Temenos

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Robert Eddy, Joscelin Godwin, Morris Graves, Jonathan Griffin, Michael Hamburger,
Brian Merrickin Hill, Pupul Jayakar, Brian Keeble, Jan Le Witt, Grevel Lindop,
Jean MacVean, Peter Malekin, Corinna Marnau, John Matthews, John Montague,
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John Heath Stubbs, Kapila Vatsyayan

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A REVIEW DEVOTED TO THE ARTS OF THE IMAGINATION
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Editorial

At the outset the word Temenos may well have come as a surprise to some readers of this review. Yet by now what it denotes should have become more familiar: it is the sacred space, the holy ground or place given over to the enactment of the sacred. What the adoption of this title presupposed was that the significance and meaning of our contributors' work was, in whatever measure, orientated towards the sacred.

Now that Temenos has reached its sixth issue it may be worth while examining more closely the two words that figure most prominently in its sub-title, 'art' and 'imagination', and to consider aspects of their meaning in the context of what Temenos stands for. That these considerations have a bearing on our understanding of the nature of work and employment, at a time when there is much discussion as to their nature and value to society, should become evident.

The real tragedy of our predicament in this field is perhaps its double nature; which is that those who have no work must suffer as well the deprivation of losing a major opportunity to exercise their humanity. This is widely, even if not in every quarter, acknowledged. But what of the second dimension of the tragedy: that those who do have employment do not have work in any real sense. All too often, and increasingly so, those who do have employment are obliged to perform tasks that do not call for the exercise of any quality that is essential to their humanity. Doubtless such a dilemma has been, for all sorts of obscure reasons, a long time in the making; but that it is a form of spiritual sickness and issues in a pervasive social malaise can no longer be denied. The promised paradise of Leisure State consumerism has become the hell of a corrosive apathy that threatens to engulf us all when the well-springs of life are stifled by mere comfortable convenience. But what has all this to do with 'art' and 'imagination'?

The word 'art' and what we understand by that term has in the last two or three centuries in the West undergone a shift of emphasis to
the detriment of our understanding of its primary meaning. By
gradual stages ‘art’ has come to refer almost exclusively to the actual
product of art and the way we value, in personal and social terms, that
product rather than, as it should, to the way such products are made.
We ought more properly to refer to ‘works of art’ since the word ‘art’
connotes human skill, method, contrivance, with a particular empha-
sis on the fact of its being a human attribute, since art results from a
knowledge and practice such as only men and women possess and of
which they are the only agents. Instead, and in short, we have allowed
art to acquire a certain snob value. The word ‘art’ has come to refer to
an exclusive group of things which are somehow set apart from the
wider category of things made whether by hand or machine. (In
passing we might note that the word ‘manufacture’, which originally
meant ‘made-by-hand’, has come to assume the quantitative and
derogatory sense of production by machine!). This wider category
mysteriously, if only by implication, then comes to be thought of as
non-art. In belonging to this exclusive group art-things puzzlingly
acquire a certain mystique, a certain status not possessed by non-art
things. For instance, an arrangement of builders bricks on the floor of
an art gallery is somehow art in a way the same bricks, arranged, in
all innocence and as a game perhaps, by the builder’s child in the
builder’s yard, is not art. Even worse, by the terms of this exclusive
group of art-things, the man who made the bricks, given that they
were manu-factured, is not entitled to consider himself an artist even
though the making of bricks requires knowledge and practiced skill.
(Surely Marcel Duchamp’s ‘Readymades’ long ago called such deceit-
fulness and confusion into question?) For all sorts of reasons it has
become desirable, even at times imperative, to be seen to be doing
art-things and not non-art things. The result has been, firstly, con-
fusion as to what art is, followed by over-valuation of the artist himself
and, finally, an inevitable devaluation of the workman and what it is
he makes.

This change of emphasis in the way we understand art has run
concurrently with, as we might expect, a complementary change in
the way we understand work. Indeed, it has partly come about as a
result of the displacement of the crafts as the true basis of human
culture. This displacement, effected by the industrial revolution, has
reduced that class of men and women who once possessed and
exercised a special skill or art, and which, in whatever measure, bore something of the mark of its maker, to a proletariat whose only purpose is to consume the non-art products of the machines they have to mind. An instinctive recognition of the impoverishment that this process entails has of course led to an attempt to rehabilitate the hand crafts in our society. And this is all to the good. But here again we need to be on our guard, for much of the ideological impetus behind the revival of the crafts is itself bedevilled by the same confusion and double standards we find in the ‘art-market’. That is to say, the modern craftsman all too often demonstrates a willingness to embrace the spurious values of the art-market – an over-inflated sense of the maker’s individuality, the desire for personal status via exhibition, the self-expression of idiosyncratic styles, and the like. We have all seen examples – if only in glossy magazines designed for the purpose – of pottery, jewellery, weaving, etc. that could only be valid within the closed context of the exhibition gallery in which the gulf between work and life is made to seem a positive necessity. In all this we have, as it were, the two sides of a self-mutilation: on the one hand the artist has been relieved of the necessity for doing anything useful, while the workman is only of use so long as he undertakes tasks that seem to deny the exercise of any inner faculty that he can recognise as giving meaning to his humanity.

All this flies in the face of reason and common sense. The word ‘art’ was and is a perfectly adequate word to signify how a thing is made by human thought and skill. What we need to do is to make every effort to put art back inside the artist. Art is not a special property miraculously given to the few to the exclusion of all others. It makes no sort of sense, beyond acknowledging a difference of degree rather than of kind, to refer to the art of the poet while at the same time denying that the carpenter or the gardener possesses also the art of making something well, of shaping, of fitting to purpose, of cultivation. If we would only return to the primary meaning of the word ‘art’ we would see that there is no reason to make this arbitrary division of things into the categories of art and non-art. If we could only recover the habit of understanding art as that skill, that propensity for conceiving, for making and doing well, which is characteristic of all human work we would see that all men (and women – think of that currently undervalued skill, amongst others, which is the art of motherhood!)
are indeed artists. We need not pretend that this would cure all the ills of our society at a stroke but it would be an essential step towards a more general recognition that we owe it to our humanity to make ‘work’ and ‘art’ reflect our essentially spiritual nature.

Let us now turn to the word ‘imagination’. To imagine something is to conceive the image of a likeness, to make a mental image of something. This presents no problems when what is pictured in the mind is the likeness of an object first perceived by the senses. But again, it flies in the face of reason as well as our actual experience to limit artificially the function of imagining to that of picturing in the mind only likenesses of sensible things. Almost coincidental in time with the complementary shift of meaning in the word art and the change in the way we view work has been the philosophical questioning of the ontological status of mental images. As the province of the artist has become more removed from the reality of daily life, as the difference between life and work widened, work approximating more readily to the condition of physical labour and art becoming more abstract, its hold on reality consequently more attenuated and over-refined, so it became a matter of importance to locate and define the real source of the artist’s creative and imaginative life. This ‘phantasy’ or ‘fancy versus reality’ debate in which the notion of creative imagination was considered to be the central value, began in the 18th Century with philosophers such as Locke and Hobbes. It gave shape and substance to the Romantic movement throughout Europe – in England, for instance, the notion of the creative imagination was obviously of fundamental importance. All this raised questions as to the ontological status of the imaginative function that are hardly resolved yet. Indeed, the attempt by the French scholar Henry Corbin to reinstate the traditional metaphysical value of imagination as an active spiritual function has once more called into question the very premisses of the debate. But why was the debate necessary? The full ramifications of this question cannot be dealt with here. Let it suffice that we offer the following contribution towards a fuller answer.

As ‘reality’ has come to be attributed to the external, the quantifiable, so the internal, non-quantifiable has come to seem somewhat ‘unreal’. By way of compensation for this usurping impoverishment of human experience several things have come about. Most important, art has come to be thought of almost exclusively as the
expression of non-quantifiable feelings and emotions. That is not to say that works of art did not previously express feeling and emotion; they did so less personally, less as something to be valued privately, and more as existing on the periphery of states of being validated, as it were, by a more objective and pervasive collective wisdom. Moreover, individual feelings and emotions have been over-emphasised in modern ‘art’ at the expense of the contemplative dimension that is possible in the many acts of doing and making that are not necessarily or primarily meant to evoke or embody purely subjective emotions. And so the workman – the artisan – and the artist are forced into separate categories of activity with the result that rather more human value is accorded the artist’s evermore attenuated individuality than is accorded to the increasingly depersonalised workman. It’s as if we turn a blind eye to the fact that both belong first of all to the category homo faber and thus of necessity draw upon much the same resources to achieve their respective ends: concentration, effort, method and skill in handling materials as well as having in the mind’s eye – in imagination – a prior image of what it is they intend to make. What is in the imagination is the motivating raison d’être, is indeed the formal cause of every act of human making.

Yet just as we may have the image of a single, sensible thing in our mind, so we may equally well have an image, more complex and less distinct perhaps, of the pattern of our possible life, an image of the shape of our particular destiny, the pattern it has to follow. There is abundant reason to think that when such a pattern is missing men are somehow less than themselves. Or that when what the pattern follows is obscured from view or is, for whatever reason, beyond our grasp, then the full potentiality of life goes unrealized and that life is lived with an awareness that it is in some sense at a subhuman level. And this awareness of an insufficiency implies something very important. It points to the central function of the imagination – as indeed of art – which is to hold up before us some image, some re-presentation of the nature and terms of our existence. By means of imagination in this, its most universal sense, man is able to shape and make his life after the pattern of what is truly higher and greater than the accumulation of worldly experience. There is nothing in mere worldly experience to prepare us fully and adequately for the transcendent value of those monuments of past civilisations, from temples and cathedrals,
manuscripts and sculptures, down to the innumerable objects of
every day use that the various crafts have sought to supply and that are
so admired both in and out of museums throughout the world. Who,
seeing such things, has not been touched by an intimation of a vision
of some higher reality that at all times and places impinges upon our
thoughts and acts? What is more, our own experience confirms that it
does not make consistent sense to suppose that such shaping and
making of our lives after the impulse of some intangible reality affects
only some parts of our being and not others. We make ourselves
whole or we do not make ourselves at all. A thing unfinished is a thing
unmade. When it comes to the making of things we work in
co-operation with, seeking a degree of mastery over, some specific
material, tangible or otherwise. But in the making of ourselves we
have to wrestle with that intractable substance life itself: and that is the
hardest work of all.

But perhaps the most profound link between art and imagination
can be traced through the etymological connotations of the word ‘art’.
Here we note that art is a Middle English inflexion of AM, which,
like ‘is’ and ‘are’ comes from the Indo-European root ‘es’ — to exist.
From ‘es’ we derive ‘esse’: ‘essence’, that is actual as opposed to
potential being. Hence, ultimately, ‘art’ expresses that which exists;
that which is true. Thus art, in the fullest potentiality of its meaning, is
an affirmation of being. So we may point to the fact that a thing
wrought to the perfection of its being is an affirmation of the unity
and wholeness of Being itself. For, by implication, when a thing is well
and truly made some reverberation of that thing’s archetypal perfec-
tion has taken place and thus some sanctity has been brought down
into human life. No perfection of work is achieved without some
degree of self-mastery – some transcendence over the more fugitive
and ephemeral aspects of our selves. In every degree of such mastery
some sanctity is present.

In so far as man has at his disposal whatever faculties and potentiali-
ties are his he has no choice but to know and to act. And in so far as he
recognises his knowing and doing are open to sanctification by virtue
of their relation to the affirmation of Being, so he has no choice but to
accept the Sacred as the measure of his humanity. Thus the ultimate
goal of his knowing and his acting is to trace all things back to their
roots in the archetypal forces that shape his being. This all men may
do in all they do in the utmost exercise of what it is their nature to be. 'The Whole Business of Man Is The Arts & All Things Common', wrote Blake. In that work which it is ours to do we re-imagine the world after the manner of its original Imaginer. For if He did not imagine the world and all things in it after His own image it could never be known. Through the perfection of their art every human being can know something of the sanctity of life. Modern man, artist and workman, has lost the art of sanctifying things at hand. To the recovery of this lost art the pages of Temenos would hope to contribute.

Brian Keeble
Itmad-ud-Dawlah's tomb, Agra
The Principle of Unity
and the Sacred Architecture of Islam*

SEYYED HOSSEIN NASR

The earth was placed for me as a mosque and purifier. (hadith)

A person of faith in a mosque is like the sun reflecting in the water. (hadith)

God designated the whole of virgin nature, that inexhaustible masterpiece of His creative act, as the place of worship for Muslims and distinguished His final messenger by allowing Islam, the primordial religion, to return to primordial nature as its temple. The sacred architecture of Islam par excellence is the mosque which is itself but the re-creation and recapitulation of the harmony, order and peace of nature which God chose as the Muslims' enduring house of worship. In praying in a traditional mosque the Muslim in a sense returns to the bosom of nature, not externally, but through the inner nexus which relates the mosque to the principles and rhythms of nature and integrates its space into that sacred space of primordial creation which dilated and still dilates, to the extent that virgin nature has survived the onslaughts of Promethean man, in the Divine Presence that at once calms and unifies the soul. Through the Divine Command which placed nature as the Muslim's temple of worship, the sacred

* This is the third chapter from Islamic Art and Spirituality, to be published by the Golgonooza Press in 1986.
architecture of Islam becomes an extension of nature as created by God within the environment constructed by man. It becomes encompassed by and participates in the unity, interrelatedness, harmony and serenity of nature even within the environment of the city and town. It becomes in fact a centre from which these qualities emanate to the whole of the urban environment. The spaces and forms of the traditional Muslim town and city are in a sense extensions of the mosque, organically related to it and participating in its sanctifying and unifying character in the same way that the whole city or town participates in the blessedness that emanates from the chanting of the Quran and the call to prayers (al-adhān) issuing from the precinct of the mosque. In making the mosque an extension of primordial nature, Islam emphasizes the primordial nature of man himself. This nature it seeks to revive and reaffirm by awakening man from the dream of forgetfulness, arousing within him the consciousness of the reality of the One or the Absolute, a consciousness which constitutes the very substance of primordial man and the raison d'être of human existence.

The very word 'mosque' derives from the Arabic masjid which means literally the place of sujūd or prostration, that is, the third position in the Islamic ritual prayers (salāt or namāz) in which the forehead of the worshipper touches the ground in the supreme act of submission and surrender to God before Whom, at the beginning of these prayers, the Muslim stands directly as the primordial man, himself his own priest, facing God without an intermediary. The space of the mosque, as the recapitulation and extension of the space of virgin nature, is thus created in accordance with the nature of the most important rite performed in the mosque, namely, the ritual prayers. These prayers are performed by man, not as a fallen being, but as God's vice-regent on earth, aware of his theomorphic substance, standing on the vertical axis of cosmic existence and capable of praying to and calling directly upon God.

It is not, however, only the space of the mosque within which the faithful pray to the One that is important. It is also the floor upon which they prostrate themselves that is of crucial significance. The first mosque of Islam was the house of the Blessed Prophet, and it was the house of which the first official mosque, that of the Blessed Prophet in Medina, was in a sense an extension. It was the forehead of the most
perfect of God's creatures, of the Perfect Man himself about whom God has said, 'Were it not for thee I would not have created the heavens', which touched in prayer the floor of the humble room within which he prayed, thereby sanctifying the floor of the mosque and returning this floor to its inviolable purity as the original earth at the dawn of creation. The Blessed Prophet had first prayed before the Divine Throne (al-‘arsh) before he prayed upon the ground (which in Arabic and Persian as farsh is often contrasted to 'arsh) and, by sanctifying the farsh over again as the reflection of ‘arsh, returned the earth to its primordial condition as the mirror and reflection of Heaven. It was this sanctification of the ground by the very act of the

Plan of the Shah Mosque in Isfahan
sujūd of the Blessed Prophet that bestowed a new meaning upon the ground and the carpet covering it. The carpet, whether of simple white colour or full of geometric and arabesque patterns and ornaments, reflects Heaven and enables the traditional Muslim who spends most of his time at home on the carpet to experience the ground upon which he sits as purified and participating in the sacred character of the ground of the mosque upon which he prays.

In revealing the central rite of daily prayers to the Prophet, God allowed not only nature to become once again the temple of worship, as it had been for primordial man, without any danger of naturalism or idolatry, but also permitted the sanctification of the earth itself through the sujūd of the Perfect Man. By touching the ground with his forehead the Prophet bestowed a special significance upon the floor of his house, through it upon the first mosque and through the Medina mosque upon the whole of Islamic architecture as far as the floor and the experience of space from the floor is concerned.

The Quranic revelation brought back to man the awareness of the cosmos as God's revelation and the complement of the 'written Quran' revealed in the Arabic language. This awareness is abetted by the rite of ritual prayer which brings out the primordial nature of man to whom God addresses Himself in Islam while it accentuates the significance of primordial nature as the temple of worship. Furthermore, the Blessed Prophet asserted the reality of the farsh as the image of the 'āsh. He prayed in deserts and mountains, in nature which was still pure and unviolated. He also prayed in his house in Mecca and later in Medina and finally in the Medina mosque which is the prototype of all later sacred architecture of Islam. In this manner God, through His last prophet, re-established nature as the primary temple of worship and made possible through the founder of Islam the consecration of the space and ground of his domicile as the sacred place within which and upon which the most perfect of men stood directly before God and performed the rites which are central to Islam. If in the Islamic city the home is an extension of the mosque and the floor of the traditional home, which is kept ritually clean, an extension of the floor of the mosque upon which one stands and prays, it is because the floor of the mosque itself is an extension, through the prototypical Medina mosque, of the floor of the house of the Blessed Prophet wherein the forehead of the Perfect Man touched
the earth as a result of a new dispensation from Heaven. This act of touching the earth, among its many functions, stood for the return of both man and nature to the state of primordial purity (al-fitrah) when Unity manifested itself directly in the hearts of man and was echoed in an unending symphony in that harmony which constitutes virgin nature. The root of the sacred architecture of Islam is to be found in this re-sanctification of nature in relation to man seen as the primordial being who remains aware of his inner nexus both to the One and to His creation, as well as in subsequent relationships between architecture and the Islamic cosmos with its cosmological laws and principles described so majestically in the Quran and elucidated and elaborated by generations of sages throughout the history of Islam.

Islamic cosmology, as based on the cosmological verses of the Quran such as the āyat al-kursī (II; 255) and āyat al-nūr (XXIV; 35) and many prophetic ḥadīths, envisages the Spirit or al-rūḥ at the apex and centre of cosmic existence and belonging to the world of Divine Command. Below it stand the archangelic substances identified with the perimeter of the Divine Throne which they uphold, then the Divine Pedestal (al-kursī) and the lower angelic orders descending in a hierarchy to the invisible world. There are many forms of mosque architecture, a fact which has been paraded by many scholars of Islamic art as proof that Islamic architecture is simply an outgrowth of historical accidents. But whether in the classical domed mosque in which the centre of the dome symbolizes the One, and on a lower level the rūḥ, while the octagonal belt, upon which the dome usually rests, symbolizes the angelic order and the four-sided base the earth or the material world, or in the earliest mosques in which all the elements of the spiritual universe of Islam are not visibly symbolized, there is an inner nexus between Islamic architecture and Islamic cosmology and angelology. The Islamic cosmos is based on the emphasis upon God as the Unique Origin of all beings, on the hierarchy of existence which relies upon the One and is ordered by His Command, on the levels of existence which relate matter to the subtle world, the subtle world to the angelic, the angelic to the archangelic, the archangelic to the Spirit or al-rūḥ and the Spirit to God's primordial creative act. This cosmos is based on order and harmony which is more than the result of the direct manifestation of the One in the many. It displays a peace and tranquillity which
SEYYED HOSSEIN NASR

dominate its obviously dynamic character because the patterns of change within nature reflect nevertheless the immutable archetypes which belong to the higher states of universal existence and are ultimately possibilities in the Divine Nature. These and many other features of Islamic cosmology are reflected in Islamic architecture, especially in the sacred architecture of the mosque which is based on a science that cannot but issue from the inner dimension of the Islamic revelation and other forms of wisdom which Islamic esotericism integrated into its world-view in accordance with its own nature and the integrating power of Islam.

The Islamic cosmos is replete with the signs and portents (āyāt) of

Geometric analysis of the tomb of Imamzadah 'Abdullah at Farsajin
God in accordance with the Quranic verse, 'We shall show them our signs (aYāt) upon the horizons and within their souls until it becomes manifest to them that it is the Truth'. (XL; 53) The true Muslim sees every aspect of nature not as phenomenon divorced from the noumenal world but as signs of God, the vestīgia Dei. The mosque also displays the same reality. Its patterns appear to the Muslim eye as vestīgia Dei while its emptiness, simplicity and in many cases lack of any designs or patterns also reflect to the Muslim mind the 'signs' of God which in this case refer to the ontological status of the world as needy and poor (al-faqīr) while God is the self-sufficient and the Rich (al-ghāniy). As for the space, its stillness reflects the pacifying presence of the Divine Word which echoes through it while the rhythmic division of the space by means of arches and columns is the counterpart to the rhythms of cosmic existence which punctuate the phases of the life of man as well as the cosmos both of which come from Him and return to Him in accordance with the Quranic verse, 'Verily we belong to God and to Him we shall return'. (II; 156)

The sacred architecture of Islam reflects the reality of God's creation through the science upon which the structure of both architecture and creation are based, this architecture depending upon the grace or barakah issuing from the Quranic revelation which has made the correspondence in Islam between sacred architecture and nature possible. Moreover, the nexus between Islamic architecture and virgin nature must be sought in the spiritual reality of the Blessed Prophet who, as the Perfect man, par excellence, brought to earth that rite which sanctified and continues to sanctify the earth and brought into focus the spiritual reality of that primordial substance and state which both man and nature bear within themselves. The spiritual significance of Islamic architecture must be sought at once in the nature of the Quranic revelation which brought out the supernatural character of both the natural order and of man as well as in the inner nature of the Blessed Prophet, who not only sanctified both the earth upon which man stands and also prostrates himself but who sanctified the space within which man lives and orients himself with the goal of reaching that Reality that lies beyond all extension and becoming.

Architecture is of course the art par excellence of ordering space and all sacred architecture achieves its basic goal of placing man in the
Pearl Mosque in Agra fort
Portal to Sikandra, the tomb of Akbar

Interior of the Cordova Mosque
presence of the Divine through the sacralization of the space which it forms, orders and orients by means of various architectural techniques. In the case of Islamic architecture this sacralization is achieved most of all by means of the polarization of space through the presence of the Ka'bah which is the centre of the earth around which Muslim pilgrims circumambulate and towards which all Muslims turn in their daily prayers. But this effect is also achieved by means of the creation of a qualified space in a sense defined by the reverberations of the Divine Word upon the surfaces and planes within the volumes of the corporeal world which comprise the Islamic edifices and cities. The space of Islamic architecture is not the quantified space of Cartesian geometry but the qualified space related to sacred geometry and given order through the presence of the sacred. The Ka'bah chosen by God as the direction of prayer or qiblah of Muslims is in a sense ubiquitous in that it determines and polarizes direction and creates an invisible set of 'lines of force' which attract all points in the periphery toward the Centre. It is not only the direction of the mosque or a whole city that is determined by the qiblah but the experience of space itself.

Space is, moreover, sanctified in an esoteric manner through the cosmic amplitude and expansion of the inner reality of the Blessed Prophet, or what the Sufis call al-ḥaqīqat al-muḥammadiyyah. As the Universal or Perfect Man, the Blessed Prophet fills the breadth ('ard) and length (jūl) of cosmic existence; he fills the space within which the Islamic cosmos functions and in which the Muslim breathes and lives. The Muḥammadan Reality reaches the zenith and the nadir and the four cardinal directions which are thereby qualified and sanctified. The stations of wisdom in Islamic spirituality are related to this aspect of the Muḥammadan Reality which in thus sanctifying space also bestowed upon it once again its primordial spiritual significance. The same being who in praying before the Divine Throne or 'arsh and then upon the earth, hallowed the earth by bringing something of the 'arsh to the ground or to the farsh of human habitation, also sanctified space in an invisible and esoteric manner which is decisive in the genesis of the sacred architecture of Islam and indeed of all Islamic architecture. In the same way that the soul of the Blessed Prophet is an invisible spring for all Islamic spirituality, something of his soul is also to be found in the sobriety, calm, harmony, outward austerity and inner
richness and generosity of the traditional Islamic city and the authentic manifestations of Islamic architecture. The experience of the space of Islamic architecture by a traditional Muslim and therefore the discovery of the principles of that architecture which make the Islamic experience of space possible cannot be achieved without paying full attention to the manner whereby, through the Prophet and the rites brought to this world by him as a result of the Divine Command, the earth and nature as a whole were once again made to reflect Heaven and regain their primordial character as the temple created for the worship of the One. Also space was qualified in such a manner as to enable the integration of all points of the periphery within the Centre and the experience of the ubiquitous presence of the Divine throughout that space which points to the Centre wherever one happens to be located on the wheel of terrestrial existence.

It is necessary to point out here, while discussing the sacralization of space, the central importance of the void in Islamic architecture and art in general. The emptiness of the mosque, even the most richly decorated, is related both to the idea of spiritual poverty (faqr) of which the Blessed Prophet said, 'Spiritual poverty is my glory' (al-faqr fakhri) and the identification of the invisible and unmanifested with the spiritual in the Muslim mind. The Quran refers often to the invisible and visible worlds, 'ālam al-ghayb wa'l-shahādah, identifying the first with the spiritual and the second with the corporeal or material world. The emptiness in the mosque, related at once to spiritual poverty and the sense of the presence of the Spirit, is of course also a result of the emphasis of the Islamic revelation upon the doctrine of Divine Unity and hence the aniconic nature of the sacred art of Islam. Together these factors bestow upon emptiness within the space of Islamic architecture a spiritual significance of the greatest importance.

This is to be seen also in interior decoration of not only the mosque but also the home which is its extension. Uncluttered by furniture, with emphasis upon the floor which is kept ritually clean, the interior space of the traditional Muslim house, like that of the mosque, evokes the sense of the sacred through the very emptiness which although non-existent from one point of view, nevertheless manifests the presence of the Spirit in the same manner that the ether, although not visible in itself, serves as the substratum for the gross elements of
traditional cosmology. Air serves as the vehicle for the transmission of the Word of God which resonates periodically throughout the spaces of the Islamic habitat. When one enters a traditional mosque or home, the very emptiness of the space draws attention to the Invisible as the experience of the ground upon which one can only walk after taking off one's shoes and which one touches with one's hands and face in prayer creates the awareness of the hallowedness of the earth by virtue of the act of that most perfect of creatures who, in touching the earth with his forehead in total submission to God, sacralized it for all subsequent generations of Muslims.

There is within Islamic spirituality a special link with qualitative mathematics in the Pythagorean sense, a link which results from the emphasis upon unity and the intellect (al-‘aql) on the one hand and the primordial nature of Islamic spirituality on the other. It is not that Islam borrowed the spiritual significance of mathematics from Pythagoras, Plato or Nicomachus. These ancient sages provided providentially a sacred science which Islam could easily assimilate into its world view. The truth is that there was already in the Islamic world-view before its encounter with Greek science what one might call an 'Abrahamic Pythagoreanism'. Pythagoras was already a Muslim sage in Muslim eyes and therefore could be assimilated easily into the Islamic universe. The mathematical nature of Islamic art and architecture does not derive from external historical influences, Greek or otherwise. It derives from the Quran whose own mathematical structure is bewildering and reveals an amazing rapport between Islamic intellectual and spiritual concerns and mathematics. The mathematical nature of Islamic art is in a sense the externalization of the mathematics hidden in the very structure of the Quran and the numerical symbolism of its letters and words. The Pythagorean philosophy of mathematics provided the language and presented an already elaborated science, itself of an esoteric nature and going back
to Egypt and Babylon, for the 'spiritual mathematics' which is so central to Islamic architecture and even the so-called decorative arts. It did not create this art. The use of rigorously defined geometric spaces, precise mathematical proportions, clearly defined lines and volumes relating to exact mathematical laws were means whereby the space of Islamic architecture, as well as its surfaces, were integrated. The principle of Unity was thereby made more manifest and the Islamic space within which Muslims carried out their ordinary lives as well as the moments of worship was sacralized. The question of how mathematics as a sacred science is related to Islamic architecture is the subject of a separate treatise. However, the significance of this

Moorish doorway, Spain
traditional mathematics, much of it drawn from ancient and Pythagorean sources and integrated into Islamic esotericism, as a means of creating a sense of the sacred in Islamic art and architecture, needs to be greatly emphasized. This mathematical character of Islamic art, moreover, derives directly from the nature of Islamic spirituality which always remains closely wedded to the experience of harmony and an archetypical reality which is the reflection of the One and which remains immutable beyond the ever changing patterns of the transient world. There is present something of both the lucidity and perfection of the snowflake and the beauty of a geometrically formed flower in the Islamic paradise which when manifest in Islamic art and architecture re-captures an echo of that paradise and prepare the soul for the experience of that firdaws promised in the Quran to the faithful.

While dealing with mathematics, it is noteworthy to mention a point neglected by most students of Islamic architecture. The surfaces of many buildings which can be characterized as sacred architecture, such as mosques, mausoleums of saints, etc., are often covered by very elaborate mathematical patterns. This characteristic is to be seen especially in later Islamic architecture in such buildings as the Shaykh Lutfallah and the Shah Mosques of Isfahan and the tomb of Shah Ni‘matallah Wali in Mahan. What can be the significance of such complicated geometric patterns on the surface of walls of mosques and mausoleums? Besides directing attention to the Centre which is everywhere and nowhere, untying the knots of the soul and preventing subjectivism, these patterns also have another significance of a remarkable nature. Although ‘on the surface’ of things, they represent the interior structure of corporeal existence or matter as this term is understood in its general sense. Recent research by several scientists has revealed extraordinary similarities between these geometric figures and configurations and the inner structure of material objects both animate and inanimate discovered through the electronic microscope and other modern techniques.

It seems as if these patterns serve as a key for the understanding of the material with which the architect deals while unravelling also the structure of the cosmos before the eyes of the beholder. But these patterns do not originate from an analysis of matter in the manner of modern physics. They are the results of the vision of the archetypal world by seers and contemplatives who then taught craftsmen to
draw them upon the surfaces of tiles or brick. These patterns do not prove that physics leads naturally to metaphysics, especially physics of the modern variety. Rather, they are an illustration of the Hermetic principle that 'that which is lowest symbolizes that which is highest'. They also illustrate an important aspect of the Islamic revelation which is to bring out the reality of the cosmos itself as God's primordial revelation. If in the sacred architecture of Islam built to celebrate God, mathematical patterns, which correspond to the inner structure of the natural world, serve as ornaments upon the various façades, it is because nature herself participated in the Quranic revelation and was re-sacralized by it in the eyes of that segment of humanity which came to accept the revelation brought by the Blessed Prophet. The role of mathematics in the sacralization of architecture in Islam is inseparable from the nature of the Quranic revelation and its emphasis on the one hand upon the supernatural character of the intellect within man and, on the other, the sacredness of virgin nature whose laws and structures are related to the mathematical world.

One must also of course consider the specific symbolism of various geometric forms associated with Islamic architecture which relates
outward forms to inner meaning and architectural utility to spiritual significance. The dome, while creating a ceiling which protects from both heat and cold, is also the symbol of the heavenly vault and its centre, the **axis mundi**, which relates all levels of cosmic existence to the One. The octagonal base of the dome symbolizes the Throne and Pedestal and also the angelic world, the square or rectangular base the corporeal world on the earth. The stalactite or muqarnas structures represent reflection here below of the supernal archetypes, the descent of the heavenly abode towards the earth and the crystallization of the celestial substance or ether in terrestrial forms. The external form of the dome symbolizes the aspect of Divine Beauty or **jamāl** and the vertical minaret Divine Majesty or **jaldāl**. The Persian arch moves upward like a flame towards Heaven and the Transcendent and the Maghribi arch inwardly toward the heart which symbolizes the same Principle in its aspect of immanence. Consideration of the symbolic aspect of these forms, not all of which are necessarily employed in all types of traditional Islamic architecture, is of course essential for an understanding of the spiritual significance of this architecture, for they are the means whereby Unity penetrates into the world of architectural forms to create a sacred quality whereby earthly forms come to signify realities beyond the earthly realm.

‘God is the Light of the Heavens and the Earth’, the Quran asserts and a prophetic saying adds a cosmogonic and cosmological dimension to this verse by adding, ‘The first being created by God was light’. This important reality of the Islamic universe manifests itself not only in the luminous skies and clear light which characterize most of the heartland of the Islamic world where classical Islamic architecture grew, but also in this architecture itself. The great masterpieces of Islamic architecture, such as the Alhambra, the **iwan** and the courtyards of so many Persian mosques and the Tāj Mahal, are like crystallizations of light, limpid and lucid, illuminating and illuminated, where the space of Islamic architecture is defined by light. While the traditional architect seeks to protect the inner spaces of a building from the great heat of the outside, and while coolness and shade are associated in the Muslim mind with divine blessing, the soul of the Muslim, and in fact the primal man in every man, yearns for that light which is ultimately a symbol of Divine Presence, the Light which shines through the whole cosmos from the central **axis mundi** that is
neither of the East nor of the West. Throughout the centuries Sufis have sung and written of the significance of light as a spiritual substance. A special school of Islamic philosophy, the school of ishrāq or illumination, based specifically upon the symbolism of light was founded by the Persian theosopher and Sufi, Suhrawardi, and developed over the centuries by such later masters as Shams al-Din Shahrazūrī, Quṭb al-Dīn Shīrāzī, Ibn Turkah and Mullā Ṣadrā. Arabic and Persian literature, and even every day language, are replete with expressions which identify light with joy of the soul and correct functioning of the intellect while even old tales told to small children are often based on the primal symbolism of light as truth and felicity, a symbolism which is so powerfully reconfirmed in the Islamic tradition and of course also asserted by many other older religions, especially Mazdaeism.

This identification of light with the spiritual principle that at once creates, orders and liberates is a determining factor in the sacralization of architecture in Islam, complementing the above-mentioned factors and principles. Moreover, this light is ultimately the same as the Word, for according to another ḥadīth the first being created by God was the Word (al-kalimah) hence the principal identity of Light and the Word al-nūr and al-kalimah. It is certainly not accidental that the place in the

Taj Mahal
mosque from which the word of God in the form of the call to prayer reaches the community, namely the minaret, is called in Arabic al-
manārāh, literally the place of light. Even if, according to certain historians of architecture, the architectural features of a minaret are derived from a lighthouse (a point which is itself debatable since a raised platform was already in use as a minaret in the Medina mosque), the very name of the minaret in Islamic languages identifies the Light of God with His Word. This confirms the Quran’s own description of itself as Guidance (al-hudā) upon the path to God, hence a light which shines upon the otherwise dark path of human existence in this world. The light which defines the spaces of Islamic architecture and brings out its geometric clarity and intellectual lucidity is inseparable from that Word which in the form of the Quran reverberates within those spaces and brings those who harken to its echo before the Divine Presence. Both the reverberations of the Word and Light sacralize the spaces and forms of Islamic architecture and create a sense of the presence of the One wherever man turns his face for as the Quran asserts, ‘Whithersoever ye turn, there is the face of God’. (II; 148-Arberry trans.)
Not only does light define the spaces of Islamic architecture, but it also plays a central role in making possible both the use of intensely white structures which reflect the purity of the desert and the levelling of all multiplicity before the One according to La ilaha illa 'llah, and the use of intensely coloured edifices which appear as an earthly reflection of the paradisal states. If white symbolizes the unity of undifferentiated reality, colours which result from the polarization of light symbolize the manifestation of the One in the many and dependence of the many upon the One. Each colour symbolizes a state and is itself light, without light being limited to that particular colour. If colours can be said to symbolize states and levels of cosmic existence, white is the symbol of Being which is the origin of all existence. As for black, which plays an eminent role in Islam in that, along with green, it is the colour of the family of the Blessed Prophet and is even important architecturally as the colour of the cloth (the kiswa) which covers the Ka'bah, it may be said to symbolize the supra-ontological principle transcending even Being as usually understood. It symbolizes the Supreme Principle to which the Ka'bah is of course related in that it is in a sense the principle of all sacred architecture in Islam.

If the white or earthen-coloured mosques remind man of his poverty before Divine Unity and correspond both to the spiritual poverty of the Blessed Prophet and to the aspect of his soul related to submission, peace, serenity and sepulchral beatitude, the intensely coloured mosques symbolize the richness of Divine creation and the other aspect of the soul of the Blessed Prophet as theophany and reflection of the infinite richness of that Divine Treasury which creates at every moment without ever exhausting its infinite possibilities. As for individual colours employed in different edifices ranging from the green dome of the Medina mosque, symbolizing the colour of Islam, to the azure blue mosques of Timurid and Safavid Persia as well as certain regions of Ottoman Turkey and Mogul India, they all possess a symbolic significance based both on hadith literature and oral tradition and are far from being ad hoc and simply man made. But in any case, whether light shines upon a white surface, or polarizes into numerous colours, whether it penetrates directly into the spaces of a mosque from ceilings or indirectly through side portals, it is related to the Divine Presence and the cosmic intelligence which also shines within man and is the means by virtue of which man is able to realize the
Friday mosque, Isfahan
One. Through the ingenious use of light the Islamic architectural spaces are integrated with each other and into a unity which transcends the experience of ordinary and 'profane' space.

The shahādah, Lā ilāha illa'Ilāh, contains the principal knowledge about the nature of Reality and in accordance with its truth, which lies at the heart of the Islamic revelation, Islam itself is based on the nature of Reality. It is profoundly 'realist' in the traditional and not modern sense of the word. It is realist in that it emphasizes that God is God and man is man, that the material world is the material world and the angelic world the angelic. It refuses to confuse one level or reality with another or to address itself to a would be ideal that is not in the nature of the being in question. This characteristic of Islam could not but
manifest itself in architecture which always preserves its realism and refuses to create the illusion of an ideal not in the nature of the material and the space with which it is concerned. There are no created tensions, no upward pull to a heavenly ideal in Islamic architecture as one finds in Gothic cathedrals which are based on another spiritual ideal than that of Islam. The space of the sacred structures of Islam rests serenely and nobly in a stillness which conforms to the inner nature of things here and now rather than seeking to participate in an ideal which belongs to another level of existence and is contrary to the nature of the material at hand.

Likewise, Islamic architecture ennobles matter not by making stone appear to be light and flying upwards but, by geometric and arabesque patterns which make material objects become transparent before their spiritual archetypes, reflecting these archetypes on the level of existence proper to those objects. In this way the nobility of material objects is brought out by remaining faithful to the nature of each object which, being created by God, reflects on its own level a particular spiritual quality. The traditional Muslim architect and builder, like all traditional craftsmen, had a profound sense of the nature of the materials with which he dealt. Stone was always treated as stone and brick as brick. At no time did such a builder seek to make a particular object appear to be something other than itself. Whether dealing with stone, brick, mud or wood in various regions of the Islamic world and depending upon ecological and economic factors, Muslim architects were able to create masterpieces of Islamic architecture because they had a mastery of both the science involved in building and of the materials used. They thereby integrated them into a whole reflecting the ethos of Islamic art. They had a sense and awareness of Islamic spirituality which enabled them to create unmistakably Islamic buildings whether using mud in Mali or wood in Malaysia. In contrast with many modern architects who have lost the sense of direct knowledge of the nature of materials, the traditional Muslim architect had direct experience of the reality of the materials he was using, possessing an at once intuitive and empirical knowledge of things. This knowledge included many dimensions of the reality of material objects left out of the world-view of both classical and modern physics despite their claim to being based on empiricism.
This sense of realism and of remaining faithful to the nature of things, which is of course inseparable from the resacralization of the cosmic order by the Quranic revelation, also manifests itself in the ecological equilibrium of the traditional Islamic building and in the whole urban environment. Islamic architecture makes full use of light and shade, and their heat and coolness, of wind and its aerodynamics, of water and its cooling effect, of the earth and its insulating features as well as its protective properties in face of the elements. Far from being an attempt to stand in opposition and defiance against nature and its rhythms, Islamic architecture remains always in harmony with the environment. It always uses the lightest touch possible in creating a human ambience, avoiding that titanic rebellion against the created order that characterizes Promethean man and his artistic creations. The Islamic town rises gently from the earth, makes maximum use of nature's own resources and when abandoned usually returns again gently to the bosom of the earth. This architecture not only participates in the rhythms and forces of nature but also in her binding harmony and unity. Moreover, this ecological harmony of traditional Islamic architecture is not simply the result of sane ecological and even economic thinking in the modern sense of these terms but is a consequence of the nature of Islamic spirituality. A small fountain in a traditional courtyard of a mosque or a private house, which cools the air as well as pleases the eye with very little waste of a precious natural resource, is seen by the Muslim in religious and not only 'practical' or economic terms. The very physical experience of the cooling effect of the wind tower on a hot summer afternoon in a traditional house in Kashan or Yazd possesses an unmistakable spiritual component. This intermingling with the qualities, forces and flow of the elements, the movement of the heavens and the ever repeating rhythms of light and darkness, all of which traditional Islamic architecture heightens and reveals rather than hides, serves only to remind the Muslim of that other revelation of God, that is, nature, which remains truly muslim or submitted to the Divine Will by obeying its own nature and the laws which each domain of the natural order was created to obey.

The unity of Islamic architecture is related of course not only to the unity of the cosmos and beyond that realm to the Unity of the Divine Principle Itself, but also to the unity of the life of the individual and the community which the Divine Law (al-Shari'ah) makes possible. By
refusing to distinguish between the sacred and the profane, by integrating religion into all facets of life and life itself into the rhythms of rites and patterns of values determined by religion, Islam creates a wholeness which is reflected in its architecture. The mosque in a traditional Islamic city is not only the centre of religious activity but of all community life, embracing the cultural, social and political as well as, to a certain extent, economic activities. It is therefore related organically to the bazaar or centre of economic life, the palace or seat of political power, schools where intellectual activity takes place, etc.
Private homes are always nearby and in the same way that work, leisure, prayer and care of the family are integrated and not totally separate in the traditional Islamic pattern of life, the architectural spaces related to these activities are also intertwined. Even within the home, a single room is often used for several functions including eating, sleeping, socializing and praying, while prayers can take place in shops in the bazaar, transactions in the mosque and teaching in both the mosque and the home.

When one looks at the traditional Islamic city, one observes that this unity and inter-relatedness are reflected directly in the architecture. At the centre there is nearly always the mosque or tomb of a saint with the city growing in an organic manner around it. Moreover, the city seems to be covered by a single roof emanating from the sacred centre. In a profound sense therefore, the sacred architecture of Islam casts its light and influences the whole of traditional Islamic architecture, bestowing upon it the character of reflecting sacred presence. It seems that in the same way that the floor of the mosque, sacralized by the Blessed Prophet, stretches into the floor of every home in which one prays, the roof of the traditional city emanates from and is an extension of the roof of the sacred structure at its heart. The space of the whole city is purified and sacralized by the presence of the Divine Word which fills it periodically every day through the chanting of the call to prayers and the text of the Quran recited from the minarets of the mosques in various parts of the city. The unity of

Plan of the round city of al-Manṣūr, Baghdad
the sacred architecture of Islam thereby spreads to the whole of traditional Islamic architecture and this architecture participates, albeit in a more peripheral manner, in that crystallization of Divine Presence which fills the spaces of the sacred architecture of Islam and places man as God's vice-regent directly before the Majesty of the One.

All the factors mentioned above, from the unitarian characteristic of the Islamic revelation, the cosmic dimension of this revelation and the nature of the Quran as the Word of God addressed to what is

![Tomb of Sinan, with his Solomon Mosque behind](image)
primordial in man, the sacralization of the earth by the Blessed Prophet through the institutionalization of the rite of ṣalāt, an esoteric science of geometry and proportions related to architecture and many other elements, have made possible the creation of the sacred architecture which is one of the central arts of Islam. This sacred art came into being as a result not of simple accretion of various elements but of a creation which is inseparable from the spirit and form of the Islamic revelation and the direct effect of this revelation without which it could not exist. The principles of this architecture and the manner of its relation to the Islamic revelation may not have been elucidated in old texts because there was no need for such an elucidation, and not because such a relationship did not exist. It is only now, when much of the oral tradition is forgotten and many Muslims themselves have become oblivious to this relationship, that it is necessary to assert categorically the Islamic nature of Islamic architecture. In fact it needs to be underlined that the sacred architecture of Islam is a crystallization of Islamic spirituality and a key for the understanding of this spirituality. The spaces it has created provide a haven in which man can savour, by grace of this very spirituality, the peace and harmony of not only virgin nature but also of that paradise of which virgin nature herself is a reflection. This paradise man carries at the depth and centre of his being where the Divine Presence reverberates, for the heart of the faithful is the Throne of the Compassionate.
Crisis in Culture*

PUPUL JAYAKAR

It is only at moments of great crises that man is forced back to the asking of fundamental questions.

The challenge we face today is unique, for it encompasses the inner spaces of the human mind and the outer spaces of the earth. A tension between knowledge and the pressures generated by divisive forces, the psychological insecurities that distortion and misuse of knowledge breeds.

This is further accentuated by an inability to comprehend the interrelationships between the proliferating artefacts of technology and the petty realities of the human mind, its distortions and its demands for self-aggrandisement. A growing fragmentation between man and man, nation and nation, and a widening gap between affluence and want intensify anxiety.

We have created a world in which the very existence of the human species is threatened. Pollution, de-forestation, a savage destruction of ecological systems, and the catastrophic culture of concrete and steel, both in the outer environment and in the within of the human mind, choke man.

Spaces close in, within the physical world and in the psychological. As populations explode, man grows self-centred, isolated, callous, seeking security in nation, group and family. An irresponsible destruction of the earth’s resources, an explosion in the artefacts of technology, the tools of destruction and the electronic gadgetry of entertainment have led to a crystallization of the human mind, a narrowing of sensory perceptions and the negation of those resources that nourish the human spirit. As the physical environment refuses man space to live with dignity and harmony, a balance between the within and without is shattered, leading to a breakdown of the cultural matrix.

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At all levels of existence there is an accelerated dissipation of energy and the creation of an environment where man cannot survive or flower. Nuclear artefacts and devastating energies contained in nuclear missiles, threaten a total annihilation of the human species, while on the drawing-boards of the technologists, systems are being designed that have the potential of making human intelligence operate within a closed-circuit material culture. A relentless search for artificial intelligence is being set into motion; with its discovery the machine is expected to take over the functioning of the human brain, making it obsolete in a universe where survival depends on function and utility.

The issues become more complex with the emergence in the last few decades of a new idiom, a global language in which to express scientific facts, even though at one level this has led to a unitary view of the universe and its laws.

It is only in periods of great crisis, in an age when the tools and artefacts man creates threaten to overwhelm man and the environment that the challenge to the inner dimensions of spirit and essence is most critical.

Physicists are speaking of new break-throughs in the perception of time — a negation of the linear time stream and discoveries of a simultaneity of time. We are told by biologists that we use only a millionth part of the awesome potential of the human brain and that the left side of the brain contains the linear stream of time while the right side is the region of a perception that views time as a simultaneity. The subtlety and refinement of the physical models of the scientists unfortunately have no link with the psychological structure of the human mind, its processes or its perceptions, nor do they lead to wisdom or maturity. Scientific discoveries, however profound, are incapable of touching or transforming the human mind or the way it operates.

The statement of the seer that the ‘observer is the observed’, as of the physicist that all our observations ‘involve the direct perceptions of the experimenter’ remain abstractions with no integration or contact with actual perceptive process, unless insight transforms the nature of the ground of perception. The scientist does not carry home the discoveries of his laboratory and relate them to his relationships and attitudes in daily life. The functioning of his brain through
fragmentary thought and clogged sensory perceptions, distorts his psyche and influences his relationships. Held in the linear stream of time, the brain continues to respond to a psychological challenge in a linear movement as the observer and the observed. And it is this linear stream of time that is the labyrinth without exit.

Scientific knowledge and the inner world of man have seemingly a parallel flow.

To demand an end to scientific and technological research is to deny man his birthright, his eternal dialogue with nature and its mysteries, to put an end to the supreme insights that emerge out of man's investigations. What then is the answer?

There is a growing comprehension that a major revolution in tools and technology, unless accompanied by intense activity of the spirit and the generation of new sources of energy, results in a shrinking of human consciousness and the diminishing of that essence that makes for humanity.

Man's magnificent achievements in the outer have not led to an extension of the spaces within. There is a growing realization that prodigious technological efficiency does not by itself enrich the human dimension nor does it lead to expanded consciousness. Massive specialization unless accompanied by deep concern for the spirit is destructive to human culture.

We are witnessing a new generation coming of age, where children learn along with the alphabet the working of the computer; where certain faculties of the human intellect are losing tone and function due to their being taken over by the machine; where electronic sound is enclosing the mind of the child in a world of illusion; where the insights and a direct perception into the within of the self and the environment is disappearing. A world where material values widen the spaces between the mind and the heart; where the human qualities of sharing, affection and concern for the anguish of another, are ebbing away.

Seeing this we ask again, what is the warp and woof of culture as the creative, the free, the unbound? On what does it rest? Where shall we seek it, with what instrument shall we probe?

The only instruments we have with which to investigate are thought, and the senses. It is through these that we establish contact
with the aural, the seeable, the tasteable, the tactile, the outer and inner worlds. Out of this arises relationship to the earth, to nature, to man and to the within of the self. The brain is both the holder of thought and the root of the sensory. The universe reveals itself through the channels of the senses and what is revealed is then given direction, contextual meaning, psychological deviation by thought. Outwardly seen as two separate processes – as thought and sensory perception, in actuality the two unite in the process of apprehending the outer and the inner as object and subject. In the very process of apprehending there is naming, integral to the perception, a process that alters the perceived. This fragmentary response born of memory and manifest as thought, clogs the senses and interrupts the sensory flow, thus cutting the brain from a living contact with nature with its capacity to heal, regenerate and bring about a transference of energy. It is through the senses that contact with living things and the inflow of energy from living things is possible. We live on verbal structures and mistake the word for actuality. The ageing of the mind, the slow corroding of the brain cells commences, if one notices, with a narrowing of the senses. This leads to psychological crystallization. The division between actuality, the ‘what is’ in the within and without, and the movement of becoming as observed in ‘what should be’ chokes and corrodes the mind and perception. Any attempt to give direction or attempt to change the ‘what is’ into the ‘what should be’ brings conflict and with it deterioration. It is the death of the creative.

We are awake neither to laughter nor to tears. Our minds are occupied with survival, or with the trivial, with an incessant chattering of the mind, and so our sensory perceptions are blurred. We never see or listen with all our senses alive and fully functioning. It is only in an awareness in which the senses are fully awake, in contact with the living present, that an ever young mind is possible. Life is movement, but the mind is static or engrossed in its own self-centred activity. A mind without space, caught in time, can only reproduce itself. It can never witness the birth of the new.

As the bird tied to a string that flies in different directions without finding a resting place returns to the stake to which it is bound, so do our thoughts. Age and misuse corrode the brain cells, narrow the senses, make the mind insensitive.
We see that thought arising as it does from the storehouse of memory is by its very nature static and value-loaded; uniting with the sensory flow as perception, it crystallizes and the cleaving energy of perception is dimmed. The senses as they operate through the bondage of thought corrode and destroy non-verbal perception. Can one start perceiving the outer world – the leaf, the stone, a human face – without judgement or evaluation, without thought as the word intervening in that perception? Can one see the various greens in nature’s palette, listen to the ocean’s roar in the midst of storm? Can one just observe and with the same movement of observation contact the within, the movement of desire, fear, ambition, loneliness, sorrow and the anguish of death? Can one let life, whatever ‘is’, the actual, flow through the mind without obstacles or judgements to distort it? Can one let ‘what is’ reveal its nature and its essence? Can one let ‘what is’ flower? This flowering, a state when all the senses are fully awake and operating simultaneously, ends self-centred activity. In it is its own austerity.

And central to the inquiry is it possible to separate thought from sensory perception? Can one negate the separation between the observer and the observed? Can the mind have the muscle, the tone and the weight to hold this paradox of immense complexity within the mind, and in its own space and time let it reveal its nature, release the energies held within it? It is only through observation, through perception that this question can be posed. The very complexities in dealing with the root of the human mind and its structure makes it essential to ask the fundamental question and, having asked, to start observing the outer and inner with utmost simplicity. This itself adds a new dimension to the human mind, extends its capacities.

From this arises skill in perception, an action of compassion as essence, the seed of the creative. The Chandogya Upanishad speaks of this state as the mind within the heart, the ‘space that is the full, the non-active’. Space where all the senses abide undifferentiated, where the barriers between the within and the without, the seer and the seen dissolve. It is this alone, a mind born of compassion and intelligence that can contain and hold the outer thrust of technology and its artefacts so that they remain tools and do not take over the human mind. In this may be the full flowering of the human species.
'Abraham's Sacrifice I', etching by Patrick Pye
These new versions of poems from Paul Celan's collections Von Schwelle zu Schwelle (1955), Sprachgitter (1959) and Die Niemandsrose (1963) are intended to fill gaps in my earlier selections, the later and larger of which, Paul Celan: Poems, is still available from Carcanet Press. For biographical information about the poet, readers are referred to this book. My introduction to it also touches on the peculiar difficulties of translating this incomparable poet's work – difficulties of interpretation, in the first place, but also of structure and diction. Although I have been helped by the large corpus of secondary literature, in many languages, devoted to Celan's work, critical approaches to it are so various and contradictory that only repeated reading has enabled me to grapple once more with poems that had proved untranslatable. Celan himself wrote no critical essays or explanatory notes on his poems; and a critical, annotated edition of his poems that has been in progress for a decade or so has not yet appeared.

Polysemy, paradox and what he himself called 'darkness' are of the essence of his work, though this darkness is apportioned, contrasted with light, in a chiaroscuro all his own, with the utmost skill and precision. The difficulties of his manner correspond exactly to the difficulties of his theme – his lifelong attempt to understand and affirm the meaning of those seemingly meaningless mass killings of which he was a survivor, but his family and community were not survivors. Such affirmation could be attained only by way of negation, even of blasphemy, by an unflinching confrontation with darkness and death. His rosa mystica became the No One's Rose, and that No One the name of God. Whether supported by esoteric tradition or not – and Celan was well versed in Jewish and Christian mysticism – such mysteries could not be stated, only intimated in terms of his own experience and vision, in images drawn both from his life and from studies that ranged from religion and folklore to botany, crystallography and nuclear physics. Because he was a poet above all, the terms he derived from those disciplines, and from others, like musicology, never mean only what they mean within those specializations; their meaning, from poem to poem, is multiple and mutable. Celan's refusal to fix or determine those meanings for the benefit of his readers rested on his faith in their imagination and the power of poetry to convey truths otherwise unutterable. As a translator, I have tried to retrace those 'raids on the inarticulate', repeatedly but selectively, since many of Celan's sources remain inaccessible to me. Beyond those attempts, I can offer no elucidations.
Assisi

Umbrian night.
Umbrian night with the silver of churchbell and olive leaf.
Umbrian night with the stone that you carried here.
Umbrian night with the stone.

Dumb, that which rose into life, dumb.
Refill the jugs, come.

Earthenware jug.
Earthenware jug to which the potter’s hand grew affixed.
Earthenware jug which a shade’s hand closed for ever.
Earthenware jug with a shade’s seal.

Stone, wherever you look, stone.
Let the grey animal in.

Trotting animal.
Trotting animal in the snow the nakedest hand scatters.
Trotting animal before the word that clicked shut.
Trotting animal that takes sleep from the feeding hand.

Brightness that will not comfort, brightness you shed.
Still they are begging, Francis – the dead.

(This Evening Also)

More fully,
since snow fell even on this
sun-drifted, sun-drenched sea,
blossoms the ice in those baskets
you carry into town.

Sand
you demand in return,
for the last
rose back at home
this evening also wants to be fed
out of the trickling hour.

(Von Schwelle zu Schwelle, 1955)
In Front of a Candle

Of chased gold, as
you instructed me, Mother,
I shaped the candlestick from which
she darkens up for me in the midst
of splintering hours:
your
being dead's daughter.

Slender in build,
a narrow, almond-eyed shade,
her mouth and her sex
surrounded by slumber beasts, dancing,
she drifts up from the gaping gold,
she ascends
to the crown of the Now.

With lips draped
by night
I speak the blessing:

In the name of the three
who war among themselves until
heaven dips down into the grave of feelings,
in the name of the three whose rings
glint on my finger whenever
I loosen the hair of the trees in the chasm,
so that richer torrents may rush through the deeps –,
in the name of the first of the three,
who cried out
when called upon to live where his word had been before him,
in the name of the second who looked on and wept,
in the name of the third, who piles up
white stones in the centre, –
I pronounce you free
of the amen that drowns our voices,
of the icy light on its edges
where, high as a tower, it enters the sea,
where the grey one, the dove
pecks up the names
on this and the other side of dying:
you remain, you remain, you remain
a dead woman's child,  
to the No of my longing consecrated,  
wedded to a fissure in time  
to which I was led by a mother's word  
so that once only  
a tremor should pass through the hand  
that again and again reaches out for my heart.

(Von Schwelle zu Schwelle, 1955)

Under a Picture

Swarming of ravens over a wheat billow.  
Blue of which heaven? The higher? Nether?  
Late arrow that the soul released.  
Louder whirring. Nearer glow. This world and the other.

(Sprachgitter, 1959)

ABOVE, SOUNDLESS, the  
travellers: vulture and star.

Below, after everything, we,  
ten of us, sand people. Time,  
how could it not, time has  
an hour even for us, here,  
in the sand city.

(Tell of the wells, tell  
of the well-wreath, well-wheel, of  
well-rooms — tell us.

Count and recount, the watch,  
this one too, runs down.

Water: what  
a word. We understand you, life.)

The stranger, uninvited, from where,  
the guest.
His dripping clothes.
His dripping eye.

(Tell us of wells, of—
count and recount.
Water: what
a word.)

His clothes-and-eye, like us
he is filled with night, he betokens
insight, he counts now,
like us, up to ten
and no farther.

Above, the
travellers
remain
inaudible.

(Sprachgitter, 1959)

OVER WINE AND LOSTNESS, OVER
the running-out of both:

I rode through the snow, do you hear,
I rode God into farness — nearness, he sang,
it was
our last ride over
human hurdles.

They ducked when
they heard us above their heads, they
wrote, they
lied our whinnying
into one
of their be-imaged languages.

(Die Niemandsrose, 1963)
ON EITHER HAND, there
where stars grew for me, far
from all heavens, near
all heavens:
How
one's awake there! How
the world opens for us, right through the midst
of ourselves!

You are
where your eye is, you are
above, are
below, I
find my way out.

O this wandering empty
hospitable midst. Apart,
I fall to you, you
fall to me, fallen away
from each other, we see
through:

One
and the same
has
lost us, one
and the same
has
forgotten us, one
and the same
has – –

(Die Niemandsrose, 219)

Twelve Years

The line
that remained, that
became true: . . . your
house in Paris – become
the altarpiece of your hands.
Breathed through thrice,
shone through thrice.

............... 

It's turning dumb, turning deaf
behind our eyes.
I see the poison flower.
In all manner of words and shapes.

Go. Come.
Love blots out its name: to
you it ascribes itself.

(Die Niemandsrose, 1963)

WITH ALL MY THOUGHTS I
went out of the world: and there you were,
you my quiet, my open one, and —
you received us.

Who
says that everything died for us
when our eyes broke?
Everything awakened, everything began.

Great, a sun came drifting, bright
a soul and a soul confronted it, clear,
masterfully their silence mapped out
an orbit for the sun.

Easily
your lap opened, tranquilly
a breath rose up to the aether
and that which made clouds, was it not,
was it not a shape come from us,
was it not
as good as a name?

(Die Niemandsrose, 1963)
The Lock Gate

Above all this mourning
of yours: no
second heaven.

................

To a mouth
for which it was one of a thousand
I lost –
I lost a word
that had remained with me:
sister.

To the worship of many gods
I lost a word that was looking for me:
Kaddish.

Through
the lock gate I had to go
to save the word back
to the salt waters and
out and across:
Yiskor.

(Die Niemandsrose, 1963)

Note
Kaddish is the Jewish prayer for the dead; the root is cognate with Kaddosh – holy.
Yiskor is Aramaic-Hebrew for 'he remembered', from the verb 'skar', and with a possible reference to Exodus 12.14, 'and this day shall be kept unto you for a memorial.'
It is no longer
this
heaviness
lowered at times together with you
into the hour. It is
another.

It is the weight holding back the void
that would
accompany you.
Like you, it has no name. Perhaps
you two are one and the same. Perhaps
one day you also will call
me so.

(Die Niemandsrose, 1963)

Two-housed, eternal one, you are, uninhabitable. That is why
we build and build. That is why
it stands, this
pitiable bedstead, — in the rain,
there it stands.

Come beloved.
That we may lie here, this
is the partition —: He
will then suffice himself, twice over.

Leave him, let
him have himself wholly, as the half
and half again. We,
we are the rain-bed, let him
come and lay us down dry.

He does not come, does not lay us down dry.

(Die Niemandsrose, 1963)
Anabasis

This
narrow sign between walls
the impassable-true
Upward and Back
to the heart-bright future.

There.

Syllable-
mole, sea-
coloured, far out
into the un navigated.

Then:
buoys —,
espalier of sorrow-buoys
with those
breath reflexes leaping and
lovely for seconds only – light-
bellsounds (dum-,
dun-, un-,
unde suspirat
cor),
re-
leased, re-
deemed, ours.

Visible, audible thing, the
tent –
word growing free:

Together.

(Die Niemandsrose, 1963)

A limited edition of Thirty-two Poems by Paul Celan, translated by Michael Hamburger and with an etching by Gisèle Celan-Lestrange is now being prepared by the Ember Hand Press, Norwich. It will include the poems published above.
Musical Alchemy:
the Work of Composer and Listener*

JOSCELYN GODWIN

In previous articles I have collected many accounts of those who have heard the music of the spheres and other secret harmonies, even the song of the Angels and the lyre-playing of Gods. But those of us who are still chained by the ears to Earth need the help not only of mystics and theorists but also of composers and performers, purveyors of the lowly musica instrumentalis. Composing, performing and listening are the exoteric liturgy of music, necessary for the spiritual sustenance of those who cannot achieve direct contact with its higher realities.

The composer and performer are the alchemists who help to transmute the Earth by making its substance and souls resonate with echoes of the heavenly music. In so doing, these earthly echoes also become audible in Heaven, and the gulf between the two thereby closes by another hairsbreadth. This is the accomplishment of the Great Work of musical alchemy which, like alchemy proper, aims toward the redemption of all Nature as well as to the reunion of Man with his higher self.

In order to undertake this work, the true composer, like the alchemist, does not choose his profession: he is summoned to it by a call that cannot be ignored. One of the signs of such a call is that he will possess the double endowment of skill and memory. Not without reason was Mnemosyne, Goddess of Memory, called the mother of the Nine Muses. To illustrate this I turn to Rudolf Steiner, in whom no one can fail to recognize yet another witness to the origin of music in the Imaginal World, no matter what credibility they may lend to his Anthroposophy as a whole. Steiner explains, in one of the fullest

* This article is an adaptation of Chapter 4, 'The Great Work', from Harmonies of Heaven and Earth, to be published next year by Thames and Hudson.
descriptions ever given of this subject, that in deep dreamless sleep everyone revisits the true home of the soul. But whereas most people do not even know that they have been there, retaining only a feeling of peace as a memory of the dreamless state, the initiate remains fully conscious and perceives a world of extraordinary colours and tones. Steiner says that there is another stage, intermediate between oblivion and full awareness, which is the experience of the inspired creative artist: he may not remember consciously where he has been, but still he is able to reproduce something of what he saw or heard there. Steiner speaks of the capacity of certain painters to create colour-tones and harmonies that go beyond those of the physical world (he mentions Leonardo da Vinci in particular) and asks: '... where could he have experienced them? They are the after-effects of night-time experience in the Astral world. Only this flowing ocean of light and colours, of beauty, of radiant, glimmering depths, where he has lived in his sleep, enables him to enrich his painting with unearthly values ...' 2 Then Steiner turns to music:

The musician, on the other hand, conjures up a still higher world. In the physical world he conjures up the Devachanic world. Indeed, the melodies and harmonies that speak to us from the works of our great masters are faithful copies of the Devachanic world. If we can obtain a shadow, a foretaste of the Devachanic world in anything, it is in the effects of the melodies and harmonies of music, in their effects on the human soul ... Man’s original home is in Devachan, and he hears echoes from this homeland, this spiritual world, in the harmonies and melodies of the physical world. These echoes interlace our world with the presentiments of a glorious and wonderful existence. They throng through his innermost being and thrill it with the vibrations of purest joy, of sublimest spirituality, which this lower world cannot provide. 3 (My italics)

The Memory of which Mnemosyne is patroness is not the everyday memory that recalls things from the past, but the power of recapturing our other modes of being: of remembering whence we came, who we really are, and where we are going. But memory alone is not sufficient to make an artist. Mnemosyne is the Muses’ mother, but their leader is Apollo, god of order and beauty, supreme wielder of the bow and lyre. It is sad to think of the well-meaning artists in every
genre who have tried to reproduce their memories without his blessing. Their experience may have been intense, even genuinely mystical, but how tedious is their ecstatic verse, their cosmic art, their musical improvisation. For them it is the very embodiment of unforgettable raptures, yet to others it seems inflated, pretentious or inept. Such people seldom gain any reputation, and they can never understand why the world will not listen to them.

On the other hand, there are those endowed by Apollo but wanting in Memory. Everything comes easily to them: they can paint anything, make words or notes do their will. But their deep sleep is spent in vain: they return from it with their vision still bounded by Earth's horizons. They can enchant the mind, captivate the feelings, and arouse the chthonic daemons, but never stir the immortal Spirit. Fame comes readily to such artists, for she is a fickle goddess (if not positively a whore) and loves to give the public what they want. Yet one can say this for these worldly professionals: that unlike the cosmic amateurs they enjoy a harmony of ends and means, and within their chosen limits achieve a kind of perfection akin to that of the master-craftsman who works with earthly substances.

At the same time as Rudolf Steiner was lecturing on music, Marcel Proust was also considering these matters in his magnum opus, A la recherche du temps perdu. This book is about Time and Memory, but also about the relation of the most outwardly profane occupations — sex and social climbing in fin-de-siècle Paris — to the deep currents of human destiny and existence. Proust shows his philosophical intention frequently in the first volume, Swann in Love, alerting one to read subsequent volumes in the same spirit, and never more explicitly than in the passages concerning music. I would juxtapose to Steiner's words on the treasures to be found in deep sleep these thoughts of Swann:  

He knew that his memory of the piano falsified still further the perspective in which he saw the music, that the field open to the musician is not a miserable stave of seven notes, but an immeasurable keyboard (still, almost all of it, unknown), on which, here and there only, separated by the gross darkness of its unexplored tracts, some few among the millions of keys, keys of tenderness, of passion, of courage, of serenity, which compose it, each one differing from all the rest as one universe differs from
another, have been discovered by certain great artists who do us the service, when they awaken in us the emotion corresponding to the theme which they have found, of showing us what richness, what variety lies hidden, unknown to us, in that great black impenetrable night, discouraging exploration, of our soul, which we have been content to regard as valueless and waste and void. (My italics)

Swann’s reflections are aroused by his intense response to a little phrase in a sonata for violin and piano by the fictitious composer Vinteuil. He feels as if he has known the phrase, as one knows a friend, all his life: but that ‘it belonged, none the less, to an order of supernatural creatures whom we have never seen, but whom, in spite of that, we recognize and acclaim with rapture when some explorer of the unseen contrives to coax it forth, to bring it down from that divine world to which he has access to shine for a brief moment in the firmament of ours.’

This secret function of musical creation and performance ‘made of that stage on which a soul was thus called into being one of the noblest altars on which a supernatural ceremony could be performed.’

There are only a few real artists, composers, or poets, meaning those abundantly endowed with both the memory of the realm of Ideas and the skill to embody that memory. Theirs is the privilege to conceive the progeny of the Gods, called by the alchemists the Philosophic Egg. At the appointed time these divine children are brought forth for all to behold, incarnated in bodies of paint, of marble, of vibrating air. For a time these substances undergo a veritable transmutation, becoming transparent to realities of a higher order. Paint may last a few centuries, marble and words a few millenia. But musical entities are more reluctant: no sooner are they born, with the indispensable help of the performer as midwife (or, to continue the alchemical analogy, as soror mystica), than they vanish. Again and again they have to be conjured back to earth on the altar of stage, studio, or living-room. No art so closely parallels those religious rites, such as the Mass, which demand constant re-enactment.

But although to the outward eye the music seems to be over as soon as the last chord has sounded and the celebrants have dispersed, this is not the case. Something has also been created on a subtle plane, and remains like an exquisite flower hovering over the sanctuary. One can
sense it in the stillness that ought to follow a musical performance. Clairvoyants assure us that they see it, but that it can be shattered by the sound of applause. Alas, one seldom has the pleasure of inhaling its full fragrance in silence, unless it be at home – where, in turn, one seldom enjoys live performances by the greatest interpreters. The French music critic Camille Mauclair, who was most sensitive to these things, writes of the howls, stampings, and cheers of an intoxicated audience as being like the growling of savage beasts before Orpheus. Yet he recognizes it as the sad but necessary means by which they re-enter ordinary life after musical ecstasy, and also as their way of compelling the performers to acknowledge their 'music' and to become merely human again. In any case, no musical vibrations are ever entirely lost: even though they are dispersed, they will go on vibrating through the cosmos for eternity. Mauclair also writes of this, in an essay on 'Occultisme Musical', saying that 'All our symphonies are recomposed in unknown worlds, as if on prodigious phonographs, and if, as I like to believe, they make music on other planets, it is quite possible that they will send us its echoes one day.' This is a modern recasting of the ancient idea of human music being heard by the angels, according to the conventional equation of the planetary spheres with celestial states of being.

There would be material for a whole book if one were to examine all the statements of composers for evidence that they, too, understand their inspiration as having its source on another plane. One would find ample corroboration from the composers of the Romantic era, especially:

When I compose, I feel that I am appropriating that same spirit to which Jesus so often referred. (Brahms)

When in my most inspired moods, I have definite compelling visions, involving a higher selfhood. I feel at such moments that I am tapping the source of Infinite and Eternal energy from which you and I and all things proceed. Religion calls it God. (Richard Strauss)

I have very definite impressions while in that trance-like condition, which is the prerequisite of all true creative effort. I feel that I am one with this vibrating Force, that it is omniscient, and that I can draw upon it to an extent that is limited only by my own capacity to do so. (Wagner, reported by Humperdinck)
There are other ways of communing with God besides attending mass and confession. When I am composing I feel that He is close to me and approves of what I am doing. (Puccini\textsuperscript{12})

My most beautiful melodies have come to me in dreams. (Max Bruch\textsuperscript{13})

We composers are projectors of the infinite into the finite. (Grieg\textsuperscript{14})

These quotations are taken from the interviews of Arthur Abell, an American music critic who during his 28 years' residence in Europe set out to collect composers' own accounts of their inspiration. Brahms, whom he interviewed in 1896 in the presence of Joseph Joachim, was so explicit about his religious convictions that he forbade Abell to publish their conversation (recorded by a bilingual stenographer) until 50 years after his death, which occurred the following year. Grieg and Strauss made similar restrictions. When eventually Abell published the interviews in 1955, their style and subject were too 'earnest' and old-fashioned to attract serious attention. Inspiration was no longer à la mode in an age of disillusion and objectivity.

Perhaps in the present reaction of neo-romanticism and 'post-modernism' it is coming back. When Karlheinz Stockhausen (b. 1928) makes his much-publicized statements about his own origins on the star Sirius, which he says is the source of all great composers, he is after all fully in accord with the Hermetic tradition. It is as if to say that the greatest music does not simply derive from the music of the planets (which is reflected in us at the psychic or astral level) but from the Eighth Sphere and beyond: the realms of pure Intelligence. Who is to say that certain composers are not creatures of some higher type who have voluntarily taken on human incarnation in order to bring gifts to Mankind? No matter that their personal life may not always measure up to the highest moral standards: being moral exemplars is not their task. (There are other souls who have incarnated for that purpose: we call them Saints, and we do not expect them to be great artists.) I am certain that the Arts all have their Avatars, especially in periods of rapid change such as the past thousand years. No merely earthly chain of development can account for such sudden apparitions as the Gothic Cathedrals, the four-part polyphony of Perotin, the oeuvres of Shakespeare and J. S. Bach, try as people will to interpret.
these as effects of some known cause. It takes a 'pure fool' to penetrate the fogs of reductionist scholarship and perceive the miracle which is there for all to see. But whether such miracles can only be brought about by superhuman beings descending to Earth, or whether they can also be the work of men who in the course of long striving have managed to enter the portals of Heaven, I would not like to say. The answer lies hidden in the mysteries of each person's pre-existence.

There are three main levels of musical and artistic inspiration. The highest is the 'avataric' level that has a historical function in addition to, or even surpassing, its intrinsic value. The works of such composers serve, in their own domain, like the visions of meditating saints which become the icons of religion. They become objects of contemplation for every subsequent composer, being constantly re-interpreted and imitated, just as, for instance, the painting of Jesus and his mother originally attributed to St. Luke became the model for every subsequent 'Virgin and Child.'

In slowly changing civilizations such as those of Antiquity or the East, a single revelation is sufficient to sustain and nourish a whole epoch of creativity. Such avatars are thenceforth celebrated as divine or semi-divine revealers of wisdom: Hermes, inventor of the lyre; Jubal, 'father of all such as handle the harp and organ'; Sarasvati, Hindu goddess of learning and player of the vina; the Chinese emperor Fo-Hi, 'discoverer of music' and inventor of the lute. Next to these may be placed the human but still almost mythical founders of historic musical eras, such as the Greek innovator Timotheus, contemporary of Plato; St. Gregory the Great, to whom all of Gregorian chant was at one time attributed; Ziryab (8th–9th centuries) court lutenist in Baghdad and Cordoba, who 'received his best melodies from spirits'; Magister Perotinus of Notre-Dame (circa 1200), creator of the first four-part polyphony. Each left his stamp permanently on the music of his civilization.

In every culture except the post-Medieval West, the task of the creative artist has been to work within the traditional forms bequeathed by such masters, filling them more less adequately as his own capacities permit. An icon painter, for example, repeatedly copies the best image he can find of the Virgin and Child, either having it before him or else holding it in his imagination. The monks
who composed the 'Gregorian' chants listened inwardly to a source of music in their souls: a kind of mental improvisation which anyone can practise who has sung enough chant. At its best, this is inspiration of the second degree. The spiritus that is inhaled is the breath of the archetype: that is the element of Memory. Such an artist refreshes his memory every night in deep sleep – so Rudolf Steiner has told us – but to jar it into action each morning he needs the exemplars of those with still clearer vision who have preceded him and created the style or models within which he works. At this second level – and it is no denigration to say so – the maker of songs is in no wise different from the maker of lutes: each is a recreator after a revealed pattern. The arts and the crafts, in short, are synonymous. Even nowadays, do we not revere the violins of the craftsman Stradivarius after our own fashion (by putting a price on them) as much as we do the works of his artist contemporaries Corelli or Vivaldi? Stradivarius did not invent the violin (we do not know who did: it was surely one of those avataric revelations), but was able to hold fast to its archetypal form and, with a skill that verges on the alchemical, to infuse that form into matter. While Stradivarius was a young man, Jan Vermeer of Delft was performing a similar work. His prima materia was not wood but paint, his memory not that of a shape and a sound but of a certain quality of light. Yet he, too, was a craftsman working in an old and accepted tradition, which he was able to raise to a transcendent level.

The third degree of inspiration is not strictly speaking inspiration at all, because it no longer has a connection with Memory. I have already mentioned it as the creativity that proceeds only from the creator's own ego, from the models he sees around him in the world, and from his subconscious (not his superconscious) mind. Having used the example of Vermeer, one could now cite that of his contemporary Jan Steen, the painter of amusing tavern-scenes and pictures of domestic disaster. The history of the arts in the West is largely the history of such people – that is why it is so enthralling. But in a traditional culture there is no call for their 'self-expression': their skills are put to use by simply copying the canonical works of art or craft, models which supply the Memory they lack. Such gifted but uninspired artists may achieve unusual feats of virtuosity within their medium. But more than that, they will very likely graduate one day to the second
degree of true inspiration, the constant contemplation of the models having awakened in them their own souls’ Memory.

This leads us in our descent through the creative hierarchy without a break to the position of the artist’s audience. For the beholder or receiver of the work of art, contemplation of beautiful objects should awaken (to paraphrase Plato) the memory and finally the awareness of that Intelligible Beauty that is their source. This is the ulterior purpose of art and craft alike. In the traditional crafts it is reached by means of symbols, like the geometrical patterns or animal emblems on textiles or pottery, or the elements of masonry, whose meaning is revealed in craft initiations. In traditional ‘arts’ – which means in effect those crafts employed in the service of religion – the symbols are overt, though their range of meaning will not be appreciated by all alike. It is up to the beholder to follow the symbol as far as his capacity allows, but his effort is sanctified by the fact that the object is true to its source. The only such musical art in the West is plainchant.

I have been considering the arts and their inspiration as found in traditional societies, leaving aside the special case of their development in the modern West. But now we come to analyze the experience of the listener, less distinction is necessary. People, after all, are not very different in their needs and desires, wherever and whenever we look at them. There are certain needs which music best fulfil, but it may be music of many types. I make the first division according to the three regions of the human being: belly, chest, and head. Every developed culture has music aimed at each level. There is visceral music, usually marked by strong rhythm, which makes one feel physically powerful (the battle march) or sexually aroused (the harem dance). Next there is the music of the heart and its emotions, with lovesickness always in pride of place since this is the strongest emotion one can feel, with the exception of bereavement. Thirdly there is music which sets thought in motion: the thought of the connoisseur who understands what is going on in the composer’s mind or in the performer’s actions and follows it with dispassionate interest. Just as in the diagrams of Renaissance cosmologists these three bodily regions correspond to the three macrocosmic realms of the Elements, the Planets, and the Angels, so in a humble way these ordinary musical experiences exercise Body, Soul, and Intellect.
This is true, at least to a degree, whether or not one is consciously involved in the music. Much of the time the listener is absent, either by accident as when one's mind wanders in a concert, or by design, as when one hears music as background to some foreground activity such as reading, watching a film, dining, working, etc. The choice of background music, as the specialists in Muzak and film scores know, is a delicate matter even if people never notice it. For a film it must intensify the prevailing affect, hence be aimed at the visceral or emotional level. For the other purposes it must be unobtrusive, familiar in style, constant in mood. It works through the unconscious mind to harmonize the being — and this is meant literally, for the sounding of consonant harmonies and regular rhythm does have a harmonious and regularizing effect on the body and psyche. When used as a background to reading or other work of the mind, it serves to give the emotional and physical bodies something to attune themselves to, so that they do not obtrude on the desired field of consciousness. Where mealtime music is concerned, it contributes to psychic harmony by covering awkward gaps in the conversation, while its rhythms aid the body's digestion.

It has also been known for centuries that music helps people work, and the more boring or disagreeable the work, the more it is welcome. Classical writers mention the songs of galley-slaves; nowadays it is the drudgery of factory work that is relieved by specially designed Muzak. If factory-workers are left to do their job in silence, they all too readily begin to dislike and resent it, envy those whose fortunes they are helping to make, and take frequent breaks for gossip. Muzak provides a clever solution to this problem by attacking on two levels simultaneously. Subconsciously, it again presents an example of regularity and harmony to which the worker's body and psyche naturally attune themselves. Consciously, it provides pictures, usually of a pleasantly romantic nature, to keep the imagination or fantasy occupied. Watered-down versions of popular love-songs therefore make the best factory music, just as the romances of film-stars and other princesses make the most popular reading-matter. They create a mild erotic haze in which the work-day passes quickly and easily.

Even in more elevating surroundings than factories, the commonest use of music is to feed the fantasy. Most concert-goers, though they
may not realize it, are 'lookers' to a far greater extent than they are
listeners. The music creates scenes, events, journeys, pictures in their
imagination, working like a kind of low-grade synaesthesia (the
function in which tones are transmuted directly into visions). Some
kinds of music explicitly invite this level of listening by means of an
extra-musical programme or title. The Romantic era from Berlioz
(Symphonie Fantastique) to Debussy (La Cathédrale Engloutie, etc.) was the
heyday of such programme-music: before then, it was a curiosity
(Renaissance battle-pieces; Kuhnau's Biblical Sonatas, etc.); afterwards,
rather an embarrassment. But outside Europe it is still the norm. In
the traditional music of the Far East, most compositions are avowedly
descriptive or evocative, usually of a natural scene: Ducks Flying over a
Moonlit Lake, The First Chrysanthemum, November Steps, etc. The same may
be said of Chinese and Japanese poetry and painting, for that matter,
in which, similarly, scenes of natural beauty serve both to calm and
refresh the soul and to carry a philosophical message to the intellect.
But there does not have to be a title for the listener to interpret the
music programmatically. Westerners prefer, on the whole, to choose
their tone-pictures for themselves. Besides, there are many other
contributing factors, apart from the music. One's inner imagery may
be blended with thoughts of current concerns at home or work: the
concert may be spent in deciding how to redecorate the kitchen, or in
imaginary conversations with colleagues, and yet afterwards one may
say that yes, it was a lovely evening and the music was beautiful.
Alternatively – or additionally, for all these modes of 'listening' may be
exercised at one and the same event – the focus of attention and
fantasy may be on the atmosphere of the setting, especially when this
is something other than an ordinary concert hall: the splendour of
Rococo church or palace; the sanctity and resonance of Gothic
cathedral; the natural setting of outdoor events. It may be the other
people there: the person one loves, the group of friends, the celebrity
in the next row or in the Royal Box.

Coming closer now to the musical event in itself, the listener's
primary attention may be on the performer(s). Certain individuals and
even groups carry with them an aura so compelling that their own
presence is the most felt reality, quite apart from the music. People
would go to hear (or actually to see and feel) Vladimir Horowitz or
Mick Jagger no matter what they were playing or singing, knowing
that the experience would be an intense one. At a slightly higher level, perhaps, it may be the composer's personality which one encounters. Several of the great composers have become heroic figures and exemplars for our culture, at the same time being individuals for whom one may have a deep love and respect. People identify especially with those who have suffered in their lives and transcended in their music. One need not look far to find examples of debilitating illness, deafness, blindness, poverty, loneliness, rejection, insanity, or sexual preferences outlawed by society. But in every case their music emerges supreme as the healing Elixir extracted from the soul's dark night. Another group, not necessarily separate but smaller, is constituted of those whose creative achievements exceed merely human limits, and it is these who have been mentioned before as the 'avatars' among composers.

All such extra-musical 'listening' is of value only if it achieves useful inner work. Otherwise it remains day-dreaming, the futile play of the ego which is always a waste of time if undirected by the will. The release from outer concerns into the inner world of imagery allows the creatures of the unconscious to come forward. But what sort of creatures are they? If they attach themselves to images of triumph through suffering, of nobility of soul, of divine order, all is well and good. If the images are of violence and depravity, then harm is being done. Examples of this are legion in the popular music of today, now with the further refinement of music-videos, in which the music is accompanied with filmed imagery of a generally disgusting nature. This new industry is aimed at young adolescents, i.e. those of the most sensitive age when discrimination has not yet matured but the social and sexual attitudes of a lifetime are being formed. If anyone deserves mill-stones around their necks, it is those who plant these images of obscenity and irresponsibility, cruelty and destruction in the psyches of the young, to flourish one day into God knows what monstrous fruit.

The alchemical work does indeed sound out the depths: that is the putrefactio, the visit to the Inferno, without which the Work cannot proceed with its purgative processes and its paradisal conclusion. In psychological terms it means coming face to face with the depravity and cruelty of one's own ego-nature, so that one may be quite certain that growth is to be away from, not within, the latter. To accept
putrefaction is necessary, but to soak oneself in it, to embrace it and actually to enjoy it – that is perversion, from which can grow only the spiritual powers of the Black magician. It is no surprise, then, to see the Satanic imagery, already implicit in the words and music of the Rolling Stones and their successors, brought to life in these videos populated by sacrificed virgins, soul-less hermaphrodites, and memories of the Third Reich.

Only when one's listening is concentrated unbrokenly on the music – no matter whether imagery, good or bad, is present – does one enter a phase comparable and complementary to the third degree of creativity mentioned above. This is the kind of creativity that comes from the composer's ego and skill alone, hence subject to his own psychological makeup. The listener then shares in his personality, for better or worse, by means of responses that again fall into the three main divisions of visceral, emotional, and mental, or those of body-music, heart-music, and head-music.

Body-music is strongly rhythmic and regular, thus resembling the physical constitution itself. It is best felt by actual participation in the movement and gesture, whether in the perfect discipline of classical ballet, the weightless swirl of the waltz, or the orgiastic contortions of popular and savage dancing. Even without this there will be some felt response on the part of the passive listener. For instance, the loud obstinate beat of rock 'n' roll raises the pulse and breathing rate, and the listener responds by foot- or hand-tapping. Some people, in fact, react to all music in this way, or not at all. But in the more refined forms of body-music, the response takes place not in the physical but in the subtle body; to be precise, in the linga sharira or etheric body through which the movements of the will are transferred to the physical vehicle. This is the locus of those empathetic feelings of lightness and grace which one experiences at the ballet. As a subtle vehicle, it is capable of movements and impulses which, in the untrained person, cannot possibly be realized on the physical level. It dances with the dancer, who differs from ordinary people in having brought the two vehicles into unanimity.

Heart-music grips one by the emotions, which have their seat not in the physical or etheric vehicles (though they may affect these) but in the kama rupa or vehicle of passions and desires. For one's everyday emotions it substitutes the vicarious longings, the artificial sorrows
and joys, for which art has always been cultivated. Since this is the centre of most systems of musical aesthetics, and of most people’s experience, little need be said about it here. But again it is an important consideration whether the emotions generated are ennobling or debasing. Whether they are happy or sad is an incidental matter. Is the sorrow that of the hurt ego (the maudlin self-pity of the Blues) or of the higher Self entombed therein (the St. Matthew Passion)? Is the joy that of sexual conquest or that of the praise-song that fertile Nature sings to her Creator? When it acts positively, heart-music aids in the refinement of our own emotions by displaying those of people better than ourselves. If it displays those of people who are worse, then persistent exposure will cause us to resemble them instead.

Head-music is perceived in the kama manas, the ‘lower mind’. Here the music is transmuted into thoughts, usually visual in nature but far removed from the idle fantasies described earlier. This is the preserve of the trained musician, the connoisseur in the sense of being cognizant of what is going on. The music may be experienced as spread out over inner space, its different pitches and textures separated as in a score. Often the image of a keyboard, or the feel of one’s hands on an instrument, appears as an aid to understanding. Words, too, explain the harmonies and forms in the language of musical analysis. Empathetic emotion is supplanted by the critical intellect (now using the term in its lower, more usual sense): the faculty that watches, weighs, and judges the work or the performer. Here, too, the connective thoughts have their place that comprehend the music in its historical context or in relation to the composer’s other works. Musicologists commonly become addicted to this level of listening, and for some types of music it is the only proper response.

Composers have periodically delighted in their technical capacity to set and solve musical puzzles. Of course a composer is doing this all the time, to a certain degree, but I refer to virtuoso efforts, such as Guillaume de Machaut’s rondeau Ma fin est mon commencement, in which the second part of the music is the first part played backwards, or the canonic tradition that runs from the late 15th century Netherlands composers to J. S. Bach’s Goldberg Variations, Art of Fugue, and Musical Offering. When the composer presents us overtly with a work of great ingenuity, the right response is to appreciate it as such, which means to think it through as he has done. The same applies to compositions
by modern serial composers which are evidently first and foremost the work of cerebration. In the 1950s and 60s it was quite common for such composers to explain how their compositions were constructed, using charts, diagrams, and tables, so that those few with the patience to follow them (usually other composers with similar intentions) could cerebrate in turn. This attitude was born from the discovery of the intricate structures that govern the works of the Second Viennese School (Schoenberg, Berg, Webern): a discovery that still continues as a veritable analytic industry.

This desire to uncover secret structures goes back at least to Albert Schweitzer's recognition, early in the century, of the symbolic and numerological meanings incorporated in J. S. Bach's music. The analytic method of Heinrich Schenker, also the fountainhead of a thriving academic industry, is a cognate phenomenon, conceived at about the same time. What all these approaches do — and it is both their strength and their shortcoming — is to substitute a cerebral construct for the pure untranslated perception of the sound. By representing the music in verbal and visual terms, they allow the eye to assist or supplant the ear. The analytic charts of Schenker and others show relationships between musical events, necessarily separated in time, as if they were simultaneous in space. Only the very highest degree of 'structural hearing' can overcome all visual representation and return to the purely audible, and I doubt that this can ever be done with twelve-tone and serial music: I mean hearing all the relationships without any visual or verbal translation. Certainly composers like Schoenberg, Berg, and Webern did not intend that to be the ultimate content of their music.

The craze for uncovering secret structures continues in all the arts today. More and more of Bach's music has been shown to be based on significant numbers. Schumann's music contains ciphered messages. Bartók and Debussy apparently made conscious use of the Golden Section or 'Divine Proportion', doubtless for philosophical as well as psychological reasons. In other disciplines there are the parallel searches for numerological schemes in poetry (Dante, Spenser, etc.) and geometrical ones in painting and architecture. The discovery by John Michell and others of an ancient and universal Canon of measurement, cosmologically based and applicable to every creative activity, shows the original and exemplary form of such
'Lawfulness'. But there is no suggestion here that the proper use of a Gothic cathedral or of a Debussy prelude is to be measured. Once the work is complete, the scaffolding can be thrown away.

Listening with a combination of bodily, emotional, and thinking responses can be an extremely rich and rewarding experience. It is the summit of 'third-degree' listening, in which the composer is paid the compliment of full attention, yet in which the higher faculties of the listener are still not involved. Another model is necessary as we proceed to the types of listening that compare to the second degree of inspiration, as defined above. Just as most composers never know this degree of inspiration, so most listeners never suspect its existence. Before entering on the difficult task of trying to explain it, I will anticipate the reader's question and say that I do not believe there is any form of listening that corresponds to the first degree of creative inspiration – the rare degree I have called 'avataric', for the simple reason that above the second level, 'listening' as such ceases, and the activity that supersedes it is of the nature of mystical or philosophic meditation. This no longer requires any musical support, though of course music may be a helpful prelude to it.

The new model is a refinement of the body-emotion-intellect (or visceral-heart-head) scheme. It is based on three of the subtle centres of the individual, known to all esoteric traditions but most commonly referred to via the Hindu system of seven chakras. Three of these are involved here: in ascending order, (1) the anahata chakra, linked to the heart in the physical body and often called the Heart Centre; (2) the vishuddha chakra, also known as the Throat Centre; (3) the ajna chakra, situated between the eyebrows and called the Third Eye. There are three lower chakras which do not concern us here: no aspirant on the Right Hand Path concentrates on them except for purposes of purification, though, regrettably, they remain the centres of consciousness for much of humanity. The uppermost chakra, the 'Thousand-petalled Lotus' at the crown of the head, is in turn beyond our subject.

When one listens to music – and it must be music of a suitable degree of inspiration – with one's consciousness deliberately focused in the Heart Centre, one may be able to enter a higher octave of emotion than that of ordinary heart-music. What is now felt is no longer the human emotions that heart-music represents, but the feeling-qualities that underlie that representation: the face behind the
mask. These are cosmic feeling-qualities beyond joy and sorrow: they are experienced as an ever-changing dilation and contraction, tension and release, to which none of the five external senses offers any parallel but which find an echo in the astrological signs of the Zodiac. In Western music they are carried primarily by the harmony, but naturally this dimension of experience is not absent from unharmonized forms such as plainchant or Oriental music; it is present there as the tonal centre of gravity, to which all the other tones are related as specific feelings. Here as always, the convention of a language must be assumed, and as verbal languages differ, so one cannot normally expect to feel perfect empathy with musical styles which one has never learnt. Therefore the Westerner should attend to the harmony. Although all great composers have been masters of this dimension, some have had a particular genius that lays it bare. They are the composers such as Chopin and Wagner, who, while commanding the widest harmonic palette, can still give to the simplest progressions an aspect of profound meaning. One could take as an example the eight chords with which Wagner describes the waking of Brünnhilde in Siegfried:

Brunnhilde's Awakening, from Richard Wagner, Siegfried, Act III, Scene 3. (Simplified).

What do these harmonic progressions mean? As soon as they are analyzed or verbalized, the magic is lost. They do not even mean that Brünnhilde is awakening: that is a translation of music into the inferior language of drama. They mean what they are, and the listener to the Heart has no need for explanation.

The ajna chakra or Throat Centre is traditionally connected with artistic creation and with the use of the voice, the primordial creative organ of both divine and human beings. So it is not surprising to find
the key to it in melody. If one listens while one's consciousness is placed at the throat, the larynx may actually respond soundlessly as if one is singing the melody, just as the dilations of the anahata chakra may be felt physically around the heart. One should try to stop this natural reaction, because it tends to exteriorize the melody in an imaginary space of high and low notes, besides the possibility of one's response deteriorating into merely 'singing along'. Spatializing the melody leads readily into the stance of mental observation characteristic of head-music. To avoid this, the listener should not observe the melody, but rather become identified with it as a golden thread that winds throughout the piece and provides a vehicle for its journey through time. Again, the melody should not be represented in any form other than itself. By listening in this way one comes very close to the limpid spring of melodic inspiration to which the composer has listened and from which he has been able to draw. It is an experience of the nature of Time.

Finally, one may place the attention between the eyebrows, closing one's eyes as one must, unless adept at meditation, for all these exercises. Now one is again 'looking at' the music, but at this higher level it has nothing of the visual about it. The vision of the Third Eye is more akin to insight. It is a concentrated attention without selectivity from which one may merge and become identified with the music itself. Then the normal state, that of ego-bound consciousness, is supplanted by the state of music.

Whoever is in love with Music is in love with Death. The deepest experience of music, like the climax of love, is a self-forgetting, a replacement of the ego by the state of ecstasy: a condition of perfect presence and perfect concentration — concentration without effort, presence without a person to be present. One can say nothing about the nature of music in this ideal state of annihilation, except that it has very little to do with anything generally associated with music: there are no instruments, no singers, no keys, scales, no sense of high or low, no emotion (for that requires a person to be moved, and a place to be moved to). The music is; and it is all that is. Whatever it does, is right. It moves without moving in a space without dimensions. All one can be entirely certain of is Time, for there is change in this world. And yet there is something beyond it still: for occasionally a silence peeps through the music, and with that silence a glimpse of yet
another order of being. When the music ceases, this Other is revealed. If the music was spaceless, this is timeless, too. When the music stops, time may, just possibly, stop for a moment, and then annihilation is complete: no individual, no music, nothing. The purpose of music is to lead us, time and again, to the threshold of this Void, in the hope that one day we will be strong enough to step across it. We practise through music during life in order that when we die we may catch that ever-open door, that needle’s eye, and willingly leave behind all that we are to vanish through it.

Notes

2 Ibid., p. 25.
3 Ibid., pp. 26, 28.
5 Ibid., pp. 363–4.
6 Ibid., pp. 365–6.
8 Ibid., p. 89.
10 Ibid., p. 86.
11 Ibid., p. 138.
12 Ibid., p. 122.
13 Ibid., p. 144.
14 Ibid., p. 162.
15 Genesis 4.21.
17 Symposium, 210 d–e.
The Wild Birds

WENDELL BERRY

'Where have they gone?' Wheeler thinks. But he knows. Gone to the cities, forever or for the day. Gone to the shopping center. Gone to the golf course. Gone to the grave.

He can remember Saturday afternoons when you could hardly find space in Hargrave to hitch a horse, and later ones when an automobile could not move through the crowd on Front Street as fast as a man could walk.

Wheeler is standing at his office window, whose lower pane announces Wheeler Catlett & Son, Attorneys at Law; he is looking out diagonally across the courthouse square and the roofs of the stores along Front Street at the shining reach of the Ohio where a white towboat is shoving an island of coal barges against the current, its screws roiling the water in a long fan behind it. The barges are empty, coming up from the power plant at Jefferson, whose dark plume of smoke Wheeler can also see, stretching out eastward, upriver, under the gray sky.

Below him, the square and the streets around it are deserted. Even the loafers are gone from the courthouse where, the offices shut, they are barred from the weekday diversions of the public interest, and it is too cold to sit on the benches under the social security trees, now leafless, in the yard. The stores are shut also, for whatever shoppers may be at large are out at La Belle Riviere Shopping Plaza, which has lately overborne a farm in the bottomland back of town. Only a few automobiles stand widely dispersed around the square, nosed to the curbs, Wheeler's own and half a dozen more, to suggest the presence, somewhere, of living human beings - others like himself, Wheeler supposes, here because here is where they have usually been on Saturday afternoon.

* This story was first published in U.S.A. in the magazine Mother Jones. The characters also appear in Wendell Berry's novels Nathan Coulter, A Place on Earth and The Memory of Old Jack.
But he knows too that he is signifying something by being here, as if here is where he agreed to be when he took his law school diploma and came home, or as near home as he could get and still practice law, forty years ago. He is here as if to prove 'to all to whom these presents may come' his readiness to be here.

And yet if he is here by agreement, he is here also in fidelity to what is gone: the oldtime Saturday to which the country people once deferred all their business, when his old clients, most of them now dead, would climb the stairs to his office as often as not for no business at all, but to sit and speak in deference to their mutual trust, reassuring both to them and to him. For along with the strictly business or legal clientele such as any lawyer anywhere might have had, Wheeler started out with a clientele that he may be said to have inherited — farmers mostly, friends of his father and his father-in-law, kinsmen, kinsmen's friends, with whom he thought of himself as a lawyer as little as they thought of themselves as clients. Between them and himself the technical connection was swallowed up in friendship, in mutual regard and loyalty. Such men, like as not, would not need a dime's worth of legal assistance between the settling of their parents' estates and the writing of their own wills, and not again after that. Wheeler served them as their defender against the law itself, before which they were ciphers, and so felt themselves — and he could do this only as their friend.

'What do I have to do about that, Wheeler?' they would ask, handing him a document or a letter.

And he would tell them. Or he would say, 'Leave it here. I'll see to it.'

'What I owe you, Wheeler?'

And he would name a figure sometimes to protect himself against the presumptuousness and longwindedness of some of them, or to protect the pride of others. Or he would say, 'Nothing,' deeming the work already repaid by 'other good and valuable considerations.'

So Wheeler is here by prior agreement and pursuant history — survivor, so far, of all that the agreement has led to. The office has changed little over the years, less by far than the town and the country around it. It contains an embankment of file cabinets, a small safe, a large desk, Wheeler's swivel chair, and a few more chairs, some more comfortable than others. The top of the desk is covered with books
and file folders neatly stacked. On the blotter in the center is a ruled yellow tablet on which Wheeler has been writing, the top page nearly covered with his precise, impatient blue script. By way of decoration, there are only a few photographs of Wheeler’s children and grandchildren — Christmas presents, all of them, for Wheeler is not the sort either to provide himself with such mementos or to require such reminding. Though the room is dim, he has not turned on a light.

A more compliant, less idealistic man than Wheeler might have been happier here than he has been, for this has been a place necessarily where people have revealed their greed, arrogance, meanness, cowardice, and sometimes their inviolable stupidity. And yet, though he has known these things, Wheeler has not believed in them. In loyalty to his clients, or to their Maker, in whose image he has supposed them made, he has believed in their generosity, goodness, courage, and intelligence. Mere fact has never been enough for him. He has pled and reasoned, cajoled, bullied, and preached, pushing events always toward a better end than he knew they could reach, resisting always the disappointment that he knew he should expect, and when the disappointment has come, as it too often has, never settling for it in his own heart or looking upon it as a conclusion.

He has seen nobody all afternoon. In the quiet he has worked well and finished all that he had to do. And now he stands at the window, as if to set eyesight and mind free of the room. He will go soon. By leaving early, he will have time to go up to his farm and salt his cattle. But for a moment longer he allows himself to be held there by the almost solemn stillness of the square and the business streets of the little town, considering again the increasing number of empty buildings, the empty spaces where buildings have been burned or torn down and not replaced, hating again the hopeless expenditure of its decay.

And now, directly across from his office door, a pickup truck eases in to the curb; two men and a woman get out. Wheeler recognizes his cousin, Burley Coulter, Burley’s nephew Nathan, and Hannah, Nathan’s wife. The three come together at the rear of the truck, the woman between the two men, and start across the street.

“What are they doing here?” Wheeler wonders. And then from their direction he understands that they have come to see him. He smiles, glad of it, and presently he hears their footsteps on the stairs.
The footsteps ascend slowly, for Burley is past seventy now and, though still vigorous, no longer nimble.

Wheeler goes through the outer office, where his secretary's typewriter sits hooded on its desk, and meets them in the dim hallway at the top of the stairs, reaching his hand to them as they come up.

'Hello, Hannah. Go right on in there in the office, honey. How're you, Nathan? Hello, Burley.'

'How you making it, Wheeler?' Burley says in his hearty way, as if speaking to him perhaps across a wide creek. 'I told them you'd be here.'

'You were right,' Wheeler says, glad to feel his presence justified by that expectation. It is as though he has been waiting for them. Burley's hand is hard and dry, its grip quick on his own. And then Wheeler lays his hand on the shoulder of the older man, pressing him toward the door, and follows him through into the greater light of the windowed rooms.

In his office he positions chairs for them in a close arc facing his chair. 'Sit down. I'm glad to see you.'

They take chairs and he returns to his own. He is glad to see them, and yet seeing them here, where they regard him with a certain unaccustomed deference, is awkward for him. He sees them often, Burley and Nathan especially, but rarely indoors, and today they have made a formal occasion of their visit by dressing up. Burley, true to custom, has put on his newest work clothes, tan pants and shirt, starched and ironed to creases stiff as wire, the shirt buttoned at the throat but without a tie, a dark, coarse wool sweater, which he has now unbuttoned, and he holds on his lap, as delicately as if it is made of eggshell, his Sunday hat. Only the hat looks the worse for wear, but any hat of Burley's will look the worse for wear two hours after he has put it on; the delicacy of his hold on it now, Wheeler knows, is a formality that will not last, a sign of his uneasiness within his own sense of the place and the occasion. In his square-cut, blunt hand, so demanding or quieting upon hound or mule or the shoulder of another man, he holds the hat so that it touches without weight the creased cloth of his pants.

'Kind of dreary out, Wheeler,' he says.

'Yes. It is, Burley. Or it looks dreary since it clouded up. I haven't been out. I was going out, though, pretty soon.'
‘Well, we won’t keep you very long.’
They’re waiting, Wheeler sees, for permission to begin their business. ‘Well,’ he says, ‘what have you got on your minds?’
‘Wheeler,’ Burley says, ‘I want you to write my will.’
‘You do?’ Wheeler is surprised and embarrassed. One does not normally write a person’s will pointblank in the presence of his heirs. For Burley to bequeath his farm to Nathan right under Nathan’s nose strikes Wheeler as an indiscretion that is, if not offensive, at least embarrassing, a public intimacy of a sort. He is amazed to hear himself ask, ‘What for?’
‘Well, Wheeler,’ Burley says, ‘I’m old enough to die, ain’t I?’
Wheeler grins. ‘You always have been.’ He leans back in his chair as if to make the occasion more ordinary than he can feel it becoming.
‘Well then, Nathan, you and Hannah should probably let Burley and me talk this over alone.’
‘But Hannah and Nathan ain’t in it, Wheeler. They ain’t going to be in it.’
Wheeler sits up. All three of his guests are watching him now. He says, ‘Oh,’ though that is not what he meant to say. And then, deliberately, he says, ‘Then who is in it?’
‘Danny Branch.’
‘Danny.’ Though he was determined not to be, Wheeler is again surprised. The springs of his chair sing as he leans slowly back. For a long moment he and Burley sit and look at each other, Burley smiling, Wheeler frowning and staring as if Burley is surrounded by a mist.
‘Danny? You’re going to leave your half of your daddy’s place, Dave Coulter’s place, old George Coulter’s place, to Danny Branch?’
‘That’s right.’
‘Why?’
‘He’s my boy, Wheeler. My son.’
‘Who said he is?’
‘Well, Wheeler, for one, I did. I just said it.’
‘Do you have any proof?’
Burley has not perceptibly moved, but his thumb and middle finger, which at first pinched just the brim of his hat, have now worked their way to the base of the crown, the brim rolled in his hand. ‘I ain’t looking for proof, Wheeler. Don’t want any. It’s done too late for proof. If there’s a mistake in this, it has been my life, or a whole lot of it.’
‘Did Kate Helen say he was yours?’
Burley shakes his head, not going to answer that one. ‘Now Wheeler, I know you know the talk that has said he was my boy, my son, ever since he was born.’

Wheeler does know it. He has known it all along. But it is irregular knowledge, irregularly known. He does not want to know it, or to admit that he knows it. ‘Talk’s talk,’ he says. ‘Talk will be talk. To hell with talk. What we’re dealing with now is the future of a good farm and the family that belongs to it, or ought to.’

‘Yes indeed.’

‘I don’t think you ought to take a step like this, Burley, until you know for sure.’

‘I know all I want to know, more than I need to know.’

Wheeler says, ‘Well . . . ,’ ready to say that he, anyhow, can think of several questions he would like to know the answers to, but Burley raises the hand with the hat in it and stops him.

‘It finally don’t have anything to do with anything, Wheeler, except just honesty. If he’s my boy, I’ve got to treat him like he is.’

‘But you do treat him like he is, and you have. You gave him half his upbringing, or three-quarters. Right up to Kate Helen’s death you saw that he raised a crop and went to school and had what he needed. You’ve taken him to live with you, him and Lyda and their children, and you’ve . . .’ Wheeler stops, realizing that he is saying nothing that all four of them do not already know.

‘But now it’s time to go beyond all that. Now I have to say that what belongs to me will belong to him, so he can belong to what I belong to. If he’s my boy, I owe that to him free and clear.’

‘Suppose he’s not.’

‘Suppose he is.’

Wheeler is slouched low in his chair now, in the attitude, nearly, of a man asleep, except that his fingers are splayed out stiffly where they hang over the ends of his chair arms, and his eyes are widened, set on Burley in a look that would scour off rust. It is not a look easily met.

But Burley is looking back at him, still smiling, confidently and just a little indulgently smiling, having thought beyond where they have got to so far.

‘It’s wayward, Wheeler. I knowed you’d say what you’ve said. Or anyhow think it. I know it seems wayward to you. But wayward is the
way it is. And always has been. The way a place in this world is passed on in time is not regular nor plain, Wheeler. It goes pretty close to accidental. But how else could it go? A deed nor a will, no writing at all, can tell you much about it. Even when it looks regular and plain, you know that somewhere it has been chancy, and just slipped by. All I see that I'm certain of is that it has got to be turned loose — loose is the way it is — to who knows what. I can say in a will, and I'm going to, that I leave it to Danny, but I don't know how it's going to him, if it will, or past him, or what it's coming to, or what will come to it. I'm just the one whose time has come to turn it loose.'

Now it seems that they are no longer looking at each other, but at a cloud between them, a difference, that they have never before come so close to making or admitting. Whatever there may have been of lawyer and client in this conversation is long gone now, and Wheeler feels and regrets that departure, for he knows that something dark and unwieldy has impinged upon them, that they will not get past except by going through.

It is Burley's word wayward that names the difference that they are going to have to reckon with. Wheeler's mind makes one final, despairing swerve toward the field where his cattle are grazing. For a moment he sees it as he knows it will look now in the wind of late November, in the gray light under the swift clouds. And then he lets it go.

Wayward — a word that Burley says easily. If the things of this world are wayward, then he will say so, and love them as they are. But as his friends all know, it is hard to be a friend of Wheeler's and settle for things as they are. You will be lucky if he will let you settle for the possible, the faults of which he can tell you. The wayward is possible, but there must be a better way than wayward. Wheeler can remember Burley's grandfather, George Washington Coulter. He wrote his father's, Dave Coulter's, will here in this very room. He does not remember not knowing Burley, whom he has accompanied as younger kinsman, onlooker, and friend through all his transformations, from the wildness of his young years, through his years of devotion in kinship and friendship, to his succession as presiding elder of a company of friends that includes Wheeler himself. It has a pattern clear enough, that life, and yet, as Wheeler has long known without exactly admitting, it is a clear pattern that includes the unclear, the wayward. The wayward and the dark.
Almost as suddenly as his mind abandons its vision of the daylit field, Wheeler recalls Burley as a night hunter. The thought of Burley solitary in the woods at night has beguiled Wheeler’s imagination and held it, more strongly perhaps than anything else outside the reach of his own life. For he knows — or from his own memory and from hearsay he is able to infer — that at those times Burley has passed over into a freedom that is old and, because it is strenuous and solitary, also rare. Those solitary hunts of his have always begun by chance or impulse. He may be out of the house already when they begin — on his way afoot to visit a neighbor after supper, maybe, followed by the dogs, who pick up a trail, and he is off. Or he will wake in the night, hearing his dogs treed away on the bluff below his house or in a thicketed slue hollow in the river bottom, and he will get up and go to them, leaving the warm bed, and so begin a route through the dark that may not bring him home again until the sun is up. Or the fever, as he calls it, will hit him while he is eating supper, and he will go, pausing only to strap on his twenty-two pistol in its shoulder holster, light the lantern, and stick into the game pocket of the canvas hunting coat, that serves him year round also as work jacket and raincoat, an apple or two, a handful of cold biscuits, perhaps a half pint ‘against the chill.’ They start as if unintentionally, these hunts, and they proceed according to the ways of coon and hound, or if the hunting is slow, according to the curiosity of a night traveler over his dark-estranged homeland. If he goes past their house, he may call to his neighbors, Martin and Arthur Rowanberry, to join him or at least turn loose their dogs. If he sees a light still on in the river bank cabin of his friend, the retired barber, the fisherman, Jayber Crow, who will be up reading by the fire, he may go in and visit or, if it is late and turning cold, spend the night. In his young manhood, before responsibilities began to call him home, these solitary hunts might carry him away two days and nights, across long stretches of the country and back again, ignoring the roads except to cross them, not seen by a human eye, as though in the dark traverses of his own silence he walked again the country as it was before Finley and the Boones, at home in it time out of time.

He has been a man of two loves, not always compatible: of the dark woods, and of the daylit membership of kin and friends and households that has cohered in one of its lineages through nearly a century of living memory, and surely longer, around Ben Feltner, and then Jack Beechum, and then Mat Feltner, and then Burley’s brother, Jarrat,
and now around himself. So Wheeler has known him. But it has made him more complex than Wheeler knows, or knows yet, that double love. He has never learned anything until he has had to — as he willingly says, as perhaps is so — but he has had to learn a good deal.

To Wheeler, behind his neatly, somewhat uncomfortably dressed Burley Coulter here in his office, there stands another, and yet another: the Burley of the barns and fields of all their lives and of his own loyally kept place and household, and then the Burley of the night-time woods and the wayward ways through the dark.

In Wheeler's mind the symbol of Burley's readiness to take to the woods at nightfall is the tan canvas hunting coat — or, he must suppose, the succession of them, though he does not remember ever seeing Burley in a new one — that he has worn through all the winters that Wheeler has known him, on all occasions except funerals, tobacco or livestock sales, or trips to Hargrave on business, such as this. The coat, as Wheeler remembers it, is always so worn that it seems more a creature than an artifact, ripped, frizzled, crudely patched, short a button or two, black at the edges. Dressed for work, he is dressed for the woods. As a farmer, Burley seems, or has come to seem, constant enough, and yet, even as such, to Wheeler he has something of the aspect of a visitor from the dark and the wild — human, friendly to humans, but apt to disappear into the woods.

If Burley has walked the marginal daylight of their world, crossing often between the open fields and the dark woods, faithful to the wayward routes that alone can join them, Wheeler's fidelity has been given to the human homesteads and neighborhoods and the known ways that preserve them. Through dark time and bad history, he has been keeper of the names that bear hope of light to the human clearings, and an orderly handing down. He is a preserver and defender of the dead, the more so, the more passionately so, as his acquaintanceship among the dead has increased, and as he has better understood the dangers to their living heirs. How, as a man of law, could he have been otherwise, or less? How, thinking of his own daughter and his two sons, could he not insist on an orderly passage of these frail human parcels through time?

It is not as though he is unacquainted with the wayward. He has, God knows, spent his life trying to straighten it out. The wayward is a possible way — because, for lack of a better, it has had to be. But
a better way is thinkable, is imaginable, and Wheeler, against all evidence and all odds, is advocate of the better way. To plead the possibility of the merely possible, losing in the process all right to insist on the desirability of what would be better, is finally to lose even the possible — or so, in one way or another, Wheeler has argued time and again, and against opponents of larger repute than Burley Coulter. If he is set now to do battle with his friend, his purpose is not entirely self-defense, though it is that.

He does not forget — it has been a long time since he has been able to forget — that he is making his stand in the middle of a dying town in the midst of a wasting country, from which many have departed and much has been sent away, a land wasting and dying for want of the human names and knowledge that could give it life. It has been a comfort to Wheeler to think that the Coulter place, past Burley's death, would live on under that name, belonging first to Nathan, whom Wheeler loves as he loves Burley, and then to Nathan's son, Mattie. Matthew Burley Coulter. That is what he longs for, that passing on of the land, in the clear, from love to love, and it is in grief for that loss that he is opposing Burley. But this grief has touched and waked up the larger one, and the old anger that goes with it. How many times in the last twenty years has Wheeler risen to speak, to realize that the speech he has prepared is a defense of the dead and the absent, and he is pleading with strangers for a hope that, he is afraid, has no chance?

'It was wayward when it come to me,' Burley is saying. 'Looked like to me, I was there, born there and not someplace else, just by accident. I never took to it by nature the way Jarrat did, the way Nathan here, I think, has. I just turned up here, take it or leave it. I might have gone somewhere else when I got mustered out in 1919, but I come back, and looked like I was in the habit of staying, so I stayed. I thought of leaving, but the times was hard and Pap needed me — or needed somebody better, to tell the truth — and I stayed. And then Pap died and Mam was old, and I stayed on with her. And when she died I stayed on and done my part with Jarrat; the boys was gone then, and he needed me. And somehow or other along the way, I began to stay because I wanted to. I wanted to be with Jarrat, and Nathan and Hannah here, and Mat and you and the others. And
somewhere or other I realized that being here was the life I had because I'd never had another one any place else, and never would have.

‘And that was all right, and is, and is going to be. But it looks like a bunch of intentions made out of accidents. I think of a night now, Wheeler. I lie awake. And I've thought this over and over, from one end to the other, and I can't see that the way it has been is in line with what anybody planned or the way anybody thought it ought to be.’

‘But they did plan. They hoped. They started hoping and planning as soon as they got here — way back yonder.’

‘It missed. Or they did. Partly, they were planning and hoping about what they'd just finished stealing from the ones who had it before, and were already quarreling over themselves. You know it. And partly they were wrong. How could they be right about what hadn't happened? And partly it was wayward.’

‘But what if they hadn't planned and hoped — the ones that did anyhow — the good ones.’

‘Then we wouldn't know how far it missed, or how far we did, or what we missed. I ain't disowning them old ones, Wheeler.’

‘But now it's your time to plan and hope and carry it on. That we missed doesn't make any difference.’

‘No. That time's gone for me now, and I've missed probably as bad as the worst of the others. Now it's my time to turn it loose. You're talking to an old man, Wheeler, damn it!’

‘Well, you're talking to an old man too, damn it, but I've still got some plans and hopes! I still know what would be best for my place!’

‘I know the same as you, Wheeler. I know what would be best for my place too — somebody to live on it and care about it and do the work. And I know what it would look like if somebody did. But I come here today to turn it loose. And I've got good reason to do it.’

‘You've got a better reason than you've told me?’

Burley has been sitting upright on his chairseat as if it were a stool. Now he sags back, and for a moment sits staring at Wheeler without paying any particular attention to him, as if he doesn't notice or it doesn't matter that Wheeler is staring back at him. And then he says, ‘Cleanse thou me from secret faults.’

‘What?’

‘Cleanse thou me from secret faults.’ As always when he quotes
Scripture, Burley is grinning, unwilling, as Wheeler knows, to be entirely serious about any part of it that he can understand, even though, once he has understood it, he may be entirely willing to act on it.

Recognizing the passage now, Wheeler grins too, and then laughs and says what otherwise he would not say, 'Well, Burley, mighty few of your faults have been secret.'

And that is pretty much a fact. Burley Coulter's faults have been public entertainment in the town and neighborhood of Port William ever since he was a boy, most of his transgressions having been committed flagrantly in the public eye, and those that were not, if they had any conceivable public interest, having been duly recounted to some element of the public by Burley Coulter himself. His escapades have now, by re-telling, worn themselves as deeply into that countryside as its backroads.

Wheeler himself has loved to tell the story of Burley's exit from the back door of Grover Gibbs's house, having paid his compliments to Beulah Gibbs, as Grover returned unexpectedly through the front door. Carrying his clothes in his arms through a night black as the inside of a gourd, Burley ran through the stock pond behind the barn, and then, heading downhill into the woods, got behind a big calf who was going slower than he was, whereupon, according to him, he cried, 'Calf, get out of the way! Let somebody run that knows how!'

'All that's past,' Wheeler says. 'Whatever was wrong in it can be forgiven in the regular way. When the psalmist said thou, he didn't mean anybody in Port William or Hargrave. That account's not to be settled here.'

'But some of it is.' Burley's smile is now gone altogether. 'Listen, Wheeler, I didn't come to take up a lot of your time, but we've done got this started now. I'm not telling you what you need to know to be my lawyer. I'm telling you what you need to know to be my friend. If a lawyer was all I wanted, I reckon I wouldn't have to hire a friend.'

'You're not hiring a friend. You have one. Go on.'

'Well, Kate Helen was an accommodating woman, too accommodating some would say, but she was good to me, Wheeler. We had what passed with me then for some good times. When I look back at them now, they still pass with me for good, though they come up
with more results than I expected. I ain't going to go back on them, or
on her, though I'm sorry, Lord knows, for some of the results.'

There is a tenderness in Burley's voice now that Wheeler did not
expect, that confesses more than he is yet prepared to understand, but
it gives Kate Helen a standing, a presence, there in the room, one
among them now, who will not lightly be dismissed. And Wheeler is
carried back to a day in his own life when he passed along the creek
road in front of Kate Helen's house, and saw her sitting on the porch
in a rocking chair, barefooted, a guitar forgotten on her lap, a red
ribbon in her hair. He has never forgotten. And the Kate Helen who
attends them now, in Wheeler's mind as perhaps in Burley's, is Kate
Helen as she was then - a woman, as Burley used to say, who could
take up a lot of room in a man's mind. In Wheeler's opposition to
Burley there is no uncertainty as to what Burley saw when he looked
at Kate Helen; Wheeler saw too, and he remembers. But now she has
come back to him with something added to her; all that was said or
implied in the gentleness with which Burley spoke of her. If she is
with them now, Burley is now with them as her protector, and there
are some things that Wheeler might have said about her that he is not
going to say, and will never say again. He feels under his breastbone
the first pain of a change.

But he turns to Nathan. 'Is this what you want? If it wasn't to be
Danny Branch's, it would be yours - your children's.' He is holding
out against what he sees he will have to give in to, still determinedly
doubting what he knows he is going to have to believe, and his voice
has the edge of challenge in it. He will not settle easily for the truth
just because it happens to be the truth. He wants a truth he can like,
and they are not surprised.

As his way is, Nathan has been sitting without moving, staring down
at the toe of his shoe, as if he is shy perhaps, and now he makes only
the small movement that brings his gaze up to meet Wheeler's. It is
the look of a man utterly resolved to mean what he says, and Wheeler
feels the force of it.

'I know what Uncle Burley wants, Wheeler, and it's all right. And
I aim to stick to Danny.'

Burley passes his hand through the air, the hat still in it, but
forgotten now; it is just along for the ride. 'I've not asked that of
him, Wheeler. I don't ask anything. If Nathan sticks to Danny after
I'm dead, that'll be fine, but my ghost won't trouble him if he don't.'

Wheeler turns to look at Hannah, knowing what to expect, but his eyes tax her nevertheless, making it difficult.

'Yes,' she says, nodding once and smiling at him, being as nice to him as she can be, though he can sense how much she is forbearing. 'It's what we all want. It's best.' And without looking away from Wheeler, she reaches for Burley's left hand, and drawing it over into her lap holds it in both of her own. To Wheeler's surprise then, her eyes suddenly fill with tears.

And then his own do. He looks down at his hands. 'Well.'

'Wheeler,' Burley says, 'Nathan and Hannah are going to have enough land, and their children too —'

'What if they weren't?'

'— and Danny's a good boy, a good young man.'

'What if he wasn't?'

'There's no use in coming with them what-ifs, Wheeler. I ain't responsible for them. They dried up and blowed away long years ago. What if I had been a better man?

'If Nathan needed what I've got, I'd have to think of that. He don't. Besides what he has got on his own, he's his daddy's heir, and in the right way. You might say that he has come, as far as he has got anyhow, by the main road, the way you have, Wheeler, and has been regular. I haven't been regular. I've come by a kind of back path — through the woods, you might say, and along the bluffs. Whatever I've come to, I've mostly got there too late, and mostly by surprise.

'I don't say everybody has to be regular. Being out of regular may be all right — I liked it mostly. It may be in your nature. Maybe it's even useful in a way. But it finally gets to be a question of what you can recommend. I never recommended to Jarrat's boys or Danny or your boys that they ought to be careless with anything, or get limber-legged and lay out all night in a hay rick. Your way has been different from mine, but by my way I've come here where you are, and now I've got to know it and act like it. I know you can't make the irregular regular, but when you have rambled out of sight, you have to come back into the clear and show yourself.'

'Wait now,' Wheeler says. 'I didn't —'

But Burley raises his hand and silences him. It is as if they recognize only now a change that has been established for some time: Burley
has quietly, without gesture, assumed the role of the oldest man — the first time he has ever done this with Wheeler — and has begun to speak for Wheeler's sake as well as his own.

'I know how you think it ought to be, Wheeler. I think the same as you. I even thought once that the way things ought to be was pretty much the way they were. It used to be that I thought things would go on here always the way they had been. The old ones would die when their time came, and the young ones would learn and come on. And the crops would be put out and got in, and the stock looked after, and things took care of. I thought, even, that the longer it went on the better it would get. People would learn; they would see what had been done wrong, and they would make it right.

'And then, about the end of the last war, I reckon, I seen it go wayward. Probably it had been wayward all along. But it got more wayward then, and I seen it then. They began to go and not come back — or a lot more did than had before. And now look at how many are gone — the old ones dead and gone that won't ever be replaced, the mold they were made in done threwed away, and the young ones dead in wars or killed in damned automobiles, or gone off to college and made too smart ever to come back, or gone off to easy money and bright lights and ain't going to work in the sun ever again if they can help it. I see them come back here to funerals — people who belong here, or did once, looking down into coffins at people they don't have anything left in common with except a name, and their children will forget that. They come from another world. They might as well come from that outer space the governments are wanting to get to now.

'When I think of a night, Wheeler, my mind sometimes slants off into that outer space, and I'm sorry the ones that knowed about it ever brought it up — all them lonesome stars and things up there so far apart. And they tell about these little atoms and the other little pieces that things are made out of, all whirling and jiggling around and not touching, as if a man could reach his hand right through himself. I know they know those things to blow them up.

'I lay my hand on me and quiet me down. And I say to myself that all that separateness, outside and inside, that don't matter. It's not here and not there. Then I think of all the good people I've known, not as good as they could have been, much less ought to have been, none of
them, but good for the good that was in them along with the rest—Mam and Pap and Uncle Jack, and Aunt Dorie and Uncle Marce, and Mat and Mrs. Feltner, and Jarrat and Tom and Kate Helen, all of them dead, and you three here and the others still living. And I think of this country around here, not purely good either, but good enough for us, better than we deserve. And I think of what I’ve done here, all of it, all I’m glad I did, and all I wish had been done different or better, but wasn’t.’

‘You’re saying you’re sorry for what you’ve done wrong? And by what you’re proposing to do now you hope to make it right?’

‘No! God damn it, Wheeler—excuse me, Hannah—no! What is done is done forever, I know that. I’m saying that the ones who have been here have been the way they were, and the ones of us who are here now are the way we are and to know that is the only chance we’ve got, dead and living, to be here together. I ain’t saying we don’t have to know what we ought to have been and ought to be, but we oughtn’t to let that stand between us. That ain’t the way we are. The way we are, we are members of each other. All of us. Everything. The difference ain’t in who is a member and who is not, but in who knows it and who don’t. What has been here, not what ought to have been, is what I have to claim. I have to be what I’ve been, and own up to it, no secret faults. Because before long I’m going to have to look the Old Marster in the eye, and when He says, “Burley Coulter?” I hope to say “Yes, Sir. Such as I am, that’s me.”’

And now he leans forward and, the hat brim rolled and clenched in the outer three fingers of his right hand, hooks his forefinger into the breast pocket of Wheeler’s vest. He does not pull, but only holds, as gently as possible given the hand’s forthrightness and the rigor in the crook of the old finger.

‘And, Wheeler, one thing I am is the man who cared about Kate Helen Branch—all her life, you might say.’

‘You loved her,’ Wheeler says.

‘That’s right.’

‘You were a husband to her—in all but name.’

‘That’s right.’

‘And you’re her widower—in all but name.’

‘That’s right.’
Burley unhooks his finger and leans back. He is smiling again.
And finally the direction of this meeting declares itself to Wheeler.
What Burley is performing, asking him to assist in, too late but none
the less necessarily, is a kind of wedding between himself and Kate
Helen Branch. It is the secrecy of that all-but-marriage of his that has
been his great fault, for its secrecy prevented its being taken seriously,
perhaps even by himself, and denied it a proper standing in the world.
‘And so that secret fault you’ve been talking about – that didn’t have
anything to do with the things we’ve all always known.’
‘No.’
‘It was secret love.’
‘That’s right. In a way I don’t think I even knowed it myself,
Wheeler. Anyhow, not for a long time. Not till too late.’
Wheeler is smiling too now, asking and listening, helping him
along. ‘Why didn’t you clear all this up any sooner?’
‘I’ve never learned anything until I had to, Wheeler. That’s the kind
of head I’ve got.’
‘And you’ve been learning this a long time?’
‘Years and years. Pret’ near all my life I’ve been figuring out where I
am and what I’m responsible for – and, as I said, pret’ near always too
slow and too late. Some things haven’t got my attention until they
knocked me in the head.’
‘But you and Kate Helen were involved in this friendly connection
for a long time. She must not have minded.’
‘That had a lot to do with it. We were friends, and she didn’t mind – or
didn’t seem to.’
Burley crosses his arms over his lap, going ahead now on his own.
‘You remember the little paper-sided house in Thad Spellman’s
thicket field that she and her mother moved into after her daddy died
– there by the creek road at the foot of the hill. I could get there from
town you might say by gravity, and at first that was usually how I got
there.
‘This is how it went. I want you to know.
‘On Saturday night I’d walk to Port William and loaf around in one
place and another a few hours, visiting, maybe shoot a game or two of
pool. And after while I’d get me a pint from Alice Whodat and stroll
out across the ridge, drinking along the way, listening to the sounds
and looking all around at whatever there was light enough to see –
free as a bird, as they say, and, far as I can remember, nothing on my
mind at all. Sometimes if the night was warm and dry, I'd sit down
somewhere and sing a while. None of the real things that have
happened to me had happened then. My head might as well have
been a cabbage, except I could eat and drink with it. And after while
I'd tumble down through the woods and the bushes to Kate Helen's
house.

'And maybe the first real thing that ever happened to me was that I
started going down there because I liked to. I liked Kate Helen. I liked
to sit and jaw with old Mrs. Branch. Sometimes I would go there in
broad daylight, just to visit, if you know what I mean, and we would
sit and talk and laugh. Part of it, I guess, was what you said. Kate Helen
didn't mind. Or up to a point she didn't, however far that was. She
liked me and her mother did too. And they wasn't at me all the time –
which for a while I thought was pretty low class of them, I will admit.

'They were poor, of course, which anybody could see, and so it
come about that whenever I went there I would gather up a few
groceries, things I knew they needed, and bring them along, or if we'd
ekilled hogs I'd bring a middling or a sack or two of sausage. And I'd
always try to save out a head or two for them. The old woman was a
great one to make souse, and made the best too that ever I ate. And
then I got so I'd help them make a garden. And then in the winter
I took to getting up their firewood. They needed those things to be
done, and I was the only soul they had to do them. I liked being of use
to them better than anything.

'But oftentimes, I'd go there just to sit a while and visit. We'd talk or
listen to the radio, maybe pop some corn. Sometimes we'd play and
sing a little.'

Wheeler might never have remembered it again. He had forgot that
he remembered. But now in thought he comes again down through
the steep fields along the side of the little creek valley. He is hunting,
supposedly, his shotgun lying in the crook of his arm, and busily
quartering the slope ahead of him is his good English setter by the
name of Romney, but the weather is dry, they have found no birds,
and, submitting to the charm of the warm, bright, still afternoon, he
has ceased to pay attention to the dog. He has idled down along the
fall of the valley, pausing to look, watching the little fields and the
patches of woodland open ahead of him with the intense, pleased
curiosity that idleness on such an afternoon can sometimes allow. And now, climbing over a rock fence at the edge of a strip of woodland into a pasture, he pauses again, and hears in the distance a few muted, dispersed notes that it takes him a minute or two to recognize as human singing.

The curve of the slope presently brings him around to where he can see the square of tin roof within the square of yard and garden within the close network of leafless thicket overgrowing Thad Spellman’s abandoned field. And now the voices are carried clearly up to him, rising and braiding themselves together over the sweet pacing of a fiddle and guitar:

‘Oh, he taught me to love him and called me his flower,
A blossom to cheer him through life’s dreary hour,
But now he has gone and left me alone,
The wildflowers to weep, the wild birds to mourn.’

Wheeler knows who they are. Burley he has heard play before at a dance or two, a little embarrassedly ‘filling a gap’ in a band, and has even heard him sing, though only emblematic scraps of songs sung out raucously at work. Now he realizes that Burley is better at both than he thought, though in both playing and singing his manner is straightforward and declarative, almost a speaking in support of the melody, which is carried by Kate Helen. It is Kate Helen’s voice that takes Wheeler by surprise – by a kind of shock, in fact: he expected nothing like it – for it is so strongly clear, so feelingly precise.

They finished the song and laughed at the end of it and spoke a little, words that he could not hear, and began another – and another and another. The dog finally came back and lay down at Wheeler’s feet, and still he stood and listened – until it came to him that they played and sang so well because they believed that, except probably for old Mrs. Branch, nobody was listening. He turned away then, embarrassed for himself, and made his way as he had come back up the long hollow onto the upland and to his father’s place again, the country remaining bemused around him in the hovering late warmth and light, and the two voices seeming to stay with him a long part of the way, as if they too hung and hovered in the air:

‘I’ll dance and I’ll sing and my heart shall be gay . . .’

‘My lord,’ he thinks, ‘that was forty years ago!’
It was forty years ago almost to the day, he thinks, and remembering the intelligent clarity of that voice lifted into the bright air that carried it away, he says, ‘And Kate Helen never did say anything? Never did suggest maybe that you two ought to get married?’

‘Fact is, she never did. And you’ll wonder why, Wheeler, and I can’t tell you. I could give you some guesses, I’ve thought about it enough. But as for knowing, I don’t. I don’t know, and won’t ever.’

‘She thought you were a lucky catch any way she could get you,’ Hannah says to him, patting his hand. It is something Wheeler can tell that she has said to him before. And then she says, more seriously, ‘She thought you were better than she deserved. So did her mother, I’ll bet.’

‘Well, I wasn’t. But whatever her reason was, not to know it is wrong. It’s the very thing that’s wrong.’

They pause at that failure, allowing it its being. And then Burley speaks on, describing his long odd-times domestic companionship with Kate Helen. He tells of Danny’s birth: ‘I purely did not think of that ahead of time, Wheeler. It was a plumb surprise. And yet it tickled me.’ He tells of the death of old Mrs. Branch; and of how, as Danny grew, time and usage grew on him and Kate Helen; how he depended on her and was dependable, took her and was taken for granted, liking the world too well as it was, ‘laying aside wars and such,’ to think how it might be improved, usually, until after his chance to improve it had gone by; how in time she became sick and died; how at her death, seeing it all then, he would have liked to have been openly and formally her mourner, but, faithful to appearances, had shown himself only an interested by-stander, acting a great deal more like himself than he felt. Behind appearances, he paid the doctor, paid the hospital, paid the undertaker, bought a lot in the cemetery; saw to everything – as Wheeler knew pretty well at the time, and attributed to guilt of conscience – as quietly as he has done for the others who have been his declared dependents.

Danny, grown by then, was still living with his mother at the time of her death.

‘You just as well come on, now,’ Burley said, ‘and live with me.’ For then he saw it the way it should have been – though he let Danny go on calling him ‘Uncle Burley,’ as he acknowledges now to Wheeler, and is shaken once by a silent laugh.
'Well, now that Mammy's gone, I want to get married.'
'Well, bring the gal. I got a big house.'

As though he has now finally lived in his own life up to that time when Danny came to live with Burley, Wheeler admits him into his mind. Or, anyhow, Danny Branch now turns up in Wheeler's mind, admitted or not, put there by the words of his would-be lawful father, after the failure of all events so far to put him there, and his face now takes its place among the faces that belong there.

Danny, Wheeler would bet, is not as smart as Burley, but he does look like him in a way; he has Burley's way of looking at you and grinning and nodding his head once before saying what he has to say — a fact which Wheeler now allows to underwrite Burley's supposition and his intent. He allows Burley's argument to make sense — not all the sense there is, but enough.

And so with Wheeler's consent Danny comes into their membership and also is one there with them, Wheeler already supposing that Nathan will not be the only one who will stick to Danny, and looking forward to the possibility of his own usefulness to that young man.

As often, the defeat of his better judgment has left him only with a job to do, a job that he can do, and he feels a sudden infusion of good humor. If Danny is Burley's son and heir, and if that is less than might have been hoped, it is what they are left with, what they have, and Wheeler will be as glad as the rest of them to make the most of it.

He feels preparing in himself the friendship for Danny Branch that these three, after all, have come to ask him for — and which, all three know, probably better than Wheeler, will be a gift and a blessing to the younger man, and also undoubtedly something of a burden, for once Wheeler has Danny on his mind he will be full of advice for him that Danny will not easily ignore.

As soon as he has a chance, Wheeler thinks, he will stop by for a visit with Burley and Danny and Lyda and the little ones. He would like, for one thing, to see if there is any resemblance to Burley or the other Coulters showing up in Danny's children.

'So,' he says. 'You just want to leave everything to Danny. That won't take but a few words. I'll get it typed up first thing Monday morning, and you can come in and sign it.' He smiles at Hannah and Nathan. 'You all can come with him and be witnesses.'
He leans back in his chair, having, as he thinks, brought the meeting to an end. He is ready for them to go, ready to go himself. He allows the wind and the gray sky back into mind.

Burley is busy restoring the shape of his hat, as though he might be about to put it on, but he does not. He looks up at Wheeler again and studies him a moment before he speaks.

‘Wheeler, do you know why we’ve been friends?’

‘I’ve thought so,’ Wheeler says. He has thought so because of that company of friends to which they both belong, which has been so largely the pleasure and meaning of both their lives. ‘But why?’

‘Because we ain’t brothers.’

‘What are you talking about?’ Wheeler says.

But he is afraid he knows, and his discomfort is apparent to them all. Nathan and Hannah obviously feel it too, and are as surprised as he is.

‘If we’d been brothers, you wouldn’t have put up with me. Or anyhow you partly wouldn’t have, because a lot of my doings haven’t been your kind of doings. As it was, they could be tolerable or even interesting or even funny to you because they wasn’t done close enough to you to matter. You could laugh.’

Wheeler sits forward now, comfortless, straight up in his chair, openly bearing the difficulty he knows it is useless to hide. Though this has never occurred to him before, because nobody has said it to him before, he knows with a seizure of conviction that Burley is right. He knows they all know, and again under his breastbone he feels the pain of a change that he thought completed, but is not completed yet. A great cavity has opened at the heart of a friendship, a membership, that not only they here in the office and the others who are living but men and women now dead belong to, going far back, dear as life. Dearer. It is a cavity larger than all they know, a cavity that somebody – their silence so testifies – is going to have to step into, or all will be lost.

If things were going slower, if he had the presence of mind he had even two minutes ago, Wheeler would pray for the strength to step into it, for the knowledge to step into it. As it is, he does not know how. He sits there as if paralyzed in his loss, without a word to his name, his
life turned as neatly inside out as if suddenly pushed stark naked into a courtroom, history and attainment stripped from him, become as a little child.

But Burley is smiling, and not with the vengeful pleasure that Wheeler feared, but with understanding. He knows that what he has given Wheeler is pain, his to give, but Wheeler’s own. He sees.

‘Wheeler, if we’re going to get this will made out, not to mention all else we’ve got to do while there’s breath in us, I think you’ve got to forgive me as if I was a brother to you.’ He laughs, asserting for the last time the seniority now indisputably his, and casting it aside. ‘And I reckon I’ve got to forgive you for taking so long to do it.’

He has spoken out of that cavity, out of that dark abyss.

It is as if some deep dividing valley has been stepped across. There can be no further tarrying, no turning back. To Wheeler, it seems that all their lives have begun again – lives dead, living, yet to be. As if feeling himself simply carried forward by that change, for another moment yet he does not move.

And then he reaches out and grips Burley’s shoulder, recognizing almost by surprise, with relief, the familiar flesh and bone. ‘Burley, it’s all right.’

And Burley leans and lays his own hand on Wheeler’s shoulder. ‘Thank you, Wheeler. Shore it is.’

Wheeler’s vision is obscured by a lens of quivering light. When it steadies and clears, his sight has changed. Now, it seems to him, he is looking through or past his idea of Burley, and can see him at last, the fine, clear, calm, generous, amused eyes looking back at him out of the old face.

And Hannah, smiling again too, though she has averted her eyes, is digging in her purse for her handkerchief. ‘Well!’ she says.

The office is crowded now with all that they have loved, the living remembered, the dead brought back to mind, and a gentle, forceless light seems to have come with them. There in the plain, penumbral old room that light gathers the four of them into its shadowless embrace. For a time without speaking they sit together in it.

Wheeler stands looking down into the street over the top of the reversed painted legend: Wheeler Catlett & Son, Attorneys at Law. The
day remains as it was, the intensity of the clouded light the same. Except that the towboat is gone now, the world seems hardly to have moved, the smoke from the power plant still tainting the sky.

In only a little while Wheeler will leave the office and leave town. The very room he stands in is driven out of his mind by the thought of the raw, free wind over the open fields. But he does not go yet. He thinks of the fields, how all we know of them lies over them, taking their shape, for a little while, like a fall of snow.

He watches Burley and Hannah and Nathan walk back to their truck, waiting for their departure to complete itself before he will begin his own.
Somehow it always gives me special pleasure to think of the rightness of the birthplace of Morris Graves, the 'mystic' American painter whom one associates not only with his 'visions of the inner eye' but also with his precise yet poetic recreations of secret moments in the hidden lives of birds, insects, animals, and all growing things, from the frailest wild flower to the sturdiest mountain pine. His birthplace was Fox Valley in the Far Western American State of Oregon; a name which evokes a sense of those remote yet keenly alive green solitudes and deep enduring silences that were to become so much a part of Graves's several different carefully chosen environments.

Although his sojourn in Fox Valley was brief, when the Graves family moved, at the will of a restless father, it was only further to the North in the Pacific Northwest where Nature was both spectacular and intimate — and truly inescapable! Towering snowcapped peaks and mountain ranges; miles of inland seas; stretches of untouched forest, much of it still virgin; vast meadows of nameless bright flowers; thickets and grottoes of giant ferns and devils' club, wild blackberry and huckleberry; banks of flowering rhododendron; immense fallen trees, long dead, and the gigantic 'stumps' of their felled brothers each growing his own magic minuscule landscapes of moss and lichen and minute plants. These were indeed charmed surroundings where an aware and gifted young observer could silently eavesdrop on the subjects of many of his most cherished later paintings: snakes in the moonlight; solitary, wading or calling birds; wounded gulls; young ganders ready for flight; ecstatic young pines and the ethereal blooms of nameless shade-growing weeds.

To be a mystic in such a land should come naturally to all sensitives but when this same land offers also a subtle but real emanation of the actual Orient — China, Japan, Korea — lying just across the Pacific Ocean such a combination of influences can produce an artist with the special vision of Morris Graves.
Graves felt the strong pull of the Asian world young in his life. He was just seventeen when he and an older brother were able to get jobs on a merchant ship bound for the Orient. As ordinary seamen the two boys left on a forty day voyage that included stops in Shanghai, Kobe, and Yokahama. In even this short time on brief crowded shore leaves Morris acquired a lasting appreciation of the Orient, in particular the subtle culture of the Japanese expressed by them in so many ways strange to the West, in their architecture, house interiors, theatre, gardens, flower and food arrangements, even in the making of pottery. In 1933 when Dr. Richard Fuller of Seattle opened his impressive private collection of Asian art to the public the Seattle Art Museum was born and became a haven for those like Graves who were seeking aesthetic experiences rooted in a different culture and an unfamiliar philosophy of life.

'Wounded Gull'. Gouache. 1943
By 1942 Graves who had been steadily painting for some years had finally been persuaded to allow some of his work to be displayed at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City. There to his astonishment it created a definitely dramatic sensation. It also brought him some much needed money. He had been earning a meagre income by selling junk store antiques, wood for fireplaces, and Japanese influenced ‘arrangements’ of moss, lichen, fern and wildflowers to Seattle florists. He lived with an utter frugality that enabled him to save forty dollars with which he had bought twenty acres of isolated land on Fidalgo Island off the Washington coast. Here in a one-room cabin on a spot he called The Rock he found the complete privacy which allowed his painting to develop so rapidly that it led directly to the success at the Museum of Modern Art show. This show threatened ‘Snake in the Moonlight’. Collection of Nancy Wilson Ross
him with the fate of becoming known as the leader of a new cult. The critics were ecstatic. His ‘haunting’ pictures of birds ‘bathed in a sort of ectoplasmic moonlight’ were something entirely new. The obvious Oriental cast and the assumed influence of certain American Northwest Indian abstractions were both unfamiliar and exciting. It seemed as if Graves was firmly ‘on his way’ but the dark shadow of the War fell on his life as on so many others at the time. Since he was a conscientious objector whose registration as a pacifist had not been received in time to prevent his actual draft induction he found himself in a nightmare situation with an Army which while admitting the illegality of his being held – in view of his religious convictions – were prevented by certain regulations from releasing him.

After months of frustration and conflict that tried his very soul he was eventually released with the help of powerful friends of friends and returned at once to the solitude of the Rock and went on with his work and his meditations. But his longing for closer contact with the Orient remained an unsatisfied appetite. He applied for and received a Guggenheim Grant to study art in Japan but although the war with
Japan was over his Army record of resistance to induction stood firmly in his way. He did manage to get as far as Honolulu where the local museum offered him inspiration in its notable collection of Asian art and artefacts. Here Graves fell under the spell of the Chou bronzes with their archaic articulation of the t’ao tieh, the mystical assemblage of abstracted animal parts presented on the surface of ancient metal vessels. Graves eventually combined his pleasure in the discovery of t’ao tieh with his joy in depicting birds to produce a Ritual Bronze series and other related works: Bird with Minnow, Double Crane Vessel, and Ceremonial Bronze Taking the Form of a Bird to name only a few.

Later in Graves’s life many opportunities for Asian travel came his way and he was able to study intimately, assimilate, and make personal use of supposedly ‘alien’ symbols and visionary materials including even some from Tibetan Tantrism. Ray Kass in the detailed catalogue he wrote for Graves’ recent, greatly admired retrospective show (which received such unusual attention when on view in 1983 at the Whitney Museum in New York and the Phillips Gallery in Washington D.C.) has shed important light on the artist’s subtle incorporation into his work of symbols as unfamiliar as the Tibetan Vajra, the chakras and kundalini of India. Even his many magnificent Ritual vessel – Mirror. Tempera. 1947
ganders connect in his mind with the god Vishnu 'the sound of whose breathing is the magic melody of creation and dissolution of the world.' Realization of the true meaning of the term Tantra as expressive of the 'universal web of life, the interwovenness of things and actions', brings at once to mind the famous 'white writing' web that binds together the moonlight and the birds and snakes of early years.

But it should not be assumed that the symbolism and teaching of Christianity were entirely ignored by Graves, the eternal seeker. In 1937 to the dismay of some of his friends, he had gone to New York to reside for approximately five months at the Harlem mission of Father Divine, an unconventional, controversial, and powerful Negro evangelist who had at one time reportedly enjoyed an association with Swami Vivekananda, the famed world-travelling disciple of Shri Ramakrishna. Through unfortunate circumstances Father Divine's mission came to a scandalous end but Graves never lost his belief in the essential purity of the Father's spiritual intentions. In fact when he was under interrogation by the Army, Graves, in all frankness and unawareness of the harm it might conceivably do him, had written on an Army questionnaire about his connections with 'peace groups'; 'I lived at Father Divine's Peace Mission in New York City for five or six months to acquaint myself with this Christian movement of collective evangelistic living. I am not a member, but respect this and any sincere world brotherhood movement.'

A longer immersion in one of the world's greatest expressions of the Christian faith came to him in 1948 when he went to France and took up residence near the Cathedral of Chartres. Daily he went to the Cathedral to study its magnificent glass windows and the inspired artisanship of the anonymous medieval stone masons who created the stunning arrays of saints, angels and gargoyles that decorated the great edifice. The Chartres experience has remained unforgettable to Graves one feels sure, but it did not arouse the deep interior response that Oriental art had in his past and was destined to do in his future. In fact, in despair at his failure to grasp and absorb the personal meaning to him of this great monument to the Christian faith, Graves destroyed all the paintings from the Chartres period. Only a few traces remain of Christian symbols in his work; among them some seldom shown privately owned chalices and sacred goblets.
Certainly without strain it is easy on the whole to relate Graves's entire work to his enduring search for the deeper essence of life, its 'meaning' if you will. Like the early Chinese artists Graves seems to accept without too much resistance the presence of some indeterminate life force making itself felt in strange ways as in the early Chou bronzes which had so influenced him with their enigmatic almost terrifying representations of the dispersed, yet-to-be realized animализm of the t'ao tieh. This same quality of blended acceptance and search, softened by decades of Buddhist and Taoist thought, is equally perceptible in the misty paintings of a much later period when Sung artists sought to express the soul of the cosmos by the creation of their deliberately mist-bathed landscapes as if thus the true essence of the universe, the mystery at its very heart, could be more deeply divined if half-concealed. Like the greatest of the Chinese there is in Graves's work no hint of casual sentimentality or personal romanticism. One is aware however of the effect on him also of the direct yet

'Little Bird Alone'. Gouache and watercolour. 1940
subtle bluntness of the Zen form of Buddhism. It cannot be denied, for it appears not only in his speech but in such works of inspired simplicity as his paintings of single wildflowers, each presented alone in its own utterly simple vase, and in such paintings as Consciousness Achieving the Form of a Crane or Crane With Void (the circle). But perhaps Zen influence most clearly appears in the quick, sure, yet modulated ink strokes that created Circle Void of 1973 admittedly achieved in the Zen manner of ‘letting the painting paint itself.’ In Graves’ memorable words, ‘to use the ink as tenderly as possible. A single stroke of the brush. And when to lay the brush down.’ Not that Graves always uses his brush ‘tenderly.’ He has described how he cut off the handle of a house broom in order to get a brush to better express his growing rage at the intrusion of constant noise and abrasive daily confusion in his life in a former retreat, Woodway Park near Seattle. He let the thick rough paint-filled brush meet the canvas with a ‘resounding splash’ – all of this very reminiscent of the stories of ‘mad’ Zen monks painting with their ink-filled hair flung wildly onto the paper.

Some of Graves’s work arises from private inner visions; some from his acute, yet poetic rather than realistic, observation of natural life; some from sheer whimsy and wit as in his Irish Fauna series: Night Sounds, Night Hedgerow Animals, Mouse Helping a Hedgerow Animal Carry a Prie

‘Each Time You Carry Me This Way’. Tempera and ink. 1953
Dieu. These small sprightly pictures are a delight to anyone who loves fantasy, Irish myth, gnomes, elves, and fairy tales but Graves himself in speaking of them and of one in particular, *Night Hedgerow Animal* of 1954 – an eerie creature with the sly head of a serpent emerging from a porcupine’s body standing on a crane’s legs – has said almost warningly, ‘this has to do with the spirit of the night in Ireland, and it’s not whimsical.’

During the years he spent in Ireland Graves also did a Hibernation series which is a long way from the whimsy of his Hedgerow animals.

‘Blind Bird’. Gouache. 1940
These paintings of animals coiled in deep sleep enclosed within the circular form of a mandala seem, as one critic has written, 'to float on the paper like celestial bodies.' Actually they indicate in a beautifully simple form three of the strongest influences in Graves's life; his response to the everchanging natural magic of the Pacific Northwest, later to the lush silence of the Irish countryside, and thirdly and most significantly this series suggests the effect on his inner spirit of certain eternal images from the East. He used the circular mandala form and the sleeping animals to represent, as Ray Kass has said, 'a state in which consciousness can enter a higher realm.'

Yet this specific awareness need not affect any viewer's response to what appear to be merely representations of simple, secret, and usually hidden episodes in the life of an animal. Graves himself seems lately to recoil from what he has called the 'blat' that often attends the viewing of his work, by which he means, one suspects, the 'blat' of those who try to 'explain' him. It must be admitted that in the past he too has been guilty of a certain verbosity even one might say a pomposity in speaking of his aims as an artist but no one is quicker to laughingly dismiss this style of verbiage and indeed no artist in the modern world appears capable of Graves's restrained, illuminating, poetic and often extremely amusing comment on his own work and its possible 'meaning'. Lately he has been quoted as remarking casually but with a certain emphasis, 'I have stopped trying to say anything about anything.'

But when Graves does speak or write it is nearly always memorable. This is peculiarly true of his writings in the sixties when he admitted the impossibility of escaping 'scientific culture' when indeed he briefly abandoned his usual work materials, Japanese and Chinese papers of utmost fragility and transiency, to try his master's hand at sculptural constructions of cast bronze, steel, marble, stone and glass. These constructions were called, with his unique gift for titles, New Age Icons, Instruments for a New Navigation. I for one took them to be new kinds of forms to be used in meditation. At this time he left Ireland which had failed to give him the peace he was forever seeking, and came back to America. Through a friend, Dr. Alan Friedman-Kien who was in Washington D.C. doing cancer research, he came into contact with certain NASA officials and immediately found himself suggesting that the designs of the very earliest space probe instruments should
contain some talisman to indicate man's regret at his sudden rude intrusion, into outer space and at the same time suggest man's creativity in other fields. He wanted the Early Lunar Flare to somehow contain an expression of apology for its abrupt appearance and the attendant violence of a machine solely designed to gain instant information about the Moon. It was not 'crashing' the moon that disturbed him because of what this would do to the moon but rather what harm might be done to man's deeper sensibilities by, in a sense, ignoring other 'unscientific' aspects of the human spirit. Graves even went so far in a letter to a sympathetic NASA official to quote a line from a Japanese No play: 'Sorrow is in the twigs of the swan's nest.' Although nothing concrete came of any of Graves's suggestions at the time, it is said that his ideas made a lasting impact on the scientists involved in those first heady space experiments.

Now in his later years Graves lives in semi-retirement in the remains of a redwood forest within sound but not sight of the sea in Northern California near the Oregon border. The elegantly simple long low house he designed and partly built himself is on a lake on which there float a number of very small islands, each with its special shrubs and flowers. These islands have been trimmed in a somewhat Japanese style. Each is named for a close friend. The feeling of the whole place is that of something ancient and part of the land itself. Graves lives alone with a companion of some years, Robert Yarber, a dedicated friend and devout Vedantist.
MORRIS GRAVES

COLOUR-PLATES

1  Chalice  1942
Gouache on rice paper, $27 \times 29\frac{3}{4}$ ins.
The Phillips Collection, Washington D.C.

2  Sanderlings  1943
Gouache on paper. $25\frac{1}{4} \times 30$ ins.
The Phillips Collection

3  In the Night  1943
Gouache on Paper. $30 \times 26$ ins.
The Phillips Collection

4  Young Pine Forest in Bloom  1947
Tempera on rice paper. $30\frac{1}{4} \times 25\frac{1}{8}$ ins.
Willard Gallery, New York

5  Young Gander Ready for Flight  1952
Oil on Canvas. $48 \times 33\frac{1}{4}$ ins.
Willard Gallery

6  August Still Life  1952
$48\frac{1}{4} \times 40\frac{3}{4}$ ins.
Willard Gallery

7  Flight of Plover  1955
$36 \times 48$ ins.
Whitney Museum, New York

8  Farmers Market Plant-Stand  1983
Tempera, $26\frac{1}{2} \times 47\frac{1}{4}$ ins.
Willard Gallery
Here the delicate dance of silence,
The quick step of the robin,
The sudden skittering rush of the wren:
Minute essences move in and out of creation
Until the skin of soundlessness forms again.

Part order, part wilderness,
Water creates its cadenced illusion
Of glaucous, fluent growth;
Fins raised, as in a waking dream,
Bright fish probe their painted stream.

Imaginary animals harbour here:
The young fox coiled in its covert,
Bright-eyed and mean, the baby bird:
The heron, like a tilted italic,
Illuminating the gospel of the absurd.

And all the menagerie of the living marvellous:
Stone shape of toad,
Flicker of insect life,
Shift of wind touched grass
As though a blessing spirit stirred.

Twin deities hover in Irish air
Reconciling poles of east and west;
The detached and sensual Indian God,
Franciscan dream of gentleness:
Gravity of Georgian manor
Approves, with classic stare,
Their dual disciplines of tenderness.

Creatures of the Irish Twilight

JOHN MONTAGUE

I was very close to Morris Graves for a time, when we were both living in Dublin in the late fifties and early sixties. He had great presence, that of the seeker or searcher, tempered by a wicked wit that mocked his own spirituality. His circle of friends was small, like the most beautiful Ricki Huston, then wife of John Huston, the American poet Theodore Roethke and a select group from Dublin. He asked me to do a preface for a series of drawings in the American Horizon. And when he was away in the U.S. for openings, we would take over his splendidly renovated Georgian house, Woodtown Manor. We had first seen it as a cowshed and watched as Morris restored it to glory.

He withdrew from Dublin because he felt he could no longer work there and the house passed to another friend of mine, Gareth Browne. But Morris was also restless for home, and beautiful though Woodtown was, Graves left houses the way other people leave lovers. Having perfected it, he moved on.

He did work in Rathfarnham, in his studio at the back of the house, away from the flickering lights of Dublin. What happened to that strange series, inspired by space exploration, paintings of the sun? He was not happy with them but then he was rarely satisfied, abandoning rather than achieving works, as Valéry said. Contemplative but restless, a hermit who could suddenly light up a party with some fantastic tale, an ascetic who was primly sensuous, even sensual, Morris was an awesome mixture of contradictions, a true artist obsessed by an ideal of perfection.

(What follows is from Horizon, (U.S.A.) July 1960)

In 1954 Morris Graves came to live on one of the lonely finger-peninsulas of Ireland opening out onto the Atlantic. West Cork is not one of the obviously beautiful parts of Ireland: its subdued colours, drab greys and heather browns, do not flatter the mind. The decaying
harbour village nearby is a cluster of stone buildings, gaunt as the beehive huts on an early monastic settlement. The sea merges with the eroding coastal land in the rock pools of a tidal river. A sparse but tender landscape, modified by the presence of man through long centuries.

Morris Graves came to Ireland as a refugee from the 'machine-age noise' of life in Washington State. He took up residence in an isolated house appropriately called Inisbeg (Gaelic, little island). What he was looking for, he has described: quietude and the kind of concentration of nature he had known in the Alpine meadows of the Pacific Northwest, where clarity of atmosphere defines sounds of earth and air. What he found one can see in his series of drawings, one of which is reproduced here. In them, minuscule forlorn creatures of the Irish countryside, which haunt hedgerow, gleaming bog pool, and rough stone wall, are transformed into symbols of individuality. These are not the wild birds of the Pacific Northwest, combating primal forces and shaped by them: the obvious destructive element has been removed. One is reminded of the animals which turn the margins of the Book of Kells into an eccentric playground: pure intuitions of grace and fugitive loneliness.

In Hedgerow animal a land creature pursues a furtive errand of its own in the dusk. Nothing impinges upon its consciousness except the fulfilling of its errand and thus itself: the undulant line of doleful purpose from head to tail is the outer motion of its interior and determined integrity. The Shorebirds, inhabitants of that marginal world where the elements of land and water meet, suggest a gregarious contrast. Ceaselessly in motion down the buffeting air, their flight creates a pattern within which each bird retains an almost spiky individuality.

The mournful Seabird in the Rain, with its black hermit's cowl, is as integral as the crepuscular Hedgerow Animal. Deluged in rain, he is not a creature of earth but of water, as much at home in his dour world as a mad monk in the light of withdrawn contemplation. And in Hibernation, 1954 Graves seems to dramatize this refuge aspect of Ireland which delights him: a sort of natural habit of introversion, both neurotic and spiritually fruitful. A solitary animal broods in his retreat, indwelling and turned as luminous as a pearl or an initial in a
mediaeval manuscript. From and into this seclusion grows an incandescent envelope; dark and light, misfit spirit and removed secretive world blend.

The Night Hedgerow Animal (not reproduced) seems to me the essence of the series. This lonely little figure, face screwed up intently, has its own misanthropic mind made up. Graves showed this drawing to a countryman in County Cork: 'I can’t name it but I’ve seen it meself', he said. It is the nature of this dwarf poltergeist to have the last word, even if, as seems likely, it be irreverent and nasty.
Bird in the Moonlight. Collection of Nancy Wilson Ross
Morris Graves's paintings find their origin in the luminous moment of poetic conception, that sudden intersection with the plane of light that allows things to be seen in their magnification for the first time. His art — like the writing of poetry — brings about a conflation of inner and outer worlds, and when the two have become inseparable, then we have entered into a state of psychophysical unity, the artist is transformed in accordance with the transformation brought about by his poetic vision. The man creating and the man living in the centre of a passive consciousness are not the same men, albeit they share one body. One actively lights up the universe, the other stares into an interposing mirror in the way that fish align with an aquarium glass. The moment of creation is fluid, a star may come as close as the eye of a primrose, birdsong becomes interpretable, the natural world becomes a visual, audial and sensory field that the artist translates with his own peculiar sensitized genius.

If Morris Graves's concern is predominantly with the beauty of the natural world, its birds, flowers, fish and trees, then he is equally preoccupied with the duality of all life — its light and its dark hemispheres. His Wounded Gull, Wounded Scoter and Dying Pigeon Series are powerful renditions of pain in which the bird electrified by instinctive fear is astrally transformed. The transmission of fear in the gull and scoter has resulted in the creation of a luminous double — the body that will be pitched to the wave and thrown ashore is already in its downward gravity superseded by a bird of light. And who has not found them, the dead gulls, razorbills, puffins, guillemots thrown out of the sea's mouth to litter the surf-line on a winter beach?

For an exhibition catalogue of his early work, Graves wrote:

I paint to evolve a changing language of symbols, a language with which to remark upon the qualities of our mysterious capacities which direct us toward ultimate reality.
I paint to rest from the phenomena of the external world — to
pronounce it — and to make notations of its essences with which
to verify the inner eye.¹

The emphasis here is upon seeing 'ultimate reality' with 'the inner
eye.' It is the desire to notate the unsayable, to locate the self in
relation to the magnetic star-writing of the cosmos that is the
aspiration behind all truly imaginative art. And very often it begins
with observation of the most simple 'fragments of sticks and stones —
and things that have not failed me' as Graves was to write, and from
the face of an earth rooted stone or the tactile quality of a stick rises
the motivating force behind the shape-lifting faculty of poetic vision.
Inspiration is after all the ability to create a world from metaphorical
associations, to evaluate with the mind's eye each symbol or sign that
points towards some semblance of unity in the mosaic. The poet or
artist's life's work may be compared to someone who dropped a
necklace in the dark and must set about retrieving each stone in order
to arrive at an achievement of balance, light and colour.

Anyone who knows and admires the art of Morris Graves cannot
help but be impressed by the simplicity — that rightness of execution
which is a narrowing in and intensification of vision. Graves no more
diversifies than a good poet diffuses, his eye focuses on the clear radial
star at the heart of the diamond, he retransmits its fire and not the
multiple world reflected in its facets.

Where, we may enquire, does an artist's landscape come from? We
know that Graves’s involvement with his childhood Seattle 'enabled
him to identify some thirty or forty varieties of wildflowers by the
time he was ten years old', and thereafter his concern with Japanese
art and Eastern mystery religions, coupled with a long sojourn in rural
Ireland, travels in Asia, and for the past two decades life on the Pacific
coast of Northern California, have all in their own way contributed
towards his vision, but the artist's landscape like that of the poet's is a
solitary uninhabited one, it is elusive, intangible, it is the projection of
a world that is partial in its attempt to define beauty. Yeats knew it
when he wrote, 'nothing we love overmuch/Is ponderable to the
touch.' The artist paints by the light of the imagination, his colours as
in Graves's 'Bird Experiencing Light' are heightened by the concen-
tration required to translate a suprasensory spectrum.
What Graves possesses over and above his contemporaries – and again the analogy extends itself to poetry – is the ability to interpret nature through the eyes of his subject material. When we observe his ‘Young Gander Ready for Flight’ we feel the mystery of consciousness and space through the bird’s pre-initiation curiosity, likewise in his Crane with Void the projection of the black circular void from the crane’s skull allows us to participate in what darkness and struggle mean to a bird. In his marvellously powerful Flight of Plover, the whiplash of the birds is dizzying in its intense curvilinear motion – you can both hear and see the gust of birds describing their triumphant aerobatic arc. This visionary depiction of the concentrated individuated life of the subject that he paints, (Hopkins would have called it inscape), is luminously present in the best of Graves’s paintings. In his ‘Bird Singing in the Moonlight’, the notes of the song have crystallized around the bird suggesting that its song is moonlight rather than a voice offered to the moon. His genius achieves this time and again, his ‘Joyous Young Pine’ is transformed in the act of self-recognition, its inner life is an anthropomorphic aspiration, its realisation of the universe mirrors our own realisation of the beauty of the pine.

Commenting on his own work in a letter to Marian Willard, Graves was to write:

I have been painting for many weeks – Sea, Fish, and the Morning Redness – Some day perhaps one paper will miraculously bloom before my eyes – much must transpire within myself first – for painting is no longer painting but is increasingly the concentrated moments of fleeing clarity. These moments – must be sustained and permeate the whole being, for I find, that one must be what they seek to utter – for inevitably one utters what they are.  

The interchangeability between artist and painting, poet and poem, and the indivisible world shared by the two is invariably the watermark of genius. What evolves from this process is, it lends itself neither to addition nor subtraction. It is the closest approximation to imaginative reality that the human can achieve.

The influence of Japanese art on Graves, characterized by the calligraphic white writing in his paintings is an important extension of his sensibility rather than an alien superimposition upon it. In his
application for a Guggenheim fellowship in 1945, Graves was to write:

It is not that I advocate that the individual abandon his position of using his personally conditioned images . . . but to couple the great freedom which the Western way of life has accorded the individual, and encourage his self-expression, with that way of Asia which has given the artist an even higher subjective technique to achieve these ends. It is rather to consider that Reality subsists in the unity of subjective and objective . . . in the identification of inner and outer as the way of liberation . . . and that the immanent divine Spirit as Idea in the mind of the artist, finds unique expression in his performance because, in tending towards an ultimate coincidence of discipline and will, he has so integrated himself with his cosmic source, that his images are grounded in its verifiable essence . . . a principle of order inherent in the nature of Deity . . . and the artist's expression in form is thus heightened through the liberty of spontaneity . . . toward an ultimate individual perfection . . .

Graves's sensitization of the natural world accords with Japanese art in its refusal to endow nature with human sentiment. What he does is to allow nature to interpret itself, his birds embody the mystery of their own being and not that of man's perplexity in observing them. No matter the advancement in the natural sciences we know little or nothing of what it is to be a bird, although we may know a great deal about the habits and physical structure of that bird. Graves's birds create their own aura of light or dark, fear or well-being, and this is brought about by the artist's ability to imaginatively empathise, to intuit through the eye of the imagination and to abstract the self in the process of so doing. 'Consciousness Achieving the Form of a Crane' is an example of this, where the process of the artistic imagination conceiving the form of a crane intersects with the bird's own realisation that it is set apart from unconsciousness by the projection of its own individuation.

In the luminous ethereal beauty of his 'Moon Bird', 'Spirit Bird', 'Gull Floating on a Sea of Light', and 'Waking, Walking, Singing in the Next Dimension', Graves achieves a transfiguring translucency, his subjects are sustained and energised by light. They possess the indestructibleness of the imagination, it is as though Graves has achieved his effect by painting with the light-beam of the imagination
rather than with a brush and tempera. We feel too in observing these paintings that they aspire to a vision that we have known and lost. Was it on some deserted moonlit beach we recall gulls sitting into the wind, or is it from the recollection of dream or a previous incarnation that we knew light as conscious form? We are left with an unanswered question but we affirm the truth of the artist's vision.

Something of Graves's attitude towards his art can be derived from a letter extract to Marian Willard:

I draw and paint in a mood of real peacefulness (unlike before there are not stabbing moments of despair) yet when the paintings are finished I can see in them only unchanging sadness — a kind of fixed sadness — and yet I am not unhappy — the paintings are me so to speak and I am not the painting. I am here in this room — yet what is in the paintings is not here in the room...

Again we are confronted with the tension of duality; the artist both is and is not his work, he is often a vessel for its transmission, but there is no denying his participation, his openness to receive the transforming light. 'I am and yet I know not who I am' wrote that sad poet of the fields John Clare. The latter would most certainly have agreed with Graves's remarks on his 'Bird Calling Down a Hole.' — 'Its title might be Bird Yelling Down a Hole, but calling is lonelier, its gentler, although there are many occasions when you're yelling down a hole too.'

One of Graves's close friends in Seattle in the forties was Theodore Roethke, and in Roethke's poetry there is the same profound compassion for nature, the observation of small things struggling to come into the light, roots stirring, the conspiratorial secrecy of conferring with meadow creatures, the empathy with dark beginnings growing to a self-realisation of light. The struggle is apparent in his poem 'Cuttings'.

This urge, wrestle, resurrection of dry sticks,
Cut stems struggling to put down feet,
What saint strained so much,
Rose on such lopped limbs to a new life?

I can hear, underground, that sucking and sobbing,
In my veins, in my bones I feel it,
The small waters seeping upward,  
The tight grains parting at last.  
When sprouts break out,  
Slippery as fish,  
I quail, lean to beginnings, sheath-wet.

Graves too, leans to beginnings, his 'Butter Burr in a vase' radiates the same intensity of light as his 'Chalice'. The artist's recognition of the transitoriness of flowers has him magnify the moment of their beauty as they choreographize the light.

I have come to the art of Morris Graves with the eye of a poet and not that of an art historian attempting to evaluate Graves's development over half a century's commitment to painting. That he isolates the poetic moment with blinding clarity is to say that he participates in the transforming sensitization of art. The imagination telescopes, isolates and projects. Its prompted radius lights up like a single sunspot filtered through storm clouds on a grey beach. And in that brief pool of light stands a gull, thus we have participated in the moment. By his own admission Graves has come to a realization of truth: 'I have stopped trying to say anything about anything — there is no statement or message other than the presence of the flowers and light — that is enough.'

Notes

2 Morris Graves, in a letter to Marian Willard, 3 January 1944
4 Cited in Rubin, ed., The Drawings of Morris Graves, p. 90.
JEREMY REED

The Wind's Eye

for the artist Morris Graves

The wind's eye dilates, I can telescope
trough its spinning cone to a cornflower
of blue that's calm. On the dragged beach a tope,

its belly cut open on a dark reef
has been deposited with shearwaters,
dead puffins, and the fluttering black leaf

of an exhausted petrel. From the air
and deeps the sea has beached its casualties.
What lived in secrecy faces the glare

of isolation in its death. We learn
from this, first the elusiveness of things
the eye can't hold, and later their return

to the defined clarity of the bone;
scotters and brent-geese shelter with the ebb,
their collective instinct leaves each alone

to touch on the dimensions of its death.
Six months ago I found gannet fledglings
facing the light with open eyes, a wreath

of swell beneath them touched by a rainbow,
The sky lavender, cobalt, pastel green
watercolours tinged by red and yellow.

Sharp-eyed, dependent, they were consciousness
facing no boundary from their rock-ledge,
but stared into a sea-blue emptiness
they'd learn to dominate with powerful flight.
It's in the still after the hurricane
the eye sees with a reawakened sight,
mutation, detail, sees as a bird must,
a gander taking flight for the first time,
assured by the air's current, its strong trust.

Violets
Their secrecy of place is matched by my
adjured concealment of that spot. Each year
I come back to it in the cerise dawn,
the wood exhaling scents of after-rain –
a dog's coat drying by a fire or stable air
warm with the bull. Almost I hesitate
to reach the green moss bedded round the roots
of ageing elms, and bend down to enquire
with tentative fingers of the mauve flower
shrinking beneath the arrow of its leaf,
a fragile concentration only shared
by those who seek it out, hermetic one,
its white spur opening to meet the shower.
Yves Bonnefoy is among the most important and influential poets now writing in France. His recent election to the Collège de France – the first poet chosen since Paul Valéry – is official recognition of his distinguished contributions as poet, art critic, translator (particularly of Shakespeare and Yeats), and specialist in the problem of the relation of poetry to the visual arts and to the history of religions.

Born in Tours in 1923, Bonnefoy studied philosophy and mathematics before devoting himself to poetry and the arts. He had been deeply impressed, from as early as 1944, by the teachings of the Russian theologian Lev Shestov. It was Shestov, and also Kierkegaard, who confirmed Bonnefoy’s intuition that the sacred presence of things had been veiled by conceptual categories and rational structures: ‘Among the hundreds of millions of men who have confessed God in words,’ wrote Shestov in his Potestas Clavium, ‘only a few have truly felt his presence’. Bonnefoy would make of the poem a dialectical search for presence: the effort to prepare consciousness, through poetry’s celebration of the sacred, for lived experience, for a richer existence, but at the same time, a relentless calling into question of the poem’s own capacity to create beautiful but illusory worlds and hence to encourage evasion. For Yves Bonnefoy the practice of poetry has thus become ‘a project for salvation’, the remembrance, even in the darkest times, of spiritual vigilance, the persistence of hope. In addition to four distinguished books of poetry and translations of Shakespeare’s major plays, his publications include Rimbaud par lui-même (1961); a study of the Roman Baroque, Rome 1630: l’horizon du premier baroque (1970); the autobiographical work, L’arrière-pays (1972); and two collections of essays on literature and the arts, Le nuage rouge (1977) and L’Improbable et autres essais (1980). He is also the editor of the important Dictionnaire des Mythologies (Paris, 1981). An English edition of Bonnefoy’s Poems 1959–1975 will be published this
'The Finding of Moses' Nicholas Poussin. (Musée du Louvre)
year by Random House of New York, in the translation by Richard Pevear.

The following texts are complete sections from Bonnefoy’s most recent and most ambitious poem, Dans le leurre du seuil (In the Lure of the Threshold), published in 1975. The work, composed of seven sections, is in many respects a recapitulation of the preoccupations of a lifetime: the search for the meaning of death, of dream, of love; a sustained meditation on the role and status of the image, of writing; a luminous affirmation of the simple beauties of earth and place.

The poem is set in Provence, in the country near the Vachères mountain. It commemorates the moments spent in an abandoned, barely habitable monastery in disrepair. The dwelling, with its gaping holes and missing stones, with its need for mending and restoration, becomes the symbol of a menaced but indomitable sacred order, the persistence of which the poet sees reflected in the simple, daily realities surrounding him.

The poem begins during a sleepless, doubt-filled night. The poet remembers the strange death of his friend, the musicologist Boris de Schloezer. What had he seen at the moment of crossing the awesome threshold? What was he coming to understand, to accept?

He listened, for a long time,
Then drew himself up, the fire
Of that work which reached,
Who knows, some pinnacle
Of release, of reunion, of joy
Lit up his face.

This transfigured vision reminds the poet of a painted image, doubtless of Poussin’s painting on ‘The Finding of Moses’. The picture seems to evoke a world of peaceful harmony and even breathing, where mind and object are in perfect accord. It is as though longing had been dispersed in the real, and dreams dispelled to allow a simple evidence to emerge in the form of a child. The images in the painting – the boatman, the rescued infant, the Pharoah’s daughter – animate a whole network of verbal associations in Bonnefoy’s poem.

The second section of the poem is a summons to the will to combat the seeming futility of the world. Then, in the sections presented here, the poet returns to the bed he has left and thus begins the
process by means of which he comes to participate in the kind of radiantly affirmative vision his friend has enjoyed and which he sees reflected both in Poussin's painting and in Shakespeare's The Winter's Tale, through the figure of Hermione, reanimated from the frozen immobility to which possessiveness and suspicion have reduced her. The passages that follow evoke, of course, the process of conception. But it is a characteristic of Bonnefoy's work to place erotic experience in the context of the vaster workings of nature and to present it as metaphorical of the search for marriage in writing between the word and the real. He therefore deals with the question of generation on both the biological and the spiritual levels. The future child promises a new and joyful world, less tortured and rent, and is therefore both infant and sign – the force that 'carries the world'.
YVES BONNEFOY

Four sections from

In the Lure of the Threshold

Two Colours

(Third section)

Further than the star
In the reflection
Two hands are digging that have, for holding,
Only their trust.
Two hands, broken, are searching
For what is better than gold
And so that life might be born
From nothing but a dream.

O sheaves of the reflection
In spite of the mud,
Threshold in the rippling
Of the closed water,
Branches and fruits that cross
The walled-up water!
Yes, you are this land,
You whom I awaken
Just as, even at night, in the water one stirs,
The sky appears other.

The tree of stars
Is moving in the troubled water.
The other light
Catches in the mounting breathing.

And thus, naked power,
I gather you
In the hands I bring together
To form a cup.
Worlds rush through
My fingers,
But what is rising in us, my burnt water,
Wants a life.

I touch you with my lips,
Beloved,
I tremble at reaching, child, sleep,
This Egypt.
Leaves, summer nights,
Animals, pathways in the sky,
Breathings, silent, signs, unfinished,
Are there, sleeping.
— And yet, Drink, you tell me,
From the meaning dreaming here.

Drink, at the shoulder of the flowing,
Where the breast is swelling,
Drink, I am the water, burnt
By a star’s reflection.
Drink, in reflection.
Love on me, what you cannot seize,
With a tireless mouth,
The star’s unmoving presence.

I trust, and so I drink,
The water streams through my fingers,
No, it glistens.
Lands, barely glimpsed at,
Grasses from before time, ripened stones,
Colours, different, never
Dreamt of so simple,
I touch your heavy ears of wheat, bent by the flow
In the darkness.

And our cry, sudden,
Breaks our embrace,
But when you are poured out,
Dawn, this wheat remains.

.................
Further off than the star
That now has grown pale
The shepherd finds the lamb
Among the stones.
Dawn on the milky foam
Of the huddled beasts,
Peace at the end of the surging, now broken,
Of the hoofbeats.
It was cold, bits of night
Are still mingled with the earth.

Further than the star
The child who carries the world
Is bathing simple
In what is.
It is still night, but he
Is of two colours,
A blue that takes on the green
Of the treetops
Like a fire growing bright
Amid fruit

And the red of the heavy
Painted cloths
Washed by the Egyptian girl, the unawakened,
In the river water at night,

When the pole plunged
Into the mud of the vacant-eyed image,
Was this the new day,
And onto living speech.
The lingering storm, the unmade bed,
The window throbbing in the heat
And the blood in its fever: I take
The hand close to me away from its dreaming, the ankle
From the mooring-ring that fastens boat
To pier, amid the sea-spray,
Then the eyes, then the mouth from absence
And the whole sudden awakening in summer night
To bring the storm to it and finish it.
— Wherever you might be when I take you, dark,
These sea-sounds grown louder in us,
Be willing to be indifference, that I might embrace,
The way blind God does, the most deserted
Matter still waiting in darkness.
Take me to you ardently, but distractedly,
Let me be faceless, nameless,
So that, being the thief I might give you more
And being the stranger, the exile, in you, in me,
Might become the starting point... — Oh, I would gladly,
And yet, forgetting you, I am still with you,
If you but loosen my fingers,
Make a cup of my hands,
I will drink, near your thirst,
Then let the water pour over all our limbs.
Water that allows us to be, not being,
Water that seems to catch fire across arid bodies
For moments of joy scattered in enigma,
And yet a foreshadowing! Do you remember,
We were walking through those stone-hedged fields,
And suddenly the well, and those two shades
In what other country of the deserted summer?
See how they are looking down, they like us,
Is it us they are listening to, speaking of,
Smiling beneath the leaves of the first tree
In the joyful, slightly veiled light?
And wouldn’t one say that a glimmering
From elsewhere is stirring in this union of their faces
And, laughing, mingles them? Look, the water is blurring
But these forms are the purer for it, consumed.
Which of these two worlds is the true one, it scarcely matters. 
Invent me, make me twofold perhaps.
On these confines of shattered myth.
I listen, I consent,
Then move aside the bent arm
That hides from me the luminous face.
I touch its mouth with my lips,
See it in confusion, broken, a whole sea.
Like God the rising sun I am bent
Over this water where our likeness is flowering,
I whisper: Is this then what you want,
Wandering power that the worlds cannot satisfy,
To gather yourself, one life, in the bare
Earthen vessel of our identity?
And, yes, for a moment all is silent,
You would think that time was coming to a halt
As though pausing on its journey,
And looking over the earthly shoulder
At what we cannot or will not see.
The thunder has stopped rumbling through the quiet sky,
The rain no longer sweeps over our roof,
The shutter that was knocking at our dream
Is still now, bent over its iron soul.
I listen, to what sound I do not know, then get up
And, still in darkness, I look for and find
The glass from the evening before, still half-full.
I pick it up, it seems to be breathing as we do,
I have you touch it with your dark thirst,
And when I drink the tepid water your lips have touched,
It is as though time were stopping on mine,
And as though my eyes were opening, onto daylight at last.

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Give me your hand forever, elusive water
That I have tried, day after day, to rid
Of the dreams that linger in the light
And of that evil desire for the infinite.
May the blessing of the water's source not cease
The moment the source is rediscovered,
May the distances not separate
Once again from what is close by, beneath the scythe
Of the water no longer dried up but without savour.
Give me your hand and lead me forth into the mortal summer
With this sound of changed light,
Scatter yourself, as you scatter me, in the light.

Images, worlds, longings,
Desires that, not knowing what they do, yet unravel,
Mysterious beauty with its dark breast,
But with hands that are fringed with light,
Laughter, the meetings on the road,

And the calls, the gifts, the consentings,
The endless requests, senseless birth,
Alliances eternal and premature,
Miraculous promises that are never kept
But, late, the unexpected all at once: may all this
Be gathered up by the rose of the passing water
As it hollows out here, then be made bright
At the unmoving hub of the wheel.

Peace, on the water filled with light. It seems as if a boat
Were passing, laden with fruit; and that a wave
Of sufficiency, or of stillness,
Were lifting up our place and this life
Like another, scarcely different boat, still moored.
Have trust, and let yourself be taken, naked shoulder,
By the mounting wave of endless summer,
Sleep, we are in the fullness of summer; and in a night
Overwhelmed with light; and our eternal night
Will soon break up; the Egyptian girl will soon
Bend over us, smiling.

Peace on the passing waves. Time is sparkling.
You would think that the boat had stopped moving.
You can only hear the sound of infinite water
Heaving and breaking against the naked flank.
The fire, its joys of torn sap.
The rain, or perhaps just some wind on the roof-tiles.
You look for your coat from the year before.
You take the keys, you go out, a star is shining.

Wander
Into the vineyards, near the mountain of Vachères.
At dawn
There will be a quicker sky.

A circle
Where indifference thunders.
Light
In place of God.

Almost fire, do you see,
In the basin filled with the night's rainwater.

And yet in the dream,
In the other dark fire that flared up again,
A servant-girl was walking far ahead of us
With a lamp. Its light was red
And streamed
Down the folds of the dress against her leg
Onto the snow.

Stars, scattered everywhere.
The heavens, an unmade bed, a birth.

And the almond tree, grown fuller
After two years: the water
From the same river, flowing in a darker branch.

O flowering almond tree,
My night without end,
Trust, child, lean
Against this lightning.

Branch from here, burnt with absence, drink
With your momentary flowers from the changing sky.

I came out
Into another universe. It was
Before daybreak.
I threw some salt upon the snow.

The Earth
(Fifth section)

I cry, Look,
The light
Was living there, so near us! Here, its store
Of water, still transfigured. Here the wood
In the shed. Here, the few fruits
Left to dry in the vibrations of the dawn sky.

Nothing has changed,
These are the same places and the same things,
Almost the same words,
But, look, in you, in me,
The undivided, the invisible are gathering.

And she! Is it not
She who is smiling there (‘I the light,
Yes, I consent’) in the certainty of the threshold,
Bending down, guiding the steps
Of what seems a child-sun over dark waters.
I cry, Look, 
The almond-tree
Is covered suddenly with thousands of flowers.
Here
The gnarled, the forever earthly, the torn,
Reach port. I the night
I consent. I the almond-tree
I enter the bridal chamber, brightly adorned.

And look, hands
From higher in the sky
Take,
Like passing rain, from every flower
The imperishable part of life.

They split open the kernel
Gently. They touch, they lift out the seeds.

They carry them off, beginnings already
Of other worlds,
In the forever of the ephemeral flower.

O flame
That, destroying, consecrates
Ash
That, scattering, brings together.

Yes, flame, that cleanses
From summer's sacrificial altar
The fevers, the writhings
Of clenched hands.
Flame, burning so that our shadow
Might be washed from the stone of the clear sky,
And so that a child god might frolic
In the bitter burning sap.
I bend over you, passing flame,
Kneeling, I gather together
All the impatience, passion, solitude, and grief
And give them to your smoke.
I bend over you, dawn, I take
Your face in my hands. How beautiful the light
On our empty bed! I sacrifice
And you are the resurrection of what I burn.

Flame
Our bedroom of the year before, full of mystery,
Like the prow of a passing ship.

Flame the glass
On the table in the deserted kitchen,
At V.
Amid the bits of plaster.

Flame, from room to room,
The plaster,
Masses of indifference, made bright.

Flame the light bulb
Burning in the place above the stable door
Where God was missing.

Flame
The vine of lightning, over there,
Amid the hoofbeats of dreaming animals.

Flame the stone
On which the chisel of dream has laboured so long.

Flame,
In the peace of the flame,
The sacrificial lamb kept safe.

..................

And, late, I cry out
Some words the fire accepts.

I cry, Look,
Here an unknown salt has settled.

I cry, Look,
Your consciousness is not in you,
The flow of your vision
Is not in you,
Your suffering is not in you, your joy even less.

I cry, Listen,
A music now has ceased.
Everywhere, in what is,
The wind rises up and unravels.
Today the space between the meshes
Is greater than the meshes,
We throw out a net that does not catch.
We no longer know how
To organize or finish.
Between the expanding eye and the truer word
The veil of the finishable is torn asunder.
O words crossed out, O gathering rust,
Where the traces of water, of meaning,
Grow limitless as they are reabsorbed,
God, bare wall
Where the erosion and the notches
Have the same deserted look on the flank of the world.
How late it is!
A god can be seen pushing something like
A barque toward a shore but then everything changes.
The roads of men have collapsed and are impassable,
There are hoofbeats, clamourings low in the sky.
Here the beyond claps
The labouring hand
– But when it veers toward the darker lines,
It is like a dawning.

Look,
Here, on the barren stretches of meaning,
A few feet from the ground,
It is as though the fire had caught fire,
And this second bursting of flame, dispossessing,
It is as though it caught fire once more, at the heights
Of the stuff of what is, billowing in the wind.
Look,
The fourth wall has come unsealed,
Between it and the pile of stones on the north side
There is room for the brambles
And each night’s furtive beasts.
The fourth wall and the first
Have shifted on the chain,
The seal of presence has burst
Beneath the rocky thrust.
And so I go in through the breach whose cry is quick.
Are these two fighters who have loosened their grip,  
Two lovers who fall back unappeased?  
No, the light plays with the light  
And the sign is life  
In the tree of the transparency of what is.

I cry, Look,  
The sign has become the place.  
Beneath the forked porch  
Of lightning  
We both are and are not.  
Come in with me, dark,  
Accept through the breach whose cry is hunger.

And let us be for one another like the flame  
When it leaps from the torch,  
A phrase of smoke, legible for a moment  
Before vanishing into the sovereign air.

.................

Yes, all simple things  
Placed once more  
Here and there, on their  
Pillars of fire.

Yes, to live now  
Without origin,  
To pass by, hands riddled  
With empty gleamings.

And every attachment  
A band of smoke,  
But ringing clear, like a  
Trumpet that sounds.

.................

Let us find one another  
So high that the light might seem to overflow  
The cup of the hour and the cry mixed together,  
A bright streaming, where nothing remains
But simple abundance, at last proclaimed.
Let us find one another, let us take up
By the handful our pure naked presence
On the bed of morning and the bed of evening,
Wherever time digs its ruts,
Wherever the precious water evaporates,
Let us go toward one another, as if we each
Had at last become every animal and every thing,
Every deserted road, every stone,
Every stream, every metal.

Look,
Here nothingness is flowering; but its petals,
Its colours of dawn and of twilight, its gifts
Of mysterious beauty to mortal earth,
And its dark greens as well, and the wind in its branches,
This is the gold that is in us: immaterial gold,
Gold of not lasting, of not having,
Gold of having consented, only flame burning
On the transfigured flank of the alembic.

And so priceless the day about to end,
So precious the quality of its light,
So simple the slightly yellowing crystal
Of these trees, of these paths among the springs,
And so full of joy for one another
Our voices, which have longed to reunite
And which have wandered side by side, cut off,
Separated by darkness for so long,

That you might call this empty vase God,
God who, though he be not, yet saves his gifts,
Sightless God whose hands reunite the world,
God a cloud, God a child and still to be born,
God the vessel for ancient sorrow understood at last,
God, arch for the faint star of the salt
In the evaporation which is the only
Intelligence here that knows and proves.

And let our hands searching for one another
Be the naked stone,
And the joy we share,
An armful of grass

For although both you and I,
Crying out, are
But a ring of bright fire
Scattered by the wind

So that soon,
In the sky, they will not know
If this cry that gave rise to birth
Even took place,

Still, finding one another,
Our hands consent
To other eternities
In desire once more.

And let our earth be
The unending
Light of the scythe
That cuts the sea foam

And not because only
Its lightning is true,
Though the bright void
Be our bed,

Nor because you and I, close together,
Simple, are but
Smoke beaten back
Upon the sacrificial fire,

But for its falling radiance
That makes us one,
Wheat of transparency,
In desire once more.

Eternity of the cry
Of the child who seems
To be born of sorrow
Transformed into light.

Eternity comes down
Into the naked earth
And digs up meaning
The way a shovel might.

And look, the child
Is there in the almond-tree,
Standing upright,
Like a string of boats arriving in dream.

He climbs
Between moon and sun. He tries to bend toward us,
Through the smoke,
His laughing fire,
Where angel and serpent have the same face.
In the clusters of words that now have ripened,
He offers us
Once more from the fruit of the tree.

And the mason is already
Bending over the depths of the light.
His shovel gathers up the bits of plaster
For the impossible mending.

With his phosphorescent spade
He scrapes
At this other sky, digging
With the iron that came before our dream,
Beneath the brambles,
To the level of fire and the uncreated.
He tears up
The white clusters of fire
From the throbbing of the uncreated among the stones.

He says nothing.
The noonday of his few words is still far off
In the light.
But, late,
The faded red of the sky
Will be enough, for the eternity of the return
Among the stones, grown larger
From the attraction of hilltops still bright.

Being but the power of nothingness,
The mouth, the saliva of nothingness,
I cry out,

And above the valley of you, and of me,
The cry of joy resides in its pure form.

Yes, I the stones of evening, in the light,
I consent.

Yes, I the pool of water
Vaster than the sky, the child
Who stirs up its mud, the iris full of
The tireless, memoryless reflections
Of the water, Yes, I consent.

And I the fire, I
The pupil of the fire's eye, in the smoke
Of the grasses and the centuries, I consent.

I the cloud
I consent. I the evening star
I consent.
I the clusters of worlds that have ripened,
I the departure
Of the masons, kept late, for their villages,
I the sound of their vans, fading in the distance,
I consent. I the shepherd,
I lead weariness and hope
Toward the stable beneath the bright arch of the star.
I the August night,
I make a bed for the animals in the stable.
I, sleep,
I take dream into my ships, I consent.
And I the voice
That desired so much. I the mallet
That struck the heavens, the black earth,
With dull blows. I the ferryman,
I the barque of all and through all,
I the sun,
I stop at the world's summit in the stones.

Speech
Come down from the cross. Hemp of appearance
Rетted at last.

Patience
That has wanted, and known.
Crown
That has the right to burn.

Pole
Of chimeras, of peace,
That finds
And gently touches, in the passing flow,

Upon a shoulder.

The Scattered, The Indivisible
(Seventh section)

Yes, at the window pane
In an effort at flight
With a dull knocking
— Sometimes crying out
From a head higher up.

Yes, in the night
When the television seeks the shore,
When ancient hope bends over
The lips of the image,
Bites
In the solitude of blood
The naked shoulder of the image.

Yes, by the night
When the need for meaning squeezes for so long
The cold breast of the image
And all alone, the heart full of sorrow,
Turns away beneath the constellations of vain desire.

Yes, by the god
Who wanders in the guise of a lamb
Near the van,
Beneath the light bulb burning through the night.
I stop, he stops,
I move forward, and the face
Vanishes, throwing light
Upon my leg, that drives him out
Into the frost crackling outside the world of light.

Yes, by the voice
Violent against the silence of,
By the shoulder's thrust
Violently against the distance of,
– But with your lightning of indifference you share,
Sky suddenly dark,
The bread of our solitude on the table.

Yes, by the door that quivers
Under the breath
Of riddled appearance
(And if I go out I will be blind
In the colour).
Yes, by the quivering that sometimes
Seems to stop.
Yes, by the fever that flares up again late in the world.

Yes, by the evening
When it stirs the ashes of colour,
Hastening with a blind man's hands
The rising of the lightless flame.

(The lightning,
The tree that cried out on its naked breast,
And you,
What is left of the sky.)

Yes, by the hilltops lit up
For one hour more.

Yes, by the hand
That violently draws the line of the hilltops
Without end,
Without future,
Sometimes drowned in bright ink, sometimes in dark
And without a place in the light that moves on alone.

Yes, by those days
When the thunder would roam, long before dawn.
By my pathways among the wet grasses
That night had crushed under its wheels of stone.

Yes, by the brambles
Of the hilltops among the stones. By that tree, standing
Against the sky.
By the flames, everywhere,
And the voices, every evening,
Of the marriage of earth and sky
(Late, when the sponge wipes
The remains of the bread and wine from the table
That glistens a little.)

Yes, by the two columns of wood,
Abandoned,
Yes, by the salt
Caked in the black-painted box in the kitchen,
Yes, by the sack of plaster: open, hardened,
Seed of the unpossessable, that illuminates.

Yes, by the hole
Near the chimney, still gaping
(The pick and shovel are leaning there
Against the wall: the mason, called away,
Seems to have left, silently,
For some other work in some other room.)

Yes, by this place
Now lost, never fully freed
From the brambles, nor from the ashes of hope.
By this desire, vanquished, no, consumed

For we will have lived so fully the moments
That were granted to us by the light!
The days were beautiful, beautiful beyond our dreams,
The countryside around us was deserted,
We could only hear the breathing of the earth
And the creaking of the chain in the well, drawing up time
That fell from the bucket like too much sky.
We would work here and there, in the vast rooms,
We spoke but little, in rusted voices,
As one might hide a key beneath a stone.
Sometimes night would come forward, from the end of the fields,
A perfect woman, dark, bending down, driving her silent
Beasts through the waters of the changeless sun.

And may it sleep
In the absolute that we have been,
That house which was like a ravine
Where the sky could rustle, where the dreaming bird
Could drink from night's peace . . . Unrevealed,
Too grand, too mysterious for our steps,
Let us but graze her dark shoulder,
Let us not trouble her, for she draws with even breath
From earth's store of dreams.
When night comes, let us simply place by her naked flank
These stones in which we seemed to read signs.

How many unfinishable tasks we tried,
How many unfathomable signs we touched
With fingers that knew nothing, and so were cruel!
What strayings and what solitude!
Memory is weary, certainly, and time narrow,
The journey is still infinite . . . But the sky
Has stones that glow more brightly along the paths
Of evening, and at this stage our lives have reached,
Light that sometimes increases, you catch and burn.

Yes, by the night
Upstairs, in the bedroom we shared in summer
That moves like a ship, faltering sometimes
In the spume of the sky (and I can still see you,
Far off in the mirror with its torn silvering,
Undoing once more the red gown
Of those years when, infinite
Like the star on the window panes, you took
In hands that were like unfinished dreams from the eddies
Of sleep where dawn comes to life
The rose of each otherwise mortal day.

I watched
The other boat come in sight, it too
A hesitant fire,
It too intact, like life,
In the vine-shoots on the mountain of Vachères.

And, yes, I can still go downstairs,
Pass through the dark rooms,
Open the door, as once before, take the steps
Of each new day among the vines
In the unending stillness of the sky,

It is a beautiful day,
The house has endured like the star that
Continues to rise in the bright sky,

And Pharoah's daughter can sleep soundly here.  
Here breasts free,  
On this bed that the mid-stream  
Current guides).

Yes, by the 'big attic'

And Jean Aubry, of Orgon,  
And his sons, Claude and Jean.  
'We built this day  
A communion rail.' There is no date.

Yes, by the broken arch  
Of the threshold  
Whose missing stone we had found  
– Flow on, river of peace, make  
The carnation of this shore flower once more.

Yes, by the bright window pane  
Where, made new,  
The simple hand of the outside offers the fruit  
(And this barque is red, crepuscular,  
You might think that the fruit of the first tree  
Had ended its day in the branches  
Of the world's sorrow. And moves off,  
Deep in thought, toward another shore.)

Yes, by the fire,  
By its fiery reflection on the peaceful waters,  
By our place, that moves on,
By the path of fire beneath the ripened fruit.

Yes, by the afternoon
When all is silent, being endless,
Time is sleeping in the ashes of yesterday's fire
And the wasp that knocks against the window has
Already sown up a great deal of the tear in the world.
We sleep, in the room upstairs, but we also
Walk, and forever, among the stones.

Yes, by the body
In the gentle sweetness that is blind and wants nothing,
And yet brings completion.
And at its windows the leaves are closer
In brighter trees. And the fruit is at rest
Beneath the mirror's arch. And the sun
Is still high, behind the summer
Basket on the table and the handful of flowers.

Yes, by birth that made
A flame from nothing,
And mingles
Our two quieted faces.

(We bent down, and the water
Was flowing fast,
But our hands, though broken,
Caught the image.)

Yes, by the child
And by these words I saved
For a child's mouth. 'Look, the serpent
At the back of the garden hardly ever leaves
The lustreless shade of the boxtree. His only desire
Is for silence and for sleep among the stones.
The painfulness of naming among things
Will cease.' There is already music in the shoulder,
Music in the arm that protects it,
Words on lips that have been reconciled.

......

Yes, by words,
A few simple words.

(And with one hand,
Of course, raise the whip, curse all meaning.
Drive
The whole load of images against the stones
– But with the other, deeper hand, hold and protect.

For he who does not know
The right of a simple dream, that only asks
To raise up meaning, to soothe
The bleeding face, to colour
The wounded word with light,
This man, be he
Almost a god, creating almost an earth,
Lacks compassion, does not attain to
The true, which is only a trusting, does not sense
In his desire clenched over his difference
The major drifting of the cloud.
He wants to build! Be it only a feeble
Trace of lightning, to preserve
In pride the emptiness of some form,
And this is dreaming too, but without joy,
Without having known how to reach the brief earth.

No, do not dismember
But deliver, and reassure. 'Writing,' a violence
But for the peace that tastes of pure water.
May beauty.
For this word has a meaning, in spite of death,
Do the work of bringing together our mountains
For the scant waters of summer
And call them into the grasses,
May it take the water's hand across the roads
And lead the water here, the meagre water, to the bright river.)

Yes, by the hand I hold
On this earth.

And outside,
The lightning is flashing once more,
Breaking loose,
Crying out from below, darting,
Blanching
The sky's final moments in the stones.

Fording
The shallow stream among the stones.

Yes, by all beauty, naked,
With something torn, foreclosed in the movement of the shoulder.

Yes, by you, lightning – stopped
Midstream in the sky,
Your robes slightly opened
Over the abundance of earth with its dark fruits.

Yes, by death,
Yes, by endless life.

By yesterday reincarnated, this evening, tomorrow,
Yes, here, there, somewhere else, here, over there once more

(And the fire has turned the pages
Of the book we dreamt of.)
It took them by the neck and weighed them down
With its bite.
They have disappeared along
The book's curved axis
Which arched them, as in
The mystery of love.

Yes, by even error,
Which moves on,
Yes, by simple joys, by the broken voice.

The unlimited, undaunted wave
Swells (yes gathered, burnt,
Scattered,
Salt
Of the mounting storms, of the clearings,
Ash
Of imaginary worlds dispelled,
And yet, dawn
Where worlds linger near the summits.
They breathe, huddled
Against one another, like
Silent beasts.
They stir in the cold.
The earth is like a fire of wet branches,
The fire, like an earth seen in dream),

And burns, yes, whitens, and then breaks
(To live, clouds
Mysteriously driven, to sparkle,
To end,
The wing of the impossible folded back once more).
Words like the sky
Today,
Something that comes together, that scatters.

Words like the sky,
Infinite
But fully captured suddenly in the brief pool.

Translated by John T. Naughton
Yves Bonnefoy

Eleven poems translated by Anthony Rudolf

Four poems from Du mouvement et de l'immobilité de Douve, 1953

She flees towards the willows; the trees' smile wraps around her, simulating the simple joy of a game. But the light is dark on her imploring hands, and fire comes to wash her face and fill her mouth, fling her body into the chasm of the willows.

O you
Engulfed by the waters of death
Off the end of the Osirian table!
Lighting up the guests
A last time with your breasts.
But pouring daylight from your head of ice
Over the sterile, the infernal regions.

* 

The little space between the tree and threshold is enough for you to spring
Out once more and die
And for me to think I live again in the light
Of the shade that you were.

And for me to forget
Your face crying out on every wall,
O Maenad reconciled perhaps
With so much shadow joyous on the stone.
Is it you
This stone opened up, this devastated house?
How can one die?

I brought light, I sought,
Blood reigned everywhere.
And I was weeping, I was crying out
With my whole body.

*

Let a place be made for the one who draws near,
The one who is cold, deprived of any home,

Tempted by the sound of a lamp, by the lit
Threshold of a solitary house.

If he is overcome by anguish and fatigue
Say again for him those words that heal.

What does this heart need which once was silence
If not those words which are both sign and prayer,

Like a fire caught sight of in the sudden night,
Like the table glimpsed in a poor house?

Two poems from *Hier régnant désert*, 1958

**San Francesco, at Night***

... And so the floor was marble in the dark
Room, where hope, incurable, led you.
It might have been calm waters where reflected
Lights bore away voices of candles and evening.

*San Francesco is a church (Ed).*
And yet, no ship was seeking shore there, no footstep
Troubled the water's stillness any more.
So it is, I say to you, with our other mirages,
Festive days in our heart, eternal torches!

The Same Voice, Always

I am like the bread you will break,
The fire you will make, pure water
That will take you over the land of the dead.

Like the foam
Which has ripened for you light and harbour.

Like the bird of evening which effaces the shores,
Like the evening wind – suddenly rougher, and cold.

Five poems from Pierre écrite, 1965

The Garden

Stars vaulted the high garden's walls like fruit
In the tree beyond, but stones from the mortal
Place filled out in the foam of the tree
Like a prow's shadow, and like a memory.

Stars and you, bits of chalk on a pure road,
You grew pale, took the true garden from us,
All the roads of the starlit sky casting shadow
Over this shipwrecked song and our dark way.

A Stone

Fall but softly rain upon this face.
Put out the humble clay lamp slowly.
A Stone

You, spoken in a low voice among the branches,
Murmured, silenced, bearing all eternity,
Moon, half open the gate and lean towards
Us who have no daylight any more.

* 

A Stone

A fire goes before us.
I see from time to time your nape, your face,
Then, only the torch,
Solid fire, tidal wave of the dead.

Ash coming away from the flame
In the evening light,
O presence
Welcome us beneath your furtive arch
For a dark feast.

* 

'Andiam, Compagne Belle . . .'

Don Giovanni, 1, 3

The lamps of this last night, among the leaves –
Are they still burning, and in what land?
Over the door the tree increases; evening.
The star came before the frail mortal fire.

Andiam, compagne belle, dwellings, stars,
River more brilliant with the evening.
On you – swept away by music – I hear foam fall
Where the untraceable heart of the dead is beating.
The Mill in the Nut

JOHN CAREY

This Smallness is without Quantity or Quality; it is Irrepressible, Infinite, Unlimited, and, while comprehending all things, is Itself Incomprehensible.

Pseudo-Dionysius, On the Divine Names 9.3.1

Around the year 1380 Chaucer wrote his dream-poem The House of Fame. Caught up by a golden eagle into Fame's celestial palace, he beheld among other celebrities a company of witches and wizards: Medea, Circe and Calypso; Belinous, Elymas and Simon Magus. The last in the list is an obscurer figure, and the only one described at any length:

Ther saugh I Colle tregetour
Upon a table of sicamour
Pleye an uncouthe thing to telle:
I saugh him carien a wind-melle
Under a walsh-note shale.2

Colle has been plausibly identified by James F. Royster with ‘un Englois qu’estoit fort nigromancien qui est a nom Colin T., qui savoit faire beaucoup de mervailles par voie de nigromancie’ (An Englishman who was a mighty nigromancer, Colin T. by name, who knew how to perform many marvels through his nigromancy): the source is a French conversation manual, written by an Englishman in 1396. Colin is said to have practised his art in Orléans at a time somewhat before that of the dialogue in which he is mentioned, so that Chaucer’s allusion seems to be a contemporary reference.3

The ‘uncouthe thing’ which Colle/Colin performs is something of a puzzle. To put a windmill under a walnut shell is a feat worthy of the most fabulous of wonder-workers; but a ‘tregetour’ was more usually a mountebank than a magus, characterized by Godefroy as a ‘juggler
performing tricks of skill and magic, who often accompanied the strolling troubadours at great gatherings. The 'table of sicamour', presumably a table like those used by Bosch’s 'Conjuror' and the 'Bateleur' of the Tarot cards, also suggests the sleight-of-hand of an itinerant sharper. The poem’s satiric tone may be responsible for some of these details; the act itself remains an enigma.

In the year 1389 the nineteen-year-old Isabel of Bavaria, wife of Charles VI of France, was crowned queen at a magnificent ceremony in Paris. A series of spectacles greeted her as she entered the city; we are here concerned only with Froissart’s account of the show at the gates:

A la première porte de Saint-Denis, ainsi que on entre dedens Paris et que on dist à la Bastide, y avoit ung ciel tout estellé, et dedens ce ciel jeunes enffans apparelliés et mis en ordonnance d’angles, lesquels enffans chantoient moult mélodieusement.
Avec tout ce il y avoit ung ymage de Nostre Dame qui tenoit par figure son petit enffant, lequel enffant s’esbatoit par soy à ung
molinel fait d'une grosse noix, et estoit le ciel armoié très-riche-ment des armes de France et de Bavière, à ung soleil d'or rayant qui estoit la devise du roy et pour la feste des joustes; lesquelles choses la royné de France et les dames, en passant oultre, veyrent moult voulentiers, et aussi firent tous ceulx qui par là passerent.\(^5\)

(At the first gate of Saint Denis, called the Bastide, which is where one enters Paris, there was a heaven filled with stars, and within this heaven were young children arrayed as angels, who sang most sweetly. With all this there was an image of Our Lady, seeming to hold her little child; and the child was playing with a little mill made from a great nut. And the heaven was blazoned most splendidly with the arms of France and Bavaria, with a sun of blazing gold to signify the king and the festival of jousting. All these things the queen of France and the ladies beheld with delight as they passed, as did all who came by.)

In the following year the royal goldsmith Jehan Du Vivier repaired 'un petit moulinet d'or, garni de perles et de balais petits, pour l'esbatement de madame Ysabel de France' (A little mill of gold, adorned with tiny pearls and rubies, for the diversion of my lady Isabel of France).\(^6\) The coincidence of dates is very close: it is tempting to believe that the queen commissioned her 'moulinet' after her fancy had been caught by the toy at the pageant.

In the sixteenth century mention begins to be made of a plaything called the 'moulinet à noix' (nut-windmill); in his Histoire des Jouets H. R. d'Allemagne describes it as operating 'by means of four nutshell-\^\hspace{2pt} turning around an axis',\(^7\) but Rabelais writes of a 'moulinet' made 'd'une coquille de noix grosliere' (from one great nutshell).\(^8\) It must have been such a contrivance, a toy windmill made from a single nut, which Isabel saw at Saint Denis; but from Froissart's admiring tone it seems clear that it was not yet the childish commonplace of later centuries, and the striking similarity of the nearly contemporary passage in Chaucer cannot be lightly dismissed. As with Colin, mill and nut are, in some sense, one; as with Colin, we sense something of marvel, even of mystery. What can we make of this?

It seems to me possible that this problematical image, later a simple whirligig, was in its origins a symbol. I believe that the mill within a
nut, the mill which is a nut, is an emblem of the universe itself: seen from within, a vast mechanism of grinding wheels; seen from without, a tiny shell resting in the hand of God.

The mill as a type of the secular world is attested in the Clavis of pseudo-Melito of Sardis (ninth-tenth century), where it is taken to mean 'life (saeculum), full of troubles' and 'the round of this life'. An earlier hint of the concept may be discernible in Ignatius of Antioch's reference to his impending martyrdom (c. 107): 'I am God's wheat, and must be ground by the teeth of wild beasts'. A poem attributed to Hildebert of Lavardin (1056–1133) equates mola ('mill') and mundus ('world'); and the anonymous Englishman who wrote the Distinctiones Monasticae (c. 1200) observed that 'To this mill Samson was sent when his eyes had been put out; for man, when he has lost the light of contemplation, tends to entangle himself in secular affairs, and seeks solace outside himself because he has lost the inner joy'. These mills are presumably querns, or hand-mills: the windmill appears later, an apter symbol of cosmic process in the disjointed times of interregnum, pestilence and schism which the ebbing Middle Ages brought to Europe. The Ayenbite of Inwyt, translated in 1340 from a French work written in 1279, says that a man sits atop Fortune's wheel 'as the mill to the wind ... there bloweth all the twelve winds of idle bliss'.

Several centuries later, in the industrial, scientific England of William Blake, the mill had become a better mirror for the universe than it could ever have been before. For Blake it is Satan who is the 'Miller of Eternity' and 'Prince of the Starry Wheels', and the demiurge Los addresses him in terms which leave the symbolism unmistakable:

O Satan my youngest born, art thou not Prince of the Starry Hosts
And of the Wheels of Heaven, to turn the Mills day & night?
Art thou not Newtons Pantocrator weaving the woof of Locke?
To Mortals thy Mills seem every thing. . . .

The cosmic significance of the nut is not nearly so well attested; the clearest expression of it known to me occurs in the days of Colin and Isabel, in the visions revealed to Julian of Norwich on the eighth of May, 1373:

And in this he shewed a little thing, the quantitie of an haselnott, lying on the palme of my hand, as me semide, and it was as rounde as a balle. I looked theran with the eye of my understanding, and thought: What may this be? And it was answered generaelly thus: It is all that is made. I marvayled how it might
laste, for me thought it might sodenly haue fallen to naught for littlenes. And I was answered in my vnderstanding: It lasteth and ever shall, for God loueth it; and so hath all thing being by the loue of God.¹⁵

For Julian it is ecstasy to perceive the smallness of all creation with the eye of her understanding; but this insight does not bring peace to all. Hamlet, who has told Rosencrantz and Guildenstern that he feels the world to be a prison, sweeps their rationalizing replies aside with the cry ‘O God! I could be bounded in a nutshell, and count myself a king of infinite space, were it not that I have bad dreams’.¹⁶ To one alone in the universe the nutshell becomes merely the illusory security of a world sustained by faith, undermined by the ‘bad dreams’ creeping in from outer chaos.

Shakespeare has placed an allusion to the cosmic nutshell in the mouth of Hamlet, the immortal culmination of the Scandinavian legend of Amlethus. The earliest trace of that legend survives in Snorri Sturluson’s Skáldskaparmál, in a brief verse by the tenth-century explorer Snaebjörn Galti. The diction is obscure, and its rendering often doubtful; but it seems evident from the poem that Amlodha kvern, ‘Hamlet’s mill’, was one of the old names of the sea.¹⁷ Giorgio de Santillana and Hertha von Dechend have brought forward a wealth of comparative material to demonstrate that this oceanic quern is to be understood as a symbol of the turning dome of heaven; some of their most clear-cut parallels are the statements of Cleomedes and Petronius Arbiter that the sky turns like a mill, the use of mill-terminology in the astronomical nomenclature of the Arabs, and the comparison of the revolving heavens to oxen working at a mill in the Hindu Purāṇas.¹⁸ For Blake the mills of Theotormon are a mechanism involving the skies and seas:

These are the starry voids of night & the depths & caverns of earth
These Mills are oceans, clouds & waters ungovernable in their fury
Here are the stars created & the seeds of all things planted
And here the Sun & Moon receive their fixed destinations.¹⁹

It is curious that we have, at either terminus of a tradition spread out over centuries, the two halves of our symbol, each with the meaning which we have sought to find in it: Amlodhi master of the mill, Hamlet king of the nutshell.²⁰
Was the ‘molinel’ in the Infant’s hand at Saint Denis so awesome and resonant an emblem? It would have been no marvel were it so: Isidore of Seville likened the sphere of heaven to ‘the balls with which children play’; and in the Legenda Aurea the child Christ says to St. Christopher: ‘Marvel thee nothing, for thou hast not only borne all the world upon thee, but thou hast borne him that created and made all the world, upon thy shoulders. I am Jesu Christ the king’. It would be hard to find for Him a fitter plaything.

But what of Cohn the juggler — what was the ‘uncouthe thing’ he did in Orléans? Perhaps nothing different from what all sorcerers have sought, witting or unwitting, in all their meddlings with stars and spirits; for none has not hearkened to the serpent’s promise ‘Ye shall be as gods’. Perhaps Colin, at his trickster’s table, dreamed of equaling the feats of Him Whom Calderón once called el Mágico Prodigioso.

Notes

1 Translated by C. E. Rolt, Dionysius the Areopagite (London, 1920), 163
2 Lines 1277-81. For the considerations on which an estimate of dating should be based see F. N. Robinson, The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer (Boston, 1957), 280: the poem must have been written at some point between 1374 and 1385, most probably in the first half of that period.
3 Royster, ‘Chaucer’s “Colle Tregetour” ’, Studies in Philology 23, 380–4. Royster discusses this technique’s use at 382: ‘. . . many times in his lists (Chaucer) proceeds in an order that to him was ancient, medieval and modern. At the end he frequently cites a modern, a contemporary, or a native example with an apparent realization of the effectiveness of the recent and local reference to suggest to his readers in a single realistic flash the meaning of a whole series of examples’.
4 Dictionnaire de l’ancienne langue française (Paris, 1880–1902), s.v. ‘tresgeteor’.
6 Cited by Léon Emmanuel Simon Joseph, marquis de Laborde, Notice des émaux, bijoux et objets divers exposés dans les galeries du Musée du Louvre (Paris, 1852), 395. I have been unable to consult this volume; cf. Godefroy, s.v. ‘moulinet’.
8 Oeuvres (Paris 1868–1903), 4. 63.


Pitra, loc. cit.; the Distinctiones are discussed xxv–xxvii.


A Book of Showings to the Anchoress Julian of Norwich, eds. Edmund Colledge and James Walsh (Toronto, 1978), 299–300.

Hamlet, 2. 2.


The link between Snaebjörn and Shakespeare was the Gesta Danorum of Saxo Grammaticus, bks. 3 and 4. But no reference to a nut is found in Saxo; and his sole allusion to the Amlóða kvem is evidently an unconscious one, an oblique reference to sand as meal of which there is no echo in the tragedy.

Etymologiae 13. 4.


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The Lord Krishna carved in sandalwood nut.

By an anonymous craftsman in Rajastan.
The Aesthetics of Indian Dance

KAPILA VATSAYAN

The many genres of Indian dance in different regions of India, in rural and urban milieus, on a simple or a sophisticated level, are governed by a common aesthetic which accounts for a unique continuity and an underlying unity despite the apparent phenomenon of staggering plurality.

THE WORLD-VIEW

This aesthetic evolves from a world view which regards the cosmic process as a dance of microcosm and macrocosm, a rhythmic interplay of eternity and flux in an unending movement of involution, evolution and devolution. Man on earth is one amongst all living matter, is inter-related to nature, responding and not conquering it. All matter is made of the five elements of water, earth, fire, space and sky. The life of Man, like the tree and the animal, sprouts from the seed or womb, is manifested in diverse ways, flowers and fruits, withers and throws up seeds. The cycle continues without beginning and end. Man’s distinctiveness lies in his capacity of self-reflection and introspection, his potentiality of conscious awareness that the microcosm of his being (body, mind and spirit) is a symbol of the processes of the macrocosm. The concept of cyclic time and the notion of a still centre which flowers out spatially like the petals of a lotus or the spokes from the hub of a wheel, each denoting a capacity for the expansion of consciousness in a series of concentric circles, held together within the periphery of a large circumference, are fundamental to this world view.

The earliest Indian texts called the Vedas articulate the world view as cosmology. The Upanishads are works of speculative thought and systematize the world view as theoretical concepts, and the Brahmanas (texts of rituals) concretize the concepts through a perfect system of performance, called vajna (normally translated sacrifice). The abstract
principles of speculative thought are thus concretized in a ritual performance of particular duration in consecrated space: the two are mutually complementary. The abstract principle explains cosmic phenomena through the verbal metaphor of the tree with its roots in heaven, or the hub and spokes of a wheel; the ritual performance recreates in physical time and space, through a system of correspondences where each sound, word, gesture, ritual object symbolises a total design of the cosmos. The performance demands full community participation. In the Upanishads evolves the notion of yoga, the yoga of the collecting together of all energies (physical and psychical) inwardly through an introspection where revelation can take place: the yajna (ritual performance) of the Brahmanas make a design in consecrated space through the establishment of a centre and an enclosure and the lighting of three fires on altars which are in the shapes of a square, circle, and semi-circle respectively. The ritual acts are a symbolic sacrifice of parts of the body in the consecrated time of specific hours or days. In its totality, this ritual is a micro-model of the cosmic rhythm. In both the inner experience and the outer recreation, equilibrium, tranquillity and harmony are the goal. The first is an inward movement to the centre in silence, the second an outward expansive movement through multi-media expression.

This aesthetic emerged from the world view, the speculative concepts and the system of ritual each asserting Man's capacity to reflect, to introspect and to expand and enlarge in space, never forgetting that seed whose flowering and dying were parts of a single totality of a 'life-death-life' continuum. The commitment to wholeness was basic: neither in thought nor in ritual was there an absolute value attached to the single parts. Each was important only in a framework of inter-relationships within a whole. All life phenomena began from the unmanifest formless, sprouted into the multiple subsidiary forms and returned to the formless or what is beyond form. The Sanskrit words arupa (formless), rupa (form) and pararupa (beyond form) recur in all discussions. The theory of aesthetics comprised the key concepts of yoga (introspection, or an inward movement) and expression in systemized ritual i.e. yajna (or outward movement), and the notions of arupa (formless), rupa (form) and pararupa (beyond form). Fundamental to all these was the view that the individual soul (atman) was constantly aspiring to merge with the
universal (the Brahman). The movement was from the gross to the subtle, from the physical to the metaphysical, from the senses to the spirit, all in a continuum without polarity. Notions of transmutation, transubstantiation of matter into energy and energy into matter were necessary outcomes.

THE THEORY OF AESTHETICS

A theory of aesthetics is first articulated in the Natyasastra attributed to a mythical writer Bharata (2nd Cent. B.C. – 3rd Cent. A.D.). However, Bharata neither discusses nor describes the world view or even the aesthetics: he takes both for granted. He only lays down rules of a total multi-media artistic performance through which a state of joy-bliss-release can be experienced. The theatrical space is for that duration a micro-design of the macrocosm: it too is consecrated. The plot and the characters are the bridges of communication employing speech, movement, song and costume as parts of a total design in a specific time.

Popularly called the theory of Rasa (Relish i.e. juice, fluid, colour) it visualizes a total process, comprising first the aesthetic experience of the artist-creator, second the content, form and technique of artistic expression, and third the evocation of an analogous state of aesthetic experience in the spectator and audience. Emerging out of the world outlined above, logically the aesthetic experience is necessarily viewed as that state of joy where all differentiation ceases, all energies are inward and the artist in that moment has an experience of the whole, the formless (arupa). Unlike any empirical experience, it is trans-mundane and akin to that state of supreme mystical bliss called Brahmananda. All duality of subject and object is lost, distinctions of physical time and space are eschewed, the finite and infinite merge. This is the state of rasa in the singular, within the creator, the artist. This can be possible only when the individual ego and subjective emotion are transcended, when polarities are experienced as continuums, when pain and pleasure are complementary and not in opposition. Momentarily, there is the experience of the universal: this is a state of concentration, an approximation to all that is understood by the word yoga, a moment of intensity that is also a moment of release here and now in life. The artist sees in his inward third eye, it is said, the white light of luminosity. The problem of art then is to communicate
through sound, word, gesture, movement, mass, volume, line and colour, finite symbols and dynamic images (rupa, pratirupa i.e. multiple forms) through which in turn the initial aesthetic experience of the artist can be re-created or re-evoked in the heart of an attuned spectator.

Naturally, the content of such art cannot be an expression of subjectivity or individual uniqueness: it can only be of generalized universal categories. The work of art, its characters, its modes of expression are akin to the spectrum of colours of a rainbow. Any work of art will comprise the finite symbols which can make a design in space in a fixed duration of time through which, in the last analysis, a whole cosmic process can be suggested, be it through an infinitesimally small icon, or a dance or a song of short duration, or of the mighty architectonic structure of a temple or a stupa. The form and content of the work of art are the counterparts of the methodology of the yajna (ritual sacrifice) where the parts are related to the whole and energies flow from within outward, like the spokes of a wheel from a hub. The arts are multiple radiations from a single centre akin to petals of a flower. In art, life is necessarily abstracted into archetypes of character, or what may be termed impersonalized human sentiments and emotions. Now the singular rasa is plural rasas, or more precisely speaking bhavas, divided into eight or nine dominant emotions, viz., the erotic (sringara), pathos or compassion (karuna), heroism (vira), fierceness (raudra), laughter (hasya), fear (bhaya), disgust (vibhati) and wonder (abdhuta). To these eight basic states is added a ninth, ‘tranquillity’ (santa). These are the counterparts of the multiple forms (pratirupa) of speculative thought. Superimposed on them are many others broadly classified as thirty-three transferable or transient states called the sanchari bhavas. For example, love can be expressed by passion or jealousy, passes through phases of separation and yearning, and can culminate in union. The transient emotions are the minute shades of colour, the micro-waves on a dominant basic state. Through the specificity of the archetypal characters, of gods or humans, in drama dance, music, poetry, sculpture and painting, the dominant and the transient or subsidiary are presented. The generalized categories, the archetypes, constitute the content of art and govern the form and technique of each of the arts. A series of correspondences are established between a micro-unit of the specific medium (i.e. speech,
sound, gesture, mass, volume, line, colour, etc.) and a transient state and a dominant state. Each note or micro-tone of sound, each gesture of the human body singly corresponds to an emotive state: in combination a total form evolves aurally and visually with a distinct shape, fragrance, colour and taste. This in turn evokes the state of bliss or joy in the spectator i.e. an experience of rasa again in the singular suggesting a state of un-differentiation. The work of art becomes an icon to be contemplated both by the creator and the viewer. The three phases are named rasanubhava (experience of rasa), the rasabhivyakti (expression of rasa) and rasoutapati (evocation of rasa). Invariably the beginning is the still centre of the formless unmanifest, while the process is that of expression and manifestation through multiple forms. The culmination is the evocation of an analogous experiential state in the spectator. In a word, the dancer is a vehicle, an instrument of communication, the bridge. Yeats, inspired by the thought of the Upanishads, sums up the theory of the Indian arts in a line: ‘How can we know the dancer from the dance?’ The dancer himself or herself becomes the worshipper of the icon of movement created or transmitted through the body.

Abhinavagupta, the most important commentator of the 10th century A.D., explicitly states what Bharata, centuries before him, had taken for granted, in the following words:

‘The artistic creation is the direct or unconventionalized expression of a feeling of passion “generalized”, that is, freed from distinctions in time or space and therefore from individual relationships and practical interests, through an inner force of the artistic or creative intuition within the artist. This state of consciousness (rasa) embodied in the poem is transferred to the actor, the dancer, the reciter and to the spectator. Born in the heart of the poet, it flowers as it were in the actor and bears fruit in the spectator.

If the artist or poet has the inner force of the creative intuition, the spectator is the man of cultivated emotion in whom lie dormant the different states of being, and when he sees them manifested, revealed on the stage through movement, sound and décor, he is lifted to that ultimate state of bliss known as “ananda”.

Made nearly a thousand years ago, these statements are pertinent today for a correct understanding, appreciation and appraisal of the
Indian arts, especially dance and music which have enjoyed a remarkable continuity of tradition.

Since the artistic experience was accepted by both the creator and the spectator as an instrument vital for the expansion of the individual, the unique self, towards the Universal Self, and since this experience was again accepted as a discipline of the highest order, both creator and spectator made a special effort to achieve a state of harmony and bliss through the experience. The dancer, the performer, had the creative intuition while the spectator had the training and cultivation to achieve this state of harmony. The language that evolved was one of symbols validated by tradition and conviction dependent for its life-breath not on the representation of nature, but on the revealing of underlying truth and beauty of life through suggestion; on the plane of technique (artistic content), the training of the spectator was an essential pre-requisite for any communication which would bring heightened experience.

The term used for the spectator, sahrdaya (of attuned heart) or the rasika (who experiences rasa) sums up all the underlying assumptions of such a view. Dormant states of consciousness exists in the spectator, which, once he sees them manifested through the medium of the art, the identical states of being are evoked and awakened within him. The spectator is one of attuned heart and similar disposition who can experience the mood, the sentiment (rasa) and who, like the creative artist himself, is capable of experiencing emotion and of feeling liberated from the distinctions of time and space.

THE PRACTICE AND PERFORMANCE

A remarkable continuity of tradition is witnessed in the Indian performing arts. The artist, in a very large measure, continues to consider the artistic experience as a self-discipline of the highest order: the cultivated spectator called Rasika, shares the same world view and aesthetics and firmly believes that the arts are an expression of his own finest sensibilities, and lead to an experience of the whole, the universal. The artist prepares himself through concentrated introspection for the creative moment of release, the spectator prepares himself to experience the dormant feelings lying within him through the artistic performance. The demands on both are exacting.

The dancer's concern, on the plane of artistic form, is necessarily
not with his individual self or the human body as such, but with its use as the human instrument through which the universal might be suggested. Designs in space, the treatment of each muscular tension and release, the gestures of hand and eye therefore assume a significance beyond the immediate and subjective emotions of the particular artist. The dancer believes that, so long as the individual self – the human form – has not been expanded, uplifted, to become an impersonalized universal self, he or she has not attained the state of preparedness for the artistic experience. The inner experience is in the silence of the whole and he or she is but the vehicle of communication. The dance is revealed through the body, the dancer is naught and there is no room here for spontaneous overflow of subjective emotion. The spectator comes to revive the universal, the impersonalized feelings, rather than to respond to the personal, subjective experience of the artist. In classical Indian dance, the music and ritual theatre, the worldview and aesthetics provide the solid foundation of the performance and communication. The fulfilling experience of art is when the mystical unseen permeates the community.

Obviously, since the thrill here lies in the unfolding of the known but dormant, and not with the confrontation of the strange, the unique or the highly subjective, the demands made upon the spectator are many and of a different order. The themes constituting the content of the classical dances of India remain the age-old themes of Indian legend, mythology and poetry; the dance, or at least one aspect of it, is highly literary in character and borrows freely from the corpus of Indian poetry. The positions and stances the Indian dancer attains are the chiselled poses of Indian sculpture and iconography; the gestures are symbolic and derived from ritual confirmed by tradition and usage; the melodic and rhythmic patterns forming the musical content of each dance are the finished rāgas (musical modes) and tala (metrical cycles with specific numbers of unaccented and accented beats, etc.). The sculpturesque, literary and musical are fused into kinetic icons of dance movements to suggest the harmonious state of being which each of these arts, singly, reiterates.

In the pure dance sequences (called nṛtta), the body is made into a geometrical design. A single motif guides the articulation of movement, such as a triangle in the case of Bharatanatyam, a square in
Kathakali, a figure of eight in Manipuri, a line in Kathak. The navel is the centre, symbolic of the cosmic centre and all movement flows outwards from it and returns to it in frozen stance. In a rigorously structured design, floor space is also covered in the same manner. As in ritual both time and space are consecrated. The movements of the single parts are related to the whole dance and are capable of evoking transient or dominant states. In the pantomimic sections (nritya) the line of poetry set to music and rendered in a metrical cycle (tala) provides the basis for recreating the myriad spectrum of emotion on a basic mood: variations and improvisations are presented only in order to evoke a dominant state of love, valour, pathos, etc. All with the ultimate aim of calling forth in the spectator an analogous experience of joy, bliss and release. Each specific character or theme is but an aid for the evocation of the dominant mood and not of absolute value as single parts. The interplay of stasis and dynamics constitutes the dance. Sometimes, for the uninitiated spectator, this dance becomes a highly contextual art-form full of bewildering complexity and punctuated by repetition. At the level of meaning and technique it demands a knowledge and training which obviously do not belong to the visual experience of the dance alone. For the initiated spectator, however, these are the very factors which contribute to his delight. The thrill lies in the unfolding of an experience known to him in works of poetry, music, architecture, and sculpture. The revelation of the familiar plays an important role in the full relish of the aesthetic experience, since it presupposes the spectator's familiarity with the myths and symbolism and awareness of the stylized sculptured poses, the language of poetry and a knowledge of musical melodic and metrical structures.

Variations, interpretations and synchronizations are all built around the pillars of the metrical cycle and the musical mode. The delight of the initiated spectator comes from the prismatic unfolding of the different lights and shades where he can enjoy the re-creation of innumerable permutations and combinations on a single myth, theme, a musical mode or a metrical cycle. In the pantomimic sequences, understanding of the word and the musical note are essential as this provides the foundation for the countless varieties of kinetic metaphor. This layering of stylized movement-patterns upon repetitive poetic and musical passages constitutes a cardinal principle
of the aesthetics of the classical Indian dance. An acquaintance with thematic, poetic, musical composition and sculptural pose at one level is an essential prerequisite as, without it, the spectator is left often on the fringes of aesthetic enjoyment and may not be permeated by the spirit of this art. On the other hand, precisely because the content and formal elements are only parts of a total design, instrumental in the expression of impersonalized states, archetypes, an immediate resonance is evoked which transcends the specific reference of myth, theme, form and technique. The attuned spectator who is not looking for specific meaning and story is transported to another state, that elevation wherein he experiences to an analogous state of joy or bliss, which is trans-mundane and transformative. The cycle comes full circle beginning with the formless unmanifest flowering into the multiplicity of the manifest, which in turn is the vehicle of the experience of the trans-manifest. The world view, the aesthetics, and the performance are multiple layers of an organically knit nodule of experience, expression and evoked experience. The annihilation of the limited self (atman) of the artist makes possible the creative act of the expression of the vaster spectrum of life in art and leads to the expansion of consciousness of both performer and spectator to a larger universal self (Brahman). The residual taste after return to mundane life is a sense of harmony and tranquillity. Perhaps this is the secret of the international attraction of Indian music and dance today.
Presences
The flooding thirsts the ghosts panting
the vengeance deluge of the haunting -
the spirits of the unborn wanting
wanting what?
Surely not
to be born!
Wanting
Earth unpoisoned – blue with water
streamy and leafy – green in air . . .
To be born there

Holder
Alone far in – a hand holding a light –
he stood
a soft puffing
like
a remote bird?
on one note . . .
two . . . a third . . .
fluting water dripped from vault height
pitting mud in the cavern beyond night

In
the Open cavern
lonely like early Man on Earth
Earth
holding life
Bindweed

Convolvulus of echoes, valley-long!
a turning stealth and then
  suddenly
  bells
outward-lookers
  Listen long
  and well...
Sometimes then turn a thesis to a song
  spiral tower that spills
  bowling its convolvulus of bells
all along a valley and hedge hills

Earth's Angels

Shooping along a dust path between broom
I came out on a lawn clasping a stream
which went gently laughing laden with twinkling lights from ripples, next bushes and trees sprinkling likewise glints from fresh leaves - starlike - but not stars: they were small cool leaves, a tender net - not fires, bits of the great rout, driven dangers . . .

Ignore the stars! watch the lips of Earth's angels

The Universe - awe sparkling in clear night - is shamed by the small leaves - if veiled by light, may be redeemed by being lost to sight in motley of finite 'live things watched instead of the wilderness Universe beautiful and dead

Mother-of-eyes Earth! live! bless each head!
Conscience Looks Ahead

The past is guilty of us not we of it –
part of us past's doing.

Our fault the future
– perhaps wholly: choices we did receive,
almost no choice is what we choose to leave.

The Handful

Blest dust in the eyes Galaxy!
the gesture of the Sower like a scythe
has just unfurled
 across the Field
grain of suns cast on the wind of Space
– one token of the treasure of no place
except the heart – cycle of seed and swathe

Deserve the harvest of the stars, soul!
the handful fanned out as if God is! Sow!
Mappa Mundi

The thirteenth-century world-map in Hereford Cathedral

Shaped like a spread cloak, as Strabo would have said, or for us like an envelope with the flap up, this trimmed square yard of sheepskin nailed to its wooden stretcher is space for a round world of ragged continents, ocean-rimmed, mermaid-hymned, spoked with a cross of seas, pivoting like a wheel on Jerusalem, nave of creation.

Here are Babel and Rome, the Strait of Gibraltar and the Earthly Paradise on its island out at the sun's East Gate, with a wall of fire to deter trespassers like us; Ararat, where in clear weather the Ark may be seen by the sharp-eyed, timbers firmly stove on the first mountain-tip given up by the Flood; the cannibal Essedones; and here the dogheaded Lapps, the crocodile and centaur.

Here is a mirror, and the world inside it no stranger than your eyes, the palm of your hand or your stressed heart bound by its rivers of blood, home of boredom and madness, the journey in the body's battered coracle towards the imagined garden. Think kindly, then, of Richard the clerk, who dared place his own Clee Hill in this corner, not so far from Jerusalem but a man might hope to walk there once in a lifetime, covering the earth with no finer vellum than the soles of pilgrim feet.
Latoun

Latoun, as Chaucer called it, this fine alloy—
Tin, copper, zinc and perhaps silver
Hammered out to thin sheets, marked
By dint of the iron hammerhead with mottles
Like the moon's face or the armour of a fish.
No lexicographer or chemist knows
How it was made, or how its name was made—
Which they spell Latten, Laton or otherwise—
Discarded like a fragment of old tin
Which I here polish and hold up to the full moon,
Its answering talisman, just naming the colour:
Not silver, pale gold, mother-of-pearl. Latoun.

The Key

Samuel Palmer sketched the hill
I climb to reach my house tonight:
the moon's a coin rubbed thin with use
wrapped in torn clouds, and up ahead
the wet road gleams with black and white.

The farm gate creaks, the farm dogs bark,
their cry tossed upwards on the wind
and on the wind receding now
as five years' distance falls between
that night and this reluctant mind

that will not let the past be past
but haunts a place that cannot be
again, and like a ghost would peer
in at the glass to find myself.
I grope in memory for the key:
the door once shut is always shut,
the reader there by gaslight died
five years ago, and here I am.
The wind has torn the house away,
time and the rain have stepped inside.

The mind tugs at its guyrope yet,
as if that place were not secure
from all the winds of hope and loss:
as if that key would not dissolve
always before I reach the door.

CORINNA MARNAU

Sonnet/Epigram

The ring on your white finger crying to the world
in the shrill wordless language of its silent gold
only the unbroken whiteness of your marriage-hand,
curved in dreaming resignation to its life’s span
beside the parted lips tinged with a faint frost-glow
as of desire to whisper that alone you know
as, calm in the mists of twilight filigree
frail as a young tree-shoot enshrouded by its leaves
you lie in state among your fronds of fairy hair
which flickers gently round as if it did not dare
caress the shadows of your neck’s translucent white
or dim the images of far-seen, dark-ringed sight
that move and sink in your inviolate sea-salt eyes
as blue-veined eyelids lift, and comprehend the sky.
R. H. MORRISON

Bread

A thing so humble has been made so holy:
the goddess walks, invited, to our table,
and when the loaf is cut or bread is broken
the sacred leaves no room for the profane.

A light is shining there, a pure symbol
of plough and furrow and attendant gulls,
and of a sleep not death that wakes to summer
and gold grain pouring till the silos fill.

A thing so newly made and yet so old
that deities were young when it first came.
Ceres has left. Someone is bending over
with holy, ageless words: 'Give us this day . . .'

The Wider Mourning

We see the trees or hear the thunder,
but is it always only thus?
Or may the trees and storms, we wonder,
hope in our hopes and feel for us?

With earth and sky she shared her laughter,
and tamed birds shared her gifts of bread;
familiar things were friends, but – after –
must only human words be said?

One last look back as we were leaving:
how pitiful the flowers placed there!
Were the white clouds and sea not grieving?
How could the summer grass not care!
A Brief Age

Come to my words of moonstone joy
in four-walled gardens of the stilled.
Across the glow of slanted sills
the mist-filled pearls have cast their coin.

You tread the courtyard of the mind
where not one rebel bough can sweep
down pollened stone. The roses dream;
the gates are shut, the bolts wedged tight.

Say you will live for once this age
of mortised moments sealed from rust,
shut from insistent beat of drums
in man-made walks of pearled and pale.

Diaphane

The morning mist is not alone.
A veiled one from another age?
How shall I name what has no name?
Boat of the soul, the soul's white boat.

The winter's thaw awaits its sun.
A sun, a pearl, a golden bird?
What songs are hidden in the earth,
where the boats go and the boats come!

This muslined morning is a dream
out of the head of sleeping night.
Music not sounded can imply,
and that which has no words can speak.
Apocalypse

I saw two suns, and hell was in the heavens.
A shower of lifeless swallows fell to the ground.
The flower of pity's signalled into powder;
if only it were night and all were dead.

My fingertips are calloused with much seeing,
stumbling along decapitated walls.
The spawn is falling and our days are falling
and life is falling faster than it breeds.

We said goodbye to violets and the swan
between the sewers and the hill of ash.
What shall I look on with these useless hands
where one by one burnt memories are lost?

Dreamers and Dreamt

Somnambulant on tracks through space and time we wander,
goaded like Io where the juggled planets stream.
We stray from dusk to dusk, from rose to rose, but yonder
there lives another world of which this world's the dream.

There lives another world, our other selves its keepers
asleep in amber halls beside a crystal lake.
A bronze gong in the making there will rouse the sleepers,
whose gauzy dreams, like ours, will crumble when they wake.

Our other selves will wake from drowse that held asunder
their prostrate forms, and night on pale obsidian hills.
They who are we will home through pearl-shelled light, and wonder
of whom are they the dream whose dreamers' waking kills.
SAMUEL MENASHE

Adam Means Earth
I am the man
Whose name is mud
But what's in a name
To shame one who knows
Mud does not stain
Clay he's made of.
Dust Adam became –
The dust he was –
Was he his name

The Spright of Delight
(For Kathleen Raine)
The spright of delight
Springs, summersaults
Vaults out of sight
Rising, self-spun
Weight overcome

Enlightenment
(For John Thornton)
He walked in awe
In awe of light
At nightfall, not at dawn
What ever he saw
Receding from sight
In the sky's afterglow
Was what he wanted
To see, to know
At Millay's Grave

Your ashes
In an urn
Buried here
Make me burn
For dear life,
My candle
At one end—
Night outlasts
Wick and wax
Foe and friend

Grace

(After Breakfast)

Propped upon a pot
This cup does not topple
Although it tilts
Over some drops
Of milk I spilled
Filling my cup
Up to the brim
Draining it dry
In praise of Him

The Host

I am haunted
Out of my house
Gaunt, dispossessed
By the homeless dead
These ghosts, guests
Have bled me white
No marrow is left
In the bone they bite
Whose Name I know

You whose name I know
As well as my own
You whose name I know
But not to tell
You whose name I know
Yet do not say
Even to myself
You whose name I know
Know that I came
Here to name you
Whose name I know

Tryptich*

When my mother
She who is not
All at once

Was a young girl
Who she was
I could see

Before the war
Waits to be
My mother

Reading sad books
Yet she is
In eternity

By the river
Already
I told her

Sometimes, she
Mother
She always

Looked up, wisely
Whose child
Would be

But did not dream
Though not yet
The one

The day I would
Could not be
Whose son

Be born to her
An other
You see

* The first poem in this Triptych appeared in Temenos 1 (now out of print) p.207. The second appeared in European Judaism, Winter 1973 (also out of print).
The Dead of Winter

In my coat I sit
At the window sill
Wintering with snow
Which did not melt
It fell long ago
At night, by stealth —
I was where I am
When the snow began

ROBIN SKELTON

The Painting

You have seen it,
the lady with the dragon,
she leading it with a
riband round its neck
down from the cavern
in the great hill mound,
and have presumed some
conquest over evil,
not recognizing
mutual reverence, she
being privy to the
dragon-power
that rocks the towering
menhirs in their beds
above the crossing waters, and he trusting
woman-lore, the changes and the seasons,
both rapt within the trance of generation.

Knowledge
Knowledge does not arrive by studied labour;
though you hunch year on year above your books
and Bachelor, Master, Doctor of each science,
labour farther to enlarge your mind,
you cannot come to knowledge; that eludes
deliberate effort as does ecstasy,
and must happen suddenly, your startled
understanding falling to its knees.
The Land

After a time
the land is not
outside you,
but a part of where
you deeply breathe
and firmly walk
the dark interiors
of your bones,

recording and
recalling all
the shames and triumphs
of the will
that moves the mountains
and the trees
and that the trees
and mountains move.

After a time
the land is not
where you have come
but where you are,
and every stone
upon the earth
is one more portrait
of your face,

sublime, indifferent
or sad,
or cracking in that
sudden smile
with which you answer
travellers
that wash the history
from their bones.
A Word Conceived in Intellect
(Per Verbum in Intellectu Conceptum)

ANDREW MOULDEY

'The artist works by a word conceived in his intellect and through the direction of his will towards the specific object to be made.'
(St. Thomas Aquinas, cited in Coomaraswamy, Selected Papers, Vol. 1, p. 228)

In the writings of Frithjof Schuon all the dimensions of the mystery of human subjectivity unfold. Our consciousness is theophanic insofar as it is a distant reflection of the Absolute and, conversely, 'that miracle that is intelligence' reveals our deiformity.¹ This image of man is fundamental to Meister Eckhart, whose vision penetrated the mystery of subjectivity to the core. He often spoke of 'a power in the soul which touches neither time nor flesh, flowing from the spirit, remaining in the spirit, altogether spiritual. In this power, God is ever verdant and flowering in all the joy and all the glory that He is in Himself'.²

The power, that Eckhart described as 'uncreated and uncreatable', is called the Intellect. According to Schuon it is the faculty of gnosis, in contrast to reason, the faculty of empirical consciousness. Unlike reason, which is an individual faculty, the Intellect is universal; although it is an increatum all of God's creation participate in it. Man stands beneath the divine axis while animals, plants and minerals are situated in the peripheral domains of nature. These creatures mirror the Universal Intellect immediately through their form but man participates to the extent that he is conscious of the miracle of his intelligence and has awoken to his theomorphic nature.³

While metaphysic and sacred science proceed from intellectual intuition, profane philosophy and science are based exclusively on reason. Similarly sacred art derives from the 'practical intellect', that Ananda Coomaraswamy defined as 'an extension of the Universal Intellect by which all natural things have been made',⁴ and profane
art arises from a split between Intellect and imagination. If the phenomenology of sacred art is to be effective in healing this split it must consider a related dichotomy, that of spirit and instinct. With this problem in mind we will be approaching the operation of the practical intellect from the peripheral domains of nature. Because all creatures participate in the Divine Intelligence, instinct is as much a manifestation of the Logos as creativity. This continuity becomes evident in the light of the Logos doctrine formulated by Philo of Alexandria.

The miracle that is intelligence was revealed to Philo through the passage in Genesis, ‘Let us make man in our own image’. Human deiformity, maintained Philo, does not reside in man’s body but in his mind which is made after the pattern of the Divine Mind. Thanks to this correspondence our consciousness is capable of transcending the world of the senses:

And so, carrying its gaze beyond the confines of all substance discernible by sense, it comes to a point at which it reaches out after the intelligible world, and on descrying in that world sights of surpassing loveliness, even the patterns and the originals of the things of sense which it saw here, it is seized by sober intoxication. . . .

In this state the mind longs to pass beyond the world of forms ‘to the Great King Himself; but amid its longing to see Him, pure and untempered rays of concentrated light stream forth like a torrent, so that by its gleams the eye of the understanding is dazzled’.5 Because Philo’s doctrine of transcendence is dualistic this longing to apprehend the Divine Essence cannot be fulfilled. But the soul is granted a vision of the Great King through the mediation of the Logos. According to Philo the Logos is the active principle of God’s thought, and also the ‘place’ of the intelligible world. In ‘De Opificio Mundi’ he tells how this suprasensible world was made to serve as the archetype of the Creation:

So when he willed to create this visible world, he first formed the intelligible world, so that he might employ a pattern completely Godlike and incorporeal for the production of the corporeal world, a more recent image of one that was older, which was to comprise as many sensible kinds as there were intelligible ones in the other.6
The intelligible world is comparable to the blueprint for a city formulated in the mind of an architect. Just as the architect puts his plan into action in order to build the city so does God, by setting the intelligible world in motion, create the sensible world. For Philo the intelligible world in the act of creation is the Logos:

If one should wish to express it more baldly he would say that the Intelligible World is nothing else than the Divine Logos already in the act of building the cosmos, for the intelligible city is nothing else than the reasoning of the architect already intent on founding a city.°

As the active cause of the world the Logos requires a passive cause to work on; this says Philo ‘is in itself lifeless and motionless, but when moved, shaped, and quickened by Mind, it is transformed into the most perfect masterwork, this world’. However the implication that the passive cause is pre-existent matter, co-eternal with God, is antithetical to Philo’s monotheism. In his cosmology matter seems to be a reflection or shadow of the Ideas in the intelligible world and therefore created indirectly by the Deity. But the procession of the passive cause from the active should not be understood chronologically, ‘for time there was not before there was a world’. Whereas the architect plans and constructs his city in temporal stages, God’s conceiving and creating of the world is simultaneous and timeless. ‘God’s thinking was not anterior to his creating’ and consequently unformed matter as such does not exist:

So it is that He, always thinking, creates and gives beginning of being to sense perceptible things, so that both could exist together: the ever-creating divine mind and the sense perceptible things to which the beginning of being is given.

Human intelligence is formed in the image of the ever creating Logos. As a portion of the Divine Mind, the mind of man participates directly in God’s continuous act of thought and conversely God is ‘ever verdant and flowering’ in the soul. Later on we will see how this correspondence extends to the practical intellect and examine Coomaraswamy’s statement ‘that the human “artist in possession of his art” is such by participation in the Master Architect’s creative power’.°
INSTINCT AND THE LOGOS

According to Paracelsus man at his birth is 'endowed with the perfect light of nature' and this light or 'inborn spirit' also dwells in animals.\textsuperscript{13} In this century Jung has reinstated Paracelsus' insight through his theory of the instincts. He first considered this problem in an important paper written in 1919: 'Instinct and the Unconscious'. Here Jung rejects the view that instincts were originally learnt patterns of behaviour that became autonomous through constant repetition. The extremely refined propagation instinct of the yucca moth is sufficient to show the inadequacy of the hypothesis:

The flowers of the yucca plant open for one night only. The moth takes the pollen from one of the flowers and kneads it into a little pellet. Then it visits a second flower, cuts open the pistil, lays its eggs between the ovules and then stuffs the pellet into the funnel-shaped opening of the pistil. Only once in its life does the moth carry out this complicated operation.\textsuperscript{14}

Such a procedure implies an element of foreknowledge; the moth's instinct, Jung suggests, must carry within itself the pattern of the situation: the structure of the flower, the act of pollination and the egg-laying. In other words instinctive forms of behaviour require a corresponding 'instinctive act of comprehension' or 'intuition'. Whereas instinct 'is a purposive impulse to carry out some highly complicated action, intuition is the unconscious purposive apprehension of a highly complicated situation'.\textsuperscript{15}

In the human psyche the a priori forms of intuitive apprehension are called 'archetypes' by Jung. These forms, which determine all psychic processes, are seen as complementary to the instincts:

Just as his instincts compel man to a specifically human mode of existence, so the archetypes force his ways of perception and apprehension into specific human patterns. The instincts and the archetypes together form the 'collective unconscious'.\textsuperscript{16}

The term archetype can be traced back to Philo, who used it to denote the ideas of the intelligible world on which the sensible world is modelled. Not surprisingly Jung's use of the concept in a biological context has given rise to controversy. For example, Titus Burckhardt had this to say in 'Cosmology and Modern Science':
... for Jung, the 'collective unconscious' is situated 'below', at the level of physiological instincts. It is important to bear this in mind, since the term 'collective unconscious', in itself, could carry a wider and in some sort more spiritual meaning as certain assimilations made by Jung seem to suggest, especially his utilizing – or rather in point of fact usurping – of the term 'archetype' in order to indicate the latent, and, as such, inaccessible contents of the 'collective unconscious'.

The expression 'physiological instincts' however is less than fair to Jung. As has been shown, in Jungian psychology instinct is not exclusively physiological but has a mental or psychic aspect in the archetype. A scientist observes an archetype as it manifests itself in a pattern of behaviour:

But the picture changes at once when looked at from the inside, from within the realm of the subjective psyche. Here the archetype appears as a numinous factor, as an experience of fundamental significance.

Without the complementarity of instinct and archetype, the living creature could not participate in the Universal Intellect. From the metaphysical standpoint the complex behaviour of the yucca moth which cannot be understood reductively, is a form of participation in the Logos or a manifestation of God's ever creative thought actualised in his creature. If this interpretation does not contradict the perennial philosophy, neither does it diverge from Jung's later archetypal theory.

We cannot consider this aspect of Jung's thought at length. In his late works the archetype is no longer regarded solely from the psychological perspective. Jung had learnt from the alchemists that man as microcosm corresponds to the macrocosm and had surmised that the archetypes which dwell in the soul are one with the ordering principles of the cosmos. This archetypal foundation of inner and outer reality is the 'unus mundus':

The background of our empirical world ... appears to be in fact an unus mundus. This is at least a probable hypothesis which satisfies the fundamental tenet of scientific theory: 'Explanatory principles are not to be multiplied beyond the necessary'. The transcendental psycho-physical background corresponds to a
"potential world' in so far as all those conditions which determine the form of empirical phenomena are inherent in it.\textsuperscript{20}

Here Jung is referring to the doctrine formulated by the alchemist Dorn. It is not without interest to note Jung’s conjecture that the model for Dorn’s unus mundus is the intelligible world of Philo’s De Opificio Mundi.\textsuperscript{21}

CREATIVITY AND THE LOGOS (ARS SINE SCIENTIA NIHIL)

If Jung was an empirical psychologist open to the transcendent, Coomaraswamy was a metaphysician who took his stand in the Intellect.\textsuperscript{22} Yet despite these radically different points of departure, their perspectives converge upon the Philonic Logos. We must now examine the role of this doctrine in Coomaraswamy’s interpretation of sacred art.

It will only be possible to consider briefly those aspects of the many named Logos that are not directly relevant to our theme. In Philo’s ethical thought, for example, true conscience is based on the working of the divine Logos in our soul rather than mere conformity to an external ‘moral code’.\textsuperscript{23} So long as the Logos is absent we are free from any sense of guilt:

But when the Scrutinizer, the true priest, enters us like a light beam utterly pure, we then discover the tainted intentions stored up in our soul and the guilty and censurable actions to which we put our hands in ignorance of what is to our benefit.\textsuperscript{24}

For Coomaraswamy the Logos as conscience pertains both to conduct and to art:

Just as there is a conscience about doing, so there is a conscience about making: and these two consciences operate independently, notwithstanding that both are referrable to one common principle, that of the spark of Divine Awareness, to which the Middle Ages referred by the name ‘Synteresis’.\textsuperscript{25}

When this Synteresis or ‘inward controller’ is operative in the field of art it is known as ‘the practical intellect’ that is ‘an extension of the Universal Intellect by which all natural things have been made’.\textsuperscript{26} The artist who works in accord with this principle is said to be ‘in possession of his art’,\textsuperscript{27} a Scholastic expression that refers to the
apprehension of the archetype from which a thing is made rather than to the possession of technical skill. This formal cause is 'the art in the artist' that corresponds to the artefact in the same way as the intelligible and the sensible worlds correspond to one another.

Just as things of beauty participate in absolute Beauty, so does the human artist participate in God's art, the creative Logos:

The art of God is the Son 'through whom all things are made'; in the same way the art in the human artist is his child through which some one thing is to be made. The intuition-expression of an imitable form is an intellectual conception born of the artist's wisdom, just as the eternal reasons are born of the Eternal Wisdom.28

But man does not in any way mimic the divine creation because 'art is the imitation of Nature in her manner of operation'.29 In this quotation from Aquinas, which runs like a leitmotiv throughout Coomaraswamy's writings, 'nature' does not refer to the sensible world but to its formal cause, the intelligible world. Accordingly the artist who participates in God's creative act of thought does not copy a perceptible object but creates an image that reflects the supra-sensible form.

The act of creation proceeds from 'a word conceived in the intellect'.30 For this conception to take place the artist must become wholly identified with the form he seeks to actualise:

The artist is first of all required to remove himself from human to celestial levels of apperception; at this level and in a state of unification, no longer having in view anything external to himself, he sees and realises, that is to say becomes what he is afterwards to represent in wrought material.31

The freedom of the artist derives from this experience of transcendence whereas the man who blindly copies an outer model is no free agent. Naturally the act of conception must be followed by the production of the artifact in whatever medium the artist has chosen. In the medieval philosophy of art the first act is called 'free' and the second 'servile'. Philo portrays this distinction through the figures of Moses and Bezalel respectively. In Exodus, Ch. 31 Yahweh instructs Moses to make Bezalel the craftsman of the sanctuary. But, says Philo:
Bezalel will bear away the secondary honours . . . whereas Moses will carry off the primary ones. For the former fashions the shadows, as painters do, for whom there is no divine licence to create anything animate. Bezalel, in effect, means 'making in shadows'. Moses, on the other hand, was assigned the task of producing not shadows but the very archetypes of things. In a true artist the free and the servile act are combined. But the images that arise in his spirit are not the property of the artist as an individual. Invention or intuition is the application of first principles contained in the Universal Intellect, 'the Synteresis . . . and not the individual as such is the ground of inventive power'.

Finally we cannot take leave of Coomaraswamy without mentioning the criteria by which works of sacred art are to be judged. If 'art imitates Nature in her manner of operation' and not in her visible manifestation, the artefact should be assessed in accordance with its similarity to its formal cause rather than by any superficial resemblance to perceptible objects. 'It is not by the looks of existing things, but as Augustine says, by their ideas, that we know what we proposed to make should be like'. Accordingly the artist does not aim to create beauty but his creation will be beautiful to the extent that it conforms to its archetype. Similarly the spectator should not seek merely to derive pleasure from the artefact but he will be delighted to the degree he has understood what it signifies. This 'pleasure of comprehension' does not preclude the 'pleasure of the senses' yet it transcends what is 'enjoyed by the eye's intrinsic faculty'.

In his 'Commentary on The Secret of the Golden Flower', a Chinese alchemical text translated by Richard Wilhelm, Jung asks:

Have we, perhaps, a dim suspicion that a mental attitude which can direct the glance inward to that extent is detached from the world only because these people have so completely fulfilled the instinctive demands of their natures that there is nothing to prevent them from glimpsing the invisible essence of things? Can it be that the precondition for such a vision is liberation from the ambitions and passions that bind us to the visible world, and does not this liberation come from the sensible fulfillment of instinctive demands rather than from the premature and fear-ridden repression of them? Are our eyes opened to the spirit only when the laws of the earth are obeyed?
By presenting instinct and creativity as modes of participating in the Logos we have sought to honour the laws of the earth and the spirit. Is it possible to go further and postulate a 'creative instinct' on the basis of this continuity? Jung does speak in these terms, albeit with much qualification. After acknowledging that creativity is not repetitive like instinct, he writes:

We use the term 'creative instinct' because this factor behaves at least dynamically, like an instinct. Like instinct it is compulsive, but it is not common, and it is not a fixed and invariably inherited organisation. 37

For Jung creativity is analogous but not identical with instinct whereas from Coomaraswamy's standpoint even this qualified comparison would blur the distinction between the free and the servile act of the artist. A work produced under the compulsion of instinct is the kind of 'art' that Plato considered unworthy of free men. In the end Jung's argument meets a death by a thousand qualifications.

Yet this point of divergence between Jung and Coomaraswamy does not preclude all dialogue. During the course of his therapeutic work Jung observed that his patients often produced paintings or models of the mandala-type. Here is how he described their psychological function:

... they serve to produce an inner order - which is why, when they appear in series they often follow chaotic, disordered states marked by conflict and anxiety. They express the idea of a safe refuge of inner reconciliation and wholeness. 38

At the conclusion of his essay on 'The Intellectual Operation in Indian Art', Coomaraswamy points out that Jung's insight accords with the Hindu conception of the work of art as a 'means of reintegration' (samskarana). 39 Naturally the similarity between the productions of Jung's patients and the mandalas of Eastern Art ends here, but the functional comparison holds insofar as both derive from participation in the Logos. While the artist 'in possession of his art' relates to the Logos actively, the analysand knows only a passive relation to this principle:

And so it is with the hand that guides the crayon or brush, the foot that executes the dance-step, with the eye and the ear, with
the word and the thought: a dark impulse is the ultimate arbiter
of the pattern, an unconscious a priori precipitates itself into
plastic form, and one has no inkling that another person's
consciousness is being guided by these same principles at the
very point where one feels utterly exposed to the boundless
subjective vagaries of chance. Over the whole procedure there
seems to reign a dim foreknowledge not only of the pattern but
of its meaning.40

By contrast there is nothing fortuitous about the creative operation
in the artist that is based on the practical intellect rather than the
spontaneous activity of the unconscious. Whatever the therapeutic
value of these unconscious products may be they are, in Jung's 'own
words, 'wholly worthless according to the test of serious art'.

The therapeutic methods developed by Jung derive their efficacy
from the healing power of the Logos. According to Philo this power
manifests itself as an angel; commenting on Jacob's words '... the
God who nourishes me from my youth to this day, the Angel who
redeemed me from all ills bless these boys' (Gen. 48:15–16) he writes:

How appropriate is his mode of expression! He considers God as
the one who nourishes him, not his Logos; but the Angel, who is
the Logos, as healer of ills. These words are fully in accord with
reality.41

It is not unknown for the epiphany of the Angel of healing to take
place in the analyst's consulting room.

Because the mandala is a replica of the intelligible world it serves to
bring the soul back into harmony with the rhythms of the cosmos.
Philo describes the realisation of man as a microcosm like this:

For he wishes to represent the sage's soul as a replica of heaven,
or if one may speak hyperbolically, a heaven on earth, containing
within itself, as does the ether, pure forms of being, ordered
movements, harmonious circuits, divine revolutions, beams of
virtue utterly starlike and dazzling.

In this soul the miracle that is intelligence becomes fully manifested.
'The eyes of the body,' Philo concludes, 'are but the smallest part of
the eye of the soul. That is like the sun; the others are like candles,
accustomed to being lighted and extinguished'.42
A WORD CONCEIVED IN INTELLECT

Notes

7 Philo, De Opificio, 24–5, Winston, p. 100.
8 Ibid., 7–9, p. 96. See: David Winston, Introduction to Philo of Alexandria — Selections, Section II, 'Philo's Theory of Creation'. I am indebted to Professor Winston for this insight.
9 Philo, De Opificio, 26, Winston, p. 106.
13 Ibid., para. 268.
14 Ibid., para. 269.
15 Ibid., para. 270. This is the first time Jung used the term 'archetype'.
17 On p. 171 of his essay Titus Burckhardt presents a view of instinct that accords well with Jung's theory:

In reality, it is enough to watch animals in order to see that their instinct has nothing of an automatism in it. The formation of such a mechanism by a purely cumulative and consequently vague and accidental process is, moreover, something highly improbable, to say the least. Instinct is a nonreflective modality of intelligence; it is determined not by a series of automatic reflexes, but by the 'form' — the qualitative determination — of the species.
20 Ibid., para. 761.
In The Nature of Buddhist Art, Coomaraswamy wrote: 'Sentimentality and materialism, if not in every respect synonymous, coincide in the subject. Man in search of spirit has become Jung's "Modern man in search of soul" who discovers ... spiritualism and psychology'. (Selected Papers 1, p. 175, no. 39.) After this scathing remark it comes as something of a surprise to read in Roger Lipsey's biography that Coomaraswamy followed Jung's writings with interest since the early 1930s and corresponded with Jung and John Layard. See: Roger Lipsey, Coomaraswamy: His Life and Work, pp. 203–4, Princeton/Bollingen, 1977.


Coomaraswamy, Medieval and Oriental Art, Selected Papers 1, p. 46.

Ibid., p. 48.

Loc. cit.


St. Thomas Aquinas, Sum. Theol. 1.5.4.

Sum. Theol. 1.45.6c. Both quotations cited in Christian and Oriental Philosophy of Art, p. 34.

Coomaraswamy, The Nature of Buddhist Art, Selected Papers 1, p. 165.

Philo, De Plantatione, 23–7, Winston, pp. 166–7. Cf. Coomaraswamy, 'The Intellectual Operation in Indian Art', Selected Papers 1, pp. 131–2, n.4. In a quote from Philo's De Vita Mosis (11.74–76), which is too long to include here, Coomaraswamy gives another excellent illustration of the 'two operations'.

Coomaraswamy, Medieval and Oriental Art, Selected Papers 1, p. 49.

St. Augustine, De Trin IX.6, 11, cited in Coomaraswamy, Christian and Oriental Philosophy of Art, p. 35.

Medieval and Oriental Art, p. 62. Coomaraswamy is bitterly critical of those theorists who reduce the appreciation of art to the pleasure principle.


C. G. Jung, 'Psychological Factors Determining Human Behaviour', in Collected Works 8, para. 245.


Coomaraswamy, Selected Papers 1, see pp. 144–46.


Khāja Shamsuddīn Muhammad Ḥāfiz-ī Shīrāzī, the Persian poet of the XIVth century, is probably one of the greatest mystics and lyrical poets of all time. The Iranian tradition has given him the agnomina lisān-al-ghayb, 'the tongue of the Invisible' and tarjumān al-ʾasrar, 'the interpreter of the mysteries'. And this for good reason, for of all the poets who have written in Persian — and there are very many of them — he has enjoyed the most privileged position, being, as it were, the intimate interlocutor of every heart in distress, of every soul that is seized by mystical exaltation, of every being anxious to be once more in diapason with the sounding of the poet's spirit. It is no accident therefore that Persians often consult his Diwān, in the same way that the Chinese consult the I Ching. Being the interpreter of the mysteries, Hafiz is also an undisputed master of spiritual hermeneutic (ta'wil); I would even say that his vision is fashioned of the ta'wil, as the poet not only searches into the unfathomable mysteries which open up thanks to the divine theophanies, but he is himself the locus where these same theophanies unveil themselves. This vision is reflected as much in the structure of his ghazals (odes) as in the almost magical perfection of his word, and in the sovereign art with which he maintains complete and undisputed mastery over all the resources and nuances of the Persian language; this vision is such that with him the art of the mystical lyric reaches an apotheosis that has never been surpassed: he marks both the supreme flowering and the uttermost limit of this art.

All the millenary genius of Persian art: the judicious equilibrium between form and content, the economy of means, the striking concision of paradoxical ideas, the affective and polyvalent tonalities of verbal magic amplifying itself on several registers, the polymorphic

* This paper was delivered at the 1980 session of l'Université Saint Jean de Jérusalem (founded by Henry Corbin) in 1980, and published in Cahier No.7, L'Hermeneutique Permanente (Berg International Editeurs).
correspondences of symbols, the bewitching aesthetic of the Eternal Feminine scattered like so many alluring images in the world’s mirrors, condense miraculously in his art. This is why Hafiz is not simply a great Persian poet, he is the ‘miracle’ of Persian literature; it is in him that the millenary sap of a culture is crystallised, which, grafting the prophetic tradition of the Muhammadan Revelation on to the ancient spirit of Iran, made a synthesis so full, so profound, that it became, as it were, the humanitas of all Islam, oriental and Iranian.

Every Persian has a private bond with Hafiz. It matters little whether he is learned, mystic, unlettered, or rend (inspired libertine), as Hafiz called himself. Every Persian finds in him a part of himself, discovers in him an unexplored niche in his own memory, a fragrant recollection from the interior garden of which he is the unique guardian. Every Persian stays to hearken to the call of the poet: it little matters whether this call comes to him in the freshness of the morning breeze, in the dawn as the last glimmers of the candle are extinguished, or by the appeal of that carillon which invites the soul to the ecstatic adventure of the desert. It is because of this communion that the poet’s tomb is a place of pilgrimage for all Persians. Everyone goes there to seek be it but a particle of his presence: humble people from the bazaar, minor officials, intellectuals, poets, ragged beggars, all go there to collect themselves and to receive the poet’s message in the silence of their heart. It is with this prophetic radiance in mind that the poet himself says:

Open my tomb after my death and see for yourself
That from the flame consuming me the smoke from my shroud ascends.

And in another place he adds;

When you pass near my tomb, take heart:
It will be the place of pilgrimage for all the wise.

In the rare art of this unique poet we recognise the quintessence of all the great achievements of Iranian art: the consummate dexterity of goldsmiths who chisel fragile cups and goblets to the point where they almost vanish, the alchemical art of enamellers who transmute the domes of mosques into the blue of sky, the dazzling dream of miniaturists who bring forth the gold of light from the opaque heart
of matter, the visionary contemplation of craftsmen who design the sumptuous flowering of carpets where the polymorphic orchestration of multiple levels radiating from the central sun engenders the enchanting multiplicity of the garden of Paradise itself. Such, in a few words, are the innumerable correspondences which the poems of Hafiz awake; and behind this profusion of imaginative forms we always recognise the mystic resonance of the soul, whose ultimate solitude in the metaphysical experience of anguish the poet depicts:

Dark night, menacing surge of the sea, whirlwinds so anguishing, Will they ever know our state, these insentient ones that languish on the sea-shore?

How is it that Iran’s most esoteric poet should also be the most popular? How do we reconcile this symbolic language with a popularity which makes the poet the intimate Friend in every household? This popularity does not owe so much to the clarity of his language as to the occult correspondences which it awakens in every heart that hearkens to his call: every listener seems to find in it an answer to his question, every reader thinks he is discovering an allusion to his desire, every man finds in him a sympathetic interlocutor capable of understanding his secret, and of harmonising it with the modulations of his song. For example, love assumes different forms according to whether it is envisaged on one level or another. It will be passionate and earthly love for some, and a profound nostalgia in quest of their original soil for others; and it will be the divine Beloved for all those who, opening themselves to what lies behind the veil of symbols, attain to the level of first events. Hence this ‘connivance’ of the poet with all his readers, whatever register and level they belong to, from the most earthbound and sensual to the most spiritual, to those most prepared to follow the vertiginous peregrinations of the poet himself.

Thus, the understanding of his hearers varies according to their knowledge, their sensibility, but each receives his due and no one goes away empty. Undoubtedly, initiation into the realm of his thought demands a progressive penetration into the rich symbolism which emanates from it; certainly Hafiz remains, for a poet of his kind, perhaps the most unknown, the most misunderstood, but the more the aura of mystery enveloping him is veiled, the stronger the impact it exercises, and the more fascinating also are the connotations of
some word which lingers on the borders of magic. It is with the reading of Hafiz as it is with the reading of the Quran, the less one comprehends intellectually, the more one receives spiritually. By the association of shaded tonalities endlessly reverberating on the keyboard of all the senses, transmuting correspondences into synchronic states amplified more and more, this poetry penetrates the heart, creating a juxtaposition of states of the soul, thanks to which the soul of him who receives it and the symbolic tenour of the poem, harmonize in the synchronic coincidence of the moment so that this coincidence becomes the mystical configuration of a precise state.

This is also due to the particular structure of the ghazal itself, and those of Hafiz in particular. The reader has the impression that the poet has an eye 'with multiple facets'; the world no longer unfolds itself before his eyes in a logical succession of ideas, but seems rather to open itself up in a simultaneous blossoming. Each distich is a complete whole, a world; within the ghazal one distich is not joined chronologically to the next, but is synchronically consubstantial with it. It is like a world within a larger world, which forms an integral part of the Diwan, as this latter forms an integral part of the cosmic vision of the poet. So, from one distich to the next, the same tonalities are amplified on extended registers, exciting synchronic coincidences, calling forth magical correspondences as every level. Each concentric circle acts as a mirror to the circle which immediately surrounds it, so that we witness a play of superimposed mirrors suggesting in some way the theophanies of the divine effusion, but with this difference, that they express in the form of an unveiling that which for the philosophers and theosophists is expressed in conceptual categories within the ontological hierarchy of the world. And the axis passing through all these levels may be thought of as a ray which, descending from the original source of the divine Beauty, penetrates the heart, illuminating it entirely.

The veil of perceptive vision is a ray of thy Beauty –
Come, then, and light up the tent of the sun.

The source of energy of poetic vision, then, is the eye of the poet's heart, which is at once both the point of origin of all the soul's vibrations, and the centre which 'spatialises' the space of the vision.
This synchronic coincidence of planes of vision is the beginning of the soul's dialectic movement, since the limitations of this vision are made good by a continual flow back and forth between the heart (qalb, dil) of the poet — the initial point whence flows the disquiet of the soul in its ascent — and the primeval source from which he draws his inspiration; in other words a perpetual oscillation between the self-revelation of the Divine in its self-concealment, and concealment of the Divine in its self-revelation; between a Beauty which attracts as it repels and a Majesty which repels as it attracts. Why is the heart the starting point of this movement? Because, as the poet says as he addresses the Beloved:

Thou hast set the Treasure of Love in our ravaged heart,
Thou hast thrown the shadow of fortune over this ruined corner.

Here we encounter three essential symbols of the dialectic of love in the work of Hafiz: that is to say, the dispenser of the Treasure of Love, Love itself, and the ravaged heart. This Treasure, the poet adds, is also a profound sorrow (gham), a poignant nostalgia:

The Sultân-i’azal [Lord of pre-eternity] offers us the Treasure of Sorrow (ganj-i gham-i ‘ishq)
That we may descend into this ravaged dwelling (manzil-i wirânèh).

Let us look at once at the connotations of the symbolism of the heart in speculative gnosis.

The heart, say the Islamic mystics, is the Throne of Mercy, and Shaykh Muḥammad Lâhiji, who wrote the famous commentary on Maḥmûd Shabestarî’s ‘Rosegarden of the Mystery’ (Gulshan-i Râz), adds, ‘just as in the outside world, the Throne is the epiphany of the name of Mercy, likewise in the interior world it is the heart that is its epiphany. At every Breath of the Merciful One, God manifests himself in a new theophany in the heart of the believer.’ The heart of man is always in motion (the word qalb in Arabic means both ‘heart’ and ‘revolution’ in the sense of inversion); a motion which manifests itself in terms of renewal and resurrection at every instant, and which works in such a way that the instant of disappearance coincides immediately with the appearance of its counterpart. The heart is therefore the centre of the Throne and the Throne is its periphery;
being the initial point of the irradiations it is also the centre which calls into being the space of vision. It is for this reason that the heart holds, says Hafiz, the Cup of Jam, that is to say, the cup of cosmic vision, which is also a mirror reflecting the invisible world (ghayb namā). But the heart is also ravaged with wounds (majdūth) as it broods longingly over the stigmata inflicted on it by the Beloved, and acts as a shield against the innumerable arrows which the Beloved's brows let loose; the heart is, also, purple with the flame of Love and bears as a mark of its devotion the ‘scar of the tulip’ (dāgh-i lāla): ‘this scar,’ says the poet, ‘which we placed in our heart is able to set ablaze the harvest of a hundred rational devout worshippers.’

These three essential symbols, namely, the Lord of pre-eternity, the sorrow of love, the ravaged heart, raise us immediately to the level of the first theophanies, and bring us within the orbit of the famous ḥadīth-i qudsī according to which God said,

'I was a Hidden Treasure, I longed to be known.
So I created the creation, in order that I should be known.'

God is a Hidden Treasure, that is, an unfathomable essence in the Mystery of Ipseity. But this treasure longs to be known, and initially in his innermost heart a strong desire manifests itself, a nostalgia to reveal himself; then comes the second stage which fulfils this desire and designates the Names which were concealed in the undifferentiated Thought of God.

Every Name aspires to be made manifest, this is what the concept of God's Nostalgia and his Love of manifesting himself (hubb-i ḥudūri) conveys; it demands an epiphany, a mirror in which it can be reflected: the knower (ʿalim) aspires to be known (maʿlūm), just as the epiphanies aspire, in order to appear, to Being, to the Names which invest them with their reality. This mutual aspiration, this sympathy between Archetypes striving to be invested with the Divine Presence and Names seeking a mirror to contemplate themselves in, constitutes of itself the second visionary theophany (shuhūdī), or the marriage of the Names and the Attributes. But the Archetypes are mirrors of Divine Beauty, and the image reflected in them is the world. To this two-way movement – of the Longing of the Hidden Treasure to reveal itself in creatures, and of the Love of these latter, aspiring to be united to the Names of which they are epiphanies – correspond the two arcs
of descent (qaws-i nuṣṭ) and ascent (qaws-i ‘urūj). The first symbolises
the ceaseless influx of Being, and the second the return movement to
God; the former symbolises the creation in a recurrent and never-
\footnote{\emph{eternal generation \(qaws-i 'awāl\)}} effusion, the latter the resurrections of beings and their return
to their initial and final cause. The cosmic vision of the poet opens
into the space between these two arcs, the one originating from the
pre-eternity of God ('\emph{azal}), and the other starting out from man
himself to flow into post-eternity ('\emph{abad}).

1. BETWEEN PRE-ETERNITY ('AZAL) AND POST-ETERNITY ('ABAD)

It is in alluding to this same space between 'azal and 'abad that the poet
says:

\begin{quote}
From the Dawn of the first Beginning till the twilight of the last
End,
Friendship and Love have drawn inspiration from one sole pact,
one single trust.
\end{quote}

Here we enter upon the poet's visionary topography, we arrive at a
world whose co-ordinates are not ordered in the quantitative time of
chronological events, and which consequently is neither historical,
nor linear, nor progressive, but a world in the interior of which every
event is presence, and every duration an instant of this same presence.
Unquestionably, with regard to the eternity of the divine itself, the
pre-eternal and post-eternal describing the entire cycle of being have
no meaning, since in its Essence, pre- and post-, first beginning and
last end, coincide in the indeterminacy of the divine Ipseity. They take
on meaning only in relation to the shadow of God, in relation to that
Other-than-He which, while it is a veil obscuring his face, remains no
less its own negation and a necessary expedient of His self-revelation.

God and man are the poles of creation; it is between these two poles,
of which one is the Origin with regard to the descent, and the other
the Origin with regard to return, that 'azal and 'abad derive all their
direction and meaning. Without the creation of man, who took upon
himself the destiny of his folly, there would have been neither initial
nor final point, there would have been only the occult eternity of the
Hidden Treasure. To see the world as a respite between the initial
point and the final point of the cycle of Being is already to anticipate
one's return, indeed one's eschatology; it is also to participate in that
'\emph{Play of the Magical Glance}' (\emph{kirishma-in jādū}), in that cycle of love
thanks to which the two-way movement of the two arcs developing in opposite directions, sets the cosmic wheel of Being turning. In this state, the poet is established at the centre of Being and, as it were, sets the wheel of Love turning; and even while it remains immobile in bewilderment (sargashta-i pābarjā) his heart nonetheless spins about in all directions like the needle of a compass. Having become in this way a visionary witness to this play of love, he is the outlet where ‘the twin tresses of the Eternal Beloved’ (sar-zulfayn-i yār) are united. It follows that this witnessing is a cosmic vision (dīd-i jahānbīn) which contemplates the play of the cycle of Love turning without respite in the instantaneous succession of a presence that is also, for the poet, a co-presence in this Play; and a co-attendance at the cosmogonic events of the genesis of the world; that is to say, an act of foundation. For in being present at the first cosmogonic events, the poet is not merely present at these events but, participating in this act, he lays the foundations, through his word, of the world, and assumes a demiurgic role. ‘Come,’ he says, ‘let us split apart the domed ceiling of the celestial spheres, and let us lay the foundation of a new structure.’ It is by virtue of the nature of this co-presence at, and co-foundation of, the first events, that the poet peoples with symbols the visionary space that blossoms, like a primordial lotus, between ‘azal and ‘abad.

Hafiz is unquestionably the most original of all philosophical poets. He never turns his gaze even for an instant from the primeval focus [foyer] whence all inspiration comes to him; every glance for him is a glance only insofar as it opens like a magic lamp in the Niche of Prophetic Lights; every drunkenness is drunkenness only insofar as it drinks deep of the heady wine of the primordial tavern; every head of hair is a head of hair only insofar as the waving chain of its tresses binds up again and commemorates the alliance of the primordial Pact (‘ahd-i ‘alast); every morning breeze is a breeze only insofar as it brings to us a fragrant breath from the Quarter of the Friend (kāy-i dūst). All his attention, his joy, his senses are tense for the space of that unique moment that is granted where every light is a divine theophany, every cup of wine a reflection of the Face of the Beloved, as well as the form of the azure bowl of the sky; every remembrance a reactualization of the primordial memory. His whole soul is present in this sacred space where being is mythogenesis and the event an archetypal act in the dawn of the eternal beginning. And it is as a Seer casting his gaze over
the ‘garden of the world’ (bâgh-i jahân) that he would gather, ‘thanks to the hand of the pupil of his eye, a flower from the Face of the Beloved.’

The eye of the poet, illuminated by the eye of the Beloved, sees in this garden the world unveiling itself as the dazzling face of the Beloved, and also becoming clouded over like its dusky hair that darkens its resplendence and makes it appear like ‘Darkened Day’ (rûz-i târik); for all Beauty implies a Majesty like the holy astonishment that follows from the prostration of the intellect in the face of the radiant Beauty of God, just as all Majesty conceals a Beauty which is the grace included in the sublime Rigour of the Divine. This oscillation, between Beauty’s occultation in self-revelation and its self-revelation in occultation, is conveyed in a certain number of Hafiz’s ghazals by the ‘Night of Separation’ (shab-i hijrân) and ‘Day of Union’ (rûz-i wasl); for every separation is great with an imminent union, and every union potentially conceals a separation. This succession of repulsion and attraction, which mutually provoke each other, engenders the dialectic movement of Love, and that accent of nostalgia which permeates all Persian mystical poetry. Here are some examples from Hafiz:

How am I to spread my wing in the span of thy Union,  
For its feathers are shed already in the nest of separation.

Or...

In this night of separation offer me the moth of Union,  
Or by the flame of my suffering I will set the universe aflame like a candle.

And in another place:

In this dark night I have lost the path of the quest.  
Come then, O star that guides us.  
Go where I may, my anguish does but grow –  
Beware this desert, this endless road.

II. THE AESTHETIC COORDINATES OF THE VISIONARY WORLD

Let us see now how Hafiz goes about furnishing this space which opens up between ‘azal and ‘abad; what, in other words, are the aesthetic consequences of this visionary topography. It goes without
saying that we shall scarcely be able to analyse the whole bewitching aesthetic of his poetic world; but we may try to reveal some themes, some modalities of his expression.

Let us say at the outset that the visionary space between 'azal and 'abād comprehends the entire topography of Being itself; that is to say, the ontological hierarchy of the superimposed worlds: the jabarūt as well as the malākūt, the world of Archetypal Images, that charter of the Imagināl of which Henry Corbin has spoken, as well as the world of sensible phenomena. But for Hafiz, who is a mystic and above all a poet, the question is posed not in terms of conceptual explication but in the form of poetic licence, and by the elaboration of a whole magic of symbolic forms suited to convey the polyvalence of what, to the last, remains ineffable, beyond any form of expression. In Hafiz, all things come together to translate the untranslatable, to express the inexpressible, to make the implicit explicit; and to do this, he has recourse not only to the structure of the ghāzal itself, which unfolds itself like concentric circles progressively amplifying at each reprise the resonance of affective states, and which, because of its drastic limits, demands a polishing of thought to the point of transparency; but Hafiz exploits to the full, with the art of a magician, all the virtuosities and subtleties of the Persian language, such as pairs of opposites, correlative terms, word play, homonyms, etymological contrivances, rhythmical alliterations, cadenced assonances, so enhancing the webs of symbols which each reflect, in accordance with the images it associates and the emotive charge it carries, the innumerable epiphanies of a truth so paradoxical, so inapprehensible, so vertiginous, that it is no sooner unveiled than it veils itself again, and even in its self-revelation hides itself more than ever. Without any pretence of exhausting the resources of his poetic world, we can bring to light some sensible modalities of expression which are always in diapason with the vision of that one who is present at the first events, and sees the world with the eye with which the divine contemplates itself. Therefore, as the poet's whole aesthetic experience orders itself from the primordial donnée, the senses also draw from it the sap of their transmutation, and so convey in sensible form a manner of being which has its roots in the unfathomable depth of the origins. The visual is truly the visual only if it configures the cup of cosmic vision; hearing and narrative have meaning only if they hearken to the voice
of the Friend and recount his tale of love; smell is smell only if it smells the perfumes that come to us from the Quarter of the Friend; and the sense of taste knows no flavour unless it awakes the sweet taste of the wine of union on the palate. Therefore, the poet sees with the eye, hears with the ears, tastes with the taste, smells with the sense of smell, of the Beloved; in short, the poet sees, feels, and lives the world in this essential prelude to Being.

1) There is in the first place a whole constellation of visual images connected with divine Beauty; this latter is symbolised by the most alluring features of the Eternal Feminine, such as the flowing locks which by a backward movement, like the arc of ascent, bind the lover once more to the initial place where the first knot, the first lock of that hair, is tied so to speak; and this lock is an Alliance (paymân) that the poet vows never to betray or to turn aside from. The brows of the Beloved symbolize sometimes the arched prayer-niche (mihrâb-i abrû); sometimes the bow which lets loose the arrows of her lashes; sometimes the arched roof of the temple of vision of pre-eternity; that is to say, before the ceiling of the vault of heaven had yet been set in its place. The beauty-spot is in keeping with the unitary vision of the world. This ‘black point’ which, itself becoming the axis of light, is, the poet says, ‘but the image of thy beauty-spot in the garden of vision.’ Consequently, the axis of the poet’s vision is strained to the visionary unity of that black point (nuqtî-yi siyâh) whose dazzling light it receives. Cypresses with tapering tops, jasmines, roses, hyacinths, all the luxuriant growth of Persian gardens, the glittering iridescence of colours, the alchemical metamorphosis of precious stones, simmering flasks, slender-necked bottles, the languishing gaze of nymphs drunk with love, the crackling of philtres of enchantment, of elixirs, and magic potions; in short, all fascinating and alluring visual images become mirrors reflecting divine Beauty, and this Beauty the bewitching play of the divine gaze, and the gaze of the poet the stake in this magical play — and therefore the very foundation of his existence. ‘It is upon the magical play of thy gaze that we have set the foundation of our being.’

Starting from the aesthetic elements of the Eternal Feminine the visionary topography of the poet is, in broad outline, formed: the topography of the land of the Friend (kishwar-i dûst), which has its lanes, its quarters, its prayer-niche, its ka’ba, its qibla, its hours of
contemplation, its garden of ecstasy; whence rises that fine dust which serves as collyrium for his eyes; whence flow the images that throng his imagination; whence rise aloft the messages that come to him, sometimes on the breeze of šabā caressing him at the hour of dawn when the candle burns low, sometimes in the cup-bearer’s vermilion cup, sometimes in the song of the hoopoe. In Hafiz these varied images express the symbol of the divine messenger that we meet again in the form of youth or angel in the visionary narratives of Avicenna and Suhrawardī; in the form of the Holy Spirit, assimilated to the Active Intelligence in the philosophers; and it is once again the idea of this messenger which is symbolized by the office of mediator that falls to the Angel Gabriel in prophetic revelation. This topography also delineates a whole region of the heart that the poet names hawā-yi dil [literally, the weather of the heart—tr.], and which constitutes the human configuration of this land of malakūt to which the poet aspires, and in relation to which the world is only an illusion, a snare. Hafiz says:

Her hair is a trap, her beauty-spot the bait in the trap,
And I in quest of the bait, have fallen into the trap.

2) In its auditory and narrative form this visionary space is also a story of Love (qīssā-yi ‘ishq) or the ‘story of a passionate sorrow’ (quīssā-yi ghussa); an eternal dialogue between lover and Beloved, one and the same story which is never repeated in exactly the same way, and each narration of which is taken up in a new and hitherto unexpressed form, since it recounts the story of a unique soul in quest of its Beloved. Hafiz says:

The nostalgia of Love is always one and the same story,
But at every hearing it is made new.

But this story goes back to the ‘story’ of an original recital, to a first revelation:

Behind the mirror I have been made to be like the parrot:
I repeat what the Lord of pre-eternity has ordered me to say.

Just as every vision is illuminated at the Niche of Prophetic Lights, as every hearing is a hearkening to the original Utterance, as every story of love is a differentiated, particularised version of this same original Utterance, so each presence at the first event is also the remembrance of an alliance whose prolonged echoes constitute the chain of
memory, and which the illusory attraction of the world often makes us forget. This is why, with the bold leap of thought which in Hafiz springs up to grasp a ground which slips away and reveals itself by turns — with that sustained effort to reconstitute, dizzy ascent by dizzy ascent, the visionary topography of the Friend — is associated correlative a whole gamut of corresponding images which evoke its memory of it, and which hark back to the nostalgic aura with which his memory is imbued. All the senses: touch, sight, taste, and, in particular, smell (because the recollective powers of this latter are singularly evocative), are combined in extremely subtle, finely shaded proportions in order to awaken, each in its own way, the memory of the Friend, like the sound of bells of the caravan in the desert, the aromatic musk of the Tartary gazelle, the exquisite aroma of wine, the sweet balm strewn by the messenger wind, so that the fragrant sap of his memory pervades the whole soul of the poem and creates that almost magical space in which images, whatever sensible object they belong to, coincide synchronically to weave the web of this immemorial memory.

3) If the world is impregnated with the memory of the Friend, this memory is also the recollection of a drunkenness, of a cup drunk in pre-eternity, of a wine offered to us in the primordial Tavern:

Last night I saw the angels knocking at the tavern door,
Modelling the clay of man, becoming drunk with the original wine;
The inhabitants of the sacred enclosure and of the divine malakût
Drank from one cup with me, the pilgrim.

If then the angels have mixed the dough or clay of man with the wine of mercy, man carries within himself the quintessence of that first drunkenness and, drinking from the cup in the tavern of the mages, he does but receive from the cup-bearer what was destined for him from the beginning. But to receive that which was from all time due to us, is tantamount to assuming our destiny; it is also tantamount to commemorating the act by virtue of which it was destined for us. It follows from this that the entire universe becomes a tavern fragrant with the wine of merciful Being; and all creatures, all the ‘drunken ones’ of the tavern of the mages, are like so many cups, and each of them receives, according to the capacity which is his lot, a drop of that
delicious drink; and the drunkenness from that drink lasts until the resurrection. As Hafiz says:

Whoever has drunk like me a draught from the cup of the Friend
Shall not become sober until the dawn of resurrection.

The images relating to the tavern, to cups, to wine, to the cup-bearer, are so many symbols which, grafted on to the aesthetic ground of the Eternal Feminine, give rise to this erotico-mystic and Bacchic symbolism of the poet of Shiráz, which is so alluring, and which (alas!) often leads to shallow and hedonist interpretations of his poetry. That there is no antagonism between the earthly wine and the divine wine, just as there is none between profane love and the love of God, since one is the necessary initiation to the other, is what Hafiz intends to show. He not only exalts sensible beauty and ‘earthly nourishment’, he transmutes them, thanks to the incantation of his word, into a divine and fantastic banquet at which angels become cup-bearers drunk with love, like those ravishing and lascivious nymphs we admire in the form of apsārás in the Buddhist grottoes at Ajanta and Eleora.

4) All these different modalities of sensible expression: sight, hearing, taste, as well as smell, converge, finally, in the memory of an event which is a sort of alliance which itself constitutes man, as well as his destiny. What then is the meaning of this Alliance to which we have referred? Hafiz says:

The heavens could not bear the burden of this Charge (bār-i 'amânat)
And the winning lot, the Trust, falls to me, the fool.

This Lot is the burden of the Charge ('amânat) entrusted to man at the beginning; man is, in other words, the repository of the universality of the Names and Attributes, in accordance with this Quranic verse (XXXIII: 72) which says:

We offered [the Trust] to the heavens, to the earth and to the mountains. They refused to take it upon themselves and they were afraid of it; and man assumed it, for he is dark (zâlûman) and ignorant (jahûlan).

And in the exegesis of the mystics this means: we offered the repository of the universal to Heaven, symbolizing the Spirits, to Earth, symbolizing material bodies, and to the Mountains, symbolizing the world of Archetypal Images; we appealed to their ontological
fitness, but they set themselves against it, being unfit to do it, while
man had the capacity; that is to say, according to Hafiz, he was foolish
enough to take on a responsibility that the entire universe refused,
and that because he is, says the Quran, 'dark and ignorant'. Man is
dark because, being the last in ontological descent, nothing was
created ontologically posterior to his rank: representing the darkness
of non-being as well as the totality of being, man had the capacity, in
that God manifested Himself in him through the plenary theophany
of his Names and his Attributes, and he became thereby 'the burden
integrating all the worlds'. He is, on the other hand, ignorant, for he is
without knowledge of all that is other-than-God. It is on this account
that darkness and ignorance epitomize, in the last analysis, the
audacious folly of man, as well as his election and the heritage of his
primordial nature (mīrāth-i fiṭrat). But being custodian of the burden,
he must also always hold it in his mind and unceasingly direct his
thought towards it. To God's question reminding him of the Pact
made in pre-eternity: 'Am I not your Lord?' (Quran VII: 172) corresponds
man's answer which is a re-evocation of the Pact, and so a thought
commemorating memory, as well as an invocation (dhikr) celebrating
the praises of his Name. But this recollection goes to the root of
memory: that is to say, to the 'Niche of Prophetic Lights' (Quran XXIV,
35, tr. Pickthall), where the lamp burns in the house of the Friend. It is
again this same Pact, in the form of the Muhammadan Reality, that the
prophets from Adam to Muhammad, whose succession constitutes
the cycle of prophecy, come to renew.

The remembrance of this Pact and of the fall of man recur
frequently of Hafiz's ghazals. Here are some examples:

The colour of Love existed when the two worlds were wanting:
Destiny has not cast our Love in the present time;

and in another place,

I was an angel and the supreme paradise my sanctuary;
It is man who brought me to this deserted cloister.

The openness of the poet to the space of memory, as well as his
witnessing of events which are so mingled with the meta-history of
the mythical dawn of every beginning, work in such a way that the
poet, while still in this world, is beleaguered by another world, and
while still captive in the snare of illusions, he remains nonetheless the free bird of the garden of visions. This perpetual shuttle between two orders of existence, the one partaking of the free flight of the bird initiated into the ‘rose-garden of the sacred’, and the other mingled with the lamentations of captivity, betrays a paradoxical position which remains inherent in the ambivalent situation of the Seer himself. The poet knows that he belongs to the world of malakût, that there is his dwelling-place, the more so as all the epiphanies he contemplates unceasingly invite him there; but he also knows that he has fallen into the cage of earthly existence. Now and then the poet acknowledges his powerlessness to take his flight towards the vertiginous heights.

How shall I turn within the space of the world of Sanctity  
Since in the alcove of combination [of elements] I remain nailed to my body.

The effect of the oscillating position of Hafiz between the world of sanctity and the fall into ‘time’ is that his position expresses on the plane of the spatial movement of the poetic vision that which at the ethical level of gnosis remains the paradoxical status of the liberated sage. The poet who is not only a mystic but also a seer and artist at the same time, will remain suspended between two manners of apprehending things: having one foot in the other world and one foot in this world; it is with the eschatological bias of the former that he will see this world unfolding itself before his eyes. That is, the time of the poet’s presence lies between 'abád and 'ázal and is therefore an unveiling; but to this visionary time-space Hafiz opposes a horizontal, linear time which runs between the two shores of the world.

From shore to shore the host of darkness stretches,  
From 'ázal to 'abád opens the dervishes’ respite.

His paradoxical situation comes precisely from the crossing of these two times, one of which flows out into post-eternity ('abád) completing the cycle of Being, while the other establishes the horizon of becoming on the linear plane. It is with regard to this horizontal time that the world is a lure, an illusion, a snare; and to emphasise all this futile trumpery, Hafiz uses the image of the new bride.

The world in its outward form is like a new bride,  
But whoever cleaves to it offers his life as dowry.
Or again, the world is a ravishing bride, but be warned that this 'chaste and modest one becomes the bride of none'; and her infidelity knows no limit. These negative aspects of the world, likened to infidelity, to inconstancy, to the fleeting attractions of a beauty which is, alas, evanescent, are connected with guile, with deceit, because this world, despite being a bride (‘arūs), is nonetheless an old woman (‘ajūz), all wrinkled, full of craft and cunning and who, weaving insidious intrigues, catches creatures in the mesh of her snare; lending herself to all and giving herself to none, 'an old woman with a thousand lovers' (‘ajūz-i hazār dāmād). In short, the world is a piece of wizardry, a trick of the conjuror and the illusionist (shu'bada). And the more the abyss of this world is revealed to the poet, the more burning becomes his desire to escape from it, and the more raging his thirst to return to his original home.

Where are the tidings of thy Union, that I with all my soul may take the leap?
I am the bird of the Holy places, could I but leap outside the snare of this world.

This desire for transcendence is at times so irresistible, his ardour so overflowing, that Hafiz not only wants to shatter the glass of confinement, to break down the walls of all the prisons, but goes so far as to overstep the frontiers of the resurrection itself, now too narrow to contain the superabundant ecstasy of a soul who wants to break the cosmic egg, to rend the ceiling of the celestial sphere, 'in order to lay there the foundations of a new building.'

III. THE PARADOXICAL ETHIC OF THE INSPIRED LIBERTINE (REND)

Now what is the ethical behaviour of the possessor of the cup of Jam? It is here that the notion of rend comes in, that untranslatable term that we render indifferently by 'inspired libertine', while taking care to underline the inadequacy of this translation; for the word rend is so bound up in our habitus to what Jacques Maritain calls the 'titles of metaphysical nobility' that it cannot be expressed in another language without extrapolating from the orbit of significations which it awakens in its own cultural context. 'The most untranslatable words,' says Charles du Bos, 'are those that mean most – those words which constitute the “mothers” (in the sense in which Goethe understood
this word) of a whole world of thought and feeling, which in the framework of the great human family, confer on each people what must be called its metaphysical individuality." The word rend, as Hafiz understands it, sums up the complex and unique traits of the psychology of the Persian. If, in the words of Berdyayev, Dostoyevsky illustrates more than any other Russian thinker the 'metaphysical hysteria' of the Russian soul, the rend of Hafiz is the most evocative symbol of the indefinable ambiguity of the Persian character; an ambiguity that often confuses not only westerners but also the other peoples of the Orient. This term is liable, because of its polyvalent cultural content, to interpretations on many levels, which are often contradictory, indeed paradoxical; all the more so because it implicitly contains its ugly side. These conflicting senses are always resolved when they are re-integrated into the initial constellation to which they all belong.

In this term we find the differing tendencies of the Persian character: its suppleness, its power of adaptation which is not necessarily opportunism, but an art of balance and of 'shrinking', as Confucius so aptly put it; however, detached from its original sense, this word can come to mean opportunism. This term also evokes a lively lucidity, a savoir faire, a refinement of action, a tact that goes all the way to compliance, a discretion in speech, which are neither craft, nor hypocrisy, nor an affectation of mystery; but can, outside their context, become those very things, being reduced to insidious shifts, not to say to dissembling and imposture. Again, this term denotes an interior liberty, an authentic detachment from the things of this world, suggesting the deliverance, in however small a measure, of the man who, shaking off his tawdry finery, lays himself open without sham, and naked to the mirror of the world; however, degenerated from its primitive context, this attitude can turn into one of exhibitionism, of posing and of mere libertinage. Equally in this concept we find a sense of immoderacy, a behaviour out of the ordinary, shocking, scandalous, able to disorient the most composed spirits, a non-conformity which derives not so much from ostentation as from the explosive exuberance of a vision so rich, so full, that it cannot manifest itself without doing violence to everyday banality and without breaking the limits defined by the normality of things. This term expresses, further, a predilection for the uncertain, for language
that is veiled and masked, for hints and insinuations, which in the authentic rend are expressed in inspired paradoxes (shaṭṭiyāt), in the discipline of the arcane (taqīya); but deflected away from its original meaning, it ends in thunderous, puffed-up discourses, and at times in plain falsehood. Finally, there is in this concept a boundless love of the divine such as we see in the great thinkers and mystics of Iranian spirituality; but detached from its mystical content, it is transformed into fanaticism and, steered by homines magni, to the psychology of the mob.

These are the positive qualities of this whole ethic of conduct, almost indecipherable for the non-Persian, with the exception perhaps of the Chinese, that we find in Hafiz's concept of rend. The word rend sums up a whole anthropology; I would say almost an 'anthroposophy' which characterizes the vision of man as it has been forged in the Iranian tradition down through the ages. We have spoken sufficiently in another connection of the cup of Jam, or the cup of cosmic vision, to know that at bottom the conduct of the rend or inspired libertine springs in some way from this same vision, which is, as we have already said, a contemplative gaze upon the play of the world. This is to say that the rend, annihilated in the Essence and attaining to subsistence in God, is reborn at the level of the first events and rediscovers the world with the eye with which the Hidden Treasure, unveiling itself, brings to light the magical play of its Beauty. This disinterested gaze of the rend, which is also the gaze of the Divine itself (seeing that without that interior purity, as the poet tells us, one cannot contemplate the mirror of its Beauty), Hafiz calls nazarbāz; a term every bit as difficult to translate as the word rend itself. Translated literally it gives, 'he who plays with his gaze'. In defining his own vision Hafiz adds:

I am the lover ('āshiq), the rend, the nazarbāz, I own it in all candour, That you may know the manifold arts with which I am adorned.

These multiple arts, however, have a common denominator, which is the art par excellence of the one possessed of cosmic vision; but they nevertheless express the various modalities of an extremely subtly-shaded truth. Seen from the perspective of dialectic Love this art is the art of the lover in quest of union with the Beloved; considered from the point of view of ethical conduct it will be simply the art of the
inspired libertine, whose provocative, scandalous attitude shocks the narrow-minded, breaking the barren charm of conformity with which people called 'rational' hem themselves in; and as seen by the interpreter of 'the science of the gaze' ('ilm-i na'zar), this art will be the magical art of 'the one who plays with his gaze', or 'the one who is possessed of the art of the gaze' (sâhib-i na'zar).

If the divine face becomes the epiphany of your gaze,
There is no doubt that now you are possessed of the gaze.

The na'zarbâz is therefore the one who plays with his gaze. To play with one's gaze means not to apprehend the world as an object or an idea, but as an unveiling. Not to see the world as object, is also not to represent it as something out there, laid out in front of us, but to discover it as something opening spontaneously, suddenly before us, like the unveiling within ourselves of a flower in blossom. If the na'zarbâz knows and sees that this unfolding is a Play of the divine gaze, it is because his gaze is a Play which has for stake the Play for which the Treasure puts forth its bewitching spell. 'It is upon the magical Play of thy gaze,' says Hafiz, 'that we laid the foundation of our being.' Now to be co-witness of the magical play of the divine gaze is also to free oneself from the hold of the two worlds.

I say it in all candour and am pleased with what I say,
Being the slave of Love, I am freed from the two worlds.

To free oneself from the worlds is tantamount, on the other hand, to liberating oneself from the opposition between 'a zal (pre-eternity) and 'a bad (post-eternity), which has meaning only in relation to the tension which exists between the two worlds of God and of man. Now for the one who is the slave of Love (banda-i 'ishq) and is released from the two worlds, the two initial points of the two arcs of descent and of ascent, originating respectively from God and from man, coincide in the eternity that is always actual at the Instant of the glance; an instant which is now the point of coincidence of an anteriority without beginning and a posteriority without end. Translated on to the visual plane, this Instant is the 'black spot' of the pupil of the divine eye, which is also the eye of the heart of the one who sees thanks to the divine eye. For just as this world is reduced in its essence in order to reveal the ludic vacuity of a pure gratuitousness
without end, a 'nothing upon nothing' (hich bar hich), so also the other world consummates itself in the Play of an amorous adventure without beginning or end, which is all the more gratuitous in that it springs forth as a spontaneous Play from the theophanic dream of God's self-revelation: a wonderful dream breaking into a thousand iridescent shivers in the spellbinding magic of his gaze.

My adventure and that of the Beloved is without term,
That which has no beginning will neither have an end.

But the uninitiated do not have access to this vision, and as they remain blind to this Play and willingly confuse cosmic vision with the narrowness of their 'selfhood-vision' (khud-bini), neither do they participate in union. It is the union, or the annihilating experience in the Majesty of the Essence, and subsistence in its Attributes, which permits the poet to reach the level of the Play, and to be co-witness of the space where this Play unveils itself. It is because of this effacement in this eruption out of the cycle of Being that the poet, tying again the two extremities of the two arcs, in the configuration projected by his gaze, reflects back as the point of coincidence, recomposing and founding again the centre and circumference and the pivot which supports the axis of the world and the space where the Play of the world opens up. This co-witnessing of the space of the Play is possible only through a surrender of the will, an abandonment to the Play of the divine magic, seeing that it is on the very gratuitousness of this Play that the poet has founded the edifice of his being, and has totally abandoned himself to it.

On the circle of Destiny we are the point of surrender (nuqti-yi taslim),
That your thought may be all grace, your beginning all order.

If the surrender is an unreserved abandonment to the Play and to the space where this Play unveils itself, it is also, on the plane of consciousness, a non-thought, a stripping away of all that is other than His thought, and on the plane of the will, a non-willing; that is to say, an emptying of all volition which would oppose itself to the bounteous freedom of this Play.

The thought and will of the self have no existence in our vision
The vision and will of selfhood are sacrilege in our religion.
It is armed now with this ethic of non-willing, and supplied with the vision of non-thought, which together constitute the true religion of the reeds, that Hafiz so relentlessly unlooses himself, with a rare audacity that makes him one of the greatest protestors in the history of the world, against the prohibition-mongers, the inquisitors, the accusers, the preachers, the tradesmen of gnosis, who in the name of symbols devoid of all content, of religion reduced to a commerce in souls, distil the venom of their blindness, tainting the world all the more cheerfully, in that inwardly they are as empty as a drum and destitute of all true sorrow. They are precisely the ones who, in making the Quran the 'snare of hypocrisy' (dām-i tazwîr), remain outside the religion of love.

Speak not to the accusers about the mysteries of Love and of drunkenness,
So that inconscient they may perish in the pain of their selfhood.

This suffering of selfhood (dard-i khud-parastī) is for the reed a non-suffering, an inconscience: that is to say, the absence of all original and existential experience of Love, since it remains refractory to the alchemical remedy that the Physician of Love never ceases to administer at every moment.

The Physician of Love possesses the breath of Christ and he is also merciful;
Since you suffer no pain why do you want Him to heal you?

It is the authenticity of this suffering which binds man as by an umbilical cord to the root of Being, which is lacking in the inconscient (bi-khabar), the rationalists ('āqil), the false ascetics, the sanctimonious (zāhid), whose inauthenticity Hafiz deplores:

The inconscient are dumbfounded by the play of our gaze.
I am as I appear; it is for them to play their role.
The rationalists are the [fixed] point of the compass of Being,
But Love knows well that their head turns round within this circle.

The inauthenticity of the 'inconscient' is not limited solely to certain individuals but represents an entire category of people who, because they take pleasure in the narrow framework of their 'selfhood vision' and believe themselves to be the centre of the compass
of being, do not know that they are drawn along on it by the whirlwind of Love; in other words, they do not know that it is Love that turns the circle; and so they remain outside that religion of love whose champion Hafiz became, pushing to its most extreme consequences a dispute as old as the world: a dispute which has from time immemorial, and particularly in Persian literature, set in opposition the tolerant generosity of the liberated thinker and the obsessional meanness of those who think they possess the truth. Hafiz exposes not only a narrow spirit which he styles the narcissistic selfhood-vision, not only a reductionist ethic that he denounces as a snare of hypocrisy, not only a condescending savoir faire that he taxes with opportunism, but also and above all a fiction which consists of taking desires for reality.

Lord forgive the warring of the seventy-two nations,
For not having seen the truth they have steeped themselves in a fiction.

Fiction (‘afsâna) is precisely that screen of prejudices and fixed views which the inconscient project upon the unfathomable depth of what at the deepest level remains a disinterested play of the world, so making a mountain out of a molehill, an insignificant gesture into the enthronement of a supreme dignity, any sign whatsoever into the exclusive symbol of a truth, mediocrity into a way of being: in short all the deceptive appearances which make inauthenticity into a solemn act of self-justification.

He who has his face on fire does not thereby know the art of seducing hearts,
He who possesses a mirror does not thereby know the art of seeing in the mirror,
He who has his head awry and has a haughty demeanour does not thereby know the art of receiving and bestowing honours gracefully.

In contrast to this, the paradoxical attitude of the rend who is ‘free from all that is capable of embracing a shade of attachment’, conveys on the ethical, human plane a truth which, as the play of the gaze open to the ludic space of love, suffers no limit, no constraint, no repression, be it ever so justified in the eyes of the oldest tradesmen in the world, that is to say, religion’s prohibition-mongers. Every repression is necessarily a falsehood, a constraint which shackles the
spontaneous play of the blossoming of the art of vision; it is a constraint upon others and upon the censor himself, indeed it is the dark side of that which, driven back, reappears showing its other face:

Those preachers who from the height of their pulpits sparkle in their sermons,
When back at home devote themselves to business of another sort.
I have a difficulty, and submit it to the wise men of this assembly:
Those who exhort to penitence, why aren’t they penitents themselves?
One would say that no longer believing in the day of the last judgment,
They corrupt, by their fraud, the work of the supreme Judge.

To corrupt the work of the supreme Judge is to interfere in the natural course of things, it is to judge men, it is, again, to curtail the free spontaneity of man; for is it not in him that the universality of the divine Names and Attributes is manifested? Who then, Hafiz asks us, could ‘discern good from evil behind the veil (of multiplicity)?’ Sin is, for the poet, never moral vice: it is instead every constraint which would encourage falsity, every fetter which would close an interior door, which would level one of the many dimensions of this mystery that is man; which would lead to the trap, to the futility of empty reputation, to the suffocating limits of an idea, to the non-experience of the suffering of Love, to the sclerosis of everyday life; in short, all that could cause us to remain outside that religion of love, that original religion that we receive as the ‘heritage of our primordial nature’ (mīrāth-i fiṭrat). Sin is, in the final reckoning, every action which would betray this primordial nature, which would be false to it, and which would moreover thwart the spontaneous flowering of its Play.

Though on all sides I am drowned in the sea of sin,
Being Love’s initiate, I am a guest in the house of Mercy.

Let us take a more concrete and actual example, the closing down of the taverns and the cabarets. This is a so-called hygienic measure which right-minded censors willingly permit themselves in order to reduce sinners to an arid and austere regime of penitence. But this measure has for Hafiz a two-fold baneful consequence: it is, on the
one hand, the closing of a door and, considering the quality of the
man who instigates it, the closing of an interior dimension, reduced
now to the ‘selfhood-vision’ of the censor’s own narrowness of heart;
and, on the other hand, this closing necessarily coincides with the
opening of another door, which is that of falsity, of deceit, of
hypocrisy; and Hafiz says in this regard:

If only the doors of the taverns could be reopened again,
If only the knots of their repressive measures could be untied.
If by the blind conceit of the pious they are shut,
Be patient, for thanks to the love of God they will be opened
again.

By the purity of the rends, these matutinal drinkers,
Numberless doors will be opened by the key of prayers.
They are closing the doors of the taverns, O my God do not give
your approval,

For it is the door of hypocrisy they are opening.

The act as such has no absolute value for Hafiz; even blasphemy and
sacrilege change their sense according to whether they are envisaged
from the point of view of the cosmic vision of the wise man, or from
the point of view of the limiting blinkers of the bigots who only
project the screen of their own unwittingness: this is to say that every
action is bad only if it is grounded in a narrow mind, captive in the
nests of the fiction of the world. To the visionary gaze of the rend, who
is free from the colouration of all attachment, of all alienating thought,
whose heart is polished like a mirror, and who has made his
ablutions, like Hafiz himself, in the shining spring of Love, wine, for
example, not only is not defiling but is rather the elixir of deliverance,
and it is in the purple substance of this purifying drink that the poet
soaks his prayer-mat, just as it is for the drunkenness this same drink
gives that he sells his dervish’s robe for two grains of barley-corn. For
every inwardly pure being longs for the Friend, it little matters
whether he is a sinner or a virtuous man, one who drinks to the dregs,
a drunkard or one awakened. And it is also from this original, almost
transparent, purity that Hafiz’s tolerance, so singular, so sublime,
flows: a tolerance which is not to be taken in the usual sense in which
we use this word, but which is a deliverance so fundamental, so
original, so far removed from the taints and defilements of prejudices,
of beliefs, of confessions and of sects, that it appears as a cleansing
spring, obliterating at last all the chimeras that men make for themselves, and soaring above those immemorial fables which permeate the fiction of a humanity which alas! the warring of the seventy-two nations does not cease to divide.

And I shall leave the last word to the poet of Shiráz himself:

Do not judge the ‘inspired libertines’, you who boast your purity –
No one will indict you for the faults of others.
What is it to you whether I am virtuous or a sinner?
Busy yourself with yourself!
Each in the end will reap the seed he himself has sown.
Every man longs for the Friend, the drunkard as much as the awakened.
Every place is the House of Love, the Synagogue as much as the Mosque.

Translated from the French by Lana and Peter Russell.

Notes

1 It was 'Abdu'r-Rahmán Jâmi, the last poet of the classical period, who gave these agnomina to Hafiz.
2 Lâhiji, Sharh-i Gulshan-i Râz, p. 169.
A Brief Bibliography of European Works Relating to Hafiz of Shiraz

1771–99  Sir William Jones. 21 ghazals in English, 19 in French.
1864  Rosenzweig. Persian text (after Brockhaus-Sudi) with translation in German verse. Vienna.
1875  Bicknell. Selections from Hafez (120 ghazals with some pieces in other forms). Translations in English verse. London.
1897  Poems from the Divan of Hafez translated by Gertrude Bell. These are really charming, period pieces, but import so many words, phrases and images which simply are not in Hafez that they are useless for a knowledge of Hafez. London.
1898  Versions from Hafez by Walter Leaf. Interesting experiment in reproducing Hafez’s metres in English. London.
1947  Fifty Poems of Hafiz. Texts and translations collected and made, introduced and annotated by Arthur J. Arberry. Cambridge. Contrary to the sub-title the translations are by various hands from William Jones to Le Gallienne and are so free as to be irrelevant to the text. Text far from reliable. For notes on Arberry as a presenter of Persian poetry in English see NINE No 11, Tunbridge Wells 1956. p. 63. Arberry’s little book of 180 pages, in photolithography preserving all the errors, is now in print at the astronomical price of £22.00 (sixth printing).

JAN LE WITT

Fire

for Pierre Emmanuel

Purple compulsion
galloping flame
a stalactite alight
fire in the inkwell
is not a matter of indifference
and with all that glaring light and combustion
fire is a blind bird madly
in love with the wind
Flames chant into the ears of Sagittarius
one no longer knows why

Flame is a wedding ring
to some
a scarlet tongue of terror
to others
fear decorated with tears
within the magic circle of time
the years are rusting away
blood clad in carnival red
purple mouth of random thoughts
a bed of roses
dangerously red
a bed of roses
with a sense of guilt
rostrum
for Job's open wounds
Flames chant into the ears of Sagittarius
one no longer knows why

Fire in profile is golden dust
suspended animation
definition of decapitated terrors
Salamander
consuming its own flesh
Salamander
echoing the fury of the furnace
Salamander
bemoaning the cinders' fiery breath
and with all that glaring light and combustion
fire
is a blind nightingale
ferociously in love with the wind

To be fire
to be flesh
to be colour
obey the carnival dreams of the spheres
obey the cliffhanger breath of the wind.
Reviews

The Great Work


CRÉON

... Je ne laisserai pas un fou sortir en liberté avec Antigone. J'ai le devoir ...

TIRÉSIAS

Le devoir! Ils ne t'appartiennent plus: ils ne relèvent plus de ta puissance.

CRÉON

Et à qui appartendraient-ils?

TIRÉSIAS

Au peuple, aux poètes, aux coeurs purs.

JOCASTE

En route! Empoigne ma robe solidement ... n'aie pas peur ...

(Ils se mettent en route.)

Jean Cocteau: La machine infernale, IV.

DEDICATION FROM ORPHEUS

Here, I, returned from that uncertain shore
where the lyre of Orpheus thrown aside complains:
my misty double haunts, blurring the air,
wind from below is dizzying my veins.

Abrading whatever in me seemed human, Hell
shone its mauve moons to polish it: my eyes
two winter diamonds or a double well
fix on an immutable sun that glows with ice.

As that deep-stepping tree, blinded by murmur
in slumber agitates its leaves at night
where dead suns ripen forgotten as buried shrouds:

now that same tree by day outraged by light
leafless and with no birds lashes the clouds
its flailing arms anathematising summer.¹

This poem prefixed Sodome at its publication in 1944, when Pierre Emmanuel
turned from the Orpheus myth to begin his great output of epic poems
whose inspiration was biblical and rooted in his own experience seen
through the eyes of his Catholic faith and oriental and esoteric lore. He died
on 22 September 1984, a few weeks after the publication of his last book,
Le grand œuvre, a summation of his poetic thought and, like the great books
that preceded it, a protest against the banalization of life, against the powerful
and corrupt who torment the individual human being, and against all that
militates against the Word. The protest, however, is not the tawdry lament of
one disillusioned with his century – there is nothing cynical about it – but the
proclamation of a faith, the vision of a cosmogony, a prophecy of redemption. Péguy said of Victor Hugo ‘What a great Catholic poet he would have
been if only he had been a Catholic’ – and in the sweep of his epic poems and
the plangency or tenderness of lyrics Emmanuel has the Hugoesque great-
ess. In 1984 it might seem that only a blind man could say:

It will come, the Day!
It is in us, the Day!
Each day is its guardian
Each day a ray of dawn
Every silent cry to the Cross
Holes the violent night of man²

But the evidence in all Emmanuel’s work and in Le grand œuvre itself is that the
hope arises from experience of the depths of human despair and human
cruelty. ‘In tenebris’ Hardy wished to depart:

Let him in whose ears the low-voiced Best is killed by the clash of the
First,
Who holds that if way to the Better there be, it exacts a full look at the
Worst,
Who feels that delight is a delicate growth cramped by crookedness,
custom, and fear,
Get him up and be gone as one shaped awry; he disturbs the order here.³

Pierre Emmanuel rose like Orpheus into the sunlit world and disturbed the
order. It is our task now to see that he escapes the fate of Orpheus by the
stream and the tearing of its waters:
Somewhere in the empty house
A crystal reverberates
September breaks in the long
Fingers of what forgets
Deserted the rain weeps
To the windows of the past
Distant a river flows down the hours
Where the sky is overcast
What soul without cease
By sobbing shaken
Can share the grief of water
Tearing breaking

Orpheus was associated in his soul with Christ: he descended into Hell and came back. The depths of human suffering are explored in Babel (a book which its author was very fond of), especially the loneliness, the isolation, the apparent powerlessness and insignificance of those suffering under contemporary tyranny; during the Nazi occupation and the reign of Vichy France Pierre Emmanuel knew what this meant, and it is significant that he took the name of Pierre Emmanuel to combine the traditions and experience of Christians and Jews. (As Saint-John Perse wrote, "I shall live in my name," was your answer to the questionnaire of the port-authority.) The epic also explores the banalization of sexuality and relationships in modern urban society in a way that would have appealed to Gilbert Cesbron. The full depths, heights and anxieties of personal sexuality are explored in the three volumes of Le livre de l'homme et de la femme. It was a boy in all practical ways motherless and discovering sex alone who developed into one of the greatest poets of human love in both its carnal and its spiritual dimensions. Further exploration is in his one novel Car enfin je vous aime: this first appeared in 1949 and was praised but not reprinted – indeed its author thought it a failure – but it reappeared in expanded form in 1983, with an epilogue of 82 pages closely related to the thinking and experience of Una, Duel and L'autre, the three books of Le livre de l'homme et de la femme. Pierre shared with Shelley and André Breton the lifelong devotion to woman and the unquenchable faith in the coming of a redeemed mankind. The novel has as epigraph Yeats' lines:

'Ah, do not mourn,' he said,
'That we are tired, and other loves await us;
Before us lies eternity; our souls
Are love, and a continual farewell.'

The epilogue, Journal du survivant, is prefaced by Cocteau's

We must gently close the eyes of the dead.
We must gently open the eyes of the living.
The technique of the novel in its revised form makes the reading of it a voyage of discovery: there are three loves in the book, carefully named, Laurence (Laure, Laura, Lawrence), the sexual intellectual; Eve, the devoted wife not always comprehensible; and the girl in blue jeans, Marie-Anne or Maia. It is to Eve that the hero, Déodat, returns in the end, to be killed in a road accident which has about it the appearance of being sought. Pierre himself thought for some time that the hero in the earlier version had married the wrong woman, but overcame that in the epilogue. I am somewhat led astray, as is the 'survivant', by the girl in blue jeans, but the importance of the book is given by its author: 'the soul of a man is the product of his successive births from all the women he has loved.' Each woman is both the mistress of the body and mother of the soul — and this doubly generative function of sexual love is fundamental to Emmanuel's outlook. In one way, this is a road to Sophia, Wisdom, and as for Baudelaire, a road to God. Hence the search for the Mother Goddess in *Le grand oeuvre*, and the magnificent apostrophe to women in *Acatisthe de Madeleine* in *Sophia*. Though disrespectful to feminists, in the interests of true feminism Pierre Emmanuel here and elsewhere redeems woman from the banalization characteristic of our modern attitudes to sexuality, rejecting both the commercialization in the world and the trivialization and excessive sanitization of contemporary intellectual society. For all is seen, ultimately, *sub specie aeternitatis* — but without the dehumanizing, the depersonalizing that can alas! mar the thought of those who may despise, as Yeats himself in fact did not, 'The struggle of the fly in marmalade'. For Pierre Emmanuel at all times, in time and out of time, the individual human being was paramount to Christ and in a way paramount in Christ, the truly 'human form divine' in a sense that Milton did not intend but Blake perceived.

Each one becomes for the others guardian of Man in us
Guarantor of the faith of those whose faith seems other
All equally servants of that Single Reality
Naked and poor all before her we offer our poverty
Surrendering all human power and assuming all human weakness
Never wanting anything won by weapons or money
Yet rich with a wealth which no one powerful possesses
Our hearts brimming over our lips tell the inexhaustible splendour
Of which the most humble being is witness along with the cosmos
Our reason and our law our joy our life our being
Is to praise is to praise and to praise then to praise the Majesty
Which alone is worthy of reigning over persons she frees
Since all from wherever for her have the countenance of love

He loves every bird of the air loves every beast of the field
Makes each grief in the universe his in body and soul
All in his flesh bears the horror of absolute destruction
All his soul takes to itself the despair that is since the beginning
Of which all that dies becomes echo throughout the creation
It is there springs the force that draws each creature from nothingness
For every single thing in its way aspires to perfection
All is guided by Love which does not differentiate
Man the Namer quite simply has as his only function
To be immensely the oblate of the universal prayer
To give thanks to the great secret which makes of the least of the living
The very centre of life in the brief time he has to live there
The stake in that eternal combat where one day time will end\textsuperscript{15}

I am reminded here, discussing these matters in the context of contemporary English poetry, with its witty acidities and alleged sophistication, of the remark of Laurette Séjourné in Burning Water\textsuperscript{16} when she comes to explore the Gods of the Nahua1:

Our difficulty in understanding the Pre-Columbian world lies less in the fact that these symbols are obscure, than in our own lack of a religious sense. Belonging to a civilization whose activities are measured by external fact, in terms of events taking place only in the temporal universe, it is not easy for us to understand motives dictated by the will to rise out of such an existence, to reach beyond our terrestrial condition.

In an article in Poetry Review\textsuperscript{17} Hilary Davies had to point out that French literature in the 1980's could talk of religion and the eternal normally without seeming a cause for mirth. To understand Pierre Emmanuel we need in English to go back to Yeats, Eliot and David Jones: one feels that of the well-known 1980's poets only Redgrove and Levi would have an inkling. \textit{Le grand œuvre}, is, of course, a term in alchemy for the mastery and offering of the secret forces of the cosmos, the transformation of the lead of dead life into the gold of the transfigured life — \textit{Physics of the body of glory}, as Henry Corbin said. It is also the great task of French poetry from Rimbaud, through Saint-Pol-Roux and the surrealists, to make the world ascend through \textit{alchemy of the Word}. Through \textit{le Verbe} the carnal mysticism of Pierre Emmanuel, influenced by Jouve, Reverdy and Saint-John Perse, re-establishes temporal man in eternity. The book begins, with a resemblance to the Vedas and the Upanishads, in short lyrics starting with those merely about sound (the breath), and goes through characteristic hymns, to the Mother Goddess, the Father, the Serpent, Man and Woman, Eve or Sleep, the animals who in the manner seen by Traherne in Christian Ethis\textsuperscript{18} discover the password \textit{Love}, and through the satiric and vituperative consideration of contemporary history, to the bold re-establishment of the 'human form divine', the new Abel, Christ as suffering man — a new incarnation. It concludes with the at first mystifying \textit{Etre ou fenêtre}, which has been compared to Zen and Taoist writings.
But as Olivier Clément concludes in the long and magnificent review in France Catholique, each person is both être and fenêtre (and also mirror, as a window can be reflecting as well as being seen through).

Many poets who believe in or proclaim l'alchimie du Verbe live in fact in isolation, contemplative but in practical life inactive. If this can be used as an argument against them, it is worthwhile to deny it for the greatest. Dante was a political exile, Milton active in affairs of state, Blake in danger of transportation, Wordsworth involved early in significant events of his time, Shelley a person whose work was pirated for revolutionary purposes (though regarded by Hazlitt as dangerous in politics because too unrealist). Pierre-Emmanuel served faithfully in Resistance movements (the Gestapo in Lyon thought him the responsibility of those in Marseille and vice versa), worked hard in organising English broadcasting in France and even as the end drew near continued as a political commentator of independent mind and a tireless worker for human rights. Thus it is idle to dismiss his fundamental visions and his characteristic imagery (of the eye, sex, the Wind etc.) as within a poetic world and not in what some call the 'real world'. He lived through and in all that he wrote about and his vision is that of a pilgrim on the way, not an intellectual spectator with the ample leisure of those apart from the struggle. It was Jesus knowing of his coming crucifixion who said, 'In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.' (John 16:33). Pierre, commenting over the telephone on my deep depression, said that the remedy was work — and with over forty books in forty years and some five masterpieces in his last seven years, he seemed a person of boundless activity, for whom l'alchimie du Verbe ceaselessly practised was a way of life. It was the same spirit that infused his journalistic writing as lived in his regret for the death of Eluard and praise for Jouve, Reverdy and Saint-John Perse in Adam (year xxi nos 235-7) and in his epic and lyrical poems. He was not a born poet in the sense that he lisped naturally in numbers as whim determined. In L'ouvrier de la onzième heure he wrote:

Each time that I pronounce the word 'justice' I want to be able to think of all those who suffer, justly or not, in all the prisons of the world; I want to be able to question myself on the part that I have in their injustice or in the injustice done to them, and to ask if the bread I eat, the smile of the woman I love, all those daily joys which common words tell of — I have not in some way stolen them from those oppressed people. If it were granted, even in small measure, thus to deepen the sense of some words, not merely in the imaginary but in my daily life, my prayer and my action would amalgamate, my responsibility towards words would become one with my responsibility to man.19

The same reverence for man and for the word is there in his almost surrealist lyrics, his passages of conscious high rhetoric, his hymns, the autobiographical
douzains of Una, the exploratory poetry and the everyday prose – if anything that passed through his transmuting mind can be called everyday. He was not only a Parisian intellectual (he detested that world) but also a Gascon with the magic of Béarn and an adoptive Provençal. The wind from le Ventoux became for him the divine inspiration, the rills from near Gan the water whose flow signified so much. That he was grounded in the earth (like Francis Jammes) enabled him to speak of Heaven. Only one who has tried but failed to tickle trout can use the terms so successfully in describing human love. As for Saint-Pol-Roux, the words were part of the things, and the things gained identity by their names. This is most easily seen in the short lyrics, though it is true of the hymns and epics.

He often followed the advice in Thimble Songs

Translate the strange
Into common speech
Rather than an angel's glance
Learn this waterdrop

(29)

But he knew the madness of Hölderlin:

Wide limpid lake
Where the sky's flowering orchards
Are reflected
Hölderlin's madness:

O salt

Ineffable of waters
Scarcely touched by those lost souls
The skimming swallows
Words

(55)

The poem itself was newness, however:

When all is said
All is to say

Just like the leaf
Which gleams in breeze
The word shines with
More than one sense

But if the world
Is only a word?
No one would say
It just as new

Poems would be born

(56)
The poem arises frequently from the thing, to bring words to earth:

- More silent than silence
- A song scarcely heard
- Words make great circles
- In the void
- That stalk of grass
- Oblique against the sky
- Gives to the soul the dizziness
- Of its identity

The human is never far away:

- Into this world in everyone born
- Comes a whole world's distress
- When I see a single tear run down
- One cheek with weight no less
- Than reluctant mercury O more
- Than outcries it brings proof
- To make me all too sure
- Of universal grief

It is the human that loves what vanishes and has the anxieties of time:

- Broken cup
- Silence
- Where the swallow cries
- Alas, Autumn
- Hangs its crotchets
- On the roofspan.
- The threads run
- The fugue rises
- Depart, depart!
- Leaning in the moonlight
- This evening
- Shall I decipher
- The living notes?
- Tomorrow
- Will be too late
- Alas, tomorrow
- The bitter score
- The wind.
- Unfinished phrases
- Migratory
- Where will you be?
But through the plight of man as the new Abel there is, though muted, triumph:

Nowell, the star
Pierces the heart
Where have you gone
Childhoods I had

- Shepherd it's time
We started out

- With frozen soul
Alas! my friends
I cannot walk

- At least give us
Some of yourself
A man's tear for
The infant king

- From empty eyes
What can I give?

- This handful of
Barren waiting
The name of man
Your name, Nowell

For Pierre Emmanuel there was only Christ to whom the man alone in suffering could cry, even if at times the cry seemed not to be heard. One of the most eloquent and moving passages in Babel, describing the terrible plight of the persecuted in this age, makes the Eternal say:

It is not only today that they throw you on the dunghill or make you into litter for beasts
Burn you to use your ashes to cushion the footsteps of the suspicious Prince
Extract dry soap from your flesh and from your bones a coarse lime.
Man was always the food of man. The factories of death are from all time.
Before there was any industry, industry made its chimneys smoke
Towerling over the spires of temples and tickling the pride of cities
They loved in the evening to follow the transitory plumes of smoke
And even then the stone of their houses took on the colour of pink ash
The very bloom of sadness.
Nothing has changed today except that the captives put to death
No longer cry as they did before but are mute and not a scandal to anyone.
They die as the leaves fall, they were there just now and no longer are.
Why this circumspection? This is an affair between them and me, the Eternal.
When a man is so far alone as not to be anything to anybody, not even himself
When his consciousness breaks, when his very identity is shattered
When he is this no-matter-what from which as whim decides someone extracts
Lard, or betrayals, or manure, or confessions,
Where is my place if it is not in this man? Where is this man if he is not in me?
I have no witnesses in this world other than those who have lost everything
And their very name and their honour as men, because my Son, He also, for a moment
But when eternity tottered, that moment when Satan was leaping at my throat
In the silence at the edge of non-being despaired of his name of God.\(^2\)

This co-exists with the lyric:

The man soliciting like a cheap girl on the pavement
Hoping to accost joy at the streetcorner
The one the whores laugh loudly at in the evening
When they see him persisting on the beaten track

Christ worn thin by those passing who fray his heart
Against the stones: where is that seamless robe
That was dawn for all worlds? His grief is dressed
Like factory apprentices by the tube station

They gather at, tired of each other and damned
Each one in the other with no escape
Devotees of hotel rooms with the base actions
Of two flints wickedly rubbed together to spark

A dawn that stinks of stone, of rancour, of fog
Ecce Homo, Behold the Man, Oh, there's the priest
Whose mass offers to the spittle of sooty sneaks
The unleavened bread, the sun of a distress
That nothing, my God, nothing can appease
Above all not the next world, factitious hope.
False golds on the window and saints tarted up
In the half shadow near the church's shifty candles
It's You I’m getting at, Lord, for being so far away
The Missing One our absence sends further off
For those whose dumbness shouts their hunger out loud
Have You only the leftovers of Your mercy
The charities of an Eden they don't believe in?
Take pity on the lightning of that white gorge
The crowd that knows nothing but how to bite. Its need
Is so eager that at one hope of a presence
You see it keen to be in at the kill. Lord
Be with us, for the suffering of the earth
If You don’t bear it among us, is the greatest
Scandal of all: would You punish man for silence
When You absolve Yourself for remaining silent?²¹

The desolation of Babel and the intensity of torment in parts of Una must be
felt so that it can be seen that the broad sweeps of other epics and the
cosmogony of Le grand œuvre are rooted and grounded in the individual
person travelling towards death, so that, as at almost the end of his life he
wrote:

The world is in our sight
A single field, a vineyard.
This evening there will be room for all
At the Father’s table.
Someone who has mingled all day
With the other vineyard workers
Will give thanks for all and each
In breaking bread.²²

It was appropriate that when Pierre Emmanuel was bombed out of his house
Jouve found him a place to live called Dieulefit.

If God did not make the physical world, in the sense that his finger
moulded the course of the gaves of Béarn and the slopes for vines around le
Ventoux, the poet as servant of the Word creates it for him. It is in fact true
that ‘in the beginning was the Word and all things were made by him’ as man
in the world without the grace of the Word is man in the void, finding or
facing the horror of nothingness (le Neant), coming from it and returning to
it, and the pilgrimage becomes the pointless journey of an animal conscious
throughout it of the void in himself, the gap, (le Beant), which only the
Mother or the Beloved can fill or comfort. Le grand œuvre is a summation of
Pierre Emmanuel’s work in, among other things, the uniting of the pagan, the
Judaic and the Christian cosmogonies. In the beginning is the Breath, as for Yahweh or Om, but also the Great Mother; as in Le livre de l'homme et de la femme, in the end one sees the Father, as it is the Son, the Christ who 'suffering among us is the Lord God seated in his glory', so that the earth is transfigured and death robbed of its victory, for the Son can fill the abysses of chaos just as the mother or the beloved comforts the gap – and the Son is suffering man, the new Abel, the son of the Great Mother, who by being the new Abel and by filling the abyss reaches the Father. The images that treat of the Great Mother, the Son and the Father have this similarity in the perpetual generation that creates, uses and fills voids. The male and the female as rivals and lovers, the male generating from the female but also engendered in the female are fundamental in the true sense of the word:

Thus every cosmogony arises from love as principle
The love between two great rivals who each issuing endlessly from the other
Are the one for the other in a ring that lasts with neither beginning nor end.23

This is recognised by the Self, the conscious, the aware, living in two times at once, the frightful one of causality in which death after death reaches life, and the other contemporaneous with all

Which streams from its eternal self
Each instant electron being eternity
In a flutter of eyelids –

a passage in which recur two characteristic often repeated images, the brook together with eyelids, eyelashes and eyes. These lines from the first long hymn, Hymne à l'Un sans second, lead to the arrival of the personal, and the pivotal section Naissance de Toi, by which the Christian is grafted on to the oriental or pagan turning universe in the recognition of God as personal, God as Father, God as Toi. What follows may seem to revert to the pagan but in fact all is now seen with a Biblical-Christian perspective and a personal perspective. It is thus appropriate that the second Hymn is to the Goddess and the third to the Father.

Olivier Clément has pointed out in his review of Le grand oeuvre in France Catholique24 that the neolithic images of the Mother Goddess have no mouth and cannot speak, only generate. It is for the poet to speak for the Goddess, just as the Father reaches his glory within the Goddess, to generate the Word. (Those seeking psychological annotation can see the Jungian Anima as primordial, a relationship within the personality between the self and the anima, and a Freudian search for the mother by a child who in life barely knew his mother: the man who has come out from the mother is almost immediately hungry for that belly he escaped from.)
The Goddess remains enigmatically generating and also absorbent. Thus, *Eve or Sleep* immediately precedes *To the East of Eden*, *The Book of Cain* and *The New Abel*, for this fundamental origin is seen again in the treatment of the myth of Adam, Eve and Eden:

Moulded from earth torn out of the earth man keeps
Within himself the hollow that tear made
Since woman is taken from that hollow her flesh
Remembered man also was moulded from that void.

Eve drawn out of Adam as Adam from the earth
Is that very earth before he was formed and torn.
She is the earth intact and the handful of earth
The uterine wound in the side where she was born.

That wound she came from is still in her, virgin
As before the waters divided when God spoke.
Virginity dove-grey as when the dawn
Filtering on her skin begins to awake.

Her skin! first look God modulates in dream
With eyes half-closed still bordering on his night.
Eve's eyelids filter primordial morning's gleam
To warn him the dazzle may come from his own light.

Eve's eyes, horizoned by their lids, see only
Adam, who there sees infinity unfurled.
Even if early he puts all earth between them
Eve skin against skin has him her only world.

And thus he falls from world to world to know
This emptiness he fills, urge unabated.
And in this contraflow these two halves of being
Divide without end but are without end united.

Inwardly smiling you're the sea with half-closed eyes
It shivers from shore to shore as a wave runs
Making the star sparkle – between your lashes
Its twinkle is reflected in countless scintillations
Night more star-sown than your darkness shrouds you
Past cosmos after cosmos douted as they reach it
Your changeless centre endlessly recedes
Spiral head of the ages pointing to the origin
Eve pure deity is your deepest sleep
Each feature's outline fades with your smile
Your breasts are dunes the seawind smoothes blurring
Forgetful your body stretched towards the unseen
The gaze watching you the wave caressing
In you are more intimate than your very being
That Void that guards you and keeps you dreaming
Creating aeons will not have consumed them.

All is consummated in you before being manifest
All manifest in you for time to consummate
Your smile is eternity glimpsed before it flees
Who sighted you once dies looking for you again

Who sees you smile feels present when all began
His amazement is what dazzled God at the dawn
Of the birthday when the first ray began to shine
Flush with eternity the ray that pierced

In divergent directions Space and the soul
Dense symmetries whose black on black osmosis
Is the deepest nostalgia for an unformed Future
Opaque hard dizziness that breaks the spirit

In you a twin desire for a centre where all homes
And a limitless wave spreading from that centre
To delight's conjoined extremes creates in dream
The universe unmade as soon as dreamed

Each breath from you modulates the vast wave
Raised by the Wind from which all springs
And thus your breathing breast allows for ever
The whole Unique to begin again every moment

It is from this eternal feminine that man or God (often as the Wind, a characteristic image) engenders the Self, creates life (which earlier was questioned in an almost Böll-like 'whywhywhy' in the Hymne au Père.)

In the vituperative and satiric consideration of history in Le livre de Cain, as in Babel, we may wonder why, but the answer lies in Le nouvel Abel, suffering man as Christ, and in the triumphs of Porte de l'homme. Unexpressed in such bald terms there seems to be an element of 'O felix culpa' or the theme of Adam lay ybounden; but nothing in Le grand œuvre has the theological simplicity of such mediaeval Catholicism and the concluding Étre ou Fenêtre can seem enigmatic. The whole is not a theological treatise but a cosmogony achieved by exploration, a questioning rather than a pat answer – and also a summation of the work of a poet who had the power of classical rhetoric and also a mastery of simple lyricism, so that here is a whole field of poetry. It is bordered by tall oaks which declaim in the wind, but in hedges and hollows are haiku-like flowers whose tendrils and perfumes ensnare the senses of the soul.

Brian Merrikin Hill
Notes

1 Dédicace d'Orphée from Sodome (1944); ed. of 1971 (Ed. du Seuil) page 13.
3 Hardy – In Tenebris II. Hardy later quoted the second line in Apology prefaced to Late Lyrics and Earlier (1922); the poem originally occurred in Poems of the Past and Present (1901).
4 Chansons du dé à coudre (Le Seuil 1971); translation first published in Verse 1984. It is on page 96 and numbers in the text for other poems from this book refer to page numbers.
5 Babel (Desclée de Brouwer 1951).
7 See Cesbron – Les saints vont en enfer (Editions Robert Laffont 1952) and other novels, available in Livres de Poche.
10 Cocteau. The source of this is unknown to me, but at this time I am tempted to say that Cocteau might have added: 'Je vous mettais en garde contre votre habitude néfaste d'interroger, de savoir, de comprendre tout' which Tirésias says to Edipe in Act IV of La machine infernale.
11 From the preface to Car enfin je vous aime. At this point it should be pointed out that the novel is dedicated to Eve (and Paul Flamand).
13 In Abside, part of Sophia, Le Seuil 1973. (The Acathistus is normally a litany to the Blessed Virgin said standing up. It is hoped that a translation of this poem will appear in the magazine Verse.)
14 Ille in Ego Dominus Tuus from The Wild Swans at Coole, 1919; CP Macmillan 1950, page 181.
15 Le grand œuvre: nos 9 and 10 of Porte de l'homme.
18 Traherne’s Christian Ethicks appears as The Way to Blessedness, modernised in spelling and punctuation by Margaret Bottrall, London: The Faith Press, 1962. See chapter VI – 'There is no creature so unsociable and furious but it is capable of loving something or other.' See also Aux dix mille vivants, page 179 et seq of Le grand œuvre.
19 L’ouvrier de la onzième heure is the second part of the Autobiographies (Ed du Seuil).
20 Babel: L’Eternel dit à ses témoins, pages 257 et seq.
21 Babel: from La messe des ténèbres, pages 234–5.
22 Le grand œuvre page 380, the end of Porte de l’homme. This is the end of the book except for the poem Étre ou fenêtre.
23 From Naissance de Dieu in Hymne à l’Un sans second, Le grand œuvre, pp 54–55. The next quotation is from no 3 of the Introit of that hymn, page 53. The images of the stream and eyelids and lashes will be found in translations from Una in Temenos 4. These images recur in Éve ou le sommeil, which is quoted later in this paper.
24 France Catholique no 1871, 28 September 1984. I am very grateful to Olivier Clement for this review and for his early book on Pierre Emmanuel.
25 These lines are no 1 and part of no 3 of Éve ou le sommeil, Le grand œuvre pages 271 et seq. Hymne au père is on page 99. In saying ‘Boll-like’ I was thinking of a general attitude shown by the women and the peasants near St. Anthony’s Abbey in Boll’s Billiards at Half Past Nine (1951), translated by Patrick Bowles, Jupiter Books (John Calder) 1965.
Leader of the Avant-Garde


Herbert Read (1893–1968) was a leading figure in the avant-garde of art, literature and aesthetics from the 1930s to the 1960s. Though he regarded himself primarily as a poet, in fact he devoted his main energies to exploring the significance of art and to making himself the apologist for modern art. To this end he wrote a large number of books clarifying his aesthetics, and the present study is an attempt to give an account of his conclusions and of how he reached them. As such it is a thorough and illuminating study. Dr Thistlewood has read all Read's many works on the theme, has consulted archives and correspondence, has conducted interviews with those well qualified to speak to him of Read's views on art, education, psychology and philosophy, and has been through most if not all the literature to which Read acknowledged his indebtedness (and he was scrupulous almost to a fault in making such acknowledgements). If there is here and there what strikes me as a certain infelicity of phrasing, this may be due to the kind of conceptual language Read himself was using, some of which now seems curiously dated or unnecessarily tortuous. In any case, although further studies may be written dealing with aspects of Read's life and thought which are only of indirect concern here – his views on education, for instance, or his political stance – it is unlikely that another full-length study of his aesthetic theory, based as it is on such painstaking research, will appear for a considerable time, if at all.

Hence to all intents and purposes this book is likely to remain the standard work on Read's central preoccupation, that in which for good or ill he made his greatest contribution to the intellectual and cultural life of his times and which has had considerable influence on the course of art in England and America down at least to the present day. Indeed, one can go further and say that the scope of Read's influence is itself to a considerable degree due to the fact that he put into coherent form ideas about art, its significance and function which were and still are those held, consciously or unconsciously, by the great majority of the modern art establishment. Thus this book should be read by all who not only have an interest in Read himself but also wish to gain a clearer understanding of the whole phenomenon of modern art and of the kind of mentality which is largely responsible for shaping the aesthetic theory and practice of our century.

Dr Thistlewood's method is in the main chronological. That is to say he identifies the influences on and the shifts in Read's thought as this develops during the 50 year span (1918–1968) of his active career. Thus in the early formative years during and immediately subsequent to the First World War we are shown the erstwhile shades of Ruskin and Morris, Bergson and Croce,
Hegel and Nietzsche, presiding over his meditations, while in the background hover the figures of Coleridge, Wordsworth and Goethe, strengthening that feeling for nature which he regarded as his birthright as the son of a Yorkshire yeoman farmer and which he was never to lose. From them, as well as from his reading of contemporary scientific works, he learnt above all to accept the concept which was to be axiomatic for him for the rest of his life: the concept that there is a natural evolutionary principle at work in all nature, just as there is in human life and consciousness. He never challenged this concept and it formed the cornerstone and key to all his subsequent thought. The counterpart to it was the idea of human perfectibility on the natural plane, if not now at least in the future: as Read began, so he remained, a humanist, and he regarded humanism as 'the greatest exaltation of the mind of man that has ever been conceived'.

These basic notions survived even forty years of friendship and correspondence with T. S. Eliot, whom Read was first to meet in the early 20s, and from whose own thought Read's was increasingly to diverge. To what he regarded as an excessive importance attributed by Eliot to conscious, even rational, control in the production of a work of art, Read opposed a notion he borrowed initially from Bertrand Russell (though he found it confirmed in the works of T. E. Hulme, which he edited during this period), namely the notion of 'insight' – or 'instinct', or 'intuition' – as the first inkling of 'truth' in any process of apprehension, whether scientific or artistic. The corollary of this for Read was that the mind, given the raw material, works unconsciously to create. This led him directly to Freud and Jung, for in their concept of the unconscious he saw a possible source for the raw material of art as well as its shaping agent. From now on psychology – and in his later years almost exclusively Jungian psychology – was to provide a basis indispensable to his aesthetics. Indispensable too was the alliance of this aesthetics with modern scientific theory, exemplified for him above all in the works of Russell's collaborator, Alfred North Whitehead, although equally significant at a later date was D'Arcy Thompson's On Growth and Form. The best preparation, Read was to write, for a true appreciation of constructive art is a study of Whitehead.

Whitehead's philosophy, in common with much of Hulme's, was essentially Bergsonian, centring upon an evolutionary principle as the key to understanding the development of both mind and matter. Indeed, Bergson seemed to offer irrefutable arguments that consciousness, art and culture were evolving in time by processes comparable with those of natural evolution – that is, by proceeding from formlessness (the vast unconscious reservoir of insight or intuition) to ordered formation (the effect of giving form to the fleeting fragments of imagery gleaned by intuition from the unconscious). Such arguments provided Read with support for his notion of cultural progress and seemed to justify his belief in the vital role played by the
avant-garde in art, by a vanguard of artists equipped with the only authentic kind of creativity. What Whitehead did for him was to redeem this evolutionary progress from a mechanistic or deterministic strait-jacket by introducing the conception of a discontinuous physics; for this notion of a quantum-leap in the progression from formlessness to form in the physical world could equally well be transferred to the field of artistic creation. Read now had a charter for what was to become a crucial theme of his aesthetics: that art was a natural organic process of unfolding, but not one whose forms could in any way be determined in advance. Hence the artist could be seen not simply as the passive recorder of a changing reality but as instrumental in the very process of evolution itself. In fact he played a central part in fulfilling what Read now recognized as the chief purpose of existence: the evolution of consciousness.

Over the course of time Read's thought was to seek new forms of expression, but his basic convictions, shaped above all by the influences we have noted, remained with him throughout his life. Art is unconscious expression, an organic event unfolding. By dipping deeply into his unconscious the artist may experience states of consciousness never before experienced and may have glimpses of the imagery through which this experience can be expressed. Increasingly for Read the 'classic' idea of submitting the artist's findings to pre-existing forms or criteria became abhorrent and seen as a negation of true creativity. Such forms and criteria were associated entirely with convention and held to be irrelevant to the workings of a specifically modern creativity. Creative direction for the true artist was not to be determined by standards, intellectual or other, or by pre-set goals, or by prescribed compositional criteria. On the contrary, the main problem for the artist was how to free his mind from any reliance upon such conventional factors. Forms and images have to emerge spontaneously from the unconscious and any conscious control must by definition result in a deformation of the archetypal material presented by the unconscious, which is itself the exclusive forming principle. What the artist has to create is essentially a new reality: 'Only on that assumption,' Read wrote, 'can we explain any form of evolutionary development in human consciousness . . . An evolutionary advance emerges from the act of expression.'

Archetypal material, Read recognized, is indispensable, but it is ineffective if deliberately deployed. Hence less and less could Read accept that archetypes possess any formal coherence or any coherence that could be expressed only in a specific form or in a form already known. Rather archetypes are deep unconscious formless predispositions (but nothing more than predispositions) towards formal expression or symbolization, predispositions which have never previously been known or given any formal coherence. Thus when the artist by plunging into his unconscious encounters previously unknown states, his chief concern must be to allow the archetypal predis-
PHILLIP SHERRARD

position towards formal symbolization to express itself in its own way, which will be a completely new way. The forms of art are significant only in so far as they express such an archetypal predisposition. In some manner the imagery, however fragmentary it may be, that is latent in the archetypal predisposition condenses itself in the artist's unconscious into symbols. Art is this process of symbolic transformation, and the authentic artist is one who has the power to symbolize archetypal feelings and intuitions in a previously unknown form.

What this symbolism signifies is, Read recognizes, totally unknown both to the artist and a fortiori to his public; and though it may subsequently become intelligible it will do so only by losing its dynamic creative potentiality and by degenerating into convention and cliche. Art, like life, has meaning, but a meaning never finally discoverable because of its continuous extension by the process of evolution. Ultimately art is to be regarded as the symbolic form of a specific, extended or heightened inner experience, though whether this experience is archetypal or merely the secretion of a morbid or corrupt subjectivity gone haywire it is impossible to assess, for the simple reason that neither the artist nor his public possesses any criteria of discrimination according to which such an assessment can be made. One has in the end to accept the value of images and forms that appeal by virtue of an inexplicable sentience: the artist's task, faced by the unknown, is not to 'designate and signify' but to affirm unanalysed excitement. In extreme cases what his work may express is not so much the unconscious forces of the imagination as 'something as irresponsible as an angry gesture'.

With hindsight it is easy to see what could be - indeed, what inevitably would be - the consequences of accepting a theory of art and creativity such as this; and Read himself in his last years became increasingly alarmed and dismayed at what in all seriousness were now promoted in its name as works of art in many leading galleries, not least of all at the I.C.A. (Institute of Contemporary Art), an institution which Read himself had been largely instrumental in founding. Yet, given the theory, it was difficult for him or for anyone else to adduce criteria according to which such works could be dismissed as the abortions and mockery they are, or to differentiate at all between the spurious and the authentic. The question which therefore arises is how could Read and all who shared and continue to share his views - perhaps the majority of the modern art world, critics and practitioners alike - have got into this kind of impasse.

I think the first thing to be said in this connection is that Read, during the whole span of his active career, was an atheist. He lost what religious faith he had at a relatively early age and, so one gathers from this book, he never regained it. Consequently for him there was no ultimate reality, no complete truth, nothing of a transhistorical nature that had been given to man through revelation and could be known equally well at all times and in every place. There was no spiritual world of living celestial beings or person-archetypes of
whom every visible thing is in some manner an image and who constitute the celestial existence or essential identity of every human being. What modern science – including the science of psychology – took to be the real world he accepted as the real world.

One might say that this was Read’s private affair and has nothing to do with his artistic theories which can be valid in their own right apart from whether or not he possessed personal beliefs of a religious nature. Unfortunately – or fortunately – it is not so simple. Art, like life, has one range of possibilities and purposes when you recognize and try to live in accordance with beliefs of a religious nature – a spiritual gnosis – and quite another when you don’t. Moreover, the choice is not between possessing beliefs or not possessing them but only between what kind of beliefs you hold. Belief, no less than air, is something from which man can exempt himself only on condition that he ceases to live and think. Thus if he does not recognize and accept beliefs of one pedigree and quality, he will recognize and accept those of another pedigree and quality, and they in their turn will determine what he regards as possible or impossible, true or false, real or unreal.

What does this mean in the context with which we are here concerned? If I recognize and attempt to live in accordance with beliefs of a religious nature I will also recognize and accept a body of doctrine in which these beliefs are enshrined. That is to say, I will accept a priori that there are certain realities to be known through the pursuit of my religion, that these realities embrace the plenitude of truth and beauty, that they have already been known and experienced countless times by the saints, sages and artists not only of my religion but possibly of other religions as well, and that only by attaining some personal knowledge and experience of them myself can I realize my own potentialities as a human being and bring my life to fruition. The corollary of this is that in so far as I fall short of attaining such knowledge and experience I am still imprisoned in a world of ignorance and illusion, exposed to demonic persuasion the identity of which I can recognize only because I accept 'on faith' the criteria of discrimination offered to me by the religion to which I subscribe.

If I am an artist my task defines itself correspondingly. I still accept a priori a doctrine of what is to be known and experienced, and I realize that my art will only be ‘about anything’, in the sense that it expresses what is real rather than unreal, genuine rather than spurious, on condition that it reflects or images – symbolizes with – the archetypal realities that constitute the essential identity of my own being as of every other form of life. This does not mean of course that I have to subject my imagination to a set of abstract concepts and rational propositions. Doctrine – religious doctrine – is not abstract or rational. It is symbolic and metaphorical. And what it symbolizes with or is a metaphor for are not abstract ideas or principles or laws but living beings. What is perceived on the horizon of the mental vision towards which religious doctrine reaches
out and leads one are essentially personal figures or else relationships between them – relationships that are the ground of and that communicate their archetypal value to the earthly relationships that are patterned on them. If therefore my art is to express truth rather than falsehood, reality rather than unreality, I have to enter into direct personal relationship with the archetypal figure or figures with which the doctrine symbolizes and to communion with whom it has invited me.

This means that I have to realize as complete a self-identification as possible with the archetype. I have to eliminate from my mind the distracting influences of fugitive emotions and ego-sponsored images, all self-willing and self-thinking; and to allow the form of the person-archetype with whom my work of art is to symbolize to engender itself in my imagination, an act of visualization that itself draws this form into my imagination, ultimately from Heaven, immediately from the heart, the ‘place’ in which the only possible experience of reality is consummated. Such an act of visualization in the imagination is not the consequence of the projection into my psyche of fragmentary images of some state or archetypal predisposition previously unknown and never before experienced, and hence without any known and explicit doctrinal or formal equivalent. On the contrary, it is the outcome of the active and conscious engendering, in the imagination, of the forms that both correspond to what I already know is to be encountered and experienced and are capable of bringing this encountering and experiencing to fruition. Doctrine and art are thus complementary and interdependent: *Ars sine scientia nihil*.

Here too something else must be noted. We saw when speaking of Read’s aesthetics that it became increasingly difficult for him to accept that archetypes possess any formal coherence or any coherence that can be expressed only in a specific form or in a form already known. Thus for him archetypes are essentially formless predispositions and nothing more. For the artist working within a religious perspective this is not the case. For him the archetypes are in full formal operation. This means that the forms and images of his art are not his own discovery or invention: they are pre-determined, both on the plane of the imagination and correspondingly in the given canonical prescriptions of his particular religious tradition. Again this does not signify that all an artist has to do is slavishly to copy the canonically prescribed forms: such a procedure would at once condemn his art to lifelessness and make it merely academic. If his art is to have life it must come from a union of his being with the being whose image his work is to enshrine, just as love can subsist only in the union of lover and beloved. But when a work of art is fully energized in this way – when theme and style are felt and lived – such categories as old and new are meaningless. What is important is not newness or innovation, still less any form of modernity, but the nowness – the immediacy – with which what is always to be expressed is expressed.
Thus there can be no such thing as an avant-garde among the artists of this kind of art, for the simple reason that there is nothing of which one can be avant or in the rear. Since this kind of art is the expression, not of a world of formlessness that for the first time is emerging into form, but of a continuous reality in full formal operation, the only ultimately valid questions to be asked when trying to assess the value of such a work are to what degree has the artist's imagination been informed by the archetypes of this reality and to what extent has he succeeded in communicating his apprehension of them in living terms. Moreover, though there may well be — in fact, inevitably will be — variations in the modes in which individual artists apprehend these archetypes, and so in some measure in their artistic styles, there is absolutely no value, and certainly no absolute value, to be attributed to the new or innovatory as such. Concomitantly, in this perspective there can be no such thing as progress or evolution of consciousness in art, any more than there can be in life and culture as a whole, seen as taking place along the linear axis of the space-time continuum that we call history. Indeed, one would have thought that the absurdity of the very ideas of progress and evolution in this sense would be quite evident to anyone capable of responding even slightly to the great works of art which are part and parcel of our inheritance; for there is not and cannot be any criterion according to which it is possible to demonstrate that the artefacts of our modern civilization evince a higher degree of intelligence, beauty or of any other positive quality than, say, an Egyptian temple, the poetry of Homer and the Book of Kells. It would appear to follow that it is only in ignorance of man's artistic inheritance that one can seriously subscribe to ideas of this kind, an ignorance one might expect from scientists but not from those whose ostensible concern is with the arts themselves.

As for the purpose of such an art, this is what one might call liturgical, not simply in the sense that it serves man in his formal religious worship — though this may well be its highest function — but also in the sense that through it he 'celebrates the praises of the gods' in all his acts of making and doing, whether these be connected with the music and dance of his festivals or the patterning of the clothes he wears; for in this art beauty is never divorced from practical use or such use from the universal rhythm with which all life must be linked if it is not to lapse into disintegration and pointlessness. That is why ultimately the purpose of this art, whatever its form, is to help man to liberate himself from the world of illusion by offering to his contemplation images of a non-spurious reality; it is to bring the earthly and the celestial into conjunction, so that things may be seen not as they appear in themselves to our 'eyes of flesh' but more nearly as they are in God, or nearer to the source of their own being; it is, as Dante put it when speaking of the purpose of La Divina Commedia, 'to remove those living in this life from a state of misery and to bring them to a state of happiness', in other words, to facilitate the attainment
by each individual of his own celestial existence, his own angelhood, by
allowing him to perceive the difference between what he now is and what he
has it in him to become, and by thus inviting him to achieve as full a
realization of his being as is possible to him.

Such an understanding of the nature and purpose of art is immediately
eclipsed in one who has no religious faith. It was eclipsed in Read. Nowhere
in this book is there even a suggestion that for Read such an understanding
might have some contemporary relevance. There is no reference whatsoever
either to the art or to the artistic theories of Eric Gill or David Jones, all but
Read’s contemporaries and fully active both in producing works of art and in
saying why they were producing them over the years in which Read was
formulating his own theories. There is no mention of Jacques Maritain or of
A. K. Coomaraswamy (though Read did once cross swords with the latter in
the pages of The Listener and it might have been illuminating to have given
some account of this in the present book). And if one asks why he could not
envisage that such an understanding of art and its purpose might have some
contemporary relevance, one can answer only by saying that, in the absence
of a religious faith, he had to find other articles of faith, and those he found,
and to which he gave his adherence, made it impossible for him to conceive
that it could have any contemporary relevance.

As we have seen, the chief of these articles or tenets of faith that Read
substituted for his loss of a religious faith was a belief in the reality of
evolution. The theory of evolution — a hypothesis, like all other scientific
theories — is peculiar in that it implies an extreme — if often subtly concealed —
form of arrogance on the part of those who accept it. By accepting it one is
committed also to accepting that theories or understandings held in the past
are outmoded, however relevant they may have been in their own time,
because human consciousness has now evolved or progressed beyond them.
But this is only a covert — and not so covert — way of saying that one is more
intelligent or in possession of a greater degree of knowledge than those of the
past who formulated or adhered to such theories and understandings. A
corollary of this is that one is further bound to assert that no degree of human
consciousness or knowledge has been attained in the past which is higher or
superior to that attained by the most advanced minds of one’s own age. By
the same token, failure to invent or subscribe to new theories and under-
standings, thus demonstrating that one is not in tune with the zeitgeist or with
the new state of things now emerging for the first time into consciousness, is
tantamount to confessing that one is stereotyped, hackneyed and virtually a
museum-piece. One has, in Rimbaud’s words, to be absolutely modern.

This among other things means one has to be a member of the avant-garde,
that very special group of people probing forward into the unknown and
gleaning from the formless depths of their unconscious fragmentary images
of the future (Read himself was convinced that a number of special artists in
his time — including Klee, Kandinsky, Mondrian, Gabo, Moore and Picasso — had thus shaped the foundation of a cultural regeneration). The new — what is innovatory — becomes a value in its own right and there can by definition be no authentic creativity without innovation, either in style or theme but preferably in both. That it should manifest some heightened inner state of unanalysed excitement is all one can ultimately ask of a contemporary work of art, because there are not and there cannot be any criteria according to which one can evaluate or judge the relevance or irrelevance of the images and forms whose sole claim to be taken seriously is that they are expressing states of being and consciousness that have never been expressed or experienced before. This in effect is to deny that there can be any valid criticism of contemporary art at all, for if, as the theory asserts, you cannot know what the artist is intending to express in his work, clearly you are quite incapable of saying whether or not he has been successful in expressing it.

Such a conclusion is of course inherent in the premisses from which it develops: that man is no more than an inescapably time-bound, evolution-conditioned being with no immortal soul, and that his art and creativity cannot possess therefore any significance other than that which can be formulated quite adequately in hedonistic ('I know what I like'), sociological, scientific or psychological terms. Whether premisses and conclusion, as well as the kind of artefacts they foster, do justice to man, his creative spirit, or for that matter to anything else, is something which everyone has to decide for himself.

Philip Sherrard
A World-Poet?


'Is Tagore a great poet?' The question came to be asked because his reputation as such preceded him to the West. When in 1912 his collection of Songs, Gitanjali appeared, Yeats wrote in his Introduction that he found in Tagore a world I have dreamed of all my life long. The work of a supreme culture, they yet appear as much the growth of the common soil as the grass and the rushes. A tradition, where poetry and religion are the same thing, has passed through the centuries, gathering from the learned and unlearned metaphor and emotion, and carried back again to the multitude the thought of the scholar and the noble.

His success was instantaneous but, as it proved, brief. William Radice, in his carefully considered Introduction to his selection of some fifty poems (most of them long) considers the circumstances of the meteoric rise and decline of Tagore's reputation, the complex of misapprehensions which surrounded him. Tagore, grandly breaking with the policy of the British Raj in India, which was to make India an English-speaking and Western-oriented nation, was not the first Bengali poet to reaffirm the Orientalism which Macaulay's edicts had sought to exclude, but he was the most authoritative and the greatest figure of that turning of the tide. In Bengal his thousands of songs were (and continue to be) known and sung by those villagers and anonymous poor who were (aristocrat as he was) both dear and close to him. He arrived in the West as a great poet writing in a language known to few, and with his long robe and impressive appearance, he enacted the part. The theme of the Gitanjali — song-offering — reinforced the image of the poet-sage. The immense popularity of the Gitanjali was with the pre-modern generation whose taste for an exhausted romanticism was brought to a sudden end by the first World War. In 1913 Tagore had been awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature; but after the war he lost his more conventional British readers by embracing the cause of Indian Home Rule and (in 1920) returning his British knighthood after the Amritsar massacre. At the same time he lost his more literary admirers who now saw him (wrongly, as William Radice well argues and fully demonstrates in his translations) as an effete Victorian Romantic with little to say to the modern world.

This too was in part Tagore's own fault. Because educated Indians speak English with great fluency they are perhaps the more insensitive to its literary subtleties. English Romantic and late Victorian poetry (itself using a highly artificial diction and vocabulary) has set on Indian-English verse a stamp which
makes it unacceptable to modern English readers; not indeed that more recent Indian adoption of the modern idiom is any better, both alike being imitations of a foreign style. Yeats helped Tagore to 'put English' on his early collections of poems, and in March 1916 wrote to Lady Gregory of 'two books of verse by Tagore to revise for Macmillan, who has no notion of the job it is.' Tagore had been reluctant to have a poem from Gitanjali revised by Bridges for *The Spirit of Man* and the final explosion is recorded in a letter from Yeats to their mutual friend William Rothenstein in 1935, by which time a coolness had developed between the two poets. Yeats wrote:

My dear Rothenstein, Damn Tagore! We got out three good books, Sturge Moore and I, and then, because he thought it more important to see and know English than to be a great poet, he brought out sentimental rubbish and wrecked his reputation. Tagore does not know English, no Indian knows English. Nobody can write with music and style in a language not learned in childhood and ever since the language of his thought. I shall return to the question of Tagore but not yet -- I shall return because he has published, in recent years, and in English, prose books of great beauty, and these books have been ignored because of the eclipse of his reputation as a poet.

Yeats was of course right about Tagore's English, and indeed about the vanity which impels so many Indian poets to write in English; (one thinks of Sri Aurobindo, whose verse Indian friends are for ever asking one to admire). But Yeats's outburst rests on his original and correct discernment of Tagore's greatness. 'I shall return', he writes; but never did. Tagore continued to send signed copies of his poems to Yeats where they remain, their pages uncut, in the shelves of his library. Tagore was, as a translator, his own worst enemy. He was better served by his friend and pupil Aurobindo Bose, but again, Bose's translations suffer from that same fluency, that same unreality of Indian-English verse-writing. In Mr. Radice's translations we can see, virtually for the first time, how great a poet Tagore is. Have we, in William Radice, one of those rare translators, as rare as good poets (one thinks of Fitzgerald, of Arthur Waley, or of Leishmann's translations of Rilke) who enriches the language by the introduction of some entirely new element, significant and salutary at a given moment? Has that moment come for Tagore?

William Radice gives another reason for the initial misunderstanding of Tagore's poetry: the Gitanjali are songs, and a song is an indivisible unity of music and words. Without their music we have not the full work. Consider also that the arts in India -- be it dance, music or poetry -- rely on a rhythm common to all, the very heart-beat of the Subcontinent, of which none who has visited India (and many who have not) can be unaware, for its effect is potent and magical. We have nothing like it in English verse whose rhythms tend to be slow, reflective and (in this century's ever-popular 'free verse'
often tenuous to the point of vanishing altogether. The present selection includes no songs: all are poems, not intended to be sung, although many are characterized by the enchantment of those powerful Indian rhythms. The translator has wisely not attempted to reproduce these in English; he has himself published a volume of verse and has evidently given much thought to metrics, carefully working on some equivalent for the Bengali original.

He started learning Bengali in 1972 and some of the translations were done during a three-month stay at Santiniketan in 1982.* The range is wide, from the powerfully compelling rhythm of 'Death Marriage' in which the placing of the reiterated invocation, 'Death, death' comes like a drum-beat in varied positions within stanza and line to the swift lyric rhythm of 'New Rain', reminiscent of a Greek lyric metre; and the majestic flow of 'Shah Jahan', bringing to mind the great Jumna flowing past the Taj Mahal. Mr. Radice makes skilful use of half-rhymes and internal rhymes: all the devices available in an English at once literate and idiomatic, poetic yet with the ease of modern speech. He is particularly successful in Tagore's late poems, free, stripped as bare of the rhetoric of his grand manner he could so well assume as are Yeats's late poems. Dignity and simplicity are united as only in the work of a great master.

The translator has refused to follow any choice of poems – even Tagore's – other than his own. In this too he has been wise, for by translating only poems into which he can fully enter, he has included none that strikes that dumb note so familiar to readers of those many interchangeable paper-back volumes of translated verse that disappoint our hopes of finding abroad anything better than our home-produced run-of-the mill sawdust that nowadays passes by the name of poetry.

To return to Tagore's eclipse after the first World War; partly it was his own fault and of the kind of English poetry that influenced Indian writers of his time, but not, I suggest, wholly so. The traumatic experience of war killed feeling, the true with the false, for a long time to come, killed as it seemed the Romantic tradition and its values. These were values of feeling, both religious and natural, which had hitherto sustained the soul of the English nation. The more superficial Georgian poets gave place to the iconoclastic Modern Movement, Sturge Moore to T. E. Hulme, Pound and the Imagists, Avalon to the Waste Land. It was a time of disillusion, of rejection, of the hardening and withering of hearts as intellectual cleverness and political Utopianism sought to lend their spurious strength to a psychologically wounded generation. Or an iconoclasm such as that of Joyce and Picasso seemed, and from the standpoint of history perhaps was, terminal. Yet humanity reaffirms itself, demands a fuller scope, cannot be satisfied with Cambridge cleverness or Oxford political verse, or the subsequent triviality of a realism which sees only

* Nine of these poems were published in TEMENOS 5, and we are therefore not quoting from them in this review.
the surfaces of things. William Radice claims Tagore for his own generation; I quote from a letter:

Tagore carried his romanticism intact into the modern world, used it as a sceptre and a torch. Thus to children of the neo-Romanticism of the 1960s, my own era, he is a sympathetic voice. His educational ideals, his anti-materialism, his feminism, his version of the spiritual, are all, to my own generation, familiar. Tagore is a great poet, a world poet.

But if Tagore is a world-poet it is not, of course, because he appeals for sometimes accidental reasons to a particular generation but because he speaks to what is most deeply human in all generations.

Mr. Radice writes in a letter (as Yeats had written in 1912) of his centrality within the vast wealth of Indian civilization; and beyond that of his human centrality:

Tagore wrote poems, songs, plays, stories, novels, essays, critical books, ballets, operas, etc. etc., — almost everything except a long epic poem . . .

He is a writer on a huge scale, in the Shakespeare-Dante-Goethe-Tolstoy league.

If he was not a 'holy man', as some took him to be, he none-the-less scanned and spanned spiritual and natural horizons of humanity with the maturity and depth of an Indian steeped in the tradition of Kalidasa and the Upanishads, but also of a man well aware of Western thought and indeed deeply interested in science. He has been compared with Goethe in this respect.

William Radice is of the modern West and has seen Tagore from a standpoint vital, young, and also humble:

It is because I do not yet know Tagore well enough that I have not felt able to translate anything from his very last book . . . or provide the commentary that would be required, the long history in his life and experience of every thought and line of its fifteen short poems. Or perhaps in any case they are untranslateable. Only in its own language can the voice be entirely itself. In the bewilderment, bafflement and incomprehension of his very last poems, Tagore comes nearest to us all; but language keeps him far.

Have we in William Radice the translator who will bring him 'near', the more so as he perceives so clearly the great mysteries concealed and revealed in the work of Tagore? Over the years it is to be hoped that he will persevere in his great self-imposed task.

The Forty Poems of Rabindranath Tagore in the volume edited by Sisirkumar Ghose (Professor of English at Santiniketan) reveal Tagore from another perspective. If William Radice is a young westerner Professor Ghose has grown old in the spiritual wisdom of the Hindu tradition. The translations (none is signed) are
like first drafts rather than, as with William Radice's, transpositions into poems convincing in themselves in the English language. The second person singular, now deemed obsolete (regrettably so perhaps, particularly in new translations of the Bible where all distinctions of status and relationship are democratized out of existence) persists in Indian-English, as do vocatives and much besides. Yet here too we often catch the tabla-rhythm of India:

Have you not heard his silent steps? He comes, comes, ever comes. Every moment and in every age, every day and every night he comes, comes, ever comes.
Many a song I have sung in many a mood of mind, but all their notes have always proclaimed, 'He comes, comes, ever comes.'
In the fragrant days of sunny April through the forest path he comes, comes, ever comes.
In the rainy gloom of July nights on the thundering chariot of clouds he comes, comes, ever comes.
In sorrow after sorrow it is his steps that press upon my heart, and it is the golden touch of his feet that makes my joy for to shine.

The power of that majestic arrival is conveyed; and the choice of poems reveals a metaphysical dimension of Tagore’s verse less clearly brought out in Mr. Radice’s choice. This aspect of Tagore is strongly presented by Professor Ghose in an appendix to Tagore’s ‘Last Question’. This question, to the Western reader accustomed to the consoling answers to ultimate questions offered alike by Christianity and by the less subtle evolutionary optimisms of the agnostic, must be disquieting; but that disquiet is one deeply rooted in both the Indian religions, in the ultimately unknowable Brahman of Hinduism of whom absolutely nothing can be affirmed, and in the Buddhist nirvana in which emptiness and plenitude are indistinguishable. The poem was written only a fortnight before the poet’s death:

The first day’s sun
had asked
at the manifestation of new being –
Who are you?
No answer came.
Year after year went by,
the last sun of the day
the question utters
On the western sea-shore
In the silent evening
Who are you?
He gets no answer.
Professor Ghose writes that the first question carries no note of interrogation; and the 'he' in the last line is not in the original Bengali. He comments:

Maybe it is less a question in need of a determinate answer and more in the nature of an amazed whisper on some borderland, or country of the mind where contraries meet, where, to use the poet's own phrase in another later work, 'yes' and 'no' lose their separate punctilio and become one. We have moved into a world where an answer, any answer, would be trivial, if not a desecration.

Later in the same commentary he writes:

We notice how the sensuous, manifold universe, swiftly summarized, has become one with the poet's witnessing or apprehending self. There is no light, colour or object in the poem other than the lonely sun, the beginning and the end, the first and the last day, and the western seashore and, mediating among all three, an asking, a question that is not perhaps a quest. But in the process of summary, an immense abstraction, has the world been mastered or just set aside? Is the suggested view of history on a par with Macbeth's pessimism? Reading between the lines one would say No. Here a lifetime's waiting, an infinite loneliness, keeps on asking, rather whispering: What becomes of becoming? Where is meaning to be found? With apologies to Abu Sayeed Ayyub, the noted Tagore critic, who thinks the poem offers 'plenty of answers', there really is none, because there could not be. The poem is not in the puzzle but in the mystery, inviolate. Indeed, in the end the mysterious and the ontological have become one. That, precisely, is the poem's triumph, beyond tragedy, beyond ordinary sadness and sorrow.

Not a puzzle but a mystery; this surely is the great watershed between East and West. For the modern West, 'mystery' is, in common parlance, synonymous with problem or 'puzzle', an exercise, like a Sherlock Holmes story, in reductionism, indeed in the exorcism of a dread of the unknowable. Thus for the Western reader, there is, in that borderland in which Tagore's poem moves, if not despair, at all events dread and darkness. And yet for the Eastern mind, habituate with mystery, this is not necessarily so. Mystery is the ultimately unknowable in whom we live and move and have our being; and at the same time a Presence which 'comes, comes, ever comes.' Why is there Being instead of Nothing? That too is a question without answer' Professor Ghose writes.

The profound difference lies in the premisses of the two cultures: for the East the distinction between theist and non-theist is a minor detail, since both alike presume a living universe of spirit. For the West, 'matter' is a lifeless order situated, to use Blake's words, in 'a void outside existence', that is outside being-consciousness-bliss, the Indian sat-chit-ananda. To say that Tagore
is 'agnostic' is not (as would be the case were a western humanist writer under consideration) to deny that he is profoundly aware of the sacred; nor to say that he is a 'humanist' imply a denial of the divine. If he believes in 'nature' is it not rather the 'nature' of Plotinus than of materialist science? It was, after all, with Goethe the alchemist, not with the materialist Darwin he has been compared.

For Eastern thought the distinctions fall differently; the Mystery, for all its ultimate silence, is to be experienced in the myriad forms of manifestation, to be loved, to be embraced ecstatically, to be known in the 'play' of the Lord Krishna, in the 'dance' of the Lord Shiva. But — and here Professor Ghose meets William Radice, spokesman of the young and of the West — Tagore confronts the Mystery without the supports of religious practise or belief:

The older Indian poets, Vedic or Buddhist, were not innocent of the Unknown and the Unknowable. But the Old Masters worked within psycho-physical disciplines. Fully cognizant of degrees beyond knowledge, even the ultimate Neti, they had techniques for taming the terror, whose absence the disinherited can only regret or dramatize. The lack of the total strength of the Great Tradition is what distinguishes Tagore, a modern among moderns, in the 'election of silence by the most articulate', a neighbour of Hölderlin and Rimbaud and Rilke.

The poem is neither question nor answer, but resonates, like Blake's 'The Tyger', with 'fathomless suggestions.'

No poet is more ecstatic in his celebration of 'nature', of the land and the people of Bengal, of 'my patient and dusky mother dust' than Tagore; none more aware of the Nothing; is this paradox comprehensible to Western readers? Commenting on the last poem which he translates William Radice comes near to seeing in Tagore a poet of the 'absurd', who 'comes perilously and awesomely close to acceptance of a complete lack of meaning or purpose in the universe, to a suspicion that, though there may be laws or rules governing Nature or the mind of man, their status may be as frivolous and arbitrary as the rules of a game; that the whole stupendous structure may rest on a bleak whimsicality.' This statement applies specifically to some of the later poems. With respect to Mr. Radice's devotion to Tagore and his understanding of his breadth and scope I find in this comment an absence of an equal grasp of the vertical dimension of height and depth; the sense of the sacred is none the less for the knowledge that the face of Nature can never be unveiled. To the Buddhist, the ultimate understanding is that nirvana and samsara are not two but one.

To return to Yeats — though he never returned to Tagore — is there not an approach to the same acceptance of Mystery in one of his Last Poems, 'Lapis Lazuli':
Every discoloration of the stone
Every accidental crack or dent,
Seems a water-course or an avalanche,
Or lofty slope where it still snows
Though doubtless plum or cherry-branch
Sweetens the little half-way house
These Chinamen climb towards, and I
Delight to imagine them sitting there;
There, on the mountain and the sky,
On all the tragic scene they stare.
One asks for mournful melodies;
Accomplished fingers begin to play.
Their eyes with many wrinkles, their eyes,
Their ancient, glittering eyes, are gay.

The mountain of the world is but a carved pebble of lapis lazuli, whose unscaleable slopes and avalanches yet provide the shelter of cherry-trees and music, a 'half-way house' where the wise may also be gay. William Radice believes Tagore to be a greater poet than Yeats: greater in breadth of humanity, it may be, but in depth Eastern and Western world-poets surely meet in the presence of the Nothing where neither has lost anything of his sense of the sacred or of the delight of Being; Tagore wrote:

When I go from hence let this be my parting word, that what I have seen is unsurpassable.
Disciple of Pound


Peter Russell has been practising poetry for forty years, but his work, much of which has been published abroad, is not well known here and Peter Jay's selection, covering the years from 1947 to 1975, is an interesting distillation.

Russell was born in Bristol in 1921 and spent the war years in the army. In 1947 he made a memorable trip to Italy where he 'discovered' the work of Ezra Pound and became a fervent disciple. Pound's 'Poetry is language charged with meaning' has had a considerable influence on him.

In post-war England he ran a small press, a poetry bookshop and the literary magazine Nine, moving to Venice in 1964 when he had run out of money. He was later poet in residence at Purdue University and the University of Victoria, British Columbia and from 1977 to 1979 a Fellow of the Imperial Academy of Philosophy in Tehran, being forced to leave with his wife and young family after the Ayatollah Khomeini's revolution.

The Directors of the Academy were the late Henry Corbin, the great Iranian scholar; Toshihiko Izutsu and Dr. Seyyed Hosein Nasr, the imaginative interpreter of Islam.

The Academy with its splendid library and beautiful Persian garden led Russell into the world of the Platonic nous, of the Sufis, Judaism and sapienta or Eternal Sophia of the Christian Platonic Tradition, as well as the mysteries of esoteric Buddhism, of the Tao and the I Ching. In an attempt to understand these philosophies Russell set himself the task of acquiring a working knowledge of Sanskrit, Arabic, Persian and Hebrew. He also studied the Greek and Roman writers and the mediaeval and modern Europeans in their original languages.

Kathleen Raine (LITTACK December 1975) wrote: 'Peter Russell has a genius for translation... In this he resembles his friend and chosen master, Ezra Pound, for whom also language was a persona by which the irrecapturable essence of some time and place could, Eurydice-like, be led back to the very brink of the here and now.'

Russell's translation of Mandelstam's poem Tristia is a reminder that he was the first translator of the great Russian poet in this country, his work appearing in AGENDA as early as January 1959. Tristia is a tactful piece of work, emphasising Mandelstam's sparestness.

Another translation in All for the Wolves is Khâqâni's The Ruins of Madâ'in which opens

Now O heart that has seen Time's lessons, - look now with your eyes!

Know now! Madâ'in's courts are a mirror of lessons!
Make your way to Tigris! Make your dwelling in Madâ'in!
From your eyes make a second Tigris flow!
It is interesting to contrast this with another opening from a translated poem of lament, the Welsh Cynddylan's Hall:

> Dark is Cynddylan's hall tonight with no fire, no bed.  
> I weep awhile, then am silent.

Where the solitary bard is tragically restrained, Khâqâni cries:

> Hear the advice of the topmost teeth  
> From the earth at the walls' feet, that were toothed!  
> It says: 'You are made of dust – we are your dust now!'

Kathleen Raine's influence and those of Pound, Blake and Yeats are clear in this selection, including Yeats's use of the refrain. This is not always a happy device for Russell and indeed is distinctly unhappy in the short poem Dream Song:

> In the castle cats are singing  
> Frogs discoursing in the well  
> Crows reciting verses  
> While the drunkard rings the bell  
> In the courtyard someone's reading  
> While the wizard casts his spell  
> Also there's a Lady laughing  
> While the drunkard rings the bell  
> I am there and you are there  
> We hear a madman's yell  
> But the Lady keeps on laughing  
> While the drunkard rings the bell

In the last verse of A Bone Rattle there is actually a Yeats/Pound marriage:

> And this is not the worst, -  
> Soul dies with the body, they say;  
> Such heretics were cursed  
> In Alighieri's day;  
> Now they are gratefully nursed  
> By usury's cold sway;  
> All things that are not clay  
> Sand in the shoes of the world

Russell's Evening in a Moroccan Cafe is a successful sestina. The disciplined form suits him and he catches exactly an incident in which there is a communication between two people who do not speak.
Evening and the homing bees — that tune! — a bright
Particular star that will be shining soon,
A plate of cus-cus and an Arab girl
With bloodless lips the colour of a mole.
Never a word exchanged to note our thinking,
Only a heady lull drenched with Moroccan wine.

Elegiac is a poem on a different scale altogether, an attempt to link different forms of life from the Cambrian dawn to the smoke from a cigarette

So music in the air, or intelligence
Clusters, or forms a rarefied cloud
For an instant in time
And things seem significant, perduring

Till a barbarian army crosses the border
And civilisation is swept away

But the nightingale goes on singing
And the beetle
Climbs

And Alcman sings
And the cicada
Scratches his legs . . .

The Golden Chain draws on the same source as Yeats’s The Song of Wandering Aengus, though Russell does not refer to the poem in his notes. His own poem opens

I lay in fetters linked with bronze,
I begged a gift of the White Dove;
The silver chains that bind the swans,
The golden chain that binds my Love.

Under the Dove’s tutelage, he is told that a Tree will grow if he plants a seed within a magic circle and

‘The fish will jump like silver birds
Out of the crystal bowl;
Sprout legs and dance, and utter words –
Words that will be your soul.

‘Take all the words and write them down
On the leaves of the growing tree;
And let the starlight like a crown
Light up the leaves’ calligraphy.
'And read again, and read again
The words the green leaves spell!
And they will be the silver chain
And the golden chain as well.'

Russell's poems For Ezra Pound in his Eightieth Birthday are very moving. He sees Pound as a second Lear:

You walk along the road like God,
Grey-bearded, ancient, like a mad old king;
And you proclaim with absent-minded nod
That you've lost interest in everything.

However, he adds, returning to one of the themes of Pound's cantos:

Becalmed, old man, step out upon the rafts
And start your marvellous journey once again!
Each day the world is new, and new bronze shafts
Drive new Odysseuses around the brain.

This is a generous and fitting tribute to the much-enduring Pound.

In this selection, Russell is almost always at his most effective in his shorter poems, such as the beautiful Mnemosyne which ends:

And ecstasy, that threads like pearls
Our origins and presences and ends
Is like the first wild jonquils of the spring
That shimmer in the wind and sun
Upon a lonely island no one knows
Drawing the swallow transports out of Africa
And every clod and every grain of quartz
Gleams like the infinite stars
Answering around the universe.

Of a longer poem The Holy Virgin of Mileseva Russell writes: 'In this poem, the memory of a very intense experience of another time and place reasserts itself, relives itself at some unexplored interface of conscious and unconscious mind. The experience is a mystical one:

The first Adam did not name the things.
He knew the evident spirit
Of everything that breathes,
Knowing the life in stones and lakes and caves,
The hidden power of mountains, rivers, trees –
The definite voice of wind and waterfall.
Gazing at a fresco of the Virgin, the poet longs

. . . to grasp the ikon’s magic power,
To gaze intent upon the beauteous face,
The curve of cheek and nose and hand,
The long fingers’ twig-like innocence;
To know the life behind the thing,
To see the thing in all its glory
And then to be myself a part of that hid life.

For a moment, he achieves this. He hears the Virgin speak:

‘I am your image, you are mine —
Mother and son, sister and brother,
Father and daughter, beloved and beloved,
Each in one another blest.’

She assures him

No other am but you, your deathless Self.

The next long poem is The Act of Love, a difficult theme, Russell’s lovers talk ‘as of the world and what’s beyond the world/Two small lost souls conversing with the unseen/And with the third and unknown presence.’ The poem is rather long and at times the high note slips disastrously as, for instance, in ‘the pulp of breast and lip/The armature of buttocks’, but recovers at the end: ‘Life starts again an uncompleted Word.’ This poem is almost very good, but flounders here and there in over-statement and failures of taste.

Quintilius, the Roman poet who is Russell’s persona, is represented in the selection by Daunia, a wry lament for a lost lover, and The Golden Age, an Italian pastoral Eden. Both poems, Russell says, ‘are soaked in the light of the whole Ligurian coast, as I saw it myself, and as I knew it from the Cantos of Ezra Pound.’

There are later Quintilius here: Brock and The Elegy at the Winter Solstice. The latter gives an indication of the meaning of the book’s title.

Quintilius remarks, using Anglo-Saxon rhythms

Dark grows the sun brothers fight
They fell each other
Axe time Sword time
Shields are sundered
Wind time Wolf time
Ere the world fall

There is a certain likeness in the theme of this poem to the theme of Edith Sitwell’s Song of the Cold, though the diction is very different. In Russell’s poem,
the learned Roman, intuitively adjusting to the demands of his emigration to British Columbia, has become something of a shaman and his language, as Russell points out in his notes, has ‘abandoned the classic mode and in fact incorporates elements not only of archaic Scandinavian oral tradition, but also echoes the traditions and beliefs of the indigenous peoples of Northern Quebec Province and British Columbia.’ Quintilius is far from home, but admirably able to do more than hold his own in the New World.

As an example of Russell’s felicity in the short poem, here is one final example: Un País de Pájaros: dedicated to Octavia Paz

A country of birds

Where’s that?

It is a country
  an oil-painting
    a landscape

A place where we were

A precise memory inventing itself

An eternal
  birth perpetually
Perpetuating
  an eternal
    Path to the Paradise-Garden

The one true Country that
WE ARE

Peter Jay appears to have made an excellent selection of Peter Russell’s varied themes and styles at last giving this ‘unfashionable’, traditional, windmill-tilting poet a chance to become better known here.

Jean MacVean
A New Arthurian Sequence


This volume comprises a sequence of narrative poems on the Arthurian legend, and the author’s treatment of this material is in many ways interesting and original. The first surprise is the metre. This consists of a series of haiku – which, as readers will know, is a Japanese form consisting of a poem of three lines of seventeen syllables in all. Now, the Japanese poets use the haiku to express a moment of intense insight. To find poems like this strung together to make a narrative may seem rather eccentric. One might say that nothing quite like it has been done since the Edwardian scholar Sir William Marris took it upon himself to translate Homer into the quatrains of Fitzgerald’s Omar Khayyam, of all things. But those who have attempted to write narrative poetry in the present century will realise the impossibility of re-handling any of the traditional forms of English narrative verse. If one writes in regular blank verse, one immediately finds oneself becoming pseudo-Miltonic or pseudo-Tennysonian, if in closed couplets, Popean, if in loose couplets, Keatsian. The same principle operates if one uses a stanza form, like the Byronic ottava rima, or the Spenserian stanza. But if, on the other hand, one tries to write a long poem throughout in free verse, there is not enough control. Pound’s Cantos start with the intention of being an epic and end as a private notebook. It follows, then, that any form, however unlikely, will be better than none, if it has not been overworked, and for this reason Harold Morland’s curious choice of metre seems to justify itself.

As for the content, Mr Morland handles the stories he retells with a beautiful and crystalline clarity, in a language which never calls attention to itself, but never falls back into the purely conventional:

But Queen Guinivere
come like a being of light,
and in her grey eyes
he saw mysteries,
a mind speaking with soft voice
of the world’s wonders.

And when she touched him,
his flesh caught the heart of fire
and his bones melted.

Camelot gossiped.
How much was purity worth?
Ask kissing Judas.
This has the merit of great clarity, and is also not without its contemporary cogency. But for us today there must necessarily be more than one line of approach to this traditional material. It is not enough just to retell these stories, they have to be re-experienced. For a twentieth-century reader to re-experience them may involve a greater realisation than I think Harold Morland altogether possesses, that these heroes and heroines of romance can be seen as very much our contemporaries – not least because we can now see them as historically having lived, not in the high Middle Ages, but in the period of chaos and darkness which succeeded the withdrawal of Roman power in Britain. For we may be moving into just such a period of chaos and darkness ourselves. Harold Morland, on the other hand, is perhaps too much beguiled by the colour and pageantry which the writers of the age of chivalry, down to Malory, imposed on what was much more primitive material. To be so beguiled is to become dangerously near to reproducing the Victorian languorousness of Tennyson and the pre-Raphaelites. Harold Morland’s very careful use of language, which I have already noted, does, I think, save him from this, but some readers may feel that he does not wholly ‘make it new’. He is perhaps at his strongest in such passages as the following, where the setting is the Cumbrian landscape in which he himself is at home:

He rode past the lakes
until he came to Wasdale,
where under Scafell
the blue water sleeps
and time dreams seductively
– then with witch’s nails
the slitting steel rain
assaults the body’s defence,
and then in peace again
blessing with silence,
the blue pardon of the sky
renews its promise.

Harold Morland is a poet of magical reverie, rather than of heroic action, and perhaps in the end he is not wholly suited to his material. But one cannot but salute a poet who has the integrity which he possesses to eschew contemporary fashions and plough his own furrow.

John Heath-Stubbs
Kettle's Yard

A Way of Life; Kettle's Yard, Jim Ede (Cambridge University Press, 1984). pp. 254. £25.00

Jim Ede, a veteran of the First World War, whose work began in the twenties, decade of Yeats and Eliot, at that time wrote confidently:

I knew what sort of a fool I was and what sort of a fool I wasn't. I knew I had little brain and much heart, that I was not clever but I was quick, that I had no sense of self-importance but was persistent, that I was a Martha more than a Mary, that I wasn't witty but was intuitive, that I was no athlete, no club man, no toper, but was friendly and willing, that I was no scholar but had a highly developed power of perception (p. 59).

In 1957, the former Assistant at the Tate Gallery brought his collection of paintings, sculpture, drawings, china, furniture, textiles, stones and shells to four derelict cottages beside a small disused church on Castle Hill in Cambridge. He then knew only that he had lived by the law that we are not free in the accepted sense, that freedom is a conformity to a plan 'in whose service is perfect freedom'.

As his developed power of perception had led him to pick up a glass thrown into his hedge in Morocco, to see greatness in the unknown young Gaudier-Brzeska or in Christopher Wood, service and conformity to art intuitively placed his rich harvest in the sparseness and elegance of the home he made. Doors and staircases were picked up from other houses, a bannister inserted upside down because it then looked right. The pink of the flower to be laid on the palm of Buddha, the exact balance of a group of plates and glasses must be right to a hair's breadth. Whilst designing the Extension, a domestic area where concerts were given, Sir Leslie Martin received daily an immense screed from Jim; every detail was a source of passionate concern. Compared with this assignment, designing the Festival Hall was child's play.

In the course of his perambulation through the hundreds of photographs which now present what Sebastian Carter has termed a portable Kettle's Yard, Jim Ede will remark that a pair of chairs are 'too matey', that a stone needs to be moved to the left. Because he felt his ivory hairbrushes, which had once belonged to Benjamin Robert Haydon, looked beautiful in Kettle's Yard, he sent them back after he went to live in Edinburgh. I note with regret that the angle of the hairbrushes has been changed so that the bristles no longer repeat so exactly the serrated lines in cockle shells on the sill.

His 'office' was a Queen Anne desk he had acquired as a boy; thus equipped, he opened his house to any who wished to enter. Pictures were lent freely, even to undergraduates; after nine years, Kettle's Yard was given to Cambridge University. Jim and Helen Ede lived there till 1973, keeping open house for all who cared to share the precision and freedom so paradoxically
combined. The Extension opened with a concert by Daniel Barenboim and Jacqueline du Pré. The best of his Gaudier-Brzeskas were given for a Gaudier Room at the Musée d'Art Moderne in Paris.

Jim Ede, never a rich man, collected from the young unknown artists he befriended; other masterpieces were given by his friends. Of all these, I feel the drawings of David Jones come nearest to the vision of Jim Ede. Stately homes are now open everywhere; but the total harmonising of the grand and the humble, on a cottage scale, with total freedom to touch, to sit, and browse, is found only here.

In the decade since the Edes left, problems of security have arisen that never occurred to Jim. The imprint of his decision is no longer sacral in loving washing of the wooden spiral staircase – which he did himself. The mere passage of many feet, the touch of many hands, the weight of thousands of bodies on old chairs and delicate fabrics have blurred the crispness and freshness that were daily imparted. ‘We’re closing’ cry the undergraduate custodians at four o’clock, as smiling sweetly they pick up their bicycles. Whilst outside, in the New Gallery, the Eastern Arts Association shares the site. Jim’s board outside the little church of St Peter, saying it was built on the site of a temple to Diana, has been replaced by one announcing that it is maintained by the Redundant Churches Fund, St Andrew-by-the-Wardrobe.

Yet a few yards up the hill, a maker of harpsichords is established; in the Castle End Mission, a rather fine example of mid-Victorian Gothic, the sounds of his delicate instruments may sometimes be heard. Visitors return again and again; I heard a working man pointing out to his wife in the rich symbolism of David Jones’s ‘Vexilla Regis’ – ‘Look; there’s Stonehenge’.

The book offers something more than a portable Kettle’s Yard – a portable Jim Ede. Between the stages of his perambulation through the cottages and the extension, Jim inserts in ‘Interludes’ stories of other houses he created in Hampstead, Morocco and France. More than half the text consists of passages of poetry that he repeated to himself to hallow this place. Only masterpieces would do; the Bible, the Book of Common Prayer, Shakespeare – especially the Sonnets – the mystics from Richard Rolle and Dame Julian to Simone Weil, much of St John of the Cross. A local scientist who wrote verses on Kettle’s Yard is included. On the last page of text ‘This book is dedicated to God, ever present’. And then, how characteristically, a Coda; more photographs from a pair of teachers in Birmingham.

The beauty of the hundreds of photographs by sixteen identified and many other anonymous artists combine softness with clarity to bring out the grainy texture of unpolished wood, stripes of light and shade across bleached or darkly polished surfaces in early morning or night time, patterns that the visitor cannot see. On p. 80, Jim writes:

I stare and stare at this extraordinary photograph and cannot get my fill, everything in it is perfection, each object is poised in stillness and their
brilliance claps its hands for joy... I may have placed these things... but it is the photographer who has reached and revealed this 'sacrament of the present moment'...

Here a small round table of unpolished wood holds four circles: a bowl of seeds, a goblet of dried flowers, an iron hoop perhaps from a farm bucket, and curled on a circular plinth, Gaudier-Brzeska's 'Sleeping Fawn'. The iron hoop could not be left in that position in life, Jim comments; and it isn't. It stands upright.

Anthology and autobiography present his Way of Life, which he had wanted to call A Way of Love. The visiting light daily revolving creates a play of presences. No doubt the Cambridge University Press had to endure, as Sir Leslie Martin had to endure, Jim's presiding over the lay-out. 'There are still about 30 changes I would like to make' he wrote to me: but 'It could prove the most beautiful "black and white" book ever printed'.

In the same letter Jim also wrote:

I only know I have never tried to be clever and have always weighed what I said with what I feel to be its deep truth. I have a feeling that today art historians don't seek this Truth — and so miss most of the points — likewise they tend to find silly what isn't their way of thinking.

In the service of truth, the rigour and precision of each choice of individual form harmonizes to create the sanctuary of peace and silence and light, riding above the city next the little sanctuary church for prisoners who had escaped from the dungeons of William the Conqueror's castle. St. Peter's church spelt liberty; the generosity of giving, that first created and then gave away Kettle's Yard, spells love.

In his perambulations, Jim would instruct his undergraduates:

The Miró was to me an opportunity to show undergraduates the importance of balance. If I put my finger over the spot at the top right all the rest of the picture slid into the left hand bottom corner. If I covered the one at the bottom, horizontal lines appeared, and if somehow I could take out the tiny red spot in the middle, everything flew to the edges. This gave me a much needed chance to mention God, by saying that if I had to find another name for God, I think it would be Balance... This often led to interesting talk. (p. 31)

This privilege is now extended to any who wish to meet Jim Ede between the lines — and particularly between the lines — of his book. One of the few surprises in the anthology is the presence of W. E. Gladstone.

Not here or now to understand
Yet even here and now to taste
How the eternal Word of Heaven
On Earth in broken bread is given. (p. 77).

M. C. Bradbrook
Ruins of Time


Alfred Marnau's native language is German, his native city of Pressburg (now Bratislava in Czechoslovakia) was a part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire whose civilization had flowed unbroken from the era of Charlemagne, carrying on its ample current all the splendours of Christendom. The Holy Roman Empire no longer exists, and that pre-Vatican Council Catholicism that raised the baroque Austrian churches and whose language was the Latin liturgy, the Tridentine Mass and Gregorian chant, that once seemed Peter's immovable rock, is gone also. That rock is stripped of its splendour and eroded by the acid rain of our apocalyptic skies. Alfred Marnau is a poet of exile – an exile more total than that (for example) of the Spanish exiled writers who came to England at about the same time (1939). When a government changes a political exile may hope to return; but when a civilization reaches its term exile must lead to a place of no return (one thinks of the cultural limbos of Brooklyn and the Bronx) or become a new kind of nationality: one thinks of the Jews over the millennia. Alfred Marnau is a Catholic not a Jew; but neither has he consented to renounce his cultural identity: rather he has chosen the deepening solitude of one who refuses to forget a past civilization. Or should one say, to forget that civilization is past. In either case his may be the last voice to speak of, and from that world.

In the 'forties Marnau published (translated by Ernst Sigler) two books of poems, The Wounds of the Apostles and Death of the Cathedral. At a time when there was a great influx of contemporary German literature – Rilke, Kafka, Broch, Mann, and many besides – these poems were acclaimed and appreciated. Marnau himself, as editor of the journal New Road, introduced to English readers, besides Lorca, Ernst Jünger and Georg Trakl. But the tide of Germanic culture that flowed into England from Rilke to Hesse to Cannetti has (save for a few scholars) ebbed, and now a younger generation may well find his poems obscure from ignorance of their context. Celan is less obscure if only because the Holocaust seems more 'relevant' to our situation than the Holy Roman Empire, destruction speaks to our condition more immediately than vanished cities and churches and old palaces and towers. Yet there is no less richness in many of these poems – and no less bitterness – than in the earlier collections; 'Melencholia', 'The World has no more to give', 'Chronicle', 'Robber Requiem', and many besides. Although the author's English in this collection is excellent (he acknowledges some help from the poet Jeremy Reed) many first appeared in German (Räuber-Requiem 1961) and the landscape is still central Europe:

Come, to Salzburg, come, and see the autumn out:
Many have loved the world for this town's sake
before your time, and are no more, just think!
Salzburg still stands, and the poem continues:

Let others judge and wreck, but you, you come
where blackbirds haunt stone fountains, caressed
by an amber hand and startling the moon at night.

But others are ghost-cities, and it is above all these Marnau's imagination inhabits; as in 'Half the Century Gone', dedicated, like several others, to the poet's friend Oskar Kokoschka:

Here the deadly arithmetic of our century failed, fell into error,
look, a marching column of gypsies with violins! They followed
a carriage all the way to the graveyard, whilst our planet
slowly moved away from the sun – it grew dark soon in that day.
And was there no shout of alarm at the porch of St. Stephen's
as the spider erected a roof-frame of iron – for who can tell
what else might haunt such debris or porch on a gargoyle's crest?
It was at Cologne that a bush grew from a stone in front of the altar,
the candles in its branches were birds who sang in holy abandon.
A face on the broken wall still wore three crowns in death,
a crowned head surviving, gazing at rain, while with much zeal
from Vienna to Aix limousines convey men keen and mean. Hold it!
Ask: what is hidden in the sand? The same finger that probes.

The voice of the mourner often turns to saeve indignatio for the manner – more than the mere fact – of the ruins of his time:

... Berlin
laid down its heart
at Checkpoint Charlie,
a weight of stone
Danubian royal keep,
where neither gate
nor speech remained,
a mirage only
my exile's night
identifies. But
a thundering of angels
burst
upon us and
forgotten names
answered in the sand.

When in the 1940s Alfred Marnau's poems made so deep an impression on a still literate, still European, English reading public there were many who shared his memories. Now the poet shares his world only with ghosts, and
writes from a deep, though never a despairing, solitude, for those ghosts are
themselves a reality; one might say a sacred reality:

I gave a feast last night in my dead home town
and those of my own kind who had been long asleep
climbed to that square-shaped castle, edged by towers,
where there was neither glass, nor gate, nor roof,
but just this stone-bound fortress where I gave my feast.
It was a night of icy skies and rare dark rain,
and yet an orange glow of Eastern fragrance
filled that cobbled yard as they arrived from outer dark,
a fragrance of such substance that it formed a tent
above our heads (that gave out light) and kept
us safe in our doom within that castle’s space.

The poet (Rilke-like) apostrophises the angels and ‘the Apostle of doubt’
(Thomas) laying before them the question of his very identity. With great
dignity he asks:

... Lost in attention to usurpers
and in neglect of this brief day I walked – and did you hear my step?
was I visible in your sight (you saw me)? But O that you
recognised and raised me to feast my dead home town!

Was it Edwin or Willa Muir (themselves translators of so many German
writers of that tragic end of an epoch) who said, ‘A poet must bear witness’.

There are more recent, happier poems of the present, written for the poet’s
wife Senta, and for their daughter; like ‘Not Sad’:

Lovely and
disturbing
- not sad
as a rainbow
is sad
over an Eastern
Easter field –
is the song
in January
of the nightingale
between Christmas
and Candlemas
sung.
Siberian ice-cast
mirrors, frozen
chants, and icicles
hung
on all the trees
strange and rare:
true home and
ture month,
January, of
disturbing
and lovely
nightingale-throated
song.

It is the image itself that communicates the meaning, with its strange and
beautiful discords of song and ice, home and mirror, rainbow and Siberia,
nightingale and January. It is at once a poem of exile and solitude, and of love
and acceptance. Yet I find most impressive the voice of total isolation when
even the last images of splendid ruined cities have fallen away, leaving only an
appalling absence. In 'Secular Intrusion — an Obulus for the Guy' the poet is
addressing Charon, ferryman of the dead, as one who has (like Dante)
embarked living on his boat: what can all that money buy, paid to Charon by
the dead he ferries? What, in underworld terms, is the value of man's estate?

I shall not challenge your neat money-spinner, nor
ethics involved in peeling coins off broken lips,
but tell me; where is, when your ship, your cash, — and what for?
In all these dead rivers and a boat that dips!

There is neither cynicism nor reductionism in this bitterness that questions
Charon not on the meaning of life — that is not in question — but on the
meaning of oblivion. An old — perhaps nowadays when nothing any longer is
held to matter very much either way — an old-fashioned — but still a noble —
question.

A word should be added in praise of the production of this book (by
Christopher Skelton and Alan Bultitude) in which the presentation is in
keeping with the contents. Charon apart, there is no cultural leveller like the
paper-back industry.
Hunters After Meaning


In spite of its attractive illustrations and appearance, this is a tragic book for it records the destruction of a unique people. The Bushmen of southern Africa were the original inhabitants of much of that continent. One of the truly ancient peoples of the world (their painting goes back thirty thousand years), apparently unrelated to the black races which have largely displaced them and from which they are quite different physically, they are today reduced to little more than a few remnants on the sordid fringes of civilisation. The book falls into two parts. The first and longer section, written by Jane Taylor, arises from a journey to film what remains of the life of the Bushmen today. It forms a perceptive and informative account of the Bushmen's past, of their gradual elimination from their homelands by both black and white invaders, of their present condition, and of what remains or can be reconstructed of their former way of life. 'The most tragic thing about the Bushmen,' she writes, 'is the clear sense they have of their own inferior status; they know that in the eyes of almost all whites and blacks they count for nothing.' And as for the future, 'the signs are not encouraging.'

But what lifts this book above the level of a factual account is the fifty or so pages with which it concludes, and which consist of an essay by Laurens van der Post which he entitles Witness to a Last Will of Man. It was Laurens van der Post who in the 1950's first drew attention to the Bushmen with his expedition to the Kalahari Desert, where he found a group untouched by modern influences and was able to record a moving, first-hand account of a way of life more primordial than any existing elsewhere in the world, with the possible exception of Australia. In two remarkable books, The Lost World of the Kalahari and The Heart of the Hunter, he showed that our knowledge of Stone Age man need not be a matter of reconstruction and wild guesswork: he is - or was, until recently - still amongst us. And it is Van der Post's greatness that he was able to observe and understand the Bushmen not in an exterior sense only - a process which, however well intended, must always have a de-humanising and diminishing effect - but to enter fully into their world and to understand it from within. What he discovered was that here were a people who, for all their isolation and the limitations of their physical life, were 'hunters after meaning', who had filled the world in which they lived with stunning paintings, and lived a rich life of the spirit through their stories, which were the expression of a continuous effort to grasp the meaning of life and for individual growth. In these, the real fundamentals of human life, they were in no way inferior to more developed peoples. Because of his refusal to adopt the belittling attitudes built into the anthropology of the day, Van der Post was attacked in some quarters for being romantic and subjective. But we
may ask which is the real scientific vision — that which, as here, seeks to penetrate to the heart of a people, to their central ideas and the well-springs of their imaginative life, and to view the facts of their physical existence, as they themselves do, from this perspective; or that which concentrates on the external facts, and without really being conscious of it, interprets these from our own quite alien viewpoint, while calling the result objectivity?

In the present book Van der Post tells how, after his expedition, he attempted to organise a part of the Kalahari which should be a permanent home for the Bushman and a place in which his own way of life could be preserved, only to find that the hour was too late and the emergent forces of nationalism, allied with the indifference of international organisations such as the United Nations, were bent on completing the destructive process begun in the time of Empire; he has some hard words at this point for 'political liberalism . . . the dominant hypocrisy of our day.' So the destruction of the last remnants of the Bushman's way of life proceeded, and in its essence what Van der Post writes is a lament not only for the Kalahari Bushmen but for all those other tribal or nomadic peoples, from the Indians of North and South America to the Afghan tribesmen, whose vivid, individualistic styles of life have been and are being remorselessly crushed by the conformism of the modern world. A principal theme of his essay is that this diminishing process is not an exterior one only: it proceeds equally within the soul of modern man. His belief, developed over many years and confirmed in the course of his friendship with Jung, is that there is a 'first man in ourselves', a primordial man who is the source of all that is joyful, direct, imaginative, gay and creative in our being; and that just as our world crushes out of existence the nomadic and primitive peoples, so this being is crushed out of our inner lives by the abstract and cerebral, and the coldly practical. 'I seemed to be more aware than ever of the loneliness creeping into the heart of modern man because he no longer sought the answers of life with the totality of his being,' he writes. 'In the depths of ourselves we feel abandoned and therein is the sickness of our time.' This of course is an idea which has old roots, and it is interesting to consider how this concept in Van der Post relates to Rousseau's Noble Savage. Nowadays it is as if the Noble Savage, having been denied for so long, has sprung into rebellion, with all the dark, destructive connotations that that word carries. 'Though he himself is vanishing fast from the vision of our physical senses,' Van der Post puts it, 'he lives on in each one of us through an indefinable guilt that grows great and angry in some basement of our own being.' And as we look about us and see the crude, regressive forms in which popular culture — and much that is more pretentious — has erupted, with its rebellious emphasis upon the vulgar, the formless, the tasteless, the ill-made, the garish and crudely sensual (forms, incidentally, which no genuine primitive would descend to), we may well feel a need to protect the values of civilised life, however artificial they may have become, and a revulsion against
the very idea of the Noble Savage. But whatever his limitations, and however
doubtful his progeny, there was a core of truth in the perceptions voiced by
Rousseau. There has always been a quality in primitive man which his more
advanced fellows (at least initially and where the cultural barriers have not
been too great) have recognised — not only a noble simplicity, but a generous
courtesy and warm humanity too. It is not merely a romantic invention of the
Eighteenth Century: the first contacts recorded by explorers in widely
different parts of the world bear witness to the fact that, as Van der Post puts
it, 'first man, as I knew him . . . was a remarkably gentle being, fierce only in
defence of himself and the lives of those in his keeping.' And shut up in
modern man is a 'Noble Savage', a simple, direct, spontaneous being, who is
a kind of inward ideal, and in a sense the centre of his being and his true
humanity. The difference in Van der Post's handling of the idea is that for him
the Noble Savage is not an opposite, an enemy, but a complement and a
friend of civilised man. He is to be consciously made at home and integrated
within our personality, where he can live in harmony and mutual enrichment
with our complex modern selves, as Van der Post himself was able to live with
the Bushmen he found. Then there will be no need for the Noble Savage to
become dark and terrible, and to invade our lives in the form of regressive,
destructive forces; no need for that 'lethal somersault backwards' into a
stifling collectivism which is the prevalent temptation of our time. As Van der
Post summarises it: 'Our diminishing civilisations can only renew themselves
by a reconciliation between two everlasting opposites, symbolized by Cain
and Abel, Jacob and Esau and, in our own day, by the Bushman and his
murderer. We have no excuse left for not seeing how fatally divided against
themselves the processes of civilization have been . . .'

Van der Post's long essay is enriched by many examples of the traditional
stories of the Bushmen, which provide vivid illustrations of the way in which
myth is unconsciously used to express spiritual aspirations. These stories are
full of images which live on in the imagination: the moon who sees that men
are afraid of dying and pities them; the stars who are great hunters; the lion
which pauses to lick the tears from the face of the man he has trapped; or the
great white bird whose reflection is momentarily glimpsed in a pool of water
by a thirsty hunter, who from that moment dedicates his life to a search for
that bird. Of great value for the understanding of the Bushman stories is
Van der Post's emphasis on the fact that each of the characters, from the
insect, Mantis, to the magnificent eland, to the moon herself, enter the story
loaded with age-old associations for their listeners; it is for this reason
that, when extracted from their culture, such stories can lose most of their
meaning for us. And he points out that such associations are deeply
embedded in European literature too: 'written literature,' he writes, 'is a mere
dwarf poised on the shoulders of a giant of unwritten and oral literature that
preceded it.' A memorable example is Baudelaire's striking line, in which
he likens the art of man to ‘a summons from hunters lost in the great woods.’

Testament to the Bushmen confirms that it is as a writer of Africa that Van der Post will be most remembered, and this essay is a worthy landmark in that richly creative trail he has left us from Venture to the Interior, through The Lost World of the Kalahari, to A Story Like the Wind and A Far Off Place. There is about it an unmistakable valedictory quality as he looks back ‘probably for the last time’ across the years of an eventful life to his childhood on the edge of the African bush, and those wizened old Bushman faces which were his nurse and early friends. The last few pages, written straight from the heart and full of that simplicity and luminescence which comes to privileged souls near the end of a long life of effort, are among the most moving he has ever written, and we must hope there may be many more such. From the first it has been the Bushmen who have been at the heart of his understanding of Africa, and it is with profound sadness that he takes leave of them in this book:

His culture was dying before our eyes, and he and what was left of it was about to vanish physically and spiritually into the bastard bloodstream of his unworthy conquerors. No doubt he will live on as other vanished and unrecorded men live on, and add a nuance or two to the being of the future, a look in the eye, a curl of hair, a tone of affirmative and indestructible laughter, a quickening of fantasy and expression on some face, that will stir men to wonder and to experience an inexplicable nostalgia of the heart...
In their eagerness to impress the literary world would-be poets are often more interested in new flashy tricks of language than in the real and basic material of a poem. They do not heed the warning given by R. S. Thomas in The Creative Writer's Suicide (Selected Prose, Poetry Wales Press) that to set out to provide what public fashion requires is a way to death. Mallarmé's remark that a poem is made of words has much to answer for, and of many famed contemporary poems one could say with Blake: 'These things that you call finished are not even begun—how then can they be finished?'. Saint-Pol-Roux ended his early preface to Les reposoirs de la procession with an ecstatic hymn to the things, although one might have thought that the words and symbols were to him more important—and much poetry arises from the necessity to concentrate on the mystery of the thing itself, to try to extract and crystallise its identity, as Hopkins tried to do, rather than spring from the thing into an intoxication with the word to produce works of literature which have forgotten or even ignored the earth and the stones. Stones are common, but mysteriously yet realistically common in the poetry of Yves Bonnefoy.

Strongly moved by the thinking of Chestov (who is discussed in an early essay by David Gascoyne (Journal 1936-1937) showing him to have influenced Benjamin Fondane) Bonnefoy faces the world of things and its domination by death. Realising (again like Saint-Pol-Roux) that God is not dead, as Nietzscheans suppose, but is to be born, he has tried to blazon a way of salvation in the tension between two postulations: the first is the temptation to escape from the real in the sense of the here and now, what exists, into an aery world of Platonic idealisation in which the contradictions and limitations of the actual and stony are forgotten (as Hamlet forgot the real autonomous Ophelia in his symbolisation of her); the second is to choose incarnation, identification with the alive and therefore dying, to pierce through into the mystery of being. At times, if God is to be born, it is not in le Verbe (as a whole tradition of French poetry would have it be) but in la Chose; one would think this suicidal in a poet, whose materials for craft are words, but in Bonnefoy this is not so. Language is a method of exploring being, not a way of escape from its imperfections and problems, though there always is the personal tension between one who thinks he is the repository of the absolute but lives as part of what is born to live imperfectly and then to die. The image expressing this is that of the tree. Bonnefoy's endeavour to discover a way of salvation is charted and discussed by John T. Naughton in The Poetics of Yves Bonnefoy with a depth of understanding that is remarkable and a meticulous faithfulness which is admirably thorough and never dull, a clarity of interpretation that critics rarely achieve—all set in a landscape of comprehension of French
BRIAN MERRIKIN HILL

literature and thought that it would be difficult to rival. This study of a French poet is an important and salutary book for the English and American literary public, in that it analyses and explicates one who took his stand against purely aesthetic poetry and said, 'The real curse in this world is to be reduced to playing games.'

Bonnefoy does not play games, amaze by wit or try to score, nor does he elude the pain of being by taking refuge in symbol. He settles in the real world of man, woman, stone, tree and bird, and they are the real, earthy, fleshly, gnarled, hard or evanescent. 'In our contact with being, we cannot do without the mediation of specific beings,' he says, and the book *Pierre écrit*, as Professor Naughton points out, 'strives to make manifest Plotinus's notion that “there is nothing yonder which is not also here”.' But this leads to the anguish of Poussin in the recognition of the profusion of riches, the inability of the individual to lose himself in them, and the ever-present thought of death as the extinction of some things and certainly of the person who is but briefly among them. And this is meditated upon in an original interpretation of the myth of Persephone and elucidatory comment on Adam Elsheimer's picture, *The Mocking of Ceres*. For Bonnefoy the boy who mocks becomes a salamander (and the salamander is important); he is protesting against the conceptualisation characteristic of Ceres and becomes a thing – but this is a protest by the things against the neglect of them for concepts: for Bonnefoy Persephone reappears in the sunlight on the tree. We must accept the ephemeral, the beauty that passes, and accept mortality and the fact that the life of the world is opaque. Two persons who love (*l'amour partagée*) can accept and become part of the simple being of the world, not longing for transcendence but acceptance, and herein may lie the hope for the birth of God, who if thought of as transcendent is absent, but may become present in the unity of being. In *Dans le leurre du seuil* the presence, the idea (if one may use the word) of a child's joy in being, finds its expression in poetry as musical thought in the sense described by Carlyle and Nietzsche. Much of the poem is *Song* and depends on the kind of vision that the musicologist Boris de Schloezer experiences at the moment of death: he hears 'a music / those close to him know nothing about', bringing 'unbindings, reunions, joy'. This is connected with dream reminiscences of Poussin's *The Finding of Moses*. Professor Naughton explores this poem with a thoroughness that cannot be precisied but only praised. He leaves us with the thought that Bonnefoy may be on the verge of the 'musical union' in which 'the world and the spirit are in harmony'.

The whole exploration and interpretation of Bonnefoy is illustrated by quotations with Naughton's perceptive and moving translations, making the book an anthology of some of the best translation in recent years. This book is a labour of thoughtful love for which Bonnefoy himself is grateful and all lovers of poetry should echo that gratitude. Professor Naughton has made
The startled salamander freezes
And feigns death.
This is the first step of consciousness among the stones,
The purest myth,
A great fire passed through, which is spirit.
The salamander was half way up
The wall, in the light from our windows.
Its look had turned to stone,
But I saw its heart beating eternal.

O my accomplice and my thought, allegory
Of all that is pure,
How I love what draws up thus in silence
The only force of joy.

How I love what is in harmony with the stars through the inert
Mass of its whole body,
How I love what awaits the hour of its victory,
And holds its breath and clings to the ground.

Brian Merrikin Hill
The Sacredness of Place


This was the basis of Gary Snyder's Schumacher lecture for 1982; it is a poet's plea that we who walk upon the body of Mother Gaia should once again recognize that where we walk is sacred, that the terms 'good' and 'wild', when applied to the land, have the same meaning. In short, he asks that we should show respect for the numinous places of the earth.

At present we act more out of ignorance of the natural order, replacing the sacredness of place with the myth of progress, which instructs us to level hills where the gods once walked, to cut down forests in order to erect housing estates, or (as in Japan recently) to convert a natural landscape into an artificial island in the sea.

In parts of Australia and the United States the sacredness of the land is still recognized, at least by the remnant of the native peoples. As Snyder says (quoting Robert Bliney) 'The land itself was their chapel and their shrines were hills and creeks and their religious relics were animals, plants, and birds...'. It is also, more than this, a gateway to the interior landscape of the shaman, who saw this inner landscape as tangentially aligned with the actual world. 'Sacred refers to that which helps take us out of our little selves into the larger self of the whole universe.'

I have said that this is a poet's plea, and it is this which makes it a far more moving and powerful statement than one arrived at by noisier or more outraged cries. It makes us care because Snyder himself cares: about the numen of the place and the sense of wonder to be experienced when visiting sites that have been made holy centuries ago. David Jones, another poet who appreciated these things, would have agreed with much that is herein. As he wrote in the Anathemata:

Upon all fore-times.
   From before time
   his perpetual light
   shines upon them.
   Upon all at once
   upon each one
   whom he invites, bids, us to recall
   when we make the recalling of him
daily, at the Stone.

John Matthews
The Divine Vision

Studies in Mystical Literature edited by Robert Eddy, Tunghai University (Box 961, Tunghai University, Taichung, Taiwan 400, Republic of China). Subscription U.S. $7.50 for institutions, $5 for individuals, plus $2 for airmail post to Europe and America, $1 elsewhere. Back issues available.

Studies in Mystical Literature, founded in 1980, deals with a difficult subject. Not only does mystical experience carry the mind beyond the clearly defined dualities of everyday life, but accounts of it also tend, almost inevitably, to involve an element of interpretation as the experiences are fitted into a dogmatic or scholarly frame of intellectual reference. To his credit the editor of Studies in Mystical Literature has eschewed a narrow denominational approach, though at the cost of some oscillation of viewpoint from one contribution to another. Each issue of the periodical has tended to centre on one particular theme, and individual contributors have been left to manage more or less adroitly their own distinctions between experience and interpretation, and between mystical experience itself and its projection through ideas or literary technique in written works.

The opening issue started with the fundamental question of the relationship between literature, especially poetry, imaginative archetypes and the ultimate silence of the transcendent. Sisirkumar Ghose surveyed these basic questions, while Elemire Zolla and Grazia Marchiano traced more specifically the interdependence of poem and cosmos. As Grazia Marchianò put it:

The genesis of the universe and the awakening of the divine essence in the human consciousness are one and the same mystery, and its core is the primordial sound.

Peter Lamborn Wilson illuminated the combination of pious hymn and profane drinking song in Sufi poetry as a means of shocking the reader into an awareness of the archetypes, and Peter Wrycza analyzed Mallarmé's œuvre as a supreme modern attempt to create an autonomous linguistic structure that would reflect the more-than-individual reaches of the inner mind.

Subsequent issues have maintained the same policy of thematic grouping in so far as practical exigences have permitted. While the quality of the articles has varied, and a judgement of that quality is, moreover, inevitably subjective, nevertheless it can be safely asserted that the best work to appear in Studies in Mystical Literature has been impressive. Many established scholars, some of international standing, have written for it, or are associated with it, among them Kathleen Raine, S. H. Nasr, Brian Keeble, Douglas Brookes-Davies, Desiree Hirst and Ursula King. The subject matter of articles has ranged from Tagore to Roethke, from D. H. Lawrence to Ibn Arabi and the Qabbalah, from Boehme and Blake, to Molinos and Ch' an Buddhism. Forthcoming issues are
planned on mysticism and mystical ideas in modern science fiction and the fantastic, and on Sufi mysticism.

Studies in Mystical Literature is a small periodical. It was launched in a period of world-wide economic recession, and its undenominational approach has denied it a base in any specific sect or religious tradition. Moreover its subject matter and ideas are hardly fashionable today, which is one of the reasons why it is needed. That it has survived so far is a comment on the tenacity of the editor, the generosity of the University of Taichung, and the quality of the best contributions. If it is to continue to survive it will need a larger circulation and a larger pool of contributors of quality.

Peter Malekin

(Peter Malekin is a member of the editorial board of Studies in Mystical Literature)
Traditional Metaphysics


Artist and Tradesman. Walter Shewring. Paulinus Press 1984. 29 pp. £1.95, paper only.

The Multiple States of Being is René Guénon's exposition of the theory of the multiple states of the human being as these are intrinsic to the metaphysical doctrines of the sacred traditions. It is here translated into English for the first time. This work was preceded by the author's The Symbolism of the Cross which dealt with the same theme but in terms of its inherent symbolism. It was succeeded, at least in terms of clarity of exposition, if not chronologically, by Man and his Becoming According to the Vedanta. Both these volumes, it has to be admitted, are more approachable than the present work, where Guénon is at his most uncompromising in the rigour of his logic and the abstraction of his thought.

Since it could be said that the two other volumes deal sufficiently with the theme one may perhaps question the need for this further exposition. Indeed, considering that the metaphysical substance of the Multiple States has to do with the effective realization of the 'supreme identity' one may even question the characteristic Guénonian treatment of it. By way of an answer one may point to the fact that Guénon can be seen in retrospect to have served providentially a supreme function in his time; this was to expound throughout his entire writings not only the metaphysical content at the heart of the sophia perennis but to interpret implications and spell out their repercussions for a world founded upon a denial of traditional premises. In the case of the theme under consideration, for instance, it is the absence of an understanding of these multiple states in the specifically modern human self-image that makes it possible for contemporary man to regard himself merely as the embodiment of psycho-physical factors. This is an imposition upon humanity's true nature that has proved to be disastrous not only spiritually, intellectually and indeed humanly, but now threatens our very survival.

Something of the difficulty of the text can be explained by the fact that Guénon is much taken up with the effort to counter the inevitable misunderstandings that would be brought to the subject by the modern mind to which metaphysics is inimical. In a style that takes such pains to avoid misunderstanding, difficulties must arise. There are extremes of rational exposition that take their revenge upon the mechanism of comprehension. Only against the prevailing conditions of the modern world does Guénon’s manner of
exposition become necessary. The specific tenor of his text stems as much from the interaction of two opposed modes of thinking as it does from the difficulty of the subject itself. One can hardly overemphasize this interaction, not to say confrontation, since Guénon, though in no more than the odd sentence here and there, and with the supreme confidence of the metaphysician, summarily dismisses the vanity of ‘theories of knowledge’ and the futility of Western philosophy that opposes ‘knowing’ and ‘being’ and the insufficiency of the evolutionary hypothesis as an explanation of the natural world.

Such circumstances laid down their own imperative making it all the more necessary that the traditional doctrine be expounded with the utmost clarity and with no trace of adulteration or compromise with any form of modernism. In meeting this need and with the relative absence of any aesthetic feeling in his thought, which was of a mathematical lucidity, Guénon’s writing is characterized by the brusqueness of a pioneer.

The publishers, acknowledging the difficulty of the present text, have taken the unusual step of providing an anonymous ‘publishers’ introduction’ which is not without a certain linguistic opaqueness, not to say misunderstanding! The reader would certainly be better prepared having read other books by Guénon, in particular the two volumes already mentioned. This is not the book to start a study of Guénon. Suffice it to say that the publishers are to be thanked for making this excellent translation available. The recovery of the displaced dimension of being, that goes beyond the banality of supposing that the rational mind engaged with the substance of the material world is the whole domain of the ‘real’ is the most urgent task that confronts modern man. Read in this context Guénon’s masterful text is as relevant today as when it was written some fifty years ago.

In his history of the Bollingen Foundation William MacGuire wrote of how the classicist C. M. Bowra thought ‘genius’ the only word suitable to describe Heinrich Zimmer’s scholarly abilities. But Zimmer himself thought of A. K. Coomaraswamy as ‘the only man in my field who, whenever I read a paper of his, gives me a genuine inferiority complex’. Coomaraswamy’s range of scholarship and intellectual penetration are a legend. It was he who shared with Guénon the task of expounding the metaphysical doctrines of Tradition at a time when they were all but occluded in Western intellectual circles. Coomaraswamy, by his profound understanding of the significance of the aesthetic element in the spiritual life complemented Guénon’s more abstract, mathematical thought. His earliest writings were predominantly on the arts and crafts of the East. Zimmer having introduced him to Guénon’s work, Coomaraswamy’s own writings became more and more metaphysical in tone and universal in content.

By far the most devoted of Coomaraswamy’s advocates has been S. Durai Raja Singam, who since 1948 has continued to publish a whole series of
monographs. The latest fruit to fall from these devoted hands is perhaps the most useful: Ananda Kentish Coomaraswamy: A Handbook is the most complete bibliography yet compiled and is, for those who know how to value it, a resource treasure. Unlike more conventional chronological listings of publications, it groups the writings under subject headings as well as under journal headings. It also lists references for a study of Coomaraswamy himself and of his father Sir Mutu Coomaraswamy, extending from 1863 to 1976. From this handbook it is apparent that the two-volume Bollingen edition of Coomaraswamy's Papers (Princeton 1977 - reviewed in Temenos 2) is but a fraction of his total output. As Raja Singam says in his postscript: 'Coomaraswamy is one of the most important writers and thinkers of this century in his exposition of the normal theory of art, of Eastern religion and metaphysics generally and of the possibilities of a synthesis between East and West. . . . A glance at the list of his writings would make one wonder whether one is looking through the catalogue of a library or the works of a single individual.'

In publishing terms not much more than the elegant vignette though in terms of its wisdom Artist and Tradesman is a most welcome essay-length footnote to the traditional studies of Coomaraswamy on the 'normal' theory of art. With much lightly-worn scholarship mixed with a degree of humour this text restates old truths concerning matters that were reiterated by Coomaraswamy and Eric Gill both of whom Shewring of course knew. It may be too much to hope that such wisdom will figure in the thinking and machinations of those of our political masters who are busily rearranging the world of employment so that each worker is no more than a dispossessed operative, a sort of floating, sentient (but only just) unit to be slotted into whatever vacancies market forces may make available. Mr. Shewring has seen and understood, as did the authors of Ecclesiasticus, that the artist and worker are wise in the same way and that 'they uphold creation; they continue by their work the making that went into the visible world; the plowman and potter have a cosmic function.' Mr. Shewring's prose extends an almost extinct courtesy to the reader. His wisdom in this paper should commend itself to anybody who has had the slightest doubt of the conventional idea that work is a burden we would be best free from so that in a leisure state we may concentrate on the 'higher things'. Now we have paid mass unemployment such 'things' seem as far off as ever.

Brian Keeble
The Pilgrim Soul


There can be few people as qualified as J. M. Cohen to produce an anthology of mystical poetry. Whether as distinguished translator, literary historian, biographer and critic, or as a discriminating, committed student and practitioner of several mystical paths, or simply as a careful, independent reader of poetry in some half dozen languages with more than sixty years of experience, he unites the three often disparate fields of criticism, literature and mysticism.

The book is divided into eight sections according to subject, and basically follows the stages experienced on the mystical path. The first section, 'the Condition of Humanity', is powerful, but is a theme easy to feel the power of, since most of us are lost in the 'deplorable condition of man' (vii). The poem by Ernesto Cardenal on Marilyn Monroe (6) is a vivid though dreadful clarification of our malady: 'She only acted out the script we gave her / — the script of our own lives'. Sadi's ode (21) is excellent for self-review as is the Buddhist translation by Edward Conze (24). The selection from Lamentations is an effective close to the section.

The second section, 'the Hope of Transcendence', ends beautifully with Richard Eberhart's 'The Eclipse' which states that nothing is 'so perfect / As man's hope of light in the face of darkness'. With R. S. Thomas (52), the section emphasizes that we must cling to life, to the most real, and not be overcome by the abstract subtleties of mind separated from reality, from the wholeness of life. In the hope of transcendence, from where does the greatest resistance come? from external reality? Christina Rossetti answers

God harden me against myself,
This coward with pathetic voice
Who craves for ease, and rest, and joys. (39)

The section lacks the strength of the first section, perhaps because it contains more poetry of aspiration than of experience. The misery has been vividly experienced and transcendence is only hoped for. This stage on the spiritual path tends to be tentative and some of the poems suffer from indecision or are merely cerebral.

Section three, 'the Inward Eye', which shows the widening and deepening of the senses that comes with the practise of contemplation, contains a number of familiar pieces from Wordsworth: 'Daffodils' (57), as well as 'the Mountain Boat' (62) and 'the Skaters' (66) from Book 1 of the Prelude. These pieces are nicely juxtaposed to Chinese poems by Li Po and Lu Yün. During the three years I taught English literature in China, I found Wordsworth to be the most popular English poet with those Chinese students well-read in their
own poetic tradition. At his best, Wordsworth does have something of the
Chinese ability to see objects and experiences directly, without, as it were,
being filtered through the personality of the self.

Section four is devoted to prayer and contemplation. It opens with a
splendid Quechua hymn (73) which shows the God-centred perspective of
the mystic heart. George Herbert's powerful portrayal of the dark night of the
soul, 'Affliction' (84), gives depth to the section and point to the prayers: 'Let
me not love thee, if I love thee not'.

Section five, which intends to show the joy and gratitude which results
from any contact with the Divine, is the weakest part of the book and is
composed of devotional poetry more than poetry of mystical experience.
Several pleasant exceptions are Wordsworth's lines from the Prelude (101),
Milarepa's hymn (117), Rumi's 'Pursuit of God' (119) and the piece to
Avalokitesvara, the compassionate Buddha (123).

Section six, on reality and illusion, gives various views of each. 'The
Mystery' (131) by the contemporary Latvian poet Ziedonis, has the power of
an image from a vivid dream: the closer one looks, the more the image
dissolves. This poem demonstrates the modesty necessary for approaching
the mystery at the core of life. When investigated coldly and with a sense of
and wish for the power of labelling and categorizing, the transcendental
progressively disappears. The superb lines on reason and imagination from
Blake's Milton (133) highlights the absolute need to approach Imagination
having 'cast off the idiot Questioner, who is always questioning, / But never
capable of answering' and 'whose whole Science is / To destroy the wisdom
of ages, to gratify ravenous Envy / That rages round him like a Wolf, day and
night, without rest'. Sadi tells us 'This world is a bridge that leads to Eternity:
the wise build not their homes on the bridge' (152), and Angelus Silesius
reminds the aspiring soul that 'Pray God, O man, for neither that nor
this. / Whatever you pray for, that your idol is' (159). These lines are followed
by the ever-powerful Kabir, who informs the intellect that God is 'neither
manifest nor hidden' (159) and that 'There are no words to tell what He is'.
The section ends with a strong answer to the 'problem' of reality and illusion,
from a Buddhist poem written in Chinese:

Stop talking, stop thinking, and there is nothing you will not understand.
Return to the Root and you will find the Meaning;
Pursue the Light, and you will lose its source,
Look inward, and in a flash you will conquer the Apparent and the Void.
For the whirligigs of Apparent and Void all come from mistaken views;
There is no need to seek Truth; only stop having views.

Section seven is on the theme of enlightenment. If, as it is always claimed,
the essence of mystical experience is ineffable, it would follow that poems
specifically about the consummation of mystical aspiration would be the
most difficult to write. How does one communicate the ineffable? Earlier stages on the path, or even the results of illumination would seem to be experiences more easily shared and communicated. How does one communicate infinite, undifferentiated Being and communion with Reality? If the experience could truly be shared and communicated, in the words of Rumi: ‘Ye would burst your bonds; no roof nor door could restrain you’ (185). Well it is that we are shielded from Reality until we can bear it. Until the soul’s experience of enlightenment, the next best thing is a poem (or any art form) which reflects the experience. For the experience itself and poems about the experience both come from the same source, as Hafiz says: ‘To please by subtleties of speech is the gift of God’ (186). The perfect poem on enlightenment would probably be that which cost al-Hallaj his life: ‘ana l Haqq’. This section ends with a poem that a Buddhist like Cohen would enjoy: ‘Let go and you snare God. But letting God go too / Is more than any but the rarest man can do’ (204).

The eighth and final section deals with the vast panorama of birth, death and rebirth, the context without which the individual soul cannot discover its true identity. The section has a fine poem by José Valente on how the approach of death opens the senses to deeper levels of reality in life, especially in the physical world. There is also an interesting Tibetan piece called ‘The Ultimate Release’ (236). The book ends with Angelus Silesius: ‘Friend, you have read enough. If you desire still more, / Then be the poem yourself, and all that it stands for’.

As always in anthologies, there will be disagreements about what should have been included or omitted. Overall I feel that the editor has made solid choices, often novel and usually substantial, with a good blend of traditional and modern. However, I am very surprised that the book contains none of the mature work of Kathleen Raine which she has chosen to preserve in her collected poems or later volumes. She is certainly one of the most important poets, if not the major poet writing about the mystical dimension of life. Dr. Raine’s early poem ‘Optical Illusion’ (155), which can be dismissed as mere juvenalia clearly written under the influence of Empson, should have been omitted since standing by itself in the volume, readers can take it to represent her ‘mystical poetry’, a totally false and damaging conclusion, unfair to the power and depth of her mature work. ‘Optical Illusion’ should have been replaced by a representative poem or poems demonstrating Dr. Raine’s developed idiom and interests. Such a choice by the editor of a major poet’s apprentice work shows a poor discernment which is very unrepresentative of the anthology as a whole.

This reviewer would have preferred more of Chinese and Japanese poetry. Indeed, these two traditions, along with Sufi poetry, represent in my opinion the most consistently and profoundly mystical of poetic traditions. I believe any international anthology of mystical verse must include the work of Tu Fu,
Wang Wei and Li Po, the great T'ang masters. It would also be unwise to exclude T'ao Ch'ien (373–427). The editor does give a reasonable amount of Sufi verse. One of the most appealing aspects of the book is the inclusion of Eastern European poems beyond the reach of most English readers. Cohen's translation of Osip Mandelstam's simple and vivid poem 'The Eucharist' (171) is an example. Another example is the 'Revelation' (195) of the contemporary Polish poet Zbigniew Herbert. The anthology also has a good deal of Spanish and Spanish-American poetry, usually expertly chosen and often very powerful.

The Rider Book of Mystical Verse can be welcomed as a solid, interesting and refreshingly non-sectarian anthology which nicely augments the work of The Oxford Book of Mystical Verse, now so badly dated in its 'contemporary' selections. The editor and publisher should be praised for producing a text at once balanced between the major mystical traditions and the work produced outside of a tradition. The editor's selections impressively demonstrate that 'adherence to one mystical tradition opens one's eyes to the essential values of all others' (viii), a perception badly needed by many critics in the field of mystical studies.

Robert Eddy
Notes on Contributors

**Wendell Berry**, poet, essayist, novelist and Kentucky farmer. His novels *A Place on Earth* and *The Memory of Old Jack* are concerned with the same group of characters as *The Wild Birds*. His first novel, *Nathan Coulter*, is reprinted by the North Point Press (Berkeley, Cal.) who have also published *The Gift of Good Land* (further essays cultural and agricultural), *Recollected Essays*, *Standing by Words*, *The Wheel* (his eighth collection of poems) and *The Collected Poems of Wendell Berry 1957–1982*.


**Muriel Bradbrook**, Professor of English and former Mistress of Girton College, Cambridge, author of many books on Shakespeare and Elizabethan drama, on Ibsen, T. S. Eliot and Malcolm Lowry. Her most recent books (vols II and III of her Collected Papers) are *Women in Literature and Aspects of Dramatic Form in the English and Irish Renaissance*.

**John Carey** has studied mythology and Celtic literature at Harvard University and the Dublin Institute of Advanced Studies; he lives in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

**Stephen Cross** is a Fellow of the Royal Asiatic Society, and has written and produced films on the poets T. S. Eliot and W. B. Yeats for the BBC and other organizations, and on the painters Odilon Redon and Cecil Collins, and also on Laurens Van der Post; and a series on *The Traditional World of Islam*. He is now living and working in Australia.

**Robert Eddy** while teaching at the University of Taiwan founded and edited the review *Studies in Mystical Literature*. His doctorate thesis (Durham University) was written on English mystical writers of the eighteenth century. He is at present living and teaching in Cambridge, Mass.
NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

Joscelyn Godwin, Professor of Music at Colgate University (New York State), author of books on Robert Fludd, Athanasius Kircher, Mystery Religions in the Ancient World (Thames and Hudson). Forthcoming books include: Cosmic Music: Three Approaches to the Musical Interpretation of Reality (Lindisfarne Press); Music, Mysticism and Magic: A Sourcebook (Routledge and Kegan Paul); Harmonies of Heaven and Earth (Thames and Hudson), and an edition of Michael Maier’s Atalanta Furiens (Magnum Opus Hermetic Sourcebooks).

Jonathan Griffin: Born in Sussex in 1906; poet and translator. His recent books of poetry are The Fact of Music, and Common Sense of the Senses (both published by the Menard Press); Fernando Pessoa: Selected Poems (Penguin Books, Second Edition 1982). Other recent translations include Jean Louis Barraud’s Autobiography (Thames and Hudson); Robert Bresson’s Notes on Cinematography (forthcoming from Quartet Books) and of plays, Kleist’s Prince of Hamburg and Partage du Midi by Claudel; all the major poems of Rimbaud (still unpublished) etc.


Brian Merrikin Hill, editor of the poetry review Pennine Platform; founder-organizer of the Wetherby Arts Festival. He has translated work by Saint-Pol Roux and other twentieth century French poets and the entire sequence of Pierre Emmanuel’s last work, Le Grand Oeuvre. His published poetry includes Wakeful in the Sleep of Time, Taxus 1984 and Local History Littlewood Press 1985.

Pupul Jayakar is adviser (Handlooms and Handicrafts) to the Government of India in the Ministry of Commerce; vice-chairman, All India Handlooms and Handicrafts board; Chairman, Advisory Committee for the Festival of India (to be held in France and U.S.A. during 1985–86) and Vice-President of the Indian Council for Cultural Relations, and of the Krishnamurti Foundation India, etc. She has been active in promoting Indian handicrafts and has written and lectured widely on various aspects of Indian Art and Culture. Among her best-known books is The Earthen Drum. She is at present working on a book on J. Krishnamurti.


Jean MacVean, poet, radio playwright, novelist. Her novel The Intermediaries was based on Gottfried von Strassburg's Tristan. Edited Thomas Blackburn's Last Poems. Malory enthusiast.

Peter Malekin, Lecturer in English at the University of Durham. He has also taught at the Universities of Uppsala and Tübingen. He is at present working on a new translation of selections from the writings of Jakob Boehme.

Corinna Marnau read Classics and theology first at Cambridge then at Oxford.

John Matthews, co-founder and co-editor (until 1984) of the review Labrys (with Graham Barrasford-Young). He has spent more than twenty years in the study of the subject of the Holy Grail. His books are: The Grail: Quest for the Eternal (Thames and Hudson 1981), editor At the Table of the Grail (Routledge 1983) and (with Caitlin Matthews) The Western Way, Vol 1 (Routledge 1985).

John Montague, poet and scholar, edited the Faber Book of Irish Verse, which includes some of his own translations from the Irish. From his seven earlier collections of verse, Selected Poems (Dolmen Press) was published in 1982. He has also published a collection of stories, The Dead Chieftain. He teaches at the University of Cork.

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, Ukranian, French, Italian and Spanish have been published in Australia, U.S.A. and India. His other books are an anthology of South Australian verse and metrical versions of Chinese Odes translated by James Legge. He regularly contributes to British, Australian and other magazines and anthologies.
Andrew Mouldey lives in London where he runs study-groups on the works of Jung. He has published in Harvest (Journal for the London Analytical Psychology Club) and in the Hermetic Journal. For some years he has been engaged in a phenomenological investigation of the image of man as a microcosm.

Seyyed Hossein Nasr, educated at Harvard and M.I.T. Dr. Nasr was President of the Imperial Iranian Academy of Philosophy, and is now University Professor of Islamic Studies at the George Washington University, Washington D.C. He is also a Director of the newly established Foundation for Traditional Studies in Washington D.C. His books include Three Muslim Sages, Ideas and Realities of Islam, An Introduction to Islamic Cosmological Doctrines, Science and Civilization in Islam, Jalal al-Din Rumi, Sufi Essays, Man and Nature: The Spiritual Crisis of Modern Man, Knowledge and the Sacred (Gifford Lectures, 1981).

John T. Naughton is Professor of Romance Literatures at Colgate University in New York. He is the author of a number of scholarly articles on Yves Bonnefoy. He has written the first major study of Bonnefoy in English, The Poetics of Yves Bonnefoy, published by the University of Chicago Press. He is now at work on a new book called Modern French Poetry and the Christian Tradition.

Richard Nicholson, musician, studied with Arnold Dolmetsch, co-founder of the English Consort of Viols. These photographs were taken in 1933, while travelling with Marco Pallis in India and Tibet. Has edited consort music publications for Faber Music.


Kathleen Raine, poet, Blake scholar etc. Her most recent publication is a new edition of her critical essays Defending Ancient Springs (1967) by the Golgonooza Press in conjunction with the Lindisfarne Press, U.S.A. Forthcoming are Yeats the Initiate (Dolmen Press and Allen and Unwin) and a new collection of papers in preparation with the Golgonooza Press with Allen and Unwin.

Jeremy Reed, poet and novelist. His last collection of poems, At the Fisheries was a Poetry Book Society recommendation, and is shortly to appear, with additional poems, in the Penguin series.

Nancy Wilson Ross was born in Washington State, whose landscape of awesome splendour and delicate beauty has remained with her throughout a life spent for the most part in the Eastern States of U.S.A. She has travelled widely especially in Japan, China and India, and her books The World of Zen, Three Ways of Asian Wisdom, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Zen have been translated into
several languages. Her most recent book (1983) is *Buddhism, a Way of Life and Thought*. She received, in 1981, the U Thant Award as a creator of ‘bridges between cultures’. Before establishing her reputation as a committed exponent of Far Eastern religious thought, she was well known as the author of four successful novels. Her non-fiction work, *Westward the Women* has recently been re-issued by the North Point Press.

**Anthony Rudolf**, born in 1942, poet, translator and publisher. His *Selected Poems of Yves Bonnefoy* was published by Jonathan Cape in 1968. He has recently revised, in some cases drastically, all the published and unpublished translations he did between 1964 and 1968. *Things Dying Things Newborn: Selected Poems of Yves Bonnefoy* will be published in June 1985 as the sixth issue of the Journals of Pierre Menard (Menard Press).

**Daryush Shayegan**, former student and colleague of Henry Corbin at the Imperial Iranian Academy at Tehran; scholar in Ismaeli, Sanscrit and other related studies, and at present a Director of the Ismaeli Institute in Paris.

**Philip Sherrard**, theologian and well-known authority on, and translator of, modern Greek poetry. Among his recent publications are *The Philokalia* (translation, with G. E. H. Palmer and Ware, Faber and Faber) and (with Edmund Keeley) *Selected Poems of Angelos Sikelianos* (Princeton University Press and Anvil Press).

**Robin Skelton**, Professor of Creative Writing at the University of Victoria, B.C.; he founded and for many years edited the *Malahat Review* from which he retired in 1983. He has published many volumes of verse and written a number of critical and scholarly books, mainly on J. G. Synge and other Irish subjects.

**John Heath Stubbs**, poet, critic and scholar. John Heath Stubbs’s *Artorius* (Enitharmon Press) was awarded the Queen’s Medal for Poetry in 1973. He has since published *Birds Reconvened* (Enitharmon Press) and *Naming the Beasts* (Carcanet). *The Immolation of Aleph* (Carcanet) spring 1985.

**Kapila Vatsyayan**, dancer, writer, critic and art historian, equally at home in Sanskrit and English literature, combines in herself the rigours and purity of traditional learning and the incisiveness of modern critical analysis. She has written extensively on the theories of Indian art as also of the inter-relationship of the Indian arts. Her first book, *Classical Indian Dance and the Arts* is an authoritative work and has been followed by many others including the definitive study *Dance in Indian Painting, Traditional Indian Theatre* and three volumes of the *Gita Govinda in Indian Art*, etc. besides some hundred research papers. She is Education Secretary to the Government of India.
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Satish Kumar in RESURGENCE

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Alistair Duncan, World of Islam Festival Trust

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Lokesh Chandra, Member of Parliament (Rajya Sabha) New Delhi

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Peter Malekin, Dept. of English, University of Durham

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