of which Milosz spares no scabrous details. Then Pinamonte meets Clarice-Annalena and falls in love with her. She becomes all to him: life, music, poetry, adoration, prayer. Time ceases; love only is. Pinamonte indeed seems to discover God in love; but his love remains carnal; yet nevertheless in the midst of its passion he continues to hear the Supreme Name. He remains unsatisfied, however, sensing that Clarice-Annalena is only a reflection, a shadow of what he is truly seeking. No matter how intimate they become, located in time and space, she remains a stranger, inaccessible, distant: an impenetrable material object. Sadness and disgust overcome him. The thought of Annalena's temporality, her death, obsesses him, and he falls back into his old, vicious, self-destructive habits. Then he discovers her in the arms of another and realizes that he has been confusing Love with the loved one, the Unconditional with the conditional, the Creator with the creature. Thereby he realizes also that the creature, the conditional, can only be a medium and must be transformed. 'True love hungers for reality', he confesses, 'and there is no reality but God.' For Love to be perfect therefore, the other, the reciprocal, must be realized in God, who is the only unconditioned perfect unity, a unity the realization of which requires three terms: God, oneself, and another.

L'Amoureuse Initiation was followed in 1911 by *Les Élēments*. These poems written between May and November 1910, sharpen and perfect the insights gained in polished Alexandrines. The elements speak of Nature and of Love, but this Love, of course, 'is not the son of space and time':

Its kingdom is elsewhere; it has never reigned
Upon this mass of hostile, lonely mud.

Le Lac

Nor has nature. Indeed both Nature and Love are in the process of transcendence:

My love is so great that no creature
Dare approach it, would know how to feed it;
It needs all hope and all memory,
All that cries and laughs, deep Nature,
The large-breasted mother who knows not how to die.
Blessed he who gives himself to human tenderness
And receives from the world as much as he gives!
I have sown the golden germ and have not harvested;
But within my proud and noble soul I carry
The consolation of having forgiven all.

La Mer

In other words, for Milosz Nature is woman, *das Ewig-Weibliche* which draws us upwards and with regard to her the same realization must occur as occurred with woman – a realization which will be most clearly and forcefully stated in the remarkable *Cantique de la Connaissance* (1919):

Like all nature poets, I was sunk in profound
ignorance. For I believed I loved beautiful flowers,
beautiful prospects and even beautiful faces for
their beauty alone . . .
Until the day when, noticing I had stopped in front
of a mirror, I looked behind me. The
source of lights and forms was there, the world
of profound, wise, chaste, archetypes . . .

This is central to the understanding of Milosz. Six months before his death he wrote Ernest Gengenbach:

> I will open up my thoughts for you in a few words. Nature (so beautiful in the eyes of most people), this nature within whose bosom we have lived millennia upon millennia, is to me an absolute kind of ugliness and baseness. We are only able to bear it because, deep within ourselves, survives the memory of first *nature* which is *divine* and *true* . . .
> The true *revolution* will be that which transmutes *second nature*, stench, lie, ugliness and ferocity, and returns to it its angelic physiognomy of the Daughter of God, of First Nature.

Thus the woman that was in Milosz died, and he gave her Nature, her kingdom, for a tomb; and he learned that 'the body of man encloses in its depths a remedy to all ills and that the knowledge of gold is also that of light and blood'. He had learned, that is, that life and creation make no sense if not destined for divine reintegration. Thus Milosz was now on the broad road to reconciliation, to experiencing the unity of Archetype and reflection, Creator and creation, Love and love's movement, to achieving the resolution of these in the heart's affirmation, its yes dissolving the all too solid and impenetrable materiality of space-time in an ecstasy of presence.

These insights were first worked through and embodied in three mystery plays: *Miguel Manara* (dealing with the original Don Juan who successfully and blessedly resolved the search for love in sanctity and conversion); *Mephisobeth* (dealing with David and Bathsheba, and the processes of guilt and expiation); and, finally, the fragmentary *Saul de Tarse* (dealing, of course, specifically with the turning to Christ). Of these *Miguel Manara* is the most purely inspired, 'thrown furiously upon the paper,' as Milosz says, 'in the silence of night, not by the sad "I", but by someone that every poet worthy of the name carries in himself.'

At the same time (1911-14) certain major poems called *Symphonies* were written: poems of the dark night of the soul, of suffering (that conflict of consciousness which alone permits its self-trans-

cendence):

> It will be exactly as in this life. The same room.
> – Yes, my child, the same. At daybreak, time's
> bird in the foliage
> Pale as a corpse: then the servants rise
> And you hear the frozen, hollow noise of buckets
>
> At the fountain. O terrible, terrible youth!
> Empty heart!
> It will be exactly as in this life . . .
>
> *Symphonie de Novembre*

In 1914, came the illumination itself. 'It was at the beginning of the European hecatomb which was to make of this Lithuanian magnate a pauper', writes Carlos Larronde who was a witness. 'Milosz was then undergoing a tragic crisis of health. For weeks one did not see him. He isolated himself in his apartment, opening his door only to very special intimates, holders of an agreed-upon sign. One sinister winter's morning in 1914 I appeared at his door. Milosz welcomed me fraternally, retained me in his vestibule, and I will always hear him saying to me, leaning his tall silhouette against the wall: "I have seen the spiritual sun." '

Great poems followed – poems of affirmation, prophecy and almost unendurable pain, suffering, compassion:

> Forty years.
> I little know my life. I have never seen it
> Light up in the eyes of a child born of me.
> Nevertheless I have penetrated my body's
> secret. O my body!
> All the joy, all the anguish of the beasts of
> solitude
> Is in you, earth spirit, brother of the rock
> and of the nettle . . .
>
> *Nihumim*

Then, in 1916, Milosz made a first metaphysical statement of his knowledge in the *Epitre à Storge,* published in 1917 in the *Revue de Hollande* and included as the opening section of *Ars Magna* (1924). This is a magic, incantatory text, an act of prophecy and testimony, whose mystery and profundity increases with each reading. Addressed to Storge, a Swedenborgian word appropriated from the Greek and meaning a kind of love in which conjugal love and love of infants is conjoined, it begins by poetically plunging the reader into the heart of metaphysical mystery:

> From the first to the last movement of our physical and mental life, Storge, everything in this natural world, in which we are for some days, may be traced to a unique necessity to situate. In truth, we bring into nature neither space nor time but rather we bring the movement of our body and the knowledge, or, more exactly, the verification and the love of this movement, a verification and love we call Thinking, and which is the origin of the first and fundamental science of situating all things, beginning with ourselves. Space and time seem to have been prepared well in advance to receive us, and yet all our anxieties arise from our need to situate this same space and time; the mental operation, by which, for want of any other imaginable place or container, we assign them a place in ourselves, multiplying and dividing them to infinity, removes nothing of these terrible anguishes, – of these anguishes of love, Storge, – which pursue us to the very limits of the Valley of the Shadow of Death.

This compulsion to situate everything, including time and space, Milosz goes on to explain, condemns us to an infinity of suffering. It creates the illusion of the infinitely great and the infinitely small, of the infinite divisibility of matter, and finally of the infinity of matter itself. Should we for a moment cease our obsessive situating,

then everything, including matter itself, would disappear. And not only matter, but time and space also: for time, space, matter are given to us in a single unity which is movement – 'All is given in a totality in Movement; there is absolute simultaneity and identity.' From this point of view, there is no distance and there is no time, only relations between movements or states:

> I know, in our poor astronomical sky, of two singularly burning stars, two faithful confidantes, beautiful and pure, which I believed to be separated from their friend by unimaginable distances. Well, the other evening, a huge night moth having fallen from the lamp on to my hand, I had the gentle curiosity to question its flaming eyes . . .

Such a condition demands, as Milosz says 'the wisdom of total affirmation or the madness of absolute negation.' The one rests upon the 'terrifying majesty of *Absolute Repose*', the other condemns us to dismemberment by multiplication and division to infinity. Our thinking, then, can choose either: the movement of Love which is repose or the movement of Hate which is division and negation. The first is the eternal feminine of Dante, Goethe, Swedenborg, Hölderlin; the second is the weakness of reason. The first places all things in the only safe place, while the second will never determine the real situation of any body whatsoever: 'There, multiplication and division to infinity strive in vain to fill a black and dreadful eternity of terror and an insatiable, sacriligious, infernal rhythm carries one off like a blade of grass into the whirling chaos of expiation.' Milosz visited both countries, and the *Epitre à Storge* concludes with an account of his visionary experiences (see p. 61).

* * *

From this point on, Milosz's life became 'other', and he began to study and discover his precursors in sacred knowledge, making the Hermetic and Pythagorean mystery traditions his own. Principally, his guides were the alchemists (Nicholas Flamel, Basil Valentine, Sendivogius, Eugenius Philalethes), Paracelsus, Boehme, Swedenborg, Martines de Pasqually and Saint-Martin, the Unknown Philosopher. But he also studied medieval philosophy, Grosseteste and Aquinas, and, of course, the Neo-Platonic philosophers and Alexandrian mystics. Simultaneously, he began to frequent mystical, occultist circles and became part of a movement of cultural renewal – renaissance – based upon spiritual and esoteric principles. All of which led to the discovery 'that the truth is one, and that it needs only a little respect and love to discover it within one's own consciousness.' Indeed, as he put it, 'There exist only two kinds of men: the negators, with irreconcilable systems, and the modest affirmers who . . . all say the same thing to whoever can listen.'

These were now the war years and they touched Milosz as intimately as they did everyone. In 1916, he was mobilized in the French army, Russian division, and was attached to the Maison de la Presse. In 1917, the October Revolution broke out, leaving him destitute. In February 1918, at Wilno, the Lithuanian Republic was formed and, from this moment on, though its boundaries did not include his literal homeland, Milosz began to appropriate his metaphysics and emotions to the idea of Lithuania. Legally a Russian émigré, Milosz could haven chosen to attach himself to either Poland or Lithuania. In fact, in most ways except the most important, those of spiritual foundation, Milosz's background was Polish – he did not even speak Lithuanian – but one may surmise that, because Lithuania represented for him both an ideal and a dream, he opted for it. At the beginning of 1919, he joined the Lithuanian Legation and, at the end of that year, having been the Lithuanian Delegate to the Peace Conference, he was appointed Delegate to the French Government. Thus his life took a new turn and for the next ten years Milosz remained in diplomatic service: from 1920-25, he was Lithuanian Chargé d'Affaires in France: from 1925-31, he was

Honorary Counsellor to the Legation.

During this period, Milosz had the immense task of attempting to gain recognition for an independent Lithuania, an aim which he pursued in the context of an alliance of Baltic States in alliance with Poland. The pressures in such a venture were tremendous. Conference followed upon conference, crisis upon crisis. But in all this activity, as Milosz himself said, the poet proved himself a true disciple of the Master. He knew that without peace and stability, Europe would continue her moral and political collapse. He was well aware, too, that with the Great War, a war in heaven had been fought and had ended, requiring a new world to arise based upon the virtues of freedom, unity, love and the natural dignity of human work. To this end, in the service of a true, supranational messianism, Milosz committed himself to the spiritual vision of the unity of Europe in a decentralized organism of independent European states. Finally, however, in 1931, realizing that his true vocation lay elsewhere, Milosz retired from diplomatic life, even becoming, while ever remaining faithful to his 'dear little Lithuania', a French citizen.

Meanwhile, his poetic and literary activity continued undiminished. Poetry and metaphysics flowed from his pen, but the tone was different. In this, as in much else, Milosz is like Blake who also saw. Indeed, as Czeslaw Milosz has pointed out, Milosz shares with Blake the twofold mission of at once abolishing 'Newton's Sleep' – particularly his view of space as an empty, mindless container – and of substituting for it a polymorphic, imaginative vision, in which a new science, based upon analogy and correspondence, could unfold in the unity of consciousness. This is 'the teaching of the sunny hour of the nights of the Divine':

> For those who, having asked, have received and
> know already.
> For those whom prayer has led to meditation upon
> the origin of language.
> Others, thieves of suffering and joy, knowledge and
> love, will understand nothing of these things.

To understand them it is necessary to know the
objects designated by certain essential words
Such as bread, salt, blood, sun, earth, water,
light, darkness, as well as all the names of
metals.
For these names are neither the brothers nor the
sons but the fathers of sensible objects.
With these objects and the prince of their substance
they were hurled from the motionless world of
archetypes into the abyss of the tempest of time.
The spirit of things alone has a name. Their
substance is unnamed.
The power to name sensible objects absolutely
impenetrable to spiritual being
Comes to us from the knowledge of the archetypes
which, being of the nature of our spirit, are like it
situated in the consciousness of the solar egg . . .
I have seen. He who has seen ceases to think and to
feel. He knows only to describe what he has seen.

La Cantique de la Connaissance

To this teaching, poems like *La Confession de Lemuel*, *La Nuit de Noel de 1922 de l'Adepte*, three *Psalms* – of the *King of Beauty*, of *Maturation* and of *Reintegration* – and two *Prayers* bear witness. At the same time Milosz turns to prose – lyrical, poetic, prophetic – in an attempt to make clear what he has seen.

In 1924, *Ars Magna* is published, the *Epitre à Storge* forming the first part of it. This is followed by another 'essay' entitled *Memoria*, or memory, which Milosz claimed is the key to the doctrine that has been revealed to him. First the problem of space and place had haunted him; then in 1914, the truth of these was shown to him, finally in 1916 he came to the gradual formulation of the simultaneity, outside succession, of space-time-matter in Movement – a single, unique movement, recalling Goethe's 'Im Anfang war die Tat'. Now it is revealed that this movement, this primordial Fiat, has its

sensible reflection in the inner movement of the blood: 'The knowledge of the primordial substance slumbers in us in the darkness of our pride like god beneath the weight of the mountains.' The Sun of Memory, that is, reveals that all which is movement is blood, that our blood is the manifest recurrence of the fiat, and that in its movement is contained all knowledge of the beginning, which is accessible to our hearts by the magic rhythm of Affirmation and Prayer.

Memoria is followed by *Nombres* which relates these insights to the ancient Pythagorean teaching of the Decad. Milosz shows how, if Movement is first, Blood and Light – the Fiat – is second, giving rise to space, time and matter – the third – observation of which, by the movement and verification of love which is human thought, is fourth; which fourth is entirely contained, that is manifested, in the blood – the fifth – which is manifestation, and which returns us to unity, giving us the pentagram symbolizing transmutation. The sixth, then, writes Milosz, is given 'by the reconciliation in man of blood and consciousness' and is symbolized by 'the rising of the Sun of Memory'. The seventh is that of completion and adoration – the seventh day – while the last three numbers symbolize the perfection of the Holy Trinity in Holy Immobility inaccessible to our reason.

Nombres is followed, first, by *Turba Magna*, wherein the anteriority of movement is fully explained and identified with 'the naught', and then by *Lumen*, a prose poem in forty-one short, two or three line sections, epitomizing what has gone before:

> Cast a glance about you, my child. How good
> and simple everything is. All this, all this matter,
> it is your own blood, and this blood is movement,
> hence time and space. (v. 14)

The metaphysical message is clear. We seek our place, but our true place is nowhere, is no material, impenetrable location. In reality there is only motionless unity; the rest is dismemberment, multiplication and division to infinity, real enough in its pain and suffering,

but illusion nevertheless. In other words, having denied, divided and separated the primordial unity of space-time-matter-movement, humanity, and the cosmos, *fell*. Hence, as Vladimir Soloviev says in *The Meaning of Love*: 'To overcome this twofold impenetrability of bodies and phenomena, to make the actual external medium conformable to the inward all-one idea – there is the problem of the process of the world.' Thus, metaphysics inevitably leads to re-ligio, and *Lumen* ends by invoking:

> . . . the incorruptible and curative God of divine Charity, that honeyed metal, secretion of archangelic bees, the gold which no synthetic enterprise will ever capture without the aid of the Ave and the Pater.

The crown and culmination of Milosz's literary career, *Les Arcanes*, written in 1926 and published in 1927, makes this clear. In it Milosz announces, in a profound commentary upon his own poem of one hundred and seven stanzas, a new Christianity and a new Christian metaphysics. Here we find all the great Miloszian ideas and visionary experiences clothed in explicitly Christian form. Indeed, in many ways, the poem is but a poetic, Hermetic disclosing of the meaning of the Prologue to the Gospel of St John. Milosz's metaphysics is thereby revealed to be Johannine and, as he himself asserted, wholly contained within the doctrine of the Catholic Church.

The universe was created terrifyingly, beautifully, single, unique and instantaneous. In the beginning was that movement which created and was instantaneity and immobility, the naught, that 'ideal mirror which spirit presents to itself in order that its beauty appearing to it freely and as though from without, love should be exalted above the law.' This mirror, or Naught, is the divine archetype of the universe; the beauty it reflects is creation or manifestation. God, severing His unspeakable unity in an act of universal sacrifice and love, sees Himself in Himself and, seeing Himself, sees the universe, his Bride. In instantaneity, of course, this first divine sacrifice is one with the 'second', that of Christ Jesus. Both, that of

the Father's *light* and of the Son's *blood*, freely transmute the necessity of law into the Beauty of Love. One creates the universe, the other redeems it; and in both cases it is the Virginal Beauty of the Universe, of the Eternal Feminine, the Soul, which makes this exaltation of Love possible. 'Thus later, at the moment of purification of beings and of things, Christ was born of a Virgin, corporeal image of free first beauty', a second Immaculate Conception corresponding to the first.

Situating ourselves in God's mirror, the archetype of the universe, the Naught, we situate ourselves in God, the only situated Reality, and see the Beauty of the universe through His eyes and with His Love. The Naught, then, in which God sees Himself both allows Him to adore Himself and to unite Himself in His Image. All things thus exist in perfect beauty in God, but division occurs: the Fall. Humans deny the God-ness, the Naught or Third Aspect of things, giving birth to space or time. Opposition and hatred take the place of adoration and prayer, but the memory of unity still remains in the blood, and so the heart may become an organ of re-cognition.

With the publication of *Les Arcanes*, Milosz withdrew from strictly poetical activity – indeed, he states in his commentary upon stanza 59 that he received an order to do so, 'his mission of humble initiator being accomplished'. For the remaining years of his life he dedicated himself to the translation and transmission of Lithuanian folklore, to an archeological philology of the linguistic origins of the Lithuanian and Hebrew peoples, to an esoteric and mystical exegesis of *The Book of Revelation*, and to the birds of Fontainebleau where he came to live. All these were important activities, clearly connected to earlier concerns. But what was most important to the poet himself was his life as a 'fervent, practising Roman Catholic'. Renouncing the fruits of knowledge, he humbly took himself to the Church of Rome, living within it a life of sanctity and humility until his death in 1939.

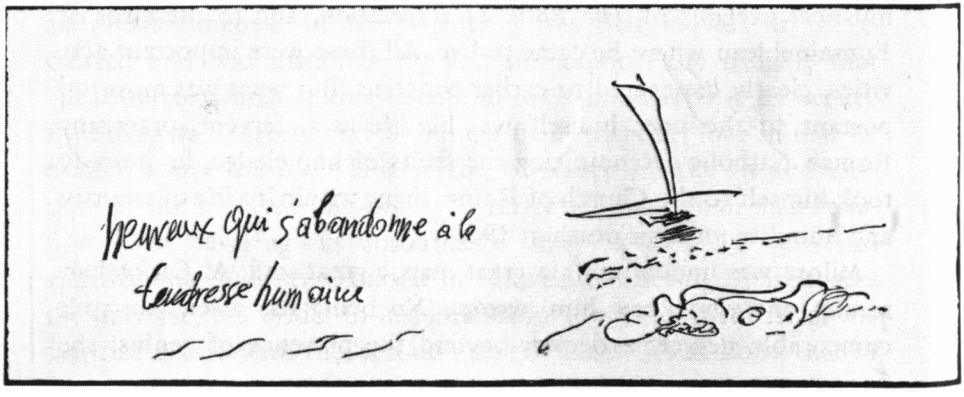
Milosz was undoubtedly a great man, a great soul. As Carlos Larronde, one who knew him, wrote: 'No being has given me, to a comparable degree, and even beyond the presence of genius, the

impression of greatness. He lived in the world of Archetypes. No shadow follows his passing.'

A Bibliographical Note

All translations are from the *Oeuvres Complètes de O.V. de L. Milosz* published in eleven volumes by Editions Andrē Silvaire, 20 Rue Domat, Paris. Editions Andrē Silvaire has also published two volumes of letters (*Soixante-quinze Lettres inēdites, Lettres à Christian Gauss*); a miscellaneous volume containing unpublished fragments and studies; a lost early book of poems (*Le Cahier Dēchirē*). Milosz has also been the subject of a number of book-length studies, of which the following may be mentioned: Armand Godoy, *Milosz, Le Poète de l'Amour*, Egloff, 1944; Andre Lebois, *L'Oeuvre de Milosz*, Editions Denoel, 1960; Jacques Buge, *Milosz en quête du Divin*, Librairie Nizet, 1963; Jean Bellemin-Noel, *La Poēsie-Philosophie de Milosz*, Klincksieck, 1979. Finally, mention must also be made of the *Cahiers de L'Association Les Amis de Milosz*, a small journal devoted to Milosz and published by Andrē Silvaire, which is now in its seventeenth number; and of *Maximes et Pensées* (chosen by Jean Bellemain-Noel, Paris 1967).

Illustration by Pranas to Milosz' *La Mer*



FROM: EPISTLE TO STORGE[1]

O. V. DE L. MILOSZ

Where nothing is situated, there is no passage from one place to another, Storge, but only from one state – and the state of love – to another. In the present state of our tenderness, we multiply and divide to infinity, and we abandon ourselves to the furious torrent of rhythm, and nothing satisfies us. But we will die, Storge, and we will enter into that blessed state where multiplication, division and rhythm, ever unsatisfied, find the supreme, absolute number, and the immutable, perfect end of every poem. This is the second love, Storge, it is Master Goethe's Elysium, the great Alighieri's Empyrean, the good Swedenborg's Andramandoni, and the unfortunate Hölderlin's Hesperides. It is here already – but what does it mean, O Storge, this word here? – yes, and scattered throughout universal matter, in infinite matter, and so without movement and place. Happy the spirit of affirmation which uncovers, here and now, this certain and single reality, this island of Patmos, land of blessedness where the fulfilment of mental movement is in correspondence with the immobility of infinite matter. For another state of love, a third, was revealed to me, to me, wretched creature of pride, rebellion and negation. There, multiplication and division to infinity strive in vain to fill a black and dreadful eternity of terror, and an insatiable, sacriligious, infernal rhythm carries one off like a blade of grass onto the whirling chaos of expiation. I have visited, my dear child, both countries, and here is the faithful relation of my journey.

On the 14th December, 1914, towards eleven o'clock in the evening, in the midst of a state of perfect wakefulness, my prayers said and my daily verse of the Bible meditated upon, I suddenly felt, without a shadow of astonishment, a most unexpected change occur throughout my body. I observed, to begin with, that a power, unknown until that day, was granted me to rise freely through

space, and the moment afterwards I found myself near the peak of a powerful mountain enveloped about with bluish mists, unspeakably thin and soft. The labour of rising by my own movement was, in that instant, spared me; for the mountain, tearing its roots from the earth, carried me rapidly towards unimaginable heights, into obscure regions, mute and furrowed with immense flashes of lightning. However, this singular ascension was but of short duration. Soon all movement ceased and, at quite a short distance from my brow, I noted a heavy, very thick cloud which, in spite of its light copper colour, I will compare with the freshly spilt seed of man. Above the top of the skull then, a little towards the back, appeared a glimmer, like a torch reflected by water or in an ancient mirror. During the rapid succession of these pictures, my senses remained as awake as they are at this moment as I write; yet I felt neither fear, nor curiosity, nor astonishment. A moment later, regions which I knew to be situated far behind me spouted a sort of gigantic, reddish egg which, hurled with an unheard of violence into space, would soon have attained the line of my brow; but there, suddenly changing movement and colour, it rounded itself, contracted, became a golden lamp, sunk down to graze my face, rose up once more, expanded again, reassumed its oval form of an angelic sun, positioned itself a little above my brow and looked me long in the eyes. And, beneath this seraphic star, a plain of misty gold, the gold of Sheba, stretched out, enchanting my gaze, to the borders of this country of love. A perfect immobility, an absolute immobility, then struck sun and clouds, giving me the inexpressable sensation of a supreme fulfilment, a definitive peacefulness, a complete cessation of mental activity, a superhuman realization of the last Rhythm. The letter H was added to my name; I tasted peace, yes, Storge, Storge! I tasted, I! a blessed peace for there was no longer any trace of either anxiety or suffering in my head, I was a priest, after the order of Melchizedek.

Alas! the eternal and very short vision disappeared; I found myself once more in my intolerable lodgings; but powerful wings or, more exactly, invisible elytra, but which I guessed to be immense,

fanned me with an adorable rustling, and whisperings, full of fraternal compassion and interspersed with the sounds of strange lutes, questioned me in an unknown tongue. Together with the most lively memory of this change of state experienced in full physical life and absolute mental consciousness is blended the obscure feeling that my moral preparation did not yet correspond to the importance of the phenomenon and that the beautiful sun of Sheba was itself only a veil, a last veil perhaps, which my unworthiness did not dare to raise.

Some time afterwards, grace was granted me to visit my true spiritual country. This second journey occurred under very different conditions from the first; for, far from feeling myself perfectly master of all my physical and mental faculties, as in the former expedition, I found myself, in the moment that the dangerous influx seized me, plunged into an extremely deep sleep. Jeremiah, in chapter XXIII of his book, establishes a most precise distinction between the first state of pure vision or apocalyptic Patmos, and the second, which is that of receptivity in the abysses of sleep. A vast extent of dark lakes, greenish and putrifying, overrun by a riot of sad, yellow flowers, suddenly opened itself to my vision. Upon these waters, stagnant and desolate as the eyes of paralytics, an iron bridge was thrown, of a hideous form and an appalling length, and, at the end of this bridge, after a crossing of millions of years, a landscape opened itself to my eyes, whose mortal, infernal melancholy I will not undertake to describe. It was an immense and deserted plain, enclosed within a hostile and dumb circle of high, watchful mountains. Endless solitude, irrevocable condemnation, extreme destitution; and in this whole satanic immensity not an inch of ground was not covered, to the point of suffocation, with a yellow, ashy, repugnant grass, which I will compare, in spite of its shrub-like height, to the reddish and corrupted moss which consumes old tombstones. Night fell. Then a universe of terror, millions upon millions of times more vast, more populated and glinting than our sidereal sky, lit up above my head, and the movement, visible to the naked eye, of these tormented cosmoses, was accompanied

by an odious, criminal sound, the enemy of all meditation, all collectedness. And the secret meaning of all this movement and all this noise was: we must multiply and divide infinity by infinity for an eternity of eternity; neither rest for you, nor memory, nor love, nor hope; multiply, multiply, divide, divide; these worlds will fall into chaos, and you will replace them by others, but you will always be here, always in this same place, and you will multiply and divide. And you will feel the last number, the supreme sound, the finale of the martyring rhythm eternally on the tip of your tongue and, miserable victim of your own iniquity, ridiculous plaything of your own scientific pride, you will make desperate efforts to reject this last number, to spit it out, to vomit it: in vain, it will efface itself from your weak memory, and you will fall once again into infinite calculation, into the whirling of eternal rhythm. Then, in the depths of my horror, and at the height of my despair, I cried out, 'Where is the Master of this country? Where is the King of this terrible Realm of Aven? Let him appear, he will understand me, will shelter me beneath his black and cold wing, will love me, will save me; for, if there is in this infinity of suffering, of terror and of destruction, a creature who is the friend of Love, it can only be the fallen Prince of these Realms!'

Billions of horrific stellar glances concentrated themselves upon my face, a demonic laugh lit up the face of Eternal Movement. 'The Morning Star seeks THE MORNING STAR, the son of man calls THE SON OF MAN. All is finished. All is finished.' May the Divine, deaf to my black prayers, hear, O Storge, yours.

Translated by Christopher Bamford

Note

1. 'There are indications which show clearly that conjugal love and the love of infants, which is called *storge*, are conjoined' (Swedenborg, *Conjugal Love*).

From *Epître à Storge* (Oeuvres Complètes, Editions André Silvaire, Paris)

FROM: ARCANA

O.V. DE L. MILOSZ

Verse 38

'My son, I am coming out of an absurd and terrifying dream.'

Absurd and Terrifying dream

Political, social, scientific and literary history of humanity is a nightmare dominated by an obscure *idée fixe*, a question without answer: 'What am I?' The first questioning of a sleeper liberated from his infernal obsessions will be: 'Where am I?' Compare the scientific principle of Goethe: 'the thing is to know not *why* but *how*'.

Verse 39

'I ran after myself and I could not seize myself.'

Adam, the Master of our Freedom, has changed the infinite – that is, his idea of the knowledge that God has of himself – into a space without end, an eternally escaping result of ceaseless multiplication: Adam has lost his way in the universal darkness which followed after the extinction of the Sun of Memory.

Verse 40

'The two states which I was, my sleep and my wakefulness, my life and my death, pursued each other and could not be joined because there was no *place*.'

There was no place

In a universe of matter extended to infinity there would be room for everything, except for place.

Verse 41

'When suddenly, in a paroxysm of universal terror, I felt *I was overtaking my remembrance*. At the same instant I renounced forever – before the primal naught – all concern for *reality*.'

Reality

What is meant here is the reality of the material world situated in itself by extension. For thought that is concerned only with sensible objects, the question of reality arises only in correlation with these objects. The result is an attempt to determine place through endless multiplication. The most striking example of this universal aberrance of ideas is offered to us by a prodigious poet but execrable metaphysician Edgar Allen Poe. The immortal author of *Ulalume*, of *Silence*, of *The Colloquy of Monos and Una*, of *Annie*, of *To Helen* – I stop, for what is more out of place than to quote from a body of work which constitutes a unique literary monument, an incomparable paragon of pure poetry – the great Irishman (sic) has left us a metaphysical testament, *Eureka*, which is undoubtedly of all the works deserving an *auto da fẽ* the most false and the most pernicious. This book, however, provides a lesson which we submit to the reflection of our misguided epoch: endless multiplication does not stop at space; it dares to force its way to God in order to present us with a spectacle of unpardonable prevarication: 'I myself feel impelled to the *fancy* – without daring to call it more – that there *does* exist a *limitless* succession of universe, more or less similar to that of which we have cognizance – to that of which *alone* we shall ever have cognizance – at the very least until the return of our own particular Universe into Unity. *If* such clusters of clusters exist, however – *and they do* – it is abundantly clear that, having had no part in our origin, they have no portion of our laws. They neither attract us, nor we them. Their material – their spirit is not ours – is not that which obtains in any part of our Universe. They could not impress our senses or our souls. Among them and us – considering all, for the moment, collectively – there are no

influences in common. Each exists, apart and independently, *in the bosom of its proper and particular God*' (*Eureka*, the works of Edgar Allan Poe edited by John H. Ingram, Volume III, London, A. and C. Black, Soho Square, 1901, p. 164). What imagination! But what spiritual infamy! Edgar Poe was not a madman. His thought, of nearly superhuman power, was much more sane than that of his detractors. Alas! No. Edgar Poe was not a madman: he was *accursed*, in the full Christian acceptance of the word. But since he found the worst of Hells in his American native land, peace to his poet's soul.

Verse 42

'The first thought of Adam was an integral perception of movement: in the heart and in the arteries of the King ran the total light of the world.'

The total light of the world

The first thought of Adam was an awareness of his movement. The original notion of this movement blended with the very circulation of blood. But blood, together with the physical light creator of the world, came from the transmutation of the incorporeal light: the total light of the universe ran then in the heart and in the arteries of the King.

Verse 43

'Adam was the sovereign memory. Drawn from the cosmic substance he remembered the cry of his magic birth, similar to the solar laughter of lead changed into gold.'

Memory

This total light was an absolute memory of the spiritual origin of the universe, of the physical light and of blood, of the Macrocosm and the Microcosm. Blood, struck by the inner mnemonic ray, is transformed into gold. The author of *The Arcana* has witnessed such a transmutation. On this earth there is no desire so pure, so

so elevated, so ardent, the fulfilment of which could bring a joy comparable to that which one feels at the simultaneous regeneration of the spirit and of mineral, the latter standing in this case for 'the perfection of the regeneration' of Nature in its entirety.

Verse 44

'Every operation of the King opened with the fundamental affirmation: I am in him who is, for that which separates me from Being is the naught.'

The Naught

I am the King of the world which issued together with my blood from the transmutation of the incorporeal light: my only place (and that of the world subject to my law) is, then, the naught into which God has projected this light. *But this naught is the idea-type of an exterior*: it is because of this naught alone that I am exterior in the idea of God. Nevertheless, the naught is only the absence of space, time, matter and movement. I am therefore in him who is.

Verse 45

'The holy notion of the naught has been given to me so that I might know that only the naught separates me from him who is and in whom I am.'

The holy notion of the naught

Certainly holy, because it separates us from God for the sake of adoration, and identifies us with God for the sake of union. We have already said in the commentary to the preceding verse that the idea of the naught is what separates and unites.

Verse 46

'The naught is the word of recognition used by the Noble Travellers. It is the entrance and the exit of the labyrinth.'

The Noble Travellers

This is the secret name of the initiates of antiquity, transmitted by oral tradition to those of the Middle Ages and of modern times. It was pronounced in public for the last time on May 30, 1786, at a session of the Parliament devoted to the cross-examination of a famous defendant, victim of a pamphleteer Theveneau de Morande. The journeys of the initiates did not differ from ordinary travels for study except that their itinerary rigorously coincided under the appearance of a hazardous route, with the most secret aspirations and gifts of the adept. The most illustrious examples of these pilgrimages are offered to us by Democritus, who was initiated into the secrets of alchemy by the Egyptian priests and by Ostanes, the magician, and into Asiatic doctrines during his stays in Persia as well as – according to some historians – in India; Thales, instructed in the temples of Egypt and of Chaldea; Pythagoras, who visited all the countries known to the ancients (and, very probably, India and China), whose stay in Persia was distinguished by conversations he had with Zaratas the magician, in Gaul by his cooperation with the Druids, in Italy by his speeches at the Assembly of the Elders in Crotona. It would be proper to add to these examples Paracelsus's stays in France, Austria, Germany, Spain and Portugal, England, Holland, Denmark, Sweden, Hungary, Poland, Lithuania, Valachia, Carniola, Dalmatia, Russia and Turkey, as well as the travels of Nicolas Flamel to Spain where Master Canches taught him how to decipher the famous hieroglyphic figures of the Book of Abraham the Jew. The poet Robert Browning has defined the secret nature of these scholarly pilgrimages in a stanza particularly rich in intuition: 'I see my way as birds their trackless way . . . In some time, his good time, I shall arrive: He guides me and the bird.' The years of travel of Wilhelm Meister have the same initiatory meaning.

Verse 47

'This notion of the naught, from where does it come to me, to me who am movement and, consequently, space, time, matter?'

The Notion of the Naught

This notion should not be confused with that of the void, even the 'absolute' void. The metaphysical naught is a total absence of movement, and, consequently, of space, time and matter. The void, on the contrary, is an extreme, ideal substance; and this is the intuitive concept that, in the quarrel between the partisans of the void and those of a 'subtle matter', governed the minds of both; the former philosophically identified space with matter through a relationship of localization which made space and matter one, while the latter did this through the simultaneity of their appearance, in a more scientific way. Basically, all such differences of opinions, in whatever field they become manifest, are psychological testimonies rather than rational indexes. The itineraries of all our learning are traced upon the old golden tablets of memory, and any voyage of exterior exploration should start with an act of faith in the consecrated place of the labyrinth; this act, moreover, should never be taken as a sign of possession of faith, but only as showing a desire for faith. That is why there is no excuse for disbelief biased in advance and refusing *the experience* of prayer.

Verse 48

> 'I, a Thing, how did I then manage to tear off from my idea of the naught the great, funereal seal of the black and frozen void?'

A Thing

A Thing, essentially: since I have my origin, like the Macrocosm itself, in the incorporeal light, I am the perfect Body created by the movement of blood, just as the universe is the perfect body created by the movement of the physical light. It is advisable never to forget, when mentioning the latter, that it is transformable into electricity, and that from this state of matter it returns to the state of light.

Translated by Czeslaw Milosz

From *Les Arcanes* (Oeuvres Complètes, Editions André Silvaire, Paris)

O.V. DE L. MILOSZ

SEPTEMBER SYMPHONY

I

Welcome, you who come to meet me
In the echo of my footsteps, from the bottom of the cold, dark
corridor of time,
Welcome, solitude, my mother.
When joy walked in my shadow, when the birds

Of laughter knocked against the mirrors of the night, when the
flowers,
When the terrible flowers of youthful pity choked my love
And when jealousy lowered its head and looked at itself in the wine
I thought of you, solitude, abandoned.

You fed me with homely black bread and milk and wild honey;
Sweet it was to eat from your hand, like the sparrow,
For I have never had, O Wet-Nurse, mother or father
And madness and coldness wandered endlessly in the house.

Sometimes, you appeared to me with the features of a woman
In the beautiful lying clarity of sleep. Your dress
Was the colour of fields at sowing time; and in my lost heart,
Dumb, hostile, cold as the pebble in the road,

A beautiful tenderness still wakens today
At the sight of a woman dressed in this poor brown,
Sad and forgiving: the first swallow
Flies, flies over the tillage in the bright sun of childhood.

I knew that you did not like the place where you were
And that, far from me, you were no more my beautiful solitude,
The rock clad with time, the wild isle in the midst of the sea
Are gentle resting places; and I know many a tomb whose door is
rust and flowers.

But your home cannot be where sky and sea
Sleep on the violets of the distance, like lovers.
No, your true home is not behind the hills.
Hence, you have thought of my heart. For it is there that you were
born.

It is there that you wrote your childhood name upon the walls
And, like a woman who has seen her earthly bridegroom die,
You come back with a taste of salt and wind upon white cheeks
And that old, old scent of Christmas hoar-frost in your hair.

As from a censer swung around a coffin
From my heart where this mysterious rhythm beats
I feel the scent of childhood middays rise. I have not forgotten
The beautiful complicitous garden whither Echo, your second son,
solitude, called me.

And I would recognize the place where I once slept
At your feet. Doesn't the rippling wind still run there
Over the ruins' sad, beautiful grass, and doesn't the honey sound
Of the shaggy bumble-bee still linger in the beautiful heat?

And if of the proud and trembling willow
One were to spread the orphan hair: the water's face
Would appear to me so clear, so pure! As pure, as clear
As the Distant One seen again in a beautiful morning daydream!

And the greenhouse incrusted with a rainbow from the old days
Doubtless still shelters dwarf cactus and feeble fig
Come once from who knows what country of happiness? And the
odour of the dying heliotrope
Still raves in the fevers of the afternoon!

O country of my childhood! O shadowy ancestral manor!
Beautiful somnolent lime tree, dear to the heavy bees,
Are you happy as of old? And you, carillon of golden flowers,
Do you charm the hills' shadow for the betrothal

Of the White Sleeper in the musty book
So sweet to leaf through when the evening ray
Descends upon the attic dust; and around us the silence
Of the spinning spider's halted spinnies. – Heart!

Sad heart! The shepherd dressed in fustian
Blows into the long horn of bark. In the orchard
The gentle green woodpecker nails the coffin of his love
And the frog prays in the dumb reeds. O sad heart!

Tender wild rose briar sick at the foot of the hill, will I see you again
Some day? And do you know that your flower where dew smiled
Was my childhood's heart so heavy with tears? O friend!
Other thorns than your's have wounded me!

And you, wise fountain, with look so calm and fine,
Where, amidst the sounding heat, all that remained
Of the earth's shade and silence sought refuge!
A less pure water flows upon my face today.

But in the evening, from my childhood bed smelling of flowers, I see
The crazily trimmed moon of the ends of summer. She watches
Through the bitter vine, and in the perfumed night
Melancholy's pack barks in a dream!

Then autumn came, with its sounds of axles, axes and wells. Like
the flight
Of the white-bellied hare over the first snow, the unexpected day
Struck our sad hearts with dumb astonishment. — All this, all this
When love which is no longer was not yet born.

II

Solitude, my mother, tell me my life again! Here is
The wall without crucifix and the table and the book,
Closed! If the impossible so long awaited
Knocked at the window, like the redbreast with the frozen heart,

Then who would rise to open for her? The call
Of the hunter delayed in the ghastly fens,
The last cry of youth grows faint and dies: the fall of a single leaf
Fills the forest's dumb heart with dread.

What are you then, sad heart? A drowsy room
Where, elbows upon the closed book, the prodigal son
Hears the old blue fly of childhood buzz?
Or a mirror which remembers? Or a tomb the robber has awoken?

Happy distances born by evening's sight, golden clouds,
Fine ships by angels loaded down with manna! Is it true
That all, all of you, have ceased to love me, that never,
Never, will I see you again through the crystal

Of childhood? That your colours, your voices and my love,
That all of this was less than the flash of the wasp
In the wind, than the sound of the tear fallen on the coffin,
A pure lie, my heart's beat heard in a dream?

Alone before the silent glaciers of age! Alone
With the echo of a name! And fear of the day and fear of the night
Like two sisters reconciled in misfortune
Standing on the bridge of sleep, signing to each other, signing to
each other!

And like the poor stone at the bottom of the dark lake
Fallen once from the hands of a beautiful cruel child:
So rests in uttermost sadness of heart,
In sleeping silt of memory, heavy love.

Translated by Christopher Bamford

NOVEMBER SYMPHONY

It will be exactly as in this life. The same room.
– Yes, my child, the same. At daybreak, times' bird in the
foliage
Pale as a corpse: then the servants rise
And you hear the frozen, hollow noise of buckets

At the fountain. O terrible, terrible youth! Empty heart!
It will be exactly as in this life. There will be
Poor voices, wintry voices of old neighbourhoods,
The glazier with his singsong call,

The bent grandmother who beneath a dirty bonnet
Calls the names of fishes, and the man in the blue apron
Who spits into his barrow-worn hand
And roars who knows what, like the Angel of Judgement.

It will be exactly as in this life. The same table,
The Bible, Goethe, the ink and its odour of time,
Paper, the white woman who reads thought,
The pen, the portrait. My child, my child!

It will be exactly as in this life! The same garden,
Deep, deep, thick, dark. And towards midday
People will delight to be united there
Who never knew each other and who knew

Only this: that they must dress
As for a celebration and go, without love, without light,
Alone into the night of those who have disappeared.
It will be exactly as in this life. The same avenue:

And (in the autumn afternoon, at the bend of the avenue,
Where the beautiful path comes down fearfully like a woman
Going to gather flowers of convalescence – listen, my child, –
We shall meet each other, as we once did here.

And you have forgotten, you, the colour of your dress then;
But as for me, I have only known a few happy moments.
You will be dressed in pale violet, beautiful sorrow!
And the flowers in your hat will be sad and small

And I won't know their name: because I have known the name
Of but a single, small, sad flower in my life, the forget-me-not,
The orphan flower, the old sleeper in ravines of the land
Of Hide-and-Seek. Yes, yes, deep heart! as in this life.

And the dark path will be there, damp
With an echo of waterfalls. And I shall speak of you
Of the city on the water and of the Rabbi of Bacharach
And of the nights of Florence. The low, crumbling wall

Will also be there, where the odour drowsed
Of old, old rains, and a leprous herb,
Cold and oily, will shake its hollow flowers there
In the silent stream.

Translated by Christopher Bamford

H[1]

The garden descends towards the sea. Poor garden, garden without
flowers, blind
Garden. On her bench, an old woman clad
In glossy mourning, yellowed with the memento and the portrait,
Watches the vessels of time departing. The nettle, in the great
emptiness

Of two-o'clock, hairy and black with thirst, keeps watch.
As though from the depths of the heart of the most lost of days,
the bird
Of the dull district chirps in the bush of slag.
The peace is the same as the terrible stillness of men devoid of
love. And I,

I too am there, for this is my shadow; and in the sad and vile
Heat she has let her empty head fall back upon
The bosom of the light; but I,
Body and soul, myself am like the rope
About to break. What is it then that's throbbing so in me.
But what is it that's throbbing so, groaning I know not where
In me, like the rope about the capstan
Of sailing-vessels ready to depart? Too wise

1. H, (the middle letter of the Hebrew alphabet) was added to the name of Abram (Abraham) and Sara (Sarah) after initiation.

Mother, eternity, ah! let me live my day!
And no longer call me Lémuel;[2] because down there
In a sunlight night, the lazy girls
Hail the islands of their singing and veiled youth! The sweet

And heavy mourning murmur of the wasps of noon
Floats low above the wine and there is a kind of craziness
About the look of the dew upon the hills of my beloved
Shady ones. In the religious gloom the brambles

Have seized hold of the girl's hair of sleep. Yellow in the shade
The water difficultly breathes beneath the heavy, low sky of
forget-me-nots.
That other suffers too, bearing like the king
Of the world, a wounded side; and from his scarred-tree wound

There flows the purest stream ever to quench the thirsty heart.
And there is the crystal bird that sweetly trills
In the old somnambulistic jasmin-tree of childhood.
I will enter in there gently raising the rainbow

And I will go straight to the tree where the eternal bride
Awaits amidst the mists of the native land. And in the fires of time
there will appear
The sudden archipelagoes, the sonorous hulks —
Peace, peace. All that is no more. All that is no longer here,
my son Lémuel.

The voices you hear no longer come from things.
That which has long lived in the dark in you
Calls you from the garden on the mountain! From the kingdom
Of the other sun! And here, it is the disillusioned fortieth

2. *Proverbs* xxxi.

Year, Lémuel.
The poor long time.
A water warm and grey.
A garden burnt.

Translated by David Gascoyne

TALITA CUMI

I've already known you some ten years on this earth that's
suspended in silence,
My child of fate, and it's always your poor image that's the first
to haunt me
In those lucid moment of my awakenings, when night begins to
decline,
And when, as my spirit follows the Cosmos in its speechless
flight,
I suddenly feel that the whole universe is vanishing within me,
as if engulfed by the void of all these days.
I'm then like something that's afire on the river in the summer
night,
And the sun's key is beneath my hand, ready to unlock realities
that shimmer with a mist of life.
A mere word, of course, and also, in that real land where I've
many a dazzling retainer,
Forms would appear which are anything but yours that I've
gathered here like a pebble to be kept as a memento.
But haven't I loved you very humbly in this tiny succession of
days?
Soon I'll go away. Oh, half of a heart, half of a heart cast out
In the mud and the cold and the rain and the night of the city!
Oh, my tamed one that winter threatens,
Listen to me, open up wide whatever within yourself you still
fail to know,

And try, come what may, but try to retain in your midget memory
This advice from one who has ripened with the nettles in the
long and torrid summer of bitterness:
And toil!
Don't tempt the terrible King of life, the God in the pitiless
Movement of the world's roads, the idol in the cart with the
wheels that crush.
Toil, my child, for you are condemned, however frail, to live long,
And I would never want to flee from these deafening galleys
With the poor image of what you must one day become:
A small child suddenly turned into a tiny old woman
With bitter white locks beneath her shawl, in some acrid and
dark suburb
And alone on the embankment by the river with a heavy load of
fear
On her back, a sister of the damp cobbles and the tall leafless
trees.
Spare me this, for I shall be terribly absent, awakened for all
times to come,
In one of the two kingdoms, I know not which one, but the darker
one,
I fear, for I bear within me something that burns with a low fire
like a condemnation.
And I warn you, pitiful sparrow, you'll be alone in that dreadful
life,
Like the red and green lights abandoned
By all in the miserly pale dawn of the Seine.
Who killed my heart? I no longer know, but as it died, did it not,
like a curse,
Bequeath all its funereal royalty of compassion to my bones? Oh,
child,
It's a pain that one cannot express, and a man afflicted with this
nocturnal ill
Suffers, omniscient and speechless, with the foundation-stones in
the rotting darkness.

I know, of course, that it's He, He whose secret name is The-one-who-is-divided-from-Himself,
Who suffers in us: and when at long last
This life's night without flowers or mirrors or harps has gone by, a vengeful
Song, a song of all the dawns of childhood,
Will be shattered within us like the huge crystal of morning
When the winged ones cry in the valley of dew.
And yes, I know it. But that poor image of your life in the lonely future,
That's what I find unbearable. It's really the panic of an insect within me,
And an insect's cry deep within me,
Beneath the heart's ashes.

Translated by Edouard Roditi

UNFINISHED SYMPHONY

I

You scarcely knew me down there, under the sun of chastisement
That unites men's shadows, never their souls,
On the earth where the hearts of benumbed men
Travel alone through the darks and terrors, without knowing their destined land.

It was long ago – listen, bitter love of the other world –
It was far, far away – hearken to me, sister of this present world –
In the North of our birth, where a scent from the primal past ascends
From the large water-lilies of the lakes, a fume of fabulous engulfed orchards.

Far from our archipelagoes of ruins, lianas and harps,
Far from our fortunate mountains.
– There was a lamp and a sound of hatchets in the haze
I remember,

And I was alone in the house you never knew,
The house of childhood, the dumb, dark house,
Deep in the leafy parks wherein the chill bird of morning
Softly sang for the love of the long-since dead, in the sombre dew.

It was there, in those vast drowsily windowed rooms
That the ancestor of our family line once lived,
And it was there that my father, his long journeys done,
Went back to die.

I was alone and, I remember,
It was the season when the wind of our native lands
Bears with it a breath of wolves, sedge and rotting flax
And sings old child-snatcher's lays in the ruins of the night.

II

The last evening had come and with it fever,
Sleeplessness and fear. And I could not recall my name.
The guard had no doubt gone to the priest's house
For the lantern no longer stood on the footstool.

All our old servants were dead; their children
Had emigrated; I was a stranger
In the slanting house
Of my childhood.

The smell of that silence was just like that of corn
Found in a tomb; and no doubt you know
That moss of the mute places, sister of the buried
And coloured like a full moon low over Memphis.

For a long while I had travelled the world with my restless
Brother; and had lain awake with anguish
In all the inns of this world. Now, there I was,
Already whiteheaded like brother cloud. And there was nobody left.

A footstep's echo, the old mouse's scuttering would have been
sweet to me,
For what was eating my heart out made no sound.
I was like the garret's lamp at daybreak,
Like the portrait in the album of the prostitute.

Family and friends were dead. You, my sister, you were further
Away than the halo with which in bright January
The snow's mother crowns herself. And you scarcely knew me.
When you spoke, you trembled to hear the voice of my heart,

But you had met me only one single time,
In the strange light of the gaudy lamps
Among the night flowers, and there were gilded courtiers there
And I bade farewell only to your reflection in the mirror.

Solitude was awaiting me with the echo
In the sombre gallery. A child was there
With a lantern and the key
To a graveyard. The winter of the streets

Breathed a wretched odour into my face.
I believed myself followed by my weeping youth;
But beneath the lamp with my Hyperion on her knees
Old age was seated; and she did not raise her head.

III

Hearken to me, my earthly sister. It was the old blue room
Of the house of my childhood.
There was I born.
It was also there

That long ago I beheld, at the festal eve gathering,
My first Christmas tree, that dead tree turned into an angel
Emerged from the deep, harsh forest,
Emerged all lit up from the ancient depths

Of the frozen forest and proceeding all by itself,
King of the snowy swamps, with its repentant and sanctified
Will-o'-the-wisps, in the beautiful silent and white countryside:
And behold the refulgent windows of the house of the well-behaved child.

Such olden, far-off days! so beautiful, so pure! it was the same
Room, but forever cold, but dumb and grey.
It seemed to have lost all recollection
Of the hearth and the cricket of long-ago evenings.

There were no relatives, friends or servants there any more!
There were only old age, silence and the lamp.
Old age lulled my heart as a maddened mother would a dead child,
Silence no longer loved me. The lamp went out.

But under the weight of the Mountain of darkness
I felt that Love was rising like an inner sun
Over the olden lands of memory and that I was flying
Far, far away, as I used to once in my sleeper's travels.

IV

– 'This is the third day.' – And I suddenly shivered, for the voice
Came from my heart. It was the voice of my life.
– 'This is the third day.' – And I slept no more but knew that the time
Had come for the morning prayer. But I was tired

And I thought of the things I should see once more; for there
Was the alluring archipelago and the isle of the Centre,
The misty, the pure, that vanished long ago
With the coral tomb of my youth

And fell half-asleep at the feet of the lava cyclops. And before me
On the hill, there was the ornamental fountain with
The lianas of Eden and the velvets of decay
On the steps worn by the moon's feet, and there, on the right,

In the glorious glade in the midst of the grove
The ruins coloured like the sun! and there, not a single secret
Passage! for in this desert solitude I have strayed
With speechless love, beneath midnight cloud. I know

Where to find the darkest mulberries; the tall grass
In which the stricken statue has hidden its face
Is my friend and the lizards have long known
That I am a messenger of peace, that it never thunders

In the cloud of my shadow. Everything here loves me
For everything has seen me suffer. – 'This is the third day.
Arise, I am thy sleeper of Memphis,
Thy death in the land of death, thy life in the land of life.

The most wise, the well-deserved . . .'

Translated by David Gascoyne

CANTICLE OF SPRING

Spring has returned from its distant rovings,
It brings us the heart's peace.
Raise yourself, dear head! Look, lovely countenance!
The mountain is an isle in the midst of the mists: it has recovered
its cheerful colour.
O youth! O viburnum of the leaning house!
O season of the prodigal wasp!
The foolish virgin of Summer
Sings in the heat.
All is security, rapture and rest.
How beauteous the world is, beloved, how beauteous is the world!
A pensive and pure cloud has arrived from an overcast kingdom.
An amorous hush has enveloped the gold of noon.
The slumbrous nettle weighs down its ripe head
Beneath its beautiful crown of Judea's queen.
Can you hear? Here comes the shower.
It is coming . . . it's fallen.
Love's whole kingdom emits the scent of the water's flower.
The young bee,
Daughter of the sun,
Is reconnoitering the mystery of the orchard;
I can hear the flocks bleating;
Echo replies to the shepherd.
How beauteous the world is, beloved, how beauteous is the world!
We will follow the bagpipe's tune into the forsaken places.
Yonder, in the cloud's shadow, at the foot of the tower,
The rosemary recommends sleep; and no beauty exceeds
That of the ewe's day-coloured child.
The tender moment sends us signs from the clouded hill.
Arise, proud love, lean on my shoulder;
I will spread aside the willow's tresses,
We will look down into the valley.
The flower bends, the tree shivers: they are drunk with scent.

Already, already the wheat
Is growing in silence, as in the dreams of sleepers.
Powerful love, my consummate sister,
Let us run towards where the gardens' concealed bird calls us.
Come, cruel heart,
Come, sweet countenace;
The infant-cheeked breeze is breathing on
The jasmine cloud.
The fine-footed dove comes to drink at the fountain;
How white she appears to herself in the new water!
What is she saying? where is she?
You could say she is singing in my reborn heart.
There she is now in the distance . . .
How beauteous the world is, beloved, how beauteous is the world!
The woman of the ruins calls me from the high window:
See how her tresses of wild flowers and wind
Are spread across the collapsing culvert
And I hear the sound of the streaked bumble-bee.
Old bell-ringer of innocent days.
The time, wild head, has come for us
To adorn ourselves with the berries that breathe in the shade.
The oriole sings in the most secret alley.
O sister of my thought! what is this mystery, then?
Enlighten me, awaken me, for these are things seen in a dream.
Oh! without a doubt I am sleeping.
How beauteous is life! no more falsehood, no more remorse
And from the earth rise flowers
Which are like the pardon of the dead.
O month of love, O traveller, O day of joy!
Be our guest; stay here;
You will take rest under our roof.
Your serious schemes will drowse when the winged alley murmurs.
We will feed you with bread, honey and milk.
Do not flee.
What do you have to do down there?

Aren't you at ease here?
We will shelter you from cares.
There is a beautiful secret room
In our house of rest.
There, the green shades enter through a window that opens
Onto a garden of rapture, solitude and water.
It listens . . . it lingers . . .
How beauteous the world is, beloved, how beauteous is the world!

Translated by David Gascoyne

PSALM OF THE MORNING STAR

The torrents of flocks pour down towards
the sheepfolds shade covers An-Dor and
Pau of the land of Esau covers Matred Toled Beith
Aram and all Sparad of Judea Starred
memory Israel's night of the soul space
projected by lambs' eyes Down under Artizarra
is already shining on the brow of our Mother Iberia
her Schourien-Ieschouroun withdraws
hiding his face beneath the sackcloth of the fog
Selah Enough of your bleating at the sky
salted with white specks let us go now my wall-lickers
to the salt of the wall of accustomed tears on the
hyssop pathway between the bitter hedgerows pass
lambs of the Spring beneath the shepherd's crook of iron
White nineteen black forty and
thou forty-fourth numbers traced by a
herdsman's hand formed like little sticks on some
wall of Bethlehem they are more numerous than are
you up there goat-kids of the Living One
of the betrothed sister of the new canticle

Selah The hand of the cedars of
benediction is still as slow upon our heads
arisen from the depths of the ages in the language of
the Western sea in vain does Naphschi try to
intercept a single new word the same
heart as in the time of the fathers beats in wood
stone and water of all that returns there is
nothing new all those things were sleeping
in closed books the books have opened themselves
beneath my hand pass my beauties Judith
pass good girls under the iron
crook Kimah Ksil and you the Mazaroths
and you the other skies nameless innumerable
suspended aloft so high in the great
hazes of God holy old men cast down
towards the earth your gazes of lost and
fractured flint Aieleth-hascahar the shepherdess
comes down towards Guinath Agoz the light's
jug of milk on her shoulder she calls to the child Olel
guardian of the lions' pasture caressed in
his sleep by vipers Selah Here things
are what they are the eyelashes' steam
fires of rain at the roof-edge in the
sower's sack handful of stars and thy wheels
entering one into the other
Iehezkeel the terrible spirals behold how here
things are what they are deep profoundly deep
is That he who bows down low
will be bowed down to

Translated by David Gascoyne

From *Poēsies*, Vol. II (Oeuvres Complètes, Editions André Silvaire, Paris)

To be free is to have the power to recognize that the nobler one is, the less one belongs to oneself and that one can only give because one has first of all received.

Can we know any other freedom than that of sacrifice?

Sacred Reason is a most delicate instrument. If one grain of the sand of pride enters the brain of a St Francis you will have Hamlet, Faust, Manfred and their anxious foolish sniggering offspring of today.

Love and haste are an ill-assorted pair. Love must be matched by patience. . . A measured and steady pace, that is the speed of love.

The great and frightening misfortune is to believe oneself a sceptic when one is merely untruthful.

Illustration by Pranas to Milosz' *La Mer*

Jan Le Witt

The Fire pavilion

Jan Le Witt

Cascade

Jan Le Witt *Andante Mosso*

Jan Le Witt *Lake Tai*

ART FOR THE TEMPLE OR GIMMICKS FOR THE FUNFAIR?

JAN LE WITT

Let me begin with an axiom. Art is a natural phenomenon, inherent in the human species like scent in a flower. Man's most serious activity belongs to the realm of make-believe.

Man's struggle has been to equate imagination with deed. For this the poets and the saviours were prepared to suffer. This was the nature of their heresy, that they dared to reach out, touch finger tips with the Creator, complete the circle.

Of paramount importance to man's perpetual quest for significance, art is an expression of a deeper relationship between himself and the world, to which the spell-bound images of Altamira and Lascaux stand witness for all time. The briefness of life is not only a challenge to live fully but a striving for eternity through art of imagination.

Seers, thinkers and poets, those unacknowledged legislators of society, guardians of the human conscience, have invariably maintained that the most reliable instrument for monitoring and diagnosing the pulse-beat of human society is Art.

Artists – as Ezra Pound has said – are the antennae of the human race. Only our visions can be ambassadors. But vision, in order to be persuasive, must have force – the force of universal order. Art is a seismograph, art is a litmus paper, art is a tell-tale brick that reveals the hidden cracks in society's structure . . .

This century we live in is unprecedented in many respects, *homo sapiens*, drunk with power, is violating nature to a degree unknown in the past, and for the first time ever man is seriously questioning the desirability of art. To modern man art seems no longer the imperative that it has been since the days of Cro-Magnon.

Art is creative thought. 'Man is all imagination' – cried Blake. 'Imagination is the Divine Body in Every Man'. But all this is now put to doubt and the voices of negation are getting louder and

louder. Life is being drained of its splendour, art – so it seems – is not even fit to serve as an alibi for Faustian Man.

Art used to be too great for the eye, now it is too small. Art used to be in the centre of life, now it is on the periphery. The art of today is suffering from a confusion of its own identity, a sunray disintegrating into shadow yet clinging to a name it no longer deserves. What a strange thing to do, issue oneself a certificate of spiritual poverty and present it in the name of Art!

'Is it progress if the cannibal uses knife and fork?' A barbarian living in the skyscrapers of history, inimical to mother nature and her myriad creatures: a troglodyte drunk on machine oil, body arched, head thrown back, aiming to fling a stone at the heart of Venus . . .

Modern man's mentality is characterised by his reckless urge to be 'independent of nature' and by his pronounced preference for indeterminate forms. But is it not Nature that gave us our whiff of warm breath? Is it not Nature that handed us our pulse-beat, our will and that exquisite dream called Art, to carry us through the tunnel of life?

Daily we witness the apotheosis of the bogus. Today the noose of an old rope is mistaken for a necklace of beauty.

In the armoury of anti-art there seem to be many deadly weapons; rationalism, materialistic wilderness, total engineering. Technology superimposed on art is a malignant growth. In decadent periods art was threatened by the intrusion of idle decoration, today facile technique nurtured by the machine is strangling art.

The notion that the truly modern artist is 'not a seer in his sanctum but a technician in a laboratory' is utterly fallacious. The artist must go on doing his job of exploration conducted in private, searching within himself, he must not allow his work to become a by-product of science, commerce or technology. Art must not live on credit, be pawned on advertising, the supermarket, comics, trivia . . . The artist must not be false to himself in order merely to depict the spiritual bankruptcy and hysteria of his times. For 'art is something deep and glistening like a dream'.

If necessary let him follow Goethe's time-honoured advice and step out of the century in order to work according to his convictions. Let art remain forever a domain of the spirit. The magical residue in art must not be eliminated.

The impact of a true work of art goes beyond instruction, beyond ideology; it is more than mere propaganda, though admittedly every artist is at heart a propagandist for his own vision of life. Art like love touches our deeper chords . . .

The poet Vernon Watkins observed: 'In our times the artist has acquired a greater freedom of choice and of emphasis in the realm of form. In many a visual artist the necessity of narrative has given way to the manipulation of motive forces, and to the excitement of form itself . . . Appreciation of the past is not enough; alone it breeds nothing but imitation. Only a complete vision, of past and present, makes a work robust; a nostalgic style is the mark of the amateur. Those who have built tradition have always begun by challenging it; their work at first seemed revolutionary. The miraculous moment of composition occurs where tradition and innovation meet, when both elements are effectively fused together.'

By the sheer fact of bringing forth harmonies, feelings and relationships that have not seen the light before, the artist channels them from his apparently isolated 'I' into a 'we' and this 'we' can be recognised even in the brimming subjectivity of an artist's personality. Octavio Paz once said: 'The true poet speaks to others even when speaking to himself, the fake poet speaks to himself even when speaking to others.' In every true work of art the division of human reality into the individual and the collective, the specific and the universal, is suspended; but it remains as a suspended factor in a re-created unity. Only art can do these things. Society needs the artist, that supreme magician, and it has a right to demand of him that he should be conscious of his vital function.

The Moses of Michelangelo was not only the artistic image of renaissance man, the embodiment in stone of a new, self-aware personality. It was also a commandment in stone to Michelangelo's contemporaries and patrons: 'that is what you ought to be like. The

age demands it. The world whose birth we are all witnessing needs it'.

Every day of our life is the first day of creation. For centuries artists have been engaged in sending messages from the uncreated into the created world. Then along came the arch-priests of pop and non-art and boasted that they are filling the gap between art and life. What art and what life? Where art is everywhere it is most difficult to find.

Habit formation is accompanied by a gradual dimming and darkening of the lights of awareness. The ticking of the clock we take for granted, but we only become aware of it the moment it has stopped. Unawares, we are gradually forming the habit of accepting the bogus, vulgar and commonplace as art, an art devoid of magic, an art fit for Sodom and Gomorrah.

All this is no doubt the result of the 'divorce from Nature' proclaimed by some 'pioneers' of modern art. Nature – Mother of all things – how does one divorce one's mother?

Any movement in history that leads to a dulling of the imaginative sensibilities is a retrograde movement leading to the decline of human civilisation, and that is precisely the threat we are facing. The more sensitive a man is the more likely he is to be haunted by the spectre of the spiritual decomposition that envelops us today, and when our spirit disintegrates, our physical world too stands little chance of surviving.

Today we are in urgent need of a blueprint for survival but instead our attention is being diverted, focussed on irrelevances. We know of the arithmetical deception whereby a hundred irrelevances add up to a sizeable relevance. As the Chinese saying goes 'when the finger points to the moon, the idiot looks at the finger'.

Let us be careful how we interpret the world. Goethe was right: '*Im farbigen Abglanz haben wir das Leben*' – the scintillating reflections of the artist's creations defining and interpreting life.

No one was more open and receptive, in his time, to new work in the field of the arts than was Herbert Read; but in his later years he denounced the meaningless nihilism of so much so-called art. The

following extract is taken from a lecture given at the Documenta in Kassel in 1965:

> A monotonous gesture has no style: it is the epitome of boredom. An absence of style leads to the apotheosis of brutality. That this quality should be offered as a substitute for style is perhaps not surprising in an age distinguished for its vandalism and criminal violence . . .
>
> Its visual aspect is clumsiness, and a brutal gesture in art is just as ugly as a brutal gesture in behaviour . . . Our contemporary brutalists are unable to effect a synthesis of terror and beauty but leave their public in a state of displeasure and distaste.
>
> . . . These brutal scribbles and scrawls, these assemblages of rusty junk from the scrap-heap or dump, what meaning or significance can they have for 'others' unless some concession is made to the idea of a relationship between artist and spectator?
>
> Art is communication and though every method and every kind of material is legitimate, materials and methods must establish a visual relationship between the artist and the spectator. Art always was and must remain a mode of symbolic discourse and where there is no symbol and therefore no discourse, there is no art. Not to affirm this, with all possible conviction, is to betray a sacred trust.
>
> . . . The whole purpose of art is called in question and what we are witnessing at the present moment is not only the disintegration of the modern movement in art, but a disintegration of intelligence itself. A descent into an eternal 'fun-fair' which is neither funny nor fair but an inferno into which the intellectually empty and morally insensitive vandals of an alienating economy drift in their ruthless search for any object on which to expend their destructive energies.

Run amok, modern industrial society tends to promote Apocalyptic moods and obscene irrational attitudes, visual destruction

being the logical outcome of the collapse of harmony and uncontrolled manners that go hand in hand with the prevailing modes of behaviour. We must reach the inevitable conclusion that all these manifestations of negativity, all these vulgar 'happenings' and 'events' masquerading as art, have little to do with imaginative truth and everything to do with pathology; perhaps some hidden complexes embedded in a generation nurtured by war and brutality. Anti-art is in its way as destructive to the human spirit as thalidomide is to expectant mothers.

But how did it all start, when did the rot set in and who let the bacteria loose? Three main culprits come to mind: Spengler, Mondrian, Duchamp.

Eight decades ago Oswald Spengler in his *Decline of the West* drew up a blueprint for the millenium:

'For Destiny's sake,' Spengler proclaimed, 'be an engineer! Don't waste your life in the futile agony of trying to realize what you may have left of a soul. This is no time for souls. If you become a painter, a poet, a composer,' he says, 'you will find yourselves in no time whatever frustrated, or else corrupted by those aesthetic cliques which offer, in terms of power, influence, licentiousness, easy sales of bogus wares, some compensation for the pains of a spiritual vocation gone astray. For the *Zeitgeist* is inexorable: as inexorable now as it was in Roman times . . . Then as now, all spiritual, aesthetic, philosophical resources had been spent . . .' His conclusion: 'I can only hope that men of the new generation may be moved by my book to take up engineering instead of poetry, join the Navy rather than an art school, become politicians rather than philosophers. Ours is the business of civilization – let us build aeroplanes, no matter what they carry; roads no matter where they lead; weapons, no matter what 'values' they defend or attack. For absolute scepticism is our intellectual fate, and absolute engineering our historical Destiny.'

To Spengler the drifting ship of our humanity was a *Götterdämmerung* on a revolving stage, a grand spectacle not to be missed,

and he must have enjoyed it in the way a fire-raiser enjoys the destructive spectacle of leaping flames.

It is worth recalling that at the time Spengler wrote his epitaph on life at the beginning of this century, Cézanne's clarion call for nature-inspired order was still reverberating, still ringing in the ears of many an aspiring artist. Indeed, the first decades of our XXth century were blessed with an unprecedented flowering in the domain of art, nay, all the arts; a veritable renaissance, an outburst of fertility combining beauty and vitality.

And notwithstanding the sombre prognostications of the catastrophe-minded historiographer (some of whose forebodings have, alas, come true) a whole galaxy of truly inspired artists and poets, taking no notice of Spengler, and ignoring his cynical and defeatist call to cast away the brushes and throw pens to the winds, went on cultivating the secret gardens of art.

However, surveying the present day antarctica of spiritual dereliction, we cannot help noticing, to our chagrin, that within the present generation the despondent teachings of Spengler have taken root.

Mondrian, brother-in-arms of Spengler, hard on the heels of his mentor's misanthropic prophesy and grim prescriptions, Mondrian, for his part, evolved the creed of engineering to be forcibly transplanted onto the live body of art. His nature-inspired imagination — as documented in his early work — had now turned into prestidigitation but as Cocteau observed 'imagination is a miracle, prestidigitation is not'. Pulling a white rabbit out of a black hat is but a minor art. It can be purchased. 'Snow in predestined hands quickly turns to marble — marble in shifting hands quickly turns to dust'.

'Art will disappear as life gains more equilibrium' — Mondrian proclaimed. The disaster of Mondrian's influence is a fatality in the history of modern art — an art in which the silvering is removed from the mirror where geometry wears a false nose.

Moreover, Mondrian made the preposterous claim that nature was a liability rather than man's supreme asset. And, echoing Spengler, his was a call to artists to desert their faith; sharp opinions

reflected in sharp rectangles to which regrettably disproportionate attention has been accorded.

The haphazard cracking of ageing oils is time's contemptuous comment, if not its ultimate revenge on Mondrian's ice-pure ideals created – so it seems – with the aid of surgical gloves, so as to eradicate any trace of having been touched by a human hand. He was committed to a misanthropic creed of 'divorce from Nature', forgetting that he himself was but a minor spare part of it.

Spengler and Mondrian – I would advise ships to avoid these icebergs. How much longer are we to be plagued by the rhetoric of their Messianic arrogance of the spirit; and is the dark side of the moon to be mistaken for the rising sun?

Then there was Marcel Duchamp; his pitiful role was to introduce the element of facilism into the 'new art', shallow melodrama which has turned out to have such a mass following among the not so choosy of today. He wanted an art unashamedly rational in its conception, and dry and mechanical in execution. Duchamp took precise and careful measurements, drew lines with a ruler, made mathematical calculations . . . He is the one credited with the invention of 'useless machines' and for all this he earned for himself the high acclaim of indiscriminate critical rodomontade.

Duchamp's frivolity is but a lack of heroism. To pin a moustache on a reproduction of the Mona Lisa is a joke in questionable taste. Duchamp like his 'pop art' followers, wants us all to be solemn about such silly matters. The reason why, to so many of today's non-artists, Duchamp is such a revered father figure is because this special brand of nihilism requires no effort and is easy to emulate.

Duchamp discarded retinal painting, mocked the sublime, profaned the sacred and finally immersed himself in silence, abandoning painting, creativity, for the sake of the game of chess . . .

Man, like the child, tends to destroy the things he is unable to solve. But whereas the child's failings are accompanied by tantrums and drowned in pools of tears, man cunningly clothes his failures in apologia, giving a false impression of having turned failure into success.

A modern avant-garde sees the absurd as an end in itself, a negative which it is impossible to negate, a spiritual and intellectual *cul-de-sac* from which there is no exit.

Those 'terrorists of art' as the poet Pierre Emmanuel called them have come to believe that by shouting louder they can communicate better, or rather, having acquired this adolescent belief, fail to accumulate enough of that real experience which alone can produce more meaningful and deeper art.

True, at no time in history has there been a shortage of the phoney masquerading as genuine though, unlike in our laissez-faire days when everything goes, the mediocre was not allowed to bask in the limelight reserved for the truly exceptional. Excellence and discrimination being a *conditio sine qua non*, egalitarianism is out of place in the domain of art.

'Art' – to quote Herbert Read again – 'is the effort to resist disintegration and the genuine arts still flickering today are engaged in a heroic struggle against triviality, mediocrity and mass values. This great enterprise has been betrayed by the permissive art rampant today; an art without discrimination, without harmony, without relationship, a darkening world, a world characterized in Heidegger's words: "By the flight of the gods, the destruction of the earth, the standardisation of man, the pre-eminence of the mediocre." '

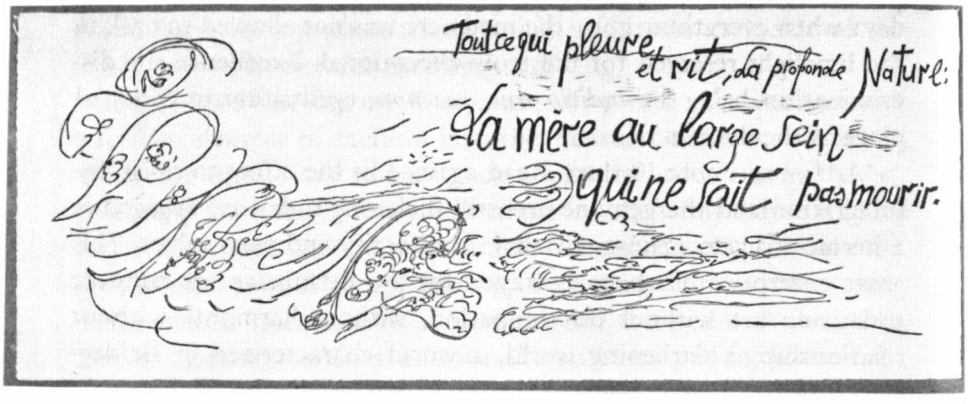
When Rimbaud abandoned poetry, either because he was afraid of something or other or perhaps because his inspiration ran dry, he fled to North Africa and took up gun-running. He did not pretend that his new trade was an artistic activity, nor have critics yet decided to elevate either the spent bullets or live bullets from those guns into poems more significant than the cataclysmic real poems of Rimbaud's youth; yet the art world is in danger of doing just that through the eulogy of, and preoccupation with, the subsequent trivial works of Duchamp, who, by his own admission, was utterly bored with retinal painting. Thus the paragons of anti-art are unwilling to face the natural corollary of their logic and clear out of the Temple altogether.

The lessons of history are worth rehearsing. When the Roman

Empire came to an end life indeed was at its lowest ebb, and there were many at the time who mistook the darkness for the end of the world . . .

Yet the gangrene and debauchery were swept away in due course. The world, like a phoenix, rose from the ashes and men were able to celebrate the flowering of a new Renaissance.

History – so they say – is fond of repeating itself . . .



The true Revolution will be the one which transforms our fallen nature, foul-smelling, false, ugly and vicious and restores to it its angelic features, those of a Daughter of God, its original state. This Revolution is the revolution of God and his Angels. It will soon come to pass and will far exceed in terror all our feeble adventures in Russia and in Spain. Live then, for only a few years remain. And Pray, without faith and without hope, mechanically, so that you may deserve to see the apocalyptic vision of the Saints. A few more years will pass and those who deserve deliverance will finally know a nature free from falsehood, sex, poetry, art and free from . . . pride.

JEREMY REED

SHAD THAMES

The wharf steps had the reek of centuries
of good and bad blood, noble and traitor,
who'd shivered here by the feculent Thames,
and felt their entrails churn at Blackfriars
before admission to the Tower.
I'd expected the cold; the oiling rain,
and the river's rat-brown turgidity,
and he whom I awaited, the keeper
of secret places in the city's bowels.
I anticipated as it might be Charon
clinking his day's offering of obols,

in the rimed discolourment of his palm.
The drizzle grained the river to tulle
stretched tight over a marsh-pool where old bones
digest, and litter nodded to the pull
of current, and a barge's swell
breasting the tidal flux. I waited in
the doorway of an abandoned warehouse
in Shad Thames, where the sign of Courage Ale,
was red against the shaling, and its brew
musty above the river's smell. Old mooring chains
creaked with the tide, and once I thought I saw

a man emerging out of Curlew Street,
to disappear among the garbage sacks –
one of the lost, blinded by white spirit,
who go anonymous, and meet their death
in bundled rags upon a dock.
I listened, thinking that I heard a man
approach with caution in his every step,
much as a cat skirts glass teeth on a wall,
but it was only rain in a flawed pipe,
discharged from broken guttering, or rats that ran
beneath pocked landing piles whose rotten struts

were green like blighted elms. On Tower Bridge,
a wash of headlights dipped into the mist
that settled tangibly above the sludge,
gobbling its pride of pieces that are lost
minute by minute in the grist
of dissolution. Who can keep his face
a night I thought, without a new crowsfoot
invisibly knotting the immodest
parody old age contrives to mock youth?
Would he I waited for, show me that darkest place
where honey awaits the embittered tooth,

and old skins are unskeined for golden silk,
and the red poppy's ichor to the blood
of those who like bees hang upon the stalk
of paradise? I heard the lick of mud
queasily settle round driftwood,
and then a barge come out of the black soup,
sluggishly toiled towards the Wapping side,
and anchored, putting out no boat, but stood
off without lights. I huddled there afraid,
but no voice hailed me, and a gull with croup
wheezed at its stern. Then a man in a hood

was stroking water rapidly with oars,
that clopped like horses' hooves over damp ground,
and aimed for the jetty. The mist shook clear
for minutes, then redubbed with shipping sounds,
moodily slid back to its dank
camouflage, and the ale seeped into stone
was sour, as though it was Raleigh's small beer
risen to reproach the conniving mind
that sharpened its wits on litigation
for the crimson scaffold. Downriver, a foghorn
was wailing; and I watched the yellow lamp

of the approaching ferryman dip out
of sight beneath the landing stairs, and heard
heavy footsteps articulate their threat
over rinsed stone. I stood still, and cowered
in a recess where rain dribbled
from an overhang, and seemed suddenly
to know the secret knot of life and death,
and that the spider in catching the fly
relived that fly's experience, and stealth
in a still centre must embody wings, and die
its victim's death as victor, and we dread

not future vacancy, but how we miss
the apple bite each second, and the core
festers with the aggregate of our loss
in black syrup, and death's not the future,
but a buoy we left upriver
to tinkle in its circumscribing lees.
The rain was driving harder as he led
me over slimy wharf-steps to the oar,
and dug into the sludge. A fattened toad
croaked at the bow, and the boat responded slowly
to current. A crow spat from the Tower,

and the gruff belligerence of a dog
was rankling from the barge. A boating cloak
and hood disguised my guide, and a grey log
abruptly rocked us. The air was like smoke
snuffling to blanket our dark wake.
I let the black thread of my past recede,
and cupped it in my cold hands as a skull,
and fingered its decay, and let it drop
into the night river. He never spoke.
I felt the dog's rank breath, and knew I woke up dead.
The man sieved steaming obols in his hat.

AIR

Rain water brushed from a swift's pointed wings
on to an eyelash or a spider's web
is how I like to think of the exchange

of altitudes, a vibrant resonance
on this gusty day with birds ticking South
through a needle's eye, each propelled in trance

to dare luminous wind-shafts, and one feels
the elasticity of their wing-pull
in the air's simmer – the twitch of their pole

asserting gravity. The earth vibrates
with their passing as with the aftermath
of hooves. I stand still and contemplate

the one vertical between me and space
that's flying Westwards with the Atlantic,
and watch a singular whitewashed lighthouse

bulb on its rock. Out here the pulse of air
tingles with stellar energy. I see
it transformed into design and colour

such as the intricacies a snowflake
contrives in fashioning its slow descent.
I sense those sharp intangible facets

pass through me diamonding the light the way
hail flashes on a heated shovel's back,
or a cormorant's sheen glistens with spray

that smokes in its alighting. Sea and sky
in one illimitable rush of blue
open up light worlds, and the tern's shrill cry

untranslatable holds me static here
given over to such fluidity
I am become a component of air.

DOROTHY WORDSWORTH

Unseasonably cold on Butterlip How,
I drowse over dear Spenser's Fairy Queen,
at rest an hour, and hear my brother's pen
alternate as the impulse comes and goes
with the transient gust of a chaffinch
alighting on a lime tree leaf.
My head aches so it seems an acorn grown
too large for its cup – it is so from birth:

my brother too suffers from sleeplessness,
pains in his head, a frail constitution
I am alert to with the attention
of one who shares rather than cures this stress:
I complement him in this suffering
the way a leaf is two sides green,
and only sunlight shows the variant
exposing on the underside light veins –

so brother and sister. Often Coleridge
walks over from Keswick, his ashen face
hollow from opium, seems to haunt a place
one sees in the water's foam from the ledge
overlooking the wildest fall. He seems
not of this earth, but of the space
allotted to his ancient mariner.
His torment's bitter salt to Sara's hearth,

and Mary quickens now when William
makes the journey over. I hear his breath
punctuate the progress of the lyric
he'll later read to me, and sloe blossoms
resist the wind. Anemones, pansies,
the violet and the celandine,
show bright aspirations to the divine;
they sparkle with alighting butterflies.

A sheltered life, but daring's how the mind
explores the heart of the smallest flower,
or sees the brightest drop in the rain shower
encapsulate the heavens in its round
and momentary earthward flash. The eye's
a needle that would correlate
striations of the speedwell with the sky,
all simplicity with the absolute.

I dreamt a moment ago a blue tit
alighted on William's little finger
and imparted a message in a straw,
he couldn't as a lifetime's work translate.
And then it was Coleridge inside a cave
I saw, and a snow owl perched on
his shoulder, and the two were in a grave
his children beat their tiny fists upon.

I woke up startled; William had strayed
into an ash coppice starred with gowans,
I heard his voice declaiming the poem
he'd written to the cuckoo; this allayed
my panic, and I gathered butterwort,
hyacinth and marsh marigold.
Everywhere lilac and blue butterflies
formed double stars of pursuit in the cold,

but that night perturbation tapped like rain
inside my head. I dreamt that William's bride
wailed on Gallow Hill, then waited outside
an hour or more, until the light of dawn
was violet on the summits. Swallows have
contrived a nest beneath our eaves,
their luminous white bellies and forked tails
hang on our window panes, and I believe

prognosticate a voyage from Grasmere,
I as my brother's sole companion,
Mary his aid. I wait their union
with joy, and am unalterably near
each resolution of dear William's heart.
I am the stream that feeds his pool
and deepens it with knowing – I the stem,
and he the gold eye of the daffodil.

I walked out at first light, and a thrush sings
in the privet, and such a radiance
blesses our house, I walk as one in trance,
who secretly accepts Christ's marriage ring.
Wild columbine, vetch, yellow pimpernel
are everywhere in abundance,
and turning round I hear my William call,
and broken hearted greet him, yet I dance.

THE STONE ORACLE

It's when the silence grows too loud,
the stone lifts by itself, you said,
without observed displacement. Where
we stood seemed in a blue crystal
of light above a spiral fall
down schist walls to a sea hollow.

And when it moves, I said, the wind
can be fitted into a hand
it so contracts, its chrysalis
is light as that of a hawk moth's.
and too, the violent sea below
slows to green water in a well.

Up there you said, see the clouds stop,
not a bird cries, and the white hoop
of swell's placid as a trout ring
dissolving. Where that sea-mew hangs
it will remain; that bee's frozen
inside the source of its pollen.

And look, I said, that shag is caught
inches above the prey it sought –
the nerve-flash of a sandeel. On
the beach that onyx coloured stone
thrown for a dog, stalls in its flight,
and yet it seems devoid of weight.

I hear the oracle, you said,
speaking to this side of the dead
from that, and if the stone should move,
a gaping hole into the cove
below our feet will open up,
and later drop us to the beach.

And while you spoke a fissure ran
around the stone's levitation,
and we suspended in dark air
looked down into a circular
rock shaft, and at its base the sea
reflected the immobile sky.

'What do you seek within the rock,
in the ruby dark, where the track
of oceans centres to a pin-
head of water that's pooled within,
and on that axis the cliff spins
round to its point of rest again?'

We looked up, and the sea wind's howl
resumed, and split the hanging gull's
feathers back into flight; the surf
thundered, the shag dipped from its reef,
and firm beneath our feet the cliff
gripped against the blue pull of space.

GUARDIANS

Like Rilke's angels they're invisible,
adjured to patience, and so close to us
we do not see our left hand as their right,
our prayer as their dictation, and our breath
the modulated rhythm of the light
they occupy that is so luminous
we think it our inheritance at death.

Always the presence and the translation
into designatory symbols. Sometimes
they enter us so fully we don't know
ourselves from them, but only see the lines
scored in bird's feet across a page; the vein
of knowing open, and a gull's feather
aslant in sunlight, plumed with a red stain.

And are most propitious when we lose thread,
alighting to transport us out of time
to where we can't return alone, but live
an hour, and disentranced wake to a room
which we don't recognize, and go as one
dazzled by light, unable to take leave
of vision granted to a poor man's bed.

AN ASPECT OF *HAIKU* – AESTHETICS
The Idea of Sabi

TOYOKO IZUTSU

Among the Japanese, *haiku*-poetry is, to say the least, one of the most prevalent genres of poetic art, typically Japanese, both in its external form and inner spirit.

The external form of *haiku* seems to be quite simple. A distinctive feature is apparently its extreme shortness. A unit of 17 syllables constitutes one whole poem of *haiku*. 17 Syllables are internally divided further into three parts: 5/7/5 syllables in this order. For example:

Uki ware wo (5)	With my melancholy
Sabishi-gara-seyo (7)	In loneliness let me be immersed
Kanko dori (5)	Cuckoo-bird

Historically speaking, among the several genres of the classical Japanese poetry, *haiku* represents the latest development. In connection with *haiku* we should perhaps mention here, though briefly, at least two other poetic genres, namely *waka* and *renga* as the direct historical forerunners of *haiku*, for *haiku* in both its external constitution and inner poetic disposition owes much to them, including the name *haiku* itself.

A *waka* consists of 31 syllables with inner articulations of 5/7/5 and 7/7, the former unit (5/7/5) constituting the upper strophe and the latter (7/7) the lower strophe. For example:

Hito kika-nu (5)	Without being heard
Fuka-ki yamabe no (7)	Deep in the mountains
Hototogisu (5)	A cuckoo's cry
Naku ne mo ikani (7)	How penetrating would it sound
Sabishi karu-ran (7)	The loneliness ever profound

As one will immediately notice, the upper strophe of *waka*, namely the first 17 syllables, 5/7/5, exactly corresponds to the formal structure of *haiku*.

In *renga*, the linked poem, that which constitutes the upper or lower strophe of *waka* functions singly as an independent unit. As a rule thirty-six, fifty, one-hundred, or occasionally one thousand units are linked together to form the whole length of *renga*, in which the units of 5/7/5 and the units of 7/7 alternate in succession.

The peculiar feature of this poetic art, *renga*, is that it is composed not by one poet but by a group of poets gathered together in a party. The units go on being created one by one on the spot and are placed one after another in serial form by the participants taking their turns.

The starting verse, the very first unit of 5/7/5, assumes technically a particular significance in *renga* so that it is composed usually by an honoured poet in the gathering, known for his conspicuous poetic attainment.

Hokku, the very first verse in the whole *renga*, is the only fixed point stably established under the direct control of one individual poet to mark the departure for the whole course of a yet unknown creative voyage, in which functional fluidity and relational mobility play a great part, preventing any one of the participants from steering its course at will. The participants know only afterwards the whole scope extending from the starting point to the end, recognizing it as a wake they themselves have left behind in their group voyage of creation.

Here I do not wish either to go into details about the rather complicated features of *renga* or deal with the most peculiar aesthetic ideal the *renga*-poet aims at realizing. I will confine myself to pointing out that although the formal structure of *haiku* is quite similar to that of the upper strophe of *waka*, as mentioned above, it is not from *waka* that *haiku* derived; rather it derived directly from *renga*, the linked poem. The preponderant significance given in *renga* to the starting verse smoothed the way for the latter to acquire a kind of autonomy and allowed it to become eventually an independent

poetic unit constituting the harmonious whole of a *haiku* poem.

Haiku naturally inherited some of the important qualities of *renga*, for example the dynamic temporality and the functional mobility which were, as a structural necessity, inherent in *renga*.

Moreover, it is to be noted in this connection that *haiku* derived not from ordinary *renga* but from *haikai renga*. The word *haikai* means jesting or provoking laughter. The essential mark of the *renga* of this variety is playfulness vividly flavoured with satire, irony and even a touch of vulgarity.

The spirit of *haikai*, that is to say, the playfulness with irony and self-derision coming directly from the mundane and naked reality of human affairs is, from the traditional standpoint of *waka* aesthetics, considered almost anti-poetic, even anti-aesthetic, flatly contradicting the aesthetic values and ideals aspired to by the *waka*-poets. Matsuo Bashô (1644-1694), as a founder of *haiku* and the *haiku*-theory, was keenly conscious of this fact. It was precisely in this that Bashô saw the unique significance of *haiku*-poetry and of the theory of *haiku*-aesthetics he established.

He succeeded in transforming what was by traditional standards a negative aesthetic value or non-value into something definitely positive by integrating it with a particular kind of ontological ground-structure, by which alone all the aesthetic values and ideas of *haiku* were to be validated.

In this respect, *sabi*, one of the key ideas of *haiku*-aesthetics which, I imagine, is well known to the West, is not an exception. It usually turns out to be impossible, even within the Japanese cultural framework, to given any satisfactory definition to the idea of *sabi* without referring to the ground-structure on which it is based.

Take for example the earthenware tea-bowls used in the tea ceremony: the imperfection, asymmetry, simplicity and the plain wholeness precariously balanced in their peculiar shapes are their *sabi*-constituents.

The atmosphere of sublimity and serenity, with a nuance of desolation felt in and around the age-old shrines and temples located in some remote places far from the turmoil of human affairs, represents

also an aspect of *sabi*.

Or again the primordial amorphousness, the weather-worn subduedness and the time-accumulation seemingly immune from the ephemerality and vulnerability of organic things, observable in stones and rocks in Japanese tea-gardens, constitute another aspect of the sense of *sabi* phenomenally manifested.

However, if we were to succeed in extracting all the conspicuous features bit by bit from infinitely varying forms of the *sabi*-phenomenon, and in assembling them into a numerical totality, we could not possibly even then grasp the aesthetic principle or spirit of *sabi* as a living and organic whole from which all the varying forms of *sabi* are manifestations.

As will clearly be noticed, those features recognized as such in the phenomenalized forms of the aesthetic value of *sabi* are so varied and contradictory in terms of semantic consideration that no essential core around which they can be coagulated or crystallized into a coherent conceptual unity can be found.

It is to be noted that all the highest aesthetic key-terms in Japan are more or less of this nature. In fact, although the use of aesthetic technical terms was fully in practice in the classical and medieval times especially among the court poets and poetic theoreticians, in formulating their critical judgements of poetic works, it seems as if they spared themselves, even in their poetic theories, the effort of giving precise and direct definitions to the meanings of these technical terms of the highest aesthetic value. It even seems as if they systematically avoided doing this.

Instead, the theoreticians and critics of the traditional art and literature often had recourse in treating these highly abstract ideas, to a peculiarly indirect means of elucidation, treating the abstract as a sensible field-structure. That is to say, any phenomenon chosen for that purpose is analytically viewed as a compound composed of various units. Variously qualified of sense, sensation and sensibility these form the meaningful and organic unity of an experiential context, a peculiar cognitive field that functions simultaneously in two different modes. These are mutually evocative dimensions of being,

sensory and supra-sensory, empirical and metaphysical.

The following is an explicit illustration of this peculiar method in which two famous thirteenth century *waka*-poems are employed quite independently of their original contexts and the creative motives of the poets themselves, to function as exemplary media, so to speak, for evoking the cognitive field here mentioned, equipped with necessary structural features analogously corresponding to the field structure of *sabi*-phenomenon.

Since *sabi*-aesthetics was first established in the art of tea, and transmitted to Bashô to be further developed into the highest aesthetic ideal of *haiku*-poetry, it would be best to start explicating the idea of *sabi* through the above-mentioned characteristic method formulated by two well-known tea-men of the 16th century, Jôwô and Rikyû. This involves two famous *waka*-poems and is commonly recognized to be the most authentic and classic case structurally defining the idea of *sabi*.

The *waka*-poems are as follows:

(1)	*Miwata-seba*	All around, no flowers in bloom
	Hana mo momiji mo	No maple leaves in glare
	Naka-ri-keri	A solitary fisherman's hut
	Wura no tomaya no	On the twilight shore
	Aki no yûgure	In this autumn eve
(2)	*Hana wo nomi*	To the yearning seekers of blossoms
	Matsu-ran hito ni	With pride, would I offer
	Yamazato no	A delight of the eye
	Yukima no kusa no	The green from under the snow
	Haru wo mise-baya	In a mountain village in spring-tide!

In this pair of *waka*-poems independently composed by two different occasions and in different contexts, Rikyû recognizes two basic aspects of *sabi*, the first poem representing its 'in-volving' or 'in-folding' aspect and the second the 'evolving'.

In the landscape of the first poem flowers and tinted maple leaves, which represent typical poetic beauty, especially for *waka*-

poets, are linguistically negated. This negation does not necessarily mean that they are totally effaced from the scene; on the contrary, they are evoked there, more richly nuanced, as a subdued but dense residue pregnantly reminiscent of all the passed phases and stages of the whole 'in-volving' process. This may range from the once fully and perfectly articulated state to the precarious state just before the complete disappearance of the phenomenal articulations into primordial amorphousness.

As a matter of fact, in this world-view, no thing or unit of phenomenality remains even for a moment in exactly the same stage within the process of the ontological 'in-volvement' and 'evolvement' to and from the metaphysical source-ground.

The tinted maple leaves in their glaring beauty and the cherry blossoms in full bloom in the above *waka*-poem which represent in their sensible articulation the highest point of aesthetic development, have gone into naught, 'in-volving' their phenomenal aspects one by one. This state of ontological affairs is nothing less than the special aesthetic sphere of *sabi*.

With regard to the solitary fisherman's hut on the twilight seashore, Jôwô is said to have mentioned the phrase '*muichi-butsu no kyogai*' meaning 'the domain where there is not a single thing', or 'the state of no possession' which is a well-recognized technical term of Zen metaphysics.

The phrase 'the solitary fisherman's hut on the twilight shore' implies in this context the locality and the mode of subjectivity existentiating and sustaining this particular landscape. As a cognitive field it will soon fade out together with the cognitive consciousness, leaving behind it the last traces of the vague and shadowy figures before completely dissolving itself into the absolute entirety of non-articulation.

With this 'in-volving' structure of *sabi* in mind, we can perhaps proceed more easily to an explication of its 'evolving' aspect in terms of the structural correspondence provided by the second *waka*-poem.

The spontaneous 'evolvement' of phenomenality from the meta-

physical source-ground is represented in this poem by the sprightly green from under the snow seen for the first time in spring in the remoteness and solitude of a mountain village.

Although the characteristics of the 'in-volving' aspect of *sabi* and those of the 'evolving' thus differ extremely from each other, they share in common one essential factor; that the proper sphere of *sabi* both 'in-volving' and 'evolving' is, from an ontological viewpoint, supposedly posited in the immediate vicinity of the non-phenomenal. That is, in the empirical region closest to the boundary of the absolute non-phenomenal from which phenomenality, with its sensible articulation, emanates and into which it dissolves itself.

In this world-view we can recognize two axes between which the sensibly articulated world extends. One is the phenomenal consummation of reality marked by a perfect and full-fledged development of sensible articulation, the other is its metaphysical consummation, the zero-point of phenomenal development, the transcendental domain where there is nothing, no articulation whatsoever.

If we are to take the standpoint of regarding the full development of sensible articulations as a supreme value (in that it realizes perfectly the phenomenal potentialities inherent in the things and events constituting the empirical world), then *sabi* will have to be considered definitely a negative value. In which case it implies a scantiness and meagreness of empirical articulations indicating either the ending phase of the waning process of phenomenality prior to the latter's complete 'in-volvement' into the primordial amorphousness, or the very beginning phase of the waxing process of phenomenal 'evolution' out of the zero-point of the ontological articulations.

The fact that both 'in-volving' and 'evolving' aspects of *sabi* are furthest removed from perfection and full-fledged state of phenomenality would naturally prove in itself to be a negative value from the empirical point of view. It will acquire a positive evaluation only if we shift the principal focus of this system of dynamic ontological gradations from its empirical to the metaphysical axis.

If we are to translate all this into a structural image, it would

assume the form of a system in which the gradual decreasing of phenomenal articulations will inevitably induce a corresponding increase of metaphysical saturation, while the gradual diminishing of metaphysical saturation will result in a corresponding expansion and ramification of sensible articulations in the empirical field of things and events.

You may have noticed by this time that the idea of *sabi* is structurally more strongly tinged with metaphysical than with aesthetic nuances. Actually, the aesthetic idea of *sabi* with its characteristic structure takes its rise from this particular system, in which ontological 'evolvement' and 'in-volvement' are always taking place, stage by dynamic stage. Each stage constitutes an existential field, with the structural focus given overwhelmingly to the metaphysical rather than to the phenomenal pole.

Since, however, the metaphysical source-ground itself, being absolutely non-phenomenal, transcends by structural necessity all empirical articulations, the artistic or literary attempt to realize its direct phenomenal representation, must inevitably lead to failure, remaining forever as an impossible aesthetic yearning or desire.

There is, however, a rather daring device traditionally developed in Japan which makes it possible to interpret the abstract structure of the metaphysical pole directly in terms of a concretely visualized field-structure.

This device consists in drawing a void circle. The encircled space devoid of any internal division or demarcation analogically signifies the essential structure pf the metaphysical pole itself, its transcendental wholeness with no inner articulation.

When the void space receives a tiny single dot anywhere at random within the circle, this implies that the absolute non-articulation has at that precise moment been incited into action toward phenomenal 'evolvement'.

This single dot itself declares, as it were, the rise of cognitive consciousness. This is necessarily and simultaneously accompanied by the rise of a cognitive field existentiated either in the domain of the inner-psychic or in the external-empirical field and constituting

the very first phase of articulated phenomenality.

The field structure of this circle-space and the tiny dot within it, immediately reminds us of the second poem mentioned above, especially of its lower strophe; 'The green from under the snow/ In the mountain village in spring-tide!' Here we have, immediately, the vivacious green of the spring shoots coming out severally here and there, from the white sheet of snow covering the ground as far as the eye can reach. The very first phase of phenomenalization, interpreted in terms of an image as an aesthetic visual field, is essentially characterized both by the sparseness of the sensible articulation and by the vivacity of the figure standing clearly embossed upon the cognitive field.

This sparseness of sensible articulation observable in the 'evolving' aspect of phenomenality is shared by its 'in-volving' aspect, for both the very first phase of 'evolvement' and the very last phase of 'involvement' constitute, as already explained, the immediate vicinity of the transcendental non-articulation.

Sabi-aesthetics, however, traditionally accentuates (in its concrete artistic representation) the 'in-volving' aspect more strongly than the 'evolving'.

The 'in-volving' aspect is represented by the first poem; 'All around, no flowers in bloom/ Nor maple leaves in glare/ A solitary fisherman's hut/ On the twilight shore/ In this autumn eve.' Here the nature-field, the landscape, once adorned with figures in colourful brilliance exuberantly and fully articulated, is now going to 'involve' itself in its entirety into naught, having first of all erased the cognizable figures without a trace leaving behind only a vague grayish dot of a fisherman's hut in the shadowy twilight still subsisting persistently with a lingering air as the final abode of the aesthetico-cognitive consciousness, before its disappearance with the total 'involvement' of the entire existential field.

The principle functioning in this aesthetic structure may perhaps be concisely expressed by saying that the closer to the metaphysical pole, the lesser the degree of phenomenality.

Thus the aesthetic phenomenon of *sabi*, subsisting in the immediate

vicinity of the metaphysical pole, may be interpreted in terms of concrete sensory articulation. Sparseness in contrast to exuberance, deficiency or imperfection rather than perfection, asymmetry rather than fully developed symmetry, simple wholeness, precariously balanced, rather than ramification, vagueness or ambiguity rather than brilliance, declining or withering rather than florescence.

These essential features recognized as the phenomenal modes of *sabi* may further be interpreted, with equal validity, in terms of a certain concrete phase and aspect of empirical things and events. Or it may even be reduced analytically to a certain facet of sense and sensation singled out from the experiential actuality whether visual, auditory, tactile, olfactory, or even palatal.

For example, even a faint momentary sensation of coolness felt in the sole of a foot touching the tatami-mat of a tea pavilion can be given a conspicuous significance in that it functions in itself as an independent aesthetic field of *sabi* or at least as one of its important components.

I shall give two examples from *haiku* poems composed by Bashô:

(1)	*Mini shimi-te*	Piercingly pungent
	Daikon kara-shi	Tastes this horseradish
	Aki no kaze	The autumn wind
(2)	*Mono iye-ba*	Emitting words
	Kuchibiru samu-shi	A chill about my lips
	Aki no kaze	The autumn wind

Forlornness, faintness, ephemerality and the minuteness tapering almost into naught in the transience of phenomenal 'in-volvement' are the keynotes of the aesthetic field of *sabi* in these *haiku* poems.

Thus the phenomenalization of the aesthetic principle of *sabi* can be actualized case by case with endless variety, creating with infinite flexibility an aesthetic field of *sabi*.

I shall quote here two more *haiku*-poems composed by Bashô:

(1)	*Umi kure-te*	As the sea grows dusky
	Kamo no koe	A cry of a seagull
	Honoka-ni shiro-shi	Faintly white
(2)	*Ishi kare-te*	Rocks bleakly exposed
	Mizu shibo-meru-ya	Water being exhausted
	Fuyu mo nashi	Absent, even a sign of winter

In the latter poem, the poet even tries to go a step further beyond the domain of *sabi*.

The *sabi*, by structural correspondence, is often associated with autumnal things and events. In the empirical world autumn is of course immediately followed by winter. In this case (i.e. in this particular structural representation of *sabi* aesthetics), however, autumn symbolizes the very last phase of the ontological 'in-volvement' beyond which there should exist only the domain of the non-phenomenal – the absolute Non-Being, the sublime domain of *metaphysical* saturation.

Human cognitive consciousness, in itself merely a unit of the phenomenally articulated, functioning only for the purpose of cognizing a variety of phenomenal articulations from a phenomenal standpoint, can do nothing other than analogically interpret and represent the transcendental dimension of metaphysical saturation, either as phenomenal negativity, as the dimension of *absence*, or as lack of phenomenal articulations.

In this latter poem, the poet, through a kind of double negation, that is to say, the nullification of negative phenomenality, – the winter landscape – tries structurally at least to hint at the direction toward the domain of transcendental Non-Being beyond all phenomenality.

This inner motivation of the poet with his poetic psyche highly elevated by an intense aspiration for metaphysical-aesthetic sublimity, has an extraordinary effect upon his poetic representation of the winter landscape. The poet who takes a step further beyond autumn suddenly becomes aware of the fact that what he is looking

at in his inner psychic field is not even a winter landscape in desolation but a fossilization of phenomenality. With its inorganic bleakness a strangely abstract landscape exists just at the back of the non-phenomenal, its life energies extinguished, caught between phenomenality and non-phenomenality.

Sabi is indeed an aesthetic venture motivated by an impossible aspiration for imagining the imageless, or representing the non-phenomenal in phenomenal time and space.

One of the disciples of Bashô remarked: 'Although there may be recognizable in my master's works thousands of poetic modes with ten thousand variations, there is none that does not contain *sabi* in it.'

I have seen: he who has seen ceases to think and to feel. He only knows that he must describe what he has seen.

HAROLD MORLAND

Two sections from *Matter of Britain*

PROLOGUE: CHILD-MINDING

She told me dark tales –
witches whose smouldering eyes
flared up from their heart,

a heart as black as coal
in a winter hearth; with bones
brittle as old sticks

that suddenly lived.
And their words spat out like sparks
that could burn a house.

Old Jinny was one,
mouldy-green and as musty
as that wrinkled skirt;

but when the air moved
it would slowly start to fill
and the green catch lights,

glints of malice. The edge
of the carpet sighed, the door
came in to whisper.

And yet in this fear
I was being filled; my mind
enriched its knowing

as if rooted in soil
from a dark garden, where fruit
was for those who dared.

I must never fear
that knowing, but let it seed
in the nights to come.

I knew their silence.
In the thickets of my veins
their thoughts would flitter

moth-like in half-light,
or with a bat's swooping skill
keep time quivering;

when no seeming-so
was truth; when a quiet stone
could move toad-like. Slow.

And flowers in the wind
were hearing music.
And when
I saw a friend's eye

as a world, peopled
with delights and great wonders
unexplored, moving

in a universe
of thought beyond.
Space and time
one iris away.

SECTION IV
THE FIRST AND LAST OF MERLIN

A virgin mother
to be the Devil's handmaid,
as Hell's parody

in red derision
of the cool white chastity
of Christ's conceiving.

With mocking laughter
the Lords of Hell planned ruin
on our human kind;

they'd breed a creature
half a devil half a man
to walk as prophet

and with magic skills
to heal a covering skin
over the world's wounds –

though let them fester
with poisons deep at the heart
to corrupt the soul.

In a quiet house
a young girl sleeping shivered
as the ice-cold seed

that had numbed her womb
fermented, and she cried aloud
at the drops of blood.

In innocent fear
she knelt before the altar
praying without words,

and a priestly saint
brought peace awhile with the sign
of Christ's agony.

When the child was born,
it was hairy as an imp
and its skin fire-red.

But the boy had laughed
as baptismal water cooled
his burning body;

and he reached his hands
to clutch at the pectoral
of the priest leaning.

Though the hair remained.
Against the years he counted
neither youth nor age:

for whilst still a child
his supple fingers moulded
little shapes of things

that in the dusk-light
had —not life — but becoming
animal? human?

which frightened the folk.
Then Merlin smiled, and whispered
in strange, wordless sounds.

The village-lads mocked
and tormented him with sticks
or stumbled on him,

tumbling him in mud
or on the sharp edge of stones,
and gibed at his tears.

But a girl gave him
half an apple once, and then
pointing at the core

raised her skirt to shew
the shape below her belly,
the apple of Eve.

She troubled Merlin
with a new sweetness of shame
that was half delight;

so that now at dusk
he moulded shapes more human
with trembling fingers.

No man knew his mind.
Once in a neighbour's farmyard
he saw a black cock

stretch its throat to crow,
and at sunset he caught it,
cooped it up till dawn

and as the sun rose
he slit its throat with his knife
and ruddied his lips.

Yet the songbirds came
to peck the grain from his palm;
and his peregrine

sensed his mastery
though Merlin stood still, silent,
and lured with his eyes.

Voles haunted his feet,
where his drowsy cat watched them,
no whisker twitching.

And he'd be tender
with a wounded hare, and smash
the poachers' trapwires.

But always lonely.
He would sit long hours, reading
the flow of water

like the truth of life,
where the drift of stalks, the whorls.
were runes to his mind.

He had that strangeness
of intensity where mind
and senses even

fine to a needle's point
to pierce the semblance of things.
Then he'd probe beyond.

But folk in number
bewildered him, he crumbled
into broken moods.

But as years went by
he seemed to the village folk
like an old rood-shaft

ruined in the square,
with letters no man could read
and storm-hazed figures.

What man heeded them?
Merlin would sit there, silent,
gray as the dusk.

But most in the woods
his lips opened for strange words
the jay would hush for,

the robin pertly
incline its head, and briefly
wittily answer.

Then once, walking clear
of the woods, he heard cries and
came to a great plain

where armies battled;
where steel clanged on steel, or hissed
through a man's muscle

and broke bone. Merlin
screamed in wild horror and ran
back among the trees.

For the hills around
were the rims of a cauldron
in which mankind seethed

with steams of anger
and belching bubbles of hate
over a gray scum

of sick thoughts, and all
stank in the exhausted air.
Green life was dying.

Yet it was the sight
of a delicate wild rose,
like the wound of Christ,

writhing on a briar
as the fire caught its petals –
and Merlin saw there

the wound in his heart
like the spear-thrust from a hand
that mocked at all life.

He saw the white rose
shapely like the silver bowl
of the Last Supper;

himself a torn man
between his two natures
with no redeemer

but his dying self.
He cried aloud like a man
thirsting for some faith.

And thoughts like briars
twisted round his brain, with blood
– hellfire blood – blind.

For days he starved. Crouched
with head bowed over a dead log
in the green darkness,

he let the silence
soothe and salve him, till a sly
adder that rustled

out of the dry leaves
and coiled in his lap, flickered
scorn of a stillness

that knew, that achieved
nothing but its barren self.
So Merlin blessed it,

and walked through the woods.
It was autumn and the trees
were heavy with fruit,

with berries and nuts;
yet Merlin had no palate
for the blackberries'

cloying, unsubtle
sweetness, or even hazels'
masculine cleanness.

He stripped the crab-trees
of their harsh embittered fruit,
made himself salads

of simple green herbs,
purging his body and mind
almost of being.

And the wild crab-juice
from the Tree in this Eden
where all was rankness

gave him a wisdom
that was sour to bite, and yet
this human palate

tested an after-
sweetness till his heart was moved
to go among men,

even fighting-men,
and learn their good and evil.
He studied the stream,

and the iris-blades
beckoned him on. Then he saw
the spoor of a bear

leading him southwards;
and a bright star that clear night
gave him direction.

There in the vast sky
his hungry spirit hunted
like a pinioned cock

for grains of God's truth,
where a scattering of stars
kept him lean, alive,

unsatisfied. Day
brought cloud-shapes that he could read
of mankind's fortunes,

and weathering time
that he could predict and teach.
Nay, that he must teach.

For the aftertaste
that was a kind of new love
made him ache for man

and all his follies,
his blindness, and his will-less
drifting down the stream.

Yet beyond all this
Merlin was aware that he —
strangely fathered, bred

as a man — would reach
the last limits of wisdom
this side space and time;

that void in the mind
where God has left a chaos
past created Man;

yet seed undying
within him would send out shoots
striving for the light.

For that agony
Hell had meant for mockery
was also God's gift.

But now on the road
with pilgrims, hucksters, beggars,
Merlin was a man.

Southwards to Arthur
and all the good and evil
of rich Camelot.

* * *

Words and weapons there
were keen-edged, polished to shine
as they caught the light;

where men thought themselves
most as selves when all encased
in masking armour

and plumed with their pride.
Yet only their shield blazoned
their identity,

and under their steel
they sweated their animal
lust to be naked.

High formality
shaped all to a flourish
of fantastic life.

The silken ladies
were delicate for delight
and love was a song.

Merlin, fresh from the woods
and the long green fields where beasts
munched their contentment,

where he had chewed on
a green thought until the sap
had sated his thirst,

saw here a spirit
like a fine flame to mould man
to a hard image.

His eyes were dazzled,
and his mind was no longer
the steadied burning

of a guarded fire
in the brazier of his skull,
but a brand falling

on a careless hearth
and scattering its hot sparks
to catch fire. Or die.

He made their armour
more supple to the body.
he alloyed their steel

to keep a keen edge
and to wield with a light stroke
from an easy wrist.

Horses no longer
lumbered a thudding burden
that exhausted them

but were swift. Like shafts
of lightning from summer skies
catching unawares.

In the pageantry
he forgot the sufferers.
An unfractured shield

to his working mind
meant more than a writhing body
beyond man's repair;

or a cracking flask
dropped by a page was closer
than a broken life.

And the ladies' silks
whisked his thoughts from images
of a gaunt, white child.

Only in half-sleep
he stirred as gray memories
rising from a mist

on that cool northern plain
brought obliviant silence
with sounds of a scream.

There had been a girl
who gave him half an apple,
slyly, with a smile.

But now at the feast
one offered him all fruits –
a peach sweet to the lip

yet needing the whole
slow care of his mouth and hand
for the devouring.

Yet no man listened.
Nor woman neither. Only
dark Morgan le Fay.

She would sit. Silent.
Seeming to be the essence
of all around her.

Eyes hard as crystal,
the concentrate of being,
drawing their life in.

And when folk left her
they felt that time was a husk
and their minds brittle

with the sap dried out.
None stayed more than a moment
beyond courtesy.

Morgan. A princess
and the sister of Arthur.
But Morgan le Fay.

Only Merlin smiled,
for he knew that from that strength
deep out of all time

Morgan lived on him,
his epiphyte, and rooted
with him in dark life;

with her living eyes
black as bryony-berries
catching points of light.

So Merlin laboured
until the world in wonder
gazed at what he made –

the armour of knights
became plated with beauty
so that men wore it

with a new panache,
the grace and glamour of art,
on which poor smiths

sweated their heart out
for the perfumed, cool splendour
of a silken court.

The knightly purpose
of succour to the needy,
to all who cry out,

became merely words
as mottoes for emblazoned
crests on a gold ground.

Still Merlin gloried
in the skill of his old craft
that filled all the land

with machines of war . . .
But rust was slowly spreading
under the high gloss.

Envy was their lord,
and the Devil was winning
with the gifts of God.

Old simplicities
were scorned; no longer a plain
unquestioned goodness

or loving kindness
as the high intent and rule
of the common will;

but the need for more,
and quantity was their cry
breathed from Hell's belly.

Even their delights
were for some new subtleties
to quiver the nerves;

where no simple song
made its easy way through ear
to the listening heart.

A learned critic,
blowing the dust from a tome
left unread till now,

gloried in the way
the sunlight from his standpoint
glistened on the motes;

and as he choked, tried
his voice out in a verse
thick with his findings.

Another, eager
to be thought new, disdaining
ears of human pitch,

blew an acid note
from his scrannel pipe of straw
and called it music.

But now Merlin asked:
'Has the Devil within me
claimed me in birthright?

I must know further,
the beginning and the end.
Alpha. Omega.

Before boiling seas
cooled into life. The white heat
of time's creation.

But the wall of fire
blinds me. Yet I need to go
in my human life

before there was life.
I want to walk, not like Christ
cool on Galilee,

but on the magma
in the first blaze of that light
before the echo

of God's 'Fiat!' died,
and bleeding out of the caul
of Eternity

the Earth cried aloud.
I want beyond – the wisdom
even of the womb.

For man aches to know
the unknowable always.
'Father, let me know.'

And a dark shudder
like laughter shook Lyonesse,
quaking Camelot.

Even Morgan feared.
'Dig in the entrails,' she said.
'Ask the roots of rock

to bleed out for you
the sap of their life and birth.
Bury your mind deep;

Or come now with me
to orchards in Avalon
and dream there in sleep.'

So Morgan lured him.
'You waste man's sap and spirit
blundering about,

groping after God
in a dark sky with only
witty, mocking stars.

Tying the far ends
of time like cord in your hands,
with your mind the knot.

Avalon is peace.
You will come in seedtime there
and wait for the harvest.

Merlin, at least
if not the seed's ecstasy,
joy in the sowing;

that delight which blinds
reason's reason for being
beyond all knowing –

the heart's wordless cry
against oblivious death
triumphant for life,'

'That indeed seems least,
that I should forget myself
in my self's pleasure.'

But still Morgan urged:
'Look, an island of the mind
in a summer sea.

When this tree bears fruit
its neighbour is flushed with Spring.
No cankers rot there,

and no heavy feet
trample the flowers . . .'
'Peace falls
on Fool's Paradise!

Do the butterflies
breed without gnawing larvae?
Is the only drink

a wild sweet nectar
that makes all thinking drowsy
and cloys the palate?

Better hunger-pains
than a man's plumping body
with a thin child's whine

'Know thyself' . . . Yet what
if the long learning reveals
in the piercing light

an infinitude
of those worlds of the minute
that the clumsy mind

in its eagerness
fingers to its frustration –
all mercurial

that I must not lose,
yet my touching in its self
breaks into problems.

Left alone would shine
like an intangible moon
on my still darkness.

God! Was man given
just that subtlety of thought
to see thought's limit?

A jocular God
who says to aching man, 'Child,
to know creation

and be a sharer
in the ecstasy of God,
begin with that self.

Find in your being
the ecstasy of the sperm
entering the egg.

Separate that self
in the heart of those others'
luminous delight,

your speck of selfhood
that others' joy created,
coming into time.

Can you then hold God's
ineffable beyondness
in a thinking skull . . .

Man, born beyond thought
into a world's beyondness,
with a shapen mind;

and that mind itself —
as your body with its skin
and subtle senses

is in touch, aware
with life and being around,
still in its own shape —

moves, and lives, and dies.

Morgan cover me with earth
to be seed again.'

Morgan le Fay's hand
touched his cheek gently with love
and human pity.

Even in herself
Avalon of the Apple
was a fading dream.

'I must learn the earth's
humility of nothing
beyond its patience.'

He looked at a leaf,
not to marvel at the skill
beyond human hands

of its creation,
or its beauty when the sun
made it pure green light;

but its otherness.
Its wholeness within itself
in the life of things.

And his world was full.
He felt the stillness where he
himself was a thing;

when a grain of sand,
a light feather in the air,
were time's mysteries.

But this wonder too
faded to the knowing peace
in being nothing;

in the vast all-life
before a white brooding wing
troubled the first day.

Aware of his palm
as just a scrap of vellum
with scrawls, a design

that said nothing now,
yet he read in it the mind
of creative man;

as if some figure –
Zero. Or One – enfolded
all infinity;

for out of chaos
the making of one green leaf
was all creation.

But words were only
the blunt fingers of a mind
groping for dark truth,

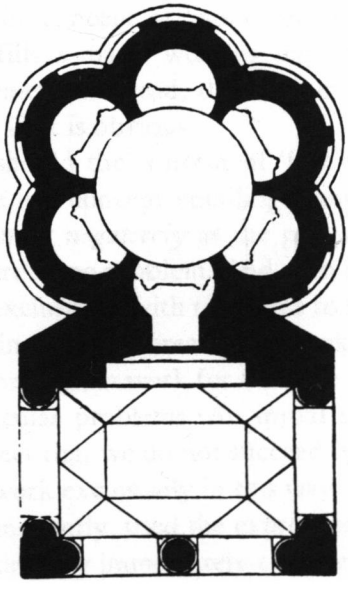
to meet sudden walls
or a wounding edge . . . at most
night's breathing silence

And as old Merlin
stepped to the edge of the grave
and saw the storm-clouds,

heard the winds whistle
cracking the knuckled branches,
and felt the cold spit

of rain on his cheek,
there was no laughter of light.
And yet in his hand

– trembling like a leaf –
plucked from the last bush, he found
the bud of a rose.



What is life but the manifestation of a need to adore, which is God? What is life but the love of love for itself?

That which we call reality is in no way something which presents itself to us, but is the fruit of initiation, and initiation begins in love.

WORK – FREE TIME – LEISURE

JOSEF PIEPER

At a first glance one does not see that these three concepts conceal an almost explosive complex of problems, which can in no way be taken as being purely theoretical. Instead they convey the impression of being almost all too innocuous. One could understand them, either approvingly or distrustingly, as an encouragement to take things easy. The title seems to radiate a serene, even an idyllic, lack of problems, which intensifies from one word to the next. 'Work' – that may be the serious side of life, but it is already on the way to being dispersed and forgotten in 'free time'. And then 'leisure' – one immediately sees someone fishing, completely happy in himself on a summer's day on the shore of a lake, much less interested in catching anything than in simply sitting there and dreaming. Where should there be any problems?

The word and the concept of 'work' are completely familiar to us. Work is what fills a man's working day, is the satisfaction of needs, the procurement of bread, the daily endeavour to get what we require for life. That is obvious.

Why, however, should the concept of 'free time' not be equally obvious? Free time is a concept entailing many levels. As long as I define free time purely *negatively* as the period of time that is not filled by work, there is no problem. And even if I consider the concept of free time exclusively with reference to the working day, if I understand it as being merely a break from work, serving the renewal of strength, a recovery from work for the sake of work – even then there are no particular problems. An initial sense of unease first arises when we reflect that we do not succeed in comprehending the time of rest from work exclusively in this way. I have already, quite incidentally and innocently, used the expression 'working day'. The notion of the working day immediately conjures up another closely-

related idea whereby free time takes on an entirely new and indeed a positive definition – a definition that says that more is involved than just the mere fact of an interruption of work and a pause for recovery. This other notion is that of the holiday. On the one hand we cannot suppress this idea of the holiday, at least *not yet* (and here the power of the Western tradition is apparent), but on the other hand the notion of the holiday has for us largely lost its unequivocal significance, profundity, and its self-evident nature (demonstrating the threat facing, and the weakening of, the norms of Western existence). If we ask ourselves what a holiday, a festivity, really is fundamentally, and in what way the vital sense of festivity (without which the celebration of a holiday as a real fulfilment of life is inconceivable) can come into being, be awakened, and maintained in the inner man – it is greatly to be feared that these questions can no longer be answered by the man of our time from any kind of immediate knowledge. We do nevertheless still have a vague idea that the Seventh Day is something more than and different from the 'weekend'; the warning contained in the singular German word *'Feierabend'* (after-work time – but literally 'evening of celebration': in other words, more is meant here than merely taking a breather) still gets across to us; and we have not yet completely forgotten that the word 'holidays' literally means a time of festivity, and why that is so. All that taken together implies that the concept of free time is in no way as superficially innocuous as it may perhaps at first appear. It extends into a deeper dimension where, without any sharply defined borders, it merges into the concept of 'leisure'.

Of leisure it can be boldly asserted that we do not know what is meant by it; we do not know, to put it more precisely, what the concept of leisure means in the sapiental tradition of Western teachings about human existence – as expressed by Plato, Aristotle, and by the great teachers of Christianity. All well and good – it could be said – just why should we know that? What does it matter if we do not know? The idea of man and of the meaning of human existence has after all changed since the age of Classical Antiquity

and of the Middle Ages in the West. Such an objection is in no way to be taken lightly. We must in any case, even if we admit this objection (and particularly then), see what is really under discussion here. We must see that the complete and irreversible corruption of that fundamental Western idea of 'leisure' will entail a clear historical consequence – the totally work-oriented state. If this consequence is not to our taste, we must see that there cannot be any resistance, underpinned by principle, against the totally work-oriented world, a resistance based on ultimate commitment to the human condition, which is in the long run the only adequate resistance, if we do not rediscover and re-implement the significance of the sentence: we work in order to have leisure.

But what is meant there? A dense tangle of misunderstandings must be cleared away so that the true meaning of the sentence becomes apparent. A brief look at the literal meanings of words is indispensable here. For us Germans it seems as if the fatal contiguity of *Musse* (leisure) and *Müssiggang* (idleness), merely a contiguity of letters, is the main stumbling-block. Seen objectively, doing nothing is exactly the opposite of using leisure (*Musse-Wirken*) where the Greeks spoke of *scholen agein* (being occupied in study). We work in order to have leisure – that would mean, in a first approximation, that we work in order to do something, in order to be able to do something that is not work. What form of activity is meant there? Recreation, entertainment, amusement, play – none of those are meant. That would also be absurd – to imagine that work exists for the sake of play. What is meant is an activity that is meaningful in itself. And work – is it not meaningful in such a way? Meaningful – yes. But not meaningful in itself. The concept of work is defined precisely by the fact that it is useful for something else, that it creates economic value, that it is a contribution to the general utility (and utility always entails being good for something else. The objectionable word-coinage 'menial-work' is also to be found in this context. This has nothing whatever to do with making work, let alone the working man, an object of contempt. It can be said that the contrary is true. There are nevertheless, as the ancients well

understood, also human activities which are not good for anything else, and there are also non-menial activities, forms of activity that are proper to every man, including the working man, and even inalienable and indispensable (just as work, the menial and useful activity serving needs, has to be carried out by everyone without exception).

A word has to be said here about the old distinction, which at first seems very old-fashioned and only of historical interest, between *artes serviles* and *artes liberales*. This distinction is in truth anything but old-fashioned; it possesses a highly political topicality. Translated into the jargon of the totally work-oriented world, it means the following: there do not only exist production and the fulfilment of plan targets, but there also exist, and rightly so, forms of human activity that cannot by nature be subordinated in any way to the criteria of a Five Year Plan. There thus exist human activities which do not, as a matter of principle, require justification in terms of the yardstick of any utilitarian social plan. We only have to formulate the matter in this way, and it becomes clear what a heresy, penetrating to the roots of the totally work-oriented world, is contained in the ancient Western teaching that there are liberal arts, human activities, that are meaningful *although* they are neither work nor mere recuperation (from work, for work). It also becomes apparent how obscurely dangerous and grave are the consequences for the totally work-oriented state of wanting to deprive work of the character of serving-for-something-else, even the character of 'servility'. The fiction that work as the creation of economic value is meaningful in itself leads exactly to the opposite of what seems to be happening: the opposite of a 'liberation', an 'exaltation', a 'rehabilitation' of man at work. The result is precisely what really does constitute the inhumanity of the totally work-oriented world – the irrevocable shackling of man to the work-process, the explicit proletarianisation of everyone.

But what happens in the totalitarian work-state explicitly is also operative everywhere in the world as a danger and a temptation. That is evident, for instance, in the difficulty encountered in answering the question as to what could be an activity meaningful

in itself, a 'free' occupation. How are we to envisage an activity such as does not have to legitimise itself in terms of anything else, in terms of producing economic values and utilitarian goods, an activity that does not produce the *means* of life but is itself the fulfilment of life in which the good for which man is really intended, his true wealth, the undiminished content of his life, his utter fulfilment, is realised?

It is clear that this question can only be answered if one has a particular conception of man; for what we are concerned with here is nothing less than the fulfilment of man's existence. What is under discussion is where such fulfilment takes place. In this sphere, originality is, it seems to me, of no account. I am trying to put into words the information contained in the Western tradition of wisdom. The most important element within this information is this: the ultimate fulfilment, the activity that simply is meaningful in itself, the complete realisation of life, the greatest satisfaction, and the partaking of one's full share in life must come to pass in a *seeing*, in actively becoming aware of the fundamental ground of the world. Plato's ultimate wisdom, for instance, runs: 'Here, if anywhere, – said the stranger from Mantinea (Diotima) – here life is worth living for a man when he beholds Divine Beauty. It is through this that he is immortal.' We need take only one more step and we will find ourselves once again in the concrete. Perhaps you have already wondered, with some astonishment and even with dismay, what airy philosophical fancy will be demanded of you next. Once again though we come back to our very tangible question: how do we, here and now, envisage an activity which is meaningful in itself? I have already said that if we are not capable of answering this question then there is no serious possibility of resistance against the totally work-oriented world. Now, the answer to this question contained in the Western tradition would run somewhat as follows: Wherever we, seeing, regarding, considering – even if only from afar – come into contact with the centre of the world, with the ultimate concealed meaning of the whole life-process, with the divine root of things, with the quintessence of the archetypal (seeing and deep

absorption are the most intensive form of appropriation that exists) – wherever and whenever we turn in this manner towards reality as a whole, then an activity which is meaningful in itself takes place within us.

Such a turning in questing gaze towards the roots and foundations of the world, towards the archetypes of things, this activity which is meaningful in itself, has a thousand concrete forms. One form which is particularly worthy of respect, and which has been forgotten to a singular degree, is religious contemplation, the reflective sinking of the self in the divine mysteries. Another is that form of philosophical awareness which has no intention whatsoever of being understood as a restricted academic discipline. Anyone who, while considering human behaviour and the gamut of human life, has been confronted by the unfathomable nature of fate and history, or, while contemplating with devotion a rose or a human face, by the secret of creation – any such person participates thus far in what has moved the great philosophers from time immemorial. Yet another form of this same activity is the imaginative shaping of the artist, who is not concerned with the production of representations but with making visible and palpable in speech, in sounds, in colours, or in stone those fundamental archetypes of the world which he is capable of seeing. Anyone who, as listener, grasps the poetic in a poem, or who looks at a painting or sculpture in the spirit properly demanded by the artist, even the mere listener or beholder, if things go aright, makes contemplative contact with the centre of the world, with the domain of the eternal archetypes. If things go aright – here lies the difficulty. This difficulty is precisely the one already mentioned: the difficulty of imagining, experiencing, and of simply realising all these forms of meditative address to the world as being, above all, 'meaningful in themselves'. Must not this difficulty be the deeper reason for the progressive isolation of the artist, of the poet, and indeed no less of the philosophically-minded, and most of all perhaps of anyone who gives himself up to religious contemplation?

Mention must be made here of a few conditions and presuppositions on which the realisation of that activity which is meaningful

in itself seems to be contingent. Only cursory mention can be made of them here.

In the first place, we cannot do what is meaningful in itself except by way of an attitude of receptive openness and silent hearkening – an attitude that is the complete antithesis of the tense activity that prevails at work. Among the most profound of human experiences is the fact that the great and blessed things in life do not come about as the outcome of our own efforts – even though some effort may perhaps also be necessary – but are granted to us if we are capable of accepting them as a gift. Here a second presupposition suggests itself, one that goes even deeper and is even less accessible to arbitrary action, a presupposition without which the very doing of anything meaningful in itself is in no way to be expected; more – without which it is in no way to be expected that this contemplative contact with the ground of all things will be experienced as meaningful in itself, whether in the form of poetry, music, visual art, philosophic deliberation, or religious contemplation. This second precondition is – to be brief – simply this: a man must be capable of celebration.

What is it that the celebration of a feast-day or holiday requires? Certainly something more than the passing of a day when there is no work. It requires that a man, despite all the discord in the world and even though it be through a veil of tears, should affirm the ultimate meaningfulness of the world, knowing that he is in harmony with it and encompassed by it. The living out, in a way quite different from that of everyday life, of this affirmation, this sense of harmony, this knowing oneself encompassed, is precisely what men have from time immemorial called a festival. It becomes apparent here that there can be no festival without gods, that the original form of the holiday is the cult celebration. This is a new theme, but this much must at least be said: it is only out of this original assent that the free breathing-space amid the quotidian life of work can come into being, in which a man, forgetting his pressing needs, can do what is meaningful in itself. Thus it is, on the other hand, that all forms of this 'free' activity, and above all its

artistic forms, are inherently celebratory in character, provided that an inkling of that fundamental affirmation remains alive. If this is once completely extinguished, then every form of organisation of free time can only become an even more tense and decidedly desperate form of work. That this is not an unrealistic view hardly requires demonstration. Nor is my next observation, as it seems to me, entirely alien to our experience: I mean that artistic activity itself can degenerate into idle, insubstantial play or into a new, refined form of hustle and bustle, restlessness, and search for commercial success – if it does not actually degrade itself into mere entertainment, leading a man to lock himself up in the working-day and to make himself at home there.

On the other hand, wherever the arts take their life from celebratory contemplation of the world as a whole and of its fundamental ground, a form of liberation occurs, a stepping out under the open sky – both for the artist engaged in creation and for the most unassuming of observers. A man needs this liberation, this foretaste of the ultimate and utter fulfilment almost more than the daily bread which is indispensable and yet at the same time unsatisfying. This, it seems to me, is the real meaning of the old saying from the *Nichomachean Ethics*: 'We work in order to have leisure.'

Translated by Peter Russell and Tim Nevill

To wait for faith before praying is to put the cart before the horse. Our path leads from the physical to the spiritual.

Prayer endows us with knowledge and charity, and so it is absolutely necessary that man should be free to pray or not to pray. Prayer was given to him as a golden key and the universe as a treasure chest full of celestial diamonds and rubies. There is no other key.

(Prayer) that voice which emanates not from the mouth of man but as from the lips of a gaping wound.

GEORGE MACKAY BROWN

TREASURES

'A man at his end, and at his beginning
Possesses nothing' . . . (This is what's said
At well or smithy, whenever there's word
Of a birth or a death.)
The green hill
Stands guard over the new child.
The burn
Makes him a flute-song.
There are the thousand harps of the sea.
Sun and wind and rain are his friends.
He owns
Grassblades, stars, snowflakes.
(He belongs to them also.)
His the green and golden corn
And the sea's silver, fish,
Which is more
Than the dust-of-gold and sweat-of-silver
On Dives' coat.

Every stone he touches will be precious.
Sound then, harps of the sea.
Green hill, guard a prince.

PETER REDGROVE

THE HARMONY

I

A storm-cloud like blue-black cliffs
Of a land which is all chasm
Pouring with waterfalls

A thunder-anvil reverberating with blows,
A county-sized cloud
Suddenly condenses.

All this has shrunk
Its glitter poured into a cobweb,
The glitter stands in the hedges

Like the ghost of the hedges,
The cobweb the skeleton-target, shivering:
The first drop flies in like a tear into a skull.

The rain falls into all the hedges in its spider-pattern,
The round ladders,
The necklaces that wear the spiders,

The great circuit closed
By the shining knife-switch of the rain,
The spin of the water held quite still in a web

As though the rain were merely made of wheels,
Wheels of water in all the hedges,
Phantoms made of wheels,

Every hedge like a crazy machine of stopped cogs,
A clock with water-wheels,
As though all the rivers had stopped suddenly,

As though the circus of the air has paused
And the mechanism stands shamelessly exposed
Freezing in the snowstorm full of wheels, of gossamers,

The spider frozen in his web
The signet of a crazy laddered circus
His round icicle like a crack on the lake.

II

The tree-sap smells like the green river
On whose bank it grows, the river
Is tributary to the wood,

The treeflowers smell of the river, melon-tasting,
The apples taste of it,
The fruit purify the river-water

Like dangling alembics
Each tree in its ancient chemistry
A great green lighted laboratory,

Console or cinema organ of scented chemistry,
Of purifying currents.
The flying magpie

Opens a dark door in the laboratory and passes through.
Doves gather on the tiles awaiting rain
Nod on the roof-tree, purring lilies,

The woods a hovering airship of canopies
Tugging at their cordage as the clouds announce
Bronze-coloured weather like gongs of thunder.

The circus of black-hatted clowns with white wet stockings
And green feet stamps, and in this rain
The river drinks its thistles,

The people with glistening clothes
Like walking mirrors,
The tree like a cinema on which the sky throws images,

And the richman studies his images
In the world about him and his furnished rooms
Twirling his wine-stem with its green liquor

Feels like God drinking from a plucked tree, sticky with pleasures.

III

The trees like dogs will give themselves
To the richman's lawns,
Fawning with their lapping green tongues,

Perfuming his open window with their flowers
As the dog perfumes his hearth,
So dogs and trees give harmony at the hearth

With their perfumes,
And the cat purrs with its audible note,
The dog licking comfortably his sexual flower,

The tree sitting up on the lawn outside
Like a green dog with its cascading paws
Its roots and rootlets reaching to the cellars

Sipping at the barrels, perfuming them,
Adding its young bouquet to the ancient wood,
Reaching behind the panelling and the masterpieces,

And as the masterpieces do, connecting up behind the world,
And the young daughter becomes the lover of its balsams.
It glitters outside

Like a piece of the river walking on its shores,
And the richman drinks the river from his tap
Like a flowering of water from a bark of lead

And the richman is of the same blood as the tree itself
That guards his threshold and flowers his daughter,
With the lapping tree and soughing dog, blood-brother.

IV

She shelters under the rose-bushes
But is still drenched from the rain
And laughing and blushing like the roses,

Shaking barbaric water-beads.
I ferry her across the river in the dusk,
Smooth oars feathering the reflectings.

The willows lean over their own river-shadows,
Having fallen into the rain, each
Emerges dressed in one of the rain's million garments,

Drop by drop returns it to the one garment of a million droplets.
The seamless stream is cat-eyed in the dusk,
Climbing its banks with feathering mists,

Pussyfooting, marks its banks
With paws of healing dew that suddenly appear
Like a dream, streaking in the grass, without warning.

V

The frost copying all night
Its picture of the pale moon on the paving,
The winds spitting

Crystal venom on the webs and roses
Like cold snakes that go upright
By a pond of glowing orange fish.

A pond like a stone cauldron of molten metal
With the crack of gunshots in the sunlit morning,
A web between roses like a visible gunsound,

The spider hurtling towards you,
The rose a little scented oven of meditation
With petals wheeling in their flames

And yellow bread baking at the centre,
The little sunflames stopped at the round parapet
Like moving metal in a stone face.

VI

The birds studded inside and out
With the bolted seeds of their flight,
Unable to bear it

Burst in full-blooming bushes
Like shell-bursts of green
That trail flowering tendrils in mid-air

And gently billow to earth.
All the seeds set in the flight path
Of a bird's life

Build up a green body of enormous volume,
The bird we see is only a winged hand of this body
And a beak of this body

Stropping its sticky seeds in cracks of chimney-stacks,
Padding gutters with the mosses from its claws,
Printing green footsteps down the ancient roofs

That develop like a photo of the woods
Or a thick mat of grasses on the slates
Where long smoke eases out like a sleeping pampas volcano.

And the scullers slide their slender shell
Down their river, a green-brown feather
Echoing from its sides that fills the banks.

What bird, of which this great river is a feather?
The leaf-hued bird, whirring round wings everywhere.

THE MAN NAMED EAST AND HIS CHILD

The dew, the healing dew, that appears
Like the dream without warning, hovering in the grass;
The motions of his wings bring dew and light,

The man named East. The ghosts have lost
All sense of perspective
In the drinking-water, twisting and turning

Shaped into too many vessels, and furrowed
By too many vessels, for we
Drink the water of a drowned village

Of a drowned College from College Reservoir,
And across our drinking-water goes
A small yacht like a lighted kitchen,

A fishing-boat like a ruined cottage,
Dinghies like little violins
With squeaky rowlocks, with violin-voices,

With the wind's music written on the waters.
I stand by the small stream which contributes.
I kneel and dip my hand in, it insists

Into my palm with a slight pressure
Like a baby's hand, which is still
The elasticity of yards of water

Reaching down the hill
From the clouds on high; I crouch
With my hand in that baby's hand

Feeling the slight movement of her fingers,
The light clasp which is love,
The little bony stones rattle

And the cool flesh of glass sinews;
The visible baby, that begins over and over,
Purifying the lily's throat

And staining it, rotting and renewing;
As the talltrees mark
Its branching patterns of ascent

It babbles like a baby, I bend
My ear to the water and now I find
I can make out underspeech

I did not hear before being confused
By its so many tongues, with the forest
Like a vast moth settling its wings on the hill.

I dip my finger in my mouth and taste
Forests and air and feel in the stream
The white rain-wings and their featherings.

Much will be forgiven those who have explored the catacombs of time. Every seed has to pass through the sweat of death before it can germinate.

R.H. MORRISON

THE PEONY

This was the central flower
on the tray of vivid lacquer,
the red there made redder
and the black even blacker.

It calls to mind a temple
by the road up to a height,
and the temple bell intoning
above a corner of white.

Were it not the flower that it is,
it might be a swan, or snow,
or a white cloud in summer
suffused with the evening's glow.

PYRITE

Interlocking cubes, placed
on the palm of my hand –
and this has majesty.
And I look down from a great
height, and my hand is God's
hand, and I hold God's world,
that turns as crystals turn
on the hand I borrowed.

THE MASK OF THE WORLD

Shall we say that all this was brushed on,
and tides of spring etched on the earth's fields,
that hands of love laid on us in sleep
a counterpane of dreams? Then to what
majesty do we turn, turning from
this majesty to one underneath,
etcher of spring, layer-on of dreams,
and how underneath? Surely that's wrong.
It is as much ours, this part we play
here, makers of the meanings of masks.
What hands gave us we will call our own,
seeing no hands, and at the Lion Gate
seeing a black void, where hands once carved
Agamemnon's mask of beaten gold.

TIR NAN OG

They have gone over the water in
the wake of the sun. Gold are their glens
and gilded are their streams. Death is dead.
They move as in a world of crystal,
where the light and the apple tree sing
and the stag's reddened wound is mended.
The sea is laden with clover's scent
blown from the meadows beyond the hills.
Tir nan Og, you have given them back
their lost lives in your lilied islands
and turned their dark of night to morning.
Age is dead. They walk the living strand,
music round them, and ponder, smiling,
the syzygy of the rose and the thorn.

THE DREDGER OF TIME

The river reeds are etched on the mist's silver
but they can still speak by moving.
Words creep out of the depths of the ripples
and lie on the flowers like dew.

Banish from the heart the heart's clock and its winding
to sink into the deep core.
The reeds stay by yielding where the grebes dive;
even this wrecked boat has order.

The wind in the grass knows its unburdening
and so too do I know mine.
I have lifted a pearl of eternity
out of the river of time.

THE STREAM

You have been where clouds were, and you were cloud.
The morning violet knows you as the dew.
Mist rises where the mountain wood is hewn,
but this bed where you ripple drew you down.

In days when there were mill-ponds, you were one,
and at your edge the miller quenched his thirst,
while you gave back the skimming flight of birds –
swallows that shone their way across the summer.

Most holy gift that hurries from our hand,
heeding the call of snow or sea or rain,
in the stillness of a glass know our praise,
in the silence of a pool hear our thanks.

RETURNING

I will parcel this poem out to the winds and the waters
that bore it, green words to the fern-gullies, clear
blue to the skies. Sun and moon, take back
your shadows; river, your boat moored at dusk.

Bluest of all shone on the blue wings
of summer. Greenest of all clothed the hills
in grass. Petal by petal, stone by stone,
I parcel you out, rich and meaningless days.

I will free myself of this coat cut from time,
green words to the fern-gullies, blue to the skies.
Sound and scent will slip away. There goes the
boat at dusk, and at dusk in it go I.

All criticism finds its ultimate goal in blind adoration.

2nd ELEGY – THE EARTH

When only a cold weary heart begins
To feel the drops of rain that fall from Heaven,
Infusing life into a wearier ground,
It comes to know
The swift, salt waves that wash life's timid shores,
That rolling, stumbling, plunging ever on,
Taunt the headlands with their scouring spray,
Rinsing the reefs with the cold tang of joy –
The sea, the snap and snarl of angry winds,
And underneath, the silver stream of herring.
Ocean, narrowing, concentrating all its thrust
Through the hard rocky straits around Glenelg,
Then opens out and scans the clear blue sky,
With deeper, stiller depths that gather strength
And send the seagulls wheeling on their way
With cormorants that dip with swift, snake necks
To draw the ocean's nutriment and cram it down
Their gullets. So on to Kyle where a dark pier
Sends moors shuttling, switching on to Skye.
Then the road winds around old Glamaig's base,
Past the white cottages at Broadford,
On and ever on, then takes a sharp turn left,
Raising itself higher and higher above
The crumbling moors,
And at the summit gazes round,
Then dips and sinks gladly down
Into Glenbrittle, where the Cuillins build
Their gabbro walls of wilderness
And whisper to themselves above the glen.

After the road there comes a path,
Murmuring of summer and the chestnut leaves,
Then on to Croft woods and the summer heat,
The tall trees talking to the sky that peeps
In timidly, the curse and the eclipse
Of winter, blast by shy beeches and tall elms.
Here a squirrel runs along the boughs
And there a bullfinch, ducking silently,
Feels the hot sky soak every feather
With warmth and peace; the beck runs slow, and here
A young trout snaps at listless flies, and now
The rocks, deeper than the deepest heat, can hear
The heart of Earth beat silently – warmth, peace
And stillness, yet are the trees
Still rooted in the soil? For every where
All over God's green earth, Man's cold and hard machines
Are gouging out Earth's peering, peeping eye,
That gazes up in silent prayer to Heaven,
Yet summer soaks and floods the Earth with deeps
Of the sky's oceanic tides of love,
With clouds that build themselves
Into huge crumbling towers, and afternoon,
That self-perpetuating now, creates
A Heaven on earth.
No random curse of Man
And sworn by man, can harm the Heavens and the hills,
That rising, falling, find an undertone
Of lava, gnawing at the deep rock's core,
Echoing earth,
Whose summer slowly ripens fruit and tree
With mist, that, swelling, now obliterates
The clearer outline of all forms of life.
Yet darkness, rust and mist are all washed clean
By winds that draw their breath from earlier springs,
Springs reaching backward to eternity,

When all the universe
Rounded and globed itself into a ball,
And spinning free, rejoicing at its birth,
Went echoing onward through the straits of time.

6th ELEGY – THE WIND

A wind, enquiring, strokes the curtains, sucks
Them out towards the garden; skies are fresh
With the white billowing litter of loose clouds;
Shadows dip and drift
Across deep fields, whose greenness reaches down,
Taming the uncouth soil. It's afternoon,
When all of time lies silent in the pool
Of summer, when a slow sun, half-asleep,
Purrs softly to itself. Children at play
Now fleck the heat's monotony with cries,
Drifting like petals; water in the pool
Lazily flaps against the stones; who could
Want more than this? Fulfilment, wise, sunk deep
into a warm eternity.
And yet
So often, Man sees nervous twitching winds,
That rub the grass the wrong way, sniff around
Among dead leaves,
That rattle birches, make rheumatic elms
Clutch at their aching joints, The cold unrest
Blows Man awry as well; afraid of dark,
He snatches at songs, that jerking sounds around,
Build him a life of wary warmth. To stir
And soil the clean, deep-sunken harmonies
That strike within the spirit is his aim,
To mould cold, jangling money to a God –

'Even then I sometimes grieve for thee, O Man,
Earth's Paramount creature.' Roots are dug out,
Swaddled in brittle glass, and sterilized,
And Earth lies gasping.
Then it is we need
A wind to blow away life's trappings, span
The Holy Spirit's surge, answer the sea,
The sea and spirit that Sibelius
Sends roaring in on our tired century.
The true wind never dies, and can be heard
Scouring the hoards and heaps of Man's disease
Then flashes into flight along the hills,
The moment when a skein of clouds takes wing,
And the wind, deepening, stirs
Cities and towns, lost and perplexed, that cry
For a fresh breeze to cool blind passions, lusts.
All earth is waiting for the spirit, bleeds
Beneath blows inflicted by men, and yet
Just now, I warmed to a mere sigh of wind,
That blew the waiting woods into my heart,
And the firm firs
Dipped me in their cool darkness, and a shade
Softened the toil and trouble of a day.

Blindness is a less terrible misfortune than the inability to cry.

TEMENOS welcomes the advent of *KAIROS*, whose founding directors are Keith and Gale Critchlow, with Robert and Deborah Lawlor and Rachel Fletcher, all of the Lindisfarne Association. The purposes of *KAIROS* (whose Greek root signifies the principle of 'due measure' or proportion, fitness of times and seasons of action) are:

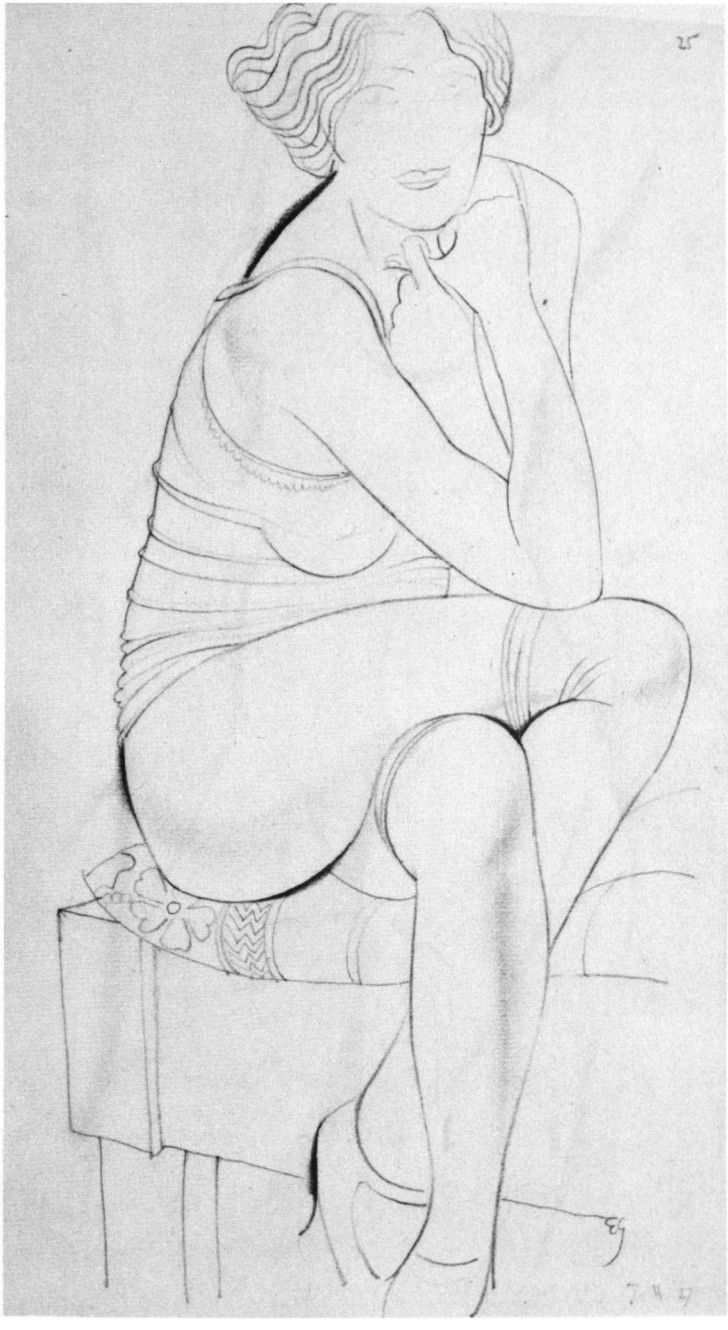
> To investigate, study, record and promote traditional values of Science and Art.
>
> Both Science and Art in the traditional sense encompass the highest ideals and the most practical applications that have been laid down or revealed by the great philosophers and sages of the human family throughout its history.

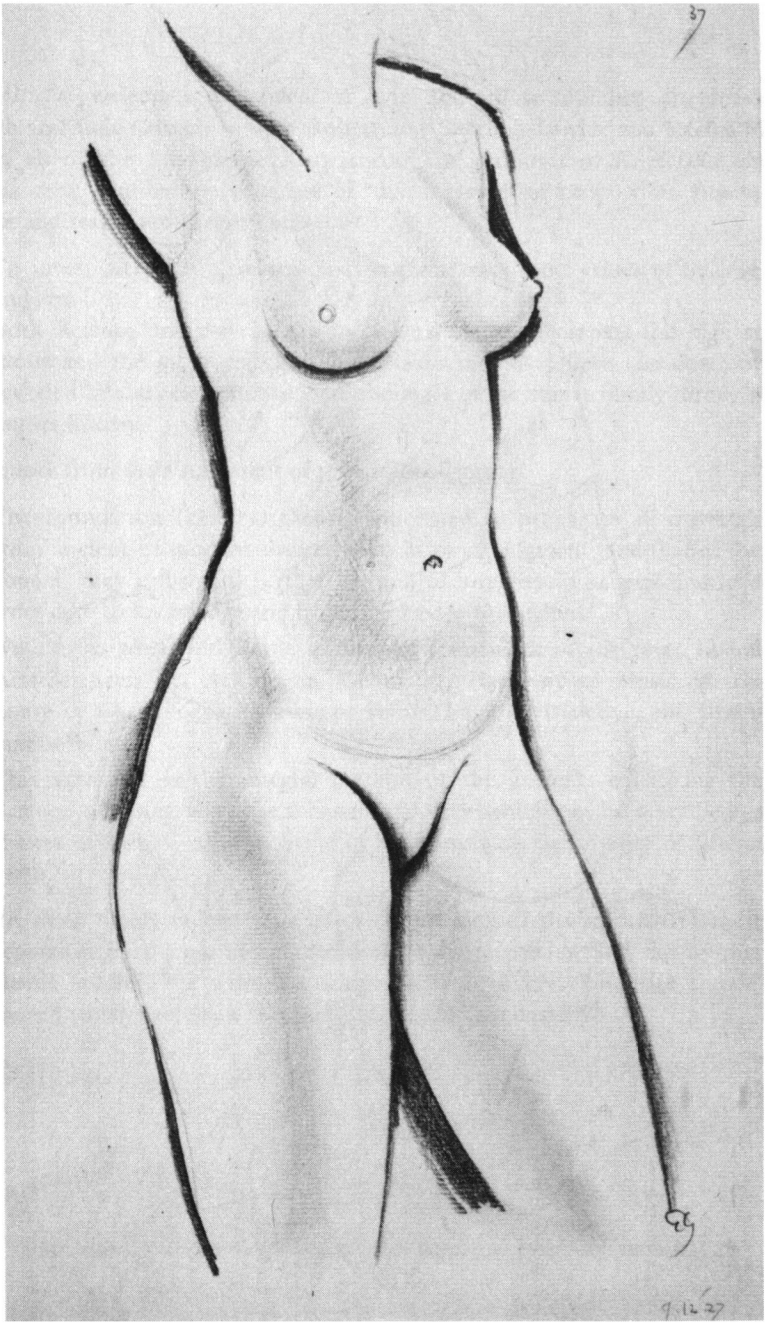
To quote from their statement of principles of intent:

> The foundation (charity) then is concerned to propagate all materials from ancient or modern sources that, in their judgment (and that of the council they call upon) further the aim of integrity in Science and lead from date to knowledge and from knowledge to wisdom.
>
> We aim to work within the traditional framework of the seven liberal Arts/Sciences, i.e. Arithmetic, Geometry, Harmony or Music, Astronomy or Cosmology, Rhetoric or Poesis, Logic or Dialectic, and Grammar or Syntax.
>
> This structure is the integral method of the ancients of linking the Science of Being with the Science of Unity which can be described as the art of living – that is, living in harmony with the totality of life on earth.

KAIROS is timely indeed; it is also an expression of the truth that Tradition is kept alive by people living according to its principles, and not by merely academic studies. We wish it a long and fruitful life. Enquiries should be addressed to Michael Shaw, 48 Guildford Road, London SW8.

Opposite: Four drawings by Eric Gill from a sketchbook dated 1927.

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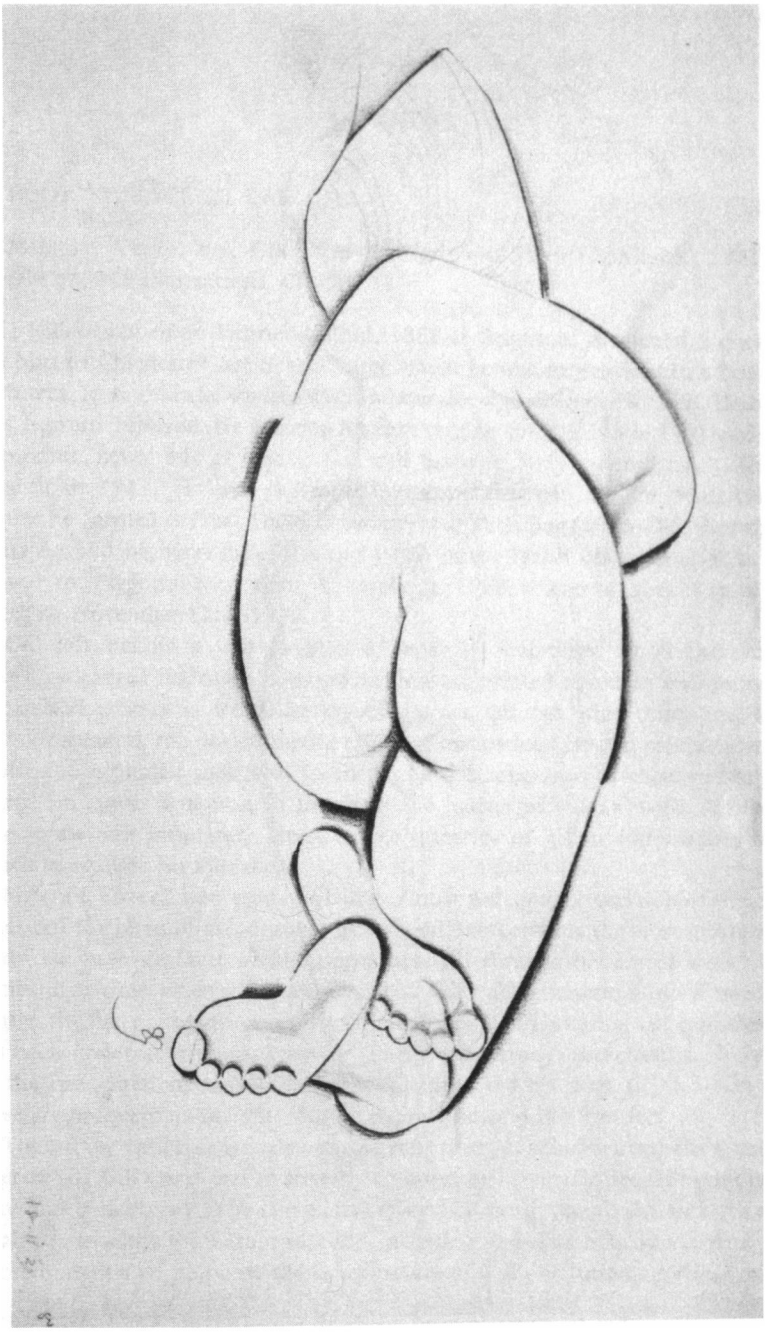

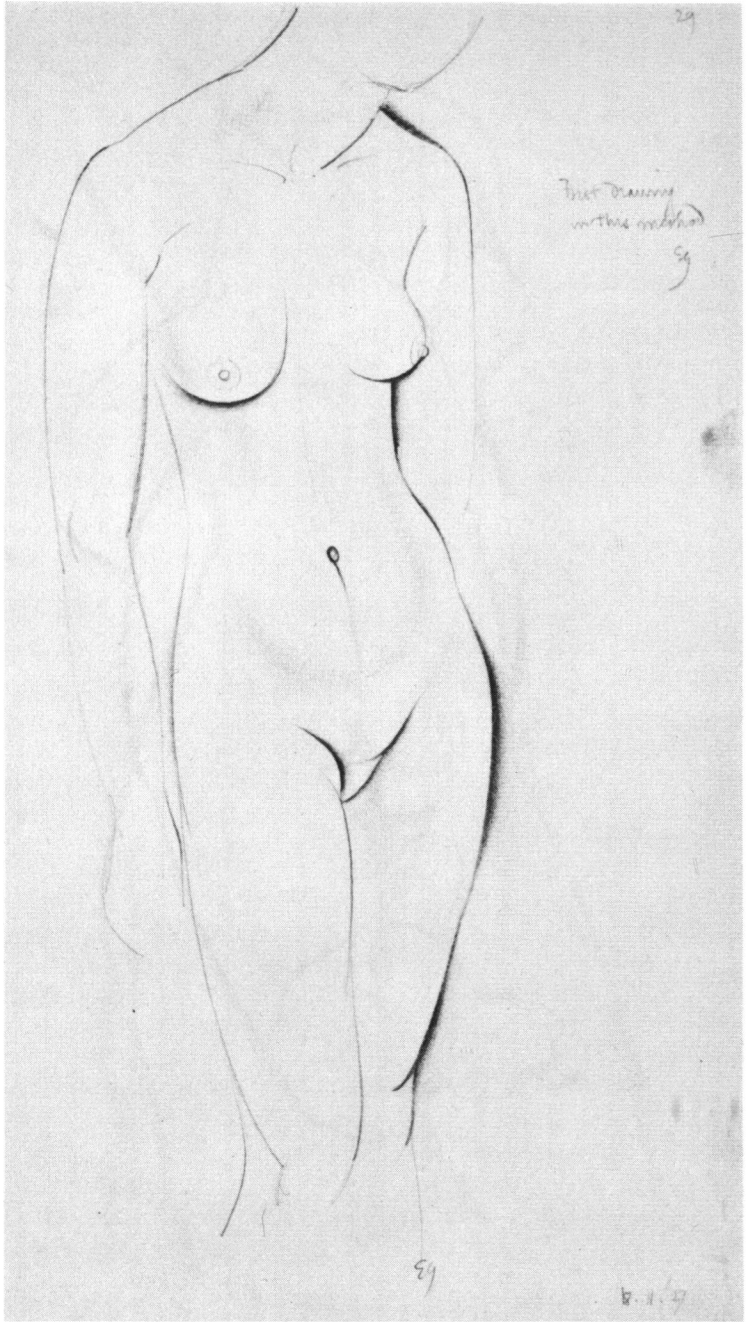

REVIEWS

LOOKING BACK AT ERIC GILL

BRIAN KEEBLE

Malcolm Yorke, *Eric Gill: Man of Flesh and Spirit* (Constable, 1981) 304 pp, 119 illustrations, £12.50

Eric Gill was born on February 22nd, 1882 at Brighton. A talent for drawing led him to Chichester Art School after which he was apprenticed to a London architect. In London he studied with and was deeply influenced by W.R. Lethaby and Edward Johnson. He received his first carving commission in 1901 and was thereafter 'never out of a job'. Gill and his wife Mary entered the Catholic Church in 1913, for him the most important event in his life. With Hilary Pepler he formed a Craft Guild Community at Ditchling (1916–24). For three years he had his workshop at Capel-y-ffin in the Welsh Black Mountains. He moved to 'Piggotts' near High Wycombe in 1928 where he worked until his death on November 17th, 1940.

Gill left behind a vast amount of work – sculptures, wood engravings, drawings, carved inscriptions, typeface designs, printed books as well as many books and articles in which he argued against, amongs other things, the 'art' world in general, the dehumanising effect of mechanised labour, production for profit and capitalist socialism. In all this he was concerned to know and to live sacred principles common to man and the matter of human work. All those who knew him intimately attest to the integrity of vision and wisdom with which he realised his intention.

Malcom Yorke's new study of Gill is a most welcome celebration of the centenary of the birth of this extra-ordinary man. It is certainly the most substantial study we have yet had which approaches Gill through his actual works and comes at a time when a re-assessment of Gill's achievement is much needed. During the forty years since his death only his work in lettering and type-design has been under continuous scrutiny. The present study, therefore, is likely to be the introduction to Gill the man, his ideas and his work (in this case the three are uniquely inseparable) for an entirely new body of readers.

The author's purpose is to demonstrate the unity of belief beneath the seeming diversity of Gill's acts and to see why he impressed so many people by his integrity and consistency. The cumulative effect, however, reveals the author's ambivalence towards the nature of Gill's intention and thus fails by a narrow yet decisive margin to pinpoint the exact nature of Gill's enduring significance. As

a result of the author's inability to divest himself of what Gill called 'art-nonsense' his re-appraisal has not quite the compulsion and clarity the subject seems to warrant.

The author chooses to demonstrate his thesis through Gill's struggle to fuse the erotic and the divine instead of through those first principles Gill himself never tired of repeating, and on which the sanctity and wholeness of his achievement must finally rest. As a result, something of the true nature of this unity is lost among too many incidental observations and equivocal judgments. A previous commentator remarked that the categories in which Gill lived and worked were absolute: religious, moral, metaphysical. The unity and profundity of Gill's life and work can only be demonstrated by recourse to these absolutes – how they actually permeate the life and the work.

If we allow Gill to drift too far away from his moorings in Catholic and scholastic doctrine we become obliged to take account only of the outward effect of his work. They then have to be viewed from an aesthetic standpoint and when this happens Gill is forced, against the inherent nature of his work, to join the ranks of that very race of 'modern artists' from which he was at pains to dissociate himself. As David Jones recognised, Gill could only have been a 'modern artist' by being a very different kind of man. This 'otherness' of Gill's manner and mode of workmanship in relation to the art of his contemporaries is not outlined with sufficient clarity in Mr Yorke's study. Even partly to lose Gill among the ranks of the 'modern artists' is to lose him altogether. And it certainly blunts the point of Gill's tireless attack against the many religious, social and artistic shibboleths of his and our time.

Of all men Gill was never half-hearted or equivocal either about what he thought or about what he intended. The whole of his life is stamped with the mark of a conscious deliberation that is the polar opposite of the aesthetic *modus operandi* of modern art. Gill's castigation of the post-renaissance world was aimed precisely at the *laissez-faire* philosophy of man and work which precludes from the outset the disciplined and intelligent co-operation of the faculties to a given end that accords with the spiritual nature of man. It is only against intentions that achievements can be measured. Any study of Gill needs to be just as unequivocal about the criteria on which he took his stand. What his repetitive and contentious writings and his other works hold up for our inspection is a vision of the proper order of human conduct as it relates to that rational and intellectual creature who is created in the image of God. From this order of things he viewed as abnormal the post-Cartesian world with its setting apart of Spirit and matter, knowing and being, mind and body, art and manufacture. These things he joined together by his way of life and by his method of working.

It is by considering this very question of what constitutes the norm of the active life of man that we stand to gain most from any re-appraisal of Gill. In this respect Mr Yorke arrives at the nub of the matter in the penultimate sentence of his book: 'David Jones reports that Gill said, "What I achieve as a sculptor is of no consequence – I can only be a beginning – it will take generations, but if only the beginnings of a reasonable, decent, holy tradition of working might be effected that is the thing".' As Gill's conception of the norm of workmanship rests upon the meaning he gave to the word 'art', and since that meaning is in direct contrast with the current understanding of the word, we are called upon to make a fundamental distinction.

Stated briefly, traditionally and normally the word 'art' refers to that intellectual virtue and operative habit of the intellect by which the workman possesses what is the proper perfection of work necessary to the spiritual and material nature of man. In such work, beauty and utility being indissoluble, spiritual and material needs are tended upon in one and the same action. Art is knowledge closely allied to skill. By the light of art the workman knows what is to be *done*. By the operation of skill he knows how it shall be *made*. As the operative agent of his art the workman's only concern is for the good of the work to be done. Thus art normally stays *in*, and is not personified *by*, the artist. In any society of unanimous values where such is the prevailing understanding virtually every man and woman is seen to be a special kind of artist since few lack entirely the freedom and ability necessary to dispose of their art to the common good. All things are made *by* art, having, as St Thomas said, 'fixed ends and ascertained means of operation'; beauty, being an 'accident' of proper work is not to be attained directly by any artistic procedure. Art is occasional in respect to use, expressive and didactic in respect to beauty and truth. Its intellectual value is expressive and symbolic rather than representative and sensible. Art belongs to the active life of making and doing which is itself guided and corrected by the contemplative life.

With the divorce of spirit and matter, knowing and being, characteristic of the post-Cartesian world, 'art' has shifted its ground. Beauty becomes a thing desirable for its own sake in our feelings and emotional reactions in excess of and apart from what we find to be useful. 'Art', being freed from the process of normal human manufacture, becomes 'pure' or 'fine' and is thus treated idealistically. From now on 'art' is the product of the aesthetic sensibility by which special kinds of men (called 'artists') create a separate and special category of objects in isolation from those things produced by 'work'. 'Art' and manual labour become opposed orders of making and the workman is no longer expected to be *in possession* of his art. The word 'art' comes to denote the actual objects that comprise this isolated and now prestigious category of things. A new problem thus presents itself – that of attempting to fix the line of demarcation between those things that are 'art' and those things that are not.

These two meanings of the word 'art' appear in confused and incongruous conjunction in some of Mr Yorke's judgements on Gill as we shall see.

The more modern meaning of the word 'art', in all its ramifications, Gill called 'art-nonsense'. This he sought to debunk in so far as it made a 'false mysticism' of man's creative spirit and falsified the proper order and status of intelligent workmanship. We cannot profitably approach Gill without having this fundamental distinction in the meaning of the word 'art' clear in our minds.

Gill always thought of himself as a workman and insisted on being treated as one. He called himself an 'ordinary man' for all that he was an exceptional one in our age. He did not seek a style of his own as might the modern artist, who, under pressure to exhibit his own personality must at all cost be stylistically innovative. Gill's style is a product of the exuberance of a master engraver's or stone-cutter's skill placed at the service of a commissioning idea. The work of the artificer is to incarnate and give expression to this form he holds in his mind and not to imitate an already existing thing. The end of the process is the satisfaction of the patron's will, even when the patron may be the artificer himself. The whole process is one of rational discernment and, being open to reason ('ascertained means of operation'), is accessible to the scrutiny of those common senses all men possess. Gill was fond of quoting St Thomas's 'The senses are a kind of reason'; and there is a sense in which we can look at his work and *see* where it is perfect, or fails, or is insufficient, without recourse either to nature or to our emotional reactions. It is a mark of the integrated workman that he excludes as conscious, contributing factors in the process of manufacture, the irrational, the arbitrary, the 'chance effect', the 'happy accident'. Such a workman does not make of art a false mysticism (Mr Yorke, p. 242, misses the point of Gill's term to describe modern art's inevitable bias in forcing aesthetic feelings to take precedence over reason and intellect. It was a mark of Gill's integration that he insisted on his apprentices not camouflaging an error of judgement or workmanship. So far as possible it should be evident whether a thing is well made or not in the same way that we can recognise whether a chair, or a pot, or a letter 'A' is well or ill made. An artefact should have the objectivity of that common sense and good which results from the normal use of intelligence. Given this philosophy of work we can appreciate why it is that the very signature of Gill's work in all mediums is a kind of clarity that comes from a coincidence of achievement and intention. Even his less successful works appear to be no more and no less than what he intended. He said, in his *Autobiography*, 'My sculpturing experiments were, after all, only an extension of my lettercutting into another sphere' (p. 164).

This is all perfectly consistent with his principles and it demonstrates why it is misleading to lump Gill together indiscriminately with other modern artists.

By his own admission he belonged to the modern movement by default. That he is of a different race from the academic sculptors is obvious. But it is not so readily apparent why he is so different from say Henry Moore (in his earlier work) whom he admired and who had, in common with Gill, a respect for the nature of the material in which he worked. But the difference can be measured by noting Gill's understanding of the significance of the human form, which goes far beyond anything Moore envisages. For Moore the significance of the human figure stays with the sculpture in the sense that it acts as the sounding-board to resonate the aesthetic qualities of mass, shape, line, texture, flow and the like. But the whole process does not go beyond the closed circle of these aesthetic qualities which are valued for the way they interact with each other; the interaction is in turn valued for its own sake.

Gill, on the other hand, begins as it were in his mind with the question 'What is Man?'. The answer entailed seeing the human form (not shape) as a 'being manifesting Being himself', and points to the fact that since *what* man creates is the product of intelligence, will and love, man is himself created in the image of God. Thus, man is responsible to God for whatever he makes, its essential perfection being the love of God to which it bears witness. Being in this manner a responsible creator who makes that which is otherwise non-existence, man is also a collaborator with God in creating. Such a truth might be said to be the informing essence of all Gill's thought and work: since that is what we *are*, our nature, is to do His bidding. This takes us far beyond merely aesthetic values. In this sense Mr Yorke is certainly correct when he points out that Gill's work has 'nothing to do with a programme of aesthetics' (p.246). Moreover, the informing essence is not merely a 'religious belief' (p.247) but determines the very being of things. It is at the heart of a process in which the workman, in fashioning the matter of his work, fashions himself. Gill's insistence on treating the work-bench as an altar; on being true to the inherent nature of one's materials and tools; on training himself and his apprentices to see clearly *what* is to be done before the work begins and to judge any insufficiency in the *how* it is done in the light of the original conception, only makes sense in the context of a vision in which the mindful operation of human making reflects the mode and manner of God's creating all things, according to the prescriptions of a divine intelligence.

In relations to this, two points arise from Mr Yorke's study. When he refers to Gill's 'determined insularity' (p.244) from the innovations of the modern school, such insularity has to be seen for what it is – a virtue of the man's integrity. A workman who can situate the whole of his active and contemplative life within the framework of heaven and earth can hardly be accused of insularity or provinciality in any sense that connotes deprivation. Following this it is

meaningless (for Mr Yorke) to judge Gill as not being 'a major European or world figure . . . demonstrably less important in the history of sculpture than he is in those of type-design or wood-engraving' (p.245). Apart from the fact that the history of sculpture is an academic convenience, and that the mere passage of time cannot be an attribute of artistic value (the idea that taking the longterm view provides us with the criteria for value judgements is particularly false when applied to Gill), this approach ignores the principles of manufacture by which Gill either failed or succeeded absolutely with each individual piece of work. We might also, incidentally, question what it means to suppose that a work of art should address 'the world'. Only in the modern view of art could such a question arise, for art is by tradition specific as to needs, local in its utility and contextual as to its meaning; as surely locked in history stylistically as it is addressed essentially to an order of things beyond time.

The second point arises from a passage by Henry Moore quoted by Mr Yorke, particularly since it is not entirely clear what value the author attaches to Moore's judgement: 'Workmanship, which people like Eric Gill thought so important, can degenerate into a most awful mental laziness, like knitting or polishing the silver' (p. 246). Again, once we have grasped the nature of his principles we can see that such a purely functional interpretation is certainly inadequate and inappropriate when applied to Gill for whom workmanship involved spiritual, intellectual as well as manual integrity – quite the opposite, one would have thought, of 'mental laziness'. Workmanship was to Gill a direct impression of the rational principle of manufacture, not a formula for producing 'imaginative' sculpture.

One can see that such workmanship could become an excuse for the lack of imaginative and innovative strength. Gill did avoid technical innovation (as Mr Yorke noted) but whether or not he was narrowly imaginative can only be assessed once we are clear about what is meant by 'imagination' in Gill's terms. For Gill the first task of the artist is imaginative, one of forming and holding in the mind the image of a thing seen in the likeness of that which makes it what it *is*; its substance as 'it conforms to its archetype in the mind of God' (*Art Nonsense* p. 147). In this sense his drawings of the female nude, for instance, are attempts to apprehend the beauty of woman as it manifests itself directly to sight. They are not attempts to portray *a* woman as she appears to a certain effect of light and from a particular point of view. This is what Gill meant in saying that the resemblance of a work to anything seen by corporeal vision was accidental not substantive.

On the other hand, one suspects that for Mr Yorke (and Mr Moore?) imagination is akin to the ability to absorb and utilize 'contemporary reference, modern materials and major technical innovation' (p.245). The hollowness of

the implied criticism against Gill can be readily sounded against the latter-day achievements of modern art where every conceivable banality and platitude has resulted from the detachment of the imaginative faculty from the qualitative nature of the thing to which it is addressed, and from innovation having been granted a status of autonomy and given its head. That Gill did not always discover a sufficiently new and powerful way of showing forth the transcendental and substantive essence of the thing he carved, drew or engraved must not be gainsaid. That, if anything, is the measure of his imaginative failure.

Both by temperament and in practice Gill worked in the interstice of two 'heresies', as an earlier commentator called them. The one heresy was the seeming irreversible persuasion of the four hundred years during which art had taken appearances as the yardstick for its content. The invention of the photograph killed this first heresy, but the counter-measure of the modern movement – an emphasis on the abstract nature of aesthetic values – was an equal and opposite heresy. The heresy of naturalism falsifies the nature of reality by limiting it to the sensual perception of appearances. The heresy of abstraction falsifies the nature of intelligence by supposing that reality is all in the delight the mind feels in its own correspondence to certain formal values of patterns and symmetry. Both forms of heresy forget or overlook the fact that the relationship between the mind and the qualitative nature of things depends upon intelligible values and not upon sensory stimulation. 'The thrill produced by the hearing of music or the sight of nakedness, may be either physical or mental, or both, but in any case the thing called 'emotion' is a consequent, and not an antecedent; what is antecedent is the mind – the intelligence and the will, the faculty for knowing truth, the faculty for desiring good, without which emotion cannot be suffered' (*Clothes* p. 173). By insisting on his fundamental axiom, that beauty is the *object* which, when *seen*, pleases, Gill clearly severed art from its connection with the notion that it should have as its *raison d'être* either the expression of feeling or the imitation of abstraction. It is by this route that we must approach Gill's statement, quoted by Mr Yorke, that 'from the point of view of human beings meaning is a more primary and more important criterion' (p.246) than aesthetic appeal. Indeed, as he wrote in *Beauty Looks After Herself* (p.234), 'Man's pleasure in things seen or heard is in fact only understandable when explained as a pleasure in what is, in accordance with reality, pure Being, God Himself'.

At the centre of the act of making is Man: a being constituted of spirit and matter – 'both good and both real'. By the former it is granted him to know all things (if not yet). By the latter he becomes responsible to the particularity of his material existence. By virtue of his intellect he knows that nature is not all – 'My kingdom is not of this world'; through his senses he must seek the path

to that reality which is as yet unre-cognised – 'God saw (of His Creation) that it was good'. On the one hand the workman or artist possesses an inner potentiality that is undetermined and inspirational but which must be conditioned by the task at hand. On the other there is the outer potentiality of the material at hand that is determinative and resistant but which must be brought to order – 'art improves on nature', Gill said. This inner and outer potentiality is the ground of every act of making. They must be realised together to form a unity, in which spirit and matter, maker and made, path and goal, image and artefact are one. This is the norm to which Gill worked and which explains why, on occasion, he could restore to sight, as could no other 'workman' of our time, the holiness and the radiance at the heart of being.

What of Eric Gill today? Only those who are prepared to accept that current social and industrial conditions indicate Gill fought a losing battle can regard him as someone who belonged exclusively to his own period. Those who feel themselves too far removed to be sympathetically concerned with Gill's preoccupations must not only do at least as much hard thinking on fundamental issues as he did, but must also come up with better answers in thought and in practice. At a time when mechanised production techniques reduce human involvement to a minimum – in their latest manifestation even displacing the machine-minder altogether with computerised robots – and with mass unemployment likely to be a permanent feature of society, the old shibboleth of man's being 'freed for higher things' dies hard. But Gill knew that in so far as there can be a norm of human making and doing there is no 'higher thing' than man himself. And if he is allowed the leisure to indulge his appetites while having lost the opportunity to discover his better self through work freely conceived and responsibly executed then that represents a deprivation, not an emancipation of his nature.

So Gill is at the centre of things. As Mr Yorke says, 'the questions Gill raises on the nature of our industrial society and the place of art within it still need answers' (p.17). Certainly he saw that machines were here to stay; even that the industrial product would exist alongside the work of the craftsman. He wrote in 1931, 'the handicrafts are not killed and they cannot be quite killed because they meet an inherent, indestructible permanent need, in human nature' (*An Essay on Typography*, p. 5). That the crafts tend towards methods of production that are nearer to the workman using his hands and his tools is of considerable significance. (It is a characteristic of art in traditional societies that it does not develop the sophistication of the means of production away from manual operations unnecessarily.) Here Gill makes what Walter Shewring has called an 'irreproachable distinction'. He saw that in the case of the tool-user the workman is responsible to himself and is aided in his task by the tool.

In the case of the machine-user the workman is responsible to the machine which he aids in the production of whatever it is designed to do. 'Tools then are helps to man, but men help machines' (*Sacred and Secular*, p. 105). The difference is absolute. The machine is not a sort of superior tool. The burden of distinction falls clearly not upon the instrumental nature of the productive means but upon the degree of responsibility the workman possesses in determining how he shall use his skill in the making of what, by the light of his art he is especially fitted to accomplish.

What Gill would not allow as being in any way inevitable and unavoidable was that final and passive capitulation, that complete denial of free-will which assumes that man has no choice but to accept his position as servant to the mechanisation he has himself created. This last transposition, accomplished at the behest of profit, whereby man becomes the product of his own technology Gill by his life and work overturned.

A YOUNG POET IN PARIS

JONATHAN GRIFFIN

David Gascoyne, *Journal 1936–1937* (Enitharmon, 1980), £6.75
David Gascoyne, *Journal 1937–1939* (Enitharmon, 1978), out of print

As first-hand evidence about the feelings and thoughts of a fine poet at the stage (or stages) of discovering his own creative way, David Gascoyne's 1936–7 and 1937–9 journals are of exceptional value.

It may not at first seem so: I here and now warn readers to skim or (better) skip the obsessive name-dropping and slovenly verbosity of the (fairly recent) Introductory Notes to the 1936–7 Journal (I, for one, am not disarmed by the apology at the end of them – why apologise? why not prune?). But once past this and into September 1936 the journal soon gets down to realities:

1. I joined the C.P. yesterday . . .
2. I have undergone a difficult crisis during the last month, from which I come out chastened. I have had to admit that *nothing* I have written so far is of the least value . . .

He was twenty then. He had already, the year before, written *A Short Survey of Surrealism*, and he was on the organising committee of the 1936 International Surrealist Exhibition, a most brilliant and influential event. Surrealism

has indeed been a formative influence on his own earlier poems with their evidently great promise, leading up to his *Hölderlin's Madness*. The 1936–7 Journal soon makes us aware that, in taking the first decisive step towards finding his own creative way, he was outgrowing surrealism; on April 4th 1937:

> But I do believe that if I ever reach the goal which is now taking shape in my ambitious mind, I shall be among those who will have helped to set literature going in a quite new direction, corresponding to a new direction of society – not socialist realism (of the 'May Day' kind), nor surrealist romanticism, but propaganda for being equally conscious of oneself and of society, of the dream and of reality, of the moral and of the political . . .

His allegiance to the Communist Party lapsed. Surrealist romanticism continued to bring its bright and dark colours to his poems, but was no longer enough for him.

The struggle which followed was terribly painful. On October 5th 1937 he records:

> And . . . in *absolute* solitude and as it were invisible to their contemporaries, there are still living men from whom escape, from time to time, a few clusters of phrases dictated by a frantic and obscure compulsion; men who are writing pages that are alive because they could not help being written, in spite of the general uproar and confusion going on outside. And these strange workers are perhaps preparing something like a great cry that must go up from the heart of our time . . . I too am trying to formulate some cry out of our common inner silence; the painful and disordained existence that I lead would have no meaning if it were not that I were meant to translate it into an articulation of this kind.

The Journals show his 'disordained existence' very frankly – alarming money trouble, the repeated humiliation of borrowing, day after day during which (even when he had some money) he tried hard to write and nothing would come. May 20th 1938:

> I still have faith; I shall always believe that there is *another plane*. I also know that in order to be able to reach it and to speak of it, one must lose everything and be destroyed: I am trying to prepare myself to accept loss and destruction, even to desire them . . . How to invoke the welding flame?

He had many friends, and his journals abound in cheerful and full-blooded things – acute comments on people, books, paintings, love affairs (there is, on October 31st 1938, a candid and unhysterical account of his attitude to sex);

but his loneliness kept deepening. On July 8th 1938, having received by post new books by Auden, Spender and MacNeice, he wrote:

> More and more, I feel the existence of a great gap between their generation's conception of poetry and my own . . .
>
> Poetry is not verse, it is not rhetoric, it is not an epigrammatic way of saying something that can be stated in prose, nor is it argument or reportage . . . The tradition of modern English poetry is really something quite different from the tradition of Hölderlin, Rimbaud, Rilke, Lorca, Jouve. . . . The values I believe in are European values and not English ones.

In the next two days, rising to the challenge (as again and again he did), he wrote two poems: *Fortress* (one of his grandest) and *Insurrection*.

David Gascoyne's finest poems stand on their own, in rueful triumph. If they need the Journals to reinforce them, it is only because so many of those who do read poetry nowadays pick up a book, flip through its pages, sample a poem or two – and perhaps get from it pleasure and even a real communication but not a complete one. When we turn from Gascoyne's Journals to re-read, say, *Cavatina*, *Spring Mcmxl*, *Walking at Whitsun* and *The Gravel-Pit Field*, and then *Requiem* and *Night Thoughts*, we find in each not only a lovely object but the voice of a human being. Crying out:

> When reality is as painful as it is at this hour, how can the disillusioned few who are capable of seeing it hope to be able to make other men open their eyes to what they see. Is the 'ordinary man' even capable of a moral suffering great enough to . . . make him admit its existence openly? If not, it would seem that the conscious few have no choice but to witness the irredeemably tragic spectacle of mankind rushing blindly and incoherently, like the Gadarene swine, into a sea of horror and obliteration.

Written on September 1st 1939, and speaking today.

ARCHETYPES by Elémire Zolla. 140 pp, published by Allen & Unwin, London 1981, £8.50 *PHILIP SHERRARD*

This is a remarkable and disturbing book, both in what it says and in what it fails to say. Its starting point or underlying premise – the theme of the opening chapter – is the extreme non-duality of Vedantic Metaphysic, and the experience of this non-duality – of Oneness or Unity beyond binding logic, the either-or, the good and evil, the conscious and the unconscious. One reaches it through a process of abstraction, by stripping being of all its qualities, both essential and incidental. This stripping includes one's own individual name and shape, one's particular face: these are things that one happens to pick up casually on entering the world of time and space – the fallen world – and are no more necessarily one's own than any other name or shape, or any other face. Only apart from one's shape and name can one reach the truth: the intellectually honest man snaps at his lover when she calls him by his name. Indeed, everything except metaphysical experience, which is the experience of Unity, Oneness, cosmic and non-dividual, is unreal, or a delusion. Time and space, and what happens in time and space, are delusions. History is chimera. Our mental constructs, the way that we conceive reality, are delusions. If they help us to reach metaphysical experience they may be called true in the sense of being trustworthy, but what they are in themselves is neither here not there: they are all delusions, and it matters little what kind of delusion it is. In fact, the sooner we drop the constructs of our waking mind, the better, since one of the major impediments to metaphysical experience is the importance we attach to our waking mind. To attain metaphysical experience waking should be no more important than dreaming. Sleep is more important than both. In sleep we draw close to metaphysical experience. The sleeping I is the ideal I-ness. So much is this the case that we can be said to attain metaphysical experience at least twice a day: on awaking and falling asleep. A neat definition of metaphysical experience is 'a dreamless sleep blissfully aware of itself'.

Given the starting-point, that of extreme non-duality, this is all consistent. But why this starting-point? Or, rather, why is this starting-point more true, or less unreal – less a delusion – than any other starting-point, since all our theories about reality are delusions? Why try to fit everything into the straightjacket of non-duality rather than squeeze it up through the tunnel of progressive evolution? The answer to this might be that whereas the theory of evolution is a purely human construct, arrived at apart from metaphysical experience, the axiom or principle of non-duality is intuited at the height of metaphysical experience itself. But this is to beg the question. For, we are told, what we experience depends upon how we conceive. Hence, what we experience will be

conditioned or limited by our *a priori* conception of what it is possible to experience. It will depend upon our conception of reality. In other words, we have to accept a theory of reality, or an axiom or principle of knowledge, before we can experience the reality or knowledge to which it relates. We have to accept the principle of non-duality before we attain metaphysical experience of non-duality. Thus, we cannot derive this principle from metaphysical experience itself. We can at best but confirm it through metaphysical experience. Yet in that case we might in a similar manner be able to confirm various other, non-non-dual theories of reality through metaphysical experience, since the type of metaphysical experience we attain, and even what we call metaphysical experience, depend upon how we conceive them. In any case, if the theory of non-duality is true, it is only relatively true, since by definition a theory of the nature of the absolute formulated on the relative human level cannot itself be absolute. Hence, to the extent that the theory of non-duality is not absolute, some form of duality is also, and equally, true. This might only be another way of saying that if everything apart from metaphysical experience is a delusion, then that statement itself is a delusion, and so is the notion that I am deluded or can be deluded. Consequently, it may not in the least be casual or incidental that I have a particular name and shape; and though it may well be wrong for me to identify myself completely with them, it may be equally wrong to disclaim responsibility for them, and not to recognize that the uniqueness of my creaturely existence is part and parcel of my eternal destiny.

From the chapter on metaphysical experience we move on to a consideration of the archetypes themselves and of their modes of operation. Oneness, or Unity, is undivided, unmultiplied, and all twoness or multiplicity is delusion and falsity. Yet, the author continues, Oneness reflects or mirrors itself. It has knowledge of itself. This means that it divides into Oneness as the Known and Oneness as the Knower. It becomes two. This is the initial step by which Unity multiplies and divides both itself into Knowers and the Known into things. The Knower, scattering himself into multiplicity, multiplies the Known whose reflections he is. But this descent into multiplicity is possible only through mediators standing between the Knower and the multitude of numbers and numbered things, since only through the mediation of relative infinities can the absolute condescend to the finite. These relative infinities are the archetypes, units of measure. They both are and are not metaphysical realities. They are units and standards of measurement, yet at the same time they are fields of psychic energy, mental categories and basic emotional plexuses. They used to be called gods and angels, but they are now known as psychic complexes or as supreme ideals. At all events, they are the source of all appearances. Everything that happens in the visible world is a reflection of events on the archetypal level.

If we look for truth among appearances, among 'concrete facts', or in words, images, impressions, we will never find it, for these are all delusions. Only by reaching back to the archetypes of which they are the reflection can we find their meaning and so touch the truth; and the archetypes in their turn can lead back to the primal source, metaphysical experience and Onenes, truth itself.

Hence it is vital, unless we are to remain victims of delusion, to direct attention constantly to the archetypes, the shaping forms of things, and their engendering energies. Above all, each man should remain close to his archetype, for not to do so is to lose himself in the maze of unreality and falsity. This is why poetry – and the other arts – are so important. They use language and imagery in such a way that they evoke the archetypes. This is because the true poet – the true artist – does not separate things from their engendering energies, their inner shaping forms. The poet is not a dreamer, but he weaves the stuff of which dreams are made according to the promptings of the archetypes. The things and beings that inhabit his poetry are symbols of the archetypes. A symbol is not a dreamy vague shadow of a thing; it is, in Goethe's words, 'a living instantaneous revelation of the inscrutable', which shows forth the archetype or idea 'in such a way that the idea remains always infinitely active and unapproachable in its image'. Poetic images reiterate archetypal truth. This is why they resonate in us so deeply: they help to bring us into contact with the archetypes, and so make us aware of them. As Plotinus said: 'When one sees in an object the outward portrayal of an archetype, the heart is shaken and the memory of the Original recaptured'.

This is all excellently said, and one would wish that every poet would give it attention. For the fact is that a great deal of what passes for poetry, and for art in general, in our times, does not possess this ennobling, transmuting quality. The images are not symbolic, and do not evoke metaphysical experience or even point towards it. Rather, the opposite is true: instead of leading towards unity, wholeness, beauty, they seem, in their inanity, to be part of a process whose purpose is one of ever-increasing disintegration, depravity and ugliness. In other words, they are evidence of a mental and psychic derangement similar to, if not identical with, that which characterizes most forms of popular entertainment, aesthetic taste and general life-style in modern industrial societies, from which the flavour of anything metaphysical appears to be entirely lacking. Does this mean that the artists of what is called the avant-garde have lost touch with the archetypes, so that they project in their works, not intellectually inspired and life-enhancing visions, but meaningless fantasies? Or does it mean that the archetypes themselves to which these artists, along with society in general, are now obedient, have become separated from metaphysical experience, and pull away from oneness instead of converging on it, so that they become

forces, not of integration, but of chaotic phantasising and fragmentation? This in fact seems to be the view maintained in this book: matters archetypal are still supreme, but the archetypes have loosened their connection to oneness, are gyrating more or less out of control, colliding with one another, and so producing disorder and not harmony. But if this is the case, either contact with the archetypes does not necessarily lead towards metaphysical experience and truth, since they themselves may no longer mirror metaphysical experience and truth; or metaphysical experience itself, or what is called metaphysical experience, need not be healing, liberating or life-enhancing, but may be precisely the opposite.

What is being ignored, one feels, is the age-old problem of evil. It is true that we are told to beware of the Trickster, and are reminded of his high theological status. But at the same time we are told more than once that metaphysical experience is beyond good and evil, and that the archetypes themselves are beyond good and evil. Yet it is clear that somewhere in the whole cosmic process a fault can enter in – indeed, has entered in; there is a breach, and the archetypes, or some of them, instead of being forces of the good – that is, instead of leading towards oneness – become forces of evil and lead to disintegration and self-destruction. They are no longer godlike or angelic, they are demonic or diabolic. In other words, evil – some power of negation and dissolution – appears to have irrupted on the archetypal level, perverting the archetypes, or some of them, so that they turn away from the One.

What are the repercussions of this for metaphysical experience, or what is called metaphysical experience? We are told in the opening sentence of the book that: 'When the experiencing psyche and the things it perceives, melt and are absorbed into one anther, what takes place may be called 'metaphysical experience' ". But are the seizures, raptures, ecstasies, swoons, trance-like states, shamanic and others, so enthusiastically commended in this book, in which the experiencing psyche and the things it perceives melt and are absorbed into one another, all redemptive and sanctifying? May they not often be demonic possessions, seducing the soul and leading it to damnation? These experiences may be beyond our sense of good and evil, but this may by no means signify that they are beyond good and evil themselves. Surely whether or not that is the case will depend on what metapsychic archetypal influence is operative in the soul at the time at which these experiences take place, and on whether or not that influence is angelic or demonic. In fact, may not many of these experiences be merely psychic, with no metaphysical quality about them at all?

As I said at the beginning, this is a remarkable and disturbing book. It is remarkable because of the insights it conveys, the scope of its references, the

pungency of its aphoristic style, the richness of its suggestivity. It is disturbing because for all its penetration, its revelations of the heights and depths of human and cosmic life, it leaves one with the sense of something crucial not taken into account: of some absence of discrimination, implicit perhaps in its underlying premise, as if, once one has shed certain limitations of thought and feeling – the crippling delusions – and has experienced self-identification with something, there is no longer any need to distinguish between heaven and hell, angel and devil, light and shadow, transconsciouness and unconsciousness, metaphysical transcendence and psychic immanence. Perhaps there is not any such need; and perhaps the notion that there is simply reflects a lack of emancipation, a failure to perceive the non-differentiation of that world of non-duality which is the author's touchstone.

FALLING INTO THE NEW AGE

JOHN MICHELL

William Irwin Thompson: *The Time Falling Bodies Take To Light*. Rider/ Hutchinson, 1981

Our good friend, William Irwin Thompson, is the founder and prime mover of Lindisfarne, that interesting college-community whose headquarters (now located on the rolling acres of a gracious benefactor in Colorado) provides a most valuable centre of studies for all of us who are concerned with traditional philosophy and its much-needed modern revival.

Thompson is an anthropologist and a professional historian. His particular field is mythology, its nature and origins, its social effects and its relation to history and science. Daily life in traditional societies is governed by the sacred myths which are those societies' most valued possessions. In our own society, however, the power of mythology has officially been broken. Myth is now taken to be synonymous with untruth, and we moderns think and act in accordance with the 'facts' of our rational universe, as established for us by scientific researchers and historians. In Thompson's view, this state of affairs is becoming even more absolute:

> In our age a class of behavioural and political scientists hopes to wield power over nature and culture, and through genetic engineering and socio-

biology to alter the natural selection of the body and the artificial selection of culture to create a perfect, scientific society.

The totalitarian menace, as described in this statement, is real enough, but Thompson is inclined to over-state and over-simplify it. As witnessed by his own works, there is now a strong conscious reaction against the de-humanizing, de-culturizing forces in modern society which he analyses. In his definition of the problem he adopts what might be called a liberal form of conspiracy theory, and both the virtues and the faults inherent in this type of thinking are prominently displayed in *Falling Bodies*. On the credit side it makes his writing passionate and entertaining, but it also leads him to personalize the opposition, thereby inhibiting his quest for the fundamental sources of error in modern philosophy.

His mission in this book is, first, to seek out and destroy the conspiratorial authors, secondly to propose a reconstruction of the present patterns of historical orthodoxy, encouraging new patterns to emerge which are conducive to humane, liberal social reform. A most amusing part is early on, when Thompson quotes some of the idiotic assertions which 'sociobiologists' have made about the origins of life and culture. Having abolished myth and superstition, the semi-literate babblers (as they are characterized by their own writings) have invented myths and superstitions of their own, and have the effrontery to claim that these poor mental constructs represent 'scientific truth'. Ever since Darwin, the field of biology has been dominated by the speculators and myth-makers, whose grisly images of 'proto-man', constructed from a few bits of bone and their own peculiar imaginations, are presented as 'scientific' reconstructions of our ancient bestial ancestors. As Thompson remarks, the cartoon figure of the shambling cave-man, dragging his woman by the hair, accurately reflects the ideas which many archeologists and prehistorians have about human nature in its essence. This low-minded view of human nature inhibits the individual from aspiring to the development of his or her full human potential and promotes the growth of the narrow kind of 'perfect scientific society' which Thompson dreads. Yet, when asked to identify the agency which is said to have transmuted species and turned beasts into humans, two of the leading modern anthropologists can do no better than to call it 'evolutionary momentum'. Thompson has a splendid time with that phrase which he rightly identifies as a metaphor, and when it comes to metaphoric language he prefers it neat, from poets and sages, rather than dressed up to resemble the language of science.

Myth-making is a game that anyone can play, and Thompson sets out to popularize it under the name of *Wissenkunst*. This appears to resemble Hesse's

Glass Bead game in that the beauty and subtlety of the intellectual patterns woven by the players is no less important than their scientific accuracy. Thompson's own essay in *Wissenkunst* fills the greater part of *Falling Bodies*. It is an impressive artefact. To whatever extent one may disagree with the details in his picture of the origins and development of human culture, however much one may dispute his values and emphases, it is impossible not to admire the deftness with which he primes and fills in his canvas, the breadth of his eclectic scholarship and, above all, the humanity and kindness which attend all his endeavours and pervade the finished product.

As I said at the beginning, I am still baffled by *Falling Bodies*. At times one wants to cheer aloud as Thompson smites the ungodly and sweeps their absurd theories off the board; the next moment one wants to shoot him for his obtuseness. The trouble is that Thompson, the college-professor intellectual, and Thompson the mystic are still two different people. The first writes kindly about the second, apologises for him, affirms his values, but never really lets him have his own say.

The book is dedicated to the Eternal Feminine and she is its true heroine. Thompson is her loyal and very effective champion, assaulting on her behalf the dragon of male chauvinist scholarship which denies both her ancient supremacy and her proper place in affairs today. Good for him! There is certainly a desperate need for the 're*vision*ing of history' as he puts it. But I cannot persuade myself that all is quite well with *Falling Bodies*. Judging it at the level on which it is pitched, as a serious, influential work one cannot help noticing some fundamental flaws. Thompson is a man of noble ambitions, and he is undertaking the highest and noblest of all literary tasks, the reformation of contemporary mythology. His spirit and intellect are more than adequate for this task, and so is his scholarship, but the quality of his writing is not quite their equal. He lapses at times into 'divine unintelligibility'. In the brilliant orator and teacher, which he is, this is a common failing, and it goes with another, also displayed in some of Thompson's writing: a tendency to over-rate the value of his personal moral judgments and preferences. Too often in *Falling Bodies* we are being lectured at, rather than hearing the type of philosophical discourse which the theme deserves.

A more substantial criticism is that, while exposing the dangerous nonsense of the sociobiologists and their ilk, Thompson has not entirely shaken off their literal-minded habits of thought. In his games of *Wissenkunst* he is strangely attentive to the rules as defined by the opposition. Thus he refutes the anthropologists who see the emblems of male dominance in the images of ancient cave painting by re-interpreting them as sexual emblems of the Eternal Feminine. Same game, different result, but there is no end to that particular game of

competitive subjectivism. Remember the late Abbé Breuil and the symbols of the Great Mother, battle scenes and so on, which he saw in ancient rock surfaces where no one since has been able to detect more than natural grooves and fissures! Thompson is plagued also by Freud's obsession with sexuality, constantly identifying ancient images as representations of human sex organs or functions. Symptomized in this habit is the puritanism which limits his vision. Such images had a far wider reference than merely the physical sexuality, being, as Iamblichus said in *The Mysteries*, 'a certain sign of the prolific power which, through this (their exhibition at religious festivals), is called forth to the generative energy of the world'. As Thompson himself emphasizes, the ancient language of symbolism was a form of magical writing with many different dimensions of meaning. Yet he often omits to allow that insight to inform his judgments. Thus promising beginnings may trail off into *non sequitors*. For instance:

> Since the Magdalenian hunters and gatherers seem to have constructed a rich and complex cosmology based upon the balance of the complimentary forces of the masculine and the feminine, it may be the case that the discovery of paternity must be set back in the Upper Paleolithic.

It was not the union of human or animal genders which was celebrated in the ancient cosmology, rightly styled 'rich and complex', but the union of celestial and earth energies, of the *yin* and *yang* throughout nature, of the universal opposites, proceeding from one source, whose seasons of separation, individuation and sublime reconciliation were but imitated in the processes of human courtship and coupling. In this context the question of the ancients' attitude to paternity is out of place.

It is the author's failure to apprehend fully the nature of the scientific, religious, psychological, ultimately cosmological synthesis of knowledge behind the ancient world-order which makes this book, for me, a 'near-miss'. The journey through *Falling Bodies* is enjoyable and highly stimulating, but in the end we seem left with little more than vaguely millenial hopes, such as: 'The avatars of the New Age . . . will not be the solitary male, but the male and female together.' Where can this New Age be inspected before purchase? Nowhere, I am sorry to tell, in the pages of this book.

IN SEARCH OF THE HOLY GRAIL

JOHN HEATH-STUBBS

John Matthews, *The Grail, Quest for the Eternal* (Thames & Hudson, 1982), £3.95

This excellent book combines a scholarly account of the growth and development of the Grail legend during the Middle Ages, with a personal but profound reading of the symbolism it involves. The volume is also furnished with a series of annotated illustrations which are germane to the various themes involved in the text, and which interestingly supplement it. These illustrations themselves range from the medieval to alchemical images of the renaissance period and also comprehend Aubrey Beardsley and a contemporary ikon.

The quest for the origin and meaning of the Grail legend is almost as bewildering as was the quest for the Grail itself. On the face of it, it is a hagiographical legend centred on a relic, which has become incorporated in the great chivalric cycle of the Matter of Britain. The hagiography is an apocryphal story of the voyage of Joseph of Arimathea bearing with him a relic of the Passion, and his founding of the first church of Glastonbury. But this tale is more than other apocryphal tales, and the grail is no ordinary relic but the actual cup used by Christ Himself at the last supper. The story was told by secular romancers rather than by monkish chroniclers, and was never officially endorsed by the Church. There is more than a suspicion that it has heretical associations – with the Albigensians of southern France for instance. But if there is one thing certain about the Albigensians it is that they rejected Matter, and hence one would have thought the essential sacramental idea of matter as a vehicle of Spirit and if there is one thing certain about the Grail Legend is it that it was deeply involved with the developed sacramentalism of medieval Catholicism; and in such versions as that given by Mallory with the mysticism of the Cistercians. The picture that we get of the Grail as guarded by a college of celibate knights suggests that the Templars played a part in the development of the legend; but what did the Templars really stand for? The charges of heresy brought against them were based on confessions extracted by torture and would not stand up in any decent court of law.

But there are other routes. Joseph's brother Brons is clearly the same person as the Welsh Bran the Blessed, a Welsh God or hero with otherworld associations, and guardian of a magic cauldron. The king of the Grail castle, Pelles, must be the same as Pwyll, another hero of the *Mabinogion* with otherworld associations. Christian writers, even those as intelligent as G.K. Chesterton and Charles Williams, have rather tended to dissociate the Grail from such pagan antetypes, but surely this is unnecessary. The Bronze-Age cauldron on the central hearth, source of food given a new nature by being offered to the

fire, and as a bath a symbol of purification and renewal of life, incorporates profound and universal ideas which can be quite naturally transvalued, but not abnegated, in the Christian symbol. Indeed recent work on the Australopithecine ancestors of man in Africa suggests that the communal sharing of food was from the very first something that differentiated the human stock from its ape relatives.

Other trails take us Eastward. Mr Matthews does not mention Jamshid's seven-ringed cup of Persian legend, whose disappearance, like that of the Gardens of Iram, is essentially a myth of a lost paradise. But he is very interesting on the revolving castle built by Chosroes II to house the relic of the True Cross which the Persians had captured from the Byzantines. Though it existed for only a short time before it was destroyed by Heraclius who recaptured the True Cross, the memory of it lingered in medieval romances hundreds of years later. Another story with analogies and associations with the Grail legend was that of Prester John, the supposed ruler of a fabulous Christian empire in further Asia. He was probably a Manichaean or a Nestorean ruler whose realm disappeared withthe expansion of Mongol power after Genghis Khan. Later Portuguese explorations in Africa led to his identification with the Emperor of Ethiopia.

Mr Matthews touches on these and many other themes but above all his book is valuable for his interpretation of the symbolism of the myth in psychological and spiritual terms. For him, and doubtless for many sensitive readers this makes this book not a mere archeological exercise but a way of entering upon a perennial quest in which we are all, in one sense or another, involved.

Nature Word by E. Schwaller de Lubicz (tr. Deborah Lawlor) will be reviewed in the fourth issue of *Temenos*.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

Christopher Bamford directs the Lindisfarne Publications (Stockbridge, Massachusetts), who plan to bring out in English translation the principal works of O.V. de L. Milosz; Scotus Eriugena's sermon on the opening verses of St John's Gospel is also in prepartion, with Introduction by Christopher Bamford.

George Mackay Brown, poet, playwright and story-teller, lives in Orkney. He was a friend and student of Edwin Muir, at Newbattle Abbey, near Edinburgh. His recent books include *Fisherman with Ploughs*, *Pictures in the Cave*, *Portrait of Orkney*, *Two Fiddlers*, and *Under Brinkie's Brae.*

Keith Critchlow has recently published **Time Stands Still: New Light on Megalithic Science.** He is a geometer with an emphasis on the sacred and its applications to architecture. His forthcoming book *Tradition, Proportion and Architecture* summarizes his main research work. Other books are *Order in Space*, *Islamic Patterns*, *The Soul as Sphere and Androgyne*, etc.

David Gascoyne, distinguished English poet and translator. His *Collected Poems* are published by Oxford University Press, and he has two books forthcoming from City Lights in San Francisco: *Selected Poems* and a reprinting of his *A Short Survey of Surrealism.* He has been awarded the Bielta Prize for 1982 for a collection of his poems translated into Italian by Roberto Sanesi.

Joscelyn Godwin is Professor of Music at Colgate University in New York State. His books include *Robert Fludd, Athanasius Kircher*, and *Mystery Religions in the Ancient World* (Thames and Hudson).

Jonathan Griffin, playwright, poet and translator. His most recent books include *The Fact of Music* (verse) and *Fernand Pessoa: Selected Poems* (Penguin Books). He was in the British Embassy in Paris from 1945–1951.

Toyoko Izutsu has written on themes of the Japanese *No* Theatre, art and aesthetics. With her husband Toshihiko Izutsu (former director of the Imperial Iranian Academy of Philosophy), she has lived in Iran, been a frequent guest of the Eranos Conference, and now lives in Japan.

Brian Keeble has published essays in *Sophia Perennis, Studies in Comparative Religion, Studies in Mystical Literature, Cognoscenza Religiosa* and elsewhere and is editor and publisher of the Golgonooza Press series. He has recently published an essay on Edwin Muir (Golgonooza Press), and is at present preparing an anthology of the works of Eric Gill.

Jan Le Witt, painter and poet, was born in Poland and spent many years in Paris before settling in England. His work has been exhibited in Paris, Poland, Florence, and in Jerusalem.

Rayne McKinnon's latest book is *The Blasting of Billy P.* and other poems, 1978 (Enitharmon Press). He publishes in various reviews in Scotland.

John Michell, author of *View over Atlantis* and *City of Revelation*. His interests are aspects of ancient science and the antiquities of Britain. He has written some dozen books, including *The Earth Spirit* (Thames and Hudson Art and Imagination Series). His most recent work is *Megalithomania* (Thames and Hudson), a study of the enthusiasm for ancient sites.

Czeslaw Milosz, poet, winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1980 and the Charles Eliot Norton Lecturer for 1981. He now lives in California.

Harold Morland, born in 1908 on the edge of the Lancashire Witches country in N.E. Lancashire. Graduate of London University, and now retired from teaching in a College of Education. Publications include books of poems from Phoenix Press, Routledge, Scorpion Press, and contributions to The Listener, Poetry Quarterly, New Age, etc. Interested in Romance Languages: Old French, Provencal, Spanish and Portuguese.

R.H. Morrison, an Australian of Scottish descent, was born in Melbourne in 1915 and lives in Adelaide. Six collections of his poems and nine books of his verse translations from the Russian, Ukrainian, French, Italian and Spanish have been published in Australia, USA and India. His other books are an anthology of South Australian verse, and metrical versions of ancient Chinese odes translated by James Legge. He regularly contributes to British, Australian and other magazines and anthologies.

Tim Nevill is a translator (most recently of a biography of Goethe) and a writer for radio. He was working at Robinson & Watkins (Publishing) during the gestation of Temenos.

Josef Pieper is Professor of Philosophy in the department of Philosophy and Anthropology in the University of Münster. He has spent time as a visiting professor at Notre Dame and Stanford in the USA and also in Canada, Japan and

India. His best known works include a *Guide to Thomas Aquinas*; an essay on Plato's Phaedrus (*Enthusiasm and Divine Madness*) and *Leisure, the Basis of Culture.*

Pranas is a Lithuanian artist working in Paris.

Kathleen Raine's most recent publications include *Collected Poems* (1981), Allen & Unwin), *The Human Face of God* (on Blake's engravings of the Book of Job, Thames and Hudson), *The Inner Journey of the Poet* (collected papers, Allen & Unwin); shortly forthcoming collected papers on Yeats (Dolman Press, Dublin).

Peter Redgrove, born 1932, poet, novelist, broadcaster, student of hatha and taoist yoga, and trained lay analyst. He read natural sciences at Cambridge and has worked as a research scientist, scientific editor and journalist. He now teaches creative studies at the Falmouth School of Art.

Jeremy Reed is a young poet whose most recent publications include *Bleeker Street* (Carcanet Press) and *A Man Afraid* (Enitharmon Press). The latter are to publish his novel *The Lipstick Boys.*

Edouard Roditi is a poet and translator from many European and Middle-Eastern languages, and an authority on Jewish mystical traditions.

Peter Russell, translator and poet, former editor of the literary review *Nine*, was until the overthrow of the Shah teaching English in Iran. He is currently engaged in translating works by Henry Corbin.

Philip Sherrard is a writer, theologian, and translator of modern Greek poetry. Among his recent publications are *The Philokalia* (with G.E.H. Palmer and Kallistos Ware, Faber and Faber), *Motets for a Sunflower* (poems, Golgonooza Press), and (with Edmund Keeley) *Angelos Sikelianos's Selected Poems* (Princeton University Press and Allen & Unwin).

Michael Stancliffe, Dean of Winchester, has studied the works of David Jones for many years with more than academic interest. His interest in the visual arts led to the commissioning of sixteen batik banners illustrating Genesis and the Apocalypse by Thetis Blacker for the 900th centenary of Winchester Cathedral in 1978.

Robin Waterfield studied Jungian psychology with Toni Sussmann, and spent sixteen years in Iran with the Episcopal Church. He is author of *Christians in Persia* and articles on related subjects, and is founder and director of the Amatē Press and Robin Waterfield Ltd antiquarian booksellers, Oxford. At present he is working on a translation of *Introduction à l'Ésoterisme Chrētien* by the Abbē Henri Stēphane.

FROM REVIEWS & COMMENDATIONS

An amazingly ambitious task: one which Blake and Kokoschka and Jung, among some others, also conceived and undertook in their time.
James Green in HARVEST

You and your editors deserve strong congratulations for putting together a magazine that projects a vision of the possibility of the imagination . . . The contributions are not fragments, but part of the whole view.
Robert J Bertholf, CURATOR, State University of New York

I am so glad you are persevering with TEMENOS and I hear its praises sung among friends I value most.
Laurens Van der Post

In a series of penetrating and provocative articles, poems, images and reviews . . . this new journal does indeed engage the imagination.
PARABOLA

I congratulate you heartily. It has much material that I value in it.
Seyyed Hossein Nasr

While each 265-page issue is priced at £10, it is well worth it. Recommended for medium to large literature collections.
AMERICAN JOURNAL OF LIBRARY SCIENCE

A magazine of undeniable distinction with its emphasis on the sacred aspect of art and literature, on continuity and tradition.
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