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COLERIDGE'S *DEJECTION: AN ODE*

STUDENTS of Coleridge have sometimes been puzzled by the entry in Dorothy Wordsworth's *Journal* under the date April 21, 1802:

William and I sauntered in the garden. Coleridge came to us, and repeated the verses he wrote to Sara. I was affected with them, and in miserable spirits. The sunshine, the greenfields and the fair sky made me sadder; even the little happy sporting lambs seemed but sorrowful to me. . . . I went to bed after dinner, could not sleep. . . .

What were these verses of Coleridge's that so deeply affected his friends? When Professor Knight edited the *Journal* he appended to the passage this note: 'Can these verses have been the first draft of *Dejection: an Ode*, in its earliest and afterwards abandoned form? It is said to have been written on 2nd April 1802.'¹ Similarly Mr. T. M. Raysor remarks in his essay entitled 'Coleridge and Asra',² 'The supposed first draft (to Wordsworth) may in reality be a second draft, developing the poem and adapting it to a different purpose in order to conceal its original application.'

The version of the ode now published, as it was written on April 4, 1802, and sent to Sara Hutchinson, proves this conjecture to be correct.

The *textus receptus* of the poem is that which Coleridge printed in his *Sybilline Leaves* of 1817, but before this he had published it in the *Morning Post* of October 7, 1802. The two texts differ in several minor details:³ the main variations

¹ Even in making this happy conjecture Knight is inaccurate. The ode was not 'said to be written on 2nd' April, it is definitely stated by Coleridge to have been written on April 4.

² In *Studies in Philology*, July 1929. A valuable essay, which sets forth with sympathy and understanding the course of Coleridge's love for Sara Hutchinson.

³ An exhaustive collation of all hitherto known texts of the poem will be found in the Clarendon Press edition of Coleridge's *Complete Poetical Works*, ed. by E. H. Coleridge. In this article the *textus receptus* is referred to as *T.R.*

between them are that (1) 'Edmund', a transparent sobriquet for Wordsworth, is found in the *Morning Post* for the vaguer 'Lady' of the *T.R.*; (2) lines 87-93 (*T.R.*)

For not to think of what I needs must feel
But to be still and patient, all I can;
And haply by abstruse research to steal
From my own nature all the natural man—
This was my sole resource, my only plan:
Till that which suits a part infects the whole,
And now is almost grown the habit of my soul,

are omitted from the *M.P.*; (3) in the concluding lines that Joy which in the *T.R.* the poet invokes for the 'lady' is in the *M.P.* represented as already the possession of his poet friend:

With light heart may he rise,
Gay fancy, cheerful eyes,
And sing his lofty song, and teach me to rejoice!
O Edmund, friend of my devoutest choice,
O rais'd from anxious dread and busy care,
By the immenseness of the good and fair,
Which thou see'st everywhere,
Joy lifts thy spirit, joy attunes thy voice,
To thee do all things live from pole to pole,
Their life the eddying of thy living soul!
O simple spirit, guided from above,
O lofty Poet, full of life and love,
Brother and friend of my devoutest choice,
Thus may'st thou ever, evermore rejoice!

Other manuscript versions of the poem, or part of it, are also extant. Two copies were transcribed for Sir George Beaumont, one of which, at least, must belong to the period between the composition of the poem and its appearance in the *M.P.*;¹ in this copy 'William' is substituted for the 'Edmund' of the *M.P.* Another is found in a letter to William Sotheby dated July 19, 1802, in which, after speaking of how 'sickness and some other and worse afflictions first forced me into downright metaphysics', he goes on, 'For

¹ Knight, confusing the date of composition with that of transcription, says that 'it was transcribed for Sir G. B. on the 4th of April'. This is impossible.

I believe that by nature I have more of the poet in me. In a poem written during that dejection, to Wordsworth, and the greater part of a private nature, I thus expressed the thought in language more forcible than harmonious'; and then, after quoting stanza vi ('There was a time, &c. . . . soul') (*T.R.* ll. 76-93), he continues, 'Thank heaven! my better mind has returned to me, and I trust I shall go on rejoicing. As I have nothing better to fill the space of this sheet with, I will transcribe the introduction of that poem to you, that being of a sufficiently general nature to be interesting to you.' Much of the poem follows in a version similar to that published in the *M.P.*; but with 'Wordsworth' for 'Edmund', and a few other variants.

Ten days later Coleridge wrote to Southey in something of the same strain: 'As to myself, all my poetic genius (if ever I really possessed any genius, and it was not rather a more general aptitude of talent and quickness in imitation) is gone, and I have been fool enough to suffer deeply in my mind, regretting the loss, which I attribute to my long and exceedingly severe metaphysical investigations, and these partly to ill-health, and partly to private afflictions which rendered any subjects immediately connected with feeling a source of pain and disquiet to me.' He then quotes *T.R.*, ll. 76-86, after which he says, 'here follow a dozen lines that would give you no pleasure,¹ and then what follows:—For not to think, &c. [*T.R.* ll. 87-93]. Having written these lines, I rejoice for you as well as for myself, that I am able to inform you, that now for a long time there has been more love and concord in my house than I have known for years before.'

It is hardly necessary to state that the love and concord which reigned at Greta Hall during July and August 1802 was only a brief suspension of hostilities: hence *Dejection: an Ode*, is the record, not of a passing mood now happily surmounted, but rather of a brilliant poetic genius doomed to premature frustration. A review of Coleridge's relations with

¹ Naturally, for they are the lines which bewail his 'coarse domestic life', and his disagreement with Mrs. Coleridge, Southey's sister-in-law.

the two *Saras* up to the date of its composition may serve to elucidate the poem, and in particular those lines 'of a private nature', which are now printed for the first time.

Coleridge had engaged himself to Sarah Fricker in August 1794 in the interests of *pantisocracy*, and within a month of his rejection by Mary Evans, whom for the previous four years he had loved 'almost to madness'. If he had hoped that this new attachment would efface the old one he was mistaken. 'Every day', he wrote a few months later, 'her memory sinks deeper into my breast', whilst of Sarah he speaks as 'her whom I do not love, but whom by every tie of reason and honour I ought to love. I am resolved, but wretched.' He was married on October 4, 1795, and in the novelty of the situation he seems for a time to have been really happy. Sarah has now become 'the woman whom I love best of all created beings', and the birth of Hartley in the next year, and of Berkeley in May 1798, by giving them a common interest, served to keep them united. The incursion of the Wordsworths into their family circle seems, in the Nether Stowey days, to have caused no unpleasantness, but rather, by the diversion it caused for Coleridge, to have postponed the day when he would realize his wife's limitations; and in his letters to her from Germany there is no trace of any *waning* of his affection. Only on his return, in July 1799, did he realize the emptiness of his home when the Wordsworths were beyond his reach; and when, on October 26, he joined them at Sockburn, met Mary and Sara Hutchinson for the first time, and was welcomed into a society of wellnigh perfect intellectual and emotional harmony, the contrast with his own home life must have struck him all the more deeply. On the next day he left with Wordsworth to pay his first visit to the Lake country, but returning to Sockburn alone, he stayed there nearly a week. On November 24 he recorded in his private note-book,¹ 'Stood up round the fire, et Sarae manum a tergo longum in tempus prensatam,

¹ For permission to inspect these note-books I am indebted to the courtesy of the Rev. Gerald Coleridge. Mr. Raysor's article (q.v.) is chiefly based on a careful examination of them.

ad tunc temporis, tunc primum amor levi spiculo venenato eheu et insanabili'. The love for Sara Hutchinson then awakened proved to be the deepest and most permanent passion of his life; his ballad *Love*, sent to the *Morning Post* on December 21, is his first poetic tribute to it.

Thus when Coleridge brought his family to reside at Keswick in the following summer the Wordsworths were not the only attraction that lured him to the north; and for the next few years he saw much of Sara Hutchinson. Before her visit to Grasmere in November–December 1800 she and the Wordsworths spent some days at Greta Hall, and while she was at Dove Cottage Coleridge was often there; during the next spring she was again the guest of both the Coleridges and the Wordsworths, and in the following August, under the pretext of sea-bathing, Coleridge spent a week with the Hutchinsons at Gallow Hill, near Scarborough.

How far Mrs. Coleridge realized the extent of her husband's devotion to Sara can only be conjectured, but it is clear that she resented his absorption in the society of the whole Wordsworth circle, which she felt all the more because, removed from all her own friends at Nether Stowey and Bristol, she was the more dependent upon his company. What wonder, then, that he had to complain of the 'freezing looks' with which she greeted his visitors, and Dorothy to admit that they were 'never very comfortable at Greta Hall after two or three days', after which time their company 'ceased to do Coleridge any good'? Moreover, he had hardly settled at Keswick before his health gave way. For nine months, he wrote in July 1801, he had had barely a fortnight's continued health, suffering from giddy head, sick stomach, and swollen knees; to ease his rheumatic pains he had recourse to opium, and now for the first time became its slave. And as he was seldom long at home when he was well enough to leave it, Mrs. Coleridge had for the most part a sick man upon her hands, irritable, depressed, often under the influence of narcotics. It would have been trying for her if she had been a trained nurse and a perfect wife. The Wordsworths, despite their love for Coleridge, could sympathize with her

difficulties. 'She is indeed a bad nurse for Coleridge', wrote Dorothy, 'but she has several great merits. She is much, very much to be pitied, for when one party is ill-matched the other necessarily must be so too. She would have made a very good wife for many another man, but for Coleridge!! Her radical fault is want of sensibility, and what can such a woman be to Coleridge?'

The situation grew daily more desperate. In October 1801 Coleridge wrote to Southey, his wife's brother-in-law, as if to prepare him for an imminent crisis. He has, he says, completely thought through the subject of marriage, and is deeply convinced of its indissolubleness, but though he goes on hoping that all will end happily he is convinced that if this mutual unsuitableness continues and strengthens he and Mrs. Coleridge had better separate. His grief is all the greater in that it will mean a separation from his children. 'If my wife loved me, and I my wife, half as well as we both love our children, I should be the happiest man alive, but this is not—will not be.'

In November he left for London, visiting Sara Hutchinson on his way, and for the next few months wrote letter after letter to her and to the Wordsworths, pouring out his woes. It is difficult for us to share their sympathy with him, when we read in Dorothy's *Journals* how relentlessly he preyed upon their love, often causing them sleepless nights, and affecting their health and spirits by his reiterated complaints. Dorothy's entry for January 29, 1802, is typical: 'A heart-rending letter from C. We were sad as we could be. Wm wrote to him. We talked of Wm's going to London.' Coleridge was fully conscious of the sorrow that he brought upon them, and bitterly reproached himself for it, but he had not the self-control to spare them, and he always chose to write to them at those moments when he was in his most abject mood. For he was not so consistently miserable as he led them to suppose. Indeed, as the time approached for his return to Keswick he could write to his wife of the 'tranquil state of his mind' and 'the cheerfulness inspired by the thought of speedily returning to you in love and peace.'

I drive away every thought but those of hope and of the tenderest yearnings after you.'

But if he felt these tender yearnings he did not pursue a course most likely to perpetuate them; for on his way home he passed some days at Gallow Hill. Reaching home in the middle of March, with the memory of Mary and Sara's loving ministrations¹ still fresh in his mind, he was not, perhaps, in the best frame of mind to appreciate a wife whose 'radical fault was a want of sensibility'. 'After my return to Keswick', he wrote later, 'I was, if possible, more miserable than before. Scarce a day passed without such a scene of discord between me and Mrs. C. as quite incapacitated me from any worthy exertion of my faculties, by degrading me in my own estimation. I found my temper impaired and daily more so; the good and pleasurable thoughts which had been the support of my moral character departed from my solitude. I determined to go abroad, but alas! the less I loved my wife the more dear and necessary did my children seem to me. I found no comfort except in the driest speculation.'²

Within a few days he was over at Grasmere. On March 19 Dorothy's *Journal* has the significant entry: 'Coleridge came in. His eyes were a little swollen with the wind. I was much affected by the sight of him. He seemed half stupified. William came in soon after. Coleridge went to bed late, and William and I sate up till four o'clock.' Doubtless their conversation was chiefly of Coleridge and his troubles. He stayed with them two days, and a week later they followed him to Keswick. Dorothy's report of their visit is brief and non-committal, though the entry under April 4, 'we sate pleasantly enough after supper', suggests, perhaps, that at other times things had not gone too smoothly. It was upon that night that Coleridge wrote, or more probably completed, *Dejection: an Ode*.

¹ It was upon this visit to Gallow Hill that the incident described in ll. 99-110 of the *Ode* must have taken place. For when C. was at Gallow Hill in the previous November Mary was at Grasmere. His other visit was in August, and the passage suggests winter rather than summer.

² To Thomas Wedgwood, Oct. 20, 1802.

It is obvious that Coleridge could never have published that part of the poem to which he refers as 'of a private nature', even if it had been poetically equal to the rest; nor could he have printed any of it as an address to Sara Hutchinson. For though he made no secret of his alienation from his wife, his attachment to Sara was unknown outside the Wordsworth circle. Yet, when he told Sotheby that the poem was addressed to Wordsworth, and implied it by the form of its publication in the *Morning Post*, though he is concealing some of the facts, he can hardly be held guilty of misrepresentation. (For even as it was first written the poem is a psychological analysis, as acute as it is tragic, of his own mental and emotional state viewed throughout in conscious and deliberate contrast with that of his poet friend. The lines bewailing his own domestic woes are conceived with the perfect affection and harmony of Dove Cottage vividly present in his mind, even the lines more definitely addressed to Sara are written with a sense—and herein lies much of their pathos—that though she returned his love, she yet belonged intrinsically, not to him, but to that happy company of friends, Mary and Dorothy and William, from which, despite their sympathy with him, his own misery seemed more and more to shut him out. This contrast in their fortunes was already, he felt, evident in their respective poetic achievements.) For he believed with no less conviction than Wordsworth that 'the deep power of joy' was alike the inspiration and the true basis of all sane imaginative art. Wordsworth, despite the troubles and anxieties of his life, was essentially 'a happy man and therefore bold to look on painful things': of Coleridge he remarked years later,¹ 'It was poor dear Coleridge's constant infelicity that prevented him from being the poet that Nature had given him the power to be. He had always too much personal and domestic discontent to paint the sorrows of mankind. He could not afford to suffer with those whom he saw suffer.' This is but the restatement of the view maintained by Coleridge himself

¹ Barron Field's *Memoirs of the Life and Poetry of William Wordsworth* (B.M. MS.).

in many of his letters no less than in the *Ode*. He was broken by 'afflictions which rendered any subjects immediately connected with feeling a source of pain and disquiet to me', and 'when a man is unhappy he writes damned bad poetry'; or, probably, if he is also a good critic, he will not write at all. Hence, he feels, while his friend will go on from strength to strength, he is himself doomed to poetic sterility.

That this contrast between Wordsworth and himself was the root idea of *Dejection* becomes doubly clear when we relate the facts already given of Coleridge's life with those of Wordsworth during the same period. The birth of his love for Sara was almost coincident with his discovery of Wordsworth's love for Mary, and while he knew that his love could never be fully satisfied, he saw his friend approaching nearer and nearer to his goal. When Wordsworth, in the company of his loved sister, paid his visit to Keswick in March-April 1802, he was on his way to see Mary, with a view to arranging that marriage which was to set the seal upon his happiness. A few days before he left Grasmere he had composed his triumphant lyric *The Rainbow* and the first stanzas of his great *Ode*; and though those stanzas only state the problem, and the *Ode* was not to be completed till some years later, he must have recited to Coleridge what he had already written, and spoken to him of that mood of meditative ecstasy in which his poem was to close. For lines 136 and 295 of *Dejection*—'*I too will crown me with a coronal*', and '*They are not to me now the things which once they were*'—are deliberate reminiscences, which Wordsworth could not fail to notice, of line 40 and line 9 of his own *Ode*. As we have seen, Coleridge wrote *Dejection* while Wordsworth was still under his roof; and soon after Wordsworth has returned to Grasmere, his joyful mission to Mary accomplished, Coleridge came over and repeated to him and Dorothy 'the verses he wrote to Sara'. He printed a revised version of them in the *Morning Post* of October 7, Wordsworth's wedding-day.

A LETTER TO —

April 4, 1802.

Sunday Evening.

Well! if the Bard was weatherwise, who made
 The grand old Ballad of Sir Patrick Spence,
 This Night, so tranquil now, will not go hence
 Unrous'd by winds, that ply a busier trade
 Than that, which moulds yon clouds in lazy flakes, 5
 Or the dull sobbing Draft, that drones and rakes
 Upon the Strings of this Eolian Lute,
 Which better far were mute.
 For, lo! the New Moon, winter-bright!
 And overspread with phantom Light 10
 (With swimming phantom Light o'erspread
 But rimm'd and circled with a silver Thread)
 I see the Old Moon in her Lap, foretelling
 The coming-on of Rain and squally Blast—
 O! Sara! that the Gust ev'n now were swelling, 15
 And the slant Night-shower driving loud and fast!

A Grief without a pang, void, dark and drear,
 A stifling, drowsy, unimpassion'd Grief
 That finds no natural outlet, no Relief
 In word, or sigh, or tear— 20
 This, Sara! well thou know'st,
 Is that sore Evil, which I dread the most,
 And oft'nest suffer! In this heartless Mood,
 To other thoughts by yonder Throstle woo'd,
 That pipes within the Larch tree, not unseen, 25
 (The Larch, which pushes out in tassels green
 It's bundled Leafits) woo'd to mild Delights
 By all the tender Sounds and gentle Sight
 Of this sweet Primrose-month—and *vainly* woo'd
 O dearest Sara! in this heartless Mood 30
 All this long Eve, so balmy and serene,
 Have I been gazing on the western Sky
 And its peculiar Tint of Yellow Green—
 And still I gaze—and with how blank an eye!

And those thin Clouds above, in flakes and bars, 35
 That give away their Motion to the Stars;
 Those Stars, that glide behind them, or between,
 Now sparkling, now bedimm'd, but always seen;
 Yon crescent Moon, as fix'd as if it grew
 In it's own cloudless, starless Lake of Blue— 40
 A boat becalm'd! dear William's Sky Canoe!
 I see them all, so excellently fair!
 I see, not feel, how beautiful they are.

My genial Spirits fail—
 And what can these avail 45
 To lift the smoth'ring Weight from off my Breast?
 It were a vain Endeavor,
 Tho' I should gaze for ever
 On that Green Light that lingers in the West!
 I may not hope from outward Forms to win 50
 The Passion and the Life whose Fountains are within!

These lifeless Shapes, around, below, Above,
 O what can they impart?
 When even the gentle Thought, that thou, my Love!
 Art gazing, now, like me, 55
 And see'st the Heaven, I see—
 Sweet Thought it is—yet feebly stirs my Heart!

Feebly! O feebly!—Yet
 (I well remember it)
 In my first Dawn of Youth that Fancy stole 60
 With many secret Yearnings on my Soul.
 At eve, sky-gazing in 'ecstatic fit'
 (Alas! for cloister'd in a city School
 The Sky was all, I knew, of Beautiful)
 At the barr'd window often did I sit, 65
 And oft upon the leaded School-roof lay,
 And to myself would say—

41. v. Prologue to *Peter Bell*.

63–6. Cf. *Frost at Midnight*, 51–3:

For I was reared
 In the great city, pent 'mid cloisters dim
 And saw naught lovely but the sky and stars.

There does not live the Man so stripp'd of good affections
 As not to love to see a Maiden's quiet Eyes
 Uprais'd, and linking on sweet Dreams by dim Connections 70
 To Moon, or Evening Star, or glorious western Skies—
 While yet a Boy, this Thought would so pursue me,
 That often it became a kind of Vision to me!

Sweet Thought! and dear of old
 To Hearts of finer Mould! 75
 Ten thousand times by Friends and Lovers blest!
 I spake with rash Despair,
 And ere I was aware,
 The Weight was somewhat lifted from my Breast!
 O Sara! in the weather-fenced Wood, 80
 Thy lov'd haunt! where the Stock-doves coo at Noon
 I guess, that thou hast stood
 And watch'd yon Crescent, and it's ghost-like Moon.
 And yet, far rather in my present Mood
 I would, that thou'dst been sitting all this while 85
 Upon the sod-built Seat of Camomile—
 And tho' thy Robin may have ceas'd to sing,
 Yet needs for *my* sake must thou love to hear
 The Bee-hive murmuring near,
 That ever-busy and most quiet Thing 90
 Which I have heard at Midnight murmuring.

I feel my spirit moved,
 And wheresoe'er thou be,
 O sister! O Beloved!
 Those dear wild Eyes, that see 95
 Even now the Heaven, *I* see—
 There is a Prayer in them! It is for *me*—
 And I, dear Sara, *I* am blessing *thee*!

It was as calm as this, that happy night
 When Mary, thou, and I together were, 100

89–91. Cf. *A Day-dream*, l. 35: Like the still hive at quiet mid-night humming.

99–110. This incident is made the theme of a separate poem, *A Day-dream*, first published in the *Bijou*, 1828.

The low decaying Fire our only Light,
And listen'd to the Stillness of the Air!
O that affectionate and blameless Maid
Dear Mary! on her Lap my head she lay'd—
Her Hand was on my Brow, 105
Even as my own is now;
And on my Cheek I felt the eye-lash play.
Such joy I had, that I may truly say,
My spirit was awe-stricken with the Excess
And trance-like Depth of it's brief Happiness. 110

Ah fair Remembrances, that so revive
The Heart, and fill it with a living Power,
Where were they, Sara?—or did I not strive
To win them to me?—on the fretting Hour
Then when I wrote thee that complaining Scroll, 115
Which even to bodily Sickness bruised thy Soul!
And yet thou blam'st thyself alone! And yet
Forbidd'st me all Regret!

And must I not regret, that I distress'd
Thee, best lov'd, who lovest me the best? 120
My better mind had fled, I know not whither,
For O! was this an absent Friend's Employ
To send from far both Pain and Sorrow thither
Where still his Blessings should have call'd down Joy!
I read thy guileless Letter o'er again— 125
I hear thee of thy blameless Self complain—
And only this I learn—and this, alas! I know—
That thou art weak and pale with Sickness, Grief, and Pain—
And *I*,—*I* made thee so!

O for my own sake I regret perforce 130
Whatever turns thee, Sara! from the course
Of calm Well-being and a Heart at rest!
When thou, and with thee those, whom thou lov'st best,
Shall dwell together in one happy Home,
One House, the dear *abiding* Home of All, 135

I too will crown me with a Coronal—
 Nor shall this Heart in idle Wishes roam
 Morbidly soft!

No! let me trust, that I shall wear away
 In no inglorious Toils the manly Day, 140
 And only now and then, and not too oft,
 Some dear and memorable Eve will bless
 Dreaming of all your Loves and Quietness.

Be happy, and I need thee not in sight.
 Peace in thy Heart, and Quiet in thy Dwelling, 145
 Health in thy Limbs, and in thine eyes the Light
 Of Love and Hope and honorable Feeling—
 Where e'er I am, I shall be well content!

Not near thee, haply shall be more content!
 To all things I prefer the Permanent. 150
 And better seems it, for a Heart, like mine,
 Always to *know*, than sometimes to behold,
 Their Happiness and thine—

For Change doth trouble me with pangs untold!
 To see thee, hear thee, feel thee—then to part 155
 Oh! it weighs down the Heart!

To *visit* those, I love, as I love thee,
 Mary, and William, and dear Dorothy,
 It is but a temptation to repine—
 The transientness is Poison in the Wine, 160
 Eats out the pith of Joy, makes all Joy hollow,
 All Pleasure a dim Dream of Pain to follow!

My own peculiar Lot, my house-hold Life
 It is, and will remain, Indifference or Strife.
 While *Ye* are *well* and *happy*, 'twould but wrong you 165
 If I should fondly yearn to be among you—
 Wherefore, O wherefore! should I wish to be
 A wither'd branch upon a blossoming Tree?

But (let me say it! for I vainly strive
 To beat away the Thought), but if thou pin'd 170
 Whate'er the Cause, in body or in mind,

I were the miserablest Man alive
To know it and be absent! Thy Delights
Far off, or near, alike I may partake—
But O! to mourn for thee, and to forsake 175
All power, all hope, of giving comfort to thee—
To know that thou art weak and worn with pain,
And not to hear thee, Sara! not to view thee—
Not sit beside thy Bed,
Not press thy aching Head, 180
Not bring thee Health again—
At least to hope, to try—
By this Voice, which thou lov'st, and by this earnest Eye—
Nay, wherefore did I let it haunt my Mind
The dark distressful Dream! 185
I turn from it, and listen to the Wind
Which long has rav'd unnotic'd! What a Scream
Of agony, by Torture lengthen'd out
That Lute sent forth! O thou wild Storm without!
Jagg'd Rock, or mountain Pond, or blasted Tree, 190
Or Pine-Grove, whither Woodman never clomb,
Or lonely House, long held the Witches' Home,
Methinks were fitter Instruments for Thee,
Mad Lutanist! that in this month of Showers,
Of dark brown Gardens and of peeping Flowers, 195
Mak'st Devil's Yule with worse than wintry Song
The Blossoms, Buds, and timorous Leaves among!
Thou Actor, perfect in all tragic Sounds!
Thou mighty Poet, even to frenzy bold!
What tell'st thou now about? 200
'Tis of the Rushing of an Host in Rout
And many groans for men with smarting Wounds—
At once they groan with smart, and shudder with the cold!
'Tis hush'd! there is a Trance of deepest Silence,
Again! but all that Sound, as of a rushing Crowd, 205
And Groans and tremulous Shudderings, all are over.
And it has other Sounds, and all less deep, less loud!
A Tale of less Affright,
And tempered with Delight,

As William's self had made the tender Lay— 210
 'Tis of a little Child
 Upon a heathy Wild,
 Not far from home, but it has lost it's way—
 And now groans low in utter grief and fear—
 And now screams loud, and hopes to make it's Mother hear!

'Tis Midnight! and small Thoughts have I of Sleep. 216
 Full seldom may my Friend such Vigils keep—
 O breathe She softly in her gentle Sleep!
 Cover her, gentle sleep! with wings of Healing.
 And be this Tempest but a Mountain Birth! 220
 May all the Stars hang bright about her Dwelling,
 Silent, as though they *watch'd* the sleeping Earth!
 Healthful and light, my Darling! may'st thou rise
 With clear and chearful Eyes—
 And of the same good Tidings to me send! 225
 For Oh! beloved Friend!
 I am not the buoyant Thing I was of yore
 When like an own Child, I to Joy belong'd:
 For others mourning oft, myself oft sorely wrong'd,
 Yet bearing all things then, as if I nothing bore! 230

Yes, dearest Sara, yes!
 There *was* a time when tho' my path was rough,
 The Joy within me dallied with Distress;
 And all Misfortunes were but as the Stuff
 Whence Fancy made me Dreams of Happiness; 235

210–15. An allusion to Wordsworth's *Lucy Gray*. Cf. also Letter to Poole, Feb. 1, 1801: 'This night-wind that pipes its thin, doleful, climbing, sinking notes, like a child that has lost its way and is crying aloud, half in grief, and half in the hope of being heard by its mother.'

221–2. These lines are quoted at the end of Coleridge's famous letter about Sir Thomas Browne, March 10, 1804, thus:

I trust that you are quietly asleep—
 And that all the stars hang bright above your dwelling
 Silent as tho' they watched the sleeping earth!

This letter has been printed as addressed to 'My dear —'; the manuscript reads 'My dear Sara'.

For Hope grew round me, like the climbing Vine,
And Leaves and Fruitage, not my own, seem'd mine!
But now Ill Tidings bow me down to Earth,
Nor care I that they rob me of my Mirth—
But Oh! each Visitation 240
Suspends what nature gave me at my Birth,
My shaping spirit of Imagination!

I speak not now of those habitual Ills
That wear out Life, when two unequal Minds
Meet in one House and two discordant Wills— 245

This leaves me, where it finds,
Past Cure, and past Complaint,—a fate austere
Too fix'd and hopeless to partake of Fear!
But thou, dear Sara! (dear indeed thou art,
My Comforter, a Heart within my Heart!) 250
Thou, and the Few we love, tho' few ye be,
Make up a World of Hopes and Fears for me.
And if Affliction, or distemp'ring Pain,
Or wayward Chance befall you, I complain
Not that I mourn—O Friends, most dear! most true! 255

Methinks to weep with you
Were better far than to rejoice alone—
But that my coarse domestic Life has known
No Habits of heart-nursing Sympathy,
No Griefs but such as dull and deaden me, 260
No mutual mild Enjoyments of it's own,
No Hopes of its own Vintage, None O! none—
Whence when I mourn'd for you, my Heart might borrow
Fair forms and living Motions for it's Sorrow
For not to think of what I needs must feel, 265
But to be still and patient all I can;
And haply by abstruse Research to steal
From my own Nature, all the Natural man—
This was my sole Resource, my wisest plan!
And that, which suits a part, infects the whole, 270
And now is almost grown the Temper of my Soul.

261. mutual: natural *is written above, but seemingly deleted.*

My little Children are a Joy, a Love,
 A good Gift from above!
 But what is Bliss, that still calls up a Woe,
 And makes it doubly keen 275
 Compelling me to *feel*, as well as *know*,
 What a most blessed Lot mine might have been.
 Those little Angel Children (woe is me!)
 There have been hours when feeling how they bind
 And pluck out the Wing-feathers of my Mind, 280
 Turning my Error to Necessity,
 I have half-wish'd they never had been born!
That seldom! but sad Thoughts they always bring,
 And like the Poet's Philomel, I sing
 My Love-song, with my breast against a Thorn. 285

 With no unthankful Spirit I confess,
 This clinging Grief, too, in it's turn, awakes
 That Love, and Father's Joy; but O! it makes
 The Love the greater, and the Joy far less—
 These Mountains too, these Vales, these Woods, these Lakes,
 Scenes full of Beauty and of Loftiness 291
 Where all my Life I fondly hop'd to live—
 I were sunk low indeed, did they *no* solace give;
 But oft I seem to feel, and evermore I fear,
 They are not to me now the Things, which once they were.

 O Sara! we receive but what we give, 296
 And in *our* life alone does Nature live
 Our's is her Wedding Garment, our's her Shroud—
 And would we aught behold of higher Worth
 Than that inanimate cold World allow'd 300
 To the poor loveless ever anxious Crowd,
 Ah! from the Soul itself must issue forth
 A Light, a Glory, and a luminous Cloud
 Enveloping the Earth!
 And from the Soul itself must there be sent 305
 A sweet and potent Voice, of it's own Birth

295. Cf. Wordsworth's *Ode*, l. 9: The things which I have seen
 I now can see no more.

Of all sweet Sounds, the Life and Element.
O pure of Heart! thou need'st not ask of me
What this strong music in the Soul may be,
What and wherein it doth exist, 310
This Light, this Glory, this fair luminous Mist,
This beautiful and beauty-making Power!
Joy, innocent Sara! *Joy*, that ne'er was given
Save to the pure, and in their purest Hour,
Joy, Sara! is the Spirit and the Power, 315
That wedding Nature to us gives in Dower
A new Earth and new Heaven,
Undreamt of by the Sensual and the Proud!
Joy is that strong Voice, *Joy* that luminous Cloud—
We, we ourselves rejoice! 320
And thence flows all that charms or ear or sight,
All melodies, the Echoes of that Voice,
All Colors a Suffusion of that Light.
Sister and Friend of my devoutest Choice
Thou being innocent and full of love, 325
And nested with the Darlings of thy Love,
And feeling in thy Soul, Heart, Lips, and Arms
Even what the conjugal and mother Dove,
That borrows genial Warmth from those, she warms,
Feels in the thrill'd wings, blessedly outspread— 330
Thou free'd awhile from Cares and human Dread
By the Immenseness of the Good and Fair
Which thou seest everywhere—
Thus, thus, should'st thou rejoice!
To thee would all things live from Pole to Pole; 335
Their Life the Eddying of thy living Soul—
O dear! O Innocent! O full of Love!
A very Friend! A Sister of my Choice—
O dear, as Light and Impulse from above,
Thus may'st thou ever, evermore rejoice! S.T.C. 340

ADDISON, KANT, AND WORDSWORTH

IT would have been pleasant if Lamb had treated as a *Popular Fallacy* the saying of his friend that 'Every author, as far as he is great and at the same time original, has had the task of *creating* the taste by which he is to be enjoyed'. 'Wordsworth', he might have begun, 'it is clear, never read Joseph Addison.' For there is another aphorism equally popular and, taken alone, no doubt equally fallacious, that every poet is the child of his age. Certainly we cannot *enjoy* what does not yet exist, but we have instinctive desires before we have satisfactions. And if the poetry that exists does not satisfy men they try to figure the not impossible poems of their ideal from shreds and patches of the past. That, surely, is what the antiquarian poets and critics of the eighteenth century were doing. They wanted something of which all they felt sure was that it was more like Spenser, Shakespeare, and Milton than Pope. Since they could not say precisely what it was, we cannot be sure that *Lyrical Ballads* was precisely it. But I think they would have recognized it better there than in Thomson or Shenstone or Chatterton or Ossian, or even in Percy's *Reliques*.¹ Still, Wordsworth might have replied that it was these earlier poets who created a taste primarily for themselves but ultimately for himself and Coleridge, who were to carry on their work further. But the fact seems to be, though to me it is very unexpected, that on the whole it was the critical theories which anticipated and stimulated the change in creative writing rather than the reverse.

It has always seemed to me that Addison foreshadowed Wordsworth's and Coleridge's theories of the Imagination and of Sublimity much more closely than any of his con-

¹ 'I do not think that there is an able writer in verse of the present day who would not be proud to acknowledge his obligations to the *Reliques*. . . . I am happy to make a public avowal of my own.' Wordsworth (1815).

temporary poets foreshadowed their practice. He owed to the critical work of Dennis and Dryden little more than brilliant hints, but to him the succeeding critics of his century owed almost everything. Professor Saintsbury¹ denies that the Imagination Addison praised was what Wordsworth and Coleridge meant by the word, mainly on the ground that Addison by the *Pleasures of the Imagination*² means only 'such as arise from visible Objects, either when we have them actually in our View, or when we call up their Ideas in our Minds'. But it is perhaps fair to remember that Wordsworth also refers to 'that inward *eye* which is the bliss of solitude',³ and that, like him, Addison holds that 'Memory heightens the Delightfulness of its Original' and that 'Imagination has in it something like Creation'. Burke⁴ perhaps has owed his greater repute to those 'finer parts of the brain' which were even more attractive to his age than to our own because it knew even less about them. Addison seemed less original and scientific in confining himself to what can be observed, the Pleasures of the Imagination.

Before turning to these greater subjects it is entertaining to notice how in small points earlier writers had revealed interests which Wordsworth and Coleridge satisfied with poetry. Professor Lowes has collected a mass of such material in his *Road to Xanadu*, and it would be easy to add more. In 1757 Chambers⁵ noted that the Chinese

sometimes make a rapid stream or torrent pass underground, the turbulent noise of which strikes the ear of the newcomer, who is at a loss to know whence it proceeds; at other times they dispose the buildings in such a manner that the wind passing through the different interstices . . . causes strange and uncommon sounds. . . . Their *enchanted* scenes answer in a great measure to what we call romantic.

¹ *History of Criticism*, ii. 444.

² *The Pleasures of the Imagination*, Spectator, 411 et seq., 1712, translated into German 1745.

³ *I wandered*.

⁴ *The Sublime and Beautiful*, 1756, translated into German 1773.

⁵ *Designs of Chinese Buildings*; cf. Kames, *Elements of Criticism*, 1762, ch. xxiv, an almost identical description.

They do. There was no need to create a taste for 'the bleak music of that old stone wall'¹ nor for the stately pleasure-house in an 'enchanted place', where the Chinese emperor heard ancestral voices in the tumult of the sacred river running through measureless caverns.

Even Wordsworth's revulsion from the extravagance of his own early romanticism had been anticipated. We can compare the prelude to *Peter Bell*:

Or we'll into the realm of Faery,
Among the lovely shades of things,
The shadowy forms of mountains bare,
And streams, and bowers, and ladies fair,
The shades of palaces and kings.

The night that calms, the day that cheers;
The common growth of mother earth
Suffices me—her tears, her mirth,
Her humblest mirth and tears.
The dragon's ring, the magic ring,
I shall not covet for my dower.

with its prosy prototype:²

Long have I loved to catch the simple chime
Of minstrel-harps and spell the fabling rime;

To mark the mouldering halls of Barons bold,
And the rough castle cast in giant mould
With Gothic manners Gothic arts explore
And muse on the magnificence of yore.

Sudden the sombre imagery is fled
Which late my visionary fancy fed;
Thý powerful hand has broke the Gothic chain,
And brought my bosom back to truth again;
To truth by no peculiar taste confin'd
Whose universal pattern strikes mankind.

But the growing-pains of romanticism in the eighteenth century are a commonplace of literary history. The main point of this paper is to trace the decisive influence of Addison, and

¹ *Prelude*, xii. 319.

² T. Warton, *On Sir J. Reynolds' Window at New College* (1782).

of English theorists who derived from him, on Kant, since it can hardly be questioned that Kant, through Coleridge, exercised a decisive influence on Wordsworth's theory, and even on his practice, of poetry. I shall only illustrate this last influence where it is peculiarly striking.

If we ask what did Coleridge and Wordsworth hope would chiefly distinguish their poetry from that of the last age, the answer must be Sublimity and Imagination.

Addison¹ said that the Sublime is to be found in nature rather than in art, but rather in 'the movement of the mind' than in any object of the senses. It is great beyond comparison. The final cause of sublimity is that we are destined to find our satisfaction in the infinity of God alone. Our Imagination loves to be filled with an object or to grasp at anything that is too big for its capacity. The mind of man naturally hates anything that looks like a restraint upon it. Nothing is more pleasant to the fancy than to enlarge itself by degrees, when it compares the body of man to the bulk of the whole earth, the earth to the circle it describes round the sun, that circle to the sphere of the fixed stars, the sphere of the fixed stars to the circuit of the whole creation, the whole creation itself to the infinite space that is everywhere diffused about it. The Understanding, indeed, opens an infinite space on every side of us, but the Imagination, after a few faint efforts, is immediately at a stand.

He gives as instances of this kind of beauty the Old Testament,² the turbulent Ocean, mountains, and also the pyramids and the Pantheon.³

Wordsworth no doubt created the taste for his poems mainly by writing them, but he probably intended his *Preface* to contribute to the effect; and this is how he does it:

The Imagination recoils from everything but the plastic, the pliant, and the infinite; . . . Having to speak of stature she does not tell you that her gigantic Angel was as tall as Pompey's

¹ *Imagination*, ii, iv, viii, x.

² *Spectator*, 405. Coleridge and Wordsworth of course agree.

³ Not, unfortunately, Wordsworth's 'stately Pantheon', but its original!

Pillar; much less that he was twelve cubits or twelve hundred cubits high; or that his dimensions equalled those of Teneriffe or Atlas;—because these, and if they were a million times as high it would be the same, are bounded: the expression is ‘His stature reached the sky!’ the illimitable firmament!¹

Coleridge writing to Thelwal in 1797 says: ‘My mind asks to know something, one, great and indivisible, only in faith of that do rocks, waterfalls, mountains or caverns give the sense of sublimity. But in this faith *all things* counterfeit infinity.’

The intermediary between these and Addison is Kant,² to whom Coleridge refers in his marginal notes to Herder’s *Kalligone*.³ Kant, like them, says that sublimity is to be found in nature only, though he gives two instances of it from art, the pyramids and St. Peter’s, the former to be found in Addison and both in Kames.⁴ He, however, corrects this by pointing out, like Addison, that the sublimity is really in a movement (*Bewegung*) of our own minds.

Nothing which can be an object of the senses is to be called sublime. There is in our Imagination a striving towards infinite progress, and in our Reason a claim for absolute totality. . . . A tree which we estimate by the height of a man gives us a standard for a mountain; and if this were a mile high it would serve as a unit for the number expressing the earth’s diameter, so as to make this intuitable. The earth’s diameter would supply a unit for the planetary system, this in turn for the milky-way, and the immeasurable number of milky-way systems called nebulae: let us expect no bounds here. . . . The feeling of the Sublime in nature is respect for our own supersensible destination, so that it is pleasant to find every standard of sense inadequate to the Ideas of the Understanding, and to be freed from the bounds of sense, when imagination vainly exhausts its powers of comparison.

It might be urged that there is a common ground for all this in the *De Sublimitate*. But on reading the three writers there

¹ Addison (*Spectator*, 321) had quoted this passage as ‘at least equal to Homer’s description celebrated by Longinus’.

² *Kritik der Urtheilskraft*, 1790, § 26 et seq.

³ Shawcross, *Biographia Literaria*.

⁴ Home, Lord Kames, *Elements of Criticism*, 1762.

can be no doubt that Kant's source was rather Addison, who doubtless had in mind the ninth and thirty-fifth chapters of 'Longinus': 'Sublimity is the echo of a great soul. . . . Homer can magnify even what is divine: "As far as a man's eye may pierce the haze, who stands on a cliff-top gazing over the wine-dark sea, no less was the resounding leap of the god's horses." He measures their leap by the standard of the Universe.' And again: 'Not even the whole universe can suffice the reaches of man's thought and contemplation, but oftentimes his imagination oversteps the bounds of space.' Addison's very closeness to 'Longinus' is significant, for the divergence or change of taste which was obscured by the controversy of Ancients and Moderns was more clearly, if rather unfairly, expressed in the rival loyalties of the time to the *De Sublimitate* and the *Poetics*. Those whose taste in poetry was for correctness, smoothness, decorum, regularity, were able to find authority in Aristotle and to neglect his more genial utterances; those who were for 'ecstasy' were more apt to enlist under 'Longinus'. And this quarrel between the critics was noted by the theorists of criticism and hypostatized by them into two species of the aesthetic genus, the sublime and the beautiful.

✓ The eighteenth century in England, and even more in Scotland, was extraordinarily prolific in aesthetic theory. Dennis, Shaftesbury, Addison, Hutcheson, Hume, Hogarth, Burke, Kames, Reynolds, Reid, Alison, Price, Knight are all important for various reasons. Scarcely less interesting are Hurd, Webb, Gerard, Usher, Harris, Monboddo, Blair, Campbell, Akenside, Beattie, Gilpin. ✓ And in this spate of theory there is a constantly recurring eddy about the question whether sublimity is to be ascribed rather to greatness, as by 'Longinus' and Addison, or to terror, as by Burke. These two qualities and others thought subsidiary to them, such as darkness, vagueness, roughness, preoccupy the writers much more than beauty in the narrow, traditional sense of 'unity in variety'. It was hard to avoid a patronizing tolerance for this latter quality, once Burke's description of it was accepted as 'almost always carrying with it an idea of weakness and

imperfection'.¹ He enumerates the qualities in beauty as smallness, smoothness, variety of outline without angularity, diversified but not strong colour, and even allows 'a moderate appearance of ill-health'. Its effects upon the spectator are a 'sinking languor and relaxation'. 'The head reclines something on one side, the eye-lids are more closed than usual and the eyes roll gently with an inclination to the object; the mouth is a little opened, and the breath drawn slowly, with now and then a low sigh.' On the other hand: 'Whatever is in any sort terrible . . . is a source of the *sublime*; that is, it is productive of the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling, . . . whether this cause of terror can be endued with greatness of dimensions or not.' But we must not actually be in danger, if we are to have this 'delightful horror'. 'Hardly anything can strike the mind with its greatness, which does not make some sort of approach to infinity, which nothing can do whilst we are able to perceive its bounds. . . . A clear idea is therefore another name for a little idea. . . . *Then a spirit passed before my face, the hair of my flesh stood up. It stood still, but I could not discern the form thereof.*' Nothing is so sublime as the power of God.

It seems to me that all this is exactly what we should expect in a period when a taste was growing which had not succeeded in creating or finding its appropriate poetry. It would be assumed that the familiar and congenial merits of contemporary work deserved the name of beauty and could be defined in the familiar, contemptuous way. But those who were vaguely unsatisfied would grope after some other name and other definition of the dim image of their desire: the romantic, gothic, picturesque, strange, terrible, immense, sublime. I suggest that a case can be made out for thinking that a taste for something like the poetry of Wordsworth and Coleridge not only was awaiting it, as is seen clearly enough in the letters and journals of Gray² and Walpole, but actually, through Kant, helped to shape, if not to create it. Kant,

¹ *On the Sublime and Beautiful*.

² e.g. *O tu severi religio loci* at the Chartreuse, and the *Journal*, especially the passage at Gordale Scar, 13 Oct. 1769.

citing Burke, accepted without question that a stormy ocean, mountains, volcanoes, cataracts, and (inconsistently) St. Peter's and the pyramids, none of which he can ever have seen,¹ were not beautiful. So they must be sublime.² He compromised the Addison-Burke dispute by allowing two kinds of sublimity, that of size and that of terrifying power when actual danger is absent. The second kind first checks and then stimulates the vital powers (Burke's 'finer parts of the system'). 'We regard the might of nature, on which we are utterly dependent, as, nevertheless, a power beneath which we need not bend if the maintenance of our highest principles were at stake.' Such sublimity cannot be combined with the charms of beauty. 'Nature is called sublime because she elevates the imagination to picture situations in which the mind can realize the proper sublimity of its own destiny as surpassing nature.'

This is how Wordsworth puts it in *The Recluse*:

Stern was the face of nature; we rejoiced
In that stern countenance, for our souls thence drew
A feeling of their strength:

and his confidant and inspirer, Dorothy, thus describes the Falls of Reichenbach:³

The cataract . . . is a tremendous one, but wanting the accompaniments of overhanging trees, and all the minor graces which surround our waterfalls . . . it gives little of what may be called pleasure. It was astonishment and awe—an overwhelming sense of the powers of nature for the destruction of all things and of the helplessness of man—of the weakness of his will if prompted to make a momentary effort against such a force.

The voice is almost precisely Kant's, just inflected by Coleridge, and the substantial thought is in Burke and Addison.

Two passages from *The Prelude* may be added:

Our destiny, our being's heart and home
Is with infinitude, and only there; (vi. 602)

¹ The *Frisches Haff* could hardly be a stormy ocean, nor even the Gulf of Danzig.

² Op. cit., § 28.

³ *Journal*, 11 Aug. 1820.

and

The soul when smitten thus
By a sublime *idea*, whencesoe'er
Vouchsafed for union or communion, feeds
On the pure bliss, and takes her rest with God. (viii. 671).

Even in the compromise of allowing two kinds of sublimity Kant was not original. He had been preceded by Kames,¹ whose long and uninspired work had been translated into German in 1763 and reviewed in the *Königsbergsche gelehrte und politische Zeitungen* for 5 March 1764, very likely by Kant himself,² who published in that year his *Beobachtungen über das Gefühl des Schönen und Erhabenen*, which is strongly reminiscent of Kames. Kames also had allowed, what Kant insists, that the sublime may be 'formless', and that it is humiliating as well as exhilarating.

When we leave sublimity and turn to beauty in the narrow sense we shall not expect to find so much both common and peculiar to the romantic poets and their theoretical predecessors, but it is worth while showing how much the latter affected Kant, in order to support our contention that he was influenced by them in his theories of sublimity.

Kant's general theory of beauty is that it arises where the object puts our faculties of perception (imagination and understanding) into a harmonious play, though one controlled by no conception of the object's purpose; and this gives us a pleasure,³ which we claim all men ought to share, in the apparently designed adaptation of the object for our perception. This 'immanent teleology' (*Zweckmässigkeit ohne Zweck*) Kant compares and contrasts with that of biology and of the physical laws of nature. Kames (ch. ix) and Hutcheson⁴ (ch. v) make a similar comparison. Kames also says: 'There is a rule for taste but a subjective one.' Kant says: 'The universality of the satisfaction is represented in the judgement of taste as only subjective.' All three agree

¹ *Elements of Criticism*.

² See Schlapp, *Anfänge von Kant's 'Kritik des Geschmacks'*.

³ There is a serious ambiguity in Kant as to whether the pleasure precedes or follows the claim. See my *Theory of Beauty*, p. 103 note.

⁴ *Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of Beauty*, 1725.

that this paradox implies a 'common-sense' or objective standard.

We may remember that Addison had said that art pleases most when like nature and nature when like art, since then we get 'such a variety or regularity as may seem the effect of design in what we call the works of Chance' (*Spectator*, 414), and Hutcheson had said that regularity of form suggests, though it does not prove, design. Addison had said the Pleasures of the Imagination are not so gross as that of Sense nor so refined as that of the Understanding. Kant defines the 'judgement of taste' as 'aesthetical, i.e. neither sensuous nor intellectual'.

Kant also follows Hutcheson and Kames in a vital distinction between pure or free beauty and relative or dependent beauty, the latter being conditioned by an idea of the thing's function or of the original which a copy represents.

The conclusions I should like to draw are two. The first is that Addison may justly be thought the father of modern critical theory. Professor Robertson,¹ who would rather claim that title for Muratori, admits that there is little evidence of Addison's having read him; and Muratori's² vague declamations upon the way in which poetry delights by illuminating truth and virtue do not seem themselves to illuminate anything.

My second conclusion is that the critical theories of Wordsworth and Coleridge, and even to some extent their actual poetry, were influenced by the aesthetic speculations of the preceding century which had indisputably evinced and fostered a taste to appreciate them.

This influence would, of course, partly be direct but partly also through the medium of Kant, who exercised such a fascination upon the youthful and metaphysically minded Coleridge. And in Kant's aesthetic theory we find little, except its rather strained connexion with his general theory of knowledge, not anticipated by English writers.

Of Addison's followers, Hutcheson, deliberately avoiding the sublime, emphasizes the formalist theory of absolute

¹ *The Genesis of Romantic Theory.*

² *Della perfetta poesia italiana*, 1706.

beauty, which is adopted by Kant. Kames recurs to a more subjective, emotional, or expressionist¹ ground for aesthetic pleasure and anticipates the *Einfühlung* theories by his suggestion that in contemplating a vast object we enlarge our own size by drawing in the breath. His stress on the relative element in beauty is developed by Alison into the associational theory, whose general basis was found in Hume. Burke would confine beauty to prettiness and sublimity to terror, for our pleasure in which he gives a physiological ground.

All these writers lead back to Addison and on to the German philosophers of aesthetic.

E. F. CARRITT.

¹ This expressionist or emotional interpretation of beauty, which is, of course, that of Wordsworth and Coleridge, is not much emphasized by Addison and is quite alien to Kant.

ELIA AND CHRIST'S HOSPITAL

THE child Elia, the discoverer, wise beyond his years, was important; and it is not strange that when the man was publishing his *Essays* 'over that signature' the third in the series should be to so large an extent the picture of that child's Christ's Hospital. Probably Lamb would have found much to haunt his memory or exercise his fancy later on in any school or no school at all; but in fact he had the advantage of encountering masters and schoolfellows, surroundings, customs, habits of mind, and episodes such as presently inspired eloquence in less gifted autobiographers. It is possible still to gather a little about them beyond what he and his best-known contemporaries have told us—to glean after Talfourd, Ainger, and Mr. E. V. Lucas.

'Christ's Hospital Five and Thirty Years Ago', a foundation situate in Newgate Street but cloistered away from that street's affairs, was the product of over two centuries of benevolence; when Lamb came into the story, the Bluecoat boy had been familiar so long that the old dramatists, like Jonson and Heywood, had referred to him naturally in their plays. The monastic buildings of the Grey Friars, driven away by Henry VIII, had not altogether vanished, and (though declining) still served the cause of the poor man's education. The number of boys (and girls, for they had their place) in the House at any time was approaching a thousand. They were a part of living London, displayed and admired on occasions of ceremony, and trained for commerce, navigation, school, and church. Into this community Lamb came as a very observant, alert, and friendly child.

He was not the first of his family to come. One thing which he has mysteriously omitted from his known writings—probably the appropriate context never occurred—is the fact that John Lamb, or James Elia, preceded him there. Mr. G. A. T. Allan found this out, and supplies the details: 'John Lamb (born June 5, 1763) was clothed on August 9,

1770; discharged June 2, 1778 by his father living with Samuel Salt in the Inner Temple. On June 4, 1778 he was bound to his father, a Scrivener, and granted £10, clothes included.' His younger brother can have had only slight recollections of John wearing the dress and using the language of a Blue (which has died away in recent years). 'Charles Lamb, born February 10, 1775, was clothed on October 9, 1782, and discharged November 23, 1789 by his mother.' To him also, on his being apprenticed, a grant of £10 was made by Christ's Hospital, from which he was thus officially parted 'for ever'.

The great majority of the boys left at about the age of fifteen, as Lamb did; but I do not find the circumstances of his departure quite so simple as those of others. In his essay printed in the *London Magazine* next before that on Christ's Hospital, Elia speaks of himself as one 'who has been defrauded in his young years of the sweet food of academic institution'. That word *defrauded* is surely not accidental. It sums up an old complaint. Lamb says that he was cheated out of his university education. 'The way to the universities, for a Blue without unofficial helps, was to become a Grecian first, a sort of sixth-form boy; Lamb never forgot that he had risen only to the rank of Deputy-Grecian, perpetually junior to George Dyer even. It is always stated that his stutter prevented him from getting farther, since Grecians were intended in the end to emerge as clergymen, and preach sermons. Leigh Hunt compares his own case precisely to Lamb's. But Hunt's name does not occur in a list which may throw a little light on Lamb's subsequent dissatisfaction. There is still in the library of Christ's Hospital, Horsham, a battered copy of Pope's *Iliad*, vols. i and ii (1716), in which former Bluecoat boys entered the names of Grecians and a few others—names that cover perhaps the space of a hundred years; and part of the catalogue needs to be quoted. 'Coleridge. C. V. Le Grice. Allen. Franklin. Lamb [*struck through, and written in again.*] S. Le Grice } Army. Thompson. Favell }

son.' By this I surmise that in the view of the school Lamb

was one of the Grecian calibre, for all the others mentioned were Grecians in fact; and there must have been argument later among the Blues, whether he had or had not been actually made Grecian. Behind this it seems likely that some other cause than a stutter led to Lamb's leaving school for an office, and being 'defrauded' of the university. It may have been difficulties in the family expenses.

I am now to come more directly to Elia—and yet the very first sentence of his essay, alluding to a paper by Mr. Lamb on the same topic, obliges me to linger. That earlier paper is in a sense the background of Elia's brightness. It had been written with great earnestness. The agitations of Radicalism had not altogether spared the administration of Christ's Hospital. Even Lamb's amiable friend George Dyer, rebellious for a season, had dared to point out abuses; in his *Complaints of the Poor People of England*, 1793, he remarked that 'if a gentleman of fortune should happen to have a natural son, there are other places to which he might with greater propriety send him, than to Christ's Hospital'. Other and louder critics continued the attack; and it was in order to put these complaints in true proportion that both Coleridge and Lamb first published their appreciations of their school. It was in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for 1813 that Lamb's papers appeared, and the choice of medium was clever; that *Magazine* had a wealthy and conservative audience, to whom Lamb—no unskilful journalist—suited the style of the writing. His stroke was very successful: the 'Recollections' became for a time the stock document about the school. There remained in Lamb's private mind plenty to say on Christ's Hospital in another manner and to other recipients.

In 1820 he had contrived, for voicing his subtleties, the mask for which he borrowed the anagrammatic name Elia, and he received the signal to show his strength, under an editor who understood literature, in Baldwin's *London Magazine*. That August ELIA stood forth—author of 'Recollections of the South Sea House'. Elia? A 'lean annuitant' of fifty-five or so, something of a reader of the classics, and half lost in yesterdays. From 'Oxford in the

Vacation', in the October number, the detectives might note that Elia was a clerk concerned with the cotton trade, and had been 'at school at Christ's'; this last hint preceded the essay now under discussion, in the *London* for November. 'Christ's Hospital Five and Thirty Years Ago' was warmly received. Speaking of some pathetic tale, the editor of the *London* presently remarked, 'Our correspondent ELIA could do all this as well, if not better than Sterne—witness his story, (in our last) of the "Young Stork", who fed his "Parent Birds" on purloined fat; and affecting as that story was—as we have had scores of letters, paid and unpaid, signifying'—but there is no need to transcribe further. If any dissentients appeared, they were some readers at Christ's Hospital or of it, very respectable men who much preferred Mr. Lamb in the *Gentleman's Magazine* to this disconcerting Elia.

(It is familiar that in *his* paper Elia spoke for others as much as for himself; particularly that he entered into the experiences of the schoolboy Coleridge, early tempest-tossed, 'alone on a wide, wide sea'. Gillman, apothecary and incomplete biographer, boldly states that Lamb drew the picture 'from the painful recollections and sufferings of Coleridge while at school, which I have often heard him relate . . . nearly the whole is a transcript of Coleridge's account'. But one would like to have an exact record of those conversations about Christ's Hospital, with Coleridge or Hunt or even John Lamb, which must have set Lamb writing.

The first part of school reminiscences, by nature's law, concerns food: and Elia follows nature. His account of the Bluecoat diet is proved exact by other sources. He has not forgotten the proper vocabulary. The word *crug* deserves illustration from a volume which will be mentioned again:

This word, the learned Grecians of the house would willingly derive from the Greek; but I rather think it no more than the corruption of an English word Crust, as it signifies neither more nor less than a piece of bread, served in the morning for their breakfast, which may justly be called a crust, it being only a fourth part of a penny loaf; though in a more enlarged sense it is also used in the house for bread in general: and he

who eats a large quantity thereof, and begs from other boys what they can spare of their allowance, is called a *Cruggy fellow*, or a lover of crug. . . . Those who are educated in the house are frequently called by each other, after they are out, when they chance to meet, *Brother Crugs*.

The marigolds which Lamb observed floating in the local soup puzzled me until I found in Culpeper's *Herbal* that those 'flowers either green or dry are much used in possets, broths, and drinks, being comfortable to the heart and spirits and expelling any malignant or pestilential quality which might annoy them'.

✓ Almost equal with food as a school subject is the question of holidays, to which Elia comes in due order. Besides August vacation Elia's Bluecoat boys had numerous 'whole-day leaves'. Here is the January list of those: '1st, Circumcision. 6th, Twelfth Day. 7th, Forty Widows. 18th, Queen's Birth Day. 25th, St. Paul. 30th, King Charles Martyr.' No opportunities were neglected—Candlemas Day, Fire of London, and of course Powder Plot were a few of many; and any such days which might fall on Sunday were kept the following day. In the preceding essay Elia had owned to his wonderful intimacy with 'the *red-letter* days, now become, to all intents and purposes, *dead-letter* days'; and he had related this faculty to his school. Do we not then owe in some measure to Christ's Hospital that run of perfect little prose idylliums on 'The Days', beginning with 'All Fools' Day' and 'Valentine's Day', in the first series of Elia? Has any other writer done anything like the set? Already the many-coloured almanack of old England was fading into the uniformity of modern life, but the child Elia had had means to enjoy the legend and the pageant. ✓

Historians have been perplexed by Elia's claim that Bluecoat boys had a prescriptive title to admission to the Tower of London, and the Lions. I can remember that it worked for me almost thirty years ago, and was kindly confirmed by the gate-keeper. There was not a Lion in sight. The privilege may have lapsed, but—let the righteous rejoice—is now in force again, except for the Bloody Tower. But what

of the Lions, those illustrious beasts, inseparable from the antique glory of London—the same that caused Fielding's Chloe (in *The Lottery*, 1731) to exclaim, 'O! my Lord! I must see all the curiosities; the Tower, and the Lions, and Bedlam, and the Court, and the Opera'? A century has passed since London's Menagerie was transferred to Regent's Park and the Zoological Society. Bluecoat boys of a date prior to Lamb's, and mine, went to the Tower not only to see the king of beasts but also the horn of the Unicorn, which has been mislaid.

After remembering holidays as disappointing Elia turns to the subject of bullying. One of 'one H——'s' misdeeds, the episode of the donkey on the roof, has a touch of merry genius about it. A pity that he did not live up to it. This alleged slave-driver is the centre of some contest among the annotators, Lamb having given his name (in his manuscript key to Elia) as Hodges, whereas 'history requires Huggins'. The late J. Rogers Rees explored the subject. In the *Philanthropist* of 1811 Lamb may have read an article on the 'State of the Slaves in the British West-Indies'; and in 1812 his friend James Webbe Tobin, who had arrived at Nevis three years earlier, was roused to publish a letter to the Governor, attacking the acquittal of a planter named Edward Huggins on the charge of inhuman whipping of slaves. If Huggins had escaped justice, 'the Honourable Arthur William Hodge, Esqr.' had not: he was hanged at Tortola, in 1811, for whipping to death his slave Prosper. Could he have been 'one H——'? Blues of that era were not seldom apprenticed to masters in the West Indies; and then, though no Huggins has been found in the school registers of the period, there is evidence that William Hodges, born November 20, 1768, spent three years in the Hospital, and was on January 2, 1783, 'bound to Jacob Wilkinson, Esq. of London, merchant, on behalf of James Tharp, Esq. of Jamaica, Planter, for four years'. The case is not quite cleared up, but it seems as if Lamb's memory had mainly been correct. Even the 'young ass' of H——'s schooldays has been subjected to historic doubts; but, as I have noted elsewhere, he has another

chronicler. In the delightful, and equally scarce, *Recollections of a Bluecoat Boy*, 1829—there is a dedication to Elia—W. P. Scargill gives the story another turn: 'In past days, some of the great boys in one of the large wards actually kept a donkey, which they used to take with them when they went to the New River to bathe in the holiday time.'

As Elia intimates, the fate of this donkey was in the hands of the steward; and the steward of old Christ's Hospital was in a remarkable position. The masters were masters for teaching purposes: he was the commanding officer. He, 'as well as superintending the affairs and provisions of the house, had the whole care of the boys in their playtime, as the several masters had during their school hours; and as it was the steward that gave the boys leave to go out beyond their bounds, so he corrected them that transgressed'. In recent times the steward, whose job must have been superhuman once, has transferred much of his disciplinary power; to the Blues of Lamb's day he was Christ's Hospital plainly embodied. Passing on, as Elia does, to a strange extreme of discipline, I may offer a statement of his Inquisition scene shorn of his art or of memory's enrichments. A Minute of 1788 stands thus: 'The Committee ordered that —— should be restored upon receiving the proper exemplary correction, and that —— who appeared incorrigible, should be stripped of his dress, clothed in an ordinary garb, and expelled after public correction in the Hall.' Whence the flaming San Benito, brimstone and black, was produced, perhaps some heartless beadle could have said.

Elia turns to classroom memories. Christ's Hospital comprised three almost distinct schools: the Grammar School, Royal Mathematical School, and Writing School. He belonged to the first of these, and rose through the forms known as Little and Great Erasmus—the Under Grammar School—into the Deputy Grecians, and perhaps finished as that phenomenon whom some remember as 'a boy that works with the Grecians'. He certainly had direct contact with the hand and mind of the Rev. James Boyer, who had been appointed Upper Grammar-master in 1776 in succession to

the irresponsible editor of Ben Jonson—Peter Whalley. The Governors were rewarded for their judgement: limited in range and narrowly forceful, Boyer remains great among teachers. Son of Abraham Boyer of Long Acre, citizen and cooper, he was baptized on August 18, 1736, admitted to the school in 1744, and sent to Balliol College, Oxford, in 1752. He became an undergraduate at almost as early an age and in the same year as Gibbon. Fifteen years later he returned to teach at Christ's Hospital, obtained the upper mastership in due course, and swelled his salary by holding School livings. When Lamb knew him he was Vicar of Enford, in Wiltshire, and the following document remains:

To the Right Worshipful the President, Treasurer, and Governors of Christ's Hospital.

The humble Petition of the Rev^d James Boyer, Upper Grammar Master,

Sheweth,

That your Petitioner has been in Holy Orders more than three and twenty years, and still possesses only a very moderate and precarious appointment in the Church.

That He has been for fifteen years one of the Masters in the Grammar School of this Hospital; the duties of both which offices it has been his study to discharge worthily by a close and unwearied assiduity.

Duly sensible how much his Trust demands the full possession of the faculties, He humbly solicits to be presented to the Vicarage of Enford in the County of Wilts, now vacant, as a retreat when He may appear no longer equal to an Employment so extensive and fatiguing.

Mean while it will be his greatest pleasure to dedicate his best services to this House, and to testify in that manner his gratitude to it for his Education, and for the signal Obligations which it has since conferred upon him.

But when Boyer did retire, it was to his rectory at Colne Engaine in Essex—a better living than Enford; and he died there in August 1814. Coleridge is his greatest enthusiast—very properly, for Boyer stood by him when he had made partial havoc of his chances at Cambridge. I do not repeat, though they have not lost their savour, the Boyeriana which occur in *Biographia Literaria* and *Table Talk*, and which,

together with the anecdotes of Lamb, Leigh Hunt, and Scargill, make up quite a comic saga of J. B.

As for Boyer's colleague, the impression put abroad by Elia can hardly have been that of readers of the *Gentleman's Magazine* for August 1796, as they scanned the Obituary: 'Aug. 11. The Rev. Matthew Feilde, M.A., rector of the united churches of St. Anne, Aldersgate, and St. John Zachary, 1788, vicar of Ugley in Essex, on the death of Paul Wright, 1785, and Under Grammar-master to Christ's Hospital. He has left a widow with six children, and a seventh expected daily.' The month following there was a supplement: 'Mr. Feilde is said to have been the author of "Vertumnus and Pomona", a pastoral, acted one night at Covent-garden theatre in 1782. He was appointed prebendary of Gretton, in the church of Lincoln, 1794; and of Eald Street, in St. Paul's, May 1795; and has left a widow and seven children.' Feilde had been at Christ's Hospital as a boy—1756 to 1767; he had arrived at Pembroke College, Cambridge, in time to see the famous Mr. Gray, had become a Fellow of the College, and after twenty years as master at his old school resigned in view of his 'preferment' at St. Paul's. What Lamb artfully records when he says that 'the town did not give their sanction' to *Vertumnus and Pomona* is noted in the *Biographia Dramatica*, 1812. The gallery, in a spirit of classical fitness and practical criticism, pelted Pomona with apples.

A word on the books read by Lamb and Co. in Mr. Feilde's class. The grammar was a Latin Grammar, 'for the use of Christ's Hospital', third edition, 1785—the production of an Old Blue named James Penn. Its frontispiece is a picture of Feilde's end of the Grammar School, with a dozen little Blue-coat boys paraded round their elegant pedagogue on his high chair. Can any of these boys be really holding, not a Phaedrus but *The Life and Adventures of Peter Wilkins*? I imagine they read that fable in Harrison's *Novelist's Magazine*, where it was included in 1783 and illustrated by Stothard. Fifty years later Lamb wrote verses in praise of Stothard with these lines:

In my young days
 How often have I with a child's fond gaze
 Pored on the pictured wonders thou hadst done . . .
 But, above all, that most romantic tale
 Did o'er my raw credulity prevail
 Where Glums and Gawries wear mysterious things
 That serve at once for jackets and for wings.

And a few days before his death Coleridge (always returning in his conversation to the 'cloisters pale') said, 'Peter Wilkins is a work of uncommon beauty; and yet Stothard's illustrations have added beauties to it. . . . It would require a very peculiar genius to add another tale, *ejusdem generis*, to "Robinson Crusoe" and "Peter Wilkins". I once projected such a thing; but the difficulty of a preoccupied ground stopped me.' Yet Coleridge accomplished, in something like the same genre, an *Ancient Mariner*.

The adventures of Captain Boyle had often been reprinted since the hairdresser Benjamin Victor published them as *A Voyage Round the World* in 1728. But now we come to the masterpiece. No school has had a merrier private classic than *The Fortunate Blue-Coat Boy: or, Memoirs of the Life and Happy Adventures of Mr. Benjamin Templeman; Formerly a Scholar in Christ's Hospital*. By an Orphanotrophian. *Quorum pars magna fui*. In Two Volumes. MDCCLX. This on internal evidence can be attributed to the Rev. James Penn aforesaid, a humorist who wrote much. It is a Fieldingesque performance. Its hero, a boy of the Mathematical School, by singing a solo at Christ Church, Newgate Street, fascinates and marries a young widow, gaining in the process 'as much as two German princesses could bring'. This legend is filled out with accounts of actual celebrities and manners of Christ's Hospital in the early eighteenth century. It was one of the books which Macaulay 'knew by heart', and its light must have revisited Elia as he summoned up the golden days of good Matthew Feilde.

Then, like some abrupt change in Collins's *Ode on the Passions*, Elia makes us hear the roar of Boyer, and the 'scrannel pipes' of his Easter Anthems. Modern headmasters

may be grateful at least that 'their duty does not oblige them to those periodical flights'. The duty was something of great antiquity, like the occasion:

On Easter Monday the boys walk in procession, accompanied by the Masters and Steward, to the Royal Exchange, from whence they proceed to the Mansion-house where they are joined by the Lord Mayor, the Lady Mayoress, the Sheriffs, Aldermen, Recorder, Chamberlain, Town Clerk, and other City Officers, with their Ladies. From thence the cavalcade proceeds to Christ Church, where a Sermon is preached, always by one of the Bishops, and an Anthem sung by the children. (1821.)

The earliest of these Anthems I have seen, 'A Psalm of thanksgiving, to be sung by the Children of Christ's Hospitall, on Munday in the Easter *holy dayes*, at Saint Mary Spittle, *for their Founders and Benefactors*', is that for 1610. The topic was, in short, thanks for yesterday, and now about to-morrow? These broadsides were embellished, as time went on, with pretty borders and cuts of Bluecoat boys and girls. In Lamb's time, these cuts showed an increasing refinement; and the Grammar-boy was displayed, in 1787, in the new Library. In spite of Lamb, I feel that Boyer was as useful a hand at the Easter Anthem as most, and shall leave it to a candid public to decide from this short example, dated 1788.

A Psalm of Thanksgiving.

I

O'er vanquished foes of old the youthful train
Oft led the sacred dance and song of praise:
To the soft harp in sweet, responsive lays
Was heard the Leader's fame: of victory vain,
Tho' thro' the hapless land wide spread the flood
Of woes, and harmless thousands wept in blood,
Did Israel's sons the festive hymns adorn,
And Hallelujahs wak'd the still-returning morn.

II

Hear from your blissful seats above
A nobler theme, ye Powers of love.
Hear, how in fervent strains and rude
The Orphan pours his gratitude,

Hear the wild joy, which swells to heav'n
 When health by bounteous hands is giv'n.
 Unnumber'd tongues one Source proclaim,
 And rival praise exalts the much-lov'd name.

CHORUS

Hail to the Worth, which reigns around
 With unpolluted lustre crown'd ;
 Which bids the silent tear to cease,
 And calms the stormy mind to peace.
 O live, in purpos'd goodness great,
 And hold to latest time thy wonted state.

Before leaving the author of those stanzas, let me illustrate one Elian nicety. He says that 'The author of the *Country Spectator* doubts not to compare Boyer with the ablest teachers of antiquity'. No. 30 of the *Country Spectator*, published at Gainsborough in 1793, ends, 'I shall only inform the unlearned Reader, that these men, whom Socrates mentions so respectfully, were among the B****s, the Wartons, and the Parrs of their day.' That Lamb should have noticed this slender allusion and retained it almost thirty years is some sign of his quality as a reader.

Passing from the near view of James Boyer, his humours and his 'sublunary infirmities', Elia traces his influence in a brief account of the eminent men whom he sent out into the world—a fraternal causerie, to which many of them owe the fact that they are remembered at all to-day. The 'first Grecian' of his time, Lancelot Stephens (so he spelt his name himself) was born in 1766; was a Bluecoat boy from 1774 to 1784, went up to Pembroke College, Cambridge, and eventually took Matthew Feilde's place at Christ's Hospital, resigning in 1818. He too was in orders. Leigh Hunt was among his grateful pupils: 'You loved him as you looked at him; and seemed as if you should love him the more the fatter he became.' Stephens died in 1833, just after a historian of the school had written of him that 'in communicating his instructions the sternness of the preceptor was forgotten in the indulgence of the parent'. It is hard to understand why Elia says that Dr. Trollope, upon Stephens's retirement, soon

discovered that 'it suited him to lay down the fasces also', but he may have heard of an intention. A. W. Trollope was Upper Grammar-master from 1799 to 1826. He was for no less than twelve years a Bluecoat boy himself (1775-87), went up to Pembroke College as Grecians usually did, and caused his university career to glitter with prizes. In that, several of his pupils imitated him handsomely. Trollope, most sonorous of Christ's Hospital poets, won the Seatonian prize in 1795 for a poem on *The Destruction of Babylon*. The echoes of that cataclysm boomed through the Easter Anthems which he produced in his turn: the 1817 example begins:

Great God of Heaven! when on a guilty land,
 Launched from thy red right hand
 The vengeful bolt descends;—
 When peal on peal the vollied thunder,
 Bursting the solid rocks asunder,
 Earth to its centre rends;
 Impress'd with awful fear, prostrate and low,
 Before the mighty GOD of POW'R we bow.

Trollope's prose was also—Babylonian. On his retirement he addressed the Governors:

. . . When I consider the liberal provision which your bounty has made for my declining age and to enable me to close my days in ease and comfort, I cannot find words adequate to the warm emotions of my heart nor has language expressions sufficiently strong to describe my sense of gratitude for your goodness. Though compelled by increasing infirmities to retire from my more immediate and active connexion with Christ's Hospital its memory will ever be most dear to me. Its interest will always be the object nearest to my heart, and while it shall please Providence to spare my life never will I fail to offer my daily and fervent prayers to the Throne of Grace for its continued prosperity and for the Blessing of Heaven upon all those who so worthily preside over it and upon all who do good unto it.

But Providence did not spare him long. (He died in 1827, aged 59.)

Elia next mentions Th——, actually Sir Edward Thornton, G.C.B. (1766-1852), of whom the *D.N.B.* gives some account, but no real biography has ever appeared. And yet he must

have been an extraordinary man. Ambassadors were never numerous among the worthies of Christ's Hospital. He was the son of William Thornton, an innkeeper ('citizen and vintner'), and like Lamb had an elder brother in the school. Admitted from St. Peter, Cornhill, in 1773, he followed the beaten track as an Exhibitioner to Pembroke College, Cambridge, was third Wrangler in 1789, and became Fellow of Pembroke in 1798. His fellow collegian Pitt found opportunity for him elsewhere. His 'various diplomatic functions' in Washington, Saxony, Sweden, Denmark, Brazil, and Portugal made him part of a remarkable chapter of history. Thornton, though 'sparing of speech', did not lack eloquence, though I only know one sentence of his prose. Investing the King of Portugal with the insignia of the Order of the Garter, in 1823, he pointed out that the annals of that honour 'include all that is most illustrious by merit or birth, most elevated by heroic virtues, and most astonishing by the great events which characterize the present age, or which impress their immortal stamp on all ages'. He retired the year after, and died at Plymouth. Lamb would have known another Blue who helped to shape the age in John Colborne, who, however, went on to Winchester. He was at Christ's Hospital from 1785 to 1789, commanded the 52nd Light Infantry at Waterloo, and became Baron Seaton in 1839.

Now among Elia's Grecians we arrive at Middleton, son of a clergyman in Derbyshire, a Bluecoat boy from 1779 to 1788. From Pembroke College, Cambridge, he departed, a little disappointed, to a curacy at Gainsborough, where he brought out the *Country Spectator* already mentioned. He intended a literary life, and among his brethren was known as a poet; but his preferments left him little time to write otherwise than officially. They cut short his editorship of the *British Critic* and took him to India, where, as Elia avers, he 'held his mitre high'. Consider his first Visitation, in the year of Waterloo. With a moving camp 'little short of five hundred souls', with a 'company's ship' at his disposal—Lamb doubtless heard of the ship at the India House—the Bishop travelled for more than a year. At Tanjore he inter-

viewed the Rajah. 'The prince returned the bishop's visit, omitting nothing in point of form to indicate his respect. There was a procession of infantry, cavalry, field-pieces, state elephants, music, and a crowd of followers, to the number of two or three thousand. It was quite an Eastern romance; and throughout the Rajah displayed the manners and deportment of a most accomplished gentleman.' On Middleton's return, although he had made no converts, it could be said that 'he had made the Church of England a little more visible'. He was a large man. He is, however, exaggerated in the Herculean monument at St. Paul's Cathedral, beetling over two confirmable Indians. He founded Bishop's College at Calcutta, wore himself out, and died on July 8, 1822. A Government Gazette Extraordinary lamented him, but the local dissenters with whom he had done battle are not known to have condoled.

With all his religious activities in India Middleton did not forget Christ's Hospital, of which he became a Governor by donation in 1821. In April 1818 he wrote (to Dr. Trollope): 'I have lately seen [Ackermann's] quarto volume on the public schools, including Christ's Hospital; I wish the account of it had been better; there is an interesting extract from C. Lamb, but a great deal more might be said on such a subject.' One wonders if he ever saw Elia's additional observations. Middleton was rather Coleridge's school friend than Lamb's, and when he published his *Treatise on the Greek Article* in 1808—that book of 700 pages aiming through philology at doctrine, which got for Middleton the jesting epitaph

‘O MIDDLETON’,

Coleridge read, and reported to Southey:

The very sight of the Book did my Heart good, the size, type, weight, all the Antipodes of the dolus bibliopolicus—a weighty, plain-pointed, plain-papered Octavo of 700 pages, and a most masterly work it is; the production of a good logician and a sound Scholar, it does honour to the Church of England, and will raise its character abroad. It is the ablest philological support of the Trinity in existence, and is of almost equal interest

to the general Greek scholar. Not that I entirely adopt his Theory; or that it has overthrown my own scheme of the Article. No! . . .

In 1793 Middleton published a sonnet which I believe alludes to Coleridge and evinces the imitation of Bowles which both young men delighted in. (It was Middleton who gave Coleridge, at school, the Sonnets of Bowles.)

CAMBRIDGE! dear name, at whose transporting sound
A pang of fond remembrance thrills my breast,
O could those hours return, which friendship blest,
Which Letter'd Ease, the Muse, and C***** crown'd.
How calm my soul, when oft at parting day
CAM saw me musing by his willowy side,
The while I would recite some raptur'd lay,
Whose ling'ring murmurs floated down the tide.
Yet ah! too short is Youth's fantastic dream,
Ere Manhood wakes th' unweeting heart to woe!
Silent and smooth CAM's loitering waters flow ;
So glided Life, a smooth and silent stream:
Sad change! for now by choking cares withstood
It scarcely bursts its way, a troubled boisterous flood.

The concluding imagery resembles the close of Coleridge's *Lines to a Beautiful Spring*:

Life's current then ran sparkling to the noon,
Or silv'ry stole beneath the pensive moon.
Ah! now it works rude brakes and thorns among,
Or o'er the rough rock bursts and foams along!

But I must return to Elia. 'Next to M. was Richards', son of the Rev. James Richards, a Blue from 1776 to 1785, then of Trinity College, Oxford; winner of the Chancellor's prize for an English Essay in 1789, and of the Newdigate for a poem in 1791. He was elected Fellow of Oriel; and in later life was Vicar of St. Martin in the Fields, where Lamb may have heard him preach. The Royal Society of Literature has long benefited from the enthusiasm which had once made him a poetic aspirant. His little books preserve an erudite and formal mind, and the rigid prosody of old Boyer. A verse essay entitled *The Christian* (1804) is inscribed to Boyer 'as a small Testimony of Respect and Gratitude by his Former

Pupil and most Affectionate Friend'. In Byron's *English Bards* three Christ's Hospital singers are censured—Lamb, Coleridge, and Dr. Johnson's protégé T. Maurice; one is approved:

Where RICHARDS wakes a genuine poet's fires
And modern Britons justly praise their sires.

'Then followed poor S——, ill-fated M——!' According to Lamb's key, 'Scott died in Bedlam'. At the school from 1776 to 1789, then of Pembroke College, he was 3rd Senior Optime in 1793. John Maunde ran away from school in September 1788, and was formally expelled on April 8, 1789; but he was proud to have been educated with Coleridge. His misfortunes continued when 'at an early period of the Revolution he went to Paris and was detained in prison four years by Robespierre'. However, he got home at last, and studied at Oxford, and took orders. He was valued as a translator from the French, and in 1801 published a version of Delille's *Rural Philosopher*; but he died (rector of Abberton) in 1813, aged 43. In recalling some unlucky Grecians, it is curious that Lamb omitted Emerson, who died in 1788.

Coleridge needs no discussion here, and I hasten to the most attractive, except Coleridge, of all Elia's Grecians: Charles Valentine Le Grice (1773–1858). Here is one who should have been among the English essayists, in his own right, and not merely remembered as a contributor to Lamb's biography. He was the son of a clergyman at Bury St. Edmunds; was 'clothed' at Christ's Hospital in 1781 (his younger brother Sam following in 1783); and in 1792 proceeded to Trinity College, Cambridge. His love of a frolic involved him in arguments with those august beings the Steward of Christ's Hospital and the Vice-Chancellor of Cambridge University; but he survived, took his degree, and was ordained. He married a lady in Cornwall, Mrs. Nicholls, to whose son he had been chosen tutor, and he spent his life mainly in the neighbourhood of Penzance, yet kept up a friendship with many men of letters. Indeed, he himself

remained one, and the entries under his name in Boase's *Bibliotheca Cornubiensis* and its Supplement help to explain Southey's epigram—that Le Grice 'had spent a fortune in sixpences'. For sixty years he was an occasional correspondent of the *Gentleman's Magazine*, and one finds him in other London periodicals; besides, he had the habit of employing the local printer on single sheets and tenuous pamphlets containing his prose or verse. To collect all that he thus 'published' would be a sufficient task.

This unambitious genuine wit made his earliest appearance as an author, it seems, in youth, with *Estianomy, or The Art of Stirring a Fire*. At Cambridge he brought together some of his recreations in *The Tineum* [τι νεον], 1794, including *The Icead, a Mock-Heroic Poem*. His Prize Declamation, spoken in his College Chapel on May 28, 1794, was printed: the subject was Richard Cromwell, and with it appeared *The Reign of Anne Improperly called the Augustan Age of English Genius*—a preliminary stroke for the Romantic dethronement of Alexander Pope. In 1796 Le Grice made fun of such College exercises in a *General Theorem for a ***** College Declamation*. From a sermon preached by him at Christ Church on St. Matthew's Day, 1805, before the Governors, it might be apprehended that he was losing his custom of mirth; he said, for example, 'With respect to those, who in these latter days have had the dauntless hardihood to deny the virtue of Benevolence, it is sufficient to observe, that the same Philosophy has styled gratitude a crime, has abetted suicide, has cut asunder the sacred ties of marriage, and has made the preservation of our offspring a matter of cold calculation.' Soon after, he temporarily appeared as an enemy of his school rival. Wordsworth wrote to Wrangham on July 12, 1807: 'Do not you write in the *Critical Review* occasionally? I know you are intimate with the publisher. . . . I put this question to you because there is a most malignant spirit (his fleshly name is Legrice) whose gall and venom are discharged upon the public through that review. This wretch, for such I cannot but call him, has taken Coleridge, his quondam school-fellow at Christ's Hospital and con-

temporary at Cambridge, into his most deadly hatred, and persecuted him upon all occasions, in which hatred all Coleridge's friends have a share and I among the rest. I have therefore to request that you would take so much trouble upon you as to keep the review of my *Poems* in the Critical out of this Creature's hands. . . . But Le Grice was not essentially changed: in 1817 we find him singing *Woodcock Shooting*—'at intervals between the shots'. Of all his productions the most considerable was the 'select translation' of Longus's *Daphnis and Chloe*, 1803; the most profitable, an *Analysis of Paley's Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy*, 1795 (for examination purposes)—8th edition, 1822.

I note here together some of Le Grice's printed things which concern great writers: paragraphs on Lamb at school, included by T. N. Talfourd in *The Letters of Charles Lamb*, 1837; reminiscences of Lamb and Coleridge, in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, May 1838; *College Reminiscences of Coleridge*, reprinted from the *Gent. Mag.* 1842; *Sonnet on Charles Lamb leading his Sister to the Asylum*, 1849; *Recollections of Lamb*, 1850; *Sonnet in Reminiscence of the Poet Coleridge*, 1852; and sonnets on Wordsworth in the *Gentleman's* during 1853 and 1854. But these may not be all, nor can one feel much certainty about the earliest dates of Le Grice's fugitives.

When Talfourd was preparing Lamb's *Letters* for publication, Le Grice gladly assisted him, and on April 9, 1836, he wrote to the biographer in terms which confirm what can be perceived elsewhere—that Elia had given offence in Christ's Hospital circles. If Le Grice said so much, others less sympathetic to genius must have said worse:

Let me *intreat* of you to *intreat* Mr. Moxon to let me revise any new edition of Elia as to Christ's Hospital. No Blue Coat can in it's present State refer to it with pleasure. I cannot read it to my family. I am selfish in this. He speaks kindly of me in it and yet I cannot shew it to a friend. I mean all relative to the expelled boy. In the revision I will erase nothing that would do Lamb credit.

And, after a detail or two on other matters, Le Grice mentions a little thing of almost fifty years before:

I went down in the Holidays to see Lamb at Mr. Plummer's Seat in Hertfordshire—a House which he describes—very solitary and no one there but his Aunt and Himself. I remember his shewing me in the Stable some Coach Harness which had not been taken from the Pegs on which it was suspended since it had been used at the Funeral of (I think) Mrs. Plummer:—what a circumstance for a child, such as he then was, to shew such a thing to his visitor, a young boy like himself, as one of the interesting features of the place; and it is remarkable, such impression must he have given at the time that it is the only thing (except a vase on an old terrace) that I recollect relative to the place.

At the Guildhall Library several of C. V. Le Grice's poems and prose pieces are preserved, bound up in an octavo volume. The following was printed without date at Trereife (single sheet, blue paper):

*Sonnet on Charles Lamb Leading his
Sister to the Asylum*

[Mr. Lloyd relates that he met Charles Lamb and his Sister slowly pacing together a little footpath in Hoxton Fields, both weeping bitterly, and that he found on joining them that they were taking their solemn way to the accustomed Asylum.]

An angel's wing is waving o'er their head
While they, the Brother and the Sister, walk,
Nor dare, as heedless of its fanning, talk
Of woes, which are not buried with the dead.
Hand clasped in hand they move; adown their cheek,
From the full heart-spring, tears o'erflowing gush;
Close and more close they clasp, as if to speak
Would wake the sorrows, which they seek to hush.
Down to the mansion slow their footsteps tend,
Where blank Despair is sooth'd by Mercy's spell,
Pausing in momentary prayer to bend
Ere the cheer'd Sister passes to her cell,
Sure in the hope, that yet there will be given
Calm and sweet hours of peace—foretastes of Heaven.

Another single sheet provides a companion piece, written in Le Grice's old age (Trereife, June 16, 1852).

Sonnet in Reminiscence of the Poet Coleridge

Coleridge, of Boyhood in the early dawn
 Oppress'd I felt not, nor of hope forlorn,
 Grasping your hand. You spake, as though our School
 Were of a sep'rate world the vestibule;
 And we it's habitants.—In cloister'd walk
 While such of opening scenes your cherish'd talk,
 I listen'd breathless;—and I saw you prove
 Your boded triumphs in the College grove.
 Thence, by a sudden plunge, amid their strife
 You sprang into the waves of this world's life;
 Nor paused.—Far, far away 'twas mine to hear
 Fame of your struggles, and th'appauding cheer.—
 At last of wond'rous Boy, of Bard, of Sage
 Sank beneath Friendship's roof¹ the shelter'd Age.

For a better example of Le Grice's poetry in general, a clearer twinkling of his usual light, I copy a

Sonnet on Mount's Bay

O Sacri Fontes! &c.

O Camus! &c.

Cowley to Alma Mater.

Bay of the Mount! whose op'ning coasts are spread
 From Mousehole island to the twin-starr'd Lizard,²
 Whose waves are speckled with the mullet red,
 From head to tail all good,—except the gizard;
 Whose sons the patriotic flame display,
 Which warm'd the breast of Hampdens and of Sidneys,
 Whose sloping headlands with potatoes gay
 Bloom with the scarlet robe, and silv'ry kidneys:
 O! Land of yellow ling, and powder'd hake!
 O! Cornucopia of clouted cream;
 O! Nurse of matrons skill'd the pie to bake
 Beneath the furze-fir'd kettle! Not a ream
 Of Folio paper from the stores of Hewett,³
 If I could write thy praise, would give me room to do it.

After Le Grice Lamb recalls Bob Allen, the luckless

¹ See the beautiful Epitaph, inscribed and placed in Highgate New Church, by James and Ann Gillman, July 1834.

² Two lights formerly at the Lizard Light House.

³ The only Bookseller then in Penzance.

journalist in *Newspapers Five and Thirty Years Ago*. That account appears to refer to the years 1802-4, but meanwhile Allen took the degrees of M.B. and M.D.; and already he had been, in 1797, 'Deputy-Surgeon to the 2nd Royal Dragoons in Portugal'. This division of enthusiasms between literature and medicine reminds us of Coleridge's early career. The two were great friends. At Easter 1794 Coleridge and J. Hucks visited Oxford, to be 'hailed by the young Oxonians, and particularly by those who were admirers of . . . Godwin's Political Justice, which had just appeared—at that time forming a numerous and a separate class, mutually addressing each other by the title of *citizens*. A debating club upon questions of this nature was instituted'; among the members were John (afterwards Sir John) Stoddart, Southey, T. F. Dibdin, and Allen. 'This jacobinical assembly created great alarm among the heads of the University.' Presently Allen joined Coleridge, Southey, and others in the 'plan to establish a Pantisocratical Society on the banks of the Ohio'. Allen's farewell letter to Coleridge, on leaving for Portugal, is printed in Coleridge's *Letters*, edited by E. H. Coleridge. He was the son of the Rev. Timothy Allen, of Faversham; went from Christ's Hospital to University College, Oxford, in 1792; and appears thus in the *Gentleman's Magazine* obituary for January 30, 1805: 'On the medical staff at Sudbury, after a short illness, in the prime of life, Robert Allen, M.D. of University-college, Oxford.'

'The junior Le G——' is known very well to readers of Lamb's early letters. He was at Christ's Hospital from 1783 to 1794, then at Trinity College, Cambridge, whence he escaped into the Army; but he was too restless to stay there. He was in the West Indies when he died, and Leigh Hunt, in *Lord Byron and his Contemporaries*, 1828, summed up general gossip by saying he 'died a rake'. The words startled Charles Valentine Le Grice at Penzance, and he protested (February 10, 1828):

Dear Sir, Excuse my writing on this paper, in my haste I can find no other. Your 'Recollections' have just reached me. What could have induced you to have given such an account

of my dear Brother? He died, you say, a rake . . . A rake! I wish, Sir, you were at my elbow, and could read a packet of his letters from Jamaica:—read his first feelings on the scenes in Jamaica: he was awakened to most serious thoughts, and meditating a history of the internal state of the island, especially of the Maroons. If you could see his letters, you would *revere* instead of abusing his memory. How delightfully you speak of *your* Father and Mother. *My* Mother is still living; only suppose this page of your book coming before her eyes! . . .

‘F——’, the ‘Poor W——’ of *Poor Relations*, was the son of John Favell, baptized November 5, 1775, admitted from St. Benedict, Cambridge, in April 1786, and sent with an Exhibition to Pembroke College, Cambridge, in 1795. While he was still at school, Coleridge netted him as a Pantisocrat, and transcribed a sonnet of his on the great theme in a letter to Southey (*Unpublished Letters*, ed. E. L. Griggs, i. 24). In the Dispatch which announced the casualties of Salamanca, July 22, 1812, one finds: ‘61st foot, 1st battn.: Capt. Faville, severely wounded (since dead).’ Did Favell thus change his name a little, for the reasons which Elia has hinted in *Poor Relations*?

Two names remain on Elia’s list. A writer in the *Gentleman’s Magazine*, 1836, adds something to our knowledge of Frederick William Franklin, who was at Christ’s Hospital from 1783 to 1793, then at Pembroke College, Cambridge, then grammar master of the Hertford part of Christ’s Hospital from 1801 to 1827.

During Mr. Franklin’s residence at Hertford, his kindness of heart and his intellectual endowments, united with convivial manners and superior powers of conversation, endeared him to his intimate friends. It was at this period that the writer of this notice first became acquainted with him, and for many years an almost daily intercourse was kept up between them, and it is with affectionate recollection that he now looks back to the many attic hours spent in his society. ‘Frank-hearted Franklin’ was the denomination given to him by his friend and school-fellow Charles Lamb; and those who knew his friendly disposition know with what truth and justice that term was applied.

Marmaduke Thompson, to whom Lamb dedicated *Rosamund Gray*, became, like Lamb, a servant of the East India Company—but that was at Madras, where he was Senior Chaplain. In later life he was for twenty years Rector of Brightwell in Berkshire, where he died on April 12, 1851, aged 75. The living was a good one, and he owed his fortune to the fact that he had married the niece of Charles Sumner, Bishop of Winchester. The Brightwell parishioners 'entreated' the Bishop to give the living to the curate, one of Lamb's friends the Burneys. But the Bishop had promised it.

These worthy men could have told us much about Lamb which would be valuable now, for it is his boyhood and his early manhood which they knew well, and we do not. Later on his ways were observed and his humours recorded by a great many acquaintances who did not always separate the man from his outwall. Fuller descriptions of the candour and keenness of the first period, when the outwall had not yet become necessary, would have been welcome instead of the weaker parts of subsequent reminiscence.

EDMUND BLUNDEN.

SOME CHARACTERISTICS OF JANE AUSTEN'S STYLE

'MANNER of writing, with regard to language'—that is Johnson's definition of style, in the *Dictionary*; and to illustrate it he quotes Swift: 'Proper words in proper places make the true definition of a *stile*.' It is in this comfortably limited sense, and almost unmindful of the wider implications suggested by modern criticism, that I propose to use the word here.

Among Jane Austen's readers, some must surely have wondered why nobody has yet looked curiously into her 'manner of writing, with regard to language'. This was not surprising in those days—not yet very distant—when the fullest critical account of her could dismiss the subject in a single bland denial: 'She has no remarkable distinction of style';¹ but it is surprising now, when even those critics who say they do not like her admit her fine workmanship. Again, that these antagonistic readers should be satisfied once they have made the admission—'When I call her writing truthful and apt, I have said all that should be said in praise of it'²—this is natural enough; but surely it is strange that her admirers should be willing to take for granted this element in her art, letting it pass as 'mere technical accomplishment'³—all the stranger since she allows us to learn something of her own preferences and opinions as to 'proper words in proper places'.

She formulates these notions explicitly in her letters to one of her nieces, the wilful, clever Anna, who embarked on a novel of her own; and, clearly enough for any one who cares to listen, in others among her letters. She expresses them implicitly in all her literary satire: through her burlesque of bad style in *Volume the First* and *Love and Freindship*;

¹ F. Warre Cornish, *Jane Austen* (E.M.L.), p. 235.

² H. W. Garrod, *Jane Austen: A Depreciation* (R.S.L.), p. 30.

³ D. Cecil, *Jane Austen* (Leslie Stephen Lecture), p. 22.

through the vein of burlesque that is traceable in her letters to Cassandra ; and through the idiosyncrasies of speech of her disagreeable people. Further, we can infer them from those small but invaluable pieces of evidence—the fragments of her manuscripts that survive. There are rough drafts of her two unfinished novels—known as *The Watsons* and *Sanditon*—with her neat corrections decipherable. There is the manuscript collection of juvenilia called *Volume the First*, with a significant alteration here and there—(and that other collection published as *Love and Freindship* may have as much to tell us if the manuscript becomes accessible). And there is the manuscript of the first draft for the end of *Persuasion*, doubly interesting in that it shows her meticulous corrections and offers itself for comparison with the final version. To study it is—almost—to watch Jane Austen at work, to see her arranging a sentence this way and that, and discovering her own preference. Among the manuscripts, *Lady Susan* alone is a discreet, unrevealing, fair copy.

But, it may fairly be said—‘among these pieces of evidence, all that can be called direct and explicit are gleaned from mere fragments of writing’. Nevertheless, regarded together they show a particular characteristic, to be expected in the work of this particular lady—a radical consistency. So, though the corrections in any one of the manuscripts may show her struggling with an incidental difficulty—as those of the *The Watsons* seem to me to do—the preferences which a study of all the manuscripts reveals answer, with a delightful precision, the preferences expressed in the letters to Anna ; while the dislikes which emerge from such a comparison tally with her choice of faults of style to ridicule in the burlesque writings. One small instance will serve for the time being: criticizing Anna’s novel, Jane Austen writes to her: ‘. . . your descriptions are often more minute than will be liked. You give too many particulars of right hand & left.’¹ Revising a passage of her own, in *The Watsons*, she prunes her account of the Edwards’ house of its minute particulars (the adjectives of colour and the enumeration of

¹ *Letters*, p. 401.

windows);¹ and it would hardly be fanciful to set beside these indications her lightly expressed disappointment when her brother Frank's eagerly awaited letter proves 'according to the present fashionable stile of composition . . . chiefly descriptive'.²

I do not think it can be poverty of evidence which has made Jane Austen's critics incurious about her notions of style. Rather it must be that the brilliance of her early writing has blinded us to later development, and made her accomplishment seem a matter of course. Already in *Love and Freindship* G. K. Chesterton notices 'a certain neatness in the nonsense . . . not a little of the true Austen irony'.³ In one of the earliest among her surviving letters—earlier than any surviving draft of her novels—this sentence catches the eye: 'Tis really very kind of my Aunt to ask us to Bath again; a kindness that deserves a better return than to profit by it.'⁴ Could there be a more neatly cut comment on an invitation from a rich relation who, by all accounts, did her duty by her nieces without enjoying it? One can feel no surprise, after this, at the frosty sparkle of *Lady Susan*; nor at the edge which exact phrasing gives to the satire in *Sense and Sensibility*—as, for example, when Mrs. Ferrars 'after such an ungracious delay as she owed to her own dignity, and as served to prevent every suspicion of good-will, . . . issued her decree of consent to the marriage of Edward and Elinor', and settled a small sum upon them. 'It was as much, however, as was desired, and more than was expected by Edward and Elinor; and Mrs. Ferrars herself, by her shuffling excuses, seemed the only person surprised at her not giving more.'⁵ One can only wonder whether a young lady who is able to write like this in her first published work will ever learn to write still better. And indeed, to the casual reader it must sometimes seem that she will not always write so well as she

¹ p. 19. See note to l. 20. References to Jane Austen's writings, except *Love and Freindship*, indicate Dr. Chapman's editions.

² *Letters*, p. 78.

³ Preface to *Love and Freindship*, p. xii.

⁴ *Letters*, p. 26.

⁵ pp. 373-4.

does in the novels drafted before the close of her youth, that never again will she be so brilliantly idiosyncratic, so unmistakably herself, as in *Pride and Prejudice*; that she might almost say, as Dryden is made to say in *The Hind and the Panther Transvers'd*, ' . . . I fill the first part with Flowers, Figures, fine Language, and all that; and then I'gad sink by degrees, till at last I write but little better than other People.' And so it comes about that in Professor Garrod's opinion 'Jane Austen could write at twenty as well, or better, or very nearly as well, as at forty'.¹ But that is to ignore the essential qualities of her later style.

For the technique of her later novels those early sports of wit, the juvenilia, were no training, and her earliest published writing bears signs of apprenticeship. She had to discover—and the stiffer parts of *Sense and Sensibility* show how hardly she came by it—the proper tone of voice for different kinds of narrative; not merely for occasional passages of emotional urgency but also for the sustained course of grave, circumstantial relation of events. I suspect that a sense of this difficulty may be lightly expressed in her own half-mocking criticism of *Pride and Prejudice* as

rather too light, and bright, and sparkling; it wants shade; it wants to be stretched out here and there with a long chapter of sense, if it could be had; if not, of solemn specious nonsense, about something unconnected with the story; an essay on writing, a critique on Walter Scott, or the history of Buonaparté, or anything that would form a contrast, and bring the reader with increased delight to the playfulness and epigrammatism of the general style.²

There are several shafts of satire in this one sentence, and not all of them directed against *Pride and Prejudice*, but that phrase 'playfulness and epigrammatism' exactly hits off the character of its narrative style, its charm and its limitations. For a retrospect of Mr. Bennet's married life it is admirable: 'To his wife he was very little otherwise indebted, than as her ignorance and folly had contributed to his amusement. This is not the sort of happiness which a man would in

¹ op. cit., p. 28.

² *Letters*, pp. 299, 300.

general wish to owe to his wife; but where other powers of entertainment are wanting, the true philosopher will derive benefit from such as are given.'¹ But for the prospect of Lydia's married life it is not so good: '... how little of permanent happiness could belong to a couple who were only brought together because their passions were stronger than their virtue, she could easily conjecture.'² The antithesis jingles.

In dialogue also she has much to learn, in spite of the precocious quickness of ear that, long before, had caught more than one tone in the talk of fools—the tone of sheer farce in the quarrel between Lady Williams and Alice Johnson,³ the solemn nonsense which accompanies the entrance of the hero into *Love and Freindship*; in spite, too, of the ripened wit that sparkles in the talk of Elizabeth and her father. She has to discover the tones that express other moods, the undertones of anxiety and sense of loss; hardest of all, she must have at her command the manner of talk among sensible people. (Richardson himself had found this not altogether easy, if we may judge from the letters written to his friends while he was framing the figure of Sir Charles Grandison.) And it is interesting to find Jane Austen congratulating Anna—more than once, and with unusual emphasis—on her success in serious dialogue—('I . . . am more particularly struck with your *serious* conversations . . .'⁴)

—and admitting regretfully: 'I wish you could make Mrs. F. talk more, but she must be difficult to manage & make entertaining, because there is so much good common sence & propriety about her that nothing can be very broad.'⁵

Common sense and propriety' in her own early novels had been apt to sound lifeless unless they were wittily expressed. Perhaps that is why 'playfulness and epigrammatism' has made its way into every part of *Pride and Prejudice*; from the manner of their introduction I should guess that the Gardiners were intended for plain, matter-of-fact people, but when they

¹ p. 236.

² p. 312.

³ *Jack and Alice* (Volume the First).

⁴ *Letters*, p. 421.

⁵ *Letters*, p. 402.

appear their talk has a dry sparkle that would hardly discredit Mr. Bennet's side of the family.¹ Not before *Emma* does Jane Austen achieve such dialogue as that between Mrs. Weston and Mr. Knightley, which holds the reader fast without one twinkle of wit on her side and but a little irony on his. Even Edmund Bertram had not always been so sensible, so remote from comedy, as he, and Fanny, supposed.

This line that I have suggested between dialogue and narrative makes a rough working division within this subject of style, if only on account of the greater importance of the ear as censor when dialogue is to be written. Miss Clavering, who was to have collaborated with her friend, Miss Ferrier, in *Marriage*, insisted very shrewdly on the necessity for this censorship. 'I don't like those high life conversations', she says; 'they are a sort of thing by consent handed down from generation to generation in novels, but have little or no groundwork in truth . . . [they] could at best amuse by putting one in mind of other novels not by recalling to anybody what they ever saw or heard in real life . . .' And she is pretty severe on her friend's more ambitious writing in this kind, 'which is the style of conversation of duchesses only in novels', and severer still on Miss Edgeworth's: 'One sees it is done half by guess, half by memory, and greatly by imagination.'¹ A conversational style handed down from one generation of novelists to another—that is a pitfall, as Jane Austen gently reminds Anna: 'I do not like a Lover's speaking in the 3^d person;—it is too much like the formal part of Lord Orville, & I think is not natural.'²

What the ear catches and memory holds of conversation overheard is, however, mere raw material of the novelist's art, awaiting transmutation. And this is not likely to be a simple process. In the first place, the material may happen to be, for some particular and obvious reason, intractable.—It is an ungrateful task to illustrate one's argument with the small mistakes of the great; but the mistakes of Dickens are

¹ 10 May 1813 (*Memoir and Correspondence of Susan Ferrier*, ed. J. A. Doyle, pp. 114–18).

² *Letters*, pp. 387–8.

of so much more significance than those of Miss Ferrier and Miss Edgeworth; besides, he can surely afford it. In part of *Oliver Twist* Dickens fails to carry through this process of transmutation: he knew, grievously well, how Bill Sykes should talk; but he did not think it right that those of his readers who were not acquainted with such a language should learn it from him; and so he fabricated a substitute, bearing no relation in vocabulary or syntax to the original—'Wolves tear your throats!'—'Hell-babe'—and such stuff.¹ This particular kind of intractability Jane Austen never encounters, coming no nearer to it than in John Thorpe's disagreeably gross idiom, which she discreetly dismisses as 'a loud and overpowering reply, of which no part was very distinct, except the frequent exclamations, amounting almost to oaths, which adorned it'.² Her problem is, rather, how to tell her story in terms of the speech and thought of her characters. And it is a problem that grows in importance as she makes more and more use of dialogue for this purpose; until, in *Emma*, the plot unfolds itself with the least possible help from direct narration. (It is illuminating to see how much of the direct narration in her first draft for the end of *Persuasion* she changes into dialogue in the final version.) Now, a character of marked idiosyncrasies of speech—an admirable comic character—does not seem well fitted to convey to the reader information of any complexity: one would not, at first sight, choose Miss Bates as the likeliest person to make clear to us so prettily complicated a comedy of errors as *Emma*.—This talk of plot may sound old-fashioned at present, but it should not be forgotten that the story-teller depends upon a tenuous thread of understanding with his readers; and therefore, if the narrative pattern he conceives is one of symmetrically posed, precisely interrelated happenings of a particular kind, he must make these happenings exactly intelligible to them. Modern unconcern with happenings of this kind does not affect this necessity: failure to make the pattern of one's story discernible must always be failure of communication, however the fashion in narrative patterns may change. Thus, it

¹ See George Gissing, *Charles Dickens*, Chapter III. ² p. 64.

is necessary that Miss Bates should convey to us the exact circumstances in which Frank Churchill undertakes to mend her mother's spectacles; and yet who would suppose that Miss Bates (for all that hers is a limpid confusion) would be able to convey anything exactly? But, taking her time about it, she accomplishes this, without using any mode of expression inconsistent with her usual habits of speech. (Fanny Burney, faced with a like problem in *Camilla*, sacrifices consistency, and allows the muddle-headed Sir Hugh Tyrold to be more, or less, articulate as the plot requires; and it is not uncommon to see a novelist slipping furtively round this obstacle with the words 'He related what had occurred'—and then giving his own account of the affair.) But it is a consequence of Jane Austen's method that the obstacle itself should be much less formidable to her than it appears: look closely at the idiosyncrasies in speech of her characters, and they will show themselves to be modelled, as it were, in very low relief. Thus, consider how it is that while Miss Bates's speech achieves an impression of confusion it is yet capable of making us understand the finest intricacies of the plot.¹ First, she never misuses words (unless when she is recognizably quoting Mrs. Elton); then, not one of her sentences can fairly be called confused: their structure and movement are as neat and brisk as her person. In fact, the impression of inextricable confusion is given by two habits which are so contrived as to counterbalance one another: in the first place, she seldom completes a sentence, though she usually carries it far enough to show how it should have been completed (a familiar English idiom): '... poor dear Jane could not bear to see anybody—anybody at all—Mrs. Elton, indeed, could not be denied—and Mrs. Cole had made such a point—and Mrs. Perry had said so much—but, except them, Jane would really see nobody.'² In the second place, each sentence flies off at a tangent from the last, but so characteristic are the trains of thought that, when need is, every sentence eluci-

¹ e.g. by giving the exact order of events at a crucial point: Frank's departure followed by Jane's ending the engagement.

² *Emma*, p. 390.

dates its curtailed predecessor—as a very small instance will show: ‘. . . upon my word, Miss Woodhouse, you do look—how do you like Jane’s hair?’¹ But to appreciate the delicate management of Miss Bates’s speech one should, of course, regard it on a larger scale—in her account (for example) of the piano, or the Perrys’ carriage, or Jane’s sudden indisposition.

This same delicate modelling is discernible in all Jane Austen’s dialogue. She tends to suggest social variants in speech by syntax and phrasing rather than by vocabulary, as appears when the elder, and less genteel, Miss Steele is compared with Fanny Burney’s Branghtons; this is what Nancy makes of Edward’s conversation with her sister, when she tries to report it to Elinor: ‘. . . it all came out . . . how he had been so worried by what had passed, that as soon as he had went away from his mother’s house, he had got upon his horse, and rid into the country some where or other; and how he had staid about at an inn all Thursday and Friday, on purpose to get the better of it.’—And ‘Edward have got some business at Oxford, he says; so he must go there for a time; and after *that*, as soon as he can light upon a Bishop, he will be ordained. I wonder what curacy he will get!’² This does not so differ in vocabulary from the speech of the Dashwoods as does that of the Branghtons from Evelina’s. And it is syntax and phrasing likewise that differentiate the speech of the Thorpes from that of the Tilneys. Yet, in this shallow modelling, there is such exact keeping of scale that the distinctions remain clearly apparent: no sentence of Elizabeth Watson’s could be transferred to her sister Emma, however their opinions may agree—because of their different upbringing; nor could a Steele vulgarity be mistaken for that of a Thorpe, for Jane Austen never repeats herself.

But suppose there is no particular reason why the stuff of overheard talk should be unaccommodating to the novelist’s immediate purpose, it must yet be treated as raw material and undergo substantial change. Even an intuitive faculty for selection, necessary as this is, will not be enough—as

¹ p. 323.

² *S. and S.*, pp. 273 and 275.

Fanny Burney demonstrates, in her double part of novelist and memoirist. She selects shrewdly and remembers faithfully—contemporary memoirs, tallying with hers, show how faithfully—the idiosyncrasies of speech which seem to her characteristic; and, having a keen eye for the surface of character, she uses them with capital effect in her journal and letters. We can hear Cumberland's petulant "So, so—oh, vastly well!"—the king's abrupt inquiries as to the beginning of *Evelina*: "How came you—how happened it—what?—what?"—and Mrs. Schwellenberg's anger bursting through her broken English: "You might not tell me such thing! . . . What for you say all that?" But when she turns novelist this very facility in selection may become a snare. It is all very well in *Evelina*, a supposed series of journal-letters, where Madame Duval's 'Ma foi' and Captain Mirvan's 'Holloa, my lads' will pass for the mannerisms noticed by a diarist with a gift of mimicry and a disposition to malice. But the direct narrative of *Cecilia*, *Camilla*, and *The Wanderer* is another matter. Horace Walpole, when he complains of *Cecilia*'s inferiority to *Evelina*, attacks its dialogue: 'The great fault is that the authoress is so afraid of not making all her *dramatis personae* set in character, that she never lets them say a syllable but what is to mark their character, which is very unnatural . . .'¹ But it is the abandonment of journal-letter form, the assumed responsibilities of direct narration, that has discovered this weakness to him. And here the weakness lies: a figure in fiction, if it is to be presented in three dimensions,² must be capable of expressing various moods or states of mind, of reacting to a variety of situations. Now, the instinctive selective faculty of the mimic, bent on seizing the characteristic turn of expression, naturally waits for the prevailing mood—for Lady Louisa Larpent at her most languid, Mr. Lovel at his most foppish, Miss Larolles at her most hoydenish—and misses the reaction

¹ 1 October 1782 (*Letters*, ed. Toynbee, vol. xii, p. 339).

² Presentation of 'round' and 'flat' characters has been finely discriminated by Mr. E. M. Forster in his *Aspects of the Novel*. I wish to examine the part taken by dialogue in creating this illusion.

to exceptional promptings. Moreover, even a two-dimensional character (for which comedy has ample room) must, if it is to preserve its peculiar sort of life, occasionally surprise us by some unexpected turn of expression for its habitual and expected turn of thought—as in Mrs. Allen's final observation on General Tilney: 'I really have not patience with the General! Such an agreeable, worthy man as he seemed to be! I do not suppose, Mrs. Morland, you ever saw a better-bred man in your life. His lodgings were taken the very day after he left them, Catherine. But no wonder; Milsom-street you know.'¹ But mere mimicry, attentive for the familiar idiom, cannot give this unexpected turn of expression, any more than it can give the expression of an unusual mood. And so we miss that element of surprise which, whether the characters be 'round' or 'flat', is essential to an illusion of the living voice.

This surprise must nevertheless be delicately contrived if it is not to blur our impression of the character. And here again Jane Austen's use of 'low relief' proves its worth. For such relief can be momentarily heightened: a character may of a sudden—not casually, but under pressure of some sense of urgency—speak with deeper idiosyncrasy than usual. Such a pressure disturbs the habitual unaffected formality of Mr. Woodhouse's speech when 'according to his custom on such occasions' he is 'making the circle of his guests, and paying his particular compliments to the ladies', last among them Jane Fairfax. For even as he generalizes, and allegorizes, and addresses her in the third person—momentarily, under the immediate pressure of his kindly solicitude, his voice takes a new tone: 'I am very sorry to hear, Miss Fairfax, of your being out this morning in the rain. Young ladies should take care of themselves.—Young ladies are delicate plants. They should take care of their health and their complexion. My dear, did you change your stockings?'²

Upon this means of creating the illusion of the living voice Jane Austen's corrections, visible in her rough drafts, throw

¹ *Northanger Abbey*, p. 238.

² *Emma*, p. 294.

a beam of light. Both in *The Watsons* and in *Sanditon* she can be seen sketching out first what her characters have to communicate, and then marking, by gradual little touches, the manner of communication—as though a draftsman should first set a human figure in a certain attitude, and occupying a certain position in his composition, and then develop it into a particular figure, with proper characteristics of person and dress. In the opening of *The Watsons*, Emma and Elizabeth are introduced to us as they are driving together ‘in the old chair’ ‘to the town of D. in Surrey’; and the task of explaining the family’s character and situation is given to Elizabeth, with the least possible help from the author’s own voice. Now, looking into the corrections, one perceives that, while in the first draft Elizabeth simply tells what has to be told, this plain account is afterwards so modified by a number of minute touches—above all, by the substitution of little vulgarisms and colloquialisms for unaffected formal speech—as to indicate also the peculiar tone of the speaker. A reference to Tom Musgrave’s habit of ‘philandering’ becomes: ‘. . . he is always behaving in a particular way to one or another.’¹ Penelope’s making ‘no secret of wishing to marry’ becomes: ‘There is nothing she wd not do to get married—she would as good as tell you so herself.’² And there is a steady and consistent substitution of short, plain words for longer synonyms throughout Elizabeth’s speech. In *The Watsons*, it is true, Jane Austen seems to be struggling with a particular oppression, a stiffness and heaviness that threaten her style, and so the corrections show a general trend towards shorter, more colloquial words, in narrative as well as dialogue. But this does not hold good for *Sanditon*, nor does it sufficiently account for the systematic deepening, in the corrections of both manuscripts, of the idiosyncrasies in the speech of almost every character. Tom Musgrave’s gallantry is a little broadened as he smirks at Emma in the assurance that he is making himself particularly agreeable: he has not, he confesses, troubled to visit

¹ *The Watsons*, p. 4. See Dr. Chapman’s note.

² p. 6.

her family before her arrival—‘But I am afraid I have been a very sad neighbour of late. I hear dreadful complaints of my negligence wherever I go, & I confess it is a shameful length of time since I was at Stanton.—But I shall *now* endeavour to make myself amends for the past.’¹ And a sharper edge is given to Mrs. Watson’s malice, a more sickly flavour to Margaret’s affectation, through such small changes. By the same means, of course, Jane Austen accentuates the amiable characteristics of her pleasant people: in recasting the end of *Persuasion* she uses some passages from the original draft, merely rewriting them; if one such passage—Wentworth’s confession to Anne—is read in the two versions,² it will be found that, by little corrections in the first, and little alterations when she comes to make the second, she has heightened the vehemence and candour with which he blames himself for his pride and obstinacy. (The only exception to this process of accentuation seems to be Lord Osborne’s address to Emma Watson; and an attempt to account for this would lie outside my present subject.) The corrections in the manuscript of *Sanditon* show this same gradual differentiation in the speech of the several characters: Mr. Parker’s idiom—his habit of thinking *in phrases*—becomes more marked; the relation of her past history by Lady Denham to Charlotte acquires her proper intonation through vulgarisms in syntax: ‘We lived perfectly happily together’ becomes ‘Nobody could live happier together than us’;³ and a little button of absurdity is fastened on top of Sir Edward’s pretentious vocabulary by the substitution of ‘anti-puerile’ for ‘sagacious’ in his description of the ideal novel-reader—that is, of himself.⁴ A comparable process of individualization can, of course, be seen among the corrections in narrative passages: even as the ear is alert for individuality in speech, so is the eye for characteristic action;

¹ pp. 51, 52. ‘I confess’, and ‘I shall *now* endeavour’ are inserted in revision.

² *Two Chapters of Persuasion*, pp. 20, 21. (See notes for corrections.) *Persuasion*, pp. 242–3.

³ p. 97.

⁴ p. 108.

Admiral Croft *calls out*, instead of saying, something to his servant, when the first draft for the end of *Persuasion* is revised, while in *The Watsons* Emma's escape from Margaret's tongue becomes a running away.

- ✓ But this is a point of secondary interest; our first inquiry must be: What model had Jane Austen for her narrative style, and how did she make it serve her purpose? Such a style would presumably be formed, in the first place and but half-consciously, by what she read. And as for prose, her brother tells us that 'Her reading was very extensive in history and belles lettres; and her memory extremely tenacious'; that she was acquainted with 'the best essays and novels in the English language'; and among the graver writings he singles out Johnson's.¹ 'She was brought up, in fact, on the standard authors of her own and the preceding age, and their habits of thought and expression might become hers, if she were so disposed.'

In spite of her flamboyant defence of the novels of her own day as works 'in which the greatest powers of the mind are displayed, in which the most thorough knowledge of human nature, the happiest delineation of its varieties, the liveliest effusions of wit and humour are conveyed to the world in the best chosen language'²—in all of which I seem to detect an ironical undertone—she did not take them as her models for style. And this was fortunate, for the novel of sentiment, successor to the great novels of the mid-eighteenth century, did not know its own business. It wanted, not merely a grand style for its more ambitious passages—which would have been excusable—but also an unaffected, simple style for plain relation of fact and circumstance. This is Fanny Burney's notion of a matter-of-fact introductory statement:

In the bosom of her respectable family resided Camilla. Nature, with a bounty the most profuse, had been lavish to her of attractions; Fortune, with a moderation yet kinder, had placed

¹ *Biographical Notice*, 1817. See *Northanger Abbey and Persuasion*, p. 7.

² *Northanger Abbey*, p. 38.

her between luxury and indigence. Her abode was the parsonage-house of Etherington . . . The living, though not considerable, enabled its incumbent to attain every rational object of his modest and circumscribed wishes; to bestow upon a deserving wife whatever her own forbearance declined not; and to educate a lovely race of one son and three daughters, with that liberal propriety, which unites improvement for the future with present enjoyment.¹

To the essayists and historians, on the other hand (to adopt Henry Austen's division), his sister seems to have apprenticed herself, even in childhood. Already in *Love and Freindship* echoes of Goldsmith's voice are heard; not, however, those tones of it that belong to his imperishable work—rather the jingling, flippant tone of his taskwork for the booksellers. This summary account of Edward IV—'His best qualities were courage and beauty; his bad, a combination of all the vices'²—might equally well belong to Goldsmith's *History of England* or to the pert little burlesque version of it in *Love and Freindship*,³ in which I seem to hear a tinkling echo of this very phrase: 'This Monarch [Edward IV] was famous only for his Beauty and his Courage, of which the Picture we have here given of him,⁴ and his undaunted Behaviour in marrying one Woman while he was engaged to another, are sufficient proofs.'⁵

✓ The eighteenth-century essayists in their lighter moods were kindly masters to the young Jane Austen; their turn of wit came easily to her—and this may perhaps account for that precocious assurance in style which has half hidden her later development. Even in her childish burlesque pieces every sentence is almost as deliberately and neatly turned (on its small scale) as are those of her masters. From the lightest

¹ *Camilla*, chapter i.

² Goldsmith, *History of England*, 1771—the edition possessed by Jane Austen (see G. Keynes, *Bibliography*), vol. ii, p. 250.

³ I have suggested this connexion between Goldsmith's *History* and the *History of England* in *Love and Freindship*, in the *London Mercury* for April 1934.

⁴ i.e. one of Cassandra's medallions, made, perhaps, in playful imitation of those in the 1771 edition of Goldsmith's *History*.

⁵ *Love and Freindship*, p. 86.

piece of nonsense—‘Our neighbourhood was small, for it consisted only of your Mother’¹—to the slyest piece of malice—‘Charlotte, who perfectly understood the meaning of her freind’s speech, was too good-temper’d & obliging to refuse her, what she knew she wished,—a compliment; & they parted the best freinds in the world’²—each stands well, its weight exactly poised. Here is the seed of the more ambitious satiric style of *Lady Susan*: ‘For myself, I confess that *I* can pity only Miss Manwaring, who coming to Town & putting herself to an expence in Cloathes, which impoverished her for two years, on purpose to secure him, was defrauded of her due by a Woman ten years older than herself.’³ And here is the promise which *Pride and Prejudice* was to fulfil.

But, as I have suggested, this early style, even in its ripeness, was not sufficient for her later needs, would not adapt itself readily enough to various moods, nor to the matter-of-fact, impersonal narration which is to reflect no mood at all. Moreover, it is not sensitive enough for another of the demands to be made upon it: Mr. Morgan speaks of the tyranny of convention over ‘the means employed to pass from dialogue to narrative and back again’ in the early novel, the jarring sensation of a transition, consciousness that ‘the narrative planes were being shifted’; and he holds that ‘this passing from plane to plane is one of the everlasting difficulties of a novelist’.⁴ Now, in *Mansfield Park* Jane Austen’s style develops a new faculty, out of one perceptible in her earlier novels—a faculty that I can only describe as *chameleon-like*. In *Sense and Sensibility* and *Pride and Prejudice* she had shown that she could make her characters think each in his or her own idiom; indeed, Elinor Dashwood thinks very much more idiomatically than she talks, for in talk she is usually condemned to be giving impersonal good advice, while her reflections are free to assume a very pretty satiric turn. In *Mansfield Park*, however, the habits of expression of the characters impress themselves on the narrative style of the

¹ *Love and Freindship*, p. 7.

² *Volume the First*, p. 12.

³ *Lady Susan*, pp. 172–3.

⁴ *Epitaph on George Moore*, pp. 47–8.

episodes in which they are involved, and on the description of their situations. The very arrival of the Bertrams' party in the midst of the solemn grandeur of Sotherton seems to fasten weights to the style:

Mr. Rushworth was at the door to receive his fair lady, and the whole party were welcomed by him with due attention. In the drawing-room they were met with equal cordiality by the mother, and Miss Bertram had all the distinction with each that she could wish. After the business of arriving was over, it was first necessary to eat, and the doors were thrown open to admit them through one or two intermediate rooms into the appointed dining-parlour, where a collation was prepared with abundance and elegance.¹

As they make their progress through the house, with its 'solid mahogany, rich damask, marble, gilding and carving', this abundance and elegance seem to lie like an increasing load upon the imagination, until, half stupefied with the air of Sotherton, we reach the appropriate anti-climax of Mrs. Rushworth's 'relation': 'This chapel was fitted up as you see it, in James the Second's time. Before that period, as I understand, the pews were only wainscot; and there is some reason to think that the linings and cushions of the pulpit and family-seat were only purple cloth; but this is not quite certain.'²

Thus, in her later work, Jane Austen is sometimes to be seen parting from her eighteenth-century models, and relinquishing their sprightly elegance, but acquiring a pliability of style which, by its usefulness for her purpose, more than compensates her for this loss. To the end, however, she can when she chooses recall that elegant *epigrammatism*:

Mrs. Clay's affections had overpowered her interest, and she had sacrificed, for the young man's sake, the possibility of scheming longer for Sir Walter. She has abilities, however, as well as affections; and it is now a doubtful point whether his cunning, or hers, may finally carry the day; whether, after preventing her from being the wife of Sir Walter, he may not be

¹ p. 84.

² p. 86.

wheedled and caressed at last into making her the wife of Sir William.¹

And even the rough draft for *Sanditon* has the same unmistakable air:

They [the Heywoods] had very pretty Property—enough, had their family been of reasonable Limits to have allowed them a very gentlemanlike share of Luxuries & Change—enough for them to have indulged in a new Carriage & better roads, an occasional month at Tunbridge Wells, & symptoms of the Gout and a Winter at Bath;—but the maintenance, Education & fitting out of 14 Children demanded a very quiet, settled, careful course of Life—& obliged them to be stationary & healthy at Willingden.²

And here it may be well to abandon this division into narrative and dialogue, which has served its purpose, and to ask: Towards what conclusion as to the general character of Jane Austen's style is this argument tending? When he has called her writing 'truthful and apt', Professor Garrod has said (he claims) 'all that should be said in praise of it'. A truthfulness³ beyond the power of the mere mimic; aptness, adaptability, which allows her to follow in a great prose tradition or to strike out on a path of her own as occasion requires; this is no small praise, after all, and I have tried to show something of the exacting standard of workmanship that it implies. And now it may be worth while to adventure a little further, and on to less firm ground. Restraint, pliability—these are virtues proper to the style of a writer of sense and judgement; but are there no mere personal likes and dislikes evident behind her management of words, no illuminating appearance of caprice?

What she liked, among books and authors, usually leaves an audible reverberation in Jane Austen's writing; and some of the tones of voice of her favourites are (I believe) echoed here and there in her novels. An echo is too elusive to be

¹ *Persuasion*, p. 250.

² *Sanditon*, pp. 26–7.

³ '... she is one of the greatest, because one of the most accurate, writers of dialogue of her own or any age', R. W. Chapman, 'Miss Austen's English', *Sense and Sensibility*, p. 389.

certainly identified; but conjecture may be worth offering. I think I see in her familiarity with, and love of, Johnson's work the explanation of her aptitude for coining pregnant abstractions—such phrases as Miss Bates's *desultory goodwill*, of which the sounds pursued her visitors as they mounted her stairs;¹ Mrs. Elton's *apparatus of happiness*, her large bonnet and basket;² and Sir Walter's advance towards his grand cousins 'with all the eagerness compatible with anxious elegance';³ these, surely, may be called Johnsonian phrases and may fairly remind us of such passages in the *Rambler* as the description of the leisurely travellers who 'missed . . . the pleasure of alarming villages with the tumult of our passage, and of disguising our insignificance by the dignity of hurry'.⁴ I will venture to suggest another small accomplishment which Jane Austen may possibly owe to 'her dear Dr. Johnson': while he has been criticized for making all the fictitious correspondents in his periodical essays address him in his own stately language, his lively mimicry of idiom in *oblique oration* has passed unnoticed. Thus Anthea, who thought nothing so elegant as a display of timidity, 'saw some sheep, and heard the wether clink his bell, which she was certain was not hung upon him for nothing, and therefore no assurances nor intreaties should prevail upon her to go a step further; she was sorry to disappoint the company, but her life was dearer to her than ceremony'.⁵ Now Jane Austen has an aptitude, not very common among the earlier novelists, for these satirically reported conversations: 'Mrs. Elton on strawberries'⁶ is, of course, the most famous; but her slighter essays in this kind are quite as shrewd: Mrs. Philips is firmly established as Mrs. Bennet's sister by her promise to her nieces that 'they would have a nice comfortable noisy game of lottery tickets, and a little bit of hot supper afterwards'.⁷

¹ *Emma*, p. 239. If one may so far generalize, I think this is not a very common idiom in women's writings, though Mrs. Thrale learnt it from the same master.

² *Emma*, p. 358.

³ *Persuasion*, p. 184.

⁴ Number 142.

⁵ *Rambler*, Number 34.

⁶ *Emma*, pp. 358–9.

⁷ *Pride and Prejudice*, p. 74.

Among these elusive echoes I seem to detect one that may be worth a moment's notice. The train of possibilities begins (I think) with Richardson's realization that a parenthetical phrase, most often built upon a present participle, if introduced abruptly into the midst of a speech—that is, not qualifying the introductory 'he said' or its equivalent, but indicating change of tone or gesture as a stage-direction might do—gives the air of eyewitness to any one who reports the speech; and since, in his novels, the narrator is always, for the moment, autobiographer, that reporter is always supposed to be an eyewitness, and therefore needs this illusion. (Thus, conversations reported by Miss Harriet Byron are not seldom interrupted by the parenthesis—'Snatching my hand'.) Fanny Burney appears to perceive this advantage and follow Richardson, so long as she also lets one of the characters tell the story—that is, in *Evelina's* letters. (Need it be said that here, too, 'Snatching my hand' is a not infrequent parenthesis?) But it seems to be Boswell who, in his own double character of author and eyewitness reporting an affair, introduces this device into direct narration, in his *Tour to the Hebrides* and, still oftener, in his *Life of Johnson*. Thus, in Johnson's speeches occur such parenthetical phrases as—' (looking to his Lordship with an arch smile) '. Whether or no Jane Austen's ear really caught from one of these three among her favourite authors the impression of immediacy which this device is able to lend to dialogue, her frequent and apt use of it is worth remarking. Nancy Steele's tale of her sister is brought within earshot by such parentheses as ' (Laughing affectedly) ' and ' (giggling as she spoke) ',¹ and poor Miss Bates's of her niece by ' (twinkling away a tear or two) ' ;² while we seem indeed to see Captain Harville's attention divided between Anne and Captain Wentworth: " 'There is no hurry on my side' ;" he tells Wentworth. " 'I am only ready whenever you are.—I am in very good anchorage here' ", (smiling at Anne) "well supplied, and want for nothing.—No hurry for a signal at all.—Well, Miss Elliot," (lowering

¹ *Sense and Sensibility*, pp. 274–5.

² *Emma*, p. 378.

his voice) "as I was saying, we shall never agree I suppose upon this point."¹

If we try to discover, however, what devices of style Jane Austen *disliked*, we find ourselves on firmer ground; for we are not dependent only on the negative evidence of her avoidance of these devices—we have her ridicule of them in her burlesque writings, her warnings to Anna against them. Any close observer of her habits of expression must have noticed that she is—so to speak—*shy* of figurative language, using it as little as possible, and least of all in her gravest passages. I do not think it extravagant to find some suggestion of the amusement and discomfort which idle use of figurative expressions caused her in this passage from a letter to Cassandra: 'He . . . poor man! is so totally deaf that they say he could not hear a cannon, were it fired close to him; having no cannon at hand to make the experiment, I took it for granted, and talked to him a little with my fingers.'² For this use of stale, unmeaning figures of speech is a common mark of insincerity in her disagreeable people—in Mrs. Elton, with her borrowed plume of poetic image, her chatter of 'Hymen's saffron robe';³ in General Tilney, whose imagery belongs to the conventions of a heartless gallantry: "'I have many pamphlets to finish," said he to Catherine, "before I can close my eyes; and perhaps may be poring over the affairs of the nation for hours after you are asleep. Can either of us be more meetly employed? *My* eyes will be blinding for the good of others; and *yours* preparing by rest for future mischief;"'⁴—a manner of speech that almost seems to excuse Catherine's suspicions; above all, in Mrs. Norris: "'Is she not a sister's child?'" she asks, rhetorically, of Fanny Price; "'and could I bear to see her want, while I had a bit of bread to give her?'"⁵ And one sees a grotesque vision of those two—the child and the old woman—confronting one another across the shining expanse of the parsonage dining-table, with a 'bit of bread' between them. But Mrs. Norris did not

¹ *Persuasion*, p. 234.

² *Letters*, p. 242.

³ *Emma*, p. 308.

⁴ *Northanger Abbey*, p. 187.

⁵ *Mansfield Park*, p. 7.

see that vision; she saw nothing—metaphor was to her a screen for the meaninglessness of her generous words. If we are to distinguish Jane Austen's aversion to such a figure of speech as this, we should set it beside one that is curiously similar and yet contrary. When Trollope's Dr. Thorne (meaning all he says, and more) promises to adopt his niece, he uses this image: 'Of what bread I eat, she shall eat; of what cup I drink, she shall drink.'¹ Trollope has here penetrated beyond mere naturalistic representation of customary speech; Thomas Thorne's imagery, recalling that of the parables, carries assurance of truth and deep feeling even to ears not accustomed to the use of Biblical language in common talk—and outlives mere habits of speech, as truly imaginative figurative expression should. This potential strength of figurative language Jane Austen denies herself—and I suspect that it was this denial, as much as any other habit of expression, that repelled Charlotte Brontë, and has alienated other readers, conscious of a dissatisfaction with Jane Austen's style that they have not cared to analyse. What prompted her to such a denial? Did she distrust all figurative language because she was sharply aware of its aptitude for persisting as a mere habit of speech, after it has lost all life for the imagination?—(a not unreasonable distrust, so large is the element of figurative idiom in our tongue). And was she further aware that, since such language commonly carries in the first using some emotional suggestion, it cannot *fossilize* without turning into a lie? Even if this should seem a rashly conjectural explanation of her apparent distrust of all figures of speech, her evident dislike of all that are *ready made*, it is certainly worth while to notice her quick ear for all those ready-made phrases, whether figurative or no, which creep so insidiously into our habitual speech. She makes them a distinguishing mark of Lady Bertram's accustomed style of letter-writing—'a very creditable, common-place, amplifying style':² "'We shall greatly miss Edmund in our small circle",' she writes to Fanny when he has gone to fetch his sick brother home; "'but I trust and

¹ *Doctor Thorne*, chapter ii.

² *Mansfield Park*, p. 425.

hope he will find the poor invalid in a less alarming state than might be apprehended . . .”¹—a style that breaks up and dissolves under the influence of real feeling: “‘He is just come, my dear Fanny, and is taken up stairs; and I am so shocked to see him, that I do not know what to do.’”² They are a mark also of the talk of Mr. Parker—who was not ‘a man of strong understanding’:³ ‘Here were we, pent down in this little contracted Nook, without Air or View, only one mile and 3 q^{rs} from the noblest expanse of Ocean between the South foreland & the Land’s end, & without the smallest advantage from it. You will not think I have made a bad exchange, when we reach Trafalgar House—which by the bye, I almost wish I had not named Trafalgar—for Waterloo is more the thing now.’”⁴ And she is at pains to emphasize this habit: “‘The Growth of my Plantations is a general astonishment’”⁵—*that* was added in revision. (One recalls that gay little piece of absurdity in an early letter to Cassandra: ‘. . . at the bottom of Kingsdown Hill we met a gentleman in a buggy, who, on minute examination, turned out to be Dr. Hall’.⁶)

✓She has the same alert ear for mannerism in speech—and what fine tact in representing it! The catchword or habitual phrase of a character is by no means easy to represent; there is but a hair’s breadth between the point at which the reader delightedly recognizes it as a revealing habit of speech, and the point at which its iteration begins to weary him. But even as Mr. Elton’s ‘Exactly so’ is ready to catch the attention as an expression of his unfeeling complaisance, and before it can threaten tediousness, Emma transfixes it by her mimicry beyond need of repetition: “‘This man is almost too gallant to be in love’, thought Emma. “I should say so, but that I suppose there may be a hundred different ways of being in love. He is an excellent young man, and will suit Harriet exactly; it will be an ‘Exactly so’, as he says himself . . .””⁷

¹ *Mansfield Park*, p. 426.

³ *Sanditon*, p. 23.

⁵ *ibid.*, p. 46.

² *ibid.*, p. 427.

⁴ *ibid.*, p. 44.

⁷ *Emma*, p. 49.

⁶ *Letters*, p. 60.

Jane Austen's sharpest critical satire is aimed, however, at the contemporary novelists' peculiar phraseology—commonly a rank weed in the aftermath of a great age of fiction. And it is amusing to compare her raillery with Beckford's, as he slashes at this weed in his violent burlesque:

. . . the finer feelings of the celestial Arabella suffered a new and more terrible shock, which the lenient hand of time could alone hope to mollify. The original breaking of his collar bone, by the fall from his famous hunter, which had once so cruelly alarmed the ladies in the park, was no longer an object of material magnitude, but . . . the innumerable difficulties he might labor under, was indeed a stroke which required the utmost fortitude, and every religious consideration to combat and sustain.¹

There is burlesque of this fossilized phraseology in Jane Austen's juvenilia—of pretentiously elaborate sentence-structure (for example) concealing a meagrely simple meaning: 'A lovely young Woman lying apparently in great pain beneath a Citron tree, was an object too interesting not to attract their notice.'² Of her mature work none is, however, sheer burlesque, only *Northanger Abbey* coming so near it as to make me pass it over in my main argument: Henry Tilney, who can speak the language of the novel as he can speak that of the pump-room or the newspaper, hits off the style of Mrs. Radcliffe's descriptive passages in his mock forecast of Catherine's arrival at the Abbey: "'. . . what will you discern? . . . on one side perhaps the remains of a broken lute, on the other a ponderous chest which no efforts can open, and over the fire-place the portrait of some handsome warrior, whose features will so incomprehensibly strike you, that you will not be able to withdraw your eyes from it'.'³—Here again is the idiom of the novel of sentiment, in his pretended investigation of Catherine's feelings upon the arrival of Isabella's letter: "'You feel, I suppose, that in losing Isabella, you lose half yourself: you feel a void in your

¹ *Modern Novel Writing* (under the pseudonym of Lady Harriet Marlow), 1796, chapter i. (The incoherence is, of course, part of the burlesque.)

² *Volume the First*, pp. 34–5.

³ *Northanger Abbey*, p. 158.

heart which nothing else can occupy. Society is becoming irksome ; and as for the amusements in which you were wont to share at Bath, the very idea of them without her is abhorrent.”¹ But Jane Austen’s consciousness of this particular pitfall is most pointedly expressed in that stricture on Anna’s novel in which she comes nearest to severity: ‘Devereux Forester’s being ruined by his Vanity is extremely good ; but I wish you would not let him plunge into a “vortex of Dissipation”’. I do not object to the Thing, but I cannot bear the expression ;—it is such thorough novel slang—and so old, that I dare say Adam met with it in the first novel he opened.’²

Behind this explicit expression of aversion we can perceive her steady avoidance of ‘novel slang’—and behind this consistent practice, her sensitiveness to the entity of the word. Her corrections show her mind moving among words, arranging and re-arranging them, until she gets them phrased to her liking ; and so every one of them remains exquisitely whole, like a falling drop of water, and no two or three are allowed to run together and settle into stagnant pools.

Delicate precision, resulting from control of the tools chosen—one could almost be content to claim no more than this for Miss Austen’s style, surmising that she would hardly claim as much. For I think she would have been satisfied to take for her motto her own pretended boast—‘An artist cannot do anything slovenly.’³

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¹ *Northanger Abbey*, p. 207.

² *Letters*, p. 404.

³ *Letters*, p. 30.

AN EXPERIMENT IN TEXTUAL RECONSTRUCTION

THE primary object of this experiment is to present the text of portions of *The Owl and the Nightingale*—including some that have been made familiar by their inclusion in volumes of selections—in such a shape that it can be read without the distraction that is inevitably caused by the medley of dialectal forms and the irregularities in spelling and prosody of the two manuscripts in which the poem has been handed down.

For such a purpose it has, of course, been necessary to determine as closely as is possible the kind of language in which the version should be dressed. A south-eastern type has been assumed for the original, in which a conspicuous feature is the representation of original Old English *y* by *e*—a feature vouched for by several rhymes. A few other points must be mentioned. The representation of Old English *æ* and shortened *ǣ* has offered a difficult problem. In certain words that were subject to the variation of sentence-stress, e.g. *was*, *þat*, *hadde*, two forms were probably in use; the *a*-form has been generalized in the present version. Old English *ā* is represented by *o*, though complete rounding may not have taken place. Rhymes indicate that the forms regularly used by the poet for ‘there’ and ‘where’ descended from Old English *þara*, *hwara*, with monosyllabic by-forms. Initial *f* has been generalized; but it may have been voiced. *An* and *and*, *i* and *ich* doubtless existed side by side in the original, with appropriate differentiation of use; the unclipped forms have been generalized here. Final inflexional *n* was lost, except in the monosyllabic infinitives *don*, &c.

With regard to prosody, where deviation from the stress-pattern $\times / \times / \times / \times / (\times)$ occurs, or any remarkable position of the stress is to be observed, an acute accent has been used. Special elision or slurring of *ě* is marked by a dot below the letter, special non-elision of final *e* by a dot above it.

It has been assumed that the metrical system allowed of variety in the treatment of final *e* immediately after the second stress of the line, so that it might be (*a*) elided in the normal way before a vowel, (*b*) slurred or ignored before a consonant, (*c*) allowed full value in hiatus before a vowel.

The line-numbers of the selection in J. Hall's *Selections from Early Middle English* are added in square brackets. In the appended notes C stands for MS. Cotton Calig. A. ix, J for MS. Jesus Coll., Oxford, 29. I have to acknowledge the kind loan of rotographs of the manuscripts by Mr. C. L. Wrenn, with whom I have also had profitable discussion.

Altercacio inter filomenam et bubonem

Ich was in one sumere dale,	
In one swipe diȝele hale ;	
Iherde ich holde grete tale	
An ule and one nihtegale.	
ȝat plait was stif and sterc and strong,	
Sum hwile softe and lud among ;	
And eiȝer áȝen oper swal	
And let ȝat fule mod ut al.	
And eiȝer sede of opres keste	
ȝat alre werste ȝat hi wiste ;	10
And hure and hure of opres songe	
Hi helde plaiding swiȝe stronge.	
ȝe nihtegaleȝ bigan ȝe speche	
In one herne of one breche,	
And sat up one feire boȝe,	
ȝat were abute blosme inoȝe,	
In ore faste picke hegge	
Imeind mid spire and grene segge.	
He was ȝe gladdre for ȝe rise	
And song a fele kenne wise.	20
ȝe drem bet ȝuhte ȝat he were	
Of harpe and pipe ȝanneȝ he nere ;	
Bet ȝuhte ȝat he were ischote	
Of harpe and pipe ȝanne of ȝrote.	

Do stod an old stoc þar biside,
 Þar song þe ule hire tide,
 And was mid ivi al bigrowe;
 Hit was þare ule ardingstowe.
 Þe nihtegale hit iseh,
 And hi biheld and overseh, 30
 And þuhte wel ful of þare ule,
 For me hi halt lodliche and fule.
 ‘Unwiht’, he sede, ‘awei þu fle;
 Me is þe wers þat ich þe se.
 Iwis, for þine fule lete
 Wel oft ich mine song forlete.
 Min herte atflicþ and falt mi tunge,
 Þanne þu art to me iþrunge.
 Me lest bet spete þanne singe
 Of þire fule ȝozelinge.’ 40
 Þes ule abod fort hit was eve;
 Hé ne mihte no leng bileve,
 For hire herte was so gret
 Þat wel neh hire fnast atschet,
 And warp a word parafter longe:
 ‘Hu þencþe nu bi mine songe?
 Wenstu þat ich ne cunne singe,
 Þeh ich ne cunne of writelinge?
 Ilome þus þu dest me grame,
 And seist me boþe tene and schame. 50
 Ȝif ich þe helde on mine fote—
 So hit bitide þat ich mote—
 And þu were ut of þine rise,
 Þu scholdest singe an oper wise.’
 Þe nihtegale ȝaf answare:
 ‘Ȝif ich me loki wiþ þe bare,
 A’nd me schilde wiþ þe blete,
 Ne recche ich noht of þine þrete.
 Ȝif ich me holde in mire hegge,
 Ne recche ich nevre hwat þu segge. 60
 Ich wot wel þat þu art unmilde
 Wiþ hem þat ne muȝe fram þe schilde,

And þat þu tukest wroþe and fule,
 Hwar þu miht, over smale fu(3)le,
 For þi þu art loþ alle fu(3)lkenne
 And alle hi þe driveþ henne,
 And þe bischricheþ and bigredeþ
 A'nd wel narwe þe biledeþ;
 And ec for þe þe selve mose
 Hire þankes wolde þe totose. 70
 Þú art lodlich to beholde
 And þu art loþ in manie folde.
 Þi bodi is schort, þi swere is smal;
 Þin heved is grette þanne þu al;
 Þine ege beþ colblake and brode,
 Riht so hi were ipeint mid wode;
 Þu starest so þu wile abite
 Al þat þu miht mid clivre smite;
 Þi bile is stif and scharp and hoked,
 Riht as an ewel þat is croked. 80
 Þarmid þu clechest oft and longe,
 And þat is on of þine songe.
 A'c þu þretest to mine flesse,
 Mid þine clivres woldest me messe.
 Þe were ikendre to one frogge
 Þat sit at melne under þe cogge.
 Snailes, mus, and fule wihte
 Beþ þine kende and þine rihte.
 Þu sitst a dei and fliest a niht;
 Þu kepst þat þu art an unwiht; 90
 Þú art lodlich and unclene—
 Bi þine neste hit ich mene
 And ec bi þine fule brode—
 Þu fetst on hem a wel ful fode.
 Wel wostu þet hi deþ þarinne:
 Hi fuleþ hit up to þe chinne;
 Hi sitteþ þare so hi be bisne;
 Þarbi men seggeþ a forbisne:
 Dahet habbe þat ilche best
 Þat fuleþ so his oge nest. 100

Dat oþer ʒer a faukun bredde ;
 His nest noht wel he ne bihedde.
 Parto þu stele in one dei
 And ledest þaron þi fule ei.
 Þo hit becom þat he hit hahte
 And of his eire ibridde wrahte,
 He brohte his ibridde mete,
 Biheld his nest, iseh hi ete.
 Hé iseh bi one halve
 His nest ifuled i þe uthalve. 110
 Þe faukun was wroþ wiþ his ibridde,
 And lude ʒal and sterne chidde :
 ‘Séggeþ hwo haveþ þis ido :
 Eú was nevre ikend parto.
 Hit was ido eu a loþ keste :
 Séggeþ me ʒif ʒe hit wiste.’
 Þo cwæþ þat on and cwæþ þat oþer :
 ‘Iwis hit was ure oʒe broþer,
 Þe ʒond þat haveþ þat grete heved.
 Wei, þat he nis þarof bireved. 120
 Wérp hit ut mid þe alre ferste
 þat his necke him toberste.’
 Þe faukun ilevde his ibridde,
 And nam þat fule brid amidde,
 And warp hit of þan wilde boʒe
 þat pie and crowe hit to droʒe.
 Herbi men seggeþ a bispel,
 Þeh hit ne be fulliche spel ;
 Al so hit is bi þan un gode
 þat is icume of fule brode 130
 And is imeind wiþ freè manne,
 E’vre he keþ þat he com þanne,
 þat he com of þat adel eie,
 Þeh he a freè neste leie.
 Þeh appel trendli fram þan trewe,
 þar he and oþre mide grewe,
 Þeh he be þarfram fer bicume,
 He keþ hwanene he is icume.’

Þes word aʒaf þe nihtegale,	[95]
And after þare longe tale	140
He song so ludê and so scharpe	
Riht so me grilde schille harpe.	
Þes ule leste þiderward	
And held hire eie neþerward,	
And sat toswollê and ibolʒe,	
So he hadde one frogge iswolʒe ;	
For he wel wiste and was iwar	
Þat he song hire a bisemar ;	
And nopeles he ʒaf andsware :	
‘Hwi neltu fle into þe bare	150
And schewi hweþer unker be	
Of brihtre hewe, of fairer ble ?’	
‘No ! þu havest scharpe clawe ;	
Ne kepe ich noht þat þu me clawe.	[110]
Þu havest clivres swiþe stronge ;	
Þu twengst þarmid so deþ a tonge.	
Þu þohtest, so doþ þine ilike,	
Mid faire worde me biswike.	
Ich nolde don þat þu me raddest,	
Ich wiste þat þu me misraddest.	160
Schâmię þe for þine unrede !	
U’nwriʒe is þi swikelrede.	
Schild þine swikdom fram þe lihte,	
And hed þet woʒe among þe rihte.	[120]
Hwânne þu wilt þin unriht spene,	
Lóke þat hit ne be isene ;	
For swikdom haveþ schame and hete,	
ʒif hit is ope and underʒete.	
Ne spetstu noht mid þine unwrenche,	
For ich am war and wel can blenche ;	170
Ne helpþ noht þat þu be to þriste ;	
Ich wolde fihte bet mid liste	
Þanne þu mid alle þine strengþe.	
Ich habbe on brede and ec on lengþe	[130]
Câstel god on mine rise.	
Wel fiht þat wel flicþ, seiþ þe wise.	

Ac lete we awei þes cheste,
 For swiche wordes beþ unwreste;
 And fo we on, mid rihte dome,
 Mid faire worde and mid isome. 180
 Þeh we ne be at one acorde,
 We muȝe bet mid faire worde,
 Wiþute cheste and bute fihte,
 Plaídi mid foȝe and mid rihte; [140]
 And mei ure eíper hwat he wile
 Mid rihte segge, and mid skile.'
 Þo cwaþ þe ule, 'Hwo schal us seme,
 Þat cunne and wile riht us deme?'
 'Ich wot wel', cwaþ þe nihtegale,
 'Ne þarf us þarof be no tale. 190
 Maister Nichole of Geldeforde,
 Hé is wis and war of worde.
 He is of worde swiþe gleu,
 And him is loþ evrich unþeu. [150]
 He wot insiht in eche songe,
 Hwo singeþ wel, hwo singeþ wronge;
 And he can schede fram þe rihte
 Þat woȝ, þat þestre fram þe lihte.'
 Þe ule one hwile hi biþohte,
 And after þan þis word upbrohte: 200
 'Ich granti wel þat he us deme.
 For, þeh he were hwile breme,
 And lef him were nihtegale,
 And oþre wihte gente and smale, [160]
 Ich wot þat he is nuþe acoled.
 Nis he for þe nowiht afoled
 Þat he for þire olde luve
 Me legge adun and þe abuve.
 Ne schaltu nevre so him cweme
 Þat he for þe a fals dom deme. 210
 He is nu ripè and fastrede,
 Ne lest him nu to none unrede,
 Nu him ne lest namore pleie;
 He wile gon a rihte weie.' [170]

Þe nihtegale was al ȝare ;
 He hadde ilerned wel ihware.
 ‘U’le’, he sede, ‘sei me sop :
 Hwi destu þat unwihtes doþ ?
 Þu singest a niht and noht a dei
 And al þi song is weilawei. 220
 Þu miht mid þine songe afere
 A’lle þet hereþ þine ibere.
 Þu schricst and ȝolst to þine fere
 Þat hit is grislich to ihere. [180]
 Hit þencheþ boþe wise and snepe
 Noht þat þu singe, ac þat þu wepe.
 Þu flicst a niht and noht a dei,
 Þarof ich wundri and wel mei.
 For evrich þing þat schuneþ riht
 Hit luveþ pestre and hateþ liht ; 230
 And ech þing þat is lef misdede,
 Hit luveþ pestre to his dede. [188]
 A wis word, þeh hit be unclene,
 Is fele manne a muþe imene.
 For Alvred king hit sede and wrot :
 He schuneþ þat hine fulne wot.
 Ich wene þat þu dest also,
 For þu flicst nihtes evremo ;
 And oper þing me is a wene,
 Þu havest a niht wel brihte sene, 240
 Bi deie þu art stareblind,
 Þat þu ne sicst ne boȝ ne rind.
 A dei þu art blind oper bisne ;
 Þarbi men seggeþ a forbisne :
 Riht so hit fareþ bi þan ungode
 Þat noht nisicþ to none gode,
 And is so ful of evle wrenche
 Þat him ne mei no man atwrenche,
 And can wel þane þestre wei
 And þane brihte let awei. 250
 So doþ þat beþ of þine kende,
 Of lihte nabbēþ hi none imende.’

Þes ule leste swiþe longe,
 And was ofteneð swiþe stronge. [190]
 He cwap: 'Þu hattest nihtegale,
 Þu miht bet hote galegale,
 Fór þu hauest to manig tale.
 Lét þi tunge habbe spale.
 Þu wenst þat þes dei be þin oþe;
 Let me nu habbe mine þroþe; 260
 Bé nu stille and let me speke,
 Ich wile be of þe awreke.
 And lest hu ich can me bitelle
 Mid rihte soþe wiþute spelle. [200]
 Þu seist þat ich me hede a dei,
 Þarto ne segge ich nik ne nei.
 And lest! ich telle þe þarfore
 And hwi hit is and hwarefore.
 Ich habbe bile stifne and stronge
 And gode clivres scharpe and longe, 270
 So hit bicumep to haþekes kenne.
 Hit is min hiht, hit is mi wenne
 Þat ich me draþe to mine kende;
 Ne mei me no man þarfore schende.
 On me hit is ful wel isene,
 For rihte kende ich am so kene.
 For þi ich am loþ smale fu(3)le
 Þat fleþ bi grunde and ec bi þuþle.
 Hi me bichermep and bigredeþ
 And here flockes to me ledeþ. 280
 Mé is lef to habbe reste
 And sitte stille in mine neste. [218]
 For nere ich nevre no þe betere,
 Þeh ich mid chavling and mid chetere
 Hem schendè and mid fule worde,
 So herdes doþ, oþer mid schitworde.
 Ne lest me wiþ þe schrewe chide,
 For þi ich wende fram hem wide.
 Hit is a wise manne dome
 And hi hit seggeþ wel ilome, 290

Þat me ne chide wiþ þe gedie,
 Ne wiþ þan ovne me ne ʒenie.
 At sume siþe herde ich telle
 Hu Alvred sedè on his spelle:
 Lóke þat tu ne be þare
 Þar chavling beþ and cheste ʒare;
 Let sottes chide and forþ þu go.
 And ich am wis and do al so.
 ʒet Alvred sede an oþre siþe
 A word þat is isprunge wide: 300
 Þat wiþ þe fule haveþ imene,
 Ne cumeþ he nevre fram him clene.
 Wenstu þat havec be þe werse [219]
 Peh crowe bigrede him bi þe mersse,
 And goþ to him mid here cherme,
 Riht so hi wile wiþ him scherme?
 Þe havec folʒeþ gode rede;
 He flicþ his wei and let hi grede.
 ʒet þu me seist of oþre þinge
 And telst þat ich ne can noht singe, 310
 Ac al mi rerdè is woning
 And to ihere grislich þing.
 Þat nis noht soþ; ich singe an evne
 Mid fulle dreme and lude stevne.
 Þu wenst þat ech song be grislich
 Þat þire pipinge nis ilich.
 Mi stevne is bold and noht unorne.
 He is ilich onę grete horne
 And þin ilich is ore pipe
 Of one smale wede unripe. 320
 Ich singe betere þan þu dest;
 Þu chetereþ so deþ an Iris prest.
 Ich singe an eve a rihte time,
 And seþþe hwanne hit is bedtime, [240]
 Þe þridde siþe a middelnihte,
 And so ich mine song adihte.
 Hwanne ich ise arise ferre
 Oþer deirew oþer deisterre,

I'ch do god mid mire þrote
 And warni men to here note. 330
 And þu singest alle longe niht
 Fram eve þat hit is deiliht,
 And evre lesteþ þin o song
 So longe so þe niht is long. [250]
 And evre croweþ þi wrecche crei
 þat he ne swikeþ niht ne dei.
 Mid þire piping þu adunest
 þas mannes ere þar þu wunest,
 And makest þi song so unwiht
 þat me ne telp of þe nowiht. 340
 Ech merhþe mei so longe ileste
 þat he schal liki wel unwreste,
 For harpe and pipe and fu(3)les song
 Mislikeþ if hit is to long.
 Ne be þe song névre so merie,
 þat he ne schal þenche wel unmerie,
 3if he ilesté ower unwille.
 So þu miht þine song aspille ;
 For hit is sop, Alvred hit sede,
 And me hit mei in boke rede: 350
 Ech þing mei lese his godhede
 Mid unmeþe and mid overdede.' [269]

þe nihtegale in hire þohte 391
 Atheld al þis and longe þohte
 Hwat he þarafter mihte segge,
 For he ne mihte noht alege
 þat þe ule hadde hire ised,
 For he spac boþe riht and red.
 And hire offuhte þat he hadde
 þe speche so ferforþ iladde,
 And was aferd þat hire andsware
 Ne werþe noht ariht ifare. 400
 Ac noþeles he spac boldéliche,
 For he is wis þat hardéliche [280]
 Wíp his fo bereþ grete ilete,

Þat he for arhþe hi ne forlete.
 For swich werþ bold, 3if þu ifficst,
 Þat wile fle 3if þu niswiest.
 3if he isicþ þat þu nart arh,
 He wile of bore werche barh.
 And for þi, þeh þe nightegale
 Wére aferd, spac bolde tale. 410
 ‘U’le’, he sede, ‘hwi destu so ?
 Þu singest a wintre wolawo ; [290]
 Þu singest so deþ hen a snowe ;
 Al þat he singeþ hit is for wowe.
 A wintre þu singest wrope and 3omere,
 And evre þu art dumb a sumere.
 Hit is for þine fule niþe
 Þat þu ne miht mid us be bliþe,
 For þu forbernest neh for onde
 Hwanne ure blisse cumeþ to londe. 420
 Þu farest al so doþ þe ille,
 E’vrich blisse him is unwille ;
 Grucching and luring him beþ rade
 3if he iseþ þat men beþ glade.
 He wolde bet þat he iseie
 Téres in evrich mannes eie ;
 Ne rohte he þeh flockes were
 Imeind bi toppes and bi here.
 Al so þu dest o þire side,
 For hwanne snou liþ picke and wide 430
 And alle wihtes habbeþ sorþe,
 Þu singest fram eve fort a morþe. [310]
 Ac alle blisse mid me ich bringe ;
 Ech wiht is glad for mine þinge,
 A’nd hit blesseþ hwanne ich cume
 And hihteþ ázen mine cume.
 Þe blosme ginneþ springe and sprede
 Bóþe in tre and ec on mede ;
 Þe lilię mid hire feire wlite
 Welcumeþ me, þat þu hit wite, 440
 Bit me mid hire feire ble

Þát ich schule to hire fle. [320]
 Þe rose al so mid hire rude,
 Þat cumeþ of þe þorne wude,
 Bít me þat ich schule singe
 For hire luve óne skentínges. 446

‘U’le, þu axest me’, he sede, 707
 ‘3if ich can eni opre dede
 Búte singe in sumere tide
 And bringe blisse fer and wide. 710
 Hwi axestu of craftes mine ?
 Bétère is min on þanne alle þine ; [330]
 Bétère is o song of mine muþe
 Þanne al þat evre þi ken cuþe :
 And lest ! ich telle þe hwarfore.
 Wostu to hwan man was ibore ?
 To þare blisse of hevenriche,
 Þar evre is song and merhþe iliche.
 Þíder fundeþ evrich man
 Þat eni þing of gode can. 720
 For þi me singeþ in holi cherche
 And clerkes ginneþ songes werche, [340]
 Þat man ípenche bi þe songe
 Hwíder he schal, and þar ben longe ;
 Þat he þe merhþe ne for3ete,
 And þarof þenchè and bi3ete,
 And nime 3eme of cherche stevne,
 Hu merie is þe blisse of hevne.
 Clerkes, munkes, and canunes,
 Þar beþ þes gode wike tunes, 730
 Ariseþ up to middelnihte
 And singeþ of þe hevenlihte,
 And prestes upe londe singeþ
 Hwánne þat liht of deie springeþ ;
 And ich hem helpe hwat ich mei. [353]
 Ich singe mid hem niht and dei,
 And hi beþ alle for me þe gladdre,
 And to þe songe beþ þe raddre.

Ich warni men to here gode,
 þat hi ben bliþe on here mode, 740
 And bidde þat hi mote iseche
 þan ilche song þat evre is eche.'

þes ule spac wel boldêliche, 1707
 For þeh he nadde so hwatliche
 Ifarê after hire here,
 He wolde noþeles ȝeve andswere
 þe nihtegale mid swiche worde. [354]

For mani man mid speres orde
 Haveþ litle strenȝe, and mid his schelde,
 Ac noþeles in one felde,
 þurh bolde worde and mid ilete,
 Deþ his ifo for arhþe swete.
 þe wranne, for he cuþe singe, [360]
 þar com in þare morȝeninge
 To helpe þare nihtegale ;

For þeh he hadde stevne smale, 1720
 He hadde gode þrote and schille
 And fele manne song a wille.
 þe wranne was wel wis iholde,
 For þeh he were ibred a wolde,
 He wes itoȝe among mankenne
 And hire wisdom brohte þenne.
 He mihte speke hwar he wolde, [370]
 Toforeþ þe kinge þeh he scholde.

'Léstep', he cwaþ, 'léteþ me speke!
 Hwat! wile ȝe þis pais tobreke 1730
 And do þan kinge swiche schame?
 ȝet nis he nouþer ded ne lame.

Unc schal itide harm and schonde
 ȝif we doþ griþbreche on his londe.
 Léteþ be and beþ isome
 And fareþ riht to eure dome
 And leteþ dom þis plait tobreke, [380]
 Al so hit was erer bispeke.'
 'Ich an wel', cwaþ þe nihtegale.

‘Ac, wranne, noht for þire tale, 1740
 Ac do for mire lahfulnesse.
 Ich nolde þat unrihtfulnesse
 Me atten endē overcome:
 Ich nam ofdrad of none dome.
 Bihote ich habbe, soþ hit is,
 Þat maister Nicholē, þat is wis,
 U’s bitwihe deme scholde; [390]
 And ȝet ich wene þat he wolde.
 Ac hware mihte we hine finde?’
 Þe wranne sat in ore linde; 1750
 ‘Hwat! nete ȝit’, cwaþ he, ‘his hom?
 He wunep nu at Porteshom,
 At one tunē in Dorsete,
 Bi þare se in ore utlete:
 Þar he demþ mani rihtne dom
 And diht and writ mani wisdom,
 And þurh his mupe and þurh his honde [400]
 Hit is þe betere in to Scotlonde.
 To seche hine is lihtlich þing,
 He naveþ bute one wuniing. 1760
 Þat is bischope muchel schame,
 And alle þan þat of his name
 Hábbep iherd and of his dede.
 Hwi nelle hi nime hem to rede,
 Þát he were mid hem ilome
 Fort teche hem of his wisdom,
 And ȝeve him rente a fele stede, [410]
 Þát he mihte hem be mide?’
 ‘Cértes’, cwaþ þe ule, ‘þat is soþ;
 Þes riche men muchel misdop 1770
 Þat leteþ þane gode man
 Þat of so fele þinge can,
 And ȝeveþ rente wel misliche
 And of him leteþ wel lihtliche.
 With here kenne hi bep mildre
 And ȝeveþ rente litle childre:
 So here wit hi demep a dwole, [420]

Pat evre abit maister Nichole.
 Ac ute we þeh to him fare,
 For þare is unker dom al ʒare'. 1780
 'Do we', þe nihtegale sede.
 'Ac hwo schal unker speche rede
 And telle tofore unker deme?'
 'þarof ich schal þe wel icweme',
 Cwaþ þe ule, 'for al ende of orde
 Telle ich can, word after worde.
 And ʒif þe þençþ þat ich misrempe, [430]
 Pu stond aʒein and do me crempe.'
 Mid þisse worde forþ hi ferde,
 Al bute here and bute ferde, 1790
 To Porteshom, þar hi bcome.
 Ac hu hi spedde of here dome
 Ne can ich eu namore telle.
 Her nis namore of þisse spelle.

NOTES

9. The form *kest* is not recorded; it corresponds to Old Frisian *kest*. The rhyme *ē/ī* is normal; cf. ll. 1768–9. 83–4. *flesse*, *messe*. In some positions OE. *sc* may have given *ss*, i.e. some kind of *s*, not *f*; cf. Dan Michel's controversial *ss*; ll. 303–4 below; *Yris* J l. 322; ll. 1387–8 *flesche/cwesse* C, *fleysse/queysse* J; *fys*, *fleys* J l. 1007. 89. *flicst* is modelled on the rhyme *iflicst* (*flizste* C, *flyhst* J)/*niswicst* (*iʒwicst* C, *swykst* J) ll. 405–6; so *flicþ* l. 176, *atflicþ* l. 37; for analogous forms see Jordan *Mittelenglische Grammatik*, § 198, Anm. 2. 148. *bisemar* is a difficult form; cf. l. 1311 (where a medial *e* is required by the metre) and *bisemar* in *Ancren Riwe* p. 132. 192. *Geldeforde*. See Ekwall *Dictionary of Place-names* s.v. *Guildford*. 313. *an evne* 'equally, steadily' (cf. *O.E.D. Even*, a. 17). But perhaps the hiatus in *singe efne* (see *O.E.D. Even*, adv. 1) should stand. 337. *adunest*. The root-vowel is *ū*, not *ü*: see *O.E.D. Dun*, v.² 339. or *And makest þi song so unwerþ þat me ne telþ þarof noht* (or *no*) *werþ*. 347. *ower unwillle*. Probably representing OE. **eower unwillum* (cf. *his unwillum*); but possibly the original had *ure unwillle* = OE. *urum unwillum* 'in our despite'. 415–16. The same rhyme *sumer/ʒeomer* occurs in *On god ureisun of ure lefdi* ll. 39–40; cf. *alle & some/nome* 'took' / *come* 'came' / *lome* 'tool', in the Harley lyric

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'Of a mon Matheu pohte' ll. 28-9. 425. *bet*: supplied metri gratia. For the use cf. *Me lest bet*, l. 39. 436. *cume*: a new formation on the verb, replacing OE. *cyme*: see *O.E.D.* *Come*, sb.¹ and cf. *imunde* 'protection' l. 1516, based on OE. *gemundian*. 1724. *were* is necessary for the sense; MSS. *nere*. 1751. *nete ȝit* 'know not you two' makes good sense, which the MS. readings do not: *nuzte ȝe C*, *mihte lyet* (with *l* subpuncted) J. 1752. *nu*: inserted in a desperate attempt to mend the metre. 1761. *bischope*, dative plural. 1766. *Fort*: see *O.E.D.* *Forte*, *fort*. 1768. The readings of the MSS., *heom ilome C*, *ilome heom J*, point to disturbance of the tradition. Delete *ilome*, which has probably come from l. 1765.

C. T. ONIONS.

WALTER HILTON AND THE MYSTICAL TRADITION IN ENGLAND

WALTER HILTON, the author of the *Scale of Perfection* and many other shorter mystical and ascetic works in English and Latin, died in 1395 or 1396.¹ His work, therefore, comes at the end of the fourteenth century and it develops out of the earlier mystical movement. The purpose and scope of his writings cannot be properly understood without some reference to the writers just before him, since Hilton is an intensely traditional writer and makes constant references to the work of other men.

The best-known figure in English medieval mysticism, Richard Rolle of Hampole, died half a century before Hilton, in 1349, but his influence grew steadily after his death, and at the close of the century his reputation for sanctity stood so high that an Office was prepared in anticipation of the canonization of Richard Hermit. Rolle's work was passionate and personal; in prose that has almost the rhythm of poetry, highly alliterated and cadenced, and in long irregular alliterative verse, he sang his 'song of love longing to Jesu', 'as þe nyghttyngale, þat lufeþ sang and melody and fayles for mykel lufe'. He preached an intense devotion to the Holy Name of Jesu; this, he declared, had brought him to his ecstasy. In the famous fifteenth chapter of the *Incendium Amoris*, he tells how 'he first came to the fire of love'. After his first turning from the world to solitude, nearly three years

¹ Many manuscripts state that Hilton died on the vigil of the Annunciation, 1395, that is March 24, 1396. See Harley 330 and 6576, and others. On the other hand, John Grenehalgh, monk of Sheen, in a colophon dated 1499, which he added to Trinity 354, gave the date of his death as the vigil of the Assumption, 1395, that is August 14, 1395. Grenehalgh gives this date too in a note he wrote in the copy of the 1494 *Scale* now in the possession of Lord Aldenham, and he adds there that he himself came from Hilton's part of the country. See Miss D. Jones, *Minor Works of Walter Hilton*, London, 1929, p. xxiv.

passed before he came to the 'opening of the heavenly door', and it was after a further year had passed that he received the special endowments of his ecstasy, first heat and then sweetness and song. The life of the contemplative, burning in the fire of love to Jesu and dowered with the gifts of heat, sweetness, and song, was to Rolle pre-eminently the solitary's life and he never tired of exalting and praising solitude. The whole story of Richard Hermit, with the miracles the Office records, must have powerfully reinforced the message of his writings and made the hermit's life, at the end of the fourteenth century, seem almost the only life for a man called of God to contemplation. The story of the young man, who borrowed from his sister two kirtles and his father's rain-hood and contriving from them the likeness of a hermit's garb fled into solitude, captures the imagination still. All the directness, the single-hearted devotion, of Rolle's works seems summed up in that first impulsive flight from the world. But although Rolle's writings are highly emotional and subjective, it would be a mistake to underrate his learning or his sanity. His lengthy Scriptural commentaries show that he regarded teaching as the proper work of the contemplative and that he did not despise reading and study. For all his delight in the sensuous accompaniments of his ecstasy, he is fully aware of the danger of delusions, and, like all great mystics, he establishes firmly the connexion between love and the virtues; they are both love's root, since 'na thyng may make þe religious, bot vertues and clenness of sawle in charite'; and they are its flower, for 'luf wil noght be ydel; it es wirkand som gude evermare'. But Rolle's main theme remains one of pure joy, joy that is felt in solitude, where the lover of Jesu 'es Jhesu lufand, Jhesu thynkand, Jhesu desirand . . . til hym syngand, of hym byrnand, in hym restand'.¹

Rolle's message is personal. He abounds in autobiography

¹ *English Writings of Richard Rolle*, edited by Hope Emily Allen, Oxford, 1931, pp. 106, 79, 111, 105. For Rolle's life, see Miss Allen's Introduction and also her *Writings Ascribed to Richard Rolle*, London and New York, 1927.

and in his earlier works he did not scruple to claim sanctity for himself. In all this he is the exact opposite of the profoundly original mystic who wrote the *Cloud of Unknowing* and its attendant epistles. Not even his name is known, and we can only guess at the circumstances of his life, whether he was secular or monk or hermit.¹ His work is directed to those 'in þe souereinnest pointe of contemplatife leuing'. The prologue is a warning that the book should not come into the hands of ordinary men. It is meant for initiates. The author was responsible for the fourteenth-century translation of the *Mystica Theologia* of Dionysius the Areopagite, and it is from Dionysius that his own doctrine derives. Where Rolle sings of a burning love to Jesu, the author of the *Cloud* austere speaks of God's transcendence which is above all man can think or know. The highest object of the contemplative's love, in this life, must be the unknowable.

For of alle oþer creatures and þeire werkes, 3e and of þe werkes of god self, may a man þorou grace haue fulheed of knowing and wel to kon pinke on hem; bot of god him self can noman pinke. And þerfore I wole leue al þat þing þat I can pink and chese to my loue þat þing þat I can not pink. Forwhi, he may wel be loued bot not þou3t. By loue may he be getyn and holden bot bi þou3t neiper.²

So the author of the *Cloud* passes hastily by repentance and sorrow for sin, prayers, and meditations: they are good, but not for those who with Mary have chosen the best part. The contemplative must put all thoughts and all works, good and bad together, beneath him, under a dark cloud of forgetting, and he must smite upon the thick cloud of unknowing, which is above him, with a sharp dart of longing love. This

¹ It has been suggested, notably by Dom McCann, *Ampleforth Journal*, July 1924, that Walter Hilton is the most likely claimant to the authorship of the *Cloud*. I have given elsewhere my reasons for rejecting this solution and also for accepting the usual dating of the *Cloud* as between Rolle and Hilton. See *Review of English Studies*, April 1933.

² Quotations are from MS. Harley 674. There is a modernized edition of the *Cloud*, edited by Miss Underhill, London, 1922, and another in the Orchard Series, edited by Dom McCann, London, 1924.

is the work to which the *Cloud* calls its special disciples; the mind must be emptied of all thought, save that which is contained in the short words 'God' and 'Love', and by this unknowing alone can God be known and loved, not God in His goodness or in His mercy, but 'þe nakid beyng of him'. This transcendental doctrine is preached in the *Cloud* with wit and vigour, force and passion. There is no place in such a scheme for the burning tenderness of Rolle, and the beauty that is achieved is of a totally different order. The writer has a mind learned in theology, subtle and daring in speculation; he has a keen eye for absurdities and is master of a lively, idiomatic prose style. For all his anonymity and his utter lack of personal reference, a highly original and brilliant personality is apparent in his work.

Walter Hilton, the successor to these two strongly marked personalities, has neither a romantic temperament such as Rolle's nor an original doctrine to preach such as the *Cloud's*. He is gentler and at first sight less interesting than either of his predecessors. Of his life almost nothing is known. When he speaks of himself it is usually to disclaim the possession of any special graces and to insist that he speaks more than he knows or does. One might say of him what Professor Gardner has said of one of his great masters, Richard of St. Victor: 'It is tempting to connect what seems his deliberate suppression of self, his repeated declaration that he knows nothing, by personal experience, of the ecstatic doctrine that he sets forth, with the supreme importance that he attaches to the virtue of humility as the very foundation of the spiritual life.'¹ Professor Gardner goes on to assert that a work such as the *De Quatuor Gradibus Violentæ Charitatis* must be based on direct experience, and in the same way one would say that no one could have written the second book of the *Scale* without having tasted what he spoke of.

However he may deny his own claims to holiness and special grace, from the audience he addresses it is clear that Hilton's reputation as a counsellor must have been high in his own day. What first strikes one is the variety of men he

¹ Edmund Gardner, *Dante and the Mystics*, London, 1913, p. 164.

taught. The first book of the *Scale* is written to an anchoress to teach her the duties of her state. It shows everywhere a delicate personal sympathy for her difficulties and temptations. A Latin epistle, *De Imagine Peccati*, is also addressed to a recluse, this time a man, who had written to Hilton to ask of him counsel and comfort, since he was troubled in spirit. Another Latin epistle, *Epistola Aurea*, is written to a friend, Adam Horsley, an official in the King's Exchequer, who was about to leave the world and enter the Carthusian house of Beauvale. The beautiful little English tract, *Of Angels' Song*, is an answer to a friend who had written to inquire how angels' song and heavenly melody were heard in a man's soul; a query probably inspired by a puzzled study of Rolle. *Mixed Life* was written to a worldly lord, to teach him how to lead his life in the world. We do not know who this lord was, but he must have been a man of some standing. Hilton speaks of his wealth and his responsibilities, to his children, his household, and his tenants. He was a widower, since no wife is mentioned, and probably no longer young, and he longed to 'sell all he had'; but Hilton, in what is perhaps the wisest and gentlest of his works, persuades him that charity calls on him to lead a mixed life, half active and half contemplative, since to abandon the duties of charity for the sake of contemplation is to adorn Christ's head, but to leave his body, the Church, naked and untended. A little unnamed tract in MS. Add. 33971 is written to a friend 'newly turnede to oure lorde Iesu, whilk was trubulde in his conciens' in the matter of confession. Harley 2406 contains a short commentary on an epistle Hilton had sent to a nun newly entered religion.

The varied audience Hilton wrote for accounts perhaps for his popularity with many different kinds of people. He must have had a gift of sympathy, and this is felt in all his works. The *Scale*, though written for a contemplative, was not only praised by the Carthusian Nicholas Love, Prior of Mount Grace,¹ and owned by many religious, it was also the favourite reading of the Lady Margaret Tudor, mother of Henry VII,

¹ *Mirroure of the Blessed Lyf*, edited Powell, Oxford, 1908, p. 165.

who commanded Wynkyn de Worde to print it, as he tells us himself; it was besides owned by many devout laymen of all classes. Lambeth 472, containing the *Scale* and other works of Hilton, was made of the goods of John Killum, a merchant, for a common profit, and a search of fifteenth-century wills reveals many lay owners of Hilton's works, men and women.

Hilton is nearly always referred to in the manuscripts as a Canon of Thurgarton, a house of Augustinian Canons in Nottinghamshire; some manuscripts add that he died there.¹ He is usually called *Magister*, a title reserved at this time for doctors of theology. One manuscript² calls him *Parisius*, and there is nothing improbable in the idea of his having studied in Paris. The most interesting hint at his life which can be found in his writings is that he was at one time himself a solitary. Harley 2397 calls him 'maister watir hiltone hermyte', and two passages in Hilton's unprinted Latin works show that his understanding of the solitary's griefs and joys came from personal experience.

The first occurs in the *De Imagine Peccati*, the tract addressed to a recluse. This is stated in the title in Digby 115, but it is clear also from the epistle itself. It is ascribed to Hilton in the manuscripts, and the ascription is very strongly supported by internal evidence. The theme of the tract is the same as the main theme of Book I of the *Scale*, the description of the image of sin, the old Adam. The same authorities are quoted as in the *Scale*, sometimes indeed almost identical phrases are used. Quoting Augustine, Hilton makes self-love the root of all sins and proceeds to describe its branches. Foremost comes pride, the head of the image and the greatest danger to the solitary, who is inclined to 'thank God he is not as other men are'. Hilton spends much time here, and then passes to envy and wrath, which are also limbs of self-love, and to accidie, which is rooted in self-indulgence. Before going on to speak of the bodily sins, Hilton speaks of covetousness or desire of worldly things in general. His friend,

¹ Harley 6576 and Upsala C 159. Grenehalgh also, in the note in the 1494 *Scale* already referred to, says he died at Thurgarton.

² Marseilles 729.

he says, may have left behind the world, but he has perhaps not left behind the love of it. In the world he was troubled over superfluities, now he allows himself to be troubled in the same way over necessities; and if he feels no necessity, he rejoices because he has found 'a plentiful nest, where he may be fed without labour and sweat'. He is willing to be humble, but not to be despised of men; so, too, he is willing to be poor but not to feel the pinch of poverty. 'Tell me', says Hilton, 'what use are you, what good do you do?' All men are set in this world to labour; the layman by working for his bread and for the bread of others and by the corporal works of mercy; the secular clergy, by the spiritual works of mercy, by undertaking the cure of souls or by celebrating for the dead; the regulars by prayers and watchings and other works of obedience. All these have their uses and have a place ordained in the Church.

What [he goes on] do we do, you and I and our like, lazy and useless men, *standing all the day idle*. We do not labour in the vineyard of the lord, administering the holy rites of the Church, nor do we go from parish to parish, preaching the word of God, nor do we show forth spiritually the other works of mercy, nor do we willingly bear the yoke of obedience, beneath the rule of another, like the heifer of Ephraim, who was taught to love to tread out the corn. In no wise do we fill the place of any servant, even the least, appointed in the Church, but we are as it were left freely to our own feeling and our own will as if in no order. We must be fearful lest we are cast away where there is no order but eternal confusion.¹

He goes on to assert that such as they have, nevertheless, a place in the mystical body of Christ, and he uses a comparison

¹ 'quid ergo facimus. tu et ego nostrique similes hominesque pigri et inutiles. *tota die stantes ociosi*. non laboramus in vinea domini sacra ecclesiastica ministrando nec discurremus per parochias uerbum dei predicando nec cetera misericordie opera spiritualiter exhibemus neque iugum obediencie sub alterius imperio tanquam vitula effraym docta diligere trituram uoluntarie portamus nusquam occupamus locum alicuius ministri et minimi in ecclesia ordinati sed quasi libere relictis nostro sensui nostreque voluntati quasi in nullo ordine sumus. timendum est nobis ne proiciamur ubi nullus est ordo sed sempiternus horror.' (Royal 6 E. III, f. 74, col. 2.)

from St. Gregory¹ to justify himself and his friend. They are like the delicate and beautiful cloths with which Moses adorned the tabernacle within, while others are the rougher and stronger cloths which protected it without. All, while they keep humility, have a place in the Church. The rest of the tract deals with the bodily sins. There is an interesting passage on the spiritual senses, with reference to the hearing of heavenly song and the tasting of heavenly sweetness, that seems to echo and explain Rolle. The five senses are, as in the *Scale* (i. 32), compared to the five yoke of oxen which their owner wished to try. Finally the destruction of the image of sin is promised, if the contemplative will wait patiently and meekly for grace.

The epistle as a whole has few mystical touches; it is concerned almost wholly with the purgative life, the rooting out of vices. The tone is very vehement, even allowing for the fact that medieval Latin always sounds more vehement than English. The tirades against sin are very different in tone from the gentleness and the care in handling sinners which Hilton generally shows. It is perhaps not fanciful to feel in the epistle, dull as it is in subject-matter, a certain unhappiness and dissatisfaction. The joys of the spiritual life are hardly mentioned and the references to Christ seem perfunctory. There is much of spiritual pride, much of spiritual dryness, and when joys are touched on there seems no experience behind them. What is interesting is Hilton's care to give each state in the Church its due and the warnings against delusions as to one's own sanctity, probably due to Rolle's exaltation of his own way of life, coupled with phraseology often taken direct from Rolle. It suggests that Hilton became a solitary fired by Rolle's example and that he was discovering dangers and difficulties in solitude.

Hilton also refers to himself as a solitary in the *Epistola Aurea* and again gives the same impression of unhappiness. The *Epistola* like the *De Imagine Peccati* is unquestionably Hilton's. It is ascribed to him by manuscript tradition and is also marked as his by internal evidence. It was addressed to

¹ *Morals*, xxv. 39 (Migne, *P.L.* lxxvi, 346).

Adam Horsley, an official of the King's Exchequer, who was about to enter the Carthusian house of Beauvale. It has been possible to trace Horsley a little at the Exchequer. He appears in 1370 in an Issue Roll of Thomas de Brantingham, when he was paid twenty shillings for the expenses of a tour in Gloucestershire.¹ Miss Dorothy Broome, who is working on the Exchequer in the late fourteenth century, kindly sent me the information that in 1375 Adam Horsley was made Controller of the Great Roll.² This means that the epistle, written when he was about to leave the Exchequer, must be dated after 1375 and that Hilton's own entry into the Priory of Thurgarton must, as will be seen, come after that date too.

The epistle, which is not very interesting in itself, is devoted to the praise of the religious life. Hilton traces its origins and describes its uses. It guards against sin by removing its occasion; it is particularly useful in that men, who left to themselves might fall into errors and delusions, are in religion checked by the correction of a superior. Religion is a school of humility and obedience. The two greatest dangers to those seeking perfection are presumption on the one hand and despair on the other; against both religion is a city of refuge. He then goes on to speak of the privileges accorded by the belief of the Church to those entering religion, and breaks off to say:

But perhaps you are thinking to yourself with amazement, why do I urge others so earnestly to religion and praise it as holy and yet do not decide myself to take upon me the habit of that same religion. . . . I confess, alas, that I do not feel that burning spiritual desire for entry into religion, inspired by divine grace, as it ought to be felt by those who from zealous devotion and pure desire of the mind plan to enter religion. But you, on the other hand, have conceived a desire for religion which the grace of God has sown in your heart and therefore you ought, as one specially called of God to this, to nourish that desire that it may bring forth the harvest of real performance. For the apostle says, Do not neglect the grace of God which is given to you. Indeed I own myself unworthy and I

¹ *Issue Roll of the Exchequer 44 Edward III*, London, 1835, p. 405.

² *Memoranda Rolls*, K.R. 152 and L.T.R. 148.

long to be the servant of even the least religious in the Church of God and I hope by God's grace to be made a sharer with them. He goes on to speak of different gifts and different callings. If his friend is called to religion he must labour in that calling.

If, on the other hand, God should have ordained for me thus, miserable and wretched as I am, and should have called me by His grace to sit solitary and serve him in that manner, as he deigns to grant to me, shall I not persevere in that calling? For the apostle says, Let each man remain in that calling in which he is called; only let each man know his calling that it is of God and then persevere in it. I know that solitude is not for all, but I know also that to some the common life is not suited. And therefore you must be prepared and all other men to obey the divine call. For if I too, all things considered, were to be in the same way of life as you are in now and were to have the same desire for religion as you have, without doubt that desire should be brought to effect by entering religion.¹

¹ 'sed forsán cogitacio tua dicit tibi ipsi mirando forsán eúr alios tam instanter ad religionem prouocem. eamque religionem commendem ut sanctam. sed tamen eiusdem religionis habitum me suscipere minime dispono. . . . fateor me miserum illud spirituale et feruens desiderium ad ingressum religionis ex diuina gratia inspiratum minime sentire sicut sentiri (MS. *sentire*) necesse est ab eo qui zelo deuocionis et puro mentis affectu religionem ingredi disponit. Et tu uero desiderium religionis gratia dei seminatum in corde tuo concepisti. ideoque tibi expedit tanquam specialiter a deo ad hanc vocato istud desiderium nutrire ut (MS. *et*) prodeat in maturam spicam realis execucionis. Dicit enim apostolus. Noli negligere gratiam dei que data est tibi. Verumptamen recognosco me indignum et opto me esse seruum et minimi religiosi in ecclesia dei et spero per dei gratiam me eorum fore participem. . . . Item e conuerso si deus mihi ordinauerit misero et abiecto sic. vocaueritque per gratiam suam ut solitarius sedeam seruamque taliter ei prout ipse michi donare dignetur quare non in hac (MS. *hoc*) vocacione perseuerabo. Dicit enim apostolus Vnusquisque in qua vocacione vocatus est in ea permaneat. tantummodo sciat quisquis vocacionem suam. quia a deo sit et tunc in ea perseueret. scio quia non omnibus conuenit solitudo (MS. *solicitudo*). ac eciám scio quia aliquibus non expedit congregacio. Et ideo paratus sis tu et quilibet alius obedire diuine vocacioni. Si enim et ego omnibus consideratis tue conuersacioni que iam est similis existerem et tale desiderium religionis haberem sicut tu procul dubio ad effectum perduceretur per religionis ingressum.' (Royal 6 E. III, ff. 125^v, col. 2, 126, col. 1.)

The writer of this passage does not seem very far from the entry into an order which he recommends to his friend. The dissatisfaction which is apparent in the *De Imagine Peccati* seems to have crystallized in the *Epistola Aurea* into a definite comparison between the advantages of religion and the disadvantages of solitude. The point of departure is the same in both, the dangers of presumption and the necessity for humility. The remedy in the *Epistola Aurea* is seen to be the practice of holy obedience under the rule of a superior. What is strange is that Hilton should have chosen the comparatively mild order of Augustinian Canons. Perhaps he felt himself unworthy of the heroic rigours of the Carthusian life which his friend was about to adopt. It is extremely unusual to proceed from a strict to a less strict way of life; the movement is nearly always the other way, from the life of the community to the solitary's cell. Miss Clay notes that when the monastery of Syon was founded many solitaries left their dwellings and entered the community, but this was exceptional.¹ As a general rule, the hermit might only come forth from his solitude to take upon him a stricter life, such as that of a bishop. A famous example is that of Pietro di Morone, who to his own unhappiness left his cell to become Pope Celestine V and made the 'great refusal' by turning his back on the throne of Peter to seek again the solitude he loved. But, however unusual it may appear, there seems no other way of reconciling Hilton's own words with the testimony of the manuscripts that he died at Thurgarton, than by assuming that he began his religious life, probably inspired by Rolle, as a hermit, that he found himself unsuited to that way of life, and that some time after 1375 he entered the Priory of Thurgarton where in 1395 or 1396 he died.

Hilton is very much the man of one book. That book, the *Scale of Perfection*, was written in English and translated into Latin by a Carmelite, Thomas Fyselawe, probably before 1400.² The *Scale* is in two books. Book I, which often

¹ Rotha M. Clay, *The Hermits and Anchorites of England*, London, 1914, p. 144.

² Quotations from the *Scale* are made from Harley 6579;

appears alone in the manuscripts, is addressed to an anchoress and contains many references to her calling. Book II, which usually follows Book I, though it twice appears alone, is addressed to a friend, who had asked to hear more of the image of sin, described in Book I. There are no individual references in Book II, which seems to have been written with a general public in view. In chapter 21, for instance, Hilton, speaking of works fitting for the contemplative, says: 'What werk þat it be þat þu schulde don after þe degre and þe state þat þu standis in bodily or gostly, if it helpe þis gracious desire þat þu haste for to lufe iesu and make it more hol, more esy and more miȝty to alle vertues and to alle goodnes, þat werke hald I beste, be it prechyng, be it þinkyng, be it redyng, be it wirkyng.' Plainly, in a passage like this, Hilton has not a woman reader in mind; its vagueness suggests that the friend who had asked for more information was a conventional excuse for writing. The two books are very different in treatment, though both handle the same theme. The ground of both is St. Paul's doctrine of regeneration in Christ: 'and as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.' But the first book is mainly concerned with the earthy, the image of sin; the second with the reformed soul in whom the image of Christ is restored. The first book is very rigidly schematized, a plan is laid down and followed, the arguments lead one to another; there are headings and sub-headings and divisions of the theme. If he does digress, Hilton pulls himself back with a jerk. The second book is discursive and free in its handling. It quotes far less from Scripture and from authorities, and Hilton's imagination plays freely in it, as in the parable of the pilgrim going to Jerusalem, the picture in the closing chapters of the rewards of the contemplative, or in the wonderful middle chapters on Love, the Giver and the abbreviations are expanded and the punctuation is modernized. There is a modernized edition, with an introduction by Miss Underhill, London, 1923, and another, in the Orchard Series, by an Oblate of Solesmes, London, 1927. For the date of the Latin translation, see my article 'The Text of the Scale of Perfection', *Medium Ævum*, February 1936.

Gift, where understanding has turned theology into poetry. It has been suggested that a period of some years must have intervened between the two books, that the first, with its rigid adherence to plan, is the work of a young man, an inexperienced writer, who relies mainly on authority, while the second, with its freedom and serenity, bears the marks of age and ripe maturity. Certainly, the references to his own unworthiness and lack of grace, which appear in Book I and echo the Latin tracts already quoted from, do not appear in Book II. Where Book I speaks with much detail of sins and of the struggle for virtues, Book II speaks of a love so strong that it makes virtues easy and natural, of virtues had in affection rather than in will, so that what was hard is light. At the close of Book II, Hilton is so secure that he can speak almost gaily of the devil as 'a clumsed caytif bounden with þe miȝt of iesu, þat he may not deren'. He can almost laugh at him: 'þer is no creature so vnmȝty as he is and perfore it is a grete cowardise þat men dreden him so mikel; he may no þinge don with outen lefe of oure lord iesu, not so mikel as entren in to a swyne as þe gospel seiþ' (ii. 45). This serenity and security is hardly felt in Book I, which deals more with the seeking than with the finding, and Book I does not show the same ease and variety of style as Book II. It is, then, quite possible that some years separate them and that they should be regarded more as two separate works than as two parts of the same book.

The *Scale* comes at the end of the fourteenth century, and the audience Hilton wrote for was almost in danger of being confused by the multitude of spiritual guides. Hilton is a little scornful at times of the contemplative's passion for advice and discussion of spiritual things. When his reader is come to 'liberte of spirit' he tells him, 'þe þar not neden for to renne aboute here and here and aske questions of ilk gostly man, what þu schalt don, how þu schalt lufe god and how þu schalt seruen god and speken of gostly materes þat passyn þi knowynge as per chaunce summe don' (ii. 42). Much of his book is spent in explaining terms and in guarding his readers against misunderstandings of mystical

phraseology, rather than in adding new ghostly counsels. Thus he explains that the fire of love, which Rolle had spoken of, is not 'bodili felid'; that devotion to the Name of Jesus is simply longing for 'ghostly hele', 'for þis name iesu is not ellis for to sey vp on englyshe but helere or hele' (i. 44); that when he says that this one word Jesu contains all that the soul has lost and would find, he does not mean 'þis wurd iesu peinted vpon þe wal, or writen wip lettres on þe book or fourmed bi lippes in soun of þe mouþ or feined in þin herte bi trauaille of þi mende, for on þis manere wise may a man oute of charite finden hym, bute I mene iesu al goodnesse, endles wisdom, luf and sw(e)tnesse, þi ioie, þi wurschip and þin aylastende blis, þi god, þi lord and þi saluacioun' (i. 46). So, too, with Rolle probably in mind, he explains that the 'openynge of heuene to þe iʒe of a clene soule of þe whilk holy men speken of in here writynge' is not 'as if a soule miȝt seen by ymaginacioun þurȝ þe skies abouen þe firmament, how oure lorde iesu sittip in his maieste, in a bodily lizt as mikel as an hundred sunnes. Nay, it is not so; ne þawȝ he see neuer so heiȝe, on þat maner, soþly he seþ not þe ghostly heuen. Þe hiȝere he stiep aboue þe sunne for to see iesu god so, bi swilk ymaginacioun, þe lowere he fallip bineþ þe sunne' (ii. 32). Similarly, in chapters 24-8 of Book II, he explains at great length the high paradoxical terms of Dionysian mysticism, which the *Cloud* had employed, 'a lizty mirknes' and a 'riche noȝt'; characteristically he makes them unparadoxical, for Hilton's mind is not daring. Chapter 40 of Book II is a beautiful exposition of common mystical terms, drawn from many sources, Rolle, the *Cloud*, St. Bernard, and others. Hilton weaves them all together into one chapter, to show that they are only so many phrases for the same truth.

þis openynge of þe ghostly eiȝe is þat lizty mirknes and riche noȝt þat I spake of bifore, and it may be callid *Parte of spirit and ghostly reste, inwarde stilnes and pees of conscience, heiȝenes of þoȝt and onlynnes of soule, a lifty felynge of grace and pryete of herte, þe waker slepe of þe spouse and tastynge of heuently sauour, brynnyng in lufe and schynnyng in lizt, entre of contemplacioun and*

reformynge in felynge. Alle þese resons are saide in holy writynge bi diuers men for ilke of hem spake of it aftir his felynge in grace and þaw3 al þai are diuers in schewynge of wordes, nerþeles þei arne alle in on sentence of soþfastnes. For a soule pat þur3 visitynge of grace hap on hap al (ii. 40).

What Hilton does with the vocabulary of mysticism is typical of what he does with his sources throughout the *Scale*. The *Scale* is not a learned book, nor is it written for a learned audience. There is no parade in it. But, in the best sense, it is learned, for Hilton knows his subject so well, that he quotes and borrows and adapts as he chooses, so easily that his book does not seem the tissue of borrowings that it is, but appears all of a piece. In this matter, all students of medieval mysticism are indebted to the French edition of the *Scale*,¹ whose editors, Dom Noetinger and Dom Bouvet, annotated the text and traced to their sources not only Hilton's ideas but also much of his ornament and illustration. Any study of Hilton must reap where they have sown. Hilton does not often refer to his sources, though he speaks constantly in general terms of Holy Church and of Doctors. By name, in the *Scale*, he refers only to Augustine, Gregory, Bernard, and the Desert Fathers. In the *Epistola Aurea* he refers, besides these, to Anselm, Hugh of St. Victor, and Thomas Aquinas. It is impossible to say how his learning came to him, whether by direct study or by books of extracts or by other men's quotations. Miss Underhill thought his learning was slight and that, apart from Scripture, Augustine was his main source, while he knew Gregory only through a book of extracts.² On the other hand, he rarely makes direct quotations, as, for instance, the author of the *Ancren Riwele* so frequently does. Direct quotation does suggest the use of a book of sentences, but with Hilton the source usually lies behind and colours his work, as happens when a man has read and pondered on his reading but has not the exact passage in his mind before him. Hilton's quotations from Augustine are commonplaces; more interesting are the passages where

¹ *Scala Perfectionis*, Tours, 1923.

² *Scale of Perfection*, London, 1923, p. xviii.

Augustine lies behind the *Scale*. One work which Hilton draws on again and again in the *Scale* and in other works is Augustine's *Commentary on the Epistle of St. John*. Again, his borrowings from Gregory's *Morals* are so frequent, and he so often chooses texts which Gregory had commented on there for illustration, as to suggest that he knew at first hand at least some sections of that formidable work. Some of his profoundest thoughts on love echo St. Bernard; he quotes, as do all late medieval mystics, from the *Sermons on the Canticles*, but his conception of love formed and unformed, the giver and the gift, seems to owe something in expression as well as in thought to the *De Diligendo Deo*, which tells of a love which is both 'Deus et Dei donum' and cries 'nemo te quaerere valet, nisi qui prius invenerit. vis igitur inveniri, ut quaeraris, quaeri ut inveniaris. Potes quidem quaeri et inveniri, non tamen praeveniri'.¹ Augustine, Gregory, Bernard, these are the three whose influence runs right through the *Scale*, as through nearly every mystical work of the later Middle Ages. But there are others. Dom Noetinger's notes show how, both through the *Vitae Patrum* and Cassian, the deep wisdom of the desert, with its gentleness and charity, has been drawn on. Occasionally, also, Hilton will base a whole chapter on a definite source, as, for instance, the first two chapters of Book II, which are a lucid and succinct summary of the arguments of Anselm's *Cur Deus Homo*.

In his general system and in his leading ideas Hilton is indebted to the school of St. Victor and particularly to Richard of St. Victor, the great doctor whom Dante set high in the fourth heaven. Hilton does not refer to him by name, but he takes from him his love of classifying and grading the spiritual life and much of his psychology, though he does not go as far as Richard in identifying certain experiences with certain states of the soul. More fundamental is the stress Hilton, like the Victorines, lays on self-knowledge, as the only knowledge necessary for the contemplative and the road to knowledge of God. The idea that God is best known in the soul He made in His image is preached by Augustine, whom

¹ *De Diligendo Deo*, 7 (Migne, P.L. clxxxii. 987).

Hilton quotes in this connexion, and derives naturally from Scripture, but with the Victorines and in a lesser degree St. Bernard this 'Christian Socratism', as M. Gilson has called it, is the basis of the contemplative life.¹ Hilton, too, makes it the ground of his system, and it controls the whole plan of Book I. He uses also the famous Platonic image of Richard of St. Victor, when he speaks of the soul as a mirror, in which God can be seen, and urges his reader to keep that mirror clean and bright.² Hilton is also with the Victorines and with their masters, Augustine and Gregory, in his insistence on the element of cognition in the highest mystical states. The Victorines here refined upon the statements of earlier writers and distinguished between different kinds of knowledge and different objects of knowing. The distinction Hilton always draws between God and 'ghostly things' derives from the *Benjamin Major*; and in the last chapters of the *Scale*, which put among the joys of the contemplative the contemplation of God in earthly creatures, in the Scriptures, in ghostly creatures, and in his rewards and judgements, Hilton is also drawing on the *Benjamin Major*, though he does not follow Richard in attaching these revelations to definite stages of the contemplative life.

Like Rolle, Hilton everywhere shows a profound devotion to the person of Christ. This devotion, so intimate and tender, both in its meditation on the Manhood and its contemplation of the Divinity, is at the heart of the *Scale*. No sources need be sought for here. Though Hilton borrows from Augustine and Bernard to distinguish between the love of Christ in His Manhood and the love of Christ in His Godhead, the whole tradition to which he belongs here is central to Christianity, showing, as Miss Underhill has said, 'an unbroken line of descent from St. Paul and the Fourth Gospel'. Miss Underhill found a difference here between Book I and Book II. She declared that Book I had far less of this Christocentric feeling and conjectured that it was written at a time when Hilton

¹ See Étienne Gilson, *The Spirit of Medieval Philosophy* (trans. Downes), London, 1936, pp. 209-28.

² *Scale*, ii. 30; *Benjamin Minor*, 72 (Migne, P.L. cxcvi. 51).

was strongly under the influence of the author of the *Cloud*, with his insistence on imageless contemplation.¹ I am not able to agree with Miss Underhill here, since the comparative lack of reference to the person of Christ in Book I seems to me to be part of its general unmystical and ascetic temper. In Book I, as in Book II, it is asserted that Christ is door and porter and that this word Jesus is all. It is true that this theme lights up Book II as it does not light up Book I, but in doctrine and method there seems to me to be no difference between the two books, and the *Scale* is throughout rooted and grounded in the love of Christ.

It is then as a wise teacher that Hilton reveals himself in the *Scale*. The purpose of his writing is seen to be, not the revelation of graces given to him, nor the exaltation of one way of life beyond another, nor the recommendation of any special practices, but an attempt to put into simple language and adapt for the needs of individual souls the general teaching of the Church. The *Scale* is in essence the work of a director; it is in the tradition of the *Ancren Riwele* and it is often nearer in spirit to the *Riwele* than to Rolle and the *Cloud*. It reminds us of the *Riwele* in its moderation and sanity, in its gentleness, its wise and temperate asceticism. The *Riwele* was still popular in the fourteenth century and Hilton almost certainly knew it. He often uses the same texts and sayings in the same connexion as the *Riwele* does, and his parable of the pilgrim is nearer to the parable in the *Riwele* than to any other version of the theme. But a comparison of the *Scale* and the *Riwele* reveals not so much deliberate borrowing as a kinship of temper and style. The *Scale*, like the *Riwele*, is a storehouse of homely, vivid, and realistic images, and it is in this homeliness, which he shares with the *Riwele*, that the essence of Hilton's personality is to be found.

Not all his vivid similes are original, but they do not lose in the borrowing. 'An hounde þat rennþ after þe hare onli for he seep oþer houndes renne, whanne he is weri he restiþ hym, ore turniþ hom again, bute if he renne for he seep þe hare, he wile nouȝt spare for werinesse, til he haþ geten hit'

¹ Op. cit., pp. xxvii and xliv.

(i. 41). This sounds like a memory of the English country, but one of the wise old men of the desert had watched a hare and hounds many hundreds of years before and had drawn Hilton's moral.¹ Again, the curious comparison of the boiling cauldron over the fire, on which no fleshly fly can settle, to a 'clene soule þat is happed and warmed al in fire of lufe, boilende and plawende psalmes and louynges to iesu', on which no sin can rest, is found three times in the works of St. Catherine of Siena² and it also occurs in the *Summa Predicantium* of Bromyard.³ St. Catherine was known in England, as Dom Noetinger points out, through her disciple, William Flete, Hilton's contemporary, but there is probably an earlier source for the comparison. The beautiful passage which compares knowing in imagination to 'milk bi þe whilk [men] are tendrely norisched as children vntil þai ben able for to comen to þe faders borde and taken on his hande hool brede' (ii. 31) is derived from Augustine,⁴ but Hilton has added to the idea of milk and bread the tender image of the father's board, where the grown children shall feed at his hand.

But whether he is using his reading or his observation, the homeliness of Hilton's images strikes the reader at once. The smoking chimney and the scolding wife of the old proverb are used to describe the darkness of sin in the soul. Or, the darkness a man finds on his first entry into himself is as 'if a man had ben a grete while in þe sunne and after þat come sodeynly in to a mirke hows þer no sunne schynþ; he schuld first be as he were blynde and seen riȝt noȝt, bot if he wil abide a while he schal mounse seen sone aboute him first grete þinges and sipen smale and sipen al þat euer is in þe hows' (ii. 27). Pride is in the soul 'as þe fox dariþ in þe den' (i. 63). Good works are like sticks to nourish the flame of desire to Jesus. The man who tries to destroy sin without rooting out self-love is like 'vnto a man whilk hadde in his gardin a

¹ *Vitae Patrum*, 5. 7. 35 (Migne, *P.L.* lxxiii. 901).

² See Dom Noetinger's note to chapter 42, Book II, of the *Scale*.

³ See Owst, *Literature and the Pulpit*, Cambridge, 1933, p. 40.

⁴ *In Epistolam Joannis*, 3. 1 (Migne, *P.L.* xxxv. 1998).

sinkinnde welle wiþ many renneles fro it. He ȝede and stopped þe renneles and lefte þe springe hool and wende al hadde ben siker, bute þe water spronge vp atte þe grounde of þe welle and stod stille so mikil þat it corruptid al þe fairnesse of þe gardin' (i. 55). A soul, he teaches, must not stand still; it must strive to go forward in grace.

For it fariþ by hym as it doþ by a man þat were drawn out of a pitt and whan he were vp, he wolde no ferþer gon þan þe pyttes brynke. Soþly he were a mikel fool; for a litel puf of wynde or an vnwarly stiryng of hym self suld sone keste hym doun agayn wers þan he was bifore. Nerþeles if he fle fro þe brynke as fer as he may and go forþ on þe erþ, þan þawȝ þer come a grete storme he is þe more siker, for he falliþ not in þe put (ii. 18).

These realistic illustrations Hilton does not only use in his moral teaching; he employs them in his most mystical passages. The boiling cauldron over the fire has been mentioned; in another passage, where he is saying that too great fervour is a sign of spiritual immaturity, he uses a simile from the vintner's trade.

Riȝt as a costret þat is olde, when it resceifiþ new wyne, þat is fresch and mizty, þe costret bolneþ out and is in poynt for to clefen and bresten vntil þe wyne haue boylid and spurged out al vncleennes; bot alsone as þe wyne is fyned and clered þan standiþ it stil and þe costret hol. Riȝt so a soule þat is olde purghe synne, when it resceifiþ a litel of þe luf of god, þat is so fresch and so mizty, þat þe body is in poynt for to clefen and for to breken, ne were þat god kepiþ it hole. Bot ȝit it bresteþ out ate þe eizen by wepyng and at þe mouþe bi spekyng and þat is more for weiknes and feblenes of þe soule, þan for mikelnes of lufe. For afterward, whan luf hap boiled out alle þe vncleennes of þe soule bi swilk grete feruours, þan is þe luf clere and standiþ stille and þan is boþ þe body and þe soule mikel more in pees and ȝit hap þe self soule mikel more lufe þan it had bifore (ii. 29).

So again the comforts and graces given to a striving soul 'arn as it were his gostly fode sent fro heuen, for to strengþ him in his trauaile. Riȝt as a pilgrym traueileþ alday metles and drynkles and is nerhande ouercomen with werynes,

fallip at þe last to a gode in, and þer haþ he mete and drynke and is wel refresshed for þe tyme' (ii. 29). This homeliness runs right through the *Scale*. Hilton does not describe raptures and ecstasies, nor does he use glowing similes to express the inexpressible. Like the English mystics generally, he makes little use of the metaphor of the spiritual marriage. While Julian of Norwich thought of God as our mother and the *Riwe* in a famous and often borrowed passage saw God and the soul as a mother playing with her little child, Hilton uses mainly the language of an intimate friendship; the love he describes is felt in stillness and peace, silence and rest of heart 'with ful meeke sikernes and grete gostly gladnes'. When grace 'makip iesu and a soule bope at one in ful accordance of wille, þer is non vpbraydyng of synnes, ne scharpe reprofyng of defautes made þat tyme in a soule, for þei are kissed and frendes; al is forgifen þat was misdome' (ii. 40). 'Þe lufer of iesu is his frende, not for he haþ deserued it, bot for iesu of his merciful goodnes makip him his frende, bi trewe acorde, and þerfore as to a trew frende þat plesyp him with lufe, not seruip him bi drede as a þral, he schewip his pryuettes' (ii. 43). Prayer makes a soul 'homly and felawly with iesu', and the goal of desire should be 'to felen ay þe lifly inspiracioun of grace made bi þe gostly presence of iesu in oure soule, if þat we miȝten, and for to han him ay in oure siȝt with reuerence and ay felen þe swetnes of his lufe, by a wondirful homlynes of his presence' (ii. 41). *Homlynes*, *stabilnes*, *sikernes*, these are Hilton's favourite words and best sum up the temper of his mind.

The number of manuscripts extant of the *Scale*, the fact that it was printed as early as 1494 and that new editions appeared in 1507, 1519, 1525, and 1533, are evidences of Hilton's popularity in his own day and after. In the storm that swept away the religious houses of England, he and his fellows were forgotten. But in corners the tradition lingered on. There was, as might be expected, a great revival of interest in English medieval mysticism among the restored congregations in exile. In 1629 Father Baker, a famous mystic himself who had become director to the 'newlie erected' English

order of St. Benedict, wrote from Cambrai, where the little company of twenty-nine English nuns had settled, to Sir Robert Cotton to ask for books for them.

Their lives [he wrote] being contemplative the comon bookes of the worlde are not for their purpose and litle or nothing is in thes daies printed in English that is proper for them. There were manie good English books in olde time, whereof thoughe they have some, yet they want manie. And therevpon I am in their behallf become an humble suitor vnto you, to bestowe on them such bookes as you please, either manuscript or printed, being in English, containing contemplation, Saints lives or other devotions. Hampoole's workes are proper for them. I wishe I had Hillton's *Scala perfectionis* in latein; it woulde helpe the vnderstanding of the English (and some of them vnderstande latein).¹

The *Scale* was a favourite work of Father Baker's; he quoted from it the parable of the pilgrim in his *Sancta Sophia*,² and, according to Anthony à Wood, he left also in manuscript a commentary upon it made for the use of the nuns at Cambrai.³ Father Baker's pupil, Dame Gertrude More, in her *Holy Practices of a Divine Lover*,⁴ quoted the same passage, and there is evidence of a wider interest in Hilton in one work which Anthony à Wood also gives under Father Baker's name: 'An Enquiry about the Author of the Abridgment of *The Ladder of Perfection*. in oct. which abridgment was first written in Italian by a lady of Milan but published under the name of one of the society of Jesus called F. Achilles Galliardi.'

But in England also Hilton was not wholly forgotten. In 1659 a modernized edition of the *Scale* was printed in London, and according to Lowndes there were editions also in 1672 and 1679.⁵ The 1659 edition, which is fairly common, is usually attributed to Serenus de Cressy, one-time chaplain to Lady Falkland and perhaps the most distinguished of early seventeenth-century converts to Rome. Cressy did

¹ MS. Cotton Julius C. III, f. 12.

² *Sancta Sophia*, London, 1876, pp. 58-65.

³ *Athenae Oxonienses*, London, 1813, vol. iii, col. 13.

⁴ *Holy Practices of a Divine Lover*, London, 1909, pp. 191-211.

⁵ Lowndes, *Bibliographers' Manual*, London, 1864, vol. ii, p. 1071.

modernize the *Revelations* of Julian of Norwich and he also left in manuscript an abridgement of the *Cloud*,¹ but there is nothing to connect him with the 1659 *Scale*. A note in a seventeenth-century hand in MS. University College 28, which contains Book I of the *Scale*, refers to the 1659 edition and says 'the reviser of which book was thought by some to be Mr. Abraham Woodhead fellow of University College and some time after a declared Roman Catholic'. Anthony à Wood also gives the *Scale* under Woodhead's name, and when describing the book² he sounds as if he were quoting from the title-page of the 1659 edition, but he actually dates Woodhead's modernization as 1679. It is possible that Anthony à Wood made a slip and gave the date of the later edition, or the edition Lowndes refers to in 1679 may be a ghost due to a mistake of Anthony à Wood's. Woodhead was a famous figure in his own day. He was ejected from his fellowship in 1648, and after travel abroad and tutorships he bought a house and garden at Hoxton in 1654 or 1655, and there formed a kind of community where he and his friends had all things in common and devoted themselves to prayer and meditation. He did not conform for more than a few months in 1660, but he was allowed to retain the emoluments of his fellowship and he remained at Hoxton till his death, causing a good deal of gossip and discussion. Here then, as at Cambridge, the revival of the religious life found its natural food in the older English works of devotion.³

Hilton was also remembered by scholars. During the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries his claim to the authorship of the *Imitation of Christ* was strongly supported by English scholars. The story of this curious claim, which rests upon a mistake of John Bale's, can be found in Mr. J. E. G. de Montmorency's book, *Thomas à Kempis, his Age and his Book*,⁴ where it can be seen that Hilton was still read and quoted in 1707. Miss Hope Allen has also sent me an

¹ Anthony à Wood, *Athenae Oxonienses*, vol. iii, col. 1011.

² Op. cit., vol. iii, col. 1164.

³ For Woodhead's life, see *D.N.B.*, London, 1900, vol. lxii, p. 398.

⁴ London, 1906, pp. 139-69.

interesting reference in a book published in 1705, by John Beaumont, *Of Spirits Apparitions and Witchcraft*, in which the 'learned Walter Hilton (a great Master of a Contemplative life)' is quoted at great length.

But these are by-ways and backwaters. In the main stream of English literature, Hilton and his fellows, as a direct influence, have no place. The only medieval work of devotion which never lost its hold was the *Imitation*, and this we find even in the hands of that most Puritan of heroines, Clarissa Harlowe. But though we cannot claim that Hilton was read and studied, his spirit at least lived on and may, I think, be recognized as characteristic of English religious feeling through the centuries. The blend of tenderness and humour, the tolerance and modesty of spirit, the gentleness and intimacy which mark his work, as they marked the *Ancren Riwele* before him, are qualities we find in many later writers. When Spenser saw the Angels of the New Jerusalem

with great ioy into that Citie wend
As commonly as friend does with his frend

and wrote that the redeemed of the Lord are 'more deare vnto their God then younglings to their dam', he strikes a note we have heard in Hilton. The piety of Herbert, his familiarity, and the divine stillness of Vaughan where

above noise and danger
Sweet peace sits crowned with smiles

have in common this serene homeliness. Differences of creed do not divide here. The churchman Herbert can speak of prayer as

Church-bells beyond the starres heard, the soul's blood,
The land of spices, something understood.

The Puritan Bunyan can make his pilgrims hear 'music in the house, music in the heart and music also in heaven for joy that we are here'. Much of the minor religious literature of the seventeenth century has this same settled happiness, this unforced quietness.

When Christ takes a man unto him selfe, hee comes and sups

with him. Hast thou then this communion with Christ ? Doth hee sup with thee, dwell with thee ? Now, communion stands in speaking to another, and in hearing him speake to us. When you pray, then pray you formally, as one that is glad when the duty is over ? Oh, if you loved the Lord, you would never be better, than when you are at prayer. And you would goe to prayer, as you would goe to speake with your dearest friend.¹

HELEN L. GARDNER.

¹ From *A Heavenly Treatise of the Divine Love of Christ*, by John Preston, Master of Emmanuel College, 1640. Quoted by Miss Helen White, *English Devotional Literature 1600-40*, Madison, 1931, p. 197.

JOHN DONNE

DONNE came of age in 1593, at that uncomfortable moment when the gale of Elizabethan enthusiasm had nearly blown itself out and a chill was in the air. He was in time to take part in the last 'heroick' exploit of the age, the capture of Cadiz (1596); but in the next year its glories were effaced by the miserable Islands Voyage and the outbreak of those open factions and animosities which darkened the remaining years of the reign. It was the age of Hamlet: indeed, if we suppose Hamlet to have been thirty at the date of the play, Donne was exactly his contemporary. 'This goodly frame, the Earth, seemes to me a sterill Promontory; this most excellent Canopy the Ayre, . . . why, it appeares no other thing to mee, then a foule and pestilent congregation of vapours.' No more of Petrarch now; no more talk of Plato and the Divine Idea. The smart young man now plucked his hat over his eyes; wrote gritty satires in a Roman vein; and joined that School of Darkness presided over by Raleigh, where fierce young atheists read papers questioning and abolishing everything under the sun. Gloriana still reigned; and in districts remote from the capital the horns of her Elf-land were still to be heard faintly blowing; but in London the pageant was paling under the light of an intellectual dawn, and her surviving knights and seneschals were revealed as a group of tired and pouchy-faced old men standing about the throne of a dreadfully painted old woman. Even the most radiant stars of her legend were losing their fire: even Astrophel, it was said, had been 'no pleasant man in countenance, his face being spoilt with pimples'.¹ And into this scene of disillusionment and dwindling reputations enter John Donne, as its expositor and coryphaeus; alert, critical, ruthless; 'not dissolute but very neat, a great visiter of Ladies, a great frequenter of Playes, a great writer of conceited Verses'.

¹ Jonson, *Conversations with Drummond*.

Ah yes, he saw through it all. An 'age of rusty iron'¹ he calls it in one of his early satires (very modern satires in the manner of Persius, full of knaves and fools and spades called spades). 'Away, thou changeling motley humourist', he cries to the fashionable friend who would take him out for a walk,

Leave me ; and in this standing wooden chest,
Comforted with these few books, let me lie
In prison, and here be confined when I die . . .
(Shall I leave all this constant company
And follow headlong, wild, uncertain thee ?²

What, after all, was there to see? The Court? Tush! he knew all about the Court. He had crowded with the rest into the Presence and had watched the typical courtier doing his stuff.

. . . He enters, and a Lady which owes
Him not so much as good will he arrests,
And unto her protests, protests, protests
So much as at Rome would serve to have thrown
Ten Cardinals into the Inquisition,
And whispered 'by Jesu' so often that a
Pursuivant would have ravished him away
For saying of our Lady's psalter.—But 'tis fit
That they each other plague ; they merit it.³

He had passed through the great Chamber—('Why is it hung with the Seven Deadly Sins?')—and had seen there the royal power and majesty embodied at last—in what? Why, in the yeomen of the guard! That is what it all came down to: stupid and gigantic beefeaters—

. . . Men that doe know
No token of worth but 'Queen's man' and fine
Living,—barrels of beef, flagons of wine.⁴

The Court! It was theme for a Savonarola. Somewhere in the background he knew that the glare and glitter culminated in a blaze of diamonds and that formidable old fairy, the Queen. But was she quite real? Was she in touch with

¹ *Satire* v. 35.

³ *Satire* iv. 210.

² *Satire* i, beginning.

⁴ *Ibid.* 230.

things? Had she any idea, for instance, of the rapine and injustice daily perpetrated in her name?

Alas! no more than Thames' clear head doth know
Whose meads her arms drown, or whose corn o'erflow.¹

No, he had seen through the Queen. Indeed, how could it be otherwise? For the Queen, after all, was a woman, and he had seen through women.

Hope not for mind in women; at their best
Sweetness and wit, they are but Mummy possess.²

His researches into this subject had been extensive, or he liked to have them thought so. His reading in the more crabbed texts of old-fashioned theology had taught him that woman was inferior to man not merely in mental equipment but in spiritual essence. Her faith was not as valid: her truth was not as true. And hence it followed that the love that she could feel must ever remain inferior to the love that she could inspire. This doleful notion is to be found in *Paradise Lost* and is sometimes regarded as an aberration typical of a Puritan poet. But it runs through the poems of Donne like spilt acid, producing the oddest effects of corrosion and distortion, yields, for instance, that quiet insult at the end of *Air and Angels*:

I saw I had love's pinnace overfraught;
Thy every hair for love to work upon
Is much too much; some fitter must be sought;
For, nor in nothing, nor in things
Extreme, and scattering bright, can love inhere;
Then as an angel face and wings
Of air, not pure as it, yet pure doth wear,
So thy love may be my love's sphere;
Just such disparity

As is 'twixt air's and angel's purity,
'Twixt women's love and men's will ever be.

Ah yes, he had seen through love. He knew all about 'the marriage of true minds'. 'I say we will have no more marriages. Those that are married already shall live; the rest

¹ *Satire*, v. 28.

² *Love's Alchemy*, 23-4.

shall keep as they are'; or rather, keep as they were in that blissful imagined state of nature, before the 'tyrant Custom' had laid chains on man, and 'Honour' and 'Constancy' had been elevated into moral imperatives.

Will no other vice content you ?

Will it not serve your turn to do as did your mothers ?

Or have you all old vices spent and now would find out others ?

Or doth a fear that men are true torment you ?

O we are not, be not you so ;

Let me, and do you, twenty know ;

Rob me, but bind me not, and let me go.

Must I, who came to travel thorough you,

¹ Grow your fix'd subject, because you are true ?¹

And so in a number of studiously scandalous 'elegies' and 'songs' he unfolds his sage and serious doctrine of promiscuity; presents that view of human nature which Othello greeted simply with the words 'Goats and monkeys' as the only true view; describes his adventures on these unlit levels; boasts of his conquests, mocks at injured husbands, and, in short, is at pains to present himself as one of the most egregious and offensive young coxcombs that even the Elizabethan age produced.

True, he does not remain at that level. Life in terms of appetite is a theme which soon yields him intellectual thistles instead of fleshly figs, and these elaborately licentious verses are interspersed with others in which the spiritual mystery of love is, after all, grudgingly admitted, and even the outworn language of 'Constancy', 'Honour', and the rest is found to have a meaning. So impossible did it prove, alas, to 'turn and live with the animals'. But his coxcombry still adheres to him. Love, when it comes, is not an experience which re-illuminates his life and wipes away the trivial, fond records of youthful apostasy. It is simply the peripeteia in the coxcomb's drama. What we see is not the new man, the lover transfigured, but the coxcomb defeated: the man who in spite of all his cynical professions has gone and fallen in love after all. It is not love that inspires him so much as exasperation

¹ *The Indifferent*, v. 2.

at feeling love. It is all imposture; he knew it, he knew it. Woman has nothing to offer; man has nothing to gain.¹ The whole thing is an elaborate and diabolical swindle by which we are made to give our substance for a shadow.² All this he knew, and yet—

✓ For God's sake hold your tongue, and let me love.³

The whole body of his love-poetry is held together by this implicit drama of the defeated coxcomb: the man who is impelled to adore what he would fain despise, and who, when the truth of his feelings is extorted from him, gives rein to hyperbole and grotesque exaggeration as a kind of sneering commentary on his own seriousness.

I may seem to be over-emphasizing this aspect of Donne's literary character. Some critics have tried, by rearranging his poems and then using them as biographical data, to trace the evolution of the lascivious prig into the grave lover who subsequently took holy orders and became a famous Dean of St. Paul's. The turning-point in this Platonic process is supposed to have been his love for Anne More, whom he met as a ward in the house of his patron, Sir Thomas Egerton, and whom he married secretly in 1601. But this is really no more than sentimental conjecture, very difficult to square with the facts. All that we know about the dates of Donne's *Songs and Sonnets* is contained in the statement of Ben Jonson that 'all his best pieces' (which must surely include some of the more grave and decorous) were written 'ere he was twenty five years of age':⁴ that is, if we take it literally, before the end of 1597, when he entered Egerton's household and met Anne More for the first time. As for the purifying and restraining influence of his love for her, assumed in the story, it is surely worth remark that the most deliberately outrageous of all his poems, a poem which would certainly have landed him in jail if he had allowed it to circulate before the Queen's death, was written in August 1601, after he had known Anne More for nearly four years, and only about four months before he

¹ *Love's Alchemy*.

² *Love's Exchange*.

³ *The Canonization*, i.

⁴ *Conversations with Drummond*.

married her. This is *Metempsychosis*: a work evidently planned as his *magnum opus*. He was going to make an end. He was going to smite once and smite no more. He was going to demolish—to sweep away—all the sentimental pasteboard and puppetry of the Elizabethan era. He was going to take that wretched thing, a woman's soul, and having traced its dirty transmigrations from the primeval slime through the bodies of shark and sparrow, ape and bitch, was going to leave it—where? Why, in Queen Elizabeth. In Gloriana. In our

Faith's pure shield, the Christian Diana.

The thing was to be an attack not only on the Queen herself, but on all the sentiment with which she had ever been regarded: on that whole system of half-chivalrous, half-Platonic idealism which had animated her servants of the pre-Armada generation, and still lingered in the hearts of the older men. It was to be a great act of liberation, and like most literary enterprises of the kind it was never finished. But it is characteristic of Donne that, although the poem peters out after some fifty stanzas, the preface is already carefully written:

Others at the Porches and entries of their Buildings set their Armes; I my picture; if any colours can deliver a minde so plaine and flat and thorough-light as mine. . . .

The liberation may not be completed, but the statue to the liberator is up. The fragment stands among Donne's works like a huge and mutilated inscription. The object of the verb is uncertain; the verb itself is obscure; but there is no doubt that the sentence begins with the pronoun I. And for Donne everything did so begin, and end. Throughout his life he was a man self-haunted, unable to escape from his own drama, unable to find any window that would not give him back the image of himself. Even the mistress of his most passionate love-verses, who must (one supposes) have been a real person, remains for him a mere abstraction of sex: a thing given. He cannot see her—does not apparently want to see her; for it is not of her that he writes, but of his relation to her; not of

love, but of himself loving. And so in later life, though the stuff of his meditations changes, this inability to lose himself remains. It is not of God that he thinks so often or so deeply as of his relation to God; of the torturing drama of his sin and its expiation, the sowing and the reaping, the wheat and the tares. The great commonplace of his sermons, it has been said, is death; but in truth it is not death that inspires his frightful eloquence so much as the image of himself dying; and the preoccupation culminates in that ghastly charade of his last hours, described by Walton, when he lay contemplating the portrait of himself in his winding-sheet like a grim and mortified Narcissus. There was no *incognito* for him in death; and even in his vision of the life beyond death the wearisome drama went on.

As upon my expiration, my transmigration from hence, as soon as my soul enters into Heaven I shall be able to say to the Angels, 'I am of the same stuff as you, spirit and spirit, and therefore let me stand with you, and look upon the face of your God, and my God',—so at the resurrection of this body I shall be able to say to the Angel of the great Councell, the Son of God, Jesus Christ himself: 'I am of the same stuff as you, body and body, flesh and flesh, and therefore let me sit down with you, at the right hand of the Father, in an everlasting security from this last enemy, who is now destroyed, Death.'¹

One may admire the eloquence and sincerity of such a passage; but are saints usually so much concerned with precedence, and does their Heaven usually look so like the House of Convocation?

I stress this peculiarity in Donne's make-up because it accounts in part for the powerful fascination which his writings exert. Just because he is so conscious of himself we are aware of him—the man speaking—in a manner and to a degree hardly to be paralleled in our reading of lyric poetry. Every word is resonant with his voice; every line seems to bear the stamp of his peculiar personality. And this impression is not something which we fancy or invent for ourselves. It is deliberately forced upon us by a technique which has no

¹ *LXXX Sermons* (1640), p. 145.

other object. The affected brusqueness of the language, the wilful fractures of the verse, the frequent use of startling or disgusting analogies,—in short, the persistent violation of poetic decorum as decorum was then understood, are devices to ensure that we shall read these poems not as the expression of any man or every man, but as the expression of this one man and no other. His personality, or the idea that he contrives to give us of it, is a necessary part of his instrument as a writer. It is a sort of context, an invisible cavern-wall about his poems, reverberating and corroborating what they say. Many of them would strike us as merely curious experiments if we found them standing alone. But in their proper matrix, the *Songs and Sonnets*, they acquire an expressiveness often quite out of proportion to their intrinsic qualities. Who can say how much a poem like *Negative Love*, for instance, owes to the fact that we come upon it suddenly among the tirades and oburgations, sneers and ribaldries of the defeated coxcomb?

I never stoop'd so low, as they
Which on an eye, cheek, lip, can prey;
Seldom to them which soar no higher
Than virtue, or the mind to admire.
For sense and understanding may
Know what gives fuel to their fire;
My love, though silly, is more brave;
For may I miss, whene'er I crave
If I know yet what I would have.

It is the intensely personal quality of Donne's writing that distinguishes it sharply from that of the so-called Classical School. To Dryden and his followers a lyric was an object almost as impersonal as a china bowl, and the skill of its craftsman was shown not in subjecting the material to the needs of his individual expression but rather in the opposite, in subjecting his individual desires and purposes to an idea conceived of as existing already in the material. Language was stuff that had poems in it if you could find them: perfect word-statues awaiting release from the block. They did not habitually reflect that in nine cases out of ten we understand a man not by what he says but by what we can suppose him to mean, that the same form of words may acquire a fresh

meaning with every new situation in which it is used, and that in the last resort language is rather the symptom of expression than the substance. They thought of it habitually as the substance: the meanable crystallized and fixed in the sayable by the usage of their enlightened age. And out of this amalgam of the thing said which all could mean, and the thing meant which all could nearly say, they were able to fashion a bold, impersonal, comely sort of poetry, moulded by social pressures and brightly glazed with civil decorums. It is impossible to imagine anything more unlike the art of Donne:

Mark but this flea, and mark in this
How little that which thou deny'st me is;
It suck'd me first, and now sucks thee . . .

Every decorum of civil life is deliberately shattered in order that this ruthless individual may emerge. Pope's poetry admits us to a social group, and gives us a sense of sharing in its amenities. But Donne's harsh voice breaks up any party; the social *Airs and Graces* flutter away, and we are left with a solitary figure, darkly pondering:

When my grave is broken up again
Some second guest to entertain,
—For graves have learn'd that woman-head,
To be to more than one a bed—
 And he that digs it, spies
A bracelet of bright hair about the bone . . .¹

It is like a soliloquy in a play by Webster, and demands an empty stage.

It was inevitable that a man so constituted should rebel against literary conventions; but the nature of his rebellion, and the direction that it took, were determined by the extraordinary deficiencies of his equipment as a poet. The beauty of the visible world meant nothing to him and yielded him no imagery for serious purpose. I am not forgetting

Her pure and eloquent blood
Spoke in her cheeks, and so distinctly wrought
That one might almost say, her body thought.²

¹ *The Relic.*

² *The Second Anniversary*, 244.

This is always quoted. But it is quoted because it is the only passage in all his works which seems to record an intense visual experience ; the one oasis in a visual desert. Nor can it be said that he is much more sensitive to beauty as perceived by the ear. His poems often begin with a noble resonance, but it is seldom maintained beyond a few lines and nearly always degenerates before the end into an ugly cross-hatching of verbal noises. In some cases this is of course deliberate :

Good we must love and must hate ill,
For ill is ill and good good still.¹

Plug-ugly verse of this kind is evidently intended to jolt the ear. But even in later years, when he has given up these vanities and is humbly using the sonnet-form which he had at first despised, the same cacophony often howls from his pen. One may defend it by attaching some new and recondite value to ugliness, and this is often done. But it remains ugliness. The only sense-impressions which seem to have had much value for Donne were tactual, or related to tactual experience. Space and the disposition of solid objects in space ; contiguity, distance, height, and depth ; progress from point to point, curving or rectilinear, continuous or interrupted ; the motion of the spiral, the smoothness and density of the sphere, the varying angles of a hinge ; all that fabric of palpable fact which we must suppose to make the world of a man born blind and deaf—it is from this, or from material closely allied to it, that Donne draws his most energetic imagery. His poems are pestered with the apparatus by which contemporary science endeavoured to extend man's tactual apprehension of the universe, and reduce the immeasurable or mysterious to something which he could hold in the palm of his hand : globes, orreries, compasses, deep-sea plummets ; a model of the planets consisting of beads threaded on a string ; a model of the nervous system done in hair ; a dissecting-table, with evidence of gory rummagings thereon ; a stone cut from the bladder ; a desiccated mandrake ; jelly said to have been a falling star ; a whole

¹ *Community.*

Tradescant's houseful of rarities, jumbled together and viewed under the cold, white light of a window facing north. To Peter Bell the primrose was at least yellow. To Donne it is a five-pointed object suggestive of mathematical analogies with the nature of woman: all that remains of a primrose in the dark.¹ And yet such is the intensity with which he contemplates this narrow field of sensation which nature made significant for him, such the zeal with which he explores and improves and exploits it, that he is able out of this dismal lumber to evolve an imagery far more powerfully expressive than that of many poets more happily endowed. This is indeed one of the things that make his work so fascinating and so difficult to judge fairly. It is all in some measure a *tour de force*, and our sense of its poetic quality is liable to be surcharged with the kind of admiration which we give to the complete model of a frigate made out of mutton bones by a prisoner of war.

Certainly, a sense of difficulty overcome is an important element in the effect which Donne's poetry makes upon us, and was evidently felt and intended to be so by himself. This is shown in his technique throughout. One might have expected a poet who jangles the instrument of metre so impatiently to forgo fixed patterns altogether and use some kind of free verse. But, as Professor Legouis has pointed out, only one of the verse-forms used in the *Songs and Sonnets* could be said to belong to this category, and most of them consist of highly intricate and exacting patterns which he had apparently invented for himself. What makes it more curious is that, having gone to the trouble of inventing these patterns, he persistently effaces and makes us forget them by allowing the natural rhythm of his language to pour over them, like a flood over a harrow, drowning them out of sight. It is not just a matter of 'the sense variously drawn out from one verse into another'. His verse is often definitely out of phase in the sense that the metrical shape and the rhythmical movement have no discernible relation. He seems to have regarded the pattern of verse (when he thought about

¹ *The Primrose, being at Montgomery Castle.*

it) not as an aid or an instrument of expression, but as a kind of obstacle, like the intricate wards of a lock; and the game of versification consisted in cutting the key of words so cunningly that it would move through them all without touching, as though they were not there. Viewed in this way versification becomes simply a form of wit, and it ends logically enough in those typographical pillars and altars and Easter-wings which diversify the pages of Herbert's *Temple*. Once it is admitted that the pattern is merely an obstacle, there is no reason why it should not take a visual form as well as any other. But Donne's impulse to create a difficulty for his art to surmount was in itself defensible, and thoroughly characteristic of the man.

It is seen again, I think, in that quickset hedge of 'metaphysical' wit which guards the centre of so many of his poems. Much has been written about this, and no one can doubt that the peculiar merits as well as the defects of his poetry proceed from it. To mention nothing else, it is by this restless cerebration that the drama of the defeated coxcomb is kept present to the mind. But as 'thought' this intellectual content of his poetry seems to me a good deal less important than some critics have made it out, and the attempt to represent Donne as a philosophical poet, like Lucretius or even like Chapman, is surely going too far. For Donne's 'rebellion', if the term may be used, was social and ethical rather than intellectual. Little evidence has been adduced by those competent to judge that he was ever in any sense a constructive thinker. Though he questions much, he establishes nothing new, and the fabric of his ideas, as Miss Ramsay and others have shown, is still medieval. In spite of the scientific lumber that figures in his poems the new scientific movement really meant nothing to him. When he refers to it it is with dismay, as an added complication of an already too complicated world.¹ Like so many of his contemporaries he felt himself to be living in the latter twilight of Time.

The skye lookes dusky: the Sunne puts forth a drowsie head:
as if hee were no longer as David once described him, like a

¹ *The First Anniversary*, 205.

Bride-groome comming out of his chamber, or a strong man reioycing to runne his race. The Moone looks pale, as if she were sicke with age: and the starres doe but twinkle; as if they were dimme, and look'd upon the earth with spectacles. The Colours of the Rainbow are not so radiant, and the whole earth shewes but like a garment often dy'd, destitute of the native hew.¹

Everything had been tried; every avenue had been explored, and nothing yet was certain. It was high time for man to turn away from this fading wreck of a world and fix his eyes on Heaven. This is Donne's intellectual position as expounded in the first and almost only poem which he allowed to be published, *The Anatomie of the World*.

Have not all souls thought
 For many ages that our body's wrought
 Of air, and fire, and other elements?
 And now they think of new ingredients:
 And one soul thinks one, and another way
 Another thinks, and 'tis an even lay.
 Know'st thou but how the stone doth enter in
 The bladder's cave, and never break the skin?
 Know'st thou how blood, which to the heart doth flow,
 Doth from one ventricle to th' other go?
 And for the putrid stuff which thou dost spit,
 Know'st thou how thy lungs have attracted it?
 There are no passages, so that there is
 —For aught thou know'st—piercing of substances? . . .
 What hope have we to know ourselves, when we
 Know not the least things which for our use be?
 We see in authors, too stiff to recant,
 A thousand controversies of an ant. . . .
 When wilt thou shake off this pedantry
 Of being taught by sense and fantasy?
 Thou look'st through spectacles; small things seem great
 Below; but up into the watch-tower get,
 And see all things despoil'd of fallacies;
 Thou shalt not peep through lattices of eyes,
 Nor hear through labyrinths of ears, nor learn
 By circuit or collections to discern.
 In heaven thou straight know'st all concerning it.²

¹ Adams, *Sermons*, 1630.

² *The Second Anniversary*, 263 et seq.

This scepticism regarding the very instrument of knowledge colours Donne's poetry throughout. His thinking never seems to be quite valid, even to himself. He is sometimes careful of the steps in his logic, but he is nearly always careless of its direction, and will use it to defend a manifest sophistry as readily as to serve what may be truth. He seems to value it, as others value fancy, more for the strange things it may suggest than for any sober certainties it can yield. Logic is the Mephistophiles by whose aid he can conjure up Helen or swindle a horse-courser: a means of peopling the unknown with the phantoms of what might be. Even in his most sombre poems the thought is seldom more than half serious:

Whoever comes to shroud me, do not harm,
 Nor question much,
 That subtle wreath of hair which crowns my arm;
 The mystery, the sign you must not touch;
 For 'tis my outward soul,
 Viceroy to that, which unto heaven being gone,
 Will leave this to control
 And keep these limbs, her provinces, from dissolution.

For if the sinewy thread my brain lets fall
 Through every part
 Can tie those parts, and make me one of all,
 Those hairs which upward grew, and strength and art
 Have from a better brain,
 Can better do't; except she meant that I
 By this should know my pain,
 As prisoners then are manacled, when they're condemn'd to
 [die.

Whate'er she meant by it, bury it with me,
 For since I am
 Love's martyr, it might breed idolatry,
 If into other hands these relics came.
 As 'twas humility
 To afford to it all that a soul can do,
 So 'tis some bravery,
 That since you would have none of me, I bury some of you.¹

The argument that *because* the thread-like nerves from his

¹ *The Funeral.*

own brain hold his body together, *therefore* the nerve-like threads from her much better brain will do it much better is a typical piece of trifling. And yet the final effect of the poem is grave enough: all the graver, perhaps, for the suggestion of brain-sickness which these futile ingenuities convey. The twaddling logic has been used to suspend and thus somehow to intensify the expression of powerful feeling. And this seems to me to be what happens in all Donne's successful poetry. He was never really interested enough in his own thought to take it as seriously as his critics. Mr. Eliot has said that 'A thought for Donne was an experience; it modified his sensibility'. But in so far as this is more than a truism—for I suppose that any man's thought modifies his sensibility to some extent—it seems to me to suggest the exact opposite of the truth. It was Donne's sensibility that modified his thought, maimed it, made a guy of it in poem after poem. Yet this 'thought', this convolvulus-growth of intellectual whim-whams, is an organic part of his poetry, and cannot be dismissed in Johnson's short way as a kind of foreign body entangled in his art by accident. Its value might perhaps best be compared with that of the Fool in *King Lear*, as providing an undercurrent of half-relevant commentary which, while it never really touches the core of the situation, serves to heighten our sense of it by creating a kind of suspense. In the poem quoted above, the futile analogy between the hair-like threads descending from one head and the thread-like hairs ascending from the other helps by its dawdling irrelevance and teasing of the mind to accentuate the sense of passionate release in the words

Whate'er she meant by it, bury it with me.

So again in the poem called *A Valediction of Weeping*: his round tears are coins because they bear her image reflected in them,—they bear his whole world reflected in them, therefore they are worlds; they are globes made by a map-maker, and his tears are the sea drawn up by her (the moon); and if she weeps too there will be too much sea and his world will be drowned;—thus the brain-sick fancies are piled up,

twaddle upon twaddle, until the whole thing explodes with a passionate outcry and a familiar image:

O more than moon,
Draw not up seas to drown me in thy sphere;
Weep me not dead in thine arms, but forbear
To teach the sea what it may do too soon.

In such passages one seems to detect the same principle of opposition that governs the technique of his verse. Just as his intricate verse-patterns are like the wards of a lock menacing the free movement of his language, so these figments of his intellect are used as obstacles endangering and making more arduous his heart's right of way. When the technique is successful his poems are enriched with the intensity of feeling which springs from the idea of difficulty surmounted. But it is surely not the technique of a philosophical poet. It suggests rather a man who felt that in the last resort the structures of the intellect were useless, and that contact with ultimate reality could be found only in passion: the passion of love, or the passion of faith.

J. E. V. CROFTS.

SUBJECT IN MODERN POETRY

THE literary critic includes the literary historian, but it is notoriously difficult to write a history of one's own times. Further, a man who writes poetry himself is certain to be prejudiced when he comes to criticize poetry. I do not, therefore, profess to attempt a reasoned, balanced, objective, or historical criticism of my contemporaries.

The usual method is to look for, and obviously to discover, literary influences. This method has been over-rated and over-exploited. The fact that I have read A is not what causes me to write *a*. Just as probably it is because I am the sort of person who is inclined to write *a* that I choose to read A. Unless I live on a desert island, I could easily shut A at the first page and look for something more congenial.

The literary critic fails through being literary. He is the one kind of writer who really is in the position of Plato's second-hand artist. Literature is a criticism (if in a wider sense of the word) of life; what the so-called critic writes is a criticism of criticism. It is a good sign in the last few years that intellectuals are becoming less interested in books about books. I am told that the prevalence of central heating in American houses makes all Americans catch cold in the open air. So it is with literary literature. Homer, Aeschylus, Bunyan, Dante, did not live in literary self-containedness. Not only the muck and wind of existence should be faced but also the prose of existence, the utilities, the *sine qua nons*, which are never admitted to the world, or rather the salon, of the Pure Artist.

Art for Art's Sake has been some time foundering. A mast-head or two even now show above the water with their inconsequent fluttering pennons (the Surrealists?), but on the whole, poets have ceased showing themselves off as mere poets. They have better things to do; they are writing *about* things again.

A similar reaction will probably be noticed in the visual

arts. I have recently been to an exhibition of nineteenth-century French painting and was surprised to find it so unsympathetic. That a harlequin, a plate of apples, and a nude woman bathing should all be presented as equally important, all presented as if with a smirk to say 'Look at me! I can make a work of art out of anything, look at my mastery of form!'—this seems to me a thoroughly unsound attitude. But analogies from the other arts are misleading, and the doctrine of pure form, however vulnerable even there, is far more defensible in painting than in literature. Literature is made with words, and words are a means of conveying a meaning. It is no doubt possible to use words merely for decoration, as the Moors used tags of the Koran to decorate their walls at heights where no one could read them. To do this in literature seems a perversion.

Poetry is a natural or universal activity. We all practise it from our earliest years. Language can be used either scientifically or poetically, and the latter use comes much more naturally to the child and the man in the street. Whenever we say something not merely to record a fact but to record a fact *plus and therefore modified by* our emotional reaction to it (which will involve mannerism in its presentation) we are speaking poetically. Nothing, therefore, could be more vicious than the popular legend that the poet is a species distinct from the ordinary man and that poetry can only flourish in certain places or people, in the highbrow's den or on the slopes of Helvellyn.

In its relations to life twentieth-century poetry has had a paradoxical development. It started (the Nineties' tradition diverted into the Georgians) divorced from life but with a fair number of readers. If we do not count the War, when war poems such as those of Sassoon had a large public, poetry subsequently became less popular the nearer it came to life. This was because in its endeavour to be true it became very difficult. Thus Mr. Eliot maintained in an essay (1921) that 'poets in our civilization, as it exists at present, must be *difficult*. Our civilization comprehends great variety and complexity, and this variety and complexity, playing upon

a refined sensibility, must produce various and complex results. The poet must become more and more comprehensive, more allusive, more indirect, in order to force, to dislocate if necessary, language into his meaning.' But since the time when Eliotesque poetry was predominant, poetry has come yet nearer to life but not in the impressionistic way of the early Eliot. This new poetry is much more intelligible and I shall discuss it presently.

The subjects of the Nineties' poets, and of their successors in individualism, the Georgians, were not believed in and not familiar subjects. They were served up because they were poetical (Samarcand or linnets); they had none of that aura of problem which attends so much of the best poetry. Poetry was comparatively popular because it was dope, though a mild and fairly harmless dope like cigarette-smoking. Samarcand and the linnets were consolations for the arm-chair. So, though superficially very different, were the poems of the Imagists. Imagism was a branch from the stump of Pure Form—a salutary movement in that it insisted on clarity and precision, so reacting from the woolly or amethystine vagueness of the other escapists, but itself escapist and bad in that the imagists had nothing to say. One must be clear and precise *about something*.

Then came Mr. T. S. Eliot—the arch-highbrow. But the arch-highbrow writing down honestly his own view of the world is a more human, 'popular', and valuable person than the purveyor of 'poetic' subjects to a public which buys them because they are the accepted things—just as they once bought antimacassars and now buy chromium-plated clocks with unreadable dials. Mr. Eliot was, indeed, extraordinarily (pathologically?) interested in literature, but he never fixed a great gulf between the street and the classics; he saw them in inter-relation.

Mr. Eliot brought back into English poetry precision—the blade which the Imagists had sharpened but never used. For Mr. Eliot had a subject. This is too often forgotten, and he is thought of sometimes mainly as a technical experimenter. Mr. Eliot's eccentricities of form were, however,

largely evoked by and appropriate to his subject. The fragmentariness of *The Waste Land* can be compared with the consonantal rhymes of Owen, the rhythms of Hopkins, the halting rhythms and bad rhymes of 'Hugh Selwyn Mauberley', and the at first sight stilted rhythms of Spender. All these are appropriate to their subject.

We must not judge a writer exclusively by his form or exclusively by his subject. In considering subjects the ordinary critic is too apt to deduce that a man who writes, say, about morbid subjects is a morbid writer. The intellectual critic, on the other hand, very often denies that distinctions in subject-matter affect the values of the work (e.g. Mr. Robert Graves in his early book of criticism, *Poetic Unreason*). It is perhaps safe to say that concentration on a narrow sphere of subjects is a good, though by no means an infallible, clue to a man's spiritual outlook. Consider Mr. Eliot's subject-matter. Until recently in his professedly Christian works (and possibly still in these?) his subject was the doom or (what was worse in that it lacks the grandeur of doom) the decay of our modern civilization. He treated this doom and decay frankly from the angle of the highbrow. *Prufrock* and *A Portrait of a Lady* were witty, shrewd, sincere, and eminently gloomy pictures of sophisticated society. Like the characters in Shakespeare whose glorifications of suicide betray their lust for life, Mr. Eliot's satire of his world in these earlier poems betrays that it was *his* world and the only world congenial to him. Thus Mr. E. M. Forster tells of how he first read Eliot's poems during the War and found them

innocent of public-spiritness: they sang of private disgust and diffidence, and of people who seemed genuine because they were unattractive or weak. . . . Here was a protest, and a feeble one, and the more congenial for being feeble. For what, in that world of gigantic horror, was tolerable except the slighter gestures of dissent? . . . He who could turn aside to complain of ladies and drawing-rooms preserved a tiny drop of our self-respect, he carried on the human heritage.

Mr. Eliot, like Henry James, saw his ladies and drawing-rooms against a dwarfing background of cultural tradition.

But he also saw the modern City against the background of European history, in particular of its religious history. He passed from private disgust and diffidence to that great objectification of despair and collapse which is *The Waste Land*.

These fragments I have shored against my ruins.

These fragments are fragments of Christianity and Paganism, of desire for system *à la Dante*, of the lust for power which finds expression in knowledge, of the individualist Urge of Whitman, the imperial Will of Kipling, of all the ideals of sex from the Troubadours to Lawrence, of the memory of rituals and heroes, of the hope for salvation through aloofness, of the 'boredom and the glory' of London.

The Waste Land is not a satirical poem, for in it Mr. Eliot has passed beyond satire. The satirist is a kind of escapist. The cross-currents, switch-overs, throw-backs, and quasi-automatic tags of *The Waste Land* are a serious and horrified attempt to represent (without satire and without sentimentality) the gloomy cross-currents, the half-exposed strata, the ruins and dying roots of that civilization which the Freudians spend their time dissecting and which the Marxists hope to alter. Compare the words of Freud—

The fateful question of the human species seems to me to be whether and to what extent the cultural process developed in it will succeed in mastering the derangements of communal life caused by the human instinct of aggression and self-destruction. In this connexion, perhaps the phase through which we are at this moment passing deserves special interest. Men have brought their powers of subduing the forces of nature to such a pitch that by using them they could now very easily exterminate one another to the last man. They know this—hence arises a great part of their current unrest, their dejection, their mood of apprehension.

Such poetry as was produced by the War itself brought back with it out of chaos the values of humanity. Pity reappeared in English poetry. 'The poetry is in the pity', said Wilfred Owen, the greatest of the war poets. The

nineteen-thirty school of English poets, represented by Mr. Auden and Mr. Spender, derives largely from Owen. When Auden says 'Man must unlearn hatred and learn love' he is affirming the values of such a poem as *Strange Meeting*; compare also Spender's poem, *The Prisoners*, with Owen's *Insensibility*. These new poets have introduced an element of thrustful (sometimes even optimistic) preaching into their works, which was not possible to the war poets and which is derived partly from Communism and partly from D. H. Lawrence. The pity of Owen, the Whitmanesque lust for life of Lawrence, and the dogmas of Lenin are now combining to make possible the most vital poetry seen in English for a long time.

Before discussing Auden and Spender in more detail I will take the instructive example of Mr. Yeats, a poet much older than Mr. Eliot, who started in the nineties as an escapist like the other poets of that time and has worked his way, by devious routes of hoodoo and wilful creeds, to a poetry which is concerned with life, a limited life but not so limited as Mr. Eliot's and one which is of value and interest to many. Mr. Yeats, like Mr. Eliot, is not a poet to imitate. He has gone too roundabout to his end. Auden writes in an essay on 'Psychology and Art': 'There must always be two kinds of art, escape-art, for man needs escape as he needs food and deep sleep, and parable-art, that art which shall teach man to unlearn hatred and learn love.' Speaking very approximately I would say that the difference between Yeats and Eliot on the one hand and Auden and Spender on the other is that escape-art predominates in Yeats and Eliot while parable-art predominates in Auden and Spender, though these two latter are of course themselves escaping at the same time as they are preaching parables. Auden, for example, is preaching communism, psycho-analysis, and the love of one's fellows, but while and through preaching those things he will escape into a rather crude hero-worship, into schoolboy spite, nostalgia for bleak spaces, and (like Mr. Eliot) into a masochistic delight in desolation and nightmare.

Mr. Yeats in his earlier days not only practised but

advocated escape. In an essay on 'The Symbolism of Poetry' (1900) he wrote:

With this return to imagination, this understanding that the laws of art, which are the hidden laws of the world, can alone bind the imagination, would come a change of style, and we would cast out of serious poetry those energetic rhythms, as of a man running, which are the invention of the will with its eyes always on something to be done or undone; and we would seek out those wavering, meditative, organic rhythms, which are the embodiment of the imagination that neither desires nor hates, because it has done with time.

But the later Yeats seems to have ceased to abnegate desire and hatred—'I study hatred with great diligence'—and his rhythms no longer waver so much. As a metaphysician he seems to have recognized the necessity of the descent into time, of 'desecration and the lover's night'.

In spite of all his preoccupation with style and certain stage-room trappings which he still affects, Yeats is a salutary influence on modern poetry just because he is *not* too literary (he is less literary than Mr. Eliot and far less literary than Mr. Pound.) He long ago saw clearly what he was trying to do, for in an early essay he tells how as a young man he made a great discovery. The discovery was this:

We should write out our own thoughts in as nearly as possible the language we thought them in, as though in a letter to an intimate friend. We should not disguise them in any way; for our lives give them force as the lives of people in plays give force to their words . . . 'If I can be sincere and make my language natural, and without becoming discursive like a novelist and so indiscreet and prosaic,' I said to myself, 'I shall, if good luck or bad luck make my life interesting, be a great poet; for it will be no longer a matter of literature at all.' Yet when I re-read those early poems which gave me so much trouble, I find little but romantic convention, unconscious drama. *It is so many years before one can believe enough in what one feels even to know what the feeling is.* [Italics mine.]

It has taken Mr. Yeats a long time, I think, to find out what his feelings are, and perhaps even now he sometimes deceives himself. He believes, as he says in *Dramatis*

Personae, in a discipline imposed from within, not from without; a man should make his own mask. But the fact that he sees the world through a series of eccentric home-made frames (theosophy, spiritualism, a mystical dialectic, aristocratic idealism) does not mean that he sees it false; if there is a glass in those frames to save him from the winds which afflicted D. H. Lawrence, it is only plain glass, not stained or frosted. We must not be discouraged in Yeats by his self-stylization. Dr. Johnson, who had a hard head, yet suffered from neuroses, one of which (I have forgotten the exact details) was something like this: whenever he had to pass through a door he would start counting in the attempt to cross the threshold on, say, the thirteenth step and on the right foot. To have such rules in life is awkward, but I can imagine that some one thus afflicted, who had a flair for elegant deportment, might conceivably turn such a tic to artistic account, always entering doors with a noticeably graceful rhythm so that people might even come to speak of him as The Man who goes through Doors So Beautifully. Such a one is Mr. Yeats; such perhaps are all poets to some extent.

The quotation from Yeats above shows that he always recognized the importance of subject—that he falls into line, in fact, with such poets as Wordsworth and Auden. It was only, however, in his later poems that Yeats began to treat the contemporary subject; witness that magnificent poem *Easter 1916*. His earlier 'Celtic' works must not, however, be regarded as purely decorative; the *Idylls of the King* and Mr. Ezra Pound's *Cantos* approach much nearer to pure decoration. Cathaleen ni Houlihan may indeed be open to ridicule, may deserve the taunts showered upon her by James Joyce and Denis Johnston, but the mere fact that she has received these taunts proves that she is a live conception which means something to many people. To an Irishman at any rate she means far more than Tennyson's Queen Guinevere could have meant to Tennyson or to any other Englishman. The Irish tend to maternal fixation, and this becomes sublimated into their peculiarly violent and sentimental patriotism. Much of

Yeats's verse is a memorable expression of this emotion. Yeats is therefore nearer the ordinary man (or *some* ordinary men, i.e. Irishmen) than Eliot was until he too started writing for a group of ordinary men (i.e. English High Church Protestants).

Yeats's Celtic Twilight poems were therefore far less an escape from life than, say, the ballads of Dante Gabriel Rossetti or of William Morris, poets who still influence his manner; and, strange though it may seem, all these outpourings about Cuchulain and Maeve were more representative of people's real feelings and outlooks than either the works of the French Symbolists or the mass of Georgian nature poetry, all those little lyrics which came forward with a simper as if to say, 'How simple we are! How true to the heart of the ordinary simple man!' Yeats and Eliot broke away from the stifling fashion of corner-poetry. 'We live in our own corner', the poets had been saying, 'apart from the rest of the room.' It did not occur to them that there is no such thing as a corner in abstraction from a room.

Still, a corner can be more or less screened off. Yeats and Eliot themselves are still fairly well screened when compared with Wilfred Owen or even with Auden and Spender. Auden and Spender have the great gift of compromise; they do not try to be purists. The purists are the curse of the arts. Let us take two contemporary types as examples:

(1) *The Surrealists*. Surrealism is the belated putting into practice of the theory of poetry found in Plato's *Ion* (no wonder Plato disapproved of poetry). The surrealist does not (or says he does not) control his medium in the very least. He is, in the words of one of them, just 'a modest registering machine'. Now, if the surrealists could confine themselves to being modest registering machines they would presumably do useful spade-work for the psychologists. But I have not enough faith in the modesty of human beings to believe that the surrealists work within their own limits. I believe that they are almost bound to exercise selection (which is on their premisses a crime), e.g. if a surrealist, while dutifully not thinking what he was writing, were modestly to

register a perfectly logical syllogism, I fancy he would suppress it.

The First Manifesto of Surrealism (1924) contains this passage:

Surrealism, as I envisage it, displays our complete *non-conformity* so clearly that there can be no question of claiming it as witness when the real world comes up for trial. On the contrary, it can but testify to the complete state of distraction to which we hope to attain here below . . . Surrealism is the 'invisible ray' that shall enable us one day to overcome our enemies . . . This summer the roses are blue; the wood is made of glass. The earth wrapped in its foliage makes as little effect on me as a ghost. Living and ceasing to live are imaginary solutions. Existence is elsewhere.

If existence is elsewhere, art is elsewhere also. Schizophrenia and paranoia may be, as the Freudians suggest, parallel to and alternative to art; they are not identical with it. The Unconscious undoubtedly has a great say in poetry, as most good critics have always recognized, but, whether you call it the Unconscious or Inspiration, it is a mistake for the poet to sit back in cold blood and ask it to do all the work. It is not fair to the Unconscious. If the Unconscious is to be given a chance, the writer should be concentrating his mind on his manifest subject. It seems to me that Wordsworth's poem—

My horse moved on ; hoof after hoof
He raised and never stopped :
When down behind the cottage roof,
At once, the bright moon dropped—

has all the virtues (which are real virtues) of the direct statement, while at the same time it beats the surrealists off their own ground. The surface mind should deal with the surface pattern; like to like. We must never forget that poetry is made with words, that words are primarily for communication, that verbal communication is, if you like, a surface ritual. It may not go as deep as other forms of communication, physical or religious, but, if a poet is to write at all, he should be content with the results proper to poetry. If he wants yoga he can go elsewhere.

(2) Surrealism is an extreme fashion, in its true form being psychic automatism. At the opposite pole stands the poetry of pure propaganda, such as was produced in Russia after the Revolution. The communist poet Maiakovski (I quote from René Fülöp-Miller's book, *The Mind and Face of Bolshevism*) 'arrived at the point of carrying on poetry purely as a trade; he proudly proclaimed that he had established a "word workshop" and was in a position to supply every revolutionary, "promptly and on easy terms", with any quantity of poetry desired'. This attitude destroys the distinction between poetry and prose and undermines poetry's claim to a higher or, at least, a different kind of truth. An advertisement is not expected to be true.

Poets to-day are seduced into bill-plastering on the one hand or visceral parrot-talk on the other. The Auden-Spender school of poets upholds the English tradition of freedom in that it walks a middle course. In spite of the many siren calls to perfection or profundity, these poets have the nerve to continue writing a poetry which is in three respects old-fashioned:—(1) it is in a tradition and does not attempt to be over-revolutionary in form; (2) it has a mixed content and contains nearly all the elements which other schools severally ban; (3) it is not directed solely either to entertainment or instruction, uplift or aloofness; it develops itself instinctively but with a reasonable amount of self-consciousness and self-criticism.

Mr. Yeats, as shown above, proposed at one time to turn his back on desire and hatred. Mr. Eliot sat back and watched other people's emotions with ennui and an ironical pity:

I keep my countenance,
 I remain self-possessed
 Except when a street-piano, mechanical and tired
 Reiterates some worn-out common song
 With the smell of hyacinths across the garden
Recalling things that other people have desired.

[Italics mine.]

The young poets, on the contrary, are almost blatant in their readiness to hate and love. They are essentially young poets

(and young does not mean immature), whereas Yeats and Eliot even in their twenties had an autumnal quality like Tennyson and the Pre-Raphaelites. Mr. Auden, the chief innovator of these poets, is a difficult type to define. He is not an emotional poet, a lyrist, in the traditional sense à la Sappho or Shelley, but it would be misleading to call him a poet of ideas. Though he is not a philosopher, Auden is excited not so much by individual people or things as by people or things *qua* parts of an up-to-date scheme. He sees the world in terms of psycho-analysis or in terms of a Marxian doctrine of progress; these overlap and to some extent co-operate. The great advantage for Auden in believing in these two doctrines severally or in his private blend of both is that thereby nearly all the detail in the world becomes significant. For Auden *qua* psychologist nearly anything henceforward will be either (a) an example or symbol of a neurosis which needs curing à la Freud, or (b) an example or symbol of how a neurosis produces good (for Auden believes that all progress is due to neurosis). For Auden *qua* Marxist, on the other hand, nearly anything will be either (a) a product of the Enemy, the reactionary, bad and therefore to be fought against, or (b) a relic of the past, once perhaps good but now bad and to be deplored, though often with reverence and affection, or (c) an earnest of better things, a pioneer of the future—or else a symbol of one of these three types. It will be seen that the neurotic who needs curing will often be identifiable with the political enemy, while the productive neurotics will include the political reformers.

Mr. Spender, on the other hand, is primarily a *feeling* poet. He is not a born missionary like Auden. Auden sees a stranger and is excited because the stranger is either a co-missioner or an enemy or (in most cases) a possible convert. His reaction, therefore, is not logically immediate because it always contains an ideological factor. Spender, on the other hand, reacts immediately, instinctively, and tends to tack his ideology on afterwards.

It is sometimes objected against these younger poets that their 'modern' stage-properties are a little obvious; that they

introduce pylons and gasometers as automatically as older poets introduced roses and nightingales. This is often true, but it should be remembered that pylons and gasometers are not merely *décor*. The modern poet is very conscious that he is writing in and of an industrial epoch and that what expresses itself visibly in pylons and gasometers is the same force that causes the discontent and discomfort of the modern individual, the class-warfare of modern society, and wars between nations in the modern world.

Mr. Yeats in his excellent *Dialogue of Self and Soul* seemed on the whole to be gambling on the Self. It is the Self which plunges in and swims the world of appearance; the Soul sits apart on an ice-floe like a yogi. Mr. Eliot puts all his hopes on the Soul. He would agree with Yeats that

Love has pitched his mansion in
The place of excrement,

but whereas Yeats in his later poems declaims this defiantly and exultingly, Eliot's cloacal lovers are not allowed to find a Salvation *here and now* through any dialectic of ethical or aesthetic opposites; their only hope is to turn their back on this world, a world which, for Eliot, is an 'eructation of unhealthy souls'. Yeats would imply that, if the world is a belch, it is the valiant belch of a Gargantua—

and all these I set
For emblems of the day against the tower
Emblematical of the night,
And claim as by a soldier's right
A charter to commit the crime once more.

Auden and Spender follow Yeats rather than Eliot in being more concerned with the Self than the Soul. They recognize the existence of the Waste Land but believe that its fertility will be restored. This is especially obvious in Mr. Day Lewis, whose hopes of a new world are perhaps a little too orthodox for a proper fusion in poetry. I find the note of hope, or at least of the will to live, in even such a gloomy poem as the last chorus of Auden's *Paid on Both Sides*—

Though he believe it, no man is strong.
He thinks to be called the fortunate,
To bring home a wife, to live long.

But he is defeated ; let the son
Sell the farm lest the mountain fall ;
His mother and her mother won.

His fields are used up where the moles visit,
The contours worn flat ; if there show
Passage for water he will miss it ;

Give up his breath, his woman, his team ;
No life to touch, though later there be
Big fruit, eagles above the stream.

This poem is far more 'Greek' than anything in A. E. Housman. By 'Greek' I mean that it is the economical expression of an emotion which is not egocentric. Epicureanism is egocentric and therefore lacks tension. Auden's admiration for the objective world is founded in that cosmic pride which is distinct from personal pride and which is at the base of Christianity. This explains his belief that 'Pelmanism' is an important factor both in art and in the good life. The Epicurean, like the Artist for Art's Sake, will have no use for pelmanism. Why burden his mind with facts *which cannot affect his own life* ? The Epicurean does not appreciate Otherness as such.

Spender, too, has remarked in conversation that he believes in 'touchability'. Touchability is, on the emotional or physical plane, the counterpart of Auden's pelmanism on the intellectual. It means the renunciation of the utilitarian Epicurean self and the belief that people in themselves are worth knowing and touching, just as for Auden facts are worth remembering. The Epicurean lover, strictly speaking, is only interested in what he can get out of love ; his love is a private luxury, his beloved a temporary piece of furniture. Many love-poets have taken this attitude. Spender is a love-poet on a higher plane ; like a true Christian he recognizes that human beings are ends in themselves and must not be degraded into tapestried figures, into hearth-rug pets, harem favourites, or valets.

Auden and Spender have reasserted the truth which was expressed, though badly, in Wordsworth's introduction to the *Lyrical Ballads*. Every man lives in a contemporary context which is of value and interest. That is the life which, directly or indirectly, he should write about. He must be a craftsman to be able to 'put it over', and this he may have to do under various disguises. Auden and Spender are good craftsmen, as are Yeats and Eliot. This essay has been concerned with subject, but I would add, though it is a truism, that a verbal sense is as necessary for poetry as a good eye is for ball games. When a poet has a verbal sense but little to say, he wastes himself in the sands like Mr. Pound. It is a good thing that there are poets now writing who have as much to say and can say it as well as those whom I have been discussing.

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