

THE BOOK WAS
DRENCHED

UNIVERSAL
LIBRARY

OU_210310

UNIVERSAL
LIBRARY

ESSAYS IN CRITICISM

Second Series

BY MEMBERS OF THE
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA



UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA PRESS
BERKELEY, CALIFORNIA

1934

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA PUBLICATIONS IN ENGLISH

Volume 4, pp. 1-270, frontispiece

Issued January 31, 1934

COPYRIGHT 1934

BY THE

REGENTS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA PRESS
BERKELEY, CALIFORNIA

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
LONDON, ENGLAND

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
BY SAMUEL T FARQUHAR, UNIVERSITY PRINTER

CONTENTS

	PAGE
John Donne's Discovery of Himself	3
By GEORGE REUBEN POTTER	
The Poetry of the Mind	27
By JAMES M. CLINE	
Kidnapping Donne	61
By MERRITT Y. HUGHES	
Pope a s Poet	93
By WILLARD H. DURHAM	
The Poesy of Fiction	113
By CHAUNCEY WETMORE WELLS	
The Willing Suspension of Disbelief	129
By BERTRAND H. BRONSON	
"Wise Enough to Play the Fool"	155
By RoBEurP UTIER	
Tragic Prodigality of Life	185
By WILLARD FARNHAM	
Beneath the Surface, 1800-1815	201
By HAROLD BRUCE	
Leigh Hunt—American	225
By MYRON F. BRIGHTFIELD	
St. Amphibalus	249
By J. S. P. TATLOCK	
Notes	261

JOHN DONNE'S DISCOVERY
OF HIMSELF

BY

GEORGE REUBEN POTTER

JOHN DONNE'S DISCOVERY OF HIMSELF

LITERARY FASHIONS change and vary, sometimes with startling rapidity and little seeming cause. A very few years ago, most young writers and college undergraduates were only just waking to the fact that John Donne—largely through the praises of T. S. Eliot and Rupert Brooke—was in fashion. Now most of them realize that they should know him, whether they do or not; and meanwhile the leaders of the fashion are beginning to turn elsewhere. Such, at least, is the impression one receives from a statement of Eliot's, in the collection of essays called *A Garland for John Donne*:¹ "Admirably and thoroughly as the subject has been handled, there might still be place for another book on Donne: except that, as I believe, Donne's poetry is a concern of the present and the recent past, rather than of the future." Mr. Eliot specifies that he is referring, not to Donne's permanent reputation as a great writer, but rather to the common feeling that his verse and prose is peculiarly akin to much verse and prose of our own day. Only time can determine whether Mr. Eliot is a true prophet or is simply voicing a mood of his own, in thinking that fewer English and American writers in the future will be disciples of Donne than are now. Such rapid shifts in literary fashion make some minds—including the present writer's—feel giddy and perplexed.

It at least seems certain that Donne will not sink back into the position he used to occupy—that of a poet who might have been major but was minor because of his eccentricities. Critics are, one hopes, not likely longer to write as W. Vaughn Moody did in 1899,² of Donne's "intellectual perversity" and "delight in far-fetched analogies and wire-drawn conceits, which made him the evil genius of young poets," or of "the tinsel gewgaws of this 'metaphysical' school of poetry"; though it must be confessed that M. Legouis has recently said things almost as derogatory. A growing number

of scholars and critics in our century is giving Donne the importance he deserves in literary history. But our understanding of him is, surely, not yet complete; probably never will be. Considering these facts, there must necessarily be room for more essays and books about him. Many important questions of fact, sources, and influences are yet unanswered. And, more important still, the nature of his poetic experience is, with all the various attempts to explain it, still a field open to investigation and speculation.

Many readers have disliked Donne because he did not write from the sources of inspiration which they have thought proper for poets. They have, I think, failed to perceive that he often wrote his verse from the impulse of emotions the existence of which they have not recognized. The complicated emotions which lie at the background of his poetic experience are harder* to unsnarl than those behind the work of any other English poet, except perhaps William Blake. I shall not, I fear, disentangle many of them in this paper. But various critics of Donne have isolated one or another emotion from the mass; and I must have my try, like the rest.

The process of disentanglement is not always as easy as it would appear. Donne's best-known poems seem fairly simple in their origin. His most passionate love poems and religious verses appear so obviously to spring from universally felt emotions that one is tempted to stop there, to say that when Donne writes under the impulse of those emotions he is at his best and that when they fail him he becomes cold, ostentatiously witty, artificially subtle, or what not.

I long to talke with some old lovers ghost,
Who dyed before the god of Love was borne.⁸

or,

If yet I have not all thy love,
Deare, I shall never have it all,⁴

come from a poet who, whatever else he was, was certainly a lover when he wrote the lines. But what about the *Anniversaries*?—those poems written concerning the death of Eliza-

beth Drury, whom Donne had never even seen? What are we to think of the driving force behind such lines as these?

She, whose faire body no such prison was,
But that a Soule might well be pleas'd to passe
An age in her; she whose rich beauty lent
Mintage to other beauties, for they went
But for so much as they were like to her;
Shee, in whose body (if we dare preferre
This low world, to so high a marke as shee,)
The Westerne treasure, Easterne spicerie,
Europe, and Afrique, and the unknowne rest
Were easily found, or what in them was best;. . .⁶

Shall we agree with Gosse that the chief emotion behind this poem was a passionate love of Sir Robert Drury's money? To say that is to deny sincerity to verse which is surely not without its thrill for any reader who likes and is used to Donne's mode of expression. But whatever poetic experience is here does not spring from the emotion of a passionate lover, nor from that of a mourner bowed down with grief for a loved one lost.

The best way, I think, to work at the problem is to eliminate first some of the obvious poetic emotions which every reader has seen in Donne's verse; then to try to disentangle part of what remains.

The emotion of sexual passion can be eliminated first from direct consideration, though indirectly it will concern us in several parts of our later discussion. Donne's sex impulses were from youth through old age so strong as to be nearly an obsession. They led him from promiscuous intercourse, through tragic satiety, into renewed and transfigured happiness in his love for Anne More, perhaps flickered subconsciously in his friendships with Lady Herbert and the Countess of Bedford, and certainly flared in his later struggles to sublimate all his personality into a union with the divine. His readers can never get entirely away from them, any more than Donne himself could.

Next, religious motion, easily recognizable, can be separated from the tangle and—for the present—laid aside. Donne's religious passion is not simple; but it is at least an emotion which any reader will recognize as legitimately poetic.

Not quite so obvious, but nevertheless felt by most readers of his verse or prose, is Donne's passion for strange and out-of-the-way ideas; and like his religious passion it is compounded of many simples.

If thou beest borne to strange sights,
Things invisible to see,
Ride ten thousand daies and nights . . .⁶

Donne seems to have passed heedlessly over interest after interest that had inspired poets before him, to brood over combinations and concatenations of ideas which had hitherto seemed as far apart as the ends of the earth. Theology, metaphysics, medical lore, mineralogy, military science, law, natural history, animal and human physiology, alchemy—all furnish to him exciting emotions that coalesce in the heat of the dominating passion of the moment. Who but Donne would have compared himself, in verse, as a lover, to a cadaver unsatisfactory for medical students to dissect?

If I must example bee
To future Rebels; If th' unborne
Must learne, by my being cut up, and torne:
Kill, and dissect me, Love; for this
Torture against thine owne ende is,
Rack't carcasses make ill Anatomies.⁷

Many a reader has recoiled from this poem in disgust, thinking it strained and indelicate wit. The only answer to such a misunderstanding of Donne's mood is to point out how the verses—from their very sound as well as from their meaning—seem to tear themselves loose from the consciousness of the poet. He that hath ears to hear let him hear. To be sure, Donne knew well enough that he had powers as a

wit; and in a number of his poems his wit parades itself unabashed. But it is only an excretion from the unique emotional power within him which reconciled irreconcilable ideas and brought forth strange but emphatically not abortive progeny.

Another driving emotion behind Donne's versé is closely akin to this last. To Donne ideas came (to misapply a phrase from Meredith) affecting the embraces of virgins. He felt toward them a passion as keen as that which most other poets have felt toward their mistresses. His love of ideas was, indeed, so much akin to sexual love in his own mind that he felt it as a form of voluptuousness. He says in one of his letters:

To chuse, is to do: but to be no part of any body, is to be nothing. . . . This I made account that I begun early, when I understood the study of our laws: but was diverted by the worst voluptuousness, which is an Hydroptique immoderate desire of humane learning and languages: beautifull ornaments to great fortunes; but mine needed an occupation. . . .⁸

When Donne, then, writes a lyric like *Aire and Angels*, in which he applies scholastic reasoning concerning the nature of angels to his relations with his mistress, the motive power behind the poetry is a passion for that reasoning concerning the angels quite as much as it is his passion for the lady, or his conclusion that he loves her more than she loves him. And the warmth of passion which Donne feels for his metaphysical concept is so closely akin to the warmth of his sexual passions that in his verse the two coalesce with no artificiality or straining for effect. Here lies the great difference between Donne and his disciples. When Crashaw wrote his notorious lines on the eyes of the weeping Magdalen—

Two walking baths, two weeping motions,
Portable and compendious oceans,

his similes failed to become one with their object because quite evidently he was trying by his conscious fancy to find as strange and unusual similes as possible. The ideas did not come from him fired by his passionate love for them. A large

majority of Donne's did. And that is the reason why most of Donne's so-called conceits are not really conceits, while most of Crashaw's are.

So one could go on, separating threads from the tangle of emotions which brought forth Donne's verse. But the thread which I wish to follow as far as I can, in this essay, is one which has not been carefully enough observed, though numerous readers of Donne have recognized its existence. Behind nearly all his verse lies a constant, restless, dominating, and insatiable longing to solve the riddle of his own personality. Occasionally he refers to this in entirely unambiguous terms:

Some that have deeper digg'd loves Myne then I,
 Say, where his centrique happinesse doth lie:
 I have lov'd, and got, and told,
 But should I love, get, tell, till I were old,
 I should not finde that hidden mysterie;
 Oh, 'tis imposture all: . . .⁹

This Extasie doth unperplex
 (We said) and tell us what we love, . . .¹⁰

Seeke wee then our selves in our selves; for as
 Men force the Sunne with much more force to passe,
 By gathering his beames with a cristall glasse;

So wee, If wee into our selves will turne,
 Blowing our sparkes of vertue, may outburne
 The straw, which doth about our hearts sojourne.¹¹

[Concerning a severe illness of his later years] "O perplex'd dis-composition, O ridling distemper, O miserable condition of Man."¹²

"Poore intricated soule!—Riddling, perplexed, labyrinthical soule!"¹⁸

Through all Donne's verse, and much of his prose, runs this undercurrent of desire. It is there even when the ostensible subject of his thought is entirely different; and this fact has misled a multitude of his readers. When he writes as a lover, or as a cynic toward love, or as a soul longing for its God,

they feel his power; but when he is writing concerning a friend, and is obviously not primarily interested in that friend—or writing concerning Elizabeth Drury and obviously only mildly affected by grief for her death—or when he breaks in upon his more conventional passions with curious speculations concerning the nature of the soul—then his readers have been too apt to think that his poetic power has left him and that he is writing from his "intellect" or is displaying his "eccentric wit."

The truth is, I think, that even in his most passionate moods as a lover, or his most exalted moods as a preacher, Donne never ceased to be impelled by his passion to know himself. He could not escape that passion even in the ecstasy of sexual love or the glory of contemplating the divine. The passion for self-knowledge is an undercurrent through all his verse.

It is perhaps most plainly seen, and isolated for observation, in those poems of his where passion of the more obvious sorts is lacking—in the *Anniversaries*, or some of his verse letters, or his *Epiccdes and Obsequies*. He says in an introductory epistle to Sir Robert Carr, prefixed to one of the *Obsequies*: ". . . you know my uttermost when it was best, and even then I did best when I had least truth for my subjects. In this present case there is so much truth as it defeats all Poetry."¹⁴ Gosse, Donne's biographer, tries to apologize for and to explain away Donne's statement thus: "By truth he means here what, in the evolution of his taste, he had come to regard as an excess of realism; and beyond question, what he here describes as his 'best' were those pieces of metaphysical extravagance, where he had 'least truth for his subject/ but embroidered conceit after conceit upon a false or trivial first idea."¹⁵ I doubt extremely whether this be Donne's meaning. Much more probably he means that when he was not tied by an active and true emotion toward the subject of his poetry he was freest to follow his deepest desire, to use that subject like a scalpel to cut deeper into his own mind. Most readers are likely to disagree with him that

then he wrote "his best." But many poets have been unable to determine when they have done their best work. And to refer to Donne's *Anniversaries*, for example, as the embroidering of "conceit after conceit upon a false or trivial first idea," is unfair to Donne, and is a false criticism of the poems.

Let us examine a little more closely the *Anniversaries*[^] not because they are Donne's best work—they are not—but because they have been consistently misunderstood, and because they illustrate my main point especially well. The first of these two poems on the death of Elizabeth Drury is "An Anatomic of the World"; the poet pictures the whole world as dying because of the death of the young maiden he is celebrating. Extravagant, artificial? Of course, when thought of as an attempt at personal sorrow by a poet who did not feel it. But is Donne primarily interested in Elizabeth Drury as a person? The best answer to that question is Donne's own, as it is quoted by Ben Jonson in one of his conversations recorded by Drummond. Jonson, says Drummond, said concerning the *Anniversarie* "that he told Mr. Donne, if it had been written of the Virgin Mary it had been something; which he answered, that he described the Idea of a Woman, and not as she was." Donne wrote his *Anatomic of the World* under an emotional impulse somewhat akin to that which led Milton to write *Lycidas*—not a violent personal sorrow for an individual, but a feeling of sadness for the loss of youth, beauty, and purity, ideal rather than actual. And in the *Anatomic of the World* Donne's world is mainly his own personality. He is impelled by the idea of Elizabeth Drury's death to embark on a voyage of exploration into the effects of this ideal sorrow upon his own microcosm. Again, in the *Second Anniversarie—Of The Progresse- of the Soule* (not, of course, to be confused with Donne's separate unfinished poem with the same title) Donne rises to superb poetry in undertaking a second voyage of exploration, this time into his ideal of a perfect woman's soul as it is representative of the growth of all human souls, and (here is the important point to us) of his own. Take, for instance, the oft-quoted lines:

She, of whose soule, if we may say, 'twas Gold,
 Her body was th'Electrum, and did hold
 Many degrees of that; wee understood
 Her by her sight; her pure, and eloquent blood
 Spoke in her cheekes, and so distinctly wrought
 That one might almost say, her body thought; . . .¹⁶

Compare these lines with *The Extasie*, in which Donne tries to solve the mystery of human sex relations, and concludes among other things that

Loves mysteries in soules doe grow,
 But yet the body is his booke.

Compare them with any of the numerous passages in Donne's verse and prose where he tries with passionate earnestness to solve the mystery of body and soul's separateness and yet oneness, "that knot subtile, which makes us man." The impulse is the same throughout. And the very fact that Donne had never seen Elizabeth Drury makes it clear that when he wrote about her pure and eloquent blood, the blood belonged not to Elizabeth Drury, but to a maiden who was no actual maiden at all, rather soul of Donne's soul. Even Shelley's ideal emotion in his *Epipsychidion* is tangled in the concrete personality of Emilia Viviani. Donne, sensualist as many readers think him, is here more abstract than the ethereal Shelley, in that he cares only for his idea.

All this is not implying that Donne was unconscious of Sir Robert Drury's money, in writing the *Anniversaries*. He laid himself open to inevitable misunderstanding in writing such poems in memory of a girl he never knew and presenting them to a generous, well-to-do patron. But he never cared greatly about the possibility of being misunderstood by the public; and his explanation to Ben Jonson is indubitably both true and self-revelatory.

In poem after poem Donne's restless, passionate self-analysis breaks through the superficial subject matter. In laughingly cynical verses like *The Indifferent* he searches his mind protestingly for some reason behind the paradox that

his early collection of essays, the *Paradoxes and Problemes*—the very title shows it, and a reading of the essays confirms this. "That Nature is our worst guide," "That a wise man is known by much laughing," "Why doth the common opinion afford women souls?"—all these subjects Donne discusses, with arrogant sophomoric wit, to be sure, with the obvious consciousness that he is writing cleverly and eccentrically, but with other thoughts stirring underneath the brilliant surface/moving about in worlds not realized. The most outspoken of his *Elegies* are kept from sordidness or obscenity by the fire of his desire to *know*. Witness *To his Mistris going to Bed*, with its frequent transitions from the frankest eroticism to a mystical preoccupation with the significance of nakedness:

Full nakedness! All joyes are due to thee,
As souls unbodied, bodies unclothed must be,
To taste whole joyes.

His prose treatise, the *Biathanatos*, shows his mind probing into his occasional morbid craving for suicide, and trying to analyze those impulses within him. In his letters to friends he forgets again and again the recipient of his letter in his desire to probe into his own feelings of friendship. Is it akin to sexual love? What relation has it to the soul and the body? What significance have letters in connection with it?

Sir, I make account that this writing of letters, when it is with any seriousness, is a kind of ecstasie, and a departure and secession and suspension of the soule, which doth then communicate itself to two bodies.¹⁷

The death of friends and acquaintances sends his mind out into the void between life and death, searching, returning baffled but unbeaten:

Man is the World, and death th'Ocean
To which God gives the lower parts of man.
This Sea invirons all, and though as yet
God hath set markes, and bounds, twixt us and it,
Yet doth it rore, and gnaw, and still pretend,
And breaks our bankes, when ere it takes a friend.¹⁸

These lines show particularly well the characteristic rebound inward of Donne's thought, from the deceased subject of the poem (Lady Marckham) to his own mental processes.

It is hardly necessary to go on through his religious verse: the painfully fierce self-searchings of his *Holy Sonnets*, the intricate speculations into the nature of sickness and death of his *Devotions upon Emergent Occasions*, the humorous yet deeply serious depreciation of his sick body in that most delightful of dying poems, *Hymne to God My God, in My Sickness*. Even his sermons, in spite of their formal public appeal outward toward his congregations, continually turn inward and bring one face to face with the preacher; for instance, in the famous hypnotic passage—too long to quote here—describing the horrors of a human soul's falling out of the hands of the living God.¹⁹

Donne's was a lifelong quest, a constant fierce battering at the bounds of human ignorance, which neither the distractions of practical life nor the weariness of increasing years could weaken; a quest which led Donne riding his ten thousand days and nights into strange seas of thought and dark lands wet with surges from the seas of the subconscious and whatever lies behind the subconscious. What were the results? What sea shells did Donne pick up from the shores of that eternal ocean?

Any reader of his verse knows the absurdity of attempts to summarize the results of that quest; also the inevitable desire a lover of the man's verse and prose has, to try the impossible. Donne discovered himself—a self unique in human history; and he found, too, as every introspective mind has, that in discovering himself he was discovering mankind and the universe.

Most of the secular lyrics show him struggling toward comprehension of sex; struggling the more vehemently because he felt so violently the demands of his own reproductive instincts. He came, of course, to different conclusions in different moods, and the attempts sometimes made to date his love lyrics according to a theory of consistent development in

his ideas give results uncertain in the extreme. Still, nothing is more plain than the evidence that his search took him deeper and deeper into the problem, showed him glimmerings of light in many directions, brought him face to face with mystery after mystery. The common saying that he turned from women to a woman, then to woman, has a certain amount of truth in it. Youthful, heart-whole, he cared for a while (or perhaps in certain moods) only to satisfy his body and amuse himself; and his inevitable attempt to explain to himself his own point of view ends in confident masculine arrogance:

Good wee must love, and must hate ill,
 For ill is ill, and good good still,
 But there are things indifferent,
 Which wee may neither hate, nor love,
 But one, and then another prove,
 As wee shall finde our fancy bent.

If then at first wise Nature had
 Made women either good or bad,
 Then some wee might hate, and some chuse,
 But since shee did them so create,
 That we may neither love, nor hate,
 Onely this rests, All, all may use.

.

Chang'd loves are but chang'd sorts of meat,
 And when hee hath the kernell eate,
 Who doth not fling away the shell?²⁰

Or perhaps the search ends in a passionate disdain which he takes for disillusioned comprehension:

Hope not for minde in women; at their best
 Sweetnesse and wit, they'are but *Mummy*, possesst.²¹

Or it ends in a cheerful defense of sex freedom:

Good is not good, unlesse
 A thousand it possesse,
 But doth wast with greedinesse.²²

His first confident trust in masculine superiority was naturally due for a fall; and—like Chaucer's Troilus, little though he shared that youth's painful shyness in the presence of women—when he fell, the fall was long and hard. If we may (as I rather think we may) read actual experience into certain poems, Donne seems to have discovered that a married woman whom he confidently thought he had made into a satisfactory and passive recipient of his vital force could make him feel shame, disgust, hatred, and jealousy. His earlier formulas for solving the mystery of sex were proving inadequate; and he tried others. That brilliant mind of which he was all too conscious had closer relations to his body than he had thought. Then he fell in love with Anne More, and realized fully the fact that love is not merely a by-product of sexual desire. With his constantly increasing horizon he found himself more and more deeply moved, and more baffled by his ignorance. He gradually learned even humility. And—as we gather from poems like *The Undertaking*, *The Canonization*, *Lovers Infiniteness*, *A Valediction:forbidding mourning*, and especially from that most illuminating of Donne's poems, *The Extasie*—all this brought him to realize that "body" and "soul" are only separate names for phases of human existence that cannot be separated in fact; that sex is not an affair of the reproductive organs only, but that the whole human microcosm is affected by sex; that the ecstasy of the lover, and the intimacy of friendship, and the contemplation of the divine essence are so closely akin that no dividing line can be drawn between the different mental processes; that the body is no more degrading than the mind, and the mind no more than the emotions, and the emotions and the mind no more than the body.

Meanwhile Donne was pursuing his search in other directions: into his study of law, medicine, metaphysics, theology; into his personal experiences as a soldier, a traveler, a friend, a courtier, a husband, a father, into his ambition and his vanity, his happiness, his sorrows, his illnesses. He learned from his mental reactions to the emotion of friendship that

the ecstasy of friendly relations is very much like that between lovers, that his mind and emotions are quickened and kept alive by his friends much as the human race is kept alive by sexual love:

Sir, more than kisses, letters mingle Soules;
For, thus friends absent speake. This ease controules
The tediousnesse of my life: But for these
I could ideate nothing, which could please,
But I should wither in one day, and passe
To'a bottle'of Hay, that am a locke of Grass.²⁸

He learned, or thought he learned, from his self-analysis when working at the *Anniversaries*, that his microcosm was so like the macrocosm that when sorrow and death disintegrate the one, they seem to have a like effect on the other; that the keener and more eager sense-perception is, the closer it brings one to that part of the personality, whatever it be called—Donne calls it the soul—not sensually perceptible, which seems to him to be immortal. He learned from traveling, and reading about traveling, that his own mind had its west and east, its distances, mountains, rivers, and the rest, that exploration into strange places of the world is so closely linked with psychological analysis that whether or not the second implies the first, at least the first implies the second.

He learned something from all experiences. And everywhere he probed through the particular experience into the depths of personality where all experiences meet and are one. The result in his writings is uncanny. Conventional compartments of the human mind did not exist to him, or existed only to be broken through; and to the shocked horror of many readers, the principle of a pair of compasses dwells with the passion of parting lovers, and the cross of Christ with the breast stroke in swimming, and Christ's "bowels of compassion" with his literal bowels seen through his wounds. So Donne is called morbid, disgustingly vulgar, without true poetic delicacy of taste; and all these epithets mean simply 'unconventional/There are, to be sure, instances as familiar

as they are uncommon among Donne's writings where Doijine plays with this disregard of convention, and deliberately tries to shock, to be witty, and to show his superiority to other writers. The curse of a self-analytical mind is its inability to forget its own ego, its disposition to have numerous layers of emotion possessing it simultaneously. And the temptation for such a mind is to dramatize or to exploit itself. When this temptation comes to Donne, and he yields to it, he writes poems like *The Flea*. But *The Flea* is a poem as untypical as it is characteristic of its author. In the fire of sincere thought and emotion which lies behind most of his poetry, conventional barriers between different parts of human experience and thought melt and disappear, to any reader who can break the shell of his prejudices and absorb the power of the verse.

Finally, all through his life, but especially in his later years, Donne's search for himself took him into religion. This field of thought brought him closer to peace than any other, but is perhaps less interesting for most readers to follow, because he ceased to travel so distinctly alone on his way toward the ultimate mysteries, and came gradually to believe that the best way to enter the holy city of complete understanding was by the passport of the English Church rather than through breaches in the walls. Perhaps he was right; but many of his readers are grateful for the fact that he became enough of a leader in the thought of that Church to continue in some degree to explore for himself, and that he was not always satisfied to wait patiently till death should open wide the gates and let him in. It is because of such impatience that we have lines like these:

If poysonous mineralls, and if that tree,
Whose fruit threw death on else immortall us,
If lecherous goats, if serpents envious
Cannot be damn'd; Alas, why should I bee?
Why should intent or reason, borne in mee,
Make sinnes, else equall, in mee more heinous?

.

But who am I, that dare dispute with thee
OGod? . . .*

Very few churchmen in Donne's day, I suspect, went as far as that in questioning the justice of God's ways to man. Donne fortunately never did quite get over an inclination to dispute with God; not to speak of his constant disputing with himself concerning God, which led him through more self-analysis to self-knowledge, as appears, for, instance, in the brief but significant passage of his *Litanie*[^]

When wee are mov'd to seeme religious
Only to vent wit, Lord deliver us.

With amazingly few exceptions, the whole body of Donne's verse and prose is permeated with the expression of his introspective experience.

A further question, though, raises itself. However genuine and omnipresent this experience in Donne may have been, was it, truly, poetic experience? Did Donne's introspection generate poetry, or was it merely an accidental accompaniment of a poetic activity the causes of which lie elsewhere? The intricate logic which Donne usually used in groping a way through his personality—logic which (as Miss Ramsay, Mr. Eliot, and others have indicated) springs partly from a lawyer's training and partly from medieval scholastic philosophy—has again and again been cited as evidence that much of his verse is not true poetry at all.

Whether or not Donne's readers think the whole body of his verse great poetry is, I suppose, largely a matter of personal feeling. Many see that quality in only a few exceptional verses. Others—and I am one of them—see it in nearly all. Writer after writer in recent years (Lowe, Brooke, Eliot, Praz, Williamson, Hayward, Hughes) bears testimony to the fact that the peculiar fusion of intellectual and emotional force in Donne's verse conveys beauty and significance to the aesthetic sense of many people. That is not, however, the main question we are here concerned with. Regardless of the effect of his verse on others, was this search for self-knowledge a poetic experience to Donne himself? The answer is emphatically yes, and the evidence in support of the affirmative

lies in the numerous passages I have quoted which show that his search, far from being cold and unemotional, was beyond any question both sensuous and passionate. Any man who feels his desire for knowledge to be "the worst form of voluptuousness," and "a hydroptic immoderate desire," is in the pursuit of that knowledge a poet, whatever be the outcome. When he writes verse about the pursuit, it is absurd to blink the causal connection between that verse and the experience expressed in it. And while the result is not necessarily great poetry, I fail to see how, if it be expressed in verse as Donne expresses it, anyone can deny that it is poetry. A man whose knowledge of a pair of compasses blends without emotional discord with his feelings at parting from his mistress is, in his own mind, at least, transmuting into poetry the compasses as well as his lover's passion.

Two specific examples may make these facts clearer. First, one which I think most readers will agree in considering good poetry:

THE FUNERALL

Who ever comes to shroud me, do not harme
 Nor question much
 That subtle wreath of haire, which crowns my arme;
 The mystery, the signe you must not touch,
 For 'tis my outward Soule,
 Viceroy to that, which then to heaven being gone,
 Will leave this to controule,
 And keepe these limbes, her Provinces, from dissolution.

For if the sinewie thread my braine lets fall
 Through every part,
 Can tye those parts, and make mee one of all;
 These hairees which upward grew, and strength and art
 Have from a better braine,
 Can better do'it; Except she meant that I
 By this should know my pain,
 As prisoners then are manacled, when they'are condemn'd
 to die.

What ere shee meant by'it, bury it with me,
 For since I am
 Loves martyr, it might breed idolatrie,
If into others hands these Reliques came;
 As'twas humility
 To afford to it all that a Soul can doe,
 So,'tis somebravery,
 That since you would save none of mee, I bury some of you.

The poet is stirred partly by the idea of unrequited love, persisting symbolically after death, in an unconscious and gentle revenge for the mistress* coldness. But that admittedly poetic idea does not begin to account for the poem's charm. The poet deals with corpses and the trappings of death, as many a poet has before and since; but the attraction to him is not simply the fascination of the horrible. It is a necessary part of the feeling which persists throughout the poem, that the body is the soul's book. The thrill of imaginative union which he feels in thinking of his mistress* hair about his arm links itself in his mind to the anatomy and physiology of the body's central nervous system. He sees all the different ideas in the light of the same emotions. And can one fail to see in *The Funerall* beauty of imagery and poetry not only in "that subtile wreath of haire which crowns my arme," but also in "the sinewie thread my braine lets fall"? One is recognized conventionally as a proper subject for poetry. The other is not. But are not both, here, imaged in the same atmosphere of poetic feeling, and merged into significant and unified beauty?

Now let us pass to a second example; this one a passage which many readers think the extreme of bad taste—the end of Donne's last sermon, *Death's Due/I*:

There now hangs that *sacred Body* upon the *Crosse*, *rebaptized* in his owne *teares* and *sweat*, and *embalmed* in his owne *blood* alive. There are those *bowells of compassion*^ which are so conspicuous, so manifested, as that you may *see them through his wounds*. There those *glorious eyes* grew faint in their light: so as the *Sun* ashamed to survive them, *departed with his light too*. . . . There wee leave

you in that *blessed dependancy*, to *hang upon him* that *hangs* upon the Crosse, there *bath* in his *teares*, there *suck* at his *woundes*, and */r> downe in peace* in his *grattf*, till hee vouchsafe you a *resurrection*, and an *ascension* into that *Kingdome*, which hee AOM *purchasedfor you*, with the *inestimable price* of Aw *incorruptible* blood. Amen.

The passage has an unfortunate effect upon many persons' sensibilities; but—forgetting that for the moment—what evidence is there in it, and the circumstances of its composition, as to the state of Donne's emotions when he wrote or preached it? In the face of the fact that he delivered and (presumably) composed the sermon during his last illness—that he knew when preaching it that he was probably taking a last farewell of his congregation—one can hardly assert that even these violent figures of speech are "strained wit." If there be strain, it is the strain of agony. But it is not agony, either Donne's or Christ's, that dominates the "passage." The preacher, and the poet who is here the preacher, felt and wanted his audience to feel the cruelty of that pain; but he felt far more powerfully the beauty, the comfort, and the glory of Christ's personality. The dying or the dead body of Christ did not jar with his sense of beauty, as it does with that of many of his readers; for to Donne man's body was beautiful, in the same sense that man's soul was, and whether the body were dead or alive, mangled or whole, the beauty remained. It might even, as here, become heightened and transfigured into glory when the mangled physical body typified the sublimest spiritual beauty which the poet could conceive. Here, just as truly—and demonstrably just as beautifully to Donne's mind—as it is in *The Funerall*, or, for that matter, *The Extasie*, the body is the soul's book.

There have not been many men, certainly not many before Donne, who have so constantly throughout all their life been swayed by the passion for self-solution. Donne was a child of the Middle Ages and the early Renaissance. His introspective egotism fed and grew upon a multitude of older ideas. But he conceived it parthenogenetically, after all, and it remained distinctively, peculiarly his own. A man of his own

age, as well as a child of the ages before him, he embarked, like those countrymen of his whom he so much admired, Drake and Raleigh, on a voyage into the unknown; one from which he never turned back. He was not the first that ever burst into that silent sea; but his voyage was as daring, his course as independent, as if he had been. And -the strange lands which he discovered have not ceased—will not cease—to be an important part of our literary inheritance as English-speaking peoples.

THE POETRY OF THE MIND

BY

JAMES M. CLINE

THE POETRY OF THE MIND

THE MOST REVEALING studies of poetry in recent times have been concerned with the *materials of poetry*. To show what lay in the author's mind at the moment of poesis, to show how it has been qualified and prepared and harmonized for the final act of conscious ordering, though not to "explain" poetry, is nevertheless to explain much that has been lazily dismissed as miraculous. Thus Mr. John Middleton Murry: "Of the last act of poetic creation there is nothing to say. We cannot explain it; but . . . we may fairly say that the actual composition of this great poem [*On First Looking into Chapman's Homer*] was but the conscious last of a whole series of unconscious acts of poetic creation."¹ And the same conclusions are implicit in Mr. Lowes's *Road to Xanadu*. With this approach to the study of poetry, all modern readers are familiar.

Of the final act of composition, the "conscious ordering of the materials" thus prepared by long gestation in the mind—of the creation of the final form, however, modern criticism disclaims all understanding; and none will doubt the wisdom of such modesty. Yet in appreciation of a characteristic kind of seventeenth-century literature a sense of the union of form and substance is inevitable. This is not to contend that the magic of their union can be explained, but only that this kind of poetic experience can be more intelligibly described through a study of form than by any other means. And this for two reasons. The first is that whereas most poetry expresses an experience "recollected in tranquillity"—a settled apprehension of truth—the poetry with which this paper is concerned expresses rather the movement of the mind in the very act of apprehending it. Indeed it may be asserted provisionally that the aim of this kind of poetry is to communicate, not *what the poet has perceived*, but *how he is perceiving it*. And because this is its purpose, the form which expresses the movements

of his mind is consciously adjusted to the communication of them. The form respects the movement of the mind, then, because the substance is the movement of the mind.

So must one conclude who will describe what is felt in the poetry of Donne. It cannot be dismissed with a name. Intellectual it is; metaphysical, perhaps. But it is not intellectual as, say, Pope is intellectual. A line like

What oft was thought, but ne'er so well expressed

may be called intellectual, because, its substance being rational, it is addressed chiefly to the intellect. But we are not required to consider how Pope reached the conclusion, nor even whether he reached it by methods peculiar to himself. We are concerned only with the result of his thinking. The excellence, of this verse is its conclusiveness, the finality with which it sums up a long process of critical reasoning. But Donne is no such proverbialist. The conclusion which he reaches is of secondary concern to the reaching of it. He feels a thought, says T. S. Eliot, as another poet might feel the odor of a rose;² which, if I understand him, means that Donne's poetry does not record the result of his meditation merely, but reveals the very act of a mind in the possession of intellectual passion. That its final realization in form is the result of the same mysterious harmonization which makes all poetry, is to be presumed; but this is a matter apart from the present consideration, which is only to examine such "poetry of the mind" in its connection with the broadest manifestations of seventeenth-century thought.

For, apart from its peculiar faculty to communicate the experience of his mind, there is in Donne's poetry a conscious, indeed a philosophical, concern with the operations of the mind: an interest which he reflects like other writers of the time, and one which derives from the remotest presuppositions of contemporaneous thought. I mean that Donne was expressing in poetry his sense of a reality which was the common subject of theology, science, and philosophy; and, because he was a poet in whom form and substance were

resolved, that it is possible to describe (though roughly, be it granted) the manifestations of his unique sense of truth upon the form of his poetry and his prose. This is not, I hope, to assert that the form of his compositions can be explained. It is to assert that the poet, conscious of the nature of his subject, consciously developed modes of expression that his form might, as it were, suggest a significant correspondence to its theme.

Such a study involves ultimately the debatable minutiae of rhythm. It may be well at the outset, therefore, to consider somewhat generally the relation of form and thought in the seventeenth century; more precisely, to trace the significance of the idea of form in the seventeenth century in seventeenth-century thinking. For the theory of style to be treated here derives, I believe, from the remotest outposts of Renaissance philosophy, and is thus a reflection in literature of that final conception of reality which was the subject also of science and theology. Some coordination of these studies, therefore, in view of this, their ultimate interest, may serve to point the way that I am going.

i

The fundamental difference between the philosophy of the Renaissance and all earlier philosophy was this: that ancient and medieval thought was concerned with the *essence* of phenomena, whereas the thinking of the Renaissance was concerned with their *connection*.

While Plato understands by ideas, general concepts which are common to the particular phenomena—universals, Bruno expressly explains that the concepts by which we raise ourselves above the confused manifold of the senses, are no mere graduated series of universal concepts (*universalia logica*), but concepts which express the real connection of phenomena; so that instead of an uniform manifold of parts, we get a firmly connected and formed whole. . . . The highest unity which is set up as the ideal of knowledge, then, is not an abstract idea, but the principle of a real interconnection according to law, which alone lends existence to the particular phenomena, and makes them comprehensible to us.⁸

This conception of reality as an organic unity communicable to the mind by universal laws, though barely touched upon by Bruno, was to find classic formulation half a century later in the philosophy of Descartes.

The experience of those fifty years of thought, however, was to drive the philosopher inevitably back upon the operations—the "laws"—of the mind itself as the only knowable reality. For there is a difference between what really happens in the universe and its representation in laws which are intelligible to the mind. In the early Renaissance, philosophers seem not to have made this distinction. They believed not only that the discovery of laws to account for the operations of nature was possible; but that, when they had formulated them, their laws *were* the laws of nature. In Descartes, however, there is but an avowed formulation which, however manifest to the mind, need have no analogy in the real operations of the universe. The truth which Descartes discovered was the truth of evidence—a form of reality most acceptable to the mind; we assent to it not because it is true in itself, but because its truth is evident and manifest to us. And thus much Descartes himself allows.

I saw very well that if we suppose a triangle to be given, the three angles must be equal to two right angles; but for all that I saw no reason to be assured that there was any such triangle in existence; while on the contrary, reverting to the notion which I had of a Perfect Being, I found that existence was implied in it in the same manner in which the equality of three angles to two right angles is implied in the idea of a triangle. Consequently, it is at least as certain that God exists, as any demonstration in geometry can possibly be.⁴

God, then, like the triangle, is a philosophical necessity. He is the intelligible unity in relation to which all things become real—or rather, in which they achieve a reality which is manifest to the mind.

But it is the earlier tendency of thought, presumably "in the air" since Bruno, which is implicit in the assumptions of two great Elizabethans, Bacon and Hooker. And it is invoked

with the naive enthusiasm of a younger experience, when men still believed that the operations of the universe might be discovered and apprehended in their immediate reality. "I suppose," Bacon observes, "that I have established forever, a true and lawful marriage between the empirical and the rational faculty/"⁵ For the mind which sees only the reflection of itself, his contempt is well known; he disparages as equally futile that kind of research which compiles for the sake of compiling—is inspired with no unifying, no interpretative principle. "A natural history compiled on its own account, and one collected for the mind's information as a foundation for philosophy, are two different things/"⁶ For the real problem of knowledge is the discovery of a relation between the *mind* and *things*; and this "marriage" he sanguinely acknowledges to be possible, once the aberrations of "affection" and superstition have been purged away. Were men to bring the innocence of little children into the presence of nature, their minds might attain that sensitivity of adjustment which is required of him who would trace her subtleties; and the laws, or operations of things, might be related to the operations of the mind. Thus the mind might become a true mirror of reality.

Upon a similar hypothesis Hooker appears to have rested his *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*. "All things that are," he says,⁷ "have in them some operation not violent or casual"—nothing operates as it does except for some preconceived end. "That which doth assign unto each thing the kind, that which doth appoint unto each form the measure and the working, that we term a law." And this kind of law functions even in the workings of God himself. Law, then, as Hooker understands it, is a kind of dynamic agency, an agency intelligently conceived. It is not, as in the Old Testament, an arbitrary command of God; it is not, as in political bodies, an expedient agreement; it is not, as in modern science, a blind and inexorable force operating without purpose or intention; it is a force nearest allied to intelligence. It might be called the act or the expression of intelligence, for by its operation

things are related and distinguished as our minds relate and distinguish them; by its operation sequences and consequences are produced. Law operates to an end with a pre-conceived purpose even as a man preconceiving a desirable object in life marshals all his actions to the achievement of it; and when a man works to a certain end, he works like a law; in every conscious action of his life a law operates—the law of reason. Thus we may say that the meaning of law for Hooker finds its nearest analogy in the operations of the human intellect. God, who Himself is supreme intelligence, works according to a law because once He has willed a certain purpose He accomplishes it by some means or rule or action which is designed to bring it about. The laws of God, the laws by which God works, therefore, are imitations of His intelligence.

"All things therefore do work according to law; only the works and operations of God, however, have him both for their worker and for the law whereby they are wrought; the being "of God is a kind of law to his working"—as, one might say, the reason of man is a kind of law to his working. "For that perfection which God is giveth perfection to what he doth, which eternal decree is what we call an eternal law." In the same way the decrees of nature, the manner in which nature works to accomplish the ends which she accomplishes, we call a natural law. Likewise, as distinct from these, the way in which human beings work, the formulation of our desires to achieve our ends—morality, politics, and the like—they we call human laws. In conclusion, then, a law is that sequence of operations by which an end is achieved, and is a form derived from the intelligence which wills it. Eternal law is a picture of God's intelligence, and human law a likeness of ours.

As the object of natural philosophy is to establish a relationship between the mind and things, the function of theology is to reestablish the relationship between the mind and God. And this, neither the Lutheran nor the Romanist is in the way of doing. The former, like Bacon's misguided

philosopher, is in danger of confusing a dream of his imagination with the true polity of God; the Romanist, clouded in superstition and vain works, to fix upon appurtenances of the service, whose intention, being forgotten or misunderstood, can have no access to the mind.⁸ Law there is in these matters, and that law is created to be comprehensible-to man. Indeed in its being rightly illustrated lies all the virtue of those ceremonies which are the subject of so much ingenious dispute and scrupulosity. The meaning of the communion, for instance, is manifest to the mind; and since its reality is a reality only to the mind that perceives it, why farther question the reality of the physical elements, which being physical are of a nature which the mind cannot contemplate? "What these elements are *in themselves*, it skilleth not; it is enough that *to me which take them*, they are the body and the blood of Christ."⁹ "The real presence of Christ's most blessed body and blood is not ... to be sought for in the sacrament, *but in the worthy receiver* of the sacrament/¹⁰ Likewise in all respects, to the knowledge of an eternal happiness which all men desire, "the wisdom of God hath revealed a way mystical and supernatural," and endowed them with the mind and the knowledge to discover it. The way of the true Christian is so to discipline his mind that it may move with that universal law which is illustrated in the order of the universe—that law "whose seat is the bosom of God, and her voice the harmony of the world."¹¹

This conception of reality, then, as a harmonizing agency in the universe, quite naturally found correspondence in the associative faculty of the mind. Perfection of mind there cannot be. "Man understands as much as his observations on the order of nature, either with regard to things or the mind, permit him, and neither knows nor is capable of more."¹² Thus ultimate knowledge either of God or of nature is impossible. But within the range of our capacities as human beings, it is possible to conform the law of our minds to the law of the universe; and when it is thus disciplined and adjusted, the mind becomes, as it were, a part of the universal

motion working within us. In that most intimate and final of all our capacities, then, in the knowing instrument itself, man may become a pattern and a part of the universal. To reveal in their acting intensity the motions of this faculty, to reveal the mind in its own reality—in its very act of relating phenomena—is to reveal at once the pattern of knowledge and of truth. And this I take to have been the aim of the literature I am about to describe.

ii

If my assumption is correct, then it must follow that the greatness of the poetry which is to express this new reality will depend as much upon composition as upon brilliant and sudden flashes of insight. For the value of any part, however excellent, will derive a yet more essential beauty as it serves to reflect and to achieve the harmony of the whole. Briefly, no touchstone method can do justice to poetry thus conceived. To have applied one is Johnson's critical error in his treatment of Cowley, who, in Johnson's opinion, lost the grandeur of generality by pursuing his thoughts too far. "Whatever professes to benefit by pleasing, must please at once; the pleasures of the mind imply something unexpected."¹³ Doubtless there is a kind of poetic pleasure which arises from a "sudden clear sense of fulfillment"; it is one of the wonders of Shakespeare to reflect in a single line so much of his experience, and ours, and human experience. But it is an excellence which should not deprive us of pleasure of another kind.

There is, besides this, the line which makes us aware not of itself alone but of the harmonious beauty of a great poem; such a line as Milton's

They also serve, who only stand and wait.

I cannot tell whether by Arnold's touchstone it is a great line or not. It is almost devoid of sensuous intensity either of color or of sound. Its value derives from its composing power upon the sonnet in which it occurs. In this respect, I think, one must conclude that if it is not great it is at least right.

Let us review the poem. In mid-career, Milton has been denied the gift of sight; and though more moved to serve God, by reason of his misfortune, he laments that because of it his talent lie? with him useless. Then he remonstrates: God, at whose behest thousands of messengers fly ceaselessly o'er land and sea, does not need man's work, however great. And then, as it were, out of this turbulence, emerges the last and the sublime association: of all those angels who serve God, the highest are not engaged in busy haste, but are the seraphim who stand about His throne in an eternal contemplation of Him. The faultlessness of the line is its unobtrusiveness. Were it more in itself, it would be less in the composition. The mind has traveled in sweaty haste "o'er land and ocean"; there has been no time to guess the meaning of it all; until, in one breathless moment, the truth "composes."

I have been thus explicit—long-winded perhaps—because this aspect of all art—the conscious harmony and composition of its parts—assumes a meaning so much vaster to the literature of the seventeenth century. For there, as I have tried to suggest by my inroads into other fields of human thought, the interrelation of phenomena, whether in a poem or in science, is no mere canon of good art, but a pattern of truth. Harmony is the final reality; the harmony of the mind is knowledge, and the expression of that harmony is art. Form is the illusion of universal motion.

The most obvious confession to a desire of harmony that an author can make is to write in verse. When we know that a poem is written in iambic pentameter, we know that its author intended to impress us with at least one kind of unity—an underlying, pervasive scheme of numbers. Yet, to discover what the principle of rhythmical harmony was in the seventeenth century has occasioned much difficulty. Ben Jonson declared that Donne, for not keeping meter, deserved hanging; and Samuel Johnson objected to Milton's verse that it was poetry but to the eye. He could not tell, from hearing it, where the lines ended. The subject is fraught with controversy, and this is no place to be controversial. As far as pos-

sible, therefore, I shall concern myself with historical considerations, hoping that however shadowy my discussion may be, it may shed some light upon the relation of rhythmical harmony to the "poetry of the mind."

The dominating principle of the experiments in English meter in the early seventeenth century was designed to enable the metrical forms to respond more flexibly to the operations of the poet's mind; or, to put it differently, to liberate verse from the domination of metrical convention, and thus allow it to respond to the rhythmical requirements of the new poetry. The consequence of many innovations may be discerned in two respects: in the production in Donne of a characteristically monotonous line; in others, especially Milton, of a kind of free verse—not so free as ever to be independent of metrical considerations, but rather through them to attain to great rhythmical variety. And though both these manifestations of the new verse are frequently found in combination, they may be considered separately.

The first—the monotonous line, as Dr. Melton calls it¹⁴—may be simply described in principle. It consists in setting up in the reader's experience the expectation of a regular iambic meter; that is, in writing some perfectly regular metrical lines. These form the rhythmical base upon which the subtler and more characteristic rhythms are to be produced. For example:

'Twere [˘]pro[˘]phan[˘]ation of [˘]our [˘]joyes
 To [˘]tell [˘]the [˘]lay[˘]etie [˘]our [˘]love.

Here, be it noted, the intellectually stressed syllables receive the metrical stress. The metrical pattern and the intellectual pattern are roughly coincident'. But when such an expectancy has once been established, it is varied characteristically in Donne to this wise:

Metrical strss:

[˘]But [˘]we [˘]by [˘]a [˘]love [˘]so [˘]far [˘]refin'd.

Rhetorical strss:

That is, the line is so written that the normal speech stresses are set in opposition to the metrical stresses, and vice versa. The effect of this carried to an extreme would be a thoroughly monotonous line, that is, a line in which every syllable received an equal stress. In practice, artistic considerations naturally operate against anything so inflexible; and usually the normal accentuation of the last syllables of the line coincides with the conventional meter. A very beautiful example is Milton's

Metrical stress:

W[˘]eep n[˘]o m[˘]ore, w[˘]oeful sh[˘]epherds, w[˘]eep n[˘]o m[˘]ore.

Rhetorical stress:

Indeed, every poet has used this device moderately, but in Donne it becomes more frequent and more significant as a revolt against the domination of the older musical patterns; and if the new note in Donne is not melodious, it has another beauty of more essential importance to his poetry. But we must first conclude the metrical discussion.

Along with monotonous verse, there became current another rhythmical device for which no name is convenient. I shall call it "free verse"; for it was verse, and, though free, its rhythms presumed and necessitated an underlying metrical scheme.

By new use of the conventional meters, some of the poets produced in conventional verses rhythms of the most subtle variety. Perhaps Johnson's observation that they so obliterated the characteristics of conventional rhythm that one could not tell when the lines ended is as good a description as any. Few, however, will accept it as a denunciation. Hearing such verse read, one is conscious of a variety of rhythmic movements, and conscious—perhaps I should say "subconscious"—of a unity at once permeating, controlling, and producing all its variety. I suppose the most perfect flower of this long cultivation is the rhythm of *Samson Agonistes*; but, for analytical purposes, perhaps the less miraculous pattern of *Lycidas* is more illustrative.

- 1 Begin/then, Sisters of the sacred well,
- 2 That from beneath the seat of Jove doth spring,
- 3 Begin, and somewhat loudly sweep the string.
- 4 Hence with ^{<3>}denial vain, / and coy ⁽²⁾excuse,
- 5 So may som ⁽³⁾gentle Muse,
- 6 With lucky words favour my ⁽³⁾destined Urn,
- 7 And as he ⁽³⁾passes turn,
- 8 And bid ⁽²⁾fair peace be to my ⁽³⁾sable shrowd.

In spite of their variety, it is clear that these verses are ordered with reference to an underlying metrical norm—iambic pentameter. To be sure, lines 5 and 7 are short, yet so artfully wrought as neither to confuse nor defeat the realization of a fundamental rhythmic principle, radiating into every part, and so constant in its operation as to give meaning to every exception: the variations enchant, but they never bewilder.

Now it is clear that the very absence of a similarly insistent principle of rhythm in the following "Song" from Greene's *Menaphon* accounts for the surprise one feels in the sudden transition from line 6 to line 7.

- 1 Some swear Love,
- 2 Smooth-faced Love,
- 3 Is sweetest sweet that men can have:
- 4 I say Love,
- 5 Sower Love,
- 6 Makes virtue yield as beauty's slave,
- 7 A bitter sweet, a folly worst of all,
- 8 That forceth wisdom to be folly's thrall.

The metrical fact is superficially not different from similar transitions in *Lycidas*; but the rhythmical effect is strikingly so. One is not sensibly aware of a rhythmical change in Milton; but not to be aware of it in Greene is to miss a subtle beauty in his stanza. Clearly the two selections exemplify

very different theories of composition; only the Miltonic concerns us here, however.

Its object was to enable the poet to combine lines of variable length without disturbing the reader's sense of the underlying metrical norm of the poem. To do so—that is, to effect transitions between the basic pentameter scheme of the verse and lines which varied from it (as in the passage from *Lycidas*), and yet to avoid the suddenness of Greene's transition—some poets of the seventeenth century appear to have used a simple expedient. They broke the five-stress lines into shorter units, usually of two and three feet respectively. Thus the ear, though subconsciously attuned to a basic pentameter rhythm, is immediately conscious also of its component phrases of two and three. To revert, for example, to the passage from *Lycidas*. In the first three lines, the poet "somewhat loudly sweeps the string" to set his basic rhythm ringing in our ears. With this preparation, he is ready to introduce some variations, which, to achieve full rhythmic value, must be imagined, so to speak, in reference to the pentameter norm. In line 4 the sweeping pentameter is broken; we read not five feet, but three and two—

Hence with denial vain, and coy excuse;

then but three feet in line 5—

So may som gentle Muse.

Only the rime, perhaps, restrains a propensity to fill out a full-bodied line by annexing the first two feet of line 6, **reading**—

So may som gentle Muse / with lucky words.

Naturally, the rime and the actual appearance of the line check an impulse so irregular; nevertheless, the pervading force of the pentameter base upon which all these variations are produced compels at least an imaginary pause at the end of the second foot—

So may som ⁽³⁾gentle Muse

With lucky words ⁽²⁾ favour my ⁽⁵⁾destined Urn.

And the awareness of this subordinate complication begets another, the parallelism of two trimeter phrases—

favour my destined Urn
And as he passes turn;

but the insistent and regular beat of line 8 asserts again the fundamental pentameter scheme—returns us to the major, as it were—and fetters wild beauties before they are free. The awareness of a basic rhythm, then, and the impulse to achieve it wherever possible, is the essential means by which these apparently irregular particles of verse are composed, even as their variety is intensified by the larger principle of unity. In a poem like Vaughan's *World* the temptation to obliterate the integrity of the metrical line is even stronger than in *Lycidas*. With whatever phrase one begins to read—even if one begin in the middle of a line—one may make up five feet by running on to the first phrase of the next; so that, did not the rime tend to assert it, the conventional pattern of the verses might be quite dissipated.

And round ⁽²⁾ beneath it, / Time, / in hours, days, years,
Driv'n by the ⁽²⁾ spheres,
Like a vast ⁽³⁾ shadow moved, / in which ⁽²⁾ the world
And all her train were ⁽³⁾ hurled.

The variety of these rhythms, then, though superficially tending to obliterate the metrical pattern, was utterly dependent upon it. Let anyone unconvinced read Mr. Robert Bridges' admirable treatment of the verse of *Paradise Lost*,¹⁶ from which, for the moment, I use one of his simpler expedients. He merely resets a passage of Milton according to its rhythmical rather than its actual and metrical division.¹⁶ The result is this:

Then feed on thoughts,
That voluntarie move harmonious numbers;
As the wakeful bird sings darkling,
And in shadiest covert hid

Tunes her nocturnal note.
Thus with the year seasons return,
But not to me returns day,
Or the sweet approach of ev'n or morn.

I have indicated below the probable phrasing of the passage when it is "syncopated" upon its metrical base. It would be a work of supererogation to suggest further how the power of the subconscious pentameter base tends to awaken illimitable new rhythms as it strives to impose itself in various ways.

- | | | |
|-----|--|-----|
| (2) | Then feed on thoughts, that voluntarie move | (J) |
| (2) | Harmonious numbers; as the wakeful bird | (5) |
| (J) | Sings darkling, and in shadiest covert hid | (4) |
| (5) | Tunes her nocturnal note. Thus with the year | (2) |
| (2) | Seasons return, but not to me returns | (3) |
| (/) | Day, or the sweet approach of ev'n or morn. | (4) |

Even the dactylic and trochaic effects [Mr. Bridges contends I are got by the placing of inversions, elisions, etc.; and where the iambic system seems entirely to disappear, it is maintained as a fictitious structure and scansion, not intended to be read, *but to be imagined* as a time beat on which the free rhythm is, so to speak, syncopated as a melody.¹⁷

And I suppose that even while its harmonies seem to be responding to the freest movements of the author's mind, the reader is attuned in some part of his consciousness to the fundamental pattern that underlies it all.

in

I should not feel that such a conclusion justified the labor to beget it, were it not necessary to carry over some of this theory into the structure of seventeenth-century prose. It is impracticable to investigate in any detail the theory of prose rhythms: all I wish to do at present is to suggest how the two principles in verse which I have described, namely, the division of a conventional line into shorter rhythmical units, and the larger principle of producing such rhythms by means of a

form that is at ojice conventional and responsive, have, if not an influence on prose, then at least an analogy in it.

If Johnson could charge that such developments in verse confused its linear terminations, he might with equal justice have said that a similar movement in prose destroyed the integrity of the sentence. What he did say, and what is far more significant, was that "the unique peculiarity of [Sir Thomas Browne's] mind [is] faithfully reflected in the form and matter of his work."¹⁸ Certain it is, however, that in many of the paragraphs of Browne and Feltham, it is quite impossible for the ear to detect the fall of a sentence—and this where the cadences are most characteristic and beautiful. If one may call the verse of Milton "free verse," one may as well throw all caution to the winds and call this "free prose": that is, prose that has eluded the restrictive cadences of grammar—or, shall I say, through them has succeeded in becoming a malleable and responsive mode of expression—even as verse by means of a fixed meter had become "free."

The description of prose rhythms is involved and difficult, dependent largely upon individual interpretation; and an attempt to be exhaustive would introduce so much controversy as to defeat its own purpose. Furthermore, in verse, there were fixed forms to revolt from; in prose, this was much less definitely the fact. Yet, without confusing the issue with precision, perhaps I may indicate a parallel movement in prose, which in its largest outlines follows that which I have described in verse.

Most English prose before the seventeenth century had been a practical medium, simple and for the most part formless. When it had aspired to grandeur, it usually smelled of perfume. Before the seventeenth century, but two formal principles of prose style had been developed: the use of verbal schemes, like Lyly's; and the far more general device of *isocolony*, or the relative equivalence of the members of the sentence. It is with Donne's innovations upon the scheme of isocolon that we have here to do. Therefore, it may be well

first to illustrate the effect of isocolon upon prose when more or less formally applied. I choose a sentence from Hooker, indicating the probable division of its members:

That law eternal which God hath made to himself, / and thereby worketh all things of which he is the cause and author; // *that law* in the admirable frame whereof / shineth with most perfect beauty the countenance of that wisdom / which hath testified concerning herself, // "The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way, / even before his works of old I was set up"; // *that law*, which hath been the pattern to make, / and is the card to guide the world by; // *that law* which hath been of God and with God everlastingly; / *that law*, the author and observer whereof is one only God to be blessed forever: // how should either men or angels be able perfectly to behold?¹⁹

The structure is that of a Latin period—a series of *cola*, each indicated by a verbal repetition—*that law*—and each of these divided into variable numbers of shorter members relatively equal in length. The effect upon the ear is that of a rolling period of great formal dignity and suitable to the elevated theme which it carries. Now, in the sentence which I am to describe as representative of Donne, precisely the same basic device is used, even to the introduction of the *cola* by the word *that*, and the conclusion of the period in a rhetorical question. Yet the emotional value of the two sentences is utterly different. And that difference is achieved by the innovations which Donne has effected upon the isocolonic base. What is the nature of them?

Let me return for a moment to verse. I suggested, in that regard, that Milton and Donne, in achieving their highly personal rhythms upon a metrical structure fundamentally conventional, first aroused the expectation of regularity; and that when this had been set ringing in the mind, the actual rhythm was, as it were, syncopated upon it. In the familiar *Valediction*, for example, the rhythm of the first stanzas is quite conventional—

As virtuous men passe mildly away,
And whisper to their soules to goe . . .

Once, however, the expectation of regularity has been established as a base, the individualities of the poet's rhythm begin to play upon it—

If they be two, they are two so
As stiffe twin compasses are two,
Thy soule, the fixt foot, makes no show
To move, but doth, if th' other doe.

And, as I have shown before, one cause of this syncopation is the breaking of the line into almost crabbed phrases which are secured in unity only by the subconscious and pre-established conventional meter—

To move, but doth, if th' other doe.

Yet by this very means the reader is shocked into an awareness of the intense intellectual forces breaking upon the form, and, more'than that, is forced to regard, almost in spite of himself, the individual virtue of every word and its organic virtue as well. Indeed, to put it conversely, through their relation to the whole do the minutiae become in themselves rhythmically significant. And this is precisely the aim of Donne's prose: to emphasize the particular by means of its relation to the whole; so that although he may appear to be constantly breaking out of his form, like Milton, he really never allows the reader to lose consciousness of it. I quote, for illustration, the first three members of the large sentence which I shall presently study—those members in which the basic rhythm is being established—

That God should let my soule fall out of his hand, into a bottom-Jesse pit, / and roll an unremovable stone upon it, / and leave it to that which it finds there . . .

They are as "round" and flowing as any of Hooker's. But once the expectation fluency is established, note how the basic device is played upon to secure, by their apparent aberration, an emphasis upon phrases, and even upon words—that that God who hath often looked upon me in my foulest uncleanness, / and when I had shut out the eye of the day, the Sunne, / and the eye of the night, the Taper—[thus much, as it were, by way of a

return to the basic unit, and a reassertion of it; and then]—and the eyes of all the world, with curtaines and windowes and doores, / did yet see me, and see me in mercy, by making me see that he saw me ...

It would be over-ingenious to pursue it farther. Just as in his verse the expectation of regularity is established only to be seemingly violated for the production of a more profound unity, so in his prose—I speak only of these passages of lofty realization—after the isocolonic structure has been once suggested, he begins to interrupt its graceful fluency, breaking it into phrases, and even into words. Yet each member of the sentence, following the same rhetorical pattern, swings round like a great light and throws beam after beam upon his subject. Then the reader, as he proceeds farther, becomes aware not only of the great light, but also of lesser ones, not less searching in their intensity—single, synonymous words, almost alike, yet each a shade various. There is no advance in thought, only a refinement of it, a deepening and gathering intensity of realization; until finally the great period crashes to a close, still reiterating, still sustaining an incremental movement of passion and of mind—

That God should let my soule fall out of his hand, into a bottomlesse pit, and roll an unremovable stone upon it, and leave it to that which it finds there (and it shall finde that there, which it never imagined, till it came thither), and never thinke more of that soule, never have more to doe with it; that of that providence of God, that studies the life of every weed, and worme, and ant, and spider, and toad, and viper, there should never, never any beame flow out upon me; that that God, who looked upon me when I was nothing, and called me when I was not, as though I had been, out of the womb and depth of darknesse, will not looke upon me now, when, though a miserable, and a banished, and a damned creature, yet I am his creature still, and contribute something to his glory, even in my damnation; that that God who hath often looked upon me in my foulest uncleannesse, and when I had shut out the eye of the day, the Sunne, and the eye of the night, the Taper, and the eyes of all the world, with curtaines, and windowes, and doores, did yet see me, and see me in mercy, by making me see that he saw me, and sometimes brought me to a present remorse, and (for that time) to

a forbearing of that sinne, should so turne himselfe from me, to his glorious Saints and Angels, as that no Saint nor Angel, not Christ Jesus himselfe, should ever pray him to looke towards me, never remember him that such a good soule there is; that that God, who hath so often said to my soule, *Quare morieris?* Why wilt thou dye? and so often sworne to my soule, *Vivit Dominus*, As the Lord liveth, I would not have thee dye, but live, will neither let me dye, nor let me live, but dye an everlasting life, and live an everlasting death; that that God, who, when he could not get into me, by standing, and knocking, by his ordinary meanes of entring, by his Word, his mercies, hath applied his judgements, and hath shaken the house, this body, with agues and palsies, and set this house on fire, with fevers and calentures, and frighted the Master of the house, my soule, with horrors, and heavy apprehensions, and so made an entrance into me; That that God should frustrate all his owne purposes and practises upon me, and leave me, and cast me away, as though I had cost him nothing; that this God at last, should let this soule goe away, as a smoake, as a vapour, as a bubble, and that then this soule cannot be a smoake, a vapour, nor a bubble, but must lie in darknesse, as long as the Lord of light is light it selfe, and never sparke of that light reach to my soule: What Tophet is not a Paradise, what Brimstone is not Amber, what gnashing is not a comfort, what gnawing of the worme is not a tickling, what torment is not a marriage bed to this damnation, to be seclued eternally, eternally, eternally from the sight of God?²⁰

It is like a great movement of planets and stars, so various that it baffles; yet, through it all, the most mystified observer is aware of harmonious principle of structure which becomes vaster and more profound the deeper one sees into its complexities. It is form within form, repetition within repetition, the principle of isocolon carried from *cola* to clauses, from clauses, to phrases, from phrases to words; but it is work of thatsame theorist who made the measure of the songsters run,

To move, but doth, if th' other doe,

and yet keep meter to the intellectual ear. I should call it an incremental harmony of rhythm: a unity which brings one closer and closer to its own reality as it makes one increasingly aware of its variations.

IV

I have described the formal technicalities of the poetry of the mind first, because, uncertain though the analysis may be, and difficult as it is to present, there is yet in them something of certainty. But how a man thinks, though it seems to many more obvious than these other matters, does not appear so to me. I am aware, of course, that the attitude of mind which these writers cultivated is responsible for the modifications which they wrought upon the formalities of verse and prose: that free verse and free prose were a response to a temper of mind which found the older fixity inadequate. To reconcile that temper of mind with its manifestations in form is therefore the final aim of this paper, which thus far has endeavored to show: (1) that an accordance of the movement of the mind with the movement of the universal laws was believed to be the end of all philosophy, and that such a concordance, within the range of men's capacities as human beings, was possible; and (2) that the innovations wrought upon the conventions of prose and verse were effected by the desire to attain a dynamic organization of the parts, in order that each part might attain its reality by its relation to everything else. It remains then to consider the relation of this conception of form to the minds which devised it.

Scattered observations on the subject are highly suggestive. Eliot I have cited already: Donne feels an idea, as another poet might feel the odor of a rose. Walter Pater feels in Browne's *Urn Burial* the harmony of a great poem;²¹ Coleridge, the chaos of frustration; Johnson, the form and reflection of the author's mind.²² How may such disparity of opinion be adjudicated?

One thing is clear. Full as are Browne's writings of discordant elements of thought, he desired harmony; it was the temper of his mind:

It is my temper, and I like it the better, to affect all harmony; and sure there is musick even in the beauty and the silent note which *Cupid* strikes, far sweeter than the sound of an instrument.

For there is a musick wherever there is a harmony, order, or proportion; and thus far we may maintain the music of the Sphears: for those well-ordered motions, and regular paces, though they give no sound unto the ear, yet to the understanding they strike a note most full of harmony. Whosoever is harmonically composed, delights in harmony; which makes me much distrust the symmetry of those heads which declaim against all Church-Musick. For my self, not only from my obedience, but my particular Genius, I do embrace it: for even that vulgar and Tavern-Musick, which makes one man merry, another mad, strikes in me a deep fit of devotion, and a profound contemplation of the first Composer. There is something in it of Divinity more than the ear discovers: it is an Hieroglyphical and shadowed lesson of the whole World, and the creatures of God; such a melody to the ear, as the whole World well understood, would afford the understanding. In brief, it is a sensible fit of that harmony, which intellectually sounds in the ears of God. I will not say with Plato that the soul is an harmony, but harmonical, and hath its nearest sympathy unto Musick.²³

But in spite of the desire for harmony, the mind is not "an harmony, but harmonical"; it is susceptible of harmonies—capable, on occasion, of thinking itself into concord with some manifestation of the universal music. Surely the mind which aspires to that adjustment is doomed as often to frustration as to fulfillment. And thus it is with Browne's. His mind is at once stimulated by the possibility of discovering harmonies, and oppressed with the necessity of doing so. There must be harmony in the world, for God is harmonious, and "nature is the art of God"—nature is one expression of His delight in harmony. To adjust the mind so that it may entwine itself with nature's harmony is Browne's aspiring delight. Thus the universality of the quincunx is a clue to a kind of harmony: for heaven and earth and the very senses that perceive them are pestered with quincunxes, until one is lost in a mystery in considering them. The *Urn Burial*, begun as an antiquarian project, shortly aspires to prove the harmony of the mind. For the variety of burial custom is but an assertion of a vaster unity—the universal expectation of immortality. Everything must at length be lost in a mystery

when, like the rude beat of a tavern ballad, it is trammelled into some unity which reflects its shadowed lesson of the whole world. But it is given to man to know only its shadows. He must infer the beauty of light from his isolated apprehensions of darkness.

Thus any of Browne's works, in its totality, is frustrate. He has attained no final harmony. But harmonies he has experienced—"sensible fits of that harmony which beats intellectually in the ears of God"—harmonies enough to assure him that one harmony there is, though he can never know it; harmonies also that have convinced him that reality is the law of harmony—"such a melody as the world well understood would afford the understanding." And it is in communicating his experience of these moments, when his mind is suddenly attuned to some "hieroglyphical and shadowed lesson of the whole world," that his prose responds to the harmonies of his concordant understanding, even as that in turn is attuned to an echo of the universal symphony.

As in his whole works, for the most part prosaic—even scientific—there are these flowery isles of realization, so in the sentence there are smaller, but no less frequent efflorescences—brief reflective phrases which grow out of the more solid stalk. Indeed, the conceit of a vine very adequately figures the movement of Browne's sentence, and his thought. The short phrase, vigorous like Donne's for its brevity, is contorted, interrupted by every means of rhythm and grammar, to make the sentence slow and to distract one from the truly formal structure of his period. If it baffles analysis, it is at least possible of description.

Time, which antiquates Antiquities, and hath an art to make dust of all things—

The initial word is emphasized—weighed by the immediate contortion of the sentence; and he proceeds twisting it this way and that, even as his observation or his feeling leads him; staying here to send out a green shoot of apostrophe—"for man is a noble animal, splendid in ashes"; then returning to

the main stem to" push on again; and finally pausing long for a final efflorescence of contemplation—

Now since these dead bones have already outlasted the living ones of *Methuselah*^ and in a yard under ground, and thin walls of clay, out-worn all the strong and specious buildings above it; and quietly rested under the drums and tramlings of three conquests; What Prince can promise such diuturnity unto his Reliques, or might not gladly say,

Sic ego componi versus in ossa velim.

As in Donne, whose period I compared to a meteoric system, whose great harmony is obscured by little lights save it be seen at great distance, so in Browne, the natural proportions of his vine-like structure are lost if one contemplate the flowers too closely. Johnson objected that the metaphysical poets had to be read twice to be understood; and somewhat, I suppose, for the same reason. For it is the passion of Donne to reiterate, in phrases and words, shades of meaning about a single apprehension; of Browne to wander between heaven and earth in the quest of similitudes that "give to airy nothing a local habitation and a name."

But Seeds themselves do lie in perpetual shades, either under the leaf, or shut up in coverings; and such as lye barest, have their husks, skins, and pulps about them, wherein the nebbe and generative particle lyeth moist and secured from the injury of Aire and Sunne. Darknesse and light hold interchangeable dominions, and alternately rule the seminal state of things. Light unto *Pluto* is darknesse unto *Jupiter*. Legions of seminall *Idceas* lye in their second Chaos and *Ofcus* of *Hippocrates*; till putting on the habits of their forms, they shew themselves upon the stage of the world, and open dominion of *Jove*. They that held the Stars of heaven were but rayes and flashing glimpses of the Empyreall light, through holes and perforations of the upper heaven, took of the natural shadows of stars, while according to better discovery the poor Inhabitants of the Moon have but a polary life, and must passe half their dayes in the shadow of that Luminary.

Light that makes things seen, makes some things invisible; were it not for darknesse and the shadow of the earth, the noblest part of

the Creation had remained unseen, and the Stars in heaven as invisible as on the fourth day, when they were created above the Horizon, with the Sun, or there was not an eye to behold them, The greatest mystery of Religion is expressed by adumbration, and in the noblest part of Jewish Types, we finde the Cherubims shadowing the Mercy-seat: Life it self is but the shadow of deathj and souls departed but the shadows of the living: Al things fall under this name. The Sunne it self is but the dark *simulachrum*, and light but the shadow of God.²⁴

I do not know how to analyze what this gives. Provisionally, however, let us agree that it brings us close to the working of a mind; close to the operation of the writer's mind, il not to the things it works on. Our senses may remain unconvinced of the sun as a dark simulacrum; and we may feel with Johnson that the most disparate images have been here by violence yoked together. We may remain unconvinced that similarities here invoked are convincingly similar; but of one thing we are convinced, and that is the mind of Browne. That, we feel, we know; to that we have been brought closer; that we have felt more intimately than any flashing and obvious simile could have helped us do. It is not the sensuous properties, nor the emotional values of the objects compared; it is not any sudden revelation of the similarities of such properties that dawns upon us; the objects—as objects—scarcely matter. What we know so immediately is not the comparison, but the comparing power. And this cannot be conveyed in a single metaphor. The reader of this kind of literature is not mesmerized by a single sensuous figure, or by its happy genius to evoke in him associations of pleasure, like "the rich jewel in an Ethiop's ear." No; to feel the power of the comparison is one thing; to feel the comparing power of the mind, another; and in order to make us feel it, our mind must travel over and over similarities until we know the author's. In short, we must be convinced by an incremental harmony—by an increasing and cumulative process, which by operation after operation over intricate and remote materials of his experience, pounds itself into our senses,

and achieves with our minds that mystical accord which the mind of the author has achieved with a universal principle.

The communication of this kind of experience justifies the metaphysical conceit. So far as the poet sought only to discover ingenious and remote comparisons, merely for the sake of finding them, one must agree with Johnson that he sacrificed the grandeur of generality to his own ingenuity. But often the very absence of the familiar and the natural protects us from the blinding flash of sensuous beauty, and enables us to see in the very remoteness of the analogy a subtler beauty—the operation of the author's mind upon his experience. Of Donne's famous figure Johnson remarked that "in the comparison of a man that travels, and his wife that stays at home, with a pair of compasses, it may be doubted whether absurdity or ingenuity has the better claim." But Donne is not suggesting any sensuous resemblances between the man, the woman, and the compasses. The analogy is not physical; it is functional. The compasses have no sensuous property to suggest a man and woman; but their action is one which the mind readily apprehends to be similar to that relation between man and woman which Donne is pursuing. Thus gold is no very fitting substance, physically, by which to describe the essential substance of the soul; nor does Donne intend it to suggest any sensuous similarity to the soul. We believe, we say, that, though bodies part, souls may remain together. "But," he seems to ask, "how can that be? Thus stated, the mind cannot comprehend it. Let us reduce it to some form that is comprehensible to the mind." In terms of a piece of gold, beaten to a theoretical and airy thinness, he has it. Gold so beaten might theoretically be extended to infinity, and yet retain its inseparable form. So theoretically souls, though the bodies be worlds apart, may keep their oneness, and remain as mutually responsive as one leg of the compass is to the other.

To establish a relationship between the mind and the accepted truths of religion was perhaps Donne's greatest service to the world, and that for which his genius was best

suites. To find an intellectually satisfying theory for the Christian beliefs, in terms on which the mind may act and thus harmonize with them, was his great gift as a preacher and theologian.

For example, it was laid down by the polity of the Church of England that "that which we for our unworthiness are afraid to crave, our prayer is that God for the worthiness of his Son would notwithstanding vouchsafe to grant/¹²⁵ Specifically, how does the mind work, when, conscious of its guilt and penitent, it yet knows that in its frailty it will again be guilty? How should one, then, ask forgiveness for sins which it lies in one's intelligence to condemn but not in one's will to forsake? What mercy may such a one, who, being rational, condemns himself, expect of the Mind of minds? Donne appears to have taken the problem to his study, and written down his prayer, enumerating over and over again the sins of which he is guilty—sins which he knew better than to commit; sins which he is ashamed of having committed, yet sins which he will nevertheless commit again. Still, it is said that we should ask forgiveness, and that God is merciful. This shall be the proof: he will revolve in his mind sin after sin, over and over again; and when he has thus abased himself with a most awful sense of guilt, then will he demand mercy—impudently, almost blasphemously, he will make God swear by Himself to forgive him. Thus only can he accommodate his mind in some degree with the operations of Divine mercy.

My sin, O God, hath not only caused Thy descent hither, and Thy passion here; but by it I am become that hell into which Thou descendedst after Thy passion. . . . O Lord, I most humbly acknowledge and confess that I have understood sin, by understanding Thy laws and judgments; but have done against Thy known and revealed will. Thou hast set up many candlesticks, and kindled many lamps in me; but I have either blown them out, or carried them to guide me in bye and forbidden ways. Thou hast given me a desire of knowledge, and some means to it, and some possession of it, and I have armed myself with Thy weapons

against Thee: yet, O God, have mercy upon me; for Thine own sake have mercy upon me. Let not sin and me be able to exceed Thee, nor to defraud Thee, nor to frustrate Thy purposes: but let me, in despite of me, be of so much use to Thy glory, that by Thy mercy to my sin, other sinners may see how much sin Thou canst pardon. Thus show mercy to many in one; and show Thy power and all-mightiness upon Thyself, by casting manacles upon Thine own hands, and calling back those thunder-bolts which Thou hadst thrown against me.²⁶

And the same revolving realization is caught in the perfected poem, where the habit of his mind has been revealed, as it seems, in its very rhythms:

Wilt thou forgive that sinne where I begunne,
 Which was my sin, though it were done before?
 Wilt thou forgive that sinne; through which I runne,
 And do run still: though still I do deplore?
 When thou hast done, thou hast not done,
 For, I have more.

Wilt thou forgive that sinne which I have wonne
 Others to sinne? and, made my sinne their doore?
 Wilt thou forgive that sinne which I did shunne
 A yeare, or two: but wallowed in, a score?
 When thou hast done, thou hast not done,
 For I have more.

I have a sinne of feare, that when I have spunne
 My last thred, I shall perish on the shore;
 But swear by thy selfe, that at my death thy sonne
 Shall shine as he shines now, and heretofore;
 And, having done that, Thou haste done,
 I feare no more.

One final and general consideration. I have tried through these illustrations to show that it was the movement of the mind—the operation of the mind over the materials of experience—which was the substance of the poetry that is most characteristic of the early seventeenth century; that the harmony of its verse and prose were directed toward capturing

and fixing in artificial forms the movements of the impassioned intellect; and that in order to convey the validity of the experience, it was necessary to show, not a single and amazing perception of the mind, but rather its successive and repeated operations, over and over again, until its peculiar character had been revealed. If such art was often frustrate, it is no wonder. To accord the operations of the human mind with the natural laws of the universe is no longer (as they understood it to be) the hope of the world. And that it may not appear that the intensity of their experience was purchased only with final resignation to chaos, one last example will serve—the poetry of John Milton.

The characteristic digression in Milton's simile has long been recognized. Clearly its artistic purpose was not merely rich amplification; for there is in his similes always a conscious articulation, forming each successive association with the next, and so relating them all to the initial comparison. And the initial comparison is always obvious. In the description of Satan's shield, nothing is clearer than its fundamental character. It is "massy, large and round/" Its broad circumference is like the moon. But at this point a digression begins:

... his ponderous shield
 Ethereal temper, massy, large and round,
 Behind him cast; the broad circumference
 Hung on his shoulders like the Moon, whose Orb
 Through Optic Glass the *Tuscan* Artist views
 At Ev'ning from the top of *Fesole*,
 Or in *Valdarno*) to descry new Lands,
 Rivers or Mountains in her spotty Globe.

Now, I had assumed that this was more than mere amplification; that one observed here, in what appears to be the free association of a cultivated mind, a very intimate glimpse of poetic genius working over its treasures. And I further assumed, that the reader's experience of the simile was intended to be similar to that which the poet experienced when

he worked upon it. The value of the fables and the sensuous materials may vary with individual taste and association; but the relating process can be an immediate communication to all minds with equal intensity.

But I had no notion of the frequency of this device in Milton until the appearance of Professor Whaler's study of the Miltonic simile.²⁷ Here it is exhaustively demonstrated that the uniqueness of the Miltonic simile consists in the application of an exact intellectual method to relate the various details of the figure. This, Professor Whaler calls "exact homologation"—a principle of unity which directs each detail to some general application in the fable. Unlike the more usual simile, which states an analogy between things dissimilar, the Miltonic simile imposes upon its detail a theory. Mr. Whaler lays down as a principle that "*Milton does not digress in any simile for the sole purpose of drawing a diverting picture*"; but digresses that the imagination may be "enlarged by the recognition of analogous forces operating in different spheres, which separately are capable of producing a vivid and noble emotion." And the description of these analogous forces is exact, Mr. Whaler finds, to a degree of mathematical subtlety—"infallibly right in its immediate context, and often yielding the riches of its application only to those who observe by the light of the full rounded fable." Briefly, then, Milton's method is fundamentally in agreement with the most advanced poetic theory of the times.

May I reassert it: through all the contradictory passions of those days there is the assumption that somehow it is possible to discover to the mind that pervasive universal law of which the mind is our most manifest possession; and that when it is discovered, that law will be consonant in its operation with the workings of the human intellect. To reveal this new reality in religious experience was the task of Hooker; to discover its operations in the natural universe was the aim of Bacon; to express its presence in the human consciousness was the aspiration of poetry. Assailed by faith and doubt and wonder as they were, one grand conviction possessed them

all, that "the inquiry of truth, which is the love-making or wooing of it; the knowledge of truth, which is the presence of it; and the belief of truth, which is the enjoying of it, is the sovereign good of human nature." And the good to which they aspired, the aspiration which their poetry communicates, is a sublime faith in the capacity of the human mind to turn at length upon the poles of truth. Then would all things become harmonious, and these isolated passions be no longer as themselves alone,

But as the meaning of all things that are.

KIDNAPPING DONNE

BY

MERRITT Y. HUGHES

KIDNAPPING DONNE

IT is AS MUCH as one's life is worth nowadays among young people/ Mr. Edmund Wilson remarked not long ago, "to say an approving word for Shelley or a dubious one about Donne."¹ He made the remark in passing, as one who accepts a "cult" of Donne because he knows that all lovely and life-giving religions have their esoterics. When a poet becomes a touchstone his adepts begin to practice strange sorceries, and in current discussion of poetry Donne is often a touchstone. A casual example is the observation made in a review of Mr. Alan Porter's *Signature of Pain, and Other Poems*,² that Mr. Porter's work has been compared "without embarrassment ... to all but the very greatest passages of even the greatest of the seventeenth-century masters, of Donne himself; the reviewer then going on to deplore the fashion of comparing modern poetasters to Donne, and finally proceeding himself to make the comparison in Mr. Porter's favor. Without in the least doubting that *The Signature of Pain* bears proof by the touchstone which its title challenges, Donne's jealous friends may question whether it is altogether fair to him to make him the measure of modern work.

It is the critical self-consciousness in our admiration for Donne that is dubious. There can be no doubt of his power over modern poetry. In the history of English literature the only forces comparable to it are Shakespeare's influence, or Milton's in the eighteenth century. Today, however, Dr. Johnson's rationalization of the hold of Shakespeare upon his contemporaries is interesting only for what it betrays to us of him, and of them. Is it possible that Donne's hold upon our imaginations has given us an illusion that we understand him better than we really do? We pick up Mr. John Crowe Ransom's *Greeting to a Lady on Her Birthday* and find the serene recklessness of Donne's pathetic fallacies in the great *Elegies*:

Too quick the annual sun returns,
 Mounts to the ledge and scans the pillowed face
 Whereon four seasons hardly have writ the trace,
 Though ever he on his timeless circuit mourns
 That faintlier his fire burns.

We watch the theme of Donne's *Good-morrow* flowering inexhaustibly in Miss Millay's *Fatal Interview* and in the rival sonnets of Miss Wylie. Even in such fiction as Mrs. Muir's *Imagined Corners* we see the divine spark, although no nook or cranny in that story would have been imaginable to Donne. Above all, in Mr. T. S. Eliot's *poetry* we feel the justification of his recent assertion⁸ that it is the special glory of our time to have understood Donne. Perhaps it is to the by no means accidental fact that Mr. Eliot has both responded to Donne as an artist and devoted much critical attention to him and to his contemporaries that we should attribute the confident possessiveness of recent criticism. Our comprehension of poetry has become involved in our analysis of Donne. He has become the key, or one of the principal keys, to the great mystery.

Critical rationalization of our passion for Donne has two aspects which are at bottom one. We kidnap him from the past and make him a "philosopher" and "poet-hero," as Mr. Sitwell calls him in *Doctor Donne and Gargantua*, by insisting on (a) his intellectuality, which is our term for his wit, and on (b) his skepticism, which is our term for his attitude toward the natural sciences and metaphysics. This study will raise some objection to both these critical rationalizations, and especially to the second of them. To the first, so far as it is a strictly technical canon of criticism, no objection can be raised. Although in 1912 Professor Grierson did justice to the technical importance of what he called "the blend of passion and thought" in the *Songs and Sonets*, we owe our present appreciation of the fusion of mind and sensation in Donne largely to Mr. T. S. Eliot. His response to Donne both as artist and as critic has resulted from his perception that metaphysical poetry is—as he said in his Clark Lectures—"that in which what is ordinarily apprehensible by thought

is brought within the grasp of feeling/' To this fundamental insight he must owe many of the technical qualities which he shares with Donne, even to the metrical dexterity which Mrs. Rachel Annand Taylor attributes to his sophistication by "the bitter breaks and pauses, the deep-sought and far-carrying music of Donne."⁴ In more than one context Mr. Eliot has restated his belief, and his definitions of metaphysical poetry are likely to rank historically with Dr. Johnson's, or even to outrank Johnson's by their power to arouse poetic purpose. His disciple, Mr. George Williamson, has recently phrased his principles in one clear formula: "Metaphysical poetry springs from the effort to resolve an emotional tension by means of intellectual equivalents which terminate in the senses, or possess the quality of sensation/⁵ How far and fast we have moved under Mr. Eliot's guidance can be measured by comparison of this definition with that of Professor Alden in 1917. Mr. Alden defined Metaphysical "wit" as making such considerable use of intellectual processes as to "take precedence, at least for the moment, of the normal poetic process."⁶ Here there is still a trace of Dr. Johnson's distrust of metaphysical "wit," and in Professor Grierson's Introduction to his edition of the *Poetical Works* in 1912 the entire essay—which is still the best complete appraisal of Donne—is moderated by the authority of Johnson and Dryden.

In the end it may prove that Professor Grierson was right in placing a certain discount upon Donne's wit—in insisting that there is bad taste in some of Donne's work. No poet can polarize his faculties in all that he writes, and no amount of faith in the value of mind in poetry can justify the unassimilated elements in Donne's verse. Even so excellent a principle as Mr. Eliot's doctrine of the fusion of thought with feeling as the basis of his poetry can be overstated. Mr. Eliot himself is responsible for the dubious turn which has been given to it in interpreting the metaphysical poets. Writing of their "wit" generally in his essay on Marvell, he says:

We can say that wit is not erudition; it is something stifled by erudition, as in much of Milton. It is not cynicism, though it has a

kind of toughness which may be confused with cynicism by the tender-minded. It is confused with erudition because it belongs to an educated mind, rich in generations of experience; and it is confused with cynicism because it implies a constant inspection and criticism of experience. It involves, probably, a recognition, implicit in the expression of every experience, of other kinds of experience which are possible.⁷

This is silencing Dr. Johnson with a vengeance. For Mr. Eliot, metaphysical wit has become a symbol for the artist's intelligence working in a complex civilization with full poetic control of all the factors which are active in the minds of his contemporaries. We may be pardoned for suspecting that his judgment in this matter does more violence to Donne and his congeners historically than Dr. Johnson's opinions have done, and that it perilously disregards history. Let us look for a moment at its effect upon Mr. Williamson.

In a book published in 1931, to which Mr. Eliot has given his general assent⁸ and praise within the past few months, Mr. Williamson founds his study of "The Donne Tradition" upon the challenge that:

Great as Milton was in learning, Donne was probably greater. In knowledge of the world they cannot be compared. Of all the explorers of the soul who come within the seventeenth century, Donne, and not Milton, deserves to stand next to Shakespeare.⁹

As a whole, Mr. Williamson's book pivots upon his challenge to the reputations of Milton and Spenser. The nature of the Donne tradition is defined "concisely... as complex, sensuous and intellectual as opposed to the simple, sensuous and passionate tradition."¹⁰ By appealing to doctors of every critical school the defense of complex, sensuous, and intellectual poetry is shrewdly consolidated. Beginning with Johnson's definition of metaphysical wit as a *discordia concors*, Mr. Williamson descends the years, gathering support for Johnson's analysis of Donne's talent and at the same time discrediting Johnson's disvaluation of that talent. Man after man is quoted to warrant the use of Donne's astringent fusion of mind and sensation as a poetical touchstone; and the whole

modern critical host deploys—with Professor Courthope alone playing the part of Abdiel—to agree with Mr. F.L.Lucas that: It is in fact toward more brain that poetry must continue to travel, as it has travelled since it began. There is no going back. If the reason has taken too much, it has given other things; if it destroyed the ballad, it brought us Donne; we need more of it, not less.¹¹

Armed with his touchstone, Mr. Williamson attacks the poetical reputations of both the Renaissance and the nineteenth century. After sacrificing Milton and Spenser, he laments that "the nineteenth-century poets lost this quality [of sensuousness suffused with intellect], that they think and feel by starts, that their images are not the very body of their thought."¹² Then with equal boldness he assumes that Donne's influence has been the dominant creative stimulus in English poetry since his death. "The influences which moulded the Cavalier school," we are told, "were no doubt three; Donne, Jonson, the Latin and Greek lyrists; and of these the chief was Donne."¹³ Man by man the seventeenth-century poets go into Mr. Williamson's crucible, and when the dross has been refined away the gold is stamped as pure Donnean metal. The elixir is present not only in Marvell's *Coy Mistress* and Crashaw's *Saint Theresa*, but even in Dryden's *Hind and the Panther*. And the nineteenth century is partly redeemed by the stream of power that flows from Donne, reflection of whose imagination Mr. Williamson finds it "difficult not to see ... in the images of Browning, Meredith, Rossetti, Coventry Patmore and Francis Thompson."¹⁴

Tennyson and Spenser will probably survive the raid upon their reputations, and critical scholarship should be grateful for any reminder that the stars differ in glory. The objection to Mr. Williamson's theory is not its onslaught upon the immortals but the claims that it makes for Donne's influence. Let us take a crucial application. Mr. Williamson illustrates his assertion that Donne was the greatest poetic stimulus among his later contemporaries by focussing a chapter upon the tension imparted to his poetry by his treatment of death. Hence comes a quality to which he refers several times as the

"metaphysical shudder." The mood of death-consciousness—of awareness of ultimate contrasts and of amazement like Pascal's in the infinite presence—seems to him to be a stamp set upon the work of Donne's followers by the master. He catches it in many an allusion to death in the *Songs and Sonets*, such as

A bracelet of bright haire about the bone,

and in Walton's story of the portrait taken in the shroud, and in all that fascination by death which is represented for us by Webster's plays and by the religious poetry which culminates in Crashaw. In George Herbert's poems he identifies it particularly in the following lines from *Vertue*:

Only a sweet and vertuous soul,
Like season'd timber, never gives;
But though the whole world turn to coal,
Then chiefly lives.¹⁶

The shock of the image of the world turned to a coal evokes the authentic shudder. It is a capital application of the touchstone. But to at least one reader the thrill given by Herbert's image is that of St. Paul's "O death, where is thy sting?" And Herbert's passage, instead of stirring a sympathetic tremor in Donne's lute, moves a vibration in an iron string of the least metaphysical of poets:

lustum et tenacem propositi virum,
· · · · ·
Si fractus inlabitur orbis,
Impavidum ferient ruinae.

The real basis of Herbert's thought is neither Horace nor Donne, but the meditation which was the climax of most of the books of devotion in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. "Nullum est genus mortis, quod nocere potest iusto," is the caption of the final chapter of John Conway's *Meditations and Praters* (1570), which, "like all the writings of its kind ends up with death, a subject of alchemic potency for the imagination of the time."¹⁶

Whatever ground there may be for making Donne's wit a touchstone for contemporary poetry, there is none for making it a master key to literary history. The more absolute we make our estimate of Donne's wit, and of metaphysical wit in general, the less historically revealing becomes our appreciation of Donne.

ii

Because skepticism rather than faith is the basis of modern thought, Donne's singularly intellectual imagination seems to us skeptical. It is in the character of a skeptic, indeed, that he is most familiar in current criticism. Mrs. Simpson thinks that it is the "sense of questioning and adventure which keeps much of Donne's work alive today."¹⁷ Mr. Williamson names skepticism, flanked by sex, as the axis of Donne's poetic personality.¹⁸ Mr. Theodore Spencer devotes several pages of his essay on *Donne and His Age* to proof that Donne was in harmony with both his own age and ours through his skepticism. An extensive parallel is drawn between Hamlet's cosmic doubts as they are expressed in the doctrine that "there's nothing good nor bad but thinking makes it so" and Donne's challenge that

There's nothing simply good, nor ill alone,
Of every quality comparison,
The onely measure is, and judge, opinion. . . .

"Donne's melancholy," says Mr. Spencer, "is the result of inaction; he cannot choose; his will is in a state of paralysis. And it is just this lack of fusion between action and will which makes *Hamlet* so interesting to us and so significant of its time."¹⁹ The parallel with *Hamlet* may be even more significant than Mr. Spencer suggests. To realistic students of Shakespeare his whole discussion will seem scandalous; and if his meaning is that by some fineness of nature or some doubtful inner struggle of purpose against weakness Hamlet is inhibited from acting, he deserves the scorn which Mr. Stoll has poured upon "the dark and cryptic ways of psychological exegesis."²⁰ If—transcending the realists with another

commentator—he means that *Hamlet*, the play and not the man, is, as Mr. Masefield describes it, "a questioning of vision" he must follow Mr. Knight in regarding Hamlet, the man, as embodying some of Shakespeare's "dark, death forces."²¹ Then Donne also must become a sinister type of skeptic and a man headed for tragedy. It is not quite in this way that current opinion regards the "sense of questioning and adventure" in his poetry, but we may find more reason to think that his skepticism had a genuine strand of this kind than that it was germinal and revolutionary, as we are taught to regard it. There are two distinct skepticisms in the Donne who exists for us in the *Paradoxes and Problemes* and in the profane poems. One of them is hesitation between the old religion and the new. That, of course, is antithetical to all modern skepticism, and even in the seventeenth century it won respect as the deepest expression of religious faith. The other was a genuine "questioning of vision," which is a different matter—as will appear later—from modern philosophical relativism. It seemed to Donne a kind of sin against the light; and even to us it can hardly appear other than sinister—a "death force," as Mr. Knight uses the term in his discussion of Shakespeare's imaginative world.

The skepticism which makes Donne seem modern to moderns is of a quite different order. They discover in him what seems to them an open-minded dubiety about cosmic matters, and a Baconian enthusiasm for natural science coupled with a more than Baconian prescience in things astronomical. The promptness of his perusal of the books of Tycho Brahe and Kepler is regarded as proving his sympathy with the outcome of their speculation, which was still on the knees of the gods. Indeed, his interest in scientific subjects generally is sometimes made to seem rather like that which is attributed now to M. Paul Valery, and his poetry is regarded as a precipitate from his reading in natural philosophy. When he wrote that the "new philosophy" (i.e., the Copernican astronomy) called all in doubt^ he is thought to have been looking down the future with some grand, Baconian surmise. Among

laymen, respect for his poetry sometimes proves to be founded upon the illusion that he was a pioneer of the Copernican astronomy in England. Even scholars are not entirely immune to the temptation. Mrs. Simpson yields to it in some degree by her italicization of Ignatius Loyola's words, in *Ignatius his Conclave*, that Copernicus' theory may well be true.²² On the other hand, Miss Ramsay counters with the positive statement that Donne was never shaken in his belief in the Ptolemaic system.

In Donne's Sermons there are several passages which may be quoted against Miss Ramsay, but opinions about their real significance will differ. Thus, for example, Mr. Bredvold prints the following passage from the sermon at the funeral of Sir William Cokayne:

. . . What one thing doe we know perfectly? Whether wee consider Arts, or Sciences, the servant knows but according to the proportion of his Masters knowledge in that Art, and the Scholar knows but according to the proportion to his Masters knowledge in that Science; Young men mend not their sight by using old mens Spectacles; and yet we looke upon Nature, but with *Aristotles* Spectacles, and upon the body of man, but with *Galens*, and upon the frame of oA the world, but with Ptolomies specatacles.²³

To Mr. Bredvold and also to Mrs. Simpson this passage seems to show that Donne in his later years was impatient of the conservatism of his contemporaries. To other readers, the passage, if account be taken of its context, may indicate that he doubted the possibility of scientific knowledge in every field, and despised the doctors of all schools because they deluded the laity. After a short break, Donne continued on the same page:

And if there be any addition to knowledge, it is rather a new knowledge, than a greater knowledge; rather a singularity in a desire of proposing something that was not knowne at all before, than an emproving, an advancing, a multiplying of former inceptions;..²⁴

In the famous passages in *Ignatius his Conclave* where Donne introduces Copernicus with Paracelsus, Pietro Aretino,

and a host of charlatans all competing with Boniface III and Mahomet for the highest place in hell's penetralium, he is not maintaining a skeptical impartiality between the old philosophy and the new. Only in the light of subsequent events does he seem to have been skeptically suspicious of ancient falsehood and receptive to dawning truth. Much may be surmised from the rather spoofing speech of Ignatius to Copernicus, which contains an aside observing that the astronomer's theory may be true. Just as much has been surmised—quite without justification—from the random note of Nicholas of Cusa, made in 1444, suggesting a triple motion for the earth. In spite of the reputation which Nicholas of Cusa has enjoyed as a precursor of Copernicus, it seems that he has been misjudged, and that he never deviated from the mystical skepticism toward natural philosophy which he embodied in the *De Docta Ignorantia*?* Probably Donne's attitude in *Ignatius his Conclave* can be much better understood in the light of the *De Docta Ignorantia* than it can in that of Copernicus' *De Revolutionibus Orbium Coelestium*.

Yet Donne was no mystic and no obscurantist. When Kepler proved that the Ptolemaic catalogue of the stars fell short of the number actually visible, he accepted the evidence; and in *Biathanatos* we find him scoring the "pertinacy" which "is imputed"—by others, as he is careful to imply, although he evidently sympathized with them—to *Aristoteles* followers, who defending the Heavens to be unalterable, because in so many ages nothing had been observed to have been altered, his Schollers stubbornly maintain his Proposition still, though by many experiences of new Stars, the reason which moved *Aristotle* seems now to be utterly defeated.²⁶

Here again it would be easy in the twentieth century to mistake Donne's meaning. The superlunar immutability which had been one of Aristotle's capital legacies to the Middle Ages was a theory quite independent of the Ptolemaic geocentric universe, although the two had been complementary. The changelessness and perfection of the heavenly bodies was a bulwark of human security which had long ago fallen. By

general acknowledgement Mutability had climbed to heaven, but God in some strange way still governed a Ptolemaic cosmos.

Setting aside for the moment Donne's intellectual curiosity about the new science, we can make sure that in the depths of his imagination he was unmoved by Copernicus. In the Sermons there is good evidence that the new theory never disturbed the bottoms of his mind and that his emotions were deeply involved in the old cosmic scheme. Thus, for example, at St. Paul's on Easter Day in 1627 he said:

. . . Nay, the ordinary things in Nature, would be greater miracles, than the extraordinary, which we admire most, if they were done but once; The standing still of the Sun, for *Josuahs* use, was not, in it selfe, so wonderfull a thing, as that so vast and immense a body as the Sun, should run so many miles, in a minute; The motion of the Sun were a greater wonder than the standing still, if all were to begine againe; . . .²⁷

Similar passages might be multiplied, all indicating that, like King John and the Archbishop's brother in the ballad, Donne believed that,

In twenty-four houres, with-out any doubt,
Your Grace may the world goe round about;
The world round about, euen as I doe say,
If with the sun you can goe the next way.

His repetition of his wonder at the sun's terrific motion betrays the unbroken set of his imagination from youth. In his Songs his Ptolemaic notions were even more dogmatic than Hamlet's in the appeal to Ophelia to

Doubt that the sun doth move.

Donne invoked the movement of the *primum mobile* itself:

Nay, if I wax but cold in my desire,²⁸
Think, heaven hath motion lost, . . .

We may be sure also that if Donne had any inclination to accept the Copernican theory he was unenthusiastic. At the close of the sixteenth century the old astronomy and the new

were respectively in positions resembling those of the Newtonian and the "new" physics today. The strength of the new astronomy was partly the weakness of the old, and the old was weak not only technically but also in its appeal to men's imaginations. By recent evidence and speculation the Ptolemaic system had been made to seem not only decadent in itself but also to involve the decadence of the universe. The conception is embodied in Spenser's Prologue to the Fifth Book of *The Faerie Queene*, where he refers to the disturbing precession of the equinoxes and introduces the then current delusion that the sun was receding from the temperate zone:

Ne is that same great glorious lampe of light,
 That doth enlumine all these lesser fyres,
 In better case, ne keepes his course more right,
 But is miscaried with the other spheres.
 For since the terme of fourteene hundred yeres,
 That learned Ptolomae his hight did take,
 - He is declyned from that marke of theirs
 Nigh thirtie minutes to the southerne lake;
 That makes me feare in time he will us quite forsake.²⁹

Reflections like those in this stanza represent a kind of sixteenth-century version of the modern physical law of entropy. They proved that the universe was running down. An inevitable corollary was belief in the decay of the biological and moral universe; and to that belief Spenser gave expression in the following stanzas, where he contrasted the perfection and stability of the Golden Age with the unquiet misery of his own. When the Copernican cosmos broke upon men's minds—coming as it did after bitter struggles against several other novel theories which were at war with it as well as with the obsolescent Ptolemaic doctrine—it brought no emotional relief and little imaginative stimulus with its bolder and clearer vision of the skies. To most men it brought the final evidence of the mutability of all things, and on that account Donne showed himself unfriendly to it in his sermon at the funeral of Sir William Cokayne:

I need not call in new Philosophy, that denies a settlednesse, an acquiescence in the very body of the Earth, but makes the Earth to move in that place, where we thought the Sunne had moved; I need not that helpe, that the Earth it selfe is in Motion, to prove this, That nothing upon Earth is permanent; . . . ⁸⁰

In all his allusions to the "new philosophy" in the sermons and equally in the profane poems Donne showed himself conscious of it as a portent of evil. The *Second Anniversarie* is built upon the idea that the universe is at the end of a degenerative process which began with the fall of Lucifer, and its climax is the exclamation that the "new philosophy calls all in doubt," which is sometimes quoted as an example of Donne's sympathy with the new theories. His real feeling about them was perhaps not unlike Tennyson's, in *In Memoriam*, toward the new biology, except that Donne in his heart felt himself so secure in God's earth-centered universe that the core of his religious faith never suffered. Certainly he never rose to the challenge of Copernicus. That way, for him, lay madness, as one of his figures in a verse letter to the Countess of Bedford indicates:

As new Philosophy arrests the Sunne,
And bids the passive earth about it runne,
So wee have dull'd our minde, it hath no ends; . . . ⁸¹

We have seen reason to suppose that Donne was as conservative as his contemporaries in his very limited recognition of the depredation of mutability in those eternal, quintessential heavens which St. Thomas Aquinas took from Aristotle and the Neo-Platonists and handed on to Dante. For many of his contemporaries the "new philosophy" had consequences in the biological realm which threw open the doors to genuine skepticism about man and his destiny. In the *Paradoxes*, *Songs*, and *Elegies*, where—as we shall see—Donne was enamored of a traditional form of moral skepticism which made "Nature" its shibboleth, we might expect to find some trace of this more dangerous, contemporary skeptical naturalism that was abroad in the world. In 1623 Donne

might have read a polemic (the *Doctrine curieuse des beaux esprit de ce temps* of the Pere Garasse⁸²) replying to Pomponazzi's denial of immortality and to the very much more subversive doctrines which Cardan and Vanini drew from the prevalent belief that lower forms of life were spontaneously engendered from the slime. Such ideas may have been the basis of Sir Walter Raleigh's mooted "atheism" and they had their adepts in England, perhaps as early as Marlowe, but we look in vain for any sign of interest in them in Donne. If they reached him at all it was by way of his theological studies. We find him in his salad days, in the *Problemes*TM making sport of "the *disputation* of the *Schoolemen*, why the *Divell* could not make *lice* in *Egypt*" and arguing on the eve of entering the Church, in the *Essays in Divinity*TM that it "is a kind of. treason and clipping of God's coin" to deny that, "either then the creature [i.e., the "cyniphs" or lice] being entirely new, the devil understood not of what it was composed; or God changed the form of dust into another form, which the devil could never do." The recurrence of this interest appears to have been the result of his early reading of the Catholic writer, Pererius, whose commentary on *Exodus* gave it currency in minds that were absorbed in theology and intrigued by black magic. Donne's interest in the matter began by being satirical and ended by becoming serious, but he was blind to the skeptical affinities of the topic. To his mind the spontaneous generation of life from the slime was significant of the end of the world rather than of its beginnings. In his Whitsunday sermon in 1625 he remarked that:

The seasons of the yeare [were] irregular and distempered; the Sun fainter, and languishing; men lesse in stature, and shorter-lived. No addition, but only every yeare, new sorts, new species of wormes, and flies, and sicknesses, which argue more and more putrefaction of which they are engendred.⁸⁵

All the evidence shows that from his first literary experiments until he wrote *Death's Duett*, Donne thought of the universe as the Ptolemaic machine pictured by St. Thomas and Dante, and that for him time began and ended with creation.

In the *Paradoxes* we find him arguing that death is the perfection of all things and that, barring the miracle of God's activity, "the frame of the whole *World*,... because it *began*, must *dye*."** In the *Essays in Divinity* he prepared himself for Holy Orders by recollecting that:

Another instrument and engine of Thine [St. Thomas], whom thou hadst so enabled that nothing was too mineral nor centric for the search and reach of his wit, hath remembered me: That it is an article of our belief that the world began.⁸⁷

In the *Sermons* he is often fascinated by God's eternity and by the brevity of created time. Those themes went down to the lowest levels of his consciousness, and they emerged in countless forms.

Clocks and Sun-dials were but a late invention upon earth; but the Sun it self, and the earth it self, was but a late invention in heaven: God had been an infinite, a super-infinite, an unimaginable space, millions of millions of unimaginable spaces in heaven, before the Creation. And our afternoon shall be as long as Gods forenoon;...⁸⁸

A curious indication of the deep roots struck into Donne's consciousness by the conception of the noon of time dividing the morning from the afternoon of eternity is his attitude toward the doctrine of transmigration. He was prone to deny the idea, and his attacks upon it always involved his dislike of its implication of a backward, earthly eternity. His belief was always that of divine infusion of the soul into the human embryo, which he recognized incidentally in the *Paradoxes*.³⁹ To his essentially Catholic mind transmigration seemed monstrous. The monstrousness of that doctrine as it seemed to him is the basis of his "blasphemous" *Progresse of the Soule*. In that "sullen writ" the wanton invention mocks the enemies rather than the friends of orthodoxy.

The break in Donne's thinking made by his entry into holy orders is easy to overstress. The old Donne never quite disappeared and, sincerely devotional though he tried to be in his later years, Mrs. Taylor is right in saying that "there lingers about him something unexorcized, as if pagan incense

were burning in a Christian crypt."⁴⁰ But his paganism was the paganism of the Renaissance, and it is misleading to build a biographical study upon the intellectual gulf between Donne the pagan and Donne the preacher, as Mr. Hugh FA. Fausset has done, bridging it only by the survival of the dynamic passions of the first stage in the last; or to follow Mr. Sitwell in his fancy that Donne's whole experience was a drift toward submergence in the passion of the Poseidonia. In *Doctor Donne and Gargantua*, Mr. Sitwell writes as a good contemporary of D. H. Lawrence. He puts his personal problem, and the problem of us all, essentially as it is put and answered in *The Plumed Serpent*. Like Mrs. Mary Austin, watching the aboriginal dances in New Mexico with robust enthusiasm, and like the hero of Mr. Walpole's *Portrait of a Man with Red Hair*, who resolves his stresses by intoxicating himself with a primitive Welsh festival, Mr. Sitwell makes a sympathetic glimpse of a Dionysiac ceremony the final insight of Donne's life. For that reason he believes that Donne and Gargantua patterned

. . . past and future with the moment's mark;
 They are the walls between these times,
 That move, but not with either,
 For their bulk is our fine watershed
 And watching through the window
 Time has its arbiter in their two shapes,
 That march where they please, but carry fate
 with them.⁴¹

By confusing Donne's paganism with our contemporary brand, Mr. Sitwell furnishes us with a fine example of the kidnapping in which current criticism is setting the fashion for scholarship.

Donne's paganism, like that of Nature's devotee, Edmund in *Lear*, was a revolt against the divine Jaws which was a kind of homage to the divinity which it defied. It was a revolt of the body rather than of the brain. The *Songs* and *Elegies* show no trace of the scientific and metaphysical skepticism

which was penetrating England from Italy at the close of the sixteenth century, but, as Mr. Louis I. Bredvold has shown in an admirable application of the results of research to criticism,⁴² they are full of the Pyrrhonism and naturalism which for Donne's contemporaries were associated with the names of Lucretius, Jean de Meung, and Montaigne. One of Mr. Bredvold's capital points is his observation that the insolence and perverse wit of the *Songs* and *Elegies*, their bold defiance of the *ius naturale*, which "had been the fundamental doctrine of political thought and social ethics in Europe from the Stoics and Cicero through the Renaissance," was a form of moral revolt which had been traditional for centuries. Its cardinal doctrine of ethical relativity, which underlies Donne's secular poems in large measure and which he declared in the lines,

There's nothing simply good, nor ill alone,
Of every quality comparison,
The onely measure is, and judge, opinion. . . .

was a challenge to the Stoic law of nature in the name of that sinister power which Edmund invoked when he asked "Nature" to be his goddess. Challenges to the *ius naturale* left as a legacy to posterity by Cicero's *De Legibus* had been a part of western literature for sixteen centuries or longer. The *Elegies* and *Songs* of Donne preserve its stigmata of thought and even of language as they are recorded as far back as Lactantius' record of the sophistries to which Cicero's argument in the *De Legibus* was addressed. Perhaps it goes back to the Greek distinction between *φύσις* and *νόμος*. In the Renaissance the challenge was renewed and reinterpreted by Machiavelli and Montaigne. Ethical relativism became almost, but not quite, respectable. Superficially it was related to the current ideas of the mutability of the universe to which the "new philosophy" gave rise. In one of the *Paradoxes*, where Donne is talking about the changeability of women, we can see the curiously self-conscious and external union of the two relativisms:

They cannot [wrote Donne] be immutable like stockes, like stones, like the Earths dull Center; Gold that lyeth still, rusteth; Water, corrupteth; Aire that moveth not, poysoneth; then why should that which is the perfection of other things, be imputed to Women as greatest imperfection? . . . *Inconstancy* is a most commendable and cleanly quality, and Women in this quality are farre more absolute than the Heavens, than the Starres, Moone, or any thing beneath it: for long observation hath pickt certainty out of their mutability.⁴⁸

The spirit of this passage is like that of Queen Elizabeth's motto, *Per mo/to variare la natura £ bella*. It falls just short of Montaigne's understanding that man is "divers et ondoyant." In Donne's passage there is a suggestion of recklessness, as if with schoolboy glee he were playing with fire. The themes with which he was playing are the same as those which were imaginatively felt in many of Shakespeare's tragedies, such as *Troilus and Cressida* and *Hamlet*, as "death forces." From Donne's language it is plain that he regarded his defense of changeability in women from mutability in nature as sophistical. Like Nash, he took delight in upsetting the polite world by means of its own principles and its own logic, tut even in the *Paradoxes* he was fully conscious of his pose. We may be wrong to discount his positive assertion in 1608 that they were written as whetstones for other men's wits. The inversion of old ideas to find new meanings was the essence of Donne's "wit," but in the best of his poetry the new meanings were never mere inversions of the old. In his youth his conception of nature was hardly that which in later life he was fond of stating in St. Augustine's words, "Dei voluntas rerum natura est"; but the man who spent a part of his twentieth year in comparing the Protestant with the Roman Catholic apologists is not likely ever to have been altogether emancipated from the sanctions which he recognized in 1608, in *Biathanatos*, by appealing first to Nature, then to Reason, and finally to God.

A passage in the *Second Anniversarie*, although it was written in 1612, when Donne was "within the pale of Thy

Church, and not in the wild forest, and enlightened by sdtæ glimmerings of natural knowledge,"⁴⁴ displays what was always his attitude toward natural science—an attitude of contempt seasoned with restless curiosity:

Have not all soules thought
 For many ages, that our body'is wrought
 Of Ayre, and Fire, and other Elements?
 And now they thinke of new ingredients,
 And one Soule thinkes one, and another way
 Another thinkes, and 'tis an even lay.
 Knowst thou but how the stone doth enter in
 The bladders cave, and never breake the skinne?
 Knowst thou how blood, which to the heart doth flow,
 Doth from one ventricle to th'other goe?
 And for the putrid stuffe, which thou dost spit,
 Know'st thou how thy lungs have attracted it?
 There are no passages, so that there is
 (For ought thou know'st) piercing of substances.
 And of those many opinions which men raise
 Of Nailes and Haires, dost thou know which to praise?
 What hope have wee to know our selves, when wee
 Know not the least things, which for our use be?
 Wee see in Authors, too stiffe to recant,
 A hundred controversies of an Ant;
 And yet one watches, starves, freeses, and sweats,
 To know but Catechismes and Alphabets
 Of unconcerning things, matters of fact; . . .⁴⁵

Here the feeling about science may be explained as a mystic's obscurantism or as a kind of Socratic skepticism. Neither explanation hits the mark, for Donne was neither Socratic nor mystic. In his passages of most impassioned Christian profession in the *Sermons* he does not reach St. Augustine's desire to know nothing but God and the soul, although he may have sympathized with St. Thomas' condemnation of all physical science as irreligious, if not sacrilegious.

So much has been written about Donne's scientific curiosity and his skepticism that we wrap him up in our modern scientific consciousness. Throughout his poems the number of

allusions to all the sciences is not large and their points of focus are not far apart. The most typical of them is recognized in the figure of the spreading and closing compass in *A Valediction: forbidding mourning*. The theme is the division and reunion of lovers, and that matter, or else the value of love, the ever fixed mark whose worth's unknown although its height be taken, is the theme of them all. The figure of the compasses was not original with Donne. It stared up at him from the title-page of his copy of Justus Lipsius* *De Constantia* and from the title-page of every book from the Plantin Press which fell into his hands. The figures of a man with a spade, symbolizing labor, and of a woman are separated in the Plantin insignia by a pair of compasses manipulated on a sheet of paper. *Lahore et Constantia* is the motto. The application to lovers who are separated by the man's response to the challenge of labor may not have been the accepted meaning of the insignia, but it is on the surface. Donne simply translated it into a passionate, realistic poem. The sensuous power of his lines, which some critics have described as an almost tactile apprehension of his thought or a veritable grasp upon it by several of his senses together, may be a result of repeated glimpses of his idea made visible and almost tangible in a drawing. It would be rash to suggest that some of his great conceits might prove to be unconventional translations into poetry of fancies which were already dear to his contemporaries in pictures. Certainly, in his youth, he can have had little sympathy with the writers of Emblem poetry, although in age Walton reports him as susceptible to their taste for allegorical pictures. How much of his sensuous enjoyment and expression of his thoughts in his poetry was a part of his common inheritance with Spenser and Ben Jonson of the habit of twisting ideas into vivid, fanciful, symbolic images in Emblems and Masques, who can tell? There is a catastrophic Ph.D. thesis in the question.

In *A Valediction; of the booke*, although the closing simile is hardly more "scientific" than that of the compasses, it is more elaborate and strange:

Thus vent thy thoughts; abroad I'll studie thee,
 As he removes farre off, that great heights takes;
 How great love is, presence best tryall makes,
 But absence tryes how long this love will bee;
 To take a latitude
 Sun, or starres, are fitliest view'd
 At their brightest, but to conclude
 Of longitudes, what other way have wee,
 But to marke when, and where the darke eclipses bee?⁴⁸

Such use of scientific imagery as this only faintly adumbrates that "unifying of his sensibility by the integration of his reading in anthropology, biology, psychology and philosophy" which Mr. Blackmur regards as vitally relating Mr. T. S. Eliot's work to that of Donne.⁴⁷ In spite of his consistent interest Donne never took natural science seriously; from first to last his attitude resembled that of Nicholas of Cusa in the *De Docta Ignorantia*. His contempt for adepts of natural philosophy can hardly be distinguished from contempt for natural philosophy itself. In the *Problemes* he despised "Physitians contemplating Nature [who], finding many abstruse things subject to the search of Reason, thinks [*sic*] therefore that all is so."⁴⁸ His candid mind recognized the validity of those scientific discoveries which, like the increase in the number of stars beyond Ptolemy's catalogue, could be attested by the senses, but it balked at the theories—and that is tantamount to the significance—of the "new philosophy." In contrast to Bacon, Donne never looked forward to a discovery of truth which would give him mastery and the enjoyment of it symbolized by Bacon's figure of the mind turning on the poles of truth. His nearest approach to the modern attitude was his playful contention in the third Paradox that "Discord increases Religion." On the surface this seems amazingly modern, if it be contrasted with the timidity of Donne's contemporary, Samuel Daniel, in the face of the skepticism which warring creeds together with new philosophies had brought upon Europe. In *The Civile Wars* Daniel made Nemesis charge Pandora to empty her box over Christendom:

Goe- therefore thou, with all thy stirring traine
 Of swelling Sciences, the gifts of grieffe:
 Go loose the links of that soule-binding chaine;
 Inlarge the vninquisitiue Beliefe:
 Call-up mens spirits, that simplenes retainer
 Enter their hearts, & Knowledge make the thiefe
 To open all the doores, to let in light;
 That all may all things see, but what is right.

Opinion Arme against Opinion growne:
 Make new-borne Contradiction still to rise;
 As if Thebes-founder, *Cadmus*, tongues had sowne,
 Instead of teeth, for greater mutinies.
 Bring new-defended Faith, against Faith known:
 Weary the Soule with contrarieties:
 Till all Religion become retrograde,
 And that faire tire, the maske of sinne be made.⁴⁹

In Donne's *Satyre III* we have an expression of his attitude* toward truth, in the widest meaning of the word, which must have been carefully expressed and deeply felt. His defense of liberty of conscience against the principle *cuius regio eius feligio* deserves to be even better known than it is, and his assertion that truth is a spirit to be wooed by hard *ascesis* of the flesh and brain is familiar:

On a huge hill,
 Cragged, and steep, Truth stands, and hee that will
 Reach her, about must, and about must goe; . . .⁶⁰

The essential matter in the satire, however, for the investigator of his thought, is the assertion that

. . . though truth and falsehood be
 Neare twins, yet truth a little elder is;⁵¹

and the opening assertion that his "Mistresse" is "faire Religion." Like Milton in the *AreopagMca*, Donne thought of truth as a power in the realms of both knowledge and behavior, of which men had been in possession in the past and to which they must win their way back. He made the relation

of natural science to truth humbly, if not negligibly, ancillary. There was an element of primitivism in his thought, as there was in Milton's; and each did its part to break the ground for the primitivism which Professor Lovejoy has studied in the deism of the seventeenth century.⁶² Of the two men Donne was immeasurably the more conservative, the more appreciative of tradition. His faith in the possibility of finding truth was radical, but it did not lie in the way of founding new commonwealths or preaching the advancement of learning.

in

Here the discussion of Donne's "skepticism" might be left, yet it may be of interest to examine a recent attempt to read a modern meaning into one of his best known poems, *The Exfasié*. The poem has been variously interpreted as a frank plea for the flesh—a plea springing from the poet's deepest "philosophy"—and as a revolt against "Platonism," a revolt carried, in the judgment of one critic, to the point of treating *The Extasie* as a purely objective study in seduction. The most extreme statement of the former point of view is Mr. Sencourt's comparison of the poem to Rodin's *Baiser supreme*.TM The latter is adopted by M. Pierre Legouis,⁶⁴ to whom the poem appears to represent a seduction studied with a technique like that of Browning in *Men and Women*. M. Legouis' attitude resembles that of a recent writer who pities the nineteenth-century public for "not being able to understand that one may follow with a great deal of intellectual interest the growth of a passion . . . out of purely intellectual curiosity."⁶⁶ Repudiating Professor Grierson's notes on the poem, which compare it with the Plotinian conception of mystical ecstasy and with Donne's own definition of letter-writing as a kind of ecstasy which mystically unites friends, he sees it as a dramatic analysis of the degradation of a liaison which has begun by being "Platonic."

Two treatments of the situation in *The Extasie* were familiar to Donne. They may be called the Puritanical and the

Metaphysical, Both were parts of the "Platonic" tradition. One of the songs in George Withers' *Fair Virtue* exemplifies the Puritanic handling of the theme. Two lovers in a garden with "their souls infus'd into each other," after hours of innocent communion, felt lust enkindled. Deadly sin would have been the consequence, if the lady had not inquired:

What goodly thing do we obtain
 If I consent to thee?
 Rare joys we lose, and what we gain,
 But common pleasures be:
 Yea, those (some say) who are to lust inclined,
 Drive love out of the mind;
 And so much reason miss,
 That they admire,
 What kind of fire
 A chaste affection is.⁶⁶

After seven such stanzas as this all danger is past and the lover is no less delighted than the lady to have escaped unscathed. "Go wantons, now," he exults,

and flout at this
 My coldness, if you list;
 Vain fools, you never knew the bliss,
 That doth in love consist.⁶⁷

The best "Platonists" themselves had reacted against this kind of thing, but modern readers and even modern scholars are inclined to submerge the Metaphysical under the Puritanical strain in the Platonism of the Renaissance.

We can meet the idea that *The Exfasie* was a realist's reaction against the Neo-Platonic love poetry of the Renaissance by comparing it to another treatment of its theme which was traditional in that poetry. Once we perceive its relation to that tradition, M. Legouis' conception of it as a study of seduction can hardly be entertained. Elsewhere⁵⁸ I have traced the theme of the poem in Continental literature; here it is sufficient, in order to realize the traditional background, to quote from one of the most famous of the now forgotten

poems of the sixteenth century in France, *La Parfaicte Amie* of Antoine Héroet. I translate from Heroet's third book, where he is treating the formal question in the casuistry of love which he derived from the adepts of Neo-Platonic passion in Italy (a casuistry which Donne in his turn was treating in *The Extasie*):

Impute no ill if sometimes Cupid's saints—
 Rapt by the god beyond our world's restraints,
 Their souls united while their bodies lie
 Dead and forgotten in their ecstasy—
 Yield them naively to that hour's bliss,
 Exchange a hand-clasp, come even to a kiss.
 The heart's instinctive bounty is the source
 Of kind caresses bringing no remorse.
 And when the masters take a noble pleasure,
 The slaves, the bodies, must enjoy their treasure,
 Minting their wealth to images of joy
 Which the swift moments instantly destroy.
 The spirits in their absence take no keep
 Of what the bodies do in their dead sleep;
 Nor can the body's imbecility
 Know or tell aught of the soul's deity.

Evidently in Heroet's lines there is something more than a mere defense of the rights of the flesh. Here is something like what is symbolized by the "Prince," liberated from prison in *The Extasie*, and also like that other Prince of the lovers in *The Anniversarie*,

Who Prince enough in one another bee.

We might regard the "Prince" as an emblem of sensual liberation with an overtone of the sympathy that it engenders between lovers, or perhaps see in it the spirit of the half-cynical "kissing, that strange and mysticall union of soules," of the second Paradox,⁶⁹ if we did not chance upon occurrences of the same theme with similar imagery elsewhere, not only in Donne's poems but also in those of a contemporary. Chapman, in *The Tears of Peace*, was certainly approximating to

the theme of " *The Extasie* when he spoke of the sun's rays penetrating the earth's atmosphere and soil to create gems, and added that so our "souls' . . . beams" must "dig in Bodies' mines"

To find them rich discourses through their senses.⁸⁰

The resemblance of Chapman's thought to Donne's cannot be mere coincidence. It forbids us to regard Donne's image of the Prince as the crowning irony in a drama of seduction. In the style of *The Extasie* there is revolt, but the whole poem is best read in the light of tradition. One final element in the tradition of which it was the heir, we may observe in the ambiguity of the term which is its title. The connotations of the word were both technical and emotional. Jean Bodin used it again and again in his *Theatre of Nature* as a part of his proof of the immortality of the soul. He triumphantly affirmed that "the phenomenon of *extasis* is certain; its positive assertion is possible."⁶¹ Dreams and visions he regarded as forms of the phenomenon and its highest variety he thought was the beatific vision of God. Bodin was no mystic and he did not seriously reckon with Plotinus' conception of ecstasy as the final step in perception of Truth and of union with God—the supreme step where the ministry of the senses and of Beauty itself is transcended. Not many even of the religiously inclined poets of the Seventeenth Century shared the suspicion of raptures and transports which was felt by St. John of the Cross. The distinction was never really clear to Donne himself. His religious as well as his love poetry justifies the remark which Signor Mario Praz puts into the mouth of Mr. Narrowgate, in an essay on "Mysticism" in *The Criterion*: "No wonder ecstasy was popular during the Seventeenth Century, the century in which, more than in any other age, intellect, as an English critic has said, was on the tip of the senses."⁸²

* * * * *

An attempt to rescue Donne from admirers who suppose that his intellect had a skeptical cast which disposed him to

sympathy with modern psychology and with modern science generally, can hardly avoid the appearance of aspersing both him and them. To try to see him as he was, is like removing the fourteenth-century gilding from a Russian icon of the tenth century. Every audience makes its own experience of an artist's work, and when the artist is removed from his public by three hundred years, and when the modern conception of him has been interlaced with original and fructifying theories of poetry by at least one great poet, the recovery of the historic reality is an ungrateful task. Perhaps that may be why in recent years interpretation of Donne has been inclined to decry the scholarly approach. Donne, we are told, was more learned than Milton, yet the study of him by Miss Ramsay in terms of the medieval writers whom he passionately examined seems to Mr. T. S. Eliot to have been "outgrown,"⁶³ while Mr. Bredvold condemns it unsparingly:

It is a great error to represent Donne's mind as always preoccupied with the subtleties of medieval thought. He was really preoccupied with the subtleties of his own soul.

In *Les doctrines medievals chez Donne* Miss Ramsay does overstate her case, and Mr. Bredvold has fully earned the right to criticize her by his investigation of a stream of medieval influence on Donne's work of which she took no account. Mr. Bredvold, by using the equipment of a modern literary critic under the control of scholarship, indicates a *via media*; and in the field indicated by the title, *Secentismo e marinismo in Inghilterra*, Signer Mario Praz has traveled far by that route.⁶⁴ A poem such as *The Dreame*, for example, gains as a work of art when it is placed in its historical setting so that the elements of convention and revolt which went to its creation can be felt by a modern reader.⁶⁶

Unfortunately, Donne did not leave a word of literary criticism behind him, and we know nothing about his theories of poetry, if he had any. Conceits he seems to have taken for a part of the universe in general rather than as a property peculiar to literature. At least, in his *Devotions* he told the

Deity, "Thou art a metaphysical God," and he added, "full of comparisons."⁶⁶ Our only information about his conception of the wit for which he was famous is his judgment that Duns Scotus, the *Doctor Subtilis*, was "the wittiest of the School Divines," and that the Kabbalist Zorzi was a "transcendent wit." We discount this hint because the Subtle Doctor represents a world which we think insignificant for us, while Donne's world—especially his world of imagination—seems to us significantly like our own. We fancy Donne's spirit as drifting passionately among the data of a world distant but real. We think of his spirit as *zparvula animula vagula*, which Hadrian or Mr. Joseph Wood Krutch would understand, but which would be incomprehensible to St. Thomas Aquinas. Because we are out of sight of Kabbalism and Scholasticism, and because Donne is a fiery beacon on our horizon, we cannot imagine that his sky was constellated differently from ours. Since we have entered the southern hemisphere, we deny that he could see the North Star.

As a matter of historical probability, we might surmise that Donne's outlook would be closer to that of Duns Scotus than to ours. In spite of the discovery of America and of the impact of the "new philosophy," the march of ideas between 1300 and 1600 was hardly more rapid than it has been during the centuries since Donne's death. However we may discount the influence of medieval thought upon him, we cannot deny that almost all his prose was dominated by the thought of God as the supreme ontological reality, or that his religious poems express "Nature's nothing" and God's absoluteness. Even the unregenerate poems could not do without the divinity which was all "love and wonder." Such uncritical divinity was the legacy of Neo-Platonism to the Renaissance quite as much as to the Middle Ages.⁶⁷ Even by such seemingly revolutionary thinkers as Giordano Bruno and Spinoza the gulf between *natura naturans* and *natura naturata* was never bridged, and the resultant paradoxes were sometimes veiled and sometimes boldly enunciated. For them and for Donne alike, God was more actual than his world, and the

mists of illusion hung around all created things. Dependence upon that idea was the source of the subtleties of the Kabbalists and Scholastics; it gave unity and direction to philosophy until the decline of Descartes' influence. It reached from Plotinus' conception of the ineffably immanent One—which because it is nowhere is everywhere—to Leibnitz's attempt to explain divine transcendence immanent in the cosmic harmony on the ground that God is universal because, having all points of view, he has none. The inner contradiction of the thought is betrayed by the unimaginable spatial image by which it was illustrated. By thinker after thinker—from Plotinus to Spinoza—its unintelligibility and inconsistency were spirited away by abrupt transitions from metaphysics to geometry, like that which we see in the doctrine that "minimum must coincide with maximum, and the centre of the universe with its circumference; for its centre and circumference are God."⁶⁸ The words belong to Nicholas of Cusa and they were the foundation of the *De Docta Ignorantia*. Donne was fascinated by this false image, by which his contemporaries exorcized their fear of the infinity that terrified Pascal. At the Spital on April 23, 1622, we find him saying:

. . . past, and present, and future, distinguish not his *Qiiando*; all is one time to him: Mountains and Vallies, Sea and Land, distinguish not his *Ubi*; all is one place to him: . . .⁶¹

When Donne thought of the *parvula animula vagu,'a*, he addressed it as, "Poore intricated soule! Riddling, perplexed, labyrinthical soule!*" And then abruptly he nerved it with the ontological assertion of God's supreme reality in its starkest form.⁷⁰

So we may leave him within sight of the road on which Plotinus and Leibnitz are termini. To insist on his vital relation to them is not to make him "medieval-minded." It makes him a man of his own time. His Mistress (except when, in the character of "rebell and atheist too," he deviated into the primrose path) was fair Religion. And he never entirely lost hope of finding Falsehood's elder sister, Truth,

POPE AS POET

BY

WILLARD H. DURHAM

POPE AS POET

DURING THE LIFETIME of Alexander Pope, certain critics had the temerity to assert that his poetry, was not good poetry. The result was usually excellent. The critics received an unenviable immortality, and the world was richer by a couplet or a *Dunciad*.¹ Charges that he had blundered, Pope replied with new and dazzling exhibitions of his skill.

When the successful attack upon him was finally made, the weapon was new, and Pope was dead. Earlier critics had attacked the details and lost; Warton attacked the whole and won. Instead of asserting that this poetry was not good poetry, he modestly inquired, Is it poetry at all? In the preface to his *Essay on the Writings and Genius of Pope*, published in 1756, appeared the following passage:

The Sublime and the Pathetic are the two chief nerves of all genuine poesy. What is there very Sublime or very Pathetic in Pope? . . . the following passage of Voltaire characterizes Pope as it does his model Boileau, for whom it was originally designed. "Incapable peut-etre du sublime qui fleve Tame, et du sentiment qui l'attendrit _____"

More than a quarter of a century later, Warton published the second volume of his essay, in which he answered the question thus raised. To certain details of that answer we must later return. For the moment the important fact is that he concluded that Pope was "the great Poet of Reason, the First of Ethical Authors in verse. And this species of writing . . . lies more level to the general capacities of men, than the higher flights of more genuine poetry."

It would be easy to cavil at Warton's implication that genuineness is something which may be approximated. It would be easy to attack the critical judgment which cites the following lines to illustrate the statement that a certain poem "has much of the sublime and is like a thought of Milton's":

To man that was i* th' evening made,
 Stars gave the first delight;
 Admiring in the gloomy shade,
 Those little drops of light.

One might also recall that in commenting on certain lines from the *Essay on Man*, Warton wrote: "Whilst I am transcribing this exalted description of the omnipresence of the Deity, I feel myself almost tempted to retract an assertion in the beginning of this work, that there is nothing transcendently sublime in Pope."

But neither the blunders nor the admissions of Warton remove the fact that he was a critic who possessed real sensitiveness and insight, nor will they permit us to deny that such a critic believed Pope's poetry too often devoid of certain qualities essential to genuine poetry.

Into the subsequent controversy which Warton's pupil, William Lisle Bowles, conducted with Roscoe, Campbell, Byron, and others, it is fortunately unnecessary to go. Not even as an example of confused thinking, bad taste, and worse manners, can the quarrel be made interesting today. As so often happens, alas, the wrong man was in the right; and, after the whole wretched little affair was over, it appeared that the doubt expressed by Warton had grown stronger than ever, and soon, in the mind of Matthew Arnold, it crystallized into a dogma.

In more recent years, Professor W. P. Ker and Mr. Lytton Strachey have defended the memory of Pope in public lectures, making light of the whole quarrel and making much of Pope's skill as a poetic artist and as a master of versification. It is probably too much to hope that even such powerful champions have for ever slain the dragon Error. There will I suppose, always be ears deaf to the music and variety of the heroic couplet handled as Pope handled it. There will always be those who will deny that Pope was a great technician and will refuse to believe that he achieved an amazing mastery of the art of poetry. But with such I am not concerned. Those that have ears, let them hear.

But Warton and Bowles had something quite different in mind. Although they phrased the question variously and beclouded the whole issue with their definitions of the "pathetic" and the "sublime," what they actually doubted was whether in general the experience which found its expression in Pope's verses was really a poetic experience. Or, to state the question from another equally important standpoint, Is the experience of the reader of Pope's verses really a poetic experience?

A direct answer to this question may seem of no great moment. Whether such an experience be or be not a poetic experience, it is certainly a literary experience, one of no small value. If the quarrel merely concerned a name, the decision might well be left to cataloguers. But, at least by implication, something much more important is involved.

There are indubitably sentences and paragraphs which are not verse; nevertheless they produce an effect which cannot easily be distinguished from that produced by what is unquestionably poetry. There are many thousands of lines of verse which do not produce this effect at all. There is, in some prose and in more verse, an evasive something, a peculiar magic, which escapes accurate definition without escaping perception. It does not much matter whether writing that has this magic be called poetry or prose; it matters equally little whether verse which lacks it be named this or that. It is in the recognition of this magic, in the study of its nature, that value lies, and it is the recognition of that value which motivates the recurrent controversy as to whether the work of this or that man be poetry or prose.

It was, I believe, the lack of this magic that Warton felt. His instinct was not at fault, but his definition was fumbling and misleading. It may still be impossible to arrive at a formulation which will be generally satisfactory, but an attempt to clarify the problem will show, I believe, something of Pope's conception of what poetry should be, and will also show a positive connection between this conception and a philosophical doctrine which affected his thinking and that of his contemporaries.

I Warton's suggestion that the defect lay in the absence of the "pathetic," and Bowles's assertion that in "passions, not in manners" lies the material for genuine poetry, are merely various ways of putting a contention which many readers have found sufficient. It is most often heard as the statement that Pope's poetry lacks "feeling," is not sufficiently emotional. But this approach to the problem rapidly leads to confusion and contradiction. Warton himself found "the genuine voice of nature and passion" in *Eloise and Abelard*. The following lines from the *Elegy on an Unfortunate Lady* were to him "touched with a great tenderness":

By foreign hands thy dying eyes were closed,
 By foreign hands thy decent limbs composed,
 By foreign hands thy humble grave adorn'd,
 By strangers honour'd, and by strangers mourn'd.

It seems unlikely that any sensitive person will disagree with Warton on this point. Here simple feeling is simply and directly expressed—feeling universally intelligible and unquestionably real. I find no less feeling here than in Elinor Wylie's *A Strange Story*:

When I died in Marylebone
 I was saying my prayers;
 There I died all alone
 Up four flights of stairs.

But when I died near Lincoln's Inn
 The small gold I had
 Surrounded me with kith and kin;
 I died stark mad.

The difference in effect between the two passages is enormous, and the difference is related to the point at issue; but it is not a difference in the quantity of feeling expressed, nor is it derived from any difference of opinion between the two poets as to the importance for poetry of human emotion.

Furthermore, those who lay great stress upon the lack of feeling in Pope usually ignore whole ranges of feeling which are not bounded by the pathetic or the erotic. Friendship,

filial devotion, hate, scorn; these are feelings that may be powerful and deep, feelings that find no inadequate expression in Pope's verse. One might even say without exaggeration that by far the greater part of Pope's verse results from some sort of feeling.

Presented thus, the charge that Pope's verse is not poetry because it is not an expression of feeling seems absurd. If this were merely a debate, one might rest here; but candor compels the admission that there is more in the charge than has as yet appeared. The defect is rather in the formulation of the charge than in the charge itself. Nevertheless, having dismissed the conventional statement as inadequate, we may leave the matter for a moment and turn to another assertion which is equally familiar.

This is the assertion best remembered as it was made by Wordsworth (but also made, although less extravagantly, by Bowles), that a prime source of our possible dissatisfaction with Pope's verse is to be found in the absence from it of clearly visualized and accurate description of external nature. The fact, repeatedly demonstrated, that there is much more of such description in eighteenth-century poetry than Wordsworth knew, is beside the point. To prove that a man has exaggerated is not to prove him wholly wrong. A possible answer, one much more likely to clarify matters, lies in the fact that we could omit from Wordsworth's own poetry all such description and still have a residue of undeniable poetry. How great the loss entailed by such omission, is another question.

The stress which has been laid upon the importance to poetry of exact observation of nature is in part due to individual taste; in part it is a confusion of science with art; and in part it is the expression of an intolerance born of both. Unquestionably there are persons who are deeply stirred by seeing the first crocus of the spring or by hearing the first cuckoo. Such persons may also be stirred by poetry which recalls or suggests such experience. There are, however, others who—if they dare be honest—will admit that they can contemplate a grosbeak without loss of self-control, and who find

nothing within them which responds to the mention of vetch or of campanula. These latter persons may be unfortunate, but they can no more be called deaf to all real poetry than can the person who finds a Bach Invention dull be said to be deaf to all real music.

When Tennyson expressed his special satisfaction with a line which described certain buds as being black in March on the ground that such buds actually were black in March, his satisfaction was really much more that of the botanist than that of the poet. Whatever the ultimate reputation of Tennyson may be, his rank as a poet will never be determined by giving him pluses for botanical and ornithological accuracies and minuses for errors.

But the belief in the importance of such details goes far beyond either taste or science. It rests upon the fact that to certain people—and especially to certain nineteenth-century people—the daffodil or the whitening willow or the skylark were symbols. For such people Nature is always capitalized. Some of them find God in Nature; some of them see in Nature the manifestation of God's power or wisdom or love; some of them find in it only a mighty Something which transcends human understanding. All of them find in the flower a microcosm which in some way mirrors the macrocosm. For such as these Nature awakens strange depths of feeling, and for them the poetry of Nature is authentic poetry.

One may find such persons occasionally irritating, but one cannot properly find them wrong. This is not the place to defend those others to whom the hum of human cities is a feeling and the silence of the mountains torture. The Nature lover is annoying only when he insists that every one share his peculiar joys or when he asserts that the emotions which he feels when he stands beside a mountain lake are necessarily vaster and more profound than any which can be aroused by Solemn Benediction at St. Peter's in Rome.

Even if we grant that the eighteenth century was too little aware of the Divine as revealed by the blackness of ash buds, it was very, very much aware of Nature as a symbolic revela-

tion of God. That man would be rash indeed who would assert that Pope, when he contemplated

one stupendous Whole
Whose body Nature is, and God the soul,

felt nothing akin to that which was aroused in Tennyson by the flower in the crannied wall. The stimulus which most readily arouses the wonder and the awe latent in Nature varies with the centuries. We of the twentieth century may be left cold by that which stirred one age or another, but that is our misfortune, not their defect.

We have found ourselves—as you may have noticed—discussing Nature in its relation to poetry as the source of an emotional experience. The quarrel about the importance of natural description to poetry is, it would appear, merely a specific instance produced in defense of the original charge that what Pope's poetry lacks is some sort of emotional experience.

I, for one, am ready not merely to admit, but to assert, that it is a sort of emotional experience which one too often fails to find in Pope. I agree that this something is a part of human feeling and that it is often aroused by the contemplation of natural objects. My only ground of difference with the opinions which have been discussed is that they seem to me not to touch the essential point.

One possible means of discovering what that something may be is to turn from the poetry of Pope to a kind of poetry vastly different from it and to consider some lines which may be regarded as vague, as meaningless, as unintelligible—which may, indeed, be bad poetry—but which, nevertheless, are certainly poetry of a sort.

With silver angels across my way,
With golden demons that none can stay,
With my father hovering on the wind
And my brother Robert just behind,
And my brother John, the evil one,
In a black cloud making his moan.

Whatever these-lines may or may not mean, their origin is certain. Blake never saw this extraordinary group with his bodily eyes, nor did he bring them together because the ordinary processes of a conscious mind suggested that they all belonged together. The concatenation may have an incontrovertible fitness; but this fitness, if it exists, is the fitness of the world of dreams, the world of the unconscious imagination in which the most incredible of juxtapositions occasions no surprise. The strangeness of this particular group is by no means limited to its peculiar membership. The ordinary person—nay, many a poet—who is rash enough to contemplate the nature and appearance of demons, may conceive of them as black, or as only a trifle grimy, or as deceptively attractive; but no logical process will suggest to him the propriety of contrasting golden demons with silver angels. Not even the fourteenth-century Florentine and Sienese painters, with all their interest in demons and all their love for gold leaf, ever did that. We may be quite certain that when Blake told us of golden demons he did so, not because he had heard of such creatures or because he had rationally decided that gold would be a novel and excellent color for demons, but because, with the inner eye, he had seen such demons, had seen them as golden and not otherwise.

We must not, however, overlook one further stage in the process. Between the image of golden demons and the recording of that image in the poem came a moment when Blake decided—either deliberately or without reflection—not to reject the image as something irrational and unsatisfactory. It is, I believe, at just this point in the poetic process that we shall find the clue of which we are in search. We can never know just what images have appeared in the mind of any poet. We cannot say what or how many he has rejected. But dreams and fantasies and strange imaginings are so much a common property of mankind—even of those who, so far from making poetic or other artistic use of them, are scarcely aware of having them at all—that we cannot, without positive evidence, deny them to any poet who exhibits the least

trace of imaginative power. The real question is as to the value which they have for him, the basis upon which he accepts or rejects them as poetic material, and how far he goes in reshaping those he does accept in accordance with his conscious judgment of their congruity and fitness.

Before proceeding farther with this point, however, let us examine a second instance, one which we should recognize without Coleridge's explicit testimony as coming from a source identical, or nearly so, with that which produced Blake's poem. However much of the imagery of *Kubla Khan* may be traced to the poet's reading, the results of Professor Lowes's exhaustive investigation of this sort of source show clearly that the extraordinary juxtaposition of words and images in this poem are not the result of any conscious mental process. The selection of any specific phrase has its dangers, yet it seems more than unlikely that any "source" will account for the use of the word "holy" in the familiar lines,

A savage place! as holy and enchanted
As e'er beneath a waning moon was haunted
By woman wailing for her demon lover.

"Unholy and enchanted" would be much more plausible, much more congruous as far as the conscious mind is concerned. Certainly if ever some future Bentley should treat Coleridge as that misguided scholar treated Milton, some such change would commend itself to him as giving better sense to the passage. Yet the peculiar quality, the strange magic of the lines, is in large measure due to just this combination of suggestions which, judged by the conventional standards of appropriateness, would be rejected or altered.

These two examples are obviously extreme. They are both from poems which may be described as visions. But such poems, in which conscious judgment plays at most a very minor part, are merely clearer examples of what is probably the primary source of that quality in poetry for which I know no better name than magic—for that inexplicable stirring of something in our minds which is not stirred by

conceptions that come from directed thinking or from the world of external fact.

It is because this stirring may be described as an emotional experience that confusion has arisen. Poetry which does not produce this effect has been described as lacking in feeling. But there is much highly emotional poetry which lacks this quality entirely—Hood's *Song of the Shirty* for example, or Browning's *Soliloquy in a Spanish Cloister*. The lines from Pope cited earlier in this essay have feeling, but they have little or none of this magic. There is no real difference in kind—however great the other differences may be—between *Rabbi ben Ezra* and the end of the fourth epistle of the *Essay on Man*. The reader who prefers one to the other does so because one sort of feeling is more congenial to him, or because the thought of one seems to him more true than that of the other, or because he prefers rhythm which is rough and vigorous to that which is smooth and subtle. The quality which neither poem exhibits to any great degree is just this magic of which we have been speaking.

We come back, then, to the fact that what we really miss in most eighteenth-century poetry is precisely the kind of magic exhibited clearly in such poems as those of Blake and Coleridge which we have examined. But even here it would be unwise to make too sweeping a generalization. Not even this sort of magic is wholly absent from the poetry of Pope. I find some of it in the couplet,

Still round and round the ghosts of beauty glide
And haunt the places where their honour died.

There is a trace of it in

Die of a rose in aromatic pain.

To me—although here I know that I shall find many who will disagree—it informs the often criticized couplet,

Where'er you walk, cool gales shall fan the glade;
Trees, where you sit, shall crowd into a shade.

We should not, however, overlook the possibility that this effect is in part due to sheer sound. We know much too little, unfortunately, concerning the psychological effect of rhythm. It is certainly not enough to say of it that it gives pleasure or that it creates an aesthetic emotion. It often does something much less obvious and intelligible than this, 'something which I shall not attempt to define with any precision. The fact remains that it does do something—it does give to forms of words otherwise dull or banal or meaningless the power to touch strange depths. It makes of them something akin to a spell. Remember the "counting-out" rhymes of childhood, their power to give a faint sense of destiny as they designated the person to be "It." This power may lie to some extent in their irrationality, the meaninglessness—which yet suggests a hidden meaning—of the words; but the same words un-rhythmically arranged would lose their power. There is something here not to be ignored. So, when we read the statement which, without rhythm, would be merely what a brilliant writer has called "a posthumous recommendation to St. Peter,"

Statesman, yet friend to truth; of soul sincere,
In action faithful, and in honour clear,

the couplet's echoing bell gives to the words just a trace of magic. No music, perhaps, is wholly unrelated to the horns of Elfland.

Nevertheless, when all is said that can be said, the fact remains that the verses of the eighteenth century in general and those of Pope in particular are as nearly devoid of magic as any good verse can be. And since there is no reason for believing that the poets of any age had no possible access to Elfland, that the deep well of the unconscious was either dry or hopelessly muddied, we may well ask why all traces of imaginative activity of this sort are so nearly absent or so dextrously concealed.

One cause will be fairly obvious to any one well read in the period. One of the things most often satirized in an age not wanting in satire, one of the things most abhorred by all who

regarded themselves as really intelligent, was Enthusiasm. **By** Enthusiasm they meant, as is well known, a mistaken belief in some inner light, some supposedly divine inspiration. During the seventeenth century much dubious inspiration had been highly valued in certain quarters and had given rise to religious vagaries which seem amusing when sufficiently remote, but which properly seemed dangerous when in full spate and close at hand. It was clear that the acceptance of such supposed inspiration at its face value was an error, and the natural reaction against it impelled men to distrust it however and wherever it appeared. Visions and fantasies—the strange, irrational, mighty images which the imaginative man encounters sometimes in sleep and sometimes in waking hours when the outer world grows utterly remote and dim—these taken as literal truth were demonstrably false. It was not until many decades later that it became possible to perceive again that these had a value, not as revelations of fact nor as direct guides to good conduct, but a value in themselves, a value as symbols having power over men, a power not negated by our inability to translate these symbols into clearly intelligible words. Blake did not fare too well in his own day; he would have fared much worse had he been writing seven or eight decades earlier.

We may say, then, that to the men of Pope's time any uncritical acceptance of the products of fantasy savored of Enthusiasm. Enthusiasm had proved itself dangerous to religion as by law established, to ethics, to the conventional social order which was a necessary foundation for material prosperity. John Locke devoted a chapter to the matter in the *Essay concerning Human Understanding*, and here, as elsewhere, formulated the opinions which were to dominate English thinking for many years thereafter. In Chapter xix of Book iv he wrote:

He therefore that will not give himself up to all the extravagancies of delusion and error, must bring this guide of his light within to the trial. God when he makes the prophet does not unmake the man. He leaves all his faculties in their natural state, to enable him to

judge of his inspirations, whether they be of divine original or no. When he illuminates the mind with supernatural light, he does not extinguish that which is natural. If he would have us assent to the truth of any proposition, he either evidences that truth by the usual methods of natural reason, or else makes it known to be a truth which he would have us assent to by his authority, and convinces us that it is from him, by some marks which reason cannot be mistaken in. Reason must be our last judge and guide in everything.

Later in the same paragraph he adds:

Every conceit that thoroughly warms our fancies must pass for an inspiration, if there be nothing but the strength of our persuasions. If reason must not examine their truth by something extrinsical to the persuasions themselves, inspirations and delusions, truth and falsehood, will have the same measure, and will not be possible to be distinguished.

For further exposition of the proper attitude toward the "conceit that thoroughly warms our fancies" we may turn back to Descartes; for, as Pringle-Patterson has said, "However he [Locke] may differ from Descartes in other respects, he accepts unreservedly the Cartesian criticism of truth as consisting in the possession of clear and distinct ideas and the apprehension of their necessary connexion," Toward the end of the fourth part of the *Discourse on Method*, Descartes wrote:

For, in fine, whether asleep or awake, we ought never to allow ourselves to be persuaded of the truth of anything unless on the evidence of our reason. And it must be noted that I say of our reason, and not of our imagination or of our senses. . . . We may very distinctly imagine the head of a lion joined to the body of a goat, without being therefore shut up to the conclusion that a chimaera exists; for it is not a dictate of reason that what we thus see or imagine is in reality existent. . . . And because our reasonings are never so clear or so complete during sleep as when we are awake, although sometimes the acts of our imaginations are then as lively and distinct, if not more so than in our waking moments, reason further dictates that, since all our thoughts cannot be true because of our partial imperfection, those possessing truth must infallibly be found in the experience of our waking moments rather than in that of our dreams.

Obviously, to anyone accepting this doctrine, "the experience of our waking moments" had to be contrasted, not merely with the experience of the dreams which occur in sleep, but also with those waking dreams sometimes called fantasies or visions.

Thus was a simple fear or scorn of Enthusiasm justified by the philosophical guides of that generation. How often, for the poets of that age, magic casements opened upon the land of faery, no one can safely say; for always the images thus seen were regarded with suspicion and subjected to the tests of reason and experience. An image which failed to pass such tests could have no place in serious literature.

To this rule only two exceptions received general sanction. One had the support of the dominant religion, the other that of a dominant tradition. Angels and devils and the spirits of the dead might appear, provided their behavior was in accord with the Christian revelation. Unfortunately the knowledge obtainable from this source was lamentably slight and annoyingly vague. Consequently—with a few highly debatable exceptions, such as Addison's famous angel—the efforts to use for poetical purposes the angelical and demoniacal hierarchies were undeniably failures. The supernatural beings of classical tradition, on the other hand, gods and goddesses, nymphs and naiads, although they appeared far more often than one might have wished, were inevitably either openly allegorical or mere conventionalized ornament. Other supernatural or non-natural beings could be used only if they were frankly presented as playful fancies having no solid reality, and even as such they might arouse objection. I see no reason to suppose that Addison was not wholly sincere in his attempt to dissuade Pope from introducing the sylphs into the *Rape of the Lock*. Pope—himself, though he proved Addison to be wrong, was careful to provide for these delicate beings an origin which would remove from them all taint of Enthusiasm:

The light coquettes in Sylphs aloft repair
And sport and flutter in the fields of air.

Hence these few exceptions were really no exceptions at all.

They were not images rising from the depths imbued with the magic such images possess, but were acquired from without, learned about, having no life save that bestowed upon them by tradition or the factitious vitality imparted by the poet's skill.

It may well be asked, however, why no one availed himself of the easy escape from the limitations imposed by the philosophical doctrine which we have been discussing. When Descartes disposed of the chimaera—as Locke in a similar passage disposed of the centaur—he disposed of it only as a creature existing in an external world. But poets have not always insisted upon actual external existence or even possible external existence as a criterion of value for their conceptions. Coleridge would not have been disturbed by an ichthyologist's remarks about his water snakes, nor did he demand a place for Alph, the sacred river, upon any map of Asia.

This fact, however, merely shows still more clearly the actual temper of eighteenth-century thought. The men whose thinking was dominated by the Descartes-Locke tradition did not, as a matter of fact, raise a question which had disturbed neither Descartes nor Locke. For them, as for their masters, objective existence was a final criterion of value. An attempt to show why they believed this to be true would require a discussion of the conditions which compelled the age to focus its attention upon external objects and external values. Here it is possible only to suggest what the answer might be. Commenting on a passage from Malebranche, Professor Kemp-Smith wrote:

And therein we find the reason, which Augustin sought in vain, why a benevolent Deity has revealed to us the knowledge of what is without us, and yet has left us in utter darkness as to what is within: our knowledge is sufficient for the performance of our duties, and any further knowledge would only distract us from the work that has to be done.

How great was the work that had to be done is apparent to any one who has seen the eighteenth century for what it was, an age of transition, an age which had to readjust its living to a new order in science, in morals, in politics, in social and

economic relations. It was only after a realization of the magnitude of this readjustment had spread to the masses, only when the general attention to these problems had become not only adequate but excessive, that poets and prophets, performing once more their function as a balance wheel, could again stress the importance of a subjective world.

It may still be asked how this conception of the effect of a rationalistic philosophy upon poetry differs from the one which has long been familiar, from the commonplace statement that Pope's was a rationalistic and hence not a poetic age. The answer would be that the difference lies only in the development of an implication which has been generally ignored. The usual discussion concerns itself with the relation of rationalism to the poet's choice of a subject or to his conscious art. It has led critics to assert as Warton did that imagination was not Pope's predominant talent—an assertion incapable of proof and far from likely in view of the fact that from his earliest to his latest years a force from within drove Pope to devote his days and his nights to the writing of verse. It has led critics to refuse to believe that Pope meant what he said when he asserted again and again that Invention was the characteristic of poetry itself. It has led critics to assert that by Invention Pope did not mean imagination when that is precisely what he did mean. Rationalism did affect Pope's choice of subjects; it did color his theories of the poetic? But it was not in these ways that it so limited his poetry as to arouse doubt of its being poetry at all. Warton vaguely apprehended the essential point when he wrote, "Whatever poetical enthusiasm he actually possessed, he withheld and stifled." It was when the dogma of the clear and distinct idea led the poet to reject the archetypal images which arose from the mysterious depths of the imagination, or so to alter them that they lost their peculiar power as concepts beyond the reaches of our minds, that this doctrine really interfered with the poetic process.

Fortunately, although it interfered with this process, it could not destroy it utterly. There are lines in Pope, and they

are not few, which contain more than meets the superficial glance. The possibility of discovering, in passages which seem to be pure reason or trivial fancy, traces of underlying archetypal images, is a seductive one. But, in default of diaries and letters which would give us dependable evidence concerning the poetic experience transformed by conscious art into the lines which have come down to us, and with our vast ignorance and uncertainty of the real nature of that portion of the mind which we call the unconscious, such attempts end in mere speculations of no great value to anyone save the speculator. What may safely be said is that again and again in Pope's poetry, more often than the casual reader would suspect, one may find traces, faint and disputable though they sometimes are, of imaginative processes which are not explicable as the result of reading or of conversation or of thinking or even of simple emotional reactions to external objects or events.

It was because such traces are indubitably there, I believe, that Warton, with his real sensitiveness to poetry, found himself unable categorically to deny the genuineness of Pope's poetry. It is because of these traces and not solely by reason of Pope's mastery of versification and of poetic art that the doubt which Warton raised remains a doubt and will never become a certainty save for those whose demands upon the poet are the polar opposite of those made by the champions of the "clear and distinct idea." The modern Enthusiasts who insist that any product of the unconscious has validity and that such a product is too sacred to be subjected to any criticism or clarification by the conscious mind are bound by their theories to scorn any poetry which is dominated by conscious art. Like the seventeenth-century religious Enthusiasts, these twentieth-century poetic Enthusiasts respect only the "inner light." They, too, are the products of an age, and theirs is an age which leads them to reject the "clear and distinct idea"; but they are not the less limited because their limitation is the polar opposite of Pope's. The poetry of Pope has, after all, survived for more than a century and a

no

Essays in Criticism : Second Series

half the assault which Warton made upon it. Will that of our contemporary Enthusiasts survive equally well the reverse of Warton's question? Is theirs genuine poetry or merely material from which poetry might have been made?

THE POESY OF FICTION

BY

CHAUNCEY WETMORE WELLS

THE POESY OF FICTION

THE TITLE needs some justification. Our earliest prose fiction was poetical, the child of an earlier poetry; but if legitimate, was it not already degenerate? Its ways were devious and dubious, it began to show a taste for doubtful company. The descent of its present offspring has indeed been a descent, for not only has it adopted "the dialect of life," the medium of business and interchange, prose of prose, but also it often wears the aspect of life in its most humdrum or even sordid phases, moves on the level of practical utility and casual intercourse. In manner and matter it consents to be prosaic.

But fiction, however it seem to be a transcript or "slice of life," continues to be an imaginative projection, like epic and romance; even at its loosest, least formal, it is perhaps tertiary epic. Slicing at life is never the process, nor is documentation. Imaginative "making" is the way of fiction, as it is the way of drama: some intelligible and probable order must be found or provided, some revealing crisis discovered or invented. And the very simple reason is that the office of fiction is the office of poetry; its office is interpretation. Its "grand power" too "is interpretative power . . . not the power of drawing out in black and white" an explanation of anything, but the power of giving us the sense and meaning of experience.

Well then, why not the Poetry of Fiction? "Poesy" seems a bit precious, a sought word. But "poetry of fiction" might suggest some particular kind, like the old cantables; or something choice and fine, like the courtly tales, intricately patterned, delicately wrought; or certain modern stories, charged with emotion or with sentiment. "Poetry," too, suggests impassioned utterance, hence a "poetical" or lyrical style approaching free verse; as it was said of Meredith, that he seemed to have "hitched winged horses to the chariot of his prose." We might disregard all these—*Aucassin et Nicolette*, *The Arcadia*, *Richard Feverel*—yet impair no whit our contention that fiction is essentially poetry.

That, however, is not my main reason for the choice of the term, "poesy." I am thinking in terms of the poetic experience: of the story as a "making" and a storyteller as a maker. "Poesy" as a term is suggestive to my sense both of process and of result, but more of process than result, like the German word *Dichtung*, and it is process that more interests me now. But yet not technical process so much as imaginative process. Not devices nor inventions, not foreshadowing nor foreshortening, not emphasis of mass or of position so much concern me as that characteristic fusion of typical and fit material under imaginative heat, of such nature as to produce what we call a novel or a story.

THE NOVEL results from the fusion of many elements, but, I maintain, of three essentials: history, memoir, drama. Historically, this statement may be challenged. Our first prose fictions were none of these, hardly indeed any projection of them. Our first prose fictions were undeniably romances; no other name will fit them. Was it the tradition of the *Odyssey* that persisted in the work of Heliodorus, Jamblichus, Achilles Tatius, as they spake of "most disastrous chances," of "moving accidents," of "hairbreadth scapes"? Was it the tradition of the pastoral surviving or reborn in *Daphnis and Chloe*, to be reborn yet again in *Rosalynde* and

Menaphon? Whether so derived or from the *Metamorphoses* of Ovid and of Apuleius, that old Alexandrian narrative "runs . . . from decorative description and expansive emotion through exciting incident and uncontrolled variety to sheer violence";² and the stories, whether pure invention or not, are sprung from the desire to thrill, to charm, to fascinate, as were the medieval romances. There were, of course, "possible realities" in them, and the Greek adventures have been compared with actual realities in the life of St. Paul, as he himself recounts them: "Thrice I suffered shipwreck, a day and a night have I been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen."³ But perhaps, says the *Advocatus Diaboli*, the important point to note here is not what it seems to Gamaliel Bradford,⁴ who cites the passage—that in such circumstances history and romance were in their "matters" not so very far apart, but that the career of one hardy adventurer seemed to him in retrospect to have been of the very essence of romance. He had fought a good fight, he had kept the faith; he stood now upon the brink of the great adventure. In other words, was not history sprung from romance, rather than romance from history?

On the score of priority in time, objection is not so likely to be raised against my contention for memoir, since, so far as I know, its history has never been written nor have its limits been accurately defined.⁶ Yet it may perhaps be asserted that memoir is the most modern of literary art-forms; as we know it, its rise is subsequent to that of the novel. Rousseau's *Confessions* follows, not precedes, *La Nouvelle Héloïse* and *Émile* as these follow *Clarissa Harlowe*; and again, *Wahrheit und Dichtung* follows, not precedes, *Werther*. If not all, most of the autobiographies apt for our purpose are of this modern type, are personal intimacies, "confessions." Historically it may seem that the novel went to the making of the memoir, rather than the memoir to the making of the novel. Such poesy as this very formless form has achieved appears to be derived from the novel.

As for drama, the adverse case seems to be historically the stronger. Was not the *Iliad* before the *Agamemnon*? Were not *Rosalynde* and *Pandosto* before *As You Like It* and *A Winter's Tale*? Not often has a drama retold made a story, but very often has a story recast made a play. Story goes before drama as a necessary presumption. Without a fund of story to draw on, drama would soon have been bankrupt: it might be myth, it might be legend or folklore, it might be epic or romance, it might be local anecdote; some reservoir of story there had to be.

Yet even historically a strong case can be made for my contention; for the history of the novel in several of its phases presents a suggestive relationship to that of each of these three elements, as I call them.

Now History (with a capital) must choose between being chronicle, or annals, and being historiography, or artistic history—for I leave out of account "scientific" history, the critical examination of historical data. What does the choice imply? That the historiographer write of "struggles seen in the light of their outcome,"⁶ that is to say, of events; and of these, moreover, "in terms of the emotions awakened by the result,"⁶ by these means alone attaining to artistic unity. It appears that in the modern world History did choose to become historiography in the eighteenth century. After *Bas-sompierre* came *Rollin*, and then *Voltaire*; after *Camden* came *Clarendon* and *Bishop Burnet*, and then *Hume*, *Robertson*, and *Gibbon*. This period, say from 1720 to 1780, is also the period of *Prevost* and of *Marivaux*, of *Lesage*, *Laclos*, and *Diderot*, as well as of *Defoe*, *Richardson*, and *Fielding*. The emergence of the novel is almost of equal date with the emergence of historiography. Within another generation the two seemed for a moment to have mixed and merged; for as it was *Fielding*, *Smollett*, and *Edgeworth* who taught *Scott* observation of homely life and character, it was *Gibbon* and the others who taught him much of the historical craft—the ordering and massing of historical action, the texture of narrative prose, the "elegance" of manner—*Gibbon* much more than *Froissart*.

The emergence of the novel, as we call it, follows, however, a long tentative period beginning about the middle of the sixteenth century and continuing for a century and a half or two centuries, in which "personal" fiction has almost exclusive dominion. Personal narrative consists, says Brunetiere, essentially in the narration of adventures in which the narrator begins by being the hero, and the object of these adventures is not so much to bring to light his qualities or virtues as to recount the purpose of a human life and the more or less singular fortune of a private condition.⁷

But this tentative period of fiction was also the flourishing period of other types of personal literature—the memoir, the diary, the familiar letter—types which so far as their aims were literary concerned themselves with the polite. Blaise de Monluc, Saint-Simon, Mme de Sevigne, Mile Montpensier in France, Lord Herbert of Cherbury, Sir John Evelyn, Sir Samuel Pepys, Lady Mary Wortley Montague in England, wrote in a decorous way of matters not always decorous, often scandalous, but treated them intimately anyway. They dealt personally with the upper world, as the fiction writers dealt often with the underworld, and in ways not altogether dissimilar. To the shaping or poesy of fiction *Clelie*, or *Gondibert*, even *La Princesse de Clfaes*, contributed less than did these humbler things, for it was these anti-types of personal literature, the polite and the impolite, which the novel was to blend; to them it succeeded; their decrease was its increase.

At about this moment, coincidence or not, journalism arose. It has been maintained⁸ that our modern novel, though born of romance, was begotten of journalism, and the facts seem to bear it out. Before the *Tatler* and *Spectator*, before Kirckman and Defoe, the theory holds, we had romances; after them we had novels. Let pass *Jacke Wilton* and suchlike writings, let pass Howeurs *Familiar Letters*; novels were at first *nouvelles*. But journalism of those days was a composite of many things—among others, of "characters"; of tales old and new retold; of passing anecdotes and current events set down for current interest. Here, then, was a *melange*, if not yet a blend, of history and memoir with fiction.

And what of drama? Did not the novel also succeed the *drama*, and in point of mere popularity and general influence supersede it? In another sense, did it not carry forward from a point where drama had halted? The outworn comedy of manners, abortive sentimental comedy, homely tragedy that would be, and mere melodrama that was—all these seem to have devised whatever they had of worth to the novel, which revitalized as it merged them. It is not an accident that Marivaux and Fielding had tried their prentice hands on drama. Out of drama, its stage tricks and conventions, trite situations, stock characters and stock motives, Fielding in particular⁹ helped to fashion a new thing, the so-called "novel of manners," which in his hands was tragi-comedy, and in the hands of Balzac and Thackeray was to become comi-tragedy.

So I think my case strong enough historically; it is even stronger genetically. Every novel is in some sense a history: not merely that it is a more or less unconscious record of its times, different from other literature in being more circumstantial, but that it is a conscious record of things that happened, or are supposed to have happened—definitely somewhere, definitely once-upon-a-time. No record merely, such as chronicle might be, but ordered narrative of events, that is, of successive actions culminating in outcomes. And it is worth remarking that fictitious record has often pretended to a belief similar to that evoked by actual record—that what is said to have happened did really happen, the novel, however, asking acceptance on the face of the record rather than through verification. But the novel is history not more in record, or the pretense of record, than in the web of discourse, the texture of its concatenated incidents, their sequence and casual or causal interconnection. Hence the propriety of the titles, *The History of Tom Jones*, *The History of Arthur Pendennis*. The novelist is in his way a historiographer.

But does the word "history" in such a use mean more than biography, more than is implied in the title, *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy*? If every novel is a history it is perhaps so in a private rather than a public sense, in the sense

of biography. There is of course no biography that is not more than a biography; the point is that upon the wider web of general, perhaps public, incidents there runs the pattern of private concerns and personal fortunes. Biography, in short, calls from the reader a biographical interest, that is to say, an interest in the work regarded as a history, whether feigned or verifiable, and for an identification of this interest with interest in at least one individual career, or with episodes of it. Now every novel has this and more: it has a biographical interest of the more intimate sort, for every novel is in some sense and to some degree a transmuted memoir. It is not indeed autobiography in the common meaning of the word, that of authentic personal record or self-revelation, even though certain master-novels such as *David Copperfield* and *Childhood, Boyhood and Youth* are said to be such; nor again necessarily in the sense of first-personal approach, first-personal identification of character and story, a type of novel in which a personal experience is, or is feigned to be, recast by a reminiscent imagination and in which hero and narrator are one, as in *Esmond*, *Kidnapped*, *John Inglesant*. Such novels are obviously transmuted memoirs, since they adopt memoir attitude and method. But every novel, whether first-personal or not, awakens an intimate kind of interest in personal history as personally experienced; it admits us, the readers, to a personal relationship, it persuades us to forego our cold detachments, to slip our skins, like werewolves, and more or less identify our lives with another life or with other lives, as the author has done; and this holds true whether the story centers in one person or is diffused through many.

This, personal interest, this much at least of the legacy of the memoirs and of such fictions as *Gil Bias*, survived even in the historical novel; it survived in *Ivanhoe*, in *Notre-Dame*, even in *Salammbô*. There is this difference: the memoirist, the personal novelist, said, "I did (felt, thought) thus and so"; the novelist more frequently says "he" or "she" or even "they"—sometimes "I," accepting the limitations of "I" for the sake of the greater vividness in action or character. But

first-personal or third-personal does not matter otherwise. The *personage* or mere figure of history suffers a change in *kind* if he become the *person* of memoir; if he become the *character* of fiction his personality undergoes no essential change but of more complete unification through limitation, expansion, intensification, and so forth.

But if every novel is a history and to some extent a memoir, so too is every novel a drama. Drama and novel are almost interchangeable terms. It is for each to give us the meaning of life in the terms of life. Now, if we deal in maxims and disquisitions, we may indeed give the meaning of life, but not life itself. Thus when Montaigne says, "There is no man so base minded that loveth not rather to fall once than ever to remaine in the feare of falling,"¹⁰ he gives us a meaning comparable to that of Maupassant's *Coward*, whose essence is, that to endure the fear of death may require more courage than to face death itself. Were we told the mere anecdote of an impertinent affront, an insult, a challenge, a suicide, we should be informed, we should be shocked, but we might not be enlightened, save perhaps by some purely arbitrary and probably unsatisfying interpretation of our own. Maupassant's interpretation satisfies us because it permeates his story, transfuses it artistically, and also because it is such interpretation as we all seek; it colors for every man the history of every day's experience, and the seeking, haply the finding, form a large part of the social activity of what we call intelligence. For, says William James,

The whole universe of concrete objects as we know them, swims ... for all of us in a higher and wider universe of abstract ideas that lend it significance. As time, space and the ether soak through all things, so (we feel) do abstract and essential goodness . . . strength . . . justice ... soak through all things, good, strong . . . and just.¹¹

That very palpably is philosophy: it provides the basis for such a saying as Montaigne's, which also is philosophy, and for such a story as Maupassant's, which is poetry. *A Coward* is poetry in that it is meaning caught in the fact; it gives us both the sense and the meaning of experience, an aspect of

"the human use that has been made of the world, . . . the fountain of all significance."¹² But every abstract statement is a witness to an irreparable loss, for "in every human interest the rationale, the exposition, is weaker than the vital meaning of the thing as retained in feeling or instinct,"¹³ Who does not feel such a loss in the substitution of the mere gist-sentence for the story? But were *A Coward* dramatized we should feel no such loss: we should still have the meaning of life in the terms of life.

History, to be sure, has its meaning—meaning in the terms of fact, or there could be no art of history. Did not Sir Edward Creasy write of the decisive battles of the world, interpreting fifteen great military crises in the light of their significance to civilization? The whole of Gibbon's history, says Raleigh, was anticipated and condensed by Hobbes in a single sentence—"If a man considers the original of this great ecclesiastical dominion, he will easily perceive that the Papacy is no other than the ghost of the deceased Roman Empire, sitting crowned upon the grave thereof."¹⁴

But the meaning of history is external and, so to speak, impersonal meaning. Memoir too has its meaning, but it is personal and particular, only shadowing out, as it were, toward the general. A general meaning at one with personal meaning and worked out in individual careers: that is what is meant by the meaning of life in the terms of life; in this is the identity of novel and drama.

It follows that their structural principles are identical, however different their special methods and economies: in each the meaning takes shape in action and culminates with event; in each the unity of action is in some segment of human experience at one with the display of its meaning. Even many technical devices are common to both: cross-purpose, coincidence, provision,-reversal, recognition, even devices of design, such as division and massing. Every means of one is available for the other, save that each must proceed in its characteristic way, the one strictly by the give-and-take of dialogue, the other mainly by continuous narrative, like history.

A novel, then, is history, it is memoir, it is drama; not a composite, but a fusion. History, or let us say experience,

whether personal or general, tends to dramatize itself; it tends to shape itself to ends; it seems at times to clarify itself as it goes, in episodes unified in their outcome, perhaps suggesting unity of interpretation; it seems to align its forces and apportion its matter accordingly. "Things tell a story . . . they play into each other's hands expressively . . .* . events fall into dramatic form, with a start, a middle, and a finish."¹⁵ Furthermore, history tends to generate common-form stories, thus meeting epic and romance halfway: for the story of Achilles there is one of Samson, for the story of Jack the Giant Killer there is one of David and Goliath. Legend that springs so readily from traditional history is at the very heart of fiction, privy to the secret of its poesy, remolding nearer to the heart's desire the sorry scheme or no-scheme of things. And if indeed the modern novel is sprung from the loins of journalism, there too the process of poesy is evident. The early journalists cared little whether news were far-fetched or near at hand, fresh or familiar, nor to draw a sharp line between fact and fancy. Side by side with what we should call news stories they set ancient or modern tales, sometimes fantastic, oftener exemplary. In such a tale how easy for a kind of osmosis to take place, for actualities to become permeated with charm, with wonder, and with meaning!

Memoir, or first-personal history, shows much the same tendencies. It too is potential drama, for it is grounded in the same struggle of human free-will against material necessity, which, says Carlyle, "not only is Poetry but is the sole Poetry possible."¹⁶ And if we do not often find the stuff of legend in the action of memoirs, in the actors at least we may sometimes discern the legendary hero—some dwindled Odysseus in a Burton or a Borrow, some Telemachus in a Ben Franklin who would

.... make mild

A rugged people, and by slow degrees

Subdue them to the useful and the good;

some Faust, perverted or frustrated, in a Cardano or a Henry Adams. Still, the dramatic tendency of memoir is feebler and,

as it were, more capricious than that of history, for memoir inclines to be episodic. But it is a poor memoir that will not bring some episode or episodes of a career into line with some phase or phases of personal significance; occasionally there will be complete harmony of design, resulting from the significant adjustment of the bent of personality to the trend of incidents; and fundamentally this is all we demand of plot. Then memoir becomes of its own force a novel; personal history has dramatized itself. History, memoir, drama; history and memoir blended in drama—in this is the poesy of fiction; this is the novel's peculiar way of "submitting the shows of things to the desires of the mind."¹⁷

What shall supply the imaginative heat necessary to this fusion? I answer, the sense of significance. Significance, like other words of large import, is hard to define; it is of vague and even doubtful meaning. Suffice for the moment to consider it as the equivalent of literary meaning; meaning, as literary art characteristically embodies and conveys it. Its ground, to repeat, is "the human use that has been made of the world,"¹⁸ whereby significant associations attach themselves to oft-repeated experiences, thus endowing objects and actions—often very common ones—with poetic qualities. From such associations imaginative preferences arise, as of necessity; selections and rejections are inevitable, and inevitably in accordance with the sense of significance. All the potentialities of this sense of significance are in the imaginative sympathies awakened and responsive. In fiction, these may make for the projection of a philosophy reasoned out and coherent, or they may indicate nothing more tangible than an attitude to life. But the philosophy, the attitude to life, will be imbued with the persuasions of temperament, if the result is to be poetry, a true "making."

The spark that sets all aflame is the perception of significance. This perception—it has already been implied—is of something more than bare translatable meaning, or gist, or essence. For that purpose the word "signification" would serve better; "significance" suggests essence of some particular

importance, essence with an exponent of value. This, if less distinct than the mere gist, is far more distinctive; for, emanating from the attitude to life, it takes its slant from the individual talent. Where a true "making" appears, the value will be found latent in an imponderable overplus of significance. As against the merely rational sense of the fact—the mere essence is no more than that—this overplus gives us, in Pater's phrase, the imaginative sense of the fact. Success in conveying this makes, to the initiated reader, all the difference, and the question of its authenticity is not arguable; to him it is the sure sign that fusion is complete.

This fusion is accomplished through fictional "distancing." I adopt, or adapt, Mr. Edward Bullough's term, "psychic distance," a necessary factor in all art, whether in the making or in the appreciation. He cites a suggestive analogy. At sea a mist will sometimes settle down upon the waters, not only enveloping the ship, staying its progress, and perhaps isolating it, but as by magic transforming it and all its relations to practical fact. Unless terror and the will to escape seize upon the passenger he will find himself out of gear with all practical ends: the voyage and its destination, the ship's business, his very relations with crew and fellow-passengers will veritably have suffered a sea-change into something rich and strange, for all these concrete facts and attitudes will now be realized in a new and enhancing distance. Of like character is the attitude the artist adopts to his subject, the appreciator to the work of art; it is the inevitable difference, slight, it may be, but determining, between practical and poetic experience, for unless the subject be duly and appropriately "distanced" there will be no art, but only transcription. This distance has nothing to do with feet and inches.

Far and forgot to it is near,
Shadow and sunlight—

are not the same, truly, but sometimes subtly interfused to cast "the light that never was on sea or land"; for distancing consists in evoking and maintaining imaginative belief.

"Separating the object from oneself by putting it out of gear with practical ends"¹⁹ is the first step in the process; it entails the recognition that the picture is a picture, the poem a poem, the symphony a symphony—to be taken as such, each on its own terms and never as a deceptive substitute for an actuality. But this seems to me only the beginning, negative at best. What must follow is the positive act of imaginative focussing: so removing and placing the subject, so training the light of imagination upon it, as to create the illusion of reality, which yet is felt, however dimly, to be illusion.

This principle applies of course to all narrative, to history as well as to fiction, for every reader of history should know that he is getting not the facts but a record of the facts, and not a complete record, at that, but one artfully selected and composed. From him as from the novel-reader an act of faith is required, and this act of faith is complex, having a static and a dynamic mode or aspect: there is the faith-state of acceptance, which is initial and persistent, and there is an active faith which is not merely "the substance of things hoped for," a "mode of ideally grasping a coming experience,"²⁰ but an energy, a sympathetic participation in events and what brings them to pass, their occurrences, their sequences and results. He who would practice or enjoy the art of narrative must lay his wager, play to win. But the application to fiction is peculiar, for the "distance" is not the "distance" of history. To each the paradoxical rule applies, the "antinomy of distance," which requires "the utmost decrease of distance without its disappearance."²¹ But the difference is not one of degree. The writer can feel himself and the reader can be brought to feel as near to (or as far from) the narrative of fact as to the narrative of fiction. But fictional distance is a special kind. Its faith-state is one of make-believe, both a negative thing, a passive acceptance, a "willing suspension of disbelief," and a positive thing as well, a will to believe, an acceptance for the purpose of the story, which is always a poetic purpose, the satisfaction of "the desires of the mind." The other mode of faith, the will to imagine, which in narra-

tive is a vicarious will to live, must be of one quality with this make-believe, though of different function. For as the faith-state must underlie and support the active faith, so can the active faith alone justify and fulfill the faith-state; it must spin the fabric of illusion with the thread furnished it, silk or cotton, in such a web and of such a pattern as the 'stuff permits or demands.

Solely in the imaginative belief evoked does the illusion of fictional reality differ from that of historical reality. There have been histories made out of whole cloth, which, artistically speaking, are none the less histories. And there are verified actualities which are fiction in spite of themselves: they seem so typical and illustrative, to be of such appeal, that they elicit belief in them as stories. Hence it is in vain to say that "every novel carries its own justification or its own condemnation in its success or failure to convince the reader that the thing was so,"²² Rather must the reader be persuaded that the thing was so though not so, that the thing was not so and yet was so. In this respect, as in others, "poetry is all history could never be,"²³

History, personal narrative, drama; these three blended in imaginative distance—here is the formula for the poesy of fiction. This is that characteristic fusion of typical and fit material under imaginative heat, of such nature as to produce what we call a novel or a story. Poesy it is, a far projection of that older art of romance, for it is the novelist's high calling, as it was the romancer's, to strike some balance in the account between our doing and our dreams, meanwhile seeking on its own account some clue in the labyrinth of our human predicament.

THE WILLING SUSPENSION OF
DISBELIEF

BY
BERTRAND H. BRONSON

THE WILLING SUSPENSION OF DISBELIEF

I HAD BEEN ENGAGED in chasing Farmer Larkin's calves—his special pride—round the field, just to show the man we hadn't forgotten him, and was returning through the kitchen-garden with a conscience at peace with all men, when I happened upon Edward, grubbing for worms in the dung-heap. Edward put his worms into his hat, and we strolled along together, discussing high matters of state. As we reached the tool-shed, strange noises arrested our steps; looking in, we perceived Harold, alone, rapt, absorbed, immersed in the special game of the moment. He was squatting in an old pig-trough that had been brought in to be tinkered; and as he rhapsodized, anon he waved a shovel over his head, anon dug it into the ground with the action of those who would urge Canadian canoes. Edward strode in upon him.

"What rot are you playing at now?" he demanded sternly.

Harold flushed up, but stuck to his pig-trough like a man. "I'm Jason," he replied defiantly; "and this is the Argo. The other fellows are here too, only you can't see them; and we're just going through the Hellespont, so don't you come bothering." And once more he plied the wine-dark sea.

Edward kicked the pig-trough contemptuously. "Pretty sort of Argo you've got!" said he.

Harold began to get annoyed. "I can't help it," he retorted, "it's the best sort of Argo I can manage, and it's all right if you only pretend enough. But YOU never could pretend one bit."

—Kenneth Grahame, *The Golden Age*.

BUT IT is OF THE UTMOST MOMENT to more than poetry that, instead of regarding the imagination as a bright but ineffectual faculty with which in some esoteric fashion poets and their kind are specially endowed, we recognize the essential oneness of its function and its ways with all the creative endeavours through which human brains, with dogged persistence, strive to discover and realize order in a chaotic world.

—John L. Lowes, *The Road to Xanadu*.

I

“**K**NOW YOU what it is to be a child ?” asks Francis Thompson in his essay on Shelley. “It is to have a spirit yet streaming from the waters of baptism; it is to believe in love, to believe in loveliness, to believe in belief; it is to be so little that the elves can reach to whisper in your ear; it is to turn pumpkins into coaches, and mice into horses, lowness into loftiness, and nothing into everything, for each child has its fairy godmother in its own soul; it is to live in a nutshell and to count yourself the king of infinite space; it is

To see a world in a grain of sand,
And a heaven in a wild flower.
Hold infinity in the palm of your hand.
And eternity in an hour;

it is to know not as yet that you are under sentence of life, nor petition that it be commuted into death.* From a poet we need not look for an exhaustive analysis of the mind of childhood. But Thompson here isolates and eloquently describes for us that faculty, possessed by children in so eminent a degree, which lies at the back of all artistic endeavor—the faculty which finds its least controversial name in the homely term, “make-believe.” Without attempting to analyze the general scope and nature of this function, we are immediately concerned with the persistence of it in man, the son of his father the child; for without its continuance into manhood, modified though it becomes, there would be no such thing as artistic or poetic faith.

Shades of the prison-house begin to close
Upon the growing boy:—

he retires to a form of make-believe which leaves him less exposed to the cold eyes of a world prone to ridicule. The transition is hinted in the passage from *The Golden Age* which stands at the head of this paper, in the contrast between Harold and Edward. The older child, already contemptuous

of the games of young childhood, takes refuge in the hidden citadel of daydream. Here for a time he enjoys an expansive and magnificent existence. Though bounded in a nutshell, he is still the king of infinite space, and advances through his vast demesne in a perpetual triumph. Gradually, however, the claims of the outward world crowd upon his attention; he himself becomes his nearest and dearest enemy, explodes his pleasure-dome, relegates the remnant of it to the portion of weeds, and goes on his way for the most part unrejoicing. Not entirely, however. If man accords no mercy to his waking dreams, there remain his dreams in sleep, over which he can exert little conscious control. And, for his permanent consolation, there abides within him the ineradicable impulse to art; wherein,

Though infand far we be,
Our souls have sight of that immortal sea
Which brought us hither,
Can in a moment travel thither,
And see the children sport upon the shore,
And hear the mighty waters rolling evermore.

In the artist as creator, the faculty of make-believe persists with evident strength, though "years that bring the philosophic mind" bring also "the inevitable yoke," to discipline it and turn its chaos to cosmos. In the ordinary man, the recipient of the work of art, the faculty persists in considerably diminished degree and modified form. We may think of it in him as wearing more of a negative than a positive aspect. He is willing to grant the artist's imaginings temporarily and for the specific end of artistic enjoyment, provided certain conditions, as yet undefined, are fulfilled. The position of his consciousness, if these conditions are satisfactorily sustained, has been described with finality by Coleridge in a phrase happily indicative both of its positive and of its negative sides: the "willing suspension of disbelief."

Coleridge, when he struck out the phrase, was thinking chiefly of the particular problems of the *Lyrical Ballads*. Though the state of mind thus described would seem to be

requisite also to the successful experiencing of other arts, in poetry, undeniably, and especially in dramatic poetry, the willing suspension of disbelief reaches a point of subtle and profound importance as an element of the aesthetic experience. If any light can be thrown upon its activity in this field, we may find the explanation of it implicit in our analysis wherever else it occurs. We shall have enough to think about, at any rate, and the inquiry will gain in distinctness, if we confine our examination for the most part to the single art-form of dramatic poetry.

It seems evident at once that the state in question depends upon the collaboration of the poet and his recipient. They proceed together, as it were, along a pass as precarious as "the unsteadfast footing of a spear," the poet assisting the other, by the encouragement of example and by means of certain precautions of which the recipient may be unaware, to maintain a nice balance. It is only, however, by the latter's initial act of faith, that he could have advanced a step from *terra firma*. His state of mind, then—if the comparison be not profane—is almost that of him who said, "Lord, I believe: help Thou mine unbelief," He is conscious of the drop below, but he does not look down so long as his confidence in the poet remains. The poet, in his turn, must have foreseen his follower's tendency to fail, and must lend present support in moments of danger. Obviously, it is fatal if the poet betrays his trust and shakes the footing. But the figure must not stand for an analysis. Since it is apparent that the balance is the result of a joint contribution of artist and recipient, it will be useful to consider each aspect separately. By examining the elements of the experience from the point of view first of the recipient—and then of the artist, we may perhaps "rehearse," as Bully Bottom would say, "more obscenely and courageously."

The initial act of faith which is the conscious and voluntary contribution of the recipient need not, I think, detain us. What has been said of childhood will serve in some measure

to account for our readiness to grant the postulates of imagination, and beyond that point it is here, perhaps, scarcely profitable to pursue the matter. We may say, simply, that we wish to believe. We know that if we can follow the artist successfully to the end, our experience will have been augmented and enriched.

Our active and conscious contribution, then, is plain. But the passive element in the experience, the continued suspension of our disbelief, is much more difficult of explanation. Before we attempt to analyze the peculiar quality of this element, it will be profitable to determine the precise point at which it enters the aesthetic experience. Now the aesthetic experience, it is generally agreed, is composed of ingredients which fall into two main classes, emotion and idea. Both are conveyed to us through the sense-stimuli which the work of art presents. Of the two, emotion would appear to be the more fundamental to the art-experience. But only when both are present does there seem to be a demand for the suspension of our disbelief. In the simplest aesthetic experience, only emotion, without idea, is aroused by the sense-stimuli—emotion vague and unmeaning. But in the abstract arts of architecture and music it is possible for the art-form to become highly complex without the introduction of definite idea in the sense intended. The emotions here arise immediately from the sense-stimuli, without the intervention of idea, though the emotions themselves may have become richer and more powerful, as when aroused by a Bach fugue, and may in turn evoke idea. The art-form has become complex, but the art-experience remains still comparatively simple, or pure. And it is evident that in such an experience the suspension of disbelief plays no part. Emotion vague and unattached to idea has its own artistic validity, and neither belief nor disbelief is relevant to it. On the other hand, if there were an art (as unless it be mathematics I believe there is not) which evoked only idea without emotion, it would be found there also, one would think, that the experience of it made likewise no demand upon the suspension of disbelief. For the mind will

accept any concept—that is, will think any concept, or series of concepts, presented to it—if it be not asked to accept a certain conclusion relative to that concept or those concepts. (A conclusion, such as a mathematical Q.E.D., is irrelevant to the experience of idea as art.) To the unbaptized reader, who experiences no *aesthetic* emotion from it, the work of Gertrude Stein might very well typify such a hypothetical art. (It is granted, of course, that this is grossly to jnistreat Miss Stein, who would not willingly be divested of emotion.) Strip—if you can—the line, "Toasted Susie is my ice-cream," of all associative emotion, consider it merely as a series of concepts, and you have such an ideational art as we desiderate. Such an art is, perhaps, no art, but it was invoked to show that the element of ideational content in the art experience does, not by itself introduce the element the quality of which we are attempting to analyze. If then the suspension of disbelief is not requisite to isolated emotion or to isolated idea in the art-experience, it must enter when emotion and idea are present in combination.

In the complex art-experience, idea and emotion are inextricably involved and interwoven. Here, every idea which the sense-stimuli of a work of art arouse in us evokes simultaneously a concomitant emotion. But if we examine their interrelation rather carefully, some light may be thrown upon the state of mind which we are seeking to understand. This interrelation may be regarded from the point of view of the artist's mind, or from the point of view of the recipient's mind. Both the idea and its attendant emotion may conceivably be the same in the mind of the recipient as they are, or were, in the mind of the artist—and this is the consummation devoutly to be wished. But it is quite possible, nay, probable, that the idea or the emotion, or both idea and emotion, may be considerably altered in passing from one mind to the other. If so, the chances are that the work will fail in greater or less degree. What are the conditions which make for the successful passage of idea and emotion from artist to recipient?

Let us concern ourselves first with our own reactions in

experiencing a successful work of art, say a poetic drama making large use of supernatural and romantic material (the two adjectives Coleridge uses in this connection) and having therefore most need of the suspension of our disbelief. In sitting down before the play, we have expressed our initial acceptance of the author's postulates. Besides granting the usual conventions of the theater, we are ready tentatively to allow whatever beings the author chooses to represent, to accept their speaking in verse, and their existing in any medium or locality that may be designated. So much for the initial act of confidence. If the author redeems that confidence, his media—the characters represented—convey to our minds through eye and ear, ideas and emotions similar to, if not identical with, the ideas and emotions which he experienced in creating the play, or rather, a selection of those ideas and emotions. The ideas and emotions which we re-experience in this way, however, we do not at the moment feel either as the author's or as our own. By the impulse which is a familiar phenomenon in art—the impulse generally called *Einfühlung*—we project them back into the media. They are our ideas and emotions, yet not ours. They seem to us to have an autonomous existence in the play, yet they are continuously subject to something within us which, if it be offended, is at any moment ready to refuse its assent to the validity of that existence. Can we determine the nature of this "something," and the grounds upon which it pronounces its judgments?

To describe this function with reference only to ordinary consciousness would be insufficient. Although it does refer to actual daily existence, the judgments which the function pronounces are not limited to the waking life. They refer as often as not to another state of being. Artistic judgments are not logical judgments in the ordinary sense of the term "logical," any more than the material of a work of art is necessarily drawn from the workaday world. Indeed, it is our will that ordinary consciousness—our conscious judgment in the usual sense—in part suspend its customary operations; though after

we, its masters (to speak in parables), have given it the initial command, we lay upon the poet the responsibility, not exactly of throwing sops to Cerberus, but of keeping him in a kind of hypnotic sleep. Our conscious judgment is never actually asleep; if it were, the work of art would have failed, for we should mistake art for reality and act accordingly. Neither is it awake in the ordinary way; for if it were, we should not experience the work of art as true, and therefore valuable: our disbelief in it would prevent its due effect. But the function in question seems to be placed at the threshold of ordinary consciousness and to cast in two directions for the material of its judgments—the direction of everyday waking life and that of a state of being more akin to sleep. Genius, we say, in witnessing a play like *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, is a law unto itself; but we pass a judgment upon the working of that law—a judgment which refers to a state beyond ordinary consciousness—in the very act of being convinced of the validity of the play. How true! how just! we cry at the most extravagant point of the poet's imagining.

In discussing this function, I have eschewed thus far the use of the term "censor," though the figure of Cerberus strongly suggested it. "Censor" is associated with a modern technical jargon, and I am anxious not to draw upon myself the weight of an attack against psychoanalysis. But it is impossible, I am afraid, to avoid a brief excursion into the dubious realm of the unconscious, because the road we are following plainly loops into it at this point. We shall, I trust, emerge before we become contaminated. The risk, at any rate, must be run, in the hope of getting further light on the interrelation of idea and emotion, and the possible bearing of this relationship upon the suspension of disbelief.

in

Professor Lowes, in *The Road to Xanadu*, gives an illuminating account of what he calls "the deep well of unconscious cerebration." Few readers can have perused his book thoughtfully without gaining the conviction that there is more in this

matter than psychoanalytical moonshine. Ample evidence is there provided of the sinking into this "well," of facts, ideas, phrases, which later are drawn up by the poet, transformed, from "hiding-places ten years deep," and more. The "deep well," as Professor Lowes describes it, is a mysterious reservoir in the poet's subconscious mind, in which all the facts that sink into it suffer a sea-change by a process of disintegration and recombination.

One after one [he writes], vivid bits from what [Coleridge] read dropped into that deep well. And there, below the level of conscious mental processes, they set up their obscure and powerful reactions. Up above, on the stream of consciousness [which is all that we commonly take into account] they floated separate and remote; here in the well they lived a strangely intimate and simultaneous life. . . . Facts which sank at intervals out of conscious recollection drew together beneath the surface through almost chemical affinities of common elements. . . . [And again,] the more multifarious, even the more incongruous and chaotic the welter, the freer play it offers to those darting and prehensile filaments of association which reach out in all directions through the mass.¹

Professor Lowes, it will be noticed, says nothing of emotions. It was no part of his cautious and scholarly purpose to theorize without evidence. But is there not evidence enough to take us a step farther? No idea seems to be utterly devoid of a concomitant emotion, however slight. Is it not altogether probable that idea and emotion sink together into the well? Is it not, indeed, likely that the emotional penumbra of an idea may itself provide one of those "darting and prehensile filaments of association" which reach out in all directions to draw together and connect incongruous ideas? Are not such emotional associations conceivably some of the "common elements" which compose the "almost chemical affinities" of disparate and separate ideas? It is perhaps impossible to demonstrate the truth of this hypothesis, not only because emotions are hard to seize and fix, but because they also doubtless undergo a sea-change in their new contexts before they are drawn up again with the transformed ideas out of

the "deep well" But its acceptance would serve further to account for the magical potency of the spell cast by the poetry which comes from subconscious depths. Certainly, at least, it is absurd to suppose that all emotion connected with ideas is the dower of the waking consciousness at the moment when those ideas rise above the level of consciousness. If anyone doubts the existence of an emotional life in the deep well, he need only question his own nightmares for the proof of it.

If what has just been said throws any light upon the interrelations of emotion and idea, it may also, I believe, serve to illuminate the suspension of our disbelief in experiencing the work of art. What in part the function which I have hesitated to call the censor pronounces its judgment upon is the validity of the interconnection between idea and emotion in the art-experience. We have seen that this interconnection transcends logic. Likewise, the judgment passed upon it is, as has been said, not a judgment which is subject solely to the laws of the workaday world. The function which permits the suspension of disbelief seems to take into account the laws, if laws they may be called, which govern the realm of the unconscious. It borrows something of the character of the material which it is judging. Our assent to the poet's imagining has a certain similarity (which is yet not identity) to the assent which we accord to our dreams while we are still asleep. Now it may be that in dreams there is nothing haphazard, that every element of a dream has its sufficient reason for entering as it does; this may indeed explain why we are convinced of its truth while we are dreaming. But the laws of dream are not logical as idea; they seem rather to look to a logic of emotion for their *modus vivendi*. The apparent incongruity of a dream, that is, results in part from the presence in it of symbols which are incongruous as idea but harmonious in the relation of their emotional affinities. So, too, in a work of art which holds our disbelief in suspension, in spite of wildly romantic or supernatural material, we are convinced while we are experiencing it that here also there is nothing incredible, nothing which we can refuse to grant as right and

proper, though the conscious judgment alone would pronounce it the veriest nonsense. We accept a poetic play, for instance, because the experience of it assures us that it proceeds in obedience to laws of truth which lie deeper than, even as they contradict, those of ordinary consciousness. Again, just as, in dream, emotion must body itself in palpable form—in visual or auditory images—so must it be in the drama:

as imagination bodies forth
The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing
A local habitation and a name.
Such tricks hath strong imagination
That, if it would but apprehend some joy [an emotion
unembodied],
It comprehends some bringer of that joy [the emotion
attached to a symbol].

We who witness the play, however, retranslate our sensations into idea and emotion. If there were not set up in us the conviction that those ideas and those emotions were deeply and inevitably, if not consciously and logically, associated—their "cunning resemblances" so "interwoven" as "hardly to be discerned"—and that, further, they proceeded and were sustained in this intimate concatenation, the suspension of our disbelief would give way and the work of art would have failed. But if we are convinced of the validity of such an interrelation of idea and emotion in the play which makes use of such "supernatural or romantic" material, we pronounce our conviction necessarily, it would seem, by reference to standards which have their roots as well in the unconscious as in consciousness. For the judge who declares the truth or falsity of a proposition which proceeds by other laws than what are called "natural" laws must have some intelligence of those other laws.

IV

It is only, it seems to me, by adopting some such assumptions that we can explain the suspension of our disbelief in experiencing a play like *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The judgment of ordinary consciousness would reject the play out of hand. There scarcely seems, when we regard it with attention to logical detail, any method in the madness here exhibited. Love, for example, in this dream world follows upon the dropping on eyelids of the juice of "a little western flower," and no more is needed to annul it than the juice of another herb applied in the same manner: the effects, if not again crossed, are permanent in either direction. But such things as this are only mildly surprising when we consider the way in which, in this romantic comedy, the ordinary world and the fairy world are made to rub shoulders.

Usually, when these two worlds come into close contact, one or the other of them suffers a sad loss of prestige, and the loser is generally the kingdom of Faery. But in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* fairies are brought into contact with the grossest reality, and neither side appears a whit the worse, or less itself, for the experience. And in spite of the varied elements of which the play is composed, and the apparent royal carelessness with which they are blended, there is, as we read or see it, no undue strain at any point upon our poetic faith.

In this play, it is at once observed, three different centers of activity, or spheres of interest, are present. There is the court group of Theseus and Hippolyta, to which also the lovers belong; there is the very different world of the "hempen homespuns," "which never laboured in their minds till now"; and there is, lastly, the delicate and fanciful world of Oberon and Titania. Each of these groups is self-complete, and each differs from the others as water and earth and air differ; yet each is compelled by the poet's genius into a contact with the other two which does no injury. The fairy world is the most dominant, and into it from time to time are drawn, with results sometimes transitory, sometimes permanent, mem-

bers of the other two spheres. We are not, it is worth emphasizing, to regard the experiences of these pixy-laden mortals as only their dreams. The things which befall have an actual, physical occurrence while those who experience them are awake. Bottom's translation, the play's grossest challenge to daily existence, takes place without his having any acquaintance with slumber. Oberon, Titania, Puck, and their followers are all authentic and palpable beings, whose dwelling, wherever else it be, is assuredly not in the minds of the other characters.

What perhaps illustrates most clearly the deep fidelity of Shakespeare's inspiration to other laws than those of consciousness, is the way in which his characters comport themselves in the face of their extraordinary experiences. In our dreams, we all show a tendency to go about the doing, in the most matter-of-fact way, of things which seem to us, when we are once again awake, the veriest madness. We no longer proceed according to those restraining principles of fitness, decorum, conventional duty, or even physical possibility, which govern us in our waking life. Our sense of incongruity is in complete abeyance. Now, in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, we see the characters, without being asleep, acting in the preposterous fashion characteristic of dream. But, much more than this, and affording the clearest evidence of the deep harmony in the play of idea and emotion, and of the way in which these things rise together out of "the well"—evidence, I say, of the inwardness with which this play has been conceived—is the fact that we can observe in these characters, while they are doing preposterous things, a similar removal from their consciousness of this sense of congruity and incongruity which is the flywheel of daily existence. Ordinarily, as the satirist has told us,

The feathered race with pinions skims the air;
Not so the walrus, and much less the bear.

But here the accustomed truths no longer hold; and those characters who come at all under the direct influence of Faery move in more than one element without conscious inconven-

ience. Lysander, for example, thinks it nothing strange that his love for Hermia should vanish in a moment to make way for an inflamed worship of Helena: "Why should he stay," he asks the former, "whom love doth press to go?" He is not unaware that he did love Hermia an hour earlier, but that love is "like to something he remembers a great while since, a long, long time ago." A parallel experience in Demetrius' consciousness does not impress the latter as at all out of the way. But Helena and Hermia, who are untouched by Puck's magic, regard it as monstrous and incredible, and act accordingly. In like manner, Titania finds her outlandish infatuation very beautiful, at the time, and natural; and Bottom—but it is impossible to do justice to the superb assurance with which this most sufficient and cosmopolitan of weavers accepts the love of the dainty queen of fairies. He does feel moved to remark that he sees little reason in it; "and yet," he adds, "to say the truth, reason and love keep little company together nowadays." Never was a weaver so at ease in Zion: he discovers a ripe knowledge of the duties one may require of a fairy valet, and a discriminating taste, in his other capacity, as touching "your good dry oats" and your "sweet hay." And we, too, realizing that the ordinary conduct of the characters is conventional, grant these extraordinary matters our full assent as we see the characters' matter-of-fact acceptance of them. It is only in retrospect that any of these persons realizes the singularity of his experiences. And then, because the discrepancy between the waking and the sleeping consciousness is an observed and familiar fact, each naturally supposes that it could only have been in sleep that he had been so wrenched from ordinary conduct. "My Oberon! what visions have I seen," cries Titania. But Oberon knows better. Similarly, the lovers recount what they denominate their "dreams," on the way back to Athens. And Bottom, musing within himself upon his experience: "I have had a most rare vision. I have had a dream, past the wit of man to say what dream it was: man is but an ass, if he go about to expound this dream."



Hitherto, we have been concerned primarily with our own response to a successful work. What occurs in our minds, however, depends, it need not be said, upon what occurred in the mind of the poet. But let us heed Bottom's warning. The critic, too, perhaps, is "but an ass, if he go about to expound" the working of a poet's unconscious inspiration. All that we can do is to note that poets are aware of that gulf in their natures, and of the part it plays in their creation in relation to the part played by the conscious mind.

The functions of the poetical faculty [according to Shelley in the *Defence of Poetry*] are twofold; by one it creates new materials of knowledge, and power, and pleasure; by the other it engenders in the mind a desire to reproduce and arrange them according to a certain rhythm and order, which may be called the beautiful and the good. These functions, as the context of the passage indicates, are equivalent to inspiration and composition. But inspiration, according to the poet, is unpredictable: "Poetry is not like reasoning, a power to be exerted according to the determination of the will." Inspiration, Shelley says, is a power which arises from within . . . and the *conscious* portions of our nature are unprophetic either of its approach or its departure. Could this influence be durable in its original purity and force, it is impossible to predict the greatness of the results; but when composition begins, inspiration is already on the decline, and the most glorious poetry that has ever been communicated to the world is probably a feeble shadow of the original conceptions of the poet.

Shelley's categorical "inspiration" is a magician's wand which tends to root the susceptible reader to the spot, and to set the poet off as an unapproachable hierophant. A passage from a living poet, Robert Graves, will help us to break the spell. Mr. Graves describes the work of inspiration as follows: The poet is consciously or unconsciously always either taking in or giving out; he hears, observes, weighs, guesses, condenses, idealizes, and the new ideas troop quietly into his mind until suddenly every

now and again two of them violently quarrel and drag into the fight a group of other ideas that have been loitering about at the back of his mind for years; there is great excitement, noise and bloodshed, with finally a reconciliation and drinks all round. The poet writes a tactful police report on the affair and there is the poem.²

Except in mood and terminology, this description is not radically different from Shelley's "evanescent visitations of thought and feeling, sometimes associated with place or person, sometimes regarding our own mind alone, and always arising unforeseen and departing unbidden, but elevating and delightful beyond all expression." Shelley leaves the origin of inspiration unexplained: "as it were the interpenetration of a diviner nature through our own"; while Graves finds the origin in a conflict of emotional ideas. Both, however, make it clear that, whatever the origin, inspiration trafficks with "the deep well of unconscious cerebration": a quarrel involving ideas which have been loitering about at the back of the poet's mind, says Graves; a power, says Shelley, "not like reasoning," and unpredictable by the conscious portions of our nature. Coleridge, too, in his description of the poet "in ideal perfection," speaks of his possession of a "synthetic and magical power," which, "first put in action by the will and understanding, and retained under their irremissive, though gentle and unnoticed, control, *'axis efferatur habenis*, reveals itself in the balance or reconcilment of opposite or discordant qualities."³ This power Coleridge calls the imagination; its effect as he describes it is perfectly analogous to Professor Lowes's account of the drawing together below the level of conscious recollection of multifarious and incongruous facts by a process of disintegration and recombination.

Poetry, then, in the words of Shelley, "makes us the inhabitants of a world to which the familiar world is a chaos." It affiliates the incongruous; it reconciles the opposite and discordant. But it does so, not by a process of conscious reasoning, but by drawing its materials in part at least from depths of the mind where "unconscious cerebration" has

revealed the unsuspected affinities of the apparently incongruous. Conversely, then, the evident inevitability, to our deeper sense, of what is to our conscious mind the apparently casual, is a test of the poetry of genuine inspiration. And this test is a matter, partly, of the presence or absence of the suspension of disbelief in the art-experience. In a sense, therefore, the "suspension of disbelief" denotes an underlying active belief in another, perhaps deeper, kind of truth.

The consciousness by itself, it is apparent, is unable to determine the laws which control the world of the unconscious. If a poet try consciously to imitate the modes of operation of unconscious cerebration upon its material, the chances are overwhelming that the fraud will be patent to sense. We may see such an attempt in Warner's "Shepherd's Dream," from *Albion's England*. In that poem, Robin Goodfellow makes an appearance with "a round of Fairie-elves and Larres of other kind." These creatures all gambol about a shepherd, who lies in a state such that "though he wakes, he sleeps." He is charmed by the sport; but finally the bare-breeched Robin, of bigger bulk and voice than the rest, seats himself upon the shepherd's face and discourses at length, to his companions, on the sad decay of the good old times in England when Popery ruled the land. He has sold himself, as it were, to the devil, but still keeps traces of his lost allegiance. At the end of his rather tedious sermon, he rises, "girding out a scape or twain." The shepherd's eyes are cleared thereby, the fairies have vanished, and the shepherd goes *off* to seek "some," as the poet has it, to whom to tell his strange story. Reading the poem, we find our poetic faith vanishing as soon as Robin begins his discourse. It is evident that he is only a mouth-piece for the poet's waking opinions. Warner has heard of Robin from others, but has never seen him, and, though the reader grant everything at the start, the poet's conscious reconstruction will not serve. Robin with his moralizing preserves nothing of reality in Warner's handling. But when Puck, in *Midsummer Night's Dream*, cries "Lord, what fools these mortals be!" it is another matter.

Warner's effort is admittedly clumsy. Drayton's *Nymphidia*, I think, is an example of the best which the poet, relying on the conscious judgment alone, can do in this kind. The *Nymphidia* has charm, and is deeply indebted to Shakespeare, besides. But it is less the work of imagination than the conscious elaboration of certain postulates. The success of the poem evidently depends in great part upon the reduction, by the intellect, of very human experiences and emotions to a diminutive size, according to a scale as exact as anything in *Gulliver's Travels*. It convinces us in somewhat the same way as does the demonstration of a mathematical hypothesis, because there is no inconsistency in it. The hypothesis, here, has traces of the "well" about it—the "well" of Shakespeare, perhaps—but the slightest inconsistency would ruin the poem, for it is the conscious intelligence that judges its success. But work which is truly born of the unconscious may have such surface inconsistencies in abundance, yet preserve to us our poetic faith. *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is full of them. Think of the conduct of Egeus, who in the first scene of the play calmly leaves his daughter alone with Lysander, the man of all men whom he knows that he has on her account most reason to fear. Think, too, of Helena, doing for love the very thing which love and common sense combined should warn her not to do: running at once, not at all with self-sacrificial intent, to warn Demetrius that Hermia, her successful rival in his affections, is about to flee from Athens.⁴ Of the *Nymphidia* it may be added, moreover, that the reduction in size erects an insuperable barrier to the presence on equal ground of mortals and fairies together. There are no mortals in Drayton's poem: they would trample the fairies out of existence.

VI

The examples of Warner and Drayton may serve to emphasize the quality of Shakespeare's inspiration. When poetry uses matter outside the realm of conscious experience, and directs it according to a plan which refers only casually to the laws of everyday life, and, though inexplicable, seems to

us nevertheless inevitable, compelling the suspension of our disbelief—then that poetry must surely have risen from depths below the threshold of ordinary consciousness. But just as the judgment we pronounce in suspending our disbelief makes reference to two sets of standards, those of the conscious and those of the unconscious states, so must the poet also, before he finally dismisses his work, judge it by a double set of standards. He must take the spontaneous product of his imagination and subject it to a conscious control. This, of course, does not mean that he must subdue the inspiration into complete accord with the laws of our waking state. But he should eliminate the "surface faults" and "unintelligible thought connections" to which, in Mr. Graves's words, "spontaneous poetry untested by conscious analysis is liable." For only so will the inspiration be rendered easy enough so that other minds will feel its cogency; only so will it attain universality and compel from us the suspension of our disbelief. It is of this conscious analysis that I was thinking when I said earlier that the poet took certain precautionary measures to ensure our acceptance of his imaginings. He has himself been the recipient as well as the creator, and has gone over the ground beforehand to smooth our path, so that we may not stumble. Such precautionary measures may be of various kinds, and may range, in degree of importance, from superficiality to the point where they touch the verge of conscious, and border on the work of unconscious, cerebration. It is not difficult to find in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* examples of such conscious elaboration, and three of these, each on a different level, may be briefly indicated.

It is no accident that certain external aids are employed more lavishly in this than in almost any other of Shakespeare's plays. Larger use of instrumental and vocal music is made here than in any other play except *The Tempest*, and the exception emphasizes Shakespeare's conscious and deliberate employment of music when dealing with supernatural material. Again, the conscious use of rhyme in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* seems attributable to the subject-matter quite

as much as to the-play's early composition. Rhyme, as everyone recognizes, is an artificial aid, but an aid nevertheless, both in its obvious and in its subtle uses, in compelling our acceptance of illusion. A "linked sweetness" is more seductive than a simple sweetness: it trains one on.

The second example is more significant of Shakespeare's art. Without minimizing the great and fundamental dissimilarity which exists between the spheres that comprise the *dramatis personae*, he has made our credence surer by skilfully emphasizing points of likeness. His fairies, though they preserve in his hands a gossamer lightness, have many human qualities. They eat and sleep, love, hate, grow jealous, even as mortals do. We may recall, in this connection, Coleridge's words about the *Lyrical Ballads*:

it was agreed, that my endeavours should be directed to persons and characters supernatural, or at least romantic; yet so as to transfer from our inward nature a human interest and a semblance of truth sufficient to procure for these shadows of imagination that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment, which constitutes poetic faith.⁵

The size of these creatures, though we must suppose that they can change it at will, must ordinarily, by the conditions of stage performance, be about the same as that of men. The elves, we may suppose, are smaller—about the size of small children. But Titania, according to the jealous Oberon, has had to do with Theseus, and she is able without difficulty to wind Bottom in her arms while she kisses his "fair large ears" and coys his "amiable cheeks." This is not that Queen Mab who drives her "team of little atomies athwart men's noses as they lie asleep." That infinitesimal being never came on any stage. She was, too, though much more consciously realized, much less inwardly conceived than Titania. She belongs with Pigwiggen, and the court of *Nymphidia*.

While he makes us feel the fairies' essential humanity, Shakespeare also heightens the imaginative qualities of those mortals who are drawn into the fairy sphere. Two of them are lovers, and therefore, as Theseus reminds us, "of imagination all compact." As for the third—not to call him lunatic—he

has certainly more than a little of the poet. Bottom, indeed, "hath simply the best" imagination "of any handicraft man in Athens," or elsewhere. He displays the poet's protean ability to be all things and all men. He will discharge any part, from lofty "Ercles' vein" to a monstrous little "Thisne! Thisne!"; or he will play you the lion—subspecies King'or Sucking Dove. He would claim kinship with that John Keats who "pecked about the gravel" with the bird outside his windows. Bottom, it is very evident, has "drunk the milk of Paradise."

But last, and verging upon unconscious inspiration, is the kind of humor which Shakespeare chiefly employs here. It attends largely upon the dream-like conduct of the characters: it is, generally speaking, humor of which the humorists themselves are unconscious. Except to Puck, for example, who is in the secret, the fun in the Puck-ridden scenes is apparent not to the participants but only to the detached but interested onlooker. And the comedy we enjoy in the company of the mechanicals is noteworthy for the same reason. Nothing in the earlier plays, it may be remarked, prepares us for it. Launce and Speed, the Dromios, Costard, and the rest, are all overweeningly conscious of their comic abilities. But Bottom and his companions are a total reversal of this practice. Scarcely one of them makes a deliberately witty remark at any time. They have no sense whatever of the absurd disparity which yawns between their rendition of the tedious brief tragedy of Pyramus and Thisbe and any other rendition. Our mirth is excited solely by the perfect gravity with which they do and say incongruous things, in a world which to them wears no aspect of comedy, and where the slightest lapse from propriety of conduct might, for aught they know, be enough to hang them, "every mother's son." The appropriateness of this sort of humor to the character of the play seems so privy to the original inspiration as to be almost a part of it: consciously planned or not, it bears the mark of inevitability. And certainly, with all the other operations of genius which have excited our admiration in this play, it makes for our acceptance, for the willing suspension of our disbelief.

VII

There is a consideration which remains, however, to suggest questions to our minds—questions which can only be touched upon, because they would carry us far beyond the scope of this inquiry. It may happen that the artist does everything possible to prompt and support the suspension of disbelief, and that the recipient is tentatively prepared to accept what is set before him, and yet all will not do. There is a notorious sentence in Pepys's Diary, under date of September 29, 1662: "To the King's Theatre, where we saw *Midsummer Night's Dream*, which I had never seen before, nor ever shall again, for it is the most insipid ridiculous play that ever I saw in my life,"

Now, if this were no more than one of the crotchets of the good Samuel, we might find it merely amusing. But the stage history of the play seems to indicate that the attitude was more than a personal idiosyncrasy. During the second half of the seventeenth century, and throughout the eighteenth, the words of Pepys might stand for the considered judgment of most critics. For more than a hundred and fifty years *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was silly and ridiculous stuff to the general; and the Wife of Bath's statement became true in a wider sense than she intended: "now" could "no man se non elves mo." We are forced to conclude that the suspension of disbelief, then, may be dependent upon yet another condition: the habits of thought, the mental temper, of the period in which the individual recipient happens to live.

We, on the opposite side of the "Renascence of Wonder," can only regard the myopia of Pepys's generation as a singular phenomenon. It is interesting to observe that in Hazlitt the wheel has come full circle. Speaking of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Hazlitt says:

All that is finest in the play is lost in the representation. . . . The ideal can have no place upon the stage. . . . The imagination cannot sufficiently qualify the actual impressions of the senses. . . . Fancy cannot be embodied any more than a simile can be painted;

and it is as idle to attempt it as to personate *Wall* or *Moonshine*. Fairies are not incredible, but fairies six feet high are so. Monsters are not shocking, if they are seen at a proper distance. When ghosts appear at midday, when apparitions stalk along Cheapside, then may the *Midsummer Nights Dream* be represented without injury at Covent Garden or Drury Lane. The boards of a theatre and the regions of fancy are not the same thing.⁶

It is not because the play is "insipid and ridiculous" that Hazlitt cannot accept its performance, but because it has reached such a depth of imaginative truth in his mind that representation only falsifies instead of realizing. The inner experience has now become the only standard of judgment, whereas, before, the sole criterion had been the outer experience. But both criticisms are false from the author's standpoint. Shakespeare's fairies were never intended to be romantic to the degree in which they were so to Hazlitt. Lascelles Abercrombie has some admirably clear sentences on this subject. What has come on the stage with Shakespeare's fairies is, he says,

a kind of life that is exquisitely impossible because it is exquisitely perfect, but nevertheless has an air of supremely vivid reality; the point being, however, that, in spite of that assured air, we are not for a moment required to take these fairies for a version of anything that does or could exist outside the enchantment of a play. We are not required to take them for anything but what they so apparently are ... they do not demand any further belief of us than the belief that we can imagine what we please in terms of the life we know.⁷

Now this, it seems to me, is what Hazlitt did not perceive. In his mind they became beings of another order; beings like those diaphanous or amorphous shadows which peopled Shelley's mind, for example. Language is taxed to represent them; the symbols of sense can only hint at their nature, because that is inconceivable in terms of the life we know in the senses. Shakespeare would not have been so rash as to attempt to introduce such beings upon the stage; but it was perhaps inevitable that a romantic should so read them.... For ourselves: "I hope we have reformed that indifferently with us, sir[s]."

"WISE ENOUGH TO PLAY THE FOOL"

BY

ROBERT P. UTTER

"WISE ENOUGH TO PLAY THE FOOL"

IF I ASK YOUNG STUDENTS of Shakespeare to explain the purpose and effect of the grave-digging scene in *Hamlet*, they tell me uniformly and glibly that its purpose is "comic relief," and that its effect is to relax the emotional tension of the audience that the tension may be tightened again by the scenes following, or that it enhances by contrast the tragedy of the finale. If I challenge the explanation, they are hopelessly bewildered. To them it is an axiom because they have read it in a book, or have had it from a high-school teacher who has read it in a book. But it is not a self-evident proposition which needs no demonstration. It is an axiom only if an axiom is a tentative law to be discarded when it has outlived its usefulness. My analysis of the comedy scenes in Shakespeare's tragedies, and those in some others, tells me that the notion of "comic relief" was never better than a stop-gap, and has now become something worse, namely, a means of concealing a gap which should be explored. It may be true that comedy scenes in tragedy sometimes afford a helpful relaxation of tension that approaches the point of emotional anesthesia. It is probably true that some tragic effects are enhanced by contrast with adjacent episodes of comedy. But it is no less true that to most critics, playwrights, readers, and playgoers, the idea of "comic relief" is a traditional rationalization of a tradition.

To take the place of this conventional explanation, I offer a tentative theory for test and use, to see how many of the facts it will fit. It is that comedy episodes in English tragedy may be more easily accounted for by two traditions of the early phases of English drama, namely, those of realism in the Church drama of England, and of the use of characters "inferior" in the Aristotelian sense; and by the fact that laughter and tragedy blend harmoniously when they are used together in a relation of organic unity.

The emergence of realism in Italian painting from the symbolism of early Christian art is attributable mainly to the wish of the Church to make its congregations feel that the things which happened in the Bible stories happened to everyday people like themselves. In the Little Cloister of the Dead in Santa Maria Novella in Florence there is a fifteenth-century lunette of the Nativity in which the shape of the fresco brings the angels close to the flock of the shepherd to whom they are announcing their glad tidings. The shepherd's dog is snarling at the nearest angel as if he were trying to protect the flock from the swoop of a hawk, and the shepherd, a clearly recognizable Tuscan peasant type, drags the dog back by the collar and looks up, listening to the heavenly message. The dog snarling at the angel is an effect of humor that makes the story human. To the same effect is the episode of the stealing of the lamb in the Second Shepherds' Play of the Towneley Cycle, and other well-known episodes, the obstinacy of Noah's wife, the grunting and swearing of the workmen setting up the cross. This last brings the great tragedy home to the man in the street, making him feel that men like himself had their part in it. The forefathers of the grave-diggers in *Hamlet* stood close to the heart of English tragedy as soon as tragedy was English. There Shakespeare found them, and the fact that he used them there seems to me to require less explanation than would be called for if he had tried to evict them.

The idea that Aristotle's theories of tragedy and comedy had an effect on the practice of introducing comedy scenes into tragedy is one which it would certainly be difficult and very likely impossible to establish by proof; for the present it rests on no firmer ground than antecedent probability. In the *Poetics*, Aristotle seems to say that comedy is the portrayal of an inferior class, and elsewhere he seems to set up a system "according to which perfect virtue belongs to the ruler only, whereas otherwise it varies with social rank. A slave has practically none, and the case of an artisan is very doubtful."¹ Precisely what Aristotle meant is less important

here than what playwrights and critics have thought he meant. Certainly such principles as these which translators find in his work point clearly enough to the general division which has been observed in our literature until comparatively modern times, a line between tragedy and comedy which plebeians were not expected to cross; they remain on the comedy side, and leave the realm of tragedy to royalty, nobility, and gentry. Doubtless in the very complicated history of the English drama many influences besides that of Aristotle went to the making of this division—I believe his influence would weigh little against that of the tradition of realism I have mentioned—but the fact remains that it is seldom mentioned by students of the drama save in his name. But the tradition of Aristotle is of long standing, and all its weight would be upon dramatist and audience to suggest a comedy episode whenever a lower-class character was introduced for any purpose. The playwright would not inevitably introduce such an episode; whether he did so or not would depend on a number of conditions, such as how strongly he felt the tradition, and how well or ill such an episode fitted the work in hand. A tradition is not a universal law; neither its existence nor its influence is disproved by exceptions. To the two traditions I have cited exceptions come readily enough to mind, but how do the numbers and importance of the exceptions rate with those of the examples which conform to the traditions, counting down through the centuries from Mack the Shepherd at one end of the list to Will Rogers at the other? Five hundred years of use have rooted these traditions like an oak beside which "comic relief shows as the merest mushroom.

If the theory of comic relief in tragedy is sound, one can hardly avoid accepting the necessity of tragic relief in comedy. Ludwig clearly suggests this without seeming to see the absurdity of the suggestion. He explains that comedy stands to tragedy in the relation of red to green, and says that "if one does not alternate red with green, the red becomes green, so tragic will become comic, and comic boresome." If this is sound, all comedy is boresome. *The School for Scandal* is a

failure because Sheridan did not understand his business well enough to sandwich in some Macbeth material, and Goldsmith should have introduced something Oedipus-like into *She Stoops to Conquer*.

The theory of comic relief is a theory of opposites. Those who speak of relief speak also of contrast. Ludwig, in the passage I have just mentioned, says that "the comic is the natural enemy of the serious," and then, after the comparison with red and green, goes on to explain that the art of mixing them is like the art of inoculation with "the comic cow-pox so that the small-pox, that is the shift to the ludicrous, shall not get in." Such metaphors as these are the nearest I find to explanation of the process by which comedy and tragedy may be successfully mixed. Expressions of dramatic theory down through the centuries are sprinkled with passages in which puzzled critics have striven to lay down the law with an air of outward assurance covering uncertainty of mind. Sir Philip Sidney declares categorically that it is neither right comedy nor right tragedy "to thrust in clownes by head and shoulders to play a part in majestical matters with neither decencie nor discretion. . . . I know," he adds cautiously, "that the ancients have one or two examples," but he does not say he likes it, obviously he does not know how it is managed, and it is clear that he advises no one to attempt it. Between this and the expletives of Voltaire's comment on *Hamlet* we have all degrees of intensity in the expression of the idea that a fellow has no feeling of his business if he sings at grave-making. Not the least interesting is that of Hamlet himself, who agrees with the others in objecting to effects which though they "make the unskillful laugh cannot but make the judicious grieve," and to those who "will themselves laugh, to set on some quantity of barren spectators to laugh too. . . . That's villainous, and shows a most pitiful ambition in the fool that uses it." The difference between critics is mainly in the intensity with which they express the opinion on which they are well agreed, that the practice of mixing comedy and tragedy is a dangerous one, successful

only in the hands of the judicious, the gentleman, the writer of sound taste. All condemn it, including Hamlet; many practice it, including Shakespeare; of all who practice it, Shakespeare is most successful. If the better part of humor is discretion, can we find a lesson in discretion from the master of it?

I believe that Shakespeare was successful in mingling laughter and tragedy because he did not look upon them as "opposites," but felt a relation between them more like that of organic unity. No one could have written Shakespeare's tragedies or Shakespeare's comedies who regarded "the comic as the natural enemy of the serious," any more than a man could live a normal life who regarded his stomach as the natural enemy of his brain. The whole spirit of Shakespeare's comedy as we may distill it from his work is against such a concept. It is a spirit which is more than the "intelligent laughter" of Meredith as wisdom is more than intelligence. It is more than the Comic Spirit of Meredith in that its humanity rises above the malign, and it is broader than the Comic Spirit in that its essence is humor rather than wit. Imaginative humor, wise humor, is as far as possible beyond the mere sense of the ludicrous. It flashes swift and far down the longest vistas. It belittles the finite, and gives us glimpses of human behavior against the background of eternity rather than of time; such glimpses as we get when the astronomer shows us spiral nebulae that look like whirls of dust in the road, and tells us that every speck of star dust in the whirl is as big as a solar system; and again when the physicist reverses the glass and shows us a solar system in every atom of a speck of dust. In such glimpses relativity becomes humor indeed, or humor relativity, and we see ourselves in an infinitely expanded Brobdingnag and an infinitely diminished Lilliput at one and the same time, a perspective in which things dwindle and swell humorously into revealing proportions. It is a spirit which excludes self-pity because so far as is humanly possible it excludes self. It cannot abolish the distinction between self and others, but it blurs the dividing line. Self-pity it feels to be unworthy, and pity is something one scorns to

accept from another; it is therefore unworthy to offer to another. If we feel with true generosity or sympathy we are as pitiless for others as for self. Our spirit of humor, then, excludes pity and includes sympathy. It excludes fear or terror, but not necessarily reverence or awe. Genuine fear is a sort of paralysis which no artist has any wish to induce in us, for it excludes all else, all aesthetic feeling, all appreciation. Tragedy, then, which can be successfully shaded with wise humor, might challenge the terms pity and terror, and offer as substitutes sympathy and awe. It is completely humane in that it is never more than human. However it may arm the spirit of man against the effects of human ills, it cannot protect him from encountering them. It cannot, any more than can religion, set man free "from the dangers of life, and the bondage of-sin, and the fear of death forever," because it cannot turn imperfect into perfect, human into divine, man into god. And no author who has enough of it to use it in his characters will yield to the temptation to try to draw a perfect character out of the imperfection of a human mind. The spirit of humor does not make a man superhuman, but it goes so far toward it as to keep him always conscious of his humanity. If he laughs at mortals, he must either laugh at himself or deny his mortality. If he laughs at himself, he must laugh at his tragic moment. A man possessed of this spirit does not proclaim the bludgeonings of fate and boast of the captaincy of his soul. If fate is a thing to laugh at, "as calamity's your only cuckold," so also is the gesture that solemnly defies it.

Drama, be it tragedy, comedy, or tragical-comical-historical-pastoral, which is blended with this humor is proof against those that have wisdom, and against the empty laughter of fools, in the sense that neither can destroy it. It encourages all and sundry to laugh with it in such wise that they cannot laugh at it. At every turn it anticipates the *reductio ad absurdum* which is the implacable foe of gravity. It reduces to the absurd extremes to which it does not go. It accepts generalizations for what they are worth, but is not disposed to inflate them into universals. It avoids the ex-

tremes of sense and nonsense; on the one hand the abstractions of pure reason, of which it is itself the best critique; on the other the random nonsense of the empty-minded verbalist who shoots in all directions at once and never drives a shaft to a preconceived mark. It is not denatured thought, for it is concerned with nature in man. It is not nonsense, it is significant; it is not barren, it is fertile; it brings forth fruit when it falls not on barren ground.

Such, as I see it, is the spirit of Shakespeare's comedy. I hope to show it item by item distilled from *Twelfth Night*, and fortified from *Romeo and Juliet*, *Midsummer Night's Dream*, and others.

In all this there may be nothing newer than the terms in which I have tried to express it. The praise of folly is older than Erasmus, and the praise of Falstaff is older than Hegel. Falstaff is the best example of the spirit I am discussing, but I will leave it to Hegel to call him the "absolute hero" of comedy. I am not philosopher enough to see how anything human can be in any philosophic sense "absolute," and Falstaff is nothing if not human. The example has been sufficiently discussed for the excellence of its folly, but I think there is still somewhat to say of wisdom. A freshman student studying the play for the first time asked me, "Don't you think that Falstaff is the most intelligent person in the play?" It seems to me that Shakespeare makes this obvious enough for any freshman to see. Professor A. C. Bradley sees that Falstaff is intelligent enough not to expect to be believed when he tells the story of the men in buckram, but he seems to miss what the freshman gets, namely, that Falstaff is wise enough to play the fool. Bradley says he sees no reason to reject the evidence that Falstaff ran nimbly and roared for mercy when the Prince and Poins attacked him, and that he (Bradley) cannot accept the suggestion that Falstaff really did know them all the time. There is reason enough for rejecting the Prince's account of Falstaff's retreat, if we wish; Falstaff has called the Prince a coward, and the Prince seldom has wit enough for any better retort than some form of "You're

another." Nor is there any reason why we shouldn't accept it, for it is just the way in which Falstaff would play the fool if he were wise enough to foresee the joke. In I, 2, as soon as Poins proposes the robbery the conversational behavior of the Prince and Poins is that of two wrestlers dodging about for an opening. Since neither will commit himself, Poins asks Falstaff to go out of hearing. Is Falstaff a fool that he does not know what they are up to? And would he be Falstaff if he did not allow them to make their own game that he might beat them at it? The joke on Falstaff and that on Francis the drawer are simple, worthy of the minds that conceive them, intelligible to the most elementary minds in the audience; they serve to emphasize the difference in degree of intelligence between Francis and Falstaff. Is it conceivable that Falstaff can miss the one directed to him? And if he saw the whole joke and had planned his way of meeting it, how would he have acted differently from what he does? In II, 2 he plays up to every phase of the joke as it develops. The Prince, Poins, and Peto are supposed in the opening lines to be hidden—"Shelter . . . stand close," When Falstaff enters, the Prince, with no stage direction, comes out of hiding and speaks to him, but retires again as soon as Falstaff asks for Poins. Falstaff perceives at once, if he did not know it before, that they are within hearing, and immediately begins to talk for their benefit, at first about Poins, whom he calls a rogue and threatens to kill; but in the next sentence, with no change of subject, he is obviously speaking of the Prince—"bewitched with the rogue's company . . . medicines to make me love him. . . ." I think nothing could account for this change but the stage business of Falstaff's catching a glimpse of the Prince in his hiding-place. Clearly Falstaff has either less intelligence than Francis the drawer, or more than the Prince, and any freshman can see which is the fact. If Falstaff has intelligence, he is playing up to the joke, point by point. He does no less if, as, and when he carries his guts nimbly away and roars for mercy. If he has intelligence he is simply telling the truth when he says, "By the Lord, I knew ye!"

If the Prince were intelligent enough to measure Falstaff's intelligence, he would probably have him put out of the way as a dangerous satirist—perhaps that is what he does in the end. One bit of satire on himself and his notions of honor, Hal certainly does not perceive. Hal seems to believe that deeds of honor are like money; all you have to do to get a supply is to let some one else accumulate them, and then take them away from him. Indeed, his profession of this principle is his very act of selling out to the campaign committee, his father:

Percy is but my factor, good my lord,
To engross up glorious deeds on my behalf;
And I will call him to so strict account
That he shall render every glory up,
Yea, even the slightest worship of his time,
Or I will tear the reckoning from his heart.

It is a thoroughly commercial figure, so commercial as to amount to satire in itself, but even Hotspur seems to admit that the idea is sound:

O, Harry! thou hast robbed me of my youth.
I better brook the loss of brittle life
Than those proud titles thou hast won of me

Falstaff, playing the better part of valor, has heard the bombast and seen the lofty gestures. The parody comes as promptly as we could ask. "He takes Hotspur on his back" and carries off the honors. When the Prince comes in, he naively rises to every point of Falstaff's joke as unconsciously as Falstaff did deliberately to his in the earlier scene. In solemn earnestness he declares that it was he who killed Percy. Falstaff tries the tactics of the tavern scene on him, but this is a serious matter, and taken seriously it staggers Lancaster's belief, it elicits from the Prince the grandest, most pompous gesture of all, the renunciation of the bag of empty honors that hangs at Falstaff's back. There is no one for Falstaff to wink at. John of Lancaster is hopeless; we know now why Falstaff says of him in the second part of the play that "a man cannot make him laugh"; he has had the

chance of a lifetime and couldn't see it. Falstaff is the only one in the play wise enough to play the fool.

As an embodied example of the spirit of humor, Falstaff is supreme, but an analysis of *Twelfth Night* yields us the theory of it set forth with an approach to system. The main expositor is Feste, who holds to the idea as a principle and enunciates it as a theory. His keynote speech is, "God give them wisdom that have it, and those that are fools, let them use their talents," The meaning of this, easily to be inferred from his consistent speech and behavior, is, wisdom which knows no folly is as complete folly as folly that knows no wisdom. Folly without wisdom is shown us at the rise of the curtain in the form of two examples of sentimentalism, one exhibited and the other implied. The first is Orsino, in love with love and with the food of love, believing, or trying to make all believe, that he is in love with Olivia. The second is the indirect impression he gives us of Olivia. If what he tells us of her is true, that she has taken a vow of seven years' retirement and daily mourning for her brother, she is no less the sentimentalist than he. The vow is two and a third times as sentimental as the sentimental vow that opens *Love's Labour's Lost*, which Berowne so realistically analyzes and so sentimentally subscribes to. Perhaps it is merely an "alleged" vow, protective diplomacy to fend off Orsino. By nature Olivia is anything but a sentimentalist. Shakespeare shows her looking toward sentimentalism in her following of a fashion, and brought back to herself by Feste.

Even before Feste appears on the stage, Maria has suggested that without wisdom folly is a barren thing. When Sir Andrew fatuously nominates himself as a fool, Maria leads him on from the dry hand to the dry metaphor and the dry jest. Rightly, I think, does the commentator (Kendrick) cite the passage from *Othello*:

Oth. Give me your hand.

This hand is moist, my lady.

Des. It hath felt no age, nor known no sorrow.

Oth. This argues fruitfulness, and liberal heart:
Hot, hot and moist.

Since this is clearly what the moist hand meant to Shakespeare and his time, it is not too much to assume that Maria means that Sir Andrew is the opposite, neither fruitful nor of liberal heart; his wit is barren, he is not generous nor of free disposition. Maria's measure is not so inclusive as Feste's, but, like his, it measures the value of wit by its fertility, discarding dry or empty fooling. This gives us understanding of the nature of the reproach in the next scene, when Olivia at first calls Feste a dry fool, and Malvolio a few lines later calls him "so barren a rascal."

Just before Olivia enters in Scene 5, Feste has declared his principle, "God give them wisdom that have it." For the sake of dramatic clarity—not in this instance "outrageous," for many a "wise" commentator misses it—Shakespeare has him repeat it in his last lines before Olivia comes:

Wit, an't be thy will, put me into good fooling! Those wits that think they have thee, do very oft prove fools; and I, that am sure I lack thee, may pass for a wise man: for what says Quinapalus? "Better a witty fool than a foolish wit."

Which citation of authority, by the way, would make an excellent parody a hundred years too soon of the "wise" note of Shaftsbury to the same effect. Feste has need of all his wit, for his lady's first words are, "Take the fool away." If she condescended to explain, she would doubtless say as she does to Viola some lines farther on that she is in no mood for lunacy. Feste gains his hearing by a speech that is either senseless or cryptic. I believe that, like many of his lines, it is a word to the wise, however it may seem nonsense to the commentators:

. . . Anything that's mended is but patched: virtue that transgresses is but patched with sin; and sin that amends is but patched with virtue. If that this simple syllogism will serve, so; if it will not, what remedy? As there is no true cuckold but calamity, so beauty's a flower

The generally accepted theory of this passage is that Feste is talking nonsense against time to put Olivia off her reprimand

for his having been absent without leave. As such it is not bad fooling, but it is none of the best, and after Feste's emphatic repetition of his principle we have a right to expect something better. A parson would at such a time preach to Olivia a sermon of consolation, with "wise" saws about sin and virtue, rising above calamity, and the evanescence of the idols of the heart. If Feste was educated to the Church, he has learned a higher wisdom since he left it. If it is possible to see in his remarks on sin and virtue the suggestion that "human nature is neither absolutely good nor absolutely bad," as does Hutson, they might bring to Olivia's heart (without the intervention of an idea) the feeling that the peace of her brother's soul was nothing to worry about. Grant that, and follow it with the feeling that calamity is a thing to laugh at, and that love like hers for her brother may be cherished in the heart like beauty which has passed from before the outward eye. This, suggested to the feeling but not said to the mind, might bring consolation as easily and as unconsciously as music might. Is this nonsense, or shall we allow Feste's boast that he wears not motley in the brain ?

Nonsense or wisdom, he gains a hearing by it, and goes on with his lesson in the wisdom of folly. As if he felt that she were already of the order, he says, "Good madonna, give me leave to prove you a fool"—not to make her one; merely to prove what he knows but she does not perceive. Then like a surgeon bold in his wisdom he cuts to the very center of the sore, and in two dextrous moves shows her that in mourning for her brother she is unworthily pitying herself. She appeals to gravity in the person of Malvolio, who naturally decides against folly. Olivia as judge reverses the opinion of the arbitrator, and accuses him of self-interest.

O! you are sick of self-love, Malvolio, and taste with a distempered appetite. To be generous, guiltless, and of free disposition, is to take those things for bird-bolts that you deem cannon-bullets. There is no slander in an allowed fool, though he do nothing but rail; nor no railing in a discreet man, though he do nothing but reprove.

Compare the philosopher (Hegel) on the characters of "true" comedy:

... a sort of greatness runs through them, a freedom and strength of individuality and superiority to external failure.

The echo of phrase and idea is such as to bring about the suggestion with which I began that there is here more exposition of theory than in the figure of Falstaff. Feste sees that his lesson has taken effect. He acknowledges the decision in his favor: "Now Mercury endue thee with leasing, for thou speakest well of fools."

Meanwhile, Malvolio has not spoken well of fools. His opinion seems to be that Feste has some form of dementia which will increase with age, and "infirmity, that decays the wise, doth ever make the better fool." Feste offers him the same lesson he is teaching Olivia: "God send you, sir, a speedy infirmity for the better increasing your folly"—that is, Malvolio mistakes gravity for wisdom, and needs nothing so much as to learn to laugh. Malvolio is too "wise" to see any point in such folly; he takes it for a poor variant on the crude retort, "You're another." He looks superciliously at both Feste and Olivia, and observes, "I marvel your ladyship takes delight in so barren a rascal." Could the poet have devised a better revelation of complete incomprehension of the wisdom of humor, or a more studied insult to the humorist? Barren, forsooth! Feste might be wise enough to let Malvolio stew in his own juice, but he is not superhuman, he has feelings, organs, and dimensions, and for him the words become Malvolio's tragic flaw.

Olivia, indeed, at first discredits Feste's fooling as sterile, "Go to, you're a dry fool"; but she has intelligence enough to see her mistake, and generosity enough to acknowledge it. Feste accepts as apology her "What think you of this fool, Malvolio, doth he not mend?" and finds complete satisfaction in her rebuke of Malvolio's self-love. He would have been even more highly gratified if he could have heard the terms in which she took Cesario's rejection of her frankly proffered

love. She shows Cesario her heart; "So," she says, "let me hear you speak."

Vio. I pity you.

OK. That's a degree to love.

Vio. No, not a grize; for 'tis a vulgar proof
That very oft we pity enemies.

OH. Why, then methinks 'tis time to smile again.

She has, we see, the gift of laughter, and it comes near to commanding our tears; if she had wept, we should have laughed at her. Here is the true picture of laughter as the best friend of tragedy, and the best possible picture of Olivia as a figure of true dignity. She can smile at her tragic moment. Bird-bolts are not cannon-bullets to her. She is "generous, guiltless, and of free disposition." Was Ben Jonson echoing this phrase when he wrote that Shakespeare "was indeed honest and of an open free nature"?

The value of the gift of laughter is the whole gist of *Twelfth Night*—set forth as Shakespeare characteristically sets forth his theme. He shows us the figure of Hamlet, for example, in the center of a group of characters each of whom is confronted with a problem which illustrates one aspect or another of the many-sided difficulty in which Hamlet finds himself entangled. In *Measure for Measure*, the experiences of Isabella, Claudio, Angelo, Juliet, Mariana, Lucio, even Pompey and Mistress Overdone, are factors in the complicated problem which confronts the Duke. Similarly in *Twelfth Night*, Olivia has as much as is humanly possible of the spirit of humor, Malvolio has none of it, Feste teaches it, Maria has the gift of laughter—but it is more malign than humane, "sportful malice" Fabian calls it. Viola is generous, guiltless, and of free disposition, and for Olivia she has sympathy, but—in spite of her words—as little pity as she has for herself. Sir Andrew is not wise enough to play the fool, his brain is all motley, a mere patchwork of bright, childish colors. Sir Toby's fooling is more or less like Feste's; his brain is blurred into motley by drink as well as by whimsicality, and he pities himself no more than he pities Malvolio—"That's all

one: has hurt me, and there's an end on't."—"Care's an enemy to life"; he does not take serious things seriously; cannon-bullets are all bird-bolts to him; his disposition is free. Orsino has nothing serious to take seriously—in this he is a companion piece to Sir Toby painted in opposite or complementary colors—so he builds his imaginary world of the abstractions of music, love, and melancholy. When something better offers, he is not slow to accept it. With Olivia, he is careful to keep to abstractions; he never seeks her presence, but worships the virtual image. That he does not take the worship of this image very seriously seems indicated by the fact that he does not propose a lifetime of mourning for it, not even seven years, when he must give it up, but realistically accepts the universe and Viola. Arrange the characters in their relation to one another, and they not only show the structural unity of the play, but all point clearly to the central theme, "God give them wisdom that have it; and those that are fools, let them use their talents." For those who can laugh at the wisdom of the play, it is the best of fooling; for those who can laugh only at its folly it is good; take it as it comes to you, for it is what you will.

If Feste were to give us a critique of the behavior of Orsino, it might be a match for Mercutio's critique of Romeo. Romeo and Mercutio, it is easy to infer, enjoyed the best of youthful companionship before Romeo began to languish fashionably after the "pale, hard-hearted wench," Rosaline. Even so, if Romeo were sincere and Rosaline generous and of free disposition, all would be well. As it is, all that Mercutio can see in the affair is the absurdity of a so-called love that drives the lover away from his mistress rather than toward her, for Romeo does not leap the wall into Rosaline's garden, rather he hides in the wood outside the city or shuts himself in his own chamber. Obviously, what Romeo cherishes is that within himself; not the human girl, but the spirit in his mistress' circle which he himself has conjured. It is an extreme which is the antithesis at once of all rationality and all sense of fact. Mercutio points it out by exhibiting the opposite extreme.

As is so often true of Shakespeare's men and women, Mercutio's first words are significant of his character. The party is on the way to the Capulet ball. Romeo affects his melancholy; he will not dance:

Give me a torch; I am not for this ambling;
But being heavy, I will bear the light.

Mercutio sweetly suggests that *light* would be a better cue for Romeo than *heavy*; he is taking himself too seriously; he needs a lighter touch.

Mer. Nay, gentle Romeo, we must have you dance.

Rom. Not I, believe me: you have dancing shoes
With nimble soles; I have a soul of lead
So stakes me to the ground I cannot move.

Mer. You are a lover; borrow Cupid's wings,
And soar with them above a common bound.

This is as surely what Romeo needs as Malvolio needs the increasing of his folly, but he is as unable as Malvolio to accept the suggestion.

Rom. I cannot bound a pitch above dull woe:
Under love's heavy burden do I sink.

Mercutio suggests that the metaphor is a heavy one for so tender a thing as love. Romeo challenges the adjective; rather is love too rough, too rude, too boisterous—as indeed it is for the fragile image mirrored in the surface of his mind. It seems then that the light touch is impossible to Romeo, at least in his present state, so Mercutio suggests the next best expedient; if the hand is heavy and cannot be schooled to lightness, the next best way is to "treat 'em rough"—"If love be rough with you, be rough with love." No use; Romeo continues to pity himself for imaginary sorrows; "The game was ne'er so fair," he says, "and I am done." Mercutio tells him that his grandsire phrase is the constable's own word, which irresistibly suggests to Shakespeare's readers what it would never have suggested to his audience, that like Dogberry Romeo is writing himself down an ass. Then Mercutio flies

to an extreme as far as possible from Romeo's, and applies to love a term which if he had spelled it in four letters as Chaucer does would have expressed beyond a commentator's doubt the realistic extreme of disgust at the romantic extreme of Romeo's clouds and vapors. Thereafter he systematically reduces Romeo's love to terms of physical realities to show that he has no illusions about it, and Romeo has naught else. This appears clearly in II, i, when Romeo has eluded Mercutio and Benvolio by going over the wall into the Capulets' garden. Mercutio, missing him, hopes at first that he has been wise enough to go home and go to bed, but Benvolio testifies to the contrary. As if in exasperation Mercutio calls and conjures, "Romeo! humours! madman! passion! lover!" and summons him by all the conceits of an artificial passion, all the catchwords of fashionable courtly love. Nothing stirs—"The ape is dead." Very well; here goes for something that will bring him to life:

I conjure thee by Rosaline's bright eyes,
By her high forehead, and her scarlet lip,
By her fine foot, straight leg, and quivering thigh,
And the demesnes that there adjacent lie. . . .

Benvolio is afraid that Romeo is within hearing (as indeed he is, but nothing to do with Rosaline can stir him now), and expresses mild apprehension of the consequences. If Romeo hears, it is no more than Mercutio wishes:

This cannot anger him: 'twould anger him
To raise a spirit in his mistress' circle
Of some strange nature, letting it there stand
Till she had laid it, and conjured it down;
That were some spite: my invocation
Is fair and honest.

Here is a plain enough figure for the physical act of love, together with a hint that Mercutio (who in the pages of Painter and Brooke "was of audacities among maidens as a lion is among lances") might attain with ease what Romeo longs for in vain. It suggests that Mercutio's prescription for Ro-

meo is the usual one for such cases. One editor who will neither print nor comment on these lines does not hesitate to publish Mercutio's earlier suggestion to similar effect, "Prick love for pricking and you beat love down," If such an editor must save his blushes he might still offer a sufficiently fair and honest interpretation of the lines before us, namely: "If Romeo had a spark of his proper self he would be angry at me were I to do the thing he himself does, make an imaginary Rosaline that will disappear if Rosaline shows her real self; my speech is fair and honest," When Mercutio in II, 4 gets Romeo to talking in such "fair and honest" terms, he feels that there is hope for him; "Why, is not this better now than groaning for love? now thou art sociable, now thou art Romeo." This is the play that Philarete Chasles calls exquisite as moonlight in an Italian garden, yet in it there are probably more than in any other one play of Shakespeare's passages that offend the unco guid. They belong here as fertilizer belongs in the garden. Flowers do not live on air. Love is of the body no less than of the spirit if it is a human thing. Romeo's "love" for Rosaline is a pale image projected from within himself on a wavering vapor that also comes from within. It is in I, 4 that Mercutio blows on it a sturdy and somewhat unsavory breath, "this sir-reverence love."

Still in vain. Romeo begins again on his pompous solemnity about nothing. Mercutio, in the patience of true friendship, tries yet again. This time it is the exquisite little symbol of Queen Mab, which is as truly a lyric as is Feste's sermon of consolation to Olivia, in that like music it might, if only Romeo were wise enough to play the fool, lead him without reason to feel the irrationality of his state, to feel that a dream waking or- sleeping is not a portentous thing ("that dreamers often lie") but a mere tickling of the brain; that the lover, like the courtier, the parson, the lawyer, the soldier, has only to scratch his head, and he may be able to cease from taking serious things seriously. "Peace, peace, Mercutio," says Romeo, "thou talk'st of nothing." As if in a vain hope that Romeo had caught the idea at last, Mercutio keys his

retort on the word nothing, and replies in eight lines that are a very miracle of lightness, floating on such words as dreams, fantasy, thin, air, wind, puffs, dew-dropping. Romeo sinks all this by hanging ponderous portents in the stars—he dooms himself to tragedy!

Mercutio's persistence is all in the way of patient friendship; Feste gives Malvolio only one chance. But it is almost as if his soul were as prophetic as Romeo's, for it is the very fact that Romeo's touch is neither light enough nor heavy enough to cope with the situation that brings Mercutio to his death. In II, 4 Mercutio hears of Tybalt's challenge to Romeo; he touches off Romeo's lack of realism in his present view of life, and raises the question, "Is he a man to encounter Tybalt?" He thinks not, and later, in III, i, forces the reluctant Tybalt to fight with him in hope of saving Romeo. On this scene Romeo enters, newly married to Juliet, newly made cousin to Tybalt. The commonly used stage business of this entrance is for Romeo to pause dramatically at sight of the impending fight, then to unbuckle his belt, hand it with rapier and dagger to his page, and motion the page off. Then he comes forward unarmed to stop the quarrel with fair words. This middle course is fatal; the situation calls for either a lighter touch or a heavier one than he is able to give it. If he had carried his rapier and dagger away himself instead of sending his page, he would have given Mercutio a fair chance to save him. If he had drawn his rapier and rushed in with the single purpose of killing Tybalt, he might at least have saved Mercutio. When the fighting begins, Romeo has not a rapier to part them with—"Draw, Benvolio; beat down their weapons." At last he rushes futilely in and causes Mercutio's death—"Why the devil came you between us? I was hurt under your arm." Exit the spirit of humor! Its proffered lesson was vain.

Mercutio's chief function in the play is to emphasize the qualities which Romeo has by exhibiting the qualities which he has not. If some of Mercutio's diction seems unfit for tragedy, it is because Romeo is the very stuff that tragedy is

made of. What is Romeo's "tragic flaw"? Mercutio shouts the answer through four scenes by exhibiting as conspicuously as possible the qualities which Romeo as conspicuously as possible lacks. It is not too much to say that Romeo's life is short because in the whole of it he never stopped to think. Mercutio opposes realistic common sense to Romeo's irrationality. And in the general symmetry of the play he serves to adjust some of the minor balances. If he came in contact with Friar Laurence he would be sure to display his extremes of fancy as a critique of Laurence's pure reason. The Nurse plays the fool, but not wisely; Mercutio balances her comedy of pure ignorance and inhumanity with comedy of humane intelligence and wit. His function is the spirit of comedy, and his is a key position in the rhythm of the tragedy.

Midsummer Night's Dream is a conspicuous exhibition of Shakespeare's spirit of humor, in that it makes *Romeo and Juliet* proof against laughter and itself proof against critics. If laughter could destroy sound tragedy, Pyramus and Thisbe would have driven *Romeo and Juliet* from the stage, for it is a *reductio ad absurdum* more complete than any mind but that which conceived *Romeo and Juliet* itself could have perpetrated. And it is a bold critic who will proclaim himself wise enough to play the analyst of it in the face of the inscription above its entrance more hopeless than the portal of Hell—"Man is but an ass if he go about to expound this dream." But perhaps—there is a way. Let us not "go about," but walk straight in.

The theme of *Romeo and Juliet* is the irrationality of love, and we are made to feel its beauty and its tragedy. In *Midsummer Night's Dream* the same theme is worked for folly and absurdity. Mortals think their love is rational. Fairies show us that it is not, and call mortals fools, even while they are exhibiting the selfsame folly. In fairies and mortals alike it is sheer lunacy. The whole play is in' the key of moonlight. Theseus talks of the moon in the very first lines of the play, and Hippolyta makes us see it again in the second speech. Thereafter it appears on almost every page, more persistently

than blood in *Macbeth* or lightning and gunpowder in *Romeo and Juliet*. The second speech of Theseus passes at first glance as a paradoxical conceit:

Hippolyta, I wooed thee with my sword,
And won thy love doing thee injuries;

until the persistent sounding of the theme of the irrationality of love makes us hark back to this as the first statement of it. The words are hardly out of his mouth before Theseus is called upon for judgment in a love case, a rational verdict on a case of emotion. He pronounces it on a rational basis, "Demetrius is a worthy gentleman," Hermia has a prompt rejoinder, "So is Lysander." Theseus is still rational; Demetrius is better by the weight of Egeus' preference, her eyes must with his "judgment" look. If "judgment" accorded with Hermia's feeling, she would no doubt be quite ready to approve it as a basis for love, since her case, at the time, is merely the opposition of her judgment against her father's; for the moment, she loves and is beloved. Helena, who is less fortunate, also seems to believe that Love is rational to the extent of his mental power. She says that "Love looks not with the eyes but with the mind," but believes that he has the mind of a child, and it is easy to deceive him.

Next come the fairies, who take themselves with portentous seriousness. I believe it is Shakespeare who gives us our concept of fairies as tiny beings who lie in a cowslip bell and ride in a hazelnut. This picture begins with Mercutio and goes on through the fairy scenes of *Midsummer Night's Dream* with reiterated emphasis till we cannot think of them as other than the little creatures who kill cankers in the musk-rose buds, war with rere-mice, and answer to such names as Moth and Mustard Seed, the merest atoms in the solar system. The first motion of these atoms is to proclaim their petty quarrel of jealousy in terms of cosmic disaster, fog and flood, frost and famine, the whole

progeny of evil comes
From our debate, from our dissension.

The quarrel would be petty anywhere; here it is ultra-microscopic—the solar system in the atom.

These atomic creatures bring about the sudden transfer of Lysander's love from Hermia to Helena—there can be no doubt about it; we see it done, and hear of it in line after line of the richest poetry in the language. But Lysander attributes it to pure reason:

The will of man is by his reason swayed,
And reason says you are the worthier maid.
Things growing are not ripe until their season;
So I, being young, till now not ripe to reason;
And touching now the point of human skill,
Reason becomes the marshal to my will,
And leads me to your eyes;

Titania is no less ready to rationalize her prejudice in favor of the ass-headed Bottom, though being a fairy she ought to know better:

And thy fair virtue's force, perforce, doth move me,
On the first view, to say, to swear, I love thee.

Bottom, for the moment, seems almost wise enough to play the fool: "Methinks, Mistress, you should have little reason for that: and yet, to say the truth, reason and love keep little company together nowadays." Puck, too, is a whimsical humorist, but he is not wise enough, for he seems to see no folly but in mortals, he does not laugh at himself or his kind, his jokes are barren rather than fertile. He is explicit in his preference for that which is without significance:

And those things do best please me
That befall preposterously.

He represents pure irrationality, and it is he who tickles the brain and brings about love.

I incline to think that *Midsummer Night's Dream* strains a principle of Hegel's to the cracking point, the principle that "genuine comedy" is determined by the question "whether the folly and restricted outlook of the characters of the drama

merely appear ridiculous to others, or are equally perceived as such by those persons themselves; whether, in short, the comic characters are an object of laughter only to the audience, or also to such characters (nur von den Zuschauern oder auch von sich selbst können ausgelacht werden)." Is *Midsummer Night's Dream* anything short of genuine comedy? And is there any character in it who laughs at himself as well as at others? It is true that a narrow ray of the "oblique light" illuminating only one small spot is not the best comedy. Probably it is equally true that an all inclusive, all pervasive laughter, like sunshine playing no favorites, shining alike on the just and the unjust, does make the best comedy. Such is the quality of the moonlight in *Midsummer Night's Dream*. The fairies demonstrate that mortals are fools. Shakespeare shows us that the fairies are fools. The audience is composed of mortals. The critic must laugh or write himself down an ass. All are genially included in the fellowship of "God send them wisdom that have it, and those that are fools, let them use their talents."

I will even go so far as to venture the assertion that the oblique ray of this spirit of humor will help to illuminate the major problem of Shakespeare, *Hamlet*. Critics of Hamlet's conduct, from the casual reader to the lifelong student of the play, are apt to say, some first, some last, and some all the time, that the trouble with him is that he thinks too much. One who doubts whether there is any such thing as too much thinking may be permitted to state the charge in other terms: the trouble with Hamlet is that he takes himself and his problem too seriously. If Hamlet were able to laugh at his tragic moment, he might, after the ghost has confirmed his suspicions, say, "Why then, methinks 'tis time to smile again." If he were consciously trying to laugh after such an emotional upheaval as the revelations of the ghost have caused him, the result might be such grotesquerie as is in his lines in I, 5 from the exit of the ghost to the end of the scene. His mind, heart, and spirit are thrown into a wild turbulence which no words but those of Shakespeare are

adequate to convey. In the last scene of Act V his spirit has regained its poise. The stages of the process are the story of the play. The shock curdles Hamlet's humor into vitriolic wit, an acid which he sprays on all about him to test their metal, and to test himself. Under guise of madness he breaks wisdom into motley speech, as the ruffled surface of a pool breaks reflections of sky, trees, and sand into elusive glimmers of sapphire, emerald, and amber. It is a process like camouflage, which carries the eye *off* on deceptive lines and forms which disguise true line and form. Hamlet adapts the method of his madness to the intelligence of his interlocutors. Every moron in the audience can understand him when he expresses his contempt for Polonius. As soon as Polonius is dead, he begins on Claudius. He carries the body of Polonius from his mother's chamber, and puts it under the stairs. As in the instance of Falstaff and the body of Hotspur, the originating impulse of this in Shakespeare's mind must have been to get the body off the stage, and it is an equally good example of the way in which Shakespeare sometimes blends necessary stage service into the harmony of the play. As we see it done on the stage we see it as a natural act of Hamlet's feigned madness, well simulated, just the silly-crafty thing a madman would do—hide the body instinctively, and then foolishly tell where it was. But on analysis we may see the method in his madness, and that as usual the method is irony—a little joke that Hamlet has to himself. His transparent subterfuge is an ironic echo of Polonius' foolish craft. Hamlet takes his body from one foolish hiding-place to another as Polonius *Was wont to go*, from behind the arras to under the stairs. Polonius is in the midst of a convention of politic worms; where could he, the underground worker, be more at home? If Claudius could read the parable he might guess that his politics are as transparent to Hamlet as Polonius', but he can't—"the body is with the King, but the King is not with the body." Then Hamlet gives Claudius the most contemptuous word in the language only verbally disguised in a dozen lines of metaphor. The King seems not to

get it—"What dost thou mean by this?" And Hamlet tells him to go to hell so plainly that not even he can miss it. The method of Hamlet's madness is like the method of Feste's folly. Break the wisdom into shapeless bits and shuffle them into an arrangement of motley; then see who has the eye to perceive the original pattern. It is like the method of modern painters of variously named schools who scorn the "representational styles" which appeal only to what they despise as the elementary mind. In the hands of the unskillful, these styles of painting are like mixtures of tragedy and comedy, they make the judicious grieve.

One of the things, perhaps the main thing, that Hamlet takes too seriously to suit his critics is death. Shakespeare devotes a whole scene to it just before the end, and when the scene is over the end is indeed near. Death is the theme of V, i, and round it as in the symmetry of the whole play are ranged various characters in various attitudes. The grave-diggers take it lightly. Hamlet's first word is a casual marking of the incongruity—"Has this fellow no feeling of his business, that he sings at grave-making?" and when Horatio attributes it to custom, "'Tis e'en so; the hand of little employment hath the daintier sense." The daintier sense of his own hand of little employment he so far overcomes as to take up the skull of Yorick and discourse upon it for many lines with only one of the exclamations of disgust which theretofore have been so frequently on his lips. He takes his cue from the grave-makers, jesting with them on their own theme and on their own plane. Their attitude is not that of the court, but it is sincerely their own, and does not anger him. Next come attitudes of form and convention. That of the priest has nothing to do with feeling; it is purely form, the form of the Church. Laertes' attitude is as surely dictated by the forms of the court (mainly euphuism), as that of the priest is by the forms of the Church, but its emptiness is a form intended to stand for excessive feeling. Hamlet has accepted the sincerity of unconventionality, but the insincerity of conventionality kindles him, as it has done before, and he

expresses his scorn of its absurd extremes by outdoing them under the guise of insanity. It is the last paroxysm of the turbulence of his spirit; in the next scene he is sorry for it, and expresses his regret. Then immediately enters fresh affectation in the person of Osric, whom Hamlet treats with a humor like Mercutio's. Not that his wound is cured ("Thou wouldst not think how ill all's here about my heart"); that would not be humanly possible. But the turbulence has subsided into calm—"We defy augury. ... If it be now, 'tis not to come: if it be not to come, it will be now; if it be not now, yet it will come: the readiness is all." All indeed that Hamlet has been seeking, and with its finding the drama of the inner life is ended; the tragedy of the outer life that follows is its epilogue. The grave-digging scene may make the unskillful laugh, but it never makes the judicious grieve, for it is not a bit of appliqué "comic relief," a momentary relaxation of tension to give the audience tone for the next agony; it is of a piece with the heart of the tragedy.

I do not know that I could find this spirit of humor in every one of Shakespeare's plays, though if space were at my command I could cite others—it is clear enough, for example, in *Measure for Measure*, and by no means to seek in *Antony and Cleopatra*. But to show that it exists, it is not necessary to find it everywhere. I believe that Shakespeare used it to put over the footlights the best of his wisdom. When in *Macbeth* he tells us, "Don't be so silly as to think you can get away with murder," it may be very wise but it has too much the solemnity of a platitude—one could almost wish the Thane of Cawdor a speedy infirmity for the increasing of his folly. But so far as the folly is absent, *Macbeth* is the easier to understand; so is *Lear*, and so is *Othello*, they too being comparatively uncontaminated by the higher wisdom. When Shakespeare wishes to take us where angels fear to tread he sends in a wise fool for us to follow if we can. I suspect from the cryptic line in *Measure for Measure* which the familiar quotation universally omits, that Shakespeare mistrusted angels. He knew well enough how to make them

weep; gravity playing wisdom will do that every time. But these angels "with our spleen would all themselves laugh mortal." Can he mean that with the gift of laughter they would lose their inhumanity? This is the very tribe for which Angelo is named. It is a quaint suggestion, that no angel with a serviceable sense of humor could hold his job for a minute. For all human purposes, certainly to convey broken glimpses of the higher wisdom to humankind, a fool is more helpful, so long as he is wise enough to play the part.

TRAGIC PRODIGALITY OF LIFE

BY

WILLARD FARNHAM

TRAGIC PRODIGALITY OF LIFE

THE ELIZABETHANS BLESSED THEMSELVES with the realization of a noble tragic drama. They did it naturally, almost with casual effort. There is something of mystery in that for us today, who have talked so hard and so hopefully about a renaissance of serious drama and have got so very little sure reward for our pains.

How are we to explain the paradox of any happy and fortunate people taking pleasure in tragedy? That question in some form has of course been often asked. I have met it recently in Mr. St. John Ervine's *The Organized Theatre* (1924), a work which examines the depths into which the English stage has fallen. Mr. Ervine maintains, as I think rightly, that none but people who are happy in the possession of a prodigal strength and courage can face the thought of death or disaster in the truly tragic manner—without flinching, even finding an elevated pleasure in its cultivation. He sadly reaches the conclusion that after fifty-four years of compulsory education and nineteen centuries of Christian civilization England is in a spiritual condition vastly inferior to that of either Elizabethan England or Periclean Greece. Those ages produced great tragic drama: this age is incapable of doing so.

It should be remembered that Mr. Ervine is talking about a vital theater which appeals to and is largely supported by common people such as the Elizabethans called "groundlings." Even those of us who would argue that there are modern plays (or modern novels) with distinctly tragic significance would be forced to admit that these are hardly ever for the multitude, in England or America. Too many of our multitude have what we shall find the Elizabethans lacking, namely, a morbid fear which passes by death or disaster on the far side whenever passing is possible. One does not need to be reminded that, in America, undertakers and many other

people talk about death without using the word, and that an "unhappy" ending for the stories consumed by ordinary men and women is usually taboo. The old sun-dial motto

I tell the hour. Think of your last hour,

has now been metamorphosed into

Let others tell of storms and showers.

I'll only coujit your sunny hours.

The contrast speaks for itself—and loudly.

Even the Greeks, so naturally comparable with the Elizabethans in any discussion of popular capacity for tragic enjoyment, were not always able to bear their tragedy without flinching. Of this we have at least one famous example. Athens failed to give effective support to the Ionian revolt, and Miletus in Asiatic Greece fell to Darius in 494 B.C. Before the men of Athens had had time to recollect in tranquillity their distress and shame, Phrynichus presented to them his tragedy upon the capture of Miletus. Herodotus says that "the theater burst into tears; they fined him a thousand drachmae for reminding them of their own misfortunes, and gave command that no man should ever use that play again." The modern man in the street would seem to be different from his counterpart among the Greeks and the Elizabethans, not in kind, but in degree. All would show limits of endurance in the contemplation of misfortune, but the ordinary man today seems so soon to reach his limit that he finds almost no pleasure whatever in the tragic scene.

It is axiomatic that for great drama great audiences are as necessary as great poets, and it is common complaint that serious drama today too often starves before vulgar audiences capable only of tawdry amusement. The ordinary man has always had his tawdry moments: but at certain periods of history he has also had moments sufficiently fine to call forth from his poets tragedy in the grand style; the age of Elizabeth was one of those periods. The Baconians, with varying complications of thought, achieve the belief that William Shakespeare of Stratford, a commoner with no great educa-

tion, could never have created his own plays. Logically they should also believe that all the finer Elizabethan dramatic poetry could never have been created for the theater public of its day and that it must have been acted before some choice band of demigods, the very least of whom had the title of Baron and a university education. Truly it is not easy to imagine how the bawds, the thieves, the fishwives, and the apprentices could have helped to demand, and therefore helped to create, the best Elizabethan tragedies. Yet, in spite of what Shakespeare and many other Elizabethan dramatists say of "the hydra-headed multitude" and its cheap concerns, the good plays seem often enough to have been genuinely popular. The groundling somehow made his contribution to the beauty of Elizabethan tragic poetry.

It would be difficult not to think that the Elizabethan groundling had his share in tragic poetry, partly because he shared so notably that gallant courage which we associate with Elizabethan England. We may, I believe, catch some small glimpse of the significant correlation here if we will scan contemporary comments upon the character of the common Elizabethan Englishman—comments made both by Englishmen and by foreigners. Those which I shall now proceed to isolate and discuss all have to do with the ordinary Englishman's—often the ordinary criminal's—manner of taking or viewing death. Such records do not tell us in so many words how the Elizabethan groundling faced tragedy on the stage, but they are testimony to the way in which he took the tragedy of his own daily life as it assumed a dramatic finality in death, and that is very much to the point. Though death may not be the necessary catastrophe of tragedy, yet death, whether on or off the stage, has always had an inescapable weight of tragic meaning.

For our testimony let us appeal first to two Englishmen. The elder of them is Sir Thomas Smith, who died in 1577. He was a man of solid substance who gained high honors in public service. He was a regius professor of civil law at Cambridge, a member of Parliament, a privy councilor, more than once

an ambassador to" France, and finally Secretary of State. He is a good witness, though perhaps somewhat biased patriotically. His principal work in letters is *De Republica Anglorum: The Maner of Governement or Policie of the Realme of England*, finished in 1565, first printed in 1583, and put through eleven editions in England in little more than a century, besides being translated. It is from a chapter entitled "Certaine Orders Peculiar to England Touching Punishment of Malefactors" that I wish to take his comment.

Torture is not used upon malefactors in England to extract confession, says Sir Thomas. It would be useless: "The nature of English men is to neglect death, to abide no torment: and therefore he [the malefactor] will confesse rather to have done anything, yea, to have killed his own father, than to suffer torment, for death our nation doth not so much esteem as a mean torment." This, one gathers, is not because the Englishman cannot stand the pain of torture, but because he simply will not stand its indignity. He prefers death because he is fearless of it. "In no place," continues Sir Thomas, "shall you see malefactors go more constantly, more assuredly and with lesse lamentation to their death than in England." Criminals though they be, they are English, and "the nature of our nation is free, stout, haulte, prodigall of life and bloud."¹

"Prodigal of life and blood!" They are admirable and memorable words. In their context they imply what I have ventured to call tragic prodigality of life. For it is not thoughtless and cruel carelessness of the life of one's fellows that Sir Thomas is describing, but gallant high carelessness of one's own life, akin to the high seriousness of the nobly tragic character because it is based upon dignity of soul. The criminal's fearlessness is not sneering cynicism. When condemned, he "doth not repine, but doth accomodate him selfe to aske mercie of God." I think that before we have finished we shall agree that Sir Thomas is not too much misled by patriotism in the characterization of his nation.

Another Englishman—strictly speaking, a Scotsman born in France but tenacious of his position as subject to an Eng-

lish king—sees English fearlessness of death from a different angle. This is John Barclay, son of a professor of civil law in the college founded by the Duke of Lorraine at Pont-a-Mousson, and born in that town in 1582. His mother was a Frenchwoman, and the cosmopolitanism which led him to choose a French wife and to end his days at Rome, pensioned by Paul V as a controversial writer against Protestantism, gave him the temper to write his *Icon Animorum*. This was published at London in 1614, where he had gone soon after the accession of James, apparently in the hope of getting preferment. The *Icon Animorum* is a Latin work reputed to be an animated and accurate sketch of the characters of the chief European nations. Animated it assuredly is in this story of an Unknown Soldier, which I quote entire from (p. 81 of) the 1633 edition of an English translation made by Thomas May:

They [the English] contemne all dangers, and death it selfe, with more courage then judgement; and hence it comes, that they are the best souldiers, when they are governed by wise Captaines; but when they goe on of their owne accord, possessed with the blindness of that desperate valour, they have reason, after sad defeats, to accuse themselves more then their ill fortune. In the late warres of the Low-countries some souldiers of the *Spanish* party were taken by the *Hollanders* and were to bee hanged, in requitall of the enemies cruelty, who had used their prisoners in the like manner. But the *Hollanders* did not entend to execute them all. Of foure and twenty (for so many were taken prisoners) eight onely were appointed to be hanged, and the rest to escape with life. There were lots therefore throwne into a helmet, and the prisoners were commanded to draw their fortunes, whosoever should draw a blanke, was to escape death; but whosoever should draw a blacke lot, was to be hanged presently. They were all possessed with a great apprehension of their present danger: especially one Spaniard with pittiful wishes, and teares, in some of the standers by did move pity, in others laughter: There was besides in that danger a certain Englishman, a common souldier, who with a carelesse countenance expressing no feare of death at all, came boldly to the helmet, & drew his lot; chance favoured him, it was a safe lot. Being free himselfe from danger he came to the Spaniard, who was yet timorous, and trem-

bled to put his hand into the fatal helmet; and receiving from him ten crowns, he entreated the Judges (oh horrid audacity!) that dismissing the Spaniard, they would suffer him againe to try his fortune. The Judges consented to the mad mans request, who valued his life at so low a rate: and he againe drew a safe lot: a wretch unworthy not onely of that double, but even of a single preservation, who so basely had undervalued his life.

Barclay is perhaps less open to the accusation of patriotic bias than Sir Thomas Smith. At least he pretends to find in that nameless English gambler with life a horrid audacity rather than an unalloyed virtue. Undoubtedly the fearlessness is there, but for all its engaging quality it is not upon a high plane. Barclay says nothing about such a prodigal attitude toward life in describing any other nation and distinctly leaves us to believe that it is highly characteristic of the English. To summarize most briefly, he describes the English as independent, individualistic, extreme in what they do, able to get wealth easily, intolerant of foreigners, excellent as soldiers and sailors, careless of death but not cruel. The French are elegant, comely, manly, obedient to rule, but much disposed to duelling in the sacred name of honor. The Italians are witty, fortunate in the finest cultural tradition, therefore attracting to them traveling young men from all the world over. But they have many hot vices, and they are often guilty of poisonings and other cruel murders. Even the thieves in Italy customarily kill, where English thieves would content themselves with knocking their victims temporarily non-resistant with staves. The Germans are steady, kindly, un-subtle, untreacherous, and sentimental. They drink hugely on points of hospitable honor. In learning they toil at great length but sometimes dully, writing more than they read and valuing their reputation by the number and greatness of the volumes which they publish in print. Finally the Spaniards are proud, though they have little learning and are full of large but hollow pretensions. They make good soldiers, but their military glory has an insecure foundation and is ready to collapse. It is plain that Barclay finds laudable virtues in

plenty among all the races except the Spanish, and that here he cannot be an objective observer because of his hearty dislike. Certainly he finds faults among the English, even in that prodigality of life and blood which Sir Thomas praises, and he is not trying to magnify them at the expense of other races.

Let us now turn to two foreign commenters on English character, whose bias would tend to be against rather than in favor of the English. The first of these outsiders is an Italian. The well-known Girolamo Cardano, or, as he Latinized his name, Hieronymus Cardanus, was one of the eminent precursors of modern science. He was born in 1501 and died in 1576. He had in his own day a great reputation as a mathematician, a physician, and an astrologer, and he has retained something of his reputation because, as one modern critic of his work and character has said, he "possessed the true scientific spirit in perfection." Even as an astrologer he seems to have shown restraint. He had opportunity to use his powers of observation and judgment upon both English and Scottish character, because at the height of his career he was called to Scotland as the medical adviser of Archbishop Hamilton of St. Andrews. He visited the English court of Edward VI, cast the king's nativity, and has left a penetrating description of him. He has also left a comment upon the English attitude toward death, a comment brief and casual but remarkable for its consistency with the judgments of Sir Thomas Smith and Barclay. It occurs in a *Dialogus de Morte* which is to be found at the end (pp. 371-372 of the 1585 edition) of his Latin work *Somniorum Synesiorum*. The characters of the dialogue are Cardanus himself and Joannes Petrus Albutius:

Alb. . . . It is worth consideration that the English care little or nothing for death. And rightly so, since it is the last of all evils and must at some time or other be suffered. Moreover, it is a lesser evil to suffer once what must be suffered than to fear it many a time and often . . . Is it not true, as is said of them, that they approach not only death but even execution with readiness and an easy

spirit? [This is perhaps the best rendering of the adjectives used, *promptos* & *a/acres.*]

Cardan. Most certainly. They bid farewell to their dear ones, to their sons and their brothers, and kiss them affectionately. They make their last recommendations to them. They say that they are entering upon immortal life, where they will await those who belong to them, and they urge those in turn to cherish their memory. Without any pallor of countenance and without any tremors of the voice, they bear with constancy the extremities of death. . . . They are strong in war but they want caution. . . . They are faithful, liberal and ambitious. But as for fortitude, the things done by the Highland Scots are the most wonderful. They, when they are led to execution, take a piper with them: and he, who is himself often one of the condemned, plays them up dancing to their death.

Alb. He proceeds less unsuitably perhaps than those who among us bewail death.²

The second outsider is Emanuel Van Meteren, Dutch consul in England. The first edition of his *Nederlandsche Historie* appeared in 1599. There he has occasion to say succinctly of the English: "The people are bold, courageous, ardent, and cruel in war, fiery in attack, and having little fear of death; they are not vindictive, but very inconstant, rash, vain-glorious, light and deceiving, and very suspicious, especially of foreigners, whom they despise."³

These four observers show a definite degree of consistency. The Elizabethan English were reputed to have a remarkable genius for facing death with courage. The testimony is worth an analysis:

First, no other race in sixteenth-century Europe is said to have a like "fearlessness of death (except the Scottish, of course).- Barclay implies that no other race has that peculiarly brave character, and Cardanus makes a direct reference in his *Dialogue* to a-common custom of bewailing death in Italy. But our common sense tells us that other races were not always arrant cowards before death. The Englishman was merely exceptionally impressive in his show of courage.

Second, this fearlessness of the English is demonstrated to the observers most concretely in the bearing of the criminal

before his hangman and that of the soldier before his enemy, but the implication is plain that the criminal and the soldier draw upon a courage common to the race. The Elizabethan criminal in the manner of his going forth from this life undoubtedly was impressive. Up and down the records of the times are scattered examples of the kind of thing which Sir Thomas Smith and Cardanus admired. The ballads, the pamphlets, the books, are full of them. No matter how mean the malefactor, he had a leading and responsible part to play at the tragedy of his own execution. His friends and enemies gathered to see him die well. From the cart-tail or from the ladder on the gallows he made a speech, preferably an edifying speech. If he could, he kept his knees firm and showed no "pallor of countenance" or "tremors of the voice." Most criminals seem to have succeeded. Then the cart was driven out from under him or he was "turned off" the ladder and left hanging. His friends often gathered around him, sometimes at his own request, to pull down upon his body and make strangulation mercifully effective at once. Such executions with all these human intimacies were a common part of English life. Foreigners who do not go so far as to comment upon any fearlessness of death do comment upon the severity of capital punishment in England. The German Paul Hentzner recorded in 1612: "[The English] are good sailors and better pirates, cunning, treacherous and thievish; above 300 are said to be hanged annually at London."⁴ The free drama under the gallows tree often drew people away from tragedies at the theaters, we may be sure.

Third, in continuation of our analysis, this fearlessness of death, even as it is so briefly described, has a marked quality. That quality can be called a large carelessness, a lack of feverish worry, a manifestation of ready and easy spirit. It is by no means a belittling of the whole business of living. The criminal to be executed does not welcome death as a release from an intolerable world, and no more than the soldier does he go about looking for a chance to die. Both criminal and soldier are described as gallant gamblers with life, ready to

pay without murmur when they lose, prodigal in their expenditure of life and scorning to flatter life in servile fashion to get from it a few more days or years. Few people have found such keen and manifold pleasure just in being alive as did the Elizabethans. We are accustomed to hearing this said now, but even then foreign comment noted it. Travelers wrote about their love of dancing and music, their simple delight in showy things, their wearing of their very best clothes when they went traveling, their vast fondness for great noises that fill the ear, such as those of cannon, of drums, of bells. In short, we have the paradox of a fortunate and sensation-loving people leaving their precious world with an impressive good grace. It is the full acceptance of death coming out of the full acceptance of life.

If the attitude toward life and death just analyzed could help men to create and to take pleasure in tragedy, what kind of tragedy would it be? Prodigality of life and blood such as Sir Thomas Smith describes might very well delight in prodigally strewn corpses on the stage, and even in the chopping off of hands, the tearing out of tongues, or eyes, and mutilation generally. We all know how well the Elizabethan stage can live up to such expectation. But did all this cater to mere cruelty on the part of the audience? Sir Thomas Smith and Barclay deny in so many words that the Englishman was cruel, prodigal of life though he might be. Moreover, the Romans had much cruel delight in public blood-spilling, but that delight produced no vital tragic poetry such as the Elizabethan.

No, there was something more than childish bloodthirstiness in Elizabethan prodigality of life as it was shown on the stage. The lack of restraint had its moments of silly excess and also its moments of untrammelled grandeur. The finer thing was always possible, I should say, because the commonest of Elizabethan groundlings kept a sense of the true dignity and worth of life, which had as its corollary a sense of the true dignity and worth of death. That is a sense which a merely cruel people never possesses, and that is the stout

sense of dignity which Sir Thomas Smith attempts to describe in even the criminals among his countrymen.

How this saving sense of the dignity of life and death can convert prodigal excess into truly tragic beauty is shown in what we call "comic relief as well as in violent death and physical mutilation. On first thought we might suppose that a prodigal carelessness of death would create tragic poetry in which men die flippantly. That is just what the pre-Shakespearean or Shakespearean tragic character does not usually do. He can die jestingly, and do it extremely well, but not flippantly. There is a large difference. He can also allow himself to be surrounded by low-comedy characters with the most graceless propensity for vulgarly hilarious comment upon the serious business of the play, and he can still keep the action and the audience's concern centered in tragedy. That is a peculiarly Elizabethan triumph of the prodigal spirit.

Consider the play of *Sir Thomas More*, known less for itself than for the possibility that Shakespeare took a small hand in its revision and left us some of his handwriting in the manuscript. It presents More as a scholar, a friend of unfortunates, a capable public servant in high place, and, in addition to all this, by nature what the Elizabethans called a "mad merry fellow," He was made to love mirth but not to take life lightly. As Lord Chancellor he finds that his conscience refuses to let him subscribe to a spiritual matter dictated by his king. He loses his head for it.

He is in the Tower waiting for his execution on the morrow. "Maister Lieutenant," says he, "I have had a sore fitt of the stone tonight; but the king hath sent me such a rare receipte, I thank him, as I shall not need to feare it much." Later at the scaffold he remarks that he has come about a "headless errand," for he has not much to say now that he is there. He walks about the "most sweet gallery" and finds the air of it better than that of his garden in Chelsea. The audience waits and he turns to it: "By your pacience, good people, that have prest thus into my bedchamber, if youle not trouble me, He take a sound sleepe heere." He makes the usual final speech

of the criminal, that natural comment upon the preceding tragic action so common in the drama of the stage and in the drama of actual life which ended beneath the gallows or at the block: "I confesse, his majestie hath bin ever good to me; and my offence to his highnesse makes me of a state pleader a stage player (though I am olde, and have a bad voyce), to act this last scean of my tragedie. He send him (for my trespasse) a reverend head, somewhat balde; for it is not requisite any head should stand coverd to so high majestie." The Earl of Surrey reminds More that he had better hold some conference with his soul since his time is short. "I see it, my good lord," replies More. "I dispatchte that busines the last night. I come hether only to be let blood; my doctor heere tells me it is good for the headache," He forgives the executioner and goes to his end:

Heere Moore forsakes all mirth; good reason why;
The foole of fleshe must with her fraile life dye.
No eye salute my trunck with a sad teare:
Our birthe to heaven should be thus, voide of feare.

This is rare fooling with the serious business of death, but it is not jesting which by flippancy denies that serious business. Somehow it becomes jesting in earnest. For the ordinary Elizabethan it probably took nothing at all away from the seriousness necessary to tragedy. It probably had the effect of actually heightening seriousness. More never implies that death is nothing, but always that he accepts its grimness and by that acceptance gains the freedom of spirit to talk about it naturally, jestingly indeed, since he has all his life been a merry man.

In one way the death of Sir Thomas More is not by any means typical of heroic deaths in Elizabethan tragedy. These are usually serious to the last degree, since the subjects of Elizabeth had a distinct taste for heavy moralizing, and it was well catered to. Criminals who played their fifth acts of unfeigned tragedies under the gallows also seem to have been jesters only occasionally. Usually they preached lay sermons

of most impeccable edification. As for Shakespeare, no central character in his tragedies speaks lightly of death or dies jesting.

But if Sir Thomas More's death is not typical in that way, it is at least fairly representative of the general Elizabethan dramatic taste for mingling jest with high seriousness. Sir Thomas More only happens to be heroic figure and jester both in one person where King Lear, for example, divides the part, playing the hero himself and leaving his double, the fool, to play jester. The tragic effect is the same in principle. Admirers are sometimes put on their mettle to "defend" Shakespeare, and they try to show that the Hell-porter scene in *Macbeth* must have been put there by some hand profaner than the author's. But Shakespeare knew how to do such things as this. If he created anybody in that play of butchery *Titus Andronicus*, it was probably the clown who is caught all ignorantly in the meshes of intrigue; who says, "God forbid that I should be so bold as to press to heaven in my young days"; who, when he finds that he must be hanged, acquiesces perforce: "By'r lady, then I have brought up a neck to a fair end." That clown is of the same genius as the one who stumbles across a somber stage and ministers to Cleopatra a worm whose biting is "immortal," since "those that do die of it do seldom or never recover." He is also of the same genius for "horrid audacity" as Barclay's Unknown Soldier in the Low Country. It was a good Elizabethan English genius.

The idea of "comic relief" in Elizabethan tragedies as a momentary turning away from suffering when the tension grew intolerable to the audience must always fall under suspicion of being formed merely by our own modern sense of the intolerable. The Elizabethans seem mainly to have enjoyed such "relief" not because their nerves were over-delicate, but precisely because their nerves were healthy and, as we should say, indelicate. They could stand tragedy in its starkness, no people better. Also they could do something even more difficult. They could stand tragedy poignantly set off with interpolations of profane jest. They could make the clown or jester in the tragic setting have the same call to the

deeper understanding of man's spirit as the gargoyle in the sublime setting of a Gothic cathedral. In their uncalculating fearlessness they created great tragedy because they took life seriously, yet not so seriously as to be morbid. They achieved balance, curiously enough, by means of that very catholicity and prodigality which we are tempted to call unrefined excess.

BENEATH THE SURFACE

1800—1815

BY

HAROLD BRUCE

BENEATH THE SURFACE, 1800-1815

"Ah! but the Mediterranean!" exclaimed Coningsby. "What would I not give to see Athens!"

"I have seen it," said the stranger . . . "and more wonderful things. Phantoms and spectres! The Age of Ruins is past. Have you seen Manchester?"

—*Coningsby, or The New Generation* (1844)

IN THE MIDDLE DECADES of the nineteenth century the complaints lodged against the manufacturing system by Carlyle, Ruskin, Arnold, Dickens, Kingsley, Mrs. Gaskell, Hood, and Mrs. Browning became important themes in English writing. Three charges against machinery were then emphasized: that it had enslaved and exploited the bodies of men; that it had warped and degraded the minds and souls of men; and that it had prostituted and destroyed craftsmanship, art, and natural beauty. Important themes in the writing of one age have usually had their preludes in a preceding age. Just as the moods of the writers of the romantic period were anticipated a generation or two earlier in the works of Gray, Cowper, Chatterton, Collins, Burns, Crabbe, and others, so the vehement protests of the Victorians against the degradations produced by machinery, manufacture, and materialism were anticipated, I believe, in English writing before 1815. But these anticipations must be sought beneath the surface of literature, in diaries, manuscripts, obscure novels, unpopular poems, minor essays.

At the surface of literature, trade, in the words of Parson Adams, remained beneath the philosopher; on machines and factories men of letters turned their backs. They looked with pleasure upon "that sea of mountains, the wild and stormy outline of the Snowdonian chain/" which to Defoe had seemed so barbarous; they made their homes in the very regions through which he had hurried shuddering. Instead of the kind of unhospitable terror which had seized on Defoe among the mountains, they now felt their presences, motions, and spirits that disturbed them with the joy of elevated thoughts.

The manufacturing towns which, giving a security for the continuance of the people in the place, alone gave Defoe ease of mind amidst rugged scenery, were to them "fungous excrescences," impressing them "with as much horror and amazement as the sudden appearance of the stocking-manufactory struck into the mind of Rousseau, when, in a lonely valley of the Alps, he had just congratulated himself on finding a spot where man had never been."¹ They saw the Coliseum by moonlight, specter barks, caverns measureless to man, Torquilstone, the Isles of Greece, the Euganean Hills, casements opening on the foam of perilous seas forlorn. They did not see Manchester.

Besides the prevailing impulse to turn aside from actuality, there was a specific reason why literature in the large failed to deal with English industry and industrial scenes- That reason was Napoleon. According to the recruiting posters, he was about to bring to England an army of Frenchmen who would ravish English women, murder English children, and shoot down English men in rows, and had "already built" a gigantic raft with a monster windmill at each corner, which was to ferry the Frenchmen, thousands at a time, across the Channel to do the ravishing, the murdering, and the shooting. Along the southern coast still stand the Martello towers which were to repulse them. "Ridiculous things ... I dare say they cost MILLIONS," raged Cobbett. Napoleon was a great employer, moreover, of English labor. An able-bodied man did not need to beg to find a place under a drill sergeant; the Continent felt, not for the last time, the "tread of the island feet." And Napoleon was one of Malthus' effective checks to population, reducing the pressure on subsistence by reducing the number of living Englishmen. Altogether he was a splendid devil for the English, military and political, not industrial; foreign, not native. Foreign devils are easy to believe in.

But Manchester was there, and Peterloo was coming. Machinery and industry were laying a heavy and oppressive hand upon the English. John Gait's Dalmailing minister, visiting Glasgow in 1791, noted, along with "a great and visible

increase of the city," that "the looks of the population were impaired, and that there was a greater proportion of long white faces in the Trongate. . . . These . . . were the weavers and others concerned in the cotton trade."² Thomas Malthus, in a chapter of his *Essay on Population* written in 1802, spoke of the crowds of children which were cut off prematurely in English manufactories,⁸ and held that, though invention after invention in machinery had been brought forward, seemingly calculated to abate the sum of human toil, the labors of the great mass of society were undiminished, and their condition unimproved. William Tennant, in *The Road to Anster Fair* (1812), described the mechanics, the "wrangling race of weavers," and the "subterranean men" from the coal pits of Dysart.

Poor human mouldwarps!
doom'd to scrape in earth,
Cimmerian people,
strangers to the sun.

Joseph Ballard, a young Boston merchant who landed at Liverpool in 1815, saw in Warrington riotous, intemperate men, drinking away their wages from Saturday night through Sunday and "blue or St. Monday";⁴ an incredible number of nude and unclean children swarming in the streets, and "at quite an early age buried in the manufactories."⁵ He passed through the smoke of Manchester and Leeds to Sheffield, where he found that the inhabitants, as in Warrington, partook "of the misery resulting from manufactures." Many children not eight years of age were in "cursed holes" of steel works. Often his heart bled as he looked at these "poor little sickly" beings.⁶ "Could . . . the advocates of the manufactures of our country but witness," he wrote, "the misery attached to those in Warrington, Sheffield, & Leeds, I am sure they would not so strenuously argue that it is for our national welfare that they should be established in America."⁷

The first⁸ of the romantic writers to see what machinery and trade were doing to the English, was working far beneath the surface of life at the opening of the century. "I am laid by

in a corner," said William Blake in 1799, "as if I did not exist." "Money flies from me," he wrote in 1804. "Profit never ventures upon my Threshold, tho' every other man's doorstep is worn down into the very Earth by the footsteps of the fiends of commerce." "So entire is the uncertainty, in which he is involved," wrote William Paulet Carey of him in 1815, "that after many inquiries, I meet with some doubt whether he is still in existence. But I have accidentally learned . . . that he is certainly now a resident in London."

Just before the lines from Blake's preface to *Milton*, which were sung in England at the end of the general strike of 1926,

I will not cease from Mental Fight,
Nor shall my Sword sleep in my hand
Till we have built Jerusalem
In England's green & pleasant Land,

came the lines:

And did the Countenance Divine
Shine forth upon our clouded hills?
And was Jerusalem builded here
Among these dark Satanic Mills?

The thought of turning wheels, of intricate machinery, bit deep into his consciousness as he passed up and down the "terrible desert" of London, or took his thirty- and forty-mile walks in the surrounding country.

Tools were made, & Born were hands,
Every Farmer Understands.⁹

As early as 1788, in *There is No Natural Religion*, he wrote: "The bounded is loathed by its possessor. The same dull round, even of a universe, would soon become a mill with complicated wheels." Again and again in *Vala* (1795-1804), *Milton* (1804-1808), and *Jerusalem* (1804-1820) appeared "immense machines," "hoarse wheels," "dark machines," "resistless wheels."¹⁰ To describe Albion and Europe bound by the "rational" thought of the eighteenth century, he wrote:

[turn my eyes to the Schools & Universities of Europe
And there behold the Loom of Locke, whose Woof rages dire,

Wash'd by the Water-wheels of Newton: black the cloth
 In heavy wreathes folds over every Nation: cruel Works
 Of many Wheels I view, wheel without wheel, with cogs tyrannic
Moving by compulsion each other. . . .¹¹
 Moving by compulsion each other. . . . I I nt h ePubl

the antithesis of "that which is Soul & Life," In Blake's mind, a mill was associated with loathsome dullness, with monotony, with slavery, with darkness, with resistlessness, with cruelty and compulsion, with soullessness. Shown the first copy of *The Mechanics' Magazine*, he remarked with bland emphasis, "Oh, sir, these things we artists HATE!" Britain was for him an

. . . Isle
 Round which the Fiends of Commerce smile.¹²

He saw that "a Machine is not a Man nor a Work of Art; it is destructive of Humanity & of Art." He saw that the "insatiable Maw" of commerce "must be fed by What all can do Equally well."¹³

In *Vala; or the Four Zoas*, probably completed in its original form before 1800, he set down specifically his interpretation of the process and result of mechanization:

And all the arts of life they chang'd into the arts of death.
 The hour glass contemn'd because its simple workmanship
 Was as the workmanship of the plowman, & the water wheel
 That raises water into Cisterns, broken & burn'd in fire
 Because its workmanship was like the workmanship
 of the shepherd,
 And in their stead intricate wheels invented, Wheel
 without wheel,
 To perplex youth in their outgoings & to bind to labours
 Of day & night the myriads of Eternity, that they
 might file
 And polish brass & iron hour after hour, laborious
 workmanship,
 Kept ignorant of the use that they might spend the
 days of wisdom
 In sorrowful drudgery to obtain a scanty pittance of bread,
 In ignorance to view a small portion & think that All.¹⁴

to be seen at Lyons. In short, our town is a perfect paradise. We are able to take them at four years of age, and in some cases sooner. Their little fingers, as soon as they have well learned the use of them, are employed for the relief of their parents, who have brought them up from the breast. They learn no bad habits; but are quiet, and orderly, and attentive, and industrious. What a prospect for their future lives! God himself must approve and bless a race who are thus early prepared to be of use to themselves and others. Among us, it is scarcely possible there should be such a thing as poverty. We have no such thing as idleness, or lewdness, or riot, or drunkenness, or debauchery of any sort. Let the day of judgment come when it will, it will never surprise us in a situation in which we should be ashamed to be found.

But Ruffigny, looking back in his old age at this "perfect paradise" into which he was forced to enter when he was eight, said that to him it had been a "thunder-stroke" to become "one of the members in this vast machine."

You will not suppose [he said] there was any thing very cheerful or exhilarating in the paradise we had entered. The idea of a mill is the antipathy of this. One perpetual, dull, flagging sound pervaded the whole. The walls were bare; the inhabitants were poor. . . . We must correct our ideas, and imagine a very sober paradise, before we can think of applying the name to this mansion.... There was a kind of stupid and hopeless vacancy in every face. . . .

Not one of the persons before me exhibited any signs of vigour and robust health. They were all sallow; their muscles flaccid, and their form emaciated. Several of the children appeared to me, judging from their size, to be under four years of age—I never saw such children. . . . They were made sacrifices, while yet tender; and, like the kid, spoken of by Moses, were seethed and prepared for the destroyer in their mother's milk.

The sort of training and drilling, necessary at first to preserve an infant during twelve hours together from the guilt of a distracted attention, was continually before my sight. The supervisor of the machine contracted, from necessity, a part of the rugged and ferocious character which belongs to a slave-driver in the West Indies.

Even the songs in which the children frequently joined as they worked, were like the songs of the prisoners at Newgate awaiting transportation.

The tone was heavy, monotonous, and flat. There was the key and the note of gaiety, but the heart was wanting. It was like the spectacle of a fresh and well-grown human body placed erect against a wall, satisfactory in other respects,—but it was dead. . . .

It is impossible to describe to you the state of mind of a human creature, whose incessant office it is from morning to night to watch the evolution of fifty-six threads. . . . Numbness and vacancy of mind are the fruits of such an employment. It ultimately transforms the being who is subjected to it, into quite a different class or species of animal.

A mechanic becomes a sort of machine; his limbs and articulations are converted, as it were, into wood and wires.

These words came from the man who in 1793, in *Political Justice*, had predicted that machines would bring something like a final close to the necessity of manual labor—"machines will be the Helots of the period I am contemplating," A cloud somewhat larger than a man's hand had spread over the dawn of Godwin's dream.

With Blake and with Godwin belong, among early questioners of machinery, two poets who had withdrawn from the world of revolutions and of cities—Southey at last showing "symptoms of root-striking" at Greta Hall near Keswick, Wordsworth with roots struck at Alan Bank in Grasmere; one pouring forth volumes of poetry and prose, the other somewhat fitfully at work on *The Recluse*.

Southey had seen the cotton factories of Manchester under the guidance of a man whom he did not name, but who was of the same temperament, I judge, as M. Vaublanc. This employer remarked that nothing could be so beneficial to a country as manufactures.

You see these children, sir [he said]. In most parts of England poor children are a burthen to their parents and to the parish; here the parish, which would else have to support them, is rid of all expense; they get their bread almost as soon as they can run about, and by the time they are seven or eight years old bring in money. There is no idleness among us:—they come at five in the morning; we allow them half an hour for breakfast, and an hour for dinner; they leave work at six, and another set relieves them for the night; the wheels never stand still.

"These children, then," said Southey, "have no time to receive instruction," "That, sir," the manufacturer replied, "is the evil which we have found. Girls are employed here from the age you see them till they marry, and then they know nothing about domestic work, not even how to mend a stocking or boil a potato. But we are remedying this now, and send the children to school for an hour after they have done work." Southey asked if so much confinement did not injure their health. "No," the manufacturer replied, "they are as healthy as any children in the world could be." To be sure, many of them as they grew up went off in consumption, "but consumption is the disease of the English."¹⁶

Southey, half giddy himself with the noise and the endless motion, was looking, while the manufacturer spoke, at the unnatural dexterity with which the fingers of the children moved in the machinery; and when the manufacturer told him there was no rest in these walls, day or night, he thought: "If Dante had peopled one of his hells with children, here was a scene worthy to have supplied him with new images of torment." As Southey listened to his guide, he thought of the cities in Arabian romance, where all the inhabitants were enchanted: in the English cities, he said, Commerce was the queen witch, and he had no talisman strong enough to disenchant those who were daily drinking of the golden cup of her charms.

Wordsworth, too, as in the eighth book of *The Excursion* he described the growth of English cities and the building of English roads during the inventive age, made "the Wanderer" look

on the darker side

Of this great change

and see the "outrage done to nature," "the perpetual sacrifice" offered in the factories to the "God of Gain." The Wanderer could not share the proud complacency of those who triumphed in these sacrifices.¹⁷ He exulted in the

intellectual mastery exercised

O'er the blind elements; a purpose given,

A perseverance fed; almost a soul

Imparted—to brute matter.¹⁸

But his exultation was possible only when blended with the hope that men of all lands would learn

that all true glory rests . . .
Upon the moral law,

that they would see ^fhow weak
Those arts, and high inventions, if unpropped
By virtue.

His exultation died away when he was asked,
. . . where is now the character of peace,
Sobriety, and order, and chaste love,
And honest dealing, and untainted speech,
And pure good-will, and hospitable cheer?

"Fled," was the Wanderer's response,
Fled utterly! or only to be traced
In a few fortunate retreats like this;
Which I behold with trembling, when I think
What lamentable change, a year—a month—
May bring; that brook converting as it runs
Into an instrument of deadly bane
For those, who . . .
Drink the pure water of its innocent stream.

As for the children of this new age, their birthright,
Breathing fresh air, and treading the green earth,
was lost:

Oh, banish far such wisdom as condemns
A native Briton to these inward chains,
Fixed in his soul, so early and so deep;
Without his own consent, or knowledge, fixed!
He is a slave to whom release comes not,
And cannot come. The boy, where'er he turns,
Is still a prisoner; when the wind is up
Among the clouds, and roars through the ancient woods;
Or when the sun is shining in the east,
Quiet and calm. Behold him—in the school
Of his attainments? no; but with the air

Fanning his temples under heaven's blue arch.
His raiment, whitened o'er with cotton-flakes
Or locks of wool, announces whence he comes.
Creeping his gait and cowering, his lip pale,
His respiration quick and audible;
And scarcely could you fancy that a gleam
Could break from out those languid eyes, or a blush
Mantle upon his cheek. Is this the form,
Is that the countenance, and such the port,
Of no mean Being? One who should be clothed
With dignity befitting his proud hope;
Who, in his very childhood, should appear
Sublime from present purity and joy!
The limbs increase; but liberty of mind
Is gone for ever; and this organic frame,
So joyful in its motions, is become
Dull, to the joy of her own motions dead;
And even the touch, so exquisitely poured
Through the whole body, with a languid will
Performs its functions; rarely competent
To impress a vivid feeling on the mind
Of what there is delightful in the breeze,
The gentle visitations of the sun,
Or lapse of liquid element—by hand,
Or foot, or lip, in summer's warmth—perceived.
—Can hope look forward to a manhood raised
On such foundations?

The Wanderer was reminded that, long before the inventive
age, other tens of thousands of children

. . . from infancy had breathed
Air unimprisoned, and had lived at large;
Yet walked beneath the sun, in human shape,
As abject, as degraded.

He responded¹⁹ that when he pictured

A Little-one, subjected to the arts
Of modern ingenuity, and made
The senseless member of a vast machine,
Serving as doth a spindle or a wheel,

he did not forget the tens of thousands who from earlier times and from other causes suffered ignorance, want, and hunger. But, he said,

no one takes delight
 In this oppression; none are proud of it;
 It bears no sounding name, nor ever bore;
 A standing grievance, an indigenous vice
 Of every country under heaven. My thoughts
 Were turned to evils that are new and chosen,
 A bondage lurking under shape of good,—
 Arts, in themselves beneficent and kind,
 But all too fondly followed and too far;—
 To victims, which the merciful can see
 Nor think that they are victims—turned to wrongs,
 By women, who have children of their own,
 Beheld without compassion, yea with praise!
 I spake of mischief by the wise diffused
 With gladness, thinking that the more it spreads
 The healthier, the securer, we become;
 Delusion which a moment may destroy!

For the new and chosen evils as for the old standing grievance, the Wanderer had two remedies, which were not to be forgotten in days long after his: universal education, and emigration to

every shore whose aspect favours hope
 Or bold adventure; promising to skill
 And perseverance their deserved reward.

These portions of *The Excursion*, written at Alan Bank between 1808 and 1811, were the work of an author whose star was, for the moment, setting, whose most creative years were passed, whose chosen part was that of the recluse. In February, 1812, another poet, whose star had not yet risen far above the horizon, made his first speech in the House of Lords. In the stocking-manufacturing districts the introduction of "frames," by throwing many men out of work, had led to serious rioting and the destruction of much property by the "frame-breakers." The Government, pressed by the panic-stricken owners, brought in a bill making the destruc-

tion of frames a capital offense. Against this bill Byron spoke. I am not sure how genuine were his sentiments—before his speech he told his leader, Lord Holland, that he would most cheerfully and sincerely submit to his superior judgment and experience, and take some other line of argument against the bill or be silent altogether—but at least he spoke with directness and irony. He analyzed effectively the causes of the workmen's sufferings, which he had seen at first hand in Nottingham; he referred scornfully to "these improvements in arts so beneficial to mankind," and he came to a peroration which testified to his strong feeling either for the frame-breakers or for emphasis:

But suppose [the bill] passed; suppose one of those men, as I have seen them,—meagre with famine, sullen with despair, careless of a life which your Lordships are perhaps about to value at something less than the price of a stocking-frame;—suppose this man surrounded by the children for whom he is unable to procure bread at the hazard of his existence . . . dragged into court, to be tried for this new offence, by this new law; still, there are two things wanting to convict and condemn him; and these are, in my opinion,—twelve butchers for a jury, and a Jeffreys for a judge!²⁰

Three days later, on March 2, 1812, Byron published anonymously in the *Morning Chronicle*, in a style more natural to him than that of his speech, his *Ode to the Framers of the Frame Bill*:

Those villains, the Weavers, are all grown refractory,
 Asking some succour for Charity's sake—
 So hang them in clusters round each manufactory,
 That will at once put an end to *mistake*.

The rascals, perhaps, may betake them to robbing,
 The dogs to be sure have got nothing to eat—
 So if we can hang them for breaking a bobbin,
 'Twill save all the Government's money and meat.
 Men are more easily made than machinery—
 Stockings fetch better prices than lives—
 Gibbets on Sherwood will heighten the scenery,
 Showing how Commerce, how Liberty thrives.

• • • • •

Some folks, for certain, have thought it shocking,
 When Famine appeals, and when Poverty groans,
 That Life should be valued at less than a stocking
 And breaking of frames, lead to breaking of bones.

Yet, if Byron thirty years before Thomas Hood lamented
 that bread should be so dear,
 And flesh and blood so cheap!

his lament was anonymous, nor was he one to dwell long upon the sufferings of others. Within four years he was to leave England not to return, and his comments on English commerce and English liberty, coming from across the Alps, were not again to have the directness of his appeals for the weavers of Nottingham.

No account of those who, before Waterloo, looked upon the darker side of the change wrought by the inventive age, should overlook a person whose name was coined to hint at darkness—Mr. Escot, in Thomas Love Peacock's *Headlong Hall*; "Escot, quasi *ἐν σκότειν*, *in tenebras* ... one who is always looking into the dark side of the question."²¹ Mr. Escot, who lived up to his name, belonged to a group of humor characters, containing, besides himself, a perfectibilian, a statu-quoite, and a Reverend Doctor Caster who was "Ventor, et praeterea nihil."

"The conversation among those illuminati soon became animated," as they approached Headlong Hall. The perfectibilian Mr. Foster held forth with great energy on the subject of roads and railways, canals and tunnels, manufactures and machinery. "In short," said he, "every thing we look on attests the progress of mankind in all the arts of life, and demonstrates their gradual advancement towards a state of unlimited perfection."

Mr. Escot, who was somewhat younger than Mr. Foster, but rather more pale and saturnine in his aspect, here took up the thread of the discourse, observing, that the proposition just advanced seemed to him perfectly contrary to the true state of the case: "for," said he, "these improvements, as you call them, appear

to me only so many links in the great chain of corruption, which will soon fetter the whole human race in irreparable slavery and incurable wretchedness: your improvements proceed in a simple ratio, while the factitious wants and unnatural appetites they engender proceed in a compound one; and thus one generation acquires fifty wants, and fifty means of supplying them are invented, which each in its turn engenders two new ones; so that the next generation has a hundred, the next two hundred, the next four hundred, till every human being becomes such a helpless compound of perverted inclinations, that he is altogether at the mercy of external circumstances, loses all independence and singleness of character, and degenerates so rapidly from the primitive dignity of his sylvan origin, that it is scarcely possible to indulge in any other expectation, than that the whole species must at length be exterminated by its own infinite imbecility and vileness."²²

When, a little later, Mr. Escot says to his companions:

What is the advantage of locomotion? The wild man is happy in one spot, and there he remains: the civilised man is wretched in every place he happens to be in, and then congratulates himself on being accommodated with a machine, that will whirl him to another, where he will be just as miserable as ever,²³

it is hard to tell whether the voice is that of Mr. Escot or that of John Ruskin. Indeed, Mr. Escot had surprising premonitions; he not only anticipated Ruskin's insight into the failure of rapid movement to dispel wretchedness, but he even foresaw the whole enormous structure of superficial desires erected by mass production and advertising.

In a walk from Headlong Hall the three philosophers, leaving behind the philosopher of the stomach, who "found himself rather *queasy* in the morning," enjoyed the wild and stormy scenery until the sight of a manufactory precipitated a discussion in which Mr. Escot gave full vent to his power of seeing the shadows over the surfaces of things:

Mr. *Foster*.—The manufacturing system is not yet purified from some evils which necessarily attend it, but which I conceive are greatly overbalanced by their concomitant advantages. Contemplate the vast sum of human industry to which this system so essentially contributes: seas covered with vessels, ports resounding with

life, profound researches, scientific inventions, complicated mechanism, canals carried over deep valleys and through the bosoms of hills: employment and existence thus given to innumerable families, and the multiplied comforts and conveniences of life diffused over the whole community.

Mr. Escot.—You present to me a complicated picture of artificial life, and require me to admire it. Seas covered with vessels: every one of which contains two or three tyrants, and from fifty to a thousand slaves, ignorant, gross, perverted, and active only in mischief. Ports resounding with life: in other words, with noise and drunkenness, the mingled din of avarice, intemperance, and prostitution. Profound researches, scientific inventions: to what end? To contract the sum of human wants? to teach the art of living on a little? to disseminate independence, liberty, and health? No; to multiply factitious desires, to stimulate depraved appetites, to invent unnatural wants, to heap up incense on the shrine of luxury, and accumulate expedients of selfish and ruinous profusion. Complicated machinery: behold its blessings. Twenty years ago, at the door of every cottage sate the good woman with her spinning-wheel: the children, if not more profitably employed than in gathering heath and sticks, at least laid in a stock of health and strength to sustain the labours of maturer years. Where is the spinning-wheel now, and every simple and insulated occupation of the industrious cottager? Wherever this boasted machinery is established, the children of the poor are death-doomed from their cradles. Look for one moment at midnight into a cotton-mill, amidst the smell of oil, the smoke of lamps, the rattling of wheels, the dizzy and complicated motions of diabolical mechanism: contemplate the little human machines that keep play with the revolutions of the iron work, robbed at that hour of their natural rest, as of air and exercise by day: observe their pale and ghastly features, more ghastly in that baleful and malignant light, and tell me if you do not fancy yourself on the threshold of Virgil's hell, where

Continud auditae voces, vagitus et ingens,
Infantumque animae flentes, in limine prime,
 Quos *dulcis vitae exsortes*, et ab ubere raptos,
Abstulit atra dies, et FUNERE MERSIT ACERBO!

. . . Nor is the lot of the parents more enviable. Sedentary victims of unhealthy toil, they have neither the corporeal energy of the

savage, nor the mental acquisitions of the civilized man. Mind, indeed, they have none, and scarcely animal life. They are mere automata, component parts of the enormous machines which administer to the pampered appetites of the few.²⁴

The deteriorationist humor of Mr. Escot reappeared in so many other persons in the works of Peacock²⁵ that that humor may be said to have represented one of Peacock's own moods.

The dark views of the effects on human life of machinery, manufacture, and invention, here drawn together from Blake, Godwin, Southey, Wordsworth, Byron, and Peacock, all appeared, I believe, spontaneously, not by diffusion one from another. Of course, Godwin may have known Blake, though I doubt it;²⁶ Southey and Wordsworth and Byron could have read *Fleetwood* (Wordsworth's phrase, "The senseless member of a vast machine," was almost a repetition of Godwin's "one of the members in this vast machine"); Peacock through Shelley was acquainted with Godwin. But the connections of these men with each other were mostly tenuous and each had opportunity for first-hand observation of the realities of machinery, factories, and workers. Their common pessimism was a natural result of their common experience.

Certainly, as I have said, these expressions of the dark view were contained in works which played but an obscure part in the development of English literature from the *Lyrical Ballads* to Waterloo. Blake was laid by in a corner as if he did not exist: his *Four Zoas*, *Milton*, and "*Jerusalem*" were not even in print. Godwin, forced to issue moral texts from his office in Skinner Street, was sinking below the horizon; his *Fleetwood* was second from the end of a descending series of novels, the next in 1812, the last in 1830. Southey and Wordsworth were over the hills at Keswick and at Grasmere, "In long seclusion from better company." "This will never do," wrote Hazlitt after reading Wordsworth's *Excursion*. "A drowsy, frowzy poem," said Byron. Wordsworth "is a slave," said Mary Godwin after she and Shelley had read it. Byron's speech was followed by the prompt passing of the bill against which the speech protested, while his *Ode to the Framers of*

the Frame Bill was anonymous political journalism. Peacock was an intellectual who could make a whole winter "a mere Atticism" and whose work, by its crotchety nature, could be "only the favourite of the few."²⁷ Moreover, even in the unprinted, or minor, or unpopular, or crotchety works, such as the *Four Zoas*, *Milton*, *Jerusalem*, *Fleetwood*, *The Excursion*, and *Headlong Hall*, the passages on the evils of machinery and manufacture were brief parts of long wholes, usually accompanied by compensating passages of enthusiasm.

Yet the chief counts which the Victorians brought so vehemently against the manufacturing system were, it seems to me, specifically brought against the system by these writers before 1815.

For machinery had already enslaved and exploited the bodies of Blake's slave at the mill; of the fallow, flaccid, emaciated children in M. Vaublanc's mill; of the Manchester cotton-factory children, who, as they grew up, went off in consumption, "the national disease of the English"; of the Wanderer's creeping, pale, quick-breathing children from the cotton factories, dead to the joy of their own motions; of Byron's frame-breakers, meager with famine, more easily made than machinery; of Mr. Escot's pale and ghastly little beings, death-doomed, keeping play with the revolutions of the iron work. Machinery had also warped and degraded the souls of Blake's workers, kept ignorant of the use of their product, viewing a small portion and thinking that all; of Ruffigny's mechanic who became a sort of machine, his mind numb and vacant; of the Wanderer's Little-one, made the senseless member of a vast machine, serving as doth a spindle or a wheel; of his tens of thousands with inward chains fixed in their souls, their liberty of mind gone forever; of Mr. Escot's little human machines, of his wretched man whirled by a machine from one place to another and miserable in each, of his men without minds, mere automata, component parts of enormous machines. Blake perceived that simple workmanship had given place to wheels within wheels, that a machine destroyed art, that commerce must be fed by stand-

ardized products, by what all can do equally well. The Wanderer saw the brook converted into deadly bane, children deprived of their birthright of fresh air and green grass, the forms of nature blocked out for them; the clouds, the ancient woods, the shining sun lost to them. Mr. Escot was-struck with horror and amazement at seeing mills in the bosom of wild Wales.

Even the remedies mentioned or implied by 1815—craftsmanship, outdoor life for children, obedience to the moral law instead of worship of gain, education for all, emigration—have a Victorian or post-Victorian rather than a romantic ring.

I believe, then, that the issues of the debate as to the good or evil effects of machinery in England were joined before Waterloo. But since the debate in its early stages was carried on far beneath the surface of the literature of the time, its echoes were lost amidst those of other and more sonorous controversies. These controversies still centered, as they had in the days of Burke and Paine, on the political rights of man. Shelley, who described himself as a nerve

O'er which do crawl
The else unfelt oppressions of mankind;

Shelley, who would stumble home barefooted in the dark after giving his shoes to a poor woman on the road; Shelley, who urged the men of England to

Rise like Lions after slumber
In unvanquishable number . . .
Ye are many—they are few,²⁸

pictured England in 1819, the year of Peterloo:

An old, mad, blind, despised, and dying king,—
Princes, the dregs of their dull race, who flow
Through public scorn,—mud from a muddy spring,—
Rulers who neither see, nor feel, nor know,
But leech-like to their fainting country cling,
Till they drop, blind in blood, without a blow—
A people starved and stabbed in the untilled field,—

An army, which liberticide and prey
 Makes as a two-edged sword to all who wield
 Golden and sanguine laws which tempt and slay;
 Religion Christless, Godless—a book sealed;
 A Senate,—Time's worst statute unrepealed,—
 Are graves, from which a glorious Phantom may
 Burst, to illumine our tempestuous day.²⁹

Sensitive as were Shelley's nerves, humanitarian as was his temper, rebellious as was his spirit, his description of England in 1819 was largely in political terms. Moreover, to complain of blind rulers, starving people, an oppressive army, a Godless church, was to repeat complaints already well worn. Only the glorious Phantom was Shelley's own.

For Shelley, and in general for the romantic writers, the devil still took the form of a ruler, a political tyrant. In the thirties and the forties of the nineteenth century, with Napoleon dead and Victoria on the throne, Victoria who meant what she said when she told the Duchess of Kent that she would be good, and who pointed to the Bible when asked the reason for England's greatness, the devil had to find new shapes for himself. Perhaps he was already, from 1800 to 1815, preparing himself for his next roles. Blake, Ruffigny, Southey, the Wanderer, and Mr. Escot seemed to catch more than a hint of a dark presence on premises considerably removed from the throne. Blake knew there were fiends of commerce, even if their footsteps did not wear down his doorstep, and saw something Satanic about the mills of England. To Ruffigny the silk mill, which was a perfect paradise to its owner, seemed a very sober place in which children were made sacrifices to a destroying power. Southey thought the Manchester cotton factory a scene worthy to have supplied Dante with new images of torment. The Wanderer looked upon children in the English factories as victims in a perpetual sacrifice. Mr. Escot, gazing into the cotton mill at midnight, felt that its dizzy and complicated mechanism was diabolical, and fancied himself on the threshold of Virgil's hell.

Were these not glimpses of the ancestors of the Chactaws and Bucaniers of industry, the millocrats, the Plugsons of Undershot, the Shuffles and Screws, the Josiah Bounderbys, into whom the devil was preparing to enter? Were these not early appearances of the "Proteus Steam-demon" that was to change England from a green flowery world to "a murky-simmering Tophet,"⁸⁰ that was to make London "a troubled sea that cannot rest . . . resonant of the clanking of chains, the grinding of remorseless machinery, the wail of lost spirits from the pit"?³¹

LEIGHHUNT—AMERICAN

BY

MYRON F. BRIGHTFIELD

LEIGH HUNT—AMERICAN

THE SPIRIT OF JOHN BULLISM has at no time existed in so concentrated a form as during the first two decades of the nineteenth century. The long war with Napoleon brought out all its admirable and its repulsive qualities; the necessities of war forced it to weed out and discard the forces alien to it. Drastic sedition laws were enacted; the press was rigorously scrutinized; government spies were sent abroad; local patriots formed volunteer companies; and party warfare was to a great extent suspended. The marked consolidation of public opinion that ensued demonstrated the success of the methods employed. Parliamentary opposition was feeble and disorganized. The animus of Whigs like Fox and Brougham arose not so much from disagreement with the measures of the ruling Tories or from the hope of taking office themselves as from personal pique at the Prince of Wales, who abandoned them and their party when he became Prince Regent. Among the literary men, Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Southey were prompt in abjuring their youthful sympathy with France to become staunch supporters of Church and Crown.

There were three audible voices that refused to join the common chorus. With admirable consistency they braved the odium which their dissenting opinions aroused. The voices were those of William Cobbett, William Hazlitt, and Leigh Hunt. And all three, we are interested to observe, were associated with America—with the Colonies or the infant United States.

Cobbett was in America on three separate occasions—as a soldier in a regiment stationed in Nova Scotia from 1784 to 1791, as a pamphleteer and newspaper editor in Philadelphia and New York from 1792 to 1800, and as a Long Island farmer from 1817 to 1819. Hazlitt's father, having aroused animosity through his sympathy with the revolting Colonies, brought his family across the Atlantic in 1793, when William was seven years old. He remained here almost four years,

narrowly failing to become the permanent head of a Unitarian church in Boston.

Although Leigh Hunt was never personally in America, his connections with this land were perhaps more direct and significant than those of Cobbett or Hazlitt. His paternal grandfather was Rector of St. Michael's in the Barbadoes. His father, Isaac Hunt, studied in Philadelphia and New York, and became a lawyer in the former place. He married Mary Shewell, the daughter of a Philadelphia merchant. The Revolution found Isaac a Royalist engaged in maintaining his opinions orally and in print. As a consequence, he was forced to embark hurriedly for England in order to escape mob violence. In England he became a minister of the established religion.

Leigh Hunt, born in 1784, was thus an infant deprived of his rightful heritage. But the bonds uniting him to what should have been his home-land were strong. The Micawber-like Isaac Hunt was never reticent about expounding, to his family or his congregation, his advanced opinions (acquired largely, it is to be presumed, in America) on politics or religion. That he felt himself an American still is indicated by the fact that he was regularly to be found in the society of Americans. A close relative of his wife's had married Benjamin West, the American artist who became president of the Royal Academy. He defended on one occasion a certain Colonel Trumbull, an American arrested as a spy. He knew Lord George Germaine's American secretary, Thompson, who was to become Count Rumford. His old American schoolfellows subscribed in large numbers for copies of his son Leigh's *Juvenilia*. Finally, one or more of his Barbadoes relatives were usually in London, and his wife wrote regularly to her family in Philadelphia.

As for Leigh Hunt himself, his grandfather offered to bring him to Philadelphia and "make a man of him." He admired his grandfather's friend, Benjamin Franklin, despite his affected scorn for Poor Richard's penny-saving maxims. Again, Hunt's writings show that he knew the works of Emerson and was a reader of the *Dial*. In London he was

visited by Emerson, Bayard Taylor, William Story, and Hawthorne, and he was much admired by Lowell (whose career and literary talents bear considerable resemblance to Hunt's). His collected poems, edited by S. Adams Lee, were successfully brought out in Boston in 1866, and his *Book of the Sonnet* first appeared in an American edition.

Physically, Hunt never felt himself an Englishman. "It was supposed," he writes in his *Autobiography*, "that Anglo-Americans already began to exhibit the influence of climate in their appearance. The late Mr. West told me, that if he had met myself or any of my brothers in the streets, he should have pronounced without knowing us, that we were Americans."¹ Elsewhere he declares: "As to my person, I am dark and black-haired, almost as a Creole"—characteristics which caused Carlyle mistakenly to remark that there was in Hunt "a trace of the African, I believe,"

If Leigh Hunt's relations with America were more direct than those of Cobbett and Hazlitt, it is also true that the influence of these relations was reflected in his mind more clearly, and in a manner less complicated by other issues. Cobbett, after all, was concerned principally with a local English question, the welfare of the small farmer. Hazlitt's face was turned to France and Napoleon rather than toward the new nation. But Hunt's principles, proclaimed at the outset of his career, were never revoked, diluted, nor overlaid. The result of them was to make him as much an alien intellectually as he was physically. "Leigh Hunt," emphatically declares Mr. R. Brimley Johnson, at the outset of his biography of the man, "was undoubtedly, by character and descent, an exotic on English soil; neither his virtues nor his vices conformed to the national type."

The most striking of Leigh Hunt's characteristics is his fearless spirit of independence. In 1808, a time when all publications were being attentively scanned for even the slightest hint of libel against the government, Leigh Hunt and his brother John began their Sunday newspaper, *The Examiner*. Their prospectus announced that they would be fearless, un-

compromising, and impartial. They adhered faithfully to their declared policy. They denounced in the strongest language, among many other things, the scandalous career of the Prince Regent. The result was two years' imprisonment for each, and practical ruin. The attacks were just and heroic, but they were very unwise. Had the Hunts joined the Whig party and Holland House and encouraged political dissatisfaction in moderate language, they would have accomplished far more of the purpose they had in mind.

The reckless independence of Leigh Hunt is evidenced by his journalistic career. But it is from his essays that his philosophy of life emerges. The basic fact of this philosophy is echoed throughout Hunt's writings. We may choose at random.

The groundwork of all happiness is health.²

Or, again:

We have before observed, but it cannot be repeated too often, that Nature . . . seems to insist, beyond anything else, upon our taking care of the mould in which she has cast us; or in other words, of that groundwork of all comfort, that box which contains the jewel of existence, our health.³

In popular parlance, physical health is usually distinguished from mental health. Hunt accepts the division for convenience, but he asserts its basic fallacy. One cannot separate mind and body in clear-cut fashion. In any healthy or unhealthy state, both are inevitably involved.

Do not imagine [he writes] that mind alone is concerned in your bad spirits. The body has a great deal to do with these matters. The mind may undoubtedly affect the body; but the body also affects the mind. There is a re-action between them; and by lessening it on either side, you diminish the pain on both.

All this is by no means to declare that what is called mental depression or nervous disorder does not produce a very real and severe effect on its victims. Particularly distressing is the *idte fixe*, the sense of

.. *fear*; in all its various degrees and modifications, which is at the bottom of nervousness and melancholy;... fear either of something

known or of the patient knows not what;—a vague sense of terror, —an impulse,—an apprehension of ill,—dwelling upon some painful and worrying thought.⁴

It is (continues Hunt) a great mistake, therefore, to call such afflictions *imaginary* ailments, thus implying their unreality. We must judge things by their effects; and it is certain enough that, in nervous depression, the effect is real. This is all that concerns us:

Our sole business is to remove those second causes, which always accompany the original idea. As in deliriums, for instance, it would be idle to go about persuading the patient that he did not behold the figures he says he does. He might reasonably ask us, if he could, how we know anything about the matter; or how we can be sure, that in the infinite wonders of the universe, certain realities may not become apparent to certain eyes, whether diseased or not. Our business would be to put him into that state of health, in which human beings are not diverted from their offices and comforts by a liability to such imaginations.⁶

Nervous troubles are thus the body's danger signals. Their cure consists in restoring physical health:

Exercise, conversation, cheerful society, amusements of all sorts, or a kind, patient, and gradual helping of the bodily health, till the mind be capable of amusement (for it should never foolishly be told "not to think" of melancholy things, without having something done for it to mend the bodily health),—these are the cures, and in our opinion, the almost infallible cures of nervous disorders, however excessive.⁶

Almost equally important is the arousing of the confidence, the fighting spirit, of the patient:

Above all, the patient should be told that there has often been an end to that torment of one haunting idea, which is indeed a great and venerable suffering. Many persons have got over it in a week, a few weeks, or a month, some in a few months, some not for years, but they have got over it at last.⁷

Leigh Hunt's attitude toward nervous disorders prepares us for his opinion of metaphysics. What shall be said of thinkers who place the true reality in some ideal realm apart

from the earth, and spend their days attempting to experience the spiritual essence of such a realm? The poet Coleridge furnishes an example of a man engrossed in such a pursuit. Of him, Hunt writes:

As to the charge against him of eternally probing the depths of his own mind, and trying what he could make of them beyond the ordinary pale of logic and philosophy, surely there was no harm in a man taking this new sort of experiment upon him, whatever little chance there may have been of his doing anything with it.⁸

To have visions of an ideal realm is thus a harmless recreation, like composing an airy poem or dreaming a happy dream. Of course, no one, even in moments of extreme ideality, can *really* escape this world. The poet Shelley tried to flee "on the wings of antipathy" from this world to one nearer his desires.

And what did Mr. Shelley carry thither when he went? A perpetual consciousness of his humanity; a clinging load of the miseries of his fellow-creatures. The *Witch of Atlas*, for example, is but a personification of the imaginative faculty in its most airy abstractions; and yet the author cannot indulge himself long in that fairy region, without *dreaming* of mortal strife. If he is not in this world, he must have visions of it. If fiction is his reality by day, reality will be his fiction during his slumbers.⁹

But a far more serious difficulty is present. If the recipient of visions is in good health, his dream structures will regularly be delightful and wholly pleasing to him. Yet dreamers are usually people who fail to take enough physical exercise to maintain health. Coleridge's condition again furnishes an example. He was an opium addict. It was said that he took the drug in order to deaden the painful acuteness of his otherworldly visions. But this is a lame excuse. I will venture to affirm, declares Hunt—

I will venture to affirm, that if he ever took anything to deaden a sensation within him, it was for no greater or more marvellous reason than other people take it; which is, because they do not take enough exercise, and so plague their heads with their livers. . . . He would then resume his natural ease, and sit, and be happy, till the want of exercise must be again supplied.¹⁰

The visions of Coleridge were thus the artificially induced dreams of a man in poor health. There need be little wonder, then, that they usually caused him acute agony. He wrote, for example, an agitated poem on *The Pains of Sleep*. Now,

What if all this heaping and war of agonies were owing to the author's having taken too little exercise, or eaten a heavier supper than ordinary? But then the proportion! What proportion, it may be asked, is there between the sin of neglected exercise and such infernal visitations as these? We answer,—the proportion, not of the particular offense, but of the general consequences.¹¹

Leigh Hunt is, in fact, fundamentally inimical to the idealist, the Kantian, the Platonist, the philosopher who is not satisfied with the earthly or everyday reality of ordinary experience. Such people are always setting up dualisms—of mind and matter, of spirit and substance, of soul and body. Hunt, his opinions firmly anchored in the empirical school of Hume and Voltaire, cannot grant the validity of such arbitrary divisions. "For our own parts," he maintains, "we see nothing at present, either in body or soul, but a medium for a world of perceptions,"¹² If body and soul thus both refer to the same thing—to human experience, that is—how can one really separate them?

But this earthly substance, of which we suppose bodies to be composed, what is that also? Is it in reality anything different from spirit? How do I know its existence but in my consciousness of it? And in what respect is this consciousness different from the thing of which it is conscious?¹³

Accordingly, the concept of a soul or spirit with an independent realm and separate laws is one which has little meaning to human experience. For (Hunt repeats the idea very often) "we can only judge of things by their effects"—by what they do, not by what they are. We measure effect, not essence: . . . whether we think the sun is a substance, or only the image of a divine thought, an idea, a thing imaginary, we are equally agreed as to the notion of its warmth. But on the other hand, as this warmth is felt differently by different temperaments, so what we call imaginary

things affect different minds. What we have to do is not to deny their effect, because we do not feel in the same proportion, or whether we even feel it at all; but to see whether our neighbors may not be moved. If they are, there is, to all intents and purposes, a moving cause.¹⁴

Clearly the basis and outlook of Hunt's philosophical opinions are firmly rooted in the actions of men and in the phenomena of this world. They must be held by a man with a healthy body in possession of all human faculties. Man's purpose in life should thus be

To consider the healthy, and, therefore, as far as mortality permits, happy exercise of all the faculties with which we have been gifted, as the self-evident final purpose of our being, so far as existence in this world is concerned; and as constituting therefore the right of every individual human creature, and the main earthly object of every social endeavour.¹⁵

Health! It is life's most precious possession.

When children are in good health and temper, they have a sense of existence which seems too exquisite to last. It is made up of clearness of blood, freshness of perception, and trustiness of heart. We remember the time, when the green rails along a set of superb gardens used to fill us with a series of holiday and rural sensations perfectly intoxicating. According to the state of our health, we have sunny glimpses of this feeling still; to say nothing of many other pleasures, which have paid us for many pains. The best time to catch them is early in the morning, at sunrise, out in the country.¹⁶

It is true that, as children grow up, knowledge makes demands which allow less leisure for the enjoyment of simple physical sensations. With knowledge, too, comes the discovery of evil, of crime, of ill health and misery in the world. But the acquisition of wisdom and experience is no bar to healthy reactions toward life. Health is not a negative quality only, a mere absence of illness. It is a major chord which imparts a full and positive tone to all that its possessor acquires. When health and the complete possession of faculties are combined with the knowledge of human interests and affairs, certain natural reactions can be confidently expected in the attitude of the fortunate possessor.

Such a man will necessarily accept life fully and enter into it with zest. He will be convinced of its value and its potentialities. He will believe that nature means well, that

The only durability to which she tends is a happy one. Her shortest lives (generally speaking) are her least healthy (her greatest longevities are those of healthy serenity).¹⁷

He will say too that "it is part of the benignity of nature that pain does not survive like pleasure."¹⁸ His basic optimism will not be shaken even by the spectacle of nature's apparent cruelty—by animal feeding on animal. For, even to the victim, life has been good:

Fortunately, . . . this cruel-looking tendency is accompanied by nature's usual beneficent tendency to produce a greater amount of pleasure than pain; for the duration of the act of dying, or of being killed, is in no instance comparable with that of the state of being alive; and life, upon the whole, is far more pleasurable than painful (otherwise we should not feel pain so impatiently when it comes).¹⁹

By accepting nature, by pronouncing life good, this man will remain in the full stream of existence. Thus he will, necessarily, accept another postulate: he will pronounce *human* nature good. Within a year of his death, Leigh Hunt wrote in his *Autobiography*:

Great disappointment and exceeding viciousness may talk as they please of the badness of human nature. For my part, I am now in my seventy-fourth year, and I have seen a good deal of the world, the dark side as well as the light, and I say that human nature is a very good and kindly thing, and capable of all sorts of virtues.²⁰

It is not to be supposed that the optimism Hunt advocates is the silly, unreasoning kind which deliberately closes its eyes to everything that might disturb its serenity. Such an optimism would be possible only if a man left the world and created a fool's paradise of his own. In the world one knows very well that illness, misery, evil, and vice have continually to be reckoned with. No man "can at all times be really cheerful, or at a moment's notice"; nevertheless, "the endeavour to look at the better side of things will produce the

habit; and this habit is the surest safeguard against the danger of sudden evils,"²¹

The healthy man, looking steadily and unblinkingly upon evils, will make three important predictions with regard to them. In the first place, there are evils, not Evil: the term is relative, not absolute. Pleasure and pain are real enough, to be sure, since they are names for certain definite results. "But the results themselves will be pleasurable or painful, according to what they act upon."²² Consequently, the standard by which evils are declared will be a variable one:

What we call health of body and mind is the fittest state of our composition upon earth: but the state of perception which is sickly to our state of existence, may be healthy to another.²³

It is easy to see, in the second place, that, if there were no evils or pains, there could scarcely be such things as pleasures.

Made as we are, there are certain pains without which it would be difficult to conceive certain great and overbalancing pleasures. We may conceive it possible for beings to be made entirely happy; but in our composition something of pain seems to be a necessary ingredient, in order that the materials may turn to as fine account as possible, though our clay, in the course of ages and experience, may be refined more and more.²⁴

This second circumstance, "that evil itself has its bright, or, at any rate, its redeeming side," reveals to the healthy intelligence, thirdly, the temper in which the entire question is properly approached and apprehended. The presence of evils in the world is a challenge to human effort. It calls to you to "put, as Jupiter says in the fable, your shoulder to the wheel; and put it as cheerfully as you can."²⁵ Evil thus viewed becomes the motive for our earthly efforts, and its progressive discomfiture the standard by which their results are measured.

Now there are people who sneer at the idea of man improving his lot upon earth. Almost any attempt to further man's control over natural phenomena is called by them an "aiming at perfection"—as if there were no difference between testable suggestions for improvement and visionary dreams of perfection! Again, they will say of a proposed

change that it is "attempting something wild and romantic." They believe, it would seem, that all progress and change are illusory. But any reference to experience and history is sufficient to disprove their position. "They say it is impossible the world should alter; and yet it has often altered," And if man does not plan his own progress, there is no other power which will benevolently achieve it for him.

In truth, the striving for progress through the overcoming of evils is the very activity which elevates mankind above other members of the animal kingdom. For "the greatest distinction hitherto discovered between men and other creatures, is that the human being is capable of improvement, and of seeing beyond the instincts common to all,"²⁶ Instinct remains stationary; the level of intelligence rises. Accordingly, the optimism with which the healthy man faces the world would lack meaning and direction unless to it there is added *meliorism*—the consciousness that the environment, in its relation to the welfare of mankind, can be indefinitely improved, and that it is the animating purpose of human activity to labor on the road through such improvements.

It is worth repeating that, by placing his emphasis upon the struggle for improvement, Hunt does not hold out perfection as the prize. In our progress, "we may get rid of the worst earth, though not of the earth itself,"²⁷ The substance of our clay has been determined by our heredity and our human instincts. The former gives us our individual mixture of vices and virtues. The latter includes the almost untamable animal impulses of war and love. Improvement, then, is not an easy matter. But it can be achieved because there remains largely under man's control the supremely important realm of environment, habit, and training. In this field, which is far more important than that of heredity, man can work out his own salvation. He must realize that "morals mean habits; that good as well as bad habits are acquirable; and that satisfaction, instead of regret, increases with their advancement."²⁸ To acquire healthy habits is to eliminate evils and advance human welfare.

With the end toward which human effort must direct its activities thus justified, one turns to the means to be employed for its attainment. What is to guide mankind on its road to improvement? Our guide must be, says Hunt, the reason or conscience. By this assertion he enrolls himself among the rationalists of the school of John Locke and the *French philosophies*, particularly Voltaire, whose *Philosophical Dictionary* provided (as we learn from the *Autobiography*) the staple of Leigh Hunt's speculations as a youth. To a rationalist of this type, reason was exalted common sense. He held that when an experienced and unprejudiced man faces a dilemma, he will find that one solution among many impresses itself clearly and firmly upon his mind. If the impression is thus distinct and vivid, it has been placed there by the faculty of reason, and it may safely be trusted. The twentieth century feels a profound distrust of such a conception. It makes of "reason" what is in effect a magical spirit instilled into the brain before birth and operating alike in everyone; it accepts, therefore, that very mysticism which Hunt has condemned. On the other hand, if there is no such magical faculty, then "reason" would seem to be nothing but individual opinion, dictated, it may be, by whim, passion, or prejudice.

By reposing upon reason or (as he sometimes calls it) conscience, then, Leigh Hunt has, in the view of the present day, wandered into a bog. It is interesting to observe, however, that he is by no means hopelessly mired. In fact, he has so well guarded his position, and is so far in advance of the usual rationalist of his day, that his philosophical system, even by present standards, suffers no essential damage.

In the first place, Hunt distrusts "reason" even while he is proclaiming its validity.

We are far from thinking [he writes] that reason can settle everything. We no more think so, than that our eyesight can see into all existence. But it does not follow that we are to take for granted the extremest contradictions of reason. Why should we? We do not even think well enough of reason to do so. For here is one of the secrets of superstition. It is so angry at reason for not being able to

settle everything, that it runs in despair into the arms of irrationality.²⁹

"Conscience" fares in the same manner:

Conscience may be in the wrong. It may be over-scrupulous as well as too little so; may have been wrongly trained; may have been taught, not only to take right for wrong, but wrong itself for right. Hence ascetics and other bigots.³⁰

When Hunt declares that reason should be our guide, but that it may easily lead us astray, he surely says very little. We see, indeed, that he does not look upon reason as an infallible faculty. But, on the other hand, we see that he has failed to point out a dependable guide for human activity. Now one cannot expect Hunt to know the processes of inductive reasoning as they were to be employed in the great scientific achievements of his century. One can see clearly, however, that his was a mind receptive to the experimental method, and that, had its processes been clearly formulated in his day, he would have discarded entirely his idea of "reason" as a special mental faculty.

Many passages in Hunt's works indicate that he foresaw the general character of scientific thought, even if he did not anticipate its processes. He writes, for example:

Experiment was that standing ground which Aristotle desired without knowing it, and on which the great lever has at last been fixed. Mechanical philosophy has not only moved; it will inevitably alter the world; and moral improvements of all sorts will follow.⁸¹

Of Francis Bacon, usually held to be the first to advocate inductive thinking, Hunt writes:

If I were asked to describe Bacon as briefly as I could, I should say that he was the liberator of the hands of knowledge.⁸²

And when, with the Holy Alliance, despotism resumed its sway over Europe after the defeat of Napoleon, Hunt still saw cause to hope for the best. He counted on two allies. The first was the public press. The second was

. . . the astonishing growth of that experimental philosophy, which has such an effect both on the production of means and the diffusion

of knowledge; and which its illustrious father, Lord Bacon prophesied, would alter the world.⁸⁸

If Hunt can thus acclaim the philosophy on which scientific advance was built, he naturally welcomes also the products of scientific discovery. "Mechanical knowledge," he declares, "is a great and glorious tool in the hands of men, and will change the globe."⁸⁴ He approves the steamboat and the railroad train; he rejoices at improvements in the manufacture of commercial articles. Trade, considered merely as the barter of products, was held by Hunt in very low esteem. But trade, by improving communication, promises better things: "commerce, while it thinks it is only exchanging commodities, is helping to diffuse knowledge."³⁶ There is, in fact, only one unfortunate peculiarity:

No reasonable man would stop the progress of manufacture, for a good will come of it beyond what is contemplated. But it is not to be denied, meanwhile, that the more petty conveniences we abound in, the more we become the slaves of them, and the more impatient at wanting them where they are not.⁸⁶

A second cause which prevents Hunt's conception of a generalized "reason" from doing his rationale of thought much harm is that he cannot be accused of confounding it with individual whim or personal bias. The standard he exacts of reason is social. His search is always, we have seen, for the effect of actions; he judges effect by observing the social group generally. Hunt will not allow his reader to forget that "we must bear in mind the good of the community as the warrant of all that we do."⁸⁷ Thus:

If your conscience, then, is in doubt, consider what you would have thought of the case had it been another's before it was your own.⁸⁸

The true standard of action is thus the familiar precept: do to others as you would have them do to you. "Reason" (or "conscience"), guiding conduct but in turn guided by social effect, sinks into a negligible middle term.

In order that the social standard may be operative and the effect of human effort fully measured by it, all members and

classes of the social group must be included. And within the group each individual must be permitted the reasonable exercise of all healthful human faculties. Consequently, there must be entire freedom of opinion, universal education, and universal suffrage. These will bring about great and beneficent changes:

And from Universal Suffrage must come universal better treatment of man by his fellows;—universal *wiser* treatment;—universal comforts;—food for all, fire and clothing for all; education for all, monopolies for *none*;—hence no necessity for lying; which is only the resource of the unequally treated against those whose lies, in pretending a right so to treat them, are far greater and more vicious.³⁹

We see here the aspect of Hunt's philosophy which so greatly attracted the young Shelley.

Leigh Hunt's interest in religion manifested itself in his *Religion of the Heart*. The title of this work is completely misleading; for, did we not know Hunt, we might think that "heart" means glowing, mystical emotion—that he considers religion to be the ecstatic union of the soul with the spiritual realities of another realm. Hunt, the bitter opponent of Methodism, means, of course, nothing of the sort. "Heart" is the old familiar "reason." Its principles assert themselves in a man when "health of mind and health of body are . . . cultivated in unison."⁴⁰ In brief, religion merges with morals; and, since Hunt's ethical standards are fixed in social effect, his religion as well is of this earth.

To Hunt, God, "though not immediately or in all stages of His processes almighty, is ultimately so."⁴¹ He is, in other words, a working, striving creature just as men are, except that *His* goal is absolute perfection. His principles, as they are progressively evolved, reveal themselves to the human reason; there has not been one single and final Revelation. The Old Testament, in fact, is only a collection of cruel myths and barbarous deeds. In the New Testament, when the fabulous portions have been cleared away, Jesus emerges as . . . a most affecting and exalting human being, one of an excessive sensibility, occasionally overborne on the side of consistency and

of healthy perception, but abounding in the tenderest and noblest sentiments, and impressing them the more by that excess on the attention of mankind.⁴²

But Jesus was merely one of many "divine men who from time to time have advanced the human species in knowledge and goodness." We must remember that

In all books that have been accounted sacred, in Zenda-Vestas, Vedas, the Koran, &c., are to be found inculcations of right principles, however obscured or contradicted.⁴³

Leigh Hunt measures an other-worldly religion by the same standard that he employs in connection with the metaphysical speculations of a Coleridge. If the idea of an after life is held vaguely and abstractly by a healthy man, it is a pleasant stimulus for his social labors. But the man who stakes a considerable portion of his life on the belief is only a selfish egotist.

Other-worldliness is the piety of the worldly. It is the same desire for the advantages of the world to come, which the worldly-minded feel for those of the present: and it is manifested in the same way. At the best it is self-seeking, without thought of others; at the worst, it is self-enjoyment at their expense.⁴⁴

And the man who prays is he who wishes to acquire something without working for it:

But let no one disgrace his belief in a Divine Being, either with thinking to gain by praise what his endeavours or his troubles should obtain for him; or by assuming even the right to praise, when his worship has never been anything but that of a worldling or a slave. To praise even an earthly father in order to gain some object by the praise, is disgraceful in children, and dishonouring to himself.⁴⁵

To this indictment must be added the item that the other-worldly religionist views the world with disdain and despises his natural faculties—so that "there are persons in England at this moment, who believe, or profess to believe, that the body is a despicable thing wholly unworthy of attention, till illness forces them to notice it,"⁴⁶ And such a person appends to his credo the hideous doctrine of eternal punishment,

which makes a monster of God and outrages nature. For "there is nothing infernal in nature":

Nature will have no unlimited pain. The sufferer swoons, or dies, or endures; but the limit comes. Death itself is but the dissolution of compounds that have either disordered or worn out, and therefore cannot continue pleasantly to co-exist.⁴⁷

Accordingly, when Hunt comes upon the *Ode to a Dead Body* of the gloomy Italian, Andrea de Basso, he experiences a healthy-minded disgust:

A decaying dead body is no more the real human being, than a watch, stopped and mutilated, is a time-piece, or cold water warm, or a numb finger in the same state of sensation as the one next it, or any one modification of being the same as another. We may pitch ourselves by imagination into this state of being; but it is ourselves, modified by our present totalities and sensation, that we do pitch there.⁴⁸

As for de Basso's condemnation of the dead woman—

But above all, to consign her to eternal punishment in the next world, because she gave rise to a series of fugitive evils in this—granting even that she, and not her wrong education, was the cause of them—is one of those idle worryings of himself and others, which only perplex further what they cannot explain, and have at last sickened the world into a sense of their unhealthiness.⁴⁹

The man who held this philosophy stood out in bold relief before a background of completely opposed English opinion at a time when the latter was in a state of forceful formulation. Leigh Hunt's system of thought was un-English. He was looked upon by his countrymen as a very superficial sort of person, a dilettante with a flashy surface gaiety. He had none of the strut of Carlyle, the "profundity" of romantics like Coleridge, the breezy confidence of Macaulay. Dickens found it possible to portray him as Harold Skimpole of *Bleak House*; the biographers of Byron have heaped scorn upon him. It is only recently that Hunt's merit—as exhibited in his *Autobiography*, in his keen-sighted essays and "characters," his descriptions of old London, his political articles, his

dramatic criticisms—shows signs of meeting proper recognition. As a symptom of this change we may turn again to Mr. R. Brimley Johnson, who, as we have seen, recognizes that Hunt was un-English. But this biographer also wrote, in 1928: "Leigh Hunt, a critic practically always right in judgment of literature from Chaucer to Browning."

But there is more to this philosophy than its un-English character. At present one is struck by its startling similarity to the pragmatism, the instrumentalism, of William James and Professor John Dewey. To complete the similarity one need add to Hunt's philosophy only a definite statement of the steps or processes of thinking (such as is contained in Professor Dewey's *How We Think*), and perhaps a more decided emphasis upon the purposive character and social implications of human thought and activity. Now, pragmatism is rather generally held to be the typical American philosophy, the philosophy naturally evolved from the problems and circumstances of American life, and having most in common with the American character. Why, then, may not Leigh Hunt be claimed for America? Why may it not be said that his life exhibits the spectacle of an American mind which by accident was deprived of its natural surroundings? We have seen that the circumstances of his descent, of his family, give to this supposition the most gratifying support.

If Leigh Hunt is an American in that his philosophy is characteristic of New World ways of thinking and doing, then one should be able to describe the typical American mind by making a practical application of Hunt's philosophy.

One will begin by saying that the American scene places a premium on good health. The individual accepts with little repining the original capacities with which he faces life and the conditions under which he must begin his labors. His emphasis is on progress; he wants to "go in" for something and to "get on"; his optimistic perseverance is marked. He has little respect for any man not similarly at work. He is firm in the belief that knowledge can be indefinitely advanced, and that the results of advancement will be beneficial to man.

He gladly accepts, therefore, the progress of the mechanical sciences in the belief that the discoveries of science will leaven all human knowledge, so that scientific progress will inevitably be accompanied by moral progress based on new and better habits of life.

The American mind, one will say, is turned outward to the world. It shows little patience with other-worldliness. Being healthy, it has no reason to despise the human body. Being busily and satisfactorily engaged with the numerous objects and forces of the environment, it has no motive for despair over human limitations, and no occasion for dreams of another realm in which the deficiencies of this one shall be made up. It is therefore somewhat contemptuous of philosophic systems based on spiritual essences and values. And if it is judged by a passive, sentimentalized, introspective religious faith, it is decidedly non-religious; or rather, perhaps, its religion is one of works, not of faith.

The American is not unsocial; he "belongs" to one group or another quite readily. Nevertheless, his emphasis is upon individual achievement. He will not erect a social framework at the expense of the full development of his individual faculties. Indeed, one may say, perhaps, that his social impulses are best exhibited by the willingness he manifests to allow his fellows to develop their individual capacities. In the new land, the pioneer had little patience with the Old World's social and political detritus of a past age. Hence he insisted on manhood suffrage, opportunity for everyone, and a certain common level of education. For the advancement of his political and social interests he is inclined to believe that no special training is requisite, that the common sense or "reason" which every man potentially possesses will suffice.

If Leigh Hunt's philosophy is American, then the basic qualities of the American scene and the American character are what has been sketched above. It will be objected that it is by no means certain that American thought and behavior *do* accord with the outline which has been given, or that, at any rate, the subject is one of such magnitude that an ade-

quate consideration of it would enormously exceed the bounds of the present study. All this is true. Yet it constitutes merely another element of the same problem.

Leigh Hunt, it has here been contended, has been judged and condemned as un-English instead of being valued and praised as American. In the same way, American speakers and writers throughout the past century were incessantly lamenting our lack of an American philosophy, literature, and civilization. They tacitly accepted the contention that American thought is only English thought, following its model at a distance of perhaps a half-century. They did not object to the claim that most American writers were English in all except geographical residence. Yet the American now finds himself a citizen *of the* World Power—hated and envied, perhaps, but not regarded with even the pretense of condescension or disdain. It seems improbable that such an elevation could come from utter vacuity—from a complete lack of a distinctive national character and mode of thought. May it not have been, at the very time of the lamentations of our speakers and writers, that the American mind had for decades been a distinctive entity, and that the liberal forces of Europe (and particularly of England) were, during the nineteenth century, acutely aware of it and learning much through observation of it? To be somewhat more specific, it seems likely that a considerable and distinctive part of the great impetus imparted to the social and political thought of Europe by what is somewhat vaguely and indiscriminately called the influence of the French Revolution, was rather the expression of principles definitely • traceable to the New World and the American Revolution. From this point of view, when it is contended that American thought has ever lagged behind and followed in the wake of English thought, it may be replied that, on the contrary, the progress of political and social thought in England during the past century has been the spectacle of successive stages in Americanization. And the assertion that American men of letters have usually been English in all save accident of birth is seen to be no more true than its

opposite extreme, a contention that English writers, so far as they followed the political and social changes their country endured, have been American in all except their place of residence.

In brief, there is a clear need for a revaluation of things American. Such a revaluation will attempt to ascertain the quality and native attitude of the American character. With such a standard established it will be possible to show that, whenever an American writer has been acclaimed as representative, this quality and attitude have been inherent and apparent in him, no matter how great may appear the surface contrasts or the differences of talent. Such a revaluation will also follow the demonstrable influence of the American mind in Europe. There—it has been the purpose of the present discussion to predict—the judgment will be pronounced that the character and philosophy of Leigh Hunt give him a clear title to be considered as an American.

ST. AMPHIBALUS

BY

J. S. P. TATLOCK

ST. AMPHIBALUS

THE NAME OF ST. AMPHIBALUS is found nowhere before Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae*. Here it appears three times. St. Alban saves "confesorem suum Amphibalum" on the point of being seized by the persecutors under Diocletian, and then delivers himself to death in his stead, "mutatis uestibus" (V, 5).¹ Next, Constantine, later an uncle to Arthur, is delivered up by his father "in ecclesia Amphybali infra Guintoniam, ut monachilem ordinem susciperet" (VI, 5). Finally, Arthur's successor Constantine, pursuing the two warlike young sons of Modredus, "alterum Guintonie iuvenem in ecclesia sancti Amphibali diffugientem ante altare trucidavit," and butchers the other at the altar of a monastery in London (XI, 4).

This third passage is the real starting point. With the addition of certain details, it is from Gildas' *De Excidio Britanniae*, one of Geoffrey's oftenest used and named sources; here Constantine kills two royal and warlike boys at the altar, "sub sancto abbate [abl. case] Amphibalo,"² according to the *editio princeps* of 1525 by Polydore Virgil. Of Constantine and his victims almost nothing is known, but they are of just about the date (mid-sixth century) of his namesake in the *Historia*, and it is certain that Geoffrey understood the two as the same person. Even apart from the "Amphibalus," no one can question that the one passage is the source, and the only source, of the other; and with the Amphibalus one can hardly question that this passage in Gildas is the origin of the saint's name in Geoffrey.³

About this name there is much to be said. The above reading, as stated, is that in the *editio princeps* of Gildas, and is therefore four centuries later than Geoffrey. The correct reading, in modern editions, has it that the boys were killed under the very chasuble or mantle of a holy abbot—"sub sancti abbatis [gen. case] amphibalo." This is the reading in

the Cotton and Cambridge Dd. MSS and that at Avranches.⁴ As to the very few other MSS listed by Hardy, Potthast, and Mommsen (all do not contain the passage), I cannot say; one of the great needs of early historical and literary scholarship is a conclusive edition of Gildas and "Nennius" together. But unquestionably Polydore found his erroneous reading in one or both of his two unknown MSS; this skeptical and scholarly Italian, who knew Greek, assuredly knew the meaning of the noun *amphibalus*, and did not change his text to give puzzling publicity to the obscure British saint in his day so named. His reading seems to appear in various editions of Gildas till it was corrected by Archbishop Ussher. It is certainly due to the fact that the rare noun *amphibalus* was not recognized by some scribe, whose psychology was that of the modern stenographer (though his expedient is not unknown to modern scholars), and to his simple alteration of the text to make it a proper name; a plausible name, in view of Amphiarus, Amphimedon, Amphitrite, Amphitryon, and other such, for example, in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. The alteration may well have come about before Geoffrey's day, at any time, and no plausible argument could be made for it as due to the vogue of the saint after Geoffrey's day, for this vogue was slight, almost confined to St. Albans;⁸ even if there were any probable origin for his name except only in this alteration; nor as due to blundering by the extraordinarily intelligent Geoffrey; nor to his intentional alteration in order to get a desired name. But whether a scribe or Geoffrey matters little. This is the only known passage, before the appearance of the saint in the *Historia*, whence Geoffrey could have drawn the name; and this passage has been seen to be the basis of the third passage in which Geoffrey names him.

The third, and not the first. This fact calls for explanation. The saint's church in Winchester appears in the *Historia* a century or so, and five books, earlier; and nearly three centuries and one more book earlier yet, we meet the saint himself, not as an abbot but as "Alban's confessor," and not at Winchester but at Verolamium. The possibility that Geoffrey

intended two persons with so unparalleled a name need not even be considered. There is no suggestion of inconsistency in the three passages; to the holy personage recorded in the first passage is dedicated the church and monastery in the others, presumably as having founded them, for early monasteries were usually dedicated to their founders, especially in Celtic territory. But it may at first seem odd that Geoffrey should have derived from the Gildas passage which he used six books later the name which he gives to the unnamed protege of Alban read of a few chapters earlier in Gildas (cap. n) and in Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica*. Yet there is no difficulty. The facts merely illustrate with how much foresight, and perhaps revision, he wrote. It is characteristic of him to get verisimilitude by plausible detail, and especially to knit his book together by references from one part to another.⁶ Nor would Gildas¹ vague supposed statement that the boys were killed in the bosom of the church and in their own mother's embrace "sub sancto abbate Amphibalo" necessarily be understood to mean that the abbot was living and present rather than a tutelary saint; or that he could not be the person saved by Alban, and now furnished with further biography and a name by a process of integration quite in Geoffrey's manner.⁷ Here we catch Geoffrey at work.

To suggest the protege's name there is not a syllable in Bede's or Gildas' account of Alban's martyrdom. This statement, and the whole of the above explanation, is contrary to the view which has been generally held from generations ago to the present day. Most of Geoffrey's wording of Alban's martyrdom is accounted for by Gildas' eleventh chapter, as to the *confessor* saved by Albanus, "mutatis dein mutuo vestibus," "in fratris supra dicti vestimentis." The account in Bede (whom also he was using hereabouts) is this:⁸ Alban, a pagan, gave lodging to a cleric fleeing from his persecutors, was converted by him, but became known as lodging the "confessorem Christi,⁹ cui necdum fuerat locus martyrii deputatus." To the soldiers sent for the cleric, Alban surrendered himself "pro hospite ac magistro suo, ipsius habitu,

id est caracalla, qua uestiebatur, indutus." Here, with some ingenuity, the origin of the name Amphibalus has been sought. The word *caracalla* being supposedly unfamiliar, a gloss, *amphibahy* supposedly familiar, supposedly was added in the wrong place and then was taken as the cleric's name.

A clever guess detecting an ancient error by pure inference has an attraction, if no great matter depends on it, and if there is no competing explanation; and this guess has been consecrated by long usage.¹⁰ But for this guess there is not an iota of evidence, no known gloss or error in the MSS of Bede. As to probabilities, while a marginal gloss (hardly an interlinear) might have been attached to the wrong ablative, it would be odd that this supposedly familiar gloss should itself in turn not be recognized. A word familiar enough to be used as a gloss by one person is unlikely to have been totally misunderstood by another. But further, *amphibalus* is not a familiar word. It is never found in either classical Latin or Greek. Apparently a popularly etymologized form for **ἀμφιμαλλος** ("something woolly on both sides")? it came to be understood as "something to be thrown about one," even as a rare synonym for chasuble. In the very passages by early writers that are used for illustration by modern lexicographers, the word was often felt to need definition.¹¹ Gildas is rather addicted to unusual words, priding himself, like many medieval writers (especially early Celtic), on his vocabulary. *Caracalla*, on the other hand, has every appearance of being a commoner word, and gained further familiarity from this very passage. Meaning a Gaulish garment given vogue early in the third century by the young emperor M. Aurelius Antoninus "Caracalla," the name was familiar to anyone who had read pretty much any history of the middle empire at Rome; sometimes his nickname is explained, as by the chronicles of Eusebius-Jerome and Cassiodorus, "propter genus vestis quod Romae erogaverat."¹² The word was adopted in Greek—**καρακάλλα, καράκαλλον, καρακάλλιον**. In Latin it is not at all uncommon, used generally without definition, and indeed used to define other words. That it was thus familiar

as the name of a garment, as well as sufficiently clear in the Bede passage, made further definition quite needless. To have used *amphibalus* to define it would have been rather more absurd than *ignotum per ignotius*. If anyone by chance felt it needed a gloss, the natural words would have been *cappa*, *capella*, *paenula*, or *pallium*; or even *birrus*, *casula*, *chlamys*, *laena*, *planeta*, *sagum*. Further, although a garment often retains its name yet greatly changes its character, there is every indication that these two garments were never similar. Neither word seems ever to be among the many words used to define the other; and just as *amphibalus* is at times used for the chasuble, *caracalla* is often used for the *cappa* or cope. That in a passage where there is already sufficient definition a fairly familiar object should be defined by one less familiar which seems not to have been like it is not a very plausible guess. Even if the "sub sancto abbate Amphibalo" reading were not actually found, it would be a better-based conjecture than the gloss.

And with this guess disappears the only alternative to the view that Geoffrey started the name and vogue of St. Amphibalus by associating the two Gildas passages. Gildas in no way does so; Geoffrey is the first. The only promising passage, as we have seen, in which the word *amphibalus* occurs is the later passage in Gildas, and the only ultimate authorities on the man are the earlier and that in Bede. Gildas' has always been a rare book, for it gives little clear and extensive and less of attractive information. Against one or two hundred MSS of Bede's *Historia* and many of so-called Nennius, there are now but a half-dozen of it, some of these mere fragments. Medieval writers themselves remark on its scarcity—"raro invenitur," says William of Newburgh.¹³ Of historians before Geoffrey it is never used by most and seldom by the others, and when Gildas' name is cited it generally refers to so-called Nennius, to whom it had become misappropriated.¹⁴ The almost sole authority used for Alban is Bede's more attractive account. It would be hard to find a single writer except Bede before Geoffrey who shows that he knew Gildas

well, and impossible to find one who by using with the first passage in Gildas a word found in the second thus integrates the two passages.

In particular there is no authority apart from Geoffrey for connecting Amphibalus' name with Winchester. There is none whatever in Gildas or Bede. All such statements are late, vague, contradictory, obviously come from Geoffrey.¹⁶ Amphibalus or a dedication to him is never mentioned in any formal document, either earlier (needless to say) or later, relating to the cathedral or any religious house in Winchester. In placing Amphibalus' church and monastery there Geoffrey was probably actuated by his desire perceptible elsewhere to exalt Winchester. Fishing in troubled waters, he may have been trying to secure for that city some of the glory over which (as will be seen) two rival houses were at odds. But clearly the Winchester monks took Geoffrey lightly.

But not so the monks of St. Albans. Bede's account, so far as it goes, would favor this as the scene for Amphibalus, since Alban is martyred there and Bede indicates that the protege presently "became a martyr. At any rate the cult and vogue of Amphibalus existed there only. The new name and detail about Bede's *confessor Christi* offered an opportunity for extension and use too good to be lost by the monks of that enterprising house. The possession of great local cults and above all of relics meant pilgrims, miracles, and gifts, and those meant prestige and wealth, which a loyal monk coveted for his house as a man in the world for himself and his family. To quote the most eminent of hagiographers, Father Hippolyte Delehaye, "Des faux audacieux, produits du mensonge et de l'ambition, ont longtemps egare des esprits trop credules et meme des critiques trop peu defiants."¹⁶ With less asperity than the Jesuit Bollandist, one may think also of the more disinterested desire to glorify God through his saints, to witness his great works through them, and to make amends to this almost forgotten martyr for his long neglect. Unscrupulous, credulous, and above all unbalanced people were always at hand to contribute the visions and miracles through which

cults and relics were sometimes obtained and guaranteed. Needless to say, the church as a whole had no responsibility for all this; it was entirely the work of individuals.

There was a special reason at St. Albans for enthusiasm over this new saint. A splendid new shrine had been built for its great possession, the relics of the protomartyr of Britain, which were translated to it in H29;¹⁷ but its possession of them was disputed. They had been claimed by a religious house in Denmark, seemingly that of Odense, and the tale of their recovery reads like a certain modern kind of novel; how, after their theft, the St. Albans sacristan Egwin had gone to the Danish house, gained admittance as a monk, risen to be sacristan and guardian of the shrine, and after crafty preparations had got the relics of Alban off to England. This is said to have been long before, but was still remembered in Denmark, it seems.¹⁸ They were claimed by the monks of Ely, with an account of their removal thither less picturesque but no more probable; the feeling between the two houses was very bitter, till partially allayed by the confirmation of the St. Albans claim to St. Alban's relics by a commission appointed by pope Eugenius III in 1151.¹⁹ With these interruptions to faith, heightened glory to the house from St. Alban's protege could not be unwelcome. A book written in the sixth century in old British or English on St. Alban was said to have been found in the tenth century in a hole in a wall, to have been translated by a decrepit priest into Latin, and then to have crumbled into dust. This seems to be the professed origin of the elaborate Acta of both saints produced by monk William under Abbot Simon between 1166 and 1183. William admits, however, that he takes Amphibalus' name from Geoffrey of Monmouth—"Gaufridus Arturus."²⁰ But still there were no relics of the new saint. In 1177 or 1178 a pious man in the town of St. Albans was visited by Alban himself at night, with much pleasant chat (according to the chronicler) led to near Redbourn, three or four miles to the north, a place which had belonged to the abbey for generations, and there shown the relics of Amphibalus.²¹ It was

more convincing that the visionary should not be a monk, and perhaps his vision served his own ends; and convenient that the relics should be found on the lands of the convent. This Invention (the technical word) tended to prove the Ely monks wrong. In 1186 Amphibalus' relics were translated to a new shrine in the abbey; by 1195-1214 we find a cleric Amphibalus named for the saint, and a painting of the saint executed on the front of an altar. After the apparition of Amphibalus himself asking that the place of his Invention be kept holy, a church is built at Redbourn as a cell to St. Alban's, and in the next abbacy, 1214-1235, some of the relics are presented there in a gilded shrine, and a fresh relic, Amphibalus' cross, stained with Alban's blood, is found in London and prudently acquired by Abbot William.²² A festival was found for Amphibalus (25 June), only three days after St. Alban's day, which would tend to confirm the view that he was martyred at the same place. Caerleon claimed the two saints as natives; it was maintained that Amphibalus had preached in Wales; Durham boasted some of his dust; Winchester, did not refrain from all claims, still less Ely. The checkered history of the cell continued till the Dissolution, when in 1539-1540 the site and estates were given to one John Cokks, Gent.; but the manor was still called St. Amphibal, at least to the time of Dugdale.²³ To this day there is a hamlet called Annables, three miles north of Redbourn and seven from St. Albans, the only place so named in the British Isles, and presumably the same, the name of which Archbishop Ussher would rightly derive from "Amphibal's."²⁴ The very topography of England therefore, as well as the hagiography, shows the influence of Geoffrey of Monmouth.

It was to prevent just such rashness as to identity, as well as rashness as to sanctity, that not far from Geoffrey's time the court of Rome began to assume the main responsibility as to canonization, which has ended in the modern long and critical process. Amphibalus' name is in no modern official list of saints. It was Geoffrey of Monmouth's enterprising literary imagination which touched off the whole combina-

tion; that combination of ambition, cupidity, fraud, and appetite for novelty, of romantic feeling, devoutness, and ever fresh longing to be touched by divine power; in short, that prevailing medieval preference of the expedient and good to the true, which had so much to do with the cult of the saints. The secular-minded Geoffrey, with his indifference to monks, saints, and miracles, was a convincing if ironical origin for this new monastic cult with all its marvels.

NOTES

NOTES TO "JOHN DONNE'S DISCOVERY OF HIMSELF"

- ¹ Edited by Theodore Spencer (Harvard Univ. Press, 1931).
- ² In the introductory comment on Milton's "poems written at School and at College"; Cambridge edition of Milton's *Complete Poems*.
- ³ *Loves Deitie*.
- ⁴ *Lovers Infinitenesse*.
- ⁶ *Second Anniversarie*.
- ¹ Song, *Goe, and cache a falling sfarre*.
- ⁷ *Loves Exchange*.
- ⁸ Letter to Sir H. Goodere, September, 1608.
- ⁹ *Loves Alchymie*.
- ¹⁰ *The Extasie*.
- ¹¹ Verse letter, to Mr. Rowland Woodward.
- ¹² *Devotions upon Emergent Occasions*, I, "Meditation."
- ¹³ Sermon preached January 25, 1628-29.
- ¹⁴ *An Hymne to the Saints, and to Marquesse Hamylton*.
- ¹⁵ Sir Edmund Gosse, *Life and Letters of John Donne*, I, 62-63.
- ¹⁶ *Second Anniversarie*.
- ¹⁷ Letter to Sir T. Lucy, October 9, 1607.
- ¹⁸ *Elegie on the Lady Marckham*.
- ¹⁹ See "A Sermon preached to the Earle of Carlile and his Company at Sion," on the text, Mark 16:16 (LXXX *Sermons*, no. Ixxvi).
- ²⁰ *Communitie*.
- ²¹ *Loves Alchymie*.
- ²² *Confined Love*.
- ²³ Verse letter to Sir Henry Wotton.
- ²⁴ *Holy Sonets*, IX.

NOTES TO "THE POETRY OF THE MIND"

- ¹ "When Keats Discovered Homer," *The Bookman*, LXVIII, 4, 401.
- ² "The Metaphysical Poets," in *Homage to John Dryden*.
- ³ Herald Hoffdmg, *A History of Modern Philosophy*, trans. B. E. Meyer (Macmillan, 1924), I, 130.
- ⁴ *Dtsours de la mtthode*, IV.
- ⁵ Preface to the *Novum Organum*.
- ⁶ *Novum Organum*, Aphorism 98.
- ⁷ *Laws*, I, 11, I.
- ⁸ *Ibid.*, V, Ixvii, 12.
- ⁹ *Ibid.* The italics are mine.
- ¹⁰ *Ibid.*, V, Ixvii, 6. The italics are mine.
- ¹¹ *Ibid.*, I, xvi, 8.
- ¹² *Novum Organum*, Aphorism I.
- ¹³ *Life of Cowley*.
- ¹⁴ W. F. Melton, *The Rhetoric of John Donne's Verse* (1906).
- ¹⁶ *Milton's Prosody* (Oxford Univ. Press), p. 55.

^M "A Lecture on Free Verse," in *Collected Essays of Robert Bridges*, p. 53.

¹⁷ *Milton's Prosody*.

¹⁸ *Life of Browne*.

¹⁹ *Laws, I, II, 6*.

⁴⁰ "A Sermon Preached to the Earle of Carlile," in *X Sermons of John Donne* (ed. Geoffrey Keynes, Nonesuch Press), p. 77.

²¹ "Sir Thomas Browne," in *Appreciations*.

²² *Life of Browne*.

²³ *Religio Medici*, II, 9.

²⁴ *Quincunx, IV*.

²⁶ *Laws, V, xlvii, I*.

²⁶ *Essays in Divinity* (ed. Augustus Jessopp, London, 1855), P. 239-

²⁷ "The Miltonic Simile," *P. M. L. A.*, XLVI, 4, 1034.

NOTES TO "KIDNAPPING DONNE"

¹ *Axel's Castle*, pp. 116-117.

² *New Republic*, LXX, 51. The reviewer is Mr. Robert Penn Warren.

³ *A Garland for John Donne*, ed. Spencer (Harvard Univ. Press, 1931), p. 5.

⁴ *Dunbar*, p. 84.

⁴ *Dunbar*, p. 84. ⁶ *A Garland for John Donne*, p. 158.

⁶ *Studies in Philology*, XIV, 137.

⁷ Quoted by R. P. Blackmur in "T. S. Eliot," *The Hound and Horn*, I, 295.

⁸ *A Garland for John Donne*, p. 4.

⁹ George Williamson, *The Donne Tradition*, p. 47.

¹⁰ *Op. cit.*, p. 57.

¹¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 294.

¹² *Op. cit.*, p. 25.

¹³ *Op. cit.*, p. 200.

¹⁴ *Op. cit.*, p. 243.

¹¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 94.

¹⁸ Helen C. White, "English Devotional Literature (Prose)," Univ. Wisconsin *Studies in Language and Literature*, no. 29, p. 243.

¹⁷ Evelyn M. Simpson, *A Study of the Prose Works of John Donne* (Oxford Univ. Press, 1924), p. 42.

¹⁸ *A Garland for John Donne*, p. 165.

¹⁹ *Op. cit.*, p. 194.

²⁰ E. E. Stoll, *Shakespeare Studies* (1927), p. 129.

²¹ G. Wilson Knight, *The Imperial Theme* (1931), p. 25.

²² *Op. cit.*, p. 185.

²³ "Studies in Shakespeare, Milton, and Donne," Univ. Michigan *Language and Literature Series*, I, 203.

²⁴ *Complete Poetry and Delected Prose*, ed. Hayward, p. 672.

²⁵ Cf. Lynn Thorndike, *Science and Thought in the Fifteenth Century*, pp. 134-136.

²⁶ Facsimile Text reproduction of the first edition, p. 146.

²⁷ Hayward, *op. cit.*, p. 609.

²⁸ *Elegy XII, His Parting from Her*, lines 99-100.

²⁹ *Book V, Prologue, stanza vii*.

- ⁸⁰ Hayward, *op. cit.*, p. 674.
- ⁸¹ Lines 37-39. *Poetical Works*, ed. Grierson (1912), p. 196.
- ⁸² Cf. J.-R. Charbonnel, *La Pensée italienne au seizième siècle* (Paris, 1919), p. 36.
- ⁸⁸ *Paradoxes and Problems*, ed. Keynes (1923), p. 43.
- ⁸⁴ *Essays in Divinity*, ed. Jessopp (1855), pp. 206-207.
- ⁸⁵ Hayward, *op. cit.*, p. 619.
- ⁸⁸ Keynes, *op. cit.*, p. 16.
- ⁸⁷ Jessopp, *op. cit.*, pp. 37-38.
- ⁸⁸ Hayward, *op. cit.*, p. 733.
- ⁸⁹ Keynes, *op. cit.*, p. 37.
- ⁴⁰ *Aspects of the Italian Renaissance*, p. 288.
- ⁴¹ Canto IV, p. 44.
- ⁴² *Jour. Eng. Germ. Philol.* XVII, 471-502.
- ⁴⁸ Keynes, *op. cit.*, p. 2.
- ⁴⁴ Jessopp, *op. cit.*, p. 95.
- ⁴⁵ Lines 263-285.
- ⁴⁸ Lines 55-63. Professor Grierson's note on these lines indicates the practical knowledge of navigation and astronomy with which Donne varied the image of the ever fixed mark whose worth's unknown although its height be taken.
- ⁴⁷ Blackmur, *op. cit.*, pp. 206-207.
- ⁴⁸ Keynes, *op. cit.*, p. 64.
- ⁴⁹ Book VI, stanzas 35-36.
- ⁵⁰ Lines 79-81.
- ⁶¹ Lines 72-73.
- ⁶² Arthur O. Lovejoy, "The Parallel of Deism to Classicism," *Mod. Philol.*, XXIX, 281-299.
- ⁶³ *Outflying Philosophy*, pp. 59-60.
- ⁶⁴ *Donne the Craftsman*, pp. 59-69.
- ^M Henry Lanz in *The Fortnightly*, Vol. I, no. 6, p. 8.
- ⁶⁸ George Wither, *Fair Virtue of the Mistress of Philarete*, London, 1818, p. 95.
- ⁶⁷ *Hid.*, p. 96.
- ⁶⁸ "The Lineage of The Extasie'," *Mod. Lang. Rev.*, XXVII, 1-5.
- ⁶⁹ Keynes, *op. cit.*, p. 6.
- ⁸⁰ The confrontation is made by Elizabeth Holmes in *Aspects of Elizabethan Imagery*, p. 99.
- ⁸¹ *Jean Bodin*, by Roger Chauviré, Paris, 1914, p. 124. Vide Bodin's *Theatrum Naturae*, IV, 15, and *Demonomanie*, II, 5.
- ⁸² *The Criterion*, VIII, p. 464.
- ⁶³ *A Garland for John Donne*, p. 4.
- ⁶⁴ *The Religious Thought of John Donne*, p. 207.
- ⁶⁶ Cf. *A Garland for John Donne*, pp. 53-55.
- ⁸⁶ Hayward, *op. cit.*, pp. 113-114.
- ⁸⁷ Cf. A. O. Lovejoy, "The Dialectic of Bruno and Spinoza," *Univ. Calif. Publ. Philos.*, I, 163-164.
- ⁸⁸ Thorndike, *op. cit.*, p. 136.
- ⁹⁴ Hayward, *op. cit.*, pp. 734-735. Cf. the use of the same thought in *Devotions upon Emergent Occasions* (ed. Sparrow), p. 4.
- ⁷⁰ Hayward, *op. cit.*, pp. 628-629.

NOTES TO "THE POESY OF FICTION"

¹ Arnold, *Essays in Criticism: First Series*.

¹ Baldwin, *Ancient Rhetoric and Poetic*.

'II Cor. ii.

⁴ *The Greek Novel Two Thousand Years Ago*.

⁶ Mrs. A. R. Burr's admirable work, *The Autobiography*, is a descriptive account, not a history, nor strictly a definition.¹

⁸ Teggart, *Prolegomena to History*.

⁷ *Honore de Balzac*.

⁸ R. P. Utter, *The Beginnings of the English Novel* (MS).

⁸ Jane Byrd, *Fielding, a Force in the Breaking Down of the Drama into the Novel* (MS).

¹⁰ *Essays*, I, 32 (Florio's translation).

¹¹ *The Varieties of Religious Experience*.

" Woodberry, *The Torch*.

¹⁸ Hocking, *The Meaning of God*.

¹⁴ *Origins of Romance*.

¹⁶ William James, *Pragmatism*.

¹⁸ *On Biography*.

¹⁷ Bacon, *The Advancement of Learning*.

¹⁸ Woodberry, *op. cit.*

¹⁹ Bullough, *Psychic Distance as a Factor in Art*.

²⁰ Sully, *Sensation and Intuition*.

²¹ Bullough, *op. cit.*

⁸² H. G. Wells, *The Contemporary Novel*.

²³ Woodberry, *op. cit.*

NOTES TO "THE WILLING SUSPENSION OF DISBELIEF"

¹ Lowes, *The Road to Xanadu*, pp. 58, 60.

² *On English Poetry* (1922), p. 26.

¹ *Biographia Literana*, Chap. XIV.

⁴ There are amusing slips of a more superficial kind, of which some perhaps crept in when the play was revised. The moon which is both new and full is well remembered. But again, much is made at the beginning of the play of the law of Athens relating to a parent's will in the marriage of his children. Duke Theseus himself can by no means extenuate its force. Yet, in the end, we see him choosing to overbear Egeus' will in regard to Hermia's marriage, and asking no justification but that of his own high pleasure. Most amusing, however, is the conduct of Theseus in the fourth act. Here he has persuaded Hippolyta to come out before the crack of dawn to climb the mountain's top, in order to listen to the baying of his hounds, in which he takes great pride—to mark "the musical confusion," as he puts it, "of hounds and echo in conjunction." But before this pleasure has been experienced, the lovers are discovered. They are awakened, and give a short and confused account of their

coming thither. Theseus listens with enjoyment, decides peremptorily upon a triple wedding, and concludes,

And, for the morning is now something worn,
Our purposed hunting shall be set aside.
Away with us to Athens.

Hippolyta, that imperial huntress, sometime queen of the Amazons, says not a word

⁶ *Biographia Literaria*, Chap. XIV. ⁷ *Romanticism*, pp. 55, 57.

⁹ *Characters of Shakespeare's Plays*.

NOTE TO "WISE ENOUGH TO PLAY THE FOOL"

¹ D. S. Margoliouth, *The Poetics of Aristotle*, p. 45.

NOTES TO "TRAGIC PRODIGALITY OF LIFE"

¹ *De Republica Anglorum* (ed. L. Alston, 1906), pp. 105-106.

⁸ A part of this passage has been translated and quoted by W. B. Rye, *England as Seen by Foreigners in the Days of Elizabeth and James the First* (1865), p. xlix.

⁸ Rye, *op. cit.* p. 20. ⁴ *Ibid.*, p. no.

NOTES TO "BENEATH THE SURFACE, 1800-1815"

[When this essay was in galley proof, the author was suddenly taken so severely ill that it was impossible for him to make certain revisions which he had planned, or even to be consulted about them. With the aid of Mrs. Bruce and of Mr. Bruce's notes, I have attempted at his request to make the revisions and to attend to checking and proofreading. Under these circumstances I feel sure that any error which may have escaped me will be pardoned to the author.—G.R.S., JR.]

¹ Thomas Love Peacock, *Headlong Hall*, Chap. VII.

¹ John Gait, *Annals of the Parish* (Edinburgh and London, William Blackwood and Sons), in, 112. (Written about 1813.)

⁸ Thomas Malthus, *Essay on the Principle of Population*, Book II, Chap. VIII.

⁴ Joseph Ballard, *England in 1815* (Boston and New York, 1913), p. 14.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 15. ⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 24, 25. ⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

⁸ To be sure, Cowper, in *The Task*, had written:

Hence merchants, unimpeachable of sin
Against the charities of domestic life,
Incorporated, seem at once to lose
Their nature; and, disclaiming all regard
For mercy and the common rights of man,
Build factories with blood, conducting trade
At the sword's point, and dyeing the white robe
Of innocent commercial justice red. . . .

—IV, *The Winter Evening*, 676-683.

but his subject was not trade nor machinery, but the evil result to society of "incorporation."

⁹ *Auguries of Innocence*, in *The Poetry and Prose of William Blake* (Bloomsbury, Nonesuch Press, 1927).

¹⁰ *Vala, Night the Seventh*.

ⁿ *Jerusalem*, I, 15.

¹² *Fragment*, in Blake, *op. cit.*, p. 857.

¹⁸ "Public Address," *ibid.*, pp. 823, 811.

¹⁴ *Vala, Night the Seventh (b)*, *ibid.*, pp. 386, 393.

¹⁶ William Godwin, *Fleetwood; or The New Man of Feeling* (London, 1832), pp. 94-110.

¹⁸ Robert Southey, *Letters from England, 1807*.

¹⁷ The 1843 Preface to *The Excursion*.

¹⁸ *The Excursion*, Book VIII.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, Book IX.

²⁰ Byron's speech was made the opening episode in Ernst Toller's drama, *Die Maschinenstürmer*, produced in Berlin, in 1922.

²¹ Peacock, *Headlong Hall*, Chap. I, note.

²² *Ibid.*, Chap. I.

» *Ibid.*, Chap. II.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, Chap. VII.

²⁸ For example, the Reverend Doctor Opimian in *Gryll Grange* (1860): "Look at our scientific machinery, which has destroyed domestic manufacture, which has substituted rottenness for strength in the thing made, and physical degradation in crowded towns for healthy and comfortable country life in the makers. The day would fail, if I should attempt to enumerate the evils which science has inflicted on mankind."—Everyman edition, p. 187.

²⁸ H. L. Bruce, "William Blake and Gilchrist's Remarkable Coterie of Advanced Thinkers," *Mod. Philol.*, XXIII, 285.

²⁷ Richard Garnett, Introduction to Everyman edition of *Headlong Hall* (1908).

²⁸ *The Mask of Anarchy*, XXXVIII.

²⁹ *Sonnet: England in 1819*.

⁸⁰ Carlyle, *Chartism*, Chap. IV.

³¹ Kingsley, *Alton Locke*, Chap. IX.

NOTES TO "LEIGH HUNT—AMERICAN"

¹ *Autobiography of Leigh Hunt* (London, 1885), p. 20.

² "Nervous Disorders," in *The Indicator*.

⁸ "Of Dreams," *ibid.*

⁴ "Nervous Disorders," *ibid.*

⁶ "On the Realities of Imagination," *ibid.*

⁸ "Nervous Disorders," *ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Autobiography*, p. 255.

⁹ *Lord Byron and Some of His Contemporaries* (London, 1828), p. 208. For Hunt's view that the basic importance of Shelley's poetry is not the "airy fancy" and "pure poetry" of his lyrics, cf. W. E. Peck, *Shelley: His Life and Works* (1927), II, 117: ". . . the passion for reform which would not let Shelley rest still indubitably stirs the hearts of men, and that passion, however brokenly it found expression in his

verse, and that vision of the poet which caused him to realize not only the necessity of certain immediate reforms in politics, society, and government, but also the inevitableness of other reforms yet unaccomplished which yet must come, have endeared him as none of these same priceless lyrics have to the hearts of men. . . . For this reason it seems to me that all the tears which editors and biographers have shed over Shelley's obstinate and self-willed perversion from the path of 'pure poetry' have been shed uselessly, and without regard for the real basis of Shelley's importance to our literature."

¹⁰ *Autobiography*, p. 254.

¹¹ "Of Dreams," in *The Indicator*.

» *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Religion of the Heart* (London, 1853), p. 48.

¹⁴ "On the Realities of Imagination," in *The Indicator*.

¹⁶ *Religion of the Heart*; p. 18.

¹⁶ "Thoughts and Guesses on Human Nature," in *The Indicator*.

¹⁷ *A Jar of Honey from Mount Hybla* (London, 1883), p. 215.

¹⁸ "Deaths of Little Children," in *The Indicator*.

¹⁹ *Table Talk* (London, 1882), p. 99.

²⁰ *Autobiography*, p. 220.

²¹ *Table Talk*, pp. 35 ff.

²² "Thoughts and Guesses on Human Nature," in *The Indicator*.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ "Deaths of Little Children," *ibid.*

²⁵ "Remarks upon Andrea de Basso's Ode to a Dead Body," *ibid.*

²⁸ "A Battle of Ants," in *The Companion*.

²⁷ "Deaths of Little Children," in *The Indicator*.

²⁸ *Religion of the Heart*, p. 19.

²⁹ "Thoughts and Guesses on Human Nature," in *The Indicator*.

⁸⁰ *Religion of the Heart*, p. 64.

³¹ *Lord Byron and Some of His Contemporaries*, p. 189.

³² *Table Talk*, p. 85.

^M "State of the World," in *The Examiner*, No. 575.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁶ "May Day," in *The Indicator*.

³⁶ *Table Talk*, p. 45.

³⁷ *Religion of the Heart*, p. 31.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 65.

³⁹ "A Few Remarks on the Rare Vice Called Lying," in *Men, Women, and Books*.

⁴⁰ *Religion of the Heart*, p. 5.

⁴¹ *Table Talk*, p. 221.

⁴² *Religion of the Heart*, p. 132.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 135.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 60.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 55-

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 195.

⁴⁷ *A Jar of Honey from Mount Hybla*, p. 214.

⁴⁸ "Remarks upon Andrea de Basso's Ode to a Dead Body," in *The Indicator*.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

NOTES TO "ST. AMPHIBALUS"

¹ Quorum Albanus cantads gratia feruens confessorum suum Amphibalum a persecutoribus insectatum et iam iamque comprehendendum primum in domo sua occuluit, et deinde mutatis uestibus sese discrimini mortis optulit, imitans in hoc Christum animam suam pro ouibus ponentem [Griscom's text; New York, 1929].

¹ Constantinus ... in duarum venerandis matrum sinibus, ecclesiae carnalisque, sub sancto abbate Amphibalo, latera regionum tenerrima puerorum, . . . inter ipsa, ut dixi, sacrosancta altaria . . . laceravit. [I omit needless parts of Gildas' sentence, sprawling as usual.]

⁸ Thus the facts brilliantly confirm the guess of M. Joseph Loth (*Revue celtique*, XI, 348-349), that Geoffrey got the name from this passage in Gildas, though not, as Loth supposed, by misreading. Loth's brief note in the *Melanges* of his review has been known to some, but by no means to all, and was apparently overlooked by M. Edmond Faral (*Ugende arthurienne* [Paris, 1929], II, 183, 317). It has not been recognized for a century that Amphibalus as a name is actually found apart from Geoffrey. But Loth might have found Polydore's reading not only in Polydore's edition of Gildas but also among the variants in Joseph Stevenson's edition (London, 1838), p. 37. That this was the ultimate origin of Amphibalus' name and legend was recognized not only by Stevenson but even by Archbishop Ussher in the seventeenth century. Polydore's reading is also given by Mommsen.

⁴ All used by Mommsen, in the *Man. Germ. Hist.*, edition, cap. 28, p. 42. B. M. MS Royal 13 D. v., listed by Potthast, is of "Nennius," not Gildas. There is a good account of texts of Gildas in J. E. Lloyd, *Hist. of Wales to the Edwardian Conquest*, (London, 1912), pp. 160-161.

⁶ See p. 254, *supra*. No churches are known to have been dedicated to him (Frances Arnold-Forster, *Studies in Church Dedications* [London, 1899], III, Statistical Summary), unless at the cell of St. Albans mentioned later. The late and apocryphal notion that the cathedral of Winchester had been so dedicated is obviously attributable to Geoffrey. See Francis Bond, *Dedications of English Churches* (Oxford, 1914), p. 190, and p. 254, *supra*.

⁸ Compare I, 17 with III, 20 (Lud); II, 9 and VII with XII, 18 (Merlin and the Shaftsbury eagle); V, 2 with XII, 10 (Severus' wall); VI, 15 with VIII, 9-12, 16, 24, and XI, 4 (Stonehenge); XI, 7, etc., with XII, 6 (Malgo, etc.). In the first as well as elsewhere we find an early allusion to a name which, like that of Amphibalus, makes its principal appearance later.

⁷ An example in this third passage is his making out the two princes butchered by Constantinus to be the sons of Modredus. Likewise the incredible words of the eagle in II, 9 appear in XII, 18 to have been political prophecies. His constant habit early in the *Historia* of giving eponymous explanations for the names of places is of much the same nature. Whether Geoffrey himself actually saw reason to believe that the Amphibalus found in Gildas was the same as the cleric saved by Alban, we need not ask.

⁸ *Hist. Eccles. Gentis Angl.*, I, 7 (ed. Plummer, Oxford, 1896, 1, 18), based in part on Gildas.

⁹ This phrase and Gildas' mere *confessorum* account for Geoffrey's odd *confessorum suum*. This probably means "his confessor" in the modern sense; *confessor* was so used in Geoffrey's day, though in modern Latin *confessarius* is customary. There-

fore Geoffrey would seem to imply that Alban had known him before, thus developing what he borrowed into fresh detail, as often. But possibly the phrase means "the holy monk whom he befriended," for *confessor* is also a complimentary word for a monk (see Ducange's *Glossarium*). Any other meaning for Geoffrey's phrase is unlikely. Geoffrey's implication in his second passage that Amphibalus had been a monk is fully accounted for by his sources. Besides the above and the *abbate*. in Gildas' cap. 28, in cap. n the latter calls him *a. frater*, which indicates a monk; further, Bede's word for the garment, *caracalla*, was often used of monastic garb, perhaps through association with *cuculla*, and is rendered *munucgegyre Ian* in the Alfredian translation. What was it to any of these authors that there were no monks anywhere till after Alban's day?

¹⁰ Even Faral, *op. cit.*, II, 183, holds to it. With less than his usual penetration he does not seem to see (p. 317) that the second passage in Gildas voids it. The guess is more or less accepted also in the *Diet. Nat. Biog.*, Suppl., 1, 28 (1917-); in Plummer's Bede's *Hist. Eccles.* (1896), II, 17; and even in the Loeb Classical Library edition (London, 1930), I, 36.

¹¹ One need hardly refer to the *Thesaurus Ling. Lat.*, Ducange's *Glossarium*, Sophocles' *Greek Lexicon of the Rom. and Byz. Period* (Boston, 1870); and to such histories of costume as H. K. J. Weiss's *Kostumkunde* (4 vols., 1872-1883).

¹² *Patrol. Graeca*, XIX, 569; *Patrol. Latino*, LXIX, 1235.

¹³ *Hist. Rer. Anglic.*, Prooemium (*Chron. Steph.*, Rolls Ser., 1884-1889, I, 11); "impolitus atque insipidus," he says.

¹⁴ Compare authors mentioned in *Diet. Nat. Biog.*, VII, 1225, which slightly understates the number of MSS of Gildas.

¹⁵ Dugdale, *Monasticon*, I (1817), 190; Thomas Rudborne's fifteenth-century *Hist. Major Wintoniensis*, in H. Wharton's *Anglia Sacra* (1691), I, 185-186; Abp. Ussher, *Brit. Eccles. Antiq.* (1847-1864), V, 234-236; T. D. Hardy, *Descriptive Catalogue* (Rolls Ser., 1862), I, 17; Bond, *loc. cit.* The best modern guides to the history of the Alban and Amphibalus legends are Hardy, the *Acta Sanctorum*, and W. R. L. Lowe, *Illustrations to the Life of St. Alban* (Oxford, 1924). The thirteenth-century *Annales de Wintonia* (Rolls Ser.) ignore the whole matter, though mentioning Modred and Constantine (p. 3).

¹⁶ *Les Legendes hagiographiques* (Brussels, 1906), p. 120; also in *Revue des questions historiques*, LXXIV, 114. He is speaking especially of such examples as Joseph of Arimathea at Glastonbury. "On se de'tourne d'eux avec mepris, tout en admirant la simplicité de leurs dupes."

¹⁷ Matthew Paris, *Gesta Abbatum S. Alb.*, in Th. Wals., *Gesta Abb.*, I, 85 (Rolls Ser., 1867-1869).

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, I, 12-19; *Diet. Nat. Biog.*, Suppl., I, 27. Some of Alban's relics were claimed at Odense in 1080-1086 (H. G. Leach, *Angev. Brit. and Scand.*, Cambridge, 1921, p. 78).

¹⁹ *Gesta Abb.*, I, 34 ff., etc., 51, 87, 176, 193; Thomas of Ely (fl. 1174), *Liber Eliensis* (Anglia Christiana Soc., London, 1848), pp. 227-228; *Acta SS*, 22 June, XXV, 140-143 (Ely revived its claim in the fourteenth century); *Diet. Nat. Biog.* Suppl., I, 27; J. A. Froude, *Short Studies* (New York, 1885), III, 29.

²⁰ *Gesta Abb.*, I, 26-27; *Flores Historiarum* (Rolls Ser., 1890), I, 169-174; *Acta SS*, 22 June, XXV, 127-138.

¹¹ Dugdale, *Monasticon*, II (1819), 182, 219; Matthew Paris, *Chron. Maj.* (Rolls Sen, 1872-1883), II, 301-308; (in *Mod. PhiloL*, XXII, 211-214, evidence is shown for Matthew's conscious elaboration of another legend); *Gesta Abb*, I, 192; Roger of Hoveden (Rolls Ser., 1868-1871), II, 136; *Acta SS*, 22 June, XXV, 144 ff. A similar story comes from Hexham (Simeon of Durham [Rolls Sen, 1882-1885], II, 48).

^B *Gesta Abb.* (Rolls Ser., 1867-1869), I, 199, 200, 205, 219, 233, 282, 292.

²⁸ *Monast.*, IV, 526.

' *Acta S3*, XXV, 126. Ampfield, seven miles southwest of Winchester, is probably for Amman-feld, the field of Amma.

