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WE WISH to reassure our readers that *Theoria* remains what it has always claimed to be: a journal of studies in the Arts, the Humanities and the Social Sciences. If literary contributors dominate our forum it is because they have won their places, not because we have imposed restricted rights of admission to the rostrum.

It may be that amongst the Philosophers, the Historians, the Political Scientists, the Theologians, the Architects, the Economists, the Sociologists and the Anthropologists none exists with thoughts suitable for those gathered in the market-place! But we prefer not to believe this, and we take the opportunity of assuring the silent-ones that an interested audience awaits them if they will enter our discussions again.

THE EDITORS.

# THEMES OF MANHOOD IN FIVE SHAKESPEARE TRAGEDIES

## Some Notes on *Othello, King Lear, Macbeth, Antony and Cleopatra* and *Coriolanus*

*by* C. O. GARDNER

## I

I am concerned in this essay with manhood as opposed to womanhood—with those characteristics that, in the West at any rate, have usually been associated with masculinity. In each of the tragedies that I am going to consider, various manly qualities are brought vividly to life and are thrown up against, and defined in relation to, various qualities of womanhood. And in each play, as I shall try to show, a specifically manly action or reaction lies at or near the centre of the tragic events.

Othello, Lear, Macbeth, Antony and Coriolanus are all heroic figures: not only are they, in their different ways, powerful and noble, but their capacity for living is stupendous. Some people would insist that it is the heroic intensity of these protagonists that makes them tragic, that they are so because of their very difference from ordinary humanity. This is, I think, a part of the truth; but of course all heroes, whether in life or in literature, are also mere men: even at its most idealistic, the concept of the hero and of the heroic is fairly firmly rooted—most would surely agree—in the reality which we know, in the biological and cultural facts that we are all involved in or with. Indeed a tendency to be 'heroic' is one of the most important and admirable of the traits that we are accustomed, and I think rightly, to associate with manhood.

Brutus and Hamlet are in many ways heroic too, of course. I have not included them in my study, however, because both of them seem to me to be passionately concerned, ultimately, with problems of morality, of general human concern, rather than with vehement assertions of their own identity. It is significant, for example, that in Antony's final tribute to Brutus—

He only, in a general honest thought
And common good to all, made one of them.
His life was gentle, and the elements
So mix'd in him, that Nature might stand up
And say to all the world, 'This was a man!'—

we are perhaps more aware of Brutus's *humanity* than of his more specific masculinity—impressively manly though he of course is. In some respects the three greatest comedies are perhaps somewhat closer to my field of interest than *Julius Caesar* and *Hamlet:* in for instance Beatrice's 'O that I were a man for his sake, or that I had any friend would be a man for my sake!' we have the germ of a theme that in another mood Shakespeare will see as pervaded with tragic possibilities.

In the essay which follows I am not putting forward a 'new interpretation' of the five tragedies. I aim simply at sketching an aspect of these plays that has perhaps not in every respect been sufficiently stressed, a particular—and limited—way of looking at them which is in no way intended to supersede or contradict the innumerable valid insights of previous critics. (At every point, however, needless to say, my remarks will show that I am more in sympathy with some critical interpretations than with others.) The word 'notes' has been included in the title partly because I am traversing an area that is too vast to be dealt with in detail in the space of an essay, partly because so many travellers have passed this way already that I want, even at the risk of dislocations, to omit some of those things that have been noted too often before.

## II

The terrible reversal that takes place in Othello's love for Desdemona is effected by the quintessential evil of Iago. Othello does not himself become evil, nor is he even seriously tainted by evil—for we can hardly apply that word to vulnerable innocence and ignorance, and to an emotional and intellectual turmoil.

Othello is *affected* by evil, as Hamlet is. Whereas Hamlet's discovery of the corruptness of the human hearts about him throws him into a moral and philosophical anguish, a despair which for some time partly dries up the well-springs of action—

O, that this too too solid flesh would melt,
Thaw and resolve itself into a dew;
Or that the Everlasting had not fix'd
His canon 'gainst self-slaughter! O God! O God!
How weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable
Seem to me all the uses of this world . . .;

Othello's belief that Desdemona has been unfaithful to him produces another sort of despair, a desperate intensity that issues in an act of violence:

. . . But there, where I have garner'd up my heart,
Where either I must live or bear no life,
The fountain from the which my current runs
Or else dries up—to be discarded thence!
Or keep it as a cistern for foul toads
To knot and gender in! Turn thy complexion there,
Patience, thou young and rose-lipp'd cherubin,
I here look grim as hell!

*Othello* is a peculiarly frightening play, precisely because it does so richly inspire awed terror as well as deep pity. The Moor who falls before our eyes is a very particular character who has been subjected to a very special set of circumstances; yet the dramatist has succeeded perfectly in making us sense that perhaps any man who loves a woman is potentially vulnerable in the way that Othello is. And Othello's vulnerability consists not only in his deceivableness but also, and more important, in his possessing a passion which by its very nature can become dangerous. *Othello* seems to me essentially a tragedy of masculine love.

The superb love-poetry that Shakespeare puts into Othello's mouth is worthy of close consideration: what distinguishes it from the sort of effusion that had been laughed at by Hotspur, by Benedick, by Viola, and from the feverishness of Troilus, is the mature and self-confident manly power that is blended with the imaginative sweetness:

It gives me wonder great as my content
To see you here before me. O my soul's joy!
If after every tempest come such calms,
May the winds blow till they have waken'd death!
And let the labouring bark climb hills of seas

Olympus-high, and duck again as low
As hell's from heaven! If it were now to die,
'Twere now to be most happy, for I fear
My soul hath her content so absolute
That not another comfort like to this
Succeeds in unknown fate.

In Othello there is a dynamic and wholly admirable harmony of male tenderness and male strength (it is of course for his manly exploits, so sensitively related, that Desdemona has first begun to love him). And the slight shudder of apprehension that is given expression in this speech suggests that combined with his sensitiveness there is also an imaginative courage, a willingness to look into the unknown. What is accomplished in Othello by Iago's evil, which is symbolic, partly, of the cruelty that Fortune is capable of, is the disjunction of sweetness and force; this is what Coleridge calls 'the civil war . . . wrought . . . in his heart':

*Othello:* Ay, let her rot, and perish, and be damned to-night; for she shall not live. No, my heart is turned to stone: I strike it, and it hurts my hand. O! the world hath not a sweeter creature; she might lie by an emperor's side and command him tasks.
*Iago:* Nay, that's not your way.
*Othello:* Hang her! I do but say what she is. So delicate with her needle! An admirable musician! O, she will sing the savageness out of a bear. Of so high and plenteous wit and invention!
*Iago:* She's the worse for all this.
*Othello:* O! a thousand, a thousand times. And then, of so gentle a condition!
*Iago:* Ay, too gentle.
*Othello:* Nay, that's certain—but yet the pity of it, Iago! O Iago, the pity of it, Iago!

Othello does not, strictly speaking, 'become violent': the violence that is let loose in him so tragically flows from the very energy that has been generated by love, by the interplay of passionate and devoted attraction and an expanding delighted self-awareness; and even at those moments when Othello hates Desdemona his hatred is fed by the now untender forcefulness of his love.

Man's love is in many respects assertive, it tends somewhat towards violence; woman's love is on the whole receptive, and tends—up to a point—towards the acceptance of a certain violence.

> *Emilia:* I would you had never seen him.
> *Desdemona:* So would not I; my love doth so approve him,
> That even his stubbornness, his checks and frowns—
> Prithee unpin me—have grace and favour in them.

In her beautiful womanly dedication, Desdemona feels that Othello loves her even in his anger; and in a sense she is right.

But of course Othello is not merely an *homme sensuel* who has expressed his sensual vivacity in memorable words and who later becomes, at moments, horrifying in his ferocity. He is noble. He is a brave warrior, and he fetches his 'life and being from men of royal siege'. These characteristics, in one of their aspects, both extend and at the same time symbolize his valid masculine mastery. He is also a good man, and a just judge—or at least a sincere military judge who always tries to come swiftly and surely at the truth. And even when his ability to reason and to evaluate has been disabled by the wild grief of his love-jealousy, Othello earnestly though impotently attempts to be just. This is felt especially at the beginning of Act V scene ii, where he has managed to establish what looks like a replica of his original mental and emotional equilibrium:

> It is the cause, it is the cause, my soul;
> Let me not name it to you, you chaste stars!
> It is the cause. Yet I'll not shed her blood,
> Nor scar that whiter skin of hers than snow,
> And smooth as monumental alabaster.
> Yet she must die, else she'll betray more men.
> Put out the light, and then put out the light:
> If I quench thee, thou flaming minister,
> I can again thy former light restore,
> Should I repent me; but once put out thy light,
> Thou cunning'st pattern of excelling nature,
> I know not where is that Promethean heat
> That can thy light relume. When I have pluck'd the rose,
> I cannot give it vital growth again,
> It needs must wither. I'll smell it on the tree.
> O balmy breath, that dost almost persuade

> Justice to break her sword! One more, one more.
> Be thus when thou art dead, and I will kill thee,
> And love thee after. One more, and this the last:
> So sweet was ne'er so fatal. I must weep,
> But they are cruel tears; this sorrow's heavenly,
> It strikes where it doth love.

We know, and we can tell from this speech, that Othello's determination to perform the deed that he believes to be necessary arises from the hidden depths of his being. But what he apprehends and suffers at this moment is a conflict between his love and his sense of justice: *that,* together with the ground swell of his profound inner distress, is what the poetry of this speech enacts. Moreover, paradoxical as it may seem, it is even in a sense to the credit of Othello's honourable sense of justice that he decides as he does. In the broken rhythms of the second half of his speech we can feel the nobility, the moral heroism, with which he endures his pain. Yet how can this be? For of course the act that he is going to perform is not only fearful but doubly unjust: however acceptable and impressive his rôle as commander may be in other situations, he has no right at all to take his wife's life into his own hands; and moreover she is supremely guiltless . . .

Othello's jealousy, in my view, is not simply what we call 'sexual jealousy': it has about it something of the 'jealousy' of the God of the Old Testament. His reaction to what he believes to be Desdemona's infidelity is by no means a merely emotional and amoral one. The passage that I quoted earlier—

> But there, where I have garner'd up my heart,
> Where either I must live or bear no life,
> The fountain from the which my current runs
> Or else dries up—to be discarded thence!—

suggests that the mysterious depths from which his desperate intention springs are also the home of his most inward sense of values—his very proper and true sense of his own and of his wife's selfhood and dignity and of their mutual vow.

> Turn thy complexion there,
> Patience, thou young and rose-lipp'd cherubin,
> I here look grim as hell!

Othello's manly feeling of authority and responsibility is aroused, not merely a sexual fury. And indeed the depths that this passage takes us down to are the very source from which any person's 'sense of justice', if that sense has rootedness and human wealth, must emerge.

It seems to me that there is great value in the view (held only of course by those who believe love-fidelity to be a matter of importance) that unfaithfulness deserves strong condemnation; and it is this way of seeing and judging that Othello, who is a man of passionate absolutes, carries to its logical—or rather to its emotional-logical conclusion.

I suggest, then, that the forces which urge Othello to kill Desdemona are in themselves not only 'natural', but good: they have contributed richly to the sheer grandeur that we saw in him at the beginning of the play. From the first he was commanding, admirably so—

> Keep up your bright swords, for the dew will rust them;

and it is the same personality that says,

> Yet she must die, else she'll betray more men.

What has happened is that in his soul's turmoil, his perplexity, Othello has lost the ability to distinguish and to weigh two tragically irreconcilable necessities; but yet again, his very turmoil stems from the fullness of his love.

Those legal systems which recognize that *crime passionel* is almost different *in kind* from most other categories of murder are profoundly right: the jealous anger that leads to the act may grow partly from the humanity and the nobility—and, if it be a man, from the otherwise rightful self-assertiveness—of the perpetrator. Yet again, of course, killing is a dreadful, an unspeakably wrong form of punishment, especially if the victim is a paragon of sweet wifely love and vivacious generosity.

Othello's final account of himself as 'one that lov'd not wisely but too well' is very just: the paradox is a summary of the play's tension and agony. Perhaps there is justice, too, in what (in a very different context) is said by Cressida:

> to be wise, and love,
> Exceeds man's might; that dwells with gods above.

## III

One of the difficulties of this study—a difficulty that is particularly acute in the case of *King Lear*—is that it is often impossible to make a firm differentiation between 'man' as distinct from woman, and 'man' as distinct from animal, or from the gods. It is, needless to say, no coincidence that the one word covers both meanings: 'man', even in the most restricted, masculine sense, is never less than a half of 'mankind' and is frequently seen as representative of the whole; the two meanings very often overlap. Yet of course the distinction does exist, and is important; and I believe there is a value in considering the part it plays in these five tragedies.

King Lear has always been felt, for all his particularity, to be an archetype of *humanity*. But he is also, more narrowly, an incredibly masculine figure: in our imagination he bulks as large, and seems as tough, as stubborn, as full of sap, as an ancient oak-tree. And in the course of his tragic suffering and moral evolution, and of the lives of the people who surround him (in this play, in contrast to *Othello,* a profoundly and specifically *moral* awareness, on our part and on the part of some of the characters, accompanies the action at every point), a serious examination of some aspects of manliness is woven into the rich texture of the play's meaning.

In Act I scene i, King Lear is regal and magnificent; we are impressed and awed by his power, his accomplished masterfulness. But his authority lacks the purity that we found in the Othello of Act I: Lear is old, he has been king for a long time, and he has succumbed, at least partly, to the two vices (ultimately they are one) that may beset those who are in the habit of wielding authority—vanity, and stubborn angry pride. The speech that, in spite of the ironic undertone in the first line, had begun so splendidly—

> Meantime we shall express our darker purpose.
> Give me the map there. Know that we have divided
> In three our kingdom, and 'tis our fast intent . . .—

takes a surprising but all-too-human turn when Lear says:

> Tell me, my daughters—
> Since now we will divest us both of rule,
> Interest of territory, cares of state—
> Which of you shall we say doth love us most?

His self-esteem has betrayed him into an absurdity: it is foolish and degrading to demand statements of love, especially in public. When Cordelia, sensitive and morally perceptive, cannot and will not play the game of flattery, Lear's egotism bursts forth. We can sympathize with him a little: he genuinely feels that she is defying and humiliating him, breaking up his plans and dislodging the structure of his affections. But he is judging superficially, and we know that it is a brute determination not to be crossed, an ugly willingness to throw all human virtues to the winds, which leads to his rejection of the good Cordelia and the noble, reasonable Kent.

Within such fellow-feeling as we have for Lear, we can discern the existence of a problem, a problem that is in some ways peculiarly masculine: how can one maintain true authority, rightful power, and yet be properly humble and responsive before the people, the human values, that one confronts? . . . The remainder of the play enacts some answers to this question. In the chastened Lear, in Kent, in Edgar, we discover a fuller and more generous, a less strained and selfishly assertive manhood; and we recognize that neither dignity nor inner power is in any sense destroyed—indeed rather the contrary—by service, compassion, a moral vision. The scene in which Kent fierily denounces Oswald and then boldly defies Cornwall and Regan—

> Sir, 'tis my occupation to be plain:
> I have seen better faces in my time
> Than stands on any shoulder that I see
> Before me at this instant—

and the moment when Edgar nobly challenges Edmund—

> I protest,
> Maugre thy strength, youth, place and eminence,
> Despite thy victor sword and fire-new fortune,
> Thy valour and thy heart, thou art a traitor,
> False to thy gods, thy brother, and thy father—

provide an important counterpoise to the bitter fury of the unregenerate Lear, to the inhuman hardness of Cornwall, and to the boastful animal masculinity of Edmund.

Let us consider Lear's progress. It is not by chance that the children in whose presence his passions work themselves out in the first scene are women. His male complexity is felt all the

more sharply for being set against those two opposite sorts of womanhood. Lear's narrow pride is like an incrustation, or indeed an 'embossed carbuncle', upon his truest personality (for almost from the first we feel him to be essentially inclined towards good rather than evil): he is unable to perceive Cordelia's simpleness and honesty, and embraces the duplicity of the flashy Goneril and Regan. Their lack of inward life seems to answer his obtuse lack of self-knowledge; in their emotional superficiality, their female viciousness, they are somewhat like prostitutes—as a number of the pregnant hints thrown out by the two moral philosophers, the Fool and Poor Tom, may suggest:

> . . . *proud in heart and mind; that curled my hair, wore* gloves in my cap, served the lust of my mistress's heart . . .

And, true to their own meretriciousness, Goneril and Regan proceed to destroy that very manhood that they have flattered. 'Life and death!' Lear cries,

> I am asham'd
> That thou hast power to shake my manhood thus,
> That these hot tears, which break from me perforce,
> Should make thee worth them.

He is by now the object of our pity and sympathy; he has already become 'a man more sinn'd against than sinning'. Yet out of his tragic desolation an inner enlargement gradually develops. His false, encrusted arrogance begins to be stripped away; he discovers the real nature of Goneril and Regan, and begins to value Cordelia.

The speech that he utters just before walking out into the approaching storm is extremely important, giving as it does so fine an account of the struggle that is raging within him:

> But for true need—
> You heavens, give me that patience, patience I need!
> You see me here, you gods, a poor old man,
> As full of grief as age; wretched in both.
> If it be you that stir these daughters' hearts
> Against their father, fool me not so much
> To bear it tamely; touch me with noble anger,
> And let not women's weapons, water-drops,
> *Stain my man's* cheeks! No, *you unnatural hags,*

> I will have such revenges on you both
> That all the world shall—I will do such things—
> What they are, yet I know not—but they shall be
> The terrors of the earth. You think I'll weep;
> No, I'll not weep:
> I have full cause of weeping, but this heart
> Shall break into a hundred thousand flaws
> Or ere I'll weep. O fool! I shall go mad.

In the first scene of the play we saw that Lear was both powerful and impotent: nothing could stand in the way of his commands, and yet he was unable to control the inward truth of Cordelia and of Kent. Now his plight is reversed: the rightness of his perception and the energy of his utterances are very impressive, but his ability to enforce his will has been removed. We are struck by the grandeur of his manhood and fatherhood and of his determination not to collapse into a weak distress; we feel vividly the shamefulness of the attack launched by his unwomanly daughters. At the same time, however, we recognize that the vain arrogance he has shown in the past has helped to produce the situation he is in, and that even now the remnant of this arrogance is nourishing desires which are pathetic but impossible:

> I will have such revenges on you both
> That all the world shall—I will do such things—
> What they are, yet I know not—but they shall be
> The terrors of the earth.

It is the violence, the absoluteness of the contrast between his new impotence and his past omnipotence (or apparent omnipotence) that is sending him mad. A wiser and a milder monarch would have suffered less agony. And yet, of course, there is no question of making a simple judgment of him: our sense of Lear's stature comes partly from our associating this anger with the anger that he displayed in Act I scene i; so much fierceness was, and is, an unequivocal indication of his male force, his impassioned selfhood—his flawed, but huge, vitality and seriousness. At the same time his excess has made him tragic, deeply 'human' (for all the awesomeness), greatly lovable.

Lear's wild outbursts in Act III make us aware of the terror not only of the storms of external circumstance but of the storms that may explode within a man. But in the end we find

that even the most violent attacks that his daughters have made upon him are turned into moral value by his willing acceptance of the 'nothing' to which he has been reduced, and by the compassionate vision of human suffering which accompanies this acceptance:

> . . . thou art the thing itself; unaccommodated man is no
> more but such a poor, bare, forked animal as thou art.
> Off, off, you lendings! . . .

The gesture evoked by these last words is one of overwhelming love; but it is also an act of madness. As his self-will collapses, his sanity dissolves too. And at this strange moment of truth the hero seems almost to pass beyond his masculinity—or at least beyond those features of it that have been most salient—into a simple fullness of humanity.

Ultimately, however, Lear's enlargement of soul proves to be an enlargement—but also a re-forming, a re-creation—of his manhood. He achieves, half-crazed as he still is, a new stability and nobility as he recognizes Cordelia (and his act of physical recognition symbolizes his new spiritual clear-sightedness):

> Do not laugh at me;
> For, *as I am a man,* I think this lady
> To be my child Cordelia.

But perhaps Lear's manliness is at its richest at one of his last moments, as he once again, and more sadly than ever, faces the harshness of Fate. He is old, and enfeebled, and his mind is wandering; and yet his speech exhibits a magnificent conjunction and harmony of anger, courage, determination, tender love of woman, honesty, humility:

> A plague upon you, murderers, traitors all!
> I might have sav'd her; now she's gone for ever!
> Cordelia, Cordelia! stay a little. Ha!
> What is 't thou sayest? Her voice was ever soft,
> Gentle and low, an excellent thing in woman.
> I kill'd the slave that was a-hanging thee.
> *Officer:* 'Tis true, my lords, he did.
> *Lear:* Did I not, fellow?
> I have seen the day, with my good biting falchion
> I would have made them skip. I am old now,

And these same crosses spoil me. Who are you?
Mine eyes are not o' the best: I'll tell you straight . . .

Throughout the play there are suggestions that a narrowly-conceived manhood becomes associated with evil, *is* evil. One remembers, for example, Edmund's grim exhortation to the officer whom he has ordered to kill Lear and Cordelia:

if thou dost
As this instructs thee, thou dost make thy way
To noble fortunes; know thou this, that men
Are as the time is; to be tender-minded
Does not become a sword. Thy great employment
Will not bear question . . .

One remembers, too, the officer's even more grim reply:

I cannot draw a cart nor eat dried oats;
If it be man's work I will do it.

So much for manhood! 'Noble fortunes' and the sword are its concerns; questions of good and evil are not relevant. Balanced against this officer is Cornwall's servant, who bravely challenges his cruel (though of course eminently 'manly') master—and is killed for his pains, run through from behind by Regan who, though she has no beard, has an unnaturally large share of peculiarly female 'manliness'.

For Goneril, manhood is a simple matter of amoral political and sexual potency.

O, the difference of man and man!
To thee a woman's services are due:
My fool usurps my bed,

she says to Edmund. And when her husband, now fully alert to the implications of his wife's actions, fiercely rebukes her for her treatment of her father, she replies:

Milk-liver'd man!
That bear'st a cheek for blows, a head for wrongs;
Who hast not in thy brows an eye discerning
Thine honour from thy suffering; that not know'st
Fools do those villains pity who are punish'd

> Ere they have done their mischief. Where's thy drum?
> France spreads his banners in our noiseless land,
> With plumed helm thy state begins to threat,
> Whilst thou, a moral fool, sits still and cries
> 'Alack, why does he so?'

Unsqueamish tough-mindedness is what she looks for in a man; thought is mere feebleness, morality is mere stupidity. Albany is angered:

> . . . Were 't my fitness
> To let these hands obey my blood,
> They are apt enough to dislocate and tear
> Thy flesh and bones. Howe'er thou art a fiend,
> A woman's shape doth shield thee.

And Goneril:

> Marry, your manhood—mew!

Even his decent forbearance towards her is included within the sweep of her contempt.

All this, like everything else in the play, is partly an echo of and a comment on the battle that fights itself out within Lear. At the same time, however, Goneril's jibes give us something of a foretaste of Lady Macbeth.

IV

The fact that different connotations can be attached to the word 'man' plays an important part in *Macbeth*, and many critics have commented on it. The protagonist allows his view of manhood to become equivocal, and there is thus a certain terrible justice in the paltering of the weird sisters—

> I pull in resolution and begin
> To doubt the equivocation of the fiend
> That lies like truth.

What has not usually been recognized, however, is the degree to which, at the crucial moment, Macbeth is genuinely and even understandably confused.

Macbeth is presented to us both as the heroic possessor of virile courage and as a person who, for all his sound intuition

and moral sensitivity, is in danger of succumbing to the ambition which often accompanies high-spiritedness. Othello had talked of 'the big wars that make ambition virtue; Macbeth knows very well that *his* ambition is not virtue; but we cannot but feel that his desire, his openness to temptation, grows out of or is akin to the very adventurous boldness that is his best quality.

Almost immediately we see his moral awareness and his passionate ruthless ambition struggling against one another.

> My thought, whose murder yet is but fantastical,
> Shakes so my single state of man that function
> Is smother'd in surmise, and nothing is
> But what is not.

His manhood in the broadest sense—his humanity, his integrity —is shaken, pulled apart by the conflict (the choppy rhythm of the verse enacts the process vividly). But there is perhaps a suggestion, too, that his manliness, seen more specifically, begins to lose its singleness: in the past he has known what it is to be a full and successful man—powerful, courageous, noble, loyal; but now he finds that there are two different men within him. Before, his actions had been straightforward and his moral vision clear; now a dark cloud of desperate speculation envelops him. He has of course entered more fully the world of the witches (who are themselves partly manifestations of the area of darkness within him)—the world of ambiguity and moral anarchy, of

> Fair is foul and foul is fair.

It is because Macbeth is partly bewildered that we are never able to feel him to be a mere villain.

For all the fear and horror that his moral nature suffers, his ambitious will hardens; but his words express most startlingly the painful disharmony within him:

> Stars, hide your fires!
> Let not light see my black and deep desires;
> The eye wink at the hand; yet let that be
> Which the eye fears, when it is done, to see.

Lady Macbeth knows well the division in her husband's heart. Determined not to be divided herself, she prepares to urge him on:

Yet do I fear thy nature:
It is too full o' the milk of human kindness
To catch the nearest way; thou wouldst be great,
Art not without ambition, but without
The illness should attend it; what thou wouldst highly,
That thou wouldst holily; wouldst not play false,
And yet wouldst wrongly win . . .

The view of manhood that she holds, or purposefully adopts, is like Goneril's, simple and amoral. Her phrase 'the milk of human kindness' implies that Macbeth's kindness—indeed his very naturalness—seems to her an effeminate aberration. His moral delicacy, his lack of the necessary 'illness,' his imaginative fear of committing evil, are the merest cowardice. The 'highness' of his spirit is diminished by its holiness.

Hie thee hither,
That I may pour my spirits in thine ear,
And chastise with the valour of my tongue . . .

she admires her own ideal of manhood so much that she is prepared to act like a man herself—at least until her husband has discovered his true responsibilities and powers.

The news that Duncan is coming makes this desire in her more explicit:

Come, you spirits
That tend on mortal thoughts; unsex me here,
And fill me from the crown to the toe top-full
Of direst cruelty . . .

We notice the ugliness not only of the transformation that she wishes for but also, again, of the qualities that she appears to regard as manly. She gives herself over to the luxury of quintessential energy, energy divorced from all natural and human restraints.

When the important last scene of Act I begins, we see Macbeth meditating quietly upon the deed that he has allowed to loom up ahead of him. In the stillness, his imagination works, and wise thoughts crystallize; hot ambitious desires recede. His deepest self recognizes the potency both of his fear and of his conscience. But Lady Macbeth comes in, finds her plan threatened, and throws out a jibe that—for all her unsexing—is profoundly and frighteningly feminine:

Was the hope drunk
Wherein you dress'd yourself? Hath it slept since,
And wakes it now, to look so green and pale
At what it did so freely? From this time
Such I account thy love. Art thou afeard
To be the same in thine own act and valour
As thou art in desire? Wouldst thou have that
Which thou esteem'st the ornament of life,
And live a coward in thine own esteem,
Letting 'I dare not' wait upon 'I would',
Like the poor cat i' the adage?

Macbeth's previous desire and determination were what he 'did so freely', and his present thought and doubt are 'green and pale'. We are reminded of Goneril's comparison of Edmund and Albany. Lady Macbeth throws down a woman's challenge:

From this time
Such I account thy love.

As a woman — as his wife — she finds him lacking in male capacity. Such a suggestion is apt to be terrible to any man, probing painfully as it does at a part of his very being; it is of course especially so for Macbeth, whose self-esteem and ambition have been fed by his own and by society's acknowledgment of his power and courage.

Lady Macbeth's taunt is not merely an emotional shock tactic: her view has a compelling force, even perhaps a certain sort of value. Though we know her to be vicious, the words that she utters are challenging, even to the reader, in a way that Goneril's never were. For indeed a passionately determined man *is* in many ways more impressive, more noble-looking, than a man who is inwardly troubled; and undoubtedly a certain self-possessed *impressiveness* is not only admirable in itself but is a not inconsiderable aspect of what a loving woman may submit to. 'Manhood', then, is a difficult and ambiguous fact and concept; the moral requirements and the physical and emotional requirements of the fullest masculinity do not fit together in any simple or obvious way. The tension between what 'feels good' to *one* self (and may 'look good' too) and what the *other* self intimately *knows* to be good is not easily resolved, especially when a man is confused—perplexed by the intensity

of his own inner conflict, and further flurried and stung by his wife's vigorous participation in that conflict. This exchange between Macbeth and his wife is at the core of the tragedy.

> Art thou afeard
> To be the same in thine own act and valour
> As thou art in desire?

Her vision is strong in its simplicity: second thoughts, indeed any moral complexity at all, are indications of timidity and impotence. By a sad irony, her contemptuous image of 'the poor cat i' the adage' makes the stirrings of humanity in Macbeth seem like a lapse into paltry animality.

Macbeth replies, takes up the suggestion of animality, and produces a formulation that is surprisingly lucid and true:

> Prithee, peace.
> I dare do all that may become a man;
> Who dares do more is none.

In a few words the problem is solved! Manhood is not a gross and brutish extreme; it observes subtle proprieties, is temperate and tempered. But the brevity of the speech suggests that it is desperate — that Macbeth's moral intelligence, thoroughly besieged, has by a supreme effort produced an answer that the rest of him cannot sustain. His emotions, the energy called into play by his wife, are not flowing behind his words; no vigorous rhetoric springs up to press the point home. And immediately his forlorn truth is drowned by a flood of his wife's passion:

> What *beast* was 't then
> That made you break this enterprise to me?

A question worth the asking: for a moment she might almost seem to have betrayed herself into his own true assessment of the situation. But of course the direction of her meaning is quite different; her tone is mocking, and she sweeps into further assertions and arguments:

> When you durst do it then you were a man;
> And, to be more than what you were, you would
> Be so much more the man.

She blurs his point; her coarse desire cannot (and her steely mind will not) recognize subtleties. Instead of seizing the opportunity, she says, he is allowing it to 'unmake' him. She, a mere woman (and she briefly reassumes feminine softness in order to shame him), would never so break her oath:

> I have given suck, and know
> How tender 'tis to love the babe that milks me:
> I would, while it was smiling in my face,
> Have pluck'd my nipple from his boneless gums,
> And dash'd the brains out, had I so sworn as you
> Have done to this.

The dynamic power of her utterance is irresistible.

Macbeth's faltering reply—'If we should fail —' — shows that his inner opposition has surrendered. The tragic error, the *hamartia,* has been made, in circumstances which richly account for the sympathy we feel for him. He has changed the ground of his argument: having abandoned conscience, he is left merely with his fear—which is helpless before his wife's final and conclusive onslaught:

> We fail!
> But screw your courage to the sticking-place,
> And we'll not fail.

Suddenly her tone is fiercely maternal: it is bitterly ironical that, at the very moment when Macbeth is proving his manhood, he should be made to look a little like a scolded child. She explains the plan of action; and Macbeth bursts out, half-admiringly, half-grimly:

> Bring forth men-children only;
> For thy undaunted mettle should compose
> Nothing but males.

His darker self prevails; he slips easily into Lady Macbeth's view of manhood as 'undaunted mettle'. His moral awareness does not evaporate, as his next speech forcefully shows; but from this point onwards his heart is fixed—or rather, trapped.

The theme of manhood recurs throughout the play. In Act II Lady Macbeth maintains her standpoint—

Why, worthy thane,
You do unbend your noble strength to think
So brainsickly of things—

her contention that adult strength is immune against all moral and religious considerations:

Infirm of purpose!
Give me the daggers. The sleeping and the dead
Are but as pictures; 'tis the eye of childhood
That fears a painted devil.

Such pronouncements form a sinister background to Macduff's assertion of naturalness and decent normality:

O gentle lady!
'Tis not for you to hear what I can speak;
The repetition in a woman's ear
Would murder as it fell—

though in the end it turns out that Macduff has hit on a part of the truth, for naturalness and normality do later cry out within her.

Macbeth devotes himself with bitter relish to his new way of life and to the notion of manhood that he has plumped for:

Do you find
Your patience so predominant in your nature
That you can let this go? Are you so gospell'd
To pray for this good man and for his issue,
Whose heavy hand hath bow'd you to the grave
And beggar'd yours for ever?
*First Murderer:* We are men, my liege.
*Macbeth:* Ay, in the catalogue ye go for men;
As hounds and greyhounds, mongrels, spaniels, curs,
Shoughs, water-rugs, and demi-wolves, are clept
All by the name of dogs: the valu'd file
Distinguishes the swift, the slow, the subtle,
The housekeeper, the hunter, every one
According to the gift which bounteous nature
Hath in him clos'd; whereby he does receive
Particular addition, from the bill
That writes them all alike: and so of men.

> Now, if you have a station in the file,
> Not i' the worst rank of manhood, say it;
> And I will put that business in your bosoms,
> Whose execution takes your enemy off . . .

We notice the nasty cynicism of the tone, the scornful emphasis that falls upon such words as 'patience' and 'gospell'd'. And the elaborate comparison between men and dogs has for the reader or audience a significance that Macbeth does not intend. We know that the accusations against Banquo are false, and the replies that the two murderers give make it clear that they are desperadoes: Macbeth's variations on the theme of manly toughness are utterly unscrupulous. The scene forms an important contrast, therefore, to a later one, in which there is again talk of revenge and manhood:

> *Malcolm:* Be comforted:
> Let's make us medicine of our great revenge,
> To cure this deadly grief.
> *Macduff:* He has no children. All my pretty ones?
> Did you say all? O hell-kite! All?
> What, all my pretty chickens and their dam
> At one fell swoop?
> *Malcolm:* Dispute it like a man.
> *Macduff:* I shall do so;
> But I must also feel it like a man:
> I cannot but remember such things were,
> That were most precious to me. Did Heaven look on,
> And would not take their part? Sinful Macduff!
> They were all struck for thee. Naught that I am,
> Not for their own demerits, but for mine,
> Fell slaughter on their souls. Heaven rest them now!
> *Malcolm:* Be this the whetstone of your sword: let grief
> Convert to anger; blunt not the heart, enrage it.
> *Macduff:* O, I could play the woman with mine eyes,
> And braggart with my tongue! But, gentle Heavens,
> Cut short all intermission; front to front,
> Bring thou this fiend of Scotland and myself;
> Within my sword's length set him; if he 'scape,
> Heaven forgive him too!
> *Malcolm:* This tune goes manly . . .

Macduff's manliness is many-sided and rich. His grief is movingly

sincere, and his anger, when it comes, is just, noble, almost humble. The revenge that he vows, so far from being callous or malicious, is an assertion of the human values that it eventually serves to re-establish. In Macduff moral feeling and determined valour are able to coexist; he holds in harmony the forces that have fought within Macbeth. But our awareness of this leads to a deeper sense of tragedy—for Macbeth is potentially finer, and indeed in his profoundly-apprehended agony actually is in a sense greater, than Macduff.

By the banquet scene, Lady Macbeth has begun to feel weary; but when her husband sees the ghost of Banquo, her rebukes hammer at the old point. She has tried to create in Macbeth the sort of man that her greed desires, and she is angered and disturbed at her failure:

> *Lady Macbeth:* Are you a man?
> *Macbeth:* Ay, and a bold one, that dare look on that
> Which might appal the devil.
> *Lady Macbeth:* O proper stuff!
> This is the very painting of your fear;
> This is the air-drawn dagger which, you said,
> Led you to Duncan . . .
> . . . What! quite unmann'd in folly?

His disturbance echoes and reinforces her own; all her energy is concentrated in an effort to annihilate his persistent conscience . . . In the quietness of the last three speeches that she makes in this scene—the last words she speaks before her sleep-walking —we are aware of the depth and the pathos of her distress.

Macbeth, too, struggles to be the kind of man that he has decided to be. He is bewildered at being confronted by a challenge which exists beyond the reach of physical prowess:

> What man dare, I dare.
> Approach thou like the rugged Russian bear,
> The arm'd rhinoceros, or the Hyrcan tiger;
> Take any shape but that, and my firm nerves
> Shall never tremble: or, be alive again,
> And dare me to the desert with thy sword;
> If trembling I inhabit then, protest me
> The baby of a girl. Hence, horrible shadow!
> Unreal mockery, hence!
> Why so; being gone,
> I am a man again.

In the evil impulse of his tragic decision, in his frenzy of guilty excitement, he has lost the perspicacity that he had in Act I. He suffers sensitively but ignorantly the counter-attacks made within him by his moral nature.

He drifts further and further from true humanity, from rounded manhood. The weird sisters confirm him in his evil by telling him to be bloody, bold and resolute. He is by now a perfect contrast to the English king, whose sanctity cures evil diseases.

As his doom approaches, we see in him a terrible mixture of desperate masculine assertion

> (Then fly, false thanes,
> And mingle with the English epicures:
> The mind I sway by and the heart I bear
> Shall never sag with doubt nor shake with fear);

nervous anger; and, later, a despairing sense—produced partly by his attempt to see and to live his manhood in merely physical terms—that all human beings are empty shells, puppets, boastful actors who lack the meaning that they pretend to have:

> Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player
> That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,
> And then is heard no more; it is a tale
> Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
> Signifying nothing.

Macbeth's 'noble strength' of manhood has come to be seen as a mere strutting and fretting; his fine animal sound and fury is worth nothing. The daring affirmation of himself that his wife spurred him on to has ended in a total negation.

At the very end, however, by an unexpected twist, Macbeth's sheer manly courage does redeem him somewhat (not that we have lacked pity for him): in the last extremity mere stubborn energy *is* something of a value. Yet this is of course a slight virtue for such a gifted hero to have to fall back upon, and this fact Shakespeare seems to stress in the closing account of the Young Siward:

> *Ross:* Your son, my lord, has paid a soldier's debt:
> He only liv'd but till he was a man;
> The which no sooner had his prowess confirmed
> In the unshrinking station where he fought,

But like a man he died.
*Siward:* Then he is dead?
*Ross:* Ay, and brought off the field. Your cause of sorrow
Must not be measur'd by his worth, for then
It hath no end.
*Siward:* Had he his hurts before?
*Ross:* Ay, on the front.
*Siward:* Why then, God's soldier be he!
Had I as many sons as I have hairs,
I would not wish them to a fairer death . . .

*(To be continued)*

# A BOOKISH NATAL SHERIFF

*by* R. N. CURREY

Thomas Phipson, who was Sheriff of Natal in the early years of British settlement, was far more likely to be found looking up from the newly-cut pages of a book than from the barrel of a gun.

His letters to the newspapers* are on such varied subjects as law, politics (including political economy and native policy), philosophy, Biblical criticism (almost a 'popular' subject in the era of the Colenso controversy) and astronomy. My object in this article is to build up from his letters some picture of the primarily bookish interests of this particular colonist, and to show how some of the most unlikely of them were turned to practical use.

When he passed through Cape Town in April 1849, cocking an eye at the clear skyline—and commenting on the effect there of the 'railway panic' in England, he was thirty-three years old, married, with three small children; with the experience of several jobs behind him, and, presumably, with his main reading habits formed. Thanks to one of his obituarists and to references in his published letters and elsewhere, it is possible to form some idea of the education and experience from which his remarkable array of interests grew.

To state that he was born in London, had his early education there (which apparently included some Latin and French) and was then apprenticed to an uncle in Birmingham, is to give an inadequate impression. The Phipsons of Birmingham were self-confident Dissenting manufacturers of the kind that contributed so much to the cultural history of the United States, especially that of nineteenth-century Boston. They were strong Unitarians and Congregationalists, shut out from many sides of public life by their religious beliefs, but influential in a town so late at getting its charter as Birmingham was. Although shut out from Oxford and Cambridge, they prided themselves on keeping up educational standards. Some of them went to Continental universities. The philosopher Joseph Priestley was closely associated with them.

Thomas Phipson was from his earliest childhood surrounded by books, and the household of Joseph Phipson, button-maker

**Letters and Other Writings of a Natal Sheriff—Thomas Phipson 1815-67,* ed. by R. N. Currey (O.U.P.), has recently been published.

and gilder—almost certainly the uncle to whom he was apprenticed—was crammed to an almost frightening extent with religious and cultural influences. It is interesting that Thomas, although he did not complete his apprenticeship as a gilder, very soon wrote a mammoth article on gilding for the *Penny Encyclopaedia*, an article of interest today for the details it gives not only of the processes but also of the lives, wages, superstitions and occupational diseases of the 'operatives'. His first earnings, it is said, were for a poem translated from the French when he was fifteen, and in his early twenties he published a translation of Alphonse de Lamartine's *Voyage en Orient*. This was a popular subject at the time—mysterious East and Holy Land in one—and there were other translations. Phipson's well-illustrated three-volume version reached at least three impressions.

He would have said at this time that his interests were in language and Biblical criticism: he taught himself Hebrew and Greek to further his Bible studies, and German so as to enable him, presumably, to study the German philosophers. A very short period at a theological seminary may have been what gave him his start with astronomy. These subjects would seem to provide an unlikely foundation for a colonial career; yet it was his academic interests—and his applications of them—that chiefly marked him out during his years in Natal.

Meanwhile, like many others who emigrated, he refused to believe that it took a lifetime to learn any particular job; a year or two usually seemed enough. A period in a publishing house taught him printing-office routine. A spell in a large law-office taught him enough law to enable him to hold his own with most of the lawyers in Natal. A corresponding clerkship in the London Missionary Society, where he dealt with missionaries from India, China and Russia, and made the personal acquaintance of Livingstone and Moffatt, widened his horizons to include two oddly assorted items of knowledge: Hinduism and knowledge of the Voortrekkers, now approaching Natal. (It was this, he said, that first turned his attention to Natal.) A period as headmaster and proprietor of a school in Essex—brought to a stop by the 'railway panic' already referred to—may have led him, among other things, to revise his Latin; and it was, in fact, his knowledge of this 'dead' language that coloured his career as Sheriff and, to some extent, his whole career in Natal.

Soon after arriving in Natal he became friendly with H. C. Cloete, the Recorder. These were the days before Natal boasted a Chief Justice. Cloete, who had received his legal training in

Holland as well as in England, interested Phipson in the Roman-Dutch law on which the law of Natal, taken over from that of the Cape, was based. Early on Phipson was struck by its simplicity and by such advantages (for a small and scattered population) as the smaller jury.

He lists the Roman-Dutch authorities in two of his letters, at the same time pouring scorn on a judge from England who made a virtue of his ignorance of them. They were Voet's *Pandects*, Van der Keessel's *Theses*, Van Leeuwen's *Censura Forensis*, all these in Latin, as well as works in Dutch by Bynershoek, Merula, Groenweg and Van der Linden. How fully he studied these we do not know, but an obituarist says that he often helped lawyers by translating passages for them. In one of his letters he gives an account of a long partnership trial in the course of which he was called upon to translate a crucial passage from Voet, which could have drastically shortened the trial but for the stupidity of some of those concerned. We know also that he used Van der Linden in a case in which he was conducting his own defence, and did so successfully.

Phipson claimed to hate law and lawyers, but his letters show so much interest in legal points that the statement must be taken with a pinch of salt. Any fine point of argument, legal or otherwise, fascinated him. At one time he produced an obscure point of law to save the life of an African woman who had committed her crime under intolerable pressure. At another we find him defining the precise circumstances in which the knobkerrie can be considered a 'lethal weapon'. Many of his stories of that primitive period turn on the absurd working out of points of law. He was author of several memorials to the Secretary of State for Colonies: one of these referred to the illegal levy of native troops; another to the degree of freedom of discussion in the press due to civil servants.

While he was Sheriff he began the series of *Reports of Cases of the Supreme Court of Natal* which was taken up again after his death and still continues. It was the criticisms of one of the judges that led to the 'Natalian Trimurti' controversy, in which he compared the Natal judges to the Hindu Trinity of Brahma, Siva and Vishnu, and showed himself the most skilful controversialist of his time.

This was the age of the classical reference and the Latin tag, and like other controversialists he used both in order to meet and beat his opponents. He accused an editor of the *Natal Mercury* of trying to be the Jupiter Tonans of the Colony instead of its

Mercury merely. When somebody described Colenso as 'the Socrates of Natal', he said that Socrates refused to believe in Divinity until it was revealed, but Colenso refused *after* it was revealed.

He gave lessons in Latin to his own children, and invited neighbours to send their children if they were interested to do so. Kenneth Hathorn, the first puisne judge to come from Natal, learned his first Latin in this way. Barbara Buchanan, who also attended some of these lessons, said that Phipson's idea of teaching was to give his pupils passages of the *Eton Grammar* to learn by heart—a sink-or-swim method which soon disposed of those without natural aptitude.

His knowledge of Greek and Hebrew, and of Biblical criticism and early church history, would seem to have no part at all to play in a new community like that of Natal; but these were the subjects that brought him into prominence in the Colenso controversy, which, starting in Maritzburg with the Bishop's attempts to answer the questions of his 'intelligent Zulu' printer, eventually shook the entire Church of England, in England as well as the Cape. Darwin's *Origin of Species* attacked the Church from without; Colenso, questioning long-held traditions, appeared to do so from within. While the 'Metropolitan' Bishop of Cape Town 'deposed' Colenso as Bishop of Natal and set up a rival Bishop of Maritzburg, and the Privy Council upheld Colenso's appeal against the Archbishop of Canterbury, a controversy that covered Church establishment and such profound questions of Biblical criticism as whether hares chew the cud (and, if not, why the Almighty, who inspired the writing of the Scriptures, did not seem to realize it) occupied what seems to us fantastic space in the Natal newspapers.

Colenso was clearly straining towards a more rational explanation of the Scriptures, but without having done as much homework on existing Biblical criticism as some of his contemporaries, both inside the Church of England and outside it. Phipson was one of these. His interest, as we have seen, was of long standing; and soon after coming to Natal, he was reading Eusebius's *Ecclesiastical History*, brought for him from England by Ferreira, chief trader in the capital at the time. In the Colenso controversy, and in an earlier one with a correspondent calling himself Segovie, he referred freely to such early writers as Porphyrius, Ordericus, Vitalis and Irenaeus as well as the contemporary Bishop Lightfoot. He was also, as a Dissenter, strongly opposed to the system of church establishment being exported to Natal, especially as it

gave support to a Bishop who seemed to many—Anglicans and Dissenters alike—to be a 'Deist' rather than a Christian. Phipson was, later, to become personally friendly with Colenso over his championship of the Hlubi chieftain Langalibalele.

Phipson's classical references range over Livy, Caesar, Suetonius, Virgil and Cicero; and his best-informed contemporaries gave him credit for a sound classical knowledge. The range of his English quotations is wide, and his references are often particular and suggest further knowledge. He quotes most often from Dr. Johnson, Addison, Cowper, Crabbe and Sir Walter Scott in the period immediately before his own; and the surviving fragments of his own verse are in the 'classical' style. In his one reference to Byron he gives him a passage from Coleridge. The impression is of a reader of prose rather than verse, and, as might be expected, masters of rhetoric specially pleased him. In the course of a long answer to a correspondent who had denied the historical basis of Christianity, he quoted Dr. Johnson, who said: 'Sir, if I take a slice out of a leg of mutton and find it putrid, I do not need to eat up the whole joint before I may proclaim the fact to the other guests.' Then he (Phipson) added: 'I have now made five cuts into this lump of corruption, and find it unsound and rotten to its very centre and core.'

Other literary references include Don Quixote (the actions of the Natal Government gave him parallels here), Falstaff (he compared Colenso's supporters to Falstaff's rag-tag-and-bob-tail troops), Sir Pertinax MacSycophant (from Macklin's *Way of the World*—a comparison here with a certain Presbyterian minister who gave him years of trouble); as well as Chaucer, Defoe and Benjamin Franklin (on whose letters he modelled some of his own). Among contemporaries he referred to Dickens, Mayhew and Thomas Chalmers (the anti-establishmentarian), as well as to Livingstone and Moffatt. Works of reference include Knight's *Political Dictionary,* Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations,* Vince's *Astronomy,* Andrew Smith's *Zoology of South Africa* and Kitto's *Cyclopaedia of Biblical Literature.*

One of his letters is, in fact, a review of Herbert Spencer's *The Study of Sociology,* another of the writings of Joao Dos Santos, the Portuguese Dominican monk who visited the neighbourhood of Delagoa Bay in the seventeenth century. His comments on Tom Paine's *Age of Reason* helped to precipitate the quarrel with Colenso. His historical references are wide, too, but he was specially interested in the period of the Civil War, which enabled him to compare his enemies with the Stuarts, and make approving references to Cromwell. As a member of a family largely excluded

from public life since the Restoration it is not surprising that his sympathies were Roundhead. One of his friends, W. C. Holden, was the first historian of Natal, and another, H. C. Cloete, the Recorder, was a historian of the Great Trek. Phipson, himself, it seems, at one time considered writing a history of Natal: his 1876 letters about earlier days suggest that it would have been a revealing document. One of the first street-plans of Maritzburg was on sale at his house, and he played some part, as draughtsman in the Surveyor-General's office, in preparing the first good map of Natal. In early days he lectured a good deal, at the Natal Society and elsewhere; his subjects include the British Colonies of America, lightning, Christianity and astronomy. For many years he contributed astronomical and tide tables to the *Natal Almanac*.

How many books did he accumulate at his house at New England, five miles outside Maritzburg? Family tradition speaks of a library with books going up to the ceiling, that his daughter Rachel, who acted as his secretary when she was growing up, brought down for him on a ladder. Tradition adds that his neighbour Colenso, across the stream at Bishopstowe, often borrowed books from him; but this must have been in early days or after their reconciliation in 1874.

The Editor of the *Natal Witness* stated once that Phipson had a knowledge of the following languages: Dutch, German, French, Latin, Greek, Hebrew and Chaldean. There seems little doubt that he had a thorough knowledge of French, Latin and Greek, and enough Hebrew to be able to cross swords with Colenso when reference to derivations was needed. It is harder to know about his German and Dutch. He started learning German before he left England, and soon after arriving in Natal helped Eugene Boniface sell his series of lessons entitled *Dutch Made Easy for an Englishman*. The newspaper he helped to run for a short time was in Dutch as well as English, and within weeks of arriving in the Colony he was attending Dutch Reformed Church services and getting some idea of the sermons. Occasionally, in his letters, he quotes a sentence or so of Dutch, but when he sent a letter to a Free State newspaper he asked for it to be translated at his expense into Dutch. Presumably he understood Dutch but was not fully confident of expressing himself well in it.

Phipson was, after his first years, self-taught, and we are conditioned nowadays to be suspicious of all who have not passed formally through school and university. It is, however, clear that he was a man of unusual powers of memory and intelligence (two faculties not always found together) and that he very soon learned and systematized anything that caught his interest. Professor

Hattersley says he was a well-informed man who helped make his fellow-colonists politically aware. This is true, but he also helped to make them aware of some items from his wide range of non-political interests. Just one of these was astronomy. Here he is writing, with characteristic enthusiasm, of the 1870 eclipse of the moon:

> At the darkest period, however (O h. 36 m. a.m.), there was still visible the disk of the satellite, wearing a dull, lurid smoky hue, like the streets of London under a November fog, or a Natal *veldt* beneath an extensive grass fire: the reader can take his choice of the similes. This was doubtless occasioned by the sun's light refracted through the earth's atmosphere; by means of which the Lunarians (if such there be) would behold our globe as a dark spot surrounded by a circle of dull hazy reddish-brown light, transmitted through our encompassing robe of air, and giving themselves illumination enough (if they have good eyes) to see surrounding objects during the (to them) total eclipse of the sun.

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# *LE GRAND MEAULNES* AS A ROMANTIC NOVEL

by Y. LAINEY

The question of the literary value of Alain-Fournier's *Grand Meaulnes* has been debated since its publication in 1913, and critics are still divided on the subject.

Such men as Fernand Desonay, André Billy and R. M. Albérès have praised the novel warmly. Others, for instance, Marcel Arland and, more recently, Léon Cellier, have criticized the book severely.

In 1940-1941, F. Desonay wrote a well-informed, perceptive and laudatory study[1] on *Le Grand Meaulnes,* which was republished unaltered in 1963 on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the work. At the end of this study, speaking about Augustine Meaulnes, the main character in the novel, Desonay states:

> It is not true that Augustine, a country lad, is only another pupil in a Berrichonne school . . . We thirst for myths and Augustine Meaulnes never ceases quenching that thirst.

In his *History of Literary Life*[2], A. Billy writes:

> The whole of a generation, yearning for evasion and fond of fantastic sentimentality, knew itself in this nostalgic narrative, which we can no longer read again without seeing Alain-Fournier's chaste and rather grave smile delineated between the lines.

In his *History of the Modern Novel*[3], R. M. Albérès, after deploring the younger generation's slight disdain, adds:

> It has all the magic of a discreet mystic romance.

On the other hand, as early as 1938, in a biting article published in the N.R.F., Marcel Arland stated that the lasting literary value of *Le Grand Meaulnes* rested on its realistic picture of country life and, especially, on the picture of a village school drawn true to life.

But, perhaps, nothing more aggressive was ever written on this debatable question than the short study by Léon Cellier, pub-

lished in 1963 under the heading: *Le Grand Meaulnes* or A Failed Initiation.[4] In his foreword, the critic shows himself to be appreciative of the romanticism of the XIXth century, but speaks scornfully of 'the Epigoni of Romanticism' between the two World Wars.

The assumption that the novel should be analysed as if it were an 'initiatory romance', reminding us of such works as *Perceval,* seems questionable. Nevertheless, because it springs from the deep conviction that the novel is not really romantic, Léon Cellier's downright condemnation is a challenge to all those who are fond of the book and interested in its future.

Nothing is more subjective than the assessment of a romantic work and I have no intention of trying to demonstrate the literary value of *Le Grand Meaulnes.* However, I feel that the novel's romanticism can still appeal to us, provided our approach be unprejudiced.

Before being related to any species of romanticism *Le Grand Meaulnes* must be studied both in its relationship to Alain-Fournier and in itself. I shall confine myself to dealing briefly with these two points.

Alain-Fournier[5] was born in 1886. His parents were school teachers. For years, both Mr and Mrs Fournier taught in small places, sometimes very small. When Alain was twelve years old, he was sent to Paris. Because he was a gifted boy, his parents had decided on making him leave primary education for secondary education. At the time, the Fourniers were teaching at Epineuil-le-Fleuriel, a tiny village in the central part of France, not very far from Bourges.

Though Alain-Fournier did not live in Paris continuously during the rest of his short life he, henceforth, lived in a Parisian atmosphere. As a student he prepared for Normale Supérieure during several years, but finally failed the oral part of this difficult competitive examination. Nevertheless, he soon became a man of letters and when he died, killed in action at the beginning of the First World War, he was already a well known writer. *Le Grand Meaulnes,* his last and by far his best work, found staunch supporters among the members of the Académie Goncourt. Eventually, it was not awarded the prize, but, as A. Billy put it, 'nevertheless it achieved a successful career after the First World War'.

The book had been expected for some years by Alain-Fournier's friends, among whom was Jacques Rivière, who had married Isabelle Fournier, sister to Alain. As a matter of fact, Alain-Fournier had been thinking of writing a major novel at least

since 1905, when he wrote that his 'great projects' were those of a novelist. Among the various statements made by the writer during the genesis of his work, let us note that in 1906 he anticipated 'perhaps a perpetual, nearly imperceptible, swing between dream and reality' and that in 1908 and again in 1912 he spoke of a character who would be 'a believer . . . for whom everything would be possible'.

In 1905 Alain-Fournier met Mademoiselle de Q. whom he fell in love with at first sight, and never forgot. It is difficult to imagine a more romantic idyll than the story of Alain-Fournier's love for Mademoiselle de Q. When he met her in Paris, by chance, she was kind, interested but discouraging. He lost sight of her and then learnt that she had married. Yet she remained the object of his faithful love. She alone, perhaps, could make him hope that pure love was possible on earth. Alain-Fournier was not a Galahad—he had several attachments—but he longed for ideal purity in love. On the occasion of the marriage of his sister Isabel to his friend Jacques Rivière, he wrote:

> So a young man and a girl shall never love each other without that? It would have been so beautiful if you both had lived and loved each other in absolute purity.

Such expectation could only be frustrated. In addition to that, Alain-Fournier, who remembered with delight the lovely days spent in the country at his parents' or at his Uncle Florent's, persistently tried to recapture the magic of his boyhood. Though he was a healthy and energetic young man—having joined the colours as a conscript he was sub-lieutenant before the end of his spell of service—he was a man looking for something he could not find on earth.

In this yearning for something else, which sprang from his inmost heart, there was a blend of humility and pride. In a letter to his mother he confessed that he felt within himself 'too much pride and dissatisfaction'. Later he said, 'it is perhaps that I am not high enough to want God'. He had believed in God in his youth, for he was a pious Catholic child, but having lost his faith, Christianity was no more to him than a temptation, hard to resist at times, but to which he would never yield, in spite of his friend Péguy's example.

A man haunted by his happy boyhood, a man in quest of purity and love, and yet a man who wanted to believe in the world, such seemed to be Alain-Fournier, when he was writing *Le Grand Meaulnes*.

The story of the novel may be summed up easily enough. It is told by a narrator, François Seurel, and starts when Augustine Meaulnes, 'Great Meaulnes', has already disappeared and will certainly never be seen again.

François was the only son of parents who were school teachers at Sainte-Agathe, a small village in the centre of France, about ten miles from Vierzon. François's parents were peaceful people, devoted to their duties. Their son was a shy boy of fifteen, who had not yet completely recovered from a crippling disease of the hip at the time of his meeting with Meaulnes; the latter was a tall country lad about the same age as François; he joined the family as a lodger in order to attend Mr Seurel's classes. Meaulnes was a strange, silent boy, both kind and selfish, both rude and considerate. The other pupils at the school were surprised and impressed by the newcomer, and he soon became the leader of their games. The most impressed of all was François Seurel, who became his faithful companion, forgetting everything about his poor health. Then Meaulnes disappeared for three days. To avoid antagonizing him Mr Seurel did not ask any questions when he came back. Everybody thought he had simply been playing truant, except François, who knew better, even before Meaulnes had told him anything about his wonderful experiences.

According to Meaulnes, his adventure took place near Sainte-Agathe, and yet was fantastic and fascinating. The determined country lad had borrowed a horse and cart to drive to Vierzon in order to bring back François's grandparents to Sainte-Agathe. They were to be the guests of Mr and Mrs Seurel. He lost his way, and on the day after his departure reached a 'mysterious estate', where he attended a strange party and met an exceptionally beautiful girl, Yvonne de Galais. The party was organized on the occasion of the betrothal of Frantz de Galais, Yvonne's brother, who wanted his life to resemble a fairy-tale. To Meaulnes the party was really a fairy-tale, despite its tragic ending.

When Augustine Meaulnes had joined the party, Frantz was away and everybody was looking forward to his return with Valentine, his betrothed. But Frantz came back home alone. He explained that his fiancée refused to accompany him, 'because of her scruples, because she was frightened, because of a lack of faith'. Then, on the very night of this confession, Frantz tried to shoot himself in a wood. Driving away from the mysterious estate in the darkness, Meaulnes saw Ganache, a bohemian who had played the part of a pierrot during the strange party, walking back with Frantz's body in his arms. However, when Meaulnes was back at Sainte-Agathe, his main preoccupation was to return

to the mysterious estate. Unfortunately he could not trace his way back to the enchanting but unknown mansion.

Later Meaulnes's narrative to his friend François proved to have been true. The 'mysterious estate' was identified. It was the estate of Sablonnières, which belonged to a retired commander of the French Navy, the father of Frantz and Yvonne. Frantz's parents, who spoilt their unbalanced son, had actually organized an unusual party on the occasion of his ill-considered engage- to a poor weaver's daughter. The girl had deserted her fiancé before the wedding for reasons difficult to understand. Frantz had disappeared; his mother had died and his father had sold the land. Sablonnières was no longer an estate.

Eventually, though he could not recapture the magic of the past, Meaulnes married Yvonne de Galais. But Frantz was not dead and was very unhappy. On the night of the wedding he reminded Meaulnes of a promise he had made to help him, come what might. Keeping his word, on the day following the wedding, Meaulnes left his wife and came back months later with both Frantz and Valentine. In his absence François Seurel proved to be a chaste and devoted friend to Yvonne. Unfortunately, the latter died shortly after giving birth to a girl. Despite his deep sorrow Meaulnes did not stay where Yvonne had lived and died. Once more he disappeared, no doubt in quest of new adventures, taking his little daughter along with him.

When the story is over, François Seurel's parents are still alive, François himself has become a teacher like his father, and ordinary life has resumed its course, but for François it will never be as if he had not met Meaulnes, the overbearing but fascinating companion of his adolescence.

Though it is sketchy, this brief summary enables us to draw important inferences concerning the meaning of the novel and the way it is related to Alain-Fournier's life, thought and feelings. Meaulnes found happiness, lost it and could not recapture it. At first he identified happiness with a beloved woman, but eventually found out that he was wrong. However he will always remain an adventurer in quest of something more than ordinary life. He is the incarnation of Alain-Fournier's dissatisfaction and correlative restlessness. Yvonne de Galais is of course Mademoiselle de Q., Mr and Mrs Seurel are Mr and Mrs Fournier. Moreover, it can easily be shown that Epineuil-le-Fleuriel has supplied many details incorporated in the description of Sainte-Agathe, especially as regards the school.

Though interesting in itself, a more complete investigation into

the realistic elements in the novel would only lead us to a foregone conclusion. Obviously the novelist wanted Meaulnes and his adventures to be as credible as possible.

Thus Alain-Fournier deliberately fitted his fantastic and sentimental story into a realistic pattern. As a result, his characters live in a deceiving world, which seems to provide them with the wonderful opportunities of a fairyland, but which, in fact, offers to their expectations the resistance of the actual world. By studying the reactions, the mutual relations and the destinies of the characters we can form an opinion about the nature and quality of Alain-Fournier's romanticism in *Le Grand Meaulnes*.

The characters of Yvonne de Galais, François Seurel and Augustine Meaulnes are closely related to each other and are, to a certain extent, antithetic to those of Frantz, Ganache and Valentine. In addition to that, Meaulnes on one side and Frantz on the other are the leaders of the games.

Yvonne is physically and morally an ideal woman, but her fate is that of a human being. Her beauty strikes both Meaulnes and François; 'you are beautiful' says Meaulnes with simplicity when he meets her at the 'strange party'. And François, when he meets her under far more prosaic circumstances at Vieux-Nançay at his Uncle's store, declares that she is 'the most beautiful girl who, perhaps, ever lived in the world'. But neither Meaulnes nor François attempts to describe her beauty with precision. We know such details as the purity of the look in her eyes, the thinness of her waist, we even know that 'summer had placed tiny red spots' on her face, but we cannot really imagine what she looked like. This vagueness, deliberate on the part of the writer, makes us susceptible to every hint of exceptional feminine grace and charm which may be given to us.

Morally we can easily judge Yvonne de Galais according to her behaviour, which is exceedingly consistent. She is quite unaffected and never selfish or resentful. To the end, she remains fond of her brother. Her attitude to Meaulnes represents an ideal perfection. If she accepts his departure on the day after their wedding, it is only because she believes that it is better for him to go. When her husband has left her, she realizes that her marriage may prove to be a failure, but she puts the blame upon herself. One day, François Seurel speaking about Meaulnes says:

> So much folly in so noble a head.

She interrupts him and replies softly:

> Don't speak like that . . . we alone are—I am—to blame. Think of what we did . . . We said to him: here is happiness, here is what you have been looking for during all your youth, here is the girl who was at the end of all your dreams!

And when François exclaims:

> But Yvonne you knew you were that girl.

she heaves a sigh and says:

> How could I ever have this vain thought. It is that thought which caused everything to go wrong.

On the other hand, there is something vulnerable in Yvonne, and something courageous but sad in her resignation, that constantly remind us of her belonging to a world where neither beauty nor kindness may prevail over misery and destruction. Her premature death, briefly but realistically depicted, is significant.

Near Meaulnes's wife, to comfort her when she is alone, the novelist has placed François Seurel, the narrator of the story, a devoted and chaste friend. He belongs to the same idealized world of moral perfection as Yvonne de Galais. Both of them always act with the best and most honourable intentions. Life may disappoint them and even cause them to feel guilty; it may not defile them. In his relationship to Yvonne, François seems to be the incarnation of Alain-Fournier's dream of absolute purity in love. At the same time François is a reasonable young man whose lucidity is not impaired by his great admiration for Meaulnes. He understands his friend, is grateful for what he has revealed to him, but realizes that Augustine is not an ordinary man.

Whatever may be exceptional in Yvonne and François there is always an air of reality about them. When we dream of them it is with the secret hope of meeting them some day. From this point of view, Meaulnes is very different from them. His is a dual character, both real and unreal.

Augustine Meaulnes is both part of a realistic picture of life and the central figure in a fantastic tale. At Sainte-Agathe, except for François Seurel, he is only one country lad among others. He is taller and more reserved than the other boys, but not really different from them. When he has become the leader of their games, his authority is not unchallenged and if he fights he is

not sure to win. Even when he has discovered the 'mysterious estate', from which he inadvertently brought a silk waistcoat, he has not lost his rustic appearance.

> 'I remember', his friend François says, '. . . the big country schoolboy, bare-headed . . . and it was strange to see him in his shirt-sleeves, with his trousers too short and his muddy shoes, laying his hands on the waistcoat of a marquis'.

When Meaulnes is driving to Vierzon, which unexpectedly will lead him to the 'mysterious estate', he is no more than a bold young man enjoying his freedom. He is able, but not implausibly so. He knows how to use his countryman's knife to remove a stone from the sore foot of a spirited horse, but he cannot avoid being hit and slightly injured by the cart when the animal bolts. Confronted with spending a night in a lonely and cold sheepfold he feels miserable.

Later his behaviour to Valentine, Frantz's betrothed, is that of an ordinary young man, well-meaning, but weak and gradually yielding to the moral and physical comfort of a female presence, though he knows that it would be better to remain alone. Here is what Meaulnes says in his diary about one of his first meetings with Valentine:

> Saturday 13 February. I met . . . this girl who, in June, gave me some information . . . I spoke to her. While she was walking, I looked sideways at the slight defects in her face: a small wrinkle at the corner of her lips, her slightly drooping cheeks, some powder accumulated on the sides of her nose. She turned back suddenly and staring at me now that she was facing me, perhaps because she is more beautiful that way than seen in profile, she said sharply: 'I find you entertaining. You remind me of a young man who once used to make love to me, at Bourges. He happened to be my fiancé'.

Meaulnes's attitude to Valentine is not romantic, he is not even in love with her, he is just interested in the girl as any boy could be in ordinary life.

However the atmosphere remains unreal, because the reader cannot forget that Meaulnes was the hero of strange adventures. When he was drawing near the 'mysterious estate' he was suddenly overwhelmed by a strange feeling of bliss. Presently he saw

delightful children. He soon heard that children were the hosts at the unknown mansion where he found himself an unexpected but welcome guest. On the next day, at dinner among strangers, he felt at home and full of confidence. His meeting with Yvonne de Galais took place in an atmosphere of fairy-tale. After the entertainments, where everything was charming but 'feverish and wild', he entered rooms in which he was 'plunged into the quietest happiness in the world'. Then he encountered Ganache and Frantz in an extraordinary way.

Meaulnes had spent his first night at the unknown country-seat and had just been woken up by two men who had entered his room and who were talking. One of them whom he soon identified as Ganache the bohemian, addressed him:

> 'Sir, Mr Asleep', he said, with the modulations of a jeering voice and mocking bows, 'you have but to wake up: put on the clothes of a marquis, even if you are a poor fellow like me; then you will go down to attend the fancy-dress party, since it so pleases the very young gentlemen and the very young ladies of the house.'

Later, he met Frantz to whom he was a complete stranger and who, nevertheless, chose to explain to him that his fiancée would not come, and told him to inform the other guests that 'the party was over'.

Whatever is fantastic in Meaulnes bears comparison or is carefully linked to something which is real. For instance, when Meaulnes, who is an intruder at the dinner during the 'strange party', paradoxically feels full of confidence, his feelings are compared to those of a man who, 'having committed an unforgivable fault', is thinking that 'there are in the world people who forgive him'. Despite its duality Meaulnes's character possesses a remarkable consistency. This is because the swing between reality and unreality is constantly maintained.

Whenever we are musing on Meaulnes he looks like one of the figures that we create in our dreams. Sometimes they seem to be ordinary men and women and sometimes, very suddenly, they become fantastic, without ceasing to be present.

Frantz is Meaulnes's 'fellow adventurer' as the latter puts it. He is an ambivalent character, a source of happiness as well as a cause of misfortune. His unreasonableness ruins his family and his disappearance makes them suffer. Besides he is responsible for Meaulnes leaving his wife. Indeed, to a certain extent, he is Great Meaulnes's rival. It is significant that when he happens

to be a temporary pupil of Mr Seurel at Sainte-Agathe, he takes the place of Augustine as the leader of the boys' games, depriving Great Meaulnes of all his prestige. It is true that nobody, not even Mr Seurel, can resist Frantz's charm.

Again, this irresistible fascination is only suggested. But if we were inclined to doubt it, his sister would convince us that we were wrong. Let us listen to her when she is speaking to François Seurel about her brother's childhood:

> He had asked for a house for himself . . . My father had found his fancy so extraordinary, so amusing, that he had not refused . . . Whenever it suited him, Frantz went away to live in his house like a man . . . It was a wonderful game!

And Frantz was not afraid of spending the night alone in his house and the whole family admired him.

Frantz's charm is that of childhood and of the past. His weakness is to remain a child when he has reached the age of a man. There is no remedy for such weakness because it is sheer madness. It is the reason why he is bound to be a cause of grief to all those who care for him. He himself is unhappy and the hardships he has to bear change his delicate face into that of a 'street urchin looking old'. And yet to the end something is left of the grace of the 'royal child in tatters'. With Yvonne's consent Meaulnes obeys his desperate call for help and rescues him. However, Frantz is saved from himself only when the novel is over, because he cannot be saved and still be Frantz.

Ganache and Valentine are also moving figures, though the latter is the more complex one. The former is a pilferer but he is above all a 'poor devil'. Even when he plays his part as a comedian there is always an air of tragedy about him. His grotesque pantomime at Sainte-Agathe is gloomy. 'Whenever he fell down, he uttered a little scream, never the same, a small unbearable scream'. He is too pitiful to be funny and he cannot be helpful either. His influence on Frantz is bad in spite of all his kindness to him. He is too miserable not to be harmful.

There is also an air of tragedy about Valentine. She is perhaps less pitiful than Ganache, but she is far more disquieting. Her portrait was inspired by Annette B. with whom Alain-Fournier had a love-affair. Speaking about this woman he said that she had 'nearly all the best qualities except purity'[6]. If we confine ourselves to the interpretation of the text of the novel, there seems to be no decisive argument to support the view that Meaulnes

and Valentine lived in sin[7]. But even if Meaulnes was a chaste suitor to Valentine he had two reasons for feeling remorseful. Courting Frantz's fiancée was betraying a man who was his friend. Besides, he had given up his quest for the 'mysterious estate' and Yvonne, which amounted to a betrayal of his ideal.

Valentine is an ambiguous character in the moral field. She is a romantic girl, who once fancied she had found Prince Charming, and who is not reasonable enough to forget her dream. At the same time she seems to be drawn towards the sins of the flesh. Like Ganache she resembles a Pierrot, but a 'guilty one'.

On the whole the characters of *Le Grand Meaulnes* are more moving than fantastic. They are intimately related to the experiences of the writer who created them and they speak to us of his frustrations and hopes. Alain-Fournier wanted them to be 'the ebb and flow of life and its encounters'. They are, in fact, the ebb and flow of his own life and of his own encounters. They lead us to the source of the artist's dreams. In so far as surrealism is the means of getting at the core of things, the characters can be called surrealistic because of their relationship to the writer himself.

Now, if it is of the essence of romanticism to long for something more than ordinary life, Alain-Fournier's dreams, though deep-rooted in reality, are romantic in the true sense of the word. Meaulnes is a stubborn discoverer. He remains an adventurer despite all that is depressing on earth, in spite of Frantz's madness, Valentine's equivocal instability, Ganache's wretchedness, and Yvonne's death. We guess that he will die hoping for something better than nothingness.

*Le Grand Meaulnes* reminds us of Wordsworth's famous phrase 'the child is father of the man'. In the universe of this 'nostalgic novel', the faith which comes from the pure heart of the child, whatever form it takes, is the answer to the mystery and tragedy of the world.

NOTES

[1] *Le Grand Meaulnes* d'Alain-Fournier, La Renaissance du Livre.

[2] *Histoire De La Vie Litteraire,* L'Epoque Contemporaine, Taillandier, 1956, p. 163.

[3] *Histoire Du Roman Moderne,* by R. M. Albérès.

[4] Published in *Archives Des Lettres Modernes,* 1963 (5), No. 51.

[5] Alain is a pen-name substituted for Henri.

[6] Quoted in French by F. Desonay, op. cit. p. 101.

[7] This opinion has already been expressed by Henri Gillet in *Alain-Fournier,* 1948, Ed. Emile Paul; and Jean-Marie Deletrez in *Alain-Fournier Et Le Grand Meaulnes,* 1954, Ed. Emile Paul. However, I must mention F. Desonay's stand, according to which the reader should understand that Meaulnes and Valentine lived in sin.

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# UNPOSTED LETTER

*by* H. W. D. MANSON

I've written and told you before about it, Jack,
But it's true.
One good green day, I feel, is all I need.
One good green day.
It's green enough today you'd say if you were here.
But that's not true.
It's nothing like green enough.
That's what I'd like to explain to you.
The thick, rich, green kikuyu grass is long,
Still spikey, standing up like spears,
Not all yet tumbled down and looping,
Not yet sending out suckers and winding round everything that
grows,
Or beginning to climb the trees and fences.
But it's growing. Everything is growing—too fast for me.
I feel in a way left behind by it all.

I have lemon trees, you know, to look at.
I have honey-suckle (in flower) growing
On a rickety arch of wire that Uncle Arthur's made
Just over the gate
And it smells most sweetly at dusk,
And in the early morning too,
I have geraniums (climbers) pink ones,
A few frail flowers here and there, but mostly leaf
Growing up against the fence.
And the leaves of geraniums, this sort anyway,
With the small pink flowers,
Are so green on a still, moist morning like this
You feel a sort of frenzy rising up inside you
Just looking at them—
As if you were a painter or something—
And had sat there, as I have often, just looking
And thinking of *how* to show it—
*How* to make men see
How all of it glows so and grows.
Into—what?—that seems to matter so?
But maybe if you could make men see

Just how much sunlight green has trapped inside it
That people cannot see,
You'd be able to answer Uncle Arthur
When he keeps asking what I'm looking at.
He's anxious, I suppose, and thinks I'm only brooding.
And I have been brooding—but not about what he thinks.
And you mustn't misunderstand me either.
One good green day inside is all I need
And something will stir.

Everything—as you predicted—has been—
How can I say it—well, both ridiculous and sad somehow.
All smiles—a bit too near to tears.
And it's unnerved me.
You see, when they called for me at the station
(Just Uncle Arthur and Aunt Janey)
They brought the half-ton.
'For all my goods and chattels', they said—meaning the wheel chair.

And they loaded it up on the back
And tied it down with bits of rope
But the damned thing rolled and slammed about
Like a thing possessed
Round every curve we took up Town Hill—all the way up.
We didn't stop for the view on top like we used to.

But nothing's changed, not a single thing, except what's natural
and seasonal,
Some wattle stripped and lying bare—
And further on some mealies there where lucerne seemed
Perhaps what you expected as the truck swung round some curve.
But at the turn-off there was something new . . .
I'm not sure whether I like it.
A real stone, cut-stone, shelter for the milk cans
With a neat, new, yellow thatch on it like a proper little cottage—
And somehow silly.
But it will last for years,
And, as Aunt Janey says, it really does keep the milk cans cool.

And then there was the arrival—
And what seemed like a hundred black and helping hands—
And the damned wheel chair—all shiny—new—standing there
unloaded.

They lowered me into it most solemnly.
We were all a bit shaky when we finally got inside.
But it was dim and cool inside as always.
The granadilla (growing thick now, full of green, young fruit)
Let what light we needed through
To look as much as we dared to at each other.
They'd cut enough of it back, I could see,
To allow me a view of the river,
And it had been freshly done—that morning probably—
Before they came for me.

After tea Uncle Arthur went outside 'to attend to things',
And that left Aunt Janey and me alone in the room.
It wasn't as bad as all that either. It really wasn't.
Almost jolly. And supper was too.
And then bed.
That was the worst bit.
You see, they didn't want to help me,
But couldn't for the life of them imagine how I managed it.
And, of course, I couldn't manage completely. I undressed though.

And shouted for them.
And they were both there—at the door—a bit too quickly.
Such agony of thwarted love in both their eyes,
Such doubts as how to do what they had to do without offending
me
That I didn't know whether to laugh or cry.
But there wasn't any need to pretend anything.
I'd forgotten how strong the old man was—
How easily we've seen him, many times, heave—no throw—
A sack of mealies bang up against the back of the truck.
And that's how he handled me.
One—two—three! And up into bed. No trouble at all.
And Aunt Janey kissed me—just once—softly,
And he did too—
The same old tobaccoey, bristly kiss.

You don't exactly stretch out when you have nothing to stretch
out—
It's something like it—but a briefer thing—
And I'd just snuffed out the candle, grateful for the dark,
And was doing just that,
When I heard him at the door again.

'What's it? I asked. The door opened. I could see him dimly.
'Boy?'
'Yes' I said.
'What do you do if you want a pee?'
'I can manage'.
He didn't go away. He didn't see how,
'How?'
It wasn't curiosity. He just didn't believe me. And I was angry.
'I've got a bloody bottle!' I shouted.
'D'you want to see it?'
'Oh. I see.' He paused for a second . . . 'A bottle . . . I'm sorry.'
And he closed the door.

Three weeks later—
I didn't post this letter, I'm afraid,
But you needn't worry. I'm quite O.K.
You don't think so, do you?
And now you're going to worry too—like them. Well, don't.
You just worry about getting back, see? In one piece.
And I don't mean that quite either.
I'm in one piece. If a bit abbreviated.
And that remark will worry you too—I know you.
Well, what am I to do?
You can't lie down and cry, can you?
And the sky's been weeping. Not one sunny day—
Not one that lasted anyway—since I last wrote.
Just one green day I wanted. What was I hoping for?
You just come back, see?
That'll be a green enough day for me.

And let's not stick about here, hey? Promise?
Pile me in the front seat with you
And let's ride—fast—wherever you like—
Any place that's to hell out of here.
Up through the Dargle, high up over Balgowan if you like.
And wherever we like, we'll stop, shall we?
At any old pub.
And we'll come singing home.
That'll be a green day for me.
You just come back, that's all.

*P.S.* And what's the use of posting this to you—now?
And how would I address it?

Care of some dark hole in the ground?
Forgive that last, most desperate quip of all,
Old mole, my brother.
Burrow however deep down into the dark
And I will hear you.
Make sounds as slight as mice feet skittering
And I shall hear.
I shall hear
If you make sounds like a rose unfurling
Or falling snow.
Lie as still as a stone through summer or winter,
Whiten away to a bare bone,
And I will hear you.
You will be as green as any tree to me, my brother, for ever
Though these ruled leaves go yellow and rot.
Our *life* together will be
All the green days I shall ever ask for—God forgive me!

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# a History of Natal

By Professor the Hon. E. H. Brookes, M.A., Litt.D., and Mr C. de B. Webb, M.A. (Cantab.), Senior Lecturer in History and Political Science in the University of Natal.

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# FURTHER TRAVELS WITH GULLIVER

*by* J. V. CREWE

*Gulliver's Travels* does not need an advocate. Few books are better known, and fewer still occupy a similar place in the popular imagination. Lilliput and Brobdingnag probably have more reality for us than do many countries of the world, modern communications notwithstanding, and Gulliver's most celebrated adventures have understandably become myths. Partly owing to Yeats's influence, modern critics have freely acknowledged Swift's greatness as a satirist, and research into his life and work is energetically pursued. But, for all this, it is doubtful that anything like full value has been had from Swift's genius. Even sophisticated readers are often reluctant to discover for themselves how much Swift offers. This reluctance is not wholly unaccountable. *Gulliver's Travels,* despite the pleasure it gives, is sometimes forbiddingly harsh, it lacks overall coherence, and the very originality of Swift's vision occasionally leads him into places where readers find it difficult to accompany him. But these difficulties should not be allowed to deter us, and since demonstration carries more weight than exhortation, I shall try in this essay to show the relevance and quality of a single episode in *Gulliver's Travels,* namely, the 'Voyage to Laputa'. This episode has been chosen partly because it may conveniently be treated as a separate entity, but more because it deserves to be much better known in academic circles.

Let us begin by simply joining Gulliver at the start of a new adventure. He is 'drawn up by Pullies' to a mysterious island that he sees floating high *above* him, and confronts the inhabitants.

> At my alighting I was surrounded by a Crowd of People, but those who stood nearest seemed to be of better Quality. They beheld me with all the Marks and Circumstances of wonder; neither indeed was I much in their Debt; having never till then seen a Race of Mortals so singular in their Shapes, Habits and Countenances. Their Heads were all reclined either to the Right, or the Left; one of their Eyes turned inward, and the other directly up to the Zenith. Their outward Garments were adorned

> with the Figures of Suns, Moons and Stars, interwoven with those of Fiddles, Flutes, Harps, Trumpets, Guittars, Harpsichords, and many more Instruments of Musick, unknown to us in Europe.

Even the phlegmatic Gulliver must admit sardonically that he is 'not much in their debt', as he stares at the laughable deformity which seems to characterise the persons of 'better Quality'. We, too, are startled by their appearance. In 'Lilliput' and 'Brobdingnag' Swift had played the simple but striking trick of describing human society as though he were looking at it through a telescope; first through the wrong end and then through the right end. Gulliver alone remained outside the field of the 'telescope', his 'standard' size giving the scale of diminution or magnification. Remove Gulliver, and there is nothing extraordinary about Lilliput or Brobdingnag, since there is no distortion *within* the societies portrayed. But here in Laputa we are shown human beings greatly deformed. They are so strange that we may begin to wonder whether the ascent to the flying island is an ascent into unreality. However, this description may enable us to come to terms at once with Swift's methods. Whereas irony is usually oblique and verbal, the irony of *Gulliver's Travels* is frequently direct and visual. It is this which often disconcerts and puzzles readers, but the advantages of such an ironic mode are considerable. Swift, of all people, is aware of what may be done by delicate suggestion, but, more than any other English satirist, he exploits the power of clear, immediate statement. He confronts us with a sharp physical *image* of an ironical truth, and it is fixed forever in our imagniation. Consequently, we see the Laputans at once for what they are essentially: their external appearance precisely reflects an inner, human deformity. Swift will compel us to admit that we are ignorant of truths that lie close at hand, and that the Laputans, far from being unreal, are a challenge to our own knowledge of reality.

Who, then, are the Laputans? They are men who have sacrificed the whole of life to abstract speculation, and for whom the ultimate reality is the exercise of mind. A closer study of their characteristics should begin to show this. The eyes are fixed: one peers into remote space at the 'Zenith', the other is turned inward. What other humans see:

> All the universe of sight,
> Love and delight,

is excluded from their vision. Their heads are 'reclined either to the Right, or to the Left', and we sense that for the Laputans (as, of course, for ourselves) 'right' and 'left' carry more than their intrinsic weight of meaning. To an outsider in Laputa it will not seem to make much difference to which side the head is reclined: he is likely to notice the amusing similarity of the Laputans to each other in reclining their heads at all, and to suspect that the distinction between 'right' and 'left' may never seem more important to him than it does at first glance. What will also be apparent is the strange rigidity of their attitude, and it may be inferred that it is symptomatic of a state of mind. The description of the Laputans ends with a reference to their bizarre robes. The deficiencies of Laputan vision being what they are, we are not surprised to find out that what they consider decorative makes no appeal to the eye at all: the absurd jumble of planets and musical instruments merely reflects the Laputans' preoccupations back into their own minds. Swift is preparing us for the Laputans' obsessive concern with astronomy, music and mathematics by showing that for them, the 'art' of decoration has ceased to exist in its own right and have its own criteria. Evidently, the Laputans know nothing about art but know what they like—namely, the barest representation of what is most familiar and congenial to them. Again, the constriction and inflexibility of the Laputan imagination are suggested. As our impressions of the Laputans begin to take shape, we can admire the vividness and economy of Swift's satire. If we were shocked into bewilderment at the beginning of Swift's narrative, we will be shocked into respect when we discover that what seemed unreal and remote is—or should be—familiar to us. The Laputans *are* freaks (and Gulliver is always at hand to remind us what an ordinary person is like) but we have chosen not to see the *same* freakishness in ourselves and those around us.

In the next part of the description we see that the Laputans are troubled by a problem not unknown in the twentieth century: a 'problem of communication'.

> I observed here and there many in the Habit of Servants, with a blown Bladder fastened like a Flail to the End of a short Stick, which they carried in their Hands. In each Bladder was a small Quantity of dried Pease, or little Pebbles, (as I was afterwards informed). With these Bladders they now and then flapped the Mouths and Ears of those who stood near them, of which Practice I could not conceive the Meaning. It seems, the Minds of these

> People are so taken up with Intense Speculations, that they neither can speak, or attend to the Discourses of others, without being rouzed by some external Taction upon the organs of Speech and Hearing; for which Reason, those People who are able to afford it, always keep a *Flapper*.

Gulliver describes this outlandish mode of communication in a quiet, disinterested tone, which increases the satirical force of the passage. He is not an Elizabethan traveller striving to satisfy public demand for the exotic, but a sensible man of the eighteenth century who would consider any embellishment of the truth to be a barbarous licence. The dispassionate accuracy of his narrative is all that is needed to show up the monstrous absurdity of what he is describing: no commentary could heighten the impact of *these* facts. 'It seems', says Gulliver innocently, 'the minds of these people are so taken up with intense Speculations, that they neither can speak or attend to the Discourses of others . . .' The Laputans' regard for the abstract produces a corresponding disregard for people, and human intercourse becomes a burdensome interruption of their 'speculations'. The *Flappers* are not there to promote effective communication; they are there to spare the Laputans the effort of real attention to each other. For the Laputans, the 'problem of communication' is really the problem of avoiding communication, if the word may be understood to mean something more than the most impersonal and perfunctory kind of exchange. The *Flappers* may make it possible to have a 'dialogue', but certainly nothing beyond that. The unsatisfactoriness of this situation is brought home to us in a wonderfully striking and economical way.

If the Laputans are indifferent to each other, they are wholly dead to anything alien. Even Gulliver fails to interest them for more than a moment.

> While we were ascending, they forgot several Times what they were about, and left me to myself, till their Memories were again roused by their Flappers; for they appeared altogether unmoved by the Sight of my foreign Habit and Countenance, and by the Shouts of the Vulgar, whose Thoughts and Minds were more disengaged.

Ironically, the 'vulgar' display a livelier sense of curiosity and wonder than their superiors. The 'disengagement' of their minds leaves them free to assimilate new experiences, and their shouts of excitement are a surer sign of mental activity than all the

weird apparatus of the learned. What chiefly distinguishes the 'persons of better Quality' from the vulgar is, of course, their absorption in 'intense Speculations'; and what Swift ironically depicts here is an aristocracy of 'intellectuals' rather than noblemen. This is not the place to discuss the relation of the Laputan satire to various aspects of Swift's own age.[1] For modern readers, and especially for members of a university, the book is interesting because their own society has become more and more like the one on the flying island. 'Intellectuals' have created Laputan society in their own image and they govern it on their own terms; with ludicrous results. However, we must not mistake Swift's intention. He is not sentimentally championing the heart against the head; ignorance against learning. He shows that 'intellectualism' is, paradoxically, an abuse of intellect—and in doing so employs his own intellect to good purpose. His powers of mind and his learning are brought to bear on life with remarkable success.

By now we should be prepared for the sort of reception awaiting Gulliver at the royal court, and for the feast he will attend:

> Before the Throne, was a large Table filled with Globes and Spheres, and Mathematical Instruments of all Kinds. His Majesty took not the least Notice of us, although our Entrance were not without sufficient Noise, by the Concourse of all Persons belonging to the Court. But, he was deep in a Problem, and we attended at least an Hour, before he could solve it. There stood by him on each Side, a young Page, with Flaps in their hands; and when he was at Leisure, one of them gently struck his Mouth, and the other his Right Ear: at which he started like one awaked on a sudden, and looking towards me, and the Company I was in, recollected the Occasion of our coming, whereof he had been informed before . . .
> We had two Courses, of three Dishes each. In the first Course, there was a Shoulder of Mutton, cut into an Equilateral Triangle; a Piece of Beef into a Rhomboides; and a pudding into a Cycloid. The second Course was two Ducks, trussed up into the Form of Fiddles . . .

The king's 'engagement' of mind, and the apparatus of his studies, wholly isolate him from practical concerns. We expect no miracles of enlightened administration, and our expectation is satisfied in the descriptions of his incompetent and oppressive rule of his dominions.[2] He is indifferent to his subjects as long

as he is propitiated, and brutal when thwarted. The king, too, depends on the ubiquitous *Flappers*, though it is royal prerogative to be served by *two* at once. Appropriately, the characteristics and aspirations of the nobility appear to find their highest embodiment in the king. When life does intrude upon the world of the Laputans, as it must occasionally, they deal with it uncompromisingly. Even Laputans must eat, but the act of eating need not be acknowledged for what it is. Since they find no enjoyment in sensation (as we have already seen, their senses are practically moribund), the necessity to eat cannot be tempered by sensuous enjoyment. However, eating may be transposed into a different category of experience. The mutton becomes palatable because it is apprehended as an 'equilateral triangle'. The effect of reading the description of the feast is curious. We know that the food is not changed by being cut into symbolic shapes, but it is quite impossible to experience the food as food while reading the passage. Swift makes us enact the Laputans' loss of sensuous delight ourselves.

It is no accident that the Laputans' chosen concerns should be Music, Mathematics and Astronomy. Each of these can be treated as a self-contained system, detached from the flux and complexity of life. As we realise this, we realise, too, the ironic meaning of the flying island. The Laputans soar above mundane reality, in a region where the intellect may spin its webs of logic without impediment. Their abstract systems may be refined and perfected, until Truth itself seems to be comfortably in their grasp. And, as we all know, or should know, truth is beauty:

> If they would, for example, praise the Beauty of a Woman, or any other Animal, they describe it by Rhombs, Circles, Parallelograms, Ellipses and other Geometrical terms . . .

However legitimate an abstraction may be, it instantly becomes nonsensical when used as the measure of *all* things.

Gulliver sees more of the amusing side-effects of Laputan intellectualism.

> . . . I made Signs as well as I could, that I had no Occasion for . . . [a Flapper] . . .; which, as I afterwards found, gave his Majesty and the whole Court a very mean Opinion of my Understanding.
>
> . . . I made bold to ask the Names of several Things in their Language; and these noble Persons, by the assistance of their *Flappers*, delighted to give me Answers, hoping to raise my Admiration of their great Abilities . . .

What could be more natural than their intellectual snobbery and conceit? They have taken the short step from exclusive approval of a few fields of intellectual activity to contempt for all others; and from there to the happy sensation of being the elect. As is usual when this happens, appearances begin to count more than deeds. Gulliver's dismissal of the *Flapper* is, in their eyes, a solecism which proves that he can teach them nothing: enlightenment can exist only on their own terms, and Gulliver plainly does not know the terms. Ironically, they *prefer* Gulliver to be unenlightened. Their coterie remains intact, and they are grateful for the chance to show off. One is struck by the contrast between the plain man and the scholars. Gulliver, in his humble willingness to learn their language, is a far truer representative of the enquiring mind than the more pretentious Laputans. In fact, the only results of their labours seem to be a disastrous complacency and isolation. Nor are these the only consequences of their state of mind. Their refusal to 'compromise' their standards produces visibly absurd results when they descend to the level of practicality.

> Their Houses are very ill built, the Walls bevil, without one right Angle in any Apartment; and this Defect ariseth from the Contempt they bear for practical Geometry; which they despise as Vulgar and Mechanic, those Instructions they give being too refined for the Intellectuals of their Workmen; which occasions perpetual Mistakes.

Like all pedants, the Laputans forget that the most *appropriate* method is the 'best' method, and that excessive precision is a kind of imprecision. Their ability to judge what a situation requires, and adapt themselves accordingly, is destroyed by the vain conviction that only *their* methods accord with propriety. There may not be a single right angle in the house, but morally there 'ought' to—and would be, but for the contemptible meanness of the workmen's understanding. The Laputans' sense of having adhered to the very highest standards steels them in their contempt for what is 'vulgar and mechanical', and practical problems must be considered insoluble since they cannot be solved on acceptable terms. However, we *see* their botched, rickety houses, and the irony of their failure is inescapable.

The Laputans are guilty of many sins of the mind, venial as well as mortal:

> They are very bad Reasoners, and Vehemently given to

> Opposition, unless when they happen to be of the right Opinion, which is seldom their Case.
> Imagination, Fancy, Invention, they are wholly Strangers to . . .
> Most of them . . . have great Faith in Judicial Astrology, although they are ashamed to own it publickly.

(i.e. charlatanism of one kind or another, against which their learning ought to be a sure defence.)

> But what I chiefly admired about them, and thought altogether unaccountable, was the strong Disposition I observed in them towards News and Politicks; perpetually enquiring into Publick Affairs; giving their Judgements in Matters of State; and passionately disputing every Inch of a Party Opinion.

The characteristic failings of an intellectual community, usually ignored because they are so familiar, stand out with fresh clarity when seen through the eyes of one to whom they are a novelty.

Despite their self-assurance, the Laputans are not without besetting terrors:

> These people are under continual Disquietudes, never enjoying a Minute's Peace of Mind; and their Disturbances proceed from Causes which very little affect the rest of Mortals. Their Apprehensions arise from several Changes they dread in the Celestial Bodies. For instance; that the Earth by the continual Approaches of the Sun towards it, must in the course of Time be absorbed or swallowed up. That the Face of the Sun will by degrees be encrusted with its own Effluvia, and give no more Light to the World . . . That, the Earth very narrowly escaped a Brush from the tail of the last Comet, which would infallibly have reduced it to Ashes; and that the next, which they have calculated for One and Thirty Years hence, will probably destroy us. For, if in its Perihelion it should approach within a certain Degree of the Sun (as by their Calculations they have Reason to dread) it will conceive a degree of heat Ten Thousand Times more intense than that of red hot glowing Iron; and in its Absence from the Sun, carry a blazing Tail Ten Hundred Thousand and Fourteen Miles long; through which if the Earth should pass at the distance of one Hundred Thousand Miles from

> the *Nucleus* or main Body of the Comet; it must in its Passage be set on Fire, and reduced to Ashes . . .

Instead of facing reality, which would give them cause enough to be fearful, the Laputans are paralysed by the thought of remote and improbable dangers. The threats they apprehend could not be averted, and all their nervous energy is consumed by futile trepidation. The Laputans are as much under the spell of their formidable jargon and computations as of the actual dangers represented. One shrinks at the mention of 'Effluvia', 'Celestial Bodies', 'the Perihelion'; of temperatures of an extreme order and distances of hundreds of thousands of miles. Not less impressive is the meticulous accuracy with which destruction is predicted exactly thirty-one years ahead (and that because the tail of the comet will be ten hundred thousand and *fourteen* miles long!). Such fateful precision alarms us into forgetting that their calculations contain unproved assumptions, and that they are more likely to die in their beds than be vaporised in the tail of a comet. Sober judgment vanishes in the cloudy and turbulent atmosphere created by the excitable Laputans, and their pre-occupation with cosmic disaster blinds them to other, perhaps more pressing, dangers. (One remembers the fate of another learned man, described in *The Canterbury Tales:*

> He walked in the feeldes, for to prye
> Upon the sterres, what ther sholde bifalle,
> Til he was in a marle-pit yfalle;
> He saugh nat that . . .)

Once again, Gulliver's calm presence helps us to resist being infected by Laputan hysteria.

Swift, however, understands that more is responsible for their 'apprehensions' than misjudgement. Having chosen the life of 'intense Speculation', the Laputans are emotionally undeveloped.[3] This is well suggested in a humiliating image.

> This Conversation they are apt to run into with the same Temper that Boys discover, in delighting to hear terrible Stories of Sprites and Hobgoblins, which they greedily listen to, and dare not go to Bed for Fear.

Since they cannot wholly stifle their emotional nature, it is inevitable that they look to their studies for a kind of 'illicit' stimulation. However, the feelings aroused are as trivial as their

origin, and they can only result in an enervated passivity. The relation that exists between thought and feeling in the Laputans is the very opposite of the creative one that produces a whole man: theirs is completely negative and accidental. It is understandable that the women of the island, who have 'Abundance of Vivacity', 'contemn their Husbands and are exceedingly fond of Strangers'. This is illustrated by a characteristic episode:

> I was told that a great Court Lady, who had several children, is married to the Prime Minister, the richest Subject in the Kingdom, a very graceful Person, extremely fond of her, and lives in the finest Palace of the Island; went down to Lagado, on pretence of Health, there hid herself for several Months, till the King sent a Warrant to search for her; and she was found in an obscure Eating-House all in Rags, having pawned her Cloths to maintain an old deformed Footman, who beat her every Day, and in whose Company she was taken against her Will. And although her Husband received her with all possible Kindness, and without the least Reproach; soon after she contrived to steal down again with all her Jewels to the same Gallant, and hath not been heard of since.

The irony of this passage is illuminating. The deformity of the footman (her Gallant!) is simply a physical disfigurement and even if it is repellent, he remains a human being. His deformity is a lesser evil than the Laputans' 'normality', just as his irascibility is a lesser evil than their undiscriminating benevolence. It is clearly as much the husband's *failure* to reproach his wife for her misconduct as anything else that confirms her in her determination to escape. An act of forgiveness is one thing, unconcern is shallow and insulting. The woman understandably prefers a living relationship, however explosive, to a state of empty wellbeing which is a denial of her humanity.

Gulliver is not tempted to linger among such people, and they, having shown contempt for his account of European Mathematics and Music, are at no pains to detain him. He leaves Laputa for Balnibari.

There he is confronted by another waste land, and this time not only an intellectual one, but a physical and material one as well: '. . . except in some very few Places, I could not discover one Ear of Corn, or Blade of Grass . . .' It is Swift's foreshadowing of a waste land produced by the failure of applied science. We have descended from a realm of airy speculation

to one of practical application, from a flying island to the solid earth.

> The Sum of his Discourse was to this Effect, That about Forty Years ago, certain Persons went up to Laputa, either upon Business or Diversion; and after five Months Continuance, came back with a very little Smattering in Mathematics, but full of Volatile Spirits acquired in that Airy Region. That these Persons upon their Return, began to dislike the Management of every Thing below; and fell into Schemes for putting all Arts, Sciences, Languages and Mechanicks upon a new Foot . . . The Professors contrive new Rules and Methods of Agriculture and Building, and new Instruments and Tools for all Trades and Manufacturers, whereby, as they undertake, one Man shall do the Work of Ten; a Palace may be built in a Week, of Materials so durable as to last for ever without repairing. All Fruits of the Earth shall come to Maturity at whatever Season we think fit to chuse, and increase an hundred Fold more than they do at present; with innumerable other happy Proposals. The only Inconvenience is that none of these Projects are yet brought to Perfection; and in the mean time, the whole Country lies miserably waste, the Houses in Ruins, and the People without Food or Cloaths.

We must concede that Swift's *prophetic* powers partly deserted him here. If applied science does produce a waste land it will be a result of the misapplication rather than the sterility of human inventiveness. Swift failed to foresee the advance of scientific technology that lay just ahead. In the unsystematic and sometimes farcical experiments of contemporary 'projectors' he did not detect the beginning of a revolution which would change the world. He is firmly on the side of tradition and good sense against innovation and revolution. Since the 'technology' of the eighteenth century may have looked unpromising his ridicule of it is pardonable. However, it is just that the very 'projects' he quotes as instances of deluded optimism stand to mock him today. Let us accept that Swift was wrong in his assumption that applied science would fail. But let us *not* assume that Swift's whole critique of applied science, from the standpoint of tradition and good sense, is invalidated. It is from that stand-

point that criticism is worthwhile, given our own infatuation with all scientific innovation and progress.

The various schemes which have laid waste the countryside originate in the Academy of Lagado, which Gulliver is invited to visit:

> The first Man I saw was of a meagre Aspect, with sooty Hands and Face, his Hair and Beard long, ragged and singed in several Places. His Clothes, Shirt and Skin were all of the same Colour. He had been eight Years upon a Project for extracting Sunbeams out of Cucumbers, which were to be put into Vials hermetically sealed, and let out to warm the Air in raw, inclement Summers. He told me, he did not doubt in Eight Years more, that he would be able to supply the Governors Gardens with Sunshine at a reasonable Rate; but he complained that his Stock was low, and intreated me to give him something as an Encouragement to Ingenuity, especially since this had been a very dear Season for Cucumbers. I made him a small Present, for my Lord had furnished me with Money on purpose, because he knew their practice of begging from all who go to see them.

Swift might have been wrong about the future of technology, but he is unmistakeably right in his caricature of a certain kind of research worker. (I would not suggest that the Sciences have the monopoly of such research workers.) This worker is scarcely recognisable as a human being, and his eight years of labour have done little more than distil the life out of him. The threadbare clothes and unkempt, bloodless appearance are the marks of his profession, but they are also the marks of his isolation from human society. Swift conveys in a few phrases the worker's sustaining confidence in his own originality, and his certainty that nothing but admiration is his due. Swift also anticipates the modern scholar's axioms, that academic output is exactly proportional to cash invested, and that 'ingenuity' may be left to look after itself as long as it receives 'encouragement' at regular intervals. However, the word 'begging', unobtrusively introduced toward the end of the passage, is a devastating reduction to the simplest terms of what we have just witnessed. Swift may not have known much about science, but there is a beautiful comic plausibility about the project the worker has devoted himself to. Its combination of apparent logicality and

senseless futility makes it the ancestor of many a Ph.D. study, and the disproportion between expense (of spirit as well as cash) and achievement is a fair warning to readers. Some similar projects may be mentioned briefly:

> I saw another at work to calcine Ice into Gunpowder; who likewise shewed me a Treatise he had written concerning the Malleability of Fire, which he intended to publish (or perish?)
>
> There was a Man born Blind, who had several Apprentices in his own Condition: their Employment was to mix Colours for Painters, which their Master taught them to distinguish by feeling and smelling. It was indeed my Misfortune to find them at that Time not very perfect in their Lessions . . . (The problem of aptitude?).

Gulliver had been eager to visit the Academy. He had modestly admitted that in his youth curiosity led him to make a few experiments of his own. But the sight of 'real' projectors at work is enough to disillusion him.

Swift's scepticism is a necessary corrective to the modern belief that all research is praiseworthy and self-justifying. It is legitimately argued that the results of apparently useless research may later be found valuable, but it would be surprising if so free a justification of research did not produce some Swiftian consequences, and needless to say, it does. In this century the Academy of Lagado has risen to the heights of prestige and influence (admittedly because it has succeeded to an extent that Swift could never have imagined) and its glory dazzles us. But if we look carefully we may still see the old 'projectors' at work.

In describing the final stages of Gulliver's visit to the Academy Swift's prophetic gift reappears. The Laputans anticipate the modern age in their perverse attempts to adapt 'scientific' procedure to the solution of moral and imaginative problems. The 'wayward' power of genius is to be supplanted by comprehensive and infallible systems, and men will be freed from their almost superstitious dependence on individual talent. In fact, the Professors of Lagado display a quiet certainty that methods are superior to men, and that all problems are susceptible of 'scientific' solution.

> The first Professor I saw was in a very large Room, with Forty Pupils about him. After Salutation, observing me

> to look earnestly upon a Frame, which took up the greatest part of both Length and Breadth of the Room; he said, perhaps I might wonder to see him employed in a Project for improving speculative Knowledge by practical and mechanical Operations. But the World would soon be sensible of its Usefulness; and he flattered himself, that a more noble exalted Thought never sprang in any Man's Head. Every one knew how laborious the usual Method is of attaining to Arts and Sciences; whereas by his Contrivance the most ignorant Person, at a reasonable Charge, and with a little bodily Labour, may write Books in Philosophy, Poetry, Politicks, Law, Mathematics and Theology, without the least assistance from Genius or Study. He then led me to the Frame, about the Sides whereof all his Pupils stood in Ranks. It was Twenty Foot square, placed in the Middle of the Room. The Superficies was composed of several bits of Wood about the bigness of a Dye, but some larger than others. They were all linked together by slender Wires. These bits of Wood were covered on every Square with Paper pasted on them; and on these Papers were written all the Words of their Language in their several Moods, Tenses, and Declensions, but without any Order. The Professor then desired me to observe, for he was going to set his Engine at work. The Pupils at his command took each of them hold of an Iron Handle, whereof there were Forty fixed round the Edges of the Frame; and giving them a sudden Turn, the whole Disposition of the Words was entirely changed. He then commanded Six and Thirty of the Lads to read the several Lines softly, as they appeared on the Frame; and where they found three or four Words together that might make Part of a Sentence, they dictated to the four remaining Boys who were Scribes.

The Professor's tone conveys the quiet yet overweening vanity of a man who has discovered the universal key to 'Speculative Knowledge', which has eluded men from the beginning of time. Again, the reasoning which underlies the project appears plausible: all thought is communicated by language; language consists of a finite number of words placed in calculable combinations; so all that remains is to invent the machine capable of reproducing those combinations. The author will, in fact, be replaced by a computer, and 'writing' becomes a purely physical act. The

reasoning is familiar to us. Yet how alien to the spirit of imaginative striving is this comical cranking and grinding out of disjointed fragments. One is conscious of the wires, wood, glue, handles—everything but the exhilaration of real discovery. (And if the imagination is to be superseded, for whom are these works being 'written'?) What is omitted from the calculations is the organic power of language to change and regenerate itself as experience changes; and the power of genius to give a different force to old words and combinations and to discover new ones. The computer programme is dead before it is completed; it can only *reproduce* dead meanings and dead experiences. Swift's description amusingly displays the futile conceit of the whole undertaking, and we spare a sigh for the poor drudges doing the work of genius by hand.

Of course, other professors at the Academy have their own aptitudes and specialities. The 'science' of politics engages many minds, all of them bent upon the theoretical solution of age-old political problems. Again the clouds of difficulty part and the bright new sun shines through:

> When Parties in the State are violent, he offered a wonderful Contrivance to reconcile them. The Method is this. You take an Hundred Leaders of each Party; you dispose them into Couples of such whose Heads are nearest of a Size; then let two nice Operators saw off the *Occiput* of each couple at the same Time, in such a Manner that the Brain may be equally divided. Let the *Occiputs* then be interchanged, applying each to the Head of the opposite Party-man . . . the two half Brains being left to debate the Matter between themselves within the Space of one Skull, would soon come to a good understanding . . .

As so often happens, the political theorist's 'solution' parts company with its frame of reference. Fortunately the result is only funny (this must surely be one of the funniest passages in the whole of English literature). The professor is content to rest on the bracing originality of his proposal without testing it in action. He has forgotten that the 'party leaders' are *people* as well as political abstractions, and the jargon word 'occiput' helps him to do so. It is unnecessary to elaborate upon the relevance of this piece of satire.

The conclusions of the professors of linguistics have a familiar ring. They argue that language might profitably be reduced to nouns only, since they alone denote a tangible reality; or better still, that words might be abolished entirely:

> . . . since Words are only names for *Things*, it would be convenient for all Men to carry about with them such *Things* as were necessary to express the particular Business they are to discourse on . . .

Plainly, the Academy of Lagado is the birthplace of logical positivism. No 'nonsense' (in the rigorous sense of the word) can be uttered under the new system; it is the perfect triumph of 'objectivity'. The only difficulty is that those who wish to communicate must carry their conversation with them:

> I have often seen two of those Sages almost sinking under the weight of their Packs, like Pedlars among us; who, when they met in the Streets would lay down their loads, open their Sacks, and hold Conversation for an Hour together; then put up their Implements, help each other to resume their Burthens, and take their Leave.

The image tempts us to ask whether the old language, for all its deficiencies, might not be a more convenient and flexible means of communication than the new.

After having observed these (and many other) intellectual sideshows, Gulliver makes a judgement in his own simple and practical fashion:

> I saw nothing in this Country which could invite me to a longer Continuance, and began to think of returning to England.

It is a decisive rejection of all that he has seen. Who would disagree with him?

*NOTES*

[1] See: *The Scientific Background of Swift's 'Voyage to Laputa'*, by M. Nicholson and N. Mohler, *Annals of Science*, Vol. II (1937).

[2] In this section of the book the oppression of the Irish under English rule is frequently implied. The scope of this essay precludes extensive analysis of the political satire in the 'Voyage to Laputa', fruitful though such analysis might be.

[3] 'The more scholastically educated a man is generally, the more he is an emotional boor.' (Essay on John Galsworthy, by D. H. Lawrence, in his *Phoenix*.)

# THE BRAIN DRAIN

*by* C. H. BORNMAN

A leading British medical researcher who recently visited the University of Natal thought it highly probable that, should a motorist be involved in an accident in England, he would be treated by a doctor who qualified in Bombay or Karachi and who is now practising away from home.

In February 1967 approximately 800 medical doctors in the United Kingdom took an examination in order to qualify for positions in the United States. Although not all of these doctors will emigrate many consider the examination as security against the day when they may finally decide to leave should the promised new deal at home not come.

An alarming number of African, Asian, and Israeli scientists are choosing the comforts and way of life of the U.S. after completing their training at universities, medical schools, and other institutes in that country. A conservative estimate puts at 20 to 25 per cent the number of foreign interns and residents in U.S. hospitals who eventually stay rather than return home where most certainly the need is greatest.

One out of every ten Israeli doctors who go abroad for advanced training fails to return. Japan annually loses 12 per cent of its best trained men after they have completed their studies in the U.S. despite the fact that it is one of the few countries which have managed to at least partially contain the drain by spending more on its scientists and technicians.

Statistics with regard to the drain of university men from South Africa are not readily available. However, if they were, there is every reason to expect that the figures would be nothing short of staggering. It is known that 70 per cent of the South African postgraduate students studying abroad do not wish to return in view of the prospects offered them by their host countries. Personally, I am aware of one or more South African scientists and engineers on the permanenet staffs of verey major U.S. and Canadian university: Papenfus at Berkeley, Smit at Los Angeles, Robinson at Wisconsin, Spilhaus at the Minnesota Institute of Technology, and so on and on. The Pietermaritzburg campus of the University of Natal within the last 18 months has lost its professors of Educational Psychology, Physics and Zoology to universities in Canada.

Do not assume that the United States is unconcerned. A nation with such extensive global investments and interests in the developing as well as in the established countries is alarmed at what is referred to as reverse foreign aid. The drain from other countries is generating criticism and hostility, and losing the U.S. friends. Furthermore, it is obliging the U.S. to send doctors, engineers and other academically trained people to fill the vacuum created by the non-return of the brain drainees.

Senator W. F. Mondale (Democrat, Minnesota) has proposed an 'International Brain Drain Act' to the U.S. Congress which in effect will force professionals to return to their own countries when their training or study tours expire.

However, the problem of the brain drain is not so simply solved. I, for one, do not believe in legislation which restricts the free movement of men of learning—for whom the laws of nature operate across national and ideological boundaries. Let us therefore consider the problem more carefully.

Not all scientists such as Nobel laureates Enrico Fermi and Albert Einstein, or Edward Teller, father of the H-bomb, fled to the United States because of political restrictions and threats in the countries of their origin. The majority went in search of new opportunities. This in fact is the key to the brain drain problem: OPPORTUNITY.

Dr C. V. Kidd[1], member of President Johnson's Office of Science and Technology, recently said that the locus of the brain drain dilemma lay in other nations and not in the U.S. What he meant was that the U.S. was not compelling highly trained people there. They were being drawn to North America by 'such things as high incomes, personal freedom, political stability, and a strong diversified research and development program in government, universities and industry.'

Fact is that top brains are often forced out of their own countries because of lack of development funds and rigid institutional structures in universities, low salary scales, lack of technical assistance, and promotion-on-seniority-only basis.

Dr D. F. Hornig[2], director of the Office of Science and Technology, recently testified that if 'the domestic policies of a number of advanced nations demonstrated nearly the same high evaluation of their scientists and engineers that is evident in their protests over the brain drain, the outward flow would be markedly diminished'.

We cannot, therefore, denounce the U.S., Canada, Britain and Australia for attracting away our trained men in the various

fields of learning. But how, then, can this brain drain be contained? I do not pretend to have the answers and many of the suggestions that could be made are supposedly at present under consideration by Government. However, the following two points should be re-emphasised:

*Remuneration*

Remuneration in South African universities is hopelessly unrealistic. The heavy dependence upon Government subsidy apparently has an equalising effect that tends to eliminate inter-university competition and reduces faculty members to the status of elite civil servants. Unless it is for a decided promotion, a staff member finds little monetary incentive for moving from one institution to another. Those faculty members who do accept positions in other universities often do so for reasons other than solely increase in salary. A senior lecturer who is earning, say, R4,000 per annum and who is offered a post-doctoral salary of R8,000 in the U.S. might well be envied but not blamed for turning a sabbatical appointment into a permanent position.

One faculty member—a lecturer—who recently was asked why he was accepting an overseas position explained that he had been married for a number of years and that he and his wife were now planning a home and a family. However, if his wife were to resign from her position they would be reduced to a bare subsistence level of existence. 'It's as simple as that,' he concluded.

*Research and Teaching Assistance, and Equipment*

Let us face the fact that South Africa has too many universities. Spread the already limited brain power, laboratory facilities, library resources and scientific instrumentation over the ten white resident universities (average student number 3,500); then add the drain on these limited human resources by National Institutes, Development Corporations, Boards of Control (the Wheat Industry Control Board requires a B.Sc. (Agric.) degree of its inspector before he may plunge a probe into a bag of grain in order to test its quality), Industry, five non-White University Colleges, a Correspondence University, etc., and two major frustrations are bared: (a) the lack of adequate facilities to provide for the progressively increasing demand for highly trained men and women, and (b) the dearth of teaching and research assistance to enable those of us who are responsible for administering this training to do it properly.

The talented young academic cannot, in our system, hope to be promoted to a professorship. He either joins private enterprise or emigrates to the U.S. or Canada where he is invited to be an associate or full-fledged professor and treated as such regardless of age, family, connections or religious affiliation. Financial assistance for pre- and post-doctoral research fellows—on whom so much of any department's productivity depends—is extremely scarce. Teaching and research assistantships for graduate students (M.A., M.Sc. and Ph.D.) as they exist in most overseas universities are virtually non-existent in their South African counterparts.

It is against such a background that scientists, engineers and other young academics find themselves being forced out of competition and, rather than face years of inertia and frustration, they, too, become brain drainees. As McGeorge Bundy, then assistant to the White House, commented when addressing the American Association for the Advancement of Science in 1962: 'Scientists are people, a fact which is frequently forgotten but verifiable experimentally.'

[1], [2] *Science News,* 91: 75 Jan. 21, 1967.

## CORRESPONDENCE

### ANOTHER VIEW OF MARVELL'S *HORATIAN ODE*

University of Natal,
Pietermaritzburg.

To the Editors of *Theoria,*

Gentlemen,

Mr W. J. B. Wood's analysis of Marvell's 'Horatian Ode' *(Theoria* No. 28) is in many ways perceptive and illuminating, and I think he is right to say that the poem 'exemplifies a mature awareness of the most positive and valuable kind'. But I believe that the nature of the awareness is somewhat different from what he describes; and that he is wrong to suggest (as he seems to) that the only important aim and effect of the poem is to produce or induce some such awareness in the reader —that we are imaginatively stirred mainly by the poem's 'carefully modulated tone' and 'superb poise', by its detached, subtly critical and creative assessment of two people and of a series of political events. At one point, when he tells us that 'the upshot of [the] poem is to urge a return to the cultural pursuits that had to be set aside at first', Mr Wood's concern for what might be called the poem's specifically educational value seems to have led him beyond the immediate impact of the words themselves to an implication that is—though inevitable, and certainly present in the poem—*not,* I would have thought, one that is given particular stress.

What Mr Wood seems to me not to recognize is the solemn weightiness that the poem exhibits at many moments. Indeed he explicitly denies that the poem is solemn:

> 'From the title one anticipates formal eulogy, a classical and heroic Grand Style. But it is 'classical' with a difference: the poetry produces an ironic effect and its seriousness proves to be of another order. Marvell does not, as Milton would have done, tell his readers not to take the poetry at its face value; he makes it impossible to do so by allowing the rhythms of real speech to off-set

> and deflate the exalted verse. The point of this kind of effect touches on the heart of the poem, which is concerned not simply with Cromwell but an attitude to Cromwell of a kind that lacks what Marvell believes to be a necessary and valuable perspective. His poetry does not dwell explicitly on this; instead of directly offering, it produces a positive viewpoint to counter what it decries.'

Mr Wood then goes on to give an example of the process of deflation.

> 'Tis Madness to resist or blame
> The force of angry Heavens flame:
> And, if we would speak true,
> Much to the Man is due.

> 'After the cosmic imagery and the heroic tone of the first couplet, we find we are brought up, by metre as well as natural speech and voice inflexion, to register bathetic surprise: that real speech rhythms should occasion the surprise is implicit comment on the unreality of what has preceded. The deflating criticism is emphasised by the implications of 'if we would speak true' (what then, one is prompted to wonder, have 'we' been indulging in!). The stress that falls on 'Man' serves as a timely reminder that Cromwell is a man after all, and not some superhuman demigod.'

Certainly there is a change of tone in the third line of this stanza, and clearly it introduces a contrast between Cromwell as portent and Cromwell as man. But it is, I think, a peculiarly modern and perverse turn of thought which hastens to the conclusion that such a contrast—especially when it is embodied in 'a modulation to normal speech'—must have the effect of deflation. Deflation and bathos can only be validly and valuably achieved when the preceding lines contain within themselves some indication, however slight, of hyperbole or of potential absurdity; without such an indication, the reader feels cheated or merely confused. I don't believe that the first two lines of the quoted stanza can be shown to be in any way ironical; they seem to me to be powerful and direct. The fact that many a modern reader is predisposed to feel sceptical about 'cosmic imagery' and 'the heroic tone', and is therefore happier to read the lines in a slightly

ironical way, tells us more about many modern readers than about Marvell's poem. (And indeed, if we are to be content to understand literature in the way that is easiest for us, and not to attend patiently to the pressures of the words themselves, what is our reading but a systematic reinforcement of our own predilections and prejudices?) I don't think, moreover, that 'if we would speak true' has the implication that Mr Wood suggests: like the colloquial phrase 'to tell you the truth', it introduces an important fact or new facet, rather than a sudden switch to veracity.

Cromwell then, it seems to me, *is* seen as something of a portent. But, though Marvell on the whole accepts and supports the new ruler, he is by no means uncritical or crudely partisan.

> 'Tis Madness to resist or blame
> The force of angry Heavens flame.

The lines suggest simultaneously the Puritan's triumphant sense of righteousness and the Royalist's almost despairing sense of doom. For all his classical restraint, Marvell seems to participate in both emotions, to gather them together in words that emphasize what the emotions have in common—a recognition of the fearfulness and grandeur of Cromwell as a manifestation of divine violence.

That this is the effect produced by the couplet that I have been examining—and that this effect represents an important aspect of the meaning of the poem as a whole—is surely confirmed by what we find in the lines that go immediately before:

> So restless *Cromwel* could not cease
> In the inglorious Arts of Peace,
> But through adventrous War
> Urged his active Star.
> And, like the three-fork'd Lightning, first
> Breaking the Clouds where it was nurst,
> Did thorough his own Side
> His fiery way divide.
> For 'tis all one to Courage high
> The Emulous or Enemy;
> And with such to inclose
> Is more then to oppose,
> Then burning through the Air he went,
> And Pallaces and Temples rent:

And *Caesars* head at last
Did through his Laurels blast.

'After the reverberating eulogy (lines 9-26) we come to a passage which pays plain and genuine tribute to real qualities that deserve admiration,' says Mr Wood. But there is no irony or suggestion of unreality in these lines—or if there *is* irony, it is of the sort that one finds in a tragedy. The impression that these lines give us of a 'terrible beauty', of a force that is superb and heroic and cruel and irresistible, is indeed a tragic impression. Like the poet and his contemporaries, we cannot but look in awe at events which surpass human comprehension. The bright vividness of the imagery and the steady flow of the verse suggest that what has happened is to be accepted and assimilated, however painfully.

Another stanza that evokes a feeling of awe at the mighty act which seems fatefully to have been both good and evil, both destructive and creative, is this:

Could by industrious Valour climbe
To ruine the great Work of Time,
And cast the Kingdome old
Into another Mold.

The word 'cast', with its suggestions both of throwing away and of forming or moulding, crystallizes the stern ambiguity.

I think it is only when they are seen in the context of such tragic pressures and complexities that the famous lines on King Charles—

That thence the *Royal Actor* born
The *Tragick Scaffold* might adorn . . .—

take on their true power and richness.

It seems to me that the 'Horatian Ode'—at least the part of it that I have looked at—is in some respects *un*typical of its author. Marvell's wisdom and delicacy of insight, his incomparable intellectual and emotional control are very evident; but the 'poise' does not on the whole impress itself as (to use the words of Eliot's that Mr Wood quotes) 'an alliance between levity and seriousness'. The poem truly is an ode; Marvell confronts the startling events of his day with more solemnity and with rather less ironical detachment than were usual for him.

The interpretation that I have offered may seem so different from Mr Wood's as to make the first sentence of this letter appear to be either insincere or merely polite. But in fact I have drawn attention only to that part of the poem where my reaction differs sharply from Mr Wood's. Many of his comments on the remainder of the poem seem to me precise and valuable.

Yours faithfully,

C. O. Gardner.

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