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From time to time we have felt and expressed concern because contributions to *Theoria* on literary subjects have tended to outnumber disproportionately those on topics in our other fields of interest. Now, while the number and quality of articles on literary topics is being steadily maintained, this imbalance has become far less marked.

It is gratifying to be able in this issue, once again, to offer articles of historical and social interest which explore unusual areas and develop and keep alive many important ideas.

THE EDITORS

PURSUIT OF THE UNICORN[1]

by A.E. VOSS

> "I met a unicorn"... is a perfectly significant assertion, if we know what it would be to be a unicorn... Thus it is only what we may call the *concept* that enters into the proposition. In the case of "unicorn"... there is not also, somewhere among the shades, something unreal which may be called "a unicorn".

Thus Bertrand Russell, in *The Introduction to Mathematical Philosophy*.[2] '"A unicorn"' according to Russell 'is an indefinite description which describes nothing. It is not an indefinite description which describes something unreal'. (170) Russell is arguing to exclude the category 'unreal objects' from logic. In theories which admit 'unreal objects', he claims,

> there is a failure of that feeling for reality which ought to be preserved even in the most abstract studies... To say that unicorns have an existence in heraldry, or in literature, or in imagination, is a most pitiful and paltry evasion. (169)

We may take heart from Coleridge:

> A philosopher's ordinary language and admissions in general conversation or writing *ad populum*, are as his watch compared with his astronomical time-piece. He sets the former by the town-clock, not because he believes it is right, but because his neighbours and his cook go by it.[3]

Setting our watches by the town-clock, then, we know what "unicorn" means: as 'concept', 'something unreal' or 'something real' — the legendary, but plausible beast, like a horse (or an antelope, or a goat), with one horn in the middle of its forehead. Conrad Gesner's illustration, in his *Historia Animalium* of 1551, is unmistakable.[4] Gesner was a zoologist: since Aristotle and Pliny scientists have until comparatively recently been seriously interested in the unicorn.

There are four kinds of explanation of the unicorn, each based on a different idea of the relationship between man and nature.

1. The unicorn is man-made — it is the product of work, in the sense in which Marx writes 'the worker brings about a change of form in natural objects'.[5] Berbix, so the story goes, was an African animal captor who grafted the two horns of a young oryx into one, and thus made an improved fighting animal for the Roman arenas.[6] Le Vaillant saw something comparable in the cattle of the Xhosa in the

1780's:[7] and in 1936 a biologist at the University of Maine made a unicorn out of a young Ayrshire.[8]

2. The unicorn once existed in nature, but has since disappeared, at the Flood, or more recently, like the Dodo or the bluebuck. An alternative version of this explanation is that the unicorn exists elsewhere in space rather than time: in Africa, for example, in *terra incognita,* beyond the frontier, deeper in the forests or the mountains. In this explanation, nature is bountiful and curious beyond man's rational laws; and if we have lost the unicorn, then it's our own fault. If we've not yet found it, it's because of our scepticism, or our lack of enterprise, daring or vision.
3. The unicorn represents a mistaken recognition of some other animal: it is really a kind of rhinoceros, or a freak gemsbok with one horn. This explanation refers always to one of the two orders of ungulates or hoofed mammals: either to a sub-division of the even-toed ungulates, the *bovidae,* which include cattle, goats, sheep and antelope; or to one of two of the three sub-divisions of the odd-toed ungulates — the *equidae* (horse-like animals) or the rhinoceroses. This explanation rests on the belief that man's rational categorizing faculty has not caught up with nature but it will soon.
4. The unicorn is a fiction, of imaginative making; not only man-made, in another sense from that of the first kind of explanation, but made-up: a fable, a figment, a legend or a myth. This explanation rests on the belief that if the unicorn never existed in fact it was a most regrettable omission from the creation. This explanation is, perhaps, only Russell's 'most pitiful and paltry evasion', but it represents clearly what the unicorn, whatever its beginnings may have been, has become.

South African history is a mine of unicorn lore, a veritable unicornucopia, and it will be the argument of this essay that in the progress of the legend and the symbol of the unicorn in South Africa there is a fascinating comment on the European imagination at work in this country. Odell Shepard sums up the unicorn's history in the concluding chapter of his great book *Lore of the Unicorn:*

> In his beginnings, wherever and whatever they may have been, the unicorn was a symbol of beneficent power inhabiting the poetic imagination. The symbol expanded into myth and this myth was debased into fable. The unicorn next became an *exemplum* of moral virtues, then an actual animal, then a thaumaturge, then a medicine, then an article of merchandise, then an idle dream, and, last stage of all, an object of antiquarian research. (274-5)

The South African unicorn has passed through these stages, and so traced the path of migration of a symbol, leaving a footnote to a chapter in the history of ideas.

Sometimes, in books that have become the repositories of South African unicorn lore, one comes across a suggestion that the fabled beast was once as common as the wildebeest or the quagga. For example Arbousset and Dumas's *Narrative* of 1846:

> . . . stretching away towards the East and the South, there lies, as we have been assured by the natives, a country rich in pasturage and in wood... and abounding in game of all sorts — as the elephant, the unicorn, the rhinoceros, the hippopotamus, the buffalo, the giraffe, the elan, the gnu, the quagga, and a great variety of gazelles, as well as lions, hyenas, leopards, jackals, wild dogs, and wild cats.[9]

There is, of course, an explanation for that apparently casual reference. But elsewhere in its history the unicorn has been seen as just another animal: in the plate "Creation of the Birds and Animals" from the Medieval English *Holkham Bible Picture Book,* or a sixteenth-century Italian painting, from the studio of Bassano, "The Animals going into the Ark".[10]

The unicorn, however, came late in its history to South Africa, long after it had developed its symbolic and magical aura. The process by which the unicorn acquired its symbolic potency is long and complex;[11] we may take as one of the high points in its history the unicorn's identification with Christ, yet Odell Shepard admits that 'the Middle Ages moralized the unicorn, thus contributing their share to his degradation' and in the late 14th century tapestries "The Hunt of the Unicorn" the unicorn is already in a stage of 'transition from the sacred to the profane'. (71) In one of the tapestries of that series is illustrated what Odell Shepard calls 'the water-conning', one of the most beautiful of all unicorn legends.

> In all the range of animal lore there is no other story conceived so completely in the aristocratic spirit as that of the unicorn stepping down to the poisoned water while the other beasts wait patiently for his coming, and making it safe for them by dipping his magic horn. Here was a perfect emblem of the ideal that European chivalry held before itself in its great periods — the ideal according to which exceptional power and privilege were balanced and justified by exceptional responsibility. (73-74)

Here may be illustrated, then, the progress of a symbol: from universal to Christian to feudal; or, in more general terms: from universal to sectarian to class.[12]

As far as I know, there are no unicorns in the recorded legend or mythology of the black, brown or yellow peoples of South Africa.[13] The South African unicorn seems to begin as a rumour brought, in expectation, from Europe, and bearing the weight of symbolic and iconographical and magical associations accumulated over centuries. In some ways the white man saw in Africa what either in imagiation or in fact, in art or in nature, he had seen before: or he thought he saw in reality in Africa what he had seen before only in fantasy.[14] In any event, the rumours persist: a number of early writers, in the late 17th and 18th centuries, refer to the unicorn, apparently as commonly known at the Cape.

Jan Willem de Grevenbroeck wrote from Cape Town in 1695 that he had heard of the unicorn there. In 1791 the Baron von Wurmb wrote that he hoped soon to see one. Captain Robert Percival who was at the Cape in 1796 and 1801, wrote that 'It is positively asserted by many that the unicorn is found in the deserts of Caffraria'.[15] A book published in Leipzig in 1748 claimed that

> ...the Malay consider the rhinoceros the female of the unicorn; and it is added that they value their horns very highly, as an antidote against all sorts of poison. It is very probable that this superstition was introduced into the colony of the Cape by the Malay slaves.[16]

Thunberg, who travelled at the Cape in the 1770's met the same superstition, as did Lichtenstein, whose *Travels* were published in 1815.[17] It is no wonder that le Vaillant spoke of 'the credulous countrymen' of the Cape and deplored 'the stupid lore of the marvellous which the colonists give in to'.(II, 447)

From Anders Sparrmann, the Swede who travelled at the Cape between 1772 and 1776, comes one of the first suggestions that what was imagination in Europe might be reality elsewhere: Sparrmann refers to Bushman paintings as evidence of the possible existence of the unicorn in South Africa.

> That singular animal, the *unicorn,* which is usually represented like a horse with a horn in its forehead, has been found delineated by the Snese-Hottentots on the plain surface of a rock somewhere in that country, though in as uncouth and artless a style, as might naturally be expected from so rude and unpolished a people. Jacob Kok, the great traveller and attentive observer of nature... is my only informer on this subject.

Sparrmann reports Kok as having been told by the Bushmen

> that by this sketch they meant to represent an animal, which,

> in point of resemblance, came nearest to the horses on which he and his train rode, but which at the same time had a horn in its forehead.

The creatures were reported to be 'rare, extremely swift of foot, furious and dangerous, but of a curious disposition'. Sparrmann had not seen the paintings, but expressed a recognisable attitude of cultural superiority:

> ... a rude and barbarous people, like the Chinese-Hottentots, could not easily invent, and by the mere force of imagination, represent to themselves such beings, and at the same time so circumstantially relate the manner in which they hunted them. Still less credible is it, that these savages should have been able to preserve any remembrance of the records and traditions of former times concerning this animal.

All that Sparrmann finds incredible about Bushman unicorn lore seems in fact to be true of the European unicorn tradition. But Sparrmann was able to conclude that

> ... the existence [of the unicorn] should not... be looked upon as a fable, notwithstanding it is not known to these more modern times.[18]

Francois le Vaillant is one of the most interesting early visitors to the Cape. He seems to combine the Enlightenment and Romanticism, so that his book *Travels from the Cape of Good Hope* keeps insisting on the importance of empirical evidence, but is also full of fancy and self-dramatisation. He is critical of Sparrmann:

> One should speak only from experience, nor assert anything for a fact, which we have not had ocular demonstration of.
>
> It is for want of this precaution, for example, that ... Doctor Sparrmann... speaks of the unicorn, which a colonist, perhaps, had descried on some uninhabitable rock... (II, 156-7)

From about 1790 to the middle of the 19th century is the peak period in South African unicorn lore. Evidence and rumour accumulate, from bushman paintings and from distant tribes and exiles beyond the frontier. Travellers write as if the unicorn is about to be discovered and the sense is of the fabulous beast as a great prize to be won, for fame, for science, or for profit.

From the first British occupation of the Cape dates the work of

Lady Anne Barnard and Sir John Barrow. In a letter of 10th August, 1797, soon after the Swellendam rebellion, Lady Anne wrote:

> .... desertion is over & many of those that had deserted are returned since the proclamation — amongst others a man who has been absent above a year, who bears an unlettered testimony to a matter which has been doubted, the existence of the unicorn in the interior parts of Africa. Some years ago, some of the natives had expressed their surprise at seeing it in the King's arms, and when they were asked if they would procure such an animal for a sum of money they had shuddered, saying 'Aye, to be sure', but he was 'their god'. The soldier's evidence corroborates this; he describes the unicorn to be much larger than a horse, though less than a small elephant; about as high, he said, as the room. He had on shoes made of the hide of one; they are of immoderate strength, and the skin more of the horse-hide sort than of any other. Mr Barrow who went up the country to the Boshemens Land will may be see something of this animal but he will chiefly be in quest of a better thing, a good silver or gold mine...[19]

The unicorn is being confused with the commodities of colonial exploitation. But Barrow did 'see something of this animal' and among the best pages of his book are devoted to it. He had been told of the unicorn before he left Cape Town, and he heard of it again on his travels, from farmers in Swellendam, the Camdeboo and the Bruintjies Hoogte. Then, on the 15th of December 1797, in the Bamboesberg, somewhere south of present-day Molteno:

> We came, at length, to a very high and concealed kloof, at the head of which was a deep cave covered in front by thick shrubbery. One of the boors mounted up the steep ascent, and having made his way through the close brushwood, he gave us notice that the sides of the cavern were covered with drawings. After clearing away the bushes to let in the light, and examining the numerous drawings, some of which were tolerably well executed, and others caricatures, part of a figure was discovered that was certainly intended as the representation of a beast with a single horn projecting from the forehead.

Barrow was mortified by the accident by which the 'body and legs were concealed by the figure of an elephant that stood directly before it'.

Barrow did not know of the white rhinoceros, and he refused to

accept that the African rhinoceros was the Bushman's unicorn. He accepted 'That the unicorn, as it is represented in Europe, is a work of fancy' but, he wrote 'it does not follow from thence that a quadruped with one horn, growing out of the middle of the forehead, should not exist... This part of Africa is as yet untrodden ground... Of all the accessible parts of the earth, the interior of Southern Africa is the least known to Europeans'. The unicorn might well be yet to be discovered there. Nor did Barrow accept any argument from theoretical zoology that such an animal could not exist. 'Much greater anomalies occur in nature'. Barrow had the word of Bushmen, Boers and the missionary van der Kemp ('a man of research... of a different cast from the missionaries in general') for the existence of the unicorn, and Barrow puts the case of the believer as movingly as anyone:

> The schooled mind is apt to feel a propensity for rejecting every thing new, unless conveyed to it through the channel of demonstrative evidence, which, on all occasions, is not to be obtained; whilst, on the other hand, credulity swallows deception in every flimsy covering. The one is, perhaps, equally liable to shut out truth, as the other is to imbibe falsehood. Nature's wide domain is too varied to be shackled with a syllogism.[20]

On the title page of the second edition of Barrow's *Travels* appears the motto 'Africa semper aliquid novi offert'.

The excitement at the prospect of discovering the true unicorn continued in the time of the re-occupation of the Cape by the Batavian Republic (1803—1812). Governor Janssens led an expedition eastwards early in 1803, and the Commissary-General de Mist another later in the same year. The official account of Janssen's expedition, Paravacini di Capelli's *Journal* and the *Journal* of Dirk Gysbert van Reenen all mention their unsuccessful search for Bushman paintings of the fabulous beast:

> We have searched many times for the mountain-drawings of the Bushmen, but found nothing: all the members of the party, however, assure us that among these drawings of animals on all the farms, which are to be found there, the unicorn is pictured, and indeed everywhere in the same manner...[21]

Both the official account of de Mist's expedition and the *Journal* of Henry Lichtenstein, who was a member of the party, mention the opinions of Commandant Lombard of Swellendam, who

> was one of those who in the year 1790, in conjunction with Mr Jacon van Reenen, undertook a journey to the very farthest extremity of the Caffre country, in search of the persons who were saved from the wreck of the Grosvenor East Indiaman. He related to us many anecdotes of the journey; and among other things, the conversation turned upon the unicorn, and the various opinions entertained as to the existence or non-existence of such an animal. Lombard declared he was not disinclined to believe in its existence, though he had never seen one himself, or knew of anybody by whom it was reported to have been seen.[22]

de Mist repeated Janssens's engagement, made all along the journey,

> to give a strong new waggon with a team of oxen and all its appurtenances as a reward to anyone who should bring a complete skin of this animal, with the horn and skull-bone to the Cape Town.[23]

The unicorn had a price on its head. No wonder it stayed away.

These accounts show clearly how the rumour of the unicorn is kept alive. Even as the depressing suspicion grows that the Bushman paintings are not of the unicorn, or that the unicorn, if it exists at all, is only another kind of rhinoceros, there comes another traveller, who has been further east or north than anyone else, and has either seen the unicorn himself or met somebody who has seen it. Such a figure is Coenraad de Buys:

> Buys also told us that to the north of the Tambookies there lives a yellow people with long hair, named Matola, and the unicorn is to be found there, of the size of an eland, and black in colour...[24]

> Coenraad de Buys also, in talking with us about the unicorn, assured us of the existence of this animal. This burger has been far beyond Caffreland and the Tambookies, and says that there are many there...[25]

Barrow had told 'the peasantry' who accompanied him to the cave where he saw the unicorn painting 'that a thousand, or even five thousand, rix-dollars would be given to anyone who would produce an original'.[26] And when William John Burchell arrived at the Cape he considered the possibility that a unicorn might make his fortune. On the 29th of May, 1811, Burchell wrote to his mother: 'should I be so fortunate as to discover the Unicorn, which has been supposed to exist in this part of Africa, I have not the least doubt of making [seven thousand five hundred pounds]'.[27] The unicorn had become a

convertible commodity, subject to market pressures: Burchell calculated his figure on the going rate for cameleopard at the time — £1 500.

But by the time Burchell published his *Travels in the Interior of South Africa* in 1822, he had learnt more zoology and was disillusioned about the unicorn:

> With respect to the idea, which I had entertained, of a single horn being an anomaly, it arose from the consideration, that all the osseous parts of animals, excepting the spine, were in pairs: those which appear single, being in fact divided longitudinally by a suture. So that any bony process such as that which supports the corneous case of horned animals, must, to be single or in the central line of the face or head, stand over a suture; a case which no anatomist has hitherto discovered in Nature... It is this rule of nature, and consequent reasoning, which will not allow me to believe that the *unicorn*, such as we see it represented, exists anywhere but in those representations, or in imagination: and many circumstances concur to render it highly probable, that the name was at first intended for nothing more than a species of rhinoceros.[28]

We can see this same movement, from what appears to us as romantic hope to disenchanted knowledge in other writers. Did Thomas Pringle believe in the unicorn? There is some evidence which says that he did. In 1886, George Armstrong, a well-known Cradock businessman, gave a lecture on Pringle, in the course of which he said:

> Mr Robert Pringle, formerly of this district, had a letter book in his possession belonging to the Poet Pringle, and in this diary or book was a copy of a letter written by Pringle to the Colonial Government informing them that his Tarka friends knew of the existence of the unicorn towards the N.E. frontier of the Cradock district, and requesting the authority and assistance of the Government to organize an expedition to go in search of this animal.
>
> The Government wrote back approving of the suggestion provided the expense of the expedition did not exceed 100 rix dollars (£7.10.0). After a good search they returned unsuccessful. The Government was thereupon apprised that expenses were somewhere about 50 rix dollars.[29]

And in a letter to Sir Walter Scott, of 12th June 1821, Pringle undertakes to send 'lions' and leopards' skins, horns of unicorns, buffaloes, Nhoos and Elands'.[30]

But in 1822 the Reverend John Campbell published his *Travels in South Africa,* which included an account of the killing of two rhinoceros at Mashow in Bechuana country, north of the Orange River: 'the head of one of them' Campbell wrote

> was different from all the others that had been killed...[It] had a straight horn projecting three feet from the forehead, about ten inches above the tip of the nose. The projection of this great horn very much resembles that of the fanciful unicorn in the British arms... this species of rhinoceros must appear really like a unicorn when running in the field...[31]

Campbell adds in a foot-note that 'the animal is considered by naturalists, since the arrival of the skull in London, to be the unicorn of the ancients, and the same as that which is described in the XXXIXth chapter of the book of Job'.[32] This discovery of the white rhinoceros kills any hope that the poet Pringle maintained a belief in the true unicorn. On 31st October, 1822, Pringle sent Sir Walter Scott a

> Bootchuana battle axe, made of iron of native manufacture and fixed on a handle formed out of the horn of a new species of Rhinoceros discovered by Mr Campbell and supposed to be the *real unicorn* of scripture.[33]

We have had two kinds of explanation for the South African unicorn: Campbell explains it as a mistaken recognition of the white rhinoceros. Burchell explains it away, as existing only 'in imagination'. There is another, probably the most popular, which identifies the unicorn with the gemsbok (*oryx gazella*). Andrew Steedman, who travelled in South Africa in the early 1830's, writes:

> Of all the fabulous animals of antiquity, whether produced by the fertile and unrestrained imagination of the Persians and Egyptians, or by the more chaste and classic taste of the Greeks, the unicorn is undoubtedly the most celebrated, and has in the most remarkable degree attracted the research and attention of the moderns... the most celebrated zoologists and philosophers of modern times, Pallas, Camper, and Cuvier, have not disdained to investigate the origin and circumstances of this pleasing fiction, and to search among the productions of nature for the actual animal which suggested the idea of the unicorn. On all hands, this is admitted to have been the oryx...[34]

William Cornwallis Harris, who travelled shortly after and advanced the same argument, had clearly read Steedman. It seems fitting that for his discussion of the unicorn he had to turn to another writer: accounts of the beast have so often been based on imagination and the study of books, rather than on experiment and the study of nature. Harris's style is more florid and his tone more dismissive:

> Of all the whimsies of antiquity, whether emanating from the unbridled and fertile fancies of the people of Egypt and Persia, or devised by the more chaste and classic taste which distinguished Greece and Rome, the Unicorn — unquestionably the most celebrated — is the chimera which has in modern ages engrossed the largest proportion of attention from the curious.[35]

In *The Wild Sports of Southern Africa* Harris writes that in January, 1837, 'on the plains of the Vaal River' he

> again met with the oryx, or gemsbok, which splendid antelope... in all probabiity gave birth to the figure of the fabulous unicorn. When seen *en profile* the long straight horns so exactly cover each other, that the existence of two might almost be doubted...'[36]

Gordon Cumming, who published *Five Years of a Hunter's Life* in 1850, had, in his turn, clearly read Harris.

> The oryx, or gemsbok... is about the most beautiful and remarkable of all the antelope tribe. It is the animal which is supposed to have given rise to the fable of the unicorn, from its long straight horns, when seen, *en profile*, so exactly covering one another as to give it the appearance of having but one.[37]

The identification of the gemsbok as the original of the unicorn is strengthened by the not infrequent sight of gemsbok with one horn missing. Steedman noted that 'During the rutting season... the males never meet without fighting'

> ...and as, during these encounters, it frequently happens that one or both lose a horn, it is not at all unlikely that individuals thus mutilated... and which, from the courage and quarrelsome disposition of the animals, must be suffficiently numerous, confirmed the idea which had been first taken from imperfect representations.[38]

The gemsbok, then, is the last explanation: like other explanations, it followed the rumours. Only when the European presence reaches beyond the Orange River does the white rhinoceros explanation arise: and in 1889, Henry Anderson Bryden wrote that the gemsbok was 'very nearly extinct' in the Cape, whereas formerly it had been 'plentiful on every karroo of the Colony'.[39]

There were people in the Cape and central South Africa who talked as if the true unicorn might still exist. But by the 1820's, with the beginnings of white settlement in Natal, the European had reached a new frontier in South Africa. This gave rise to one of the funniest, or saddest stories in all unicorn lore. It is told by Nathaniel Isaacs in his *Travels and Adventures in Eastern Africa.*

> 10th. [December 1825] — Having heard that Magie possessed a unicorn, or, as the natives described it to me, 'In yar mogoss imponte moonya," [Inyamakazi ephona lunye] "An animal with one horn," I had a great desire to see it... the chief however told me that it was at another kraal, some distance in the interior, but that he would order it to be brought up for me to see it some other time. My anticipations of acquiring renown among naturalists and men of science vanished at once into empty air. I gave up all hopes of obtaining it, although the chief assured me that he would dispose of it to no one but me.

Isaacs next met up with his fellows two days later.

> I found all my friends well; they congratulated me on my return, and especially complimented me for my arrangements concerning the unicorn. I could not yet but feel that I was entitled to some little praise for my sagacity in an affair which would, in all probability, crown our adventures with considerable éclat.

He heard nothing further until 12th February the next year when

> a messenger arrived to announce the unicorn had arrived. I went unhesitatingly to see it, when lo! this wonderful production of nature, from which I was to derive fame and renown, turned out to be a he-goat with the loss of one of its horns! I predicted the ridicule to which this circumstance would subject me, and made up my mind to submit to the sarcasms of my friends with the same fortitude as I bore the disappointment of anticipated honours, from the possession of this wonder of fabled history.[40]

By the middle of the 19th century still another frontier had opened up on the west coast. Sir Francis Galton, travelling in Damaraland in 1851, revived the possibility of the true unicorn.

> The Bushmen, without any leading question or previous talk upon the subject, mentioned the unicorn. I cross-questioned them thoroughly, but they persisted in describing a one-horned animal, something like a gemsbok in shape and size, whose horn was in the middle of its forehead... It will indeed be strange, if, after all, the creature has a real existence... there is surely plenty of room to find something new in the vast belt of *terra incognita* that lies in this continent.[41]

But in the same decade the gemsbok explanation had reached that frontier too, as Charles Anderson wrote in his book *Lake Ngami*, published in 1856. And Anderson added a rather condescending footnote: 'For some curious remarks on the unicorn see Barrow...'[42]

Barrow's romantic hope is being threatened by Victorian common sense, but there are glimmers of belief. On 1st July, 1826, Ludwig Kregs, 'the Prussian naturalist',[43] had written from a farm on the Baviaans River, near Bedford in the Eastern Cape, to Lichtenstein, that some Tambookies had told him 'of a unicorn, of which three were to have stayed for some days on a high mountain, a few days' journey this side... and they said it was terribly wild'.[44] But for all the unicorn's fabled medicinal power, there were prizes to be won, more practically necessary for the European's continued stay in Africa. In 1852 David Livingstone wrote to Thomas Maclear from Kerima: 'If I can discover a healthy range of country and means to foil that terrible plague [malaria], I shall be content to let the unicorn sleep in everlasting oblivion'.[45]

Barrow, the 18th century champion of the unicorn, found his true 19th century successor in Thomas Baines, who travelled across most of Southern Africa for nearly thirty years, from 1850. He was later sceptical about the unicorn, but in 1853 he wrote: 'I... am convinced, as nearly as I can be without actually seeing the drawings, that such an animal must have existed in Africa...'[46] He searched 'in caves on Kat River, Klipplaat, Winterberg, Tarka, and at Eildon, the residence of the poet of South Africa, and have recognised most of the wild animals of the country... but [he says] though I have heard of the unicorn... I could never find it.'[47] Baines maintained that 'The Bushmen... never draw from imagination, but from actual memory, and they certainly did not know enough of perspective to draw a two-horned animal with his horns in one...'[48] Baines tested Bushmen's reactions to his own perspective drawings on his trip to South-West Africa in the 1860's.[49]

Baines's travels were such that he seemed always to be on the frontier, swiftly as that frontier shifted during the period of his Southern African journeys. In June 1871 he discussed the unicorn with a family near Potchefstroom.

> I coincided with the general opinion that the man who should catch one alive... would make his fortune, but I also expressed my disbelief of its existence and, as usual among the Dutch, the Bible was referred to. I remarked that the passages referring to the strength of the unicorn... might be applied to the one-horned rhinoceros, and my friends then turned to the illustrations... in the picture of the ark a pair of unicorns were duly marshalled...[50]

Later that same year, on 25th September, Baines received a letter from 'Mr Blanch at Bamangwato' which prompted a long entry in the *Northern Goldfields Diaries,* in which Baines discussed and illustrated his ideas on the unicorn. Blanch had challenged Baines's scepticism about the creature and had argued that 'it may still exist in those parts of Africa that have not been properly hunted and explored'. Always the reports and rumours come from just beyond the moving frontier — in 'Namaqualand, 12 days from Lake Ngami' at Ghanzi, or '2 or 3 weeks' journey by canoe from the lake'.[51] In June 1871 Baines had heard 'the usual tales of "eenhoorns" having been seen in the Drakensbergs... recounted', but, he added, 'our belief in these vanishes as the localities are explored'.[52] It is in the locality of the Drakensberg, on that frontier, that the South African unicorn legend can be said to have died.

In his autobiography *A Life-time in South Africa,* published in 1900, describing the expedition sent after Langalibalele in 1873, Sir John Robinson wrote

> Captain Allison and Captain Hawkins had no easy task before them. They had to take their men up the almost inaccessible mountain sides into a region of rugged and trackless desolation that had never before been penetrated by white men — a region whose only known inhabitants in the past had been the tiny untameable Bushman, the ravening hyena, or the fabled unicorn; for there tradition had located the one-horned antelope.[53]

But mockery, scorn and the profit motive had long since driven the unicorn out of the Drakensberg. According to one writer, there were rumours of unicorn in the Drakensberg in the 1860's. The arguments for and against were raised and the 'feasibility of hunting up the said animal' was discussed. 'As the enterprise was not a very costly affair,

those in favour might have persevered, and taken shares in a Natal Unicorn Company (limited)...' But the expedition came to nothing, because, apparently, of the hostile attitude of Moshesh, through whose territory, via Witzieshoek, the colonists would have had to make their way.[54]

A.W. Drayson, in *Tales of the Outspan,* published in London in 1865, made what is intended to be a humorous story out of the Natal unicorn experience. 'The Professor's Search for the Unicorn' is told by the Professor himself: after hearing rumours, he finds Baba, 'the man who has seen the unicorn', who eventually leads him to a spot on the mountains. The unicorn turns out to be 'a common wildebeest' with 'only one horn, the other having been broken off close to his skull, probably in fighting'.[55]

When a creature of mystery and romance becomes the subject of a cumbersome joke like Drayson's, the river of unicorn lore has run dry. Our frontiers have changed and the unicorn passes from the explorers to the poets, with whom it probably belonged in the first place. The South African unicorn has suffered the stages outlined by Odell Shepard in his summary of 'the total history of the animal's legend'.[56] By the time the unicorn reached South Africa it had passed through its phases of universal symbol, myth, fable and moral *exemplum.* It is as an actual animal that it sets hoof on these shores (Perceval, Barrow, Buys). The unicorn does not much feature as thaumaturge in South Africa, although it does make a short appearance as a medicine. But the 'article of merchandise' phase dominates the South African unicorn's history (Burchell, the Natal Unicorn Company), although for many it has long been an idle dream (Harris to Drayson). Now, as the topic of this paper, it has become 'an object of antiquarian research'.

The forms in which the South African unicorn still tenuously survives bear out Odell Shepard's observation that 'Relics of the earlier stages' of its history 'are discoverable in the later'.[57] In the British coat-of-arms which still adorns some of our pre-1910 public buildings, the unicorn is part of a symbol, for some at least, of beneficent power inhabiting the political, if not the poetic imagination.[58] The unicorn has been appropriated as the emblem of a chain-store (Clicks), a shipping-line and a mining and financial conglomerate (Union Corporation).[59] Apparently opposed to this dominant and exploitative image, and yet paradoxically related to it are the uses to which the unicorn has been put by South African poets. It is no longer a universal but a private symbol, even a symbol of privacy itself. In the title poem of his volume *Grass for the Unicorn* Perseus Adams is drawn to 'a riskier animal' than sheep or cows,

> a fabled beast
> who has outgrown
> utility...

This poet thrills to the unicorn's 'high superfluousness'.[60] And in the epigraph to a poem dedicated to Uys Krige, Barend J. Toerien asks

> ... wie kan ooit jou beeld vang
> —warm, gul, vol *no-nonsense* nonsies waaragtig soos die ewigheid
> en die eenhoring vaskeer in 'n kamp fleur-de-lys?[61]

A South African poet can still be an aristocracy of one.

The rot for the South African unicorn had already set in when Barrow held out the promise of monetary reward for its capture. Yet, in a significant way, the promise of reward has kept the unicorn alive, if in captivity: there is in Afrikaans the expression "n eenhoring skiet'; according to the *Woordeboek van die Afrikaanse Taal,* it was believed that the British Government had offered £10000 to anyone who shot a unicorn, 'daarom het die ou mense altyd gesê dat as 'n jongkêrel na 'n ryk nooi gaan vry, dan skiet hy 'n eenhoring'. The alternative meaning given for the expression ''n eenhoring skiet' is 'na iets soek wat nie daar is nie.'[62]

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NOTES

[1] This paper was originally given as a University lecture at the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, on 23rd May, 1979. An earlier and shorter version had been given to the Pietermaritzburg branch of the Wildlife Society. As are all unicorn scholars, I am greatly indebted to Odell Shepard, to whose book *Lore of the Unicorn* (London, 1930; 2nd impression, 1967) I should be content for this essay to be a South African footnote. I am also grateful to Anna H. Smith, 'In Search of the Unicorn', *AN&N,* Vol. 18, pp. 91-112.

[2] London, 1948 (1920), p. 168.

[3] *Complete Works,* ed. W.G.T. Shedd, 7 Vols., N.Y., 1884: VI, 416.

[4] Gesner's illustration has been often reproduced: for example, in Smith, op. cit., p. 105.

[5] Quoted by Ernst Fischer, *The Necessity of Art: A Marxist Approach,* Harmondsworth, 1978, p. 17. The immediate context of the quotation is interesting and relevant to a study of the South African unicorn: 'The labour process ends in the creation of something which, when the process began, already existed in the worker's imagination, already existed in an ideal form. What happens is not merely that the worker brings about a change of form in natural objects; at the same time, in the nature that exists apart from himself, he realizes his own purposes, the purpose which gives the law to his activities, the purpose to which he has to subordinate his own will!' Thus the European imagination sought the unicorn in the new 'nature' of South Africa, existing apart from itself, because it bore the memory of the unicorn's 'ideal form'. The unicorn, although traditionally an aristocratic beast was, here as elsewhere, subordinated to some distinctly bourgeois purposes.

[6] Denis Godfrey, *The Enchanted Door,* Cape Town, 1963, p. 177.

[7] François le Vaillant, *Travels from the Cape of Good Hope,* 2 Vols., London, 1790: reprint, N.Y., 1972; II, 226-228.

[8] W. Franklin Dove, 'Artificial Production of the Fabulous Unicorn...', *Scientific Monthly,* Vol. 42, No. 5 (1936), pp. 431-436.

[9] T. Arbousset and F. Daumas, *Narrative of an Exploratory Tour to the North-East of the Colony of the Cape of Good Hope* (1846), Cape Town, facsimile reprint, 1968, p. 133.

[10] Both are reproduced in Kenneth Clark, *Animals and Men,* London, 1977, plates nos. 2 and 3. In the latter picture the unicorns are preceded only by the lions.

[11] Shepard, op. cit., passim. See also Ad. de Vries, *Dictionary of Symbols and Imagery,* Amsterdam/London, 1976, pp. 481-483.

[12] 'Virgin Embracing a Unicorn' by Domenichino (reproduced in Clark, op. cit. as plate no. 108) suggests a bourgeois version of another famous unicorn story, the 'virgin-capture'. Domenichino's unicorn is robust and weighty, not the rarefied creature of the tapestries. Perhaps the feudal aristocracy's adaptive survival by marriage to the rising bourgeoisie is suggested by Domenichino's picture.

[13] I say this despite the many travellers who report unsolicited evidence of the unicorn from Bushmen, Tambookies, Caffres, etc. In these reports the unicorn is, with rare exceptions (such as Lady Anne Barnard's account, discussed below), mentioned as just another animal.

[14] The Dutch artist Claudius was at the Cape in the 1680's. His pictures of the gemsbok (R.F. Kennedy, *Africana Museum: Catalogue of Pictures,* 5 vols, Johannesburg, 1966-68; C278 and C727, II, 45 and 133) seem dependent on earlier images of the unicorn. See Rudolf Wittkower, *Allegory and the Migration of Symbols,* London, 1977: Ch. 4.

[15] Smith, op. cit., 103-104.

[16] Henry, Lichtenstein, *Travels in Southern Africa,* 2 vols., London, 1812, 1815 (VRS. Nos. 10, 11; 1928-1930) I, 106, footnote.

[17] ibid., pp. 106-107.

[18] *A Voyage to the Cape of Good Hope, 1772-1776,* 2 vols., London, 1785 (reprint, N.Y., 1971); II, 447. Reproductions of the kind of rock-painting that Sparrmann refers to have been frequently published. See, for example, G.W. Stow and Dorothea Bleeck, *Rock Painting in South Africa,* London, 1930; plate 1, 'Rhino, zebra' and plate 32, 'Female and male Rhinoceros'.

[19] *The Letters of Lady Anne Barnard to Henry Dundas,* ed. A.M. Lewin Robinson, Cape Town, 1973, p. 54.

[20] Sir John Barrow, *Travels into the Interior of Southern Africa,* 2d. ed., London, 1806; pp. 259, 267-278. See also Barrow's *Autobiographical Memoir,* London, 1847; pp. 190-191.

Barrow's argument on the scepticism of 'the schooled mind' is substantially the same as Spenser's in the proem to Book II of the *Faerie Queene.* Significantly, perhaps, John Purves included Spenser's stanzas in *The South African Book of English Verse* (London, 1915), p. 17.

Barrow's *Travels* include his *facsimile* of the Bushman unicorn: like Claudius, he seems to have been remembering European models, in this case the heraldic unicorn. See also Hennie Aucamp, ed., *Op die Stormberge,* Cape Town, 1971.

[21] Official Journal of Janssen's Expedition, in Godée Molsbergen, *Reizen in Zuid-Afrika,* 4 vols., 's Gravenhage, 1916-1922; IV, 174. (My translation.)

[22] Lichtenstein, op. cit.; I, 206.

[23] idem.

[24] Dirk Gysbert van Reenen, *Die Joernaal . . . 1803,* ed. Blommaert and Wild, Cape Town, 1937 (VRS No. 18); pp. 166-167. (My translation.)

[25] Godée Molsbergen, loc. cit.

[26] Barrow, *Travels,* p. 270.

[27] William John Burchell, *Travels in the Interior of South Africa,* 2 vols., ed. I. Schapera, London, 1953; II, 423.

[28] ibid.; II, 55. See Shepard, op. cit., p. 209.

[29] George Armstrong, *Thomas Pringle,* Durban/Pietermaritzburg, 1964; p. 11.

At about the same time, 5th February 1824, Carel Hendrik Kruger, who farmed near Bethulie, at the junction of the Orange and Caledon Rivers, petitioned Somerset for permission to travel beyond the borders of the colony on a journey of exploration:

> A group of Korannas had told him that while they were following a strange tribe which they had attacked (?), they saw herds of wild animals, unknown to them before. The animals were said to be bigger than horses, each with a horn in its forehead and very fierce. Kruger thought that this might be the long sought-after unicorn and was very eager to penetrate deeper into the interior than he had previously, to investigate and study the races there. Kruger's petition was successful.

H. Pellissier, *J.P. Pellissier van Bethulie,* Pretoria, 1956; p. 210. (My translation.)

30 *South African Library: Quarterly Bulletin,* Vol. 6 (1952); p. 112.

31 *Travels in South Africa undertaken at the request of the London Missionary Society; being an narrative of a second journey in the interior of that country,* London, 1822; pp. 294-295. It is difficult to believe that Campbell's 'Head of a Unicorn, killed near the City of Mashow' (ill. facing p. 294) could ever be taken to be the original of, say, the unicorn of the tapestries, or that Campbell was illustrating the same animal as Harris was to depict in *Portraits of the Game and Wild Animals of Southern Africa,* London, 1840 (reprint, Cape Town, 1969).

32 Campbell, op. cit., p. 296. The reference is to verses 10-12.

33 *South African Library: Quarterly Bulletin;* Vol. 6 (1952), p. 116.

34 Andrew Steedman, *Wanderings and Adventures in the Interior of Southern Africa,* 2 vols., London, 1835; II, 119-120.

35 Harris, *Portraits of the Game and Wild Animals of Southern Africa,* p. 50.

36 London, 1852 (facsimile, Cape Town, 1963), p. 258.

37 2 vols. London, 1850; I, 93. On Harris and Cumming, see Stephen Gray, *Southern African Literature, an Introduction,* Cape Town/London, 1979, pp. 97-105.

38 Steedman, op. cit., II, 122. Many writers mention the gemsbok as the rival of the lion in a way that recalls the nursery-rhyme of 'The Lion and the Unicorn': for, example, Henry Anderson Bryden, *Animals of Africa,* London, 1900, pp. 86-87.

39 *Kloof and Karroo,* London, 1889, pp. 292-293. Similarly J.G. Millais, in 1885, proposed the sable as the original of the unicorn (*A Breath from the Veldt, London,* 1895: referred to in Smith, op. cit., p. 108). The sable 'seems never to have existed naturally south of the Crocodile River in the Eastern Transvaal' *A Field Guide to the Antelope of Southern Africa,* Supplement to *Natal Wildlife,* Oct., 1974; p. 46.

40 Cape Town, 1970 (2 vols., London, 1836); 37-38, 46.

41 *Narrative of an Explorer . . .,* London, 1890; p. 173. Galton states at this point that 'the Bushmen' had 'learnt to understand our Hottentot a little better'.

42 London, 1856; p. 281.

43 Thomas Phillips, *Scenes and Occurrences in Albany and Caffreland,* South Africa, London, 1827; p. 130. Phillips, an 1820 settler, met Krebs at this time. Phillips gives an account of his visit to the cave painting, said to be of a unicorn, on Thomas Pringle's farm: but 'we could not distinguish it. Indeed the whole was so faint from age, that we adopted the method used at Herculaneum, — wetting the rock in order to make the colours brighter'. (pp. 131-132)

44 Pamela ffolliott and Richard Liversedge, *Ludwig Kregs: Cape Naturalist to the King of Prussia,* Cape Town, 1971; p. 60.

45 Quoted by Michael Gelfand, *Livingstone the Doctor,* Oxford, 1957; p. 60.

46 *Journal of a Residence in Africa,* ed. R.F. Kennedy, 2 vols. Cape Town, 1962 (VRS, no. 42); I, 40-41.

47 *Explorations in South West Africa,* London, 1864; pp. 171-172.

48 *Northern Goldfields Diaries,* ed. J.P.R. Wallis, 3 vols., London, 1946; III, 719-720.

49 *Explorations,* loc. cit. Baines concluded that the Bushman painter, 'a true child in art . . . *will never fail to give each animal its proper complement of members*'. Baines's low estimate of Bushman perspective may have helped to keep the possibility of the true unicorn alive, but there are paintings which contradict him. See, for example, H. Obermaier and H. Kühn, *Bushman Art: Rock-Paintings of South-West Africa,* London, 1930; plate no. 24, 'Eland' (?), and G.W. Stow and Dorothea Bleeck, *Rock-Paintings in South Africa . . .* London, 1930; plate no. 9, 'Eland foreshortened . . .'

See also Baines, *Journal of a Residence,* I, 167.

50 *Northern Goldfields Diaries,* III, 611. Perhaps the Bible illustration Baines refers to looked rather like the Bassano painting of 'The Animals Going into the Ark'.

51 ibid., III, 717-719. Blanch's phrase 'hunted and explored' speaks volumes of South African history.

52 *Northern Goldfields Diaries,* III, 611. Baines wrote in 1861: 'a representation of a one-horned animal, could I be certain it was not defaced and rendered imperfect by time or accident, and that it was in reality drawn by Bushmen before intercourse with Europeans had made them acquainted with our traditions, would confirm me in the belief that such a creature in reality existed. The rumours among Hottentots and other tribes bordering on the colony are easily recognised as our own legends of the unicorn, the mermaid etc., returned to us altered, and perhaps improved by travel'. (*Explorations,* p. 172) The possibility that the Bushmen of, say, the Stormberg, shared with the courtly makers of 15th century France the legend of the

unicorn might have been another clue in the search for a universal human culture.

53 London, 1900; p. 123.

54 K.J. de Kok, *Empires of the Veld,* Durban, 1904; pp. 199-202.

55 pp. 193-205. Truth is sometimes not only stranger, but also funnier than fiction. Isaac's unicorn story is funnier than Drayson's; so is William Finaughty's. Finaughty's bearer, Cigar, claims to have wounded a rhinoceros: 'I soon located the carcass. It certainly had a pretty horn 3ft $10^1/_2$ ins in length and with a very small butt. In fact it was so unlike the usual rhino horn that I afterwards showed it to a man as a fine specimen of a unicorn horn.' *Recollections of an . . . Elephant Hunter,* reprint, Cape Town, 1957, p. 60.

56 Shepard, op. cit., p. 274.

57 ibid., p. 275. There was a 'Unicorn Pass' on the map, but that was named, according to Livingstone, for 'a large edible caterpillar, with an erect horn-like tail'. (*Missionary Travels and Researches in South Africa,* London, 1857; p. 150.) And there is the constellation Monoceros in the southern sky.

58 There are, naturally some fine examples in Pietermaritzburg, but the best in South Africa is Anreith's ironic pediment over the Parliament Street entrance of the Cultural History Museum in Cape Town.

59 The Unicorp statue in Johannesburg has the dimensions of the beast that Lady Anne Barnard reported ('much larger than a horse, though less than a small elephant; about as high . . . as the room'). Barrow, according to Lady Anne, was 'in quest of a better thing, a good silver or gold mine'. Now Unicorp has both the unicorn and the mines.

60 Cape Town, 1975, pp. 1-2.

61 André P. Brink, ed., *Oggendlied: vir Uys Krige,* Cape Town, 1977, p. 42. See also Robert Greig's 'The Unicorn' in his collection *Talking Bull, Bateleur Poets,* Johannesburg, 1975; p. 45, and Tony Voss's 'The Unicorn' in *Poems for Performance,* ed. Stephen Gray, Johannesburg, 1978; p. 95. June Drummond's novel *The Black Unicorn* (London, 1959) is a descendant of *The Scarlet Pimpernel.*

Olive Schreiner made of the Bushman unicorn a strange image, paradoxically suggesting both the present's isolation from and its continuity with the past: 'They sat under a shelving rock, on the surface of which were still visible some old Bushman-paintings, their red and black pigments having been preserved through long years from wind and rain by the overhanging ledge; grotesque oxen, elephants, rhinoceroses, and a one-horned beast, such as no man ever has seen or ever shall.' *The Story of an African Farm,* Harmondsworth, 1971, p. 44.

62 *WAT,* 'eenhoring', uitdr. In this South African expression there survive perhaps, vestiges both of the 'Hunt of the Unicorn' and, as Professor C.O. Gardner has suggested to me, of the 'virgin-capture'.

A BREATH OF FRESH AIR AT GOVERNMENT HOUSE

SIR WILLIAM BUTLER IN SOUTH AFRICA

by W.H. BIZLEY

Sitting on the slopes of Table Mountain — not far, perhaps, from one of those very paths where the De Beers' Chairman and founder of the Chartered Company used to ramble pensively, trying to net another 'thought' for the House — one can gaze across False Bay to the Simonsberg and Jonkershoek mountains, and know why it was that Rhodes's 'vision' and high-pitched vocabulary on the subject of the 'interior' could be so intoxicating. In the late 1890's, with Kipling visiting Groote Schuur and the debonair Dr Jameson back as large as life from his period of 'discipline' and seeking new adventures in 'Charterland', the ethos of Empire must have had a magic about it that was difficult to withstand. It would take a very anti-Romantic realism, apparently, to resist Rhodes's ample gesture across the map of Africa, or to be indifferent to the theory of British trust that was so fluently advocated by the editor of the *Cape Times.*

The subject of this article, Lieutenant-General the Right Honourable Sir William Butler, G.C.B., is remarkable for ignoring these blandishments so resolutely that the devotees of the ethos would class him permanently as an eminent nuisance, if not an actual enemy. A high-ranking and long-experienced soldier of the Queen, the author of several books that show him by no means unimaginative, he was disconcertingly thrown into the most senior position in South Africa for two memorable months, and proved there to be calmly and wryly alien to the party and even the philosophical interest represented by the Cecil Rhodes of the post-Raid years. More than that, his outlook proved so variant from Alfred Milner's (the man he briefly replaced) that he caused jaws to drop in the inner circle that the High Commissioner left behind, and eyebrows to raise throughout the 'reform' triangle, in Johannesburg, Cape Town and in London.

William Butler rubs up with South African history only briefly — in fact the Government House period lasted from November 1898 to February 1899, when he took over from Milner the rein of Governorship of the Cape Colony and High Commissionership for Southern Africa. (Milner left on leave for England on November 2nd, 1898.) Yet in his brief sojourn Butler managed to flutter the dovecotes and upset local 'balance of power' politics in a way that has given Lord Milner's apologists grist for their mill ever since, and should make him, we will claim, a permanent point of reference for any historian sizing up the forces of antagonism in this era. Before Milner left South Africa he stressed, says Cecil Headlam, editor of *The*

Milner Papers, that his replacement should be a man of 'some political sense', and the inference is obvious:— the actual appointee was nothing short of a disaster! The interest of our subject might in fact be gauged by the way this commentator continues:

> The choice fell upon this clever but erratic Irishman, who, much to Mr Chamberlain's annoyance, was appointed from the War Office without his being consulted.[1]

Butler's 'Irishness' is, of course, meant to be taken as a pertinent hint. As a matter of fact, if there *was* a consistency in this 'erratic' soldier, it was largely due to his national origins. Antagonists of Butler might mention his Irishness as the clue to his scepticism of most Westminster conceptions. But it was a heritage that determined the quickness of his observation rather than the fervour of his prejudice. Here, for instance, from Butler's *Autobiography,* is a vivid childhood recollection of a typical eviction scene in the Ireland of the 1840's — a memory that shows why his sympathies wouldn't always go with the governing class:

> On one side of the road was a ruined church, the mounds of an old graveyard, and a few of those trees which never seem to grow any larger but remained stunted and ragged deformities, nibbled by goats below and warped by storms above . . . At a signal from the sheriff the work began. The miserable inmates of the cabins were dragged out upon the road; the thatched roofs were torn down and the earthern walls battered in by crowbars . . . the screaming women, the half-naked children, the paralysed grandmother and the tottering grandfather were hauled out. It was a sight I have never forgotten.[2]

It was probably Butler's Irishness, too, that determined his choice of career. Like many a soldier of the Queen, he was a pedigreed Irish Catholic who owed it to the British army that he had any avenue at all to 'worldly status'. There was mighty little material platform for a family such as his to lever itself up on, though of 'spiritual' platform, apparently, there was plenty! As Butler records:

> The family traditions were almost as extensive as the family purse was limited. I think there was a somewhat similar antithesis of thought with us between purse and pride, not uncommon in cases of this kind — as though nature had put into old blood some antitoxin to neutralise the bacteria of poverty.[3]

Of his army career in India, Cyprus, Canada and Egypt, and of his gradual elevation through the ranks, we needn't say much, except that, from his account of this progress, we soon know we are dealing with no ordinary soldier. It comes out, for instance, in his attitude to military inspections:

> I have seldom known keener amusement than when I have had, either as a general followed by his staff, or as one of a staff following a general, to walk slowly up and down long lines of officers and men standing stiff as old ramrods, and looking straight out at an imaginary horizon of infinite remoteness.[4]

And he tells us the story of one inspection where the general

> whose name was the lugubrious one of Coffin, was, in all pomp and circumstance of feathers and unnecessary anger, inspecting the men of a battery of artillery drawn up in open formation. Suddenly stopping before a gunner who, to the eye of the ordinary observer, did not appear to differ in any marked degree from his fellow-men, the general turned to the company officer and snorted out, 'Look at that man, sir!' The officer, who always wore a large eyeglass firmly set in the triple environment of cheek, nose and eyebrow, at once directed his glassy stare full upon the man to whom his attention was called, and then slowly turned the same inscrutable glance upon the face of the inspecting general; but he carefully refrained from making any observation whatever. The vacuous stare through the glass and the silence that accompanied it were more than the general could stand. 'Is it possible, sir,' he exclaimed, 'that you can find nothing to call for observation in the appearance of that man?' The major turned his stony stare again upon the soldier, surveyed him with even closer scrutiny than before, and then quietly observed, 'Well, sir, now that you have particularly called my attention to this man, I do see that he bears a rather strong resemblance to an old maiden aunt of mine who lived at Cheltenham when I was a boy.'[5]

Suffice it to say that it was by way of his joining Garnet Wolseley's West Coast 'Ashanti' expedition that Butler thereafter made his first visit to South Africa with Wolseley in February 1875, when the latter was briefly appointed to the governorship in Natal.

Some of Butler's comments on his stay in Natal are more typical of an army man than others; — there is for instance his appreciation of

that 'noble savage' Theophilus Shepstone, a philosopher who had also risen through the ranks:

> I enjoyed many a day's companionship with Mr Shepstone. He had lived among the Zulus from his childhood. Half the philosophers of the world have to go down from the class before they can go up to the clouds. They are like plants nurtured in a hot-house, unable to stand in the open. Shepstone had always been in the open. With him the years had drawn out the telescope of life to its full focus; he saw long distances, and moreover, the hills on the horizon had other sides for him. He had the native habit of long silences; then something would occur . . . and the silent spring of thought would begin to flow in words.[6]

For Butler, Shepstone's one mistake was to become embroiled in Bartle Frere's expansionary schemes. Indeed, so far from enthusing over the 'mania for acquisition which Lord Beaconsfield inaugurated in 1875-6', Butler notes that it plunged 'South Africa into a state of intermittent war for twenty-six years' at the end of which 'we are pretty much as we were.' Of the Lieutenant-Governor of Natal, 'a man of exceptional sense and foresight', he notes that he did not want any war with the Zulus, but had his views put aside, and of the subsequent expedition he notes that, as it approached Zululand, it provoked the typical colonial comment 'there will be no fighting . . . The Zulus are too good-natured'![7]

An acquaintance made before leaving for Cyprus (Garnet Wolseley and his staff were transferred just before the Zulu War broke out) gives us another clue as to the direction of Butler's sympathies. This was the itinerant historian James Anthony Froude, now on 'Confederation' research for Lord Carnarvon, and to whom Butler was introduced at Government House in Pietermaritzburg, 'at the foot of the slope that led up to Fort Napier and the Zwart Kop.' Butler reports 'an evening of pleasant intercourse round the general's table', and one might predict that he would be a reluctant anti-Boer from his account of the conversation:

> I think that if Mr Froude honoured me with a larger share of his conversation than that which he gave to my companions it was because being Irish and Catholic I presented, perhaps, a wider target for his shots than they did. His heart was set in Kerry, and I have an idea that it was by the lessons he had learned in the study of Tudor and Stuart times in that part of Ireland that his views of the Dutch question in South Africa had been coloured and even moulded.[8]

But it wasn't only an Irish past that gave Butler the wide range of sympathies that made him an ideal table-companion at Government House. If he was cast in the mould of the nineteenth-century British Army, he had also visited North America in his course of duties, and come under the spell of the urgency and the vitality of the transcontinental impulse as he observed it both in Canada and the United States. Nothing tempted him so much to quit Her Majesty's arms as his posting in Canada where

> all the throbbing life that one saw everywhere, on road and river, in the cities, on the plains: this great march that was forever going on — all seemed to call with irresistible voice to throw in one's little lot into the movement.[9]

He recounts the part he played in the Red River expedition of 1870, and in the middle of it can hardly help himself exclaiming 'This America was a great mind-stretcher.' The effect, we will contend, comes out in the way he reports men and events in South Africa. It is there for instance in a passing comment on the relation of Bishop Colenso to the colonists in Natal — a sympathetic one, but which doesn't entirely exonerate His Lordship:

> Another friend met at that time in Natal was Dr Colenso, a brave and devoted soldier fighting an uphill battle against the greeds and cruelties of man. He was not in touch with the majority of his fellow-colonists in those days, for causes which will be familiar to readers of Nathaniel Hawthorne fifty years ago, or of Olive Schreiner in our own time. When you cut down the forest or clear the brushwood in a new colony, the first crop that springs from the soil has many weeds in it. It is inevitable that it should be so; perhaps it is even necessary. The man who doesn't know how much he doesn't know may have his uses in a new land . . .[10]

It's as though Butler, sensing the distinction of Colenso compared with the society about him, knows nevertheless that, 'ecologically' speaking, the Bishop would have felt an alien ecclesiast in much of the New World.

Butler returned to Natal, still on Wolseley's staff, in the final phase of the Zulu War. As assistant Adjutant-General he was the chief commissariat officer in Durban, where he spent most of his time in a stifling office of corrugated iron. Even from this vantage-point we find those flashes of vivid description in his memoirs that plead the authenticity of his overall experience. Consider, for instance, his feeling for light, — as accurate in the tropics as it is in his sketches of the wintry North-West. The scene is that of the funeral procession for

the Prince Imperial, that darling of the troops who had captivated Butler but a month previously at Government House in Pietermaritzburg. As the senior Catholic officer in Durban, it was Butler's task to prepare the chapel for the dead Prince:

> I think that the scene as the funeral cortège wound down the Berea Hill towards Durban was the saddest but the most impressive sight I had ever witnessed. It was the sunset hour; the eastern slope of the Berea was in shadow, but the town beneath, the ships in the roadstead, and the deep blue Indian Ocean beyond the white line of shore were all in dazzling light. The regiments that had gone up country had left their bands on the coast, and, one after the other, these took up the great March of the Dead, until the twilight, moving eastward to the sea, seemed to be marching with us as we went. Night had all but closed when we carried the coffin into the little Catholic church at the base of the Berea Hill.
>
> I could not get any money from the State or from the Colony, but the people of Durban readily answered my appeal; and, though we had only twenty-four hours' notice, the church was entirely hung in black cloth, violets were in profusion, and many wax lights stood round the violet-covered bier upon which the coffin lay. A few French nuns prayed by the dead, relieving each other at intervals through the night ...[11]

After the war, Butler made two visits of the sort of antithesis that would attract a man of lively curiosity. One was to Bartle Frere, whom he found 'feeble and broken' but adamant that he hadn't had any alternatives. The other was to Cetewayo himself! It's a small incident, but it surely confirms our sense of Butler's quality. The visit was occasioned by a request from the warden of the garrison prison at Cape Town. Bundles of green rushes were needed for the royal prisoner, so that a traditional mat could be made for him to sleep on:

> I sent into Zululand, through Mr Grant, a true friend of the Zulus, and I soon had three large bundles of green rushes to take with me to Cape Town ... The first thing I did on arrival was to get the bundles on to the top of a four-wheeled cab and drive to the castle. Everything leaving the docks was subject to duty; but as rushes were not in the taxable category, the gatekeeper had to let me through free. I was soon in the room wherein the unfortunate Cetewayo was kept. He was delighted to get this little bit of his beloved Zululand in his dreary four-walled prison. It was the same as putting a bit of green sod into the cage of a lark; only the

> unfortunate Zulu king wept when he saw these reminders of his old home and he said to the interpreter as he shook my hand, 'Say to him that he has brought sleep to me: now I can rest at night.'[12]

Evidence like this must suggest, then, that the War Office didn't make such an unfounded choice when, in 1898, it was called upon to provide at the Cape the traditional army stand-in for a civic official on leave, and came up with William Butler. But of course the War Office candidate was inevitably to be compared with the brilliant Oxford scholar and Civil Servant whom he replaced, and so some remarks are necessary on Butler's adequacy for the job. T.R.H. Davenport, in his book on the Afrikaner Bond, which certainly has no Milnerite axe to grind, says characteristically of the new locum:

> Like Milner, Butler may have been too set in his opinions, and he admitted that his impression of Rhodes was not based on personal acquaintance. But if he lacked Milner's intellect, he outweighed him in South African experience.[13]

The counter-balancing of 'experience' and 'intellect' here spurs us to make a defensive point. To weigh the Oxford man and the quixotic soldier in the scale of civil government would seem to be very much to the advantage of Milner. But what *is* intelligence, after all, if it is less and less able to imbibe fresh experience, or if, in the diplomatic world, it can no longer tell the difference when it has become the victim of invisible pressures? Butler's memoirs flash with detail and a sense of event such as is missing, we would judge, from the letters and diaries that make up *The Milner Papers.* There is a certain laconic New World edge to Butler's observations that prevents his becoming the instrument of a 'systematic' line of thought. We aren't out to make an exaggerated claim for our man! — Butler wasn't one to provide an 'alternate philosophy' on South Africa. Yet in terms of the vast retrospect that we now command, it would seem that his instinct equipped him better than the gloomy High Commissioner, whose sense of duty was intensified by his distaste for his environment, and who, though brilliantly able to analyse Rhodes's 'game', wasn't proof against the pull of its vortex.

Most biographers of Milner treat Butler's accession to the High Commissionership with an aghast sense of the ludicrous. Here for instance is Edward Crankshaw on the new 'locum' at the Cape, in his book *The Forsaken Idea:*

> He was an Irishman, brilliant and charming.
> (i.e. as untrustworthy a commodity as the Queen could provide!)

> He was also, as was generally known, an ardent sympathiser with any anti-British cause he could find. Already, earlier in South Africa, and again in Egypt, he had been at the centre of anti-British intrigues, while officially representing the Queen.[14]

If this were 'generally known' as this author claims, it certainly was an odd appointment, and must make us wonder why Butler wasn't simply court-martialled as an obvious traitor. Milner's biographers are often more unfair than Milner himself, who — though exasperated with the man — never accused him of disloyalty. Butler had showed in his *Life of General Colley* that, no matter how mistaken he thought the policy that had led to his friend's death at Majuba, Colley's story was still a valid one, since he put duty and gallantry first as the basis of soldierly action. But the Egyptian case is more significant. In Egypt, the officer who courageously risked the charge of insubordination was in fact one who made a lone personal protest against the processes of penal retribution as were practised by the military court that was set up after the defeat of the Arabi, and by which court the Arabi himself was in fact sentenced to death. Butler's complaint soon found alliance, and eventually was upheld by the Gladstone government as establishing a very principle of military jurisdiction.

For all that, Edward Crankshaw is worth quoting! Like Milner himself (who, after all, had some right to require that his replacement be a man of 'like mind') he can't entirely resist Butler:

> His conduct was invariably from the best of motives; for he too, in his way, may be said to have been before his time. He believed that all wars were deliberately fomented for their own nefarious ends by big business and high finance. The only thing that is not clear is why, believing this, he went on being a soldier . . .[15]

Was it possible, this author seems to ask, that the odd mixture of old-world ethics and new-world analysis could be fostered in the ranks of the Queen's army!? If Crankshaw does put his finger on an enigma in William Butler, it is why, with his apparent incongruency in the world of the 1890's, he could sum it up in so twentieth-century a manner.

But let us follow the sequence of the locum's misdemeanours as they occurred. The first public act that showed Butler's colours was his Christmas speech in Grahamstown, one that he remembers composing on the journey up from Cape Town.

> It was a long journey, some forty-four hours, but I would have had it longer. In old days I had never tired of South

> Africa outside its towns and cities. It was the same with me still. I saw again with pleasure the hot blazing wastes of the karroo, the great plains of the upper plateaux, the far-apart river valleys with their yellow streams, the green mimosa fringings, the huge table-topped hills, with glimpses beyond those hills of blue mountain ranges, and over all that wondrous sky, with its atmosphere of arm-stretching and lung-expanding freedom, the glory of space everywhere visible. Well, it was worth coming all those miles of ocean, and finding oneself condemned to the desk of a thankless office, just to see it all once again.[16]

Perhaps it was this sensation that inspired the speech that followed, — a speech that was to raise doubts amongst the 'constitutionalists', and confirm the suspicions of the editor of the *Cape Times*. In a famous (or infamous) formulation, Butler said:

> South Africa, in my opinion, does not need a surgical operation; she needs peace, progress, and the development which is only possible through the union of many hearts and the labour of many hands . . .[17]

The analogy with a 'surgical operation' is a striking one. If it was felt to be alarmist and excessive at the time, we, with the advantage of hindsight, can hardly feel it to have been inappropriate. South Africa was to be riven with war within the year, and a war, at that, that put the country on the dialectical knife-edge that has dogged it ever since, bringing in its wake a long chain of national reactions. What in one light is often called 'the last of the gentleman's wars' was, in another, the war that saw the scorched-earth techniques, the transhipment of prisoners and the concentration camps that were all-too prophetic of wars to come. It was the war that gave an inorganic thrust to our history and ensured the sort of bitter cultural reaction such as makes Butler's analogy all too just.

But the major 'event' during Butler's tenure, and the one that kept Pretoria-Whitehall relations distinctly on the boil, was the 'Edgar' affair. It will be our argument that Butler's estimate of this episode (he called it a 'drunken brawl') was essentially more accurate than that of his superiors. For Cecil Headlam, the more-than-committed editor of *The Milner Papers,* it was the 'spark which caused the final explosion in the highly-charged political atmosphere in the Transvaal.'[18] So it is not surprising that there are circumstantial differences in the way Headlam and Butler sketch the 'Edgar' incident. Here is Headlam's version:

> Edgar had knocked down a man who had insulted him as he

> was returning home at midnight. Four policemen thereupon broke into his house without a warrant, and one of them, Constable Jones, shot him dead. Evidence was conflicting as to whether Edgar had offered any resistance. Jones was charged with manslaughter ... (and) rightly or wrongly, was acquitted.[19]

This was the squalid incident that was seized upon by the South African League in Johannesburg, thence in Cape Town, and soon by their correspondents in London. For those who were playing 'the waiting game' (Joseph Chamberlain's version of Rhodes's favourite pastime) the 'Edgar' incident caused a moral indignation that was not unmixed with a certain opportune glee. We find it in a letter from Chamberlain to Milner:

> The 'Edgar' affair may be very important and give us the right of remonstrance and action ... which we have not hitherto had.[20]

And it is undoubtedly there in a letter of Milner's to Lord Selbourne, the Secretary of State:

> It is a shocking story which makes one's blood boil. But we are used here now to seeing British subjects treated with injustice in the Transvaal. This is only a rather extreme case, not unfortunately extreme enough to justify by itself any tremendous measures, but undoubtedly a thing to be well noted up and kept in reserve.[21]

Milner's 'not unfortunately extreme enough' surely concedes a recognition of the true size of the 'Edgar' affair. It shows also his tendency to measure such episodes by their usefulness for a larger strategy. It would hardly have rated as an 'international' incident if it had occurred in Sydney, or in Cairo, or in San Francisco, and we must wonder whether Chamberlain and Milner between them had the necessary diplomatic detachment to put it in perspective.

Be that as it may, Butler's unfluttered neutrality over the 'Edgar' affair seemed to Chamberlain an inexcusable flippancy. The offensive tone was no doubt that which we can still find his memoirs:

> A man of British nationality had been shot by a policeman in a midnight brawl in a low quarter of Johannesburg. The man's name was Edgar; the man who fired the shot which killed him was named Jones. Edgar had already knocked another Englishman to pieces, maltreating him to such an extent that he soon after died of his wounds ...

(This detail is not mentioned in Headlam's account!)

> ... Had this drunken brawl occurred in any other city in the world out of the Transvaal it would have occasioned no excitement outside of the people immediately concerned in it. The time, after midnight; a drunken brawl; a man left dead, or mortally hurt, in the street; his assailant is a fugitive in a house. The police are called for; the fugitive is pursued; a door is broken open; the fugitive shows fight; a shot is fired; the man is killed. The policeman is arrested and charged next morning with culpable homicide. On this foundation the South African League seized with avidity, and built upon it a huge international question. Indignation meetings were immediately organised; a petition to the Queen was prepared; all the wires were pulled at once. Telegrams, cablegrams, letters and despatches flew like leaves in a November storm. All the newspapers in Mr Rhodes's interest in South Africa double-headed their types. So well had the organisation been arranged, that the so-called petition to the Queen had already appeared in sensational type in Mr G---'s newspaper, and the London journals were in receipt of sensational cablegrams from South Africa, before the meeting had been even held which was to denounce the slaying of an unoffending citizen ...[22]

In a telegram to Chamberlain of 14th January 1899, Butler summarised the 'Edgar' affair in a way that confirmed all his overlord's doubts. Claiming that it was

> easy enough to see that the present agitation in Johannesburg is a prepared business,

he added

> it is needless to indicate the original train layers: they are nearer to you than me.[23]

Not surprisingly he received a reply from Chamberlain 'couched in almost rude language', insisting that the Edgar case was 'an outrage of the grossest character,' and requiring explanation of him for not taking it seriously.

Butler's spirited response, in turn, proved to be his last communication with Whitehall before Milner returned. His telegram of the twenty-first of January is an excellent illustration of his unusually independent and (we would say) sociologically advanced way of looking at things. It is described by Headlam as a 'violent

attack upon Johannesburg capitalists', so we had better anticipate censure and take time to ask whether Butler's background had equipped him only to look upon the stock-exchange capitals of the world with ungovernable prejudice.

An incident in his life pertinent to this question (and which shows him more truly a 'man of the world' than his critics were inclined to allow) took the shape of an extension of leave he applied for back in 1871, when he was still posted in Canada. Butler applied for this for the characteristic reason that he wanted to travel to France, and study there the military situation that had brought about the defeat of Louis Napoleon. Reaching the French capital, this unusually inquisitive officer discovered that a civil war, identifying itself as a proletarian revolution, had broken out in the boulevards, and that the 'reds', at the time of his appearance, were retreating to the north-east of the city. If Butler didn't have the 'analytical powers' of a highly-trained mind, there is something all the more distinctive about the way he now badgered the German garrison to let him get to the heart of the civil strife. He obviously figured that a 'class' war within a 'national' war was a most significant nineteenth-century cameo. Was it because of the scenes that he now saw in Paris that he was inclined to be unresponsive to appeals from Johannesburg at a later date?

> What a strange sight this was ... German officers watching the bombardment of Paris by France, smoking, spitting, and laughing as they watched! ... Presently we could see movement and commotion going on far down the broad avenue towards Paris. Troops were advancing up the roadway between the elm-trees... Behind these came a great straggling band of Communist prisoners, men, women, and children, ragged, fierce, powder-marked, streaming with perspiration; such people as I had never seen before and have never seen since; faces at the last gasp of exhaustion; faces that looked scornfully at the howling mob of bourgeois, that shouting, racing crowd which ran under the elms on either side and ran out of the cafés, throwing vile epithets over the heads of the soldiers. At the end of the dismal column came the carts with the wounded. In one of these there sat, bolt upright, a woman in the prime of life ... I saw the figure against the background of the great chateau as the terrible cortège filed away into the open space before the palace. There it all was, grouped, set, framed, and told as never pen could write it, nor picture paint it. Two hundred years of French history were there ...[24]

Reviewing this text, we may surely conclude that it stems from an observant rather than a theoretical cast of mind.

By one of those quirks of fate that must make the interested historian rejoice in the 'counterpoint' of history, another personage mightily impressed by what he saw of the Franco-Prussian War was none other than Alfred Milner! Before entering Oxford he accompanied his father on a walking-tour in the vicinity of Strasbourg, from which they had a clear view of the famous siege of 1870. The moral engraved on the young Milner's mind was rather different, though, from the one Butler took away with him — he averred that the direst consequences must follow if a State were ever caught off-guard or unarmed. The two differing reactions of the chief characters of our story to one event might go a long way to explaining the differences on 'policy' between them in 1899.[25] Butler's reaction, however, sizes up nicely how the sympathies of a traveller-soldier might elude the persons and the 'era' of the middle-class. That alone, however, would hardly account for the strangely 'contemporary' flavour of Butler's telegram to Chamberlain some twenty-eight years later.

Now it is the vocabulary of this telegram that Headlam finds so inappropriate, amounting, for him, to a 'violent attack on Johannesburg capitalists'.[25] Is that, though, the tone or the content of the telegram as we read it? I may perhaps offer here my own experience, and recall that, paging through the *Milner Papers,* and having never encountered William Butler as a South African 'fact', it was this piece that brought me up with a jolt. The commentary didn't square with what the telegam said! More than that, the military man's report had a sociological 'scalpel' to it such as one wouldn't expect from a bluff Victorian:

> Telegram to Mr Chamberlain.
> 21/1/99. The Johannesburg situation appears to be as follows. The Capitalists are busily engaged in bulling and bearing, having realised certainty of enormous gold values at lower level mines. These plans demand local unrest from one side as useful depreciatory factor. Hence the recent disturbances. Hence also the use of the organisation of the South African League, and of the elements of disorder and discontent which exist in Johannesburg. The holders of house and shop property, on the other hand, resent unrest, as it depreciates their values and prevents their properties from being equally improved by correspondent boom in stocks, consequent on immense gold output. Hence the counter-agitation. The support, open or secret, of Dutch people, and possibly of Dutch officials who support

> opposition to League, must be added to this last class. The meeting last Saturday appears to have been broken up by Boers and cosmopolitan opponents of the League acting jointly. From the furniture only having suffered, though papers report crowbars used, it would appear that no real fighting spirit existed on either side. Nevertheless, above synopsis of situation will show that elements of danger exist. The South African League, though well organised, is crude in its methods and apparent in its machinery. There appears to be in it here, or in Johannesburg, no person of note or mental consequence. Dodd I cannot place; but Webb appears to be a high authority on questions of the prize ring . . .[26]

For Butler, the 'drama' in the Transvaal was not between Johannesburg and Pretoria, but within Johannesburg itself, where there was stuff enough for a text by Stendahl! Parts of this analysis could come from the pages of St Simon or Max Weber, and one can imagine what dumbfounding effect it must have had back in Chamberlain's office. That formidable scholar, Alfred Milner, who had publicly lectured on Karl Marx when the latter was still alive in Finsbury, had apparently never thought of Johannesburg in these terms. No wonder Butler was to be alternately found 'violent' or 'Gilbertian'! Milner and Chamberlain always thought of the Uitlanders as speaking with one voice, and didn't question that there might be 'class' complexity endemic to a mining community. (The Jameson Raid, incidentally, would vindicate a degree of 'behavioural' analysis of Johannesburg — what with the large mineowners of the time washing their hands of the reformers, and the reformers themselves so little united that, as Mark Twain observed, when the Raid was announced, the trains for Natal were crammed full hours before their departure!)[27]

We won't deny that there is a certain 'caste' scorn in Butler's view, nor will we claim that he grasped all sides of the Uitlander predicament. But as a matter of fact even *The Milner Papers* will provide evidence that the Johannesburg-based 'League' was all too ready to cry 'Wolf'. At times this provoked in Milner a class-distaste that was quite unrelieved by Butler's analytical zest. It comes out in his handling of the 'dynamite' monopoly, for instance. Kruger's iron hand on the dynamite franchise was to prove one of Milner's major complaints against the Transvaal. Yet even on such a contentious issue, he had to admit that he didn't know whether he represented a popular voice:

> Meantime there is the d---d dynamite monopoly down on us in severe form. I hate touching it, still I hardly see how we

> can allow the S.A.R. to renew it for 15 years sub silentio! What puzzles me in the matter is that the mining people are apparently quite quiescent. They are, of course, powerless, but they generally shriek loud enough over much smaller grievances. I never like fighting their battles unless they will do whatever they can for themselves. I look at the papers every day to see whether there is any news of Johannesburg taking an interest in the matter. Never a word. . . .[28]

The exasperation apparent in that 'shriek loud enough' is surely a hint that Milner recognised at times only too well the quality of the element that was the chief lever in his diplomatic machinery.

In the meantime, for Butler at Government House, it was the Cape link in the 'reform' triangle that now began to oppress him with hints and glances and editorial innuendos. Was it for ecological reasons that clever minds in a colonial climate needed desperately to feel themselves all part of a gigantic manoeuvre!? That was the excuse at any rate that Butler found for the strange 'diplomat's disease' that now began to reach through to his staff!:

> South Africa is a land of strange contradictions. Under its gorgeous sunshine and the alternately depressing and exhilarating influence of its atmosphere, the European mind seems to be subject to sudden outbursts of confidential communicativeness.[29]

And he cites an instance where the editor of the *Cape Times* came into possession of information that could only have been copied from his desk.

Now Butler was to be himself censured for unwarranted 'communicativeness' after the 'Edgar' affair, because he consulted with the Schreiner ministry at the Cape in order to submit, along with his correspondence to London, what Headlam calls 'an expression of opinion which echoed both his sentiments and his words'. It took the form of a letter in which the Schreiner cabinet, declaring an 'earnest desire to do all in their power to aid and further a policy of peaceful progress throughout South Africa,' criticised the League for seizing every possible occasion 'to magnify into great events minor incidents when occurring in the South African Republic . . .'[30] This enclosure of Butler's provokes from Headlam the typically excessive comment:

> The effect of Sir William Butler's championship of the Transvaal could only encourage Dopperdom to persist in its blind negation of reform.[31]

There is surely something paranoiac in this reaction. To refuse to

countenance the 'Edgar' protest was hardly equivalent to 'championing' the Transvaal. And it would take an unsympathetic observer indeed to equate the sentiments of the Schreiner ministry with 'Dopperdom'. Schreiner's was a 'Bond' ministry, it is true, but this dismissive comment exhibits the unforgiveable tendency, both in Milner and his apologists, to link the Bond with an ultra-Republican voice, and to believe that it formed part of a widespread drive for Dutch dominion. When one recognises the care that Schreiner took to form a 'centre' ministry (most members in fact not belonging to the Bond at all)[32] one is bound to judge this as one of Milner's chief failings. The High Commissioner might declare that

> ...a certain section of the press, and not in the Transvaal only, preaches openly and constantly the doctrine of a Republic embracing all South Africa ...[33]

thus implying that the Bond was in cahoots with Kruger, and a Kruger at that who had opted for South African dominion. What is historically regrettable, though, is that he should thereafter have persuaded Whitehall that a few flames made a whole fire. The effect of this was to permanently weaken the mediating ability of the Cape-centred 'Bond'. That Milner's assumption was unwarranted is ably shown by T.R.H. Davenport:

> ...If the tone of Colonial Dutch journalism is considered as a whole ... the charge must be dismissed as ludicrous. Neither *Ons Land,* nor *Onze Courant,* nor *Het Oosten,* the three most influential Bond papers in the Colony, either stimulated disaffection or indulged in republican propaganda of the kind suggested by Milner. They devoted extraordinarily little editorial space to the Transvaal.[34]

On February 14th, 1899, Butler's brief tenure of highest office came to an end, and it must in all fairness be said of Milner that he didn't return to South Africa bearing any sort of personal rancour or resentment towards him. In fact he writes to one friend that he finds a certain Gilbertian flavour to Butler's 'idiotic proceedings'. (To find his locum 'out-Krugering Kruger', though, is typically excessive. No doubt Butler confirmed the 'Gilbertian' image when he told Milner, as he handed over the keys, that the only thing he envied him were the books in his library!) We can't help noticing, on this score, an interesting ambiguity in Milner's reactions to Butler. Perhaps he didn't quite know how to take him. He ends the letter just cited:

> P.S. Don't think that Butler is a bad fellow. He is hasty and

> rhetorical, fearfully deficient in judgement. But he is well-meaning enough and a most agreeable companion.[35]

Before the lonely High Commissioner could taste more of this agreeable company, though, Sir William had to transfer to what now became his real function, that of Commander of Her Majesty's forces in South Africa.

The final phase of Butler's stay in South Africa moved to its inevitable end as it became more and more obvious to Milner, and thereafter to Chamberlain, that 'the General' was not the man to support wholeheartedly a programme for British self-assertion in the sub-continent. Butler's 'variant' thinking could never be identified as rank disobedience, but his interpretation of policy for the remainder of his stay in 1899 could only be, for them, a political stumbling-block.

In any account of the build-up to the Anglo-Boer war, commentators will vary in their judgment as to which side was in reaction to which, or which, in the rapid tennis-ball effect, might be said to have been the 'aggressor', and which the 'defender'. Butler was in no doubt that the Jameson Raid had produced an understandable alarm in the Transvaal, and he reviewed the Republic's armament measures of 1897-1898 in the pattern of legitimate defence rather than that of ideological threat. For Cecil Headlam, summarising what we might call the Milner viewpoint, such an estimate is not conceded:

> The political attitude of the Boers and their continuous arming had, of course, compelled the War Office to consider the possibility of war in the futue.[36]

Within a certain section of the War Office (and Butler has some piquant descriptions of the Pall Mall buildings where one section so easily lost touch with another) a scheme was drawn up that proposed

> the occupation of advanced positions both in Natal and the Cape Colony, and emphasised the necessity, in the case of war, of seizing the bridges over the Orange River, and of Van Reenen's Pass ... General Butler determined not only to do nothing of the kind, but also to say nothing about the plan of defence upon which he decided.[37]

Put like that, Butler's reaction sounds like rank insubordination such as would hardly have been tolerated, one would have thought, by his superiors in London. The picture only gets clearer as we move deeper into the strange twilight world of 'suggestion' and 'scheming' that was the mode of Imperialism at this time, and which now began to press in on Butler, despite the fact that his most consistent 'official'

instruction was that there would be no further troop increases in South Africa. It was not surprising that he should feel, with schemes like this pressed upon him, that the 'Raid' mentality hadn't been ousted after all, and that, if anything, it was coming back into force. Again and again he insisted that nothing would confirm the suspicions of the Transvaal more than the deployment of British troops on its border. It was not a point to be taken, though, by the sort of mind for whom it was not the Transvaal's 'turn' to be suspicious in the first place. Butler estimated that if he ever did have to push his small force across that border,

> their capture or annihilation by even small bodies of active mounted riflemen must have been the work of a few hours. There were to be no supports behind these troops, which were thus, as it were, shot into hostile space, having behind them military voids many hundreds of miles in length, peopled by a strong and active population of Dutch farmers, the cousins and brothers of the men who lived beyond these frontiers.[38]

Back in the War Office, certain academic planners were apparently becoming obsessed with the concept that the frontier was an 'absolute' thing, and Butler had to insist that 'these natural features did not affect the population' which 'on both sides the Orange River, and in a lesser degree in Natal, was composed of similar elements.' It seemed that it was not only the lesson of the Raid, but the lesson of Majuba that had not yet been learned.

For a man with a reputation for long brooding and 'knowing his own mind' like Milner, it seems odd that he should at this stage have come under the influence of certain odd-ball fly-abouts like one Mr Sampson, who now arrived at his doorstep full of excited plans for ringing the Republics, and proposing that Tuli in Rhodesia should be the base for a raid into the Transvaal. So impressed was Milner that he decided that Sampson should meet his General, and, of course, the latter could only muster the most tepid response. Milner put it down to the fact that

> the General himself is unfortunately quite out of sympathy with my policy. No doubt he is making all strictly military preparations, but cordial co-operation between us is impossible. This is a great source of weakness. At this present moment I am trying hard, but so far in vain, to get him to interest himself in the possibility of a diversion from the side of Rhodesia (of course, only in the case of war actually having broken out). He seems to think I am planning another Jameson Raid, and like a thorough

> Bondsman sees Rhodes and the Chartered Company behind every bush.[39]

Did Milner really believe that a gallivant like Sampson would be a convincing intermediary for a commanding officer who was starved of any official instruction as to policy in South Africa!? The idea of dominating a frontier of some fourteen hundred miles with a small force of seven to eight thousand men was, as Butler said, 'too silly for official language to deal with calmly.'[40] Yet in his final interview with Milner, which more or less ushered in his resignation, this coolness towards Sampson was cited by the High Commissioner as a reason for his failing confidence.

On the 10th of May Milner once again asked Butler whether

> if it were necessary to bring pressure to bear upon the Transvaal Government, anything could be done by moving troops in Natal forward to the frontier?[41]

Butler must have exasperated his superior by laughing openly at the idea, and offering the judgment that it would require forty thousand men to pose any sort of threat (and that was the figure he gave on the spur of the moment — he later put it at a much higher figure). Relations between the two men never became so strained, it must be insisted, that Milner ever saw point to doubt Butler's loyalty. What confounded him was his General's inability to catch the nuance of the times, and to switch over to the mentality of tactical net-spreading. He made this clear in a letter to Chamberlain:

> One word in conclusion. The General. He is too awful. He has, I believe, made his military preparations all right, but beyond that I cannot get him to make the least move . . . There are a hundred things, outside his absolute duty, which he ought to be thinking of.[42]

What is revealed here is the interesting historical point that 'the General' never received instruction, it would seem, as to what his 'absolute duty' was in the overall South African picture. The High Commissioner's remarks expose a breakdown of communication that obviously ran through Whitehall itself, and thereafter through Pall Mall, depending how top officials interpreted 'Empire', or had been seized by its 'zeitgeist.' To such a degree did this ambiguity cloud all War Office correspondence that Redvers Buller told the Under-Secretary for War in July 1899 that if his telegrams to South Africa were ever published he would be hanged![43] But what is generally evident is that no official instruction ever went out that a

defensive posture should be quitted, and that General Butler stolidly went his own way:

> . . . without a clear and explicit mandate for movement, my merry men — some seven thousand all told — would stay where they were.

Or, to put it in real 'blarney':

> If Caesar, seated in Pall Mall, told me to move, action would be taken at once; but the orders must be Caesar's and not Cecil's.[44]

An unfair dig, no doubt! — but Butler obviously felt himself thrust up against a whole sub-culture, a way of talking (or rather, of not talking) that warranted such a sally.

As a matter of fact, none knew better than he how Milner's desire to 'influence' Boer opinion could go awry. It had already been tried, one afternoon just outside Ladysmith! Butler's account of the demonstration is altogether one of his most entertaining pages:

> The new garrison was strong in one arm — artillery. It had an entire brigade division of eighteen field guns of the most recent pattern. It was, of course, expected that this strong unit would impress the minds of the Boer farmers around Ladysmith, as well as those in the Orange Free State, from the frontiers of which Ladysmith was in sight twenty miles away. The British officer and the Boer farmer have always been by nature and inclination good friends. Both were open-air sportsmen, neither belonged to what is known as the shopkeeping class. Within a few weeks of the establishment of Ladysmith as a military garrison at the door of the Free State friendly feelings were established between the farmers and the officers; the latter were asked to shoot bucks on the surrounding farms, the farmer came freely to see the officer. It was thought a good idea that the Boer visitors should see the power of the new weapon — the destructive nature of its projectiles at long ranges — for they would thus be impressed by the hopelessness of trying conclusions with their rifles against such powerful artillery weapons.
>
> The day came. The eighteen breech-loading guns were drawn up outside the camp at Ladysmith facing a well-known ridge called Waggon Hill, from which the firing point was distant about three thousand yards. Someone had conceived a bright idea: it was to buy a number of Kaffir

> goats from a neighbouring kraal and picket these animals on Waggon Hill. The annihilation of these goats under shrapnel fire at this long range would no doubt add immensely to the lesson which the Boer farmers were about to learn. All this had been arranged to everybody's satisfaction. Goats and guns were in position, the guests and the gunners were assembled, everything was ready. Fire began. Men with binoculars averred that they could see signs of perturbation among the goats; all the shrapnel burst at or over the hill. After twenty minutes the 'cease fire' sounded. The visitors and their hosts mounted and rode to Waggon Hill. As they neared it some goats could be discerned still in being; a few, perhaps, were alive; twenty had been brought for the trial. The order was given to count the dead. Lo! a miracle had occurred: there were no dead; twenty-two goats were found alive on the hill! Two newly-born kids were among them; one old nanny-goat was still showing signs of maternal excitement, but even she and her premature twins were doing well . . .[45]

When one reviews the urbanity and the articulateness of this piece it seems all the more telling that the General and the High Commissioner couldn't have more in common. As we have said, Milner never had cause for any *direct* complaint of Butler. In a long letter to Lord Selbourne, Under-Secretary for the Colonies, he says of him:

> He has behaved perfectly well towards me since my return.[46]

In terms of our general argument we would judge, therefore, that the declining relation between the two men is an index of the way a certain cultural in-talk and a concealed diplomatic subtlety spread through the ranks of the Imperial faction as they manoeuvred towards war. The nuance of this language was for the ears of the converted only — what Milner essentially complained of was that Butler had an unconverted ear. He reported of him, in phrases worthy of the Court of Denmark:

> I do not mean that he refuses to answer questions or to give effect to any wishes I express. He answers what I absolutely and point-blank ask and he does what I absolutely request. But there is no freedom of communication between him and me.[47]

There couldn't be better definition that the conflict was between two different styles or even philosophies of communication.

The final showdown, conducted, as always, with the restraint

fitting between servants of Her Majesty, came with yet another interview on the 21st June, only a few months, as it turned out, before the actual outbreak of war. Butler found Milner on this occasion already in that confident frame of mind that was to sustain itself right through to the outbreak of hostilities. (It is typified for example in a letter that the High Commissioner wrote to Chamberlain as late as 16th October:

> I do not myself believe that there is much chance of either republic attacking us ... there might be a dash into the Colony, Natal is, I think, too strong to tempt them ...[48]

At the interview with Butler it came to the fore with yet another suggestion that the General set about preparing a 'Tuli'-type raid, and it met once again with a negative response. 'The General' would not be party to a diversion that could have such colossal consequences:

> 'It would be said afterwards', I remarked, 'that by my action and through my foolish disregard of facts I had precipitated a conflict before we were prepared for it; perhaps brought on a war when the Home Government desired peace'.

What *did* the Home Government want? What would its chief representative in South Africa say to this riposte? Something, perhaps, that they were reluctant to put into words? That, at any rate, is what Milner's quick response suggests:

> He caught at this. 'It can never be said, Sir William Butler, that *you* precipitated a conflict with the Dutch.' 'I understand your meaning,' I said; 'there can be no further use in my continuing the interview.'[49]

The verbal stratagem that the High Commissioner offered his General here was the very model, it seems, for the diplomatic stratagem that he was at present intent on, one that must find a *casus belli* yet take no aggressive role. Butler was shrewd enough to see the game, and also not to play it! It was a game he had already identified in a letter to a friend:

> The game, for it is, I believe, a game, and not a policy, still less a lofty purpose, is now directed solely to one end — a constant effort to bring the Government ship into stormy weather ...[50]

Eventually, as an old soldier knows, history catches up with an attempt 'by indirections to find directions out'! And as it was, the

'Raid mentality' (as Butler called it) was soon to learn a sobering lesson. With the outbreak of war it became obvious that the Boers were not going to be swept away in a matter of weeks as so many predicted. They would only be defeated after long costly years, — years that would see recourse to methods more akin to those of 'total war'.

The old-world demeanour that made Butler proof against the invitation tacitly put to him in this interview needs to be remarked on. The type of mind that William Butler admired was not of the 'insinuating' or 'indirect' category. It was the sort of mind that he had encountered at a dinner-date back in 1876 in a London club, where he had been introduced to General Gordon:

> We adjourned to the smoking-room, and there the stream of thought and anecdote flowed on better than before ... He spoke in low but very distinct tones, and his voice, varying with its subject, carried to the ear a sense of pleasure in the sound similar to that which the sight of his features, lit with the light of a very ardent soul, gave to the listener's eye. I never heard human voice nor looked into any man's eye and found similar tone and glance there, nor did I ever meet a man who had equal facility for putting into words the thoughts that were in his brain. You had never to ask an explanation; the thing, whatever it might be, was at once said and done ...[51]

Twenty-three years later, Butler's regard for this ideal had in no sense dwindled. In the light of his interview with Milner, he decided that he must now go beyond his strictly military terms of reference, and seek official clarity on his political role in South Africa. To his first exploratory letter there came a long interrogative reply, giving away nothing as to policy, but requiring of him all sorts of statistics as to his munitions and defences. A change of gear in military policy seemed imminent, but the General wouldn't be told of it in so many words! The letter ended, however, with an unusual post-script, in which Butler was asked whether he himself would like to offer any comment. Taking this to be his cue, he composed a cablegram that firmly and deliberately 'gave himself away':

> You ask my observations ... They might fill many pages, but they could be summarised thus: I believe that a war between the white races, coming as a sequel to Jameson Raid and the subsequent events of last three years, would be the greatest calamity that ever occurred in South Africa.[52]

It was a bold bursting of the cloud of ambiguity, of the vagueness

and concealment that had loomed over all his correspondence with the War Office up to this point. And for it, Her Majesty's General in South Africa was firmly put in his place, and the machinery put in motion that would dismiss him altogether from the South African theatre. The chilly letter he got by return from the Secretary of State preserves well the concealment of the political by the logistical that had frustrated him all along:

> You were invited to offer observations as to suitability of War Office proposals for securing object in view, viz. increased efficiency in existing forces, not as to the general merits of policy adopted by H.M. Government.
>
> You cannot understand too clearly that, whatever your private opinions, it is your duty to be guided in all questions of policy by those who are fully aware of our views, and whom you will, of course, loyally support.[53]

Receiving this, with its typical ambiguity in a term like 'increased efficiency', Butler felt he had only one course. He requested yet another interview with Milner, and the High Commissioner now admitted openly that he had found him a hindrance on various occasions. The offer of a Home Command came swiftly, and Butler duly offered his resignation. In a particularly inhospitable jibe, the letter that accepted it added the instruction that there should be no 'demonstration' at his departure from the Cape. Jan Hofmeyr, sensing that this might be the case, paid his respects to Butler shortly before he sailed, and assured him that many of the Dutch community in Cape Town would like to have gone on board to offer their adieux, but felt that their doing so would have been misunderstood.

Back in England, Butler became an obvious scapegoat for the early British reverses in the South African war (each one amply fulfilling his own prediction). He was asked not to accompany the Queen on a festive visit to Bristol

> for fear that the violence and insult threatened against him might cause inconvenience to Her Majesty.[54]

After the war, of course, the reconstruction of events showed him in a different light. He was invited by the Liberals to stand in the election that was to see the success of Campbell-Bannerman, and would probably have accepted the offer did not the Education question alienate his sympathies as a loyal Catholic. He spent his retirement in Co. Tipperary, where he died in June 1910.

I have presented this sketch of William Butler not only to do redress to my own ignorance but to record the conviction that a man so interesting and independent should make a permanent 'point of

reference' in the review of personalities and events that led up to the Anglo-Boer War. There is perhaps a danger of one's being too enchanted with his highly verbal sense of things, and it must be admitted that if he had been stationed at the Cape as permanent High Commissioner he would have had to take a more definitive line on the Uitlander franchise question, a matter that both the brevity of his stay and the nature of his disposition privileged him not to take on.

But he exhibits quite exceptionally the difference in 'generation' in the servants of the Empire. We find the comment in one of his letters:

> I was taught as a boy ... that the patriot's road often led to the scaffold: now it leads to a house in Park Lane, a box at the opera, and a yacht in the Mediterranean.[55]

And James Molteno, recalling an encounter with Butler when the latter briefly visited South Africa after the war, illustrates for us how this soldier of the Queen could never be an Edwardian!:

> Cape Town was the centre of the universe, not only the richest town of the Empire, but the most fashionable. Despite all the efforts of Lord Kitchener, the rank, fashion and high society of London found Cape Town, in every respect, a goodly place of residence. I was dining one night with my handsome and courtly old friend, Sir William Butler, at the Mount Nelson Hotel, and, looking round the gay and brilliant scene, he remarked to me, "I see a great deal of Lady Hamilton, but little of Nelson."[56]

No doubt Butler had at times a simplistic view of things, but who will deny that Cape Town, at that moment of time, with an eye to what had happened and what was being suffered, shouldn't have been finding things quite so pleasant!

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CONSERVATIVE REFORM IN 'MIDDLEMARCH'

by CHERRY WILHELM

In November 1872, just after George Eliot had completed *Middlemarch,* she wrote to Alexander Main, her enthusiastic anthologizer:

> Do you not take great interest in the tremendous European change which is being prepared by the new attitude of Common Labour? The centre of gravity is slowly changing and will not pause because people of taste object to the disturbance of their habits.[1]

The shift of gravity she refers to was an outcome of the second Reform Bill, which Disraeli had steered through Parliament in 1867. It was one of the many successive pieces of legislation which eventually founded the modern democratic British constitution. These included the first Reform Bill of 1832, which had increased the voters for the House of Commons by 50%; Gladstone's Secret Ballot Act of 1872, which has been described as 'the real liberator of working-class power',[2] as it removed the insidious pressures operating between the classes in a public ballot; and finally Gladstone's Reform Acts of 1884-1885, which gave the vote to all adult males and secured fairer representation for the new towns.

Although George Eliot focussed *Middlemarch* rather narrowly in the three years preceding the First Reform Bill, she seems to have had this broader, gradual process in mind, to have been telescoping the slow but real extension of political rights into the temporal curve of her novel by showing its broader principle in action in all spheres: science, transport, morality, medicine, and religion. Nothing could have better vindicated her belief in the slow process of beneficial change than the way in which parliamentary reform did historically occur.

> 'One has to dwell continually on the permanent, growing influence of ideas, in spite of temporary reactions however violent, in order to get courage and perseverance for any work which lies aloof from the immediate wants of society.'[3]

By 'any work' she means artistic as well as intellectual activity. She writes to Harriet Beecher Stowe that the power of a book

> 'over the social mind, for any good, is after all due to its reception by a few appreciative natures, and is the slow result of radiation from that narrow circle ... no exquisite book

> tells properly and directly on a multitude however largely it may be spread by type and paper.'[4]

It may seem ironical that this comment should be addressed to one of the few writers whose work did have this mighty popular impact, but the word 'exquisite' provides a useful caveat. And when Eliot adds 'one must continually feel how slowly the centuries work toward the moral good of man',[5] one is placed squarely in the world of *Middlemarch.*

In a sense, these statements are characteristically Victorian: the slow extension of privileges and educational benefits, as in the scheme for 'The Diffusion of Useful Knowledge',[6] was a tenet of the times, but the mood is not quite optimistically progressive enough to be considered typical — at least not typical of those philosophers from whom Eliot is so confidently assumed to derive: Auguste Comte with his Schwärmerei for the Utopian third and positive phase of all human development, Herbert Spencer's triumphant logic-chopping to retain a throne for the Almighty against the onslaught of Science by changing his name from God to the Unknowable, or Bentham's astonishingly truncated model of human organisms readjusting their molecules and feelers for maximal gratification. George Eliot is perhaps too often thought of as a writer who served a gruelling apprenticeship translating Strauss and Feuerbach, reading Comte and Hennell, and then leaping heavily across to the novels in which she rather mechanically embodied the philosophical synthesis which her age demanded. Leslie Stephen is partly responsible for this view when he says 'She was to be the first female novelist whose inspiration came in a great degree from a philosophical creed',[7] and 'George Eliot alone came to fiction from philosophy'.[8]

Certainly, her intellectual comprehensiveness is an element in the pleasure we take in *Middlemarch,* but when she justifies herself as a novelist, she does so in terms of artistic power, which she defined as 'an instinctive perception of the varied state(s) of which the human mind is susceptible, with ability to give them out anew in intensified expression'.[9] She speaks of the subject becoming 'a complete organism';[10] she *is* comforted when she receives 'deeply affecting assurances of its *(Middlemarch's)* influence for good on individual minds',[11] but her ideal remains 'to make matter and form an inseparable truthfulness'.[12] Much superfluous stuff, she says to Burne-Jones, has been written about purpose in art:

> 'A nasty mind makes nasty art, whether for art or any other sake. And a meagre mind will bring forth what is meagre. And some effect in determining other minds there must be according to the degree of nobleness or meanness in the selection made by the artist's soul'.[13]

Curiously enough, the objection she raises to Burne-Jones's paintings is identical to the one Marxist critics are fond of levelling at *Middlemarch* — that Dorothea and Lydgate are helpless against crushing social forces. She says his art displays 'a deeper sense of the tremendous outer forces which urge us than of the inner impulses which urge us towards heroic struggle and achievement'.[14]

This struggle between inner and outer forces is expressed in *Middlemarch* in a slow process of mutual adaptation to which one might give the name 'conservative reform', and which operates with the broader political and historical process as a model and a point of reference. George Eliot knew, like Mill, Spencer, and Arnold, that some sort of reconciliation had to be effected between Religion and Science if humanity was not to be left to blankness or nihilism; she had seen in her own life the need to conserve the habits and attitudes bred by her early faith even if the doctrines had been given over; she had felt on her own pulse the need to re-channel moral ardour and spiritual craving in a worthwhile direction. She did not need to go to Comte for this message; Blake had said it before him in his trippingly blithe metres:

> Thou art a Man God is no more,
> Thy own humanity learn to adore.[15]

That might stand as a general epigraph to *Middlemarch:* the whole thrust of the novel is to erect an ethical platform on a Godless ticket, to be an Independent Candidate of a more successful kind than Mr Brooke, with his comic flounderings on the Middlemarch platform. In the formal shaping of the novel a number of analogies are set up to embody the desirable and reprehensible ways of living without God.

Eliot slyly points out her own procedure in Chapter 35, where she directs one of her satirical jabs at an audience who might object to the presentation of lower-class characters and vulgar concerns: they may then read 'low' events as parables, she says, and translate them into genteel terms. The passage is there to indicate her own sense of 'shifting the centre of gravity downwards' in the art of fiction, extending the allowable range of characters in the realistic novel, but she also makes a passing reference to 'historical parallels', which would be so valuable if only there were enough space, and she adds that they are remarkably efficient in elevating a low subject *(Mm,* p. 375). This seems remarkably tongue-in-cheek in a novel where Dorothea Brooke's two marriages (one to a Casaubon who wishes to conserve the entire past in his *Key to All Mythologies,* and the other to a man who joins the Reformist movement) might stand for the polarities of the century. Those two marriages, as successive attempts to extend and ennoble her own life, might also stand as fictional equivalents to the successive Reform Bills. The pattern is varied by

the addition of Lydgate's case, who also makes two successive attempts at love, but makes the same mistake twice, choosing first a literal and then a metaphorical killer.

There are three main analogical and interlocking areas in *Middlemarch* which demonstrate the principle of conservative reform: legal and financial, i.e. the ways in which money and property are filtered through the society of the novel; scientific, mainly medical reform, though others are present in metaphor and allusion; and moral or spiritual reform, the re-formation or re-shaping of the lives of the main characters.

The world of money and property demonstrates both conservative and reformist tendencies. Featherstone and Casaubon both use the extant legal machinery of testation to threaten and punish those fortunate enough to live on in a world without them. Both reform their wills in the interests of maximum frustration and disappointment to others. Neither is alive to see his financial weapon backfire: Stone Court *does* go to Fred Vincy after all, Ladislaw and Dorothea *do* marry, and the will designed as a curb acts as a spur to Dorothea's feeling for Will Ladislaw. Mrs Cadwallader is an aristocratic miser; Mr Brooke is a theoretical reformist but a financial conservative: fixing his tenants' living conditions causes him real agony of spirit; spending is one of the many activities in which it is wiser not to go 'too far': 'And as to being in a hurry to put money into schemes — it won't do, you know, Garth has drawn me in uncommonly with repairs, draining, that sort of thing: I'm uncommonly out of pocket with one thing or another. I must pull up' *(Mm,* p. 791).

By way of contrast, there are the characters who seek to give away money, not always from the highest motives, and not always successfully. Bulstrode makes financial offers to Will Ladislaw, Raffles and Lydgate, all as buying-off operations. Lydgate is the only honourable man who accepts, and it causes his downfall, as he loses his scientific and medical independence. Lydgate is a good instance of a man whose conservatism in one area (socially, regarding money as always freely available and women as brainless ornaments) checks his real ability to reform in another area: medical science. The death of Raffles illustrates this point with great economy: Bulstrode's gift, and the slight professional hesitation it produces in Lydgate, prevent him from making an important scientific discovery: was his progressive medication of Raffles right or wrong? The outcome of the experiment — and experiments were once his delight — is blurred for ever.

Dorothea's money is given away to better effect: she dispenses her money through the social system much as she learns to dispense affection and concern through that system. Farebrother, Lydgate and Caleb Garth are drawn into relationships with her which are financially and morally beneficial: the good preacher, the good

doctor, and the good labourer. Dorothea's investments are in people, not in manganese shares, like Featherstone's, and they are moral as well as financial. Giving is not restricted to the rich: the tiny Henrietta Noble gathers and dispenses tiny gifts to the children. She is a miniature Robin Hood, a petty criminal of a loving kind, whereas Bulstrode, who robs the poor to give to himself, buys off God, that big banker in the sky, by funding 'worthy' projects.

Many incidents in the novel serve to illustrate twisted or diseased ways of giving and receiving money: alteration of wills, deprivation of genuine heirs, blackmail, gambling, money given as a sop to the conscience, to establish a hold, to gain a favour, to smother a secret. Wrong financial relationships are analogous to wrong personal relationships, and they are determined by the same principle: the 'good' financial transaction, like the 'good' emotional or moral transaction, depends upon an act of good faith. The people who genuinely give money or gifts in the novel are animated by the same spirit as Lear and Gloucester after they have been 'made tame to fortune's blows';[16] they want to 'shake the superflux to [the poor] and show the heavens more just'.[17] This is not mealy-mouthed philanthropy. *Middlemarch* and *King Lear* arrive at strikingly similar conclusions though they aproach them from different directions. *King Lear* refracts Christian values through a pagan society; *Middlemarch* refracts nineteenth-century metaphysical scepticism through the Christian provincial society of an earlier period, but they both cut through to the 'first principle' of conduct: the 'going out of the self' necessary for a healthy relationship between the individual and the community.

There is another interesting aspect to the question of wills, property, and inheritance, some areas of which underwent reform in the nineteenth century. The disinheriting of Featherstone's own 'blood' in preference for the 'love-child' Joshua Rigg, this grafting of a comparative foreigner onto Middlemarch stock is a cruder version of the pattern in which Will Ladislaw, another 'love-child' in the sense that his mother deserted money for love, the cultured semi-foreigner, is grafted onto Middlemarch philistinism by cross-breeding. Puritanism needs to be reformed by artistic sensibility; the theme is carried much further in *Daniel Deronda,* but is embryonically there in *Middlemarch.* English blood, or birth, by which Mrs Cadwallader takes her intransigent stand, needs an influx of talent, of European cultural awareness, of red blood-corpuscles. Otherwise the exsanguine Darwinian fossils Lord Megatherium, Lord Tapir, and Lord Triton would never mutate into survivable creatures. 'Fine old-blooded idiocy' was as much in need of reform as fine old-blooded policies.

Bulstrode is the finest example in the novel of a wrong marriage between conservatism and reform: his doctrines come from theology

and his motives from self-interest; he is an unhappy alliance of the Bible and Jeremy Bentham. The stretching of George Eliot's compassion to include him is a triumph of imaginative sympathy over theoretical rejection. Bulstrode's original 'business', the unfortunate receiving-house in the London past, a physical parody of other, more valuable forms of receptivity in the novel, is opposed to Caleb Garth's 'business', by which he means honest labour. The basic discrepancy between the two kinds of business is pointed when Garth cuts his ties with Bulstrode after hearing of the sources of his wealth.

Scientific reform in *Middlemarch* is partly a matter of the colouring it takes from its language, imagery and general texture, and partly tied up with Lydgate in terms of character and plot. It has been suggested that Lydgate is present in the novel as a medical exponent of what Eliot herself does as a novelist.[18] She does use the microscope as well as the telescope in *Middlemarch,* analyses as well as synthesizes; she puts that relatively new instrument, the stethoscope, to the heartbeat of Middlemarch. And one of the best descriptions of the overall narrative method of the novel is provided by Lydgate when he says 'there must be a systole and diastole in all enquiry' and 'a man's mind must be continually expanding and shrinking between the whole human horizon and the horizon of an object-glass' *(Mm,* p. 690). Nothing could better describe the alternation in the novel of a crowded close-focus with the long-range view of history and memory, looking before and after. *Middlemarch is* a scientific demonstration of 'how the mysterious [human] mixture behaves under the varying experiments of Time' *(Mm,* p. 25) or, more precisely, 'the mixed moral influence shed on society by dogmatic systems'.[19] Eliot sets up the experiment, notes its complex causes, clarifies the essential substance on which it operates, and, in the finale, delivers a report on its subtle and diffusive results. Her method, if not her beliefs, is identical to that attributed by J.S. Mill to Bentham's reform of scientific procedures: 'he introduced into morals and politics those habits of thought and modes of investigation which are essential to the idea of science',[20] and 'he sees every subject in connection with all the other subjects with which in his view it is related, and from which it requires to be distinguished'.[21] One could arrive at an approximate definition of Eliot's range by adding to Bentham's method all those qualities in which Mill finds him deficient: imagination, sympathy with beings and states alien to his own, 'all the more subtle workings both of the mind upon itself, and of external things upon the mind'.[22] Bentham's defects were Eliot's peculiar strengths.

Apart from the scientific colouring, texture, and method which, in being applied to such varied human motives, actions and passions, gives the whole novel its distinctive blend of scientific detachment and moral passion, there is the plot of *Middlemarch,* at least in the Bulstrode/Raffles/Lydgate catastrophe, which in turn involves

almost everyone in the town, and is made to turn on a point of medical reform. Raffles's death is not a melodramatic sop to the Victorian groundlings; it has far-reaching implications. One implication — apart from the rather unnerving inference that doctors had been murdering their alcoholic patients for years before reformers like Lydgate arrived — is that culpability does not lie in the obvious areas, either legal or medical. Culpability lies at that point (and Eliot charts it with great precision) at which Bulstrode's attempts to sustain a fellow-creature's life became a willingness to see him die. The scene has a direct bearing on all the other murders, physical and spiritual, which the novel touches upon. Murder, the willed extinction of others, is an antithesis to the willed flourishing of others, which the novel holds up as an ideal.

What is the willed flourishing of others? George Eliot defines her modern ethical platform by demonstrating in action, embedded in circumstance, those qualities that make for the healthy spiritual survival of the individual and the community: they are, in a four-point plan: activism, dynamism, gradualism, and altruism.

Moral activism, active intervention in the lives of others, is demonstrated at key moments in the novel, where characters are poised at an existential cross-roads. One of the most garishly-lit scenes is that in The Green Dragon, where Lydgate is engrossed in desperate betting and Fred is tempted to slip the halter of Caleb Garth's industry. There are two acts of moral intercession (and in George Eliot's world only human beings can intercede) when Fred distracts Lydgate and breaks the spell, and afterwards when Farebrother tugs Fred back from his slide towards the old habits. Eliot is opposed to a laissez-faire morality. Bulstrode is as content to allow Lydgate to sink into a debtor's prison as he is to allow Raffles to sink into death. The reform of a life — and Fred Vincy's is only the most striking example within a graded spectrum — has a lot to do with the moral investments other people make in that life.

These actions are necessarily dynamic, the active colliding pattern of one life with another, but dynamism also implies the constant re-assessment by one person of his own inner condition and convictions. Eliot values 'the most important sign of spiritual life — to be able to re-consider always one's conclusions.'[23] We often see characters engaged in this process in the novel. But change itself is made of small gradual movements of the consciousness, just as the plot is made up of trifling and coincidental objects: the letter from Bulstrode stuffed into Raffles's brandy-flask, the chain dropped by Rosamond in the proposal scene, the tortoise-shell lozenge-box given by Will to Henrietta Noble, which figures in later scenes affecting Will and Dorothea, just as Miss Noble once figured in Dorothea's imagination as a kind person connected with Will's receptive and generous nature. Indeed, as Mr Borthrop Trumbull says in his best auctioneering

manner, when he invites bids for a box of similar physical trifles: 'Now, ladies . . . this tray contains a very recherchy lot — a collection of trifles for the drawing-room table — and trifles make the sum of human things — nothing more important than trifles' *(Mm,* p. 653). The inward movements of Eliot's characters, those minute muscular flexings of consciousness, are mirrored in these fragile objects which live beyond themselves in memory and dream. Spirit and substance always interpenetrate in *Middlemarch.* Small inward movements of the mind may be in the direction of the rationalization of desire or self-interest, or towards the suppression of the self. Dorothea's spiritual supremacy, and her claim to be the focus of the novel, lies in the 'clutching of her own pain' and her altruistic struggle towards 'the Right' of all concerned in any situation. We see her succeed, only momentarily, with Casaubon, and with Rosamond, the latter scene in Chapter 81 (written, she said, on one impulse and with scarcely a revision) being the emotional centre of the novel. If the reader does not respond to that scene, then Eliot has failed as a novelist: she said 'The emotion which stirred one in writing [must be] repeated in the mind of the reader.'[24]

Altruism in *Middlemarch* is not a simple quality; it is shown to be partly dependent on imaginative power. Dorothea's submission to mercy comes only after 'a litany of *pictured* sorrows.' *(Mm,* p. 464). Mrs Bulstrode's compassionate mental leap to her husband's side comes with 'the *image* of her husband exposed to disgrace' *(Mm,* p. 806). The imaginative power is akin to that of the novelist herself: it conjures up an image of the separate other as an *equivalent* centre of self *(Mm,* p. 243) and it is contrasted with those characters who call up images of a different kind: Rosamond calling up her fair reflection in a number of mirrors, Brooke calling up a ludicrous effigy of himself in his electioneering speech, both of them being spattered with egg, and Casaubon, whose portrait as Thomas Aquinas is called into being just as the image of him as a great scholar, entertained by Dorothea's illusions, is crumbling. Morality has an aesthetic dimension in *Middlemarch;* the good is the beautiful. After Farebrother's kind act of self-denial on Fred Vincy's behalf we are told: 'Some one highly susceptible to the contemplation of a fine act has said, that it produces a sort of regenerating shudder through the frame, and makes one feel ready to begin a new life' *(Mm,* p. 728). The effects are often shown to be less than lasting, but the act of contemplation is not dissimilar to the contemplation of a work of art. Hence Dorothea is often described in aesthetic terms, and hence the response ascribed to the character Fred Vincy is also the one the ideal reader should have at such 'momenti' in the novel. The change which Casaubon undergoes when he hears of his approaching death is the kind of change Eliot means, as a novelist, to effect in the consciousness of her reader, to make us *'feel* the truth of a common-

place, which is as different from what we call knowing it, as the vision of waters upon the earth is different from the delirious vision of the water which cannot be had to cool the burning tongue' *(Mm.,* p. 461). That is *her* rendering of 'truth carried alive into the heart by passion', and only the vocabulary differs from Wordsworth's.

In terms of moral or religious reform, Eliot's stance is perhaps closer to Matthew Arnold's than to Auguste Comte's. Arnold, who cuts through much speculative theology with slightly irritated trenchancy, says that religion is three-quarters conduct, and defines it as 'not simply morality, but morality touched by emotion.'[25] That is a fine definition of *Middlemarch,* and so is Arnold's description of religion as 'not the mere enjoining of conduct, but it is this enjoining touched, strengthened, and almost transformed, by the addition of feeling.'[26]

There is one last aspect of Conservative Reform which George Eliot raises in *Middlemarch,* most critics say inadequately, and that is the social position of women. The issue is raised mainly by the Prelude and the Finale of the novel: the question of what portion of the blame for Dorothea's 'failure' to achieve her ideals should be apportioned to her society's attitudes towards women. The question would probably not be raised at all if the Prelude and Finale were not flatter and more discursive utterances about Dorothea than the complex embodiment of her mixed life and fate which the novel is. They do draw back and reflect, whereas the novel demonstrates. Some say, with Leavis, that the treatment of Dorothea throughout is marked by an enclave of emotional immaturity in the author; Marxist criticism argues that the flaws spring from an inadequately static conception of society. Laurence Lerner counter-argues that such criticisms arise from ethical differences about the value of idealism itself. Eliot simply *values* idealism more highly than her critics.[27] Surely this last point is true. The pressure Dorothea exerts at vital areas of the novel is made vividly alive to us, and we are meant to see that her value, if also her slight absurdity, lies in her closeness to 'that roar which lies on the other side of silence' *(Mm,* p. 226), to hidden throbbing currents of concealed life. Her relative 'failure' (if a happy marriage could be considered a failure, which I am not sure George Eliot did consider it to be) arises from the fact that Dorothea's life was historically determined; she was living before the First Reform Bill and not writing *Middlemarch* after the Second. Dorothea was partially intended to be an aborted George Eliot: she could achieve emotional fulfilment in marriage but not the satisfaction of an independent intellectual life. There is, perhaps, a failure to focus this issue of education clearly: one of the sentences present in the first edition of *Middlemarch* but deleted in later ones ascribes the outcome of Dorothea's life partly to 'modes of education which make a woman's knowledge another name for motley

ignorance'.[27] Yet this emphasis is necessary in an abstract summary, and it is one borne out by her letters, where she says:

> We women are always in danger of living too exclusively in the affections; and though our affections are perhaps the best gifts we have, we ought also to have our share of the more independent life — some joy in things for their own sake. It is piteous to see the helplessness of some sweet women when their affections are disappointed — because all their teaching has been, that they can only delight in study of any kind for the sake of a personal love. They have never contemplated an independent delight in ideas as an experience which they could confess without being laughed at. Yet surely women need this sort of defence against passionate affliction even more than men.[28]

Other letters reveal more uncertainty. Dorothea was partly intended as a case-history, and partly as a timeless model of the right direction in which to channel the flow of a being, that 'brook' that must keep to a fairly narrow channel in its given time, yet is permanently valuable as a pattern of the extension of emotional sympathy outward, through her window to 'the manifold wakings of men to labour and endurance' *(Mm,* p. 846), and downward, when in the interview with Rosamond Vincy she clasps the hand of the 'huckster's daughter' *(Mm,* p. 29) whose clothing she might have found rather vulgar in the opening stages of the history of Miss Brooke. Surely that progression is an emotional shifting of the centre of gravity analogous to the political shifting of the century.

If there is uncertainty in the feminist issue, it is an uncertainty we have inherited from George Eliot, just as we have inherited the broader ethical platform she attempted to construct for us. Understanding does not make our world any easier than hers: as Arnold says, conduct is the simplest thing in the world 'as far as *understanding* is concerned; as regards *doing,* it is the hardest thing in the world'.[29] There lies our kinship with *Middlemarch:* the intense fragility of its best scenes, in which human beings have to help one another, minister to one another, be one another's priest, and litany, and faith, speaks to us of the minimal victories and multiple failures of the moral life in a delimited, short-term universe. The retention of the Christian vocabulary merely underlines the loss.

When Jane Austen died, her last words were 'Pray for me, oh pray for me'; [30] when George Eliot died she is reported to have said 'Tell them the pain is on the left side'.[31] The shift which took place between the two novelists is movingly registered in those two utterances: to have gained all the scientific ability to measure and locate human pain without the redeeming belief in any ultimate remedy for that

pain — that is the predicament George Eliot 'gave out in intensified form' in *Middlemarch,* and it is one of which we too, living in a later century, have an intimate knowledge.

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FOOTNOTES

All references to *Middlemarch* are to the Penguin edition, (ed.) W.J. Harvey (Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1965). All references to the letters are to Vol. V of *The George Eliot Letters,* (ed.) G.S. Haight.

1 G.S. Haight, *The George Eliot Letters* Vol. V (New Haven: Yale U.P., 1955), p. 326.
2 R. Chapman, *The Victorian Debate* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1968), p. 25.
3 *Letters,* p. 12.
4 *Letters,* pp. 29-30.
5 *Ibid.*
6 R. Chapman, *op. cit.,* p. 55.
7 Leslie Stephen, *George Eliot* (London: MacMillan, 1926), p. 50.
8 *Ibid.,* p. 68.
9 Quoted by B. Willey, *Nineteenth Century Studies* (Harmondsworth: Pelican, 1973), p. 255.
10 *Letters,* p. 324.
11 *Letters,* p. 349.
12 *Letters,* p. 374.
13 *Letters,* p. 391.
14 *Letters,* p. 371.
15 Quoted by M.K. Nurmi, *William Blake* (London: Hutchinson, 1975), p. 54.
16 *King Lear,* IV 6 l. 225
17 *Ibid.* III 4 ll. 35-36.
18 W.J. Harvey, Introduction to *Middlemarch* (Penguin), p. 22.
19 *Letters,* p. 48.
20 F.R. Leavis, (ed.), *Mill on Bentham and Coleridge* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1959), p. 48.
21 *Ibid,* p. 51.
22 *Ibid,* p. 63.
23 *Letters,* p. 58.
24 *Letters,* p. 374.
25 Matthew Arnold, 'Religion Given', *Selected Essays* (London: O.U.P., 1964), p. 329.
26 *Ibid,* p. 330.
27 Quoted by Laurence Lerner, 'Dorothea and the Theresa-Complex', *Middlemarch: A Casebook,* (ed.) P. Swinden (London: MacMillan, 1972), p. 245.
28 *Letters,* p. 107.
29 Arnold, *op. cit.,* p. 323.
30 Letter from Cassandra Austen to Fanny Knight, *Jane Austen's Letters* (ed.) R.W. Chapman (London: O.U.P., 1964), p. 514.
31 Quoted by V.S. Pritchett, in *Middlemarch: A Casebook,* p. 107.

MODES OF SPEAKING IN SHAKESPEARE'S TRAGEDIES

by M.R. ORKIN

Rhetoric was considered, by the Elizabethans and Jacobeans, an essential prerequisite for good expression. It was, moreover, one of the crucial elements in humanist education because the proper use of rhetoric made eloquence possible; and eloquence, the art of speaking well, was the aim of every humanist. For the Elizabethans and Jacobeans, as amply demonstrated in recent years, there were literally hundreds of possible language devices, all classified and indeed all learned by heart.[1] What we know of the education of the time shows us that mastery of the rules of rhetoric in the schoolroom was analagous to the automatic knowledge modern children might have of multiplication tables.[2] The Elizabethan pupil had all the rules of rhetoric at his fingertips.

The humanist' emphasis upon language and literature was not directed at the achievement solely of an external elegance of delivery. At the heart of the humanist ideal is the notion that Renaissance man by means of the tool of language among other things, will take his knowledge of the truth, and especially divine truth, out of the medieval study and put it instead into his own society, into his everyday actions, and into the art of government. Christ was admired as the ideal humanist precisely because He was not only the source of good, but because He communicated that good to man[3]. His medium was the spoken word, hence the humanist's concern with rules of speaking properly.

The concept of language as a vehicle to communicate inner morality, or truth, led the humanists, like the classical rhetoricians, to value it as an instrument for persuasion. But there was another equally valuable function for rhetoric in the Renaissance: it was considered to be a system for the stylisation of emotional and psychological states of mind.[4] Certain kinds of patternings or repetititions, say, were held to be suitable for certain kinds of emotional or psychological purposes. How effective this system of rules for speaking well could be, we may know by examining the nature of Shakespeare's art and his achievement.

A beginning may be made with a character who speaks with rhetoric in order to deceive. This is indeed the most accessible approach for those of us who come to the notion of rhetoric with only a modern, derogatory association for the term. In *Othello,* Iago displays a remarkable ability for the mimicry of the language of honesty. He utilises the language of rhetoric for his own ends. If we compare, for instance, what he says when he bears witness against

Cassio after the brawl in Act II with what he says to Cassio only fifteen or so lines later, what is remarkable is Iago's linguistic proficiency, the different modes of speaking he can in different situations assume. His report of the brawl to Othello is offered in simple, factual, direct language, suggesting the tone of an honest man forced to tell the truth; modified only by parenthetical expressions of regret about Cassio himself: 'I had rather have this tongue cut from my mouth/Than it shold do offense to Michael Cassio' (II iii 222), or, 'And Cassio high in oath; which till tonight/I ne'er might say before' (II iii 236).[5]

This style of speaking disappears, however, when he consoles Cassio. He utilises particular word-patterns to play on an already troubled and confused man; this, so that he may influence his actions further:

> As I am an honest man, I had thought you had receiv'd some bodily wound; there is more sense in that than in reputation. Reputation is an idle and most false imposition; oft got without merit, and lost without deserving. You have lost no reputation at all, unless you repute yourself such a loser.
> (II iii 271)

The tone here is consolatory but there is no doubt that Shakespeare's first audience would have registered Iago's sudden skilful utilisation of several rhetorical devices. *Ploche* is the repetition of a word within a line or over several lines, while *Polyptoton* is the changing of one form of a word into another, related form: Iago repeats the words 'reputation' and 'lost', while he turns 'reputation' into 'repute' and 'lost' into 'loser'. Both of these devices were considered a useful means of emphasising the subject matter as was yet a third, *Anadiplosis,* which is the repetition of the last word of a clause or sentence at the beginning of the next — again, the word is 'reputation'.

Iago's ostensible motive is to console Cassio for the loss of his reputation, but the rhetorical patterning in his speech emphasises the fact of that loss. The play with repetition, indeed, rubs salt into Cassio's wounds. Having increased his victim's anxiety and thus his sense of despair, Iago is more easily able, in the lines following these, to direct Cassio along the path he has devised for him.

The use of rhetoric to deceive is a commonplace obsession in Jacobean theatre: we might think of Ben Jonson's Volpone and Mosca who also provide virtuoso displays of linguistic deception.[6] Their rhetorical expertise is yet another of their disguises, adapted to hide their inner malice and greed.

But if some applications of rhetoric anticipate Orwellian doublespeak, this is only one of countless possibilities. Let us consider briefly the way some of Shakespeare's political characters

use rhetoric. In a play like *Julius Caesar* it becomes clear very quickly that rhetoric cannot have the modern sense of bad use of language, or the specious show of language to deceive, in any simple sense — something we might, without sufficient information about rhetoric, be tempted to expect. This play has sometimes been described as a cold tragedy and perhaps one of the reasons is that the characters never, like Hamlet or Macbeth for example, move to their inner selves.[7] All the politicians are concerned with their public roles, so much so that several critics have written on the significance of the way in which they speak of themselves with proper names, or in the third person.[8] And all of them use rhetoric. When the play begins we encounter Marullus in a set speech full of rhetorical patterns, carefully prompting the crowd's reaction and haranguing them into submission. But a short while later, Cassius in his denunciation of Caesar is just as active with rhetoric. For example he asks Brutus:

> Brutus and Caesar: what should be in that 'Caesar'?
> Why should that name be sounded more than yours?
> Write them together, yours is as fair a name;
> Sound them, it doth become the mouth as well;
> Weigh them, it is as heavy; conjure with 'em,
> 'Brutus' will start a spirit as soon as 'Caesar'.
> (I ii 147)

There is absorbed use here of *Anaphora,* the commencement of a series of lines or clauses with the same word — in this case the words repeated are 'Brutus' and 'it'; there is also *Epistrophe,* the ending of a series of clauses or lines with the same word — here both 'Caesar' and 'them'. Cassius also draws on *Isocolon,* which gives the same length to corresponding phrases and clauses — for example 'Write them', 'Sound them' and 'Weighh them'. Cassius is demystifying the word 'Caesar' by incorporating it, together with the word 'Brutus' and the pronouns 'it' and 'them' within these and several other rhetorical devices.

If Cassius uses rhetorical figures, so does Brutus. In his address to the conspirators his rhetoric admittedly suggests the movement of his thought; but his somewhat misguided understanding of the assassination or his limited political skill is reflected in the dull, repetitive symmetries present in his address to the plebeians. The inflexible symmetry produces the effect of cold logical abstraction. By contrast, Antony in his address to the people makes a more lively application of rhetorical devices to win his audience totally.[9]

Yet when we think of rhetoric and politicians in Shakespeare, many tend to mention only Claudius. (His rhetoric is slightly suspect it is true, but it also demonstrates, as we have often enough been taught to acknowledge, a remarkable political skill in reconciling the

old world with the new). We would do much better to think of rhetoric as the Elizabethans did, rather like the way rhythm may be used in music or metre in verse: the application depends upon the effect desired.[10] Moreover, it was precisely because rhetoric was a system of speaking intended to convey moral truth as well as to provide decoration that it proved so useful in the drama.[11]

Three further examples may illustrate how Shakespeare integrates rhetoric into his dramatic language; they may also show how rhetoric when we notice it, reveals some additional understanding of the way in which the respective characters speak within the dramatic situation. Thus, when Othello has been affected by Iago's deceptions, Shakespeare lets him re-enter the stage to speak, amongst other things, with the very devices of rhetoric Iago himself has already used with Cassio:

> O now, for ever
> Farewell the tranquil mind! farewell content!
> Farewell the plumed troops and the big wars
> That makes ambition virtue! O, farewell!
> Farewell the neighing steed and the shrill trump,
> The spirit-stirring drum, th'ear piercing fife,
> The royal banner, and all quality,
> Pride, pomp, and circumstance of glorious war!
> (III iii 354)

In these lines, as well as *Ploche* and *Anadiplosis* utilising the word 'farewell' there is *Anaphora,* the beginning of a series of clauses or sentences with the same word — again 'farewell' — a form of *Isocolon* in the use of similar structures over several lines, and the application of *Brachylogia* or *Asyndeton,* which is a catalogue of items of varying length.

We might say here that the rhetorical patterns serve to intensify Othello's sense of loss, the long string of military images helping to suffuse this sense of loss with the resonance of departing nobility and heroism. But the rhythm in the patterning establishes a formality as well; it is full of control, almost a ritual. This controlled tension in the language is all the more interesting because of what lies beneath it. That agony, as we know, externalises itself in the acts of violence that provide at the same time no relief for Othello in the fourth act.

The highly charged language that gives us our first glimpse of the protagonists in *Antony and Cleopatra* is another interesting instance of Shakespeare's rhetorical practice:

> Cleo. If it be love indeed, tell me how much.
> Ant. There's beggary in the love that can be reckon'd.
> Cleo. I'll set a bourn how far to be belov'd.

Ant. Then must thou needs finds out new heaven, new earth.
(I i 18)

We are all responsive to the witty use Antony makes of Cleopatra's imagery, 'tell' provoking 'reckon'd' and 'bourn' — 'new heaven, new earth'. Besides, there is in the lines an echo of argumentative rhetoric; the language of the hypothetical syllogism in Cleopatra's conditional 'if', the hint of a conclusion in Antony's 'Then' after two clever turns by the speakers. And there is too, the use of *Ploche* — 'love', and *Polyptoton* — significantly the repetition involves the word 'love', which becomes 'belov'd'. Such a device is common in Shakespeare; we might think of Lear's line 'I am a man/More sinn'd against than sinning' (III ii 60) in which different forms of the word 'sin' — 'sinn'd against' and 'sinning' — are juxtaposed.

The protagonists are, in our first glimpse of them, playing a formal game about the extent of love and suggesting that 'feeling has reached the ultimate.'[12] The complexity of the games that are going on confirms their seriousness; it also suggests an intensity that bespeaks a real process of testing and an underlying hint of insecurity. Lovers such as this, both with a past, must be aware that love is not necessarily immortal and that to love is not always to be 'belov'd'.

Soon after, Antony makes his hyperbolic claim 'Let Rome in Tiber melt' (I i 33). We might indeed observe that the hyperbolic language of the whole of *Antony and Cleopatra* almost leads us to the centre of the play's concerns. It shows a continual tension between on the one hand the actions and situation of the characters, and on the other hand the hyperbole they use; a struggle that finally ends when Antony and Cleopatra become, in a sense, the hyperbole with which they speak: Cleopatra with 'immortal longings' puts on her crown and becomes immortal.

For a third example we might have selected the marvellously awesome moment in the first act of *King Lear* when Goneril denounces her father: 'Not only, sir, this your all-licens'd Fool' (I iv 201 ff) with its string of inserted compound epithets and patterned repetitive, relative clauses — rhetoric that shows her tortuously yoking her father's behaviour to her interpretation of it. Let us choose instead Cordelia. She speaks, too, in the first act, with rhetoric:

Good my lord,
You have begot me, bred me, lov'd me: I
Return those duties back as are right fit,
Obey you, love you, and most honor you.
Why have my sisters' husbands, if they say
They love you all? Happily, when I shall wed,
That lord whose hand must take my plight shall carry
Half my love with him, half my care and duty.
(I i 102)

Here the rhetorical symmetries could hardly have more effect or meaning; they help Cordelia to speak what she feels. The patterning of *Isocolon* which, we may remember, gives the same length to corresponding phrases or clauses, skilfully balances the role of father — 'You have begot me, bred me, lov'd me', with that of daughter — 'Obey you, love you, and most honour you', whilst *Epistrophe,* the ending of a series of clauses with the same word underlines their relationship further: 'me' is balanced against 'you'. There is even an absorbed use of *Polyptoton* in 'lov'd me' and 'love you'; whilst the two lines we have been looking at are balanced by the alternating run-on lines. Furthermore, *Anaphora* is introduced, significantly with the word 'half'. The effect of all these balanced symmetries and repetitions is to emphasise the mutuality of a relationship that is shortly to be shattered. We may observe such symmetry too in the lines that follow, when the father says:

> So young and so untender?
> (I i 106)

and the daughter replies

> So young, my lord, and true.
> (I i 107)

Here it is precisely the tools of rhetoric that state the bond between the two even as Lear proceeds to his terrible mistake:

> Let it be so: thy truth then be thy dow'r!
> (I i 108)

We see that 'true' becomes 'truth': the rhetorical device of *Polyptoton* involves that word.

Just how far Shakespeare has integrated his use of rhetoric into his writing by the time of the tragedies, absorbing with vitality and originality well-known devices from the system of speaking well, may be seen by a glance at his earlier plays. A few lines from a long passage in *3 Henry VI* serve as illustration:

> O God! methinks it were a happy life
> To be no better than a homely swain,
> To sit upon a hill, as I do now,
> To carve out dials quaintly, point by point,
> Thereby to see the minutes how they run:
> How many makes the hour full complete,
> How many hours brings about the day,
> How many days will finish up the year,

> How many years a mortal man may live.
> So many hours must I tend my flock
> So many hours must I take my rest,
> So many hours must I contemplate,
> So many hours must I sport myself . . .
> (II v 34)

Merely by glancing at these lines and those that follow, we can identify an obvious patterning which in performance as well as in reading, hypnotises the attention to distract the audience from the dramatic situation.

To suggest that we all rush out to obtain seventeenth-century manuals of rhetoric would certainly engender a sense of quaint anachronism in the age of semiotics and structuralism. As most critics of Shakespeare's use of rhetoric have emphasised, however, it does not take long to understand the few devices we need to know and more important, it is not difficult to appreciate the principle. Shakespeare uses rhetoric everywhere in his plays: if we have an interest in the way his characters speak, it is worth alerting ourselves to those moments when rhetorical devices achieve particular resonances for speaker and dramatic situation.

Moreover, it is not really surprising that the Elizabethans and Jacobeans should have cherished the art of rhetoric, respected since classical times. A brief glance at Elizabeth's world only confirms the love of order, systematization and patterning that we find in the linguistic system. Manners were highly elaborate and endlessly repetitive in Elizabeth's court; she has herself been referred to as a 'painted idol'.[13] The underlying principle in James's court was also humanist. If linguistic patterning and the proper use of imagery reflected truth, so did the heightened artificiality of the court suggest a divine power on earth. *Hamlet* is a Jacobean tragedy and some might wish to find in the play the signs of a society losing confidence in itself; but Hamlet is still the ideal Renaissance man, not only the scholar's and courtier's but also the soldier's 'eye, tongue, sword' (III i 151).

Indeed the very word artificiality is for the sixteenth and early seventeenth century a word of praise. Puttenham wrote that in anything got by study and discipline

> as to daunce by measures, to sing by note, to play on the lute, and such like, it is a praise to be said an artificiall dauncer, singer, & player on instruments, because they be not exactly knowne or done, but by rules & precepts or teaching of schoole-masters.[14]

When Shakespeare wrote his tragedies it is true that the notion of

appropriate 'artificiality' was different from the Euphuism of John Lyly; Hamlet has time to criticise Osric for affectation, speaking with only the 'tune of the time' (V ii 190). But we should emphasise that this disapproval is only relative. The highly organised structures of Elizabethan and Jacobean rhetoric may strike us initially as contrived in our sense of the word, but in its time, well done, artificiality was considered the highest virtue.

To turn from rhetoric, briefly, to another mode of speaking is not to leave it behind, for rhetoric is in one sense inseparable from Shakespeare's poetry; as much as anything rhetoric holds the poetry together. However, of the many that might be selected, one mode of speaking provides an especially nice contrast. An appreciation of it does not depend upon the language system of a past age. This kind of speaking may be hinted at by noticing the way in which Shakespeare, at certain moments in the tragedies, consciously utilises the language of simplicity — the stuff of ordinary humanity. Such an element in his language might be approached by way of a discussion of imagery: we could study for example the extent to which Shakespeare chooses, at some crucial moments in the tragedies, the more familiar, more domestic image. One example is that of Lady Macbeth when she calls on thick night to

> . . . pall thee in the dunnest smoke of hell,
> That my keen knife see not the wound it makes,
> Nor heaven peep through the blanket of the dark
> To cry, 'Hold, hold!'
>
> (I v 54)

The effect of the image of the 'blanket' at this moment is potent precisely because it is full of the resonance of the homely and the known, evoking the rhythm of sleep and the vulnerability of humanity in sleep, its need for simple warmth.

Shakespeare, as we know, was concerned even in his comedies with the value of ordinary language: 'Honest plain words best pierce the ear of grief' *(Love's Labour's Lost* V ii 753), says Berowne. Such honest plain words are to be found at the end of *Antony and Cleopatra* when the Clown comes to the Egyptian queen with the asp to speak about death. He tells Cleopatra of those whom he remembers to have died by it:

> I heard of one of them no longer than yesterday, a very honest woman — but something given to lie, as a women should not do, but in the way of honesty — how she died of the biting of it, what pain she felt. Truly, she makes a very good report o' th' worm.
>
> (V ii 255)

This language contrasts with the hyperbole in other parts of the play.[15] The contrast is there in the way the Clown speaks of death and the way Cleopatra will shortly speak of it; but there is also a common link in the fact of death established between the two, just as there is a link between Hamlet and the gravediggers.[16]

Shakespeare makes Cleopatra speak with this kind of language as well; when she does so our connection with her is even more poignantly felt. One of the most painful moments in the play occurs on the Monument, when the dying Antony is brought to his queen. Shakespeare allows Cleopatra's love to be expressed here, not only by a voice that is demonstrably poetic:

> O sun,
> Burn the great sphere thou mov'st in! darkling stand
> The varying shore o' the' world!
> (IV xv 11)

but with language that comes from our ordinary world — language which asserts the bond Cleopatra has with us and which communicates her concern as she helps to raise the Antony she is about to lose. The tragic meaning is all in the simplicity of word and gesture:

> O Antony,
> Antony, Antony! Help Charmian, help, Iras, help;
> Help, friends below, let's draw him hither.
> (IV xv 13)

and

> But come, come, Antony —
> Help me, my women — we must draw thee up.
> Assist, good friends.
> (IV xv 31)
>
> Here's sport indeed! How heavy weighs my Lord!
> Our strength is all gone into heaviness . . .
> (IV xv 33)

In this scene, as in Cleopatra's death-scene, 'the mingling of regality and simple humanity is breathtaking'.[17]

Perhaps nowhere is such ordinary language so remarkably evident as in the closing moments of *King Lear*. It is worth ending with a glance at Lear's last question which gives not only an example of such plain speaking, but displays as well Shakespeare's full mastery of rhetoric:

> Why should a dog, a horse, a rat, have life,
> And thou no breath at all? Thou'lt come no more,
> Never, never, never, never, never.
>
> (V iii 309)

This last of Lear's questions asks something from which perhaps we can never recover. It is not merely a point of cleverness to notice that what is simply couched is also artfully couched, in blank verse, with the rhetorical devices of *Brachylogia* and *Epizeuxis* — the repetition of a single word. John Hoskyns, in his *Direccons For Speech and Style* describes *Anaphora* as a figure that 'beates vppon one thinge to cause the quicker feeling in the audience',[18] and the comment is relevant to other figures of repetition as well. The word Shakespeare beats upon is 'never' and it points not only to the irrevocability of death but to the cessation of the one life Lear values most. In this cessation he finds a truly terrible meaning to the word 'nothing'. Here, again, the art is utterly integrated and the artifice appears to be natural. The appearance of simplicity depends nevertheless upon art.

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NOTES

[1] See, for example, Sister Miriam Joseph, *Shakespeare's Use of the Arts of Language* (New York: Hafner 1966), Rosemund Tuve, *Elizabethan and Metaphysical Imagery* (Chicago, 1947), Brian Vickers, *The Artistry of Shakespeare's Prose* (London, Methuen 1968), *Classical Rhetoric in English Poetry* (London, Macmillan 1970).

[2] See G. Puttenham, *The Arts of English Poesie* ed. Gladys Doidge Willcock and Alice Walker (Cambridge University Press 1970), Introduction p.lxxv.

[3] See G.K. Hunter, *John Lyly: The Humanist as Courtier* (London, Routledge and Kegan Paul 1962), p.14.

[4] This was also traditional; Vickers (1970, p.105) writes: 'Longinus makes afresh the discovery that the schemes and tropes are basically stylizations or records of man's natural emotional behaviour as expressed in language . . .'

[5] All quotations from Shakespeare are taken from *The Riverside Shakespeare* ed. G. Blakemore Evans (Boston, Houghton Mifflin 1974). Where more than one line is quoted the Riverside reference for the last line is given.

[6] See, for example, Jonas A. Barish, *Ben Jonson and the Language of Prose Comedy* (Cambridge Mass., Harvard University Press 1960); Alexander H. Sackton *Rhetoric as a Dramatic Language in Ben Jonson* (London, F. Cass & Co. 1967).

[7] Brutus's soliloquy (II i 61-69) is an exception in the play.

[8] See, for example, Madeleine Doran, *Shakespeare's Dramatic Language* (University of Wisconsin Press, 1976) pp. 120-153.

[9] See Vickers (1968), pp. 241-5.

[10] Vickers, *Shakespeare's Use of Rhetoric* in *A New Companion to Shakespeare Studies* ed. K. Muir and S. Schoenbaum (Cambridge University Press, 1971)

p. 84, writes: 'rhetorical figures are to be regarded as artistic conventions of the same order as rhyme or metrical patterns in poetry, sonata-form or fugue in music.'

[11] Puttenham (p.196) writes of the Poet: 'there is nothing so fitte for him, as to be furnished with all the figures that be *Rhetoricall,* and such as do most beautifie language with eloquence & sententiousnes. Therfore, since we haue already allowed to our maker his *auricular* figures, and also his *sensable,* by which all the words and clauses of his meeters are made as well tunable to the eare, as stirring to the minde, we are now by order to bestow vpon him those other figures which may execute both offices, and all at once to beautifie and geue sence and sententiousnes to the whole language at large.'

[12] See Winifred Nowottny, *The Language Poets Use* (London, Athlone Press 1965), p. 102.

[13] See Hunter, p. 7.

[14] Puttenham, p. 305.

[15] See Maynard Mack, *The Jacobean Shakespeare,* in *Jacobean Theatre* Stratford-upon-Avon Studies, ed. J.R. Brown and B. Harris (London, Arnold 1960) pp. 11-41. Mack writes of the voice which, he says, opposes the heroic 'This other idiom is not necessarily under-statement, though it often takes the form of a deflating accent and very often involves colloquialism — or perhaps a middling form of speech — expressive of a suppler outlook than the hero's, and of other and less upsetting ways of encountering experience than his hyperbolic, not to say intransigent, rigorism.' (p. 15).

[16] Mack, pp. 21-2.

[17] Winifred Nowottny, *Shakespeare's Tragedies* in *Shakespeare's World* ed. J. Sutherland and J. Hurstfield (London, Arnold, 1964) p. 76.

[18] John Hoskyns, *Dirreccons For Speech and Style,* in *The life, letters and writings of John Hoskyns* by Louise Brown Osborn (New Haven, Yale University Press 1937) p. 127.

THE ROLE OF THE CHORUS IN 'MURDER IN THE CATHEDRAL'

by CAROLE M. BECKETT

The role of the Chorus in *Murder in the Cathedral* is not as simple as it would seem at first reading. Indeed, the more one considers this drama, the more complex does its role become. The importance of the women of Canterbury both in the role of dramatic characters and in that of participants and interpreters of the ethical significance of the play, can best be appreciated if they are studied on three different levels: the Chorus and the audience; the Chorus and Thomas; the Chorus in relation to itself and the growth of its awareness of the situation and subsequent assumption of responsibility.

I

In 'The Need for Poetic Drama' (*The Listener,* November 1936) Eliot said:

> '... in making use of the chorus we do not aim to copy Greek drama. ... But the chorus has fundamentally the same uses. It mediates between the action and the audience; it intensifies the action by projecting its emotional consequences so that we as the audience see it doubly by seeing its effect on other people.'

The dramatic function of the women of the Chorus is to comment upon the events which they witness. As they are not saints (like Thomas) nor evil (like the Knights) but simply ordinary women, the audience is able to identify with them, thus becoming involved in the action at the same time as they are outside of the action by mere virtue of the fact that they are spectators. (This internal/external participation has an interesting parallel in the internal conflict of Part I and the external conflict of Part II.)

Conversely, at a certain level the Chorus too can be regarded as simply onlookers for whom:

> '...there is no action
> But only to wait and to witness.'
> *Murder in the Cathedral*

We therefore have a situation of complete fusion: the audience becomes the Chorus and the Chorus becomes mere spectators. By this complex interaction of self-identification with the Chorus:

'Knowing myself yet being someone other'
Little Gidding II

the audience enters the play at an intimate, involved level for Eliot is not prepared to allow either Chorus or audience to remain entirely spectators. They are not to be permitted to say:

'We had the experience but missed the meaning'
The Dry Salvages II

However, by the time they realise that they are interwoven with and caught up in the drama it is too late to withdraw.

II

All the characters in *Murder in the Cathedral* represent or reflect potential or actual states of Thomas's being and he in turn is the focus of the drama and the whole community. The Chorus is as necessary for Thomas's clear thinking and right choice of action (after listening to the last Chorus in Part I he admits: 'Now is my way clear, now is the meaning plain') as he is to their development.

Like Thomas, the women of the Chorus have to learn to conform their wills. In a way, they may be said to form a circumference of which he is the centre. In Part I we see them, as it were, acting with him, brought into the action against their will for they have suffered and do not want to suffer any more. As his destiny becomes more evident, their terrors increase for they see him moving towards tribulation and doom. At no time do we see the anguish of Thomas; it is mirrored and expressed by the women. It is they who give voice to the conflict in tumultuous rhythms; in the strange, dark, stifling images of despair.

This is one of the paradoxes of the role of the Chorus: they participate in the action and suffering of Thomas in order that action and suffering might be transcended.

One of Eliot's aims in *Murder in the Cathedral* is to propound the difference between the saint and ordinary man, and the Chorus serves to bridge this gap.

III

Of what kind of people is the Chorus composed? In the list of characters they are designated as 'women of Canterbury'. They themselves enlarge upon this and call themselves variously: 'the poor, the poor women of Canterbury'; 'the small folk who live among small

things'; 'the scrubbers and sweepers of Canterbury'; and 'type of common man'. We see, therefore, that the Chorus is not an anonymous group but, as one would expect in a Christian drama, a collection of individuals who represent the common man, a group whose function is suffering just as the Knights' is evil and Thomas's martyrdom.

Murder in the Cathedral is a play which penetrates to the heart of the mystery of human suffering and the anguish of surrender. As such, it speaks of the human condition and may be regarded as a drama of salvation, for is it not said in the second epistle of Paul to Timothy 2:12, 'If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him.'? Christian life is often called an Imitation of Christ. The Saviour's sacrifice is renewed in the martyrdom of Thomas which may be seen as a re-enactment of Christ's death in miniature. A martyrdom is not efficacious unless it is accepted by the great mass of men as 'the design of God, for His love of men, to warn them and lead them back to His ways.'

Is not this the true purpose of *Murder in the Cathedral,* to lead man back to 'the still point of the turning world'? For it is only here that man will find:

> The release from action and suffering, release from the inner
> And outer compulsion, yet surrounded
> By a grace of sense, a white light still moving,
> *Erhebung* without motion, concentration
> Without elimination, both a new world
> And the old made explicit, understood
> In the completion of its partial ecstasy,
> The resolution of its partial horror.
>
> Burnt Norton II

The primary and by far the most complex role of the Chorus is to demonstrate their journey (and that of every man, as shown in the first part of this discussion) towards salvation. It would be interesting to follow their development towards acceptance.

At the beginning of the play we see the women of Canterbury living in a barren desert with no hope of change:

> Why should the summer bring consolation
> From autumn fires and winter fogs?
> What shall we do in barren orchards for another October?

They suffer and are fearful but do not have the faith to act, that is why:

> For us, the poor, there is no action
> But only to wait and to witness.

They do not 'wish anything to happen.' Yet the word 'witness', used in the line above, is used in the Christian sense which means to see and to be involved. The women will become involved in Thomas's death through their passivity. We might note in passing an existentialist aspect in Eliot's thought: by choosing not to act the women have chosen an action of inactivity.

The Chorus who are

> Living and partly living

fear a

> ...disturbance of the quiet seasons

for

> They know and do not know what it is to act or suffer.
> They know and do not know, that action is suffering
> And suffering is action.

It is for this reason that they beg:

> O Thomas, return, Archbishop; return, return to France.
> Return. Quickly. Quietly. Leave us to perish in quiet.

But in vain. Gradually they come to realise that they cannot stop the course of events:

> we know what we must expect
> and not expect.

and they

> Are afraid in a fear which we cannot know, which we
> cannot face, which none understands.

The opening speech of Part II demonstrates clearly that the women's attitude has changed. They now realise that:

> ...the world must be cleaned in the winter, or we
> shall have only
> A sour spring, a parched summer, an empty harvest.

Only through death (winter) can there be rebirth (spring).

Yet this knowledge cannot dispel their supreme horror which is expressed in the brilliant chorus describing the world upside down:

> I have smelt them, the death-bringers...

The metre of this particular chorus is of great importance for the change from the long, irresolute lines to the balanced order of versification indicates that they have accepted their portion of responsibility for Thomas's death. By their inaction and passivity the women of Canterbury are as guilty as the Knights.

> now is too late
> For action, too soon for contrition
> Nothing is possible but the shamed swoon
> Of those consenting to the last humiliation.
> I have consented, Lord Archbishop, have consented.
> .....
> O Lord Archbishop, O Thomas Archbishop, forgive us,
> forgive us, pray for us that we may pray for you,
> out of our shame.

Like the rest of humanity, the women have ignored the remedy offered for purging of sins (acceptance of the Atonement) and must be reminded of it by the martyrdom which reaffirms the Atonement.

Here we see that the passive witness has become active only in the sense that he has permitted the action: the women did nothing to stop the Knights. This is why Thomas says:

> These things had to come to you and you to accept them
> This is your share of the eternal burden.

In accepting Thomas's death they accept anew Christ's sacrifice, for as Thomas says:

> Human kind cannot bear very much reality.

But his death has not been in vain:

> We appreciate this
> better
> In the agony of others, nearly experienced,
> Involving ourselves, than in our own.
> *The Dry Salvages II*

Yet, before this acceptance, there comes a moment of utter desperation at the foulness of the deed which has been perpetrated, when they recognize that they share the sin of the whole world which was responsible for Thomas's (Christ's) sacrifice:

> How can I ever return, to the soft quiet seasons?

But acceptance comes and in the anguish of the Chorus's resignation the women assume the burden disclaimed by the Knights, reconstitute the purpose of the struggle and submit their will to a Church dedicated to humility. Under the impact of martyrdom, they have moved from apathy and evasion to a lively faith and humble acceptance. Thomas's death has shown them that:

> What we call the beginning is often the end
> And to make an end is to make a beginning.
> The end is where we start from.
>
> *Little Gidding V*

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CORRESPONDENCE:
'TIMON' AND HISTORY

The Editors,
Theoria.

Dear Sirs,

It seems a pity that Mr Phelps, in his correspondence about Mr Bizley's article on *Timon of Athens* (Theoria 44), should be so closed to the very considerable insights that article offers into the play, the more so as his resistance appears to stem from his rejection of an approach which seems to me to be productive, scrupulous, and sane. Mr Phelps objects to Mr Bizley's bringing a historical theory to bear on the play, rather than approaching it as if naked and innocent of all preconceived ideas. But it is impossible to approach a text in utter nakedness; the critic is always bringing to it his own preconceptions, he is always applying some method in his exploration of it, always making some assumptions about the nature of the object he is questioning. And it is only too easy for him to be unaware of his own method, assumptions and preconceptions, only too easy to bluff himself that his receptivity to the play is a neutral (or a universal) one. He needs to combat this unawareness as far as is humanly possible, or he must inevitably become guilty of bad faith, if not towards himself then towards his readers. Mr Bizley does indeed bring a theory into contact with the text — the theory, to quote Mr Phelps, 'that a particular "cultural evolution" in which "two 'generations' of sensibility" were involved was really happening in Shakespeare's time'; it is entirely to Mr Bizley's credit that this theory, which was surely not arrived at without labour, should be so plainly visible, and visible *as a theory.* Its value must be judged by the extent to which it makes the text speak to us more fully — the proof of the pudding lies in the eating — and my own feeling was that this particular article enriched the play considerably by giving the language a density and fulness of reference that I had always felt to be there, without being able to flesh it out for myself.

Mr Phelps quotes Chaucer's characterization of the 'Marchant' in the *Canterbury Tales* and asks whether he is not 'of the same mould as Lucullus who says "this is no time to lend money, especially upon bare friendship, without security"'. One's answer to this can only be a flat 'No'. Lucullus's tone implies that anybody else (with any sense) would do as he does — and think in the terms he thinks in; Chaucer's Merchant, on the other hand, is felt as coming from a universe somewhat alien to the other pilgrims, needing to explain himself to them. The irony of Chaucer's characterization of the Merchant depends on the fact that the implicit standard underlying all the

portraits in the 'Prologue' is that of the good craftsman: in these terms the merchant stands out as an anomaly, with no apparent justification for his existence. In other words, the comparison would actually enforce the argument that the 'reasons' of the merchant have changed in status between Chaucer's time and Shakespeare's: in Chaucer he is still something relatively inexplicable in terms of the predominant forms of thought and evaluation; by Shakespeare's time *his* terms are in danger of becoming the orthodox terms.

My point is that there is a grave loss entailed when the critic denies that man changes with historical change. He is left with generalizations about human nature which cannot explain the particular passion, the special intensity, with which a writer may feel about a problem at a particular time so that the writer's vehemence will appear gratuitous and empty, unravelling into mere sound and fury. Meanwhile the true reason for the intensity may be that the writer has lighted upon the one particular problem which, at that moment, can illuminate and set in motion his whole social world which of course includes language, feeling, even perception. Mr Phelps sees Shakespeare as showing, in *Timon,* 'an essential or universal proclivity in men to deceive themselves (and, in so doing, their fellow men) by means of a set or form of materialistic dishonesty'. This, surely, would be a theme for satire or comedy: it cannot explain why Timon is overcome with so powerful a sense that the world as he knew it has gone mad — and not only mad, but meaningless and grotesquely ugly, a world from which value has departed. Mr Bizley's article *does* explain something of what is at stake in that sudden reversal — the tragic reversal in Timon's vision of the world. One is grateful for this illumination in itself and also grateful for what seems promised by Mr Bizley's method of approach: there are certain dimensions to Shakespeare's intelligence which need to be recovered from the blunting effect of time.

Yours faithfully,
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