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To have to express regret rarely brings pleasure. It is, however, with an unavoidable sense of gratification that we apologise to readers who have been unable to secure copies of *Theoria* 38. For the first time in the history of this journal a number has sold out before the next is ready for the press.

Arrangements are now being made for a reprint of *Theoria* 38, and we hope that those who have been inconvenienced will soon secure their copies.

We hope, too, that no-one will object if we confess eager anticipation of an equally rapid exhaustion of the stocks of the present issue. and of issues still to come.

THE EDITORS.

LANGLAND'S VISION OF SOCIETY

by J. V. CREWE

It is a commonplace that Langland presents the extreme contrast to his near-contemporary, Chaucer. Unlike Chaucer, he is a 'committed' writer; a popular prophet and moralist, concerned with the difficulties of achieving social justice in this world and felicity in the next. Or, to put the matter in a way that does more credit to Langland's intelligence and poetic feeling, he is concerned with the problems that arise from the apparent *co-existence* of the temporal and the eternal, realms which are subject to different laws, but which overlap and interpenetrate in a baffling fashion. I hope to show some of the ways in which this concern manifests itself concretely in *Piers Ploughman.*

A study of Langland's vision of society might seem to be confined in advance to the strictly temporal dimension of *Piers Ploughman* — it might seem to preclude consideration of the visionary and otherworldly elements which constitute (perhaps) the larger and finer part of the poem. However, Langland's vision of temporal society is not something that can be set over against his vision of a world existing outside time. To explain this one need do no more than refer to his belief in the 'fact' of Christ's incarnation. The paradoxical connection between the eternal and the temporal, and between historical mankind and the eternal creator, is decisively established by the mystery of the Incarnation. For a fourteenth-century religious poet to have ignored this connection, however strong his 'sociological' or reformist bent, would simply have been inconceivable. Human society could not be displayed as an isolated phenomenon, to be studied independently of the divine purpose embracing it. Consequently, an attempt to discuss Langland's vision of society must take account of the larger scheme, described eloquently, though perhaps too romantically, by C. S. Lewis:[1]

> . . . the great vision wherein the poet beholds 'the sea and the sun and the sand after', and sees 'man and his make' among the other creatures is distinctive. There is in it a Lucretian largeness which, in that age, no one but Langland attampts . . .

At the centre of this great vision is the vision of Christ, or love personified, descending from heaven to earth:[2]

Love is the plonte of pees, most precious of vertues,
For hevene holde hit ne myghte, so hevy hit first semede,
Til it hadde of the erthe ygoten hitsilve.
Was nevere lef uppon lynde lyhtere ther-after,
As when hit hadde of the folde flesch and blode taken.
Tho was hit portatyf and persaunt as is the poynt of a nelde,
May non armure hit lette ne none heye walles.
(C, ii, ll. 147-155)

(plonte = plant;
'Till it hadde of the erthe ygoten hitsilve' =
'till it had begotten itself on an earthly body';
lynde = linden, lime tree;
folde = earth;
portatyf = light, easily carried;
lette = prevent, hinder)

In this passage the signal importance of Christ's incarnation is conveyed with the utmost simplicity and richness. The language of common speech, and the images drawn from the immediate medieval surroundings (the germinating plant, the earth, the castle, the needle, etc.) serve to expound a mysterious doctrine even to the unlettered medieval audience, but the passage also glows with Langland's delicate gratitude for the miracle of the incarnation, and he achieves a remarkable blending of the visionary and the down-to-earth, the natural and the supernatural, the divine and the human.

In the image of the 'plonte of pees' one has the impression of a branch, richly laden with fruit, bending further and further down till it touches the earth, whereupon the seed takes root. 'Love' is presented, not as a static medieval abstraction, but as a living thing: it grows as it draws closer to its object (in this case, the earth, man) finally becoming almost completely identified with its object '. . . when hit hadde of the folde flesch and blode taken . . .'. Love cannot withhold itself from fulfilment any more than the fruit can withhold itself from growing, or the laden branch can resist the slow, downward pull of the ripening fruit.

In contrast to the impression given here of rich weightiness, one has the sense of lightness, relief and release once love has on earth 'ygoten hitsilve'. The image of rich, organic abundance having given substance to the notion of God's love emanating from heaven in the person of Christ, the delicacy of 'lef uppon lynde' now relieves any impression of heavy inertness that might be associated with 'erthe'. Flesh and blood have been interpenetrated by the spirit. As the laden bough sinks toward earth the linden tree grows toward heaven,

and the presence of the spirit on, or in earth is suggested by the light freshness of the 'lef'. Finally 'armure' and 'heye walles' appear as the massive, dead embodiment of man's resistance to love, standing in their monumental futility against the life of the spirit. The awful distance between heaven and earth, between God and man, and even between man and man, is diminished — ideally nullified — by the power of love.

Few would deny the intrinsic power of this passage. Its strength and sensitivity; its simplicity, which is nevertheless wholly adequate to the demands of the matter in hand; the subtle movement of the rhythm, and the unmechanical, unostentatious play of intensifying alliteration, are wholly satisfying. In 'language such as men use' Langland gives reality to an elusive religious teaching, and the images drawn from the medieval landscape are transformed to embody a visionary truth. What C. S. Lewis speaks of as 'a Lucretian largeness' is really the largeness of the medieval imagination at its best, and which finds its highest expression in Dante's ordered universe moved by the power of love.

However, it is not so much the intrinsic quality of the passage as its bearing on Langland's social theme that concerns us here. The point is that Langland's absolute belief in Christian charity, and in the possibility of a world redeemed, gives him a serious and consistent standpoint from which to analyse medieval society. ('Analyse' is not a good word to describe the activity of a poet, but it will have to stand for the moment since it conveys something important about the characteristic working of Langland's mind). For Langland, existing society is to be seen always and only in relation to ideal society — that of perfect human brotherhood in love and truth. There is to be no compromise with imperfection, no 'Chaucerian' appreciation of the human comedy as such, but a persistent concern with those forces, whether personal or institutional, which impede the achievement of the ideal. It is this which gives the characteristically radical flavour to Langland's social comedy, and which, predictably, causes him very early in *Piers Ploughman* to confront the problem of money.

The passage already analysed displays the harmonies of the relationship between Christ and man, heaven and earth. In contrast, the social comedy of *Piers Ploughman* reflects the discords of that relationship, and the prime agent of discord is identified with almost brutal directness: it is Lady Mede, the allegorical embodiment of reward, bribery, or even wealth.

Readers will remember that the poem begins, as do nearly all the great medieval allegories, with an anonymous figure falling into

a deep sleep, during which he dreams a revelatory dream. As the dream opens, the world of human society is seen poised between 'the tower of truth' on a hill, and a 'deep dungeon' beneath — a simple enough allegorical representation of the human situation in orthodox Christian terms. As the dreamer gazes there is a sense of growing confusion: life is so various, the forces of evil and deceit so strong, and truth so hard to discern in its operation, that judgment quails. The Prologue to the poem (in which the dream has begun) concludes with a vivid but apparently disordered blending of London sights and sounds, which some critics have compared to passages in *The Waste Land*. This comparison makes a point: for all the superficial vitality of the medieval scene observed by the dreamer, it is, to Langland, an unredeemed world, and one which the observer can hardly understand without guidance.

Immediately after the Prologue, in the first Passus of the poem, a guide appears: the allegorical figure of Holy Church descends from the hill, on which stands the 'tower of truth', to enlighten the dreamer. Holy Church is, of course, 'the bride of Christ'; she is a woman of beautiful, sober countenance, 'in linnen yclothid', given to an uncompromising directness of speech. The dreamer fails to recognise her — an ironical point at his own expense (he is a Christian) and also at the expense of the 'unholy church' which occupies so large a place in the poem, and in medieval society. The dreamer's tendency is to be overwhelmed by the complexity of moral issues, and to expect esoteric illuminations from Holy Church. Her tendency, in contrast, is to force the dreamer back upon the truths that lie close to hand ('seek in thine own heart'), and upon the simple, inexhaustible formulations of Christ. The first Passus is dominated by the figure of Holy Church, who attempts to re-establish the simple, harmonious covenant between Christ and man that is embodied in the incarnation.

In pointed contrast, the second passus of the poem introduces, and is dominated by, the figure of Lady Mede. It is obvious why Holy Church and Mede are contrasted: the one is the source, on this earth, of all good, the other the source of all evil ('radix malorum est cupiditas'). Furthermore, Holy Church stands for truth, and for a love that gives beyond deserts; Mede stands at best for legitimate reward ('worthy is the workman his hire to have') and at worst for outright bribery. Holy Church descends from the hill to work in the world — from eternity to work in time — while Mede has no place but in the world, and in time. Finally, Holy Church stands for grace; Mede stands at best for law — an eye for an eye. This, then, is Lady Mede:

I lokide on my left half, as the lady me taughte,
And was war of a womman wonderliche clothide,
Ipurfiled with pelure, the pureste on erthe,
Icorounid with a coroune, the king hath non betere.
Alle here fyve fingris were frettid with rynges
Of the pureste perreighe that prince werde evere;
In red scarlet robide, and ribande with gold;
There is no quen queyntere that quyk is o lyve.
(A. ii, ll. 7-15).

(Ipurfiled = trimmed; pelure = fur; pureste = unique; perreighe = jewellery; queyntere = more elegant, magnificently dressed)

It is interesting that Mede is presented thus 'objectively' before the long, sermonistic denunciation of her by Holy Church. We are enabled to feel something of Mede's complexity, before our attitude to her has been too decisively influenced by the words of Holy Church. Furthermore, the dramatic personification of Mede has the power to convince of a thing shown, as distinct from a thing merely talked about; she is effectively set before us by the means of the artist, not those of the preacher. Perhaps it is for that reason that there is a certain ambivalence in the description.

Mede is not merely repulsive, and Langland cannot be accused of underestimating the temptation. 'Wonderliche', 'pureste', 'no quen queyntere' are epithets which may be taken at face value, and the spectacle of Mede has undeniable brilliance and beauty. Moreover, Mede is not just a gorgeous surface; her behind-the-scenes pre-eminence is hinted at in references to temporal rulers.

We do feel Mede's attraction and power sufficiently, but she is personified satirically. Despite the seeming neutrality of the description there are some plain hints as to her true worth: she is seen on 'the *left* half'; she is the 'scarlet woman'; her fingers are 'frettid' with rings, a vulgarity which nullifies the implications of 'pureste'. Altogether there is a flavour of excess about the display, and the sheer piling-up of superlatives forces one after a while to attend more closely to the comparisons being made. The 'pelure' (fur) may be 'pureste on erthe', but it is irredeemably *on* and of earth. No living queen may be 'queyntere' — but what of immortal life, and the 'queen of heaven'; a question that would easily occur to a medieval mind? And so Mede's bondage to time and mortality is driven home. The materialistic attempt to create value and defeat time, symbolised by Mede's slightly grotesque excess of jewellery, is pathetically unavailing, and there is no lightness of spirit ('lef uppon lynde') to relieve the oppression of material objects. The 'eternity' of the

diamond is cold and dead compared with the eternity of organic renewal, pointing beyond death to rebirth, which is the basis of the passage on the incarnation discussed previously.

The final 'placing' of Mede comes, of course, in the contrast with Holy Church, 'in linnen yclothid'. Holy Church does not create temporal distinctions (it is the essence of Mede to do so) but appears in the simple, beautiful attire associated both with the common man and with Christ. It is her *face* which impresses the dreamer, so that he feels a mixture of love and awe, not merely temptation as in the case of Mede. It strikes us that Mede is faceless; she *is* the trimmings, and that is the decisive comment upon her.

The first appearance of Mede is dramatically important, since it is she who introduces the note of conflict, and activates the first four Passus of the poem. Langland's comedy has accurately been compared to Ben Jonson's, and Mede's rôle at this point in the poem is very similar to that of 'Riches, the dumb god, that gives all men tongues' at the beginning of *Volpone*.[3]

> That canst do naught, yet mak'st men do all things,
> The price of souls; even hell, with thee to boot,
> Is made worth heaven! Thou art virtue, fame,
> Honour, and all things else . . .
>
> (Act I, sc. i)

Similarly Mede, herself passive, is the cause of almost frenzied activity in others, and most mysteries concerning the workings of society become explicable once her presence is discerned. No sooner is Mede introduced into the poem than an attempt is made to marry her to False in an allegorical wedding, i.e. to entrench bribery, corruption and excess in the very tissues of society. This marriage, arranged by 'Simony' and 'Civil Law' produces one of the finest satirical episodes of the poem: it is to be a *great* marriage, necessitating the most lavish expenditure, the minutest legal division of the spoils, the most distinguished guests, many clergymen and the utmost publicity. Needless to say, Holy Church will not be present, though the effect of her absence is emphasised when Langland introduces into the parody marriage the simple and moving words of the marriage service, which provide a sufficient commentary on the proceedings. The scene of the wedding is described in a way that clearly foreshadows Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair*, or Bunyan's *Vanity Fair:*

> Ther nas halle ne hous to herberwe the peple
> That iche feld nas ful of folk al aboute.

In myddis a mounteyne, at mydmorewe tide,
Was pight up a pavyloun, proud for the nones;
And ten thousand of tentis teldit beside,
Of knightes of cuntre, of comeres about,
For sisours, for somenours, for selleris, for byggeris,
For lerid, for lewid, for laboureris of thropis,
Alle to wytnesse wel what the writ wolde . . .

(A. ii, II. 38-46)

(herberwe = accommodate; sisour = juryman (cf. assize); somenour = official who summoned to ecclesiastical courts; lewis = unlettered)

To a modern reader the spectacle of a great medieval fair might seem decidedly picturesque, but to Langland the 'mounteyne' of worldly vanity, topped by its pavilion, stands in contrast to the tower of truth, and is 'placed' by it.

It is significant how often in discussing the poem one finds oneself using the word 'placed' — one symbol is 'placed' by another, various phenomena are 'placed' in relation to Langland's Christian values, or to his orthodox frame of reference. In fact, the whole question of 'placing' is extremely important when one comes to analyse the nature of Langland's comedy. He can, for instance, describe Glutton, personifying the deadly sin of gluttony, as follows:

Now begynneth Glotoun for to go to shrift,
And carieth hym to chircheward, his synne for to shewe;
And Betoun the breustere bad him good morewe,
And heo askide of hym whidirward he wolde.
'To holy chirche,' quath he, 'for to here masse;
And sithen I wile be shriven, and synne no more'.
'I have good ale, gossib,' quath heo; 'Glotoun, wilt thou assaie?'
'Hast thou ought in thi pors,' quath he, 'any hote spices?'
'Ya, Glotoun, gossib,' quath heo, 'god wot, wel hote;
I have pepir and pyanye, and a pound of garlek,
And a ferthyng worth of fenel seed, for fastyng dayes'.
Thanne goth Glotoun in, and grete othis aftir;
Cisse the sewstere sat on the benche.....

.....

There was laughing and louryng and 'lete go the cuppe!'
Bargaynes and beverechis begonne to rise,
And seten so till evensong, and songe sum while,
Til Glotoun hadde ygluppid a galoun and a gille.
He pisside a potel, in a *pater-noster* while,
And bleugh the rounde rewet at the rigge-bones ende,

That alle that herden that horn held here nose aftir,
And wisshide it hadde be wexid with a wispe of firsen.
He hadde no strengthe to stonde, er he his staf hadde,
And thanne gan he to go lyk a glemans bicche,
Sum tyme asid, and sum tyme arere,
As who so leith lynes to lacche with foules.
Whanne he drough to the dore, thanne dymmede hise eighen;
He stumbled on the thresshewold and threw to the erthe,
That with al the wo of this world, his wyf and his wenche
Bere hym hom to his bed, and broughte him ther inne.
And aftir all this surfet, an axesse he hadde,
That he slepte Satirday and Sonneday, til sonne yede to reste.
Thanne wakide he of his wynkyng, and wipide his eighen;
The ferste woord that he spak was, 'Where is the bolle?'
His wyf blamide hym thanne, of wykkidnesse and synne.
Thanne was the shrewe asshamide, and shrapide hise eris,
And gan grete grymly, and gret doel to make
For his lither lif, that he lyved hadde . . .

(A. v, ll. 145-157, 186-209)

(shrift = confession; breustere = female brewer; potel = a measure of two quarts(!); rewet = trumpet; wexid = wiped; gleman(s) = minstrel('s); lacche = catch; bolle = bowl; grete = cry out, moan)

Taken out of context it might be difficult to say whether or not this description is strictly satirical — comic it abundantly is, and amazingly vivid. The 'vice' is shown to have undeniably painful consequences, but Glutton's plight, and the weakness of will that leads to it, are likely to evoke from the reader something other than mere righteous indignation. Langland's tone is not ungenial and it is possible for him to display an attitude to Glutton that is very far from that of the nineteenth-century temperance reformer. The 'sinfulness' of drinking is not stridently asserted, the vivid life of the medieval tavern with its games and noisy gaiety, and even the pleasure-loving vitality of Glutton, are faithfully recorded. Langland's morality is not of the cold, inexperienced or life-hating sort, and Glutton is a comic ancestor of the Bardolphs and Toby Belches of a later age.

However, Glutton is the embodiment of a Deadly Sin, and therefore no mere laughing matter to Langland. This is not simply a case in which one can apply the formula 'trust the tale, not the teller' as though Langland the poet has somehow outwitted Langland the 'verkrampte' moralist. There is embodied *within* the description a sufficiently convincing suggestion of Glutton's beast-

liness (in the extreme physicality of the symptoms marking his collapse, and the references to the 'glemans bicche' and the 'foules') to be disturbing. The spiritual man is simply drowned out, leaving the field, at least temporarily, in possession of the brute. Because of the positive force with which both the medieval tradition and the individual genius of Langland can charge the idea of spirituality, there is no need for explicit denunciation. Gluttony, as it were, 'places' itself in relation to the poem's great positives. In this lies the main satirical force of the passage.

However, there is a further point to be considered — a social point. Glutton's bout begins in conviviality and ends in isolation. Even the early conviviality is slightly tainted, since Glutton is first lured into the tavern through the cupidity of the hostess rather than her genuine hospitality, and the tavern games are re-enactments in miniature of the competition and bargaining associated with Mede. If this passage were taken out of context one might hardly notice such details, and one would certainly feel more inhibited about commenting on them in a way which might seem priggish and heavy-handed. As it is, these familiar aspects of tavern life are placed in a context which quietly challenges their often sentimentalised charm. The brotherhood of the tavern is half-spurious; an impediment to, rather than a realisation of, Langland's ideal of humane fraternity. Glutton is left alone on his face in the mud after the accidental gathering in the tavern has broken up — or broken apart — and his restoration to humanity is left to the long-suffering 'wife' and 'wench'. Langland's point, unobtrusively and comically enforced, is that Glutton is not so much an unproductive as a non-participating member of any human society worth the name.

If we are aware of a limitation in Langland's art it is that it cannot in the nature of things be as finely evaluative as Chaucer's. In the *Canterbury Tales* 'gluttony' manifests itself through a whole range of types, or characters, from the Somonour at one extreme, through the Monk, to the Franklin at the other extreme. In the case of the latter, gluttony shades off into magnanimity, with the Franklin dispensing his bounty 'like a rural English Silenus'. Chaucer's evaluations are complex partly because of his own temperament, no doubt, but partly too, because he is conscious in a way that Langland is not of the *fact* of civilisation, and of the embodiment in civilisation of complex criteria and traditions, derived from heterogeneous sources. Langland is more radical and more totalitarian, and Traversi's description of the medieval allegorical outlook in general[4] readily applies to the particular outlook represented in *Piers Ploughman:*

> The allegorical outlook, in its full medieval form, implied the capacity to see a situation simultaneously under different aspects, each independent and existing, on its own level, in its own right, but at the same time forming part of a transcendent order in relation to which alone its complete meaning is to be ascertained.

Perhaps one should say instead of 'implied the capacity' something like 'implied the attempt', since in fact such a vision as this is inevitably reductive. The price of general 'completeness' is particular incompleteness, as the comparison with Chaucer suggests.

To return to the attempted marriage between Mede and False: it enables Langland to create some striking medieval set-pieces; that of the 'Vanity Fair', followed by the comic-grotesque cavalcade (cf. *Canterbury Tales*) that wends its way to the King's court for judgment after 'Theology' has interrupted the marriage between Mede and False; and finally, the 'trial-scene' before the king. In each of these one has social spectacle and drama of a high order, but interpenetrated by a brilliant, sometimes grotesque, satirical comedy based upon sharp moral evaluation. The same is true of the doings in the corridors of power at Westminster:

> Curteisliche the clerk thanne, as the king highte,
> Tok Mede be the myddel, and broughte hire to chaumbre.
> Ac there was merthe and mynstralcie Mede to plese;
> Thei that wonith at Westmenstre worsshipeth hire alle.
> Jentily with joye, the justices somme
> Buskide hem to the bour, there the byrde dwellide;
> Counfortide hire kyndely, be clergies leve,
> And seide, 'Mourne nought, Mede, ne make thou no sorewe;
> For we wile wisse the king, and thi wey shapen'.
>
> (A. iii, ll. 8-17)

These representative scenes from medieval life pass almost pictorially by, but in each case it is not the surface that concerns Langland, but the underlying mechanism. Langland has the characteristic medieval analytical and generalising tendency; the scenes are chosen for their representativeness, not for their picturesqueness, and there is no attempt at the delineation of individual character as an end in itself. (There is certainly none of Chaucer's capacity to individualise character and *yet* achieve a representativeness that prompted Blake to say that 'Chaucer's Pilgrims are the characters which compose all ages and nations . . . they are the physiognomies and lineaments of

universal human life . . .'). Langland's blend of the naturalistic and the schematic is determined by the need to demonstrate the unity of moral law behind the variety of appearances — it is a development of the medieval preacher's method of illustrating the truth of a Biblical text by drawing upon a wide range of illustrative *exempla*.[5]

It is hardly necessary to show how Langland's attitude to money (or acquisitiveness) stands not merely in a medieval tradition, but in a tradition which, leading through the seventeenth century up to the present day, has developed with the development of capitalism.[6] For Langland, no consideration of the individual predicament is possible until the social forces which condition it have been understood, and that means in the first place that the rôle of Mede must be understood. At Westminster she is like a queen bee at the centre of a swarm, and as long as she remains in existence, there is virtually no chance that the swarm will find a different focus, or achieve a social organisation more humane than that of a swarm. That is the pessimistic conclusion to the vision of Mede.

The king innocently and zealously desires to solve the problems created by Mede 'once for all', but the attempt is wrecked by a difficulty that Langland himself appears to regard as almost insuperable. One cannot, apparently, achieve a social revolution in which Mede is simply eliminated. Apart from the traumatic re-ordering of society that would be necessary, there is the question of Mede's 'legitimate' rôle: 'worthy is the workman his hire to have'. Pending some millenial change the king is forced to compromise: to try and impose by law the legitimate marriage of Mede to Truth. All that can be achieved then is a perpetual conflict between law and corruption, in which the power of law, though valuable, is pitifully limited in its operation. In principle there is a conflict between law ('measure for measure') and charity, and in practice the law is always a bit of an ass, one step behind the offender. The king pronounces doom on Mede's criminal associates, but, suggests Langland, the bourgeois and clerical establishments offer them the cloak of invulnerable respectability. While falsity, guile and lying stand nakedly exposed to the king's judgment they are vulnerable, but once they are *dressed up* in merchants' or friars' garb they become, so to speak, invisible.

> Thanne Falsenesse for feer fleigh to the freris,
> And Gile doth him to go, agast for to deighe;
> Ac marchauntis mette with hym, and made him abide,
> Besshette hym in here shoppis to shewen here ware,
> Aparailide hym as a prentice the peple to serve.

> Lightliche Lighere lep awey thennes,
> Lurkyng thorugh lanes, to-luggid of manye.
> He was nowhere welcome, for his many talis,
> Overal yhunted and yhote trusse;
> Til pardoners had pite, and pulden him to house,
> Wosshen hym and wypide him and wounde hym in cloutis,
> And senten hym on Sundais with selis to chirchis . . .
> (A. ii, ll. 172-183).

(to-luggid = pushed, kicked; yhote trusse = told to get the hell out of it)

It is no surprise when, towards the end of *Piers Ploughman*, the 'unholy church' becomes virtually identified with Antichrist. That development is already foreshadowed in the pardoners' parody-enactment of the parable of the Good Samaritan.

The vision of Mede concludes essentially in a stalemate. Mede can be checked but not checkmated, and the moves can be repeated an indefinite number of times. This stalemate cannot be broken; only transcended on the plane of charity, where Mede becomes irrelevant.

It is understandable that a writer with Langland's attitude towards money and the distinctions it creates should find his symbol of regeneration in the common man. Indeed, it is the common man to whom the poem is chiefly addressed, in language close to his own, and running to a proverbial simplicity and pithiness of statement. ('Chastity without charity worth cheyned in hell!'). But for Langland 'the common man' can mean two apparently inconsistent things. He is either Piers Ploughman, the type of human excellence, or the insolent scrounger in whom the Old Adam is unconquered. About Piers, D. Traversi has written:[7]

> The figure of Piers Ploughman himself is a perfect example of the way in which (the) convergence of simultaneous attributes upon a single point provides added depth of perspective, enriches our understanding by conferring upon it moral significance without in any way detracting from the concreteness of the original experience. Piers is in the first place the English countryman of his own particular time and place, and none of his subsequent transformations will make this primary aspect of his nature irrelevant; rather, they will complete it by setting it in what the poet believes to be its natural spiritual context. This context, in turn, is indicated through the gradual transformation of Piers, which springs so naturally from his normal being that we are hardly aware of it; for Piers, simply by living

> in accordance with the set of values he has inherited with his calling, is able to pass judgment upon the world around him, to denounce its numerous failings and to indicate the way that leads to spiritual health. So far, factually and morally, he is still a projection of contemporary realities. It is only in the later and more daring stages of his allegorical transformation that Piers becomes something more than a fourteenth century farmer concerned with the ills of contemporary society, and with the simple, severe code by which those ills can be mastered. First, as the Good Samaritan, the bodily representation of the supreme Christian virtue of charity, and then — by the most far-reaching and inclusive transformation of all — as the symbol of the humanity assumed by Jesus Christ . . . he becomes the key, not merely to the time and place in which he originally appeared, but to the destiny of the whole human race. The successive phases of this transformation have by the end of the poem been gathered together, assumed into the unity of a complete conception.

Leaving this quotation to speak for itself, let us return to the other aspect of 'common humanity' so amusingly and depressingly revealed when Piers tries to enlist help to till the half-acre (a task which, it is easy to guess, has a symbolic as well as a literal meaning in the poem):

> At heigh prime Peris let the plough stande,
> To oversen hem hymself who so best wroughte;
> Thanne seten somme, and sungen at the ale,
> And holpen eren the half akir with, 'Hey, trolly-lolly!'
> 'Now, be the prince of paradis,' quath Peris tho in wraththe,
> 'But ye rise the rathere and rape yow to werche,
> Shal no greyn that here growith glade yow at nede,
> And theigh ye deighe for doel, the devil have that recche!
> Thanne were faitours aferd, and feynide hem blynde;
> Somme leide here leggis a-lery, as such losellis cunne,
> And pleynide hem to Peris with suche pitous wordis
> 'We have no lymes to laboure with, Lord ygracid be ye!
> Ac we preye for yow, Peris, and for youre plough bothe,
> That God of his grace your greyn multiplie,
> And yelde yow of your almesse that ye yiven us here.
> For we mowe nouther swynke ne swete, such seknesse us eileth'.
> (A. vii, ll. 104-120)

(eren = cultivate; doel = misery; faitours = cheats; a-lery = in deformed attitudes (?); losellis = wretches; swynke = work)

Only Hunger, which imposes its own harsh law, can deal with this resistance, and the limited effect of law, whether natural or human, is one of the chief themes of the first ten passus of the poem. The bite of famine is more deadly than that of a temporal ruler — Langland says it '. . . hente Wastour by the mawe, / And wrong hym so by the wombe that bothe his eighen watride . . .' — but as soon as famine recedes complacency is restored, social co-operation ceases, and, as Langland comments with the Englishman's contempt for Gallic affectations, ale and bread are replaced on the workman's table by wine and food 'chaud et plus chaud'. Thus we arrive at another stalemate, apparently, and one which originates in fundamental human nature.

The effect of successive stalemates is to force Langland (or the dreamer) back more decisively upon questions affecting individual salvation, and upon the prophetic revelations of the Bible. The deep-seated medieval contempt for the world affects the tone and implications of *Piers Ploughman*, in common with so many contemporary works. We never lose touch with society as the poem develops, but there is a partial withdrawal by the poet into the realm of the private conscience in its relationship with Christ. However, this point should not be exaggerated, since it would be misleading to suggest that Langland evades his own sharp questioning, and it would be merely inaccurate to say that there is a sudden, final renunciation of the temporal at any point in the poem. What we should recognise, rather, is the rudiments of a genuinely dialectical progression within the poem (this is especially clear in the long B and C texts), one result of which is (quite naturally) a movement away from the finite particulars of contemporary society, and towards the visionary state in which that society is both absorbed and transcended. In fact, if one were to substitute a belief in History for the belief in God, both the social diagnosis and the dialectical movement of *Piers Ploughman* would take on a surprising contemporary familiarity. However, having let slip this hint that we should see Langland as a kind of medieval Marx (which may simply be a way of bringing out some long-recognised similarities between Christian and Marxist ideology; or which may be a way of saying that, given any strongly purposive view of human destiny, similar intellectual and moral conclusions are likely to be drawn) — having let slip this hint, it is fair to admit that Langland's vision of society does not appear to embrace the possibility of secular revolution.

Abuses and corruptions are exposed, but the fundamental structure of feudal society appears to be not merely accepted but endorsed. Insofar as distinctions are created by wealth or competition they are,

of course, seen as evils, but for Langland it does not by any means follow that hierarchical society is itself at fault. Ideally the knight and the ploughman exist in a relationship of charity and mutual interdependence, in which there is neither servitude nor coercion. The temporal order of the state has its analogue and justification in the changeless hierarchical order of the universe under God, and the limits of Langland's radicalism might be said to coincide with the limits of the medieval imagination. Even Chancer's audacities and complexities are held, however insecurely, within a framework he shares with Langland.

In the *Canterbury Tales* the boundaries of society are still marked by the grand, idealised figures of Knight and Ploughman, and the moral dignity of feudal idealism is still felt; though perhaps rather wistfully, since the forces threatening it are so very strongly represented in figures like the Wife of Bath and the Merchant. However, in the 'General Prologue' especially, the feudal structure still holds, and the Ploughman and Poor Parson are portrayed as brothers who, together, form a rather Piers-like composite figure. It is notable that in the feudal world (but not *only* in that world) there is an idealistic association between the social extremes (Knight, Ploughman) against the 'bourgeois' middle (Merchant, Clerical officialdom) in the name of human freedom.

Finally, having temporarily associated Langland and Chaucer, I must return to the starting-point of this essay, which was the statement that Langland presents the extreme contrast to his near-contemporary, Chaucer.

Alongside many (important) differences in ability, social position, education and sensibility between the two writers, there is one which might be defined in terms borrowed from a famous essay by Sir Isiah Berlin. Langland is a 'hedgehog', and Chaucer is a 'fox' — according to the proverb which states that 'the fox knows many things; the hedgehog knows one big thing'. To the 'foxes' among writers (and Berlin includes Shakespeare among them) a sense of the endless multiplicity of life is all-important, while to the 'hedgehogs' a single, inclusive vision is all-important. It is the 'hedgehog' in Langland which determines his view of society from first to last.

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NOTES

[1] C. S. Lewis, *The Allegory of Love*, (O.U.P., New York, 1958) p. 160

[2] I have taken this quotation alone from Piers Ploughman, ed. Elizabeth Salter and Derek Pearsall (Arnold), a selection from the C-text published in the York Medieval Texts series. For the rest I have used

Piers the Ploughman, A Critical Edition of the A-version, ed. Knott and Fowler, (Baltimore, 1952), in which nearly all the material relevant to this essay occurs.

[3] See L. C. Knights, *Drama and Society in the Age of Jonson*, (Chatto and Windus, 1937).

[4] D. A. Traversi, 'Langland's *Piers Ploughman*', *The Age of Chaucer*, ed. Boris Ford (Penguin, 1954) p. 135.

[5] See G. R. Owst, *Literature and Pulpit in Medieval England*, (Oxford, 1966).

[6] Knights, op. cit.

[7] Traversi, op. cit., p. 135.

I should like to acknowledge my indebtedness to two books not specifically mentioned in the course of this essay, namely:
Piers Ploughman, an essay in criticism, J. Lawlor, (London, 1962)
Medieval English Poetry; the Non-Chaucerian Tradition, J. Speirs (London, 1957).

THE NON-EMPLOYABLE DIMENSION
SOME THOUGHTS ON UNIVERSITY EDUCATION *

by R. H. WYLLIE

By the non-employable dimension I mean that dimension of the person which is not available to be turned to professional employment for financial or other gain. The employable aspect of the person on the other hand is that which can be hired, which fits in to a useful and possibly lucrative professional, commercial or industrial occupation and is therefore of immediate material benefit to the person himself and to the society of which he becomes a useful and respectable member. I should not like to think that I am belittling either of these dimensions in order to emphasize the value of the other. I am simply taking the view that these are two of the aspects of the person to be considered when we think of his education and also that there is an inevitable tension between the two aspects and that both have claims which will affect his education and life. It is the non-employable dimension on which I wish to enlarge, but I must add immediately that I am not thinking of these very roughly sketched 'dimensions' as being *the* dimensions or elements of a human person. To draw the distinction offers one way of bringing forward, for the purpose of discussing education, certain aspects of the complex unity which we call the human person.

It should be apparent already from what I have said that I am considering, amongst other things, the University's function in relation to society. This is true, but I am thinking at the same time of its function in relation to the person as individual. In Plato's *Republic*, which is very much concerned with education for life in society, we find that the enquiry into what makes for a good society cannot be differentiated from the enquiry into what makes for a good individual. There is of course a tension between the individual's claim for personal fulfilment and the claims of society for stability and justice, but more than this, there are inevitable tensions within society because it is composed of different people with differing needs and different gifts to offer. This is the aspect of society which leads to division of labour and specialization which is so much at the root of the problem facing higher educational institutions. We might argue on the one hand that the universities do and must produce specialists to meet the ever more sophisticated needs of society.

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Yet with even greater justification we could argue that this is simply what the function of the universities is *not*. If they were to do this and only this they would be betraying themselves, the society they thought to serve and also the people whom they were training.

There is an idea held by many quite eminent practical educators that universities should be geared to the national economy and national growth; that a careful preview of employment opportunities based on national needs should guide students and their parents and advisers in the choice of curricula on the one hand and the universities in the development of their staff and facilities on the other. Above all in order to make the best use of man-power and funds, the universities should be careful not to allow non-vocational courses to be disproportionately developed in relation to vocational courses. The function of the universities, as evidenced by graduation ceremonies, is taken to be the award of degrees, and the purpose of awarding degrees is taken to be the annual certification of a properly balanced number of students for employment in the various professions.

Now this theory of university education, although based apparently on sound common sense, has only to be expressed in order to give rise to feelings of doubt and dismay. It savours immediately of computerized prediction of national needs, computerized assessment of aptitudes and computerized training and examinations. In short it visualizes the person as a work-unit. Let it be common-sense to plan in this way; let it in fact be rational, bringing with it, as it does, an appeal to its own sort of self-evidence: I think we should still say that it represents 'common' sense and rationality at their most mundane and superficial level. At first sight we don't need any more deeply serious critique of this view than that given in the clever popular song about the little boxes:

> And the people in the houses
> All go to the University
> Where they all get put in boxes,
> And they all come out the same;
> And there's doctors and lawyers
> And there's business executives
> And they're all made out of ticky-tacky
> And they all look just the same.

This suggests something of the dreadful uniformity which could result if such a theory were implemented to its limit, as I feel sure, I hope not over optimistically, it would never be.

There is, however, something more to be said about this idea which brings me closer to the heart of the theme I wish to discuss. The idea that the production of graduates should be balanced against existing or probable employment opportunities implicitly contains certain assumptions or theories which merit more than a passing glance. The first of these underlying assumptions seems to be that the pattern of society is quite satisfactory as it is, and does not need to be changed in any way; a second or alternative assumption could be that the pattern is unchangeable so that any attempt to change it would be a waste of time. There is of course a third alternative which is quite prevalent as an idea but is not very logical. This third view would have it that the business of social change or the preservation of the *status quo* can safely be left in the hands of 'others', others, that is, who are better qualified to deal with such matters than university students who are after all subsidized by society to get on with their studies and leave politics and social criticism alone. Presumably these 'others' are the people who are elected to seats in parliament, together with people who compose large industrial and commercial pressure groups, town and provincial councils, etc. I referred to this view as not logical because it implies that the future members of these groups, who might have some direct influence on society, should be safer and wiser people than university graduates. In the daily press, sometimes, and in the mouths of the politicians, very often, the words 'students' and 'intellectuals' are beginning to carry a distinct savour of anarchism or even communism. Must we conclude that our future leaders should be drawn from social strata which are happily free from the contamination of university studies or other intellectual pursuits?

Let us however move on from this unlikely position with no more than a watchful backward glance.

We will assume then that the students at a university have a responsibility to society, a responsibility already real and important and destined to become increasingly vital in their futures. We will also assume that the universities are a very real and living element of society, not merely something which is built on its outskirts to train people to enter it. Should we accept that our society is either quite satisfactory as it is, or in any event unchangeable, and therefore not worth any effort directed towards change? Is it not our first duty to consider these very questions by bringing to bear on the problems all the resources of knowledge and criticism, the trained scholarship, the libraries, the experimental minds and the comparative freedom from economic and political pressure which the university has to offer? I have said 'comparative' freedom. Ideally of

course it should be freedom in the widest sense of free thought, speech and investigation: complete freedom from censorship or any other barriers to discovery. This is in fact the academic freedom, the guardianship and preservation of which is so much the duty of both the universities and the public they serve.

Let us go back a little, however. The universities in recent times have accepted a changing function in that they have incorporated more and more professional schools into their structure. Some educators, tending to take a diametrically opposite view from those I have already mentioned, rather deplore this state of affairs, feeling that in the universities emphasis is being placed more on professional training and its techniques and less on advanced studies in the pure sciences and the humanities, which have traditionally been regarded as the fields of higher learning. I do not propose to quote statistics. The changing function of which I speak was very marked about eight to ten years ago and was the subject of a memorable and interesting address to the Convocation of this University by Dr. Simon Biesheuvel in 1964.[1] However, over the last few years there has been a very marked increase in student enrolment for arts and human sciences which could indicate various things: for instance a new recognition of the value of arts courses in education, or merely a judgment that some of the professions are overcrowded and will not be offering the same lucrative employment in the next few years, or that industry has not the same need for research scientists at the moment. Personally I think the reason is the first: a new evaluation of the study of the humanities. Personally, also, I do not see any reason to be sorry that universities incorporate professional schools. They seem to be the more truly universities for doing so. We should not wish our universities to follow higher learning in 'ivory tower' separation from the working world. At the same time we would expect that our university-trained doctors, engineers, architects and industrialists would be more than technically or administratively skilful. We would expect them to have a questioning attitude and an appreciation of human needs in a wider framework than that of their own professions.

For example one would expect a university trained architect not only to understand, as architects do, the economic use of enclosed space, and various theories of aesthetic design, but also something of the social tendencies and pressures which govern the type of building he is designing and the social effects of use of such an office complex or such a block of flats. We would expect him to question why it seems evident quite often that whether he or some other architect designed the building the result would be just the same.

He would be critically aware that its shape, size and general characteristics are predetermined by economic and social settings which might seem to him as a cultivated man and a thinker to be most undesirable, but from which there seems to be no escape. One must earn one's living, fulfil one's function, do one's duty to one's clients and employers. All of these motivations are justified and even morally praiseworthy, but all are limiting of a dimension of humanity in the designer himself and in the people who are going to be affected by his work. We would expect then of the university trained architect something of a philosophy of his craft, a critical sense of its social function.

Similarly the medical profession, especially as a result of the onset of specialization and skill in organ transplants, might learn how to prolong people's lives so that old people can have a species of immortality resembling that of the Struldbruggs in *Gulliver's Travels*. It seems clear that in the imaginary extreme case the specialist heart-transplanter, who could do nothing else, and had been so engrossed in the study necessary to perfect his technique that he had not had time to consider other things, might conceivably perform his operations simply because the immediate physical conditions were propitious and because he knew what to do and how to do it. Swift's description of the Struldbruggs themselves suggests to our imagination a picture of the possible social consequences. The whole passage is relevant, but the following paragraph could serve as an example:

> When they came to Fourscore Years, which is reckoned the Extremity of living in this country, they had not only all the Follies and Infirmities of other old Men, but many more which arose from the dreadful Prospect of never dying. They were not only opinionative, peevish, covetous, morose, vain, talkative; but incapable of Friendship, and dead to all natural Affection, which never descended below their Grand-children. Envy and impotent Desires, are their prevailing Passions. But those Objects against which their Envy seems principally directed, are the Vices of the younger Sort, and the Deaths of the old. By reflecting on the former, they find themselves cut off from all Possibility of Pleasure; and whenever they see a Funeral, they lament and repine that others are gone to an Harbour of Rest, to which they themselves never can hope to arrive. They have no Remembrance of any thing but what they learned and observed in their Youth and middle Age, and even that is very imperfect: And for the Truth or Particulars of any Fact, it is

> safer to depend on common Traditions than upon their best Recollections. The least miserable among them, appear to be those who turn to Dotage, and entirely lose their Memories; these meet with more Pity and Assistance, because they want many bad qualities which abound in others.'

I feel in reading this that we would not wish such a prolongation of life on our worst enemies.

If we turn to engineering we find ourselves up against similar difficulties. Engineers provide services because social tendencies demand them and because they are trained to recognise the tendency and to perform the service that meets the demand. Greater and greater areas of our cities and our countryside for instance become allocated to roads. This tendency gives us a very concrete example of the victory of the Absurd. Presumably with the future increase in traffic we will have only roads and parking facilities, no cities or countryside left. No doubt people will still drive on the roads because there is something to go on although there is nowhere left to go to.

It is not that engineers and town planners are not extremely intelligent men. Indeed one cannot blame any individual or group. There is an apparently irresistible social and economic machine which goes forward blindly. Nobody knows how to stop or steer it. The people trained to apply the techniques (and nobody would deny their remarkable skills) only know how to pave its way, and we are all happy as long as its movement is called Progress.

It is only fair to add too that many people are increasingly aware of the devastation of countryside which has taken place and are demanding that this ruin of an irreplaceable heritage should come to an end.

Very probably these seem to be negative views, but it seems that some destructive criticism is needed before anything positive can emerge.

In thinking, even on this rather superficial level, of education for the professions we are immediately faced with the problem: should we as students and scholars question, or should we merely accept the situation as inevitable, and prepare for our place in this wise and respectable society which is already there, an Establishment, waiting for us? Should we not at least raise questions about the very profession which we might happen to be preparing to enter? The questioning attitude is part of the non-employable dimension. It stops work for a moment to question, reflect and evaluate.

Of course there are other problems which apply to all occupations because they affect society in all its levels and spread through all its

branches. There are the problems of the population explosion and the pollution of the environment both of which loom over the whole world as very real threats, among the most dangerous which have ever confronted mankind. Do we think about them and attempt to see the consequences, and what possible counters to their menace there might be, or do we leave them to the future, or to God, trusting that He will excuse our failure to apply our reason to the matter?

There are other problems too. For instance, there is the problem of the underdevelopment and poverty of about eighty percent of the world which has come about as a result of the extremely high stage of development and wealth of the other twenty percent.[2] We find ourselves, political scientists tell us, at the end of what seems to have been a third world war which has consisted in a clash of the ideologies of capitalism and communism represented by America and Russia. It has been known as the 'cold war'. Its terrible forces of mass destruction have not been unleashed; the buttons ready to send the guided missiles on to their targets have not been pressed and we are told that, barring some accident, they will probably not be pressed. In spite of the crazy theories of thermo-nuclear warfare which military experts have entertained and discussed, the calculations of how many cities could be exchanged between America and her allies on the one hand, and Russia and her allies on the other, of how many people the nations could afford to lose without completely disappearing as nations: in spite of all this cool, unemotional, calculative reasoning, somehow an acceptable logic of nuclear warfare has not emerged, and it seems quite likely that the missiles will never be used, although this is not yet certain by any means.

We are told however that, without this third world war having reached its ultimate flash point, a fourth has begun. This of course takes the form of guerilla warfare. This type of warfare has been going on for a considerable time but its pattern now begins to emerge more clearly. We have seen examples of it in various parts of the world and now we see a particularly grim example in Ireland. It is usually the last resort of the underprivileged in society to gain their ends against the privileged and powerful whom they consider to be permanent obstacles to their economic or political self-determination. It is thought now to be a world development because it is the striking method of what has become known as the 'third world', that is the under-developed eighty percent of the world's people.

This whole problem of the emergence of a third world (the 'first' being America with technically developed Western Europe, and the 'second' Soviet Russia) is obviously very complex and very

fascinating. It gives rise to problems and concepts which must inevitably lead thinking Western people to challenge their own establishment and look critically at their education and their history. This will be conceded to be a university study, but my question here is: is it so only for those whose pre-occupation is with History and Political Science as disciplines? It seems to involve the whole thinking world in new challenges to understanding. Yet its discussion will not help professional or industrial trainees to earn their living; rather it might lead them to an uncomfortable even subversive discontent with the whole substructure on which their education itself and their various occupations are based.

Perhaps some of the parents, our avuncular governing bodies and our general public who help to finance university education will also say these things are to be left well alone, left to the anonymous 'those who know'. Do they know? The dimension I am trying to defend is that which has always been characteristic of universities: the dimension of free and gratuitous enquiry which asks for nothing except understanding for its own sake or what amounts to the same thing, the opening of the mind and the intensifying of perceptions which it brings.

There is another question which arises. Should we know too much if the knowledge is going to make us critical of established social structures instead of happily serving within them as though they were based on laws of God or on the fundamental nature of the cosmos itself? The problem is rather like that posed by the *Oedipus* drama. Is it better to *know*, and to be fully human in the unhappiness which knowledge brings, or is it best not to know either ourselves or our society and to live in a false world blissfully unaware of the waiting depths under the thin ice? This is what Marcuse calls 'euphoria in unhappiness'. It is a euphoric state like a drug 'trip', only more dangerous because more permanent and more apparently coherent.

Speaking at his trial in defence of his philosophic vocation Socrates gave us the wise saying that 'The unexamined life is not a livable human life.' Examination of life and ways of living, he would say, is the rôle of the philosopher in society, or as I should prefer to interpret it here, the rôle of philosophy in education and the rôle of that part of every human person which questions and reflects. Philosophy is that within us which asks us, not for any reward, but, because we are human, to come to a halt for a moment, to step back and look, enquire and think. Why you might ask is this so particularly 'human'? I should agree with Socrates that it is human, because I see it as one of the expressions of the freedom

which is a mark and dimension of true humanity. Above all it is the expression of freedom from one's own self-satisfaction and one's own prejudices. By its very nature such an examination frees dialogue. It suggests to us Nietzsche's dictum which Professor Degenaar of Stellenbosch quotes as an epigraph to his essay on Open Discourse — 'Die Oop Gesprek' — in *Beweging Uitwaarts:* 'A common error, having the courage of one's convictions; on the contrary one must have the courage to attack one's convictions'.

When one looks for this non-employable dimension of which I am speaking in the domain of pure science one's perception of it gets a little clouded because society, tremendously impressed by the technological possibilities which science makes possible, has adopted science not only as worthy of respect but of positive adulation. Hence the spirit of free enquiry which is the very life blood of science, as it is of the universities themselves, finds itself quite happily received even where there is no immediately visible advantage to be gained. Society has learned to accept research even where the research takes the form of throwing a net into the sea without knowing quite what will be hauled back inside it.[3] The scientist is sometimes thought to be a danger to society because strange and apparently unrelated discoveries may be combined with startling, often potentially disastrous consequences; but these consequences can almost always be used to increase man's power to control and manipulate nature. Descartes' conception that men, through scientific method, would become the 'lords and possessors of nature' has advanced incredibly rapidly towards realization.

It is of course technology, not scientific enquiry itself which manipulates natural forces, exploits scientific discoveries and has used the latter to make of men not only to some extent lords and possessors of nature, but slaves of their own means of production and waste, apparently unable to prevent the self-destruction which threatens them. We would obviously have to be very unenlightened to think of pure science in the same way as we think of technology. However for all our admiration of science, I feel bound to say that scientific method carries within it the seed of man's alienation from his world and from himself which is the malaise of our civilization. This seems to be because science objectifies, as indeed it has to if it is to make progress. Objectification calls upon a power of detachment or separation which is in fact the power of the human consciousness which has made science possible. I said that I thought it carried the seed of alienation within it, but this comes about not through science itself but through a mistake, the mistake that our relationship to the world in which we live is like that of the scientist to the

scientific object, that the world is there as something separate from us, an inexhaustible assemblage of objects of which we can become possessors through knowledge. The mistake is the mistake of scientism which, by a sort of extension, assumes that the scientific mode of relationship to the world of objects is in fact the actual and only mode of our relationship to the world. Also, within the scientific world itself, alienation can occur through a type of over specialization, the development of one human capacity at the expense of the others, and this seems to apply even though in this instance it is so advanced an intellectual capacity that we are considering.

It is not easy to explain what is lost to humanity in the development of scientific objective thinking at the expense of other modes of thought. In philosophy it has become one of the problems of this century, coming at the end of the era where the flaws of both rationalism and empiricism have become increasingly apparent and there have been major attempts to resolve the conflict between them. The German philosopher Heidegger has shown us that there are two sorts of thinking — both characteristically human. He calls these *rechnende Denken* and *andenkende Denken:* calculative thinking and recollective thinking. Calculative thinking is that which characterizes the procedures of science; it is the thinking of mathematics and logic. It is methodical and enormously effective. It sets out to 'capture' as it were, and order the phenomena, or as Kant would say, to 'constrain nature to answer questions of reason's own determining'. The net it throws out into the sea of Being is a purposefully articulated net. Recollective thinking on the other hand is that which has its source in wonder, in the sense that wonder, as both Plato and Aristotle said, is the beginning of philosophy. It is the aspect of thought which rather than examining and ordering data, remembers the data as the *given* and thus remembers that the 'given' needs to be received and that receptivity is man's characteristically human quality in the face of nature's gifts. Again, the awareness of what it is to receive keeps alive the consciousness of human finitude and incompleteness because anything complete or perfect would not need to receive anything, would not be aware of any 'data'. Through what is given human existence becomes a constant transcendence of itself towards the new and not yet realized; and through the receptive attitude man realizes himself not so much as a fisherman catching wonders of Being in his contrived net, but as a man empty-handed, brought to a stand on the sea-shore with open eyes and ears, as a 'being there', *Da-sein*, an openness in which the given can become the given because it can enter and be received. This is the attitude to the other dimension of thought in which

Heidegger can meaningfully say 'Wir kommen nie zu Gedanken. Sie kommen zu uns.' (We never search out thoughts, they come to us.)

To establish the point I wish to make here I need to draw on Heidegger's philosophy a little further. Since it is part of man's realization to receive, it would seem to be equally so to give. What we give is perhaps not so apparent, but in receptiveness we do give ourselves in response, in a certain attentiveness, sometimes in praise, sometimes in an expression of joy or astonishment. It is human simply to give thanks. What seems to be inhuman is not to give at all. A relationship develops in the dialectic of giving and receiving in which man as the poet Hölderlin said, 'becomes a conversation'. In this relationship we cease to objectify but we find ourselves in co-existence with the things of our world, quite literally 'find ourselves' as one might come upon something he wanted having hardly realized that he was looking for it. The coexistence we are speaking about is not a coexistence in separation like that of two stones lying side by side or of two people or two nations who 'co-exist' with a minimum of contact, but is a coexistence of interweaving, as a conversation cannot go on without a speaker and a listener who frequently change rôles. It is a relationship which reveals humanity in a new dignity. We as human beings are needed for this intercourse. Heidegger says that Being needs man in order to be, and needs man's thought to give it meaning. In this relationship then man is no longer the 'lord and possessor of nature' of the Cartesian aspiration at the beginning of the rise of science; he is part of nature, a centre of its meaning, a 'custodian' rather than a possessor or manipulator.

Perhaps some will say that there is no relationship between this attitude that I have now described, stimulating and refreshing as it might admittedly be, and the scientific attitude. But here I would not agree. For one thing there are different sciences needing different approaches, and objectification and isolation of sets of data, studies of selected patterns in artifically experimental situations, have not proved as notably successful in sciences like psychology or sociology as they have in physics and chemistry. However, this is not the most important point. The attitude of which we are speaking is prescientific, not in the historical sense, but in the sense that belongs to a more primitive but persisting level of consciousness. It is relevant to science because it is the attitude in which science originates as questioning. The human dimension of which I am speaking here can be discovered and developed in an education which will open our eyes and ears to the more primitive but more intimately human world to which we are made insensitive by the immense sedimentation

of existing science, social structures, prejudice and convention. Such an education might, we hope, free our imagination to enable us to find ourselves (no mean achievement) and to find also perhaps new approaches to the world. We do not know if humanity will ever find its way out of the impasse to which technology, industry and commerce have brought it, but it does seem very unlikely that we or our posterity will do so by trying to make minor changes within the now established order. It does in fact seem that a fresh start is needed, and that to make a fresh start we have to rediscover ourselves at our origins.

This discussion so far has not been intended in any way as a contribution to the Science and Arts debate.[4]

As soon as one starts a debate on education from this point of view, difficult questions arise. What arts courses should science students take, and what science courses should arts students take? The problem of arts students learning enough about any special science to make what they learn worth while is quite often the more difficult of the two. I have not any suggested solution to offer. I am looking at education from the point of view that all of us, who are, after all, different people, have different aptitudes and natural interests and that a university should as far as possible give us opportunities to pursue our enquiries in the fields in which our interests lie. As I said when I touched on Plato's enquiry in the *Republic* earlier on, the community is enriched by different people and people are enriched by different facets of personality and different talents. Over-specialization seems stultifying but some specialization in unavoidable. People like Leonardo da Vinci can have a marvellously creative genius in many fields and we can always hope that one such genius might arise in society from time to time, but the main thing for the more ordinary people is that they should be free to develop their interests so far as possible.

When I consider what I call the non-employable dimension in the person within the framework of university education as a whole, I find that it is most generally considered to be the task of the arts faculty to nurture and guard it. I am thinking of course of departments of fine arts and music as well as literature and critical subjects in the humanities generally.

If as Nietzsche said 'thought should learn to dance', it is in these studies if anywhere that it may be able to do so. We find here studies whose only 'excuse' if they have to have one, is the joy they can bring to the person studying them. In a rather puritanical work-and-success orientated society, joy in any case may be rather suspect. It might well be found safer and more likely to win approval by sticking

to the pleasurable recreations that spare time offers: 'to relax and have fun in accordance with the advertisements' (as Marcuse puts it), and go on organized travel tours in the way that other people do.

To try and justify studies in literature, art and philosophy in terms of usefulness is quite futile, and even the people who earn a reasonable enough living by teaching in these fields (and therefore, one might say, making use of them), are appealing to a dimension beyond the concept of usefulness in their pupils and students. There has to be something gratuitous about these studies. They are undertaken for their own sake. They appeal to the gratuitous in man, to the way a human being answers to the evocation of his or her world by composing music, painting pictures, carving or constructing figures in space, writing poetry and plays, dancing and singing songs. The dimension of which we are speaking is always concerned with the gratuitous. There is in fact something gratuitous about the human person which he has in order to be human. We can observe the sky for instance and be conscious of opposing movements of cloud banks at different depths, a changing play of light and darkness and a sense of illimitable space; we can be captivated by the tracery of branches in a thorn-tree; we can watch a bird or a horse. This is not idle gazing, — what the Germans would call *glotzen*. It is observing and participating in the depths and movements given to our receptivity; and all such perceptions are in fact most remarkable extensions of ourselves. There is no shade however of intention to make use of what we observe. If studying poetry and pictures has a purpose beyond itself it would be because one of the manifold sources of poetry and pictures lies in perceptions such as these. The study of them teaches us how to participate, how to understand and share. But its method of teaching is not the method by which we 'objectify' what we are studying, becoming ourselves detached uninvolved. observers. We cannot wrest knowledge from nature, seen in this aspect, by calculation and experiment. Our experience is a participation, the participation in the lived world which is prior to scientific investigations. The method of teaching students in the departments which study the arts is therefore different too. The lecturer might have some ancillary explanations to make to facilitate understanding of a difficult text but generally his task is to introduce the real teacher, who is the artist or poet himself, and then to withdraw.

Where the work of art or the artist is the 'teacher', clearly the 'teaching' is of a different order from that which imparts knowledge. The work is something new, created from the materials of the lived world of the artist and transposed into forms which express the

artist's own participation. We cannot treat the artist's work as though it were an object for detached analysis. Should we analyse it? We can meet and experience the artist's work only as subject to subject, that is, in what is called an intersubjective relationship rather than a relationship of subject to object; or using, as seems quite natural here, the terms which Martin Buber has made famous, we can say we meet with it in the relationship of *I to Thou*, where we would meet the object of scientific knowledge in the relationship of *I to It*. For the intersubjective relationship to come into being some of the artist's experience is needed by the student: that is, there needs to be some opening, common to both the student and to the artist, on to the world of the artist.

The work of art does not present or represent things to us. It becomes (once again to use an expression of Heidegger's) the 'clearing' in which something can appear for us and come to meet us if we have the imaginative expectancy and the 'listening' receptiveness which lets things speak with their own voice and be what they really are.

I have just said that it is futile to attempt to justify studies in art and literature in terms of usefulness; yet having renounced usefulness as a motivation, we yet find that a deeply serious benefit emerges from the study. George Eliot is aware of this when she says:

> The greatest benefit we owe to the artist, whether painter, poet or novelist is the extension of our sympathies,

and again

> Art is the nearest thing to life, it is a mode of amplifying experience and extending our contact with our fellow men beyond the bounds of our personal lot.

If these benefits are 'useful', then we must make a concession to usefulness.

It seems natural that I should conclude with a rather philosophical question: the question of what it is that university studies have in common — not only the few that I have mentioned in passing, but all that are worthy of the name. I think we would all agree that what is common is the search for truth and that truth has many forms and manifestations. In whatever form it is manifested, however, it seems to have one doorway which opens on to it, and this is freedom. It may be the freedom of perfectly independent enquiry, freedom to explore sources, to engage in dialogue and experiment, or it may be simply waiting, watching or listening in free receptivity. I find myself convinced that it is freedom which is really at the radiating

centre of the non-employable dimension which I have been trying to discuss. Freedom is of course dangerous. I should like to suggest, however, that there are some things that are more dangerous still, and one of these is the assumption that established society has all the answers and knows where it is going.

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NOTES

[1] Biesheuvel, S. *The Changing Function of the Universities.* University of Natal Press, 1965

[2] For the following reflections on the international situation I am indebted to a series of University Extension Lectures on international relationships presented by Mr. M. Nupen of the Department of History and Political Science, Natal University, Durban, earlier this year.

[3] The phrase is borrowed from Merleau-Ponty's essay "Eye and Mind" published in *The Primacy of Perception.* North Western University Press, 1964.

[4] For an interesting contribution to this debate by universities in the United Kingdom see Ross, A. ed. *Arts versus Science.* Methuen & Co., Ltd. 1967.

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The Style of Faulkner's INTRUDER IN THE DUST

by D. HUTCHINSON

Critics of fiction sometimes argue that creative initiative has passed from Britain to the United States, leaving contemporary English novels in a dead-end designed for them by Joyce. Whatever the validity of such generalised comparisons in 'trend-spotting', there has been an observed vitality about American fiction over the last forty years or so. And the range of the English novel does seem smaller than that of its American counterpart.

Typical of the modern English novel has been its development from realistic creation of comic characters in a domestic social setting (often rural), judged by set moral criteria, towards a consciously aesthetic concern with sophisticated narration at the behest of a more self-contained dramatic and poetic effect. And, of course, it has explored the obsessive, tragic theme of isolated individuals progressively alienated from an impersonal and destructive urban society.

American novelists, however, have a tradition of using fiction in an experimental way to create poetic-symbolic effects (one thinks of Hawthorne, Melville, even James, and 'outsiders' like Huck and Ahab). This century the position may be neatly reversed in that the American novel is developing, more and more, a sociological interest. Further, the prominent authors tend to be negroes, southerners or jews; that is, spokesmen (or apologists) for minority-cultures.

Faulkner's novels are set in the Deep South. Yet, although he uses a broad canvas ranging from old Southern aristocrats at the top down to the artificial substratum of the Negro, the chief impression is not sprawling or spacious, but of a panorama in a nutshell, a whole created world in microcosm. The intensely unified effect of a novel like *Intruder in the Dust* is achieved by three devices. The setting and attitude are those of a regional novel; even, to an extent, a qualified regional manifesto of the South. The story's action belongs to the detective mystery genre, employing an intricately complex and suspenseful plot of a murder frame-up and its consequences. The third unifying device, a familiar Faulknerian technique for involving the reader, lies in the sophisticated trick of modulating narration through a special point of view, and one slightly out of focus at that, thereby adding a twist to what James

called 'dramatic consciousness'. We see through the eyes of a boy (elsewhere in Faulkner it may be an idiot), Charles (Chick) Mallison, whose muddled perception gradually clears. By this we recognize the novel as a *bildungsroman*, the moral education of a mind, the hero's, his gradual growth in awareness and development to maturity and manhood.

This process is dramatized against the background tensions of the American South, that integrated dynastic, clannish community with its own traumatic sense of history and, simultaneously, serving as a repository for the simple heroic values of a past chivalric age. All of which Faulkner recreates in his epic, semi-legendary way. The central point of the Southern Tradition, the 1861-5 Civil War and the liberation of negro slaves, is loaded with ambiguous emotion. It was one of the last wars fought with swords and chivalric gallantry, yet Faulkner treats it as a traumatic event for his characters, the Confederate defeat symbolizing an undying image preventing the South from moving into the modern era. The defeat created a moral dilemma: 'We lost, but our generals were better, our men braver, our cause just'. Hence, the South's hurt pride, wilfully rejecting the fact of defeat, preferred honour to integrity.

This mental block, a traumatic double-bind, is the central datum of the South's unconscious and the main problem Chick must face in order to define himself and resolve his love-hate conflict with the community. In the famous hypnopompic dream passage of Chapter 9, sandwiched between observations on the mindless herd instinct of the lynch-mob ('The Face'), with whom Chick has hitherto identified, this is bracketed and 'placed' in the following context of craven anti-Negro prejudice:

> A Face, the composite Face of his native kind . . . not even needing to be patient since yesterday today and tomorrow are Is: Indivisible: One (.....): who had pretermitted not even a death . . . to scurry . . . like mice through the slot of a guillotine until at the one unheeding moment the unheeding unwitting uncaring chopper falls; . . .[1]

The image of headlong flight abruptly chopped, coinciding with the ondriving rhythms arrested at the caesura after 'falls', crystallizes here an intersection of the Timeless with Time, a point of revelation for Chick of his own intersection with Time and History. This reinforces the more violent device Faulkner uses here of breaking the sentence to leap back in a page-long parenthesis (.....) to that traumatic crisis in Southern history — the Civil War and

Negro Liberation — which conditions Chick's taking on of responsibility for Lucas Beauchamp and so rejecting the hidebound part of his heritage.

> (. . . 'It's all *now* you see. Yesterday wont be over until tomorrow and tomorrow began ten thousand years ago. For every Southern boy fourteen years old, not once but whenever he wants it, there is the instant when it's still not yet two o'clock on that July afternoon in 1863, the brigades are in position behind the rail fence, the guns are laid and ready in the woods and the furled flags are already loosened to break out and Pickett himself with his long oiled ringlets and his hat in one hand probably and his sword in the other looking up the hill waiting for Longstreet to give the word and it's all in the balance, it hasn't happened yet, it hasn't even begun yet, it not only hasn't begun yet but there is still time for it not to begin against that position and those circumstances which made more men than Garnett and Kemper and Armstead and Wilcox look grave yet it's going to begin, we all know that, we have come too far with too much at stake and that moment doesn't need even a fourteen-year-old boy to think *This Time. Maybe this time* . . . yesterday's sunset and yesterday's tea both are inextricable from the scattered indestructible uninfusable grounds blown through the endless corridors of tomorrow . . .')

Faulkner, in trying to create an effect of *simultaneity* between past and present, implying that all actions are a continuity conditioned by tradition, expresses a Jungian idea, one which justifies his fictional jumbling of time-sequence, flashback and encapsulated digression. All Faulkner's heroes must relive the archetypal unconscious of their race (as James Joyce's must). Or, more specifically, the 'collective unconscious' of the South, as shaped by history and phantasy alike, has an impact on the hero's ego and motivation; he must *re-enact* it for himself. And, just as every Southerner must bear the burden of that old military defeat, he must, too, confront the guilt of not having freed the negro. The vivid tang of history in such passages, '*This time. Maybe this time* . . .', with its sense of the significant moment frozen in a traumatic 'still', an arrested point of infinite possibility for the Southern consciousness, owes its resonance to Faulkner's technique of the bizarre point-of-view. The reader, looking through the aperture of an adolescent on the brink of maturity whose perception is in process of clearing, registers a slightly unfocused confusion of effect both functional and fitting.

The lack of punctuation, the rhetorical build-up of clauses, the ondriving rhythms and repetitions all suggest that Jungian simultaneity and synchronicity.

Faulkner, in Yoknapatawpha County, conveniently dramatizes a whole social and cultural system in which the chivalrous old aristocracy has degenerated into financial impotence assailed and invaded by the amoral materialism of the North. But *Intruder in the Dust* is more than a regional political manifesto and rearguard defence of the South. This marvellous localized myth is also a universal symbol: moorings have been lost, the old values are adrift, and endemic bad faith and corruption supervene. Against such decay Faulkner sets the ethical centre of his work, a glorification of human effort and endurance, and a code of heroic decency. In this vision the negro occupies a central place.

The negro, always a convenient yardstick of American morality, constitutes in Faulkner a symbol of inherited guilt through slavery. And Chick's struggle to see straight involves sifting the real Lucas Beauchamp from the stock images, myths and abstractions accreted around him, as in this confrontation from a car window:

> . . . a formal group of ritual almost mystic significance identical and monotonous as milestones tying the county-seat to the county's ultimate rim as milestones would: the beast the plough and the man integrated in one, foundationed into the frozen wave of their furrow, tremendous with effort yet at the same time vacant of progress, ponderable immovable and immobile like groups of wrestling statuary set against the land's immensity . . .
>
> 'There's a nigger.' . . .
>
> — the car rushing boring up so that across the field's edge and the perhaps fifty yards separating them he and the Negro behind the plough looked eye to eye into each other's face before the Negro looked away — the face black and gleamed with sweat and passionate effort, tense concentrated and composed, the car flashing past and on while he leaned first out the open window to look back then turned in the seat to see back through the rear window, watching them still in their rapid unblurred diminishment — the man and the mule and the wooden plough which coupled them furious and solitary, fixed and without progress in the earth, leaning, terrifically, against nothing.[2]

This, the symbolic negro, elemental, effortful but static, is Chick's own romantic cliché of Negritude. By sheer suggestion Faulkner

reveals Chick's unconscious, conventional image of the negro at the moment of his rejecting it: he is caught unawares, the half-derogatory word slips out, the two exchange looks, and then the figure diminishes and *recedes*, becoming slightly comic, signifying Chick's growth away from such false, simplified attitudes. Lucas Beauchamp is neither a resigned stoic with infinite resilience and capacity for suffering nor, like Joe Christmas in *Light in August*, a Christ figure and martyr who willingly assumes the sin of the South. He is a blood relation to the Southern aristocracy, regarding himself less as a negro than as the last survivor of the old South. It is Chick who undergoes a pattern of expiation and redemption, not Lucas.

The detective story elements in the novel, the melodrama of midnight excavations in country churchyards or in quicksands, the mystery plot of withheld information, centre on the exposure of an attempted frame-up. The thriller, however, at its most exciting and suspenseful point is simply abandoned. The coffin having been exhumed no fewer than six times, and the murderer dismissed in a suicidal aside, all the complications of the plot are dissolved on a relaxed, perfunctory, comic level. The casual absent-minded resolution of the plot-line without justifying the resulting incoherence or patching the preposterous motivation, underlines its role as a device which is only partially functional. Like Greek Tragedy, where action is predetermined by Fate, the Detective Story allows no development of character through Time. Hence Faulkner is using the thriller-pattern and Yoknapatawpha County to serve the unities of Action and Place respectively, but they are merely vehicles for what he wishes to do with (and to) the time-sequence, for his own ends.

As a *bildungsroman* or psychological study of the individuation process in the central character (the narrator) the novel's formal structure is mimetic in that the prose mimics the gradually maturing moral awareness of Chick. In the external time-sequence of two days, Chick passes through a series of mental changes that mark his rejection of the most limited, unthinking Southern point of view. And since for Faulkner one's individual consciousness contains all the fluid, collective-historical past, he proceeds to redefine what being a Southerner implies. This moral self-education is dramatized by the hero's relationship with the half-caste Lucas Beauchamp, the *eminence grise* we only see modulated through the progressively sharpening consciousness of Chick.

The opening chapter describes, in flashback, their first encounter and Chick's awful faux-pas when, resenting the breaking of the master-servant relationship, he tries to repay Lucas for saving him from drowning and has his money ignominiously rejected.

> It was cold that morning, the first winter cold-snap; the hedgerows were rimed and stiff with frost and the standing water in the roadside drainage ditches was skimmed with ice and even the edges of the running water in the Nine Mile branch glinted fragile and scintillant like fairy glass and from the first farmyard they passed and then again and again and again came the windless tang of woodsmoke and they could see in the back yards the black iron pots already steaming while women in the sunbonnets still of summer or men's old felt hats and long men's overcoats stoked wood under them and the men with crokersack aprons tied with wire over their overalls whetted knives or already moved about the pens where hogs grunted and squealed, not quite startled, not alarmed but just alerted as though sensing already, even though only dimly, their rich and immanent destiny; by nightfall the whole land would be hung with their spectral intact tallow coloured empty carcasses, immobilized by the heels, in attitudes of frantic running, as though full tilt, at the centre of the earth.[3]

The prose, densely orchestrated, consciously rhetorical and cadenced, registers a colourful pungency of sensuous details to render the mounting excitement, of a boy hunting. As a device, it is not unlike that of Joyce's in *Portrait of the Artist*, where the mimetic prose develops in step with the evolving states of consciousness in Stephen that it reflects. Notable here is the punctuation effected not grammatically but by *rhyme* (glass, first, passed; again, tang; pots, hats, overcoats; crokersack, over their overalls), a potentially dangerous trick but one which shows how far Faulkner is taking the idea of making fiction 'poetic'. The image of 'frantic running' is significant of the bond later to emerge between Lucas and Chick who, unlike the lynch-mob, do not run, do not compromise their integrity. The image is introduced as a thematic leit-motif in an overture and the passage is built up like a musical theme hinting at what is to come. Admittedly, the diffuseness of Faulkner's style often disguises the consciously sophisticated artist rendering every detail maximumly functional to his theme. Chick falls into the creek, the whole landscape is inverted, everything is seen upside down and, at this crucial point, he first glimpses Lucas on the bank above. The placing of characters here is symbolic: it fore-shadows the imminent breaking of the master-servant relationship between them and initiates their reciprocal change of attitude.

Faulkner's technique of dramatizing this development is complex and confusing. Form, the most striking aspect of his fiction, in-

volves an attack on chronological time, an assault that makes mincemeat of the links between time and the trauma-expiation theme. The obscurity of Faulkner's style derives partly from its reflection of what the individual is totally (racially) aware of. By a stream-of-unconsciousness technique Faulkner zigzags through time, arresting a moment in the flux to investigate all its implications to the hilt. This preoccupation exhibits itself variously in all the major novels. In *Absalom, Absalom!* it is manifested in the reconstruction of history through interrogations, memory, confused intuitions and corrections. In *The Sound and The Fury* it occurs in the technique of free association and dialogue, but through the imperfect, shattered focus of an imbecile thirty-three years old. In *As I Lay Dying* it is divided among sixty brief episodes from within the individual consciousness of fifteen characters, one of whom is an idiot. It is present in the naturalism of *Light in August* and the blurs of *Sanctuary*.

Many of these techniques, in diluted form, are used in *Intruder in the Dust* at first to heighten, later to clarify, the objective-subjective confusion in the focus, a child in transition to an adult. There is, too, another purpose (frequently *de rigueur* in modern fiction) for not telling the story directly or straight-forwardly; and this may account for the fractured narrative structure and long melodious sentences (masterly if often monotonous), the involuted syntax, the mixture of regional colloquialism and stilted formality. Theoretically, through such disorderly, fragmentary impressions Faulkner aims at a vivid, immediate picture built up exactly as in real life. In fact, however, it is often overdone and irritating. Technical experimentation can make a novel more self-consciously intricate than necessary: obscurity and dazzle are often the effect of the Conrad or Joyce aesthetic, as of Faulkner's, and the self-contained illusion of reality may not remain wholly intact from authorial intrusion crudely disguised in a character like Gavin Stevens.

Such are the techniques, at any rate, that in the middle sections of the novel contrive a deliberate spiralling confusion and ironical vertigo that draws us into Chick's uncertainty and self-doubt. His first reaction to the predicament Lucas's succour has placed him in is resentment issuing in progressively more desperate attempts at retaliating and reversing the obligation. But an exchange of gifts calculated on a finely graded *quid pro quo* social scale reinforces the undercurrent of gamesmanship between them and leaves Lucas top-dog. Nonplussed, handicapped by youth and inexperience, Chick cannot cope or hold his own: 'whatever would or could set him free was beyond not merely his reach but even his ken.' In his eyes a power struggle of a classic love-hate type evolves. This ex-

change is led into and underscored, by way of an episode in a local store, an ordeal-scene that emphasises Lucas's poise and savoir faire, which are constantly tried.[4] Baited, Lucas neatly turns the tables on his tormentors, retorting a social snub upon their racial taunts with the composure of a king at large among his muttering hinds. He rejects alike condescension and the rôles of negro butt and spade playing card. He is a M'Caslin. And that he is no uppity cartoon-figure presuming to higher status than he can claim is precisely the realization marking Chick's first stage of awareness. The insight, granted at the death of Lucas's wife, finds Chick 'thinking with a kind of amazement: *He was grieving. You don't have to not be a nigger in order to grieve . . .*[5] His mental growing-up takes a leap forward with this, his first sympathetic response to the negro. It is a partial and incomplete awareness, however, qualified by a sense of astonishment and hedged by that obligation still undischarged.

The crisis of Chick's moral evolution arrives with the arrest of Lucas. Their roles are now reversed and Lucas, up another creek entirely, depends, in his turn, on Chick. The key confrontation-scene in the gaol, which precipitates Chick's sense of obligation, and which is the outcome of a struggle against his impulse to evade it and run, resolves him to take on the responsibility of the community, and thereby frees him from Lucas's hold.

> 'I'll pay you,' Lucas said.
>
> So he wasn't listening, not even to his own voice in amazed incredulous outrage: 'Me go out there and dig up that grave?' He wasn't even thinking anymore. *So this is what that plate of meat and greens is going to cost me.* Because he had already passed that long ago when that something — whatever it was — had held him here five minutes ago looking back across the vast, the almost insuperable chasm between him and the old Negro murderer and saw, heard Lucas saying something to him not because he was himself, Charles Mallison junior, nor because he had eaten the plate of greens and warmed himself at the fire, but because he alone of all the white people Lucas would have a chance to speak to between now and the moment when he might be dragged out of the cell and down the steps at the end of a rope, would hear the mute unhoping urgency of the eyes. He said:
>
> 'Come here,' Lucas did so, approaching, taking hold of two of the bars as a child stands inside a fence. Nor did he remember doing so but looking down he saw his own hands holding to

> two of the bars, the two pairs of hands, the black ones and the white ones, grasping the bars while they faced one another above them. 'All right,' he said.[6]

The biblical allusion to the mess of lentils keeps Chick's indebtedness in the foreground, superadding the notion of a betrayed birthright, history's sell-out of the Negro, which this young Southerner must redeem. Further, his full name is revealed for the first time now: in discharging his debts, therefore, he is discovering his own identity; it is a process of moral self-discovery he undergoes. One cannot miss the commanding tone that signalizes his decision here, nor the symbolic value Faulkner so deftly endows the dividing bars with. Each is a prisoner incarcerated on different sides of an insulated bigoted society. Chick is to free Lucas physically; Lucas is to liberate Chick from his inherited prejudices and social preconceptions. Their relationship is reciprocal and complementary. The scene's visual precision, understated and unobtrusive, sharply defines this symbolic moment in a child's attaining to the realization of his common shared humanity.

An undertone of wariness, however, characterizes these exchanges of mutual trust still, there's a cat-and-mouse fencing with each other.

> 'I'll have to get out there and dig him up and get back to town before midnight or one o'clock and maybe even midnight or one o'clock and maybe even midnight will be too late. I don't see how I can do it. I can't do it.'
>
> 'I'll try to wait,' Lucas said.[7]

The comic punch-line, whose laconic irony does not disguise the seriousness behind it, is assigned to Lucas, as was the assured repartee of the Store-scene. The tendency of Faulkner (and Chick) to appear as dupes of Lucas's superiority is strong but curbed by comedy. The novel's complex and cathartic finale demonstrates the same irony functioning as a control for the tension contrived here. Who has the upper hand? Who saves whom? On the surface Lucas Beauchamp, as the negro society victimizes, is the mouse. But, at the same time, his pride responds with wit, outspokenness and tart insouciance. This spices the challenge of clearing him for Chick. Paradoxically *he* is being dominated. Finally each achieves his own independence. They become equals.

The next stage of awareness is achieved by a feat of prose style. We register the nictitating membrane, the falling veil and drawn curtain that all constitute an image of clarifying vision, but it is the

abrupt clipped rhythms and rhetorical balance of the prose which indicate how Chick's mind is developing its powers of moral discrimination.

> . . . and suddenly he realized that he had been completely wrong; it was not Saturday which had never happened but only last night which to them had not happened yet, that not only they didn't know about last night but there was nobody, not even Hampton, who could have told them because they would have refused to believe him; whereupon something like a skim or a veil like that which crosses a chicken's eye and which he had not even known was there went flick! from his own and he saw them for the first time — the same weathered still almost inattentive faces and the same faded clean cotton shirts and pants and dresses but no crowd now waiting for the curtain to rise on a stage's illusion but rather the one in the courtroom waiting for the sheriff's officer to cry Oyez Oyez Oyez: This honourable court; not even impatient because the moment had not even come yet to sit in judgement not on Lucas Beauchamp, they had already condemned him but on Beat Four, come not to see what they called justice done nor even retribution exacted but to see that Beat Four should not fail its white man's high estate.[8]

To create an effect of insightful perception Faulkner simply needs to tighten his prose into clipped staccato rhythms and cut its mesmeric flow with pointed antithetic clauses. This technique is that of Jane Austen in reverse. The level, unruffled calm of Austen's prose plateau requires only the slightest rhythmic disturbance at crucial peaks to achieve an effect of heightened emotion. Faulkner merely inverts that technique for the same effect. By formalizing his normally overwrought and cumbersome prose momentum thus, Faulkner evades the dangers that often attend impressionist authors. Conrad, for instance, writes constantly at full volume and hence fails to expand his tone for 'big' scenes, succumbing instead to a vivid, megaphonic blur. Faulkner's devices here, formally patterning themselves, focus Chick's realization that the mob requires not justice but a reassuring scapegoat, a ritual sacrifice. Allegiances no longer divided, his individuation proceeds in this dissociation from the herd.

The final, decisive stage of Chick's complete awareness is not set in the cadaver-hunt or at Lucas's discharge (all scenes embedded in the misty plot-line) but where he witnesses the stampeding mob of

would-be lynchers turn tail and run. This revelation is almost more than can be borne. Faulkner is at pains to dramatize it so. The whole of Chapter Nine, where he bears witness to the hypocritical pettiness and bad faith of his community, has Chick on the verge of a nervous breakdown. While convincing on a realistic level as the result of his physical exhaustion, shock and loss of sleep, this serves, too, as a literary convention to dramatize symbolically the character's moral change (one is reminded of Catherine's delirium in *Wuthering Heights*, or Lear's 'My wits begin to turn', a moment of significant insight modulated through madness at the drama's height). When he awakes the next morning, he has changed. All sense of solidarity with the crowd is repudiated. His uncle prolixly argues, philosophizes and rationalizes the event, but to Chick it all crystallizes in a single phrase:

> He said, 'They ran,' calm and completely final, not even contemptuous, flicking the shirt floating away behind him and at the same moment dropping the trousers and stepping barefoot out of them in nothing now but shorts. 'Besides, it's all right. I dreamed through all that . . . 'It was something . . . somebody . . . something about how maybe this was too much to expect of us, too much for people just sixteen or going on eighty or ninety or whatever she is to have to bear . . . ' — only there was something else too — I was trying . . .' and he stopped them at last feeling the hot hard blood burn all the way up his neck into his face and nowhere even to look not because he was standing there almost naked to begin with but because no clothes nor expression nor talking either smoke-screened anything from his uncle's bright grave eyes.
>
> 'Yes?' his uncle said. Then his uncle said, 'Yes. Some things you must always be unable to bear. Some things you must never stop refusing to bear. Injustice and outrage and dishonour and shame. No matter how young you are or how old you have got. Not for kudos and not for cash; your picture in the paper nor money in the bank either. Just refuse to bear them. That it?
>
> 'Who, me,' he said, moving now already crossing the room, not even waiting for the slippers. 'I haven't been a Tenderfoot scout since I was twelve years old.'
>
> 'Of course not,' his uncle said. 'But just regret it; don't be ashamed.[9]

The parallel with Lear's insight on the Heath is closely urged. Chick, 'bare, unaccommodated man', is decisive, unillusioned. His nakedness denotes his rise to a dimension of humanity above the mere clothing level of artificial civilized values (specifically satirized in Chapter Eleven). We remark, too, how Gavin Stevens stands tall and draws fire off from Chick. Chick's embarrassment before large sentiments mirrors the reader's own dismay at the literary design. The bluff man-to-man chat, marred by jingles and the strident, see-saw rhythm, collapses into cheap rhetoric. In this the passage illuminates the book's central flaw. The values, which when oblique and implicit Faulkner so expertly dramatizes, here, explicitly enunciated by Gavin Stevens, come over only as mealymouthed clichés.

The problem is one of contamination. How are we to take Gavin Stevens? Faulkner uses him in two ways.[10] The novel's self-contained narrative mode excludes authorial intrusion and comment, hence Gavin Stevens acts partly as Faulkner's mouthpiece, a sympathetic character-vehicle for his manifesto. But he is also the gauge Chick measures his own developing perceptions against, and as such his ideas are rejected: as specious double-talk, by Chick ('You're a lawyer'); by the florid, verbose prose of his philosophizing, which takes a critical sidelong glance at itself; by his tendentious querulousness. Though no benevolent paternalist of the White-Man's-Burden school, his tirades are coloured by the historical resentment of progressive liberal southerners against the North's take-over bid for the negro ('We would've made a better job of freeing them, when we got round to it!) But Stevens's ideas are given at such length (in Chapter Ten, especially) and at such significant junctures that the balance of his dual function in never redressed. His Dr. Jekyll succumbs to a Mr. Hyde, a portentous twin one can't help taking as a touchstone of moral reference embodying ideas, one feels, Faulkner himself admires.[11] This is doubly fatal. He is a garrulous and irritating bore and, since he stands in such close, big-brotherly relation to the hero and the final chapters are worked round his point of view, the novel's unity is threatened and Chick's independently achieved experience almost invalidated. Faulkner makes a gallant attempt to patch this up with the splendid and free-standing final scene.

This highly elliptic and accomplished conclusion has perplexed and dissatisfied many readers.[12] There is no dénouement: Faulkner shrugs off the mystery-plot, slighting the question of the real murderer's motivation and (flouting even the more sophisticated readers' expectations, too) deliberately avoids a direct confrontation between Chick and Lucas. Is this legitimate? Yes, I think, if the scanted

tête-a-tête is demonstrably contained, however subtly, by implication, in the comic finale which brings our character's affairs, literally, to compt. The comic resolution receives its gradual build-up from Chick's humorous phantasy of Miss Habersham's drive,[13] continuing through Stevens' satiric comments on the South's degenerate materialism inherited from the North, and all climaxing in Lucas's last entry:

> 'Well,' Lucas said. 'If wont nothing else satisfy you — (.....) — and came to the table and laid the hat on it and took from the inside coat pocket a leather snap-purse patina-ed like old siver and almost as big as Miss Habersham's handbag and said,
>
> 'I believe you got a little bill against me.'
>
> 'What for?' his uncle said.
>
> 'For representing my case,' Lucas said. 'Name whatever your fee is within reason. I want to pay it.'[14]

We note the tell-tale parenthesis (conjuror's patter extending over two foggy pages) in which, by cunning sleight-of-hand, Faulkner removes the car-ride interview between Chick and Lucas. The lawyer declines payment.

> Lucas looked back to his uncle; he watched them staring at one another. Then once more Lucas blinked twice. 'All right,' he said. 'I'll pay the expenses then. Name your expenses at anything within reason and let's get this thing settled.'
>
> 'Expenses?' his uncle said. 'Yes, I had an expense sitting here last Tuesday trying to write down all the different things you finally told me . . . Of course the paper belongs to the county but the fountain pen was mine and it cost me two dollars to have a new point put in it. You owe me two dollars.'
>
> 'Two dollars?' Lucas said. He blinked twice again. Then he blinked twice again. 'Just two dollars?' Now he just blinked once, then he did something with his breath: . . .[15]

Lucas's optical tic, which blinks back emotion, becomes a sight-gag whose repetition has the scene's elaborate seriousness teetering dangerously this side of farce.

> . . . and drew from the purse a worn bill crumpled into a ball not much larger than a shrivelled olive and opened it enough to read it then opened it out and laid it on the desk and from the

> purse took a half dollar and laid it on the desk then counted on to the desk from the purse one by one four dimes and two nickels and then counted them again with his forefinger, moving them one by one about half an inch, his lips moving under the moustache, the purse still open in the other hand, then he picked up two of the dimes and a nickel and put them into the hand holding the open purse and took from the purse a quarter and put it on the desk and looked down at the coins for a rapid second then put the two dimes and the nickel back on the desk and took up the half dollar and put it back into the purse. [Then took out] a knotted soiled cloth tobacco sack bulging and solid looking which struck on the desk top with a dull thick chink.[16]

The scene is constructed to the phenomenalist formula,[17] a technique of characterization purely through cataloguing physical objects: in itself a severely limited device but useful in comedy or where, as here, the overdeliberate accumulation of trivia and stage 'business' piles up farcical details to hold the underlying emotion precariously in check. The method is essentially two-dimensional and typical of satire, 'defining people sharply and vividly in their social rôles'.[18] And that is a pointer to the submerged action of the scene: this external balancing of accounts is a mutual acknowledgment of the tacit social equalization of Lucas and Chick.

> 'This is business,' his uncle said. So Lucas unknotted the sack and dumped the pennies out on the desk and counted them one by one moving each one with his forefinger into the first small mass of dimes and nickels, counting aloud, then snapped the purse shut and put it back inside his coat and with the other hand shoved the whole mass of coins and the crumpled bill across the table until the desk blotter stopped them and took a bandana handkerchief from the side pocket of the coat and wiped his hands and put the handkerchief back and stood again intractable and calm and not looking at either of them now while the fixed blaring of the radios and the blatting creep of the automobile horns and all the rest of the whole County's Saturday uproar came up on the bright afternoon.
>
> 'Now what?' his uncle said. 'What are you waiting for now?'
>
> 'My receipt,' Lucas said.[19]

The whole deadpan rigmarole climaxes in that final taut clincher's cathartic release. The camera mesmerically decelerates into a

slowmotion close-up that magnifies the action and registers its symbolic import. Retaining dignity and face, each partner plays out his rôle in this ritual act, a transaction that seals both their new rapprochement and the latent emotionalism it formally controls. It's just a gesture, of course, because Lucas's debt to Chick can no more be financially assessed and discharged than Chick's original faux-pas could. It cements the bond between them, free of any headpatting condescension or handcupped humility. The passage is neither an apotheosis nor a dégringolade: the characters pass before the lens at handshake level and stand firmly on middle earth, human, jokey and eye to eye. Their dialogue's understated humour signifies this is a joke between equals, and their prolonged fencing match concludes with a palpable touché.

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NOTES

[1] *Intruder in the Dust*, Penguin, pp. 187-9.
[2] Ibid. pp. 143-4.
[3] Ibid. p. 6.
[4] Ibid. p. 22 ff.
[5] Ibid. p. 25.
[6] Ibid. pp. 67-8.
[7] Ibid. p. 72.
[8] Ibid. pp. 132-3.
[9] Ibid. pp. 197-9.
[10] The impersonal 'distancing' of Faulkner's prose holds the two rôles in solution. One feels, however, that the author is having it both ways. The same suspicion often mars one's appreciation of Joyce, in whom ambiguity of tone and mannered parody are erected into an impenetrable defence-mechanism.
[11] A full discussion of Faulkner's ambiguity is given in C. Brooks: *William Faulkner, The Yoknapatawpha County* (Yale University Press, 1963), Note 13, pp. 420-4.
[12] Slatoff, W. J. in *Quest for Failure* (Cornell, 1960), Part III, pp. 218-20, sees a relegation to comic puppetdom for Lucas in it.
[13] Op. cit. pp. 180-3.
[14] Ibid. pp. 233-5.
[15] Ibid. p. 236.
[16] Ibid. p. 237.
[17] An outrageous and amusing phenomenalist inventory in J. D. Salinger's 'Zooey', *Franny and Zooey* (Heinemann, 1962), pp. 75-6, tabulates brand-names of items in a character's medicine chest. The method is a staple of another *New Yorker* writer, Nabokov.
[18] A. G. Woodward, "Nadine Gordimer", *Theoria* 16, 1961, p. 4.
[19] Op. cit. p. 238.

THE CULTURE CHASM:
BANTU EDUCATION AND THE USE OF ENGLISH

by T. OLIVIER

The following remarks do not purport to be a thoroughly documented or exhaustive study; nor can I escape the fact that I am indulging at least in part in the dangerous practice of armchair philosophising. Nevertheless, anyone who has tried to teach an English literature course at post-matriculation level to African students will, I believe, recognise in the examples reproduced in this paper, many characteristic expressions, ideas, and mannerisms. My purpose in thus reproducing these extracts is not only to provide a body of material on which to base a few comments and general observations, but also to record, for the benefit of those who tell us with great complacency how flourishing is the state of education for the non-European in South Africa, a sobering selection of what the cream of that education system is producing as written English — in this case, in relation to a poem, the simple sense of which should present no difficulty to anyone who has successfully completed his secondary schooling.

The poem, D. H. Lawrence's *Piano*, was chosen quite arbitrarily as an exercise in analysis for an English I class, and it was only when the first few ansewrs had proved unusually exasperating (the distinction between 'usual' and 'unusual' is by no means extreme) that I began to record extracts from the students' answers with this paper in mind. What follows then, is the poem set, and thereafter a fairly wide selection of extracts from students' analyses interspersed with relevant comments. The extracts, which, I might add, are transcribed quite faithfully, reveal perhaps two fundamental types of fault, and of these the second is by far the weightiest, both in prominence and in seriousness. The first group comprises faults that are essentially technical, in the main irrelevancies such as rationalisation, generalisation, and reading into the poem notions not contained or implied — such failings as are met with in the work of first-year students everywhere. The second group is more peculiar and disturbing; it might feasibly be described as revealing a gross unfamiliarity with the language — not with vocabulary as such, but with the reality, the experience involved in understanding the words. English is read as if from the outside, and these examples show clearly the 'outsider's' typically superficial acquaintance with the things he describes or discusses. The result is a kind of vacuum, in

which words float about in absurd costume, their usual relationships refusing to materialise before the reader's hopeful eye and the anticipated meaning of the whole being lost as some new world is imposed on them. In this group we find literal reading, inadequate understanding — sometimes complete misunderstanding — and ignorance of the habitual patterns of English. Perhaps 'naivety' is the most apt word to sum up these faults, and virtually all the extracts show something of this quality. Obviously, this division is artificial; thus there is a good deal of overlapping,almost any example being criticizable on both technical grounds and for this characteristic naivety. Indeed, if it were possible to categorise faults positively, it would be a relatively simple matter to isolate each student's weaknesses and to remedy them. The problem is, unfortunately, too ingrained for any merely grammatical programme to be of much value, as the great preponderance of second-group faults surely suggests.

The poem reads as follows:

Piano

Softly, in the dusk, a woman singing to me;
Taking me back down the vista of years, till I see
A child sitting under the piano, in the boom of the tingling strings
And pressing the small, poised feet of a mother who smiles as she sings.

In spite of myself, the insidious mastery of song
Betrays me back, till the heart of me weeps to belong
To the old Sunday evenings at home, with winter outside
And hymns in the cosy parlour, the tinkling piano our guide.

So now it is vain for the singer to burst into clamour
With the great black piano appassionato. The glamour
Of childish days is upon me, my manhood is cast
Down in the flood of remembrance, I weep like a child for the past.

The poem has its difficulties; the question of sentimentality is bound to be raised in any normal discussion, and one might conceivably query the contrivance of a phrase such as 'the great black piano appassionato.' But its simple sense, what is said in paraphrasable terms, is scarcely obscure; yet it is precisely on this score that virtually all the extracts show a basic inability — to grasp what is

'going on' in the poem. The following could perhaps be regarded in the main as technically weak, but even they contain obvious naiveties:

> The poet seems to be appreciating music which is sung to him by a woman. This melody makes him to think of the life which he did not spend in the field of music. The music is so sweet to him that now he has a wish of becoming a child although it is too late. He listens to the music with a musical ear.
> The music is gradually 'taking' him back to the adolescent stage. It reminds him of the child listening attentively to his mother while the music is on. All this took place in the mind of poet . . . He mourns sorrowfully as he looks back to the life he has wasted doing nothing.

Both of these read into the poem in an attempt to rationalise it and, like the following, seem to be largely conditioned by a blindness to the poet's reasons (both obvious and possible) for using certain words rather than others; the student takes hold of something that he recognises or has knowledge of, and offers that as an adequate explanation of the word or line:

> He is imagining himself sitting and playing on the piano which consists of numerous tingling strings. '. . . Small, poised feet' pertains to the pedals at the bottom of the piano which regulate the length of the sound.

This goes, predictably, with an appallingly naive literalism:

> As a poetic device he says that, 'the heart of me weeps' though we know that a heart cannot weep. His manhood is cast down into remembrance not physical because he still remains a man.

The following student has some perception, but it is still strangled by the attempt to associate the poem with something he knows:

> In the third stanza he denounces the years of maturity. His manhood is cast — thrown away like an old garment. To think of the past is now tantamount to crying over spilt milk with the tears swelling into 'the flood of remembrance'. To me, this poem conjures a picture of the Biblical '*prodigal son.*' The only difference here being no hope of home and asking for forgiveness.

The Biblical reference is by no means uncommon; here is another, further complicated by the student's evident reading of psychology:

> Viewed from the religious point we can say that the poet was wholly dependent on his parents who taught him about God. As a result 'the insidious mastery of song betrays him back.' This means that as he is older now, he may try to run away from what his parents taught him, but he cannot do so because his parents had taught him in such a way that their beliefs are now internalized in him, that is, they are part of himself. We thus see the effect of early education or early teaching and how it affects the behaviour in adult life.

Quite how the poem is supposed to support all this is not dealt with. However, if we ignore the oddities of expression and the wilful associations, these are still within the bounds of reasonably controlled English, and with some effort, their authors could be trained to avoid the irrelevancies which they share with a great number of first-year students everywhere.

The bulk of the extracts however, which are set out below, seem less hopeful of easy remedy.

> The poet seems as if he was sitting in the nightclub where a woman singer was singing. This nightclub as all nightclubs are was dim-litted and this is emphasised by the word 'dusk'. The poet was there sitting and listening to the singer and the way the singer was singing brought him many reminescences of his life gone by. This woman seemed to the poet as if she was singing to him not to the other patrons in the nightclub. This idea is emphasised by a phrase:
>
> a woman is singing to *me;*
> Taking *me* back down the vista of years.

The stark irrelevancy of this comment is highlighted by the student's subsequent grasp, albeit half strangled in the expression, of the poem's merged notions, 'a woman', 'the singer', and 'a mother'. He comments:

> The singer brought back the memory of his mother as if the singer (woman) was his mother singing to him. His mother would always smile to him if she was singing to him. The idea that every woman is a mother is conveyed here.

A confusion of morals is evident in the following extract. The writer decides that 'the way the woman was mastering the piano and the song brought a sentimental mood to the poet', and then goes on:

> The life he was leading is not as good as his childhood life. He is now a man and with all the responsibilities. When he was a child he was protected by the cosy atmosphere of his home. He there worshipped God accompanied by a tinkling piano. The piano he now sees and hears being played bring all the reminescences of his past life. The piano was their guide at worshiping God and the piano used by the singer brings back the memories of the piano that was used at his home. The singing of the singer and the accompaniment of the piano made him to cry and remember his early days in the world. He was now feeling as if he was a child, the singer as his mother and crowning it all the piano as his guide in this hazardous world. It seems as if the poet was not worshiping God during his manhood and he wished to be a child again so that he can be able to go to church on Sundays without other things disturbing him.

Here is an earnest sense of moral degeneracy imposed on the poet together with a desire to repent, all qualified by the decision that this is sentimental. To untie this knot would, I feel, require rather more than remedial grammar training. Nor would this be of much help in the following case of literal reading:

> He recollects of the 'Sunday evenings' which appear to me to be the exact time at which he used to play music. The exact time of the year at which he used to play the piano was in winter. It might be because it was cold and had therefore to keep indoors... To me it appears as if they had practices on Sunday evenings.

This student becomes progressively more involved in rationalisation on his own strange pattern:

> In the last stanza the poet does not approve of anybody to make a discourse with that 'great black piano appassionato'. He shows some respect or admiration of the piano by using the word 'great'. It might have been heavy in weight, but to me the sense of admiration seems to excell.

The following is basically a case of simple misunderstanding. The student has not grasped the situation involved in the poem, and has therefore constructed one; i.e., he has rationalised the experience in his own terms, and he fits the poet's words to this situation with ill-founded confidence:

> I think the poem is about an old person who is now blind and also cannot do the things as he wishes. Now most of the things are done for him like a child. In the first line:
>
> 'in the dusk'
>
> He shows us that this person cannot see anything as it is always the case that at dusk you can either see faintly or not at all. It shows us that he could hear people talk and sing but not see see them as he puts it in the following sentence:
>
> 'My manhood is cast
> Down in the flood of remembrance'
>
> What he can do now is to remember what used to happen during his green days as he can not either see or do not of the things for himself.

But such misunderstanding is surely more deep-rooted than poor language-teaching; it seems to reveal what I can only call 'cultural paucity'. To read the extract is to be aware of a literalism that suggests a lack of contact with the elements that make up the world of the poem. The writer's imagination cannot conceive (or reproduce) the poet's experience, and he is to that extent culturally deprived, malnourished. He goes on to reveal a crippling ignorance of the simplest English meanings, his set of connotations being quite foreign to what the poet's words invoke:

> I think the writer of this poem has tried to show us that when people are old and blind they always think of the days when they young. They wish they can be born again to enjoy the motherly care which the children enjoy.
>
> 'The glamour
> Of childish days'
>
> This shows us that when you are young there is plenty of amusement and there are so many things which can entertain you but when you are blind or old you can only imagine or watch other people enjoy themselves in some activities in which you cannot partake because of old-age.

And perhaps the cultural deprivation is even clearer in the pathos of the following:

> The topic of the poem itself is 'Piano' an instrument for playing music. The poet has adopted a narrative style. The way the poet uses words in the poem brings about decency in the whole poem, for example, in a phrase 'cosy parlour' gives an impression of a very comfortable, first-grade room.

A feature of this deprivation, not altogether characteristic yet recurring, is the semi-literate's pompous fondness for 'big' words:

> 'Boom' could be implying the plentifulness and volumenousness of sound to the child's ear. This sound from the piano might have not been concordial or comprehensive to immature ear of the child.

The point he makes is a good one — at least it begins promisingly — but his unsureness reveals itself both in the malapropisims and in the multiple description offered. Malapropism in another sense is clear in the following example as a kind of brave irrelevance that seems to result from that literal reading already seen:

> This seems to be modern music since the poet regrets that he belongs 'To the old Sundayschool evenings at home,' where they sang songs with the accompaniment of a piano 'in the cosy parlour.' As the woman sings, she entertains the poet whose emotions are aroused until he visualises a child sitted under a piano whose feet were pressing the feet of a mother hanging on the pedals of the piano. This statement is qualified by the following line:
>
> 'And pressing the small, poised feet of the mother
> Who smiles as she sings'.
>
> The woman sang joyously in the accompaniment of the piano but the poet mastered the song with difficulty since he belonged to the old Sundayschool in which old songs of the time were sung as reflected in the following:
>
> 'In spite of myself the insidiuos mastery of song
> Betrays me back till the heart of me weeps'.
>
> The poet is sorry that his knowledge of singing is that of the past and this music belongs to modern times.

This note of regret recurs in various forms as the past is recalled:

> In this poem is revealed how a man tremendously exhilerated by the catchyness of a woman's song is incited to recollect and brood with envy over the days of his youth . . . He is now so impervious to the pangs of erotic passion that it is in vain for the singer to bring him back to that present moment . . . Probably the poet recalls his childhood days and the splendours he used to experience; and seemingly he was one of those who sang in the church choir; . . . It may also be that the piano as an instrument

on which nice pieces of music can be sung, signifies how interesting and glorious his youthful days had been . . .
He recalls the way in which he used to play with his mother when he was putting his tender feet on her mother and tramped her without complaining . . . The most remarkable days were Sundays when they were peacefully seated at the kitchen as implied by the word 'parlour'.

A last group seems to have been intrigued by the reason for the title, and the following consciously or unconsciously juggle with it, justifying its presence in various ways, all of which suggest the naivety that goes with unfamiliarity:

According to the tittle of the poem, one expects to hear more about the piano as a musical instrument but the poet deals more of vocal music than the music of his subject (piano).

The phrase 'in the dusk' leads me to think that it was partially dark when the poet heard a music from a woman . . . In this first passage the word "feet" leads me tho think of the notes of a piano, and the mother here is a piano itself. "A mother who smiles as she sings". This sentence leads me to think of the piano while being played by somebody. The poet associates the up and down moving of the piano notes with smiling.

I think the poet refers to the notes of the piano as 'small poised feet' which are pressed in order to render music . . . The poet further tells us that in his childhood his family was religious because on Sundays in the evening they would gather in the parlour and sing praises or hymns under the guidance of the piano.

In the sentence 'And pressing the small, poised feet of a mother who smiles as she sings' seems to show that the mother of the girl was sitting by admiring her daughter. It also could mean that the girl was pressing the buttons of the piano while her mother with the feet of her daughter on top of hers was helping to work the pressure of the piano.

To me it shows that the poet really appreciated the music. He thought — it seems that he was more enjoying it than the woman who was playing it. For he says:
The glamour of childhood days is upon me.

There was also another thing very much like the piano at home, which had the same tingling sound that fascinates him here. This was the Sunday evenings. Obviously it was on Sunday evenings that his mother played the piano.

A question may be asked: why a child? To me it seems as if the poet wants to tell us how easy it is to play on a piano.

The poet shows us how romantic and cool were the conditions in that house . . . the 'boom' which indicates the droning of the strings of the piano. Well some of these strings were offering a 'tingling' type of music which is usually rendered by the bells . . . The poet further argued that inspite of his treacherous 'insidious' understanding of the song sold or revealed that he so which or long of the past . . . The poet found it pointless for the singer to rise her pitch when the condition prevailing allow soft music to be rendered. The optic delusion of childhood days is on the poet and seemed to have forgoten that he is a 'manhood', and as a man he should not show his feelings outwardly by weeping.

In this poem we see the poet watching the lady which he suspects that she is singing for him . . . The poet himself is a music lover and also a good singer therefore when he saw that lady singing he called that something doing him harm secretly . . . the language the poet used is perspicuous.

Though the music seems not to have any meaning for him, he nonetheless, in his childish way, hears 'the boom of the tingling strings' and only contented himself, as a way of taking an active part in the rendition, pressed 'the small, poised feet' of his mother. He had sense enough then to realise that some pedalling was necessary to adjust the tone of sounds. Consequently he 'assisted' his mother. The fact that he was in fact still a child is seen in that since he could not sing nor play the piano, he opted for sitting under the piano. An adult would prefer to sit and listen if he wants . . . an grown man. . . does not sit under the piano but listens without interfering with the singer.

This selection has, of course, the appearance of an anthology of schoolboy 'howlers', and I have placed it here in this unbroken manner so that the reader can gain an uninterrupted impression of the standard of English I am concerned with (and about); reading

these examples as 'howlers' one smiles involuntarily, but when it is recalled that the weaknesses shown are not schoolboy slips but the serious opinions of adult men and women who have satisfied the authorities that they are competent to leave school and proceed to university, one's smile tends to freeze with the chill sense of serious shortcomings. All these students have passed Senior Certificate English — how and at what level, I do not know. The fact that English is not their 'home' or first language is entirely irrelevant; entrance to university demands a level of competence that should be the same everywhere, and this level is not reflected in the examples above. Six years of marking such essays, tests, and examination answers have revealed a fair degree of constancy in the standard seen in these examples, and the exceptions have been at the rate of only three or four per year, at a level which can be described only as 'adequate'. The fact is that the usual is poor; very poor indeed.

What is wrong? Many things, probably, but none that can easily be put right. Of one thing I am convinced; nothing in the way of course selection or manipulation at university level will achieve the kind of improvement necessary to turn these examples into reasonably intelligent comment. The university is not a remedial institution, nor is it a basic training ground. What the extracts reveal is not merely a technical or grammatical weakness, but a blank unfamiliarity with concepts and notions assumed by all who use English and without which it is impossible to communicate properly by means of the language. The primary ability to visualise a situation is almost totally wanting: under such conditions it is quite possible for the teacher to enthuse over the subtleties of Shakespeare's use of darkness in *Macbeth*, only to be told that most of the murders in the play are 'done during the nighttime'. There is clearly evident in almost all the examples, a profound inadequacy of experience in the language and the cultural concomitants of the language; and this inadequacy is likely to become further entrenched by a system dedicated to the perpetuation of isolationist education. If education were simply a matter of gathering information in a limited number of fields, all would be well. Education has manifestly little to do with such a proceeding, and I hope I have demonstrated that all is not well. The results of English-teaching under this system are patently appalling; all that has been produced is a state of semi-literacy in which the student, though often verbose, is curiously inarticulate, reading literally and often without understanding. Nor is the reaosn very obscure; the writers of these exempla are on the far side of a great gulf. They see from their vantage point, a church, Sunday-school, the piano, night-clubs, parlours, and a host of other things.

We, benevolently, fly over the gulf and tell them about these things; they are pleased and eager to show their competence, which they do by building models, sometimes with our help. But the models are inevitably quaint; some almost work, some don't work at all. They never will work until the gulf is either filled in or very much better bridged.

Afterword

Since this article was first written some two years ago, I have had the benefit of several comments and, as a result, I have recast it a little. Perhaps this is the right place to indicate both such criticism and my response, as this will probably anticipate the more obvious doubts of readers. The fundamental criticism levelled was that I had not demonstrated that the reason for this state of affairs is indeed cultural, and that it would be better to attempt to determine the extent to which 'isolationist education' has contributed to the inadequacy raised in the article. Such an undertaking would indeed be a valuable one, but it would be beyond the intention of the present paper. It would entail long research into the history of South African education and the comparison of results over the years; and even then I feel we would have only the limited, sometimes meaningless picture that the facts and figures of examination results can give. I have presented this paper in this particular way because I wish to indicate the effects of Bantu education in terms of present English performance — and this is better judged in the immediacy of direct contact with the language used than in the abstraction of a set of figures that reflect a previously-made judgement. The level of these particular students seems to me also to be the best point at which to make such a selection, since they have not been out of school long enough for many side-effects to influence the calibre of their English. Although I have not been scrupulous to ensure that all the examples were taken from students, of say, not more than six months post-matriculation study, the sample is, I am confident, a representative one. Whatever other factors may have been operative in the examples cited, my point was and is that they are typical in my experience at least of the English used by Bantu students coming into the university and taking English as a subject. The number of English-speaking (and English-teaching) South Africans in direct contact with Bantu university students is, I believe, severely limited; to those who are, this paper will be of little use or interest. At its least useful it should confirm the more casual observation that even educated Bantu English is not very good as a whole; to some, it may be something of a revelation.

A second major criticism was that I had been too negative in simply

pointing to the inadequacy; I should have offered something positive by way of solution. I am rather afraid that this is one of those problems which, Denmark-like, would require a general purge to set it right. The standard of English — especially as a second language — is bound to depend very largely on its developing in a context which is sufficiently intimate with the living language to make its richness apparent, to give a basis of reality to concepts that at present seem to be attached to 'airy nothing.' And this need is made even more urgent by the fact that this second language is (and has to be) the language of thought. One minor comment in this connection was that I had contradicted myself by suggesting both that the students were unfamiliar with basic English concepts and that they had a reasonably wide vocabulary. That both statements can be simultaneously true is unfortunately a real possibility;[1] I am constantly confronted with examples of empty vocabulary, and some of these are obvious in the paper. Concepts and notions can only attain substance by immediate personal grasp; otherwise words become empty counters bandied about with spurious understanding. Even in this age of the sterilely efficient language 'laboratory', the only truly satisfactory way of becoming familiar with a language and its literature — especially a dynamic one — is by constant contact with the people who speak that language, since the subtleties and implications of some of the most ordinary conversation, let alone literature, are something that demand intimacy of knowledge and usage. Students who must study a language at arm's length because of an arbitrary social position, will never have an adequate grasp of that language or its literature.

What this amounts to, of course, is an assertion that as long as the present ideological climate and its system of divided education remains in force, we who teach English will see only decline in the Bantu's use of English and his ability to understand its literature.

NOTE

Mtunzini, Natal.

[1] I have recently become aware of D. S. Baker's paper *Shakespeare in Ghana* (Shakespeare Survey 16, C. U. P. 1963). His experience bears a striking resemblance to that common in this country, and his analysis of the problems into linguistic and cultural divisions is obviously relevant to the present paper. That his conclusions are more optimistic and constructive is perhaps inevitable; our own scene is hardly conducive to the 'sheer fun' he has obtained from Ghanaian Shakespeare.

"A WINTER LANDSCAPE IN NEUTRAL COLOURS": Some Notes on Philip Larkin's Vision of Reality

by DIETER WELZ

Philip Larkin, author of two novels and three slim volumes of verse,[1] is praised by some people as 'the unofficial Poet Laureate of present-day England'[2] and condemned by others as 'typical of a younger group of self-snubbers and self-loathers (who, nevertheless, have never thought to put down their wretched mirrors)'.[3] The basic premise on which Larkin criticism seems to rely is summed up in Charles Tomlinson's verdict: Larkin's 'subject-matter is largely his own inadequacy.'[4] Any approach to this poet's work, or to any writer's work for that matter, must, as Larkin puts it, 'seek first of all to determine what element is peculiarly his.'[5] After studying the literature on Larkin and his work I am led to believe that this task has not yet been fully accomplished.[6]

Larkin is very reluctant to give any abstract views on his work or the impulse that lies behind it. He has, however, occasionally done so when prompted. From these remarks something like a doctrine of poetic creativity arises, culminating in the maxim: 'Poetry is an affair of sanity, of seeing things as they are.'[7] In order to grasp the full meaning of this statement, it is necessary to understand the assumptions it implies. In *Poets of the 1950s* Larkin explains: 'I write poems to preserve things I have seen/thought/felt (if I may so indicate a composite and complex experience) both for myself and for others, though I feel that my prime responsibility is to the experience itself, which I am trying to keep from oblivion for its own sake.'[8] The experience with which Larkin is preoccupied, is the everlasting struggle for self-assertion in an 'indifferent or hostile environment'[9]. His refusal to overlook the ignoble and sickening aspects of that struggle has earned him on the one hand the reputation of being obsessed with defeat,[10] and on the other that of being one of the most unflinchingly realistic poets of contemporary England.[11]

According to Larkin the reality of human suffering is the experience that goads creative man into action, that urges him to gain command of the situation, at least to some extent, by writing about it. Suffering and creativity are, he maintains, inseparable:'Separating the man who suffers from the man who creates is all right . . but the dependence of the second on the first is complete.'[12] Most of his critics fail to appreciate that Larkin is trying to preserve suffering, both experienced and observed, not as an end in itself, but in order to create insight into its origin.

His attitude towards what he calls 'modernist art' and his adherence to traditional verse and colloquial language are quite in keeping with this. He condemns modernism in art as an irresponsible exploitation of technique, 'in contradiction of human life as we know it', offering neither help nor pleasure, and being of no use to ordinary people.[13] He believes that art should be relevant to an audience seeking both inspiration and pleasure. In other words, he pleads for an art that fulfils the ancient postulate of *prodesse et delectare*.

Larkin argues that neither he, the poet, nor the characters he creates have much control over their lives. Moreover, he makes it quite clear that this is a highly unpleasant state of affairs and that one is only too willing to escape from it by means of self-deception and wishful thinking. The poet himself is no exception to this rule. Larkin says that he too 'is perpetually in that common human condition of trying to feel a thing because he believes it, or believe a thing because he feels it.'[14] For this reason there is a constant struggle between mind and imagination to decide 'what is true or right or real'[15] and consequently 'what is important enough to be written about'[16]. The poet is never released from making such a decision, and this is his 'ailment'[17]. In Larkin's words: 'to write well entails enjoying what you are writing, and there is not much pleasure to be got from the truth about things as anyone sees it.'[18]

Larkin's poetry is strictly personal in that it never suggests that the poet is different from what he is.[19] That does not necessarily mean, however, that it is 'a limitedly personal poetry which, because the poet never struggles for any finer-than-average or even fine-as-average humanity in it, is of little or no use to anyone.'[20] For personal relevance does not exclude general significance. This kind of negative criticism indicates, I think, that there is something disturbingly true about Larkin's personal poetic statements on life, something with which 'romantic reviewers' do not like to be confronted. The poet's comment on those critics reveals that he too is perfectly aware of this. He observes:

> One thing I do feel a slight restiveness about is being typed as someone who has carved out for himself a uniquely dreary life, growing older, having to work, and not getting things he wants and so on — is this so different from everyone else? I'd like to know how all these romantic reviewers spend their time — do they kill a lot of dragons, for instance? If other people do have wonderful lives, then I'm glad for them, but I can't help feeling that my miseries are over-done a bit by the critics. They may retort that they are over-done by me, of course.[21]

There can be no doubt that misery, in Larkin's poetry, is a little 'over-done'. In his opinion a poem should be dramatized in order to create an impression on the reader. It is the mark of a good or successful poem to 'emotional in nature and theatrical in operation, a skilled re-creation of emotion in other people', but it is equally true that 'conversely a bad poem is one that never succeeds in doing this.'[22] It is the subject-matter rather than the way it is treated that seems to irritate most of his critics. They are dissatisfied with what they call Larkin's lack of 'nobility'[23] and what one may more suitably call his adherence to the truth about human life as he sees it.

This attitude prevails in Larkin's mature poetry and can be traced in *The Less Deceived* and *The Whitsun Weddings* as the 'representative attitude'.[24] As his novels show how such an attitude develops, they should also be regarded as an integral part of his poetic work. The poet even refers to them as 'over-sized poems'[25]. John Kemp in *Jill* and Katherine Lind in *A Girl in Winter* are faced with an environment that proves to be hostile or at least indifferent to them and to their 'attempts at a personal life'. It makes their behaviour look 'irritatingly absurd'[26] and forces them to find happiness in themselves. Both characters are displaced heroes and this causes their suffering. They try to get to terms with their new surroundings, are rejected, but finally accept this as inevtiable, and are even 'glad that such order, such destiny existed'[27].

John Kemp arrives at Oxford in 1940 as a scholarship boy. He is from Lancashire, of working class origin, and has been singled out by his school-teachers for university education. His fate is not of his own making. It has been decided upon by other people for reasons unknown to him, but not to the reader. He represents an early example of the working class hero in post-war English fiction, who is uprooted in the course of the expansion of higher education to classes previously excluded from it, and he is one of the awkward victims caught up in the ensuing 'crisis of expansion'[28]. Larkin admits that this is so, though he feels bound to add that it is not intentional.[29] But that does not really matter. The fact as such remains.

It is not quite correct to say that *Jill* is concerned with 'shyness and the consequences of it'[30]. The novel is rather concerned with exploring the causes that lead to shyness — and justify it. John Kemp is unsure of himself in a world new and strange to him. His shyness is the outcome of 'innate assumptions' (*Whitsun Weddings*, p. 38) about the world around him and the threat it represents. The events narrated in the novel prove that his fears and the shyness they inspire are real: 'All his life he had imagined people were hostile to him and wanted to hurt him; now he knew he had been right and all the worst fears of childhood were realized' (*Jill*, p. 203).

At college he has to share a room with one Christopher Warner, scion of London upper-class society, whom he admires and envies for his background and the luxury, waste and freedom with which it provides him. He wants to live up to this being from another and obviously better world, and tries to adapt himself to the standards set by his room-mate, only to find out in the end that he has never been accepted, but has always been regarded as 'a feeble sort of worm' (*Jill*, p. 111). This triggers off his first painful disillusionment, depriving him of what little self-respect he had attained from being around with Warner and his set: 'Once they had shown him he was despicable, he instantly saw himself as fifty times more despicable than than they thought him. The past three weeks, that hitherto had been dispersed and vague, sprang suddenly into focus for what they were — an extended, conceited daydream' (*Jill*, pp. 111f.). Fully aware that he is powerless to make a tradegy of the affair, he finds a means of retaliation by inventing Jill, an imaginary younger sister of his. These lies have an unexpected effect on Warner. He becomes envious of John Kemp, confessing that he has never struck up any worthwhile relationship with his sisters. For some time he treats John Kemp as his equal, even bothering to pay back some of the money he borrowed from him.

John Kemp's fantasies about Jill are first and foremost a means of escape, illustrating Larkin's theory that creativity depends entirely on suffering: 'Suddenly it was she who was important, she who was interesting, she whom he longed to write about; beside her, he and his life seemed dusty and tedious . . . She was a hallucination of innocence' (*Jill*, p. 135). This provides the clue for the following events. John Kemp meets a girl in a bookshop, decides it is Jill, follows her, and even manages to invite her to his room. Gillian-Jill turns out to be a younger cousin of Elizabeth, Warner's girl-friend, later mistress. Elizabeth interferes, preventing Gillian from keeping her date with John Kemp. This means for him that he has again been rejected, and all his illusions are once more shattered. Now he arrives at a valid assessment of the situation accepting the fact that his environment is hostile to him and forces him into loneliness.

John Kemp experiences a form of alienation that is superficially just his own personal affair, but one realizes that it has a more general significance when one considers the causes behind it. These causes are clearly of a historical nature. The fate of John Kemp has a symbolic meaning. His agony is nothing unique, but rather the appointed lot of the many caught up in the crisis of expansion.[31] His suffering is not imaginary, but it is intensified by his imagination, which is really his refusal to acknowledge reality. His awareness of

suffering is not meant to make him despicable in the eyes of the reader. Quite the opposite is true: one is supposed to sympathize with him and to understand that the struggle he is involved in between mind and imagination, and his spiritual suffering are the mark of a superior character.[32] John Kemp's childhood, his entire past has been one long series of spiritual sufferings which continues in his first term at Oxford. After visiting his badly damaged home town, Huddersfield, Kemp returns to university life, elated and in high spirits. The destruction caused by air raids seems symbolic to him. It amounts to 'a kind of annulling of his childhood' (*Jill*, p. 219). The past is no longer of any importance to him. Meeting his former teacher and sponsor underlines this impression. He makes a final futile attempt to meet Gillian, but this does not really matter to him any longer. John Kemp has reached the point where wishful thinking stops, and where he starts to see things as they are.

The ability to accept the unpleasant truth about one's life indicates maturity, within the framework of Larkin's poetry: 'in most lives there had to come a break, when the past dropped away and the maturity it had enclosed for so long stood painfully upright. It came through death or disaster, or even through a love-affair that with the best will in the world on both sides went wrong' (*Girl*, p. 183). The theme of Larkin's second novel is again the acceptance of reality and the attainment of maturity. Katherine Lind is another displaced hero. She even has the status of a displaced person, being a refugee from the continent living in a small English town at the time of World War II. As in *Jill*, causes of a distinctly historical nature are responsible for the suffering imposed on the individual.[33] The break with the past, brought about by 'apparently meaningless disasters' (*Girl*, p. 185), is welcomed by Katherine Lind. A return to former life and its conditions appears to be impossible: 'For the world seemed to have moved off a little, and to have lost its immediacy . . . It was like a painting of a winter landscape in neutral colours . . . She felt one of her faculties had died without her consent or knowledge . . . The world that she had been so used to appraising, delighting in, and mixing with had drawn away, and she no longer felt she was part of it' (*Girl*, p. 184). She is alienated, and other people are no longer of any interest to her. She has been disappointed by them and is no longer willing or able to communicate with them: 'Henceforward, if she needed comfort, she would have to comfort herself; if she were to be happy,the happiness would have to burn from her own nature' (ibid.). She finds it difficult to accept this as the truth about her life. The fact that her theory about human life has been proved on her adds to her uneasiness and evokes des-

perate hopes of avoiding the consequences of all this. In the course of one winter day her illusions collapse. They are not in keeping with the reality of life, and are unfit to support her 'failing hope that she was wrong to think her life had worsened so irrevocably' (*Girl*, p. 185).

Disenchantment takes place in two phases. Katherine Lind expects a letter from Robin Fennel, which, as she makes herself believe, might give her life a turn for the better. The Fennels are part of her past life, an English family she spent her holidays with sometime before the war. Since writing to them, 'those three nearly forgotten weeks had taken on a new character in her memory. It was the only period of her life that had not been spoiled by later events, and she found that she could draw upon it hearteningly, remembering when she had been happy, and ready to give and take, instead of unwilling to give, and finding nothing worth taking. It was as if she hoped they would warm back to life a part of her that had been frozen' (ibid.).

The second part of the novel, in relating that summertime episode, discloses that her memories are blurred with wishful thinking, thus preparing the reader for the final downfall of all her hopes. The expected letter arrives, but does not extend the anticipated invitation to join the Fennels. Instead it announces that Robin Fennel is coming to see her. This indicates that the English family is not prepared to put her up as some sort of a lost child. When she has digested this news, a telegram arrives cancelling Robin Fennel's visit. Katherine Lind understands that she has been cruelly rejected and 'shut out into her own life again; all her nature beat on his refusal, begging to be re-admitted to the easy happiness she had been remembering' (*Girl*, p. 212).

Robin Fennel turns up after all — but that changes nothing. Their meeting is a disappointment for both of them. The novel ends with a description of the dreams that harass the sleeping couple, before they find peace in untroubled sleep, that is clearly meant to foreshadow death:

> There was the snow, and her watch ticking. So many snowflakes, so many seconds. As time passed they seemed to mingle in their minds, heaping up into a vast shape that might be a burial mound . . . Into its shadows dreams crowded, full of conceptions and stirrings of cold, as if iceflakes were moving down a lightless channel of water. They were going in orderly slow procession, moving from darkness further into darkness, allowing no suggestion that their order should be broken, or that one day, however many years distant, the darkness would begin to give place to light (*Girl*, p. 248).

This novel has been criticized for the way it depicts the relationship between Katherine Lind and Robin Fennel. Lawrence Durrell writes: 'the love-story — if it can be called that — between Katherine the foreigner and Robin Fennel the Englishman seemed to me rather hollow and meaningless.'[34] It is in fact hollow and meaningless: that is precisely the point Larkin is making. His human beings are indeed 'dry cell batteries unable to make contact with each other.'[35] This is the result of a development described in detail in this novel; it is not due to the author's failure to inspire his characters with life. Larkin is at pains to demonstrate that there is no possible contact between people who are reduced to a barren existence without fulfilment, unless one adheres to the notion of romantic love and ignores the reality of alienation, something Katherine Lind can no longer do, and something she prevents Robin Fennel from trying to do. Larkin's novel is concerned with a life gone irrevocably wrong,and and one of the essential features of such a life is its lack of communication and the suffering caused by this.

In his novels, Larkin deals with people who are made to accept that they are destined to loneliness. John Kemp and Katherine Lind, after finding out that they have nothing in common with other people, lose all interest in them.Loss of interest in other people and their affairs is the reason given by Larkin for no longer writing novels: 'I suppose I must have lost interest in other people, or perhaps was only pretending to be interested in them.'[36] Looking back on his novels, he thinks they do not really deserve that name. For in his opinion 'novels are about other people'[37], and his novels are basically more concerned with the author's self than with other people. Therefore, as stated earlier, he refers to them as over-sized poems, for 'poetry is about yourself'[38]. Larkin's decision to give up novel writing can be explained as a result of arriving at the conclusion that other people are of no importance to the mature individual who has accepted alienation.

Larkin dismisses his early poems, collected in *The North Ship*, as being of mere historical value and autobiographical interest: 'Looking back, I find in the poems not one self but several . . . This search for a style was only one aspect of a general immaturity.'[39] His later poems represent the point of view he thinks valid, and they are written in a style that is typically his own. Accordingly he says: 'I don't think I want to change; just to become better at what I am.'[40]

The main concern of Larkin's mature poetry is to find out who one is, what past is related to one's present life, and what identifies it as real. In the poem 'Age' the poet considers his position and defines his existence in terms of alienation willingly accepted:

My age fallen away like white swaddling
Floats in the middle distance, becomes
An inhabited cloud. I bend closer, discern
A lighted tenement scuttling with voices.
O you tall game I tired myself with joining!
Now I wade through you like knee-level weeds,

And they attend me, dear translucent bergs:
Silence and space. By now so much has flown
From the nest here of my head that I needs must turn
To know what prints I leave, whether of feet,
Or spoor of pads, or a bird's adept splay.
(*Less Deceived*, p. 30)

The world of the other people ('a lighted tenement scuttling with voices') is no longer of real concern to the individual tired of vain efforts to become part of it. Withdrawal from society and contemplation on one's real identity characterize the attitude of the mature person. The poet is estranged from other people, and he is a stranger to himself. He does not know why he should prefer silence and space to social life, but he knows that he does prefer it. His existence does not make much sense to him, but he is confident that there is sense in it: the past may offer a clue. That is why he feels he must turn back and try to identify his traces.

In 'The Importance of Elsewhere' this train of thought is pursued further. The other people's world appears here to be present-day England, and the poet considers the meaning of withdrawal in that context. The past he ponders over is his time at Queen's University in Belfast:

Lonely in Ireland, since it was not home,
Strangeness made sense . . .
Living in England has no such excuse:
These are my customs and establishments
It would be much more serious to refuse.
Here no elsewhere underwrites my existence.
(*Whitsun Weddings*, p. 34)

To justify one's personal way of life here inevitably means to question the validity of customs and establishments that thwart it. Such a justification becomes necessary as soon as all attempts of the individual to come to terms with society have failed or have been abandoned as futile efforts. At this point one must critically evaluate one's own self and the world around. The conflict between personal

convictions and 'the arguments of outward reality'[41] is a recurrent theme in Larkin's mature poetry. The opposition of conflicting points of view provides the basic framework of Larkin's poetic reflections upon life in postwar Britain and the effect it has on his own existence.

Defining one's own existence is an act of self-defence, implying a rejection of all those facts of social life that tend to impede individual happiness and cause suffering. That rejection is often indirectly expressed, occasionally even ridiculed, but never really questioned as to its justification — or revoked. Not getting the things one wants, having to work without seeing the point of it, getting old in the process — these are some of the aspects of life that Larkin turns over in his mind when considering the fitness of society to promote human values and to guarantee individual happiness.[42] He never explicitly blames common habits or given institutions, but concentrates on the human suffering caused by them, thus revealing that there must be something fundamentally wrong with the general set-up of social life as it is.[43]

In the poem 'Here' two ways of life are contrasted with each other. The life of the many is seen through the window of a train passing 'a large town' — and leaving it behind:

> Here domes and statues, spires and cranes cluster
> Beside grain-scattered streets, barge-crowded water,
> And residents from raw estates, brought down
> The dead straight miles by stealing flat-faced trolleys,
> Push through plate-glass swing doors to their desires —
> Cheap suits, red kitchen-ware, sharp shoes, iced lollies,
> Electric mixers, toasters, washers, driers —
> (*Whitsun Weddings*, p. 9)

The town, abode of the 'cut-price crowd', stands for the world that is rejected. The region beyond it represents the sphere of removed life, clarified by loneliness and offering an 'unfenced existence': the destination of the traveller.

The life of the many appears absolutely farcical if one looks at it from a safe distance, disregarding any kind of involvement that might bias one's judgement. The poem 'The Whitsun Weddings' gives such a detached view of the reality of ordinary wroking class life, at one of its supposedly happiest moments. The observer sitting back in his corner seat in the train and watching 'a dozen marriages get under way' is 'an archetypal Larkinian situation'[44]. It enables the poet to have a good look at what is gong on outside and allows

him, on the strength of his detachment, to see things as they *really*[45] are. What they are like is summed up in terms that indicate the poet's unwillingness to get involved in this. The account the poem gives of what happens all over again, 'in different terms', each time the train stops, reveals the inhuman and mechanistic quality of a standardized way of life. For those people, life indeed is 'one long unintelligent summer'[46] — and that is not entirely their own fault.

In 'Naturally the Foundation will Bear Your Expenses' the attitude of getting away from it all appears in the form of a satirical refusal to be taken in by childish rituals that serve no other purpose but to evade present-day problems. Commenting on this poem, Larkin remarks: 'I've never written a poem that has been less understood.'[47] It is a piece of serio-comic writing, and that means by definition that it is serious and funny at the same time. The underlying pattern is no different from that present in the poem 'Here'. The world of the other people is here represented by 'crowds, colourless and careworn', that take part in the commemoration ceremony on Armistice Day. Their world is strongly rejected and scathingly ridiculed, and precisely for that reason some critics have refused to take this rejection seriously at all.[48] However, it has to be taken seriously, if only for Larkin's comment: 'it's as serious as anything I have written . . . Why he (the character in the poem) should be blamed for not sympathizing with the crowds on Armistice Day, I don't quite know.'[49]

The relevant passage of this first-person-poem is:

> That day when Queen and Minister
> And Band of Guards and all
> Still act their solemn-sinister
> Wreath-rubbish in Whitehall.
>
> It used to make me throw up,
> These mawkish nursery games:
> O when will England grow up?
> — But I outsoar the Thames,
> And dwindle off down Auster
> . . . (*Whitsun Weddings*, p. 13)

The character who features in this poem and acts as the speaker is clearly meant as a caricature of a certain type of travelling lecturer. He is in a hurry and entirely preoccupied with his mission. The crowds in the streets annoy him, because they delay his taxi. His self-importance is slightly ridiculous, but his attitude towards the world of the many represents that of the mature individual. He leaves

that world behind, 'outsoaring the Thames' and heading towards a region beyond the reach of the many — thus proving superior to them.

This poem is a satire about the heroes of culture. Nevertheless, it supports the view held by the person being ridiculed. What happens in the streets is interpreted as a symptom of general immaturity. Its rejection is supposed to be taken seriously — and so is the gesture of withdrawal from it.

In 'Reason for Attendance' the decision to keep apart is discussed and confirmed. The person standing outside, for convenience' sake referred to as the poet, for a moment looks through a lighted window and watches the dancers inside the room. He asks himself why he is out here and why he wants to stay where he is. He argues:

> . . . Surely, to think the lino's share
> Of happiness is found by couples — sheer
> Inaccuracy, as far as I'm concerned.
> What calls me is that lifted, rough-tongued bell
> (Art, if you like) whose individual sound
> Insists I too am individual. (*Less Deceived*, p. 18)

Art encourages man to remain true to himself and to accept life as it is. In the poem 'For Sidney Bechet' Larkin writes accordingly:

> On me your voice falls as they say love should,
> Like an enormous yes . . . (*Whitsun Weddings*, p. 16)

Love, however, is an illusion, an empty promise — within the context of Larkin's work.[50] The poet maintains that in everyone there is an almost instinctive hope for love, and that this hope, for reasons difficult to understand, in most cases remains unfulfilled. This is one of the tragic aspects of human life — and the main cause of spiritual suffering:

> . . . In everyone there sleeps
> A sense of life lived according to love.
> To some it means the difference they could make
> By loving others, but across most it sweeps
> As all they might have done had they been loved.
> That nothing cures . . . (*Whitsun Weddings*, p. 15)

The only cure seems to lie in the acceptance of the fact that love — 'whether fulfilled or unfulfilled' (*Jill*, p. 242) — must die. Even the

mature individual who has come to this conclusion cannot always dispel the idea that there might be everlasting love and happiness. It seems to be a notion deeply ingrained in human nature, as the poem 'An Arundel Tomb' states:

> . . . The stone fidelity
> They hardly meant has come to be
> Their final blazon, and to prove
> Our almost instinct almost true:
> What will survive of us is love. (*Whitsun Weddings*, p. 46)

The quest for one's true identity leads to further inquiries into the reality of human existence, dicsovering an enormous ignorance of life. Awareness of that ignorance constitutes that common condition in which the poet finds himself entangled:

> Strange to know nothing, never to be sure
> Of what is true or right or real,
> But forced to qualify *or so I feel*,
> Or *Well, it does seem so:*
> *Someone must know.* (*Whitsun Weddings*, p. 39)

It follows that in writing about life as one sees it one has to be careful not to become over-committed to one's own statements. For that reason Larkin employs a poetic technique which rules out over-commitment: 'In a sense that means you have to build in quite a lot of things to correct any impression of over-optimism or over-commitment.'[51] These built-in correctives act as a safeguard in case 'one has misjudged himself. Or lied' (*Less Deceived*, p. 18).

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NOTES

[1] Novels: *Jill* (1946); *A Girl in Winter* (1947).
Poetry: *The North Ship* (1945); *The Less Deceived* (1955); *The Whitsun Weddings* (1964).

[2] John Wain, 'Engagement or Withdrawal? Some Notes on the Work of Philip Larkin,' *Critical Quarterly*, 6 (1964), 172.

[3] M. L. Rosenthal, *The Modern Poets: A Critical Introduction* (New York, 1960), p. 222.

[4] 'Poetry Today,' *The Pelican Guide to English Literature*, VII, 471.

[5] Philip Larkin, 'Wanted: Good Hardy Critic,' *Critical Quarterly*, 8 (1966), 178.

[6] For literature on Larkin cf. select bibliography attached to my essay on his work in *Englische Literatur der Gegenwart*, ed. Horst W. Drescher (Stuttgart: Kröner Vlg., 1970), pp. 581-589.

[7] Philip Larkin, 'Big Victims: Emily Dickinson and Walter de la Mare,' *New Statesman*, 13 March 1970, p. 368.

[8] *Poets of the* 1950*s: An Anthology of New English Verse*, ed. D. J. Enright (Tokyo: Kenkyusha Ltd., 1955), p. 77.
[9] Philip Larkin, 'Context,' *London Magazine*, n.s. 1 : 11 (1962), 32.
[10] G. S. Fraser, 'An Imaginary Parallel: English Poetry since 1945,' *London Magazine*, 6 : 11 (1959), 13.
[11] J. D. Hainsworth, 'A Poet of our Time,' *Hibbert Journal*, 64 (1965-6), 154.
[12] *London Magazine*, n. s. 1 : 11, 32.
[13] Philip Larkin, *All What Jazz: A Record Diary* 1961-68 (London: Faber and Faber, 1970), p. 17.
[14] *London Magazine*, n.s. 1 : 11, 32.
[15] *The Whitsun Weddings*, 4th impr. (London: Faber and Faber, 1968), p. 39.
[16] Philip Larkin, *London Magazine*, n.s. 1 : 11, 32.
[17] Cf. *The Less Deceived*, 6th ed. Hessle: The Marvell Press, 1966 (p. 26.)
[18] *London Magazine*, n.s. 1 : 11, 32.
[19] Cf. Ian Hamilton, 'Four Conversations: Philip Larkin,' *London Magazine*, n.s. 4 : 8 (1964), 75.
[20] J. M. Newton, '. . . And a more comprehensive soul,' rev. of *The Whitsun Weddings*, by Philip Larkin, *Cambridge Quarterly*, 1 (1965-6), 97.
[21] *London Magazine*, n.s. 4 : 8, 73.
[22] Philip Larkin, 'The Pleasure Principle,' *Listen*, 2 : 3 (1957), 28.
[23] J. M. Newton, *Cambridge Quarterly*, 1, 97.
[24] Ian Hamilton, *London Magazine*, n.s. 4 : 8, 73.
[25] Ibid., p. 75.
[26] *Jill* (1946; rpt. London: Faber and Faber, 1964), p. 112.
[27] *A Girl in Winter* (1947; prt. London: Faber and Faber, 1957; paper covered ed. 1965), p. 248.
[28] D. S. Brewer, *Proteus: Studies in English Literature* (Tokyo, 1958), p. 257.
[29] Cf. Larkin's 'Introduction' to *Jill* (London: Faber and Faber, 1964), p. 11.
[30] William van O'Connor, *The New University Wits and the End of Modernism* (Cabondale: Southern Illinois Press, 1963), p. 142.
[31] Cf. James Gindin, *Postwar British Fiction: New Accents and Attitudes* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1962), p. 2.
[32] Philip Larkin, *Critical Quarterly*, 8 (1966), 178.
[33] J. Gindin, p. 105.
[34] *London Magazine*, 4 : 4 (1957), 67.
[35] Ibid., pp. 67 and 69.
[36] *London Magazine*, n.s. 4 : 8, 75.
[37] Ibid..
[38] Ibid..
[39] 'Introduction' to *The North Ship* (London: Faber and Faber, 1968), p. 8.
[40] *London Magazine*, n.s. 4 : 8, 77.
[41] *The North Ship*, p. 33.
[42] *All What Jazz*, p. 17.
[43] Cf. D. S. Brewer, *Proteus*, p. 257 et passim. John Press, *A Map of Modern English Verse* (1969; rpt. London, Oxford, New York: Oxford Univsrsity Press, 1971), p. 254.
[44] John Wain, *Critical Quarterly*, 6, 174.
[45] That is to say: when looked at from the point of view of the man who does not believe in the blessings of 'getting a family, increasing and multiplying' (Girl, p. 247). Cf. 'Dockery and Son' (*Whitsun Weddings*, p. 38) and C. O. Gardner, 'Some Reflections on the Opening of "Burnt Norton",' *Critical Quarterly*, Winter 1971, p. 334.
[46] *Girl*, p. 183.
[47] *London Magazine*, n.s. 4 : 8, 76.
[48] Cf. John Wain, Critical Quarterly, 6, 172.
[49] *London Magazine*, n.s. 4 : 8, 76.
[50] Cf. 'No Road' (*Less Deceived*, p. 26), 'Love Songs in Age' and 'Faith Healing' (*Whitsun Weddings*, pp. 12 and 15).
[51] *London Magazine*, n.s. 4 : 8, 75.

LAW AND JUSTICE IN SOUTH AFRICA*

by B. van D. van NIEKERK

An American insitution which had more money than common sense once billed an erudite naturalist to speak at a public meeting on the topic 'Ostriches in Mauritius'. His speech consisted of one sentence only: 'There are no ostriches in Mauritius.' There may be some who feel that a discussion of justice in South Africa should be equally brief. That men should have such feelings of frustration is understandable; but it is a feeling that South Africans would be well-advised to avoid, for, all told, one of the basic prerequisites for the survival of justice, or for its enlargement, is to keep talking about it. Indeed at this juncture of South African history when there is an expectation of change in the air, when there is a promise that wider circles than has been the case hitherto have become committed to the cause of justice in this land, there is great need for some clear thinking about the intrinsic ingredients of the concept of justice, and also for tireless efforts to transplant once again the ideals of justice to the South African soil which for so long has shown itself so barren for their growth.

In what follows, it is not my purpose to embark on a philosophical expose of the evolution of the concept of justice in the western world. My approach is that of a practical lawyer, a South African lawyer, with a vested interest in the development of our legal system towards a fuller recognition of those values in our civilization which, for want of a better name, we have come to call justice. I would like in fact to treat briefly with ways and means which our legal system system may adopt to approximate some of the ideals of justice as commonly understood in the greater part of the civilized world.

In doing so I shall eschew matters with a purely political content. I do so not because injustices which are prevalent in the political field in South Africa and even institutionalized there are of no import to the law and the lawyers. On the contrary, most of the ills which beset out country, and hence our law, are ultimately retraceable to the political sphere, a fact which no observer of any part of the South African scene — and certainly no lawyer — can ignore if he wishes to have the faintest understanding of the realities around him. I shall, however, confine myself to a few aspects of justice which are of especial relevance to law and the administration of justice; aspects which touch upon the esential quality of justice in any

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accepted sense of the word. Moreover, the aspects which I have selected are aspects which can, I think, by and large be improved upon even within the existing political and social system as we have it today.

The legal profession cannot claim to be the oldest profession, although it may well be the second oldest. Nevertheless it may perhaps, with a bit of competition from the medical profession, claim to be the world's most honourable profession. This may sound like a bit of typical exaggeration in the best 'legal tradition', but in the ultimate analysis the legal profession in its various branches is essential in any civilised state to assure the attainment of peace and happiness and contentment, and, above all, of justice. Whatever differences of a political or ideological kind there may exist amongst lawyers, even in South Africa they are by and large fairly agreed on certain fundamental principles inasmuch as these relate to questions of justice. Indeed I am always struck by the profound degree of unanimity which prevails on essential issues of justice between lawyers from all the communities in South Africa, regardless of political affiliation.

Most of the topics I shall touch upon are topics on which, within certain limits, most leading lawyers in South Africa are in substantial agreement. The only group of lawyers who are often in disagreement are those who have 'fallen by the wayside' and joined the ranks of the predominantly farming community in Parliament!

I stress this agreement for two reasons. First, because I think that the views which I shall tentatively put forward are views which are realizable within the present system which permeates our national life. Secondly, because the lawyer is equipped, imperfectly no doubt but nonetheless better than any other person in society, to seek a workable and fair equilibrium in the dealings between man and man; in short, to seek justice. He has this responsibility not only because there is no-one else equally well equipped to assume it, but chiefly because the assumption of the responsibility of leadership in matters relating to justice is really and essentially what his job is all about in the same way as it is the job of the medical profession to keep society free from hazards to health.

Justice, it can be said, has got one similarity with the President Hotel: it is open to all those who can pay for it. Poverty, whether absolute or relative, has always been the one great inhibiting factor towards an equal and fair distribution of justice, all over the world and certainly also in South Africa. When bolstered still by ignorance or lowly station in life the hurdle of poverty will more often than not

be an insuperable obstacle to the attainment of justice. The problem is not of course that justice is consciously meted out *with* fear and favour, but simply that the poor and the ignorant by dint of their lack of resources cannot dispose of the same facilities as are available to the state and the rich. Among the many beautiful myths which adorn the South African socio-political landscape there is none as beautiful — but certainly also none as fatal to the cause of justice — as the myth that legal representation (quite apart from the quality of that representation) makes no difference to the outcome of a trial. Of course I am now really referring to criminal matters since the technicalities of the law have made it almost impossible even to start thinking of a civil suit of any importance without representation.

On uncountable occasions our Supreme Court has taken the fact of an accused's representation or otherwise into consideration when reviewing cases or hearing them on appeal. And yet, in the vast majority of all criminal cases heard in South Africa the accused is unrepresented. Of course most of these cases concern non-whites on technical offences. Nevertheless the majority of such cases result in prison sentences. Even as regards non-technical offences the large majority of non-whites who stand trial probably do so unrepresented. As if this were not bad enough, these same people stand trial in surroundings unfamiliar to them, engulfed in procedures they can never hope to understand and which are couched in what often amounts to a foreign language.

In the United States of America, as is well known, the right of an accused to legal representation has recently been inferred from the constitution. This has been done not on account of some tendency, often ascribed to Americans, of wanting to molly-coddle criminals, but simply because it has been realize that the fact that a man is represented or not, in the majority of instances, makes all the difference between the attainment of justice or otherwise.

Both in the United States and South Africa we have a so-called adversary system of procedure where the State on the one hand and the accused on the other fight it out on a so-called basis of equality with the judge as it were merely representing an independent adjudicator or umpire. Whatever may be the case in theory we know that in practice there is indeed no equaliy unless — and this is the basic point — unless the accused is able to dispose of representation of equal standing to that of the state. And even then the dice are still, perhaps in the ultimate analysis unavoidably so, heavily loaded against an accused due to the superior facilities available to the state for the preparation and conduct of its case.

Now this palpable truth, that a man's representation or otherwise

can often make all the difference in the attainment of justice, has taken an inordinately long time to dawn in South Africa. It has to be credited largely to certain sections of the legal profession that after an incubation of many years a legal aid act was enacted about two years ago and put into force last year. However, the vast majority of technical offences of non-Whites, which wreak so much havoc in our social fabric, are excluded from the purview of legal aid; so also are drug offences which, as we know, can now lead to minimum sentences of five years' imprisonment. When I recently made enquiries to the legal aid officer in one of South Africa's main urban centres I was dismayed to learn that in the majority of instances where legal aid was provided it was done for civil cases, namely to obtain divorce! I was likewise shocked to hear that the African population who, as we all know, are at the bottom rung of our economic scale, made the least use of legal aid.

The picture is a sombre one, and would be regarded as sombre in any country of the world. What makes it even more disturbing is the peculiar South African situation where crimes are defined with incredible latitude, and where, as Professor A. S. Mathews recently put it, a man can be put in jeopardy of his life and liberty under the definitions of certain crimes — in this case he was speaking of the Terrorism Act — by the authorities acting against anyone who is *persona non grata* with them. Whether a charge under these widely defined crimes or any other crime would ultimately stick, is not the point. In the meantime the accused must go to the expense of obtaining legal defence which in South Africa is one of the costliest pursuits possible with no chance of ever recouping a penny even should he be acquitted. This I may add is not the case in some countries, notably Germany, where the accused when acquitted is entitled to full reimbursement of his legal expenses.

What then is the answer to this problem? Many possibilities exist, but all of them will involve expense and adaptation. I have no doubt, however, that this is one of the greatest challenges with which our community, but especially the legal fraternity, is faced.

Without wanting to go into detailed suggestions, I think there is one possibility which will neither be overly costly nor unduly burdensome on the machinery of justice; it will involve the appointment of what has been called in certain American states a public defender whose duty it is to countervail, at public cost, the expertise and skill of each public prosecutor. In order to safeguard and indeed maximize the independence of these officers I would suggest that they be appointed by, and that they act under the supervision of, the Bar Councils and Law Societies. Of course, in most instances

the appearance of public defenders would have the effect of retarding procedure, especially in Bantu Commissioner's Courts where the average duration of a case is less than five minutes; but by bogging this procedure down the first step may well be taken to a complete re-evalutaion of the law which makes such a grotesque situation possible. If our legal fraternity could elaborate such a system and induce our society to accept it — as indeed I think they conceivably can — there will for the first time be an approximation of a real adversary system in South Africa and the cause of justice will be well served.

What I have said about poverty being an often insuperable hurdle in the attainment of justice in criminal matters applies of course also to civil matters. Indeed it is even more strikingly the case there than in the crminal law where at least some facilities are available for legal aid and where a man can also, within certain very narrow limits with considerable help from the Bench, conduct his own defence. The shortcomings of the present system are perhaps in a sense more important in criminal law since what is at stake is not just money but a man's liberty. However, the situation as regards the influence of poverty on a man's chances to secure justice in a civil matter is of course also of great importance in any society which aims at the achievement of justice for all regardless of station in life. It does not happen very often that the Minister of Justice and I see eye to eye on a matter, but he was recently reported to have asked rhetorically whether 'the situation has not developed that litigation in the Supreme Court is a luxury open to a privileged few such as big financial institutions or companies?' And he went on to ask — and I echo this question — 'What use are the finest legal principles if they cannot be invoked by the ordinary citizen in practice?'

The situation depicted by Mr Pelser has indeed already come about and it is the clarion duty of the legal profession to think very deeply and very soon about the problem. Even in cases where relatively well-to-do persons are involved, the situation has been reached that the possibility of a crippling order of costs will very often completely inhibit recourse to the courts. The solution to this problem is, I am afraid, not as simple as the one proposed by the Honourable Minister, namely to give regional magistrates' courts civil jurisdiction. With all due respect to the incumbents of those courts their experience is simply not such that they will assuredly be able to cope with the compications of many civil trials.

The solution, I think, must rather be sought along the lines of streamlining procedure which will obviate costly delays and by intro-

ducing the American system of contingent fees where a client is allowed by the legal profession to contract with a member of the profession on the basis that should the client be unsuccessful no fee will be charged. Of course, a fully-fledged legal aid system in civil matters will, sooner or later, have to be introduced, because the reputation that the machinery of justice is only available to the rich is one which we will do well to avoid for our legal system.

Another aspect of justice in South Africa which commends itself to the attention of the collective South African conscience, and to that of the legal profession in particular, is the situation as regards punishment. This is a huge field. Fact is that the science of penology, in the words of Mr. Justice Dendy-Young a few years ago (R v Dematerra, 1967 (4) SA 370) is practically unknown in South Africa. Allow me just to illuminate in the briefest of terms three or four points on penology which commend themselves to all who have an interest in South Africa's being deserving of the label enlightened.

In the first place, something about our prisons. All over the western world and to a limited extent also in South Africa prison services are under scrutiny in order to achieve a maximum amount of success in rehabilitation. There is certainty no reticence on the part of reformers and critics and even prison authorities to highlight inefficiencies or inadequacies. In South Africa, however, the situation looks very different. We have as regards our prisons a situation about which only a fool can comment; due to the penal provisions of the Prisons Act our prisons are indeed placed beyond the sphere of public enquiry or comment although we often hear from official quarters unctious remarks about their modernness. In no country this side of the Iron Curtain are prisons which are after all public institutions and paid for by the taxpayers, and fulfilling a role of civilisation, so insulated from criticism and comment as ours. We have many queer laws on our statute book but certainly none with so little social merit as opposed to social disadvantages. There seems to be no political advantage — or at least very little — to be derived from putting the prison services in cocoons and making comment about them hazardous. Surely the time has come for enligtened South Africans of all political persuasions to call for the repeal of this threat of sanctions which hangs over comments and enquiries into an essential public service, and which impedes necessary reforms.

Another aspect of penology which calls for comment in South Africa is the question of the death penalty. When will South Africans ever become outraged by the knowledge that they are the world's most inveterate legal killers, responsible as they are for over ninety

per cent of the executions in the western world? Furthermore, when will the situation ever be rectified which does not allow for an automatic right of appeal where the death penalty has been imposed? Recently the Bar Council, I believe, made recommendations in this ragard. While gratefully acknowledging this leadership of which there is such a crying need, I would nevertheless respectfully urge them not to abandon this demand of theirs. After all, if leave to appeal can be granted under certain circumstances for such things as bicycle theft and contempt of court, why should it not *always* be allowed where society arrogates unto itself the right to take the life of a fellow man? Thirdly, when if ever, in a society which for understandable reasons countenances the death penalty for murder, will there be a revolt against the situation that the death penalty is still regularly imposed with no ripple in the public conscience for the crime of rape?

While I am posing questions on matters of punishment, I may also pose one as regards another kind of punishment which still forms a hallowed part of our legal fabric long after it has been thrown overboard elsewhere as a crude reminder of the days when torture was part of the legal machinery. I am referring, of course, to corporal punishment which a few years ago was obligatory for a whole series of crimes. How long must this punishment still be tolerated in view of its inherent cruelty and degrading nature to both the victim and the punisher, and in view also of the incontrovertible evidence that it has a hardening effect on the criminal?

How long must all these practices continue before we as lawyers, and we as citizens, realize that we have turned our criminal law into one of the bluntest instruments of injustice?

From a host of possibilities in the field of penology I have chosen a few where it is possible to bring about changes that will not shake the foundations of our society; changes that will have the effect of bringing our legal system a wee bit nearer to the ideals of justice as understood in the greater part of the civilized world. These are matters which call for bold leadership. And once more I pose the question whether there is any group in our society better qualified than the practising legal profession to provide this leadership.

Finally, allow me as it were to make a complete lift-off from a sense of reality and to ascend to the field of pure phantasy; phantasy not in the context of the law of any other western country deserving of that name, but phantasy certainly in the context of this land. As we stretch our hands towards the twenty-first century, after a century in which (despite termendous set-backs) the common man

has at last come to expect his full right in just about every sphere, has not the time come for South Africans to theorize about ways which may be devised to ensure full civil rights for all, about ways in which our law can become a better and more effective servant of justice?

I have not so far burdened you with an attempt to do the impossible and to define justice, and I shall not do so now. Like love,which we can likewise not describe, we know when it is present — and, especially, when it is absent. It is significant, however, that in the world outside South Africa, whenever the talk is about justice, its content, and about ways in which it can be realized, or strengthened, thoughts inevitably turn to constitutional safeguards. It is true that in South Africa, where our experience with constitutional safeguards has been particularly unfortunate, the very idea of constitutional safeguards is highly discredited, and yet, all told, what other safeguards can be devised which will, if properly drafted and properly applied, ensure compliance with basic standards of justice?

A few years ago the mere expression of a thought of this nature would have been taken as a sure symptom of incurable political naïveté. I may be wrong, but I think the tide in South Africa has turned. When a respected Nationalist M.P. can plead for a closer '*association*' (whatever that may mean) of South Africa with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, there must certainly somewhere have been a faint change of heart. With more and more Bantustans developing towards some kind of autonomy or independence, the scope and indeed the need for a rethink on the question of constitutional safeguards for civil rights have become once more a matter deserving of serious attention.

The concept of constitutional safeguards for basic civil liberties is not a new one, and is one which has been accepted in theory, if not always in practice, by the vast majority of Western countries. It basically revolves around the acceptance of the idea that certain rights of the citizen are simply too important to leave to the mercurial mercy of politicians who happen to be in power, or to the even more mercurial will of bureaucrats. In other words certain limitations are put on the powers of all authorities, including the courts, to tamper with certain rights which are regarded as being of transcendental importance. In these developed societies it is not felt that these limitations act as obstacles to a full exercise of sovereignty, but that they underscore the importance a given society attaches to certain values as the practical signs of its liberty. The method employed to entrench these rights is invariably to give courts, either ordinary courts or special courts, the right to intervene when these rights are flouted by the legislature, the executive or even by the courts themselves.

Of the many characteristics which stud the evolution of legal science in this century and especially in the period subsequent to World War II, there is possibly one characteristic or one development which outshines all others. I call this development, for lack of a better name, the *humanization* of law. This is a development visible in all spheres of the law. In criminal law, for instance, it is to be seen in the abandonment of cruel punishments and acceptance of the sometimes unpalatable truth that rehabilitation serves the community better than obtaining gratification through punishment. Another example of this development in criminal law is the acceptance of subjective guilt as the basis of culpability. In constitutional law this trend of humanization of law is clearly visible in most countries by the enactment of effective safeguards for the civil liberties of individuals and by the outlawing of discriminatory practices based on race, religion or creed.

Even in international law, there has been a marked swing away from the traditional concept that individuals have no standing. In Western Europe, as you may well be aware, basic human rights have been enshrined in a convention of the Council of Europe which not only sets out certain ideals but which in fact creates machinery, including a tribunal, for the effective enforcement of these rights even at the instance of an individual against his own state. If one looks at the impressive list of protected rights it is clear that there is not a single one which is not infringed in South Africa in some statute or another. Indeed, some statutes of ours resemble near exhaustive catalogues of possible ways of infringing this convention! International law, traditionally, far removed from the pains and agonies of the individual, has indeed in this convention been brought down to a human level, where it comes to the assistance of the weak, the poor, the unpopular and the persecuted. Even in the development of international law outside Europe there has been a steady tendency to gear it to the protection of basic human rights, and despite its shortcomings and inconsistencies, the recent opinion of the International Court of Justice on South West Africa can only be understood against the background of this development from which we in South Africa have largely dissociated ourselves.

This process of the humanization of law, especially in the form of creating enforceable safeguards against the infringement of certain fundamental civil and other rights, is one which, although it has largely taken place beyond our borders, is not without profound significance to us. I have mentioned already what influence it has overtly or covertly had in the recent South West African decision, and there is no reason to expect that our troubles on that score are

over. But also on the national level there are in a shrinking world, and with more education becoming available and with expectation steadily rising, bound to be increased demands for a greater awareness in our public life of the dignity and the rights of each individual. The signs that this is indeed the case are there for all to see.

How the problem can be tackled of bringing South Africa gradually back to the fold of civilized nations as regards the protection of human rights is not one which I can answer here; suffice it to say that something can be done, albeit only gradually.To give but one example. There is nothing which prevents Chief Buthelezi's Zulustan enacting, even within the limited powers of its competence, certain constitutional safeguards for the protection of civil rights. There is also nothing to stop South Africa's social leaders calling repeatedly and insistently for limited palliatives, such as the right of every accused person to counsel or for the creation of certain safeguards — e.g. a judicial board of review against possible abuses of our draconian detention provision. (This presupposes, of course, that it will for the time being be useless to call for the abandonment of the provisions altogether!)

In short, as regards the creation of safeguards against the infringement of the basic rights of the individual we shall, for the time being, have to settle for modest improvements which may nevertheless in the long run bring some real advantages. Very little thought has in the last few years been expended on this topic, and with a host of laws on the statute book which fly in the face of most of the concepts of justice as understood elsewhere and as crystallized into various constitutions, this is hardly surprising. But all this, we know, may change. With flux and change in the air it may not perhaps be completely unrealistic to start thinking again along the lines of guaranteed civil rights.

In contradistinction to the other points I mentioned, the lead here must perhaps be taken in the first place by our universities — English and Afrikaans and Black. But once more the job of ultimately selling the idea to the populace will to a significant extent devolve upon the lawyer; not because he is endowed with superior wisdom and insight, but simply because, by and large, the fact of his leadership in matters such as these is accepted by all strata of our community.

The task of the law reformer in a country like South Africa is no easy one and the price for commitment to law reform may sometimes appear to be disproportinate to the results achieved. Yet, like Everest, the task is there and it has to be undertaken by some section of the community. As I have said, there is no section in our society better equipped to do so than the legal profession which, with all its short

comings, still remains the one group in our society which has made it its business, against tremendous odds, to blunt the edge of injustices. Whether they will assume this leadership will largely depend on the support of the community in which they operate. I can, however, think of no greater challenge to the servants of the law than to be come the servants of justice, not in the sense in which the word is often used in South Africa as a synonym merely for law, but in the sense in which it has become the greatest single attribute of the civilization to which, in our better moments, we like to think we belong. In the same way as some people ask us to put Christ back into Christmas, we lawyers, and we South Africans generally, must ask ourselves whether it has not become time also to put some justice back into our law.

University of Natal,
Durban.

CORRESPONDENCE

THE POETRY OF DYLAN THOMAS

The Editors,
Theoria.
Dear Sirs,

I am one of those readers that Mr Crewe refers to in his article ('The Poetry of Dylan Thomas', *Theoria* 38, May 1972) as having to overcome resistance to the poetry of Dylan Thomas. I am afraid that Mr Crewe's arguments and demonstrations have still not convinced me that Thomas's poetry ever really escapes the cosy and limited world that it creates. The poem *Fern Hill* does have a certain kind of appeal, but that appeal lies solely within the domain of an indulgent child-fantasy world rather self-consciously evoked by an adult whose emotions are rooted in the dangerous belief: 'Those were the best days of my life'. Mr Crewe's support for such sentiments is contained in the sentence . . . '[*Fern Hill*] conveys, in spite of "time", a magnificent sense of untrammelled life.' Instead of contrasting Thomas's poem with poems by Vaughan and Wordsworth, I think that Mr Crewe ought to have examined a poem by the man whose work stands as an essential corrective to Thomas's writings, D. H. Lawrence. The poem I have in mind is *Piano*, of which I quote the last stanza:

> So now it is in vain for the singer to burst into clamour
> With the great black piano appassionato. The glamour
> Of childish days is upon me, my manhood is cast
> Down in the flood of remembrance, I weep like a child for the past.[1]

Thomas's poem lacks the emotional tension and the subtle astringency of feeling that is contained in words like 'The glamour/Of childish days is upon me, . . .' Despite its fairly careful organization, *Fern Hill* ultimately turns in upon itself and the last lines are drowned by those qualities that Mr Crewe ascribes to the poem: 'It sparkles; it is moving; it is full of verbal inventiveness; it vividly evokes certain pictures and sensations of childhood, it is rhythmically seductive. . . .' The clause that I really dispute in this list of attributes is 'it is moving' because I do not respect the emotions that I experience on reading Thomas's poem as I do those feelings aroused when I read Lawrence's *Piano*. Instead of Thomas's view of childhood being 'seductive', the strong appeal of 'childish days' in *Piano* is evoked in such a way that I feel the sweep of nostalgia as it

comings, still remains the one group in our society which has made it its business, against tremendous odds, to blunt the edge of injustices. Whether they will assume this leadership will largely depend on the support of the community in which they operate. I can, however, think of no greater challenge to the servants of the law than to be come the servants of justice, not in the sense in which the word is often used in South Africa as a synonym merely for law, but in the sense in which it has become the greatest single attribute of the civilization to which, in our better moments, we like to think we belong. In the same way as some people ask us to put Christ back into Christmas, we lawyers, and we South Africans generally, must ask ourselves whether it has not become time also to put some justice back into our law.

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overwhelms the speaker while I feel the unwillingness to collapse into what is, for an adult, a helpless and impotent state. This tension arises from the delicately balanced emotional structure of the poem. The first two lines of the second verse of *Piano* are for me a comment upon the emotional surrender in Thomas's poem:

> In spite of myself, the insidious mastery of song
> Betrays me back, till the heart of me weeps to belong . . .

These distinctions between the two poems are neither merely a matter of arbitrary choice nor personal prejudice. When Mr Crewe describes the child in *Fern Hill* as being 'the centre of a harmonious universe that exists equally within and beyond his own mind, and the "within" and "beyond" are inseparable', he touches upon the strength of *Fern Hill* and the weakness of Thomas's account of life. That harmony, which is valid for only *certain* states of childhood and adulthood (see the description of an almost paradisal state and the unsatisfying native of that state in the opening pages of Lawrence's *The Rainbow*, for example) is never really challenged in Thomas's poetry. Intellectual gestures are made, as in the last line of *A refusal to Mourn the Death by Fire, of a child in London*, which do not generate the complexity of experience or feeling that a poem like Lawrence's *Pianio* does. Such complexity indicates the awareness in the writer of the contrary states of being which give to life its real vitality when, as Lawrence states it generally, 'a man [lives] under the radiance of his own negation.'[2]

My repeated references to D. H. Lawrence are deliberate, as other areas of Mr Crewe's article bring Lawrence's work to mind, rather than Dylan Thomas's. For example, in a passage quoted from J. Hillis Miller's book *Poets of Reality* by Mr Crewe, the following sentence occurs:

> What exists for Thomas as soon as anything exists at all is a single, continuous realm which is at once consciousness, body, cosmos and the words which express all three at once.

I suspect that all that Mr Miller is saying here is that Thomas's poetry has highly-concentrated layers of meaning, but it is of course Lawrence who has deliberately explored the complex and serious relationships between the inter-linked areas of life that Mr Miller names. Later in the article an extract from Nietzsche quoted by Mr Crewe prompts me to suggest that it is, again, Lawrence who has been pre-eminently the explorer of man's non-cognitive modes

of experience. March's encounter with the fox, in *The Fox* and the chapters 'Anna Victrix' and 'The Rainbow' in *The Rainbow*[3] will have to suffice here as examples of Lawrence's concern to 'disintegrate our commonsense, perhaps rationalistic way of seeing things, and draw us into a new realm of vision and inner experience' as Mr Crewe says Dylan Thomas does in his poetry. No close reader of Lawrence's creative and discursive writing is likely to dispute Lawrence's interest in the deep, non-rational areas of human experience and their relationship to the 'living cosmos'. My contention is that whereas Lawrence is usually very successful in his serious aims, Thomas is not concerned with more than superficially disrupting ordinary habits of mind while cultivating indulgent emotional responses.

Two other major points in Mr Crewe's article disturb me. The first is that Dylan Thomas is approvingly called 'a minor prophet of our culture, and one of the first to hit the modern freedom-trail'. This assertion is supported by an earlier paragraph on page 66 of the article (beginning 'In a manner of speaking a great artist . . .') where Thomas is praised for his radical social views. The manner in which these qualities of Thomas are described suggests an impulse on the part of Mr Crewe to show how 'relevant' to contemporary fashions the poetry of Thomas is. I would prefer a more soundly-based discussion of this aspect of Thomas's work as the present mode is not convincing.

What seems to me to be an even more serious misjudgement is the linking of that splendid quotation from Nietzsche with the poetry of Dylan Thomas. I feel at present that to call Nietzsche's evocation of the Dionysiac celebration the 'clinching summmary' of what is to be found in Dylan Thomas's poetry absurd. In making this sort of conjunction Mr Crewe seems to be trying to convince his audience by the same means that Robert Graves accuses Thomas of using (quoted by Mr Crewe): 'He seems to have decided that there was no need to aim at all as long as the explosion sounded loud enough'.

Yours faithfully,

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NOTES

[1] *Complete Poems* ed. de Pinto and Roberts, London, 1964, p. 148.
[2] *Selected Essays*, Penguin, 1960, p. 160.
[3] Alan Friedman discusses Lawrence's expression of unconscious states in *The Turn of the Novel* (New York, 1966).