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ENGLISH STUDIES
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PREFACE

THE papers here published were read and discussed at the International Conference of University Professors of English held at Magdalen College, Oxford, in August 1950. The Conference—the first of its kind—was attended by scholars from some thirty countries, and its success gave the occasion for efforts to form an International Association of University Professors of English. These efforts have continued since and will probably bear fruit before long.

Naturally the papers given at such a conference were diverse in scope and interest. Under the title of *English Studies Today* they will, it is hoped, be found to represent many of the varied perspectives and attitudes found among university professors of English today. They also include some dealing with what may be termed 'background subjects', written by leaders of thought outside the English professoriate, and discussing matters of common concern to students of humane subjects which centre to some extent in English. They have been classified roughly under four headings: first, papers devoted to matters of general literary interest; second, linguistic subjects, covering to some extent a wider field than English alone; then particular topics of English literature proper; and, lastly, papers dealing with the teaching of English in Universities, with special emphasis on the presentation of the subject to those whose native language is not English.

Although probably the outstanding achievement of this International Conference was to increase mutual understanding and to allow the free exchange of ideas among scholars who had for years had few opportunities for personal intercourse of this kind, these papers will provide a valuable record of its more formal meetings.

In addition it is hoped that they will give some idea of present trends in English studies throughout the world, throwing light on changing interests and proportions in the field, and the development of new lines of approach. They are deliberately intended to appeal to all those concerned with English language and literature; few of them, therefore, are narrowly technical. The subjects were chosen by the authors of the papers themselves, and were designed to provoke discussion. Naturally most of them are occupied with literary criticism of various kinds; but linguistic interests are also represented and, as has become common in England of late, these linguistic themes are often closely associated with studies in medieval English literature.

While it is not pretended that all of these papers are in themselves of equal significance, it is believed that some of them will have permanent value. All students of English language and literature and related humane subjects will, we think, find several essays here which will stimulate and please. *

As general editors responsible for preparing the papers for printing, we, in common with all who have dealt with the Clarendon Press, feel deeply grateful to its Delegates and especially to their statT, not only for undertaking the publication of the book, but also for the limitless courtesy and care from which we have benefited while the book was being produced. The Index of Names was generously made by Mrs. Margaret Bullough.

C. L. W.
G. B.

ERRATUM

CONTENTS, line 14:

for DAI GWILYM JAMES, Professor of English Literature, Bristol.

read DAVID GWILYM JAMES, Winterstoke Professor of English, Bristol.

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PART ONE
GENERAL

Europe and the Classical Tradition

IN power Europe has been hitherto the undoubted leader of civilization. In technology, economic strength, military power, and political experience she has been supreme. In intellectual and artistic culture, in letters, philosophy, science, art, music, her supremacy has been absolutely unchallenged. Except for some contributions from the old civilization of China, and to a lesser degree from that of India, the European or Christian civilization, with its great Atlantic and Pacific affiliations, might almost be said to have stood alone.

What has been the basis of this supremacy? Is it colour? It is easy to speak of the superiority of the white man over the coloured, but that is to take a very irrational basis. Is it race or language? It would be very difficult to find any common basis in these respects. Not many people would agree with a friend of mine, who after studying the primitive Indo-Germanic came to the conclusion that any people who could speak so difficult a language accurately and without hesitation must be a people of superior mind, with every right to a ruling position. If, however, we take the phrase 'hellenic', we are basing matters, rightly, not on race but on *mores*, traditional habits of thought and action. It was on *mores*, *TrcuSeia*, 'culture', and not on race, that the Greeks themselves based their hellenism, and I think in many ways the European does feel towards the rest of the world much as the Greek felt towards the barbarian. Our *mores* in general are derived historically from Rome, Athens, Jerusalem; but our intellectual and artistic culture is almost entirely Greek, and our religion still centred in one small Greek book. It is worth asking what this antithesis between Greek and barbarian meant to a Greek. Take, for instance, a passage in Aeschylus' *Eumenides* where the Furies are bidden to depart from Greece into the lands of the barbarians: 'To lands where by sentence of law heads are cut off, eyes gouged, men slaughtered, boys castrated; where there are mutilations and stonings, and a groan in the air of men impaled on stakes.' Except that we have no great objection to legal decapitations, is not that roughly the kind of thing we think unfit for Europe, barbarous? Then the Greek, like us, insisted on freedom and law; for the Greek there

was no divine king, with the right to have slaves and concubines sacrificed upon his grave, and to insist on obedience as the whole duty of his subjects. It was not obedience to a ruler that the ordinary Greek insisted on, but law, and a law which should embody real justice and be justly administered between man and man. A very clear example of this difference is given in the half-hellenized Seleucid empire, where the cities were Greek while the *hinterland* remained Oriental or barbaric. An accused man in the cities, even if his accuser represented the king, had a right to open trial according to a known and published code. He had free speech in his defence, whether he spoke himself or engaged an advocate, and his penalty was also limited by law. In the *hinterland* there were no such protections. A man might be condemned without trial, and condemned to any fantastic punishment, and his family with him.

In parts of Greece, such as Athens, the general freedom of speech and thought led, of course, to a great toleration of differences. Few states known to history, in the middle of a difficult war, would have allowed a comedian in a public theatre to ridicule the whole war policy as Aristophanes does. Then freedom, of course, has its dangers; and that is why Greek literature is almost boring in its insistence on the duty of moderation, measure, temperance, *μηδὲν ἄγαν*, 'nothing too much', and *γνώθι σαυτόν*, 'know thyself—that is, see yourself as others see you. The spirit of avoiding excess appears everywhere in Greek civilization as it does in ours. The magistrate has at the end of his year of office to submit his accounts and show that he has been faithful to his trust. The medical man has to take an oath that he will not pretend to possess magic arts. Even the general after victory must not be so arrogant as to put up any permanent memorial, only a temporary wooden cross, which must not be raised again when it falls, or repaired when it rots away.

Then, like the Romans after them, the Greeks did consider that they were superior in the art of government. No doubt both were right. Aristotle has got into great trouble with modern critics because he said that it seemed that by nature the Greeks were fitted to rule and barbarians to serve. It has been interpreted as a defence of the institution of slavery. But, of course, it was roughly true. In the innumerable settlements of Greeks all over the Mediterranean world, one did find Greeks ruling and the natives in some subject position; and this same talent for government has been generally accepted as a mark of the 'white man'. In Europe, Britain, France, Holland, Belgium, Spain, Germany, Italy—all have, or have had, their actual

colonies among coloured or non-European peoples; and where there was no national empire, the white man individually always belonged to a ruling class. In speaking of this European rule I will, for obvious reasons, take as my example the British Empire. I don't forget that all these empires have their weak points and may be subjected to devastating criticism. I know there have been varying degrees of skill and justice; I don't forget the virtual extermination of the Red Indians, or the treatment of the Australian aborigines, pushed out ever farther from fertile country into sheer desert, where human beings cannot live—a real case, only partly corrected as yet, of the newly invented crime called genocide'. I remember also with interest an Indian friend of mine from Nepal, who told me that he had been brought up to regard the British as not quite human, but as a species of demon, of whom the chief characteristic was that they insisted on their due portion every day of alcohol and of blood. He was quite right. The British used habitually to go to his country for shooting parties; they were disappointed if they got no sport, and felt badly treated if they were deprived of their normal drink. Allowing for these failures and misunderstandings, I think it is worth remembering how very little this rule of the European depended on force, and how much upon consent and prestige. I have seen it calculated that the proportion of British in India at its highest was about one to four thousand. One man cannot control four thousand against their will. And as for prestige, I remember a case at the end of the First World War when there were rumours of disorders amounting almost to a religious war breaking out in an inaccessible district about a hundred miles from the Black Sea. There were no troops available; so a young naval lieutenant was sent up, taking a Union Jack with him, who told the thousands of angry tribesmen that they must not. And they did not! In the long struggle of nationalist India, which has resulted in a complete victory, there was amid all the unpleasantness and the serious crime often a certain humorous element. Mahatma Gandhi was on the friendliest terms with Lord Lytton as Governor of Bengal, and Lord Lytton has told me how Gandhi, with a smile, would insist that he must be sent to prison; he would go on committing various forbidden offences until the Governor-General had no choice. And when in prison, he sent on one occasion three successive messages. One: he did not like the milk; might he have his own herd of goats? This was granted. Two: he did not like the rough prison blankets; might he have his own Jaeger blankets? He might. In his restricted diet he depended greatly upon almonds and raisins, and

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liked them of good quality. Might he have them from Fortnum & Mason in Piccadilly? At this point the tyrannical government girt up its loins and said no.

What I have said of the British applies, I think, with certain variations, to the empire exercised by Europe as a whole. We are not faced anywhere by a subject people maddened by oppression, but almost always by the insurgent nationalism of the intellectual classes, who feel that they have deserved and won a place in the government of their own country, and are often conscious of an intellectual superiority to a good many of the Europeans who are in authority over them. The intellectuals are the leaders, but of course any nationalist appeal is sure of popular support.

I wonder sometimes, in considering this forced retreat of Europe's empire over the world, how much importance we should allow to the old truth expressed by Cleon in Thucydides: 'This is not the first time I have seen that a democracy can never govern an empire.' Western Europe has long maintained, or at least professed, a belief in democracy. When Britain started on its education of India, that education was shaped by Macaulay on Whig principles, with an emphasis on freedom and the right of rebellion, and the absolute duty of the Government to embody the wishes of the people, or else to go. France carried into its Empire the extremely upsetting principles of *Liberte, Egalite, Fraternite*; and all nations now after the Second World War are ringing with these grandiloquent half-truths, and with apocalyptic promises of worlds 'free from want' and 'free from fear'. Would it have been better in the beginning to try to impress upon our coloured Empires the duty of peoples to obey their rulers, and the supreme social importance of order, peace, and loyalty? Or even to try to teach them, instead of the equality of all mankind, the inborn superiority of some races to others? It is an idle speculation in any case, for clearly it is too late now for such things.

The change from dependence on Europe to independence amounts almost to a revolution, and must in any case be full of difficulties and dangers. India is a very favourable case. The terrible tragedies of 1948 were caused, or at any rate greatly aggravated, by the split between India and Pakistan. Apart from that, to the Indians independence came gradually, and was recognized on both sides to be due or almost due. India had a full supply of able Western-trained leaders, and I believe that the number of administrative officials who have been trained in Western methods amounts to about half as

million. But in most cases the change came with violence, and for Europe as a whole it has meant dethronement.

The seed was sown in 1905, when for the first time the coloured Asiatic beat the white Christian European in a great war, the war of the Japanese against Russia. A friend of mine who was a British official in Baluchistan told me that, even there, thousands of miles away, the news of the Japanese victory set every Asiatic heart leaping. But the fatal blow came, I think, with the First World War. It was indeed true, as Sir Edward Grey said in 1914, 'the lamps are going out all over Europe; we shall not see them lit again in our lifetime.'

Why was the effect of the war of 1914 so extraordinarily bad compared with that of other wars? Well, in the first place, apart from its size and apart from the increased destructiveness of weapons, the structure of Europe's industrial civilization was far too delicate and complex to endure the monstrous material sabotage of war. Then, as Professor Halecki puts it, in a manner quite unforeseen the First World War drove Russia back from Europe into Asia, and gave her ultimately the leadership of all the coloured and colonial peoples against their European masters, and the rank of Enemy Number One to the whole European social order.

I think we must also recognize that man in Europe had on the whole reached a stage of moral development in which the things he had to do in a modern war revolted him, confused all his standards, and resulted, for large parts of Europe, in an appalling lapse into barbarism. More important still from the point of view of Europe, the war of 1914 was a civil war. The devastated country was always European country, the humiliating defeats were European defeats, the treasures plundered and destroyed were the treasures of Europe. And from the point of view of the Asiatic onlooker, the moral prestige which the Christian world had enjoyed was wrecked by the crimes actually committed by Christian against Christian, and the still more awful crimes attributed by them to one another in their war propaganda.

As for military and economic strength, must one not recognize, after all, a large amount of truth in the terrible admission for which a great French soldier is now paying the penalty in prison—Marshal Plain's deliberate judgement that France, after the first war, had not the strength to fight a second? How many nations had? And has not the second war largely completed the work of the first? All the great Powers of western Europe were left shattered, their economies undermined, their military strength broken, and their prestige in

particular terribly injured by the long series of Japanese victories. There is no mistake about the feeling on this point in India and all farther Asia. True, they have seen that the Western Powers did win in the end. But the magic of the Western name has gone; it is a new situation when Indian nationalists have proclaimed that the presence of one European soldier on Asiatic soil is an insult to all Asia.

How is our dethroned queen to be saved? I mean our European culture. You and I are savants, not politicians. Our business is with culture. Power is another question, but I must say a few words about it first. There has obviously been a great transfer of power in the world, from Europe elsewhere; a normal and peaceful transfer from Europe proper to the affiliated civilizations of North America and Australasia; a dangerous transfer to Asia, including the Russian Empire: a transfer from the white man to the coloured, corresponding perhaps to the transfer of power in each individual state from an aristocracy to a proletariat, from the cultured to the less cultured. Years ago, President Elliott of Harvard gave offence to two continents at once in a short sentence: 'Europe is no place for a man of conscience: America no place for a man of culture/ (The Americans, I may add, were more offended than the Europeans.) But one cannot help being reminded of the transfer of power from Greece to Rome, and many centuries afterwards from Rome to the barbarians. In those cases it is usual to speak of 'decadence'; but can one speak of any decadence now in the modern European? I do not think so. Both in brains and in energy this century has shown itself to be a great age. It has produced great men, and men of extraordinary endurance and courage. In all kinds of scientific invention the advance has been absolutely amazing. There is no parallel to it in all history. In the other branches of knowledge, even in a branch so far removed from practical life as ancient history, the progress has been very remarkable. And the advance has not been purely intellectual. In all athletic contests, in racing, Channel swimming, mountain climbing, Arctic exploration, the present day has made new records. I note in passing that an American journalist, writing of England when America was neutral, has stated that 'there is not a single record in this war of any British woman in uniformed service quitting her post or failing in her duty under fire'. I am not sure how anyone could know that there was no such record, but the statement does not suggest a decadent people. It is a tough, intelligent, and vigorous race throughout Europe that is being deposed from its high position.

I would make another claim, which will perhaps not be so easily admitted. I do not know in history of any age in which the horrors and mutual hatreds of war have been followed by such an immense effort towards reconciliation and charity. The wars may have done their worst to debase and brutalize us, but there is something still left of our Liberal, Hellenic, Christian, civilization which makes even now a tremendous counter-attack.

There is no decadence either of brains or energy, but there has, I think, been a change in the focus of interest. We cannot help being preoccupied by our dangers and troubles, both military and economic. We must think about war, and therefore about questions of armament, about engineering and chemistry, about the means of destruction and possible defences against destruction. Then, for reasons that I will not try to analyse, there is also danger of a class war. We have to think about problems of practical self-preservation in a pervading struggle for life; to think of the Communist menace, without and within, and the dangers that result from a decline of standards. One friend of mine was a pacifist in the first war, because he thought that a widespread submission to the Kaiser, though very regrettable, was a lesser evil than a world war; whereas in the thirties he considered a new war far preferable to a world-conquest by the Nazis, and now thinks no war could be so disastrous as a submission to Communist Russia. I do not, of course, say he is right; but one can understand his reasoning. The evil forces now in power in parts of the world are so vastly more barbarous than any in 1914. Again, I have an extremely intelligent friend, a lady in a cultivated family, who mentioned casually that she had never had time to read *Hamlet*. Her focus of attention has been elsewhere. There has been a great increase in popular education, but is it accompanied by any increase of culture? I should be inclined to estimate that, to denote an ugly process by an ugly name, there has been a sort of proletarianization of taste both in language and literature, and in response to it, a cliquish exclusiveness in criticism. In music, in poetry, in painting and sculpture something odd is taking place which seems to be connected with the war and the world movements resulting from war. Is it the growth of new vigour or a relapse into eccentricity and barbarism? The best authorities differ. There is the same doubt about religious feeling; is there a renaissance, or is there mainly an increase of gross superstition and of brutal indifference? Both views are strongly held. I dare not pronounce.

Thus I think it is clear that our Hellenic tradition of culture is in

danger. The power has gone from Europe, in part to the insurgent nations in Asia, in part from Europe proper to new countries which are less dependent on tradition and more cut off from the old traditional centres; countries which have been preoccupied with new material needs, such as the absolute necessity of building roads and railways and opening up the land. And further, I think we must allow for the very interesting fact that America at any rate was to a great extent peopled by refugees who fled from oppression, persecution, or lack of sympathy in England and in Europe, and looked upon the whole European tradition as something from which they wished to escape. This was true of the Pilgrim Fathers, true of the exiles of 1848, and is still true of almost all emigrants, particularly those from the east. Of course there is also assimilation constantly going on between the new countries and Europe, but on the whole I suspect we are moving towards them rather more than they towards us.

I can find one element of comfort amid these depressing facts. It seems, as Arnold Toynbee has pointed out, that in history a loss of power has often been followed by an actual increase of cultural influence. As power passed from Greece to Rome, there was less anti-Greek feeling among cultured Romans. They took increasingly to the study and admiration of Greek literature and art and philosophy, and familiarity with the Greek language. Cicero translated Greek philosophers into Latin; but when Marcus Aurelius wanted to write philosophy it was more natural to him to write actually in Greek. The Greek language as well as Greek thought dominated the greater part of the Roman Empire. Then, centuries later, when Rome in turn was conquered by the barbarians, and the barbarians found the task of governing an empire too difficult for them, for some time they took to putting up as puppet emperors cultivated Romans who were accustomed to the job. Later on, when the barbarians became emperors themselves (so I learn from Delisle Burns's interesting book, *The First Europe*), they remained greatly puzzled by the requirements of systematic law, and, when in doubt, made a practice of sending for advice to the nearest Roman bishop. Something similar is probably happening with British influence in India. The Indians have been extraordinarily quick and talented in understanding the English language and culture, but as long as British rule lasted, their liking for our ways of thought and practice was hampered by their national resentment of that rule. From all I can hear, this resentment has now mostly decreased or disappeared.

and Indians resort to the West in greater numbers than before. I wonder if some change of this sort, some cessation of resentment, as all cause for jealousy disappears, may be operating in the United States. Certainly the great influx of French, German, Austrian, and Russian savants into American universities must be having a notable influence on all intellectual life across the Atlantic.

But above all we must not forget our own loyalty to our dethroned queen. We must maintain among ourselves our own great European tradition, classic in each European language as well as in its Graeco-Roman origin. The ancient languages have had their part in it. I confess that, for my own part, I do not see how the nobler parts of the greatest European writers can be understood without some knowledge of the things they knew, some affection for the Greek and Roman books they loved. When an uncle of mine was a war correspondent in Poland in the 1860's, he found Latin the ordinary convenient means of communication, not only with priests but with all the cultured classes—the only difficulty being great differences in pronunciation. That is a past stage, but I have often noticed in the Assembly of the League of Nations the great effect of a Latin quotation or allusion. It ran through the whole body much more effectively than a quotation from Shakespeare or Dante. I remember a quotation by M. Briand of the motto on the bells of Basle, to which he compared the message of the League of Nations itself after the war: 'defunctos ploro, vivos voco, fulgura frango'. I remember the general laughter when a certain Albanian bishop of Noli who had been somewhat unreasonable was referred to by another speaker as 'ce vieux *Noli Me Tangere*'. But the importance of classical culture in any language is something much deeper than this. All we in Europe must look back to the rock from which we were hewn, but every great language builds in course of time its own indigenous classics, its Dantes, Shakespeares, Goethes, Tolstoys—I hardly know whom to choose for France. India has its classic tradition; China one even greater. The classic spirit is a refusal to acquiesce in the prison of the immediate material present, a refusal to be the slave of current fashions, ideas, tastes, and aspirations; a refusal to be content with the easy and obvious, a determination to seek the highest even if it is difficult and remote; and perhaps also a realization that nothing can be understood without some knowledge of its history. Things that deserve the name of 'classic' are those which possess the kind of value which survives the changes of taste. In a paper I once wrote about the ancient art of *grammatike*, I commented on the great

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trouble that ancient human beings took in making *grammata*, inscribed characters, to record some moment of experience. Mostly, of course, they were meant to record something practical, like a treaty or a business contract; but to later generations the records that matter most are something different. They mostly, no doubt, aimed at TO *avayKaiov*, 'the necessary'; but sometimes, and surprisingly often, they aimed straight at TO *καλόν*, 'the beautiful'. *Thtgrammata* were laboriously inscribed in order to preserve or recall, or perhaps to make eternal, some discovery, or thrill of beauty, or inspiration; some moment of experience which man could not bear to lose. To write it down, letter by letter, on papyrus, or carve it in stone, was man's way of saying to some moment of life, in the words of Faust:

Verweile doch, du bist so schön!

The moving forces in the spiritual progress of man are not widespread over the globe. It has been the work of a chosen few, standing out from what Halecki calls the 'colossal and uniform'. A few great ages, a few cities or peoples or individual men of genius have scaled the heights for us and made them accessible, and the *Grammata*, the literary tradition, is precisely the record of those chosen few. Of course the record is faulty. It is both redundant and incomplete. Man in his long pilgrimage has collected much waste matter and wasted treasures. But such as it is, with all its imperfections, the *Grammata* he has inscribed form a record of the triumphs of the human soul, the moments of which he has said: 'These must not be allowed to die.' In the great classic tradition the soul of man stands at the door and knocks. It is for each of us to open or not to open, to listen, trying to understand, or to turn aside to the tumult of louder voices and more insistent claims.

GILBERT MURRAY

The Nature of Character in Drama, with special reference to Tragedy

WHAT do we mean when we speak of 'character' in the work of a great dramatist?

Just as a work of art differs as a whole from the raw material which is its source, so must its various parts or aspects differ from the corresponding aspects of that material. In that particular branch of the art of literature which we call drama, plot or action, for instance, is not identical with a series of actual events, though it has a special relationship to it; nor is dialogue identical with actual conversation, however cunningly it may contrive to appear so; nor 'character' with character. That aspect of a play which we may, if we wish, abstract from the whole and think of as a 'character' has travelled a long way from the original source of inspiration. It took its rise, in the dramatist's imagination, from his experience of and not-necessarily-conscious interpretation of human motive, emotion, thought, and action, as they appeared to him in life and at a particular moment. It was resolved, by the artistic process, into a conception or form held, unexpressed, in his mind. Next, or it may be half-simultaneously, this was transmuted into communicable form in terms of certain conventions, conventions mysteriously potent in their operation upon the imaginations of the recipients—in this case readers or audiences—communicating to them a proportion of the poet's original experience, the proportion varying, of course, in any given conjunction, in accordance with his power to communicate and theirs to receive.

From this it follows that we must not demand, when we approach dramatic character, too limited or too immediate correspondence with character as we meet it in life. We do the artist wrong when we apply the test of superficial resemblance and use that as our criterion of his fidelity to truth. The revelation of character, like any other branch of dramatic technique, should not, properly, attempt to deceive us into believing that what we have before us is fact itself or a direct deduction from fact. Yet this must not be taken to imply that it is illusion, if by illusion we mean something incapable by its very nature of leading us to truth. Dramatic character, like dramatic plot, is an image on the grand scale, and it is the function of imagery to evoke in our minds certain perceptions, realizations, emotions, which are themselves aspects of an underlying reality, not to present

us with a scientific statement of fact, an abstract from that perceived reality.

This is, of course, a commonplace of aesthetics, but its truth has sometimes eluded critics, largely perhaps because certain dramatists have themselves denied it in practice and in their theories, misleading dramatic criticism, not so much about their own experiment as about the real nature of this aspect of dramatic technique. For drama occupies a somewhat anomalous position among the arts in that it appears at first glance to be inherently representational, and the habit of certain of its weaker practitioners in the recent phase of its history has confirmed this impression in the minds alike of audiences, critics, and subsequent dramatists. Fidelity to surface appearance, in character as in other branches of dramatic technique, has been given, in popular and in critical opinion, an honourable estate as a mode of presentation to which the evidence does not, I think, entitle it. A host of honest, workmanlike dramatists of the second rank have practised it assiduously and with the best of artistic intentions; one at least of the first rank seemed for a time to set his seal upon it. But drama, which, because it is transmitted to us in the theatre through impersonations by living men and women, appears to come nearer to the actual than any of the other arts, is in fact debarred by certain fundamental laws of its nature from any sustained attempt to present surface appearance. Its brevity alone would make this impossible, even if the deeper-lying demands of passion and thought did not add their weight to the swift momentum. We are thus confronted with another of those paradoxes that beset dramatic aesthetics. The art which in its proper sphere of the theatre seems the most nearly immediate of all is forced, in obedience to that law of concentration without which it would not seem immediate, to present action, character, and even speech itself in terms which, upon investigation, turn out to be profoundly unrealistic.

The attempt to deny this fundamental necessity of drama, which is, properly, the basic dramatic convention, is of very recent growth. Without the weighty authority of Ibsen, it is doubtful whether the diligent output of the everyday dramatist of the mid-nineteenth century would seriously have disturbed our acceptance of the grand, ancient technical tradition of what Aristotle classed as tragedy. But in a few of his plays (and how hard it is to persuade our generation that they were only a few!) Ibsen did in fact appear to lend his genius to an experiment the results of which bewilder our judgements to the present day. Some half-dozen sinister accidents then combined

to make the small group of plays from *Pillars of Society* to *Wild Duck* his most influential in those countries whose own influence was to count for most in twentieth-century dramatic criticism. Small wonder that the early work of Dumas *fils* seemed to be confirmed in its implications, or that the Galsworthies and the Brieux of the twentieth century followed. A revolution occurred and it seemed for a time that major drama could be written in terms of everyday life, whether of action, character, or speech. And this meant in the domain of character that the brevity of drama must now be circumvented in a new way, not as before by offering an image of the hidden reality at the roots of life, but by an abstraction from it, a statement of conclusions drawn from it by a deductive process and presented in terms of diagrammatic or self-explanatory character. The great artists do this with consummate cunning and Ibsen offers us a long line of characters in whom this procedure is justified because they have been forced by temperament or circumstances to think about themselves, sometimes to know themselves, but always to become lucid and facile in explaining themselves. Brand, Karsten Bernick, Lona Hessel, Nora Helmer, Mrs. Alving, Pastor Manders, Oswald Alving, Regina Engstrand, the brothers Stockmann, all have this capacity for self-examination and in each it seems at the worst plausible, at the best inevitable. But the great hinterland of the unknown self to which the Greeks and the Elizabethans had access, the domain of great poetry and of the poet or the mystic in the common man, was closed. The counter-revolution which Ibsen himself began in the late plays with the studies of Solness, Hilda Wangel, Rosmer, Rebecca West, and John Gabriel Borkman is not yet stabilized; we have lost our way, as W. B. Yeats long ago realized, to the sources of the living imagination in drama. We are confronted with what appear to be two valid and alternative ways of revealing character, the expository and the evocative, but in fact the first of these is not valid and cannot lead to full, profound, or poetic revelation. Like the lovers in Yeats's story we have attempted to put our knowledge of a mystery into 'common words' and have lost our vision and the memory of the way to the hidden country to which our real selves belong. In our nostalgia we blame a multitude of causes for this century's failure to produce great drama, but we seldom reflect that one of the roots of our predicament is the denial of the poetic process, a denial that strangles the poet in our dramatists. Nowhere in dramatic technique is this more disastrous than in the technique of portraying character.

One of the odd corollaries of this false theorem is the application to the whole body of the traditional drama behind us of the conclusions from the practice and theories of the last hundred years. We accuse the great dramatists from Aeschylus downward (but principally Shakespeare, because more of us study him) of perpetrating an illusion in their presentation of character. The naturalists, in attempting to persuade us that a character in a work of art is a character in nature, lost touch with the deep, hidden wells of reality from which imagination draws its life, and the shallowness of their resultant rendering has at last forced itself upon our notice. And from this we unjustifiably conclude that 'character' in drama must always and necessarily be illusion, theatrical effect only, that will not bear investigating; and that the character-work of the great poetic dramatists, because it lacks even superficial likeness to everyday events, is more deeply guilty of illusion even than that of those naturalists. And so the serious investigation of the characters of Shakespeare's plays becomes at best a piece of venial day-dreaming, at worst a dangerous heresy. Whereas, in fact, it is the great poetic dramatists whose sure, unerring technique alone makes character revelation possible, because it alone finds anything to reveal, and the one thing that their presentation needs to assure us of this is investigation.

I should like, with your permission[^] to illustrate what I mean at this point by reference to two specific passages. It must, of-eoms, be understood that nothing less than the consideration of the total presentation of a character throughout a play (and preferably, of all the characters) could justly illustrate the technique of revelation. Extracts as brief as those which I must now use can do nothing more, even if they are passages of great significance, than illustrate the function of speech in a brief dialogue. What depends upon action, in so far as that can be distinguished from speech, is necessarily omitted and we lose further the cumulative power which the interrelation of action and speech gives to both and that further potent effect which the successive phases of the revelation derive from their place in the total action. But I am convinced that what is true of these passages is true one-hundredfold of the total effect of the play and that the distinction I am attempting to draw becomes more, not less, apparent as we pursue it further.

I choose for my first passage a short extract from the second Act of *Ghosts*, one of the few plays of Ibsen whose claim to the title of tragedy can hardly be denied under any definition, ancient or modern. It is the passage in which Manders and Mrs. Alving speak face to

face after years of silence and strip away one by one the veils that have hidden their past. It is a scene charged with passion, the stored-up bitterness of fruitless sacrifice, and yet it is as lucid as a logical or legal analysis, because the speaker, a woman of fearless and powerful mind, has subjected these injuries, and the moral code that caused them, to a slow, pitiless, and scientific examination through long years of solitude. It arises with the perfect naturalness of a mountain peak from its massif, for these two lovers who for years have been enemies are confronted with a situation which suddenly releases the pent-up thinking of a lifetime.

MRS. ALVING. Let me tell you what I mean. I'm timid and half-hearted because I can't get rid of the ghosts that haunt me.

MANDERS. What do you say haunts you?

MRS. ALVING. Ghosts! When I heard Regina and Oswald in there, it was as though I saw ghosts before me. But I almost think we're all of us ghosts, Pastor Manders. It's not only what we have inherited from our father and mother that 'walks' in us. It's all sorts of dead ideas, old lifeless beliefs, and so forth. They have no vitality; but they cling to us all the same, and we can't get rid of them. Whenever I take up a newspaper I seem to see ghosts gliding between the lines. There must be ghosts all over the country, as thick as the sand of the sea. And then we're all of us so pitifully afraid of the light.

MANDERS. Ah! here we have the fruits of your reading! And pretty fruits they are, upon my word! Those horrible, revolutionary, free-thinking books!

MRS. ALVING. You're mistaken, my dear Pastor. It was you yourself set me thinking. And I thank you for it with all my heart.

MANDERS. I?

MRS. ALVING. Yes. When you forced me under the yoke you called 'Duty' and 'Obligation'; when you praised as right and proper what my whole soul rebelled against, as against something loathsome. It was then I began to look into the seams of your doctrine. I only meant to pick at a single knot; but when I'd got that undone, the whole thing unravelled out. And then I realized that it was all machine-sewn.

MANDERS (*softly, with emotion*). And was that the upshot of my life's hardest battle?

MRS. ALVING. Call it, rather, your most pitiful defeat.

MANDERS. It was my greatest victory, Helen—the victory over myself.

MRS. ALVING. It was a crime against us both.

MANDERS. When you went astray, and came to me crying, 'Here I am; take me!', I commanded you, saying—'Woman, go home to your lawful husband.' Was that a crime?

MRS. ALVING. Yes, I think so.

16 THE NATURE OF CHARACTER IN DRAMA

MANDERS. We two do not understand each other.

MRS. ALVING. Not now, at any rate.

None of us would deny to this scene, thinking of it in its place in the drama, its cogency, the intensity of its passionate thought. It impresses us; almost it moves us; certainly it rivets our attention. Two minds are in conflict upon a moral issue. A life-history is revealed, lucidly, painfully; its case is pleaded before us, like a case in a court. We listen intently, we sympathize, as, step by step, actions are explained by motive and motive in its turn by freshly interpreted fact. For in this court we are the judge and the plaintiff pleads her own case before us in this reinterpretation of fact and motive. But there is a fatal limitation in this function of judge that is forced upon us. For what kind of revelation of character have we? And what kind of response does it call out in us? We should, of course, have no difficulty in describing the outstanding traits of the two people before us; there is no failure to define their characteristics. But what is there, in this clear self-analysis and self-defence, of the deeper movements of character, what sudden disclosure of the vast unexplored territories of the mind, seen suddenly as through parting mists, such as, in a single line of Aeschylus, reveals to us a human soul akin to the unknown or half-known soul within ourselves?

οὐδεὶς ἀκούει ταῦτα τῶν εὐδαιμόνων.

(Alas, none that is happy knows that word.)¹

In that line Cassandra, at the crisis of her tragedy, discovers and lets fall one of those great truths whose perception changes the habit of a mind, transforms its reading of life. What communication have we, in the noble elucidation of Mrs. Alving's motive and behaviour, with the region of the spirit from which such knowledge as Cassandra's comes? And yet can we really be said to have tragic character when we are cut off from these intimations, when we are restricted to the conscious, reasoning operations of the mind, which are the best we can hope for in a play in which the characters must perforce explain themselves if they are to be known at all? And is this technique, the inevitable result of his commitment to naturalism, ultimately worthy of the genius of Ibsen, however closely his architectural power interlocks the parts of the action, down to the smallest detail, however strongly his passion, held prisoner within that flawless and unbreakable design, throbs through the hard, clear dialogue?

¹ Ag. 1303.

'Je ne reconnais plus Pauteur du *Misanthrope*'; we miss the poet of the fifth Act of *Peer Gynt* and of the death of John Gabriel Borkman.

But if we turn back to Shakespeare we meet a technique that wastes no time or strength in trying to persuade us that a play is not a play or that the words that lie before us on the page are an exact reproduction of those of everyday life. The great poetic dramatists are mercifully delivered from this temptation by the traditional forms of their lines; no one has, I believe (not even in the criticism of the last hundred years), contended that the Elizabethans habitually spoke blank verse, the citizens of Athens iambics, or the audiences of the Hotel de Bourgogne alexandrines. And, in this matter of dramatic technique, to be committed in advance to a great traditional convention, even if it govern no more than the vehicle of speech, is to be delivered from a host of misconceptions as to the relation between the truth (or reality) to be communicated and the medium through which it is transmitted. If our characters cannot speak the rhythms of everyday life, we are protected against the assumption that they can be made to sound as if they were living their outward lives before us. If we are guarded thus against the temptation to present those actual, outward lives as themselves an aspect of reality, we are free to use our brief dramatic span to reveal the enduring, the universal, the inward experience of man. But to do that, in so brief space, we must use, boldly, another technique—a technique that is not afraid of (has not indeed regarded) its unrealistic mode; a technique that indicates character by touches, by silences, by omissions, but by touches of such rare significance that their presence in those silences evokes in our imagination an ever-growing, living organism, a whole that is a character. To use language thus to indicate and evoke character is not to practise illusion, any more than do those few brief words in which the mystic images a part of his experience and evokes a corresponding understanding in those who can receive them. In the technique of revealing character in drama, it is, I repeat, the only way to achieve a revelation of validity and scope.

MACBETH.

Two Truths are told,
As happy Prologues to the swelling Act
Of the Imperial! Theame. I thanke you Gentlemen:
Thissupernaturallsollicking
Cannot be ill; cannot be good. If ill,
Why hath it giuen me earnest of succeſſe,
Commencing in a Truth? I am *Thane* of Cawdor.
If good, why doe I yeeld to that suggestion,

Whose horrid Image doth vnfixe my Heire,
And make my seated Heart knock at my Ribbes,
Against the vse of Nature? Present Feares
Are lesse then horrible Imaginings:
My Thought, whose Murther yet is but fantastically,
Shakes so my single state of Man, that Function
Is smother'd in surmise, and nothing is,
But what is not.

The turmoil and mystery of man's unknown self is released by this passage as great music releases it. It is a series of potent images that drop like deep shafts into the hidden wells of man's being to reach a strange and terrifying reality. If we were to examine it word by word, each phrase, each image, each suggestion would serve to lead us into speculation, into knowledge the total expression of which in explicit terms would demand a volume of writing no less in extent than a whole play (supposing, which is clearly impossible, that such explication could be conceived in dramatic form at all). For it works upon us not through our judgement but by direct appeal to that vast, hidden imaginative self which it alone can reach. In the whole passage no sentence has the form of normal speech, except that in which Macbeth breaks away for a moment from his preoccupation in the brief 'I thank you, Gentlemen.' We may ask ourselves, 'What does this tell us of character?' And the answer at first may seem to be 'Nothing', for such moments are the meeting-grounds of passion and inchoate thought that overwhelm characteristics and resolve the individual man into the eternal, the universal, the generic. It tells us little of those superficial traits and characteristics by which we so readily sum up character as it appears to offer itself in the everyday commerce of life and in the drama that attempts to work in terms of that commerce. But there is, after all, ample time for such indication of those features as we shall need in the play, by a casual reference here and there, by the juxtaposition of speech and action. What we have here is the deep working of half-hidden and half-articulate motive such as, in ourselves and other men, seems to overwhelm individuality, that 'drowning of the dykes', that 'perishing into reality' in which Yeats found the essential tragic experience. Yet, when we look more closely, whether it is at the 'character' Shakespeare has called Macbeth or at similar moments in our own experience, we know that this is not all; that in this evocation of mysterious forces, this exploration of unknown depths, the individuality is not utterly obliterated. Riding the torrent it cannot stem, it survives into a

measure of choice, and what follows, in its action and thought, will have a power withheld in art or life from the 'character' that is rooted in its own consciousness. Put the limitless and 'still-breeding'* implication of this brief indication of the hidden world of Macbeth's mind beside the limits that Ibsen, at the stage of *Ghosts*, deliberately sets to the definition of his problem, and dare we do otherwise than reverse the popular verdict of our day? It is the technique of Ibsen's four realistic plays, and more still that technique as practised by dramatists of lesser genius, which makes the presentation of character in drama an illusion. It is the evocative and non-realistic technique of Shakespeare and the poetic dramatists that leads us to reality. Indeed, as Blake said: 'Improvement makes straight roads, but crooked roads without improvement are roads of Genius.' Only by abandoning the apparent safeguards of verisimilitude can drama, especially in this branch of its technique, become the vehicle of the deepest-hidden truth. Ibsen's characters live the examined life commended by Plato: ὁ ἀνεξέταστος βίος οὐ βιωτὸς ἀνθρώπῳ;* but Shakespeare's art, like all great poetry, depends on another mode of being, commended in another place: 'Amen, amen dico vobis, nisi granum frumenti cadens in terram mortuum fuerit, ipsum solum manet; si autem mortuum fuerit, multum fructum affert', or the hidden life without safeguards which is the life of the mystics and of the great ideal poets.

We might very well have reached our conclusion as to the relative validity of these techniques by a different road, and I shall attempt in the space that I have left to indicate this. Ibsen and Shakespeare, like all artists, faced the inexorable task of selection. Even the realist cannot escape this, but it is the dramatic realist's misfortune that he must often pretend to do so. We can watch Ibsen at work and see something of the magnificent sureness with which he selects and re-combines, of the architectural economy that doubles and trebles the significance of every part or fragment by the relating to it of every other. But life does not select, and the need to hide the fact that the artist does taxed to the uttermost even Ibsen's powers, while the verisimilitude of lesser dramatists broke down, even as verisimilitude, in the effort to appear to use only the actual when one aspect of that actual is precisely a mass of detail that could in no circumstances be used. And so the nature of the selection the dramatist makes becomes the governing factor in his presentation of truth, in character as in all other branches of technique. Nothing can

¹ Ap. 38A.

save him from this law, and his peril is his glory. He will be aware (consciously or unconsciously—or both) of event and character as a continuous stream of what for brevity's sake we will call experience, and his task as an artist is to dip into that stream and draw from it, now here, now there, small quantities which can never, by the very nature of the artistic process, be more than a minute proportion of the whole, disconnected, isolated from each other, and to sacrifice the rest of that vast continuum which is the material of inner and outward experience. Nothing can save him from disastrous errors of omission and wrong emphasis that would give a lying picture of reality except that gift of divination which is genius and the hidden, fundamental, and mysterious operations of its power. If he trusts instead to the operation of the intellect working upon observation, however acute, of the surface of life, he cuts himself off from the sources of power and of illumination.

I have spoken so far of the method by which the dramatist may transmit his perception of reality in character, as in other branches of technique, but in doing so I have made two obvious assumptions: that there is a reality to transmit and that the great poet is one of the channels for its transmission. I do not want to end without indicating my meaning here, since the test of technical validity depends upon a relation between technique and content.

For the purposes of this argument, I will merely say that I take truth, which the great artist communicates, to be a part or parts of a complete and irreducible reality, such as might be discerned by an unerring and all-including intelligence, which some of us find it briefer and less cumbersome to call God. I consider further that the spiritual universe affords the means for the knowledge of this truth; that it is part of its nature to do so. I believe this knowledge to be possible under certain conditions to human faculties, to such faculties, for instance, as are possessed by the great poets and the great saints. I believe, that is to say, that in this continuum of experience, of which we have spoken, it is possible to either of them to discern certain significant elements, unnameable perhaps by either and for the artist certainly better undefined, which so work upon the imagination as to produce awareness of form, of the presence of intention, of the operation of underlying law. Provided, that is to say, that the poet has within his power the means of transmission (and it has been my object here to discuss one particular aspect of his choice of those means), he is capable of transmitting truth, and that truth is there to be communicated.

But the distinction between the presentation of character in terms of statement and its indication by means of the evocative technique remains within the province of dramatic aesthetics. Since, as we have demonstrated, the technique of statement cannot reveal so much or so profoundly as can the evocative technique, the method, even in the hands of Ibsen, is a hindrance to drama, and, so far, undramatic. It appears to present reality, only to provoke the accusation that 'character' in drama is an illusion. Whereas in fact, even with the realists, the illusion is all in the technique and the 'character*' imagined (and in part transmitted, despite the technique) is an aspect of imaginative truth. But in the great poetic dramatists, who proceed by evocation, there is, rightly understood, no attempt to present a likeness to the surface of character. Speeches, phrases, single words even, are all indications, leading the imagination on to awareness and comprehension for which the intelligence has no words, to comprehension of processes of emotion, of hitherto unperceived depths and complexities of character which the dramatist himself has discerned. The touch which disengages these is the ultimate test of the genuine dramatist; the dramatist's technique when it is supreme is wholly evocative. Free to work, then, in terms of their great, traditional evocative technique, and using only so much of surface resemblance (and a very little is in fact needed) as will serve to stimulate the twin sympathies of pity and fear, the great dramatists speak, through their characters, from the depths of their own poetic experience to the depths of man's nature. And their reward is that the 'characters' they create will speak for ever, or for so long as human imagination survives to hear them.

UNA ELLIS-FERMOR

The Function of Poetry in Drama

MY remarks, or my illustrations, will not be restricted to any period, country, or author. My subject is a very general one, and though I want to avoid the reproach of abstraction, I do not wish either to draw too much from a single field, wherein it would be easier to find arguments. I am setting out to examine the function of poetry in drama, that is the active relationship between poetry and drama, the way in which poetry informs drama, becomes an essential factor of a dramatic work—it being understood that whenever I use the term 'dramatic work' I mean an imaginative work of art belonging to literature.

I may as well disclose my batteries at once: I believe poetry is—or should be—*indivisible from* drama, is—or should be—fundamental to drama. No dramatic work of any magnitude can be fully satisfactory to the mind which does not, consciously or unconsciously, appeal to and rely on poetry, use poetical effects in some way or other, or associate closely the function of poetry with its own dramatic function. When I say 'is', I am, of course, thinking of the past. I am fairly confident nobody now would counter my contention with regard to the theatre in the past centuries but one. And Vriien I say Should be', I am referring to the present state of the theatre and to its future. I think the partial—or total—failure of the contemporary theatre may be partly ascribed to the differentiation which has tended to establish itself in the theatre between poetry and drama, partly to a wrong or distorted use of poetry, and partly again to the contempt in which poetry—*quia* bad or misused poetry—has been held by the theatre-goer or by the playwright.

Without going as far back as the Greek drama, it is clear enough that in the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century English theatre the author did not think in terms of poetry and in terms of the drama separately. Whatever defects Sidney may have found in the dramatic structure or the poetic speech of his own day, he did not dispute the fact. What worried him was the use of inappropriate poetic language—inappropriate in so far as it differed from the dignity of his own conception of poetic expression. Sidney did not live long enough to understand that the revolution in poetic expression which, for the benefit of the drama, began, say, with Marlowe and Kyd,^f was to be magnificently operative in the ultimate success of the drama of the

period. He could not have known that a few years later one major poet at least would use with the same success a poetic speech as remote from Spenserian ornamental suavities as the most rugged and vigorous dramatic language of some of his immediate successors. I need not expatiate on this point, but I think I may be allowed a certain amount of explanation on my first proposition.

When I say that there is no line of separation for the Elizabethan or Jacobean playwright between poetry and drama, I wish to imply something more than what could be inferred from the Aristotelian conception of the theatre. It is obvious that Greek tragedy and, to some extent, though on a different plane, Greek comedy were poetry at the same time, united and indistinguishable from each other. There was in them—and this is particularly true of tragedy, the sacredness attached to the utterance of a legendary and higher truth, which could be similarly expressed in the epic, though the drama had superiority over the epic by its direct impersonation. But it was understood that both forms of expression were meant to raise characters, feelings, or ideas to a higher plane, and to shed over them a new and miraculous light, which would bring about a complete transformation of the universe. The function of poetry was mainly to transcend the real and the legendary, so as to render possible through the work of art the liberation of man from the oppressive laws of Fate, as decreed by the Gods, who could not themselves escape it.

The idea which later ages formed of the Greek conception of tragedy was not—and could not be—ruled by any metaphysical explanation, such as we are inclined today to propound. It was wholly based on aesthetic principles, such as Aristotle had been led to formulate. Aristotle's theory of tragedy is universal inasmuch as it is a strict codification of forms and definitions of form. It is the 'formality*' which is all-important, in which the Greek theorist has once and for all forcibly enclosed the technical rules which were to govern tragedy, and the *raison d'être* of tragedy in connexion with the spiritual life of man. But this universality itself, founded on the particular experience of Greek civilization, at a given moment of its development, could not, for all purposes, retain its validity when confronted with man's experience at a later age, under different historical circumstances. All that was left of it for the practitioner—in most cases distinct from the theorist—was the indestructible prestige of a certain form of literary expression. The English practitioner of the great dramatig period did not choose to draw his effects from Greek normality—as some practitioners of other literatures may have done—

but, nevertheless, he was fully aware of the relative importance of his work in the hierarchy of man's aesthetic achievements.

The *something more* which I wished to imply in my preceding paragraph can now be understood as meaning something more than mere conformity with an ancient and highly respectable tradition, according to which the drama was an aesthetic form of a superior rank partaking of the sacredness of poetry. The durable alliance of poetry and drama in the period I have in mind was indeed unavoidable for more complex and more cogent reasons.

The primary fact, which is so obvious that it hardly needs to be mentioned—and yet glaring truths are in danger of being overlooked—is that *a play is written with words*, and is nothing more in itself than a certain arrangement of words. It will therefore achieve its end according to the way in which words are disposed. The language is the elementary fact upon which all subsequent effects must depend. This, of course, can be said of all literary works, but it is worth while remembering, because of the almost universal tendency of critics to lay stress on what they consider more to the point: say characterization, psychology, images, ideas, and so on. The second fact, which bears relation to the first, is that a play is not made to be read in the retirement of the closet, but to be spoken in front of people sitting in a theatre, and it must interest and move the public, make them laugh or shed tears, render them sensitive to passion or beauty, elevate their thoughts or refine their feelings—in a word make them share in the total experience of the dramatic personae.

Now one of the deepest and most constant needs of civilized man—however high or low he may be in the scale of civilization—is precisely to share in other people's emotional experience, to get in closer touch with other people's consciousness. I have insisted elsewhere on this *besoin du spectacle*, which is as fundamentally necessary as bread to man. There may be sociological, psychological, and even metaphysical reasons for it, into which this is not the place to inquire. But it is not irrelevant to my subject to remind you that the spectator—that is everyone of us, that is man in general—is craving to know not only how his *semblable* may *behave* when faced by such and such an external event, but how *he feels* and *thinks* about it: not only how will the event affect the conduct of his life, and his relationship with other creatures and the world generally, but how it will affect his inner self, how it will alter his outlook on the world, how indeed he will manage to be himself, and himself alone. The proper function of drama—leaving aside all accessory, utilitarian, and even Aris-

totelian purposes—is, I believe, to reveal this inner self, and elicit its expression through words. It has to reach the nearest approximation possible to this inner reality, and this can only be done if the dramatist is also a poet.

I think I have by now got to the core of the problem. One may differ in opinion as to what effective poetic speech may be—as indeed writers and their critics have differed—and from generation to generation the answer has to be different. The answer can only be given by the dramatist in terms of works of art—which the critics will have to appraise and the public to like or dislike. The effectiveness of poetic speech will depend on the resources and possibilities of the language, on tradition, fashions, taste, and what not—but also, and chiefly, on the creative power and analytical insight of each particular artist.

Now, I am aware that the term 'poetry*' lends itself to so many vagaries of interpretation that I feel compelled to try—diffidently, but still it must be done—to submit, here, if not a definition (who could be so presumptuous as to propose an exhaustive definition of poetry?), at least a few remarks tending to throw some light on the sense in which I use the word. Mr. T. S. Eliot has lately written a very pertinent essay—mainly justificative, but it goes well beyond personal justification—on 'the aims of poetic drama'. In this essay he endeavours to prove that he was right in writing his own plays in verse instead of in prose—and, throughout his demonstration, he takes the words 'poetry' and 'verse' as synonyms. After having said that 'poetry is a proper form for the theatre, in fact that it is the normal form', he adds, that 'the great modern dramatists such as Ibsen, Strindberg and even Tchekov, were really poets who were actually hampered by the *limitations of prose*' This means, obviously enough, that prose is a poorer instrument of expression than verse, or, to put it the other way round, that verse can go farther than prose in making the drama dramatic. I am not quite ready—at least if I think of the theatre in my own country—to endorse this view entirely. Mr. Eliot stands on firm ground when he illustrates his statement with an analysis of the opening scene of *Hamlet*. He chooses it because it suits his purpose admirably. It is not a scene, indeed, where the intensity of emotion requires that compactness of expression, or complexity of allusion, which can only be conveyed through the channels of verse. It does not need ornamental, nor deeply functional poetry. The verse is as unobtrusive as can be—Mr. Eliot calls it 'transparent*—so much so that 'we do not stop to notice

whether the characters are speaking verse or prose'. Indeed, it is the poet's greatest achievement to have used verse, and left us 'unaware of the difference between poetry and prose'. At this point we cannot help thinking that Mr. Eliot has with great subtlety and power of argument succeeded in legitimizing the evolution of his own dramatic style, from *Murder in the Cathedral* to *The Cocktail Party*. He insists on verse being verse, and yet as indistinguishable as possible from prose—as if verse had somehow to be ashamed of being verse, and ought to pretend not to be verse. This, of course, is an extreme position, and I fully understand Mr. Eliot's anxious desire of creating for his own use a poetical idiom which would be different from that in which he writes his poems, which would be free from Shakespearian influences, and which would operate on those members of the audience who do not like poetry. We have here what I would make bold to call 'criticism militant'. It has also been said by a French critic that the verse of Racine *rase la prose* and yet, in spite of Racine's genuine simplicity, he is one of the most elaborate and conscious artists. His alexandrines are perfect, his caesuras almost always regular, and he rhymes in the most traditional way. The even perfection of his verse, the subtlety of his rhythms, the musical quality of his sequences of words make it impossible for me to share the view of the modern school of acting which will deliver Racine's verse as they would Marivaux's prose. And yet I believe Racine's verse and Marivaux's prose, for different reasons and on different planes, are both entitled to be called poetic.

Consequently I would not use the words 'verse' and 'poetry' indifferently, even though verse be the commonest means of expression for poetic drama, and particularly so in English literature. I quite agree with Mr. Eliot when he says, later in the essay, that 'in great dramatic poetry a greater range of feeling can be expressed than in the greatest prose play'—but I am afraid this bears reference more to the past than to the present. At any rate, it could not be applied to French dramatic literature, the classics of the seventeenth century excepted. I would even say there is a divorce in French dramatic literature between poetry and verse, though no one would say *there has been a divorce between poetry and the theatre*. One could here speak, not of the limitations of prose, but of the limitations of verse. Not that the scourge of the so-called realist theatre has been particularly devastating with us, but because the great dramatic metre—that is the alexandrine—has ceased to be the appropriate instrument of expression. Since Edmond Rostand's *Cyrano de Bergerac*, which

cannot be ranked as a major poetic drama in spite of its continued favour with the public ever since its first performance, no dramatic writer of any importance has addressed himself to verse—and when an important poet, who is also a dramatic writer who has done more than anybody else in France to bring back poetry on the stage, writes a play in verse, it almost looks like a parody of Racine. Cocteau's *Renaud et Armide* is the most brilliant illustration of the limitations of verse in my country's contemporary dramatic literature. On the other hand, his prose plays stand, along with those of Jean Giraudoux, as poetic dramas probably unequalled among the productions of the last twenty-five years.

I should therefore be inclined to broaden the meaning of the mysterious word 'poetry', as I am also inclined to broaden the scope of its function in drama. I would make bold to say that there is no great drama which does not receive its full force from poetry—which is going still farther than Mr. Eliot's formula, because I do not insist on poetry's being tied up with verse. Nor do I wish to revive the age-long quarrel between the realist and the poetic theatre, and I shall willingly leave William Archer and Mr. Eliot back to back. But I would commit myself to the length of saying that there is *no realist theatre properly so-called*. Realism can be—as indeed it is—the source of poetry as well as romance may be, or the supernatural, or legend, or history, or murder. . . . The spectator sitting in a theatre is well aware that he is witnessing an imaginary action, and even if the facts related are historically true, he knows that actors, and not real characters, are enacting them. When the curtain rises something uncanny is going to happen: we are dangerously involved in the intricacies of an action unfolding itself relentlessly before our eyes, up to its unavoidable conclusion. This in itself, even though the action be limited, to quote Mr. Eliot once more, 'to the plane of ordinary consciousness', partakes of the marvellous. This in itself, from the very start, paves the way for the forthcoming miracles. Or, to put it in other words, the spectator's expectancy is a kind of preparatory *état de grâce* in which all miracles become possible. Or, again, one could say nobody is more prepared for, and more readily receptive to, poetry, whether consciously or unconsciously, than the theatre-goer.

In the same way, an authentic dramatist, in a dramatically conscious age, need not justify himself for being poetically minded. Dramatists of the past ages, from the Greek to the Jacobean, and all those generally who wrote plays for popular audiences, without

regard for the learned or the highbrows, were keenly aware of the fact. There was no need for them to specify to a nicety the wheres and whens and whys of poetry. Aeschylus and Sophocles had written their masterpieces before Aristotle set out to codify the rules of tragedy, and from Marlowe and Kyd to Webster and Ford there is no body of doctrine holding the safe recipes of poetic drama. It is a sign of a critical age that a practitioner like Dryden, who was also a great poet, should write an essay on 'dramatic poesy'—and it is a sign of no less critical an age that a practitioner like Mr. Eliot, who is also a great poet, should write an essay on the aims of poetic drama. The great examples of the past show that poetry is not for the dramatist a question of theory; it is a medium of expression which offers itself spontaneously, and to which he turns instinctively. The choice of form, whether verse or prose, however important, is more a matter of personal taste and expediency than of doctrine. However, I do not mean to say that a play is automatically poetic because it is a play. I mean that a play, because a play, offers to the writer the largest and the best opportunities for poetry.

Enacting, or re-enacting, on the stage a real, or imaginary, action is already in itself a poetical process, in the sense that it is re-creating life in an atmosphere and surroundings different from life, and yet recognizable as such. Any creative artistic activity, in literature, or in any other field, naturally borders on the poetic. There exists no definite frontier between the poetic and the non-poetic, as there are no objects in nature, no concepts and no images in the mind of man, which can be said to be specifically poetic or non-poetic. Donne and Shakespeare have shown us long ago that a pair of compasses or a list of dogs can be as effectively poetical as roses or the morning dew. It all depends on the way in which the artist uses his material, inserts his find in his context, and follows up his intention. Accordingly, any object or thought or image, taken in the absolute of its neutrality, can be made subservient to poetry, provided its function be not just nominative or descriptive, but will contribute to bringing to our conscious life an indefinite and unforeseen range of emotions and feelings which otherwise would not have been awakened. The function of drama is primarily, I believe, a poetic function—because drama has no other function than stirring up in us that indefinite and unforeseen range of emotions and feelings the quality of which is properly poetic. The poetic is not, however, an absolute in itself: it knows of degrees and shades infinite, but its essence is to awaken in our consciousness a revelation of the secret and unexpected rela-

tions between ourselves and the outside world, which do not come to light unless thus excited. It restores us to a feeling of wonder—a notion very difficult to describe and to account for—it holds us in suspense, and to return to an expression I have already used, it makes us ready to receive and accept the miraculous. That is why all the elements constituting a drama have a fair part to play in the poetical function of the whole, and can be made to concur in the same purpose. Plot, action, themes, characters, and style are similarly involved. I do not think it is an abuse of words to speak of a poetical plot, or poetical characters—and no one will dispute that there are poetical themes in plenty. A plot can be poetic, not only because it will draw on legend, myth, romance, or the supernatural, but whenever the inventiveness of the artist's mind transforms the given facts of the real into something which somehow transcends it, that evades its logic without lacking consistency, and that enlarges the field of possible occurrences depending on character and circumstances which the spectator would be ready to accept, however illogical, and which, however, he would not be in a position to foresee. Such, for example, are the plots of *Volpone* and *The Alchemist*, in which the masterful skill of Ben Jonson has pre-ordained the dizzying cascade of incidents which accumulate and topple down on one another to bring about the final confusion of everybody; such, again, are the plots of *The Revenger's Tragedy*, and *The White Devil*, where the incidence of fact holds us in suspense throughout, because we cannot make up our minds to choose between the logic of the real, that is the logic which we would expect from the characters and circumstances such as we know them, and the logic of the artist. Again, a plot is poetic when behind the concatenation of facts which the artist has brought together there lies the intimation of something which transcends the subject-matter, and from which it receives its full significance, though not its factual coherence. Thus, to take illustrations from contemporary artists, the plot of *Murder in the Cathedral*, which might have been nothing but factual history (though whether it is reliable history is open to discussion), is made to be something more than the putting together of historical facts for the thrill of the theatre-goer, by the unobtrusive presence, behind the eventful sequence of incidents, of the Catholic dogma of the Communion of Saints. Again, behind *The Family Reunion* there lurks the fateful myth of the Atridae blended with the Christian idea of the regeneration of the sinner by suffering; and this, I believe, makes the plot more vigorously poetic than that of some play which deliberately sets out to be a poetic

play, such as, for instance, those of Maeterlinck or Stephen Phillips. I would add, to give one more example from the French theatre, that almost all Jean Giraudoux's plots are poetic for the reasons I have just mentioned.

But to proceed to characters. There, again, more characters can be functionally poetic than are usually believed to be so. A fairy, a god or a demi-god, a legendary or a mythical character is poetic *ipso facto*. So are allegories, ancient or modern, from the impersonations of vices or virtues to the romantic figures of popular melodrama. So are indeed all tragic heroes and heroines of the past, whose great names, actions, and passions belong to the common stock of dramatic poetry, and who, from generation to generation, and country to country, appear and reappear on the stage in varied garbs and colours, endowed with an identical power of seduction and crowned with the same poetical aura. But a large variety of characters, outside those known and classified conventional categories, equally deserve, through their own individual merits, to belong to the poetic race. I do not think those characters can be successfully carried out if there exists, in the mind of the writer, a preconception as to their 'poetic'¹ quality. The substance of a convention is consistent with itself, but it must, to be poetic beyond conventionality, be also consistent with what we know of a human being. Similarly, a character which does not belong to a poetic convention must reach the poetic without ceasing to be consistent with the real. But at certain moments, under a greater pressure of events, or, on the contrary, when he will seem to be at greater liberty, he will act or speak *beyond himself*, as if detached, and reveal a depth of feeling, an adequacy of thought and judgement in face of the situation, or a mastery of behaviour which will unexpectedly confer upon him the prestige of poetry. He will, so to speak, create between himself and the world new and unexpected relations which will open for us a limitless perspective of discovery into the unknown, whose validity we shall not put in doubt, particularly if his roots are firmly planted in the real. Such I account, for example, the character of Banquo, when, once or twice in the tragedy, he suddenly utters those strange reflections which have no apparent relation with the dramatic situation, and which, however, could not be abstracted from the scene without damage to the play and to the character himself. The martlet passage is an instance; and it has not been, I believe, accounted for from this point of view. The passage is poetic in itself—granted. But it is dramatically poetic, and Banquo's character is suffused by the poetry of the passage, because it reveals

Banquo's prophetic insight into a situation which is matter-of-fact in itself (nothing more than the arrival of the king before one of his generals' castles), but full of ominous developments.

This, of course, as I have repeatedly emphasized, can only be achieved through a certain use of words. Thus I return, in the end, to the heart of the matter, which is, when all is said, ever and again, *language*. The study of the function of language in the making of a poetic drama would in itself require more than the perfunctory conclusion to a perfunctory paper. But so much has been said, and in many instances excellently said, that I need not dwell too long on it. In the past twenty-five years or so considerable progress has been made in the analysis of the poetical function of the language, and there has been a revival of creative criticism, both academic and freelance, which can be ranked as higher than in any other period of English criticism. I have here to thank English and sometimes American critics, to whom I owe so much, and who have opened my eyes and my ears to the many mysteries of the poetical resources of the English language, which, I believe, reach their utmost intensity and efficiency in drama. I shall satisfy myself (even if I do not satisfy others) with a few remarks, most of which will no doubt be platitudes.

The dramatist can first use language according to the current poetical conventions of his own age, which makes poetic speech immediately recognizable as such. There is *first* verse and rhythm, perhaps rhyme and music, and words and images which belong to the poetic tradition. When Shakespeare writes:

But, look, the morn in russet mantle clad,
Walks o'er the dew of yon high eastern hill

we have no difficulty in assigning it to poetry. We have the morn, the dew, the eastern hill, the allegory of the morning draped in his mantle, the tripping rhythm slowing down to the majestic tread at the end of the line. It is poetic diction apparently at its best, and so strikingly effective that it has impressed readers and listeners for years, and rightly so. But it has also impressed itself so much in the minds of successive dramatic writers that some have believed it was the only way in which language could be poetically used. That is probably one of the reasons why poetic drama has later failed to achieve success, by being too deliberately (and one could paradoxically say blindly) obedient to one given form of poetic expression. (And, incidentally, that is one of the reasons why T. S. Eliot has

evolved the poetic idiom which is his own.) Now even when some given form of poetic speech does not lose its validity when confronted with other forms, it does not mean that it can be used exactly as it has been fixed by success. Conventions belonging to a past age soon become obsolete and ineffective, unless they are renewed and re-freshed, and their artificiality, in a new context and a new age, is the more apparent. They cannot be taken for living speech, and they look like a kind of stuffing or *placage*, to which we can have no other response than boredom or hilarity, or, still worse, indifference.

But there is another language, different from the conventionally poetic, whose words, images, and rhythms are not ornamental. This language would be Shakespeare's at his greatest moments of dramatic intensity—though it is by no means absent from his plays at a lower level of dramatic urgency. It has often been described by critics of our generation as being *functional*, which means that the poetry is not a superadded ornament, recognizable as such, but contributes to the total effect, and cannot be dissociated from the language spoken by the character at a given moment of his dramatic career. We feel then that there is no other way in which the character could express himself in face of the given situation. It is, so to speak, exhaustive of the character's consciousness, and there we have indeed great dramatic poetry. I could draw, as you know, innumerable examples of this poetic language from Shakespeare and submit them to the kind of analysis which Middleton Murry, for instance, has achieved so successfully with *Antony and Cleopatra*, or L. C. Knights with *Macbeth*, or Dr. Tillyard with some of the *histories*; and many other English critics, of the past or of the present, whatever be the school to which they belong, whether they be Bradleians or anti-Bradleians, Dover-Wilsonians or Eliotians. It could be done with any of Shakespeare's plays, I believe, after 1600; and the mark of his genius is precisely that he could, out of the conventions of poetic diction and dramatic rhetoric of his earlier years, evolve that particular, and at one time revolutionary, form of expression, which is *his*, and nobody else's. There we have the supreme achievement and the superior grace. *Macbeth's*, or *Lear's*, or *Timon's*, or *Cleopatra's* 'verbal delirium' (as I would call their tense, compact, effusiveness) is a sure sign that they are, as it were, possessed by the dramatic urgency of their situation, and, at the same time, supremely aware of their spiritual mastery over it. They are waging a hopeless war against fate, or ingratitude, or suffering, or death, and they give themselves up to it, using the only weapons they have at their disposal, words that

impinge upon the situation, and make the listener aware in his turn of something that goes far beyond both the situation and the character. Poetry, there, whatever constituent elements a technical analysis of such passages could detect, is something more than these elements (rhythm, syntax, metaphors, &c.), it is their fusion into an indivisible whole, apprehended by the mind as such, and having that provocative power, peculiar to great dramatic poetry, which no other form of artistic expression can possess to the same degree. It is no use, in considering such passages, to oppose realism to illusion; we have such a coherence between the two that it is not a question of doctrine or of terminology; not a question of interpreting the means of access to that unique apprehension of the many different modes of existence and expression, but almost a question of entelechy. It is reality at its utmost point of perfection, and that is why Professor Dover-Wilson, in quoting one day the answer of—was it a girl-student of his?—when asked what she thought of Antony, said she was right in exclaiming 'terrific'. Yes, Antony, is 'terrific', not because of his gigantic stature, or his bravery, or nobility, or kindness, nor because of his passion, nor because he has anything to do with what Plutarch knew, or we ourselves know, of his historical character, not again because Shakespeare's psychological approach to him was the right one, but because of all those reasons together, because he speaks, and is spoken of by the other characters in the play, Enobarbus or Cleopatra, in terms which blend the real and the absolute, the credible and the incredible; because the experience of the character called Antony in Shakespeare's tragedy, whether it be crime, love, lust, ambition, cowardice, courage, or cruelty, is expressed in terms which express it in its uniqueness and profundity, and, at the same time, go far beyond history, passion, and motivation, and reach the ill-defined regions where wonder and enjoyment sit. Who bids higher? I don't think anybody could.

But this superior form of expression, which is both supremely unrealistic and fiercely realistic (let me remind you, for one, of almost any of Macbeth's speeches, before or after the murder, and for the other, of Claudio's terror in his prison), must somehow (and this is the mystery of artistic creation) be consistent with what I would call the logic of the dramatic world in the second degree. I mean by this rather obscure expression, which I suspect is hardly English, that there is a logic of the illogical in the dramatic world. Granted, for example, that a character is mad, there must be in his (or her) mad speeches, not the sheer illogicality of madness, but through this

illogicality, a coherence, a consistency with what the dramatic function of the character must be; such as we find in Ophelia's mad speeches, such as we do not find in Marlowe's Zabina's.

The provocative power of the poetic speech I have been trying to describe cannot therefore be effective unless there be present behind it a coherence and consistency, which make it, as it were, a mere secretion of the character and of the dramatic situation. If not, it runs the risk of becoming as conventional and unconvincing as the former I have already defined; which is the reason why so many attempts at poetic drama throughout the nineteenth century and part of the twentieth have been looked upon by both critic and theatre-goer as failures. We have had the failure of what I called the first conventionality; we are now having the meritorious efforts of contemporary dramatists to bring to new life the second kind of conventionality. I would not say they have produced so far any work of outstanding value, which would be as convincing—or, to use Stendhal's phrase, as 'probant'—as the slightest bit of Shakespeare. They will never entirely succeed until they have created the new poetical idiom our epoch so sadly needs. Such an idiom, Mr. Eliot, who is so conscious of the function of poetic speech, and who ignores none of the resources of the English language, has tried to achieve, and perhaps achieved. We do not yet know for certain. What we know is that if it were found, it would pierce to the roots of life with the same superbe ease and detachment as Shakespeare, and then the function of poetry in drama would be restored to its ancient vigour and efficiency.

HENRI FLUCHÈRE

The Significance of Minor Poets

IT is, I believe, one of the distinguishing features between English studies as pursued abroad, and those in this country of England, that we foreigners are more inclined than the English to classify, to systematize, to generalize, to reduce the complexities of critical survey to an historical or, at least, dialectical outline, to group authors and poets in schools and movements, to attach labels where possible and so superimpose some semblance of ordered development on the phenomena of individual variety. I do not think the only reason for this difference is the more empirical turn of mind of the Englishman, compared with the speculative temper of the purely Germanic and the rationalizing tendencies of the Latin mind. Another strong reason is the fact that our mastery of the material is less detailed, that, in an acquired language, the finest shades of meaning, the subtlest utterances of the personal and individual, are apt to escape our attention. It would be vain to pretend that, compared with the Englishman, judging of his own language, we are not hard of hearing and often deaf to the personal note. If, nevertheless, sometimes we presume to judge, it should be a sobering thought for us to remember how often we have been caught admiring the wrong thing, and how small has been the reputation in England of some of the poets most highly valued abroad. Either in the consciousness of this or unconsciously avoiding the inaccessible regions of personal intimacy, continental scholars have often confined their attention to the more general features which lend themselves to classification where the individual often proves intractable.

But this is not all. If Englishmen do not perhaps all 'lisp in numbers', yet at an early age they absorb a mass of poetry, which is accessible to them without undue effort, but to which our students at a more advanced age in a strange language can only make a laborious approach. Without labels of identification they may easily be overwhelmed by the richness and variety of the flora confronting them. Nor can the average foreign student ever hope to master more than a fraction of the material at the command of the English undergraduate.

Now labels are usually misleading, not least those attached to such infinitely complex human manifestations as the utterances of the poets.

We all know how easy are sweeping generalizations and how difficult the just summary of a period, how impossible the attempt to assess it without violation to some essential part or feature of it. Labels

must fall short, yet we cannot wholly do without them if we want to attain some degree of ordered knowledge. But it is undeniable that labels, whether of specified schools or more general movements, are apt to conceal the individual without picturing the whole, and in the process of classification it is, very naturally, the minor poets who are most liable to suffer an eclipse. It would not be unreasonable to maintain that a poet who is worth talking about only as a member of a school is not worth talking about at all. But what makes him a poet is exactly that which by force of his personality and individual contribution distinguishes him from the school or movement to which his name is habitually attached. Hence labels are an evil, and though we cannot do without them, we should be careful to suppress the temptation to take a pride in them, as if they were necessarily instructive and in themselves desirable, though a skilful attempt at systematization has recently been made in this country by Mr. F. W. Bateson.¹

The terms 'major' and 'minor' in poetry are of course only another two such labels, sanctioned by tradition and upheld for reasons of convenience. Although a 'minor' poet might conceivably be a *better* poet than one recognized as 'major', I am not going to quarrel with the terms, but accept them in the traditional sense. This, if not founded on relative perfection of craftsmanship, is clearly not based on popularity either—for a minor may be more popular than a major poet—but on value, on a sense of greater and lesser. For the purposes of this discussion it may perhaps be permissible to regard as *minor* poets those who have not, like the very great, revealed what Signor Vivante calls 'the creative moment',² the feeling of the presence of the infinite resources, the unlimited potentialities of the spirit, those poets, in other words, who have not communicated a 'sense of man's greatness', the decay of which in contemporary poetry a recent critic deplures.³ But which among the English poets are major, and which minor, I shall not attempt to decide here. Distinguished from the great on the one hand, minor poets must not be confused with mere versifiers on the other. For there are genuine poets among the minor tribe, who have made a contribution of their own to the treasure-store of English poetry. There are among them poets who deserve studying for their own sake, and indeed *are* studied for their own sake, not merely as features of a background or pawns in a literary

¹ *English Poetry, a Critical Introduction*, Longmans, Green & Co., 1950.

² Leone Vivante, *English Poetry and its Contribution to the Knowledge of a Creative Principle*, Faber & Faber, 1950.

³ Rostrevor Hamilton, *The Tell-Tale Article*, Heinemann, 1949.

movement, but for the strain they sing, for their importance in the eternal process of creation and revelation of human and eternal values. It would be preposterous to maintain that such poets have no significance.

I do not propose to give any instances of minor poets who are worth reading for the pleasure they give, for the intrinsic interest of their work, or even for the influence they have exercised on other poets or their importance in the history of literature. Many are obvious, others might raise controversy about their right to a place among the poets. I should prefer to put the question whether the study of minor poets may have something to contribute to our knowledge of poets in general, of the workings of the creative faculty as it expresses itself in poetry. Have they got something to tell us, which we cannot easily gather from the great, or which at any rate we can see more clearly when it is brought home to us by a minor poet? I believe they have.

Turning in the first instance to a somewhat specialized field, we are told that art, the greatest art, is spontaneous. A poem should grow naturally like a plant, says Keats; every true poem is really a *Gelegenheitsgedicht*, says Goethe, meaning, I take it, about the same thing as Mr. T. S. Eliot, when he calls it 'an epitaph'. Too great a consciousness of art seems to have a paralysing effect on the creative spirit. Robbed of its spontaneity creation loses some of its magic, if I may be permitted to use such an unfashionable word. And by magic I mean that quality which may, it is true, be faintly described, but which can never be wholly explained. Some of its elements may be analysed, but the magic rests in the whole, in the undivided unity of its parts. Even where all the elements of a poem seem to be laid before the reader, as in Livingstone Lowes's unmatched *The Road to Xanadu*, the wonder remains, perhaps even enhanced. How did they come to wield the magic wand, these poets recognized as great? No one has yet told. Like life, like all creation, it remains at the last unexplained.

But on a lower plane, in less exalted work, we may find a sufficient amount of that self-consciousness, of that consciousness of art, which makes a poet just miss greatness, but which raises a small corner of the curtain that usually conceals the scene of creation. Signor Vivante in the book already referred to quotes such rays of illumination from Elizabeth Barrett Browning, falling on the vexed questions of art's truth to life and other relationships of life and art. (In prose one might refer to Mr. Charles Morgan as one too acutely conscious of the nature of art to have climbed as yet its highest peaks, but his

utterances are nevertheless, or perhaps I should say, for that very reason, enlightening. Even of this he seems himself to be conscious.)

It is notable, to choose another instance, that Signor Vivante reduces the various activities of the creative impulse, in poet, artist, scholar, scientist, to one and the same spiritual force working on them all.¹ Professor Herbert Dingle has arrived independently at the same conclusion.² Now Beddoes could have told them that. His terminology is different, but there can be no doubt about the identity of his experience.

Though genius bearing out of other worlds
New freights of thought from fresh-discovered mines,
Be but reciprocated love of truth:
Witness kind Shakespeare, our recording angel,
Newton, whose thought rebuilt the universe,
And Galileo, broken-hearted seer, . . .

In the light of his intense love of intellectual pursuit, himself both scientist and poet, these activities appeared to him as derived from the same source. It is interesting to find it confirmed by the philosophers.

The act of creation is usually concealed in the work of those who wield what I called the magic wand. They seem as if they had been born to wield it. It appears to have been from the beginning ready to their hand, even in their immaturity. (I need hardly specifically mention that this does not exclude development, which is not opposed to a high measure of perfection reached successively on different levels.) There are such composers and painters too, and artists in various fields. How it comes about, we are unable to tell. The struggle for form is concealed under the perfection of the finished work. Or, from another aspect, by what gift is it that they distil the spirit out of life's confusion and extract the essence out of the turmoil of existence? Where does it come from? Does it only come to them and never at all to others? Or is it there for sale, so to speak, and what is the price they pay for their powers of insight and communication, vision and revelation? If there is in the minor poets but an inkling, so much as an intimation of knowledge, or a reflection even, of the struggles of the great, of a price paid for each triumph of the spirit, each triumph of art, it is worth having. If it is there, then the minor poets can do something for us in bringing the great ones nearer to us and ourselves into a more intimate contact with greatness.

¹ Op. cit., p. 333.

^a *Science and Literary Criticism* pp. 84 ff., Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1949.

The advantage, from this point of view, of the minor poets is that they are more accessible, more easily within our reach; they do not at the crucial moment escape our understanding. A complete intimacy with a minor poet may at length eliminate the element of surprise that always attends the observation of the great. And if we find that the minor poets too may have a gift of disentangling for us to some extent and on occasion 'the ravelled sleeve of care', and recognize in them also that very element of greatness which makes the creative processes of the magicians inaccessible to us, we may perhaps be able to see, if only dimly, how it was brought about.

Such illumination it seems to me not wholly impossible occasionally to gather from the minor poets in their moments of greatness, even the most self-conscious ones, if for a minute I may be allowed to return to this particular feature. None more self-conscious than the Metaphysical poets. Yet they wrung from no less a judge than Dr. Johnson this tribute: 'great labour, directed by great abilities, is never wholly lost: if they frequently threw away their wit upon false conceits, they likewise sometimes struck out unexpected truth: if their conceits were far fetched, they were often worth the carriage.' How was Dr. Johnson himself so illuminating and so wise a critic both of major and minor poetry, and not least wise about the greatest? Was it not because he was a great writer of English prose, a great man, and a great scholar as well as a minor poet? Such were also Charles Lamb and Sainte-Beuve and many of the finest critics. From the close study of our minor poets, then, we should, theoretically, be able to learn as much about poetry as Dr. Johnson himself, if only we had his wisdom, his generosity of heart, his warmth of human understanding.

Let us see what he has to say about one of the minor, and decidedly minor, poets, Sir Richard Blackmore: 'nor does it appear that he saw beyond his own performances, or had ever elevated his views to that ideal perfection which every genius born to excel is condemned always to pursue, and never overtake.' This is not the doctrine of the magician at the waving of whose wand perfection springs into existence. But it is the doctrine of one who has seen the light. And this is one of the important things about minor poets, that they do on occasion find that objective correlative, that significant form, that communicability, that conviction of Tightness—whatever we choose to call it, from whatever angle we prefer to view it—which in the spontaneous revelation of the inner vision constitutes a work of art.

¹ *Life of Cowley.*

Yet the very word 'condemned' in Dr. Johnson's sentence indicates that such insight was not bought without a price, and a price paid not once only but again and again, as long as life might last. It is the price of dedication to a high calling, the price of that entire dedication to creative work of which only the great seem capable, the grim perseverance of Milton, the ardent devotion of Keats, the perpetual struggle for a yet higher perfection of Henry James.

If we could gather from the works of minor poets how they arrived at that elimination, or perhaps, in a more sophisticated terminology, that sublimation of self, which is the essence of service and the necessary condition of all dedication, we might gather also some intimation of the burden carried by genius, of the cost of the sacrifice which has brought perfection within their reach, which has made of them, in Milton's phrase, 'a true poem'. For perfection of form, the complete victory of the spirit over matter is the outward sign of the conquest of self. At the same time it is only the conquest of self achieved that makes possible the full realization of self. But how their pride was bent and turned into humility before something greater than themselves, how they became like instruments playing a tune which to them is everything, how this happened they have not told.

They learn in suffering what they teach in song,

says Shelley, but the struggles of greatness are outside the common grasp for reasons of their very magnitude. We may say that the more they suffer, the more they have to teach, taking 'teach', of course, in the widest possible sense. The experience of it, however, is not attained without paying the price. And the richer the experience, the more dearly bought. The power of suffering is a mark of genius and a measure of greatness. But the successful endurance, the triumph of survival, the healing of the wounds, is apt to conceal that mortal conflict which made victory possible in all its fullness. Once the order of creation is achieved it is difficult to visualize the chaos that preceded it. It is here that minor poets may come to our assistance. It is easier to catch them at it. If we can see them nearly losing the battle and saving themselves by a hair's breadth; if we can see their convictions go by the board one after the other, their faith, and with it all self-confidence; if we can see them very nearly lose life itself, and then emerge, their humanity released, with a richer experience, a firmer conviction, with calm of mind and harmony of spirit, greater sensibility and mastery of their art, with a message now of their own; if we can follow this development in a minor poet, surely we have seen the

beginnings of dedication and something of the process of creation in general, something of the condition of greatness.

If we can see in a minor poet how his sensibility is awakened only at the very highest cost, his sensibility, that is to say, in all its potentialities, and again how only the threat of extinction can so reconcile the disharmonies of his spirit as to bring about the uniting of all his powers in the creation of a work of art, but how he must be brought to the last pitch before any of this can happen, how the conquest of self is forced upon him: surely in all this there is a reflection of the struggle for immortality even of the great. If we then consider the livelier and more universal sensibility of the very great, we may go some little part of the way towards understanding how much deeper were their wounds, how much more acutely felt their smarts, how much higher was their stake, and how much greater their triumph. But of the price there can be little doubt. It seems to be a price so high that it can be paid only by the very rich. For it may happen that we can see a minor poet emerge from his struggles richer in spirit, it is true, when crowned with conquest, and yet feel that something has broken within him, that the price has been too high. For the victory they have won is like a partial suicide, it entails what Signor Vivante calls 'the death-like extinction which belongs to the deepest nature of thought'.¹

Hence the note of sorrowful resignation, some would say frustration, sometimes discernible in the work of minor poets, so distinct from the triumphant signals of the great. But this note, where it appears, is rich in wisdom and experience and should not be lightly dismissed. It is the note of those who, vulgarly speaking, have paid more than they could afford, and reflects some of the common lot of humanity. It is the echo of the steps of the saint, no less than of the artist, just as it is, in real life, a miniature copy of the greatest triumphs of tragedy.

If we can see in the works of minor poets how their sensibility was heightened at the cost of a 'death-like extinction' and released in the creation of a work of art, however 'minor', even if the sensibility so resulting should be only a fraction of that which is manifest in the works of the greatest, yet it seems to me that some light is shed on the creative process. And if we can in some degree gauge that suffering of the minor poet which, as I say, has this power of awakening his sensibility, even if this were only a fraction of the sufferings of the great, we may receive some small intimation of the constant agony

¹ Op. cit., p. 186.

that goes with the infinite sensibility of the universal poets and attends their work of creation. It may help us to feel more vividly why genius was of old regarded as akin to lunacy, an inspired madness though poetry may be.

I cannot attempt to give here an illustration of the process of partial attainment at the cost of partial extinction, because that must always be a long story. And if 'in a logical disputation [I] keep to general terms', it is not, as Dryden pointedly said, 'to hide a fallacy', but because that story I have once tried to tell, as far as I was able, in the case of Beddoes;¹ and it is not biographical details that matter so much as the fact of shocks received and vitality rebounding. A counterpart of this development we can occasionally see in poets who, I think, must be recognized as great, and in any case major, like Lord Byron, who became great, or even genuine, only after he had paid the price and himself sounded the abysses which he had previously only pretended to inhabit.

But the lesson so far drawn does not exhaust the instructive possibilities of minor poets.

So far I have spoken only of the relative attainments of minor poets. These I think may go some way, and I am fully conscious how small a part of the whole way, to provide in the gauge of suffering a measure of greatness, to make us realize what double-edged swords are the gift of sensibility and the power of expression. But the profession of poetry is full of mysteries, and I do not think it is entirely futile to seek for some other broken rays of reflected light in the experience of minor poets. I have spoken of the tone of resignation which is the mark of conquered self and the achievement of a wider humanity, recognizable here and there in the works of minor poets. Needless to say, we do not find it everywhere. Sometimes a fine and genuine, though a minor, poet seems to give up the struggle and abandons poetry for (shall I say?) more serious pursuits. It is not necessarily that he has outgrown his childhood: it may be rather that he has seen the light and learned that dedication to service is greater than the ambition to make a mark in the world, which is often all the aim of the young, not least among poets. There is no school like art, like poetry, to show up the insufficiency of mere self.

This is also the message of one of the greatest of poets and of one who had learned to command the demon of poetry, of Goethe in *Wilhelm Meister*. I imagine that this was the lesson learned by Thomas Sackville, Lord Buckhurst, first Earl of Dorset, but manifested

¹ Thomas Lovell Beddoes: *the Making of a Poet*, Blackwell, 1935.

rather in public service than in that of the Muses. (I mention him because I believe that he has not yet received the full share of critical consideration to which his merits as a poet should entitle him.) It seems to me as if his long silence might have been caused by achievement rather than failure, but without the most intimate acquaintance with a poet's work it is hazardous to say, and of Sackville nothing has been preserved from after-years that might betray his secret. A poet, however, who has once achieved a conviction of Tightness may also recognize that he does not possess that universal sensibility which would enable him to maintain himself on the heights of greatness. Having paid the price of insight once, he may find it beyond his means to go on paying. He knows what it requires and may feel his powers insufficient, his talent too one-sided. His resignation may result from a sense of unworthiness for what must appear to him in the light of a priestly calling, a dedication without reserve, a service given whole-heartedly without *arriere-pensee*.

Failures also may be instructive, and I believe there is something we may learn about the victories of the great from the defeats of minor poets. For is not failure in a sense more instructive than success, inasmuch as it does come within the sphere of observation? Just as we may not presume to judge of verbal and stylistic achievements in a language we cannot write ourselves without some measure of plausibility or, in our own language, criticize a form we have not at any rate tried to practise, so without minor poets we should find it extremely hard to appreciate the difficulties attending on all creative work and rightly to assess the successes of the great. Here the minor poets offer a standard of comparison and may serve to initiate critics in the secrets of the trade. But it is not only the perfections of the great that stand in relief against the comparative failures of minor poets. Some of their imperfections, too, may be paralleled in the works of minor poets.

The struggle for form must always be attended by birthpangs, and the bigger the baby the worse the pain. Every occupation, however, even the writing of poetry, may become habitual, and with habit less painful. The less hard-learned lesson is also the more easily forgotten. Poets to whom the happy phrase is always at hand may forget the more exacting conditions of creation and start drawing too large dividends until they ultimately come to live on their capital. There are instances of a minor poet being seduced by his own voice just as there are of great poets writing more than has been good for their reputation. Also 'genius now and then produces a lucky trifle', says

Dr. Johnson in his *Life of Waller*. These lucky trifles, produced without effort, may become a siren voice to lure poets off their course. It seems more natural when minor poets fall for this temptation; the degradation of the great causes painful surprise. A reference to the minor poets, however, offers a parallel to show how easily they may fall victims to their own facility. It is conceivable that the facile creator, whether major or minor, never experiences that moment of enlightenment that sometimes falls to the share of a minor poet.

In yet another way the shortcomings of minor poets may be instructive. They may teach us not to demand the impossible even from the great. We may learn from them not to take a poet too seriously to task for what looks to us like inconsistencies or even contradictions of thought, because these may be emotionally resolved. A poet may ascribe a different, perhaps a deeper, meaning to words than that of mere logic. It is easier to get at these specialized senses in the works of minor poets, but they are present in all poetry and must be explored in the light of a poet's experience if we want to avoid misunderstandings. The romantic days of criticism are happily past when no fault could be found with the great, but we are falling into another fallacy, that of ascribing to them an overconscious calculation in creation, which is more characteristic of our own barren intellectualism than of more spacious days. A natural play on words is one thing, and we know, for instance, that the Elizabethans not seldom indulged in strained effects. Here the phoneticians may help us to understand Shakespearian puns concealed by changes in pronunciation. Conceding this, however, I think we should do well to be extremely careful lest we read Shakespeare as if he were James Joyce and attribute to every word he wrote any meaning except the obvious; or to assume calculated verbal effects intelligible only in view of after-events and so essentially untheatrical. Unique as he was, even Shakespeare's was no monster mind, and we must not ask for all the logic of an academic dissertation in works possessed of the tumultuousness of life. The inconsistencies, for instance, that so frequently occur in his plays, we know to pass lightly on the stage for which the plays were written and where such little blunders are not even noticed. Why, then, should we demand a mathematical precision which is as inconsistent with the nature of poetry as it was uncalled-for by the conditions of his theatre? We must know from the works of the minor poets how difficult, not to say impossible, it is to avoid small inconsistencies in the creation of such a complex thing as human drama, most particularly of the Elizabethan variety. I am inclined to believe that

circumstantial inconsistencies (not, of course, inconsistencies in character-drawing) have their place in the dramatic form more than in any other, because more than others it attempts to give a concentrated representation of life itself, which, as we all know, is full of inconsistencies, and if we did not know, there is Henry James to tell us how life can bungle the best of plots. Hence in the light of the sins committed by minor copyists of nature, I would suggest that inconsistencies in the works of the great need not necessarily be due to revision by minor hands.

To sum up, what I have been trying to say is simply this, that minor poets are easier to know familiarly in their works, and that years of intimacy with one of them may give us some little knowledge of the workings of the creative spirit in their minds, and so of the poetic mind in general. It is a field of study where the historian of literature and the literary critic may join hands, for the first duty of both is to try, as far as they can, to understand that which they are attempting to describe, the origins and the effects of which they seek to determine, the qualities of which they hope to ascertain, the merits of which they aim at appreciating, the faults of which they venture to criticize. In this attempt I would maintain the claims on our attention of the minor poets, because I believe we ignore them at our peril, but may find our menial labour richly rewarded in their service. It is not that great poets have not revealed the secrets of the human heart, the potentialities of man, the mysteries of the creative spirit, but that in order to understand their lesson we may find it profitable to turn for aid to the less exalted and try to learn, if we can, to some little extent how greatness, or some measure of greatness, may be brought about. So far from discounting what the great have told us about their own art—and such instructors as Goethe, Coleridge, Keats, even Matthew Arnold and Mr. Eliot, to name only a few, are not to be despised—I would merely suggest that the humbler instruments are entitled to their place in the orchestra and have something to contribute to the fullness of the tune, that the failures and successes of minor poets are significant in the study of the whole, that art is one and the partial achievements of minor poets an aid towards the understanding of the perfections of the great, their failures a possible clue to some of the shortcomings of their betters.

H. W. DONNER

The Nature of Literary History

I

I PROPOSE to try to say something on a large and difficult subject. I do not at all imagine that I have anything approaching a complete solution of the problems which I have in mind. But I am sure that it is very important to try to state and confront these problems, though I shall certainly not be able to deal with more than part of them. Not to do so leaves us, I think, vague about our aims and intentions as professional teachers of English in universities.

I shall concern myself only with literary history. If I have anything to say about literary criticism, it will be incidental to what I have to say about literary history. In any case, we know, or think we know, more or less clearly, what literary criticism sets about doing; we are much less certain what literary history is, or even if it exists.

Now it is not difficult to discover many various and opposing doctrines about literary history. The first and most striking is that there is no such thing. This was a view which seems to have been taken by no less a writer and scholar than W. P. Ker. 'Method', he said, 'is far less required in literary than in political history', since literary history is 'more like a guide-book than a geography.' The objects of literary writing, he said again, are 'eternal' and have no proper history. I notice also a remark of Mr. T. S. Eliot: The whole of the literature of Europe has a simultaneous existence and composes a simultaneous order.'

Consider again now what is superficially a very different kind of attitude, that of Walter Pater. Pater himself upheld, on paper at least, what he called 'historic criticism': this was the kind of criticism he thought peculiar to and desirable in modern times. Pater was not indeed, as Mr. Graham Hough has recently observed, notable for practising this kind of criticism. But he asserted it; and he said that it requires us to think that 'nothing man has projected from himself is really intelligible except at its own date and from its proper point of view in the never-resting "secular process" '. This attitude, if it is rigorously considered, also destroys the possibilities of literary history: it requires us to believe that any history we write is itself a product of its own date and of its proper point of view; and there is therefore not a wide gap between 'historic criticism' and the im-

pressionistic criticism which Pater himself sometimes extolled and most frequently practised.

I do not propose to quote other views. These will serve well enough for a starting-point for what I have to say. All three I have quoted seem to be opposed to the possibility of literary history proper. And I ask: What is it which inclines us, or at least many people, to write off the idea of literary history? No one ever seriously doubted that political, social, legal history is possible: research may be done in them; they may be written and rewritten. But literary history is in another boat: what may be *called* literary history may be written; but the title is merely honorific: it is not *really* history.

Now this feeling, which is both strong and widespread, arises from the fact that in the study of literature we are confronted by, we are in the presence of, the work of art. There it is; we have the feeling of contemporaneity with it; or again, it is 'eternal' in some senses; or again, the work of art can be said to be a work of art only as I or you react to it and recreate it in our imaginations. Now this feeling of contemporaneity is indeed vital in literary criticism; as 'contemporary', the work of art comes home to our bosoms; when we read the poem, it lives in us and we in it. But it is precisely this feeling which threatens to be diminished by 'literary history'; the historical study of literature contrives somehow to distance the poem from us; poetry loses its contemporaneity and therefore its impact on us; it becomes an object of archaeological study; it becomes, above all, something to *explain*, so far as we can explain it. To criticism the poem is monadic, absolute, in time now. In history it is continuous with its environment; in place of being monadic, we resolve it, if we can, into a number of surrounding factors of which it becomes a function; it is no longer a monad, but a whirl in a stream, in time past.

This tension is peculiar (or seems to be) to literary history (or, strictly, to art history, but I confine myself to literature). Consider, by way of contrast, a constitutional historian recounting the history of Cabinet government in England in the eighteenth century. What he writes of is in time past. Certainly what he writes of has had momentous consequences for the shape of the government of England today, and in *that* sense it may be said to be contemporary; but this sense of 'contemporary' is, as it were, thin and academic, in comparison with the contemporaneity of, say, the *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard*.

Literary history, then, seems to be caught in a kind of tension *vis-a-vis* literary criticism, the tension between 'pastness', so to say,

and 'contemporaneity'. Literary criticism is committed to denying Pater's statement that a work of art is really only intelligible at its own date; its date, says the critic is then, now, and for ever. But literary history declares that it has a date, which is in the past, and that it is, inevitably, dated; it cannot mean to us what it meant at the time of its creation; we cannot hope to remake it; it is at best a fading image. Literary criticism therefore exults in a sense of perfect possession; a thing of beauty is a possession as well as a joy for ever. But literary history shakes its head over this rapture and confident appraisal; and it resolves criticism into a wistful and melancholy impressionism, sighing, like Pater, over things past. Or again, literary criticism proceeds to vigorous judgement; it pronounces confident sentences; it yields the palm or withholds it; it puts works of art into the great tradition or it summarily puts them out of it; it is magisterial, wigged and robed perpetually for High Court Actions and Sentences, with a Black Cap for ever to hand. But your historian dislikes this high-handedness. Tenderness for what has been pervades him; he praises what he can; the rest he blandly excuses or ignores.

Or again, the quarrel may break out in other ways. Consider, for example, the play called *Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*; it is generally agreed that it is a play of unusual power, or importance, or greatness. But unfortunately, nobody seems to know what it is all about. The critics have the feeling, for which they cannot be blamed, that it signifies something quite momentous for us; but what is momentous in it eludes a clear and agreed critical formulation. This provides a unique opportunity for the historian. The literary historian declares that the critics have taken the play without regard for factors contemporary with Shakespeare; they have carried on as if *Hamlet* were contemporary with *them*. But the critics know little enough about Shakespeare's audience, or the then state of belief about ghosts, or the Elizabethan attitude to royal succession. But still, when these things have been explained, we are not given a formula for what *Hamlet* is really about. Now some historians will readily acknowledge this; Professor Dover Wilson modestly acknowledges, in his edition of *Hamlet*, that the problem of *Hamlet* is framed by his and others' researches 'in more delicate dramatic tracery'; but the mystery, he says, remains. But all are not so modest. The literary historian sometimes, with the bit well in his teeth, will not be checked; he goes ahead to declare that there is no mystery. Mystery is not to his liking; and it must be exorcized like some evil spirit with which history will have nothing to do. Accordingly, we are told that *Hamlet*

is the result of Shakespeare's struggle with intractable material; Shakespeare could make nothing of it, and he merely bemused and bemuses his audiences; it is a tale told by a Shakespeare, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing.

These are the quarrels, open or suppressed, between the literary historian and the literary critic; and there are others. Of these the chief and most regrettable is that between those called modernists and those called medievalists; and the state of suspicion which sometimes exists between these two arises in considerable measure from different evaluation of the place of linguistic study in English schools. The modernist will regard the medievalist as the pure scholar, or historian or linguist; the medievalist will regard the modernist as an impressionist, not to say irresponsible critic, disregarding of time, fact, and evidence. The modernist acknowledges, or imputes, that a medievalist is an historian, but denies that he is literary; the medievalist acknowledges, or imputes, that the modernist is a critic of a kind, but denies that he is an historian. Neither, therefore, has sufficient validity in the eyes of the other; one, in the eyes of the other, is too historical or too literary, as the case may be. Now that these quarrels exist I take for granted. But we do not, I think, sufficiently acknowledge their existence or the state of suspicion and distrust which exists. For I take it that this tension is necessary and healthy; what is important is not that it should be resolved, but that it should be acknowledged for the healthy thing it is, or at least can be. But having said that, we cannot, I suppose, leave things there. The tension, I have said, is desirable and healthy; what is not desirable and not healthy is a state of affairs in which we do not more or less clearly envisage first the tension, and then a synthesis which does not indeed resolve the tension, but instead makes it creative: a principle of unity and not disunity; something which is aiming at one thing instead of two; and no less, therefore, a continuing self-criticism and not a criticism of others.

If this is so, I ask, in what way can we contribute to this desirable state of affairs, and thereby give to English studies the unity and clearness of purpose in which at present, I venture to think, they are lacking? Is there a principle of unity available and usable? I think that there is; and I shall try to set it out as best I can.

II

The opposing battle-cries are: *The Past is past* and *The Past is contemporary*. But the trouble is that both cries are justified. The

Past is past; and the Past *can* become, in these matters at least, contemporary. Now when we try to take stock of this situation, it is consoling to remember that this state of affairs is not peculiar to literary history. This battle, or something very like it, has raged, over many years, in regard to history at large. It is true that, in England at least, philosophers have not shown much interest in the Philosophy of History. They have been engaged with other matters which seem to be of far less importance for us. The sort of knowledge which common sense and science come by has almost exclusively absorbed their interest; and they are at no pains to give us any help. Accordingly, we are driven to fend for ourselves; or, at least, to look abroad for any help we can obtain.

Now if we do so, we find Croce taking his stand firmly on one side of this dispute. All History is contemporary, he says. Let the past *be* past; let it be dated, held off at a remove; and then your study of it is lifeless, pedantic, meaningless; if you like, *scientific*. You are then studying, if you insist, history. But it is not true history. You are trying to resolve yourself into a scientist; and you are also trying to treat human matters as if they were a part of nature, something natural. The need to do this, or something near it, J. B. Bury proclaimed when he declared in his Inaugural Lecture at Cambridge in 1903: 'History is simply a science, no less and no more'; and just this idea Croce is at pains to attack. To take Bury's view is to try to move history across the dividing line between the humanities and the sciences; it is to treat what is alive as something dead; it is to try to resolve into illustration of general laws what is in fact individual; it is to analyse and classify merely; it is to seek to overcome or extrude the essential temporality of things; it is to seek, in short, to avoid *history* proper, and to come by something else: not a reconstitution of the past, but an elucidation of a thesis.

But history proper is a perpetual re-creation of what is individual, and this re-creation is a kind of re-living of the past, an assimilation of oneself to what is past; and this process is a contemporizing of the past. We become what we behold; and it, in turn, is reborn in us. We impose, as historians, no masterful patterns on the freedom of history; history resists elucidation by tyrannical concepts; it comes to us on its own terms or not at all; and it enforces us to allow that its fecundity is inexhaustible by us. If we advance towards it with a neat theory, it promptly hits us on the head with a brute fact. It is history proper, Croce will say, which really allows for fact and has the courage and open-mindedness to face it and accept it. 'Scientific' history seems

too often to squint at or slyly to ignore facts in the interest of a rounded thesis. To allow history to be contemporary and not 'scientific' is to offer the strongest guarantee of justice being done to the facts.

Now it is possible to employ this celebrated doctrine having in mind not only history as it is ordinarily understood, that is, as signifying political and social history, but also literary and artistic history.¹ It may be employed, for example, with regard to the constitutional history of the eighteenth century. The growth of the English constitution at that time was a highly individual thing; it arose in a unique context and was in part the issue of individual minds and temperaments; much depended on the political sensibility of a Harley, a Bolingbroke, a Walpole, a Pitt, a Burke; and these imponderables are not to be caught up by 'scientific' history in any closely meshed net of 'research'. Here, too, is something which requires the historical imagination; we must become contemporary with it, or it with us; and the historical imagination in this activity is not at all disregarding of 'research'. On the contrary, it ensures its diligent prosecution; fact is its nutriment.

But earlier I said that there seems to be a notable difference between literary history and constitutional history; an eighteenth-century poem, I said, is more assimilable to ourselves than the growth of the constitution in the eighteenth century; it is more obviously 'contemporary' with us, or can more readily become so. But now, shall we still say so? Is literary history something unique, and so unique as not to be history at all? Or is it not as much, and as rigorously, history as political, economic, or social history? What fundamental difference can there be between literary and political history, considered as history?

To these questions we might reply as follows: There is yet, we might say, a striking difference; What literary history must above all concern itself with is the work of art, its process and stages of composition, and then its finished state. The poem is there, or here, before us; we possess it and are confronted by it as we cannot be said to be confronted with the constitution of the eighteenth century. The Earl of Oxford and his thoughts are in the past; the *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard* was then, is now, and will be.

But, of course, this will not really do. It simply is not true to say

¹ I do not say that Croce himself so employs it. Indeed, he himself seems to maintain a doctrine of two 'kinds' of history, which in what follows I am concerned to deny.

that in constitutional history we consciously reach back into the past, and that in literary history we do not. We cannot read a poem without dating it, whether it be a poem of the eighteenth century or a poem of yesterday; a poem is an occurrence in time; we cannot read it as something without a temporal setting; it belongs in time. It is all very well to call a poem 'eternal'. No doubt something is intended by speaking of it so; but W. P. Ker, it is likely, employed the word more for emphasis than for sober accuracy; he was the last man to jib at the facts. And here, I suppose, is one of the points where the scholarly historian is disposed to quarrel with the critic. 'You will', he says, 'read this poem as if it were written yesterday instead of in the eighteenth century; but are you sure you know what this or that word meant in the eighteenth century or the kind of associations it had then? You treat the poem as if it were "eternal", which means in effect "contemporary" with you; in fact you know perfectly well that it is saturated in its own time; but this you ignore, or try to.'

Besides, consider this word 'eternal'. What on earth does it mean? It means, I suppose, that we really and rightly react to the work of art when, after no doubt having taken cognizance of its temporal setting and of the influence of that temporal setting, we enter into an enjoyable contemplation of it. It is not in the last resort something to employ, but to enjoy. And this no doubt is true enough. But what is the aim of the political historian? When he had conducted his researches and answered his questions, he too comes to rest in a happy contemplation of the picture of his chosen period. There is nothing more to do. No doubt in its light he will the better understand the state of the constitution in 1950, and he may possibly be a better critic of it; but the literary student of the eighteenth century may also the better apprehend the state of English poetry in 1950 and possibly be a better critic of it.

I am therefore at a loss to see how we can deny to literary history its rightful place as history proper, or the literary historian his rightful place as an historian proper. And yet, by implication, this is habitually done. A professor of history is an historian; and he and we know where he stands. But what is a teacher of English? Does he readily accept the designation of 'historian'? I do not think he does. I suspect that neither we nor our public know clearly what we are—historians, critics, linguists, belletrists, commentators, guide-posts, preachers?

I fear that I may be flogging a dead horse. Or again, it may be said that I am bothering about names merely. But names are not unim-

portant, and they influence our points of view; and if I am right in suggesting that the right name is 'historian', and if this designation were generally accepted, it would, I think, provide a basis of accommodation which would have agreeable consequences. I may add three considerations which I think are important.

in

In the first place, the historian, as we ordinarily think of him, does not and cannot elude the responsibilities of criticism. He does not and cannot divest himself or his work of judgements of value. A Bury may say what he likes; but 'scientific history', so far as it is realizable at all, is likely to be neither scientific nor history. The historian is dealing with the past of human thought, or with human beings thinking, or with nothing; and he can only be deluding himself if he thinks he can recount bare facts in abstraction from value. But if value is to come in at all, his own values must come in also. They can no more be kept out of his writing than air can be kept out of his lungs. Therefore the constitutional historian or the social historian is also a constitutional critic, or social critic; and similarly the literary historian need have no fear that continuing to adopt the apparently modest role of historian is to abdicate from critical responsibilities; he will be little enough of an historian if he does so. It would be lamentable if we ever allowed 'literary history' to signify only the establishment of chronology and what is called textual criticism, even if it could be thought (which it rightly cannot) that literary evaluations can be separable from these labours.

In the second place, to accept the designation of 'historian' provides not only a basis of accommodation between English scholars; it provides also a basis of accommodation with all other historians of England. Our labours then become of a piece with the rest of history to an extent that they are not, I suspect, at present. I sometimes think that we are guilty of a certain suspicion of the political and social historian, or again, of the historian of philosophy; we sometimes, if not habitually, feel on our guard against them as if we have categories to protect at all costs and which we judge we can safeguard only by a certain exclusiveness. But all historians, I take it, are historians of human thought, if we may use 'thought' in its wide sense; and we have nothing to lose and everything to gain by a policy of the open door, and of quick and easy inter-communication. We shall be therefore no less concerned to understand, enjoy, and

appraise works of literary art: there need be no question of resolving poets and their works into functions of social, economic, political, and philosophical factors; and this for the reason that all history proper is *human* history. To make climate or the means of production the key to literary history, is simply to relapse uncritically into 'scientific' or pseudo-scientific history; it is always the way the mind has responded to those things that history sets on record: history is the history of the human, not of the natural, which is the concern of science.

Thirdly, to be, in the first place, historians, and then critics *because* we are historians, is to provide ourselves with some insurance against unjust and arbitrary critical judgements. Everybody knows that Matthew Arnold was singularly unregardful of historical considerations: all authors were to him as if they were in all truth his contemporaries: a Jeremy Taylor, a Pope, a Wordsworth were somehow out of time; and he therefore missed, and was bound to miss, something of the individuality of these writers. He did not realize that he had to travel back in order to become contemporary with them, and that this effort of historical imagination is not separable from the imaginative appraisal of what they did at the time they were. We have to take account of time; it is the major fact we have to confront; and not to remember this is to fail to apprehend a writer's individuality.

Besides, errors like this do not die with their perpetrators; they live on, if only in the reactions against themselves which they set up. Sooner or later someone will, animated no doubt by a wish for justice, speak up for the Pope whom Arnold maligned; and in that case he is only too likely to go too far on the other side. Indignation will interfere with his historical judgement.

Or again, consider the injustice that has been done to Milton in our time: doctrinaire judgements, marching behind party banners, loaded the responsibility for what happened to English poetry in the course of the seventeenth century on to Milton. But it is not difficult to see, if we have no axe to grind, that what happened in Milton's poetry had begun to happen in Donne's. But Donne has been endlessly fussed over and exalted, Milton cold-shouldered and depressed. From this kind of judgement we can be saved by history. Criticism will never save us; it is not, often, cool enough and strong-minded enough to allow the facts their rightful play. Besides, aberrations of this kind have their consequences for the practice of writing; they are not things of no practical import.

IV

The position therefore seems to be this: that history proper is on the one side an attempt to make all history contemporary, to assimilate ourselves to the past. But, on the other hand, it respects the facts; it emphasizes the *differences* of the past from ourselves; it calls attention to these; and then, and then only, gives allowance to the play of the historical imagination whereby our minds enter into the past and the past enters into our minds, and the two become contemporary with each other.

Now if this is so, the concept of history, rightly entertained, overcomes the opposition of historian and critic which I spoke of earlier: the historian and the critic become one person instead of remaining two, and two at loggerheads with each other. The literary critic may be well content, on reflection, to be metamorphosed into the literary historian; and he may become surprised to discover that he is a better critic for it. I have in mind not only the study of literary creation in the past, but, no less, the study of literary work strictly contemporary with ourselves: it is not possible, and certainly is not desirable, to divest oneself of history in the study of a book hot from the press. I am indeed only repeating, as best I can, what Mr. T. S. Eliot has said: 'No poet [said Mr. Eliot] . . . has his complete meaning alone. His significance, his appreciation, is the appreciation of his relation to the dead poets and artists. You cannot value him alone; you must set him, for contrast and comparison, among the dead. I mean this', he goes on to say, 'as a *principle of aesthetic, not merely historical, criticism*' That is it: the aesthetic and the historical are inseparable: we cannot jump out of history.

I have only one thing further to add. I have said that literary criticism turns out to be nothing other than literary history. The critic of the literature of today must act as an historian and see himself as one; and he will be no less, rather more, for that reason a good critic. Now this union of the two we can best implement, it seems to me, in university teaching, by venturing to bring the literature of our own time within the scope of our courses. The novelty of the present is itself a part of history; and besides, it illuminates and to that extent changes the past, or if you will, increases our understanding of the past. I have said that the critic must lose himself in the historian; but the historian may find himself, or find himself in greater measure, through the study of what goes on in his own time; and in that measure he will be a better critic.

D. G. JAMES

PART TWO

LINGUISTIC

*The Development of Quantity as Evidence of
Western European Linguistic Interdependence*

I DO not intend to set forth new facts. What I shall do is to discuss certain very well-known facts in order to draw from them conclusions which I believe to be of some importance to the history of English and other languages of western Europe.

The function of energy, the use of an alternation between strong and weak elements by a phonological—or phonemic—system may, as Trubetzkoy has shown in a convincing manner, take two different forms. It may appear either as a difference in length or as a difference in stress. Some languages, however, do not use these differences semantically. Modern Georgian has neither phonological stress nor phonological quantity. A *phonetic* stress is found, but it is very weak and accompanied by a slight raising of pitch. The elements of the sentence are arranged into rhythmic groups which have little stability. All syllables are pronounced practically on the same level, except the last, which is weakened, without loss, however, of the character of the vowel. The way a Georgian reads a verse is very striking to the Teutonic ear. He stresses lightly one syllable of the foot, *le temps fort du pied*, and raises the tone slightly. The syllable stressed in a verse may very well be one which is not stressed in the rhythmic group of the ordinary sentence.

Certain African languages, e.g. Ewe, have only significant quantitative differences and no stress differences. In modern Finnish only the difference between long and short is significant, and stress, which is invariably on the initial syllable, has no semantic function; it serves mainly to mark out word groups.¹ Russian uses stress for semantic purposes, but has no alternation between long and short.

Differences in pitch, in melody, may also be used for semantic purposes, as is well known from many languages. They may occur in languages of the three types I have just mentioned.

Indo-European used differences of quantity and pitch for semantic

¹ Cf. A. Sauvageot, *Esquisse de la langue finnoise*, p. 30.

purposes in its vowel system, but it had no phonological stress. The same is true of ancient Greek and of Latin, with the exception that in Latin pitch was mechanically fixed to the ultimate or penultimate syllable. Latin may have had phonetic stress on the initial radical syllable which may have varied in strength during the different periods of the history of the language. Primitive Germanic had phonological vowel quantity and also, during its most ancient period, phonological pitch, as is seen by the effects of what is called Verner's Law. It had probably a phonetic stress accent mechanically bound to the initial radical syllable. In later periods there is a tendency to restrict vowel quantity to the radical initial syllable.

In the third century B.C. the first traces of the development of a phonological stress accent and of the loss of significant vowel quantity appear in Greek. The final result is the modern Greek system of isochronal vowels which are a little longer in stressed syllables than in unstressed ones.¹ Stress as such takes over the function of quantity and pitch.

Latin gets stress in the third century A.D. An examination of the poetry of the period shows that the former tone is transformed into stress and that quantity is subordinated to stress. Long final vowels are shortened, short accented ones are lengthened, the *syllaba natura* or *positione longa* disappears. Later, probably in the sixth century, quantity is completely subordinated to stress, short vowels lengthened in open stressed syllables, and long ones shortened in stressed closed syllables, e.g. *fi-des* > *fi-des*, *scrip-tus* > *scrip-tus*. In this way there is a tendency to give every stressed syllable the same length, having either a long vowel or a short vowel -|- a consonant.

This same development occurs in Middle English, probably in the thirteenth century (/ and *u* are lengthened later and not so generally),² e.g. *fx-der* 'father' > *fa-der*, *he-ran* > *be-ren*, *cep-te* > *cep-te*, &c.

There is thus the same tendency at work in Middle English as earlier in Latin, though there are, of course, many differences in details.

In Middle Low German a similar development results in diphthongs, e.g. *e* > *ee*, *iz*, *id*, &c. In High German, too, short-stressed vowels are lengthened in open, and long-stressed ones shortened in closed syllables.

In the thirteenth century this development reaches Norway, at least in some of the dialects. We now get the modern principle of the

¹ Cf. Schwyzer, *Griech. Gramm.*, p. 392.

² These vowels have often a special treatment in systems of quantity.

pronunciation of the *riksmdl* and of most of the dialects according to which all stressed syllables have approximately the same length, having either a long vowel or a long consonant, e.g. *ll-fa* 'to live' > *le-V9*, *fd-ra* 'to go, to travel' > *fa-rz*, *dk(a)r* 'field' > *ā-kar*, *ko-ma* 'to come' > *kam-md* (written *komme*), *vm* (accusative) 'friend' > *venn*, *ndtt* 'night' > *ndtt* (written *nott*), *natt*.

This change coincides with a change in poetry and the introduction of the dance song, the ballad. Similar developments are found also in Swedish and Danish, but Danish differs in many details from Norwegian and Swedish.

At last, in the sixteenth century, the new principle reaches Iceland. The poems of the last catholic bishop of Iceland, Jon Arason, who was executed in 1550, still show the old quantity; but the new rules appear before 1600, and we get Modern Icelandic *sd-lur* 'hall' ON. *sdlr*, *ge-ta* < *ge-ta* 'to get', *li-fa* 'to live' < *ll-fa*, *d-kur* 'field' < *dkry*, *gdtt* (n. of *godur*) 'good' < *gdtt*, &c.

What is common to these developments in the languages we have examined is that the function of energy takes the form of stress, and that quantitative differences, where they subsist, are entirely subordinated to stress. It is highly probable that here we are *not* faced by independent spontaneous developments—in fact, I do not think that spontaneous linguistic changes in the strict sense of the term do exist. We know that there is extensive parallelism in the development of western European languages, and that Latin especially has influenced Germanic from a very early period onwards. These languages have, as we know, discarded the complicated inflexional system and have a large vocabulary in common words which have passed directly from one to the other or from Latin or Latinized Greek to the national languages, or which are translations of migrating words. In the case of loan-words it is well known that such words are introduced through bilingual groups. I think a thorough study of the pronunciation of bilingual groups, a rather neglected subject, will show that these groups are sometimes instrumental in bringing about phonetic and also phonological changes. Personally I have been able to observe how quickly general phonological traits of the language of a person may be affected through his stay in a group of another language.¹ Bilingual groups have, of course, existed from time immemorial; and they have been important all through the history of Europe. Teutons who served in the armies of Rome and returned home, Anglo-French, Anglo-Norse, Gaelic-Norse groups, &c., were in

¹ Cf. *Acta Linguistica*, v. 123.

existence. In Europe we must reckon not only with national languages but also with Medieval Latin and how it was pronounced. In the old Norwegian book 'The Royal Mirror' (*Konungsskuggsjd*), the author says in the chapter about the merchant—the book was written about 1260: 'If you want to have perfect knowledge, learn all languages; but in the first place Latin and French, because with them you will go farthest.' In matters of pronunciation it may be general features such as rhythm, and also precise details which are taken over, e.g. a stronger or weaker aspiration of voiceless plosives or the change in the location of the tip of the tongue in the articulation of dentals. In the case before us it may only be the principle of stress which has been imitated, a new rhythm which may have had different results in detail according to the phonological system into which it was introduced. The lengthening of short-stressed vowels in English takes place much later than in Latin, at a time when these vowels had undergone different developments; some Romance scholars seem not to reckon with a lengthening in Latin at all, but only with a change of *timbre*. It cannot be objected that the development of stress is so 'natural' that stress may have arisen quite independently in each of the languages in question. What we deem 'natural' is only that to which we are accustomed. Linguistic and other social phenomena which to us seem 'natural' are often thought very strange by people of societies different from ours. In a discussion in Oslo some years ago a classical philologist objected to the theory of phonological quantity in Latin, affirming that it would be impossible for the speaker to distinguish clearly between short and long vowels in the interior of the sentence. We know, however, through Cicero¹ that if an actor made a false quantity *theatra tota reclamant*.

I think, therefore, that in the evolution of phonological systems we must reckon with the same external influences as in lexicology and morphology. In all linguistic development we must distinguish between the process of change and the determining cause of the change. The process of change itself is comparatively well known. It is of a psychological nature. Grammont and Meillet have pointed out the main general patterns found in sound-history, and van Ginneken has shown how these patterns of change are explained by the principles of psychological automatism. But such general patterns as assimilation, differentiation, dissimilation, &c., which occur in all languages and are general possibilities, cannot explain the causes of a special event in the history of language. That can only be done by a variable,

¹ *De Oratore*, iii. 196.

an element which in the last instance lies outside language itself. In the change of meaning of the word *pen* from 'quill or feather pen' to 'steel pen' the psychological process is a transfer of the word and its meaning to the new object on account of the similarity between the latter and the quill-feather pen. The event which gave rise to this process was the invention of the steel pen. Many sound-changes which apparently seem to be quite independent may, I think, be explained by outside influence. We may take the development of Welsh *chw* into a voiceless *w* which is of south Welsh origin and is now travelling northwards.¹ I think it is due to English influence, the guttural voiceless spirant being an archaic phoneme in the British Isles. That *chw* is associated with English *wh* is seen by such loans as *chwhip* and *chwirligwgan* from *whip* and *whirligig*. It is significant that this change comes from the south of Wales where the English influence is strongest. In certain southern dialects at least the *ch* is weak and approaches the sound of *h*.

I think it will be possible, in this way, to explain many phonological changes which hitherto have seemed rather mysterious. But the fundamental problem of the cause of the change in its focus remains. We can follow the phonological function of stress back to the Greek of the third century B.C. From where did Greek get it? Schwyzer² thinks it came from foreigners speaking Greek. It is obvious that we cannot solve such problems before we have a thorough knowledge of the structural systems of the languages of the world.

The subordination of quantity to stress and the tendency to give a stressed syllable equal length, either through the vowel or through a final consonant, is characteristic of the initial period of the Romance languages and of the medieval periods of the Germanic languages. In later periods there have been many changes; the Romance languages differ from the Germanic, and the latter among themselves. Only Norwegian, Swedish, and Icelandic have retained the old principle. The Celtic fringe has, at least in part, remained outside the main influences. The Breton dialect of St. Pol-de-Lton has a system similar to the Norwegian: long vowels in stressed open syllables, short in stressed closed ones; the stress falls mechanically on the last syllable but one.³ In monosyllables the vowel is long when it is final or is followed by only one consonant, with the exception of cases having / or *n* going back to Middle Breton // and *nn*, e.g. *gal'Frenchman*,

¹ Cf. the author, *Studies in Cyfetiog Welsh*, p. 140.

² *Op. cit.*, p. 393.

³ Cf. the author, *Le Breton parU d Saint-Pol-de-Ldon*.

M.Br. *gall*: *bren* 'bran', M.Br. *brenn*. In central and northern Welsh which stresses the penultimate syllable, long vowels appear only in monosyllables before certain consonants and when final. Before / and *n* there are doublets, e.g. *ta:l(tdl)* 'payment': *t al'tall*', *gu:n(gwn)* 'robe': *gun (gwri)* 'I know', *gli:n* 'knee': *glin* (N.W. *glyri*) 'valley'.¹ Irish has independent quantity in the stressed syllable which in the north is always the initial radical syllable. Donegal Irish has even retained a limited system of short and long consonants, an opposition between short and long palatal and non-palatal nasals and liquids and traces of an opposition *r: rr?* similar to the opposition between short and long consonants found in Old Norse.

The development of a phonological stress accent with isochronal vowels similar to that of Greek is found in a certain number of east European languages, especially in Russian. The movement originating in Greek has thus taken a somewhat different character in the East.

As is the case within a dialect area of the same language where each dialect trait may have its own extension, the development of stress and quantity in western Europe does not necessarily cover the same territory as other important traits. Ernst Lewy has, on the basis of an examination of word, sentence, and clause structure, tried to establish the structure-groups of the European languages. He sets up, among others, an *Atlantic* group exemplified by Basque, Spanish, Italian, French, Irish, English, and Swedish; and a *Central* one exemplified by German and Hungarian. However this may be, the phonological development studied above does not cover the whole *Atlantic* territory and overlaps into the *Central* territory. This is characteristic of the currents and cross-currents of European civilization.

In our attempts at explaining the development of the linguistic structures of Europe we must also take into account the influence of extinct languages. We are of course handicapped by the fact that the languages which preceded Indo-European in western, central, and eastern Europe have disappeared without leaving any direct traces. But the geographical distribution of certain facts may indicate the previous extension of phonological traits of substratum languages. It is well known that when a dialect-trait occurs in the lateral areas of a territory, this may indicate that the trait in question was once current

¹ Cf. S. Jones, *A Welsh Phonetic Reader*, p. 21; the author, *Studies in Cyfeiliog* Wel\$> p. 44.

² Cf. the author, *The Dialect of Torr, Co. Donegal*.

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in the intermediate territory. It is interesting and significant, I think, to observe that Irish has developed a complete opposition between palatal and non-palatal consonants, a feature which may have had a greater extension in the insular Celtic languages in prehistoric times. The same complete opposition is found in a vast territory of eastern Europe and Asia.¹ Donegal Irish has still, as I have just remarked, a significant opposition between long and short dental nasals, liquids, and *r*. This opposition was once common to Irish, and in prehistoric times it was not limited to nasals and liquids. It seems also to have been current in prehistoric Brythonic. Such an alternation between short and long consonants is today still found in Finnish, and existed in Old Norse. Nothing of all this was found in original Indo-European; but such phenomena may have characterized pre-Indo-European languages of western, northern, and eastern Europe.

If we wish to explain the historical development of a language this development must be seen in relation to the history of the surrounding languages. Languages of different origin may form structure-groups, termed *Sprachbunde* by Trubetzkoy. The historical investigation of a language must use a combination of genealogical and structural methods.

ALF SOMMERFELT

¹ Cf. R. Jakobson, *Tiavaux du Cercle Linguistique de Prague*, iv. 235 ff.

The New Survey of Dialectal English

PART I

SOMETHING may have already been heard of the proposal of O the Philological Society for a new survey of dialectal English as spoken in these islands. In this connexion I propose to offer some remarks on the Questionnaire which Professor Eugen Dieth, of Zurich, and myself have been preparing, and upon the methods and results of its application.

At Leeds, apart from working on the Questionnaire already mentioned, our dialect centre, which has been at work since 1946, has carried out several pieces of work. These include the compilation of four complete dialect grammars (which I hope to publish, sooner or later), a survey of the nature and distribution in Yorkshire of the definite article medially in the sense-group, the delineation of the existing boundary between northern and north-midland dialects in Yorkshire, as well as several preliminary investigations of local dialects in Durham, Lancashire, Yorkshire, Staffordshire, and Northamptonshire. So far as we at Leeds are concerned, the most important fact to chronicle is the completion of the Questionnaire that Dieth and I have been working on during the last five years. It has been tested frequently, and revised four times; and now it will soon be ready for the printer.

As is well known, the fundamental instrument of a Linguistic Atlas is the Questionnaire. I should like to set down, in a general way, something about our Questionnaire as it now exists, about its aim, how it has been prepared, its form and contents, and how we think it ought to be used.

The Questionnaire as it exists today comprises nine booklets, containing in all about 1,300 questions. Its chief topics are: Book I, The Farmstead; Book II, Cultivation; Book III, Animals; Book IV, Nature; Book V, The House and Housekeeping; Book VI, The Human Body; Book VII, Numbers, Time, and Weather; Book VIII, Social Activities; and Book IX, States, Actions, and Relationships. Thus the Questionnaire deals with farming and the home. It is not concerned with fishing, mining, or other industrial activities; nor, in any special way, with life in the town. In content it is mainly lexical; but, aiming at comprehensiveness, it also includes phonological,

morphological, and syntactical questions. All the questions are framed; and nowhere is the informant asked to translate, e.g. to render some Standard English phrase or sentence into his own vernacular speech. It is intended to be asked of dialect-speaking natives of at least sixty years of age or more, and in particular of a farmer, especially a small farmer, and his wife, or some other woman of the same type, within the space of five days, i.e. one week, we imagine, of a field-worker's time.

At this point I may speak briefly about the formulation of the questions in the Questionnaire. Clearly it would be best if the field-worker had nothing at all to ask in words, and if the informant could give all the requisite information in the shortest space of time without prompting. But that ideal is unattainable. The field-worker must in fact speak. He must use words and ask questions; and in doing so, risk putting the informant out of his stride by his own manner of speaking. The ideal question is the shortest possible, consistent with clarity: short, simple, direct, colloquial, unambiguous, crystal clear; and it must at once elicit the current vernacular expression concerned. Further, wherever possible, it must be *personalized*, in order to clinch the informant's interest in the question and answer. Our questions, of course, vary in kind. They are of the following types: (1) *Naming*, (2) *Completing*, and (3) *Talking*. Let me deal with each in turn. Under Type 1, *naming*, we include the 'what-do-you-call-this' question. All the field-worker need do here is to point to the object, show a picture of it—we find pictures very helpful—or indicate it by description, imitation, or gesture. This is the simplest type of question to answer, and it invariably produces a quick and satisfactory response. For example: *What do you call* . . . , and the field-worker points, for instance, to those parts of the body he wants his informant to name. Or again, he may ask: *What do you call the bird that does this?* and he then imitates the crow of a cock. Or again: *What do you call that other mysterious person we think of as having horns and a tail?* or again: *What do you call that much of the stuff you tie a parcel up with?* (and, with a gesture, he indicates a piece of string). Really, it seems difficult here for the field-worker to go wrong.

Type 2 is the *completing* type. It undoubtedly works efficiently and the informants obviously relish it. Here are a few examples. *Some people drink their tea with sugar; but some drink it* . . . (WITHOUT). Secondly, *Two bad-tempered dogs when they meet, usually begin* ... (to FIGHT EACH OTHER). Thirdly, */// didn't know what a cowman is, you would tell me: he is the man* . . . (that LOOKS AFTER THE cows). That a

question is here actually being asked is indicated to the informant both by the appropriate intonation and by the pause at the end of the incomplete statement of the question. As J said, this type is extremely popular with informants, and they seem to regard it simply as an entertaining guessing-game. Thus is his interest in the proceedings of the interview sustained.

In the third type, the *Talking* type, the informant is asked to talk about some notional group, in the expectation that the wanted \word or words will quickly emerge. For example: *What kinds of berries do you know?* And again, *What can you make from milk?* It is, of course, a good method, but often in practice produces results too slowly. The method is really more appropriate to the activities of the resident investigator than to the field-worker working with a questionnaire against time. Consequently, we do not use this *Talking* type very much. Lastly, I may once more emphasize that nowhere do we ask the informant to translate a Standard English phrase or sentence into his vernacular speech.

The upshot of several years of experimenting has convinced us that the Questionnaire has proved to be useful. Suitable informants were readily found, farmers still knew and retained much of their traditional dialect, and the people we have encountered seemed generally interested in our investigations.

Early this summer our Questionnaire was tested fairly searchingly at six different places: once in Cumberland, twice in Westmorland, twice in Northumberland, and once in the West Riding. In addition, nine of its original ten books have been recently used by half-a-dozen pupils and colleagues of Angus McIntosh in experimental field-work in different parts of Scotland. During the past few weeks we have again revised the work and reduced the number of its books from ten to nine by squeezing all the questions on animals into one book. The whole is now ready in draft. A questionnaire for a linguistic atlas can really never be regarded as final until all the field-work designed to be carried out with it has actually been completed. But we feel that our Questionnaire is now sound enough to be printed and published without delay.

It is time to say a few words about the method of recording, the informants to be used, a possible method of choosing the network of localities, and the publication of the material collected by the field-workers.

The informants' responses are, of course, transcribed phonetically and in the alphabet of the International Phonetic Association. The

recording is impressionistic, but not too narrow. A broad transcription would, however, be quite inadequate for our purpose. The recordings are taken down in specially designed books containing a hundred sheets. These books have proved to be handy and satisfactory. In general our field-worker will be instructed to record the informant's first response, unless it is obviously irrelevant. But since our aim is to obtain *traditional* dialect, our field-worker will not be content to register forms that are evidently newfangled or merely distortions of Received Standard pronunciations. But he will put pressure on his informant with a view to eliciting the appropriate traditional element. If this emerges, he will mark it in his answer-book with a P, denoting meaning evoked under pressure. Our field-worker must thus be not only a phonetician, but also a competent student of English dialectology. It would be tragic if the field-worker in this new survey failed to probe for surviving elements of our traditional vernaculars. This indeed may prove to be the last opportunity for recording historical English dialect on a national scale.

For sources, we prefer to use men and women of at least sixty or over. Men of this age, especially in the farming community, have not, as a rule, been uprooted by the national liabilities of the male during two world wars. We prefer to find our own sources from inquiries on the spot. We use no 'educated' speaker, but only men or women who employ dialectal English as their normal speech. The informant must obviously have a good head, a good mouth, as well as good hearing and good eyesight. He must also be a native, and, if possible, the offspring of natives. If he has never lived away from his native village, that is a great recommendation. Sources who satisfy these requirements could, we believe, be readily found by the field-worker by the end of the day of his arrival in any village in this country.

Next comes the question of where to record. Obviously the plotting of the network of localities cannot be left to mere chance. Due regard must be paid, above all, to the geographical conditions, to the occupational activities of the community concerned, to the distance between the several localities, and to the population figures of the past century. Bearing these factors in mind, it is not difficult to plot a *minimal* system. We have constructed, for instance, a provisional minimal Yorkshire network comprising twenty-four places.

In this tentative method we follow the rivers and tributaries towards their sources, and provisionally choose a place in the higher reaches that has had a stable population of about five hundred during the last hundred years. Such places may usually be counted upon to

have a well-marked, firmly established, and consistent phonological system, as well as a good stock of traditional words. Then we choose a place with about the same number of inhabitants below the junction of the tributary and the main stream. In this way we expect to sample both ends of that particular valley. Where there is a plain with no river of any size, we might select places on its fringes where the ground rises. But these selections, based on the map and the population-statistics, should be regarded as provisional and the final decision should be delayed until both directors of the survey and field-worker have made their personal reconnaissance on the ground. Naturally they will then take into account the age of the buildings and the population-movements of the last decade or so. This provisional method of selecting the minimal network may have weaknesses, e.g. the omission to pay attention to the historical linguistic boundaries. But it is only a first attempt, though we can apply the method very tentatively and experimentally to the whole of England. Where desirable, as perhaps in the West Riding of Yorkshire, a closer mesh could easily be plotted. However, this method produces for the three north-eastern counties, twenty-four places for Yorkshire, eight places for Durham, and six places for Northumberland; and for England as a whole, some three hundred places. This would mean six and a half years' work for one field-worker working full-time five days a week, forty-six weeks a year. But this is no more than a rough calculation; and I have referred to the question here merely to call attention to the magnitude of the problem.

Finally in this brief account of the preparatory work already carried out comes the question of publishing all the material to be collected. We have, however, only just arrived at the point when the field-work can begin; and so one cannot be expected to say much about this question. Many of us are, however, turning the matter over in our minds. Some seem to think that maps are too expensive to make and too cumbersome to use, and consequently recommend publication of the material in lists in book form, cheaply bound. But others think that maps are absolutely essential to show the material to advantage. We therefore shelve the question for the present, and devote ourselves energetically and wholeheartedly, and in harmony, to the speediest possible collection of the raw material. This is a most urgent matter. In Leeds, we have a questionnaire, a field-worker, and a motor vehicle for his use; and we shall also soon have a tape-recorder with which he can record permanently the speech of the men and women he will use as his informants. So we in Leeds feel that we must begin

our field-work in Yorkshire in October this year, and press on with the task as speedily as we can, while we have the opportunity, the enthusiasm, and the energy to undertake it.

H. ORTON

PART II

READERS of the preceding paper of Orton will have learnt in a *general* way what we in Leeds have *so far done*, and *along what lines* we feel we ought to proceed in carrying out this Survey of English Dialects.

I now propose to deal with some of the problems in principle, and I shall try to explain why we think the dialect survey should be carried out in the way outlined by Orton.

Let me begin with a few remarks on the *field-worker*. You may like to know whether we have considered at all employing what is called the *indirect* or *correspondence method* and whether we are really prepared to forgo the advantage of having 2,000, 3,000, or even 5,000 informants working for us without having to pay them. The case might be argued that *for the purely lexical matter* the layman's help might be enlisted, since it is the existence and distribution of a word that is wanted rather than its phonetic form. Indeed, it would be interesting to have for 5,000 places the various terms for, say, 'a scare-crow'.

But let us be practical. We have reason to believe that a very close net would not really mean a bigger catch of words.

It should also be remembered that in the mixing of dialects *the lexical differences are usually the first to be levelled out*. Considering, therefore, the many built-up and mixed areas there are in this country, it is very doubtful whether a close mesh would serve any useful purpose.

There is another reason, one of method, for rejecting the indirect way of collecting the material. One would either have to resort to translation (of the type: 'What is your word for *the threshold*')—a method we strictly avoid—or else one would need a detailed description with diagrams. But even so, we should find that the material world is too complex and the naming of things and their parts too diverse to admit of our equating the answers. Let me pick out one particular case: when the informant answers with *pars pro toto*, when he answers *swipple* for *flail*, *ridge* or *riffin'* for *roof*, *crook* for *crime* (i.e. the whole arrangement for hanging the kettle on over the fire),

and *swingletree* for both the *threepree* and *swingletree*. The reverse, too, may happen; the informant can answer *totum pro parte*, when in a corn plant, for example, he distinguishes *the stem* and *the head* and, as parts of the head, *the ear*. Such things are best unravelled on the spot and by a competent field-worker who knows about these linguistic tricks. Also, think of all the most valuable *incidental material* that we should miss if there were no field-worker to record it.

If ever a field-worker was required for gathering in the materials for a linguistic atlas, it would be in this country and for our kind of survey. The dialectal situation is such, owing to extensive mixing, as to take very skilful handling to produce really genuine information. For, it should be noted, ours is a *survey with an historical bias* that is, we are not always satisfied with the first answer the informant may offer.

The field-worker, then, has to be more than a *well-trained phonetician*; he is required to be an *experienced phonologist*, capable of recognizing an adulterated form and keen to probe his source for the real thing. It is clear that he cannot carry on this game unless he is a *linguist* and something of a *psychologist* and a *clever conversationalist* who knows how to tone up his informant.

Let me illustrate this:

Suppose a man answers *a prong* in an area where we have reason to expect *tine* or the Scandinavian loan *grain*. In such a case the field-worker, who is briefed to ascertain the survival of these words, would follow it up, even to the point of suggesting the word he expected. He would, however, try the informant with a form which is not likely to be his; he might say: 'Have you ever heard [gri:n?]', which may elicit the informant's 'Oh yes, we call it [greron]'. All these forms are taken down by the field-worker, but, of course, with the necessary symbols, such as p. = on pressure, sw. = word suggested, sf. = phonetic form suggested, ' no longer used, and so on.

We may now proceed to *examine the questionnaire* more closely. Preparing a questionnaire is recognized to be a most strenuous task. You can never really call it complete; there is always room for improvement. On the other hand, if you wait for your questionnaire to be perfect, your Linguistic Atlas will never be made.

The proof of the questionnaire is in the answering, and its quality shows up on the dialect maps.

Now first of all you expect the entries on a map to be *strictly comparable*. It is easy enough to ensure this in concrete cases like *ear*, *fox*, *gate-posts*. But when one comes to qualities like 'slovenly',

'careless', 'angry', or to natural phenomena like 'drizzling', 'blowing', 'being hazy', one begins to realize how vague and elusive they are. We have therefore kept away from such notions.

It seemed to us to be of vital importance to let the reader see *how the responses were obtained*. We therefore decided to frame the questions carefully and to write them out in full, so as to leave as few loopholes as possible. The situation is thus the same every time the question is asked, and if the questionnaire should be handled by more than one field-worker, we know that the approach to the answer will still remain identical.

Here are three adjacent questions from the first page of the Nature-Book in our Questionnaire:

- (i) *What do you call that place on a farm, filled with water, smaller than a lake (POND)?*
- (ii) *What do you call those small hollows in the road, filled with water after rain (PUDDLES)?*
- (iii) A completing question: *After very heavy rains a river becomes swollen and so you say: the river is . . . (IN FLOOD)?*

Framing questions is by no means easy. On the one hand *you must avoid translation at all costs*—because otherwise your informants will succumb to the influence of Standard English all too easily; on the other hand, a system of carefully framed questions will make for rigidity, the last thing one wants in trying to elicit the variety of dialectal speech.

But then again your question may be so loose and give the informant so much play that the responses can hardly be regarded as being synonymous. Take the question: *When hay is stacked too green, what do you say it does?* Now if you get answers like: *it sweats, heats, reeks, mowburns*, do they stand for the different phases of the process or may they be taken to represent the process as a whole?

The following case surely is less doubtful. In unloading a haycart on to a haystack it usually takes three men: *the teamer* on the cart, *the stacker* on the stack, and *the middleman*. About the last-named we may ask: *What does this man do?* The answers given are: *he pitches, throws, feeds* (viz. the stacker), *takes away* (viz. from the teamer). These clearly are not all the same aspect, and yet they must be said to be comparable. The English *life-preserver* and the German *Totschldger* also represent different points of view, the one defensive, the other offensive, and yet they stand for very much the same thing: *a cosh*.

I hope that by now it has been clearly seen *why our books of*

questions have been revised over and over again. These revisions have all been done in the light of our experience in the field. The questions have been worded more happily; they have been tightened so as to avoid loopholes, and the situations have been changed so as to render them more realistic and the questions accordingly more compelling.

You may be interested to hear some of the reframed questions, improvements as we think: one of the original questions was: *Suppose your cart-load is lopsided and you drive carelessly, what is the cart likely to do?* This question is not very flattering to a farmer, and his reply might well be: *We don't do that.* The new wording is no doubt happier: *Suppose your cart goes over accidentally, what would you say it does?*

In trying to get the expression *to lay eggs*, we used to ask: *What do hens do?* Its present form, is surely more exclusive and more compelling: *What do we expect hens to do?*

It sometimes happens that informants answer by *giving material information*, e.g. We asked: *If you want to kill a cockerel, what do you do?* They answered: *We take a knife, &c.* The new version: *What do you say you do?* produces the desired response, viz. *we break its neck*, or rather *we throw it neck* as the case may be.

Our emendations largely concern *leading questions*. It is not until you get the answers that you realize how leading you have been. Let me give a few instances. In asking for *all the buildings on a farm taken together*, we all too often got *farm buildings*, instead of, say, *the onstead*. Hence we now show an aerial picture of a farm with its fields and ask: *What's your name for this?* pointing to the buildings. In asking for *that well-known forked bone in the breast of a roast fowl* (I mean of course *the wishing bone*) we often just got *breastbone*, which made us cut out *in the breast*.

With another item we want to ascertain whether it is *hens*, *fozvl*, *poultry*, or *chickens* the informants use as the generic word. We tried to get the word by making them complete the sentence: *If we want eggs of our own, we must keep* As you can guess, the *eggs* called for the *hens* in nearly all cases. To make it a fair trial, we now say: *Some people have a shed and a run at the bottom of their garden. Why? Because . . .* THEY KEEP HENS. Incidentally, of course, we hope to get *they keepen* and *they keeps*.

Another question ran like this: *You sometimes catch fish, specially trout, by groping for them; what do you call that?* It is a good notion and promptly produces answers like *guddling*, *gumping*, *tickling*, *snigging*, *grappling* and [griapin], i.e. *groping*. Now the last word to us

looked suspect, as if it had been suggested by our using *groping*, but it turned out to be one of the genuine dialectal terms. All the same, in order to remove any suspicion of influence, we have substituted *with your hands* for *groping*.

A novelty in our Questionnaire is what we call a *reverse question*. Here we do not look for different local terms for a given notion, but for different notions covered by the same term. Thus we ask for the meaning of BARN, BIN, CORN, BROTH, PARLOUR, DIKE, and a few more. The answers can be shown on a map by symbols; the boundaries will then have to be called not isoglosses but *isosemes*. They indicate the areas within which a certain word has the same meaning.

In making up a questionnaire one is often tempted to enter questions for the sake of finding out the distribution of an impressive dialect word or idiom, such as *osse* 'to try' (heard in the West Riding and Lancashire), *lait* 'to look for' (Yorkshire), *gaumless* 'careless, stupid', *to take a spell* 'to take a turn' (Durham), *the wicks o' your moiC* 'the corners of your mouth' (Aberdeenshire).

One is apt to forget that the fact of one dialect possessing a special word for a certain notion does not necessarily mean that other dialects distinguish that same notion. What we all know from learning foreign languages and translating into them, also holds good of dialects. Such items then have often to be dropped sooner or later, unless we are prepared to get *maps* with *many gaps*. One swallow does not make a summer. For the same reason the dialect surveyor cannot consider notions associated with localized trades and processes, such as cider-making, hop-growing, or hurdle-making.

A few remarks on *the practical difficulties of our field-work*. As a 'continental', I am perhaps in a better position to see them.

(i) Our informants, for obvious reasons, must be elderly men of at least sixty; in fact they are often above seventy. That means that not infrequently they are not very mobile any more; hence it is not always possible to ask the questions in front of the objects. The consequence is that we have to *resort to pictures* (the next best thing). Also, the weather in this country, being what it is, often makes a walk in the yard or fields undesirable.

(ii) The sources are extremely willing, and they never allow themselves to be hired. This, however, has its drawbacks; you cannot engage them at any time that suits you. That means one is forced to have *several sources* in the same place to fill in the time remuneratively, unless one is prepared to stay in one place longer than a week, the time we reckon it will take the field-worker to investigate one place.

(iii) In Switzerland, and I believe elsewhere too, *the women* are found to be the better informants. They are quicker than the men and the better dialect speakers, for the simple reason that their work is in their homes and that therefore they do not mix so much. In this country they are quicker, too, at answering questions, but *from the dialect point of view women are not nearly so good as the men*. It appears that their anxiety to be refined and a model to their children is incompatible with speaking the dialect.

(iv) The famous *public-house scene* with all its spontaneity of speech is out of the question. It may be very well for the squatter, who has time to study quietly the speech of each customer, but the field-worker must beware of it; what he hears is a babel of dialects.

(v) Even the *material world* does not lend us all the help we should like to get from it. A good many farming activities and their implements are quickly going out of use. This is really the eleventh hour, at any rate for an agricultural questionnaire. A few examples: The old-fashioned cowhouse with *the heel-stone*, *the baulks*, and the wooden partition has been condemned by the Act of Parliament of 1936. Threshing and winnowing, and therewith the flail, are only just remembered. Even churning (butter-making) is a thing of the past; there are hardly any churns left; the Milk Marketing Board has done away with them or rather uses the word in a more modern sense. The art of thatching is quickly being forgotten, for the hay and cornstacks are being replaced by the Dutch barn. With the advent of the tractor, *teams* of horses have become a rare sight, and the horse-driver's place is taken by the mechanic. I need not insist on how these material changes play havoc with an investigation like ours.

It is true that some remote farms are still in a backward way (without electricity, water-taps, &c.), but on the whole the country is modernized and internationalized to such an extent as to render an *investigation on the ethnological side practically unremunerative*.

E. DIETH

The Editing of Middle English Texts

Ich was in one sumere dale,
In one supe di3ele hale,
Iherde ich holde grete tale
Bocere and makere smale.
pat plait was stif and stare and strong.

THE 'dale* or valley referred to was *not* the sweet south-eastern nook where the Owl and the Nightingale of old *venerunt certamen ad impar*, as Apollo and Marsyas did in ancient times. It was one of the Elysian fields. And the ghostly authors and scribes conducting the great debate were the once human beings (men and women) who composed, wrote, or transcribed the *Ancrene Wisse* and the *Halt MeiShad* group, *The Owl and the Nightingale*, *On God Ureisun of Ure Lefdi*, and other works related to them. Several others were listening, and sometimes chimed in. Among these I recognized Chaucer. He was accompanied, as was his earthly habit, by 'his owne scriveyn' (by that time a very bald Adam) and he was, as usual, finding fault with him. For your benefit I will try to summarize the different views expressed in the course of this great debate. But let me tell you at once that our authors (known and unknown), as well as their scribes, agreed on one point; that modern editors and critics were *mutatis mutandis* not better than the medieval scribes, in spite of the elaborate apparatus of modern scholarship. Indeed, they said, the latter were often worse. To put it in the words of the C scribe of *The Owl and the Nightingale*, which he said, winking at Adam:

Under hore lokkes ho moste haue pe scalle
bute after ure makinge ho write trewe!

One of the bitter complaints of the ghostly scribes was that modern editors and critics deliberately ignore both scribal intention and pen-habits. And yet, I heard one say, in practical affairs these same editors and critics would not neglect scribal intention when making use of handwritten documents. The solemn assertion that a manuscript inventory read *bottle* for *bottle*, because of a slight aberration in the placing of the cross-bar of the double *it* would rightly be regarded as absurd and a waste of time. Yet in editing texts or commenting on them they do not hesitate to read, say, *wreadSe*, *lifful*, for *wreadde*, *lisful* according to their casual appearance to the eye. When these

moderns insist upon choosing the wrong reading in this way, they show merely a lack of familiarity both with the pen-habits of scribes in general, and with the language of the text they are studying as well.

The Bodley¹ scribe (referred to as Bee) had many things to say against misjudgements made by editors and collators in the reading of his 3's, g's, t's, e's, o's, a's, p's, and p's, to say nothing of the general management of minims. 'It drives one to despair', Bee added, 'to see the mess they make of our texts, in spite (or perhaps because) of these new things called photostats, which are supposed to replace the manuscripts. But they certainly do not!'

Here the C scribe of *The Owl and the Nightingale* (familiarily nicknamed Cotton) had a few things to add to Bee's complaints. He deeply sympathized, he said, with Bee's feelings. He himself had had his breath taken away more than once, when he came across some of their ghost-spellings of familiar words. 'Though I am, of course, quite well aware of my own shortcomings', he said, 'My Anglo-Norman training was a serious handicap, especially in the shaping of those peculiar English letters p, 3, and p (of the latter two of which that fourteenth-century man Mandeville made so much).' 'Wee in Englonde haue in oure langage 7 speche ii. lettres mo pan pei haue in hire A.B.C. 7 pat is: p 3, the whiche ben clept porn 7 3ogh.¹² Cotton knew that his p, p, and y could easily be mistaken one for the other in spite of his doing his very best to distinguish them by dotting his p and occasionally y. He owned that he sometimes forgot the dot or wrote it erroneously on his p's . . . 'But to read pif(284), hpucche(936), underpat(1091), nopt(1552), popespeste(i\$2\$)> for yif hpucche, underyat, nopt, popes peste (to cite a few examples from many), may be nothing more than a way of expressing a minute and purely casual aberration in the shaping of these letters—an aberration only properly to be appreciated by the eye. But to add over and over again in palaeographical notes that "P is clearly formed and miswritten for y, p, or 3" is surely absurd. Moreover, these moderns should be consistent with their own theory and read, for instance, ep (=ew), 104, or pule, 1748, for ey and pule, again to choose two examples out of many.'

This outburst provoked smiles. This encouraged Cotton to go on: 'As to what my esteemed colleague the Bodley scribe of these tedious

¹ For examples see J. R. R. Tolkien and S. R. T. O. d'Ardenne, 'MS. Bodley 34: A recollection of a collation', in *Studio. Neophilologica*, vol. xx, nos. 1-2.

² *Mandeville's Travels*, E.E.T.S., 153. 92. 10-12.

lives of women saints said about the editors' gross unfamiliarity with our pen-habits, I might add a few words. We are credited over and over again with having "emended" a letter from another. That, of course, frequently happened. But discrimination should be made between genuine emendations and those which are imaginary. Many of these so-called emendations simply reveal ignorance of the way in which we produced our letters. This is the case with Bee's 3 and *g* which are frequently said to have been emended from *t* or *c* or *e*. This is the case with my elaborate capital 7¹, which is stated "to have been altered from *E*" in *Teres* (426), but which is accepted without any commentary whatsoever in *To uore* (1728). This may sound pettifoggery. But it is a protest against pettifoggery and against the way these editors, critics, or collators treat us and our works. We were, after all, human beings as much as they are and *not* mere mechanical typewriters expected to produce always the same fixed forms of their modern fount. We were blunderers, tired, bored, sleepy, ignorant, and often absent-minded. But so are the moderns—even the palaeographers. And they have not to cope with our difficulties. They too often forget the circumstances under which we worked: cramped little rooms, stuffy in summer and ice-cold in winter, with no large windows, as I am told they now have in the libraries; no electric light but the flickering candle-flame, which sometimes burned holes in precious parchment. We, too, had to work long on texts whose language was unfamiliar to us, and we had no copy of that remarkable *Oxford English Dictionary*, nor of Bosworth-Toller's *Anglo-Saxon Dictionary* to help us. We had no central heating, and our fingers were often stiff with the cold; and sometimes we could hardly shape our letters—especially with the primitive writing implements we had to use instead of their fountain-pens and typewriters. I often wonder what the moderns would have done, had they been in our place, considering the results they achieve in spite of their modern equipment. And mind you', Cotton went on, 'they can make use of printers' proofs, which we could not. On the contrary, we were frequently told to be sparing with parchment, so that we were obliged to learn all these Latin abbreviation-marks. Weren't they a nuisance!'

'Not only for us, but also for the editors,' Bee chimed in. 'Have you noticed the extraordinary interpretation these moderns often give to abbreviations, although they have dictionaries of them, and although we frequently wrote the words in full? Thus, to my great surprise, I found in a recent collation of my manuscript *Olibrius*

and *Margarete* expanded to *Olibrius* and *Margarete*, both obviously misrepresenting my intention and the variable uses of the abbreviations concerned, although both words had been read correctly by the latest editor.' 'I quite agree with you, my dear Bee/ said Cotton, 'and I can add some new items to your list, such as *grome* (1076), *kume* (1319), *forgrame*, *kune*. *Ler* (1528) is described by the editor as "7 shaped like an / with a flourish"; he would have thought better of it, had he paid attention to the following *lere*. Yes, it is already bad enough where we used Latin abbreviation-marks: but what are we to say of the way they expand our own abbreviation tricks, as for instance *p* which, you remember, we used for *pat*, *pan*, and *par*. But it also happened—rather frequently we must own—that we forgot to use them. The result of an editor's guesses is sometimes disconcerting. Take the case of *ofbeche* (19), which my colleague J. used instead of the expected *breche* (my own reading), and which has puzzled scholars ever since. I am convinced that he forgot the abbreviation-mark above the *e*.' To this J. answered that this was very likely the case, although after so many years he could hardly remember. But considering Cotton's own reading, the one required by rhyme and sense, he was quite ready to admit that he had been absent-minded. 'After all,' said he, evidently bearing in mind the recent allusion to his editorial activity, 'editors are apt to be absent-minded. Take for instance the E.E.T.S. edition of Cotton's version of *The Owl and the Nightingale*. How many letters are either omitted, added, or given their modern forms (or others) or simply misread, as in *min* (1706); *fore* (1741); *deth* (1577); *lives* (1632); *stoc* (1113)', *cunne* (1396); *ibolve* (145) *fod* (950); *zepnade* (683), for *mine*; *for*; *dep*; *Hues*', *stok*', *kunne*; *ibolpe*; *sod*; *zephede*. Bee has just told me that in the latest "diplomatic" edition of his version of the life of St. Juliana the relative pronoun *pe*, in *pe flan of luue fleoff* (36), was "certainly and not probably omitted by (editorial) accident". But to come back to the omission of abbreviation-marks: I think that they are less prejudicial than the addition of ghost-forms as in *Seinte Margarete*, *merren* (28/3), the so-called "trace of abbreviation for *er* above *m* " being the offset of *-es*, the ending of *godes*, to be found on the next folio.'

Cotton had been talking to Nero, who transcribed *On god ureisun of ure lefdi*. He turned round on hearing J.'s last words, and said: 'Well I never! Nero has just been telling me of a howler made recently by the latest editor of his poem. It bears upon your point, J. You remember the words of line 29

SwuSe wel ham likeO biuoren Pe to beonne ?

The editor emended *likeff* to *likieS* on the ground that "*HkieS* was altered from *likeS*" meaning, I suppose, by Nero himself. Mind you, the editor repeated the mistake by entering this awful form in his glossary, where it stood, as you would expect, isolated, being grammatically impossible—except to the editors. This should have taught him caution. Nero got such a shock that he had a look at his manuscript. What do you think he found there? Simply this: the so-called *i* added in the same hand was simply the offset of the title, written in *red* ink on folio *iao*^v, an offset which even caught the curl of the final *-3* in *liked*. The very fact that it was in red should have suggested caution.'

'This editor very likely worked from photostats/ said Bee. 'I know too well the amount of mistakes they can make in using these new things. I have seen one of these "accurate" collators detect deletion-dots, where these were impossible, as *inpe*, which in fact were simply holes in the manuscript. Or I have known one of them creating impossible grammatical forms of your *likieS* type, such as *horn* for *ham* (which I plainly wrote) in *Sawles Warde*, 277, because a fold in the manuscript caused my clearly shaped *a* to look like *o*. Most unreliable things these photostats are, I tell you!' 'More reliable than their so-called diplomatic texts though,' said Nero. 'In this particular case, however, I do not think that photostats were used. For I saw the photostat, and the so-called added *i* did not show at all. The editor must have got it from the manuscript itself. And again, *come* (36), entered in the glossary as the 3rd sg. present subjunctive of *cumen*, should be restored to *com*.; "came", the 3rd sg. past tense indicative, required both by sense and grammar, in fact my own reading. As to *neo* (48), "nor" (both in text and in the glossary), it only existed in the editor's mind and phonology, for the reading of the manuscript is (as expected) *ne*. And yet the editor claims that "the orthography of the manuscript(s) has been followed throughout, . . . Accordingly the reader can form a clearer idea of the actual manuscript forms." I am afraid that he would get a clearer idea of this particular text from the earlier editions of Morris and Hall. Moreover, what about *spuSe* (123), *Vre*, *Vreisun* (title), *CRistes* (i), for *spupe*, *ure*, *ureisun*, *Cristes*? What about *isend* (16), *finest* (34), which are the results (unrecorded) of emendations from *isent* and *giuest*? What about *efning* (24), written on an erasure which caught the *n* of preceding *pin* and left/mutilated and hardly legible? But you see, it is no good editing a manuscript unless you know the language in which the work is written.'

'Quite so', agreed the *Ancrene Wisse* scribe: 'that's why I did my very best to use consistent language in my Cambridge version of the *Wisse*. But don't be too hard on modern editors, for in that line we medieval scribes were sometimes worse than they. I know it by personal experience. But of course we had no English grammars or dictionaries at our disposal.'

'All the same,' said Cotton, 'they do make absurd errors. I remember one, which I grant you, was immediately redressed by a scholar called Craigie: it was the confusion *owel*, "a flesh-hook", with the modern "awl", the shoemaker's tool.¹ Philologically it was already bad enough, but zoologically it was simply absurd. Just imagine an owl provided with a tree-creeper's beak, or with eyes painted with *wood* instead of *woad* (another little mistake of the editors). Really it looks as if editorial or philological works sap men's common sense! See how shockingly they treat my revered Master Nicholas of Guildford. They refuse to recognize him as the author of his poem on the ground that "his self-praise would prove him to have been one of the most conceited men". . . . That "it would surprise us, if he were the author". But they completely lose sight of the aim of the poem: a plea for preferment—to redress a most unfair and undeserved situation. It was, in their modern jargon, Master Nicholas's application for a post. Has no member of the learned academic profession today ever felt it necessary to set out his own achievements and good qualities? Though not many, I think, that come in triplicate or octuplicate before boards of electors are so wittily expressed as Master Nicholas's. Yet to a modern Englishman's self-restraint many of his ancestors' flowery applications might come as a shock. Such elaborate applications are still in great "vogue" on the Continent, where 30 pages of self-praise (unsupported by any testimonials of disinterested persons) are still not infrequently submitted to amused boards of electors. Compared with these, Master Nicholas's application appears as the work of a paragon of modesty!'

'But to return to text-editing,' Cotton went on: 'have you noticed that the moderns see erasures everywhere, at least as frequently as they discover emendations . . . and as erroneously as well. Take, for instance, *ek*, in *The Owl and the Nightingale*, 608, and *gode* (1771). Both are stated to have been written on an erasure. I had a look at the manuscript to see if I could recapture what I was supposed to have rubbed out. I found this: *gode* was written on a stain. As to *ek*, the so-called erasure was caused by the fact that I had to paste a slip

¹ i. 80.

of parchment on the verso pf the folio, and it simply showed on the recto! As I was looking for *ek*, my eye caught up the *wordgaleweie* (910), which I was said to have emended from *galaweie*. Whether I did this or not, I could not remember, as the emendation was done by partly erasing the second *a* so as to make it look like *e*. But the editor knew better.'

'Yes, some of their comments are ridiculous,' said Bee. 'But what about some of their readings? Take, for instance, the so-called *ileanett* said to be found in my version of *Sawles Warde*, 38. You know that such a form is impossible in my spelling. This again should have been a warning to them. But no! They must print what they think they see. What happened is simply this: I first wrote *ileaned*, then I erased *d* and wrote *t* in its stead rather clumsily, I must confess; for the bottom part of the erased *d* was still visible and was misread as *.* Hence the most unusual *ileanett* spelling. And again *awenriede* in *Halt Meishad*, 633, which is indeed the word *aweariede* so familiar to our readers, and which contains the same *a*, misread *n* again in *cleanschiþe* (299). As the devil said to *lulienē*: "Hu wult tu]?et ich endi pe pe tale pe waxed aa as ich telle?" "How, please, am I to finish the reckoning which goes on growing while I am counting?"'

'As to what you said a few minutes ago about the so-called deletion-dots, my dear Bee,' said Cotton, 'I have more amusing examples to give you. I will choose one out of many: *oper* (748) is stated to "have a large dot below the r". Now *blipe* (740), just a few lines above, has the same large dot below *e*, but the dot is not recorded (and rightly so). In both cases a bad pen did it! And mind you, not even mine! The moderns imagine that our pens were always perfect and our ink without a speck of dust. And there were flies too! I must tell you the story of the Hebrew scholar and the Fly. Well . . .'

But here my Anglo-Norman scribe was interrupted with: 'Away with your French stories', and other deterrent remarks. One of the scribal shades even quoted 'pu mi3tes bet hoten galegale'. 'I quite agree with Cotton though,' said most unexpectedly a very stern and dull-looking ghost, in whom I recognized Orm, the homilist. He was talking with a very old and dignified Anglo-Saxon scribe, the glossator of the Vespasian Psalter. This approval created a sensation, for the other scribes had never credited him with a sense of humour. 'They do make strange errors in their interpretations of dots and other so-called palaeographical signs. But the funniest part of it is that they frequently give them some palaeographical value when they have none, and deny it when in fact they have. I am thinking of their

our S.' 'Yes, indeed,' said Master Nicholas, stepping forward out of the shadows. 'Did you not, Cotton, write *ire* instead of *ise* (1030), in spite of the rhyme—and you, J., too? Did you fellows never think that a rhyming poet intended to rhyme? and there is *for* again instead of *fos*, "fox", in 812.'

'Well,' said Cotton, 'this is a mistake that even the Old English scribes made. There is a *Sipum* for *Ripum*, I am told, for their modern *Ripon* in the West Riding of Yorkshire. Bee here wrote *feskin* for *ferkin*. And we were not the only culprits. The confusion between the two letters is easy to understand. But to say, in the year of grace 1950, that "confusion between *r* and *x* should be assumed in *for* (*f o x*)" is simply absurd.¹ It shows a lack of familiarity with the native language of Master Nicholas. 'And yet' said the *Ancrene Wisse* scribe, 'paradoxical as it may sound, it is precisely when a scribe is inattentive or when he does not understand his original that the linguistic features of this original are likely to be preserved or at least glimpsed. Thus in the Old English *Exodus* the word for "trumpet" regularly appears as *byme*. Once, however, the scribe wrote for *bymum*, *benum*, "with prayers". It is in this moment's aberration that a wise editor suddenly glimpses the fact that throughout the scribe has been translating Anglian *beme* into W.S. *byme*. It was only when the scribe failed to recognize the word and made a mistake that the original dialect feature(s) survived. But, Gentlemen, the day is breaking. It is high time that we should come to some agreement and have a motion on this most important debate on modern editorial work. I think I shall be expressing the general opinion of the distinguished members of this assembly by proposing the following motion for your approval: "In the opinion of this company, Editors and Critics of Middle English texts should always keep in mind the following principles:

- A. There are two principles, which are, no doubt, recognized, but not always practised:
 - (a) it is desirable to know the language of the manuscript you are editing;
 - (b) it is advisable to believe that the scribe knew that language better than you, and therefore his being in error is the last (not the first) thing to be assumed.

¹ Bertil Sundby, *The Dialect and Provenance of the Middle English poem The Owl and the Nightingale*, Lund, 1950, p. 25.

B. There are two other points which seem not so well understood :

- (a) the waste of time, paper, and patience involved in the making of so-called diplomatic texts such as, say, Plummer's edition of the Parker version of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. The human eye is quick to see; but language was not devised for the description of curves and sticks. It is the function of photostats to replace so-called diplomatic texts and collations. And it is to be hoped that in the future university libraries will be possessed of facsimiles of the manuscripts of all the most important texts and of those recognized to be of sufficient importance for the linguist, the historian, and the palaeographer. These should be provided with a collation of the manuscript. If for some reason you cannot publish a facsimile edition, but must edit a text, and if palaeographical matters are really important, *print* them, at whatever expense; but provide your edition with numerous facsimiles to support your views;
- (b) when you do actually edit a text for the use of others whose interest is less in pen-strokes than in texts, treat the scribes as you treat a friend when you read his letters or prepare them for publication. You cannot deliberately ignore both scribal intention and pen-habits."

It is thus, indeed, that a wise printer will treat these scribbled notes of mine, if they are published. He would certainly not print *s*, *n* in, say, *wise* and *indeed* simply because the dot of the *i* happened to land on a following *s* or *n*. Still less would he wish to record the wrongly dotted letters in special footnotes.

Last, but not least, it is advisable that a would-be editor of a Middle English text should try to copy it down, put it aside for a while, and have a look at the result. Then he will most certainly agree with Goethe that:

Grau . . . ist alle Theorie;
Und griin des Lebens goldener Baum.

Just at that moment the cock crew. The 'sorry' souls vanished into thin air ... and I should never have known what the authors thought of this debate, but for a chance remark which I happened to overhear. Said Chaucer to Master Nicholas of Guildford: 'These scriveners have improved their wits since they left the little sphere of earth.

For all their argument, many of them were once dullards and hopeless blunderers! When I remember how . . .

Ofte adaye I moste hire werk renewe
It to corecte and eke to rubbe and scrape
And al was through hire neglycence and rape

s. R. T. o. D'ARDENNE

PART THREE

PARTICULAR LITERARY TOPICS

The Medieval Poet and his Public

WHEN we speak of an author and his public we mean by his public a group of people, more or less considerable, ranging from enthusiastic admirers down to those who read even if they do not value highly his works. The personal element is a part, and the determining part, of the contact between writer and reader. In the Middle Ages there was no public of that kind. What weighed for those who read or heard was matter not men, whence the prevailing anonymity of works of purely literary appeal, and whence also the practice of undisguised plagiarism as we should call it. Of Anglo-Saxon practising poets whose works have survived we know the name of one, Cynewulf, and besides him of one other of whom we have perhaps some fragmentary remains, Caedmon; and these are all. We owe one of the two names to Bede's desire to put on record a miracle of God's grace, the other to the author's habit of incorporating his name in the poems, more as a request for the hearer's prayers¹ than to claim authorship. Nobody in Anglo-Saxon times was moved to collect Cynewulf's works completely into one volume or to separate them from others because they were his. All that is typical of the medieval period, early or late. A good deal has been written fairly recently on the subject of this paper, but the discussion has been confined to the closing years of the fourteenth and to the fifteenth century, the period of Chaucer and his successors.² The opening sentence of G. M. Trevelyan's *English Social History* is: 'In Chaucer's England we see for the first time the modern mingling with the mediaeval': and his words are just. It is with the appearance and growth of this modern spirit that recent writers have been occupied, and before we look back to untouched medievalism, it is of advantage to recall briefly how new conditions were created, changing the fabric

¹ Explicitly in *Juliana*, 718 ff., and in the epilogue annexed to *The Fates of the Apostles*, 107 ff.

² H. S. Bennett, 'The Author and his Public' in *Essays and Studies by Members of the English Association*, xxiii (1937). See also *Chaucer and the Fifteenth Century* (1947) in 'Oxford History of English Literature', II, i. 105 ff., and 'Vernacular Manuscripts' in *Library*, 5th series, i (1947), 167 ff.

of society and bringing in their train new demands' in all literary activities.

As the fourteenth century advances we are faced with the beginnings of change from an agricultural to an industrial economy in England, from a rural to an urban civilization. At the end of the century comes the man of letters and a demand for his works, that is, a real public. The emergence of the merchant class in sufficient number to be a determining factor in English polity is the business of the historian, but it is permissible to sketch one or two details which are of intimate concern for our purpose. A vital part of the earlier economic situation was the lack of money in circulation. It is not an accident that a real gold coinage was introduced by Edward III and that it met with immediate success. Acquisition of books meant expenditure of money, and buyers of books were to be found chiefly in the Church and among those connected with it, monastic foundations, universities, together with some individuals of high rank in the Church. Such was Richard de Bury, who on one occasion gave fifty pounds of silver as the purchase-price of thirty-two books from St. Albans.¹ Monastic libraries had to be kept furnished with the necessary equipment, and though copying was done by the monks themselves in their own *scriptoria* and (later) by hired scribes paid and maintained,² there was direct purchase as well. Among the laity, nobles, and gentry living on their estates the case was different. Some amelioration of their position began in the thirteenth century by the habit of commuting service for money-rent, but this did not become important until after the Black Death, then increasingly so till it became usual in the fifteenth century. It seems, however, that the growing luxury in dress and appointments absorbed the ready money among the landed class. With a few exceptions among the great, they were not buyers of books or patrons of literature till a later time. Meantime the rising class engaged in trade and commerce was essentially a moneyed class. Their rise was helped by the expulsion of the Jews, and early in the fourteenth century the dissolution of the Templars, and later the failure of the great Italian banking houses. From that time the king was accustomed to borrow for his political needs from his own subjects who stepped into the place vacated by the Lombards. Men like De la Pole of Hull, the Canynges of Bristol, Richard Whittington of London, may be taken as types of the great merchant princes. Pestilence and scarcity were no less a help in the

¹ E. C. Thomas, *The Phydobiblon of Richard de Bury*, xxix.

² H. E. Bell, 'The Price of Books' in *Library*, 2nd series, xvii (1937), 312 ff.

rise of such men, especially in their lower ranks, for in spite of regulations against *forestalling*, *regrating*, and the like, it was not possible to extinguish such practices. About the middle of the century, moreover, England changed over from the export of wool to manufacture; and large fortunes were made in the change. The men who made them were citizens in the towns but not a *bourgeoisie* in the continental sense, a class distinct in origin and way of life from the *noblesse*. Recruited also from the younger sons of the landed gentry, their eyes were directed to the acquisition of landed estates of their own, and (with the lawyer class) they usurp in time the place of the old feudal nobility. From the nature of their occupation, reading and writing were as natural to them as walking or riding; the merchants had interests and connexions over the whole of western Europe and beyond; all had a lively interest in their fellows, in events and narratives of wonders and exploits accepted *sub specie veritatis*; nor should it be forgotten that they were eminently devout, founders of churches and of hospitals to the glory of God. It does not surprise that they were patrons of literature, and of all sorts, history, romance, travel, coarse and humorous tales, along with religious and devotional works. There was a demand for books, and money to buy them.

A demand means supply and organization of means of supply. By the end of the fourteenth century we reach the period of multiple manuscripts. Before that time texts are more often in one manuscript and there combined with unrelated material in a collection made for private use. The exceptions are works of learning or religion. So we have to explain the fairly numerous copies of *Robert of Gloucester* on the one hand, of *Cursor Mundi* on the other. It is unusual to find such a book as *The Proverbs of Alfred* surviving in four manuscripts, though it too can be assigned to the class of instruction. At the end of the century the position had altered. We know that Gower had an organized system of reproduction and was careful about his text.¹ If Chaucer took less care, there must, nevertheless, have been at hand some organized means to multiply copies. H. S. Bennett has shown how far it was developed in the century following. At the same time books were expensive luxuries. Our surviving copies of Gower and Chaucer are for the most part written on parchment, and finely written and highly decorated copies would naturally be on the more costly material. Paper, however, already a successful rival, was in abundant supply all over western Europe. It was available to meet

¹ On Gower see G. C. Macaulay in his edition of *Gower's Works* (Oxford), II. clxvii, and in his edition of *Confessio Amantis* (E.E.T.S.), I. cxxx.

the enormous demands of the mercantile and trading classes for correspondence and accounts. One Italian merchant who died in 1410 left paper documents to a total of 100,000, consisting of correspondence with agents in Italy, France, Spain, Africa, and England;¹ and he was but one of many, in England as well as abroad. Naturally books of paper were less valued and less expensive. The universities would not accept them in pledge. The romances listed in the Duke of Gloucester's inventory at sixpence to a shilling may have been such, though the price is not so inconsiderable. Naturally also their chance of survival is much less; but it seems an unavoidable conclusion that it was by their means that the considerable demand was met, and the demand was created by this new class, urban, curious of mind, and of a reading habit. That is the antithesis of medievalism. In France urban development was earlier than in England, in Italy it was already old, and correspondingly the breach with medievalism was earlier. We know how profoundly Chaucer was influenced in choice of subject and in intellectual approach. I need only mention the immense vogue of the *Roman de la Rose*, of which we may say with Gaston Paris that it closes the literature of the Middle Ages in France while introducing elements which are an integral part of modern literature.² From *Troilus* onwards, if not earlier, Chaucer's subjects were such as to make an immediate appeal to the urban civilization established in England. He scarifies the romances which still had their public and maintained it for long afterwards, and he refers slightly to the alliterative poetry popular then and later.

To get in touch with the medieval public, if the term be used at all, we must go back to the twelfth and thirteenth centuries in the post-conquest period, and beyond that to Anglo-Saxon times. Few read, and fewer still had the habit of reading. After the Conquest there is the threefold linguistic division, Latin for the clergy, French for the upper classes, and English, the language of the lower orders, especially those on the land. The first need not detain us. Latin works were meant to be read and were addressed to a particular public, the learned class of western Europe. That is as true of the chronicles of William of Malmesbury or Matthew Paris as of Anselm's *Cur Deus Homo?*, John of Salisbury's *Polycraticus*, of the writings of Roger Bacon or William of Ockham. For popular poetry the cleric was in the same position as other men and as keenly interested as they.

¹ Pirenne in *Histoire du Moyen Age*, viii (Glotz, *Histoire Generate*), p. 184, n. 23.

² *Littérature française au moyen âge*, p. 190. It is significant that he ends the book well before the middle of the fourteenth century.

Ailred of Rievaulx tells of a young monk reduced to tears by hearing stories of Arthur.¹ On the other hand, by the linguistic separation the vernacular material, French or English, had of necessity a class appeal. It is also an inherent weakness that the best minds, engrossed in Latin, were not occupied with it. Most of all in English a practical purpose not merely predominates but is the whole matter, and that means religious and didactic preoccupation. There are no doubt lyrics, songs, and carols, some of which go back to the centuries in question; but moving and perfect as they can be, these are stripped of thought and reason, vehicles of sentiment expressing itself in a surge of emotion. Even so, they were *heard*, not read, and their diffusion beyond the immediate circle of hearers was due to appropriation and spread in the mouths of others. In that they are at one with all the popular poetry of the time. All over we must think of hearers, not readers; and in poetry, once heard or read, there was no property or copyright, no accepted relation between poet and poem. In a more ambitious work there would be a presentation copy for the patron who commissioned it or whose favour was sought, there may have been others for private friends, but the circulation which mattered was due to surreptitious copies passing from hand to hand. Thus no authentic or standard text could exist. In the result we find incorporation, alteration, variation, extension. This is obviously so in learned works, works of instruction, and devotional writings. Among Latin chroniclers Florence of Worcester incorporated Asser, Simeon of Durham took over Florence, and the so-called Matthew of Westminster is an edition of Matthew Paris with interpolations. In another field we have the various versions of *Ancren Riwe* in English, French, and Latin. For evident reasons attention was given to accuracy of reproduction in learned works; in others it was less needful or observed, least of all in those resting on oral tradition. The chief difficulty which embarrasses the editor of a medieval poem preserved in more than one manuscript is the frequent absence of any standard text which can be reconstituted. The original has been extended, curtailed, modernized, edited in fact by the copyist, or alternatively he is reproducing what was in truth a different version from the beginning. This is notorious in the text of romances. Behind may lie not an original but a skeleton more

¹ 'Speculum Chantatis' in Migne, *P.L.* cxcv, col. 565: 'nam et in fabulis quae vulgo de nescio quo finguntur Arcturo, memini me nonnunquam usque ad effusionem lachrymarum fuisse permotum.' I owe this reference to M. Bloch, *La Societè Fiodale* ('L'fivolution de rhumanite", xxxiv), p. 152.

or less articulated. These romances pre-eminently were *heard*, not read; and the rival minstrel who heard, even if only once, a new story, plot, or complication was able to appropriate it to his own use and build out the details at his pleasure. It is sufficient to refer to H. J. Chaytor's *From Script to Print*.¹ As romance is the most significant product in the secular sphere, so in religion the most striking characteristic is an astonishing fecundity in legends of the Saints. They must be connected with the exploitation of relics, possibly with the aim of attracting pilgrims and so wealth to particular foundations, but they were meant for the edification of the people and satisfied at once a religious need and an interest in stories, exciting, strange, and miraculous. They were the romances of religion. A part of the normal service of the Church, they were read both publicly and in private.

The patron had no important part in encouraging vernacular writing at least until fairly late.² Patrons do not appear among the Anglo-Saxons except possibly in *Deor*, so far as we know.³ We learn of no poets presenting poems to King Alfred. Asser does not mention any activity even in the preservation of religious poetry (which we might have expected), and naturally has no word of any effort to preserve the other kind. It was poetry for the moment, not for the future. No doubt the poets got gifts as usual, but as a reward for entertainment. We may recall the relation between Alfred and Waerferth, or between Tethelmaer and Ælfric, but that was not patronage in the later sense. After the Conquest the same conditions prevail if we except the single class of versified history. Gaimar wrote *L'Estorie des Engleis* at the request of Constance, wife of Ralph Fitz Gislebert, his patroness, and he tells us that an Anglo-Norman poet David wrote a metrical history of Henry I by order of Adelaide of Louvain which Constance valued so highly that she paid a mark of silver for a transcript to read in her private chamber. Wace and Benoit de Sainte More were rivals for the favour of Henry II, and Layamon dedicated his book to Henry's queen, Eleanor. An outstanding example is a poem on the life of William the Marshall, Earl of Pembroke, who died in 1219. It was commissioned by his son shortly after his death and composed by a professional minstrel on

¹ c. vi, pp. 115 ff. and esp. p. 128.

² G. G. Coulton, *Medieval Panorama* (1943), p. 581, says roundly (of the period before 1350), 'he who has not a patrimony must get a patron'.

³ Aldfrith's acquisition of the cosmography from Ceolfrith (Bede, *Hist. Abb.*, c. 15, Plummer, i. 380) was not an act of patronage but a simple exchange, even if a costly one.

information supplied by the earl's family and friends. All these and others are intended as sober works of history, and only Layamon's is in English. Its date is round about 1200 and it stands isolated. Similarly romances in English rarely date back to the thirteenth century, fewer still are preserved in manuscripts written then, perhaps only *Horn* and *Floris and Blaunchefleur* towards its end. The reason is plain. The public for which the romances were made, and which took special pleasure in them, spoke French. The twelfth and thirteenth centuries in England were profuse in production, but if anything was done in English it was not in the form of sustained composition, poetry, or prose, but traditional material passed on by word of mouth and probably fragmentary in extent. Some of the popular tales were taken over by the minstrels, *Horn*, *Havelok*, *Guy of Warwick*, and others, but were transformed in their hands, and the later English translations or imitations reflect the French originals. The public, as always, was the immediate group of hearers renewed from place to place, who listened to the travelling minstrel who had composed, or to others who had in whole or in part got possession of his work.

I doubt if a clear distinction appeared at that time between romance and history, or if a valid line can be drawn between *Horn* and the *Roman de Ron*. At all events it is clear that historical composition was no less popular than romance at the courts of kings and in the halls of nobles. Both were in full development during the same centuries, and both were in French. Leaving aside stray survivals of Anglo-Saxon chronicles and, of course, Layamon, historical writing in English was later, but the Anglo-Norman writers took over with more sober accounts of Anglo-Saxon times survivors in tradition among the people. Contact between history and romance is there particularly close. I have mentioned the case of William the Marshall and the employment of a professional minstrel for this special purpose. Some kings and perhaps others kept beside them a sort of domestic minstrel to write romances, or (by a kind of vanity or presumption) to celebrate their victories and exploits. Walter Bower in *Scotichronicon*¹ has a story that Edward II took with him to Scotland in 1314 a Carmelite friar, Baston by name and a famous minstrel, for such a purpose. Being so unfortunate as to fall into the hands of the victors, he was compelled as the price of his life to celebrate their victory and Edward's defeat. Bower inserts a Latin poem in the account, but it is scarcely credible that it can be the

original. These minstrels were rarely of merit, and by the time the practice was common the days of romantic inspiration had passed.

I have made it plain that all this poetry appealed to the ear, with occasional help from the eye, and that written copies were isolated and incidental. We tend in these modern times to underestimate the amount that a poet could hold in memory. Even long works of more serious appeal and based on translation, research, or both, were not always meant to be disseminated by means of written copies. If they had been, we should expect a larger record of them in medieval libraries. N. R. Ker in *Medieval Libraries of Great Britain* has listed as identified well over 4,000 works of which only some 200 are in French or English, and the great majority of the French books belong to the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. These proportions are not likely to be seriously inaccurate. The conclusion is confirmed by the number of works which have perished. Wace's translation of Geoffrey of Monmouth (the *Brut*) survives, but Gaimar's has perished, and of two others only fragments are known. So it is in many other cases. Though our discussion of the post-conquest period has been confined to history and romance, the conclusions apply equally to the other literary fields cultivated then. I may mention the drama in the early centuries, almost completely lost, and in later days works of instruction in morals and manners apparently intended to be learned by heart, as were likewise the imitations of them in English.

Before the Norman Conquest we have to deal only with works in English. There was a period of distinguished scholarship in the seventh and in the early eighth century, but nothing of value has survived except the writings of Bede. It was followed by a period of decline or rather collapse, and from the time of Boniface and Alcuin, the writings of neither of whom are apposite, until the days of Dunstan, when learning was in a slight degree restored, we have no writing of importance in Latin. Even in this later period nothing important emerged. We are concerned, accordingly, only with works in the vernacular, and among these only with those in verse; for the prose has almost throughout the single aim of edification or instruction. Sermons were addressed to the laity in church, the rest was for the clergy themselves. At the very close of Anglo-Saxon times there appear fugitive traces of other interests, e.g. a rendering of the story of Apollonius of Tyre. By that time England was in intimate contact with France, and there romance was in full development. At the battle of Hastings Taillefer chanted the *Chanson de Roland* in some primi-

tive form,¹ and it would not be strange if the movement that this seems to imply had repercussions in England. Anyhow, the jump from *Mlfric's* life of Placidus (St. Eustace),² which, setting aside the end, is a romance in conception and execution, to a translation of *Apollonius* is not considerable. How this movement might have developed we cannot know: we do know that there was a living interest in the heroes of earlier days and a power to deal with contemporary exploits on similar lines. These lived in the memory and on the lips of the people, and probably both as poems and sagas.

Poetry as cultivated by the Anglo-Saxons falls into two clearly distinguished groups, written and unwritten in origin: and it seems evident to me that the written poetry was of monastic origin, definitely for a religious purpose and addressed to a more or less instructed class for their edification or amusement. It was because it was for such a public that these were written books. The theory may seem surprising in view of the content or character of several Anglo-Saxon poems, but the evidence supports it.

Provision was made in the monasteries for a reader and the reading of edifying works at the time of refection and at other times. In the ideal monastery the texts read would be Latin books, devotional, doctrinal, and the like, but the ideal could not be realized in England, not even in Northumbria in the seventh century; at any other place or time it was an absurdity. In Northumbria, too, there were monks whose Latin was inadequate, men who came late to a monastic life and without the needful training in letters, and there were always in the house some with no claim to learning, servants and workmen. For those whose Latin was inadequate or non-existent the only recourse was reading in the vernacular, sermons, lives of saints and martyrs, expository discourses in English. The *Homilies* and the *Saints' Lives* of yElfric are typical examples of the kind of thing required.³ We know that the clergy were interested in secular poetry as well, heard it gladly, and were sometimes skilled in the practice of it. Aldhelm was a master of poetic form, Bede is said to have been *doctus in nostris carminibus*⁴ and we have the testimony of Alcuin to the monks' delight in hearing it.⁵ Thus substitution of

¹ The authority is Wace, *Roman de Rou* (ed. F. Plaquet, 1827), li. 214-15.

² *Saints' Lives*, xxx (Skeat), n. 190 ff.

³ Ibid. ii. 2: 'placuit nobis in isto codicello ordinare passiones etiam uel uitas sanctorum illorum quos non uulgas sed coenobite officijs uenerantur'; and more explicitly in English, 'pe mynstermenn mid heora enumgum betweox him *Wurdiao*'.

⁴ 'Epistola Cuthberti ad Cuthwinum' in Plummer's *Bede*, I. clxi.

⁵ Jaffee's *Monumenta Alcuimana* (*Bibliotheca Rer: Germ.* VI), Berlin, 1873, p. 357; *Epistolae*, 81.

vernacular verse-lives for prose was easy. Ælfric's reference to an early verse passion of St. Thomas is clearly to its use for religious reading. A homily on Thomas seemed to him needless because it was already supplied. He expresses no condemnation of language or form and the inference is that he regarded it as quite appropriate, apart from the single point to which he makes objection. In the same spirit he states that he will curtail his account of the passion of St. Peter and St. Paul because it is completely set out elsewhere, this time in prose.¹ We need not doubt the purport and use of such poems as *Guthlac*, *Elene*, *Andreas*, and the other religious epics. Doubtless there were *paternosters*, *creeds*, *hymns*, *prayers*, and perhaps certain *psalms* in English from the beginning, certainly from early times.² What of the others which fall outside the definition of religion, *Widsith*, *Deor*, *Riddles*, and the rest? Some can be claimed as appertaining to religion, for instance, *Wanderer*, *Seafarer*; others have at all events a moral purpose, *Father's Instructions*, *Maxims*; others, again, may be included under the head of instruction, also *Widsith* as a historico-geographical compendium. As for the *Riddles*, they were frankly intended for the entertainment of the company. In the seventh century Aldhelm wrote *aenigmata* which were popular and inspired imitations in English. A little later came Tatwine. They may have composed for their own amusement, but the riddles were certainly made public and were familiar. That they were for the learned is evident even apart from their Latin language, and many of the English riddles must have been equally unintelligible to the vulgar. With few exceptions the written poetry is thus easily explained. The special case of *Beowulf*, *Finnesburh*, and *Waldere* will be discussed in the sequel. Some remainder such as *Brunanburh*, the other Chronicle poems, and *Maldon* fall within the province of history and are all late.

The great bulk of Anglo-Saxon poetry is preserved in four collections, *Exeter Book*, *Vercelli Book*, the *Junius* and *Beowulf* MSS. I suggest that these manuscripts were written for the precise purpose of reading aloud in clerical circles. Consider first the *Vercelli Book* with its mixture of verse and prose. It has at once a sufficient explanation if we regard it as so designed; but it cannot be readily explained as a collection of sermons for preaching to the public. Just as in Ælfric part of the prose content appears to me in design and

¹ *Homilies* (Thorpe), on St. Thomas, ii. 520, on St. Peter and St. Paul, i. 370.

² Asser (Stevenson), cc. 23, 24, 88, speaks of them in terms which suggest they were familiar.

execution, as also in matter, more adapted to auditors in a monastery. Such were the lives of St. Martin and St. Guthlac, but not these alone. The *Exeter Book* and the *Junius MS.* have only verse texts. Both belonged to monastic establishments, were intended for reading there and surely for reading in audience. The last codex, the *Beowulf MS.* may be left aside for a moment while we deal with what I call the unwritten literature.

A distinction between the two kinds of poetry, the written religious and the originally unwritten secular, is clearly traceable throughout the Anglo-Saxon period. Though Bede does not say that Caedmon's poetry was written down at once or at all, it may well have been so, and the Old English version of Bede says that his teachers wrote it down at his mouth,¹ which means at all events that the translator knew written works by Caedmon or ascribed to him. The runic signatures of Cynewulf make it highly improbable that the poems were not in written form from the beginning. It was not so with the other kind which includes the heroic poetry. Alcuin's words in 797 imply the distinction when he condemns the introduction of *istriones vel luxuriosos quoslibet*, that is minstrels, and the substitution of their performance for the reading of the Fathers. 'It is fitting that readers should be heard, not the harpist, *sermones patrum non carmina gentilium*' *Carmina* is the word regularly attached to the secular poetry. In an earlier letter (793) to the same bishop, Hygbald, he says, 'in your house let there be heard *legentes non ludentes in plated*', and in 787 he warns the abbot of Corbey against introducing into his house *histriones et mimos et saltatores*.² It is self-evident that we have here not to do with written documents: the *scop* had to come in person and recite. In Alfred's day Asser in the same way distinguishes books (*libros*) and the unwritten poetry (*carmina*).³ Of the books he uses the word *recitare* 'read aloud', of the latter *memoriter discere* 'learn by heart'. Half a century later at the court of yEthelstan Dunstan was charged by his detractors with having learned the old pagan poems, *avitae gentilitatis vanissima didicisse carmina*, and cultivating minstrels' songs, *incantationes colere*.⁴ He was also a harpist of repute and may well be supposed to have reproduced them for the pleasure of other men. We learn from the author of *De Gestis Herewardi* about a certain Leofric, deacon and priest at Bourne in the eleventh century

¹ *Hist. EccL* iv. 24 (Plummer, i. 260), and *O. E. Bede* (Schipper), p. 485.

³ *Monumenta Germanica Historica, Epistolae IV, ad Hygaldum* (797), p. 183, (793), P. 59, *ad abbatem* (799), p. 290. The last is a quotation from Augustine.

³ cc. 75, 6.

⁴ 'Vita Dunstani auctore B.' in *Memorials of S. Dunstan* (Rolls Series) p. u.

(as it seems), who was accustomed to collect and commit to writing 'all the deeds of giants and warriors from the fabulous tales of the ancients or from a faithful account', the last no doubt in prose.¹ It has been shown already how the old stories survived in the people's memory.

The Anglo-Saxon *scop* did not write his poem, nor would he wish to have it accessible in written form. It is very improbable that he could write or read. His public was the people, and the whole people, by oral delivery. Nevertheless, as in romance, public recitation put him at the mercy of his competitors who would be swift to seize any new tragic conflict, new plot or twist or circumstance, new method of holding interest in the treatment or development of the story. Each of them by training and practice was at home in the mechanics of story-telling in verse, and so intimately a partaker in the moral and social atmosphere of the time, that a mere hint would be enough. All the rest was at command. Let us remember that this was the inherited method of Germanic poetry wherever cultivated, and that exact parallels can be cited from Germany and Scandinavia. German heroic story, unwritten for centuries, had a notable resurgence (and transformation) in the twelfth century. In the interval a trace is plain in the tenth-century *Waltharius*, even more in the preoccupation of Gunther, Bishop of Bamberg (1057-65), with the heroic figures of the past rather than with the Fathers of the Church, reminding us of Alcuin's criticism of the Northumbrian monks. A friend who sent the bishop two volumes of Augustine's sermons did not venture to hope that he would assign a set portion of the day to reading them, but indicated that it would not hurt him as bishop to give to the word of the Lord the broken fragments of time left over from the heroic material' Elsewhere he says that Gunther is occupied with Attila and the Amalungs instead of with Augustine and Gregory; and if a plausible emendation of a corrupt and unintelligible passage be accepted, himself composed verses about them. He is called *egregius poeta* and his verse must have been in the vernacular.² I need not recall the lengthy process of modification and reconstruction which precedes the written form of *The Edda*.

In England we do have, however, some little heroic material in written form and dating from Anglo-Saxon times. There is *Waldere*, apparently developed on extensive epic lines, the lay of *Finnesburh*,

¹ Wright, *The A.-N. Metrical Chronicle of Geoffrey Gaimar* (Caxton Society), App., pp. 45, 46.

² C. Erdmann in *Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum*, 73 (1936), pp. 87 ff., and 74 (1937), p. 116.

and above all we have *Beowulf*. I am persuaded that of these only the last was put in writing early, and that *Waldere* and *Finnesburh* in the existing form were composed and written late. The stories go back to pagan times, but what we have is a version belonging to the tenth and eleventh centuries, a time when interest in the remoter past may have been roused in English minds. Something of this interest can be traced in the genealogical tables. I mean the tables extended backwards beyond Woden, and a little also in Ethelwerdus. If that is so, then *Waldere* and *Finnesburh* are not on a par with *Beowulf*. *Beowulf* is found in a collection rather different from the *Vercelli*, *Exeter*, and *junius* MSS. The collection belongs to the tenth century and, excepting *Beowulf*, the content is late, *Judith* no less than the rest. Largely a book of wonders and miracles, it was written in a monastery and unquestionably intended for reading there. If this manuscript was intended for monastic reading, we may ask why *Beowulf* was included. The more urgent question is rather how the poem came to be written down so early, for our text is plainly several removes from the original. It seems to me that an answer can be found to these questions, and to both the same answer; for it cannot be an accident that *Beowulf* alone early attained a written form. It must have had a special appeal, fortuitously or by design, not so much by Christian allusions and imitations which are slight and on the surface, but by a Christian attitude to life which lies deep. In the last analysis it is a tale of evil overcome and destroyed, of life adventured and sacrificed for the sake of humanity. *Finnesburh*, whatever interpretation we adopt, is at best the story of a bloody vengeance, the kind of unchristian behaviour which Alcuin cites *noniinatim* when he speaks of Ingeld. At bottom *Waldere* is a heroic defence against attempted plunder by an attack, if not treacherous at least unjustified and unprovoked. Equal objection can be brought against all other subjects which spring to mind, Alaric or Theoderic¹ (notorious Arians), Ermanaric, Sigefrith or his father Sigemund, Attila, Weland, and the like. It is not surprising that *Beowulf* alone got into manuscript, into a book for the entertainment of religious houses. The others lived on in the old way, on the lips of the minstrels in set metrical form, on the lips of the people as familiar tales of the past. Again and again rehandled we find at last two written down late and imperfectly, with a Christian colouring superimposed in the epic of *Waldere*, or without it in the lay of *Finnesburh*.

RITCHIE GIRVAN

¹ Alfred perhaps knew poems about Theoderic: cf. his *Boethius* (Sedgefield), p. i.

*A Poet at Work: Chaucer revising his Verses*¹

THE Prologue of Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women* has come down to us in two versions, known to scholars as F and Gg. For many years philologists have debated at length about these versions, the question at issue being that of priority: which version is the earlier? For my part I follow Ten Brink and many others in giving priority to version F. Without arguing the matter, and proceeding on the hypothesis that Gg represents a revision of F (a hypothesis based on evidence which I look upon as convincing but which, for want of time, I cannot present in this paper), I will compare in detail a passage of thirteen lines in version F with the corresponding passage in version Gg, in order to find out whether my working hypothesis actually works. Before accepting the hypothesis as proved, one would have to do much more, of course: one would have to apply it not merely to a single passage but to the whole of the Prologue; and one would have to apply the contrary hypothesis in the same way, the choice between them being made according to the usefulness of each in explaining the phenomena under investigation. Here I can do no more than present a sample of the complete study. This sample will illustrate the procedures used in my examination of Chaucer's poem.

The sample which I have chosen for presentation here is a passage about old books, lines 27-39 of the Prologue. In version F it reads as:

- 27 Wel ought us thanne honouren and beleve
These bokes, there we han noon other preve.
And as for me, though that I konne but lyte,
30 On bokes for to rede I me delyte,
And to hem yive I feyth and ful credence,
And in myn herte have hem in reverence
So hertely, that ther is game noon
That fro my bokes maketh me to goon,
35 But yt be seldom on the holyday,
Save, certeynly, whan that the month of May
Is comen, and that I here the foules synge,
And that the floures gynnen for to sprynge,
39 Farwel my bok, and my devocioun!²

¹ Republished by kind permission of the American Philosophical Society: cf. PAPS xclv., 317-21.

² ed. Robinson.

The passage in version Gg (ed. Robinson) reads:

- 27 Wei oughte us thanne on olde bokes leve,
There as there is non other assay by preve.
And as for me, though that my wit be lyte,
30 On bokes for to rede I me delyte,
And in myn herte have hem in reverence,
And to hem yeve swich lust and swich credence
That there is wel unethe game non
That fro my bokes make me to gon,
35 But it be other upon the halyday
Or ellis in the joly tyme of May:
Whan that I here the smale foules synge
And that the floures gynne for to sprynge
39 Farwel my stodye, as lastynge that sesoun!

Chaucer's revision of this passage did not involve any major operations. The lines stayed where they were (except for 31 and 32, which exchanged places), the thought remained the same, and the number of lines in the passage was not altered. Elsewhere in the Prologue we find Chaucer making changes much more radical. But it will be worth our while to examine somewhat narrowly the changes which we find here. By comparing the two versions of this passage we can peep over the poet's shoulder, as it were, while he is at work, and learn something about one aspect, at least, of his poetic art: his technique of revision. Let us then set to work, without further preliminaries.

The most striking difference between the two versions of our passage has to do with the linear structure. In version F we find three run-on lines: 27, 32, and 36. In version Gg, all the lines are end-stopped. In other passages of the Prologue the same difference appears, and it would seem that Chaucer looked upon a run-on line as something metrically inferior, even though he obviously did not rule it out altogether. We might as well begin our detailed examination with line 27, the first line of the passage and the first example of the change from run-on to end-stopped linear structure. Line 27 as it stands in version F does not make a complete unit of thought; the thought is completed by the first two words of line 28. Chaucer's problem here was to make the thought complete within the limits of the line. He got most of the space needful for this by cancelling the verb *honouren*, which was something of a metrical filler anyhow, and contenting himself with one infinitive. The *and* after *honouren* had the function of linking the two infinitives. Now that one of the infinitives was cancelled, the link served no further purpose and had to be

cancelled too. These cancellations left Chaucer with two metrical feet to fill in line 27. He might have shifted the *these bokes* of the next line into the empty space which he had made, but the line which would have thus come into being could have been given a satisfactory scansion with difficulty if at all. Chaucer therefore gave himself a little more leeway by cancelling the prefix *be-* of his second infinitive, thus changing the verb-form into a simple *leve*. Into the space of five syllables thereby made available in line 27, Chaucer put the phrase *on olde bokes*, filling the line neatly enough from a metrical point of view and completing the thought beautifully within the limits of the line. The phrase actually used, *on olde bokes*, was obviously inspired by the *these bokes* of the earlier version, taking shape as it did to fit the metrical and syntactical conditions of Chaucer's problem.

In the foregoing I have made no effort to reconstruct the course of events in a sequence true to psychological reality. I do not know what this sequence was, and I see no way of finding out. Chaucer may perfectly well have started by deciding to shift *these bokes* to line 27, and only then may he have looked at that line to see what he could dispense with there. But I am inclined to think that he began by brooding over his problem, and that he ended with a solution which came to him all at once, in a flash. Certainly he need not have gone through any such conscious procedure as that which I have outlined. But whether he analysed and then synthesized consciously, or sub-consciously, his mind worked on the problem before it solved it, and the elements which his mind had to consider before the problem could be solved are the elements which I have pointed out. Whether these elements were considered one at a time or together we shall never know; but we do know that they were all considered.

Chaucer's problem in line 28 differed greatly from the problem he solved in line 27. When he shifted *these bokes* or the equivalent phrase to line 27, he thereby made a blank space in line 28, a space which had to be filled to satisfy the metrical requirements of the line. His problem, then, was one of expansion or augmentation. What was left of line 28 had to be given a new wording which would fill up the line. The poet had to say the same thing in more words. A little prolixity was needed. Chaucer expanded *noon other preve* 'no other experience' to *non other assay by preve* 'no other test by experience'. This statement is more precise as well as longer than the corresponding statement in version F, but the great reason for making the change in wording was to fill up the line, not to gain greater precision. In other words, the problem here was metrical, not semantic. The

same applies to the expansion of the first part of the line: from *there we han* 'where we have' to *there as there is* 'there where there is'. In this case the metrical requirements made it needful to cancel the pronoun and change the verb, but there is no real change in the thought.

We come now to line 29. Here the change amounts to little. There is no difference at all in the thought, but the wording of the revised version is such that the personal pronoun / vanishes from the scene. Chaucer also gets rid of this pronoun in line 31. Version F has three I's in as many successive lines (29, 30, and 31), of which only one is kept in the later version, the one in line 30. This change is to be reckoned a stylistic improvement, an avoidance of repetition.

Line 30 is left unchanged. Lines 31 and 32 are made to change places, and the first two words of line 33 are cancelled. These words, *so hertely*, belong grammatically to line 32 and their occurrence at the beginning of line 33 keeps line 32 from being end-stopped. Their cancellation, then, turns line 32 (or line 31, as it becomes in version Gg) from a run-on to an end-stopped line. But the idea behind the cancelled words needs expression, and Chaucer found means to get this idea in without giving up the systematic end-stopping characteristic of the revised version of the passage. To express the idea he used the word *swich* 'such' (that is, 'so much'). He found he could not insert *swich* into line 32, because doing so would destroy the metrical pattern of the line. He therefore put line 32 right after line 30, and brought the old line 31 down to the position of line 32. The pattern of this line (the new 32) included a word-pair connected by the conjunction *and*, and Chaucer kept the pairing, though he changed one member of the pair. *Credence*, the second member of the pair, was modified by the adjective *w/*, and it was easy to substitute *swich* for this *w/*; there is even a connexion in meaning, though of course not a complete equivalence. The first member of the pair, *feyth*, had no modifier, but before it came an 7 which could be dispensed with, and Chaucer put another *swich* where the / had stood. He had to have two *swich*'s for the sake of symmetry, one modifier for each member of the word-pair. But 'swich feyth and swich credence' did not fully satisfy him, in spite of its symmetrical structure. The two members of the word-pair mean very much the same thing, and Chaucer saw no point in the semantic repetition. The second member of the pair, *credence*, was the rhyme word and could not be changed, but *feyth* was easier to handle. Chaucer replaced it with *lust* 'interest', a very satisfactory solution indeed.

With *so hertely* cancelled, the rest of line 33 needed expansion, the

problem here being like that in line 28. Chaucer turned the trick readily enough, by inserting the adverbs *wel* and *unethe* 'hardly' before *game*. This changed the meaning a little, but so little that it hardly mattered. Line 34 was left as it had stood, except for one subtle change: the indicative *maketh* was replaced by the subjunctive *make*. This change goes with the *wel unethe* of line 33; in both cases the statement, unqualified in version F, has become slightly less positive.

In both versions the concluding lines of the passage specify the exceptions to the rule set down in lines 33-34. These exceptions are two in number: the holiday and the month of May. In version F the two exceptions are not on the same footing: Chaucer said he 'seldom' left his books on holidays; but he made no such qualification about his behaviour in May. In version Gg, however, Chaucer treated the two exceptions in the same way: he marked their equality by using the correlative pair *other . . . or ellis* 'either . . . or else'. The first member of the correlation, *other*, replaces the *seldom* of line 35; the second member, *or ellis*, replaces the *save, certeynly* of line 36. The correlation carried with it a parallelism in the structure of the two lines, a parallelism not to be found in the earlier version, where line 35 ends with a prepositional phrase, whereas line 36 ends with a clause which runs on into the next line. Chaucer took the consequences of the correlation which he had set up, and made the two lines parallel in structure throughout: 'upon the halyday' (line 35) answers in formal pattern to 'in the joly tyme of May' (line 36), though the correspondence is not absolutely rigid, since the second prepositional phrase has a somewhat more complicated structure than has the first. Both lines, too, are end-stopped in the later version, whereas in version F only line 35 has end-stoppage. The change from *month* to *tyme* in line 36 has the effect of removing the alliteration, and this may have been Chaucer's reason for making the change; in line i of the poem the change he makes has the same effect. The insertion of *joly* into line 36 makes a happy solution of the metrical problem here.

The last three lines of the passage are integrated with line 36 in the earlier version, but this integration could not be kept if lines 35 and 36 were to be correlated and made parallel. Chaucer therefore took the other tack and made the last three lines an independent grammatical unit, serving to tell us more about what happened to him in the jolly time of May, but giving us this information without syntactical linkage to line 36. The significant changes here are the cancellation of *is comen* and the replacement of *and* by *whan*. These two changes, both in line 37, remove the two links which in version F had bound

lines 36 and 37 together. Line 37, shortened by the cancellation, was made metrically complete by inserting the adjective *smale* before *foules*. Line 38 was left unchanged. The changes made in line 39 were not needed, so far as I can see. I wish Chaucer had let the line stand as it was. But there is no accounting for tastes.

If now we compare the two versions of the passage as a whole, we see plainly enough that the Gg version is structurally tighter, more polished, showing a greater degree of balance and symmetry in its parts. In particular, lines 35 and 36 have an awkwardness in version F which is not to be found in version Gg, and the change from run-on to end-stopped lines adds to the finished effect. From a strictly technical point of view version Gg is clearly superior, and it would be hard to imagine the poet changing his verses in the contrary direction: making them less polished, rougher, adding a touch of awkwardness, and the like. In other words, the evidence to be found in this passage bears out the hypothesis that F is the earlier, Gg the later version of the Prologue.

It remains to consider the effect of Chaucer's changes on the poetical values which the passage has to offer. I have already expressed my opinion that the poet ought to have left line 39 unchanged. The other changes, though they make the verses smoother, do not improve the passage *poetically*, so far as I can tell. Indeed, they take away something of the freshness and spontaneity so marked in the earlier version. I realize that this judgement of mine is subjective; and perhaps I am wrong in bringing up such matters at all on this occasion, devoted to scientific rather than to impressionistic literary studies. I yield to temptation here because I am deeply interested in classifying Chaucer as a reviser. Some authors work hard and long at revision without gaining anything thereby; Balzac is a well-known case. Others in the course of revision may have inspirations which lift a passage from verse to poetry. In my opinion Chaucer falls into neither of these groups. He gains, as we have seen, in polish. In my opinion, however, he loses more than he gains. Chaucer's best effects go with the colloquial, informal style of which he is master. Any attempt to polish such verse as his may be perilous indeed. A little polish is a good thing, no doubt, even in the colloquial style. But when you set out to polish, if you do not watch out, you will overdo the thing, with disastrous consequences to your verses. Chaucer's genius, I think, found better focus in the heat of original composition than in the cold of critical revision.

The Importance of the Fifteenth Century for the Study of the English Renaissance with special reference to Lydgate

SINCE Jacob Burckhardt's classical essay on the Italian Renaissance it had become customary with scholars and the general public to imagine clear-cut periods—Middle Ages, Renaissance, Modern Times—and to work out easy, broad definitions to characterize their salient traits. Then a reaction set in, starting with the dispute about the year or even century when the Renaissance began till Huizinga's *Waning of the Middle Ages* endeavoured to abolish the Renaissance altogether by making the seventeenth century the turning-point of the medieval and the modern worlds,

I do not want to enter into a terminological discussion; I should even like to retain the old conception of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance to a certain extent; but I want to point out the links between the different ages or periods. That is why the fifteenth century has attracted me. I knew that it was at best a half-truth to see in Chaucer the culmination of the medieval world, just as it was a half-truth to call him the morning-star of the Renaissance, for both assertions ignore the fifteenth century or pass it over as a period of decay. There is no such thing; each time brings simultaneously harvest and seed—and, if we cannot see it or feel it the fault must be ours.

The Italian scholar A. Mortis, almost a century ago, was aware of it.¹ He knew that Lydgate was not a drivelling monk as Joseph Ritson called him,² but the representative poet of the fifteenth century. Lydgate continued Chaucer's art and handed it on to the next age. We must not bring in our taste and literary ideals. For the fifteenth-century Chaucer was 'the noble poete of bretaine' whose words were 'golde droppis of speche' and 'first finder of our langage'.³ This purely rhetorical appreciation which was shared by the poets and their public in the fifteenth century was brought to a climax in Lydgate's 'Aureate Diction'.⁴

There is no doubt that Lydgate thought that he was improving

¹ *Stodj sulle opere latine del Boccaccio*, Trieste, 1879, p. 640.

² *Bibliographia poetica*, 1802, p. 87.

³ Cf. C. Spurgeon, *Chaucer Criticism and Allusion*, Cambridge, 1925, *passim*.

⁴ E. Tilgner, *Aureate Terms bet Lydgate*, Blu, 1936.

upon Chaucer, and whatever we may think of it, his point is not altogether wrong. All imitation means change. And I propose to work out the thesis that Lydgate, without being fully aware of it, in imitating his admired master discovered new realms. His style which became the 'poetic diction' of his successors is on the whole an anti-climax to Chaucer's style—but in the religious field the close connexion of, for instance, Chaucer's *ABC* and Lydgate's *Ballades* in praise of the Blessed Virgin can easily be pointed out.¹ The same might be said of courtly poems such as, for instance, Chaucer's *Boke of the Duchesse* and Lydgate's *Complaine of the Black Knight*. But as soon as this florid style was adopted for other subjects—and the monk preferred the 'Ubi sunt' theme to the worldly subjects of the courtly poet Chaucer—we move in a wholly different world.

This is the case in Lydgate's longest and most influential work: *Fall of Princes*.² In this majestic funeral procession there is a tragic solemnity and a sombre grandeur absolutely alien to Chaucer but surprisingly akin to Sackville's and the other contributors' *Mirror for Magistrates*. Sackville's contemporaries, as we shall see, were conscious of it.

When Lydgate was asked by Duke Humphrey to translate Boccaccio's *De casibus virorum illustrium* he must have looked upon his original as a collection of 'tragedies' similar to those told by Chaucer's Monk—differing only in length and variety. Boccaccio's work, however, was more than that. Far from being a monotonous series of complaints it had a revolutionary sting of derision of the great who well deserved their misfortune. Inserted discussions added to the liveliness of the monologues and a rhythmical movement resulted from the alternation of soliloquies with the grouping of several persons in one chapter, e.g. *pauciflentes* or *infelices quidem*. The work appealed to high and low; Charles d'Orleans read it as a consolation in his captivity, humanists felt stimulated by the author's learning and occasional ironic remarks, while revolutionary-minded youngsters saw the dawn of a new time.

Boccaccio's *De casibus* became famous, and there were many translations. One of these, the French adaptation by Laurent de Premierfait, was used by Lydgate. Laurent, proud of his learning, had added many geographical, historical, and biographical details, and his work is more bulky, less interesting, and more medieval than Boccaccio's concise Latin prose.

¹ Cf. Th. Walpers, *Englische Marienlynk im Mittelalter* (diss. Bonn. 1949).

² E.E.T.S. O.S. cxxi-cxxiv.

Lydgate, who expanded it to 36,000 verses, made it even more tedious. Yet the *Fall of Princes* is no mere translation and differs from Boccaccio as well as from Laurent's version in spirit and form. Lydgate bears no grudge against the great. He wants to teach and in holding up the mirror avoids all coarseness. He suppresses, for instance, the Italian's mockery of the clergy. On the other hand he adds prologues, ballades, and summarizing 'envoys', and by these means, perhaps without being aware of it, succeeds in giving his work some of the rhythmical variation which was a feature of the original and which was lost in Laurent's formless expansion. Moreover, the material Lydgate has to deal with captivates his fancy and makes him to some extent forget his poetical aim of a mild moralizing sermon: 'vices to reprove with a maner couert symylitude' (III. 3830). He had to discourse of the fall of the great; and though he hardly saw the problem whether it was sin or the goddess Fortune that caused their downfall, he told the stories of the unhappy princes as *exempla* to intensify his sermon of the mutability of all earthly things. Lydgate saw no harm in becoming engrossed in history. History for him revealed God's justice and it must be the aim of an historical work to make that evident. So he related the lives of the Greek and Roman heroes Mucius Scaevola (II. 918), Leonidas (in. 2297), Alcibiades (in. 3284), Scipio, Cato, and Marcus Regulus, whom he calls the greatest of the Romans (v. 755). He uses Latin histories as source-books. His patriotism makes him understand the heroes of antiquity and praise Regulus' death for his country.

Thereafter Lydgate wrote, as it were, Universal History. This shifting of his poetic endeavour from moralizing to historiography becomes apparent in Book III and continues to the end of Book VII. It is at its height in Books V and VI where he is dealing with Marcus Regulus, Scipio, Hannibal, the strife between Rome and Carthage, and the wars of Pompeius and Caesar. Then he grew weary of his task; the stories of Constantine and Theodosius in Book VIII are no longer historical and unbiased but read like saints' legends. When he is prompted by patriotic feeling, however (for instance in dealing with Arthur, Charles of Anjou, and John of France in Book IX), he recaptures the tone of an historic epic which was predominant in Books III to VII. We may even say that Lydgate consciously aspired to write as an historian, for in Book II he assures us that clerks' writing makes the princes famous:

Or wheroff komth ther laude in reportyng
 Sauff that clerkis han wreten ther histories (II. 815)

and he means much the same when he says (Iv. 24) that all 'religioun and ordre of good lyuyng takth ther exaample be doctryn of lettrure'. He feels convinced that the great historical spectacle will serve as a mirror for magistrates. All his favourite ideas he saw mirrored in the heroes¹ stories which he had to tell: that 'vertu is strenger than outhere plate and maille' (Iv. 3741), that strife between princely relations causes misfortune (e.g. v. 101), that wars will bring misery to each and all (e.g. iv. 421, 2015), and that mutability is the constant burden of all human affairs (espec. n. 4460). What happened in the Roman world may happen in ours as well. This is as it ought to be and in tune with the teaching of the Church. But the impressiveness of the Roman examples makes him forget to stress the belief that in the fall of the great, Divine justice is evident; he even shows admiration for pagan heroes and exalts the heathen philosophers because they did not care for ephemeral things and did not rely on fortune. The goddess Fortune, the incarnation of Mutability, rules the world; throughout the huge epic the *Ubi sunt* melody haunts the reader and many passages, as for instance the stanzas on Rome (11. 4460) and the Envoy on Caesar (vi. 2871), have a stately and dignified rhythm. Though one cannot call Lydgate inspired one cannot deny the impressiveness of the great historical spectacle of transition. Written in the sombre and pompous style he and his times liked so much, the *Fall of Princes* reads like the great epic of the fifteenth century, that century that was filled with the Anglo-French wars and the Wars of the Roses—a *cortege funebre*.

It goes without saying that a work like this appealed to the imagination of its readers. It invited a continuation 'concernynge the chefe Prynces of thys Hand' [as Wayland wrote later on] to make it a truly English epic poem. Lydgate himself had given this hint in a short poem ('Of the sodain fall of Princes in our days'¹) which mentions Edward II, Richard III, Charles of France, the Duke of Orleans, and Thomas, Duke of Gloucester.

Lydgate's work was popular in its time and later on. Though the majority of the manuscripts may be lost, some thirty are still extant, and there are prints by Pynson in 1494 and 1527, by Tottel in 1554, and by Wayland in 1558. Then there are no more reprints. It was superseded by the *Mirror for Magistrates* which was undertaken as a continuation of the *Fall of Princes*.

At first sight it might seem surprising that Lydgate's unwieldy work found favour after the middle of the sixteenth century to such

¹E.E.T.S. 792, p. 660.

an extent that in Wayland's undated edition (of about 1555) we read that 'sundry gentlemen very wel learned commended much the workes of Lydgate, chefely the fall of Prynces . . . whereof none were to he got' (Campbell's ed., pp. 5 f.)¹ The scholars or poets Wayland speaks of could not have been enthusiastic about a medieval collection of 'tragedies'. They must have valued Lydgate's work as an historical epic poem. And as their 'conception of history as a mirror wherein the present might see and learn the patterns of conduct which had brought happiness or unhappiness to nations and to men in the past' (Campbell, pp. 48 f.) was not different from Lydgate's, the *Fall of Princes* was by no means out of fashion. It only wanted to be made more up to date by a continuation which put the stress on English worthies. Then it could fulfil the poetical ideals of the time: it was able to teach, it dealt with 'heroic' material, it answered to some extent the desire for a national epic. That is proved by Wayland's preface: 'I have added [to Lydgate's work] a continuation of that Argument, concernynge the chefe Prynces of this Hand, penned by the best clarkes in such kinde of matters that be thys day lyuing, not vnworthy to be matched with maister Lydgate' (Campbell, p. 6).

The plan of this comprehensive work was not carried out—the Censor interfered and the necessary collaborators were not ready—but 'copies exist of an edition of Lydgate's translation in which at the end there is a title-page of what was apparently to have been the first edition of the *Mirror for Magistrates*' (Hearsey, *Complaint*, p. 8; Campbell, p. 5).²

When some years later (1559) the *Mirror* was published as a separate work, its arrangement and structure, as was to be expected, closely resembled Lydgate's *Fall of Princes*. The editor William Baldwin, who was at the same time one of its main contributors, stated in the Argument that he 'determined to continue and perfect all the story himselfe in such order as Lydgate . . . had already used' (Hearsey, p. u), the only change being that Baldwin was to become the interlocutor: 'seyng that both Bochas and Lidgate were dead . . . they [the collaborators of the first edition] al agreed that I should vsurpe Bochas rowme, and the wretched princes compleyne vnto me' (Campbell, p. 9).

¹ *The Mirror for Magistrates*, ed. L. B. Campbell (Cambr. 1938. Huntington Libr. Publ.).

² *The Complaint of Henry Duke of Buckingham* . . ., ed. M. Hearsey (New Haven, 1936; Yale Studies in English, 86).

From these facts the close connexion of the *Fall of Princes* and the *Mirror of Magistrates* may be understood. Lydgate's work is the pattern. Even the best of the collaborators of the *Mirror*, Sackville, though his versification is incomparably superior to Lydgate's, seems to have used the *Fall of Princes* for his historical illustrations. Miss Marguerite Hearsey in her excellent edition of Sackville's contributions to the *Mirror* has again and again to refer to Lydgate's material and even to his wording. There are also definite resemblances between the general tone of Sackville's *Complaint* and Lydgate's *Black Knight* (Hearsey, p. 121 *et passim*). While writing Sackville must have had a copy of the *Fall of Princes* on his desk; once a marginal note of his is left incomplete 'Xerxes put to Might in Greece by ' apparently because Lydgate does not give the name (Hearsey, p. 103).

We must not be blinded by the superiority as poetry of Sackville's work to Lydgate's verbose accounts, to the fact that the writers of the *Mirror* were echoing Lydgate's poetic ideals. They were aiming at a contemporary audience, it is true, that is why they dealt primarily with English history: but their transference to the poet of the accepted task of the historian had already been realized by Lydgate. And the stress they lay on the accountability of kings to the king of kings (Campbell, p. 53) merely reproduces Lydgate's belief that a king is vicegerent to God. The able editor of the *Mirror*, Miss Lily B. Campbell, says that the *Mirror* was an important pioneer work on account of this transference of the functions of political teaching from the historian to the poet (p. 51). This, we have seen, had already been apprehended by the author of the *Fall of Princes*. Lydgate's importance becomes quite evident when Miss Campbell continues that consideration must be given to the long line of historical plays and poems popular during the reign of Elizabeth. We have then a direct line: *Fall of Princes*—*Mirror for Magistrates* - History Plays.¹

This hint has been taken up recently by Mr. R. Chapman in his paper 'The Wheel of Fortune in Shakespeare's Historical Plays' (*R.E.S.*, Jan. 1950). Mr. Chapman's conclusions coincide with my own and I should like to make use of his epigrammatic formulation: 'These plays are in fact dramatic versions of the medieval theme of the fall of kings' (p. i). Miss Hearsey had already pointed out that the fickleness and ingratitude of the masses is commented upon not only by Lydgate (cf. in. 2164, and Envoysto Miltiades, Coriolanus,

¹ Cf. Dr. Tillyard: 'The morality that Lydgate preaches, though less poetical, is more of the Renaissance than Chaucers'; (*Shakespeare's History Plays*, p. 72).

&c.) and Sackville (both of whom use the same word *comounte—comountie*), but also by Shakespeare in *Richard HI* and other historical plays (Hearsey, p. 115). She also pointed out further resemblances between the *Mirror* and Shakespeare's Histories—for instance the insistence on the idea of Destiny and of Nemesis (p. 108) and the pathos in the account of the murder of the two young princes in *Richard III* (p. 114). Formerly the chroniclers Halle and Polydore Vergil were held responsible for this influence (cf. G. B. Churchill, *Richard II up to Shakespeare*, Berlin, 1900, Palaestra, 10). Dr. Tillyard proved that the *Mirror for Magistrates* was the most authoritative earlier exponent in poetry of the ideas on which Shakespeare's History Plays are founded. And now Mr. Chapman convincingly proves that we have not only to go to the Mirror-poets contemporary with Shakespeare but also to the medieval tradition.

⁴The conception of a relentless alternation of rise and fall—(on which the *Fall of Princes* is based)—is also the pattern which lies beneath Shakespeare's history plays' (p. 3). Mr. Chapman winds up: 'Shakespeare had in mind a literary convention much older than the chronicle histories of his dramatic predecessors. To the contemporary audience kings and nobles were clinging to the ever turning Wheel of Fortune' (P-7)-

All this, of course, wants a careful and more detailed treatment than I have been able to give in this paper. But if you feel that the general trend of my paper can stand you will agree that the study of the literature of the fifteenth century is of great importance for the understanding and just appreciation of the poetry of the English Renaissance. I am afraid we cannot do justice to an age like the fifteenth century by looking at its poets from the height of either Chaucer or Shakespeare, but if my paper can show in Lydgate's *aevre* the work of a pioneer rather than of a drivelling monk, as Ritson called him, it means that a revaluation of the whole literary output of the fifteenth century is needed. It must be understood as seed-time and harvest, as a necessary link in the great tradition of English Literature.

WALTER F. SCHIRMER

Elizabethan Drama and the Elizabethan Science of Psychology

'T N what way, and to what extent, has the study of the Renaissance science of psychology enhanced our understanding of the plays of Shakespeare and his contemporaries?' In considering this question it is worth recalling the principal studies of the past few decades which have invoked Elizabethan psychological doctrines as a primary aid in interpreting Elizabethan drama, the theories which the writers of these studies have proposed, and, finally, the arguments advanced recently to support a scornful repudiation of the value of the psychological treatises of Shakespeare's day for the critic of Tudor and Stuart drama. Although my own opinions will undoubtedly become manifest in what I have to say, my purpose is not to render a verdict, but to incite a reappraisal of evidence.

Let us return in imagination to the year 1600, and to the audience that filled the Globe or the Fortune to see performances of plays by Shakespeare, Jonson, Marlowe, or others of their contemporaries. This audience brought with them to the theatre a confused mixture of current psychological concepts, gleaned from the reading of popular handbooks, from casual conversation and reading—from the intangible body of universal ideas of their age. Learned physicians like Timothy Bright, with a passion for accurate definitions, might condemn the superficiality that characterized the notions of psychology shared by this popular audience; but for the dramatist the very universality and impreciseness of these ideas were godsend which assisted him at every turn in suggesting to his auditors certain characteristics in human beings without burdening him with any rigid scientific analysis. Thus in a loose, wholly unclinical fashion every Elizabethan dramatist invoked the contemporary science and terminology of psychology in depicting character on the stage. Today, in the same manner, Eugene O'Neill draws heavily, in such plays as *Strange Interlude* and *Mourning becomes Electra*, upon Freudian psychology, as reflected in the aberrant mirror of the popular mind. More recently, in a play now on the London stage,¹ we find T. S. Eliot invoking the doctrines of psychiatry to suggest profound philosophical meanings.

In the year 1600, therefore, just as in the year 1950, the general

¹ *The Cocktail Party*.

notions which the contemporary science of psychology had made familiar to all members of the audience were unconsciously utilized by the original observers and critics of the plays of Shakespeare and his fellows—and this was exactly what the dramatists expected. But as psychological doctrines and terminology changed with each succeeding generation, the earlier theories became more and more matters of merely antiquarian interest and rarely were invoked directly by critics—especially after the Romantic Movement—in their attempts to elucidate an Elizabethan play. Dramatic personages were analysed psychologically in the more familiar terms of a later age.

Twentieth-century criticism takes its departure from the extremely influential lectures and essays of A. C. Bradley, whose brilliant psychological analysis of the characters of Shakespeare's plays in terms of the familiar psychology of the nineteenth century was profoundly satisfying to his own and the next generation. But Elizabethan scholars soon voiced two principal objections to Bradley's conclusions which, although they did not invalidate many of his points, yet called for their modification in several details. The first was that Bradley had often overlooked the essential difference between persons existing in real life and those existing only in a play and for that reason necessarily portrayed in accordance with the accepted dramatic conventions of the time. Professors Stoll and Schiicking were the chief pioneers in this line of criticism. The other objection to Bradley emphasized the need for explaining the dramatic creations of Shakespeare and his fellow playwrights in the light of Elizabethan psychology rather than that of nineteenth-century Romanticism.

The movement to reinvolve the aid of Elizabethan psychology in the interpretation of Elizabethan drama was initiated primarily by Edward Dowden in an article in the *Atlantic Monthly* in the year 1907, entitled 'Elizabethan Psychology', which was reprinted in 1910 in his *Essays Modern and Elizabethan*.¹ Dowden's essay was followed in 1911 by P. Ansell Robin's Ph.D. thesis at the University of London on *The Old Physiology in English Literature*. Both Dowden and Robin called the attention of scholars to a number of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century books dealing with human psychology and the analysis of the passions which had in Shakespeare's day been widely read in England—such treatises as Grimestone's translation of Nicholas Coeffeteau's *Table of the Human Passions*, Pierre Charron's *Of Wisdom*, Juan Huarte's *Examination of Men's Wits*, Thomas

¹ London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1910, pp. 308-33.

² London: J. M. Dent & Sons; New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1911.

Wright's *The Passions of the Mind*, and the physician Timothy Bright's more technical *Treatise of Melancholy*.

The suggestions contained in the studies of Dowden and Robin were not followed upon any great scale until after the First World War, and then chiefly in America. The principal works which have sought in the Elizabethan treatises on psychology the key to a better understanding of the people in the plays of Shakespeare and other dramatists are familiar to all of you. I shall mention only a few. Among the books, Professor Lily Bess Campbell's *Shakespeare's Tragic Heroes: Slaves of Passion*¹ is of special significance because it takes its departure directly from Dowden's essay, and is the first full-length study of Shakespeare's characters analysed in the terminology of Renaissance psychology. But even before this book was issued in 1930, numerous articles with the same purpose had been published by several other scholars, notably Hardin Craig, his pupil Ruth Leila Anderson, Laurence Babb, O. J. Campbell, and the prolific John W. Draper. Since 1930 articles and books have continued to multiply. Not all the authors have avoided the temptation of fitting some character in a play into the procrustean bed of a precise description of a passion found in some particular Elizabethan text-book of psychology. Thus it has come about that this recent scholarly activity has proved confusing as well as helpful—helpful to the extent that we can now read the Elizabethan dramatists with a knowledge of the theories about human conduct and passion which were invoked by the playwright in portraying for his contemporaries the persons in his plays; detrimental, on the other hand, whenever the modern writer, in misguided enthusiasm, gives the impression that the sixteenth-century dramatist, text-book in hand, was intent upon depicting on the stage clinical case-histories of the various passions. When such excess becomes apparent, common sense bids us pause and ask whether a method of this sort has ever been the way of successful dramatic creation.

Such misgivings, aroused by the excesses of too-ardent partisans of this new psychological criticism, lie behind a vigorous and rather indiscriminate onslaught against all who have called Elizabethan psychology to their aid in dramatic interpretation. I refer to an article published in *P.M.L.A.* for September 1946 by Mrs. Louise Turner Forest, entitled 'A Caveat for the Critics against invoking Elizabethan Psychology'.²

¹ Cambridge: University Press, 1930.

² *P.M.L.A.* lxi (1946), 651-72 (September 1946).

Mrs. Forest caustically recites instances in which modern critics have founded new interpretations of *Hamlet*, for example, upon the characteristics assigned to the melancholic temperament by a single, particular Elizabethan treatise on psychology; and then she proceeds to what she considers a devastating demonstration that such treatises are in utter disagreement among themselves. Thus she argues that there was in fact no Elizabethan science of psychology, but only a mass of conflicting theories. Consequently, a critic who interprets a dramatic character in the light of any given Elizabethan psychological work, regardless of all or of most others, is doomed to views that are partial, dogmatic, and probably mistaken. So she would have us throw overboard our attempts to enrich our understanding of Elizabethan drama by reading the psychological treatises of the age; they are a will-o'-the-wisp that leads the critic into quagmires of confusion and futility. This is the conclusion offered to us by Mrs. Forest's article.

What, then, should be the critics' course? Are we to follow Mrs. Forest and decide that we have been led astray in consulting Elizabethan psychological doctrines? Or has the study of sixteenth-century psychology contributed something of value to the interpretation of Elizabethan drama, and, if so, what has been the nature and extent of its contribution? This is the question for this morning's discussion.

Let me say first that anyone who reads the treatises of Bright, Charron, Coeffeteau, Huarte, or Thomas Wright can find innumerable instances of disagreement among them upon the distinguishing characteristics of specific temperaments and passions. In fact, the authors themselves are usually at pains to point out these differences of opinion among their authorities. The later treatise best known to literary students, Robert Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*, is, in many sections, frankly a compilation of divergent opinions of earlier writers. We can therefore applaud whole-heartedly Mrs. Forest's exposure of the fallacy committed by some modern writers when, seizing upon a particular trait cited in one psychological treatise but not in others, they have quoted this treatise to support their theory of the nature of a character in a play. Such a method assumes that the dramatist's audience had read that particular treatise, and that the playwright intended his allusion to evoke a precise response from his auditors, based upon one theory rather than another. This is never the method of the successful popular dramatist, who must concern himself with widely held general notions, not with the esoteric learning of a special coterie.

But Mrs. Forest seems to share the same misconception about science that lies at the root of the errors she so vigorously exposes. She expects a science to be a consistent body of notions, about which all authorities are in agreement, with a precise terminology in which one word means the same thing to all writers. This, she finds, was certainly not true of Elizabethan psychology; hence she reaches the extreme conclusion that it has no right to be ranked as a science at all.

But the very nature of a science—that which distinguishes it from a rigidly consistent system of metaphysical philosophy—is that it is constantly changing, modifying its theories to fit observed facts—not the facts to fit the theories. The same term means different things in different writers, though the careful writer makes clear either explicitly or implicitly the precise signification he assigns to the terms he uses. Hence 'scientific accuracy' is a myth, reserved only for mathematics, with its artificial constructions; the physical, and even more the biological sciences, must recognize that they deal with probabilities and approximations. In the brief handbooks and epitomes inherited from the Middle Ages one can find the psychological doctrines derived from the works of Plato and Aristotle neatly systematized. Their compilers were philosophers rather than scientific observers, and were content to disregard all differences of opinion in the interests of uniformity. If a single Elizabethan psychology is sought as a consistent entity, it can be found only in these medieval handbooks and epitomes; they were the elementary text-books for the Elizabethan, and were perfect examples of the method of the delivery of knowledge which Bacon in his *Advancement of Learning* condemned as 'magistral and peremptory, in a sort as may be soonest believed, and not easiest examined'. But Shakespeare and his fellows could count on their audience's familiarity with the substratum of psychological doctrines magisterially set forth in these simple treatises.

These books, however, rarely pretended to be thoughtful analyses of scientific opinion and observation upon human psychology. In an infinite number of small ways the writings of medieval physicians, both in the Muslim and the western European world, had modified and reinterpreted the doctrines which came down to them from Aristotle and Galen—and these ancient writers themselves were often at variance. All this mass of commentary was usually disregarded by the compilers of manuals, whose aim was simplicity and lucidity rather than the accurate portrayal of human complexity; Renaissance scholars, however, habitually sifted these additions to the central core of ancient psychological doctrine, incorporating in their own work

whatever seemed to them sound and in harmony with their own observation. In this procedure they merely illustrated once more the manner in which any science slowly grows and changes as new facts impinge upon old notions. Thus it is that when a modern student turns from the essentially medieval handbooks to the treatises of the more learned and intelligent writers—to Timothy Bright, or Pierre Charron, or Huarte, or Thomas Wright—he will inevitably, unless he closes his eye to all divergences, find himself perpetually confronted with inconsistencies and conflicting opinions. Yet this very fact is witness to the vitality of the Elizabethan science of psychology. Writers were ever trying to find a place for new facts within the framework inherited from classical antiquity. The audience of 1600 had a general acquaintance with this framework, just as we in 1950 have a vague acquaintance with the terminology and the general doctrines of modern psychiatry and psycho-analysis, which we bring with us to a performance of *Mourning becomes Electra* or *The Cocktail Party*. But ask someone as he leaves the New Theatre whether T. S. Eliot's Sir Henry Harcourt-Riley showed himself a disciple of Freud, or Jung, or Adler, or some other psychiatrist who differs on many points from each of these three masters, and he would quite properly reject this as a silly and irrelevant question. It is unlikely that this query was ever considered by Eliot himself. Yet there is certainly as great, and probably even more radical, disagreement among professional psychiatrists today than there was among Elizabethan writers on the science of psychology. But the presence of divergent and inconsistent opinions does not prevent a dramatist from successfully using the general popular notions about a science; it merely bars an attempt at a clinical precision quite foreign to the technique of the playwright. The common terms of a science will each evoke a particular set of associations, differing slightly with each auditor. But this inconsistency will perturb only an over-zealous semanticist; the dramatist welcomes this inherently human inexactness and diversity in the use of words.

The history of a science, then—the history of psychology itself—should warn us of the impossibility of an exact definition of character by means of words spoken on the stage. As an illustration of this lack of exact agreement in scientific terminology, let us take the history of definitions of the so-called internal senses from the time of Aristotle to the Renaissance.

In most of the medieval handbooks you will find the internal senses classified as three: Imagination, or fancy; Common sense;

and Memory. This is the division most familiar to readers of medieval and of Renaissance texts. We find it—to mention only one of many instances—in Book II of Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, in the poet's description of the Castle of Alma. But in reality these 'internal senses', or post-sensory faculties, which Aristotle had discussed and differentiated from the five physical senses, were by medieval writers distinguished sometimes as three, sometimes as five (in Alfarabi), again, as seven (in Avicenna), later reduced to four by Averroes. For a thorough study of the discrimination and definitions of the various post-sensory faculties, I refer you to Professor Harry Wolfson's article in the *Harvard Theological Review* for 1935, on 'The Internal Senses in Latin, Arabic and Hebrew Philosophic Texts'.¹ It shows, for example, that what the handbook writers, with their new three-fold division, crudely labelled fancy or imagination was broken up by learned authors into no less than four distinct faculties. Consequently, to the Renaissance writer the term Imagination might involve four quite different concepts; unless he made clear the sense in which he used the term, one could not be certain what he had in mind—perhaps he was uncertain himself.

The multiplicity of meanings of the faculty of imagination could be paralleled by tracing the history of many other common terms of Renaissance psychology. We can see, then, that the Renaissance psychologist who set out to write a new treatise on the subject found the classifications and definitions of his predecessors a formidable complexity. No wonder, then, that these Renaissance treatises did not present a simple pattern of consistency and general agreement.

What, then, is the value of a study of Elizabethan psychology for the interpretation of Elizabethan drama? Is the confusion among sixteenth-century experts so great that as critics we should abandon all appeals to that science for enlightenment? I do not believe we need succumb, with Mrs. Forest, to the counsels of Despair. The first task of the critic, I would say, is to discriminate carefully between the psychological treatises he consults—something his predecessors have often failed to do. He should divide them roughly into two classes:

In the first he will place the popular handbooks—usually based on medieval manuals. Since these generally followed the same tradition, each copying its predecessor, the doctrines set forth are relatively consistent. They represent the popular text-books of the time, and present the common core of psychological concepts. Therefore, they

¹ *Harvard Theological Review*, xxviii (1935), 69-133.

are the most valuable aids for the student of Elizabethan literature, and will provide him with the body of general notions about human psychology—often superficial in the eyes of scholars of his time—which, for the average member of the Elizabethan audience, supplied the framework of ideas by which he analysed the character of any person he encountered, either in life or on the stage. The medieval encyclopaedias still popular in the Renaissance, such as Bartholomaeus Anglicus' *De proprietatibus rerum*, and smaller handbooks derived directly from them, are the best source for these general notions. From them a modern student, by eliminating points of difference and including only those matters upon which all authorities agree, can compile for himself a summary of that body of psychological doctrine that almost every Elizabethan unconsciously accepted.

A knowledge of this basic psychology is, in my opinion, indispensable to any serious student of Elizabethan drama. The difficulties arise when we turn to the more detailed psychological treatises of the second type, which, although founded upon the doctrines expounded in the elementary treatises, should be carefully distinguished from the first group. Here, in the books of Lemnius, Bright, Charron, Thomas Wright, and Huarte, we will find much agreement with the first group in underlying theories, but this concurrence should not blind us to the many differences in minor details. One principle should always be kept before us—through neglecting it have arisen most of the excesses which can be rightly urged against the scholars citing the Elizabethan psychologists in support of particular interpretations of an Elizabethan dramatic character. A dramatist desiring to evoke a single definite response from his audience can only do so by describing his characters in terms of psychological theories concerning which no disagreement exists; otherwise he will of necessity suggest several possible interpretations. Therefore no modern scholar can properly invoke Elizabethan psychology in support of his critical pronouncement without showing that the passage he cites from a psychological treatise represents common doctrine, and not an individual variation from the norm. This common-sense counsel, however, is no argument against the value to critics of further study of the more detailed treatises of Elizabethan psychology. They will enrich his understanding of the complexity of sixteenth-century ideas upon human nature and conduct, and increase his awareness of the implications which an Elizabethan playgoer would perceive in the words and actions he witnessed on the stage. He would come to see that those leaving a performance at the Globe in the first year of King James

might not carry from the theatre exactly the same portrait of Hamlet in their minds—that each might properly argue for a slightly different view. In short, I do not believe that in Shakespeare's day the Elizabethan science of psychology could do more towards making dramatic criticism an exact science than psychiatry can today for modern criticism. The most confident scientific practitioner finds, in real life, that his diagnoses often turn out to be wrong. How foolish, then, to expect a dramatist, even were he an expert physician, to supply in the lines of his play the materials whereby the critic can make a precise and undisputed diagnosis of the hero's psychological malady? Yet that, too often, is what certain modern critics assume that the Elizabethan dramatist actually did. It is also what the objectors, such as Mrs. Forest, in attacking the theories of these critics, tacitly assume that the dramatists could have done, had they not been prevented by the inconsistencies of the science of psychology in their day.

The answer, then, to those who have misused Elizabethan psychology in the interpretation of Elizabethan drama, is not merely to prove that Elizabethan treatises on psychology were inconsistent, but to be aware, first, that the history of any active and growing science demonstrates that the ideal of fixity and consistency in scientific theory and terminology is a figment of the human imagination, and, second, that the art of drama, by its very nature, most successfully conveys its impressions of human character by means of subtle suggestion and emotional impressions, not by 'scientific'⁵ analysis.

The critic of Elizabethan drama, then, so long as he remembers these truisms, will find a knowledge of the Elizabethan science of psychology indispensable when he interprets the plays of this period. Without this knowledge he will frequently fail to perceive the suggestions and impressions that the dramatist intended to convey, and successfully conveyed to his first audiences. But if he persists in looking for a precision of analysis that was never there—if he succumbs to the delusion that psychology was a more exact science in the sixteenth century than it is today—then all his learning will lead to error rather than enlightenment.

FRANCIS R. JOHNSON

Romanticism and the History of Ideas

[This paper proving somewhat too long for the present volume, Section I dealing with the history of ideas in general and with the concept of nature (with special reference to Professor Lovejoy's *The Great Chain of Being*) is omitted, and the printed version begins with Section II.]

II

BESIDE the idea of nature, however conceived, must always be placed the concept of mind. The two are complementary. For nature is what the mind of man can apprehend, or imagine, of the scheme of thingr., as art is what the mind can make from nature, or from its own resources. And in our period the powers of the mind came under searching review. In its thought on the subject we may distinguish, you will agree, four schools or traditions.

That of Hobbes (dating, as we shall have occasion to remember, from the beginning of the Neo-classical period) is a thoroughgoing system of materialism, in which a mechanistic conception of nature is completed by a mechanistic account of mind. In method it has a good deal in common with Empiricism, and in their later phases the two traditions must not be too sharply differentiated.

The second, and dominant tradition, is that of Empiricism, represented at the outset by Locke, whose own thought, however, is (like Newton's) ambivalent. A principal tendency of this tradition, fully realized in Hume, is to isolate the mind, regarded as the area of mental phenomena, and concentrate attention on the behaviour of our impressions and ideas. Hume's view of these mental phenomena is mechanistic in so far as it succeeds in eliminating mind as an agent and tracing their pattern simply to an association of ideas; but the association does not depend solely on the content and contiguity of the ideas, but occurs under the impulse of certain emotional and instinctive drives, and these, together with the active power of imagination, appear to be attributes of the mind itself and the substitutes in Hume's system for the reason which his scepticism has dethroned. The tendency to mechanism is most unequivocal in those empiricists who, consciously or unconsciously, approach the dogmatic materialism of Hobbes, as do Bentham and his followers, and (at an earlier date) David Hartley. For despite his religion, his avowed discipleship of Newton, and his delayed but determined adoption by the empirical school, Hartley (as Coleridge came to

recognize) stemmed from Hobbes. But when separated by Priestley from the mechanism of physical vibrations on which it rested, and of which it was the psychological counterpart, Hartley's explanation of mental phenomena was made available to empiricism as a complete and almost entirely mechanistic account of mind. For Hartley sought to show how, by association, there was built up from simple ideas of sensation, with their accompaniment of pleasure or pain, the whole impressive structure of human thought, including those ideas which others had ascribed to reflection or regarded as immediate and irreducible intuitions, and including also the hierarchical order in which the ideas were ranged. All this, Hartley had attributed to the mechanism of association.

For the third tradition it is not easy to find a completely satisfactory name. To a modern ear the word 'Rationalist' carries some suggestions opposed to its spirit and intentions; yet for that name we had better settle. For this was the tradition which insisted on the competence of reason and on its agency in supplying essential elements of knowledge quite independent of ideas of sensation, and principles of morality independent of pleasure and pain. Among its seventeenth-century representatives were the Cambridge Platonists, and in the eighteenth century, Shaftesbury and Clarke, Price and (as his latest editor has shown) Godwin; to this tradition, also, parts of the teaching of Locke himself belong—the parts opposed to Hobbes and eliminated by Hartley and Hume. In the age of triumphant empiricism, the rationalist tradition (which continued to command the general assent of humanists like Johnson) bore witness to important truths, and finally made its contribution to the mature philosophy of Coleridge, that is, to the romantic reaction against empiricism.

The fourth tradition—that of the Scottish Common-Sense School—represents an effort of compromise between rationalism and empiricism: its aims have much in common with the former, its methods with the latter, whose interest in psychology it shared to the full. And herein lay its chief importance for literature, since most of the Scottish writers who were reshaping the critical theory of the eighteenth century either came under the influence of, or at least shared the interests manifested by, the Common-Sense School.

I have said that humanists such as Johnson gave a general assent to the principles of the rationalist tradition. But I am not altogether satisfied with this brief dismissal of a force, so great, so varied and so pervasive as humanism, and am almost tempted to add a fifth tradition, the Humanistic. This, unlike the others, would not find

its distinguishing mark in a particular philosophy of mind, but in its response to classical literature, to human experience, and to Christian ethics. It would be irrevocably opposed to the materialism of Hobbes and strongly drawn to much, if not everything, in the rationalist tradition, but it could also find some common ground with empiricism and more perhaps with the Common-Sense School. There are, after all, elements of humanism in Locke (as Professor James has recently shown), and it was the basic philosophy of Locke that Addison and (more significantly) Burke combined with humanism and thereby in measure transformed. The example of Johnson would of course suggest that humanism resisted the romantic movement, and in many ways it did. Yet the name of Burke suggests a different inference, and in Wordsworth and Coleridge, among the great romantics, there are, I am persuaded, elements of genuine humanism.

The traditions of thought of whose presence we have reminded ourselves are part of the essential background of English literature in the period with which we are concerned. They exercise an influence upon literary theory, and both mediately, through the theory, and directly, by the ideas which they render available, they influence the literature itself.

In his suggestive essay, 'English Neo-classicism: a Study in Confusion', Mr. Victor Hamm has argued that neo-classical doctrine cannot be securely built on any but a firm basis of rationalism, that such a basis French classicism found in the philosophy of Descartes—an assertion which involves some rather large assumptions about both Descartes and French classicism—and that English neo-classicism signally lacked the necessary foundation. Its doctrines were, in fact, first formulated by Hobbes in his *Answer to Davenant*, the circularity of whose argument is seen (says Mr. Hamm) when he asserts that judgement must furnish the strength and structure of a poem and control the poet's fancy as it ranges through the field of memory, and then proceeds to derive memory, fancy, and judgement itself from experience, that is, ultimately from sensation. Where are the standards that judgement is to invoke and what is their sanction? Thus stated the case against Hobbes is imposing. But the historian (who is not concerned with drawing up indictments) will answer, and truly, that the standards are empirical and prudential, precisely as are those which Hobbes invokes in politics. In literature and politics alike he champions order and authority, but proposes to ground them, not in metaphysical fictions, but in facts. (One may still, of course, question whether what he took to be metaphysical fictions, and what facts,

were so indeed.) Now this strong element of empiricism, already present in Hobbes's formulation of its doctrines, is certainly characteristic of English neo-classicism. But it was due less to Hobbes's formulation than to the steady infusion of empirical method into English thought in and after Locke, to which rival schools in measure responded; and in criticism it issued less in confusion than in a degree of flexibility and in a concern with psychological and aesthetic facts. To this may be attributed some of the best criticism of the period. What is more important, it facilitated adjustments within neo-classicism itself (which in England was certainly not the moribund system that Saintsbury and others describe), and it resulted in the early beginning of the movement towards romanticism, which at first involved less the rejection than the reinterpretation of neo-classical formulae.

Dr. W. J. Bate would go a good deal farther and seek in this pervasive empiricism a sufficient explanation of the English romantic movement. His book *From Classic to Romantic* has done valuable service in tracing its influence in the eighteenth-century critics and upon the younger (that is, the empiricist) Coleridge and Wordsworth, on the essentially unmetaphysical Hazlitt, and (through him) on Keats. But it is fatal to ignore that other tradition in English thought which we have called the rationalist, and which also made its important contribution to romanticism. As a result of ignoring it, Dr. Bate seriously misinterprets Shaftesbury, altogether failing to recognize his derivation from the rationalist tradition and the transformation which it commenced to undergo at his hands; and he has nothing at all to say of Blake, of the mature Coleridge and Wordsworth, or of Shelley. Clearly, romanticism is not simply the product or by-product of empiricism, but derives from both traditions; and to suppose otherwise is to mistake either thesis or antithesis for the required principle of synthesis.

To illustrate the truth of this proposition one need only recall how many ideas important for romanticism were derived from the rationalist tradition. Among them were: the great chain of being itself; the neo-classicist ideal of order, which Shaftesbury transformed to an ideal of harmony; the conviction of man's natural sociability and benevolence, urged by the rationalists against Hobbes; the idea of a spirit of Nature, and (more generally) the principle of animism as opposed to that of mechanism; the approximation of the moral and the aesthetic sense, foreshadowed in the 'boniform faculty' of Henry More, and affected by Shaftesbury, who in its name championed a

new enthusiasm evoked by the beauty and harmony of nature; the idea of natural and innate endowment, in which the notions of taste, genius, and the purity of primitive forms found their account.

From its own resources, empiricism also originated some ideas important for romanticism, and among them that of progression, with the hopes of indefinite improvement to be effected by an education which utilized its principle of association. But the greatest contribution of the empirical tradition was, no doubt, its experimental spirit and its interest in psychology, which prompted it to seek new explanations for conceptions which it had not originated. The case of genius is instructive. In the *Dissertation on Genius* (1755) by William Sharpe, an extreme empiricist, innate endowment is denied and everything attributed to superior acquirements. But in William Duff's *Essay on Original Genius* (1767) and Alexander Gerard's *Essay on Genius* (1774), both products of the Scottish school, the fact of genius is allowed and a psychological explanation is attempted: genius depends on imagination and amounts to the rapidity and fertility with which ideas are associated. Gerard's essay affords a striking example of the way in which the new psychology attributes to the spontaneous working of the mind powers of selection and organization which earlier criticism had confidently assigned to judgement and conscious artistry. Duff's essay links the conception of genius with the cult of the primitive by arguing that genius is least impeded in a free and simple society, and also, of course, with the strong prepossession in favour of originality and against imitation, already expressed in Young's *Conjectures upon Original Composition* (1759), a document which has its own importance, combining (as it does) an emphasis on progress through the empirical methods of science with a parallel between genius and the moral sense as intuitive in their judgements and superior to rules. Not less instructive is Burke's epoch-making *Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime* (and edn. 1759). Empirical in its basic philosophy (as the preliminary essay on a standard of taste clearly shows), the *Enquiry* is a striking example of the new preoccupation of criticism with psychological and aesthetic facts and the revolutionary results which it may yield. For in this complete reinterpretation of the Longinian sublime, which shifts the emphasis from the moral to the physical, Burke recognizes, as the home of the sublime, a state intermediate between pleasure and pain and partaking of the nature of both—a momentous discovery for romantic aesthetics; he insists on suggestions of terror and wonder, obscurity and infinity, as elements in the sublime; and he asserts the power of

words to operate directly by association without the intervention of visual images. Perhaps no other critical essay in English breaks so much new ground.

But more central to romanticism than either *genius* or the *sublime*, is the idea of *imagination*, the most important element in the romantic conception of mind.

III

In considering the idea of imagination, our attention properly fixes on the role assigned to it in poetry, but it is necessary to remember that the term is borrowed from philosophy, that imagination also had its role in perception and the formation of knowledge, and that the view taken of it in one department will not be without influence in the other. Its history in our period finds its natural starting-point in Bacon and falls into four chronological divisions.

1. The first chapter opens when Bacon initiates what may be called the empirical theory of imagination by recognizing its creative power and its primacy in poetry or 'feigned history'—but this under a limitation characteristic of the tradition from its earliest to its latest date: imagination is the organ not of truth, but of mere fiction, and poetry, bearing no necessary relation to truth, is in effect not an imitation of nature at all.

2. In the second chapter, the neo-classical assumption is directly opposed to Bacon's: poetry is an imitation of nature and concerned with truth; accordingly, imagination is relegated to a subordinate role. 'Judgment said Hobbes, 'begets the strength and structure, and fancy begets the ornaments, of a poem At the same time Hobbes, exploring the imagination, rounded out Bacon's theory, and paved the way for Addison's, by emphasizing its compounding power; while Dryden, reacting against the imitation of nature as interpreted by Hobbes, asserted the freedom of the poetic imagination, and its ability to envisage ideal truth and imitate 'nature wrought up to a nobler pitch', thus initiating in English criticism a claim for the imagination as an organ of truth which finds its full realization only in the great romantics.

3. A third chapter opens, midway in the neo-classical period, with Addison's papers on the Imagination. By combining Hobbesian psychology with Baconian poetics, Addison reaches his essentially empirical theory of creative imagination, which leaves it the organ of mere fiction. While Addison's theories were influencing the

pre-romantics, the empirical exploration of the mind went on, and in Hume, for example, and Adam Smith, imagination claims a much more central place in epistemology and ethics than it received from Locke; but it is far from being regarded as itself an organ of truth (for its free activity issues in mere fiction—in poetry or in dreams). But once more the claim, from another tradition, for the imagination as an organ of truth, is not quite absent: it finds a faint echo in William Collins and an equivocal one in Sir Joshua Reynolds.

4. When at last this protest becomes dominant, as it does quite suddenly, we have entered upon the fourth and final chapter of our history. In Blake, Coleridge, and Wordsworth, and in Shelley, it is no longer necessary to establish the centrality of the imagination in poetry or its creative power: these are accepted dogmas. What now requires to be argued is the validity of the imagination's findings, the truth of its creations. That is the problem which engages the great romantics, and for which they offer different solutions. But the solutions have this in common: they involve a more or less categorical rejection of empiricism, and an appeal to some form of what we have called the rationalist tradition. Of special significance are the solutions of Coleridge and Wordsworth because they seek to unite in a comprehensive view the two conceptions of poetry as a product of creative imagination and as an imitation of nature.

Up to this time the two ideas are, generally speaking, opposed to each other. The imitation of nature (however interpreted) implies a claim that poetry is truth (that is, a representation of reality); the idea of imagination, an admission that it is mere fiction. This is, of course, a part of the problem to which criticism keeps returning, the relation of art to reality. But for the opposition of imagination and the imitation of nature there are special historical reasons. In expounding his genuinely imaginative conception of poetry as an imitation of nature (that is, a representation of essential truth by means of fiction), Aristotle did not invoke the idea of imagination: he rescued (by redefining) the Platonic *imitation*, but not the Platonic *fancy*. The result was to leave *imagination* without a defined role in poetry, and labouring, in addition, under a heavy weight of prejudice, accumulated against it by the rationalist tradition in thought.

True, its psychological role in perception and the formation of knowledge was recognized, but precisely here its activity was viewed with watchful suspicion, as Milton's account of it in *Paradise Lost* (v. 100-12) serves to remind us: only as it operated in due subordination to reason was it safe, and against that subordination it constantly

rebelled. This suspicion, which was increased by a sense of the imagination's alliance with the passions, and fostered by many circumstances, long persisted. 'Imagination', said Johnson, 'is a licentious faculty, unsusceptible of limitations and impatient of restraint/ 'All predominance of fancy over reason is a degree of insanity.'

These facts help to explain the limited role assigned to the imagination in neo-classical poetics, which assumed that poetry was an imitation of nature whose end was to instruct or edify by means of delight. In the production of poetry, as in the formation of knowledge, imagination had its legitimate but limited function, which could be safely exercised only in due subordination to reason.

Before, however, the neo-classical creed was fully formulated, the encyclopaedic Bacon, after assigning philosophy to reason, and history to memory, boldly assigned poetry or 'feigned history' to the imagination, but with implications better understood by Bacon himself than by many historians of criticism. For in his view poetry is not an imitation of nature, not a presentation of essential truth by means of fiction, but fictitious in its essence; and the use of poetry is merely (or mainly) 'to give some shadow of satisfaction to the mind ... in those points wherein the nature of things doth deny it', by representing 'a more ample greatness, a more exact goodness, and a more absolute variety' than the real world will afford. In effect, Sidney was right when he described nature's world as brazen and the poet's only as golden, but absurd to describe poetry as an imitation of nature or to claim for it a special value and dignity. Poetry offers no insight into reality, but simply an escape therefrom. It is not knowledge, not a *work* of the mind like philosophy or history, but its play: and Bacon values it accordingly. This will turn out to be characteristic of the empirical tradition, whose precursor Bacon was. Its inquiries extended to poetry and the imagination, but its true affinity was with science and the understanding; and out of it could come only that kind of romanticism which acquiesces in the divorce of art from reality. Addison and the pre-romantics were the heirs of Bacon on poetry and the imagination.

Meanwhile, however, the empirical and indeed materialist Hobbes had undertaken to draw up the neo-classical poetic, whose keystone was the imitation of nature. The result was to hand poetry over to the understanding, to reduce imagination to the subordinate office of ornamenting its productions, and to tie the poet to such a narrow conception of nature as the Hobbesian philosophy would afford.

There are some [said Hobbes] that are not pleased with fiction unless it

be bold, not only to exceed the work, but the possibility of nature. They would have impenetrable armours, enchanted castles, invulnerable bodies, iron men, flying horses, and a thousand other such things, which are easily feigned by them that dare. ... As truth is the bound of historical, so resemblance of truth is the utmost limit of poetical liberty. . . . Beyond the actual works of nature a poet may ... go; but beyond the conceived possibility of nature, never.

At the same time Hobbes, in the *Leviathan*, was investigating the role of the imagination in thought, including the very process by which it so easily feigned these wonders. Dependent for all its data upon sensation, and in its simple activity merely a fading memory of sensual images (or, as Hobbes calls it, 'decaying sense'), the imagination has nevertheless a second activity, a compounding power, whereby it can join two such images to form a third. 'So when a man compoundeth the image of his own person with the image of the actions of another . . . and imagines himself a Hercules or an Alexander (which happeneth often to them that are much taken with reading of romances), it is a compound imagination, and properly but a fiction of the mind. Moreover these 'imaginations' occur in trains, either fortuitous (and dependent on an accidental association of ideas) or 'regulated by some desire or design'. On the latter depends all our power of invention, which, however, Hobbes, significantly, pauses to develop only in its relation to science, and not to poetry and the arts.

Though in general a disciple of Locke, it was not to Locke, who has nothing new to say on the subject, but to Bacon and Hobbes that Addison owed his ideas on the role of the imagination in poetry. His *Spectator* papers on the Imagination (411-21) gave new currency to the term, extended its application, and set it in a context of ideas whose full implications became apparent during the half-century that followed. He combined the Hobbesian conception of the compounding imagination with Bacon's view of poetry. Imagination, said Addison, 'makes additions to nature and gives a greater variety to God's works' (419). 'It has something in it like creation: it bestows a kind of existence' (421). And

because the mind of man requires something more perfect in matter than what it finds there; ... or because the imagination can fancy to itself things more great, strange and beautiful [note the echo of Longinus on the sources of the sublime] than the eye ever saw, and is still sensible of some defect in what it has seen: on this account it is the part of a poet to humour the imagination in its own notions by mending and perfecting nature

where he describes a reality, and by adding greater beauties than are put together in nature where he describes a fiction (418).

When one recalls Addison's elaboration of this position—his emphasis on landscape of a surprisingly romantic kind, and on effects of vastness, strangeness, and a 'pleasing horror', with his extension of the 'fairy way of writing' (Dryden's phrase) to include all visionary beings from Shakespeare's ghosts to Spenser's personifications: when one recalls all this, it is clear that the papers on the Imagination contain almost the whole programme of pre-romantic poetry.

Certainly we may trace to Addison the emphasis of the Wartons on 'creative imagination' as the special mark of the poet, which never implies any claim for the truth of poetry or its insight into reality, but only for its power of providing vicarious emotional experience (cf., for example, Joseph Warton's *Ode to Fancy*). In Collins, indeed, as we shall observe, the Addisonian is crossed by other influences; but for the study of his poetry also (as I tried to indicate many years ago) Addison's papers offer the best vantage point, if we would understand his aims and avoid the pitfalls that beset the unhistorical critic.

Meanwhile in the empirical philosophy's account of the mind imagination was claiming a larger role. In Locke there had been few references to it, and those both conventional and derogatory: it was the very type of fiction, to which the cautious conclusions of the understanding were opposed. Nor in Hartley does the role of imagination bulk as large as it does (for example) in Hobbes: ideas of imagination form one group, low in his hierarchical order, and are not more essential to it than are any of the others. In Hume all this is changed: imagination receives renewed attention, and a central place in his scheme. It is the power by which we form and recall ideas less vivid than those of memory, and this inferior vividness is the only difference between the two kinds of idea. But a second characteristic of imagination is its freedom; for its ideas, unlike those of memory, are not tied to the order of the parent impressions. The old stigma of fiction is not removed (for it was no part of Hume's purpose to rehabilitate the imagination); but the distinction between true and false is reduced to the single question of vividness, or (as Hume significantly calls it) the *feeling* of the ideas. And it presently transpires that, by a union with the passions, ideas of imagination sometimes acquire a peculiar vividness. But what gives imagination a central place in Hume's scheme is his repeated reference to its role in the association of ideas. 'When the mind . . . passes from the idea or impression of one object to the idea or belief of another, it is not determined by

reason but by certain principles which associate together the ideas of these objects and unite them in the imagination' (*Treatise* 1. 3. 6). The association of ideas (whether through their resemblance, their contiguity, or a supposed causal relation) reduces itself merely to the facility with which the imagination is enabled to pass from one idea to another. In the sceptical philosophy imagination is the heir of the dethroned understanding and brings into our thoughts whatever order they possess; the note of this order, however, is not truth, but convenience. There is plenty of evidence to show that Hume personally retained the common prejudice against the imagination, which could on occasion have its use. The Peripatetics, he writes, 'were guided by every trivial propensity of the imagination', and nowhere more than in their *sympathies* and *antipathies*.

There is a very remarkable inclination in human nature to bestow on external objects the same emotions which it observes in itself. . . . This inclination 'tis true is suppressed by a little reflection, and only takes in children, poets, and the ancient philosophers. . . . We must pardon children because of their age; poets, because they profess to follow implicitly the suggestions of their fancy. But what excuse shall we find to justify our philosophers in so singular a weakness? (*Treatise* 1. 4. 3.)

This is characteristic of Hume's references to poetry. Clearly, to rehabilitate the poetic imagination was no part of his purpose; nor indeed to rehabilitate the imagination at all. The use to which it was put in the sceptical philosophy required no radical alteration in the concept, and certainly no claim for the imagination of any special affinity with, or insight into, truth. It is in his attention to the imagination merely, and to its role in the association of ideas, that Hume is significant, characteristic of his period, and influential upon it.

By Adam Smith, in his empirical account of the ethics of sympathy and benevolence, imagination is given an equally important role. It becomes the indispensable agent of sympathy, whereby we place ourselves in the situation of another and make his feelings our own. And this idea was a permanent contribution to the romantic conception of the imagination; for it was adopted by Shelley, combined with a much more exalted notion of the faculty, and by him given its important application to poetry.

More immediately influential upon criticism were the inheritors of the Associationist psychology, the members of the Scottish Common-Sense School. From Alexander Gerard, through James Beattie, to Dugald Stewart, they emphasized the importance of the imagina-

tion and themselves wrote on its role in poetry. Gerard, for example, proclaimed imagination, as it facilitated the association of ideas, the essence of genius; and of genius and imagination he recognized two kinds: the scientific whose aim was truth, and the aesthetic, whose only concern was beauty. But had it been left to the Scottish philosophers, and the critics who fell under their influence, while one might have had a clear recognition of the importance of the imagination in psychology, ethics, and aesthetics, an attributing to its spontaneous activity of virtues hitherto assigned to the understanding or judgement, and a linking of imagination with the cults of genius, originality, and the primitive, one would never have had that radical revision and extension of the concept itself, which the last phase of its history entails.

In this final phase of its history the imagination at last comes into its own: its creativeness and its truth (or the validity of its creations) are alike asserted, and the two claims are reconciled. In earlier periods there are at most some faint and confused premonitions of this event.

That the poet is a maker, and a second god, is frequently asserted in the Renaissance (and the analogy cannot fail to imply the strongest claim for the dignity of the poet and for the essential truth of poetry), but the idea is seldom associated with the imagination as it momentarily is by Puttenham: 'A poet is as much as to say a maker . . . : such as (by way of resemblance and reverently) we may say of God, who, without travail to his divine imagination made all the world of nought.' Again, in the Renaissance, it was at least intermittently perceived that to imitate nature was to look through appearance to the essential truth of things, but this power was not in general attributed to the imagination. Too often, however, the Aristotelian imitation was itself misunderstood, and poetry was conceived as idealization, as giving, not something *truer* than empirical reality, but something *better*—the poet's golden world for nature's brazen one, in Sidney's phrase; and this was an idea which could be readily divorced from imitation and attached to imagination, as Bacon proved, with momentous consequences in the history of criticism.

It was, of course, not difficult to bring the ideas of imagination and the imitation of nature together, so long as by the latter was meant some form of idealization; and to this expedient Dryden came. It served its temporary purpose as a protest against the Hobbesian effort to confine poetry within the limits of a concept of nature too narrow and prosaic. But as a contribution to critical theory this is not perhaps to be taken altogether seriously, and the difference between Dryden's

position and Bacon's is more apparent than real. Acquiescent at first in the doctrine of Hobbes, Dryden grew restive under an imitation of nature which denied all freedom to the poetic imagination. 'An heroic poet', he said, 'is not tied to a bare representation of what is true or exceeding probable, but. . . may let himself loose to visionary objects and to the representation of such things as depending not on sense . . . may give him a freer scope for imagination' (*Essay of Heroic Plays*). 'All that is dull, insipid, languishing, and without sinews in a poem, they call an imitation of nature' (*Apology for Heroic Poetry*). In the Italian critic Bellori, he found a theory that might serve his turn; and this he presented in the *Parallel of Poetry and Painting*. From the contemplation of his own excellence, 'God drew and constituted those first forms which are called ideas', and thence produced 'that wonderful contexture of created beings', the world. 'But... all things . . . sublunary are subject to change . . . ; and, though Nature always intends a consummate beauty in her productions, yet through the inequality of the matter the forms are altered.' Therefore artists, 'imitating the divine Maker, form to themselves, as well as they are able, a model of the superior beauties, and . . . endeavour to correct and amend the common nature, and to represent it as it was at first created, without fault either in colour or in lineament'. This is substantially Sidney's theory, but with one important difference. For Bellori, as quoted by Dryden, goes on to say that the model of the superior beauties is formed in the imagination, citing among ancient authorities the celebrated statement of Apollonius, 'that the fancy more instructs the painter than the imitation; for the last makes only the things that it sees, but the first makes also things that it never sees'. By the imagination then, the poet, likewise, is enabled to imitate what Dryden calls 'nature . . . wrought up to a nobler pitch'.

From Dryden the doctrine was passed on to Sir Joshua Reynolds. 'To paint particulars,' he writes in his notes to the *De Arte Graphica*, 'is not to paint nature'; the artist must 'conceive in his imagination the image of perfect beauty or the abstract idea of forms'. In the *Discourses* we see Reynolds at first attempting to extract from the imitation of nature this doctrine of ideal forms, then abandoning the effort and turning to the imagination as their true source. 'A native vigour of imagination' is the mark of genius in the artist, which makes him superior to every rule. 'Raphael had more taste and fancy; Michelangelo, more genius and imagination. The one excelled in beauty, the other in energy. Michelangelo has more of... poetical inspiration.... Nobody excelled Raphael in judgment' (*Discourse 15*). The power

of art to appeal to the imagination is an aesthetic fact that transcends all others and every rule. 'Upon the whole,' says Reynolds, 'it seems to me that the object and intention of all the arts is to supply the natural imperfection of things, and often to gratify the mind by realizing and embodying what never existed but in *imagination*' (*Discourse* 13). We are back with Bacon and Addison.

Among the pre-romantic poets, Collins is not altogether satisfied with the Addisonian formula. No doubt, in the *Ode to Fear*, the poet sees,

appalled, the unreal scene
While Fancy lifts the veil between;

and this is characteristic of much of his verse. But in the *Ode on the Poetical Character* he presents poetry as a divine gift paralleling the creative act of God when first He

called with thought to birth
Yon tented sky, this laughing earth,

witnessed not only by Wonder, but by Truth, who (as he claims in the *Ode to Liberty*) inspires the Muse. To the end (in the *Ode on the Superstitions*) he is searching for the possibility of scenes 'which daring to depart from sober (i.e. from prosaic) truth, are still to nature true'. But, though interesting in relation to Collinses own poetry, and setting him off from his immediate associates, these scattered references do not suggest any consistent theory of imaginative truth, such as one certainly finds in Blake, in Wordsworth, and in Coleridge.

Each is a subject in itself, and we can afford only a few rapid generalizations. The significance of these poets for our thesis is that each asserts the imagination to be, not only creative, not only the essential power in poetry, but an organ—even the supreme organ—of truth. And this is a position which the empirical philosophy or its variants can never be made to afford. For it requires a view of the mind as animate, organic, and able to supply essential elements of its own knowledge: it requires, in other words, such a view of the mind as the Rationalist tradition had always maintained.

That the rationalist tradition had not heretofore made, or allowed, the claims for the imagination which these poets were to put forth, is sufficiently evident. Nor is the reason far to seek. The principal source of the tradition is Plato, with elements from Aristotle, the Neoplatonists, and the Stoics; and in Plato fancy (or the image-making faculty) is confined to the lower division of existence: to the sensible, the realm of mere appearance, not the intelligible, the realm of the real;

and the faculty is placed with the passions in the irrational soul. It is true that Plato came to conceive of a higher faculty, capable, not indeed of forming, but of receiving from God, their maker, images of essential truth: a faculty thus co-ordinate with intuitive reason, though passive instead of active. And this conception no doubt contributed to the belief in inspiration held by Milton (where the Spirit imprinted such images directly upon the imagination), and ultimately to Blake's double insistence upon imagination and inspired vision. But so far as the general theory of poetry was concerned, the stubborn fact that in his own treatment of the poets Plato did not invoke any idea of a higher imagination, militated strongly against the arrival at such an idea by the rationalist tradition, which turned for its theory of poetry principally to Aristotle, though the ambiguities of Plotinus, when added to those of Plato, were sufficient to ensure some attention to the imagination by Neoplatonists, including Henry More, and the theory of ideal imitation quoted by Dryden from Bellori is more Platonic than Aristotelian. But not until the romantic reaction against empiricism did the transformed rationalist tradition put forth a coherent theory of the imagination as central alike in the apprehension of truth and the production of poetry.

I am sensible of the seeming paradox in pretending to relate Blake the mystic to the rationalist tradition, however much transformed; but it was against reason as empiricism had come to conceive it that Blake protested. And if by the rationalist we mean one who insists that the mind is no mere mechanism, and no mere passive observer of what goes forward among its ideas, but a living power which furnishes essential elements of our knowledge and bestows significance upon experience itself, the paradox disappears. It was against the whole development of British thought from Bacon onward that Blake protested. With it he associated all the evils and futilities of the age (as he took them to be), and not least the inadequacy of its poetry and art. Whether he was right in his judgement, the historian need not inquire. It is sufficient that he was right in detecting the connexion between the various phenomena. And upon the role assigned to the imagination he fastened as central.

One cannot read far in Blake without recognizing the radical character of his theory. It is the very antithesis of the empirical or Baconian scheme, which he condemns. The visions of the imagination are primary and true; it is the results reached by the understanding in its inquiry into nature that are delusive or at best derivative. For reality is in its essence spiritual, and to be apprehended only by the appro-

priate spiritual faculty. 'Imagination', says Blake, 'is spiritual sensation' (ed. Keynes, p. 1040). 'The world of imagination is infinite and eternal, whereas the world of generation . . . is finite and temporal. There exist in that eternal world the perfect realities of everything which we see reflected in this . . . glass of nature' (p. 830). 'He who does not imagine in stronger and better lineaments, and stronger and better light, than his perishing and mortal eye can see, does not imagine at all' (p. 795). 'All we see is vision . . . , permanent in the imagination, considered as nothing by the natural man' (p. 765). Imagination is essential to all true perception. It is also antecedent to all proof: 'What is now proved was once only imagined' (p. 193). But imagination is pre-eminently the poet's gift. 'Ezekiel said: . . . "We of Israel taught that poetic genius, as you now call it, was the first principle [of perception], and all others merely derivative"' (p. 196).

This theory of reality, and of its apprehension by the imagination, at once conditions, and is conditioned by, Blake's view of poetry. The proper sphere of poetry, he declares, is 'invention and visionary creation' (p. 794). 'One power alone makes a poet: imagination, the divine vision' (p. 1024). Obviously no theory of the imitation of nature will serve his purpose. For it is the imagination that bestows form and meaning upon nature itself:

Nature has no outline, but imagination has;
Nature has no tune, but imagination has;
Nature has no supernatural and dissolves:
imagination is eternity (p. 769).

And with an eye both to the old definition of poetry and to that aspect of the empirical view of the imagination which related it to memory, he denounces those

Who pretend to poetry that they may destroy Imagination
By imitation of Nature's images drawn from remembrance (p. 466).

'Natural objects', he exclaims, 'always did and now do weaken, deaden and obliterate imagination in me' (p. 1024). But this is not, of course, the whole story. The manifold vision which the imagination provides accompanies a perception of something in nature; and 'to the eyes of the man of imagination, nature is imagination itself. . . . You certainly mistake when you say that the visions of fancy are not to be found in this world. To me this world is all one continued vision of fancy or imagination' (p. 1039). It still remains true, however, that Blake shows marked traces of those theories which set imagination

and the imitation of nature in opposition: only, it is for imagination that he makes the claim of truth.

To Wordsworth and Coleridge we must look for an effort of synthesis which will attempt to draw the two conceptions together. They differ in their attitudes. Wordsworth is poet, but not philosopher: he tests everything by his own experience and will adopt any theory which, surviving this test, will throw upon his experience a strong light. In early days he found much that would do so in the Hartleian scheme of association, which grounded the whole hierarchy of ideas on what Wordsworth called 'nature and the language of the sense'; and indeed the passage in *Tintern Abbey* which contains this phrase is a perfect poetic rendering of Hartley. In the Preface of 1815, he has passed beyond this stage. It is characteristic, however, in its emphasis on other qualities in the poet besides imagination, and notably on observation and description, which Blake deplored. The Preface refuses, moreover, to distinguish too sharply between the processes of fancy and imagination because they were not sharply distinguished in Wordsworth's experience. The clearest distinction which he can reach is in the *value* of what they produce: 'Fancy he says, 'is given to quicken and beguile the temporal part of our nature; imagination to incite and support the eternal. Yet. . . fancy is also under her own laws, and in her own spirit, a creative faculty.' Wordsworth's deeper insights are found in *The Prelude*¹ with its constant reference of the poet's experience and his growth to two complementary powers—nature and imagination. He has his own version of Coleridge's theory that perception is itself a creative act, and dependent upon imagination: the mind 'half perceives and half creates,' and for this process he coins the phrase 'creative sensibility'. From its unconscious promptings we are carried through to what for Wordsworth is the consummation of knowledge and wisdom—to what he calls (after Plato) 'intellectual' or 'spiritual love':

This spiritual love acts not, nor can exist,
Without imagination, which in truth
Is but another name for absolute power,
And clearest insight, amplitude of mind,
And reason in her most exalted mood
(14. 188-92.)

Coleridge, on the other hand, is a philosopher, and one whose passion is for comprehension (he will abandon nothing) and for synthesis and the reconciliation of opposites. He is also a Christian, who

must find his ultimate principle of synthesis in God. And, finally, he, too, is a poet, receptive to nature, but yet more aware of the quickening and transforming power of imagination. These are the conditions under which Coleridge approaches the problem.

Our interest as students of literature centres on the last of these facts—the quickening and transforming power of the imagination in poetry. But if we would understand his doctrine we must not unduly narrow the problem, as literary historians are apt to do, or brush Coleridge on the 'primary imagination' aside, and give all our attention to the 'secondary' or poetic imagination and to the famous distinction between it and fancy. For Coleridge's view of imagination is part of the whole philosophy of mind, and of nature, which he worked out in reaction against empiricism and its variants, or against what he himself called the 'mechanical philosophy'.

The 'primary imagination' is important, in the first place, because it embodies Coleridge's recognition of the role of the imagination in the forming of our knowledge. And this is a creative role. Without the active power of imagination no knowledge of any kind would be possible. The relation of Coleridge's thought to Kant's is a quicksand which I would avoid. But I think that some observations of Kant's may serve to fix what I will call Coleridge's minimum meaning. Imagination, says Kant, 'is a necessary ingredient of perception itself. It is a mistake to suppose 'that the senses not only supply impressions, but also combine them so as to generate images of objects. For that purpose something more than the mere receptivity of impressions is undoubtedly required, namely a function for the synthesis of them' (*Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. N. Kemp Smith, p. 144, Kant's footnote). And again: 'Now since every appearance contains a manifold, and since different perceptions therefore occur in the mind separately and singly, a combination of them, such as they cannot have in sense itself, is demanded. There must therefore exist in us an active faculty for the synthesis of this manifold. To this faculty I give the title *imagination*. Its action, when immediately directed upon perceptions, I entitle apprehension' (p. 144). And finally (by an argument which I must not pause to summarize) he reaches the conclusion that without this synthetizing faculty of imagination no subjective experience (unified by belonging to a single consciousness), and no ordered knowledge of the objective world, would be possible, and that in fact the imagination performs an essential office of mediation between mere sensibility and understanding.

It is not easy to be certain whether Coleridge's eager affirmation,

which characteristically differs from the cautious and involved argument of the Critical Philosophy, implies more than this. Possibly it does. Long ago he had averred that the mind must be active because made in the image of the Creator, and that any system built on the passiveness of the mind is therefore false (to Poole, March 1801: *Letters*, i. 352). Now he writes: "The primary imagination I hold to be the living power and prime agent in all human perception, and as a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I Am' (*Biog. Lit.*, ed. Shawcross, i. 202). A part at least of his purpose is to assert the validity, the essential truth, of the poetic imagination. To do so, he resorts to the traditional idea that the poet is a maker, like God; but, again characteristically, he seeks to give the idea philosophic content. The primary imagination is a finite counterpart of God's creative act. The secondary or poetic imagination, which (in Coleridge's phrase) coexists with conscious will, is identical with the primary in kind and differs only in degree and in the mode of its operation. Therefore it, too, is a finite counterpart of God's creative act. This is Coleridge's answer to that whole tradition of thought which regarded the product of the imagination merely as fiction, and to those philosophers who, even when they studied poetry, despised it.

Coleridge's famous contrast of the secondary imagination and fancy parallels his other contrast of reason and understanding. Fancy, he tells us, is merely 'a mode of memory', though 'emancipated from the order of time and space', and subjected instead to 'that empirical phenomenon of the will' called choice; and 'equally with the ordinary memory, the fancy must receive all its materials ready made from the law of association' (*ibid.* i. 203). Thus, despite the wide difference in their products, fancy and understanding move in the same area, have the same material at their disposal (*natura naturata*), and operate under the same law (the association of ideas). Coleridge's fancy is the undifferentiated fancy and imagination of Hobbes and the Empirical tradition. His secondary imagination, on the contrary, belongs to the higher realm of reason. That it coexists with conscious will, not only records Coleridge's conviction that a poem is willed and planned, and does not simply happen (as Shelley avers), but it also brings the imagination into the area of the practical reason and subjects it to the same law. It is not, however, in the light of Kant alone that Coleridge's doctrine is to be understood: we must also remember Plato's higher or intuitive reason. Coleridge has broken the fatal spell and effected the juncture of intuitive reason and the *active* power of

imagination, for which Plato declined, or at least failed, to provide. By a single act of imagination the insights of reason are given concrete embodiment. Wordsworth understood Coleridge's doctrine, and provided the best brief summary of it when he described imagination as 'reason in her most exalted mood'. On the lower level understanding and fancy, despite their common material and law, are sharply opposed. On the higher, reason and imagination can be described as different modes of the same power.

Coleridge's doctrine of the imagination remains in some degree a matter of inference; and none of his many applications utilizes its full resources. One of the best occurs in his *Lay Sermon* (1816), published at a time when, as the marginalia in one of his copies testify, he was thinking deeply on the understanding, the reason, and the imagination:

And in nothing is the scriptural history more strongly contrasted with the histories of highest note in the present age than in its freedom from the hollowness of abstractions. While the latter present a shadow-fight of things and quantities, the former gives us the histories of men and balances the important influences of individual minds with the previous state of the national morals and manners. . . . How should it be otherwise? The histories and political economy of the present and preceding century partake in the general contagion of its mechanic philosophy and are the product of an unenlivened generalizing Understanding. In the scriptures they are the living educts of the Imagination; of that reconciling and mediatory power, which incorporating the Reason in images of the Sense, and organizing (as it were) the flux of the senses by the permanence and self-encircling energies of the Reason, gives birth to a system of symbols, harmonious in themselves and consubstantial with the truths of which they are the conductors (*Lay Sermon*, 1816, pp. 34-5.)

In the essay *On Poesy or Art* (which means, as one remembers, the creative process common to all the arts), Coleridge curiously does not refer to the imagination by name. But he explains the traditional conception of art as an imitation of nature as it would be interpreted by one who held his view of the imagination and its role. To imitate is not to copy; and the nature which the artist must seek to imitate is *natura naturans*: that nature which is a living and productive thing, bearing, indeed, all the marks of intellect antecedent to consciousness and moral responsibility.

And man's mind [says Coleridge] is the very focus of all the rays of intellect which are scattered throughout the images of nature. Now so to place these images, totalized, and fitted to the limits of the human mind,

as to elicit from, and superinduce upon, the forms themselves the moral reflections to which they approximate, to make the external internal, and the internal external, to make nature thought, and thought nature,—*this* is the mystery of genius in the fine arts. (ed. Shawcross, ii. 257-8.)

It is thus that Coleridge completes the romantic theory of poetry in one of its lines by asserting the validity of the creative imagination and attempting to reconcile in theory (as not only Wordsworth, but Shakespeare, Spenser, and Milton, each in his own way, reconciles in practice) the rival claims of imagination and the imitation of nature.

This is not the whole story of the developing idea of imagination in our period, which would entail a similar examination of Shelley and the other great romantics and much fuller documentation from minor writers than could be attempted in this brief sketch; but it is, I believe, an essential part of the story, and characteristic of the whole in the clash and contribution of different traditions in thought, and in its evident relevance, at point after point, to the history of the movement from neo-classical to romantic in England.

A. S. P. WOODHOUSE

[A brief bibliographical note will supplement the references supplied in the text: A. C. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being* (1936), *Essays in the History of Ideas* (1948: includes 'The Historiography of Ideas', 'Nature as an Aesthetic Norm', 'On the Discrimination of Romanticisms'); W. J. Bate, *From Classic to Romantic* (1946); Victor M. Hamm, 'English Neo-classicism: a study in confusion' (*Thought*, xi. 378 ff.); F. E. L. Priestley, 'Newton and the Romantic Concept of Nature' (*Univ. of Toronto Quart.* xvii. 323 ff.); D. G. James, *The Age of Reason* (1949); M. W. Bundy, *The Theory of Imagination in Classical and Mediaeval Thought* (*Univ. of Illinois Studies in Lang. and Lit.*, 1927); 'Bacon's True Opinion of Poetry' (*Stud. in Philol.* xxvii. 244 ff.); A. S. P. Woodhouse, 'Collins and the Creative Imagination' (*Studies in English*, ed. M. W. Wallace, 1931, 59 ff.); Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria*, with his *Aesthetical Essays*, ed. J. Shawcross; Dryden's *Essays*, ed. W. P. Ker; *Elizabethan Critical Essays*, ed. G. Gregory Smith (for Sidney and Puttenham); *English Critical Essays of the Seventeenth Century*, ed. J. E. Spingarn (for Bacon's *Advancement of Learning* and Hobbes's *Answer to Davenant*). In quotations, spelling, capitalization, and punctuation have been modernized. It is to be understood that the history of 'imagination' could have been much more fully documented, and will be, with that of other crucial terms, in a book which I am preparing with the collaboration of Professor Priestley.]

An Approach to words worth's Genius

WORDSWORTH is now accepted without question as one of our great English poets, a poet of genius. I want to look closely at one aspect of his genius which is suggested by his own reflections upon it; and I would say at once that, while I hold him to be a vital and most interesting thinker, what I value in his contribution to our understanding of the laws and processes of poetic creation is *not* his aesthetic philosophy—he was no trained philosopher—but his power to see the significance of what happened in his own inner life, and to record it faithfully.

He has said some good things about Genius. 'Genius is the introduction of a new element into the intellectual universe.' 'Of genius in the fine arts the only infallible sign is *the widening the sphere of human sensibility* for the delight, honour and benefit of human nature.' With genius he significantly associates power. 'Every great poet in the highest exercise of his genius must call forth and communicate power.' It is the implication of the last two statements—'the widening the sphere of human sensibility' and the 'calling forth and communicating of power' that I should like to pursue in the limited—or unlimited—sphere of his own genius.

With the simplicity of greatness; and, I would say, with the modesty, the calm, unassertive assurance of genius—which Keats had, and Milton—Wordsworth writes in *The Prelude*

Of Genius, Power,
Creation, and divinity itself
I have been speaking, for my theme has been
What passed within me.

He was deeply conscious of the *power* which fostered his genius and which he believed his genius could communicate. He used the word with a highly charged meaning: it meant for him, as it did for St. Paul and St. John, spiritual power. He found it in Nature and in Man.

As a child he felt, he says, 'the power of Nature': as a man he hailed in Nature

the blessed power that rolls
About, below, above.

And the power in human personality came home to him with a special appeal.

When Fox was dying he wrote:

A power is passing from the earth.

And when Scott, desperately ill, was leaving Abbotsford, Wordsworth wrote of his fellow poet in a moving sonnet ('A trouble not of clouds or weeping rain') that Spirits of Power in his native hills were lamenting

A kindred power, departing from their sight.

Books, poems, and their writers are, he insists, powers

For ever to be hallowed, only less

For what we may become and what we need

Than Nature's self, which is the breath of God.

He hoped that his own poetry, proceeding from a source of untaught things', would become 'a power like one of Nature's'.

Wordsworth was a profound and subtle psychologist. In the poem on his own early life, *The Prelude*, he conducted a searching study into the process by which a poet was made out of a healthy vigorous north-country lad; and it was in his view a necessary part of that study to investigate the sources of the *power* which fostered his genius.

Wordsworth's mind had a scientific bent: he was an accurate observer and recorder: he believed in facts. Coleridge complained, as Hazlitt, of a certain matter-of-factness, a clinging to the palpable in Wordsworth. Again he was interested in the origin of things, in growth and development. He knew that for him the vital period of his life was childhood and early youth; but characteristically he carries his search still farther back.

The babe in his mother's arms, he observed, makes, through his senses, and especially through the touch of his mother, his first link with the world outside him, and thus he shares in the power that sustains the universe.

For feeling has to him imparted power,
That through the growing faculties of sense,
Doth like an agent of the one great mind
Create, creator and receiver both,
Working but in alliance with the works
Which it beholds.—Such verily is the first
Poetic spirit of our human life.

PreL ii. 255.

These lines bring us near to the centre of Wordsworth's thought.

The foundation of our knowledge of the world is the experience of

the senses: what the senses tell us is quickened by feeling. The power that thus flows into us becomes a creative agent, becomes indeed 'the first poetic spirit of our human life', which elsewhere he calls imagination, the creative faculty *par excellence*. One thing more: the senses, he knows from his own experience in childhood, were the gateway into the world of the spirit.

There is

an all-pervading Spirit upon whom
Our dark foundations rest,

a presence which is in Nature, as it is in the mind of man. So he believed. We must accept this up to the hilt if we are to understand Wordsworth's poetry. We must equally accept his belief in what he calls (in lines he never published) 'the *godlike faculties of sense*'. We can agree that every great original poet must 'widen the sphere of human sensibility': to do this he must have some special awareness, so that he can reveal to us 'things unseen before'. Now Wordsworth's special awareness was, as we know, of the life of Nature, into which he entered through his extraordinarily lively senses: here it was that for him a shaft opened which reached down to an inexhaustible world of experience—known to us in some measure, but not before realized. Wordsworth is in no doubt at all as to what this had to do with his genius.

Here is the title which he gave to one of the first passages he printed from *The Prelude*, the lines beginning 'Wisdom and Spirit of the Universe': 'Growth of Genius from the influence of Natural Objects on the Imagination in childhood and early youth'

Wisdom and Spirit of the universe!
Thou Soul that art the eternity of thought,
That givest to forms and images a breath
And everlasting motion, not in vain
By day or star-light thus from my first dawn
Of childhood didst thou intertwine for me
The passions that build up our human soul;
Not with the mean and vulgar works of man,
But with high objects, with enduring things—
With life and nature—purifying thus
The elements of feeling and of thought,
And sanctifying, by such discipline,
Both pain and fear, until we recognize
A grandeur in the beatings of the heart.

If I may attempt very crudely to render the meaning of these subtle

lines in the unwinged words of prose, it is something like this: he addresses the eternal spirit as the great creative intelligence who informs the universe and whom he recognizes in his own mind as the motive power of thought; judging by his own experience, images which have excited strong feelings in us move through our minds with a continuous life. If the images are great and beautiful, the feelings themselves will be purified. This is a recurrent theme with Wordsworth: images of the senses are joined with feelings—joy, fear, pain; and 'feeling comes in aid of feeling if but once we have been strong'; such feelings become a part of the whole united personality built up by the mind's linking of past and present in a living chain of experience. Again and again in *The Prelude* he returns to earlier experiences, 'their spectacles and sounds', to 'drink as at a fountain'.

Coleridge explains the idea in *The Friend* and rightly quotes Wordsworth to clinch it:

If men laugh at the falsehoods that were imposed on themselves in childhood, it is because they are not good and wise enough to contemplate the past in the present, and so to produce by a virtuous and thoughtful sensibility that *continuity in their self-consciousness* which Nature has made the law of their animal life Men are ungrateful to others only when they have ceased to look back on their former selves with joy and tenderness. They exist in fragments. Annihilated as to the Past, they are dead to the Future, or seek for the proofs of it everywhere, only not (where alone they can be found) in themselves. A contemporary Poet has exprest and illustrated this sentiment with equal fineness of thought and tenderness of feeling:

My heart leaps up when I behold
 A rainbow in the sky:
 So was it when my life began;
 So is it now I am a man;
 So be it when I shall grow old,
 Or let me die!
 The Child is father of the Man;
 And I could wish my days to be
 Bound each to each by natural piety.

This continued movement of the image through the life of the mind, which we may find abundantly illustrated in his poetry, is, Wordsworth thinks, in the special charge of the imagination.

The Poem which in 1815 he placed first in the *Category of Poems of the Imagination* is another episode from *The Prelude* belonging to

his early life, that about the Boy hooting to the Owls. He writes of it thus in his Preface:

I have begun with one of the earliest processes of Nature in the development of this faculty. Guided by one of my own primary consciousnesses I have represented a transfer of internal feelings co-operating with external accidents to plant for immortality images of sound and sight *in the celestial soil of the imagination*. The Boy there introduced is listening with something of a feverish and restless anxiety for the recurrence of the riotous sounds which he had previously excited; and at the moment when the intenseness of his mind is beginning to remit he is surprized into a perception of the solemn and tranquillizing images which the Poem describes—

There was a Boy; ye knew him well, ye cliffs
And islands of Winander!—many a time,
At evening, when the earliest stars began
To move along the edges of the hills,
Rising or setting, would he stand alone,
Beneath the trees, or by the glimmering lake;
And there, with fingers interwoven, both hands
Pressed closely palm to palm and to his mouth
Uplifted, he, as through an instrument,
Blew mimic hodings to the silent owls,
That they might answer him.—And they would shout
Across the watery vale, and shout again,
Responsive to his call,—with quivering peals,
And long halloos, and screams, and echoes loud
Redoubled and redoubled; concourse wild
Of jocund din! And, when there came a pause
Of silence such as baffled his best skill:
Then sometimes, in that silence, while he hung
Listening, a gentle shock of mild surprise
Has carried far into his heart the voice
Of mountain-torrents; or the visible scene
Would enter unawares into his mind
With all its solemn imagery, its rocks,
Its woods, and that uncertain heaven received
Into the bosom of the steady lake.

The images, as he says, were taken into the keeping of the imagination—into the safe keeping, we might say: they will go on living in his mind as long as he lives. And it is certain that they will go on living in the minds of his readers as long as there are human beings who value poetry. Well might Wordsworth speak of 'the mighty world of eye and ear'. The sense of sight was unusually developed in

him: he speaks of 'the power of a peculiar eye', which 'could find no surface where its power might sleep'. And his ear was perhaps even more sensitive. Images of sound mean as much in his poetry as those of sight.

The precise prosaic phrase which he used in the title of the passage I quoted earlier, 'the influence of natural objects', is not one that I shall repeat, though I like its prosaic precision. 'Natural objects' when they enter the life of the mind become 'images of nature', and images of nature with all the power they carry were feeding sources of his genius. Wordsworth sets us on the track of the part they played historically in his development as a poet. We shall learn something by following out the story from the beginning with his help.

He says of his early Poems from which he printed extracts in his collective edition of 1815, 'they represent implicitly some of the features of a youthful mind, at a time when *images of nature* supplied to it the place of thought, sentiment, and almost of action'. We may think in particular of *An Evening Walk*, chock-full as it is of these images.

One of them had a special significance in his poetical history: an oak-tree seen against the evening sky:

And fronting the bright west, yon oak entwines
Its darkening boughs and leaves in stronger lines.

'This', Wordsworth said, 'is feebly expressed, but I recollect distinctly the very spot where this first struck me. It was in the way between Hawkshead and Ambleside and gave me extreme pleasure. The moment was important in my poetical history; for I date from it my consciousness of the infinite variety of natural appearances which had been unnoticed by the poets . . . and I made a resolution to supply in some degree the deficiency. I could not have been at that time above 14 years of age.'

Coleridge noticed 'the novelty and struggling crowd of images' in these Juvenile poems which belonged to the class named by Wordsworth loco-descriptive. Wordsworth was indeed caught in the trammels of the inherited diction of this class of poems, of which the most influential practitioners were for him Thomson and Beattie, both harking back to Milton. We have 'vistas' and 'prospects'—attempts at the word-painting of landscape, special attention to effects of light and shade.

In *An Evening Walk* he gives a description of the Rydal lower falls, a well-known picturesque view, which, you will remember, Keats as an eager tourist did not miss.

The separate images are accurately observed,¹ but they huddle together in a way that muffles their significance (the rill huddles, by the way, because there was a 'huddling brook' in *Comus*). We have the impression of a poet whose eye is on his object—and it is a keen eye—but who is trying to express what he sees in a completely unsuitable medium.

Wordsworth had to extricate himself not only from the crowding tumult of images—he describes his mind as 'beset with images' in his Cambridge days—but also from this overloaded vocabulary, and to break with the sentimental picturesque tradition, before he could find his tongue as a poet. But we must acknowledge, as he did himself, the importance of his devotion to natural images. In describing the young days of the Wanderer in *The Excursion* he is recording his own:

he had attained
An active power to fasten images
Upon his brain; and on their pictured lines
Intensely brooded, even till they acquired
The liveliness of dreams.

Excursion, i. 144.

Between 1789 when *An Evening Walk* was completed and 1798, the year of the *Lyrical Ballads* and *Tintern Abbey*, something happened which shook Wordsworth's inner world to its foundations, which

¹ In the note dictated to Miss Fenwick on *An Evening Walk*, Wordsworth said: 'There is not an image in it which I have not observed; and now, in my seventy-third year, I recollect the time and place where most of them were noticed.'

deepened his emotional life immeasurably, and which opened to him the way into a true poetic language—true that is for himself, right for what he had to say.

What happened was, briefly, the French Revolution, his tumultuous experience in France, his return to his sister Dorothy, and the unlooked-for miracle of his friendship with Coleridge.

To measure the leap forward in his poetical art compare this handling of an image in *An Evening Walk* with its successor in the early *Prelude*. The image is of cloud shadows moving along the hills:

And shades of deep embattled clouds were seen,¹
Spotting the Northern cliffs with lights between.

That is from *An Evening Walk*.

In *The Prelude* he rejoiced, on a day of sun and wind, in
the lights and shades
That marched and countermarched about the hills
In glorious apparition.

Or contrast the picture in *An Evening Walk* of the solitary outcast woman roaming houseless at night:

I see her now deny'd to lay her head,
On cold blue nights, in hut or straw-built shed

with that of the other poor outcast of *The Thorn*:

And she is known to every star
And every wind that blows.

By 1798 Wordsworth had become profoundly aware of human beings. The central book of *The Prelude* has the significant heading 'Love of Nature leading to love of Man'. When he turned from his disillusionment with the French Revolution and its Utopian vision of humanity to reach down to the reality of human life, he found in humble men and women a strength and beauty that were a revelation. He found in the simple affections, the elementary passions, the power to love and suffer, the *same* beauty, power, and mystery that he already knew in Nature. They seemed to spring from the same source. Here was his poetic theme; and looking for a language near to the heart of life, he found it in the traditional ballads, and in the living speech that he heard on the lips of simple countrymen and women.

He now knew the true value for his poetry of the store of images which he was perpetually garnering. He had passed out of the phase

¹ The 'embattled clouds' comes from Beattie.

when he could look at Nature with the eyes of a landscape-painter—
when

the tall rock,
The mountain, and the deep and gloomy wood,
Their colours and their forms

were to him 'an appetite, a feeling and a love' that had no 'interest
unborrowed from the eye'.

He now saw man and Nature together, and his deep knowledge of
Nature kept revealing to him the inner truth about man:

One impulse from a vernal wood,
May teach you more of man,
Of moral evil and of good
Than all the sages can.

Before we pass on to the *Lyrical Ballads*, and their lively Preface, which unfolds his thought about Poetry at that most vital period of his creative life when the poems were conceived, we must remind ourselves that the advance from the Juvenile Poems to the volume of 1798 was not made at one bound. Wordsworth's was a slow nature, his mind retentive of the past. Between *An Evening Walk* and *Tintern Abbey* we have to reckon with a body of serious work at his poetic craft, much of it in the style of an earlier poetic mode, little of it bearing the strong stamp of his genius. It is enough perhaps to remember *The Female Vagrant* and *The Borderers* as the work of the Racedown years, 1795 to 1797. But I should like to tell you of another poem which belongs to the end of that period, a poem with the title *Address to Silence*, which has lain buried since 1797 in a west-country periodical, till I tracked it down a year ago. I now propose to exhume it for your benefit. This is the story.

In a note-book of Dorothy Wordsworth's into which she copied extracts from her brother's poems between 1797 and 1800, at the opposite end of the book from that where the main extracts begin, there stands the following entry:

*Passages taken from an address to Silence published in the
Weekly Entertainer*

Round Iceland's coast, the frozen sea its base,
Its top the sky, lit by the polar star
Thy throne is fixed—
Far, far remote from noise thy presence dwells;
The sleeping infant and his mother's eye,

ISO AN APPROACH TO WORDSWORTH'S GENIUS

The smiling picture, and the breathless bust,
The lonely tower upon the desert rock,
The shining valley with the full-orb'd moon
Are thy delights: with them thou art well-pleas'd
With thee 'tis peace: peace now, peace evermore!
Eternity of calmness is thy joy,
Immensity of space is thine abode
The rolling planets own thy sacred power,
Our noisy years are moments of thy life,
Our little world is lost amid thy spheres
The harmony serene of mind is thine

At the end of the extract you can read, written very faintly but certainly, the initials W. W.

Professor de Selincourt made the following note to the memorable lines of the *Immortality Ode*:

Our noisy years seem moments in the being
Of the eternal Silence

'A reminiscence of lines in an Address to Silence published in the Weekly Entertainer and copied into a note-book of Dorothy Wordsworth.'

It did not occur to him that the lines were by Wordsworth.

By the kindness of Mrs. Moorman, who is at work on the life of Wordsworth, my attention was drawn to the following note in the Diary of Joseph Gill, the factotum at Racedown House when the Wordsworths were there: '*Jan. ist. 1797.* Mr. P(inney) of Blackdown to send Mr. Wordsworth's poem to "The Entertainer".' I searched that periodical till I found 'The Address to Silence' printed in the number for 6 March 1797. It opens thus (I give the whole passage, from which Dorothy had copied only portions):

Address to Silence

[Read at a Literary Club]

Silence! calm venerable majesty:
Guardian of contemplation and of love,
Thy voice, in marv'llous words of nature, speaks
Not to the ear, but to the eye of man;
Thy placid mien restores the ruffled heath
Or shattered forests, where the storm is past;
And calms the ocean wave without a shore.
Sometimes when not a single leaf is wav'd;
When no mild breeze sweeps o'er the smiling vale,
When, in the lake, each undulation sleeps;

When heaven is full serene; and grove and hill,
 And mother earth are stript of herb and flower
 By winter's hand, laying in deep repose
 Whole islands; heav'nly musing silence reigns.

Then follow the lines quoted by Dorothy:

Round Iceland's coast...
 Thy throne is fixt

continuing

Thy palace now and then
 Is to the centre shook by falling rocks
 Of glittering ice; or the enormous whale,
 Or by the roar of Hecla's flaming mouth
 Loud thundering o'er thy widely echoing realms.

At first when I read the whole poem I resisted the idea that it was Wordsworth's. The initials that stand at the end of the printed version are not W. W. but W. C. Was it perhaps the joint work of Wordsworth and Coleridge? In the end, now that I know the lines familiarly, I am convinced that they are mainly, if not wholly, Wordsworth's. The imaginative mode with its elaborate and sustained personification of Silence, and its provision of scenery from Iceland and the Northern Seas, belongs to the eighteenth-century tradition, and suggests Thomson and Dyer rather than Wordsworth. But some of the images are Wordsworthian indubitably. These two for example:

Sometimes when not a single leaf is wav'd
 and

When, in the lake, each undulation sleeps.

They are not startling, they are simple and inevitable and belong to his early days among the woods, and by the lake of Esthwaite.

Sometimes when not a single leaf is wav'd.

That calls up a line from the early *Prelude* which reverberates in the memory; a line that carries the same image with a deeper implication:

Hush'd meanwhile
 Was the under soul, lock'd up in such a calm
 That not a leaf of the great nature stirr'd.

In the other line

When, in the lake, each undulation sleeps,

it is the word 'sleeps' which is significant and Wordsworthian. At the beautiful close of *An Evening Walk*, where the evening sounds drop

into a magical stillness and silence, comes this quiet imaginative line:

All air is, as the sleeping water, still.

It is the same lake, the same sleeping water.

Silence is not every poet's subject, but it was Wordsworth's. In his later poetry he could touch it infallibly:

His daily teachers had been woods and rills,
The silence that is in the starry sky,
The sleep that is among the lonely hills.

He knew the mountain solitudes

Where even the motion of an angel's wing
Would interrupt the intense tranquillity
Of silent hills and more than silent sky.

He knew the meaning of the eternal Silence, which we in our noisy years have unlearned, or rarely succeed in learning.

That is why I have judged this early Address to Silence, spun out as it is to 64 lines of flat blank verse, just worth a passing notice, though I freely admit that as a poem to join the Wordsworth Canon it is no great shakes!

I now return to the *Lyrical Ballads* and the place of natural imagery in his mind when he wrote them. The Ballads are poetical studies of simple human beings in a setting of earth, air, and sky. They are not descriptive poems either of man or nature. His object had been, he said in the famous Preface, to choose incidents from common life which would illustrate the primary laws of our nature, traced especially in the working of what he calls the essential passions of the heart, or our elementary feelings. So far he speaks only of man. And where does Nature come in? He leaves us in no doubt.

With what, he asks, are 'the general passions and thoughts and feelings of man connected?' 'Undoubtedly', he answers, 'with our moral sentiments and our *animal sensations*, and with the causes which excite these; with the operations of the elements and the appearances of the visible universe; with storm and sunshine, with the revolutions of the seasons, with cold and heat, with loss of friends and kindred, with injuries and resentments, gratitude and hope, with fear and sorrow.' You will notice that he puts the things that belong to Nature *before* those that belong to Man, though man was now first with him, his prime subject. But we have been tracing historically the effect upon him of the images of Nature, and in his inner history it is manifest that the influence of Nature came first.

In a famous letter to John Wilson he writes of the influence upon human beings of 'the colours and forms of flowers, the voices and motions of birds and beasts, the appearances of the sky and heavenly bodies', and says that 'all men are more or less affected by them; and in childhood in the first practice and exercise of their senses, they must have been not the nourishers merely, but the *fathers of their passions*'.

This surprising statement is true to his own experience. 'I speak of what I know' he said, 'and what we feel within'. The very foundation of his experience with nature is a direct physical awareness unusual only in its intensity: he is not afraid to acknowledge the value of *animal sensations*', through them he shared directly in the life of nature and absorbed her power into his moral being. He owed much to mountain streams. When he visited Vaucluse 'the beauty of the stream called forcibly', he says, 'for the expression of sympathy from one who from his childhood had studied the brooks and torrents of his native mountains'. And in one of his sonnets on the Duddon, a stream he loved from boyhood, he gives a hint of how the physical companionship entered into his moral life.

Return Content! for fondly I pursued
 Even when a child, the Streams—unheard, unseen;
 Through tangled woods, impending rocks between;
 Or free as air, with flying inquest viewed
 The sullen reservoirs whence their bold brood—
 Pure as the morning, fretful, boisterous, keen,
 Green as the salt sea billows, white and green—
 Poured down the hills, a joyous multitude!
 Nor have I tracked their course for scanty gain;
 They taught me random cares and truant joys,
 That shield from mischief and preserve from stain
 Vague minds, when men are growing out of boys;
 My manly heart has owed to their rough noise
 Triumph, and thoughts no bondage can restrain.

(I have taken the last two lines from an earlier manuscript version.) 'Wordsworth', said De Quincey, 'had his passion for Nature fixed in his blood; it was a necessity of his being, like that of the mulberry leaf to the silk-worm, and through his commerce with Nature did he live and breathe. Hence it was from the *truth* of his love that his knowledge grew.'

Everywhere in his poetry, not thrusting themselves insistently, but lying quietly, are the signs of an intensely loving and watchful

companionship with Nature, whose countenance he knows, as we may know the countenance of a beloved friend. He records the hour when he would begin to hoot to the owls. It was

At evening when the earliest stars began
To move along the edges of the hills.

This delicate and lively observation lies under all his poetic imagery. He was particularly sensitive to weather, an accurate observer of its phases. Here are some lines from a note-book which give the imagery of a phase in stormy weather well known to dwellers in mountain country:

The rains at length have ceased,
The stars shine brightly between clouds at rest
And as a cavern is with darkness filled
The Vale is by a mighty sound possessed.

When this same imagery is brought into relation with human emotion, its significance is deepened tenfold.

On the evening when Wordsworth had the news of the imminent death of Charles James Fox, just such a clearing in the weather after protracted storm greeted him in the valley of Grasmere.

Loud is the Vale! the Voice is up
With which she speaks when storms are gone,
A mighty unison of streams!
Of all her Voices, One!

Loud is the Vale;—this inland Depth
In peace is roaring like the Sea;
Yon star upon the mountain-top
Is listening quietly.

Sad was I, even to pain deprest,
Importunate and heavy load!
The Comforter hath found me here,
Upon this lonely road;

And many thousands now are sad—
Wait the fulfilment of their fear;
For he must die who is their stay,
Their glory disappear.

A power is passing from the earth
To breathless Nature's dark abyss;
But when the great and good depart
What is it more than this—

That Man, who is from God sent forth,
 Doth yet again to God return?—
 Such ebb and flow must ever be,
 Then wherefore should we mourn?

The imagery, alive and true, of the sounds and sights that mark such a change in the weather—the roar of innumerable swollen torrents and rills, the shining of the star in the quiet sky above the mountain top, prepare us to find alive and true the human consolation that the poet drew from what he heard and saw. Peace came to him and a sense of the sureness of the great natural laws: life and death seemed to belong to the eternal ebb and flow.

Images of nature play their part, not obtrusively but intimately, in all his poetry of human nature. His human characters are met out of doors, with the wind on their faces, the sky behind their heads, and as often as not the sound of running water in their ears. Wordsworth could find no better way of convincing us of the beauty, or greatness, or sheer joyfulness of human personality. There is no need to press the point.

The young Lord Clifford grew up as a shepherd-boy among the mountains.

No thoughts he hath, but thoughts that pass
 Light as the wind along the grass.

Lucy, that elusive maiden, was wont to lean her ear

In many a secret place
 Where rivulets dance their wayward round
 And beauty born of murmuring sound
 Would pass into her face.

The heroic old shepherd Michael had been alone

Amid the heart of many thousand mists
 That came to him and left him on the heights.

The aged leech-gatherer, the living incarnation of the insuperable power of the human spirit, is seen standing 'motionless as a cloud' beside a desolate pool on a rocky moor. In each poem the natural surroundings have something to do—impossible to analyse—with the livingness and *inwardness* of the characters revealed.

The wheel has come full circle. Through his senses Wordsworth had his way *in* to the sphere of the spirit. Images of nature led him to the threshold of the world beyond sense. Who shall deny or explain

the experience of the mystic? Wordsworth records the great moments—rare, and more rare as they came to be in his later life, and it is always some experience with Nature which becomes as it were the aking-off place for the mystic trance.

The best record he gives is of that vision connected with his first crossing of the Alps:

Imagination—here the Power so called
Through sad incompetence of human speech,
That awful Power rose from the mind's abyss
Like an unfathered vapour that enwraps,
At once, some lonely traveller. I was lost;
Halted without an effort to break through;
But to my conscious soul I now can say—
'I recognize thy glory:' in such strength
Of usurpation, when the light of sense
Goes out, but with a flash that has revealed
The invisible world, doth greatness make abode,
There harbours; whether we be young or old,
Our destiny, our being's heart and home,
Is with infinitude, and only there;
With hope it is, hope that can never die,
Effort, and expectation, and desire,
And something evermore about to be.

I do not propose to trace the further part played by natural imagery in Wordsworth's later poetry. That is another subject. He came to use natural images in a more ordinary way, as illustrations of ideas or moral convictions, in the manner, we may say, of the Emblem.

In some well-known lines of *The Excursion* there is an image which is used in this fashion, but vitally and with a far-reaching significance. I shall end with that.

I have seen

A curious child, who dwelt upon a tract
Of inland ground, applying to his ear
The convolutions of a smooth-lipped shell;
To which, in silence hushed, his very soul
Listened intensely; and his countenance soon
Brightened with joy; for from within were heard
Murmurings, whereby the monitor expressed
Mysterious union with its native sea.
Even such a shell the universe itself
Is to the ear of Faith; and there are times,
I doubt not, when to you it doth impart

Authentic tidings of invisible things;
Of ebb and flow, and ever-during power;
And central peace, subsisting at the heart
Of endless agitation.

I put these lines before you not as a statement of doctrine or a confession of faith, but as a piece of poetic truth, conveyed in a natural image, full of life as Wordsworth's images are, carrying conviction. He had an intense physical consciousness of the beauty and order of Nature. In him as in all poets and artists the powers of sense and soul were mysteriously allied (I use his own words). When he laid his ear to the earth, he heard—not as you or I might—the dull thudding of human footsteps, but authentic tidings of invisible things.

HELEN DARBISHIRE

The Critical Importance of the Revived Interest in Seventeenth-Century Metaphysical Poetry

THE bewilderment of the public in face of *avant-garde* literature, art, and music of today is a fact of common experience. An Italian art critic, Matteo Marangoni, in 1933¹ went so far as to say, apropos of painting, that 'contemporary art has so succeeded in breaking off from tradition, that the visual categories so far used for the art of the past do not seem to apply any longer; perhaps it will be necessary to find new ones'. Indeed anyone who happens to cross from the rooms of ancient painting to those of modern and contemporary art in a gallery like that of Basel, might actually imagine himself transferred to another planet, where a different visual language is employed; that same cleavage which once would have been noticed between rooms of Western and Eastern art in a museum, may strike us nowadays within the compass of the European development. Ortega y Gasset, in *The Dehumanization of Art* (Princeton University Press, 1948), maintains that modern art—he is thinking chiefly of painting—is one of the periodical recurrences of iconoclasm, of hatred for the forms of living bodies, of return to geometry, such as took place for instance in very ancient times, when the snake and the sun became stylized in the meander and the swastika: modern art is therefore in opposition to the Greek tradition, which can be said to have dominated Europe until recently with its deep love for living forms. It would of course be absurd to maintain that all connexions with the past have been broken off; but it has become increasingly difficult to establish such connexions. Who, without being previously warned, would ever think of Poussin in front of Cezanne's canvases? Do we not find it rather surprising to hear of Cezanne's avowed intention 'vivi-fier Poussin au contact de la nature'? Who would think of Homer's *Odyssey* while reading Joyce's *Ulysses*? Who would notice a likeness between Vico's idea of history and *Finnegan's Wake*? Still, in the author's intentions, *Ulysses* was meant to be a modern unheroic transposition of the *Odyssey*, a sort of *retcorso* (in Vico's sense of the word) of the Homeric poem as it has been interpreted by Victor Berard in his famous work *Les Phéniciens et l'Odyssée*. A poem like Eliot's *Waste*

¹ In the first edition of his well-known guide to the appreciation of painting, *Saper vedere*.

Landy with its complex cultural allusions within a frame which does not seem to be linked up with any tradition, is perhaps the best instance of a fact now of everyday occurrence in modern art, namely that the relation of the artist to the past is no longer based on imitation but rather on allusion, it has a polemical character, it is filtered through the medium of irony. Let us again quote Ortega y Gasset:

The new art ridicules art itself. Art has never shown more clearly its magic gift than in thus flouting itself. Thanks to this suicidal gesture art continues to be art, its self-negation miraculously bringing about its preservation and triumph. I doubt much whether any young person of our time can be impressed by a poem, a painting, or a piece of music that is not flavoured with a dash of irony.

Ortega y Gasset goes on to say that this is no new phenomenon; something like it took place with the German romantics, under the leadership of the two brothers Schlegel who pronounced irony the foremost aesthetic category.

Art [he writes] has no right to exist if, content to reproduce reality, it uselessly duplicates it. Its mission is to conjure up imaginary worlds. That can be done only if the artist repudiates reality and by this act places himself above it. Being an artist means ceasing to take seriously that very serious person we are when we are not an artist. This inevitable dash of irony, it is true, imparts to modern art a monotony which must exasperate patience herself. But be that as it may, the contradiction between surfeit and enthusiasm now appears resolved. The first is aroused by art as a serious affair, the second is felt for art that triumphs as a farce, laughing off everything—itsself included—much as in a system of mirrors which indefinitely reflect one another no shape is ultimate, all are eventually ridiculed and revealed as pure images.

For romantic irony we may quote the brothers Schlegel; the irony of modern poetry (limiting our remarks now to this) has also a critical precedent. For, as is well known, critical thought, guiding taste, is the habitual forerunner of creative activity. I have chosen poetry as the subject of this paper because, of literary genres, poetry is the one which displays a more decided cleavage with the past. This term, literary genres, may sound out of date after Benedetto Croce's devastating criticism of it, but the fact that nevertheless genres continue to exist, springing up in different, but still recognizable shapes, is witnessed to by the different development of poetry and prose in contemporary literature. Obscure prose, notwithstanding Joyce's model, is rare, not to say non-existent, in modern fiction; whereas any poetry worth the name is abstruse, written in what a candid reader may

take as a conventional language, a cipher. There are not only commercial reasons for clarity in prose composition. It is indeed a well-known fact that the volumes of even the best contemporary English poets sell very badly, and that publishers continue to print them only for reasons of prestige and enlightened patronage; but no publisher is likely to print novels which fail to appeal to a comparatively wide public. But if novelists have not all and sundry followed suit after Joyce, in the same way as all poets, more or less, have learned from the example of T. S. Eliot, the chief reason is not commercial, but rather one of a general character, namely that poetry by tradition has always been a form of divine madness, bearing to madness the same relation as sleep bears to death, so that rare and abstruse language seems to be demanded by the very condition of singing; a commonplace passage, a snatch of *sermo pedestris*, may indeed occur in poetry with a view to deliberate artistic effect (as happens with Eliot and his followers), but is not the natural way of expression, as it is in the novel. But, beside this general reason, there is a special one which has suggested the theme of this paper, that is: a revolution of taste, a breaking off from the nineteenth-century tradition, has taken place in poetry first of all, because modern poetry is closely linked up with the rediscovery of the metaphysical poetry of the seventeenth century, and with the poetic theory which underlies that output of verse. It is well known how Eliot rediscovered John Donne, whose poems had been critically edited in 1912 by Grierson; Eliot had been predisposed and almost put in the way of this discovery by his admiration and imitation of Laforgue. We may note that Laforgue's irony, which distinguishes him from the other *poetes maudits*, descends directly from Heine's irony: thus, in a roundabout way, the irony of the modern poets is also linked up with the romantic tradition.

Of course Donne and his school had not been altogether blotted out from the memory of later generations, but if we take up, for instance, Palgrave's *Golden Treasury*, we shall vainly seek there for Marvell's masterpiece, *To his Coy Mistress*. Anthologies codify current taste. *To his Coy Mistress*, one of the greatest poems of the seventeenth century, had been excluded in consequence of the rationalist reaction against metaphysical poetry which set in at the end of the century. Dryden's condemnation of Donne and his school in his *Essay on Satyre* is too well known to bear quotation; behind a poet there is usually, as I have said, a critic and a philosopher: behind Dryden there is Hobbes. The modern interpretation of Hobbes's influence could be no better summed up than in the words of John Crowe Ransom:

What Bacon with his disparagement of poetry had begun, in the cause of science and protestantism, Hobbes completed. The name [of Hobbes] stood for common sense and naturalism, and the monopoly of the scientific spirit over the mind

—and in the remarks which Cleanth Brooks has added to this quotation:¹

The weakening of the metaphor, the development of a specifically 'poetic' subject matter and diction, the emphasis on simplicity and clarity, the simplification of the poet's attitude, the segregation of the witty and the ironical from the serious, the stricter separation of the various genres—all these items testify to the monopoly of the scientific spirit. This process of clarification involved the *exclusion* of certain elements from poetry—the prosaic, the unrefined, and the obscure. The imagination was weakened from a 'magic and synthetic' power to Hobbes's conception of it as the file-clerk of the memory.

The metaphysicals—and here lies Eliot's critical contribution, stimulated by suggestions from such disparate personalities as Ezra Pound and Sir Herbert Grierson—had succeeded in giving a peculiar blend of passion and thought, of feeling and intellect: in a word 'sensuous apprehension of thought'. This happy formula is the keystone not only of the modern interpretation of the metaphysicals, but also of contemporary poetic theory. How far does it actually fit seventeenth-century poetry? Miss Rosemond Tuve² has warned us against misreading earlier imagery, and has insisted on the necessity of interpreting the poets in the light of the poetic theory of their age; she would have us close our Eliot and open our Puttenham:

Would Donne, or any Metaphysical poet, have understood T. S. Eliot's attribution to him of a 'direct sensuous apprehension of thought', or have recognized himself in that intellectual poet who 'feels his thought as immediately as the odour of a rose'?

And still apropos of the formula 'direct sensuous apprehension of thought':

This famous phrase of Eliot's has come to be used by modern criticism almost as an explanation of the peculiar nature of Metaphysical poetry. I think that any Elizabethan or Jacobean would have found it obscure and psychologically untenable; their own orthodox explanations of the operation of metaphor and its variants illuminate Metaphysical tropes more simply and clearly.

¹ *Modern Poetry and its Tradition*, Editions Poetry, London, 1948, p. 60.

² *Elizabethan and Metaphysical Imagery, Renaissance Poetic and Twentieth-century Critics*, The University of Chicago Press, 1947, *passim*, chiefly pp. 5, 95, 128

And again:

It is clear that Varying¹ through metaphor would make for 'delightful' images not primarily sensuous in function, though plentiful in the mention of particulars. Donne's style, for example, highly tropical rather than schematic, is jammed with concretions, but no one could call it sensuous. Such a fact would cause nobody in the Renaissance any embarrassment, for that era did not share the modern antirational bias which has led us to seize with relief upon phrases like Eliot's 'sensuous apprehension of thought'.

The importance of historical correctness needs no emphasizing, but the vitality of poetry depends in a large measure on what later generations see in it: the two elements must concur in a critical estimate. For the present discussion, however, what interests us is not so much how far Donne and his contemporaries were aware of their own type of inspiration, but what we feel when surveying their poetry from the point of view of our present taste. Even if Eliot's interpretation should prove biased from a strictly historical standpoint (and William Empson has justly remarked that Miss Tuve's strictures do not dispose of it)¹, we have to take that interpretation as a positive starting-point in order to appreciate the effect of the rediscovery of the metaphysicals on modern poetry.

Accepting therefore the modern interpretation of Hobbes's influence, we see how 'the tendency towards order and simplification, taken over into a sphere in which it was inappropriate, succeeded in destroying metaphysical poetry'.² Once poetry had been reduced to poetic diction and to certain categories of poetic themes, like a watertight compartment, a poem like *To his Coy Mistress*, which blended wit and paradox with passion, would as a matter of course be judged a hybrid and fail to satisfy the critical test. Dr. Johnson's strictures on the metaphysicals have been frequently quoted: 'Their attempts

¹ 'Donne and the Rhetorical Tradition', in the *Kenyan Review*, Autumn 1949, PP. 571-89: 'Much of the haunting quality of Donne comes from writing about a total situation, without realizing quite how much of it he was getting into his language or even what all his cross-currents of feeling about it were; he broods like a thundercloud, as well as flashing like one. 'Poor Mr. Eliot, not to mention minor figures, comes in for a good deal of teasing [on Miss Tuve's part] for having said that Donne felt his thoughts, or did not suffer from the peculiar separation between intellect and emotion which arose later. It was a time when "the intellect was at the tip of the senses", and so on. Admittedly these are literary phrases, therefore a kind of pot shot at the real point, but they seem to me good ones. As Miss Tuve spends a great many pages in claiming that the old rhetoricians firmly avoided ever making the separation in view, it seems clear that she agrees with the point Eliot was making.'

² Cleanth Brooks, *op. cit.*, p. 199.

were always analytic; they broke every image into fragments; and could no more represent, by their slender conceits and laboured particularities, the prospects of nature or the scenes of life, than he who dissects a sun-beam with a prism, can exhibit the wide effulgence of a summer noon.' Sainte-Beuve did not express himself in a very different way when bent on advising Baudelaire : 'Vous vous défiez trop de la passion — de la passion naturelle.... Vous accordez trop a Pesprit, a la combinaison. Laissez-vous faire, ne craignez pas de sentir comme les autres, n'ayez jamais peur d'être commun. . . .' And Croce's criticism of Dante, his distinction between the elements of the *Divine Comedy*, his separation of the theological framework (non-poetry) from the actual poetry, are inspired by similar criteria to those of Dr. Johnson and Sainte-Beuve. Now the moderns, with Eliot in the lead, have tried to react against this idea of poetry as a poetry of exclusion, they have attempted to revive the poetry of inclusion which belongs to metaphysical periods, of which, according to Eliot, there are three in the history of European poetry: a medieval one, with Guinicelli, Cavalcanti, Dante (a field revealed to Eliot by Ezra Pound), a Baroque period, with Donne and his school, and a modern one with Baudelaire and Laforgue as its chief representatives. What has attracted the moderns to Donne is the sinuous, contrasted progress of his songs, one would almost say their *linea serpentinata*, to use a term introduced by the Cinquecento mannerists; their mixture of prosaic, refractory materials, that tangle of intellect and emotion which to the critical judgement of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries appeared a clear sign of impure inspiration, has been interpreted by the moderns as a symptom of imaginative power: no longer non-poetry, but rather poetry inclusive of all reality. The discovery of the metaphysicals has been more than a literary fashion, has resulted not only in the adoption of certain images, in the cult of certain conceits and imaginative processes; it has rather amounted to the awareness of a similar disposition of the spirit, of the same perplexity in facing life, of the same ironical reaction.

It appears likely that poets in our civilization, as it exists at present, must be *difficult* [Eliot said in his essay on *The Metaphysical Poets*]. Our civilization comprehends great variety and complexity, and this variety and complexity, playing upon a refined sensibility, must produce various and complex results. The poet must become more and more comprehensive, more allusive, more indirect, in order to force, to dislocate if necessary, language into his meaning.

Besides there has intervened in many poets whose formation dates

from around 1930 a political and social preoccupation, or rather anxiety, which was subtly analysed by Virginia Woolf in her essay on *The Leaning Tower*. Donne's was an age of anxiety, an anxiety before the spectacle of the collapse of the old medieval world under the blows of the new science; our modern epoch is also an age of anxiety, which has found its affinities in the seventeenth century. Auden, in *The Age of Anxiety* (1947), has chosen an appropriate title to define a climate common to all the poets for whose sense of insecurity, and dizziness, Virginia Woolf had found the image of the leaning tower. The feeling of frustration which is common to much intellectual English poetry of today finds a counterpart in Donne's bewilderment at the new discoveries in astronomy (Copernicus, Ticho, Galileo) and philosophy (Bacon). In the *Anniversaries* Donne surveys that medieval conception of the world which he has learned from the books so that it has become part and parcel of his thought, and he is dismayed at perceiving how all its supports have been shaken by the recent revolution in the scientific field. The perplexity of the seventeenth-century thinker who sees the very foundations of his thought undermined, and the perplexity of the twentieth-century poet who foresees 'another long day of servitude to wilful authority and blind accident', represent a link of sympathy much deeper than the mere revival of a fashion after a leap of centuries.

Irony, as it has been pointed out, is a customary attitude with modern poets. Their poetry of inclusion has brought about also the revaluation of another great poet in whom the romantics had seen the very opposite of the poetic disposition, Alexander Pope. The utmost the romantics were willing to grant him was an 'artificial' inspiration, inferior to the 'natural' inspiration of the true poets. The objection was substantially the same as the one made to metaphysical poetry by Dryden and Johnson, with their rationalist standards. In the anti-theoretical wit, in the allusions to persons and events of the narrow circle of his contemporaries, in such abiding features of Pope's verse, the romantic critics saw the antithesis of that solemn, nostalgic world, the more poetical as it was more vague, which their poets had sung, from Coleridge and Keats to Poe and Tennyson. Indeed the romantic revolution seems to us nowadays much less revolutionary, since, as it has been remarked by Cleanth Brooks,¹ in attacking the neo-classic conception of the poetic, they tended to offer new poetic objects rather than to discard altogether the conception of a special poetic material; and that is why many eighteenth-century features reappear today in

¹ Op. cit., p. 60.

Coleridge and Wordsworth, let alone the more obvious case of Byron, now that time has toned down and worn the specious glitter of their varnishing-day. It may at first sight seem incongruous that the revaluation of the metaphysicals should have had among its consequences also a revaluation of the chief poet of that Age of Reason which actually reacted against the metaphysicals. But Pope's poetry, like Donne's, shows also, though in a different way, the interpenetration of intellect and emotion. Whoever is capable of overcoming the prejudice that satire cannot be a subject of poetry, sees that warmth of feeling is not absent from Pope's great satirical poem, *The Dimciad*.

Another echo of Eliot's formula of 'sensuous thought' devised for the interpretation of metaphysical poetry, can be noticed in Herbert Read's appreciation of Wordsworth.¹

Wordsworth's poetry at its best [says Read] is philosophical poetry, and belongs to that rare species of poetry in which *thought is felt*. ... If I were asked: how can thought be felt? I should reply: not in pure ecstatic contemplation of its own processes, but by being conceived in some analogy which blends it vicariously with the passions and volitions of our vital frame. . . . The abstractions are as it were vitalized by contact with phenomena: they are no sooner thought of than they suggest an object lesson. The objects in the object lesson are so real in Wordsworth's case that they have the force of direct sensational experience.

The formulas of sensuous thought, of the objective correlative, of the poetry of inclusion, which date from the redintegration of metaphysical poetry into the main English tradition, are found by Read applicable also to Wordsworth.

The revaluation of the metaphysicals has been an earthquake in the English Parnassus, reshaping the outline of its summit as if it were a volcano. Donne's influence had been stemmed by the Age of Reason, ignored by the romantics; yet not long ago Professor Merritt Y. Hughes, wrote:² 'In the history of English literature the only forces comparable to it [Donne's power over modern poetry] are Shakespeare's influence, or Milton's in the eighteenth century.' An age capable of enjoying Donne was not calculated to be moved by the

¹ H. Read, *Wordsworth*, new edition, 1950, pp. 119, 126, 165.

² 'Kidnapping Donne', in *Essays in Criticism*, Second Series, by Members of the Department of English, University of California, 1934. Tracing the influence of Donne on modern poetry, Mr. Hughes says: 'Above all, in Mr. T. S. Eliot's *poetry* we feel the justification of his recent assertion that it is the special glory of our time to have understood Donne.' See Eliot's essay in *A Garland for John Donne*, ed. Spencer, Harvard Univ. Press, 1931, p. 5.

traditional music of Milton; T. S. Eliot voiced the new point of view on Milton in a famous essay whose assertions he has qualified since; an age trained to appreciate the intelligent poetry of Donne and Pope has found fault, through Eliot, with the pseudo-philosophical background of Shelley, and has defined Tennyson, in the words of W. H. Auden, 'the stupidest' of all the English poets: 'there was little about melancholia that he didn't know; there was little else that he did'. Of the nineteenth-century English poets the moderns have exalted the one who, born in an uncongenial period, has received only a posthumous recognition, Gerard Manley Hopkins. Hopkins, says Cecil Day Lewis,¹ has produced an effect opposite to that of Wordsworth: while Wordsworth tried to bring the language of poetry closer to everyday language, Hopkins, in his aversion to the commonplace, has done everything to remove the language of poetry as far as possible from ordinary speech. Language becomes with him incantation again; his prosody, on the other hand, has swung to the other extreme, for it is based on the rhythm of common speech (sprung rhythm). Such characteristics do we find, to a greater or lesser degree, in most contemporary poets. To quote again from Lewis: 'We find in post-war poetry [i.e. in the poetry written after the First World War] a tendency to combine these two results, to use common speech rhythms together with a mixture of simplified, superficially unpoetical language and highly poetical incantatory language.' These two languages, admirably blended in Hopkins as they had been in Donne, are used side by side and often contrasted in the poems of Pound, Eliot, and his followers, in order to produce effects of dissonance and surprise apt to convey the confusion of the modern world.

Thus the revaluation of Donne has not only resulted in a change of perspective in literary criticism, but has also furthered the reaction against the critical standards and the poetic theory of romanticism: Donne, we may say without fear of exaggeration, has had in the last thirty years a catalytic function.

MARIO PRAZ

¹ *A Hope for Poetry*, 1934.

PART FOUR

THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH IN
UNIVERSITIES

*The Place of English Studies in the British
Universities*

I AM not a teacher of English and never have been, and therefore I approach this subject very much from the outside, and I hope to be forgiven if I seem to imply that teachers of English do what they do not, or that they do not do what they do.

My mind at present is bound to be full of the educational experiment in which I am busily engaged in North Staffordshire in trying to overcome the specialization of our modern university teaching. We are trying to ensure that all our students shall have a common background of knowledge and understanding before they embark on their more specialized studies. We have arranged a General Course which is to occupy their first year, and which would include a course common to all on 'The History of Western Civilization, 'Modern Institutions', and 'The Empirical Sciences'. It will be clear at once that the teaching of English is bound to occupy a very important place in this scheme.

I do not know how many of you have read a little book by Dr., now Professor, Lowe, who was for some years a lecturer at Manchester, and is now research Director of an Institution in New York. The book is called *The Universities in Transformation*, and it contains a very notable criticism of German universities, the truth of which was amply evident to me when I was on a Commission regarding them in 1948. Lowe's point was that the universities of Germany used to give their students what the Germans call a *Weltanschauung*—a philosophy of life—and that was one of their greatest contributions to Germany in the early nineteenth century; but the splitting up of studies by the increased specialization needed to meet the growing importance of science had destroyed this first function of German universities, and they no longer inspired their students with any ideals or common purpose or values, and had consequently in Lowe's opinion become nothing but glorified technical colleges.

He went on to say that in the nineteenth century, and until the First World War, the universities of England were more fortunate, largely through the dominating influence of classical education and of schools like 'Literae Humaniores', but he expressed his apprehension that what had happened to German universities was beginning to happen to us, that the same excessive specialization is coming to mean that the great proportion of our students leave our universities without an education in the fullest sense of the term.

In a remarkable little book called *The Mission of the University*, the distinguished Spaniard, Ortega y Gasset, makes what is substantially the same point. Europe, he thinks, has lost its unity of culture. Our students are not educated but specialized, and have no common background, and what the universities have somehow got to try to do is to make their students live up to what he calls 'the height of the age'. That can only be done, he thinks, by giving them all some understanding of modern empirical science on the one hand and of the European heritage on the other.

In 1948 I found German universities trying to meet this criticism in many ways, but specially by the introduction of a year of what the Germans call *stttdium generale*, or perhaps more generally by re-thinking and changing the position of what the Germans call the Philosophical Faculty. That means that they are as much disturbed as we ought to be about the position of what we call the Arts Faculty.

I remember some years ago when discussing the modern situation with the late Professor Karl Mannheim and Dr. Lowe, I listened to what they said about the importance for us here of Philosophy, and the acquisition through it of a common *Weltanschauung*. My wife interrupted to say: 'We English, unlike you Germans, do not get our *Weltanschauung* through Philosophy, but through Poetry/ I am sure that is true. I am sure that in English poetry we have an inestimable cultural treasure which we neglect at our cost, and that our hope of retaining a firm sense of spiritual values depends on our being taught when young to love and treasure our great inheritance of English poetry.

'When young'—but how young? This is I think the crux of the matter. What we do at present is to arrange that almost everybody is taught English up to School Certificate, and that will now be to the age of 16; but after 16 specialization begins, and what our University Departments of English do by and large is to train teachers to teach English to the young up to the age of 16.

Now far be it from me to deny that you can have a love of poetry

distilled into you at a very early age, and I am all for that being done. The old habit, which for all I know still persists, of making children learn pieces of poetry by heart, gave many people a treasure which they kept with them all their lives, but nevertheless I am sure that Sir Richard Livingstone is right in supposing that cultural subjects, and the understanding of spiritual and social values, cannot be learnt properly by people under the age of 15 or 16. We ought to go on longer, and it is I think one of the main faults of our university education at the present time that most boys and girls, particularly most boys, put aside all cultural subjects after they are 16 and become specialists, and are more and more becoming scientific specialists. The country needs scientific specialists, but we also have a growing need for an understanding of spiritual values. Mental and spiritual health—as well as physical—is after all,

only for those brave
who, less than whole, are still by wholeness led.

We must somehow devise a university education which both gives students understanding of spiritual and social values, and allows them to pursue their own particular expertness. That means that we must somehow arrange some teaching and understanding of English for *all* students, and that means a revolution in the way in which we regard the respective importance of Honours and ordinary classes in English. My impression is that in the last twenty years the prestige of the ordinary class has declined, and there is a tendency to think that the only thing that matters is an Honours Degree. There was an extraordinary correspondence in the Educational Supplement of *The Times* not very long ago when it was assumed that nobody ought to go to a university who was not going to take an Honours Degree. There is no harm in that position as long as an Honours Degree is not exclusively an Honours Degree; as long as with the specialist's Honours training there is a first-class *ordinary* training in other subjects.

When I was a student at Glasgow, professors gave their best to their ordinary classes. The wonderful impression in those days which A. C. Bradley and Gilbert Murray made on the students of the University of Glasgow was made through their ordinary classes, not on a mere handful of people who took Honours in English, or in Greek, and the same thing was true twenty or thirty years later when I was myself a professor at Glasgow, though even then the size of the Honours classes was growing. It makes all the difference in the world

in the teaching of a subject where the professor puts the emphasis. Here in Oxford the Pass Degree atrophied and became of no educational value whatever, and by the end of the First World War practically everybody who was any good at Oxford did an Honours Degree, and the standard of the Pass Degree, which was kept for failures of one kind or another, was contemptible. But in my day as a student at the University of Glasgow in the nineties the teaching of A. C. Bradley and Gilbert Murray, of Henry Jones and of Adamson in their Pass classes was superb. That tradition, as I say, remained in Glasgow, and produced in me the impression that anybody could teach Honours students, but that it requires one's whole imagination and energy to teach the ordinary class; and I think that this emphasis on the Honours Degree has been fatal to the Arts Faculties in our universities.

Let me make it clear that I am not criticizing the teaching given in Honours English in the universities at the present time. I feel strongly that it ought to be accompanied by Honours in another subject, History or Philosophy, but that is part of my general belief that Honours in a single subject is bad. I am sure that the content of these Honours Schools is of a very high standard, and admirably adapted to turn out teachers of English. I am really making a much more far-reaching criticism, as I hope I am now beginning to make clear. The existing Honours Schools far too largely turn out teachers of English. I am concerned about the Arts and English education for scientists and economists and so on. I am concerned, as I said at the beginning, for education in values, for men who are also going to be technical specialists. My belief is, as I have said, that an understanding and appreciation of English poetry, of its history, and of its relation to the history of English culture, is a far more effective way of teaching a common outlook on the world, and a common understanding of our heritage, than a technical instruction in Philosophy.

Let us consider this idea of English for all—if you like, English for the scientists and economists—better put it in the latter way, because we should keep in our minds always that the students will have their special studies as well as English. Perhaps I may begin by explaining what we in North Staffordshire are, as at present advised, proposing to do.

Ten weeks of our first year will be devoted to lectures on European History, English Literature, and European Literature. The three subjects will be kept going at the same time, and students will be given an idea both of the place of English poetry in its historical

setting, and of its relation to the movement of European Literature. We propose also that students shall do a certain amount of tutorial work, or work in tutorial classes, accompanying this course.

In the second, third, and fourth years of the General Course of the Honours B.A. the scientists will be of course specially occupied with their two sciences, which they will study for every year of the three, and these two sciences will be what we call their principal subjects; but they will also have to take three other subjects of what we shall call subsidiary standard, which will, we expect, correspond to ordinary standard say at a Scottish University, and one at least of these possible two subjects will be in a division of subjects which includes History and Political and Moral Philosophy. What we shall be able to make out of these classes of subsidiary subjects we don't yet know, but I think an appreciable amount. The difficulty about these proposals for 'general' education is that they are apt to be superficial and smattery, and we have tried very hard to see that the 'general' sides of this education are real, and yet not to overweight the curriculum. I think it can be done. We have talked of the possibility of giving up the sharp division between these different Arts subjects, and prolonging the combined class of the first year into the second, third, and fourth, but we have so far been so busy in planning out our first year that we haven't got any detailed proposals about the second, third, and fourth yet. I hold myself rather strongly that if we can we ought to study English Literature against the background of the social conditions of the period which produced it, and of European Literature, but I know too well that proposals of this kind have to compromise owing to difficulties of time-tables and the necessity not to overload the students.

I have not been able to find out how such institutions as the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, which I understand make a study of English compulsory for all their students, arrange their syllabus.

You who are teachers of English will see all sorts of questions arising in relation to these far-reaching proposals. What for instance is to be the place of Language? Professor Samuel Alexander was making one of his challenging paradoxical thrusts which put us on the alert when he said that Shakespeare found Hamlet in the English Language. I should make that a text—could I elaborate the sermon—of the way we ought to teach the language side of English 'to the general'. Again, what is to be the place of learning to write English? Should students be encouraged, as children are at some schools, to

write verse? The answer to this is, I think, 'Yes, as long as they are not allowed to think that that is poetry!' These are not subjects on which my opinion is worth anything, but I have a conviction or prejudice that it is dangerous to get into the heads of students that there are certain things of which they ought to approve, and certain things of which they ought not. A true sense of values is a curious subtle growth, which cannot be forced.

I have this little bit of experience to go upon, that at an Oxford Tutorial Classes Summer School a good many years ago we were up against the problem of advising a course of lectures which were to apply to students of very many different tutorial classes, Economics, History, Philosophy, and Literature, and we did it by taking a period of English History and doing the Literature along with the History and the Economics and the Philosophy, and so on. We started with the nineteenth century and went back to the seventeenth, taking different periods in successive years, and those organizations were a very great success, and I think it is worth developing something like this at a university level.

In these experiments you will see one fundamental assumption, namely that we can break down the existing division between the different Arts subjects, and particularly between the different Arts Departments. I think that is a very difficult business. In our larger universities the Departments are so large that they almost inevitably tend to be self-contained.

I remember that when we were first discussing the proposals that we are now putting into practice in North Staffordshire, one Vice-Chancellor said to me: 'What you propose is what we should all like, but you will find that the Professors won't let you', and I think what he meant by that was that the vested interests in Honours Schools, particularly reinforced by what I may call Research Schools, would prevent any such revolution as I have been suggesting to you. Starting, as we are, with a staff who are all committed to the enterprise and therefore determined to work together, is a very different matter, and I think it is for us in North Staffordshire to show that this experiment can be a success before we can expect other universities to go very far.

Of course there are being worked out most interesting experiments in General Arts Degree Courses, but I hope it is clear that what we are experimenting with is something very different. It is not hard to take the Honours Degree as it now exists in one form or another at different universities and make new combinations like Modern

Greats. There are similar experiments which have been in existence now for quite a time. It is I think a very different matter to combine a really instructive teaching of an Arts subject like English with an Honours Degree in a scientific or economics subject.

It is institutions like the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, or the Technical University at Zurich, whose experiments in what I may call Arts for everybody seem to me most suggestive and interesting.

The proposals I have been putting forward imply something like the relation between Arts and what were then called the Higher Degrees in the medieval university, but the modern conception of university teaching makes it impossible to produce that relation exactly. We are all committed nowadays, and rightly committed, to the conception of a university teacher who ought himself in some way to be advancing his subject; at any rate he has got to be original—he has not to be expounding a text-book.

As I think I have said, the teaching in the ordinary class when I was a student was almost all of it given by the professors. They were of course themselves distinguished and great scholars, and their effect on their students in the ordinary classes was very remarkable. I am sure that something like this still goes on, but I still think that we need to change our emphasis in teaching English, and to turn all our minds and invention and imagination on to teaching English to students most of whom are specialists in other subjects. We ought not to let 'Honours' so dominate the teaching of any subject, and especially not of English, as to make us think of our students in the ordinary class as being in their first year of an Honours Course.

We need to put all the students in the way to use, as we use daily bread, the great common heritage which English, and particularly English poetry, holds.

LINDSAY OF BIRKER

What is 'Literature' for

IN the framework of these discussions, what I mean by the title 'What is "Literature" for?', is, 'Why do we teach it in universities?', and I want to talk about it because this is really the matter for which the Conference of Professors of English was originally convened some four years ago. We were to discuss and argue about what we do, and why. It is a question I continually ask myself, which you may think rather priggish of me; but the fact is, it wouldn't much amuse me to give my life to a job of which I did not see the purpose, and as far as possible, approve. And if as a consequence what I have to say may seem elementary, I can plead forgiveness only on the ground that we must at intervals go back and question our premisses. Besides I am not here to present a final philosophy, but to give a talk to start a discussion.

I must say at the outset that I am, of course, talking about English Literature mainly for people whose national literature it is. I am, to make no bones about it, speaking about English literature to Professors of English in England and America: but—and here I hope that you all agree—I feel that what I have to say is applicable, *mutatis mutandis*, to Professors of English or French in France, of English or Dutch in Holland, and so on. There is, possibly, one difference, for it seems to me that in England, at any rate, this comparatively new academic activity of 'English Literature' is hampered by its origins; and what I should really like to attempt this afternoon is to throw out some suggestions—inevitably, but not deliberately, provocative suggestions—to rid it of its chains. If I state what may perhaps be considered an extreme position, I hope that nobody will take offence. After all, I shall be here to be pelted for the rest of the afternoon.

It seems to me that what we have to do in teaching our literature in our own country, is, through two or three channels, to make it easier for our students to 'compete with' living.¹ No one would wish to make unduly high claims for his subject, but it seems to me that we can more potently, and we hope, more reasonably and humanely, than teachers of any other subject, carry out that distortion of the mind which is called 'education'. After all, education is, I suppose, for some purpose, for some end; and I should like to say that at the

¹ All this applies only to our general, educative activity, and not to the tiny percentage we train as scholars, and who will separate themselves out by their own volition.

present time we should be educating very consciously for civilization. Something far bigger than our 'subject' is involved, namely, the mode of existence, and the attitude towards life, of the people who come to sit at our feet.

Literature, as we know only too well, can be studied in a large number of ways, adapted to different purposes, suitable to different kinds of mind; and seeing that literature means everything that is written, and all that this writing implies, our danger is that, too easily lured by the surety of other and older disciplines, we may allow it to become, and even study it as, a sub-department of history and sociology, of philosophy and morals, and of psychology, though the last perhaps more properly, for it is at least a study of what man spiritually is.

What distinguishes literature from the other disciplines is that although we study that we may in the end profit, the way to this profit is through delight, through pleasure, through even the sensuous pleasures, and through letting the imagination roam as lawlessly as it feels inclined. And what seems to me to be the first thing we should aim at is to refine, to sharpen, to make ever more perceptive, the faculty which receives the delight imparted by the imagination, spiritual, practical, and sensuous.

It is, of course, possible to study literature historically, and I would be the last to decry the value of this approach; reading in this way we do at least get some vision of how the mind of man has moved, get some idea of how the instrument of language has been put to a hundred uses, watch how one form, or vehicle, has gradually replaced earlier ones, and to make guesses (honourably known as research) as to the influence of 'whichness' on 'whatness', or of who upon whom. All this is very interesting, and up to a point, so long as it is not taken as an end in itself, a useful check and framework; but it is not in itself a study of literature.

Or again, it can be studied sociologically, as the froth thrown out by the ferment of society, as the expression of aristocratic romance, of bourgeois morality, of imperialistic aggression, or whatever easy and agreeable generalization fits in with the fashion of the moment. This, too, has its uses as a check, as a gloss, as, perhaps, a screen against misunderstanding; but again, by itself, it is not a study of literature. And though, perhaps, it approaches nearer to our purposes if we use literature to tell us how people in any particular age actually lived—though this can be done, speaking broadly, only through the medium of the novel—we are likely to miss that particularly

distinctive thing by which each individual author opens a door on another reality, another dimension of being.

Or again, the field of literature can be entered into as a sub-department of the province of philosophy, and this is a more dangerous, a more insidious temptation, since the philosophers, like ourselves, are in search of values. I say this is dangerous and insidious because the philosopher is always eager to achieve a system, whereas the artist is always at pains to avoid one. In many ways the philosophical approach is inimical to the artistic, for whereas philosophy seeks to arrange and to regulate, every artist is a rebel against the order of things, every really original work of art a bomb; and our very real difficulty as teachers of literature lies in this—that as critics we cannot avoid to some extent being philosophers, eager to produce order, categorize, make neat compartments, whereas the whole point of any work of art is that it is unique, and unlike any other work of art.

And, of course, the easy step downwards from the position of the philosopher is to that of the moralist, and there is today a strong tendency in the Schools to judge works of art by their moral value; yet no one man is entitled so to impose his system of morals on others. And the great condemnation of the moralistic approach, to be met with again and again, is its contempt of pleasure, that pleasure through which the literary artist is bound to work. I hold by the old phrase that the object of literature is to profit and delight, but also by the dictum born of experience, that there can be no profit unless there is delight. And my contention is that our first object in studying literature should be to realize this delight, to see how it is brought about, and then, but not till then, if we can, assess its value. How, we must ask, does it help man to live?

But the values to be gained from the study of literature cannot be arrived at by a statement of them. They can be imparted only by the work of art itself: what we have to study, what we have to try to get some idea of into our students, is the nature of myth, allegory, image, emblem, metaphor, and their relation with reality. It is a tremendous task, which I don't think many of us have ever really undertaken. That is the temple; we are apt to play in the precincts, concerning ourselves with adjuncts and technologies. Literature is imaginative and must be imaginatively grasped, and approached. To steal from the Hon. Member for Bristol, imagination

. . . takes a place . . . midway between sense and understanding, or better, partakes of both, while being neither; and it is that by which the com-

munity and intimacy of the knower and the known is maintained. This intimacy is also the 'assimilation' of the knower to the known, and of the known to the knower, and is the condition of all knowledge. This intimacy shows itself in poetry, in symbolism: and symbolism is not a device of poetry, but a fundamental feature of knowledge which poetry unquestioningly acknowledges.¹

And, of course, we do not wish to inculcate any special values, or at least, we should not, though part of our *raison d'être* maybe is to free the minds of our students from values which may already inappropriately possess them. What we have to do is to make minds receptive of values, even of opposing values; then perhaps we may proceed to the further step of training these minds to compare values, and to test them against such experience as they may have gained, either through living, or through the imaginative apprehension of living experience offered them in the literature we study with them. I suggest that there are in the main two ways of doing this, ways complementary to each other, one of which is useless without the other. They are, of course, emotional response and analysis.

The first thing is to ensure as far as possible that our students do allow themselves to become susceptible of the emotional content of what they read, before proceeding to analyse. We should be chary of saying to a student 'Dispute it like a man', because first of all he must ⁴feel it like a man'. Unfortunately, to feel it, to grasp it imaginatively and sensuously, in fact to enjoy it and experience delight, requires time, brooding, even a sense of leisure, and this we seem less and less able to give our students. Further, one of our difficulties is to get the students to be completely honest about their emotions: that, as we know ourselves, involves a discipline extremely difficult to achieve. But I regard it as one of the answers to the question I am asking of why we study our national literature, that we do to some extent foster the extremely rare virtue of complete emotional honesty with ourselves, harder even to achieve than intellectual honesty, for it involves a part of ourselves more profound than the intellectual—namely the instinctive or intuitive. I would even say that that is our main task, towards which one of our most important aids is analysis.

Analysis is, indeed, of the first importance in the training of the minds of our students. It is our chief discipline (in the other sense of the word), to which all other 'training' aspects of our discipline must be subordinate. And our analysis consists of two things; first of how the

¹ D. G. James, *The Life of Reason*, p. 173.

words reach the reader, and what they mean to him; and then how the words were used by the writer.

'How the words reach the reader' is, of course, what we try to discover by that process which in our jargon we know as 'practical criticism'. This, like any other useful activity of the mind, can produce its own further jargon, by way of camouflage: but that need not deter us. It is really an application of the hoary injunction 'Know thyself, and is of enormous importance; for I venture to think that our proper study is man and not God, though He may be offered as 'influence', 'historic mission', 'truth', *Zeitgeist*, or anything else—our business is with the being of man, not with abstractions. In fact in one way our mission is to teach our students to 'clear their minds of cant'. And I would like here to adapt Lamb's remark, and say: 'Of all the cant that ever was canted, the cant of "Eng. Lit." is the worst/ I know it too well, for have not I also canted it?

Nevertheless, I think that in training our students in the technique of practical criticism, we must be very careful not to suggest that by this form of discipline we can arrive at any universal statement, or universally valid judgements, because of necessity, in itself, it relies so much upon purely individual experience. This does not make it any less valuable, so long as, here again, we regard this process, not as an end, but as a means, a means to sharpen individual response, and to make the individual himself into an instrument to appreciate the literary object he is faced with. And by appreciate I don't mean only to enjoy: I mean, perhaps, 'assimilate'. After all there is nothing startlingly new about this. It is only by severe self-interrogation that we, or our students, can independently arrive at any true appreciation of poetry. It is surely not we 'who talk of Poetry as a matter of amusement and idle pleasure, or who will converse as gravely about a *taste* for poetry as if it were a thing as indifferent as a taste for rope-dancing or Frontiniac'. But however that may be, I am profoundly convinced that this is the real discipline we today have to undergo in place of linguistic discipline—the learning of Greek and Latin—that our grandfathers and their forbears had to go through.

I do not at the moment see an active menace in this newer method, so long as those of us who practise the discipline are careful not to think that by probing our own minds we have arrived at any absolute standards. I don't think that, so far, we are in danger here of confusing the means with the end, because, in fact, in practising it, we are all the time so close to the end—if it is the end—at any rate so clewed to the object of our studies (the poem, play, or prose passage) that we

cannot detach the means. A far greater danger is in practising the other half of the discipline, which is in determining what a writer of 100, 200, 400, or 600 years ago 'meant' by the words and phrases, images and metaphors, that he used. We who are all aware how the use or implication of a word or a phrase may change, even in a lifetime, know what a tricky business it is to determine exactly what a man meant. Now while I think that the importance of any piece of literature is what it matters to us here and now, and not what it mattered to A, B, or C, x, y, or z years ago, I do think it very important that we should, as far as possible, avoid misinterpreting, more than is inevitable, what A, B, or C may have said in past centuries. So, although I think it wildly idealistic to suppose that we can ever read Carlyle, or Pope, or Shakespeare, or Chaucer as their contemporaries read them (and I believe, with all respect, that people who think they can are deluding themselves), I am sure we gain immeasurably more by attempting to do so than we should if we took all their words and images in their present sense as referring to our present-day situation.

What I am trying to say here, in a very few words, is that though I think we should study within limits the ethos of any period, paying due attention to semantics, as well as to political, religious, and social urgencies, the colourings and philosophies of the day, we must admit that this can only be approximate, and that we must not spend too much of our students' time over it, and that in short we must realize that this study of the sense of a period is again a means and not an end. And I would like to say that this study is only one aspect of our analysis of how the things that a great mind, a great imagination, a great spirit, had to convey, are actually brought to impinge upon the contemporary mind. And I firmly believe that, short of going too deeply, and I want to emphasize *too* deeply, into the investigation, we can on the whole realize what people such as Swift, and Milton, and Spenser meant, without asking our students to spend too much of their energies on this—seeing that their energies should be applied to the present and even the future rather than to the past. For a great man's being is conveyed as much by the way he says a thing, by the form he uses, the sound he makes, as by the, shall I say, plain grammar of the words. Plain grammar by itself is a very clumsy instrument for human communication at the higher levels or more profound depths.

I should like to think that we are training the mind for a specific function, and that we always have this in view. In the old days (days to which our philosophy of the University still seems hopefully to

cling) this was comparatively easy. Most people came to the universities from an established social background, and were trained, wittingly or not, to perform the function society demanded of them. But today our students do not come from specialized backgrounds, either social or intellectual: society itself is uncertain of what function it will want university graduates to fulfil. So can we today think in those functional terms? For when we consider what has happened to human assumptions since the disintegration of the medieval view of life, with again the vast changes in our conceptions of what man is and what he ought to be which have come about in the last hundred years, would it not seem that the effect of imaginative literature, and therefore the discussion of it in our Schools, should be towards integration, towards healing the tremendous rift between our emotions and our actions, our ostensible beliefs, and the assumptions we do indeed act upon? It seems to me that neither science, nor history, nor philosophy can alone do this: it is only by the fusion of imaginative warmth with imaginative understanding that we can fit ourselves into life as we have to live it today.

We have another difficulty. In the old days (again) the principle of ⁴'transfer' was largely accepted, namely, the hypothesis that if you trained the mind to grapple with one set of problems, in one sphere of reality, it was *ipso facto* made capable of grasping realities in any other realm. This doctrine is now, though not utterly damned, considerably undermined. We know that the doctrine of 'transfer' is of only very limited application, and that to train a man to be an engineer does not necessarily make him a good civil servant. So that we cannot just say that we are producing an educated person, without being able to answer the question 'Educated for what?'; and I suppose that in view of the present fluid circumstances of our existence each of us would answer the question 'For what?' in a different way. I believe it possible that the people we turn out from our Schools will prove to be the best administrators, simply because administration in government or industry demands just those qualities of sensibility, of understanding, that we develop together with that historical perspective which enables the mind to grasp clearly what it is that has happened in the last, shall we say, 300 years, to make things just as they are. But that is mere chance.

So I think a more important point than we normally think it to be, is to induce in our students a habit of scepticism, of resistance to ideas or things which present a substitute for those by which we, and our immediate forefathers, so securely lived. To be without scepticism

is, to quote D. G. James again, as bad as to be without faith. It certainly delivers 'the people'—and our students are largely 'the people' of the future—into the hands of demagogues. And I believe we do induce scepticism, not so much by examining ideas, as by giving a sense of individual being through contact with imaginative writing. And this contact we can give—or I should perhaps say offer—by (and here I return to my earlier utterances) opening the sensibilities to the things conveyed, not the statements uttered; not what the words say, but what they don't. We ought to try to make our people recover the lost faculty of listening—to vowel sounds, to rhythm, and texture, and so be poised to the miracle of form. That is a door we must open, so that the individual may enlarge his sense of being. In that way, by training the sensibility we discipline the emotions.

And to accomplish all these things I have talked about, we must put every possible instrument into the hands of our students, perhaps discarding the old, boldly adopting the new—and the new, those given us in the last fifty years are depth-psychology and anthropology.¹

When most of our Schools in England began it was thought that linguistics, philology, and so on were the best instruments for our purpose, and—this was a notion partly sentimental and partly *policier* shall I call it?—that Anglo-Saxon (speciously called Old English) was a necessary load to bear. I am profoundly convinced that philology and Anglo-Saxon should flourish in our universities, but not as appendages to schools of English Literature. We cannot afford the time for them in our less than three brief years—we cannot bear the extra burden—we have other things to do, which for us must seem far more important. Nor ought their advocates, if they believe in their value, to tolerate this position of what is, after all, as things are, dependence (except at Cambridge).²

To insist on them now is a form of pedantry—we are all prone to regard our own particular favourite pedantry as an essential—and here more than anywhere, perhaps, we confuse the means with the end. We must—for heaven's sake we must—realize what are our tools—history, philosophy, and so on, and what are our technologies—linguistics, phonetics, and suchlike. We have all the while to be on

¹ These are also the materials of modern creative writers.

² I have long thought that what is needed is a School of what might be called 'North Western Studies'—comprising Anglo-Saxon, Celtic, Old Icelandic, with a consideration of the political and religious background. I believe this would be immensely valuable—and very exciting.

our guard against encroachments upon our precious time; there is no more than for our own specialization in three years; and the techniques, *if and where necessary*, must strictly be kept subordinate. I would myself make them optional, recommending where recommendation seems called for. Otherwise

We ply the memory, we load the brain,
Bind rebel wit, and double chain on chain.

(Parenthetically, I would like all of us teachers of English Literature to have to recite publicly once a year the relevant passages in the fourth book of *The Dunciad*.) Always we must ask ourselves—Can we afford the time? however fascinating in itself the other subject may be. Think how long it takes to assimilate, in the full meaning of the word, a single Shakespeare sonnet!

For, to sum up, what we are asking our students to do is, by disciplining their emotions and ordering their minds, to distinguish which of the values by which men have lived in the past still are values, still are valid, and we cannot afford to forget that the things we live by—our religion, our philosophy, our concepts of law—all derive from the Mediterranean. We should be constantly aware of the other, of course; but we have so much to do, so much to look at, to taste, to test, from Chaucer onward, that we are betraying our trust if we do not strip ourselves of all inessentials. Our business is to make men and women ponder how men and women have made the word live, how they have achieved works of lasting delight, and so realize in what manner they have existed—that is, met their emotional and moral problems: or, to put it differently, our task is to enable our students to understand the reality of being—of having to be—in Bishop Butler's phrase, 'such creatures as we are, in such a world as the present one'. This is what 'Literature' is for.

BONAMY DOBRÉE

English Teaching in Universities Abroad

I MUST begin with the assurance that I do not pretend to speak with catholic knowledge of universities outside England. I speak from acquaintance as a visitor with some university institutions in Europe, in the Middle East, and Africa where English is not the native language: any knowledge I have of universities in the North American continent where English is the mother tongue is not relevant to what I want to say.

Within those limits there are wide disparities. In some European universities there are departments of English famous for profound scholarship; there are institutions in Africa which are laying foundations, but in which the students, although English is not their mother tongue, have a good working knowledge of the language; and in some other universities in Europe and Asia the studies in a department of English hardly go beyond a struggle to master the language and to get acquaintance with a few texts. It is, therefore, difficult to generalize, and, if I do, please believe that I am conscious of the many exceptions which are bound to arise in the minds of those who have experience in different parts of this wide and varied field.

Although it is so obvious a fact, it is not always remembered that the standards of a university depend on the standards of the schools from which it draws its students. This is true generally, and it is especially evident in studies involving a foreign language. If a student comes to the university with no knowledge of a subject, and the university curriculum must start from the rudiments, it is clear that after a three- or four-year course the general standard of attainment will not be as high as if there has been a good preliminary grounding and the university course can start at a more advanced level. In an English university, for example, a student will not usually be accepted as a student of French unless he has already reached a reasonably high standard, and if he proposes to specialize he will need to have considerable acquaintance with the language and literature and also probably with the history of France. This is possible because of the advance in French studies in English secondary schools.

Contrast with this the case of, say, a department of Russian or of Spanish in an English university. Seeing that the study of these languages has made so little headway in English schools it would be vain for universities to demand any considerable knowledge from its

entrants: indeed they must be willing to let them start from scratch. That being so, it is obvious that whatever be the attainment of picked students it would be unreal to expect equality of achievement as a whole between departments of French and Russian. In just the same way it must be recognized that in countries where English is not a usual school subject or is not well taught, it is not to be expected that the standards of English studies in the university will be high.

Nor will the entry be numerous, for the schools and universities react also in respect of numbers. If English is taught widely in the schools there will be a consequently large demand for teachers who have studied English at a university. On the other hand, if there is little teaching of English in schools and if the output of graduates in English is small it is difficult to find the teachers to serve the subject in the schools. This has proved to be a real difficulty of recent years in certain countries where there has been a desire to start or extend English teaching in schools and progress has been held up by lack of teachers. However, that is a side issue not concerning us directly in this discussion.

I come now to the purpose which inspires the study of English in a university. I need not repeat that throughout I am referring to universities in countries where English is not the mother tongue, and for my purpose the universities in the English-speaking Dominions fall outside that category. What I am going to say might be broadened to cover the study of any language which is not native to the university concerned, as, for example, the study of French in England or of German in France. The principles are the same.

I have spoken of a study of the language. That is a poor phrase, but I am trammelled by the poverty of the English language. I refuse, however, to take refuge behind some such verbal horror as 'anglistics', although if it were not so horrible it would be what I am trying to name. Language is an exceedingly important factor in this study, indeed it is the only medium for a proper study; but it is a means rather than an end. If English is worth study—and this is true of any foreign study—it is to enable the student to gain understanding of the culture of England. England is more important than English, France than French, and so forth.

But I demand a wide connotation of the much abused and oft misunderstood word 'culture'.⁵ I use it here to comprehend the Englishman and woman and child, what is peculiar and what is of worth in, their thought, achievement, and way of life. If it is worth the time and trouble of a foreigner to study English it is not merely to achieve

verbal familiarity with the language but to learn of England and the English, to be able to criticize in the true sense of criticism—to understand, to appraise, to be able to reject, and to take for his own enrichment. Too often, I fear, English studies in universities abroad get bogged in philological sloughs. I recognize the value of these studies, but of themselves they do not enable the student to acquire a taste for or a knowledge of what makes up the real culture of England. They must play their part, but I am convinced that it should be a relatively smaller part than is often the case.

Let me interpolate here a word of explanation, or of apology. I speak as an Englishman, but England is not the only repository of English culture, and I recognize that for those whose culture is English but whose land is not England these statements of mine may seem inappropriate. May I cover myself by saying that I recognize these differences respectfully and would ask others who have a different standpoint to adjust for themselves the principles I am setting forth? I believe that they are applicable for us all.

If an English course is to be a real introduction to English culture it must include means of studying not only English thought but English achievement. Perhaps in this company I may risk being accused of narrow patriotism if I express a belief that English achievement has been notable in many fields. Shakespeare is an easy one; and I need say no more about literature. And this country has done something in the fields of painting, music, architecture, philosophy. But no full appreciation of English is possible without some understanding of such eminently English achievements as its system of local government, its forms of justice, trade-unionism, the co-operative movement, the vast mass of voluntary organizations and voluntary service, which go to make the complicated texture of English life. That is the soil from which its culture springs.

You know as well as I that for the most part the concern of those who plan English studies has been much more with those aspects of culture which are revealed through artistic and aesthetic manifestations. In fact, the main medium of aesthetic study has been literature, and out of this there has emerged, in varying degrees, concern with the background of life and thought which is necessary for an appreciation of literature. This is perhaps to give too optimistic a picture, for often the study of literature is concerned mainly with a linguistic understanding, rather than with the apprehension of the spirit of which it is an efflorescence. Still I do not wish to suggest that all, or even much, of the teaching of English literature abroad is philologically

dry-as-dust, but I do think it is fair to say that in so far as the non-aesthetic aspects of English culture are subjects of study in a department of English, they are treated as ancillary to and explanatory of English literature. What I am pleading for is a wider conception of English studies in which language and literature are most important factors, but in which other factors are admitted not as handmaidens but as partners.

I suppose that the content of English courses has been, perhaps imperceptibly, influenced by the fact that the chief demand for English studies has come from aspiring teachers of English, and this has given a literary bent to the curriculum. Another factor undoubtedly has been the influence of classical studies. Generally speaking classical studies have tended inevitably to rest on the literatures of Greece and Rome and consequently they have been primarily bookish; and although history, archaeology, and philosophy have bulked considerably, in varying degrees in different universities, the core of the study has been literary with heavy weighting of linguistics. These studies had a great academic position, and if other studies, based on modern languages, were to establish their repute they had to show that they were comparable in academic substance with the traditional studium. Therefore they copied; and in order to prove that they were not a soft option they were braced with a large amount of philology. It might be difficult to sustain that the granite quality of classical study could be provided by toying with the lyrical poetry of a living language, but none could gainsay the need for the quarryman's brawn if the student were obliged to master the phonology of Old English or the dialectal varieties of the fourteenth century. In this way what should have been regarded as an important means came to win the place of a primary aim.

That university studies should be intellectually tough is surely important. It is indeed lamentable when universities, as they do occasionally, give degrees for achievement which is sometimes more like play and dilettantism. The curriculum must have intellectual grit, but there are other forms of grit than philology which might be used to contribute a hard aggregate to a university course of English.

One of the difficulties is that students may not have sufficient facility to make wide reading practicable. At this point I think we must discriminate. There is the high-ranking student who must have achieved this facility; and therefore it is largely a matter of seeing that his curriculum is so set that he is enabled to range in the field I have suggested. It is another matter for the student who does not advance

far but who nevertheless wants to include English in his university studies. What generally happens is that he spends most of his time studying the language and manages to work through a few texts: say a play of Shakespeare's, one *book of Paradise Lost*, *Rasselas*, a selection of essays, a selection of lyrical verse, *A Tale of Two Cities*[^] and *Vanity Fair*. He has possibly studied a primer of English literature or heard lectures from which he has gleaned a certain sketchy knowledge of literary history and second-hand criticism of works he has not read.

Now I do not want to be cynical or impossibilist, as I realize that for many students it is desirable that they should know something of these things although they are never going to be accomplished to a high degree in English studies. But I do suggest that something might be done to widen the horizon of these students and that they might be given a rather fuller range. At the risk of incurring your horrified wrath I suggest seriously that there should be more recourse to translations. What makes study of a few texts in a foreign language so bleak is what I would call their loneliness. You cannot expect the majority of students to read more than a few; and those few which seem so typical and revealing to you with your wider knowledge (assuming perhaps rashly that they are always well chosen for this purpose and not because they are cheap or are the only ones available or are verbally easy), those few to the unread student may be strangely unrelated to reality.

Now students are realists. We must often remind ourselves of this important fact. And if we are to light their enthusiasm we must enable them to see the significance of what we appreciate and admire. If we merely impose our taste on them we are making intellectual and aesthetic hypocrites or prigs. 'Of course it's good: it's by Shakespeare.' 'It must be good: our Professor admires it.' The lesser evil, but an evil, is that you make rebels who are not prepared to accept the professorial *ipse dixit* and run after the strange gods or advertised idols of literature whose worship is more exciting to an untutored taste.

If, however, you can enable the student to see something more of the whole by reading widely in translation—an easier and more rapid task for him—he will be able to appreciate much better the significance and the worth of those few texts that it is practicable for him to master in a limited time and with his limited facility in the language.

I repeat my belief that students are realists: they demand significance in their studies; and why not? They are mostly poor and they have all too little time to devote to study before embarking on their life's work. Are we to condemn them if they insist on investing their

universities, especially those in the Middle East and farther east, have an immense burden of elementary linguistic teaching which inevitably acts as a dead weight on the department concerned in English studies. If English does become more surely established as a common language it is reasonable to expect that English teaching in schools will improve and in this way the burden on the universities will be lightened. Until then it seems that the universities must carry much of the load as cheerfully as may be. One of the retarding factors is the dearth of school-teachers. Consequently the busier the universities are in providing them the sooner the schools will be able to relieve them of this elementary work. I do not know enough about these matters to do more than draw your attention to them; but I feel that those who work in universities where the main activity in an English department concerns students of a reasonably high standard must remember that for some of their colleagues the problems are very different.

I have touched, perhaps too lightly, on the really important question of the choice of texts for study. Before concluding I wish to revert to the point for a moment and in connexion with it raise a more general question. I have suggested that the approach should be realistic. I admit, nay I insist, that it is the duty of every university to decide what is best for the student. At the same time I suggest that this decision should not merely reflect professorial predilection (although that is a most important factor) but should take cognizance also of potential student predilections. I have for long believed that the sound approach to literary study is from the existing interest of the student. I do not suggest playing down to popularity or softening the path unduly, but I am convinced by experience that you can get greater enthusiasm and harder work if a student perceives the reality of his studies. A simple and obvious didactic method is to proceed from the known to the unknown, and in English studies I believe it is worth considering whether more could be achieved by working backwards historically. I do not suggest a crudely inverted chronology. All I suggest is that students should have early opportunity of making acquaintance with modern literature which will inflame their interest, carry them back readily to the past, and illuminate their studies of earlier times.

We must remember that in some countries life is even now so different from that in England and the cultural gulf is so wide that students of English have great difficulty in spanning it. If the historical gap is narrowed something is done to reduce the difficulty. But more can be done, and it is especially necessary in some countries. To

Rome are great cultures. Now I am going to risk once more the accusation of complacent nationalism in declaring my belief that English culture is a great culture. That does not mean that I am blind to the many failings and mistakes of the English: heaven knows they are patent to history and to the world. But the fact that classical studies are a valuable discipline is not invalidated because some of the Roman emperors had most unpleasant habits and some Greeks were thoroughly nasty, untrustworthy fellows.

Despite all our shortcomings I believe that the English have something—as many other nations have—and that it is peculiar. Moreover, I believe that to study the spirit, the thought, the institutions, and the achievement of English culture may be a valuable discipline. I am not claiming it as worth more than the discipline of studying Graeco-Roman culture: all I am suggesting is that rightly taken and widely interpreted it is one medium of developing those qualities which are useful in public service and maybe in other walks of life, such as business and the professions. The fact that the study of English abroad must include mastery of the language is advantageous. There is more difficulty in putting that grit I have spoken of into a study of one's own national culture. English as a study abroad has the same advantage as the study of French or German culture in this country, and all that I have been saying would apply to them in the same way.

But if there are more barriers to get over in studying a foreign culture we must be sure they are got over. I realize that this is a question of degree: you cannot treat the student who takes English as a subsidiary subject for two or three years as you would those who are studying it more thoroughly over a longer period. I confess it is rather these specialist students that I have been thinking about chiefly in what I have said to you. The specialist student can be helped to surmount the language barrier; by which I mean that he can really have some facility of communication both ways—to understand and to express. Indeed it is only if he can acquire that facility that all my demands become practicable.

There is, however, a much larger problem facing the teacher of English in universities where English is not the mother tongue. In some cases English is nevertheless the language of general instruction, more frequently in the scientific subjects; and this is merely a manifestation of the fact that English is more and more tending to become a world-wide lingua franca. The consequence for some universities is that English teaching has to be provided for all or almost all students. It is not easy to foresee how this will develop, but at the moment some

universities, especially those in the Middle East and farther east, have an immense burden of elementary linguistic teaching which inevitably acts as a dead weight on the department concerned in English studies. If English does become more surely established as a common language it is reasonable to expect that English teaching in schools will improve and in this way the burden on the universities will be lightened. Until then it seems that the universities must carry much of the load as cheerfully as may be. One of the retarding factors is the dearth of school-teachers. Consequently the busier the universities are in providing them the sooner the schools will be able to relieve them of this elementary work. I do not know enough about these matters to do more than draw your attention to them; but I feel that those who work in universities where the main activity in an English department concerns students of a reasonably high standard must remember that for some of their colleagues the problems are very different.

I have touched, perhaps too lightly, on the really important question of the choice of texts for study. Before concluding I wish to revert to the point for a moment and in connexion with it raise a more general question. I have suggested that the approach should be realistic. I admit, nay I insist, that it is the duty of every university to decide what is best for the student. At the same time I suggest that this decision should not merely reflect professorial predilection (although that is a most important factor) but should take cognizance also of potential student predilections. I have for long believed that the sound approach to literary study is from the existing interest of the student. I do not suggest playing down to popularity or softening the path unduly, but I am convinced by experience that you can get greater enthusiasm and harder work if a student perceives the reality of his studies. A simple and obvious didactic method is to proceed from the known to the unknown, and in English studies I believe it is worth considering whether more could be achieved by working backwards historically. I do not suggest a crudely inverted chronology. All I suggest is that students should have early opportunity of making acquaintance with modern literature which will inflame their interest, carry them back readily to the past, and illuminate their studies of earlier times.

We must remember that in some countries life is even now so different from that in England and the cultural gulf is so wide that students of English have great difficulty in spanning it. If the historical gap is narrowed something is done to reduce the difficulty. But more can be done, and it is especially necessary in some countries. To

a north European the differences between the background and the habit of life in England and in his country are not so great as for the African, the Arab, or the Chinese. For them there are vast differences arising from religion, habits of life, climate, topography, and the whole social organization, and all these constitute a great barrier to an appreciation of English literature and culture in general.

The best way to get over this difficulty is for the student to visit England; but how many can ? For the great majority this is clearly impossible; but something can be done to help them. Nowadays the improvement and multiplication of visual aids, such as films and film-strips, should be exploited to the full. But perhaps most important is to ensure that students can have the personal influence of teachers who know England and have learned to appreciate English culture at first hand and also those who are themselves English and can in their own persons bring something of English culture. But they must be men and women who really do know England; and this is not true of everyone born and bred in this country. They must be soaked in English life and English tradition, redolent of the common people of this island who for better or worse are the best that England can show. English culture is theirs. It does not reside in or spring from Chelsea, Bloomsbury, or the universities alone. These have made their contribution, but so have the simpler folk of sun-bathed Warwickshire, of the windy braes of Scotland, of the industrial north, and of the streets of London. If a culture is worth understanding it must be widely comprehended; and English culture rightly understood is the expression of life, the thought, and the achievement of the generations of men and women, great and humble, who have made England what she is. If there are those in other lands who consider that this is worth their study that is for them to say; but if that is their choice my plea to them is to look upon it steadily and look upon it whole.

A. E. MORGAN

The Teaching of English as a Foreign Language

ONE of the most obvious features of the modern world is the greatly increased amount of communication that is going on. People of different nationalities and with different languages need to speak and listen to each other much more than they have ever done before, either directly or through writing and print. They can do so only in a common language, and for a variety of reasons English is assuming a special importance. There is a great demand for English from all kinds of people for all kinds of purposes. In the past relatively few needed it. The small minority who had contacts with English-speaking people picked up enough to serve their turn. Where English had a place in university and school education, and it was a much smaller place than it has today, it was learned chiefly for cultural reasons. Now many learn English to get access to technical information or through curiosity about British and American life and institutions, while in the great continent of Africa and in parts of Asia English has come to occupy almost the position that Latin held in medieval Europe as the language of higher education and the *lingua franca* of the educated.

However much they aspire to the ivory tower, universities can never keep quite aloof from the outside world. Their language teaching must to some extent reflect what languages mean to the world as a whole. They belong to the educational systems of their respective countries. Students come from schools, and schools have other functions than to train students for university entrance. In practice universities have to take over a student's education at the point where the schools have left it. The attainments of students in the university are controlled by the amount and kind of language teaching they have had in school. There is a limit to the speed of the fastest sprinter: the point he reaches in a given time depends to a great extent on the point from which he starts and the direction in which he runs. So with students. Where the standards of the schools are low the standards of the universities they feed are correspondingly low, however energetic the teaching inside the universities.

Universities have therefore a great interest in the nature and the quality of English teaching in the schools. If they are anxious about

standards of attainment, the places to watch are the schools. If the general demand for English is changing its emphasis, the change is bound sooner or later to make itself felt in the schools, and universities had better be prepared for that and shape their policy accordingly. It is only realistic to look at the teaching of English in the educational system as a whole and to adjust one's aims and methods to the circumstances in which one has to work.

Advanced work can be based only on solid foundations laid in the more elementary stages. That is so obvious as to be hardly worth stating, were it not that we often find students trying to run before they can walk. Composition and literature, for example, cannot be profitably studied until the essential structures of English have become absolutely automatic. These structures, of course, are the framework on which all learning of English must be built, because no precise communication can be conducted without them. What is not always so clearly realized is that the sooner they become fixed and automatic the more experience can be gained of applying English to a variety of situations and purposes. This experience is reflected in the size and composition of the vocabulary. Learning words is a very small part of learning a language; it is learning to use the words that is difficult and important. They must operate in structures and sentence patterns, and until the essential structures and sentence patterns are fixed the weight of vocabulary has to be kept down to what can be constantly practised. But a rich and varied vocabulary is necessary for the study of style or literature. To give time for it to be acquired and surely handled the essential structures have to be mastered early. Those responsible for advanced work have an interest in the efficiency of this early training, not only in order to rid themselves of remedial work, but because it ensures opportunity for the experience in operating a varied vocabulary without which advanced work cannot be attempted.

There are also certain skills of great value in advanced work which it is very difficult to acquire after early habits have been formed. One of these is competence in speech. Most advanced courses include literature, and poetry is one of the main divisions of literature. But how can the full significance of poetry be appreciated unless the student can hear it? We do get something from poetry we do not speak in the way intended by its authors—classical Greek poetry, for example. But we certainly miss something the poets wanted us to get. The difficulty of hearing a foreign poetry is generally under-estimated. It requires more training than it usually receives. The basis of it must be the ordinary speech training of the student. That does not mean

that he should be expected to talk like an Englishman. Minimum standards of competence have to be defined. For most learners the test is intelligibility: he must be able to recognize and reproduce differences that carry meaning. To hear poetry he must be sure of the stress system, for stress is the main element in both the metrical forms of English verse and in the rhythms counterpointed on them. A few non-standard versions of the primary phonemes will not affect his appreciation of the poetry very much. After all none of us pronounces English as Shakespeare did, but we hear his verse as verse, and its rhythmical effect on us is very close to that he intended. Stress is important in ordinary speech, and if attention has been given to speech at all, the way is clear to the study of poetry. But speech must be dealt with early to be dealt with successfully. Bad speech habits, once formed, are extremely difficult to break. The university teacher has an interest in seeing that good habits are encouraged at the very beginning. He can insist on that only to the extent that it does not interfere with the acquisition of other necessary skills. The majority of pupils in schools will never want to study any English poetry. Most of them will chiefly want to read English, not to speak or write it. We must accept the fact and consider whether there is any advantage in an oral approach even for them. If there is, our task later will be eased: if there is not, then we should recognize that our students will need special training which the schools cannot provide. There are methods of teaching English which go straight for reading ability, but there is no evidence that they reach their aim any more rapidly by omitting oral work, and in the world as it is today it seems increasingly likely that most people who learn English will want at some time to talk in it and to listen to the BBC. Still, the oral element in early teaching is a question in which all teachers of English have an interest, and those concerned with advanced work should not only stake a claim for what will be useful later to them but should also understand the issues involved.

The way this question is decided and the length of the student's experience in using English, as well as the vocabulary he has learned to handle competently, will determine whether his advanced work can be done entirely in English, which is desirable for a number of reasons. When we think of this possibility and its conditions a little further we soon see that it raises the whole problem of teaching method. The student's capacity to work in English will depend not only on *what* he has been taught but on *how* he has been taught. If he has already been taught entirely in English from the beginning, he will be able to go on extending his range of English without forming a new set of habits.

But he will have the benefit of more than the avoidance of a difficult transition from one set of habits to another. He will already have had twice as much practice in using English as he would have got from a translation method of teaching. In any one lesson the more the pupil speaks the more practice he gets in speaking, and the more speaking in English he does the more practised in speaking English does he become. Such practice forms the skill which is the aim of all language teaching. But more is gained by giving all the available time to the central purpose of language teaching. The pupil associates English sentences directly with situations. English speech patterns come to symbolize features of the external world. What he says and what he hears refers to what he sees and what he does. There is no confusion between English habits of reference and those of his own language, and the danger of broken English is lessened. On these simple references more complex references can be built systematically. But the condition is that the meaning of the simple references should be clearly established, a condition not always fulfilled by methods called direct. This is the responsibility of the teacher, and the quality of the teaching in the early stages is supremely important. If the foundations are securely laid there, any superstructure we please can be built on them.

Wherever we start to think about our teaching, we soon reach the same conclusion: that the whole attitude and equipment of our students are determined by their earlier training. The less time has been wasted on inessentials, the more continuity there has been, the better the chance of reaching a high level of attainment in the university. We cannot avoid looking at the teaching of English as a whole and concerning ourselves with what happens in the schools right from the beginning of the learning of English. And that means interesting ourselves in the quality of the teaching—not only in *what* is taught but in *how* it is taught. Here self-interest merges into responsibility. Universities can and should influence the training of teachers. They are the natural leaders of the teaching profession, and no reluctance to accept responsibility for vocational training should prevent them from exercising their leadership. In this country during the past few years all teacher training has been associated with universities. Elsewhere their natural position is not so explicitly recognized, but there are innumerable ways in which their influence can be exerted to raise the standard of teaching. Until the training of language teachers is deliberately organized, much effort to teach languages at all stages will be wasted.

We are sometimes betrayed into talking as though all a teacher needs is a knowledge of his subject. All of us who teach realize that is not true. Equally misleading is it to dismiss teaching technique as though it consisted only in tips about how to behave in the class-room. Technique comes from consciousness of the aim and a study of the means of giving it effect. Language teaching is both a linguistic and a pedagogical problem. If we are trying to ensure good teaching throughout the whole range of English learning, we cannot leave each individual teacher to fend for himself. That would be like regarding war as a mass of hand-to-hand fights between soldiers. The soldier's behaviour will win or lose the battle, but his training is the chief guarantee that he has a chance of winning, and behind him has to be the support of the commanders and ultimately of industry and the back-room boys. The organization of language teaching is very similar. Success depends on the teacher's conduct in the class-room. Every word he speaks, every action he performs, is important, and there is a technique to be acquired to enable him to gain his full effect. It is technique founded on understanding of what he is after. He must be aware of what learning a language means, and he must never forget that what is taught is unimportant compared with what is learned. That will put him on his guard against confusions and help him to see that meaning is clearly established at each point. His technique must be developed to secure these objectives. There is plenty of scope for individual enterprise, but it can operate confidently only when it is trained. The training of language teachers is a very specialized business. It can be done only by those who have a linguistic outlook themselves and who will not hesitate to go into the class-room with the student and to discuss and practise with him all the details of presentation. Teaching can never be learned from a course of lectures; it must be learned in the class-room. Practical training with a sound theoretical background is what is required in language teaching, and the quickest way of improving the efficiency of English teaching at all levels is to insist on the proper organization of training.

The organization of specialized training will put trained teachers into the class-room, but they still need equipment. To provide it is the function of the back-room boys. This again is a co-operative enterprise: text-books by individuals will not meet the need, unless there is research behind them. Before teaching material can be designed the language to be taught must be analysed, so that all the essential elements can be reviewed. Surprisingly enough there is no complete analysis of present-day English, though one could perhaps be as-

sembled from the dispersed knowledge available. But an analysis will not teach itself. What has to be learned is skill in using English, and that means practising a synthesis all the time, right from the beginning. The analysis has to be rearranged, so that each item in it is presented as speech operating in a situation. That involves selection and grading. We have to decide what to teach and in what order to teach it, and we have to present each item so that it can become automatic through practice in actual speech. The selection and grading would provide the structural framework round which any learning of English could be built. Much of this work would inevitably be done in this country and in the United States, and it would be applicable to the teaching of English anywhere. There already are departments concerned with the teaching of English as a foreign language in the Universities of London, Harvard, and Michigan, and they naturally are interested in the general problem rather than in the particular problems of various parts of the world. But the translation of a basic plan for selecting and grading structures into material for learning and practice entails a knowledge of the pupil's mother tongue and social background, which would decide the content vocabulary and the pace at which the structural elements could be mastered. Each university would be aware of the conditions in its own region. The great requisite is that all the agencies for solving these problems should co-operate. All the linguistic scholarship available is needed to bring reliable results in as short a time as possible. It must be married to a firm hold on pedagogical considerations to produce the teaching material for equipping teachers, and the teachers themselves must be trained to use it effectively. We must by co-operation set up the whole organization from the drawing-office to the front line.

To discuss organization sometimes leads to a slackening of individual responsibility. It should not do so. One of the chief advantages of looking at the teaching of English as a whole should be to make us more conscious of our own part as teachers. The organization that we have been discussing aims at opening communications by training people quickly and surely in the use of English. If we see our work as part of that process, we shall think of it as developing the capacities of our students rather than as imparting knowledge to them. We shall think of what they can do with English rather than what they can learn about it. We shall value their ability to interpret a poem more than their ability to repeat portions of the standard histories of literature; we shall praise them for being able to cope with a situation in the appropriate kind of English rather than for being able to attach the

accepted grammatical terms to speech that does not interest them in the least. Our syllabuses may need a little adjustment in consequence, but will there be any loss? I think not. Our students will be all the better able to attain the standards we have always wished them to attain. If we concentrate on teaching and arrange for learning to be effective and continuous over the whole range of English, then all the communication for which English has been used will be possible for the foreign learner of English. Effective and continuous learning is the only way to higher standards, and unless we think of the learning process as a whole in relation to particular learners, we shall make relatively little progress at any one level.

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