THEORIA

A JOURNAL OF STUDIES

in the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences

Vol. XXXVII

October 1971

37

R0,50

THEORIA

CONTENTS

Published twice yearly by
UNIVERSITY OF NATAL PRESS
PIETERMARITZBURG

It is with pleasure that we publish an Index to *Theoria* which has been brought up to date since 1965. We are very grateful to Miss Moberly of the University Library in Pietermaritzburg for the care she has taken in arranging a guide to Volumes 24 to 36 to supplement the previous Index.

THE EDITORS.

HISTORY AND ARTISTRY IN SEAN O'CASEY'S DUBLIN TRILOGY

by RONALD AYLING

I

> 'The *artistic* value of any work of art is measured by its *uniqueness*. The human value is given largely by its intensity and its richness . . . No personal originality is enough to make a rich work unique, unless it has also the characteristic of a particular [time] and locality and the life that is in it.'
>
> J. M. Synge: From a Notebook (1908)[1]

> 'National literature . . . is the work of writers who are moulded by influences that are moulding their country, and who write out of so deep a life that they are accepted there in the end.'
>
> W. B. Yeats: Samhain (1904)[2]

It is in many ways rewarding to approach *Juno and the Paycock* together with *The Plough and the Stars* and *The Shadow of a Gunman* as a cycle of political and social plays conceived on an epic scale and deeply tinged by an overall tragic vision: a trilogy similar in some respects to Shakespeare's cycle comprising *Richard II*, *Henry IV* (two parts), and *Henry V* or even the earlier one of *Henry VI* (three parts) and *Richard III*. In each series individual plays, though self-contained and complete in themselves, are more meaningful in conjunction with the other plays relating to their particular cycle, and, together with them, add up to a panoramic view of a country in a state of crisis. Of course Shakespeare's plays are more consciously shaped as chronicles of an age, a particular period in histroy, than are O'Casey's. Starting to write at a time when there was an immense popular demand for history plays, Shakespeare took an evolving genre that only a few years earlier had been little more than crude two-dimensional representation of historical and legendary figures and widened the social context to embrace many different levels of society and regional ways of life. At the same time, while he humanised and individualised his narrative sources, Shakespeare depicted history with an awareness that a moral design was to be discerned in it. Beginning from the opposite end, as it were, O'Casey wrote of the lives and struggles of ordinary men and women at a particular time of social upheaval, and in the process gave the drama something of an

epic compass, realising a social and political content that is far wider and deeper than is apparent at first sight.

In chronological order of the subject-matter, *The Plough and the Stars* (1915-1916), *The Shadow of a Gunman* (1920), and *Juno and the Paycock* (1922) cover the most momentous events in recent Irish history, not from the point of view of the political or military leaders, but from that of the ordinary people unwillingly caught up in the indiscriminate savagery and recrimination of civil war and revolution. It is as though Ralph Mouldy, Peter Bullcalf, Francis Feeble and their families were at the centre of the dramatic action (with Bardolph, Nym, and Doll Tearsheet as minor characters) instead of Prince Hal and Hotspur. In this respect, of course, O'Casey is being realistic in writing about Irish history from the point of view of his own experience and realising (in however heightened a manner) people with whom he was intimately familiar. At the same time we can, with some advantage, think of his Dublin dramas in terms somewhat similar to Bernard Shaw's rebellion against the absurdly romanticised approach to history characteristic of the nineteenth-century theatre.[3]

In O'Casey, as in Shakespeare's history plays, certain recurrent themes are uppermost: the inter-action of public and private drama, the horror of civil strife and anarchy in the state, and, likewise in both, a continuing debate on the ambiguous demands of justice and order in society. The Elizabethan playright, conveniently distanced in time (but not relevance) from the events he chronicled, was provided with a firm moral as well as political pattern by the Tudor historians whose writings provided his main sources. The Irish author, writing in close proximity to the events he chronicled, naturally lacked so elaborate or consistent a narrative framework and the consequent opportunities for cross-reference within plays and from one play to another, yet even so he does succeed in imposing a sense of unity on the Dublin trilogy. This cohesion is maintained by a grim ironic vision of the destructive forces in society, a compassionate concern for the resultant human suffering, a highly idiosyncratic comic technique, and purposeful thematic patterning common to each of these three dramas.

Moreover, it could be argued that, although O'Casey had no Holinshed or Hall to fall back upon, he could (and did) draw upon a massive store of patriotic writings, ballads, speeches, and fables which were — he knew — known to, and popular with a wide cross-section of Irish society. Again and again, in examining his writings, we are confronted by an astonishing richness of local associations and national folklore, and by a multiplicity of references derived from literary and oral traditions of thought, all cleverly adapted for their specific contemporary relevance. This textual density is the product

of more than forty years' immersion in the everyday life and ways of thought of Dublin working-class people, of more than a quarter of a century's acquaintance with the oral sources and copious writings associated with the nationalist and labour movements centred in Dublin, and an extensive knowledge of English and Gaelic literature.

Throughout his life O'Casey enriched the surface texture of his writings with a diverse selection of quotations, references, and clichés drawn from both popular and learned sources, using them for a variety of effects, though most often for satire or irony. In *Juno and the Paycock* the quotations — usually given by Joxer — are deliberately commonplace examples culled from Burns, Macaulay, Scott, Thomas Moore's *Melodies*, popular proverbs and Irish songs and ballads. The following speech by Boyle, for example, shows how the author exploits well known aphorisms for his own purposes, shaping the syntax of the original to enhance his own prose rhythms:

> 'I'm goin' to tell you somethin', Joxer, that I wouldn't tell to anybody else — the clergy always had too much power over the people in this unfortunate counthry . . . Didn't they prevent the people in "'47" from seizin' the corn, an' they starvin'; didn't they down Parnell; *didn't they say hell wasn't hot enough nor eternity long enough to punish the Fenians?* We don't forget, we don't forget them things, Joxer. If they've taken everything else from us, Joxer, they've left us our memory.'[4]

Part of the delicious irony here, of course, is derived from our knowledge of the specious patriotism of the speaker himself, and the fact that he is prepared to forget all these injustices (more, to repudiate them) as soon as he becomes, as he thinks, a man of property; yet the author himself is in deadly earnest in this indictment of the political and economic betrayal of the Irish people by their clergy, and the lyrical intensity of Boyle's outburst — ludicrous as it may be in the full dramatic context — does give a momentary sense of conviction to his argument. It is interesting to compare Boyle's language here with a contemporary account of a sermon preached by Bishop Moriarty in March 1867, as reported by a Fenian supporter and quoted in William D'Arcy's *The Fenian Movement in the United States*, 1858-1886:

> 'Things are definitely looking up for the Fenians now, despite the ill-timed blast delivered at them by Bishop Moriarty of Kerry. In a sermon on hell *the Bishop took the opportunity to remark that, although the sufferings inflicted in that fiery pit were fear-*

> *some, still hell was not hot enough nor eternity long enough to punish such miscreants as the Fenian leaders.*'[5]

If it might be objected that such an allusion would be beyond the scope of reference of an ignorant man like Boyle, it should be made clear to non-Irish readers that the use of this quotation is quite different from, say, T. S. Eliot's adaptation of part of a sermon by Lancelot Andrewes in 'Journey of the Magi,' a reference which would be fully appreciated only by a reader with sophisticated literary taste. Moriarty's words, on the other hand, were common knowledge to Irish people of all classes, having entered into what may be called 'rebel folk-lore.'[6] My general point, of course, is how cleverly O'Casey has adapted popular material for his own particular purpose: it is a technique that is often similarly used in his plays and prose writings. In later dramas like *Cock-a-Doodle Dandy*, *The Bishop's Bonfire*, and *Figuro in the Night* a further dimension is added in that, in addition to popular and music-hall elements, more consciously 'literary' allusions are also used, including phrases and ideas from, among others, Yeats, Joyce, Marvell, and Eliot[7]: sometimes these are parodied, sometimes used in a straightforward manner to reinforce the playwright's own viewpoint, but whatever their function the particular context into which they are introduced usually gives them a significance beyond their immediate surface meaning.

Indeed, the use of allusion on such an extensive, if mostly unobtrusive scale is comparable — though in the Dublin trilogy at a consistently popular, vernacular level — to the poetic practice of Ezra Pound, T. S. Eliot, and other modern writers. In *The Waste Land*, for instance, many lines and phrases are borrowed (either directly or adapted) from the work of other writers, and yet the poem — in its parts as in the whole — has a distinctively personal flavour. Of Eliot's technique in this respect G. S. Fraser says:

> 'this use of allusion and concealed quotation enables him to set the present and the past in perspective, and to exhibit ironically the decay of past standards in present-day life.'[8]

Though O'Casey's method developed quite independently, it served similar purposes to those described by Fraser. Indeed, the irony works both ways in his case, for certain values of the past are criticised at the same time that their contemporary relevance is questioned. This is particularly true of conventional (that is, chivalric) notions of heroism, of martial glory and chauvinism. Legendary heroes and heroines are introduced at various times but always in a context that undermines the usually accepted valuation of them. Juno

Boyle is introduced to us by her husband, who complains of her nagging: 'Tisn't Juno should be her pet name at all, but Deirdre of th' Sorras, for she's always grousin' ' (Act I, p. 10). We may smile ruefully at the joke, which reduces the tragic Celtic herione to a termagant, but later we are to recognise that in a sense beyond Boyle's understanding Juno is a genuinely tragic figure comparable to her classical namesake. Later, when Bentham hears of her pet name (which has its own relevance, of course, for the Greek goddess is renowned not only for her beauty but for having to put up with a recalcitrant 'husband' and with the troubles of her off-spring) he exclaims: 'Juno! What an interesting name! It reminds one of Homer's glorious story of ancient gods and heroes.' But the rising inflection in his voice is soon brought down by Boyle's prosaic and uncomprehending explanation: 'Yis, doesn't it? You see, Juno was born an' christened in June; I met her in June; we were married in June, an' Johnny was born in June, so wan day I says to her, "You should ha' been called Juno," an' the name stuck to her ever since' (Act I, pp. 31-32).

The anti-heroic attitude is buttressed by a formidable assortment of weapons. In *Juno*, for example, the despicable toady Joxer Daly is one of the author's main agents for working this effect. He is always ready with a made-to-measure, custom-worn quotation to fit any occasion, whether it be a celebration of military bravery (Boyle's imaginary deeds in Easter Week), or of marital valour, or of life at sea. The satire works on various levels: for one thing, there is the credibility gap between what is said and the speaker himself; there is the inappropriateness (often) between what is said and the situation to which it refers; and there is the contrast, too, between what is resolved by the characters being satirised, and what in fact they do.

One obvious example that covers all these aspects is the histrionic quotation from Macaulay's 'Horatius' (XXVII) which acts as the climax of Joxer's response to Boyle's announcement that he is going to stand up to his wife:

> 'Them sentiments does you credit, Captain; I don't like to say anything as between man an' wife, but I say as a butty, as a butty, Captain, that you've stuck it too long, an' that it's about time you showed a little spunk. *How can a man die betther than facin' fearful odds, For th' ashes of his fathers an' the temples of his gods?'* (I, p. 27.)

The couplet is beautifully incongruous on every count from subject-matter to mathematical facts! The sentiments themselves are not only undermined by the character of the man who utters them and by

that of the man to whom they are addressed but by the subsequent actions of the two men, who, as soon as they hear a woman's voice on the landing, drop all pretence of resistance in panic-stricken flight. Elsewhere, the drunken Joxer declaims 'Chains an' slaveree' as he collapses on Boyle's bed (O'Casey would expect audiences to know this well-known poem by Burns, and to see the squalid parallel to the poet's invocation: 'Welcome to your gory *bed*,/Or to victorie'); and, in the same episode, quotes from Scott's *The Lay of the Last Minstrel:* 'Breathes there a man with soul . . . so . . . de . . . ad . . . this . . . me . . . o . . . wn, me nat . . . ive l . . . an'!' (III, p. 88). Boyle at the same time is speaking about his imaginary exploits in Easter Week, with 'Commandant Kelly' of the Irish Volunteers dying in his arms. Scott's lines, in their full context, throw further calumny upon the ignoble pair of hypocrites. Boyle's 'homecoming' here (to a place despoiled of everything that makes a home, from furniture to people and affection) is glanced at in the poem. The exile 'As home his footsteps he hath turned' is full of patriotic feelings; but there is a curse on any wretch ('concentred all in self') who does not share these generous feelings. Living, such a one is fated to lose all renown; dead, he shall be 'unwept, unhonour'd, and unsung.' Coming immediately after the real sufferings of Mrs. Boyle, the poetic attitudes are seen to be empty rhetorical gestures in themselves, and surrogates not inspirations for action. While the traditional ethical values and poetic expression of the epic lay are found to be quite inappropriate to the actions of the men who invoke them, they nonetheless throw into relief the really heroic attitudes of Juno Boyle herself.

O'Casey in fact is never wholly anti-heroic even in his most pessimistic moments: there is always someone worthy of esteem, always a hint that, despite all appearances to the contrary, there is in unlikely places and people much genuine bravery and self-sacrifice. His writings imply that a good deal of traditional literature, largely concerned with noble heroes and martial feats, has often celebrated courage and self-sacrifice in the wrong people and circumstances; at the same time we are left in no doubt that there is a good deal of positive human endeavour (generally ignored in pre-Modernist literature) that is really worthy of poetic celebration. Juno Boyle is, after all, aptly named: she does assume universal significance by the end of the play and can rightly be regarded as the 'goddess' or symbol of womankind and marriage.

II

> 'I once said to John Synge, "Why is it that an early Renaissance building is so much more beautiful than anything that followed?"

> And he replied, "Style is from the shock of new material." '
> W. B. Yeats: "The Irish Dramatic Movement" (1922)[9]

There was, as we have said, a rich store of ancient and modern literature, myths, popular beliefs, and often glamourised contemporary and near-contemporary historical writings that was widely known throughout Ireland, and upon which O'Casey drew in order to enrich the surface texture of his chronicle plays. He also had the advantage — so often denied to modern writers — that not only did he use material that was common knowledge, nationally, but he also wrote with specific audience attitudes and prejudices in mind, and these could be exploited for his own purposes, too. He could rely upon particular songs and quotations, for instance, having predictable emotive associations for Irish people, and this allowed him to exploit such responses for his own purposes. As a more obvious example one might instance the songs sung by Tommy Owens and Adolphus Grigson in *The Shadow of a Gunman*. Both have strong emotional overtones either of love or hate for Irish people. 'High upon the gallows-tree' used to be sung as a sort of national anthem in patriotic assemblies before 'A Soldier's Song' was adopted as the official anthem of the Irish Republic, while 'Erin's Orange Lily O!' might be regarded as a sectarian hymn for Northern Irish Protestant extremists. The use of these two antithetical 'battle-cries' is carefully plotted by the playwright. By having each sung by drunken and irresponsible hypocrites at particularly 'awkward' moments in the dramatic action (one in each of the two acts of the play), the dramatist enhances the overall impression that, for all the sectarian hatred between the two contending political movements, they have much in common in discreditable essentials. Taken within the full contexts in which they appear, therefore, the ballads reinforce O'Casey's message — a plague on both kinds of extreme chauvinism — without the necessity of him resorting to overtly didactic means. Owens and Grigson condemn themselves out of their own mouths. Both overdo their attempts to ingratiate themselves with Davoren and to impress him with their importance and devotion to particular sectarian 'principles.' Understandably, the louder their protestations, the less credible are their claims. Because they are shown to be, in the course of the action, only too representative of extreme public opinion (that is, green and orange attitudes) on both sides of 'the border', the dramatist's criticisms are therefore general in application. Recent events in Northern Ireland emphasise the continuing social relevance, unfortunately, of this theme.

This is only one of many aggressive methods employed by O'Casey. Other audacious shock tactics include grotesque and discon-

certing juxtapositions of incident and verbal response. Moreover, by choosing generally acceptable patriotic and religious sentiments and having them expressed by characters unacceptable to Irish audiences, and by encouraging stock reactions from the latter at what prove to be wholly inappropriate moments in the dramatic action, O'Casey set in motion a series of emotional and intellectual collisions with which to disturb the minds of the spectators. By these and many other conscious devices the playwright attempted to challenge and sometimes subvert the conventional moral and social attitudes of native audiences. He wanted to startle, shock, even scandalise Irish audiences into questioning inherited political and religious beliefs and, indeed, reverential national attitudes on all levels of public life, for at such a critical juncture in the history of his country it seemed to him that only extreme methods had any likelihood of making an impact on public opinion.

O'Casey's intentions in this respect surely provide a large part of the explanation for the extraordinary audience reactions to his drama in Dublin. At no time have these reactions been lukewarm or indifferent. I am here not thinking only of the active hostility of certain factions and individuals in Ireland — a response which, in one way or another, was to greet almost everything he wrote from the 1920s up to his death in 1964. (The list is a long one, including religious objections to *Juno and the Paycock* in Cork in 1925, riots in Dublin over *The Plough and the Stars* in 1926, bitter clerical opposition to *The Silver Tassie* in 1935, an organised press campaign against *The Bishop's Bonfire* in 1955, and the enforced abandonment of the 1958 Dublin Theatre Festival because *The Drums of Father Ned* was to be given its première there.) I am also thinking of the remarkable fact that no other dramatist, whether Irish or not, has had a popularity in any way comparable to that of O'Casey in Dublin.

In a letter to Sean O'Casey dated April 20th 1928, W. B. Yeats acknowledged his theatre's debt to the former's plays:

> 'I bore in mind that the Abbey owed its recent prosperity to you. If you had not brought us your plays just at that moment I doubt if it would now exist.'[10]

The poet was here thinking of the theatre's virtual bankruptcy in 1923. Forced to close for many months during the Anglo-Irish guerilla war (when the evening curfew kept people indoors) and harassed by the general fear of bomb-throwing raids on public places in the subsequent Civil War, the theatre had still not retrieved its fortunes by 1923 when *The Shadow of a Gunman* became its first great box-office attraction for many years. *Juno and the Paycock* confirmed this appeal,

as various entries in Joseph Holloway's voluminous Diaries testify. On May 10th 1924, for instance, he wrote of the play's revival at the Abbey (it was first staged there on March 3rd of that year):

> 'The little theatre was thronged again, and crowds being turned away as I went up at 7:45 . . . The matinee was equal to last Saturday's in attendance. *Juno* has broken all records.'[11]

Another entry, for August 14th 1924, reads:

> 'I witnessed a strange incident last night in seeing W. B. Yeats and Mrs. Yeats being crowded out of the Abbey, and having to seek the pictures to allay their disappointment. O'Casey's play, *The Shadow of a Gunman*, had been staged for three nights with the usual result — that crowds had to be turned away each performance. This and his other play, *Juno and the Paycock*, have wonderful drawing power. *The same people want to see them over and over again.* . . . And the author stood chatting to me in the vestibule the other night as the audience came thronging in, proud of the fact, but no way swell-headed, his cloth cap cocked over his left eye, as his right looked short-sightedly at the audience's eager rush. Certainly he has written the two most popular plays ever seen at the Abbey, and they both are backgrounded by the terrible times we have just passed through, but his characters are so true to life and humorous that all swallow the bitter pill of fact that underlies both pieces. The acting in both reaches the highest watermark of Abbey acting. It looks as if the Abbey is coming into its own at long last, and it's about time. In December next it will reach its twentieth year of existence.'[12]

Holloway had been a regular patron of the Abbey throughout those nineteen struggling years; his comments on the plays and the acting are thus especially significant in the present context.

The Plough and the Stars did not join the Abbey's repertoire until 1926, but when it did do so it quickly showed itself to be as durable as the two earlier O'Casey dramas. Indeed, over the years it has proved to be the most popular of the trilogy in Dublin. Between its first production in February 1926 and O'Casey's withdrawal of his plays from Éire in 1958 (as a protest against discrimination against James Joyce and himself at that year's Dublin Theatre Festival) *The Plough* was revived at the Abbey on seventy-six occasions as compared to *Juno and the Paycock's* sixty occasions between March 1924 and 1958. Ernest Blythe, managing director of the Abbey until 1967, has published figures which show conclusively that these works are the most popular of any in the theatre's history. Up to 1963 *The*

Plough was performed 410 times while *Juno* was given 341 performances. The next most performed play was Lady Gregory's *The Rising of the Moon* (1907) — 318 times — followed by *The Whiteheaded Boy* (1916) by Lennox Robinson — 284 — and *The Shadow of a Gunman* (1923), also with 284 performances. Only seven other plays had been staged more than two hundred times, and, of these, none had exceeded 239 performances.[13] These figures are quite astonishing, bearing in mind that revivals of O'Casey's plays since the playwritgh's ban on is plays came to an end in 1964 have been as frequent as before and also the fact that his early plays are also often performed in Ireland by amateurs. In the 1920s and for a short while afterwards, perhaps, the popularity of the three dramas could be interpreted as a mere temporary phenomenon: the keen interest that they have sustained right up to the present in Dublin, despite repeated revivals in the past four decades since their initial appearance there, is a really extraordinary feature.

Professor Walter Starkie described the phenomenon as it was viewed in Dublin in the 'twenties and 'thirties as follows:

> 'When I watch those crowded houses at the O'Casey plays I am struck by the restless attitude of the audience towards events that were so familiar. They are fascinated by them, but the tragic side makes them laugh hysterically, as if willy-nilly they could not let sadness overpower them.'[14]

Like Holloway, Starkie attributed the popularity of the plays — and, presumably, the particular psychological response of Irish audiences to them — to their topicality and historical accuracy, 'for everyone feels the morbid desire to live again in a few hours those long, tedious years of horror.'[15] In *The Harvest of Tragedy* T. R. Henn exhibits a restricted understanding of O'Casey's intentions and achievements. He goes a little further than Holloway or Starkie, however, in his analysis of audience reactions to O'Casey. Of his Abbey drama, Henn declares:

> 'It is a crude and violent theatre, highly competent in its handling of situation and in its understanding of comic relief; so much so, indeed that the Dublin audiences appeared to have concentrated their interest upon the "recognition" and approval of its comic types. It is possible that such an attitude was to some extent a defence mechanism against the rawness of their recent memories of the "Troubles" and the Civil War.'[16]

There is undoubtedly a good deal of truth in the explanations

provided by all three writers; but when we come to consider the presence of hysterical laughter and of a kind of morbid fascination in Irish responses to the plays it is surely even more valid to point out that such defence barriers are erected primarily as protection against the playwright's onslaughts on the sensibilities of native audiences. Indeed, judging from various reports and from my own observation of audience reactions outside as well as within Ireland, it must be recognised that the dramatist's shock tactics have an even more universal effect. Richard Rees wrote a perceptive comment on this aspect in *The Adelphi* for February 1934:

> 'Mr. Sean O'Casey's Irish tragedies, *Juno and the Paycock* and *The Plough and the Stars*, were "popular" [in England] in spite of their overwhelming imaginative realism. I used to think that the rapturous and hysterical giggling with which the audience accompanied the comic business and to some extent marred the performance of these two plays was the result of the Irish Players overreaching themselves. The comic brilliance of the performers seemed to run away with the play. *But it may have been an unconscious strategy of the audience to turn aside the point of a dramatist* — the only one alive today, perhaps — *who might pierce our complacency and compel us to pity and terror.*'[17]

Spectators even outside Ireland are, it is true, involved in the fearful grotesque experience. It is not the familiarity of subject matter (*pace* Starkie) that affects native or non-native audiences so much as it is the author's deliberate and disturbing manipulation of such experience. To ignore this aspect is to overlook the conscious sense of purpose that continually informs O'Casey's stagecraft. It is a neglect that has debilitated O'Casey criticism for many years. Irish critics especially have refused to see the dramatist as anything other than a slice-of-life realist and, as we might expect with such an approach, many of O'Casey's more obvious satiric effects as well as some subtler touches have been attributed to accidental or historical factors by such critics. Even a reasonably competent academic critic like Walter Starkie falls into the same error because of his insistence (like A. E. Malone and others) that, in his Abbey trilogy, O'Casey was a straightforward recorder of life as he had known it. He praises the playwright for the 'mature observation' of each of these early plays in which (he believed)

> 'the dramatist *remained rigidly objective* and became the sensitive receiver of impressions. He watched his characters work upon the stage *without ever giving his* own thoughts.'[18]

The facts are quite otherwise. Each play for long periods bombards the audience with a wide range of conflicting thoughts and ethical attitudes — seemingly in an objective manner, it is true — putting forward certain basic values which the writer thinks paramount in the particular circumstances, while realising contrary values in ways which are carefully calculated to alienate them from the spectators. The dramatist's deep moral commitment inspires the audacious theatrical experimentation which characterises his Dublin trilogy. The formal daring exhibited in these plays, the liveliness of characters and their vivid idiomatic speech ought not to obscure the fact that such means are used for specific ends. That the plays are rarely as *overtly* didactic as some of his later works does not mean that they serve no propaganda purpose whatsoever or that he writes at any time in his life 'without ever giving his own thoughts.'

To approach the Dublin trilogy as political drama on an epic scale need not reduce the critical effect or importance of its component parts, nor should it restrict their significance to the level of documentary reportage — one only has to think in terms of Shakespeare's histories or, say, Brecht's *Mother Courage and Her Children*, with which drama O'Casey's work has much in common. Instead, it is a useful way of viewing the plays in an enlarged focus, for to evaluate *Juno and the Paycock* solely in terms of domestic tragedy (as James Agate did when he described the play 'as much a tragedy as *Macbeth*, but it is a tragedy taking place in the porter's family'[19]) is seriously to diminish the work. It *is*, of course, a domestic tragedy, but is much more besides and if judged only as the tragic story of the Boyle family then it will compare unfavourably with many lesser plays. *The Plough and the Stars* is even less rewarding from a dramatic point of view if approached in terms of conventional tragedy, rather than as one of a cycle of plays realising formal variations on certain recurrent political and social themes. Certainly each part of the trilogy would gain immeasurably (like Shakespeare's two cycles played at Stratford-on-Avon, England) if they were performed, successively, in repertory. Yet, though the Abbey Theatre has staged each of the three plays several hundred times, they have never been presented as a cycle in Dublin. The nearest the Irish National Theatre came to this was when *Juno* and *The Plough* were presented as the Abbey's contribution to the London World Theatre Festival on Shakespeare's anniversary in 1964.

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NOTES

1 J. M. Synge, *Collected Works*, II (London, 1966), p. 350.
2 W. B. Yeats, *Explorations* (London, 1962), p. 156.
3 See M. Meisel, *Shaw and the Nineteenth-Century Theatre* (Princeton, 1963).
4 *Juno and the Paycock* in *Collected Plays*, I (London, 1949), Act I, pp. 24-25, my italics: all future references are to this edition. One need only compare Boyle's words in this quotation with those of O'Casey in the *Irish Worker* for Nov. 15, 1913 (in an article fiercely condemning the Catholic clergy for their support for the employers during the great Dublin Lock-out at this time) to see where the author's sympathies lie. In the course of his attack the playwright wrote, with heavy sarcasm, 'Parnell, too, I think, was an Irishman,' adding abruptly, 'and it was the clergy [who] whipped energy into the pack of hounds that hunted him to death.'
5 *The Fenian Movement in the United States*, 1858-1886 (Washington, 1947), p. 235: my italics.
6 Dominic Behan's autobiography, *Teems of Times and Happy Returns* (London, 1961), for instance, shows Moriarty's words being quoted to him by his brother, Sean Behan, as one of the reasons for his being opposed to the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland (see p. 222).
7 Since this article was written Robert Hogan has published an excellent introductory essay on O'Casey's use of allusions and rhetorical devices in his later plays: see 'The Haunted Inkbottle' in *James Joyce Quarterly* (VIII, 1), Fall 1970.
8 G. S. Fraser, *The Modern Writer and his World* (London, 1953), p. 44; this passage is slightly changed in the rev. edn. (1964), p. 49.
9 W. B. Yeats, 'The Irish Dramatic Movement', in *Theatre and Nationalism in Twentieth-Century Ireland*, edited by R. O'Driscoll (Toronto, 1971), p. 84.
10 *The Letters of W. B. Yeats*, ed. Allan Wade (London, 1954), p. 740.
11 *Holloway's Journal* (Carbondale, 1967), p. 231.
12 *Holloway's Journal*, pp. 235-236: my italics.
13 Cf. E. Blythe, *The Abbey Theatre* (Dublin, 1963), p. 9. Since 1964 — when, six months before his death, O'Casey relented his ban and allowed the Abbey to perform *Juno* and *The Plough* in London as part of the 400th Anniversary of Shakespeare's birth — the Abbey Theatre has resumed productions of O'Casey's first three full-length plays and has also added later works like *Hall of Healing* and *Red Roses for Me* to its repertoire.
14 'Sean O'Casey,' *The Irish Theatre* ed. Lennox Robinson (London, 1939), p. 164.
15 *Ibid.*, p. 164.
16 T. R. Henn, *The Harvest of Tragedy* (London, 1956), p. 212.
17 *The Adelphi* (VII, 5), Feb. 1934, p. 385: my italics.
18 'Sean O'Casey,' *The Irish Theatre*, p. 150: my italics.
19 *Sunday Times*, Nov. 16, 1925.

GREAT BRITAIN AND 'DIE REPUBLIEK NATALIA': AN EARLY CASE OF U.D.I. AND SANCTIONS

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IN 1838 Port Natal was occupied by British troops from the Cape Colony. The object of the occupation, as stated at the time, was to limit bloodshed between the indigenous inhabitants and certain of the Voortrekkers who had moved into this region in search of their 'promised land'. The occupation was of short duration, however. Because of the British government's unwillingness to assume any additional responsibilities in southern Africa, the troops which the Cape Governor had sent to Natal were withdrawn under instructions from London in 1839.

Two years later, in December 1841, the Governor of the Cape, Sir George Napier, for a second time ordered the military occupation of the port, this time by a small British force under the command of Captain Thomas Charlton Smith of the 27th Regiment. Again, however, the Governor's decision was countermanded from London. Four months after Napier had issued his instructions to Smith's force, the Secretary of State for the War and Colonial Departments, Lord Stanley, on April 10th 1842, put his signature to a despatch ordering Napier to recall the troops forthwith. This time Napier refused to obey his instructions. The military occupation of the port was maintained; and a few months later, on 13th December 1842, Lord Stanley reversed his previous orders. He now sent off a despatch not only permitting the continued presence of the troops at the port, but permitting the *whole* of Natal to be brought under British authority.

In that review of the decisions taken during the course of three or four years lie the essential elements in the Natal annexation puzzle. Why should the port have been occupied and then abandoned and then occupied again? Still more puzzling: why, in December 1842, should the British government have turned so dramatically on its previous decisions as to allow full-scale annexation when, only eight months previously, it had not been prepared to shoulder the limited responsibility of a temporary occupation of the port?

Historians have not found it easy to agree in their answers to these questions — partly it would seem because latter-day political passions have blurred their vision. In a world that is still reacting against the great expansive movement of the European nations, studies of imperialism tend often to become essays in propaganda. Marxians, for example, following the gospel of Lenin, see imperialism

as a function of monopoly capitalism, as an expression of the need, which inevitably arises at a certain stage in the development of capitalist societies, to acquire new fields for the investment of their accumulated surpluses. Alongside the Marxians, conscience-stricken representatives of the ex-imperialist Powers have joined voice with those who were once the victims of Western expansionism to echo the arguments of the early twentieth century economist, J. A. Hobson, whose view it was that the forces producing imperialism originate 'in the selfish interests of certain industrial, financial, and professional classes, seeking private advantage out of a policy of imperial expansion'. One way or another, whether Marxians or non-Marxians, the theorists of economic imperialism see the European expansive movement as an expression of economic greed. Territories were grabbed, they assert, because of the material benefits which they offered to the colonizing Power; and in this, they suggest, lies the root explanation of the imperialist phenomenon.

Set against the theorists of economic imperialism is a variety of opponents. Some have come forward with strange and fascinating theories to explain the expansive movement. Thus the German scholar, Joseph Schumpeter, in a book published just after the First World War, put forward a case for regarding imperialism as an atavism, as something to be explained in terms of inherited psychological attitudes rather than material needs. Others, finding Schumpeter's thesis as untenable as Hobson's and Lenin's, have sought to explain imperialism in political terms, as an expression of nationalism, as the 'projection on a world scale' of the struggle for a balance of power in Europe, as the incidental offshoot of the devious alliance diplomacy of the great Powers.[1]

Such conflicts of theory seem remote from the question of the annexation of Natal; but the two issues are not unrelated. The validity of the general theories can, after all, only be tested by observing whether they hold good for individual cases of imperial aggrandizement. Though Natal was annexed before the onset, in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, of that scramble for colonies which it is the purpose of certain of the theories to explain, an enquiry into the circumstances of the annexation may nevertheless shed some light on the more general problem which Americans have named 'the dynamics of imperial expansion'.

Of the South African historians who have investigated the Natal annexation problem, most have reached conclusions which are irreconcilable with the grand theories. A few, however, have come up with accounts of the annexation which dovetail snugly into the arguments of those engaged in the great ideological debate. At least one of our historians, for example, has explained the annexation

primarily in terms of British commercial acquisitiveness, and in doing so has joined hands (unwittingly perhaps) with the Hobsonists. This is Dr A. J. du Plessis whose work entitled *Die Republiek Natalia* was published in Volume I of the *Archives Year Book* for 1942.

Briefly, the case he puts forward is the following: As early as 1824 there were English traders at Port Natal, and from these men and others there came pleas to the British government to annex the territory and so provide it with orderly administration. Yet as often as these pleas were made they were rejected by a mother country that was reluctant to incur the additional costs and responsibilities of administering more territory in Africa. By 1838, the grounds for annexation had grown stronger. By then, the Great Trek had brought to Natal large numbers of emigrant Boers — British subjects who were soon in conflict with their Zulu neighbours, and who proceeded, after defeating Dingane, to assert their independence of Britain by declaring themselves to be Die Republiek Natalia. Even these developments, however, failed to budge the British government from its policy of no territorial advance; and it was not until the end of 1842, after the port had twice been militarily occupied, that the British at last overcame the scruples that had held them back for nearly two decades and decided to make Natal theirs. Many factors, says Dr du Plessis, contributed to this *volte face*, by they were not all of equal importance. In the forefront of the British government's declared reasons for deciding at last to annex was the old humanitarian purpose of providing protection to the indigenous African peoples. But this, says Dr du Plessis, was merely a mask concealing other considerations that weighed far more heavily with those responsible for British policy. By 1842 there was in the hinterland of Port Natal an emergent state with a trading potential that was arousing the attention of foreign Powers; a state possessing a harbour giving access to the wider world. Still more telling were two other considerations. One was the discovery that Natal possessed rich *coal* deposits which could be of considerable value in an age of developing steam transport. The other was the prospect of Natal's serving as a *cotton* colony, which might free the mills of Lancashire from their dependence upon imports from the U.S.A. In these circumstances, says Dr du Plessis, Natal came to be seen as an area of value to Britain. In London it was feared that the Boers of Natal might acquire a considerable degree of economic and political independence. Worse still, there was the danger that they might be taken under the protection of a foreign Power, for then not only would the economic potential of the area be lost to Britain, but there would be the added discomfiture of a foreign Power in control of a commanding position on the east coast.[2]

At first sight it is a plausible explanation. As soon as one begins to examine the documentary evidence, however, doubts begin to arise. Amongst the documents for April 1842, for example, one finds Lord Stanley, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, writing to Governor Napier at the Cape:[3]

> Many considerations concur to dissuade the establishment of a new colony in Southern Africa. . . . Some of them are derived from a general survey of the actual extent of our colonial possessions in different parts of the world; from the magnitude of the naval and military force required for the defence of such settlements, and from the demands to which the national revenue is already subject. These are subjects to which, for obvious reasons, I make only brief and passing allusion; but when I advert to the reports which have been collected from every public officer who has been stationed at or near Port Natal, and from almost every private person who has visited that country . . . I am compelled to conclude that Port Natal is nearly worthless in itself as a harbour . . . that the adjacent territory possesses no peculiar physical advantages; that the establishment of a colony there would be attended with little prospect of advantage; that it would be productive of a serious charge to the revenues of Great Britain for many years to come. . . .

In short, Lord Stanley could see no economic advantage to be derived from the possession of Natal. This despatch, it must be acknowledged, was written some eight months *before* the decision was taken to authorise at last the annexation of the territory; but there is no evidence in Dr du Plessis' work, or anywhere else for that matter, that new information came before Lord Stanley in the intervening months to convince him that Natal possessed an economic potential which he had failed to perceive earlier. On the contrary, in his despatch of 13 December, permitting the extension of the Queen's authority over Natal, Stanley restated his view that there were 'insuperable obstacles to any degree of prosperity' in Natal, and the records reveal that what had reached him during the intervening months was a despatch from Napier in which the Governor had admitted rather gloomily:[4]

> In considering the question (i.e. of annexing Natal), I have never been led away by the flattering accounts of the beauty of the country and its fertility, in which so many travellers indulge. I have always had before me the dangers of the

> anchorage and the difficulties of entering the harbour; neither have I been sanguine as to the profit likely to be derived from colonising Natal. I have never for a moment viewed it as a lucrative possession, nor have I been unmindful of the expense of its settlement as a colony.

So speak the official documents. In the 'coal and cotton' thesis they are ignored. Instead, the case is based on evidence remote in time from the annexation decision.

As far as coal is concerned, it is undeniable that the Colonial Office *for a while* showed considerable interest. Lord Normanby, who held the seals of the Office during 1839, wrote to Napier in June of that year that the reports of coal in Natal 'would appear to demand careful investigation, as such a resource might prove of the utmost importance to steam navigation in the adjacent seas'.[5] Investigations were instituted, and in June 1841, Sir James Stephen, the Permanent Under-Secretary, minuted that the advantages of a steady supply of coal at such a place as Port Natal would be 'exceedingly great'.[6] What is no less true, however, is that by 1842 this interest had evaporated. Long before Lord Stanley took his decision to permit the establishment of British authority over Natal, the men in the Colonial Office had become fully aware that the harbour could 'only be entered by the smallest description of coasting vessels', and that the anchorage outside was 'so dangerous at particular seasons as to be unfit for larger vessels to ride there in safety for the purpose of discharging or receiving cargo'.[7] The Colonial Office had also learnt that much of the coal in Natal was of poor quality, that the main beds were situated a hundred miles or more from the coast, that it would have to be transported to the harbour on ox-waggons over non-existent roads, and that the costs would therefore be exorbitant.[8] The effect of this upon attitudes may best be judged from the following minute, penned by Stephen in January 1842:[9]

> To make a new settlement at Port Natal, where there is not even an accessible port or safe roadstead, would be merely to throw away so much money, and to multiply our relations and responsibilities towards barbarous tribes, from which nothing could ever come but the consumption of treasure, the waste of human life, and a warfare alike inglorious, unprofitable and afflicting.

It should perhaps be added that if anyone might have been tempted to make the most of the prospects of Port Natal as a coaling station it was Sir George Napier, whose over-riding concern it was to

persuade the British government to take possession of the territory. Yet it was Napier who wrote, in December 1841, with the unfailing honesty that characterised all his despatches, warning the Colonial Office of the 'serious objections' that stood in the way of schemes for 'forming a depot for Coals on that part of the Coast of Africa'.[10] After that, almost nothing was said of Natal as a coaling station; certainly it was not one of the considerations that featured in the correspondence relating to the decision to permit annexation at last.

It is regrettable that no account should have been taken of this evidence; it is even more regrettable that the issue of cotton-growing should have been raised to support the argument that acquisitive motives contributed largely to the British decision to annex. If one examines the sources, one finds only one document from the year 1842 that in any way relates to Natal's cotton-growing potential.[11] This is a letter written by Captain Smith, the commander of the second occupation force; but there is no evidence that it made a convincing impression either on the Cape Governor or the British government and it is not cited by Dr du Plessis. Indeed, the strongest testimony that is adduced in support of the cotton thesis is a document written in December 1849, six years after the annexation, by Earl Grey, who, it is worth noting, had nothing to do with the annexation decision. The other witnesses are, if anything, more irrelevant. One is the Natal pioneer, adventurer and traveller, Nathaniel Isaacs, who had no official influence, and whose views on Natal's cotton-growing capacities appeared in a book published in 1836; another is some-one signing himself 'Amicus', who published a letter on cotton-growing in *The Natal Witness* — one must presume either in 1846 or 1847 — either way, long after annexation was an accomplished fact.[12]

There were, it is true, merchants and others, both at the Cape and in London who, over the years, repeatedly pressed for the annexation of Natal, on the grounds that it would be a profitable venture.[13] But they were, in every case, pursuing specific and limited private interests, and there is nothing to suggest that the British governments of the period regarded these private interests as in any way synonymous with the larger interests of the empire which they ruled. With the one exception of Lord John Russell, who presided over the Colonial Office from September 1839 to September 1841, there was not a Secretary of State during the years 1824-1842 who evinced any enthusiasm for the proposition that Natal should be added to the territories of the Crown. The majority — and amongst them must be numbered Lord Stanley — were firmly convinced that Natal would be a drain on Britain's resources, not a source of new wealth.

Yet the very strength of the evidence that Natal was an unwelcome new entry in the British balance-sheets of empire serves only to

raise again, in more emphatic terms, the question: Why, then, was the decision taken to permit its annexation?

An explanation skilfully argued by two South African historians is that the decision to annex must be accounted for primarily in terms of competitive European power politics. Thus C. J. Uys, in his book *In the Era of Shepstone*, argues that 'the British government was inspired neither by racial animus (against the Afrikaner), nor by philanthropic considerations in departing from its policy of non-interference. . . . ' When Lord Stanley and his colleagues resolved to annex Natal they were, says Uys, yielding 'to the inexorable dictates of foreign policy'.[14] G. D. Scholtz, who follows the path pioneered by Uys, provides a rather fuller explanation. In *Suid-Afrika en die Wêreldpolitiek* Scholtz argues that the essential background to be taken into account in explaining the annexation of Natal is the legacy of strained relations between Britain and France left behind by a crisis which had developed in the 1830s. In these circumstances, he says, no British government could allow the French to gain any new advantages that might tip the balance in their favour. One such possible advantage was a port on the east coast of Africa, commanding the sea route to India. Consequently, as soon as there was any suggestion of French interest in the Boer Republic of Natal, the decision was taken in London to annex.[15]

The great merit of the explanation offered by Uys and Scholtz is that it fixes attention where it needs to be focussed — on the months between April and December 1842. In April 1842 Lord Stanley was as adamant as any of his predecessors in insisting that Britain should acquire no responsibilities in Natal, not even the limited responsibility of a temporary military occupation of the port. In December 1842, he permitted the annexation of all the hinterland as well as the port. What has to be explained is what happened between April and December to induce the British government to break with a policy to which it and its predecessors had held fast for most of twenty years.

The event which both Uys and Scholtz seize upon to explain Stanley's change of attitude is the arrival at Port Natal of the Dutch schooner *Brazilia* on March 24th, 1842. This was not the first time that a foreign trading vessel had called at the port; but the *Brazilia* was a foreign vessel with a difference. It carried not only a cargo of goods for trade; it carried also as supercargo, a ubiquitous Dutchman, Johan Arnold Smellekamp, who was to pop up at other moments in South African history, and whose purpose on this occasion appeared to be quite as much political as commercial; for with him in his baggage Smellekamp brought copies of a pamphlet, printed in Amsterdam in 1841, which was decidedly sympathetic to the efforts of the Boers to liberate themselves from British exploitation and

oppression; and rumour soon had it that Smellekamp was an unofficial agent of the King of Holland on a special assignment to assure the Boers of Dutch protection.[16] Amongst the Trekkers of the Republic of Natalia anyone bearing such glad tidings was bound to be joyfully received, and bound also perhaps to do good trade! On the British side, the response was bound to be different. In May, Captain Smith, the commander of the occupation force, reported to the Cape Governor, Sir George Napier, the goings-on that had followed the *Brazilia's* arrival. Sir George Napier promptly reported to the Colonial Office: the Colonial Office informed the Foreign Office; the Foreign Office instructed the British ambassador to the Netherlands, Sir Edward Disbrowe, to institute enquiries; and His Excellency the Ambassador approached the Foreign Minister of the government of His Majesty the King of the Netherlands. The result was an emphatic denial by the Dutch government of any interest in Natal, and a promise that those responsible for the *Brazilia* expedition would be brought 'to a proper account'. There the matter might have rested had not Sir Edward Disbrowe instituted further enquiries which led him to the conclusion 'that the whole proceedings originated with certain parties in Paris'. This news reached the Colonial Office on December 7th, 1842. Less than a week later, on 13 December, 1842, the despatch was signed permitting Napier to make Natal one of the possessions of the Crown.[17]

The conclusion reached by Uys and Scholtz is that Natal was annexed to prevent its falling into French hands. Stanley's despatch of December 13th was, in fact, a move in the great game of European power politics. It is an explanation that harmonizes happily with the views of those theorists who see nineteenth century imperialism as the projection on a world scale of the rivalries and diplomatic manoeuvres of the Great Powers. It is also a more satisfactory explanation in its own right than that offered by Dr du Plessis, for Uys and Scholtz draw their evidence from those who contributed directly or indirectly to the annexation decision, and they focus on events which occurred at such a time as possibly to have influenced that decision.

Yet, for all this, their explanation is open to question. One aspect of the situation which features in neither account is that there is little evidence of any very great degree of alarm about the *Brazilia* episode either in the Colonial Office documents or in the Foreign Office documents. In the Foreign Office, the conclusion seems to have been that the *Brazilia's* visit was, at the very worst, an unsuccessful French attempt to embroil Britain and the Netherlands in trouble with each other; and in the Colonial Office Sir James Stephen minuted on 8 December, 1842, that it would hardly be wise to make a

fuss about the matter unless the British government was wanting a quarrel with France which, he supposed, was 'quite impossible'.[18]

To say the least, these are hardly the responses of senior civil servants expecting a sudden blow to be struck by the French against Britain's Indian Ocean shipping lanes. Far from alarm, there seems to have been a fair measure of indifference about the whole business. Certainly there is nothing to suggest that the British feared *imminent* French intervention in Natal. Yet, if this was so, why did the British government resort to the extreme precaution of immediately sending off a despatch permitting Napier to bring the whole of Natal under the Queen's authority? Why did Stanley and his colleagues not delay at least for a few weeks longer? There was, after all, a British military force already in occupation of the port. Rather than annex the whole of an unwanted territory, why did the British government not instruct Napier to maintain that occupation until the matter had been cleared up with the French?

These are questions which it is as well to face; for the asking of them transforms the picture. What appeared to be an account of considered British action becomes instead a story of almost absurd official ineptitude and ministerial confusion. What we are asked to accept is that the mere whisper of a French inspired trading expedition to Port Natal was enough to throw the British cabinet and its official advisers into a panic; such a blind panic, indeed, that within a week of the whisper reaching them and without further ado, without even waiting for further information, they were prepared to adopt the drastic expedient of adding Natal to the possessions of the Crown — a step which they and their predecessors had been using all their ingenuity to avoid during two long decades!

It is hardly a credible story, and there are other reasons for doubting its validity. In the first place, Lord Stanley's despatch of December 13th, 1842, reviewing the reasons for at last permitting the extension of British authority over Natal, has in it only one reference to foreign Powers, and that, significantly, is a passing reference to the British government's determination to prevent the Boers coming 'under the protection or dominion of a foreign Power'.[19] Nowhere in this long document, which runs into pages of fine print, is there any discussion of Port Natal as a strategic asset important to the game of European power politics. In the second place, if as Uys and Scholtz suggest, the prime purpose of the British government was to keep foreign Powers out of south east Africa and its shipping routes, then this was something which could have been attained, quite as effectively, and much more cheaply, by the simple expedient of annexing the port only and disregarding the hinterland. In London it was known that even Port Natal was incapable of taking naval

vessels, and nowhere else on the whole Natal coastline was there a harbour suitable for trade let alone for ships of war.[20] Earlier in 1842 the masterful Sir James Stephen had argued that, if only it were practicable, Britain's 'true policy' would be to abandon all responsibility, even in the Cape Colony, retaining possession only of 'the sea-port towns and the immediate neighbourhood on which they depend for food.'[21] There can be little doubt that such views would have been pressed again with emphasis if the problem had simply been one of depriving the French of a footing on the coast. No British government was likely to take on larger responsibilities than were absolutely necessary at a time when imperial commitments were unpopular precisely because they burned large holes in the pockets of the British tax-payers.

Certainty often eludes the historian. It may be, as the passing reference to foreign Powers in Lord Stanley's December despatch suggests, that the possibility of French intervention was one of the considerations influencing the British government's decision to annex Natal. If it was a consideration, however, it was not the only, nor even the major one. In the sedate corridors and offices of Whitehall, the *Brazilia* episode caused a stir, but no consternation; and the fact that the hinterland was annexed as well as the port, suggests strongly that it was the internal South African situation that Lord Stanley and his colleagues were responding to quite as much as grand strategy and fear of foreign competition.

It is thus events in South Africa that must be examined to ascertain whether, as seems probable, something happened between April and December 1842 to transform the British government's attitude.

Demands from South Africa for the annexation of Natal were nothing new by 1842. Apart from the clamour of the merchants and others, whose private interests would be promoted by the colonization of the territory, the voice of Sir George Napier had been heard over the years, pleading the cause of British intervention with an unflagging determination, one is tempted to say 'nagging persistence', which must at times sorely have tried the patience of his superiors in London. He had arrived at the Cape in 1838, at almost the same time as groups of Trekkers were moving into the lands between the Drakensberg and the sea, and from that moment through to 1842 he had bombarded the Colonial Office with despatches urging the establishment of British authority in Natal.[22]

Throughout this correspondence, Napier had remained cautious, at times even pessimistic, about the economic potential of the territory he was so anxious to control. When he urged imperial intervention it was almost always on humanitarian, strategic and political grounds. Britain, he argued, must control Natal, in the first

instance simply to prevent bloodshed between Trekker and tribesman; to protect the indigenous peoples and prevent the recrudescence of slavery. Beyond that, imperial intervention was necessary to control the situation in the interior, by closing a port of entry for supplies, particularly supplies of guns and powder, intended for the Trekkers settled to the north and south of the Vaal. It was necessary also to discourage further Boer emigration from the Cape and so blight the hopes of those who were anxious to subvert British supremacy in South Africa. Above all, however, British intervention was necessary to avert the danger of the emigrants pressing down from Natal upon the troublesome chiefdoms dammed up against the Cape eastern frontier. Once the Trekkers who had moved into Natal had indicated their intention of establishing an independent republic, *resolute* action was necessary in Napier's opinion.[23] To use a late twentieth century phrase, such a 'unilateral declaration of independence', if allowed to succeed, would in all probability encourage further insubordination, perhaps even rebellion, amongst the Queen's Dutch-speaking subjects.

As Napier saw it, Britain could not hope to control the new and complex South Africa created by the Trek unless as a first step she controlled Natal.

By 1842 Napier's arguments had been repeated so often that one assumption can immediately be ruled out: the assumption that Lord Stanley's April instructions to withdraw the occupation force from Port Natal were issued in ignorance of the dangers and complications which the Cape Governor was trying to control. Quite certainly, the Colonial Secretary and his colleagues and advisers were fully aware that something had to be done if future troubles were to be avoided. What they had not accepted was Napier's argument that it was *only* through the occupation of the port or the establishment of British rule in Natal that effective control could be exercised. Indeed if anything shows through the stately phrases of the withdrawal despatch of April, it is not ignorance of the bearing of the Natal problem upon related South African issues, but ignorance of the character and temper of the emigrant Boers and of the geographical obstacles in the way of enforcing effective alternative measures to those advocated by Napier. Nowhere in that despatch was there any suggestion that after the recall of the occupation force the Natal situation should be allowed simply to drift. On the contrary, the Governor was to take the situation firmly in hand; by various well-chosen devices other than annexation or military occupation, he was to place the Boers under pressures that would induce them to give up their foolhardy attempt to establish their independence in the wilderness beyond the beneficent reach of civilized government.

Hitherto, complained Lord Stanley, Napier had been too 'indistinct and irresolute'; but, he continued[24]

> when the emigrants shall be clearly appraised of how little they have to hope from perseverence in their projects, how little they have to dread from the abandonment of them, and how fixed is Her Majesty's purpose to protect against them the tribes who have been admitted into alliance with us, it seems reasonable to anticipate some disorganisation of the force and the counsels of the emigrants. I perceive that there are already some indications of such a result, and of a desire on the part of many of them, to return within the protection of the British Crown. To stimulate that desire, and to encourage those who may actually resume their residence within the colony, and to render the absence of the contumacious as destitute as possible of all necessary succours, should be your fixed and avowed policy.

Like Lord Glenelg before him, Stanley was convinced that with a firm and proper application of the correct policies, by making life intolerable for the emigrants, the wheels of the Trekkers' wagons could be set in motion again, this time rolling back towards the Cape.

What destroyed these illusions, and shook up the thoughts of the men in the Colonal Office was an event which occurred only a matter of weeks after the withdrawal despatch had been written — the armed resistance of the Natal Boers against the British occupation force in May, 1842. The defeat of British troops at the battle of Congella, and the long siege which they then had to sustain before Dick King's famous ride brought reinforcements and relief were events which cast the Natal situation in a wholly new light.

In his reply to the withdrawal instructions of April 1842, Napier informed Stanley of the dramatic turn which events had taken, and then read his chief a lecture in which he set out to demonstrate the futility of the policy which Stanley had proposed. Conditions in South Africa, he argued, particularly the nature of the terrain, would not permit the successful implementation of a policy designed to deprive the emigrants of 'all necessary succours'. Peaceful pressures of the type envisaged by Stanley would fail to induce the Trekkers to return to the Cape. Furthermore, in the new situation created by the armed resistance of the Boers, a withdrawal of the troops from Port Natal would be regarded as a sign of British weakness, and might therefore encourage further emigration from the Cape, further acts of defiance, further attacks upon the tribal peoples and encroachments on their lands. In the circumstances, he informed Stanley, he

had decided to disobey his instructions and 'retain the military occupation of the Port'.[25]

If the turning point in British policy towards Natal is to be located, there can be little doubt that it was in the months after the arrival in London of this despatch. When Napier heard again from Stanley, it was to be told that his insubordination had been condoned.[26] The arguments he had presented were not dismissed as the hot expostulations of a wilful, or perhaps overwrought, subordinate. On the contrary, they were seriously considered; and in his despatch of 13 December allowing the establishment of British authority over the whole of Natal, Stanley was to admit that he had been fairly convinced of 'the impossibility of inducing any considerable number of these emigrants voluntarily to return to the colony'.[27]

As the American historian, J. S. Galbraith, has shown, the British government had, in an age of slow-moving communications, been outmanoeuvred by swift-moving events. With a delay of anything up to four months in communications between London and Cape Town, Stanley's withdrawal instructions had arrived after the battle of Congella had transformed the situation. The instructions themselves were, therefore, anachronistic. They were based on London's assessment of a situation that had ceased to exist.[28]

Not only had events outpaced instructions, however; they had demonstrated that the policy which the British government had formulated for handling the Natal problem was wholly inappropriate. Essentially what Stanley had wanted when he ordered the abandonment of the military occupation in April 1842 was the implementation of what the twentieth century would call a sanctions policy. The Cape Governor was instructed to 'adopt every practicable and legal method for interdicting all commercial intercourse and all communication' between the Boers in Natal and the rest of South Africa. If the existing laws of the Cape were inadequate for such a policy, then he was to enact new legislation backed by 'adequate penalties'. 'The objects of the law', he was told, 'should be to oppose the most effectual obstacles which can be raised to the supply to the emigrants of any articles of which they may stand in need, and especially of gunpowder, firearms, and other munitions of war'. And to make the blockade as effective as possible, 'the Admiral on the Station' was to be 'especially empowered and directed to intercept all supplies . . . sent by sea in contravention of any such law.'[29]

After the battle of Congella, however, such a sanctions policy ceased to be relevant, for the British government now faced something far more serious than the political defiance of a group of British subjects who had unilaterally declared a republic. The Queen's troops

had been fired upon by men who, although they had abandoned the Cape, were still technically her subjects. And armed rebellion could not be allowed to pass without requital. Furthermore, as Napier had been quick to point out, the abandonment of Natal in the new circumstances would almost certainly have been construed as a sign of British weakness, and would thus have served to encourage more widespread insubordination.[30]

In another respect, too, events had outrun instructions and made nonsense of a sanctions policy; for after the arrival in Natal of the British relief force under Colonel Cloete, the rump of the Volksraad of Die Republiek Natalia had submitted to the Queen's authority.[31] Thus, by the latter part of 1842 there could be no turning back except at the cost of serious damage to the prestige and moral authority of British rule in South Africa; for withdrawal after such a submission was bound to be seen as a confession either of unwillingness or of inability on the part of the British government to control and defend those who had acknowledged themselves to be its subjects.

These, the documents indicate, were the considerations which influenced the mind of Lord Stanley in the months before the annexation decision of December 1842. There is no need to turn to contingent events or to dubious witnesses to explain why Natal was annexed. The difficulty lies not in the lack of evidence, nor in the quality of the documents; it lies in sorting out a confused series of events, in which London was out of touch with the developments it was seeking to control. If the events themselves are shuffled into their proper order, and if the despatches are then pinned to the events to which they relate, they tell their tale in clear and unmistakable terms.

When Lord Stanley approved Napier's breach of his instructions and authorized him to continue the occupation of the port, he did so, not because he had suddenly been apprised of Natal's rich economic potential, but because it seemed to him that[32]

> to withdraw in the present state of affairs . . . without having vindicated the authority of the Crown and restored the supremacy of British power, would be highly discreditable and would virtually admit the triumph of a few undisciplined Boers over the Queen's troops . . .

When, at the same time, he arranged for reinforcements to be made available to Napier, he did so not because he feared that the French were about to pounce on Port Natal, but because he wished Napier to be able to deal more effectively with the contumacious Boers. When, in October, he wrote to Napier telling him that he intended to lay the Natal question before the Cabinet, his was not a

mind excited by the prospects of coal and cotton, but a mind disturbed by 'the altered circumstances of the case since the period at which' the withdrawal instructions were issued and the sanctions policy formulated.[33] Finally, when, on December 13th, he wrote to Napier authorizing the annexation of the territory, it was not in terms of a murky Parisian plot that he explained the decision, but in terms of the fact that he and his colleagues now accepted that the situation could not otherwise be brought under effective control. If the *Brazilia* episode played a part, it did so because of its bearing upon affairs in South Africa: because it indicated that the defiance of the emigrants was likely to be stiffened by hopes of foreign patronage.[34]

The British government's sudden revision of its long-held attitude towards Natal was a product neither of commercial acquisitiveness nor of 'the dictates of foreign policy'. What persuaded the Queen's ministers to abandon the policy that had been maintained for close on twenty years was the volley of Boer shots that rang out over the Bay of Natal in the early months of 1842; for that volley demonstrated more effectively than argument ever could how seriously the Boers intended their unilateral declaration of independence and how ineffectual sanctions were likely to be.

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NOTES

As this article was prepared for teachers of history in South Africa, the endeavour has been made throughout to cite sources that are readily available in published form.

1 A useful anthology of selected passages from the literature on imperialism is available in the 'Problems in European Civilisation' series under the title *The 'New Imperialism': Analysis of Late Nineteenth Century Expansion*, ed. by H. M. Wright (Boston, 1961).

2 Du Plessis, A. J. 'Die Republiek Natalia' in *Archives Year Book for South African History*, 1942, Part I (Cape Town, 1943), pp. 187-194.

3 Stanley to Napier, 10.4.42, cited in Bird, J. *The Annals of Natal*, Vol. I (Pietermaritzburg, 1888), p. 701.

4 Napier to Stanley, 23.8.42, Bird II, p. 86. See also Stanley to Napier, 13.12.42, Bird II, p. 144.

5 Normanby to Napier, 30.6.39, Bird I, p. 525.

6 Colonial Office (C.O.) 48/125, conf., East India Board to Stephen, 22.6.41, minute by Stephen, cited in Uys, C. J. *In the Era of Shepstone* (Lovedale), pp. 8-9.

7 Napier to Russell, 6.12.41, Bird I, p. 665

8 Report of the Colonial Land Commissioners, 11.2.41, cited in Kirby, P. R. *Andrew Smith and Natal* (Cape Town, 1955) p. 230. See also evidence cited in Muller, C. F. J. *Die Britse Owerheid en die Groot Trek* (Cape Town and Johannesburg), pp. 152-153.

9 C.O. 48/214, No. 283, minute by Stephen, 31.1.42, cited in Morrell, W. P. *British Colonial Policy in the Age of Peel and Russell* (Oxford, 1930), p. 141.

10 C.O. 1149, No. 118, Napier to Russell, 9.11.41, cited in Muller, p. 153.
11 Smith to Napier, 20.8.42, Bird II, p. 79.
12 Du Plessis, pp. 190-194.
13 See: Kirby, Parts II & III, *passim;* Muller, pp. 140-150.
14 Uys, pp. 15-21.
15 Scholtz, G. D. *Suid-Afrika en die Wêreldpolitiek* 1652-1952 (Johannesburg, 1954), pp. 124-132.
16 'The Emigrants at Port Natal' by G. G. Ohrig, Bird I, pp. 667-686; 'Extract from Cloete's Lectures', Bird II, pp. 2-3.
17 For a fuller account of the proceedings see: Uys, pp. 15-19; Scholtz, pp. 128-131.
18 C.O. 48/225, D.132, Canning to Stephen, conf., 7.12.42, minute by Stephen, 9.12.42, cited in Uys, p. 20.
19 Stanley to Napier, 13.12.42, Bird II, p. 142.
20 Report of the Colonial Land Commissioners, 11.12.41, cited in Kirby, p. 239.
21 C.O. 48/214, D.136, Napier to Russell, 6.12.41, minute by Stephen, 31.1.42, cited in Uys, p. 5.
22 For a representative selection of these despatches, see: Bird I, pp. 397-398, 418-420, 606-611; Bird II, pp. 46-55, and 84-86.
23 Napier to Russell, 11.3.41, Bird I, pp. 634-635; and Napier to President of 'Council of People', 3.9.41, Bird I, p. 650.
24 Stanley to Napier, 10.4.42, Bird I, p. 704.
25 Napier to Stanley, 25.7.42, Bird II, pp. 46-55.
26 Stanley to Napier, 25.8.42, Bird II, pp. 87-88.
27 Stanley to Napier, 13.12.42, Bird II, pp. 142-143.
28 Galbraith, J. S. *Reluctant Empire: British Policy on the South African Fontier, 1834-1854* (Berkely, 1963), pp. 192-197.
29 Stanley to Napier, 10.4.42, Bird I, pp. 700-704.
30 Napier to Stanley, 25.7.42, Bird II, pp. 46-55.
31 Government Notice, 9.8.42, Bird II, p. 62; Proclamation, 11.8.42, Bird II, pp. 63-64.
32 Stanley to Napier, 25.8.42, Bird II, p. 88.
33 Stanley to Napier, 12.10.42, Bird II, p. 103.
34 Napier to Stanley, 13.6.42, Bird II, pp. 10-11.

SHAKESPEARE'S *JULIUS CAESAR*

by J. V. CREWE

It is a persistent tradition of Shakespeare criticism to read *Julius Caesar* as 'the tragedy of Brutus'. There are good reasons for doing so, on which there is no need for me to enlarge. Brutus is also one of the Shakespearean characters who, having been too simply exalted by the critics of the nineteenth century, has suffered somewhat at the hands of the modern iconoclasts. At its extreme the anti-heroic reaction has led to a reading of the play as 'the farce of Brutus' rather than 'the tragedy of Brutus', and Brutus's gullibility, pompousness, coldness and so on have been sarcastically exposed.[1] Now that the balance has tipped to both extremes, it can probably be left to find its true level; a level determined by Shakespeare's complex and by no means one-sided portrayal.

My aim is, in a sense, to get Brutus out of the way, and attempt a reading of *Julius Caesar* as such. I have begun by referring to the 'tragedy of Brutus' because, in spite of iconoclastic attacks, that way of reading the play is still perhaps the most generally accepted one, and I wish to get away from a Brutus-dominated view of the play altogether. This need not necessarily entail a smaller allocation of space to Brutus in a study of the play, or a denial of Brutus's pre-eminence in some important respects. It is simply a reorientation that is required.

When critics turn *Julius Caesar* into 'the tragedy of Brutus' there is often an implicit suggestion that the play is at fault. Either it has been misnamed, or Shakespeare has almost unwittingly invested Brutus with the kind of stature and complexity that he later, and with more point, invests in such protagonists as Macbeth and Othello. Furthermore, the play is felt, in comparison with the great tragedies, or even with such works as *The Winter's Tale*, to lack 'soul'; to be characterised by the kind of brilliance, or lack of tenderness and richness,[2] that makes it difficult for a reader to invest his emotional capital. Brutus alone seems to invite intimacy, and in Brutus alone does Shakespearean brilliance deepen into Shakespearean humanity. We shall see.

Shaw referred to *Julius Caesar* as the greatest political melodrama in English, and to my mind that is where the emphasis should properly fall. To ask it to be more than that is to ignore what is given, and turn it into the least of the tragedies, leaving oneself partly frustrated, since the least will always turn one's thoughts to the greater. The best way into this great political melodrama (perhaps we had better say 'play' to avoid irrelevant complications) may be

through the eponymous character, Caesar himself. A corollary of Brutus's exaltation has been the denigration of Caesar, whether by those who feel him to be a travesty of the historical Caesar, or merely puzzling, or even absurd. The cult of Brutus is itself a reflection of a felt inadequacy in the character to whom the play's title directs our attention. But surely Caesar's portrayal is perfectly successful and even challenging in the context of the play?

In *Troilus and Cressida*, apart from introducing some characteristically Elizabethan interests into a classical framework, Shakespeare makes a sceptical attack on Homeric heroism. A play specifically prepared for the classically-educated audience of the Inns of Court could hardly be innocent of iconoclasm in dealing so roughly with some of the principal received ideas of that audience. It seems likely that the impulse at least to re-examine myths of heroic greatness was native to Shakespeare, and his portrayal of Julius Caesar stems partly from that impulse. Shakespeare could hardly have been unaware that this portrayal would raise some eyebrows. It appears to me that there is no simple-minded intention to demolish the myth of Caesar — he remains, when every qualification has been made, a great man. At the moment of his murder the conspirators surround him like jackals, and Antony's image of the 'brave hart' 'bayed' is not just a result of taking Caesar at his own self-estimate. Shakespeare accepts Caesar as a great man, but analyses what 'greatness', in the world of rational politics, may amount to. (I use the phrase 'rational politics'[3] to make a distinction between the politics of the Roman plays and those of the history plays, in which there is an element of religious mysticism, bound up with nature of kingship. Henry V is Caesar's nearest counterpart in that political context.)

In Act I Scene i, there is a good deal of talk about Caesar which, it has often been noted, arouses in us both interest and critical curiosity about the man shortly to appear in triumphal procession. This scene also acquaints us with some of the fundamental facts about Roman politics which we have to know before we try to estimate Caesar. The values of the Roman Republic are clearly invested, not in the common people, but in their tribunes, Flavius and Marullus. Their determination to uphold these values, enshrined in the defeated Pompey, is accompanied by their desire to maintain their own political position, which is clearly incompatible with a dictatorship. Flavius and Marullus are at odds with the people they ostensibly represent:

> Hence! home, you idle creatures, get you home:
> Is this a holiday? what, know you not,
> Being mechanical, you ought not walk

> Upon a labouring day, without the sign
> Of your profession? . . . etc.

The tribunes are at odds with the people over the particular issue of whether Caesar's triumph should be celebrated, but underlying the difference there is a fundamental difference of attitude. The 'people's representatives', by virtue of their elevation, are seen to be spiritually and emotionally alienated from those they represent. They have a vested interest to maintain, they are willy-nilly being forced to identify themselves with the patrician clique, and they are also more imaginatively alive to the values of the Republic than its citizens appear to be:

> Wherefore rejoice? What conquest brings he home?
> What tributaries follow him to Rome
> To grace in captive bonds his chariot-wheels?
> You blocks, you stones, you worse than senseless things!

Despite their mixed motives, they can bring out the relative cheapness of Caesar's triumph, but in doing so they must identify themselves with the defeated Pompey against the successful Caesar. (Their own impending fall is implicit in this.) It is plain that they no longer offer leadership based on sensitivity to the needs and impulses of those who are led. The joking replies given by the tradesmen when questioned, good-humoured though they may appear to be, are actually a mode of resistance, and the fact that those 'idle creatures' *are* 'idle' is partly a reflection of failed leadership.

The Roman citizens constitute an urban proletariat. The urban setting is emphasised early on, and it is not the classical city that we see (Augustus has not yet arrived to turn brick into marble) but 'walls and battlements', 'towers and windows' and 'chimney-tops'. It is a city of tenements, walled for defence, and the life of the commoners within it is necessarily regimented and constricted ('you ought not walk . . . without the sign of your profession'). Can we be surprised that they are eager for holidays, spectacles — and, perhaps, heroes who will embody in themselves a glamour to be enjoyed vicariously? Heroes who will, moreover, show themselves to be sensitively aware that 'the people' have their dignity and their needs? Flavius and Marullus are politicians enough to know that the commoners will not be diverted from their incipient idolatry of Caesar by reminders that they are free men, or by being asked to defend an abstract liberty which they can hardly be said to enjoy. The tribunes set up Pompey as a counter-hero to Caesar, and successfully disperse the citizens by resorting to methods which

remarkably resemble those that are later used by Antony in the Forum speech.

My point is this: before Caesar enters we are enabled to see that there exists in Rome a political and emotional vacuum into which an opportunistic man might let himself be drawn. It is not merely an accidental vacuum, but a representative one in a capitalistic republic, in which an élite possessing a sense of history and considerable opportunities for personal fulfilment contends for liberty on its own behalf, and on behalf of a populace of whose real situation and needs it is unaware. In this situation, if Caesar did not exist he would have to be invented. The precariousness of the Republic, and the likelihood that the patricians will be ground between the upper millstone of a dictator and the nether millstone of the proletariat, are all too obvious. In fact, the Roman Republic is as good as dead before the main action begins, something which is mercilessly brought home to us when Brutus has 'successfully' appealed to the citizens in the name of liberty after Caesar's murder. The popular cry is:

> Let Caesar's better parts be *crowned* in Brutus!

To this representative political moment Shakespeare matches a representative great man. The paradox that 'men make history' and 'history makes men' — both terms of which are equally and simultaneously valid — is beautifully maintained in the play.

It is commonplace that the Caesar of the play is in some ways an unimpressive figure, but his qualities are sufficient to the occasion, and perhaps sufficient to confer what we call 'greatness' in a political context. If Caesar is unrewarding from the point of view of 'character study', he does at least exist as a more massive presence in the political world of the play than do any of the conspirators — that is true from first to last. To go further; in this not very rich realm of 'rational politics' (so similar to our own) can we expect a great man to be much more than Caesar shows himself to be?

The qualities that enable Caesar to fill the vacuum prepared in the first seventy-six lines of the play are interesting, and make a recognisable combination. He is a successful general; he can inspire devotion (as Antony's behaviour shows); his diagnosis of Cassius as a revolutionary type is vivid and penetrating, showing considerable political judgment (nullified by the paradoxical assumption of invulnerability). His personal self-estimate is not low, and perhaps that is a *sine qua non* for political effectiveness. His friendly attitude to the common people, though ambiguous, is at least not wholly dishonest, as the terms of his will indicate. He is not merely a small-minded man on the make, and some of the contradictions of his

portrayal in the play stem from his attempt to assume an ideal rôle, transcending personal weaknesses and partialities. The attempt to do this is both sublime and grotesque, and the resulting irony is evident again and again:

> . . . for always I am Caesar!
> Come on my right hand, for this ear is deaf . . .

Caesar must institutionalise himself as the ideal embodiment of constancy and legality, and whenever a single ambitious (?) personality tries to do this, there is inevitably an element of unreality and strain in the attempt. However, if Caesar is a visibly-ageing man; if there is a certain inner emptiness reflected in his relationship with Calpurnia (to whom he speaks, like Gladstone, as if he were addressing an audience) and if one feels that he has become a *persona* rather than a person, can it be denied that he embodies the characteristic failings of those who live exclusively in the public realm? Is not his superstitiousness itself a symptom of the increasing triviality of his inner, spiritual life? If Caesar is disqualified for 'greatness' on account of the failings that appear in the play, few successful public figures of any kind are likely to be qualified. This is one of the less palatable facts with which the play confronts us.

Caesar is also a problem, both to us and to his antagonists. In a sense there are as many Caesars as there are viewpoints in the play: which is the 'real' Caesar and what are his real intentions? To what extent are his intentions justifiable? No easy answers are possible. There is a tantalising ambiguity about Caesar's conduct: is his 'putting to silence' of Flavius and Marullus as sinister as it appears, or is it a 'legitimate' reaction to their mainly self-interested provocation and dishonesty? (They have lied to the commoners about the Lupercal.) Is his concern about Calpurnia's barrenness related to the future need for an heir? How innocent is his public refusal of the crown, and the accompanying display of humility? There are many such questions, and their unanswerableness is part of the play's point. Political action must be based on judgment and prediction — there are few certainties. Insofar as Caesar himself constitutes the political problem of the play, it *must* remain partly insoluble, in the nature of things. Brutus, for example, must act while still uncertain about Caesar's aims; by the time certainty could be attained Caesar would be in an impregnable position as a dictator (if that *had* been his aim).

Two central ironies of the play are, of course, that an actual dictatorship, more severe than any Caesar would have been likely to institute, is the outcome of Brutus's attempt to 'liberate' Rome, and that *after* Caesar's death he (or his spirit) can for the first time:

> . . . with a *monarch's* voice,
> Cry 'Havoc' and let slip the dogs of war . . .

But these ironies should not merely prompt us to comment on Brutus's self-evident lack of political acumen (all of the major figures in the play make disastrous misjudgments at one time or another) or even on the wrong assumptions on which he acts; it is an irony, rather, that brings home in the most salutary fashion the incalculable character of political life. (Caesar's death, at the moment of his public self-deification, is an irony of the same order.) Without lessening our sense that politics is important — indeed, the fascination of the play is the fascination of politics — and necessitates responsible commitment, the play forces us to recognize some of the limitations of political life and action as such. Imponderables, of which Caesar's character and intentions are characteristic examples, lie at the heart of politics, and what have sometimes been regarded as weak incongruities in the portrayal of Caesar are in fact deeply relevant to the play.

Around Caesar three principal characters move in close dramatic conjunction: Brutus, Cassius and Antony. It is perfectly legitimate to single them out for separate discussion, as long as they are seen, finally, in conjunction. The play does not present characters or political attitudes for acceptance or rejection; instead it sets up a continuous flow and recoil of sympathy in the reader. Let me illustrate this as follows: if one is asked whether one prefers principled or unprincipled men in positions of responsibility, there can be no difficulty about the answer. One might as well be asked whether one prefers good to bad. But if we call the man of principle Brutus and the unprincipled one Cassius difficulties appear and multiply, and as the play develops our sympathy and judgment are in a continual state of flux. The choice is no longer between black and white, a fact not merely to be acknowledged, but *lived*, as Shakespeare makes us live it in the play. To say this is not to deny the necessity of choice, and naturally if we have to say who is the better man it will be Brutus. But we will at least know what is entailed in making such a choice.

Brutus may be an interesting enough 'character study' when he is viewed, as he so often is, half-detached from the context of the play, but when considered within that context he becomes a figure of telling representative significance. He is the man of principle[4] confronting the political problem of Caesar, contrasted with a disingenuous man confronting the same problem. Many of the details of his conduct and of the contrast with Cassius have been discussed by others who have written on the play, so I shall restrict myself to making a few points that seem necessary. It is common cause that Brutus has a moral ascendancy over all the other characters in the play; an ascendancy

which nobody in the play ever questions. As Professor Gillham has commented,[5] even 'Et tu Brute? Then fall Caesar' sounds like submission to superior judgment as much as horrified recognition that a friend is about to strike a mortal blow. Brutus's moral ascendancy is deserved, since it is based on true scruple and is related to a richness of inner life that we find in no other character in the play but Portia. But before we can take Brutus as our touchstone in the somewhat corrupt world of Roman politics there are many qualifications and ironies to be acknowledged: ironies which, in the end, keep one at some distance from Brutus and make a fully tragic interpretation of his rôle unacceptable. (In listing some of these ironies I take it for granted that Brutus's vision, integrity and courage will have more than merely pious acknowledgement. There are few readers who will be able to afford a sense of superiority to Brutus, and few who will be able to watch so catastrophic a failure by a *representative* man of principle with indifference.)

First, Brutus is not as disinterested as he believes himself to be. One should add at once that his selfish motive for the murder of Caesar is innocence itself when compared with that of Cassius, or of any of the other conspirators. It is merely that in moving against Caesar he is sustaining a *rôle* which satisfies him:

> . . . If it be aught toward the general good
> Set honour in one eye and death i' the other,
> And I will look on both indifferently . . .

His virtue is in some degree self-conscious. This, I think, has been generally admitted, although in the speech above, the line between conventional self-revelation through soliloquy (cf. 'I am determined to prove a villain . . . ') and psychological or moral self-revelation by implication, is difficult to draw. However, it is interesting that earlier on Cassius called himself the 'mirror' in which Brutus might study his own 'feature', and Brutus's tacit acceptance of a human mirror is not the act of a man without some vanity. It is a vanity which Cassius finds fatally easy to exploit.

So much for the existence of vanity in Brutus. What is its significance? Many commentators appear content to say 'tut, tut' and leave it at that. But the point about Brutus's vanity is that it brings home to us the extraordinary difficulty of achieving sincerity — absolute sincerity — in political action. There is no conscious insincerity in Brutus, and he is strict with himself in a way that the contrast with Cassius brings out, but the achievement of sincerity is not simply a matter of avoiding conscious insincerity; a fact which we admit as soon as we begin to discuss sincerity in writing, for

example. Personal adequacy to the good intention is as important as the intention itself, and the egotistical will is almost as inimical to sincerity as is hypocrisy. Both will and self are among the tools of political action.

By the standard of sincerity that we apply to the creative writer, Brutus is insincere: he cannot do justice to the truth in all its complexity; he is aware of the market-value of his nobility, and acts partly because he owes it to his reputation; his decision to kill Caesar on principle is largely willed. It is of course absurd to invoke the standard of sincerity applicable to the great creative artists in a political situation — art is art and politics is politics — but in saying this one is admitting that there is a certain level of sincerity that is virtually unattainable in politics. Some of the disastrousness of political action in general must be traced to this fact.

Vanity is partly responsible for Brutus's political miscalculations, for his easy assumption of leadership in the conspiracy and indifference to the opinion of others, and for the fact that he allows a bad argument to have decisive effect in bringing him into the conspiracy:

> . . . since the quarrel
> Will bear no colour for the thing he is,
> Fashion it thus . . .

Brutus's integrity prevents him from taking the prejudiced view of Caesar that the violently envious Cassius (who would kill Caesar as one does a fly) takes; but without a touch of vanity to subvert conscience, would he have allowed himself to say, in effect, 'since there is no case, let us manufacture one'? To what extent is that vanity responsible for his capacity actually to murder a friend? The question can only make us decidely uneasy, because we cannot detach ourselves from Brutus by denouncing this or that failing: morally, he is the best hope we have in the play, and can we humanly expect a better?

Brutus's conscience is his distinctive feature in a setting full of conscienceless people. But the striking thing about this conscience is that it manifests itself in a curiously baffled way. It is not simply that the moral problem he faces is complex (which it is) but that he finds it extraordinarily difficult to bring his thought and action into any healthy relationship with his conscience. In fact, the most moving manifestation of the existence of conscience in Brutus is sleeplessness, and this brings to mind Henry IV. There is a certain pathos in Brutus's troubled condition, but the condition is unproductive, and does not prevent Brutus from making his unpleasant (though not wholly meaningless) distinctions between 'butchery' and 'sacrifice'

and then going forward to kill Caesar with a sense of rectitude. The public manifestations of Brutus's conscience must win him a certain regard when he is compared with his associates, but there is too much near-rationalization in them. This is unavoidable, since Caesar's 'guilt' has not been established to Brutus's satisfaction. The long speeches he addresses to the conspirators (they give no sign of paying attention; the high moral tone is little more to them than a card to be played after the murder) issue from a scrupulous but subtly subverted moral nature. The relief with which Brutus kills himself, paying his debt to Caesar, is unmistakable.

Brutus would not have acted in the conspiracy without Cassius to 'strike' some 'show of fire' from him. The reason is perhaps that Brutus appears, in his exchanges with Portia and even with the boy Lucius, to enjoy a domestic and personal fulfilment that leaves him without the rancour and discontent which motivate such men as Cassius and Casca. Neither the tawdry showiness nor the standards of integrity prevailing in public life would induce him to find his vocation in politics. Brutus becomes a conspirator against the grain, or at least without an intensely personal motive. So much to the good! But unfortunately, the disinterestedness is accompanied by a persistent amateurishness in action, and by unawareness of the forces that really operate in the world of politics into which he rather loftily descends. He also assumes that actions in the name of principle are, so to speak, warranted against failure. If an action is good, all men must see it to be so! After the death of Caesar he has not the least idea of the terrors and passions that the killing will unleash — how the fact of killing itself transforms a situation. The 'reasons' are set down on paper in the Capitol, and that should satisfy anyone. Brutus's comment to Mark Antony:

> Our reasons are so full of good regard
> That were you, Antony, the son of Caesar
> You should be satisfied . . .

is the crowning instance of his principled unawareness, an unawareness which, in the end, becomes a radical inhumanity.

Brutus, then, is the man of principle, admirable, but lethal precisely because he is trusted. Caesar is easily on guard against Cassius — but 'Et tu Brute'? Dangerous because of his unawareness, dangerous because, once bolstered by a sense of rectitude, there is little of which he will be incapable. Dangerous because a devotion to principle baffles the subtle operation of what Lawrence might have called the 'passional life'. Is Cassius, who kills out of malignant envy more to be condemned than Brutus who kills with passionless judicial coldness?

The contradictions of Brutus's character and rôle in the play are crystallized in the terrible irony of Antony's Forum speech, but perhaps even more so when Brutus says:

> Countrymen,
> My heart doth joy that yet in all my life
> I found no man but he was true to me . . .

This is a deserved glory and it is not just sour grapes when Brutus says that he values this fidelity more than he would have a military victory, but he does not pause to reflect that it is precisely this crowning fulfilment that he has denied Caesar, the friend who trusted *him*. Furthermore there is a kind of retreat, at this critical stage, from facing the outcome of the decisive action of his life.

Brutus stands for principle, Cassius for its absence, and Antony for its negation, if that way of putting it is permissible. The flow and recoil of our sympathy between Brutus, Cassius and Antony is subtle, and continues till the end of the play. Cassius is willing to give unbridled expression to intense, personal envy of one who *is*, in fact, his superior. That Caesar is the superior of Cassius comes out nowhere more strongly than in the speeches where Cassius attempts to deny it:

> Why, man, he doth bestride the narrow world
> Like a Colossus, and we petty men
> Walk under his huge legs, and peep about
> To find ourselves dishonourable graves.

Cassius's rancour stems from weakness, and his sarcasm rebounds. It is not merely the fact that his motives for wanting to kill Caesar are personal, but that they are mean which robs him of distinction. And we are shown that unprincipled public action is, in its very nature, mean action. We may refer to many of Antony's actions (in *Antony and Cleopatra*) as grossly irresponsible, but we are not likely to choose the word 'unprincipled' to describe them. When Antony throws away a kingdom he is, in a sense, contending for something more important: he is not insulated from all large concerns by petty egotism, as Cassius is. Trivial unscrupulousness of the kind exemplified by Cassius stands as a foil to Brutus's responsibility and profound concern for large and disinterested ends.

But Cassius is not merely a foil to Brutus; he is characterized in some detail, and his indifference to impersonal considerations is not simply there to bring out Brutus's superiority by contrast. We must, of course, say unequivocally that Cassius is morally unfit for any part

in political life whatever. But since the play is concerned with what *is*, as well as what should be, we cannot deny that in some ways Cassius is incomparably better fitted for political action than Brutus. His very unscrupulousness makes him alert to frailty and opportunism in others, and he is not deterred from doing what is necessary by the thought that it may be wrong.

Cassius forces us to ask ourselves honestly whether the qualities he embodies can be dispensed with in politics. This question is finally pressed home in the tragi-comic episodes of the quarrel, where Brutus simultaneously attacks Cassius for not supplying him with enough money for the campaign and for raising money by dishonest means. Brutus's cause is good, as political causes go; should it be allowed to fail because of an absolute refusal to compromise? There is no answer to this — the problem must be lived, and its resolution is always certain to be untidy.

Cassius's indifference to impersonal issues not only makes him dependant and personally vulnerable, it also enables him to see with a trace of bitterness that Brutus's Olympian detachment makes possible both corruption and treachery:

> Well, Brutus, thou art noble; yet I see
> Thy honourable metal may be wrought
> From that it is disposed: therefore, it is meet
> That noble minds keep ever with their likes;
> For who so firm that cannot be seduced?
> Caesar doth bear me hard, but he loves Brutus.
> If I were Brutus now and he were Cassius,
> He should not humour me.

Cassius's need for friendship, and for warm personal contact, are his most moving attributes, and they would prevent him from acting as Brutus does. 'Principle' and loyalty appear to be incompatible with one another.

Finally, Antony, the living negation of 'principle'. This negation is evident in his 'gamesomeness' in the early parts of the play; an unconcern about ostensibly serious matters that has as its counterpart an absolute devotion to individuals, in this case Caesar. Antony differs from Cassius in being Brutus's equal in force, and also in his capacity to escape from limiting egotism, not by the adoption of an impersonal stand or code (Brutus is a stoic), but by a self-forgetful devotion to Caesar. When Caesar dies, Antony is not insincere in saying:

> Live a thousand years,
> I shall not find myself so apt to die:

No place will please me so, no mean of death,
As here by Caesar and by you cut off,
The choice and master spirits of the age . . .

It is Antony's devotion to Caesar which most fully brings home to us the human implications of a murder, and also the almost incredible perfunctoriness (not to say callousness) of Brutus's reaction after Caesar has been killed. Brutus talks about his friendship with Caesar: Antony lives it. When Antony says at the beginning of the play, in response to a command:

When Caesar says 'do this', it is performed . . .

Brutus sees only an obsequiously 'quick spirit' fawning on Caesar. But to the eye of love — a love unhampered by 'principle' or stoical subjugation of the passions — the command has been given by:

. . . the noblest man
That ever lived in the tide of times.

and a more tardy response would be impossible. And though we cannot go all the way with Antony in his grief-stricken view of the dead Caesar, it must be acknowledged that his tribute awakens in us a dormant recognition of Caesar's distinction:

O mighty Caesar! dost thou lie so low?
Are all thy conquests, glories, triumphs, spoils,
Shrunk to this little measure? Fare thee well.

'Quick-eyed love' has found out a distinction in Caesar that it is later to find in Cleopatra when the Roman stoics see only gypsy lust.

Brutus achieves a certain largeness through impersonality: Antony does so by eschewing it. The contrast between the two men could hardly be more pointed: Brutus will sacrifice a friend to the general good of Rome, and Antony will as unreservedly sacrifice the general good to a friend:

Domestic fury and fierce civil strife,
Shall cumber all the parts of Italy;
Blood and destruction shall be so in use,
And dreadful objects so familiar,
That mothers shall but smile when they behold
Their infants quartered with the hands of war . . .

The contrast between Antony's 'gamesomeness' in the early part of the play and his formidable power in the later is no inconsistency. They are two faces of an uninhibited 'passional self'. If, however, we feel inclined to espouse the 'Lawrentian' Antony against the dutiful Brutus, we should remember the scene in which names are 'prick'd down' for extermination. Where love exists, Antony will do anything for its object, but where it does not exist he will write off a 'sister's son' without compunction. Antony's own survival is due to the compunction of Brutus, who despises him. Furthermore, the 'passional' personality has an innate bent towards creating public anarchy, through want of any steadying principle. This fact is exemplified not only in *Julius Caesar*, where Antony's willingness to subject the country to anarchy is horrifying, but also in *Antony and Cleopatra*. It is significant that the steely young Octavius has taken Antony's measure by the end of *Julius Caesar*.

Brutus and Cassius: principle and lack of principle. Brutus and Antony: principle and passion. Caesar, the focus of the play and the problem of the play. That, simply stated, seems to me what we should concentrate on in reading *Julius Caesar*. It is a simple way of summarizing a complex work, but perhaps legitimate for the sake of achieving a clear orientation.

In discussing the play I have found myself occasionally striking a pessimistic, or perhaps defeatist note in referring to politics. That is a note I should like to avoid. There is an anecdote concerning Lord Macaulay (I think) which runs as follows:

Sensitive young man: I cannot accept this universe!
Macaulay: You'd better!

In much the same way, we had better accept politics. That man and his institutions are necessarily imperfect does not make them less interesting, and if there is one lesson that modern politics has taught it is that though there may be realms of human experience that transcend politics, they can be approached only *through* politics; not at their expense. That Shakespeare was aware of this we can hardly doubt, and it may be for that reason that he explored the world of the political animal so energetically before embarking on the vision of man under the aspect of eternity, in the tragedies and the plays of the final phase.

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NOTES

1 An excellent review of critical attitudes to Brutus is contained in 'The Double Vision of Tragedy: Brutus, and Antony's Forum Speech' by C. O. Gardner, *The Sole Function* (Pietermaritzburg, 1969).

2 This attitude to the play can be traced back as far as Dr. Johnson.

3 I do not imply that the world of 'rational politics' is equivalent to that of 'weasels fighting in a hole'. There may be no Divine Right, but the operation of moral laws is too strongly implied in the play to be overlooked.

4 On the question of Brutus as 'man of principle' see R. T. Jones, '*Shakespeare's Julius Caesar*', Theoria 12, 1959.

5 In an unpublished M.A. thesis 'Mimesis in Verse' by D. G. Gillham, University of South Africa, 1960.

A NEW WORK BY MANSON

by C. VAN HEYNINGEN

Admirers of Mr H. W. D. (Cake) Manson's ten plays and his poems will be interested to hear about his only prose work, *Karl Gunter Hoffmann*, an unfinished novel which has been published privately.* This novel was written in Mr Manson's last Christmas vacation (1968-9), when he felt that he could no longer bear to live without writing, yet would have to wait for his first long leave, due only seven months after his death, for enough time to allow of the extreme and continuous concentration necessary for writing a play. The novel was never revised, and but for the elimination of one or two obvious mistakes, has been printed as it stands in the manuscript. Its readers will long to know what would have happened in the completed version (could there have been one) to nearly all the characters, who, as usual, come so vividly alive, and always surprisingly, under Manson's pen.

The central story had been in Manson's mind for many years, and with me, for one, he had discussed at least half a dozen almost totally different versions of it. Judging by the part of it that exists, the novel would have been almost entirely different from any of those versions. But in all of them two characters were constant. One was the old German General, imprisoned for fifteen years for war crimes during the Nazi régime. He *was* guilty, but only, in a way, technically so. The other was the handsome young woman, Anna Auerbach, who somehow helps him. In the novel, Anna is mad, pretending in all kinds of ways that she is only fourteen, whereas she is, in fact, probably in her late twenties; and her madness is most beautifully handled, with that profound human sympathy and quite startling insight that only Manson, among English language writers since the late forties, is capable of. At one point in the story, the old General says to himself, 'Well, if she's as mad as a hatter, so am I'. But he is only very slightly mad, as an understandable result of his long and solitary incarceration. Anna's madness is far more complex, but we are given a slight indication that it may come to an end one day, when God wills. By means mainly poetic, one is made to feel as Chapter III ends, that the old General and Anna, simply by the unique quality of their strange friendship, may cure each other, for the cure in both cases has already begun.

*It has been published by the Manson Memorial Fund and is now on sale in the University Library, Pietermaritzburg, in an inexpensive edition limited to one hundred copies.

The third most important character in the novel — at least until the end of Chapter Three, which portion alone is played in Vienna, and set in the immediate present (that is, in about 1964) — is the Jewish psychiatrist, Arthur Steinhardt, in whose rooms Anna and Hoffmann first accidentally meet. Steinhardt rapidly endears himself to the reader, partly because of his patience, kindness and tact, and partly because he tries so vainly to be an atheist, as his profession demands, but cannot help believing in Jehovah, because he is subconsciously aware that life is infinitely and radically more mysterious than psychiatry allows for. To Hoffmann the reader also soon becomes deeply attached (all of course in the sense in which readers do become attached to fictional characters), and to Anna more slowly.

The remaining three chapters of the book, equally fascinating (though the part about Pastor Hoffmann's prayers seems rather less convincing than the rest) are set in Germany near the turn of the century. They are all concerned with the old General's dreams. At first, in solitary confinement, he has dreamt chiefly guilt dreams, but actually he knows that he is not really guilty, since he had accepted a most harrowing responsibility as the only way of sparing his victims from a much worse fate. These dreams Manson compares to those dishonest 'realistic' documentaries that are superficially quite undeniably 'true', and yet are subtly and fundamentally false. Bored and disgusted with them, Karl Gunter Hoffmann (for that is the old General's name) after a while manages to train himself to dream 'absolutely real' dreams, in which he has 'perfect recall' of patches of the past. In these Manson recreates for us the changing landscapes and atmosphere of German life round about 1900. Only the always deeply interested and often delighted observer of nature and human life that Manson was could have performed this feat so vividly after a short visit or two to that country and much reading and listening. Perhaps it is only an illusion that he knows Germany, and Bavaria, well; if so, it is a convincing one, and there are a simple beauty and a most sensitive liveliness in these passages. The essence of true 'Gemütlichkeit', for example, is evoked by Manson in a lovely short description of a summer evening in Bavaria, in which even the happy cries of children, out and free much later than usual, and the shrill cries of joy emitted by the birds flying high up above them both contribute to that (I believe) peculiarly German (or pre-Nazi German) sense of sociable enjoyment. Then there are the fascinating insights, which only a man so capable of experience as Manson, could have given into such things as, for example, Steinhardt's Jewishness, or the General's reflections on why he became a soldier (he decides that it was in order to learn not to fear death; which means subjecting one's

will completely to the will of God, and that this is the most necessary lesson any man can learn). Manson also gives us convincing insights into the nature and proper treatment of panic (this is in a very moving incident), into the curious and rather hateful conventions that develop among schoolboys and schoolmasters; or the sheer spiritual size of such characters as, for example, Corporal Depport, to some degree the old Major, or Karl's father, and most of all Karl himself, something that begins to develop even before he goes away to school. But there is no space to enumerate more.

All these things and more, as you read them, are evidence of the strong undercurrent of human knowledge, profound experience and wisdom, humour and irony that runs just below the surface, and often breaks through it. Such passages could be found also in first-rate prose, but much of this unfinished novel could have been written only by a poet. The fragment sometimes appears to have been carelessly written, and it was never at all revised. Yet only a fool would attempt to eliminate all, or even many, of the repetitions and the unconventionalities of style and grammar. As in much of the best Lawrence, a pedantic correctness would destroy the invaluable effect of spontaneity — the spontaneity being real — and a careful attempt to substitute other words for those that seem to have been repeated too often in one passage might destroy or diminish the poetic essence of that passage. In editing this unfinished novel, I disagreed with one excellent critic about the part where Anna, who has been stubbornly resisting, with her jaws slightly bulging, Dr Steinhardt's careful attempt to make her admit her real age, suddenly feels at peace with herself. Her real age is a secret between God and herself, she reflects, and a proof to her alone of his eternal love. He, in his good time, will release her from the continual effort of concealing it, and from the deceptions she has to practise. As she feels this, her jaws cease to bulge, her whole face and form alter, and she suddenly looks truly soft and feminine. 'She is with God', thinks Dr Steinhardt instinctively, and then is shocked at himself, and doubly shocked at his thinking of his reaction as blasphemy. This seems to me a passage of amazing insight, and it is followed by the amusing disquisition on Dr Steinhardt's horror at thinking of his reaction to have been a kind of blasphemy against atheism, and so against his profession, which is founded on the idea that nothing is really a mystery, and everything can be explained in time by mere human patience and skill (Manson put it much more fully and exactly, but there is no room here to quote the whole). There are many repetitions of the words 'mysterious' and 'mysteriously' in the passage describing Anna's feelings, and this critic wanted to substitute 'inexplicably' for one of the 'mysteriously's. But I felt that

merely to introduce the idea of explicability, even negatively, would diminish the force of Manson's poetic expression of the conviction that life really *is* fundamentally mysterious — an idea that the repetitions of the word 'mysterious' itself strongly reinforce. Another critic reminded me how often Dickens, as well as Lawrence, uses repetition with tremendous frequency for the sake of poetic force — for example, the word 'fog' in the first paragraphs of *Bleak House*, and elsewhere in that book.

There is no room to give particular examples of this quality of Manson's in his only prose work. I will therefore only suggest that readers pay special attention to, for example, the extraordinarily subtle and interesting passage in which we are made to feel the beauty of the candlelight with which Karl and his sister, Hedwig, and her friend, Diana, softly light up the kitchen, using saucers all along the shelves, as well as every bright silver candle-stick they can find in the parsonage. This account spreads through the whole episode a sense of the loveliness of that soft and brilliant light; and the spontaneous gaiety of the young people together in the kitchen seems 'somehow symbolic of the meaningless but poignant joyfulness of youth' so that their elders can't help joining in, and feeling an as wonderful sense of joy. The Pastor believes that 'any joy felt suddenly and spontaneously (is) in fact the way God (speaks) to men', and Manson by the sheer beauty that he has created makes us share, for the time being — at least in a suspended way, and perhaps more permanently — this belief. Related to this episode are other intrinsically poetic passages, wonderfully original and containing surprising beauty, yet closely and finely analytical, which describe how, at the age of not yet quite fifteen, Karl falls in love with Diana, and at the moment when the novel is suddenly cut off, hardly yet fully realises that this is not an entirely aesthetic and spiritual experience. He is quite 'shocked by joy'. On the night of the candle-lighting it seems to Karl that 'the brilliant illumination that struck Diana's white muslin dress' from every side made it somehow diaphanous. He feels this 'made a covering, not of substance, but of pure light only, about her'. And Manson goes on 'he was aware, with stunning force, not of her body, but that there was a body lovelier than any clothes could conceal existing, as it were, only by virtue of the effect of light upon it.' But this is not like any other experience, aesthetic or spiritual, that he has ever had, or imagined he has had, in the past. It is more complex. 'There was, he recognised, some other power mingled with the purely aesthetic experience, that had the effect, the actual physical effect, of seeming to strike, as his heart seemed to strike and thud within him, with a physical force, developed, as it seemed by magic, from the very air that seemed to surround her. And it was a terrifying and

mysterious and deadly force.' Next morning, on Karl's going to wake Hedwig and Diana at four-thirty for the expedition they have planned, when Diana's light, thrilling voice answers him instead of Hedwig's, thick with sleep, as he'd expected, he gets an 'unpleasant' shock, can't answer at once, then tries to hide his emotion by the 'rough brotherly' admonition to Hedwig to 'get a move on', and goes 'stumping off noisily' down the stairs to prevent anyone from knowing that his knees are knocking together.

Another such episode is the very moving account of the friendship that so strangely springs up in one afternoon between Anna and the old General, and of how they talk before parting for the night in unexpected happiness, with the light of the setting sun behind them transforming both their figures. Over and over again in the course of this large prose fragment of what might have become a very long book, it seems that Manson could not help writing like the poet he was whenever his daemon seized him. Unfinished and totally unrevised as it is, the book is an indispensable part of the total corpus of his work.

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Numbers I to XXXVI*

Compiled by M. P. MOBERLY

Dates of issue: The first two issues of *Theoria*, those of 1947 and 1948, bore no serial numbers. Numbering began with the next issue, No. III, in 1950. Numbers IV to IX appeared annually from 1952 to 1957. Thereafter two numbers have appeared each year.

AUTHOR INDEX

*This index is an updated expansion of the one compiled by R. M. McConkey in 1965.

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