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SHORT STORIES

POETRY

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ART

ARTICLES

SHORT STORIES

The Old Gopher Returns

Cris Mazza

THIS is what happened last week when I went back to see my former boss, and friend, Champ Stillwater. I'm 28 years old, and I'm his old secretary. The new secretary smiles more than the old one ever did. That's the first thing I could tell was different.

She's much taller than me, mostly in the legs. Plus she has straight hair and it's long, and her nailpolish matches her lipstick. I used lipstick a few times, but I wiped it off in an hour or two, and the only reason I ever wore nailpolish was so I could pick off the color instead of peeling my fingernails down until they bled. *I* never thought I was ugly—I *like* my frizzy orange hair and thousands of freckles. So what if my legs are slightly bowed (I said *slightly*), I'm athletic and coordinated, and pretty damn strong for my size. No, I don't have much of a bust, but I've got a hell of a well-developed ribcage with great lung capacity. My body does a good job for me—holds me together in one piece and gets me where I want to go. I know it's too late to defend myself now, but *now's* all I've got, and better than nothing.

Something else was different too—the door was shut between the inner and outer office. Champ and I never kept the door shut because there was no intercom, so we shouted back and forth, or I would use the extra desk he kept in his office. I had a little sign on my desk with my name, Tam McNeil, and I used to take it with me to whatever desk I was using. His real name is Merle, but he didn't want that on his door, so the door was blank, but now it says Mr. Stillwater, and *she* has a desk-sign that says Miss Butternut.

I walked past her and knocked on his door while she said, "May I help you? Do you have an appointment? Mr. Stillwater is on the phone." But I heard him say "come in," so I opened the door and gave the new secretary Miss Butteredbread a smile over my shoulder.

It smelled the same, like stale coffee, and his desk was in the same

place—just far enough away from the wall to fit his chair behind it, the plaster full of black marks where his chair hit when he leaned back or stood up suddenly, like when I came in that day: he stood up and his chair banged on the wall.

Then it was time for me to figure out why I was there. As hard as it was to decide to come back, that was easier than telling myself *why*. He was my friend when I worked there and I saw him every day, and it wasn't just *work*. But then I left and for three years I hadn't seen him, not once, nor talked on the phone or written a letter. What kind of friend is that? Before I went back to see him, I sometimes asked my dog, since there was no one else to ask (except myself), was he really a friend or just a friendly boss?

His hair was shorter, light brown, sun-streaked, but there was grey in it that wasn't there three years ago. He wore a tie and a belt, neither of which he'd worn before. And he didn't say anything to me.

"I've been feeling like I'd forgotten something," I said. "Is something of mine still here?"

He didn't quite smile, didn't sit, and neither did I. When he started to make more coffee, I said, "Let me do it."

"No." That's the first word he said. Then neither of us said anything for a while. The coffeepot rumbled and began breathing hoarsely. Everything looked the same—the bulletin boards, the long row of file cabinets, the bookcase, the small table for the coffee equipment, even the empty desk was still in the office, but it was pushed into a corner and almost buried beneath boxes of books and papers. There was a photo near the coffeepot of a group of people at Champ's mountain cabin. I'd never been there. I thought I recognized a few people in the picture, maybe even Miss BreadnButter, smiling, with a white fur hat and matching scarf.

The coffeepot let out a nervous sigh and the last drops fell through the filter. Champ sat down heavily, but not behind his desk. He used the empty chair near the coffeepot. He folded his hands between his legs and stared at them, watching one thumb polish the nail of the other thumb.

I hadn't thought it would be like this. I didn't know what to do. I read some appointments written with perfect penmanship (*much* prettier than mine) on his wall calendar and rubbed my toe on a worn place in the rug where the door scraped. A phone rang somewhere, far away. I don't know what I would've done. I might've left, saying *goodbye* this time, but then I saw the box of junk stored under the empty desk.

"Wow!" I pulled a crumpled mustard-colored blazer from the box. "I'd forgotten about *this*. Remember when you got this—on Mr. Widmer's first day? Is he still here?"

"No."

"I always wondered if he would last. I didn't think so. Remember that meeting on his first day?"

Champ finally looked up. "Uh . . . no."

"How could you forget!" I put the blazer on and it clashed badly with

my light brown pants. "You came back with this thing and said, he wants us to feel like a team so now we have uniforms."

He was staring at me, and then started talking, but it wasn't his voice anymore: "Are you here collecting for charity, how nice, would it be sufficient for me to say I gave at the office?" He started for the door, as though to show me out, but I didn't follow him. My heart was going too fast, and it was in my ears so I couldn't hear very well, or maybe it was Miss Butterbreast's typewriter. Then when he got to the door, he shut it, and the typewriter was muffled, and his voice changed again, a mean voice he'd never used with me before, except teasing, "What do you want from me, a job or something?"

So I tried to joke back: "Very funny." I shivered and talked fast. "Didn't I tell you, I work in a kennel now. It only took me four years working *here* to realize I would rather work with dogs."

I expected him to laugh, or at least smile, but his mouth just opened slightly and he didn't say anything. The blazer was already wet under my arms, so I took it off. Both sleeves were wrinkled and dirty, but I don't think Champ had ever actually worn it. Maybe to a costume party at Halloween. That would've gotten a laugh.

"*I* remember the day you got this."

He had come back from the meeting and showed it to me, holding it up in front of himself, then he told me to do something with it. When I asked what Widmer, the new vice president, was like, he said a dog trainer. A *dog trainer?* I used to talk about wanting to be an animal trainer, before I actually became one. Instead of answering me straight out, he would only quiz me: *what does a trainer want?* For his dogs to perform properly. *How?* By training them, of course. *But what if he's given some other trainer's dogs to work with?* He won't get the same results. *Why?* Dogs can't change handlers that easily. *Maybe that's what he's afraid of.* But I couldn't see how any of that answered my question. Why was Widmer afraid of dogs, I asked, c'mon, Champ, what's he *really* like. A company man? But Champ had become very serious: Don't put words in my mouth, Tam, I'll tell you what he wants, are you listening? He wants a *team,* and he wants the right kind of teammates . . . he wants everyone to be the same. Wow, I'd joked—laughing a little—then you'd better hurry and get some grey hair or go bald and I've got to see a good doctor or we'll both get fired! But Champ hadn't laughed.

I stuffed the blazer back in the box and turned to Champ. "What *really* happened at that meeting, Champ?"

He didn't answer, so I went on, "You know, he couldn't have been like a dog trainer if he wanted everyone to be the same. Trainers don't expect dogs to be all the same. Each dog is trained differently."

Champ took a deep breath, then at last smiled. "That's for *dogs,* not people."

"Why should people be any different, think about it, Champ, why

should dogs get special treatment?" That was the first time since I got there that I felt I was talking to Champ Stillwater again. I stopped sweating for a second. But suddenly he said, "I haven't the slightest idea who you are."

"What!" Then the silence was awful—air-tight and muffled and hot—I could hardly breathe. All I could hear was the thin buzz of the hot plate, the hum of a fan somewhere, the faint popping of a typewriter. And my heartbeat came back, in my stomach, in my fingertips and lips. Champ poured himself a cup of coffee, carefully, then drank slowly, and finally looked over the rim of the cup at me.

"You're actually saying you don't know who I am?" I was already spinning in place, looking all around the room, trying to find something to remind him, but I got dizzy and fell—I had to hold my spinning head. I almost cried and I almost threw up, both things I'd done in front of him before, but not this time, because he said, "You'd better go home—where'd you say you live? The dog pound?"

"No!" I stood up. "Not until you remember—not until I *make* you remember!"

Suddenly *I* remembered things I hadn't thought about in years. I went straight to a crevice between the last file cabinet and the wall and pulled out two old baseball mitts. "This'll prove it!" We used to play catch right there in the office. "And look— oh . . . they've painted the wall, otherwise you could see the marks from the times I missed." People in other offices probably wondered what the hell was going on—sometimes it sounded like he was beating me up. "But *you* missed once too, Champ, and the window broke. You said maybe I'd better quit before I was fired. What a joke, after all the things *you* broke when *I* missed—like the coffeepot, remember?" What an explosion, glass and hot coffee went everywhere, including all over me. I would've cried if I hadn't been laughing. And Champ—he was on the *floor* he was laughing so hard. I didn't care; it was a relief to hear Champ laugh. He'd been to another meeting with Widmer, and came back and grabbed the mitts without saying anything. Usually he used to tell me what he was throwing—slider, curve, sinker—but that day it was all fastballs, and all right at my head, right between the eyes, then he asked me if I knew what a baseball felt like or if I'd ever felt that way. I was busy trying to keep the ball from breaking the wall down or knocking my head off, but finally it was the coffeepot that got it, and suddenly we were both laughing and he said *good riddance,* as though he'd only been mad at the coffeepot all along.

I put on one of the mitts, smacked the pocket a few times, then held the other out toward him. "You wanna play some?"

"Those aren't mine." He cleared his throat. "What are they, polo equipment? Boxing gloves? Lacross nets?"

"What the hell is the matter with you!" I threw the mitt at his feet. He picked it up but didn't put it on. He held it open like a book and looked

into the pocket. "Maybe I'd better call the police," he said softly.

"Wait! I'm not finished." Not thinking *could* he have me booked and fingerprinted for trying to impersonate an old secretary—but *would he?* I dropped the mitt and picked up the coffeepot. "This'll remind you—this coffeepot, it was *mine,* remember? I gave it to you to replace the one I—*we* broke with the baseball." For a while he had decided to stop drinking coffee, but he was sending me to the machine so often to get tiny paper cups of tepid brown water for 50 cents, I finally brought my own coffee maker for him. "You'll remember," I said, "because this pot was part of the conversation that time Widmer came to our office. Now does it all ring a bell?"

Champ was playing with his phone. He put every line on hold so all the little red lights were blinking, then he turned off the overhead light, leaving the phone blinking like a police car at night. I even thought I heard sirens. Maybe he was humming. "I have to go soon," he said.

"You're not going anywhere until we settle this." I could have tied him to his chair with my socks if necessary. *Then* he could've had me arrested. I held the coffeepot right in front of his face. "*This* very pot was used by me to make Widmer some coffee!" There was no coffee when he'd arrived, just some dregs in the bottom of the pot. Champ didn't notice, but Widmer said, Where's the coffee, girl, when you're expecting someone you should always have the coffee *ready.* That's not in my job description, I'd said, and he turned to *stare* at me, but what was so funny was Champ, behind Widmer, motioning for me to shut up and making faces.

Champ's cup was empty, so I filled it, then put the pot back on the hot plate.

There's a right kind of look for this office, Widmer told me, people should see it as soon as they step in the door, the right kind of person, cheerful and everything that goes along with it—*smile,* girl! By that time I was mad, but Champ was still making those goony faces over Widmer's shoulder, holding the corners of his mouth out with his fingers, I couldn't help starting to laugh, and Widmer said, well, that's a *little* better.

Champ looked down at the coffee I had poured into his cup, and he smiled a little, so I said, "You're remembering now, aren't you?"

He looked away again, picked up a pencil and tapped it against the side of the desk, his face flashing in the red phone buttons. He tossed the pencil onto his desk. "How about if we arm wrestle—if I win two out of three, you'll leave, okay? Maybe some other contest? Name your game."

"Right!" I shouted and went behind him to his desk, pushed his chair aside and opened the middle drawer. They were still there, in back, a very tattered deck of cards. "Here's our contest, Champ, remember? Poker—the loser had to pay for lunch. Deny these!"

He took the deck from me and tapped it against the edge of the desk. "I'm not denying anything."

"You don't think so?" I watched him shuffle the cards. "You know, Champ, I didn't leave here with some dumb going-away present or a bouquet of phony flowers. I thought all I gave up was a *job*." I was suddenly tired and had to lean against the desk. "But I didn't think I'd have to lose everything else I had here too."

"What do you mean?" He turned the overhead lights back on.

When I sat in his chair, the vinyl seat let out a deep sigh. "Of course you wouldn't know . . . if you don't even know who I am. . . . Then what the hell *were* we to each other?"

He looked up from a game of solitaire he'd laid out on the corner of the desk. His eyes weren't blue anymore—they were grey. I took the remaining cards from him and passed them one by one from one hand to the other, face up. "This is typical, Champ. You would never cheat at solitaire, but you used to get me to play poker with a loaded deck—not so I'd lose but so I'd think I won easily. How many times did I fall for that joke." He scraped up the solitaire game and stacked the cards, so I put my half of the deck on top of his. "Anyway, I got some free lunches, if nothing else—of course I earned them with a lot of trips to the bank for the cash you never had to bet with in the first place." I felt so weak, I could hardly think, my head so heavy, it's amazing I even remembered about the check, the one I still had. He would write checks to me when he needed money, and I walked to the bank to cash them, but one of them had bounced once, and I'd kept it, just because I thought it was funny, also because we never did get around to fixing it . . . the bank had taken the fifty bucks out of my account. He was going to pay me back.

I grabbed my wallet out of my purse and found the check, folded up behind some pictures, then I came back to his desk and handed it to him. I didn't say anything, I couldn't, I just let him take it. He looked at it, then put it down on the desk.

"Now you'll remember me," I said. "You'll have to, because of this check. . . ." We were both staring at the check. It was face-up on the desk—pay to the order of Tam McNeil, fifty dollars, insufficient funds—and in that moment I remembered why we'd never taken care of it: He *had* sent me to the bank to find out why it had bounced, but the bank was too crowded so I thought it could wait for another day, and I came right back to the office. But I completely forgot about the check as soon as I walked in because the door was open as usual—I went right in and found Champ interviewing somebody for my job.

While I remembered, I picked up the check again and searched it, but I don't know what I was looking for. I held it in my fist. It was so hot in there. I thought maybe Miss Butterbreath was turning up the heat from the outside, to flush me out and get me to leave. I hadn't tried that when she was there for her interview. Then again, I don't remember if it was actually Miss ButteredUp or not, just someone similar who could've been anyone.

"Champ, tell me I'm wrong." I could only whisper.

Then he came rushing toward me. "My Leona! You've come back to me!" Before I could dodge him or duck, he had his arms around me, holding my head still, kissing my mouth—which was still open with surprise. He smelled faintly like the office—stale coffee—blended with some cologne that was barely there, and his sweat, and I was dizzy and wouldn't have remained standing except he was holding me. I didn't even wonder who the hell was Leona, and I thought maybe I didn't care. But when he stepped back, still holding my shoulders, looking at me, his eyes clouded, all I could remember was the way he had sat on the edge of his desk as he interviewed her, and looked down at her, and he was tossing a baseball from one hand to the other as he listened to her.

"If you're not Leona," he said slowly, "then who *are* you?"

"Damn you!" I ripped a poster off the wall, leaving a tattered corner still stuck to the plaster. "See this—*I* put this up, I'll bet you never even noticed!" I tossed it to the floor. "And how about this . . . I *know* it's here. . . ." I was looking for a small dog-eared book in the bookcase. "We bought a Hoyle once on our lunch hour because we argued over the rules so often—where is it?" I didn't find it, so I grabbed another book and threw it—when it hit the wall, some of the pages fluttered free. I spun in place, ignoring the dizziness, then once again spotted the box of junk stashed under the extra desk. "Ah ha!" I shouted, and kneeled beside the box. I pulled out a large brown coffee mug with "Champ" printed on it. "You won this in a bet. . . . I had it made for you. The next day you brought one for me just like it, except with *my* name." I pitched the cup over my shoulder and kept digging through the box, looking for my mug, but instead I found an envelope of snapshots. "Lookit this!" I tossed them like confetti. "The pictures I took at the Christmas party the year *you* had to be Santa." Then I crawled on hands and knees among the photos. "I know it's here . . . the blurry one . . . where *is* it? I had someone take a picture of *us.* Guess who your elf was—that's right, *me.*" I looked at each of the pictures, not able to see well through the tears gathering in my eyes, but well enough to know there wasn't a single shot of me. "Where is it!" I tore them all into small pieces and threw the handful at him. "And this thing!" I pulled a trophy out of the box and held it like a sword, pointing at him. "Dammit, this is the trophy our team won at the company bowling tournament." Then I stared at it. I had to hold it close to be able to see it at all. I couldn't keep it still. "The cheap thing—it's already *bent!*" I threw it, not lightly, and it fell in two pieces after hitting the wall. Next I picked up the whole box and dumped it on the floor. "Look at this junk—I could probably name everything here and where you got it. Just stupid-ass *junk.*" I could hardly see anything anymore, so I gathered an armload of objects and tossed them up, then ducked as they fell around me. "Just junk junk junk, half of it isn't even *here* anymore, and all this time I

thought it was important. . . ." I had my back to him, so I lifted my shirt to dry my face and eyes.

Champ was back at his desk, staring at his coffee and swirling it around in the cup, just like he had the day I caught him interviewing for a new secretary. After she left, there he sat, staring at his muddy coffee as he swirled it in the cup, but he wouldn't talk about her or the interview. He had pulled out a piece of paper to draw a baseball diamond. How could I listen to him? But I remember what he'd said: When a guy puts down a sacrifice bunt to move the runner into scoring position, it doesn't lower the batter's average and he'll always have lots of other times at bat to hit a home run . . . but in the real world, when a guy sacrifices himself, even for a good cause, he's just *out,* period, so it's not a very good strategy. You know that, Tam?

"Champ." I picked up a paper clip from his desk and unbent it until it was straight. "Just admit it, I was a goner, wasn't I? All I want is for you to admit it now."

He didn't answer. I twirled the straight paper clip between my fingers. "Your baseball strategy forgot one thing, Champ: What happens when the guy who's *supposed* to sacrifice ignores the signal—the runner gets picked off at first, and he's *out* too?" Then I pushed the straight paper clip into the bulletin board, as far as it would go.

Champ said, without looking up, "But there are other ways to move the runner along."

"That's right, and you did. Would I have thought to resign and start raising dogs if *you* hadn't suggested it? Not that I regret getting my dog. You know, she's already had a litter and I sold them for $400 *each.* But Champ, you know what? All this time—I thought quitting had been *my* idea."

"That's a lot of money for a puppy."

"Listen to me!" All that talk about baseball strategy, and then how he regretted not pursuing his athletic career, and how I shouldn't let anything stand in the way of *my* career as an animal trainer, and the only worthwhile accomplishment in life was self respect and so few of us have a real chance to have it—pretty soon I'd *forgotten* about the interview. There I was typing and copying my résumé while he looked up training kennels in the yellow pages. There I was writing my letter of resignation while he told me how happy I was going to be. Then at lunch he talked me into buying myself a dog book, and we looked at it together while I thought about which breed I wanted to start with, and he listened and let me talk, and— "How *could* you—did you think you were protecting *me,* or was it just *yourself*—you took away my only chance to fight back, what kind of friend is that—?" He came toward me around his desk and shouted "Shut up!"

"No, I won't, you can't stop me from remembering *this* time, you can't

even *kiss* it away this time, I know what you did, you bastard, you bastard—"

He was holding my shoulders and shaking me, my teeth snapping together, his fingers digging into me. "Shut up, I don't even know what you're talking about!"

Then I hit him, as hard as I could, not a slap with an open palm—I slugged him. He turned around and stood there, holding his mouth. I couldn't even hear him breathing. "Okay, you win," I said. "It never happened, you never knew me." My voice was surprisingly steady. "Why don't I just get my papers out of the dead files so you'll never have to accidentally remember I was here, if you someday came across them." I went to the file cabinet, but didn't open the drawer. For a moment I didn't even have enough strength to do that. Then I saw the label on the drawer, in my handwriting: Keep Out—Private—Do Not Disturb. "Champ? . . . ." I saw he was watching me. "Go ahead," he said.

Instead of the former-employee files, the drawer was full of stuff, *my* stuff: an old sweater, some sneakers I wore to jog during lunch hours, the mug with my name printed on it, the book about dogs and the Hoyle, the blurry photo of me at the Christmas party, my name plate from my desk, and a baseball from the 1965 college world series—signed by Champ Stillwater who warmed up in the ninth inning but never played—which he'd given to me as a paperweight when I complained that the air conditioner blew things off my desk. "Champ . . . no one opened this drawer in three years!"

He was back behind his desk, shuffling the cards, but he stopped and looked up. "That's right, Tam." He laughed a little. "I've been *afraid* to open it." He dealt out two poker hands.

I didn't move for a moment, then left everything in the drawer and shut it. I went to pick up my cards and studied them silently—nothing higher than a nine, no two alike. "You used to say guilt is a worthless emotion," I said, "but when you said it the day I left, I thought you were telling me not to feel guilty for quitting so fast." I put my cards down on the desk. "Champ, I actually came here to ask you, would you hire me again now?"

He held his cards under his chin, smiled and shook his head.

"No, not *will* you hire me . . . I said *would* you."

This time he neither nodded nor shook his head. He just stared, his elbow on the desk, chin in his hand, silently tapping the desktop with his fingertips, then he laughed. "I bet you wouldn't really want me to."

"Okay . . . fifty dollars!" I smiled, got the crumpled check from the floor and tossed it onto the desk.

Competitions

Sanford Pinsker

I

THE annual meeting of the Modern Language Association no longer held its usual fascinations. He had seen the swarming, anxiously intoxicated people before, out of place in the elegant lobbies of the New York Hilton or Chicago's Palmer House, but this year was different. He had been granted tenure (however reluctantly) last spring, his book on certain American-Jewish writers had been published in the fall, and, for Leonard Shuman, it seemed as if the knots of badge-wearing professors drifting toward the registration desk had come to New York especially to celebrate his success. True, Professor Harold Linton (University of Michigan) had rejected his paper on "Survivor Guilt in the Works of Saul Bellow and Bernard Malamud." The note was terse, as formal as it was unexpected:

> *Thank you very much for your submission. Unfortunately, the panel does not lend itself to the sort of paper you have proposed.*

After the first flush of disappointment, he kept re-reading the sentences behind the closed doors of his office, trying to determine if there was a deeper meaning lurking between Linton's gratefulness and his rejection. Evidently these MLA panels were a closed shop, filled by cronies or people to whom one owed favors. He made a mental note to act more responsibly, more "ethically" when *his* turn arrived. As he sat on an oversized leather sofa just to the side of the lobby, both "notes" merged into a smile only a touch short of satisfaction. He had remembered to bring his pipe, tobacco, and an already rumpled *Program*. It was important to look at ease, relaxed—especially when the lobby corridors, the elevators, seemingly the entire building filled to the bursting point with academic types. That was the whole idea behind taking the early bus from Mt. Laurel, New Jersey. He had beaten the crowds flying into Kennedy from

all parts of the country—those huddled masses yearning to breathe the smoke-filled air and rub their elbows against those with jobs, those who interviewed for jobs, those who delivered papers, those who decided who delivered papers. Now he was here, all six feet of Leonard Shuman rather self-consciously slumped into the expensive Hilton leather, surveying the scene.

To his right, lines were already forming at the house phones. *Professor Nelson? This is Donald Sampson of Southern Connecticut College. I was wondering if you had received the dossier I sent. You did?* . . . Hopeless. Entirely hopeless. This year promised to be even worse than last. No wonder they started early, first with polite calls to rooms where balding men paddled across the floor in slippers, secretly treating themselves to the color TV set and the expense-vouchered scotch. Later, desperation would set in. Attempts at black humor with fellow job-seekers did not help. So they would buttonhole names they recognized from *Who's Where* (until these harried, vaguely guilt-ridden souls learned to pocket their nametags and stroll through the lobbies impersonating "regular" guests), slip *vitae* sheets, off-prints, impeccable credentials under hotel room doors, become gaunt as Conrad's Marlow in three short days. Two years ago he had heard one fellow, obviously a graduate student, at these same house phones muttering to himself: *I wonder if the Hilton could use a bellhop with a dissertation on Dryden nearly done?* Hopeless, all right. But he could not move from the sofa near the house phones. He could not bring himself not to look.

A few short years ago "they" had been him. And he still recalled the shock and then the bitterness when T. W. Hansen (of staid, ivy-shrouded Middlebury College) had not been able to pronounce the title of his dissertation correctly. "Ah, yes, Mr. Shuman," he had begun, already bored, "and how *is* your dissertation on the . . . on the *'shimmel'* . . . coming along?" Earlier Shuman had been asked how his scholarly edition was proceeding (apparently the powers-that-be at sprawling Michigan State had mixed up the dossiers or the order of interviewees) and he had found himself wishing that he had worked on an obscure Renaissance text rather than something unpronounceable like the *schlemiel.* The poetic irony served him right. What could you expect when even his adviser had wondered out loud if he "made up" a Yiddish writer with the wildly improbable name of Mendele Mocher Seforim and then had written a lengthy chapter of literary criticism about him? Like so many others in English departments everywhere, he had become what he had analysed, a "shimmel."

Instinctively Shuman smoothed his mustache and the downward curve of his beard. A sure sign of nervousness, bad memories. There were a few hardy left-overs, but beards were evidently no longer the fashion. Only a few years ago this same lobby had been so jammed with bushy

growths and black fur-trimmed hats that it looked more like Moscow than New York. Now there were only faint glimpses of the old academic style—some stray corduroy jackets, an occasional pair of baggy trousers, the odd fellow wearing brown (scuffed) shoes with a blue suit. Double knit had given the conventioneers, as a whole, a permanent crease. The anxious, "literary" talk aside, it might have been a gathering of insurance salesmen. At least he had his pipe. And a jacket with thin lapels and honorable patches. Besides, his beard had that trimmed, committed look that implied that he had had it a long time (he had!) and had every intention of keeping it. Scraggly interlopers usually didn't have *that* kind of staying power. Here one meeting and clean-shaven the next. It had degenerated into a John Berryman look-alike contest. He reminded himself to give the *Dream Songs* another try, if only to affirm that poets could do what those who teach their poems should not. Wear long-flowing, crazed beards. Turn up for class drunk. Jump off bridges. The whole *shtick* of a romantic poet in an unromantic, tough-to-the-bones America. He smoothed his mustache. His nervousness. His own bad memories.

Opening the official, magazine-length *Program,* Shuman concentrated on arranging a mental schedule. There were so many sessions, so many papers. Too many. But one particularly intrigued him. It was a panel entirely devoted to the work of Mary Ann Evans. The listing looked like all the others: Madison A [7:00–8:15]. Even the papers had a predictable, academic ring: one would investigate her Lawrentian influences, another her "models of self-definition," still another her use of androgynous archetyping. The usual stuff, all right. But Miss Evans herself was listed as a "participant" and *that* made the session worth attending.

For as long as Shuman could remember, he had been alternately fascinated and disgusted by Miss Evans's career. Not since "childhood" of course, but since the time he had begun to take literature seriously, to think of it as a profession. Since grad school, in other words. And it had pained him to read the inner flap of her book jackets, to realize that she was only a few years older than himself and that he could never, never hope to catch up with all that frantic productivity. With each successive book—novels, short stories, collections of poetry, of essays—the bibliographic entry grew, listing her prizes, her awards, her mushrooming distinction. He had brooded over the face on the back of these books nearly as much as he had the chilling fictions inside. What could this study in plainness know about love, let alone about violence? Her hair was styled with all the deliberate care and taste of a woman readying herself for the annual banquet of some bowling league or Elks Club. Even the appearance of photo-sunglasses (as grotesquely large as they were affected) could not disguise a longer tradition of buying cosmetics at Kresge's and applying them with a vengeance that made her no threat to the faces one sees on the covers of *Vogue.* She looked like a drawing

Aubrey Beardsley might have done of Emily Dickinson.

Shuman looked forward to meeting her. That was his secret, the ace-in-the-hole that nobody in this by-now crowded, conventioneering lobby knew. He had a letter from Miss Evans herself, agreeing to (as she put it) "make time" to talk with him about a projected study about her fiction. She had "enjoyed" (Shuman wanted to underline that word; show it to his chairman, his dean) reading his article on *The Shattered Glass* and hoped it would be accepted by *Hudson Review.* But, she had added, there were those at that prestigious journal who did not think highly of her work, who were constantly admonishing her to "slow down," to reconsider, to revise, to *stop.* She could not, WOULD NOT, agree. The capital letters frightened Shuman, especially in a letter that had begun on such a perfunctory note. Still, he valued her words, kept them close at hand, in the right-hand pocket of his absolutely correct jacket. They were his ticket to the sort of meetings he had read about: Edmund Wilson with Scott Fitzgerald; Malcolm Cowley with William Faulkner. Now—at an MLA meeting, no less—it would be Leonard Shuman with Mary Ann Evans. Let the others crowd into Madison B, hoping to catch a glimpse of the Dark Lady of American Letters. He would meet with her privately, all to himself, over drinks. He resisted a vulgar impulse to shout that coup into the smug faces of people elbowing old cronies, arranging next year's program. Instead Shuman carefully folded the *Program* under his arm as if it were *The London Times* and strolled, casually, toward the house phones.

II

"Miss Evans? This is Leonard Shuman calling. I want to thank you, first of all, for your gracious letter. And I was wondering if we might firm up a time and place to meet." His words sounded rushed, more breathless than he had calculated them.

"Oh, yes . . . Mr. Shuman. I have been thinking about you, even *dreaming* about you in a certain sense. What you would sound like. How you would look . . ." Her voice struck Shuman as more disembodied than telephone voices usually are, as if she were speaking from another region of the cosmos and not from a room on the Hilton's 16th floor.

It was Room 1637, to be exact. Shuman left nothing to chance. The numbers were inked into his *Program* like a secret code. "I could come up to your room now, if that's all right," he suggested, breaking into the reverie at the other end of the cable.

There was a long, uncomfortable pause. And then. "*Now?* This minute?" Shuman cringed. *Had he been too presumptuous, a breaker of unwritten rules?* "I am feeling so disoriented at the moment, so unbelievably *rushed.* The train ride was very tiring . . ."

Of course, Shuman quickly remembered, she had to come all the way

from that small Canadian university where she taught. Across the border from Detroit. A long trip for somebody who, if the rumors were true, did not especially like to travel, who refused to fly, who was a notorious backseat driver. Of course. "Of course, Miss Evans. I can well understand that. Naturally, if you've just arrived, we could make . . ."

"Heavens no," she interrupted, "I have been here since yesterday afternoon. It's just that I don't like to move so quickly from one set of stimuli to another. Impressions tend to get lost, diluted when you do that, don't you agree?"

"Absolutely," he replied, although he failed to see what was so "absolute" about it or to have even the vaguest idea of what she was talking about. *He* had taken a bus that morning and was of the opinion that people do *that* all the time. Even when setting off to attend meetings like this.

"Besides," she continued, either unaware of or singularly unimpressed by his agreement, "I can never take a train ride without becoming fascinated by the other people who happen to share the coach. Why have such separate lives been crowded together? Sometimes I have the sense that it must be fate, a fate none of us completely understands. There is a compulsion to tell their stories. For example, there was a little girl a few seats away from me. Probably nine or maybe ten years old. I couldn't see exactly what sort of dress she had on, but it was long, meant for dress-up. She had shiny Mary Janes on her feet and a light blue winter coat, the kind that have little velvet trim on the collars. The girl was with her mother and father. They were taking a trip, perhaps to visit relatives. Nothing could have been more ordinary, more *safe*.

"But then I noticed something unusual, even terrifying in its way. On her lap the girl had an old library book with stained pages. I watched her trying to read it for a long time. She would bend a corner of the page back and forth until it came loose in her fingers—then she did not know what to do with it. Finally, she slid the jagged paper between the pages at the back of the book. I was the only one who saw, but I thought of it as the train pulled into New York, into this convention filled with talk about books."

Shuman, on the other hand, had spent the bus ride from New Jersey rehearsing what he would say when he finally spoke to Miss Evans. He had finally decided that the correct tone would be casual, yet businesslike, respectful without turning him into the sycophant. All for naught. Was she testing him, wondering what sort of "deep reading" he could dream up on the spot? He knew he was coming off badly. At last he composed himself well enough to plunge, again, into the breach; "You are quite right, Miss Evans. This convention will be *filled* with talk about books and the people who have written them. There is no need to rush our meeting. Perhaps tomorrow, at some time of your convenience, would be better for both of us." *There, it was out.* The proposed postpone-

ment. The pleading for another chance. He hoped against hope it would work.

In a fashion it did.

"Oh, yes. Tomorrow would be so much better. Say, at four o'clock?"

"That would be fine. Why don't I come round to fetch you at your room and we could get a cup of coffee or something."

"Good. I'll look forward to meeting you then, Mr. Shuman. And thank you so much for calling."

"Thank you, Miss Evans."

"Goodbye."

"Goodbye."

He turned and nearly collided with a young man whose worried face revealed a condition that his name badge merely confirmed: *Michael Robinson of St. Clair Extension.* Obviously job-hunting and growing desperate, even in this twilight of long registration lines, rushing bellhops, and mountains of luggage strewn all over the lobby. The phone hardly had a chance to chill in its cradle before Robinson began to dial numbers from the piece of crumpled paper in his hand. Shuman wondered if Robinson had overheard his conversation with Miss Evans in the same way people instinctively peek at name badges on crowded elevators. Probably not, he concluded, the poor kid is too wrapped up in his own problems. That seemed clear enough from the way he grimaced and gave out nearly inaudible groans whenever a room wouldn't answer. He reminded Shuman of a fighter covering up on the ropes, trying to hang on while his opponent showered punches at him from every angle. Still, a part of Shuman wanted Robinson, wanted everyone, to know about his telephone call, who he would be meeting at four o'clock. And, acknowledging that impulse, Shuman returned to the sofa, ashamed. Enough had happened for one day. He decided to skip the panel and its dreary papers. His questions could wait.

III

"Did the panel go well last night? I *considered* attending it," he said, as if measuring out fairness with coffee spoons, "but it does seem to me that there is always a danger in hearing other critical opinions when your own essays are *in media res,* as it were."

"Well, it was very stuffy. Very crowded. And with so much cigarette smoke in the air, I found it hard to keep my attention from wandering." They were sitting in one of those small coffee shops that often nestle at the base of large, skyscrapers in New York. Far enough from the Hilton so that none of the people who popped in for a quick sandwich or late afternoon snack would recognize Miss Evans. Or interrupt them, once the conversation *really* got going. Shuman nervously hoped it would.

"You've seen the article I wrote on *The Shattered Glass.* What I hope to do, of course, is expand it somewhat, turn it into a chapter. In any event, I am particularly interested in the massacre, the family slaughtering, which opens that novel. I don't quite know why, but I assume that you keep a file of newspaper clippings in your study, that your fictions begin in those bizarre events which seem to appear in the daily papers all the time."

"Actually, I don't keep a clippings file," she replied, "and I don't even read the newspapers very regularly. The incident which opens *The Shattered Glass* and remains at its center, more or less, is one that had haunted me for many years. It must have been eight or ten years ago—before I began work on the novel."

"Well, let me try something else, then, that's been on my mind. Is there any explanation for the pathological behavior, for the grotesquery which seems to be so much a part of your fiction? What I have in mind here are characters mutilating themselves or compulsively eating until they fairly burst from food. Do you think of these things as metaphors for some larger condition?"

"A larger condition? Like what?"

"America itself. Its obesity, its ugliness." Shuman's eyes drifted past—or through—Miss Evans to the counterman hard at work frying hamburgers. For Christ's sake, he thought, if I was a character in her goddamn book, I could make it clear enough. I would bolt down a half-dozen cheeseburgers, eight orders of french fries, milkshakes, coca-colas, donuts, layer cake. Everything else that crazy son-of-a-bitch ate and then she'd understand.

"Each extreme action is simply the outcome of an intensification of behavior considered 'normal' in our society. Like everything else, it is metaphorical, but also, in part, literal." Shuman wondered if the pronouncement included this conversation—this study in crossed purposes, strained talk. It was, God forbid, turning into an *interview.*

And it continued that way for nearly a half hour. Did Miss Evans know a book on the brain by a man named Rose? (She did not.) Was she familiar with something called the Praeder-Wilcox syndrome? (She was not.) Questions about characters, about possible models for Zion County, about her fascinations with law, with medicine, with politics, with race car drivers. It was hopeless.

Miss Evans sat across the narrow expanse of Formica, sipping a Tab. She had, no doubt, heard all these earnest "probing" questions before. The unnecessary silverware—forks, knives—lay dully between them, near her Tab, his coffee. Shuman wanted to take out his pipe, but at the last moment recalled (luckily) her objections to clouds of literary smoke. Instead, he fixed his attention on the knife, a detail he had encountered in countless stories about maniacal hitchhikers, rural misfits, and assorted thugs. Her stories were obsessed with seemingly unmotivated deaths.

Still, Shuman had defended her, insisting that Miss Evans herself was not suicidal, *not* as "strange" as some of her critics imagined. After all, hadn't she once insisted that her life was a "study in conventionality"? Had that time-honored separation between the Artist and his Art been totally forgotten in our gossip-hungry time?

"Why are you so intrigued by random violence?" he asked, lowering his voice to a pitch just above a whisper and his eyes to the knife laying just a few inches from his hands, "By emotions that explode out of control?"

"It's so hard to explain. Perhaps *too* hard. I am always suspicious of such explanations anyhow. I don't *want* to think about what I do, to analyze it. I'm afraid I am not going to be very much help, Mr. Shuman." She paused, tried to distract herself by reading the advertisements pasted on the mirror-like wall behind the counter: *Quarter-Pound hamburger and large drink,* in two-inch block letters, followed by multi-colored numbers—*$1.19;* HOMEMADE SOUPS; assorted *Pies, Cakes, Donuts.* "Cities often seem so transparent," she continued, "that I can hear them ticking, can feel the frustrations and the angers seeping into my body."

"Will there be anything else?" the waitress asked. She towered over them both, adding up the check. Her uniform suffered from five o'clock shadow.

"Would you like some dessert—a piece of pie or some cake?"

"No, thank you. I've had quite enough to eat today. A large breakfast at the hotel this morning and an enormous lunch at Luchow's. No, I really couldn't eat another thing. I don't know *how* I shall manage to eat dinner this evening. My publisher has promised to take me to the Four Seasons."

Shuman glanced quickly at the check, slid a dollar bill under his cup, and found himself agreeing with Miss Evans at last—it was hard to think of a mouth like hers actually *eating,* much less three complete meals in one day. She was so thin, her jawline a collection of right angles. Clothes hung on her as if the bony frame inside was ill at ease. Everything conspired to make her look like one of the blue collared heroines from her books. And the tiny, gold, heart-shaped locket suspended around her neck was the final touch. Shuman imagined her childhood home in upstate New York, her apartment in central Canada, and saw sofas covered with clear plastic, flowered wallpaper, the whole proletarian works. He was glad to follow her through the door, to get out of there.

Shuman didn't notice the table knife in his pocket, didn't feel its surprisingly sharp surface, until they had nearly returned to the Hilton. The corner of 53rd Street and Fifth Avenue. Cold. The wind turning skin raw. He plunged his reddening hands into his jacket pockets—and there it was. He remembered staring at the dull, stainless steel knife all right, but not taking it. What had possessed him to do that? Should he excuse him-

self, return to the coffee shop, make up some story? But Shuman was not exactly sure where the place was. Do I make a left at the next corner? or a right? Was it two blocks or three?

Suddenly he felt hungry—in fact, starved. He should have ordered something at the restaurant. Coffee was not enough. He wanted a steak, the biggest one you could buy in a small place like that. Wanted it with a desperation that only increased as he turned the knife over in his fingers, traced its outline against his pocket.

They walked through the lobby, stood near the elevators, and waited for one that would stop at the 16th floor. Shuman's stomach rumbled, gnawed at him. The crowds had thinned out, off to dinner or publishers' parties, but several people were apparently nodding toward Miss Evans. He wondered if they were friends or merely rubbernecking a celebrity. Strange that he could still catch a nuance like that and at the same time not remember what he had said to Miss Evans after leaving the coffee shop. Or what she had replied to him. There *must* have been the usual amenities, polite chatter about a forthcoming novel or how prizes are determined, but Shuman remained uncertain. Everything was a confusing blur. He moved with the slow, exaggerated steps of a sleepwalker. This is really not happening, he thought, not to me. To me. Or to her. It was impossible to feel anything.

Room 1637. Only the clutched knife inside his pocket seemed real. It would be so easy to plunge it through the thin tissues of her neck, watch it disappear beneath the tight folds of her skin. His brain throbbed. His tongue swelled, filling up his mouth. He wanted a drink, anything to quench this unreasonable thirst. He remembered her story about the strange young man who lured an innocent, all-too-trusting girl out of her house. Shuman smiled, imagining the ultimate criticism, the final act of poetic justice to the author of that unsettling tale. It would be so easy. Simply push through the opened hotel door—she was cooing words about "his plans," offering to "write him back" if he needed further help—and the knife would spring out by itself. Then he could have a glass of water. Several glasses. All the hotel rooms came well supplied with tumblers. Shuman reminded himself to smash it afterward. Destroying his fingerprints. The evidence. He was glad he had remembered that important detail.

IV

"Leonard. Leonard *Shuman!* How the hell are you?" It was Jim Fredericks, a fellow grad student at Penn. One of those competitive types who hid his angst under the veneer of boisterous laughter and enthusiastic handshakes. Shuman had always disliked him. "What, no drink?" he fairly shouted, "Let *me* buy, my good man," steering Shuman

toward one of the portable bars that dotted the large room. There were lines of freeloaders as if word about the Norton party had been made over the hotel loudspeakers. Everyone was impatiently awaiting the liquor that anthologies bought. Shuman ordered a scotch and followed the jovial Fredericks as he made a bee-line for a table with bowls of nuts, pretzels, several kinds of crackers and institutional dips.

"I see you're still at Amherst," Shuman remarked in a dry, matter-of-fact way, "You must like the place."

"Well, the place likes me, let's put it that way. Granted, I'm doing well enough there. Can't complain. They granted me tenure in my third year, right after my book on the Bloomsbury group came out." Shuman remembered it—and his surprise when he realized that J. M. Fredericks, the author of *Pampered Visionaries* (Oxford University Press; generously reviewed) and Jim Fredericks were one and the same. In the past three years there had been two other critical studies, each one trailing a cloud of similar glory. "But to tell the truth, old man, I'm looking around. In fact, I've been talking to some people at the convention."

"Really?" he heard himself exclaim, feeling the old resentments rising up again.

"Well, that's what these meeting are *for.* I mean, people tend to overdo all the depressing talk about the meat market, the graduate school cattle drives and that sort of thing. It's bad enough at the time, I suppose, but after you land your first job it's contacts that count."

"I guess you're right."

"Absolutely. As a matter of fact, a very good possibility developed after I delivered my paper at the session on Aesthetic Reconsiderations this afternoon. Walter Bryson was there, spouting the Old Line like a beached whale. But I think he was really impressed by my structuralist approach. We had drinks afterward and, you know, I just may be shuffling off to Princeton soon." Fredericks stuffed a handful of nuts into his mouth and finished off his drink, all in a single, uninterrupted motion. "And what about you?"

"I'm working on Mary Ann Evans at the moment," he announced, unable to resist a renewal of the old competitions. Fredericks appeared interested enough, but not particularly impressed. Not solid enough. Definitely not solid enough. Or—wait—could it be something else? Was he so out of touch with contemporary American writers (particularly those with no Bloomsbury connections) that he didn't recognize the name? His eyes darted nervously past Shuman's shoulder, around Shuman's head.

"As a matter of fact, Mary and I had lunch this afternoon."

Evidently that got Fredericks' attention. "Is she *here?* At the convention?" he inquired. He did know her—that is, her *work*—after all.

"Oh, yes. I'm told that she used to come to these bashes often. Years

ago. When she was a graduate student herself. But this is the first time we've actually had a chance to meet."

"Well, that makes you a fortunate man indeed. Should help with your book, no doubt. You *are* working a book about her, aren't you?"

"Yes. And I hope so." Shuman felt himself warming up, gaining confidence. Perhaps it was the drink. Or Fredericks. Whatever, it did not matter. Now that he had started, he would turn that smug, much published face green. "Doing a book-length study will not only give me a chance to re-evaluate Naturalism, but also to investigate the nature of violence in our evolving mythos, our eschatological . . ."

He was mid-sentence before he realized that Fredericks had not been listening. "Sounds quite intriguing, Len, but I just noticed old Bryson come in and I really ought to say hello. You know how it is. Look, it was good seeing you again. Let's get together for drinks or something before this thing is over—O.K.?" He grabbed Shuman's hand and gave it a characteristic Fredericks pump. Shuman tallied up the results, concluded that, once again, he had "lost" and walked slowly toward the door. For all his scanning, he did not see a familiar face, no likely candidate to hear about his lunch with Mary Ann Evans. Besides, he was no longer sure he wanted to tell anyone about it.

V

His room seemed as out of place as everything else at this convention. The bed had been made, but papers were scattered along the dresser and TV set: hotel guides to New York, information about room service, wake-up calls, Miss Evans's letter. Shuman sat on the room's only chair and read the last item once again. *It is not often that I read criticism about my fiction which has been as understanding and sympathetic as yours was . . .* He was tired. No, exhausted. But he read the letter over and over again, creasing it down the middle after each reading. To make it seem fresh. Like the first time he opened it in the mailroom of Trenton State. After a long time the letter seemed to dissolve in his hands and Shuman found himself holding two pieces of jagged paper. He held them awkwardly, wondering what to do. Finally he decided. He read each portion separately, carefully folding each in half when he had finished. The process was somehow soothing, appropriate. He kept on doing it.

In the morning the floor was pockmarked by tiny bits of paper as if there had been a miniature parade in his room and people had showered confetti from all the upper windows. Shuman himself was fast asleep.

POETRY

R. S. Stewart

First Cell

How it must have popped about
In its pleasure, a bit of a boat,
Its nucleus fanning like fire
To keep it alive and afloat, contained
As membrane, to save it from drifting out
To a sea aching to swallow it.

How it must have risen above
The fever of sand and steam, proof of the power
In capsule, meeting the swell
Of the wave head-on, taking the helm
By storm, searching for strategy,
A mate, another first of anything.

How it must have felt the tinge
Of terror in its tiny walls, sensed
Its awesome mission in its fierce little motor.
How it must have wanted to dissolve
Back to broken chemicals, to confess
The responsible mistake, not making
Designs on the universe
In its next-to-nothingness.

A Ghost of a Chance

That's how thin some things become
On purpose and overnight, liking the smooth slide
Of going under and returning only
To the source of the most invisible.

That's how brave some things must be,
Haunting the head for an undisturbed century
And then one precipitate afternoon
Colliding with the sudden invention,

Putting the hat back in place
And escaping by a hair's breadth.
That's how poised some people portray themselves,
Preparing for the worst and no fear

Following when a mountain comes to move them
To a faith less frequent.
That's how eternal some events are,
Absorbing themselves into obdurate oblivion

And liking the idea of being there
For the absolute thrill of it,
As if no other reason need explain
The grand geography. That's how far some sounds go

Never to be heard again, how deep
Some desires fall to disappear,
Manifesting themselves moments later
And the situation never once improving.

Domestic Detail

The scene is half imagined
Since those who live here
Are more amazed at their arrival
Than at the tranquil moments appearing

More and more out of the blue
And with the frequency of stars.
The inhabitants know that design best
And how something keeps marring

The exterior. But all is well
Within. The immaculate curtains hang
Undisturbed, the closets close up
No skeletons, and if a door is banging

It bangs only in the imagination.
The furniture, the lamps are the keys
To a quiet and safe future
Where the dwellers keep on seeing

What they have envisioned since the start:
The perfectly made luxurious bed,
Pots and pans, candles in all
The cold corners, but dreading

Nothing, not even the end of arrival.
The house has a hold on everything,
Even that far-away sacred sound
Of one cathedral bell left ringing.

The Way Things Work

A mechanical means means most
In reverse, the backup of the actuals
Revealing themselves as less-than-amazing
Miracles, at a time when the world begins
To look the way it did
When it was pristine,
All air and water and matrix,
A lone line by the sweep of the sea
As if something divine really had been done,
Keeping its spaces free of clutter
Since the only thing that matters at all
Is the heart of matter and energy
After physics lays down the laws
And the rest is all pause and motion
And a real knowing for what is going on
And coming to, especially with motors
That hum and hum and mean nothing
But nuts and bolts and a shot of oil
Because when one thing shuts
And another opens, something works
Or is about to, even whole machines
That are about as devout as things come
For as long as they can be
Shining like steel, bending like tin,
Reminiscent of toys and globes spinning just so
To make wonders cease,
To make mountains move,
To make more than blood and rivers flow
And atoms split for a start
Of some sort, a cause for celebration,
A knob getting superbly twisted,
A plug finding true satisfaction.

Marguerite Bouvard

The Sum

for Jose

At dinner, everyone talks at once.
Our laughter volleys back and forth,
the syllables dipping among the paella and rioja.
But you, who were always the center,

no longer touch meat or wine.
You smile quietly, a little apart,
as if you had just returned from a long journey.
You are thinking about tightropes,

the cancer that grows inside you
like an underwater plant, the marriage
you left behind. Perhaps you are thinking
we hold it all too lightly.

I want to tell you that a dense forest
has sprung around Krakatoa,
that in the underground tunnels
formed by lava where long, rope-like

tree roots dangle, a whole community feeds.
In this darkness, the cricket propels
itself by touch. I want to tell you
that nothing is lost. But it is you who tell me

later on, as we look at your paintings—
that we're always reaching for something
better, that it's not the single work,
but the sum of all our trials.

The Farmer on the Cuchet

She would bring up the cows for summer pasture
line the sills with red and pink geraniums,
hook up swings for the grandchildren.

The Cuchet echoed with their shouts, and the dog
worrying the cows, and the blong, blang, blong
of bells over tall grass.

Even when restaurants and ski-lifts rose
behind the farm like conflagrations,
drawing up cars, she stayed,

coming out evenings to water the cows,
wring out clothes in the stream-filled trough.
But this year, a silence

of shutters, an absence, as if someone
had touched a switch. In the gathering dark,
a few cows munch the thick blades,

while heavily, a black steer folds his legs
beneath him, settles down to watch the peaks
as if for the last time.

Nancy G. Westerfield

Vending Machines

Caveat emptor in the corner
Arcade adjoining the station, where they wait
Along the wall, bending to the undecided
Sweet promises of hot or cold delights,
Tension relief, speedball and ramrod video
Fun. And she is one: douce ex machina
Standing in wait against the wall,
Insolently loafing among the station police.
With one boot propped high, she keeps
The buyer aware of her deep throaty
Cough, of her breasts in a Day-Glo coat
Pushed half-off, handles PacMan's rod
With her practiced skill, if jolted loose
From her post quaffs something cool
From a fellow vending machine, never
Lights up Empty, never lights up full.

The Moles

Lately, I have noticed their colors
Changing: from beetroot to fuchsia, blueberry
To black, and their amplitude: building
Their molecastles one atop another
In all the stagnant recesses of the flesh.
Some, like burgeoning brown buttons
On shanks, link into body orifices
As if buttonholed, black holes visible
To the naked eye with what they are
Plunging inward: malignancy moling
Its pathways toward the brain. Any man's
Kiss that explores the mineshaft to the heart
Is finding the mouth's molespread: papillae
And polyps growing there in the dark
At the back of the tongue. Nights,
When brushing the teeth, I splay it
To the light, thrust forward to catch them
Small as grass-seeds watered with the splash
Of words until they will become waverings
Like seaweeds seen through the limpidshine
Of tides. Nothing can stop the growing
Of the mole-rampant; my days now
Are a molespan; the white one pearling itself
Like a mollusk over and over in layers
Of unbuttoned being, will grow with nothing
To stop the growing until its mole-pearl
Is all that the shell of me can hold.

J. B. Goodenough

Maple

All the words
The tree ever spoke
The wind erased.

Now they lie
Talking ghost-talk
Under foot,

Their grammar
Scrambled,
Their meaning lost.

The tree
Collects her thoughts,
Plans

A thousand things
To say
Come spring.

Elizabeth, Baking Bread

I wouldn't make bread
In any bowl but this one
That used to be my mother's.
Brown, with a yellow stripe,
Only one chip out.

I wouldn't curse any man
Or bless any man,
Punching the dough down,
Except this one: I've had him
A long time, your father.

I wouldn't flour the board
In any apron but this one.
It used to have blue flowers.
I made it myself
When I was twelve.

I wouldn't talk to anyone
Except you about these things,
About saving, and keeping.
How else would you learn
What to say to a daughter?

Grandfather

In the year of our ashes
To aetatis suae, Grandfather,
Departing this dearly
Beloved span of his let
Us join hands, was graveside
Heard, hear us O, to mutter
Of mustard-seed until we
Bounced dust unto et cetera
Upon his little lid, but
Grandfather, hallelujah by
Trade preacher and thus
Hating always Amen, exploded
Golden, and all the twelve
Gates of the parsonage
Vegetable garden opened
Thereafter upon the wild
Weed of his witness lo
Seventy years plus seven.

Cat Swamp

He fishes at dusk, grandfather
Who died a long time ago.
Wood-duck do not take flight;
Frogs continue their song.

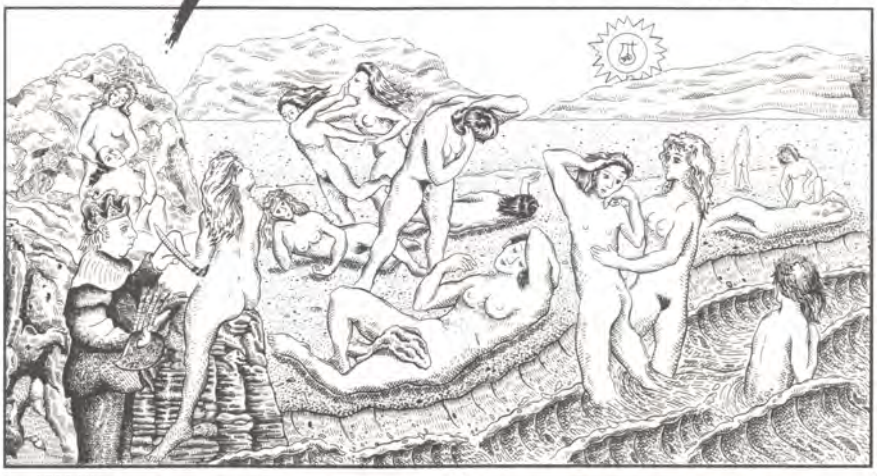
The path from house to pond
Is overgrown; ferns bend for him,
And poplars spill pale rain
When his coming shakes the leaves.

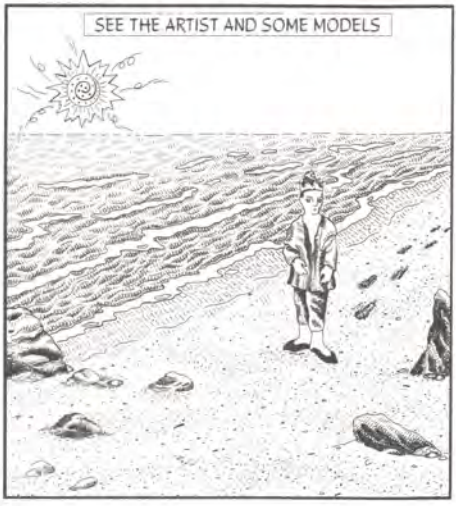
In half-dark I cannot see him,
Only the pock of hook and sinker
Hitting the water; then circles
Closing inward to the center.

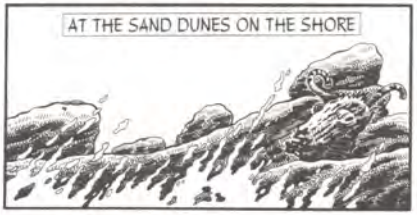
ART

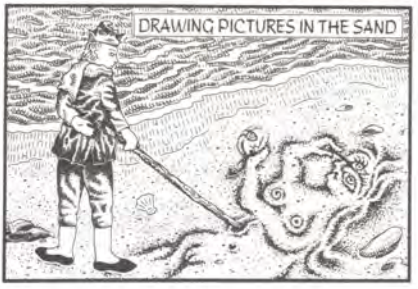
A DAY AT THE BEACH WITH Picasso

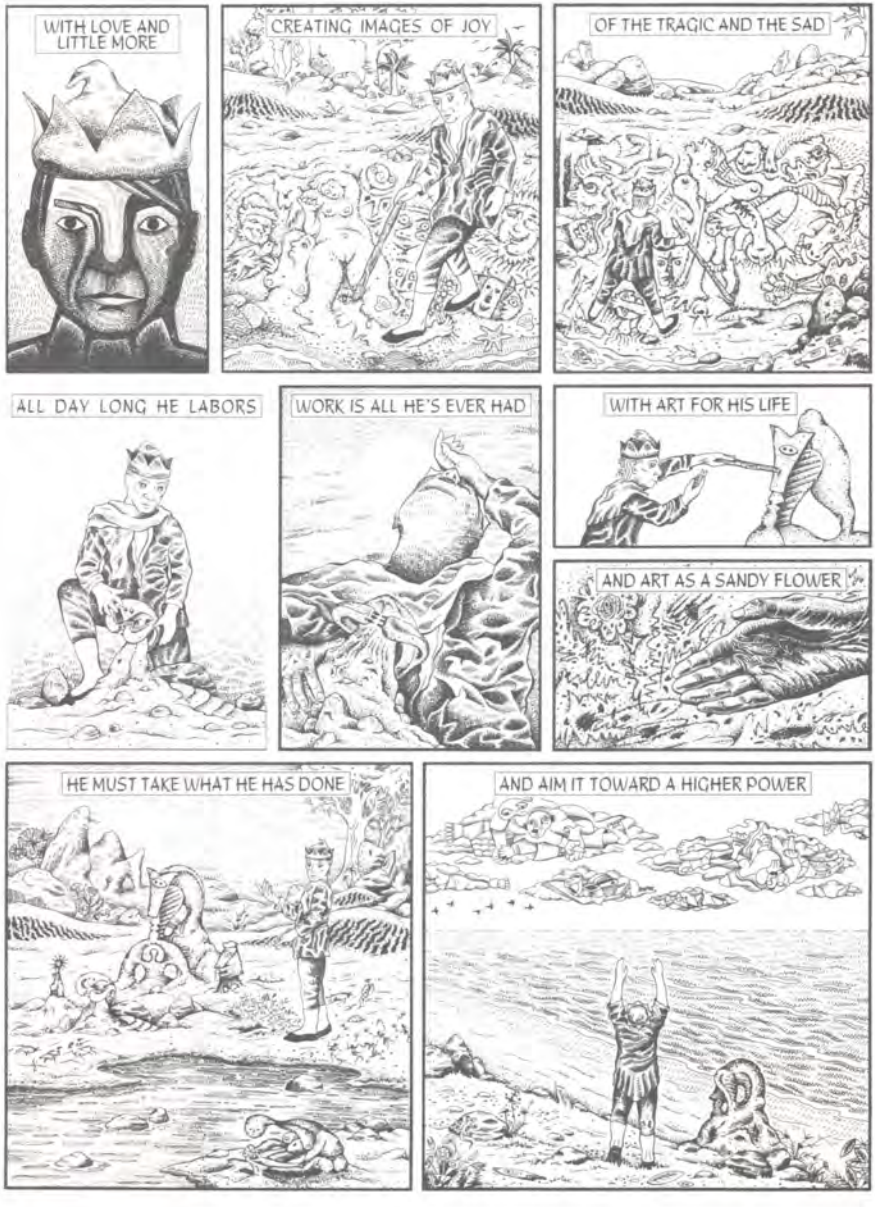
BY JEFF HOPP










WITH LOVE AND LITTLE MORE
CREATING IMAGES OF JOY
OF THE TRAGIC AND THE SAD
ALL DAY LONG HE LABORS
WORK IS ALL HE'S EVER HAD
WITH ART FOR HIS LIFE
AND ART AS A SANDY FLOWER
HE MUST TAKE WHAT HE HAS DONE
AND AIM IT TOWARD A HIGHER POWER


THE GOLDEN PAINTING IN THE SAND
IN THE FADING LIGHT IS FREED
THE ARTIST TURNS TO LEAVE
AS THE SUN JOINS WITH THE SEA
THEN HE WHEELS AROUND TO LOOK AT
ALL THAT HE DID TODAY
BEFORE THE TIDE SWEEPS IN
TO WASH IT ALL AWAY
AGAIN AND AGAIN THE TIDE RUSHES IN

ARTICLES

Joyce's Politics and Mine

Richard Flanagan

THEY are different. That is my thesis. Joyce's politics and mine. And I am forced into confrontation with the difference and into an understanding of what the confrontation means so that I can then get on with my own work. Reduction: for me, politics is action toward the redistribution of power in a society; for him it wasn't. As artist, I participate consciously in that action; he chose not to. I mull this over in a public forum because the issue is not mine alone nor a whimsical quarrel with a dead writer. Stephen Dedalus confronts the matter in the last chapter of *A Portrait of the Artist As a Young Man.* Every self-conscious artist must raise the question for himself or herself, perhaps numerous times, and choose how profoundly the work of art shall be a political statement. *Whether* it will be political is now an archaic consideration about which I say more below.

In Seamus Deane's essay, "Joyce and Nationalism," the following lines appear:

> An act of writing which will replace all earlier acts; which will replace all politics; which will make the ignoble noble; which will make history into culture by making it the material of consciousness—this extraordinary ambition is at the heart of Joyce's enterprise.

And Deane adds: "The desire of nationalism pales in comparison with this desire."[1] I sit in awe of that formulation as of the ambition it describes. In this essay, I want to concentrate on two matters, one embodied in that formulation, one that is my own (although by no means exclusively so)—and on the connection between the two.

Making "history into culture" doubtless has more than one meaning. It

is clear enough that Seamus Deane's meaning and purpose, as he uses the expression, have to do with Joyce's desire and need to make use of Irish history—and a large chunk of western literary history—as a way of creating a new and estimable culture for Ireland. It is much grander than that, both in fact and in Deane's rendition of it. I do not aspire to elucidate Deane, however, but to graze for a time among his fecund observations.

Later, Deane says this: ". . . the idea of sequence demands that one should conform to the pattern of the past so that, in doing so, the pattern becomes extended or fulfilled in oneself. Stephen and Bloom, however, try to avoid sequence and to replace it with simultaneity. For them, history is not a record of facts but the material of their consciousness." (p. 177)

One wants to know what it means to "try to avoid sequence," for we are seemingly joined to sequentialness, in an erotic pose, like Siamese twins linked at the pelvis.

Here is another brilliant summary, this one from an essay by Jorge Borges and found in *Borges, A Reader,* (a subtle sub-title):

> Imagine any present. On a Mississippi night Huckleberry Finn awakens. The raft, lost in the partial darkness, is floating down the river. Perhaps the weather is cool. Huckleberry Finn recognizes the quiet relentless sound of the water; he opens his eyes lazily. He sees a vague number of stars, he sees an indistinct streak of trees; then he sinks into an immemorial sleep that envelops him like murky water. The metaphysics of idealism declare that it is risky and futile to add a material substance (the object) and a spiritual substance (the subject) to those perceptions. I maintain that it is no less illogical to think that they are terms of a series whose beginning is as inconceivable as its end. To add to the river and the shore perceived by Huck the notion of another substantive river and another shore, to add another perception to that immediate network of perceptions is, for idealism, unjustifiable. For me, it is no less unjustifiable to add chronological precision: the fact, for example, that the event occurred on June 7, 1849, between 4:10 and 4:11 A.M. Or in other words: I deny, with the arguments of idealism, the vast temporal series that idealism admits. Hume has denied the existence of absolute space, in which each thing has its place; I deny the existence of one time, in which all events are linked together. To deny coexistence is no less difficult than to deny succession.[2]

I want to suggest that with these two passages we are squarely in the

middle of modernist pronouncement, which will be all right with those who, like me, may not be entirely ready for post-modernism yet and may even find the very term offensive.[3]

Don't misunderstand my presumption. There are many ways, I know, of being in the middle of modernist pronouncement. The positions of Deane and Borges are one middle. If one understands them, one has no trouble acknowledging the possibility that something can have more than one middle.

But suppose one doesn't understand the passages or understand them fully. For example, what does it mean to assert that simultaneity, not sequence, is the significant mode, let alone that it is a modernist expression, a central expression at that?

It seems possible, perhaps inevitable, that we shall continue to think that one thing follows another, that causality is both demonstrable and true. We shall very likely continue to think that Joyce's accomplishment in *Ulysses* is to have recorded with a special fidelity the moment-by-moment progress of Leopold Bloom's fictional journey through Dublin 82 years ago, one event following another as inexorably as the footsteps that carried you from bed to bath to breakfast this morning.

But what do we know in our world except that we cannot tabulate in the old ways? Is there any certainty but that? If I deny here the suzerainty of "truth," will anyone be shocked? The confusion of reality with truth is a gift from Joyce to us, no matter what he intended, which is quite beyond us.

Stephen Heath states: "Joyce's writing . . . deconstructs the fundamental (contextual) distinction between the literal and the figurative."[4] Given that statement as a premise, what is the epic Joyce would write for us today? May we climb up out of our scholarly absorptions long enough to consider such a question? The man who ducked and dodged the political exigencies and urgencies of his time (in our idolatry, we want to say he "transcended" them), whose heartfelt convictions about power and its re-distribution were consigned chiefly to querulous letters and asides[5]—what would this man have written if he had seen Nietzsche's proclamation of the death of God made flesh in Auschwitz and Nagasaki and My Lai and Soweto? Could he have lived through the last 45 years and written the same book?

The answer is not as obvious to me as it may be to others. All anguish becomes one, becomes simultaneous, in contemplation of the horrible, the inarticulable. It is the gift of Bracques and Mies van der Rohe and Stockhausen to present to us all sides at once. The modernist position says, among many things, that we are not melded with the meliorism of the 19th century, no matter how strongly our humanistic or sentimental inclinations bend us in that direction. We have a different notion of hope, blasted and disfigured and staggering. The modernist position implies as

well, in the passages I presented at the outset, that we are all collaborators—I interpret here, for my own reasons—we are all at Auschwitz, in both costumes; we are bombers and burned in Japan, killers and victims at My Lai and in South Africa.

Czeslaw Milosz, in his Norton Lectures at Harvard, said:

> My corner of Europe, owing to the extraordinary and lethal events that have been occurring there, comparable only to violent earthquakes, affords a peculiar perspective. As a result, all of us who come from those parts appraise poetry slightly differently than do the majority of my audience, for we tend to view it as a witness and participant in one of mankind's major transformations. I have titled this book *The Witness of Poetry* not because we witness it, but because it witnesses us.[6]

Listen to Stockhausen's ruminations on his composition:

> His work and your work and my work play a TRIO, their works accompany.
>
> Your work and my work play a DUO, his work accompanies.
>
> My work plays a SOLO, your work accompanies.
>
> My work and I play a DUO, the second I accompanies.
>
> My work and I and the second I play a TRIO, the third I accompanies. etc.————[7]

We are playing or we are accompanying. Those are the possibilities. While there may be pauses, for the sake of rhythm, the playing of any and all of us goes on simultaneously.

Patrick Parrinder, writing of the Proteus section, Stephen's elaborated "soliloquy," "stream of consciousness," "interior monologue," says:

> Abstract thinking, as Stephen practices it, is largely a process of recalling and rearranging the voices of philosophical and theological tradition . . . For the reader, the process of reading Stephen's mind is like that of scanning a linguistic collage. Decoding the chapter, we discover not only the vividness of his memories and physical perceptions, but the richness and diversity of his accumulation of thoughts.[8]

The word "collage" arrests me here, partly because I have written this essay with such a model in mind. The nature of a collage, linguistic on the page or spread about on the wall, is that it all exists at the same time.

Stephen's associational tripping is all present at once by virtue of the constraint on Joyce to distribute it across a number of pages and on the publisher to print it so. Our shortcoming is that we cannot apprehend it all at the same time. Nonetheless, there it is. For any practical purpose of ours, it makes no difference whether the events in Stephen's mind, as Joyce displays them, happened one after the other or all at once. What is clear is that the events, besides being a collage eternally present in front of us, are all present at the same time in Stephen's "mind." Harking back to the language above, we have with Bloom not a progress but a tableau, not a movie but a frieze.

If I understand Stephen Heath, he means much the same thing when he says in "Ambiviolences": "Writing, no longer seen as unique expression, becomes an activity of assemblage, of reading, in which activity the writing subject itself is dispersed in a plurality of possible positions and functions."[9]

Stephen Dedalus is, after all (let us not forget), a fictional character; his mind, unlike a living person's, utterly finished, finite, sprung from Joyce's forehead. "Recalling and rearranging voices" is an odd practice to attribute to a finished and therefore static character. Reading *Ulysses,* we are all necessarily post-Stephen.

* * *

I am struggling with this matter of simultaneity less earnestly as a scholar than as a writer of my own fiction. With the thought that live authors, too, have their contribution to make, I want to speak now of a work of mine in progress.

I had a friend some years ago, a sculptor, who told me once that his ambition was to create a sculpture that would float—no pedestal, no base, no floor beneath, no gas balloons—a solid piece of work that would . . . float.

He may have been a little drunk at the time, but he was no fool. He knew enough about physics to know that his ambition would never be realized. But it was the ambition that was important, because it hovered there, like his imagined sculpture, whenever he was in his studio. It shaped his understanding of materials and forms and helped him to produce a different kind of sculpture than he would have without this absurd ambition.

I am producing a fiction in which two historical periods exist at the same time. It's not science fiction, nor an attempt to render Dada da da da—or Derrida da da. . . .

The Fenians, Irish-Americans, invaded Canada in 1866 and again in 1870. Their vision was that an invasion of then still-British territory across the Niagara in Lower Ontario would deliver to Queen Victoria such a kick

in the arse that war would break out between Britain and the U.S., during which Ireland would find its freedom. In March of 1970, a brownstone building in Greenwich Village blew up, two women fled naked into the night as their neighbor Dustin Hoffman looked on . . . a week of extraordinary events in the anti-war and civil rights movements in the United States.

I want my fiction to dismiss the time between these events. I am captured by the ambition—like my sculptor friend's—and believe that it is good for me to hold it as a working premise that these fatally flawed enterprises—the Fenian invasion, the fond hostility of some activists of 15 or 20 years ago—bubble up from the same spring, a kind of water table, absolutely essential, that flows beneath us, mostly in plangent silence. It does not geyser forth at the convenience of artists and intellectuals nor flow the polite course.

Returning to the Deane passage from which I began, I have no wish to replace all politics nor to reduce history to mere culture, but to make art and history serve each other's ends as well as their own.

The word "azimuth" seems central. Historical periods, sensitively understood, become a means to understand each other, a mechanism for taking the azimuth of one another, for getting a clearer sense of the arc and its portion, its portent, in the circumference of events.

Novels, astutely written and read, use characters as comments upon one another, not on themselves alone. What is more, any serious novel comments upon all novels, and all novels provide means by which we take the azimuth of ourselves and everyone on our horizon.

Historical novels, which draw upon real historical figures or superimpose fictional figures upon historical periods, or both, combine in their respective ratios the two kinds of means. We understand our and any historical period better by knowing the other; we see historical figures not more "truthfully" but with an illuminating angularity—like night vision, perhaps—through the refraction of the fictional treatment and by the comment upon them provided by fictional characters; the novels as novels take their place and make their comment upon the history of the genre; we see ourselves, if we will, in the different light cast by the characters, historical or fictional.

To stay with the metaphor for two more steps: in optics, azimuth refers to "the angle which the plane of polarization of light makes with a plane of reference." Polarization, in turn, is said to be that phenomenon in which the vibrations of light "assume a different form."

That is what art of serious purpose aspires to accomplish, everywhere and always.

Never mind that there is also the reality of azimuth error.

* * *

The subject, then, becomes finally historical understanding itself. Toward what course of action does my character's understanding of history impel her or him? And with that question, although not there only, Joyce and I part company. As rich and various as his characters' consideration of history is, their understanding of the history they know is, to be generous, truncated where it is not parodic. Take "understanding" to mean here nothing extraordinary, not free of prejudice, surely, nor articulable by the character in any sophisticated way. Take it to mean thoughtful, a step or two beyond the received idea.

What is remarkable in Joyce's work is that there are no characters who can be said to display this rudimentary understanding, who can claim our respect for being more than the least amount thoughtful about the history of their country nor impelled to respectable action by such thinking as they have done. Indeed—and here is my chief critique of Joyce and of those who wish to attribute to him some kind of political sensitivity—in several instances where we might be tantalized by the prospect of some historical insight, Joyce appears to go out of his way to make sure that we are disappointed. Two illustrations: Conventional patriotism is put down both indirectly and directly throughout *A Portrait of the Artist As a Young Man.* While one may want to argue that there is much to put down in conventional patriotism, the only person in the novel who displays some modicum of thought about history and politics, Stephen Dedalus himself, does so with an almost malignant sophomorism. It is surely true that his understanding of history impels him to action, and if Joyce had not gone on to write *Ulysses,* we might conclude that Stephen's flight from oppression is a very model for anyone who understands his or her history in a similar way.

But Joyce did write *Ulysses,* and so we have the portrait there of Stephen disillusioned, returned from flight, withdrawn and distracted and apolitical.

Elsewhere in *Ulysses,* as a broad-gauge second illustration, one finds that any character who speaks a political line Joyce might be supposed to endorse is sooner or later undercut and his position devalued. The thoroughly acceptable denunciation of the English export policy in the Cyclops passage, for example, is mouthed by a character who is seen a page later to be altogether untrustworthy and reprehensible.

One is denied the benefit of finding even a mixed message. Rather, the message is clear that people who act to achieve some historical understanding and who base further action on that understanding are deluded and foolish. Flaws in understanding and strategy are the subject of ridicule. It is insufficient that Joyce should eschew politics for himself; he must eschew politics, one way or another, on behalf of his characters and the works they populate.

* * *

No one needs to argue that James Joyce's works are sufficient unto themselves. The testimonies to his stature and accomplishment are by now cliché. At the same time, the claim now at a high decibel level is that he did still more than what we know he did, that subtly, interstitially, he articulated a politics in spite of his own claims to be not interested in politics and in contravention of Seamus Deane's grand attribution cited at the beginning of this essay. My conclusion is to take Joyce at his word. He was genuinely not interested in politics, not as I have defined it, and to some modest degree I deplore that rejection as I consider the history of Ireland in Joyce's time, her great and compelling need. I do not take Davin's position, in the quarrel with Stephen in the last chapter of *A Portrait*. "Ireland first, Stevie. You can be a poet or mystic after."

Why after? Why instead? As I attempt to yoke two historical periods, so I intend to unite politics and my art. The need is still great and compelling. The possibility of plotting the azimuth is irresistible.

* * *

This essay developed from a paper presented June 20, 1986, at the Tenth International James Joyce Symposium, Copenhagen, Denmark. The "azimuth" paragraphs first appeared in The ABC's of Reading, ed. James Grauberger, Hamilton College (Clinton, N.Y.: 1986).

Notes

[1] Deane, Seamus, "Joyce and Nationalism," in *James Joyce: New Perspectives,* Indiana University Press (Bloomington, IN: 1982), p. 173.

[2] Borges, Jorge Luis, in *Borges, A Reader,* E. R. Monegal and Alastair Reid, eds., (E. P. Dutton, NY: 1981), p. 182.

[3] We are intent on withholding definition of ourselves from ourselves. What a sign it is that we can only call ourselves post-this or post-that. Post-industrial, post-modern, post-structuralist—even, someone has said, post-feminist, and she was a feminist! A recent book review spoke of an author's style as post-hip. We are in very great danger of becoming *post restante.*

[4] Heath, Stephen, in *Post-Structuralist Joyce,* University of Cambridge Press (Cambridge: 1984) p. 41. Originally in *TelQuel,* Summer 1972.

[5] I think that Dominic Manganiello's *Joyce's Politics,* demonstrates, albeit unintentionally, that Joyce did not deal directly with contemporary politics in his art. Rutledge and Kegan Paul (London: 1980).

[6] Milosz, Czeslaw, *The Witness of Poetry,* Harvard University Press (Cambridge: 1983).

[7] Worner, Karl H., *Stockhausen,* Life and Work, University of California Press (Berkeley: 1973), p. 49.

[8] Parrinder, Patrick, *James Joyce,* Cambridge University Press (Cambridge: 1984), p. 132–33.

[9] *Ibid.,* pp. 39–40.

The Golden Age and Its Return in Marxism

Vincent Geoghegan

THIS article seeks to throw some light on an interesting episode in the history of Marxism, one that occurred at the time of the Second International. In this period a number of Marxists turned to the remote past and developed a fascinating type of Golden Age theory. To appreciate this phenomenon fully, it is necessary to be aware of the intellectual climate of the Second International.

The Second International (1889–1914), like its predecessor the First International (1864–1876), sought to bring together socialists from many different nations and provide an institutional form for international socialist unity. From Germany, France, England, Belgium, Austria-Hungary, Russia, and other countries, socialist parties and trade unions sent delegates to the various congresses; until, that is, the whole edifice collapsed in the face of World War I nationalism.

Although far from an homogeneous organization, the International did become associated with a distinctive type of Marxism. The principal theoreticians of the Second International prided themselves on the scientific nature of their socialism. In this age of technology and of Darwin, the aspiration to be scientific was widespread. In the work of Marx and Engels, their latter-day followers found the ideal concept to describe those not in a scientific state of grace—"utopian." They wielded this concept like a club both against ideological foes and against each other. Utopianism was a mortal sin. The general indiscriminate use of the term partly arose from, and partly contributed to, the feeling that there was something wrong in speculating about the future. Such speculation was viewed as somehow arbitrary and abstract, against the "laws-and-facts" spirit of the age. Certainly it was possible to read Marx and Engels in a way that gave credence to such a view; anyone familiar with *The Manifesto of the Communist Party* would have been aware of Marx's and Engels's strictures on "utopian socialism."

This fear of future speculation was a simple fact of life in the most

influential party of the International, the German Social Democratic Party (SPD). Peter Nettl argues that in the party, discussion of post-revolutionary society was one of the "universally respected taboos" and points out by way of illustration that between 1882 and 1914 the party journal *Neue Zeit* (edited by Karl Kautsky) contained only one article dealing with future society and this was Kautsky's own discussion of *past* millenarian societies.[1] In the same vein, David Lovell quotes Jan Masaryk's reminiscences that in an international journal devoting a special issue to future society, "Liebknecht [an SPD leader] almost facetiously refuses to depict the future socialist order" and that in a debate on the same theme in the German Imperial Diet in 1893 "the socialist deputies, Liebknecht, Bebel, and others treated the theme lightly."[2] If these examples are taken to mean that there was a climate antithetical to developed, self-conscious discussion of what was to replace capitalism then the point is incontrovertible. And yet these thinkers found it quite impossible to do without a future orientation. In the complex world of the late 19th century, Marxists, like everybody else, felt the need for both short and long term speculation. It had to be achieved, however, without committing the sin of utopianism.

A recourse to history was one way out. It was possible to speculate about the future by talking about the past. Discussion of an ancient freedom could become the arena for anticipation of future freedom. Furthermore, one could give greater substance and plausibility to an image of the future by showing that such arrangements once obtained in the past. If a Golden Age had once existed, was not a Golden Future a real possibility? In short, the safe, "scientific" past could become a focus for all those suspect utopian longings and fantasies. The glamor of that which was past, and therefore "real," allowed one to be both scientific and utopian.

The use of what one might term "golden history" has itself a venerable and varied history. Plato used the example of ancient humanity in the *Laws* to show that truly moral societies have existed on the earth. In medieval times, the period before the Fall became the new lost paradise and could, in the hands of a John Ball, prompt the famous question: "Whan Adam dalf and Eve span, wo was thanne a gentilman?" The theory of the Norman Yoke, popular in 17th century radicalism, portrayed a free, equal, and democratic Anglo-Saxon society which was destroyed by the tyrannical Normans. Among modern political thinkers, Rousseau looks back to Sparta in his *Discourse on the Sciences and Arts*, while Hegel extols the virtues of ancient Athens in *The Philosophy of History* and *The Phenomenology of Spirit*.

These snapshots of bliss have fulfilled a whole range of functions: some have used them as components in a theory of historical decline, where the lost paradise was an irretrievable pinnacle; others consign them to the happy childhood of humanity, an initial phase which had to give way to a

more prosaic maturity; while others advocate a return to the pristine purity of the old days, a process involving a rejection of all the accretions of succeeding centuries. The response we are interested in is the use of these memories of time past as both models of, and evidence for, a new Eden. This is not a call to return to the past but rather to incorporate the essential qualities of those times in the context, and on the basis, of modern conditions—renaissance, not regression.

That much of this response produces bad history, made up of mythic, poetic, and religious aspects and reflecting both wish-fulfilment and the elementary nature of historical knowledge in these times, should not obscure the methodological intent of those who appealed to the past. They considered themselves to be dealing with real historical events, to be distinguished from rhetorical resort to fable or from the construction of abstract states of nature as explanatory devices. It was the *reality* of these wonderful events that made the whole enterprise worthwhile; for if ancestors once sustained, for example, a more flexible division of labor, held goods in common, and practiced direct democracy, such arrangements are obviously humanly possible and the old could serve as a reliable guide for the new.

Negative Sentiments

Marx penned some negative sentiments against a certain type of revivalism in *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte.* His target was the co-optation by revolutionaries of the imagery of their predecessors: the apparently paradoxical fact that the challenge of the new generates a retreat into the past, and that

> just when they seem engaged in revolutionising themselves and things, in creating something that has never yet existed, precisely in such periods of revolutionary crisis they anxiously conjure up the spirits of the past to their service and borrow from them names, battle cries and costumes . . .[3]

Marx does distinguish between, on the one hand, the partially creative use of the past by the great bourgeois revolutionaries, Cromwell, Danton, and Napoleon, where revivalism could act as a stimulant, and, on the other, the conservative and purely rhetorical use by the French revolutionaries of 1848–51. In the case of the former:

> the awakening of the dead . . . served the purpose of glorifying the new struggles, not of parodying the old; of magnifying the given task in imagination, not of fleeing from its solution in reality; of finding once more the spirit of revolution, not of making its ghost walk about again.

Nevertheless, to Marx, even this usage by such illustrious men contained a large measure of self-deception, a necessary element of mystification with respect to goals and motives. These men found in antique "ideals and . . . art forms, the self-deceptions they needed in order to conceal from themselves the bourgeois limitations of the content of their struggle." Modern revolutionaries, by contrast, must orient themselves to the future and not allow the memory of past glories to seduce them away from pressing tasks. "The social revolution of the 19th century cannot draw its poetry from the past, but only from the future." Having noted this, however, not too much should be built upon it. Marx is concerned here with the *self-delusory* use of historical *imagery* and cannot be interpreted as ruling out a scientific and revolutionary appropriation of the past.

To understand later Marxist conceptions of the "golden age," it is necessary to be aware of the discovery of "primitive communism" by 19th century historians and anthropologists. August Haxthausen pointed to the survival of common ownership from ancient Slavonic society. Georg Maurer argued that such ownership was also to be found in all early Teutonic societies. In Lewis Morgan's work there is the claim that primitive communism is a ubiquitous phenomenon in human history. Yet another important element was provided by Johann Bachofen, whose *Das Mutterrecht,* suggests that these early societies were matriarchal. In a German context, all this fed into a long-standing tradition of extolling the virtues of the sturdy Teutonic past. Bearing in mind Engels's later enthusiasm for ancient Germanic society, we might note Marx's methodological fears in 1844. *Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law* expresses Marx's worry about both the specificity of ancient forms and the temptation to read present conditions back into the past. He thus takes to task those "Germanomaniacs" who

> seek our history of freedom beyond our history in the primeval Teutonic forests. But what difference is there between the history of our freedom and the history of the boar's freedom if it can be found only in the forests? Besides, it is common knowledge that the forest echoes back what you shout into it. So let us leave the ancient Teutonic forests in peace.[4]

In Engels's *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* we can observe both sensitivity towards and admiration for earlier social formations. The similarities between Engels's portrait of ancient society and the classic Marxist vision of communism are obvious. It is hard to avoid the conclusion that one of the principal purposes of the work was to show the feasibility of free institutions and the transient nature of capitalism. The

whole piece, in fact, was conceived as a means of getting socialist propaganda past the German Anti-Socialist Law by disguising it as a "neutral" scientific treatise. The work's subtitle is "In the light of the researches of Lewis H. Morgan" and draws heavily on the anthropological data of this American writer, particularly his work on the Iroquois. As the preface to *The Origin* makes clear, Marx had himself, if he had lived, planned to publish on Morgan's findings, and Engels claimed that "the following chapters constitute, in a sense the fulfilment of a bequest."[5]

Morgan, Engels declares, had independently rediscovered the materialist conception of history and provided crucial evidence for humanity's first stage. Engels lovingly describes the time when there was no bourgeois family, no state, and no private property, a time when liberty, equality, and fraternity were manifest:

> Everything runs smoothly without soldiers, gendarmes or police; without nobles, kings, governors, prefects or judges; without prisons; without trials. All quarrels and disputes are settled by the whole body of those concerned. Although there are many more affairs in common than at present—the household is run in common and communistically by a number of families, the land is tribal property, only the small gardens being temporarily assigned to the households—still, not a bit of our extensive and complicated machinery of administration is required. There can be no poor and needy—the communistic household and the gens know their obligations towards the aged, the sick and those disabled in war. All are free and equal—including the women. There is as yet no room for slaves, nor, as a rule, for the subjection of alien tribes . . . This is what mankind and human society were like before class divisions arose.

Engels also wants to show that this society was doomed, that it carried within itself the seeds of its own destruction—in short, that capitalism was a necessary, if unpleasant, development.

Engels is thus aware of the darker side of ancient society, including its tribalism, undeveloped production, and limited horizons. However, the work ends, most significantly, with a quote from Morgan in which, speculating on a better future society, he states: "It will be a revival, in a higher form, of the liberty, equality and fraternity of the ancient gentes." Engels does appear to be suggesting in the use of this quote that communism will be the old order raised to a new level (in a letter of this period he had enthused: "Morgan . . . concludes with directly communist propositions in relation to present-day society."[6]) This use of revivalism by Engels is of a very specific type. It is not that he has come across a society which has so

impressed him that he thinks future society must incorporate its essential features. Rather, it is that he already has a vision of future society drawn from other sources and is merely casting around for evidence for its viability. One of the other sources that haunts Engels's book is Charles Fourier, the great utopian socialist who, along with Robert Owen and Saint-Simon, so influenced the revolutionary vision of Marx and Engels. As Engels said in a letter to Kautsky describing his purposes in *The Origin:* "I must show how Fourier's genius anticipated Morgan in very many things." And although Engels refers to Fourier's critique of capitalism, in this context one cannot help feeling the influence of Fourier (and the other two utopian socialists) in Engels's picture of ancient free society.

The whole "return" thesis is succinctly summarized in A. Bebel's immensely popular and pioneering book on Marxist feminism, *Die Frau und der Sozialismus,* a work that in its first editions, sometimes for legal purposes, was retitled *Die Frau in der Vergangenheit, Gegenwart, und Zukunft, Woman in the Past, Present, and Future.* This work predated Engels's book and contained no reference to a "return." Later editions, however, show Engels's influence. Thus by the turn of the century, in the 33rd edition, the leader of the German party could draw together the work of Morgan, Engels, and the rest of the burgeoning material on primitive communism. Bebel, who was a self-taught, long-standing member of the worker's movement and who had written a study of the life and teachings of Fourier, was, contrary to the impressions of both Masaryk and Bismarck, more willing to speculate about the future than most of his colleagues. H. J. Steinberg's examination of the social science/party literature sections of workers' libraries in Germany before 1914, shows that Bebel's book was far and away the most purchased and borrowed: "A contemporary critic of social democracy had already found that Bebel's picture of the future state 'had undoubtedly created a greater belief in socialism in the popular mind than Karl Marx's biting criticism of bourgeois economics was ever able to.' "[7] Bebel's ability to flesh out the goal of the historical process, conceived in terms of a "return," fed the utopian appetites of a working class whose needs he appreciated. His chapter on woman in the future concludes on a clear "return" note:

> Human society has traversed, in the course of thousands of years, all the various phases of development, to arrive in the end where it started from—communistic property and complete equality and fraternity. . . . Nevertheless, while man returns to the starting point in his development, the return is effected upon an infinitely higher social plane than that from which he started. . . . The "Golden Age" that man has been dreaming of for thousands of years, and after which they have been longing, will have come at last.[8]

The adoption of Bebel reveals the extent to which the "return" thesis penetrated Marxist perspectives of that period.

Effect on 1930s Thinkers

Engels's portrayal of primitive communism has remained a stimulus to Marxists in this century. Two thinkers from the 1930s, W. Reich and J. Strachey, should suffice as examples. Reich, in *The Imposition of Sexual Morality,* a work which, he says, "may be considered the direct continuation of the Morgan and Engels studies,"[9] argues the case for an ancient sexually-free matriarchy and speculates that in the future society: "The original conditions of primitive communism return once more on a higher economic and cultural level as the sex-economic management of sexual relationships." Strachey's *The Theory and Practice of Socialism,* in a significantly entitled chapter, "Origin and Future of the State," concludes an Engelsian account of human history with this observation on the future citizens of communism:

> The idea of refusing to play their part, to the best of their ability, in the social and productive life of the community will no more occur to those citizens of the future than the idea of refusing to dig, to hunt or to come to the general assembly of the tribe occurred to an Iroquois or a pre-Homeric Achaean gentile.[10]

Several unorthodox thinkers in the period of the Second International developed the theory of "the golden age and its return" in interesting directions. A number of years prior to Engels's work, Marx's son-in-law Paul Lafargue (1842–1911), in his exuberant *The Right To Be Lazy,* had used historical and anthropological data to raise the promise of a communism in which the lost natural individual would live again. History, for Lafargue, provided numerous examples of ennobling indolence, as, for example, in the leisured classes of ancient Greece and Rome and the holidays of the middle ages where there was "leisure to taste the joys of the earth, to make love and to frolic, to banquet joyously in honor of the jovial god of idleness." In a passage reminiscent of both Fourier and Saint-Simon, he spells out the task of the proletariat:

> It must return to its natural instincts, it must proclaim the Rights of Laziness, a thousand times more noble and more sacred than the anaemic Rights of Man concocted by the metaphysical lawyers of the bourgeois revolution. It must accustom itself to working but three hours a day, reserving the rest of the day and night for leisure and feasting.

Unlike the ancient and medieval world, where the natural was based on exploitative social relations and low technology, the future would combine equitable relationships with extensive mechanization. The publication of Engels's work reinforced this line of thought in Lafargue. Lafargue's letters reveal that he was familiar with Morgan and the literature on pre-history before Engels's book appeared (Engels said himself of *The Origin* that "there are things in it just in his [i.e. Lafargue's] line"[11]). However, in a letter of 1885, Lafargue told Engels, after reading the first few chapters of *The Origin*, that "Your exposition has been a revelation to me." His own *The Evolution of Property from Savagery to Civilization* (1890), therefore, does seem to be following Engels (though curiously he is only briefly mentioned once) in putting into center stage Morgan's positive account of primitive communism. Lafargue's chapter on this topic is explicitly conceived as a polemic against those who argue for the "eternal quality" of capitalist relations; in particular it is directed against T. H. Huxley's dismissal of Rousseau's communist state of nature. Although, like Engels, Lafargue is aware of the necessary defects of this ancient form, it is clear that he conceives of the communism to come as embodying at a higher level the basic spirit of the earlier mode. He thinks, for example, that the modern individual is by and large both mentally and physically inferior to archaic humanity and will require the conditions of socialism to regain these standards[12]: "It will require an education beginning at the cradle and prolonged throughout life and continued for several generations to restore to the human being of future society the vigour and perfection of the senses which characterise the savage and the barbarian."[13]

Lafargue's conclusion is unambiguous: "[The] final communist and international revolution of property is inevitable; already, in the midst of bourgeois civilisation, do the institutions and communistic customs of primitive times revive." All these points are reiterated in his *La Propriété: Origine et Evolution* (1895) in which the debt to Engels is acknowledged. Engels read this work, and his letter to Lafargue, while criticising some points of fact and presentation, in no way attacks the idea of the "return" of primitive communism.

Morris and Connolly

A utopian concern with the past can be seen in the work of two thinkers from Britain and Ireland. William Morris (1834–96) and James Connolly (1868–1916) each in his highly distinctive way turned to history as part of their future orientation.

Morris is atypical of Marxists of this period, in that he had none of that obsessive fear of utopianism. A strong claim could be made that Morris was the first self-consciously utopian Marxist. Although he did not

describe himself as a utopian, his work not only abounds with visions of the future but also seeks to justify the revolutionary function of such anticipation. The titles of some of his lectures and articles convey these views, as in "How We Live and How We Might Live," "The Hopes of Civilization," and "The Society of the Future." In *News From Nowhere*, he produced a classic utopia. Such visions, he argues, motivate, "these dreams for the future, make many a man a Socialist whom sober reason deduced from science and political economy and the selection of the fittest would not move at all."[14] They also provide direction: "It is, then, no less than reasonable that those whom we try to involve in the great struggle for a better form of life than that which we now lead should call on us to give them at least some idea of what that life may be like."[15]

Throughout, a particular conception of the medieval world shaped important aspects of Morris's vision of communism. Although he was fully aware of the evils that accompanied feudal society, he also claimed that this society displayed qualities which capitalism had destroyed but which communism would revive. There is a link here with the Morgan/Engels thesis: in an article of 1890 Morris connects the vigorous creativity of the tribes which administered the *coup de grâce* to the Roman Empire to their comparative nearness to the old primitive communism. Long before this Engelsian detail was added, however, Morris, like his great mentor John Ruskin, was under the spell of Victorian medievalism.

In particular, Morris saw in medieval craft labor an anticipation of what free labor in communism would be like. The medieval craftsperson experienced none of the divisions that fragment and degrade labor under capitalism: the division between manual and intellectual labor, between "great art" and mere manufacture, and between pleasure and work. This labor was also essentially co-operative. (One should note in these respects Morris's admiration for the work of Owen and Fourier.) Morris was fully aware of the ideological advantage to be gained in showing that free labor has historically existed: "it is possible for man to rejoice in his work, for, strange as it may seem to us to-day, there have been times when he did rejoice in it."[16] For Morris, not only is such labor the paradigm for human activity, but also its products represent the pinnacle of human achievement to date. It is in this double sense that Morris argued in 1889: "In the future, therefore, our style of architecture must be Gothic Architecture." Throughout his description of communist England in *News From Nowhere*, one of the highest compliments he pays to objects is that they are, or resemble, "fourteenth-century" artifacts, and the place seems to be positively saturated with such things. The post-medieval world is seen as shoddy and inhuman. The Renaissance, "the miseries of the New Birth," is derided, its "great men were really but the fruit of the blossoming-time, the Gothic period." Thomas More "must be looked

upon rather as the last of the old than the first of the new." And so on and so forth. The revolution that will usher in the new world is itself described in terms of the achievement of the ancient tribes: "So shall we be our own Goths, and at whatever cost break up again the new tyrannous Empire of Capitalism."[17]

Morris was conscious of the inevitable subjective element in his vision of communism—that his radicalized "Merrie Englandism" would not be shared by all. In a review of Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward,* for example, he acknowledges the persuasive charm which the author's "high-tech" utopia might exercise on many readers. Communism may be inevitable but the details of its anticipation, as of its actuality, could not be authoritatively determined by one individual. As he wrote in 1889: "a man's vision of the future of society . . . must always be more or less personal to himself."[18] This view was not intended as a recipe for relativism—some visions were more objectively grounded than others—but rather as enjoining a pluralist approach where people themselves would decide which visions they found plausible and engage in the free and voluntaristic enterprise of creating socialism.

The Gothic revivalism associated with the names of Ruskin and Morris struck roots in the British labor movement at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries. Keir Hardie, who called Morris "the greatest man whom the Socialist movement has yet claimed in this country,"[19] could speak of Europe "from the beginning of the thirteenth to the middle of the fifteenth century" as a period when "there was neither Millionaires nor Paupers . . . but a rude abundance for all."[20] David Howell in his perceptive study of the Independent Labor Party has written of the power that images of "the world we have lost" and rural Arcadias had over members of this party. He argues that some of the support for the Boer cause among these people arose from a perception of the supposed innocence of the former. In the phenomenon of Guild Socialism, the further influence of Morris and Ruskin can be found overlaid with syndicalist conceptions. In short, the imagery of "Merrie England" exercised great fascination for many on the left and influenced their particular conceptions of future society.

James Connolly's attempt to combine Irish nationalism with Marxism looked to a Gaelic past as an anticipatory model of the new Ireland. In 1897 in the Belfast journal *Shan Van Vocht,* edited by Alice Milligan, he spelled out what was to be a leitmotif of his work: "Nationalism without Socialism—without a reorganization of society on the basis of a broader and more developed form of that common property which underlay the social structure of Ancient Erin—is only national recreancy."[21] A major influence on Connolly was the Gaelic Revival in Ireland at the end of the 19th century. Institutions like the Gaelic Athletic Association (founded 1884), which sought to spread interest in "native" Gaelic sports against "alien" English pursuits, and The Gaelic League (founded 1893), with its

goal of "de-Anglicising Ireland" through the promotion of Irish language and culture, all stressed the integrity and contemporary validity of Gaelic traditions. Connolly was sympathetic to this revival but insisted that it move beyond genteel enthusiasm and become incorporated into the socialist transformation of Ireland.

Another important influence was our old friend the anthropological literature on "primitive society" and the work of Morgan in particular. In "Erin's Hope . . . The End And The Means" he noted that: "Recent scientific research by such eminent sociologists as Letourneau, Lewis Morgan, Sir Henry Maine, and others has amply demonstrated the fact that common ownership of land formed the basis of primitive society in almost every country."[22] In *Labour in Irish History,* he said that Morgan's *Ancient Society* provided the "key" which "will yet unlock the doors which guard the secrets of our native Celtic civilisation."[23] Engels's *The Origin* is nowhere mentioned, which casts some doubt on C. D. Greaves's claim in his biography of Connolly that "probably he had read Unterman's translation of Engels's *Origin of the Family.*"[24] Familiarity with the concept of primitive communism would have been widespread in Marxist circles of the time; Marx himself had referred to its presence in ancient Celtic society as early as 1859 in his *Critique of Political Economy.* Ireland's achievement, according to Connolly, was that, unlike other societies, this egalitarian and democratic organization lasted well into historic times and was only destroyed by the English invaders with their individualistic and hierarchical ways. In Ireland, he argues, "primitive communism . . . formed part of the well-defined social organization of a nation of scholars and students, recognized . . . as the inspiring principle of their collective life, and the basis of their national system of jurisprudence."[25] And he praises these "Celtic forefathers, who foreshadowed in the democratic organization of the Irish clan the more perfect organization of the free society of the future."

Modern Stance on Celtic Communism

A modern advocacy of Connolly's stance on Celtic Communism can be found in Peter Berresford Ellis's *A History of the Irish Working Class* (1972). This work recognizes the political impulse behind Connolly's venture into ancient history and that of some of Connolly's critics. Ellis argues that "the conservative forces of the Irish independence movement wanted Eoin MacNeill, a Celtic scholar of wide repute, to academically destroy Connolly's theories on early Irish society."[26] They clearly saw the radical implications of Connolly's perspective and wished to replace it with one which stressed inequality and private ownership in ancient Ireland, says Ellis who doggedly defends Connolly.

Modern scholarship has shown that there is much in these various

"golden ages" which is simplistic and mistaken. In the cases of the "primitive communism" of Engels, Bebel, Lafargue, and Connolly, it has been demonstrated that such societies could simultaneously reject ultimate individual rights to property and countenance fundamental inequalities of use. As to Morris, it has been argued that he vastly overrated the centrality and spread of craft labor in what was in fact a thoroughly un-merry England. As Robert Blauner has put it:

> craftsmen, far from being typical workers of the past era, accounted for less than ten per cent of the medieval labour force, and the peasant, who was actually the representative labourer was . . . practically nothing more than a working beast.[27]

There is also the danger of falling into the "naturalistic fallacy," that is, of attempting to derive an "ought" from an "is" (or in this case from a "was"). A "good" past is derived from the value "good" and not from the condition of being "past." The past, as such, is value-free and only gains modern significance by an act of modern evaluation. The fact of primitive communism cannot, in itself, imply the future desirability of communism. There are also clear dangers in projecting on to advanced societies characteristics that belong to less advanced forms; what was appropriate to medieval England may not be so in a highly developed socialist economy. It should also be noted that 19th and early 20th century visions of the golden age often developed into particularly poisonous forms of right-wing utopianism, most notoriously of all in the Fascist cult of the Volk.

An account of these dangers, however, is not the full story. The historical speculation of the various thinkers discussed was by no means all fantasy; they had locked into genuinely different, and instructive, societies. Furthermore, such writers raise the question of the future by showing the mutable nature of past and present. They therefore strike at all ideological attempts to eternalize the present. Moreover, they attempt to link the future to its past and thereby introduce an element of continuity into what might otherwise be arbitrary speculation. At the political level, the anchoring of socialism in national or other types of tradition is a powerful antidote to attempts to portray this ideology as somehow alien. There is also something powerfully attractive in golden ages, whether they be true or not, as can be seen in the continuing popularity of the fictionalized forms of fairy tale and legend. Whatever their other functions, they do seem to act as vehicles for a whole range of human aspirations.

The period of the Second International, therefore, saw a number of fascinating attempts to deal with the problem of the future. However, there was overall a powerful reluctance to use the word "utopia" in any

positive sense (although Morris is an important exception); and, insofar as there was a greater openness to the future, it was, as we have seen, often grounded in the supposedly solid structure of history. Such half-heartedness played into the hands of their opponents. The ultra-right, alas, proved to be much more competent at harnessing powerful historical imagery. It was the National Socialists who managed to create a vision of a thousand-year Reich out of romantic conceptions of Teutonic knights and Saxon kings. This vision was a part of the evidence of Marxism's general failure to adequately harness utopian energy. Here again the right had no qualms and rapidly filled the vacuum. As Samson B. Knoll has pointed out, a rash of cheap novels appeared in pre-World War I Germany portraying the supposed hell of future socialist society and, even more sinisterly, developing utopian visions of strong leaders, international power, and racial purity.[28] The left all too often abandoned this great reservoir of utopianism to be poisoned by the right.

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Notes

[1] J. P. Nettl, "The German Social Democratic Party, 1890–1914, As a Political Model," *Past and Present,* No. 30, 1965, p. 73.

[2] D. W. Lovell, *From Marx to Lenin,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984, p. 92.

[3] K. Marx and F. Engels, *Selected Works,* London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1970. This and the immediately following quotation are pp. 96 and 97. The two subsequent quotations are p. 98.

[4] K. Marx and F. Engels, *Collected Works,* London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1975, Vol. 3, p. 177.

[5] Marx and Engels, *Selected Works.* This and the next two quotations are from p. 449, p. 519, and p. 583 respectively.

[6] Marx and Engels, *Selected Correspondence,* Moscow: Progress, 1975. This and the next immediate quotation are from p. 347 and p. 351 respectively.

[7] H. J. Steinberg, "Worker's Libraries in Germany before 1914," *History Workshop,* No. 1, p. 174.

[8] A. Bebel, *Woman Under Socialism,* New York: Schocken, 1971, pp. 347–349.

[9] W. Reich, *Sex-Pol Essays, 1929–1934,* New York: Vintage, 1972. This quotation and the one immediately following are from p. 103 and p. 248 respectively.

[10] J. Strachey, *The Theory and Practice of Socialism,* London: Gollancz, 1936, p. 194.

[11] F. Engels, P. and L. Lafargue, *Correspondence: Volume 1 1868–1886,* Moscow:

Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1959. This and the immediately following quotation are from p. 206 and p. 298 respectively.

[12] P. Lafargue, *The Right To Be Lazy*, Chicago: Charles H. Kerr, n.d. This quotation and the one immediately following are from p. 32 and p. 29 respectively.

[13] P. Lafargue, *The Evolution of Property from Savagery to Civilization*, London: Swan Sonnenschein, 1890. This and the next immediate quotation are from p. 8 and p. 173 respectively.

[14] A. L. Morton (ed.), *Political Writings of William Morris*, London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1973, p. 189.

[15] A. Briggs, *News from Nowhere and Selected Writings and Designs*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1984, pp. 159–60.

[16] M. Morris, *William Morris: Artist Writer Socialist*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1936, Vol. 1. The locations of this and the next five quotations are, respectively, p. 292, p. 285, p. 283, p. 282, p. 289.

[17] W. Morris, "The Development of Modern Society," *The Commonweal*, August 16, 1890, p. 261.

[18] M. Morris, *William Morris: Artist Writer Socialist*, Vol. 2, p. 506.

[19] K. O. Morgan, *Keir Hardie: Radical Socialist*, London: Wiedenfeld & Nicolson, 1975, p. 206.

[20] Quoted in D. Howell, *British Workers and the Independent Labour Party 1888–1906*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1983. This and the immediately following quotation are from p. 355 and pp. 354–5 respectively.

[21] P. B. Ellis (ed.), *James Connolly: Selected Writings*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973, p. 124.

[22] O. D. Edwards and B. Ransom, *James Connolly: Selected Political Writings*, London: Jonathan Cape, 1973, p. 173.

[23] J. Connolly, *Labour in Irish History*, Dublin: New Books Publications, 1971, p. xxxii.

[24] C. D. Greaves, *The Life and Times of James Connolly*, London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1976, p. 177.

[25] O. D. Edwards and B. Ransom, *James Connolly: Selected Political Writings*, p. 173 for this quotation and p. 174 for the next.

[26] P. B. Ellis, *A History of the Irish Working Class*, London: Pluto 1985, p. 13.

[27] Quoted in C. Frayling and H. Snowdon, "Perspectives on Craft," *Crafts*, January/February, 1982, p. 17.

[28] See S. B. Knoll, "Socialism as Dystopia: Political Uses of Utopian Dime Novels in pre-World War I Germany," in E. D. Wilson (ed.), *Society for Utopian Studies: Eighth Annual Conference*, Pennsylvania: Society for Utopian Studies, 1984.

Integration in Earthsea and Middle-earth

Edith L. Crowe

ANY writer of fiction is to some extent world-maker as well as word-maker, and the landscape he or she describes is primarily an interior one—humankind contemplating itself. Fiction is a way of getting the distance necessary for proper perspective. Novelists who choose a naturalistic style feel the need to step only a little to one side. Others, however, require greater perspective; they chafe under the limitations imposed by realistic fiction; they desire dragons. Carl Gustav Jung's theories of the collective unconscious, the common archetypal patterns of the human psyche, have shed considerable light on the substratum that underlies human storytelling activity from the myths of our most distant ancestors to the modern novel. Some prefer to reiterate these basic stories in the continent of Africa or battle Leviathan with a whaler's harpoon. Practitioners of the specialized form of fiction known as fantasy choose a different road. For them, only the broadest perspective will do, in which our world is viewed from outside, from another world altogether. Lacking such a world ready-made, the author makes one.

Two of the finest examples of this mythopoeic world-making are J. R. R. Tolkien's Middle-earth and Ursula K. Le Guin's Earthsea. Both are fully realized landscapes, the settings for several books,[1] and both are traversed their length and breadth by individuals undergoing that most archetypal of journeys: the journey of the hero, which Joseph Campbell found so common he termed it the "monomyth."[2] Tolkien and Le Guin use many of the same elements in their "subcreations" (to use Tolkien's term). Such classic accouterments of fantasy as wizards, dragons, magic, noble heroes, and lost kings populate both. But these superficial similarities veil some profound philosophical differences. Tolkien was a devout Roman Catholic associated with the "Oxford Christians" (especially C. S. Lewis and Charles Williams) and made no secret of the influence of this

Christianity on *The Lord of Rings.*[3] Le Guin, on the other hand, has described herself as a "consistent unChristian."[4]

Despite such dissimilar attitudes, the two authors share an awareness of the moral element of fantasy. I shall examine the moral dialectic, what Le Guin calls the "ethics of the unconscious,"[5] as it emerges from the lands, people, and events of Earthsea and Middle-earth. The guiding theme is the implications of the journey of the hero, which is repeated several times in both these secondary worlds. Keeping in mind Jung's theories of individuation and Campbell's monomyth, I shall consider both personal individuation (through the hero's initiatory trials and the fulfilling of the quest) and social individuation, in which the hero achieves for the macrocosm of his society the integration he has achieved for himself.

There are two aspects to the journey of the hero, inextricably intertwined. The journey is usually a quest, which has a distinct purpose: an object to find, a task to accomplish. The attainment of the purpose usually has important implications for the hero's society, the larger world beyond the self. Of the three stages of the hero's journey—separation, initiation, return—the last carries the greatest social implications. The first two stages, however, take up most of the journey itself, and it is the journey, not the destination, which is most important for the hero as an individual.

The idea of initiation or coming-of-age as a necessary stage of human life has been much diluted in our modern "civilized" world. In traditional societies the purpose of initiation was to make a child into an adult, a part of the social and political structure of the community. In our time, the external community may be fragmented or fluid, with little steadiness or consistency in its sociopolitical structure. The significance of coming-of-age is now found more commonly on the personal, individual level; our rites and symbols of initiation are primarily psychological. The journey in the fantasy novel is, among other things, an extended metaphor for the interior journey which results in a fully realized human being. We all have our dragons to slay on a psychic level, and fantasy objectifies this.

In both Earthsea and Middle-earth, many characters undergo some sort of coming-of-age. In *The Lord of the Rings,* all four hobbits do. Although Frodo is the main hero, Sam, Merry, and Pippin are actually more important than he during the return phase of the journey. Their personal development is a necessary prerequisite to their influence on the integration of their society. All undergo adventures which test their physical courage (encounters with monsters, heat, cold, privation, and hunger) and their emotional courage (the loss of loved companions). One of the greatest barriers to individuation for a hobbit is the unconscious, undifferentiated, childish quality of life in the Shire, their

homeland. The wholeness of individuation, of self-hood, is of another sort altogether, which comes after conscious differentiation of the psyche; an awareness of the parts which are then integrated into a greater, conscious wholeness.

Merry and Pippin develop their sense of identity, their egos, by facing the trials of the journey and finding the strength to overcome them. Their hobbit identities are defined and enriched by contact with all manner of other creatures. Both develop a certain moral stature by serving something greater than themselves. Merry gives his service to the Rohirrim, particularly King Théoden, who becomes something of a father-figure to him and whose death at the Battle of Pelennor Fields precipitates Merry's courageous attack on the Nazgûl who killed Théoden. The master Pippin chooses to serve is a much more complex character; he is Denethor, Steward of Gondor, the closest thing to a tragic hero Tolkien has created outside *The Silmarillion*. Pippin is forced to make a difficult choice: to decide when his duty to a higher moral order supersedes his duty to one he has sworn to serve; one who has committed the sin of Judas (not betrayal, but despair) and is about to commit filicide as well. Pippin must overcome his awe of Denethor, assert his own identity, and take action to prevent this second tragedy. His association with the complex figure of Denethor certainly broadens Pippin's awareness that making moral choices is not as simple as he once may have thought, while it reinforces his conviction that they must be made nonetheless.

Keeping out the Strange

Hobbits of the Shire seem to have little connection with the deeper levels of the psyche; they prefer to keep anything strange outside their borders. This preference precludes any real development, since the energy and power necessary for change reside in those deeper levels. The hero's task is to re-establish that connection with the unconscious, to meet its monsters or gods face to face. The world of Faërie is a common metaphor for the unconscious. Pippin and Merry almost fall into the events of the story, partly from youthful high spirits and partly from devotion to Frodo. Sam is second to none in his devotion to Frodo, but he also possesses a curious characteristic for such an outwardly staid hobbit—an unexpected hunger for those realms of the unconscious—he wants to see elves.

Sam's greatest significance is in the social realm, but he achieves great stature as an individual first by sharing all the trials that Frodo encounters. In fact, more than one commentator considers Sam the real hero of *The Lord of the Rings*.[6] He survives terrifying but tempering descents into the unconscious, symbolized by the mines of Moria and Cirith Ungol, and confronts such monsters of the darkness as Shelob, the

great spider. Sam confronts his shadow as well, in Jungian terms; in Christian terms he faces temptation. His "dark night of the soul" occurs after the encounter with Shelob, when he believes that Frodo is dead. Sam decides that he must take up the Quest himself, and as he becomes the Ringbearer, the Ring's malevolent power begins to work on him:

> He felt that he had from now on only two choices: to forbear the Ring, though it would torment him; or to claim it, and challenge the Power . . . he saw Samwise the strong, Hero of the Age, striding with a flaming sword across the darkened land, and armies flocking to his call. . . ." (*RK* 177)

This passage has echoes of Satan's temptation of Christ (Matt 4:8–9). Sam is forced to face the fact that he is vulnerable to the lure of the Ring and possesses a shadow that answers to its call. But he resists and emerges with the strength to do what no one else has been able to do: voluntarily give up the Ring when reunited with Frodo.[7]

Tenar of Earthsea, the heroine of *The Tombs of Atuan,* has the opposite problem from the hobbits of Middle-earth. It is less shadow she must deal with than light. Her unconscious overdeveloped, it is her consciousness that must be raised from the depths. Her struggle to do so is a powerful metaphor of female individuation. Tenar is a citizen of the Kargish Empire, which has a highly structured religious system. One of its three main temples is dedicated to the worship of the Nameless Ones, ancient dark powers. At the age of six Tenar becomes the servant of these powers, Priestess of the Tombs of Atuan. Her name is taken from her and she is known only as Arha, "the eaten one." In Earthsea's magic the name *is* the thing. Loss of name is loss of ego, of identity.

Ged, the hero of the Earthsea trilogy, now enters Arha's life as a bringer of consciousness, a guide to individuation: her animus. He comes to Atuan to seek the missing half of the Ring of Erreth—Akbe (a powerful force for social integration), and not incidentally to face his anima, Arha. She discovers Ged in her undergound realm and traps him there. However, she does not kill him for his sacrilegious trespass, although it is her duty to do so. He tempts her with knowledge, with tales of the outside world, with life. He also gives her back her name, which he discovers through his magic. As her trust in Ged grows, Tenar's belief in the dark powers fades, and she is in danger of rejecting them utterly. Ged, however, has learned the hard way not to deny the dark. The guiding principle of the magic he serves is, after all, balance. The dark powers are real but they are not all.

Ged and Tenar must escape when Tenar's dereliction of duty is discovered. That is not the end of the story, however. Contrary to the misapprehensions of its detractors, people do not necessarily live

happily ever after in fantasy. Tenar's feelings after she wins her freedom are not unfamiliar to many women today. The most difficult part of the hero's journey is often the return to society; in Tenar's case it is doubly difficult because the return is to a life she hardly remembers. As she tells Ged, "All I know is of no use now, and I haven't learned anything else." Nor is she given the opportunity to trade one variety of bondage for another, because Ged tells her he cannot stay with her. Ged had told her, back in the temple precincts, "You were taught to be a slave, but you have broken free." Tolkien speaks of the Doom of Choice, and Tenar now understands well what that means:

> A dark hand had let go its lifelong hold upon her heart. But she did not feel joy . . . She put her head down in her arms and cried. . . . She cried for the waste of years in bondage to a useless evil. She wept in pain, because she was free. (*TA* 141)

Although all these journeys are important and have their parts to play in the overall story, the most important journeys are those of the two major heroes of their respective lands: Ged of Earthsea and Frodo of Middle-earth. Not only are they the most complex and fully realized characters, but their actions have the most far-reaching effect on those around them. The success or failure of their respective journeys toward individual integration will affect their whole societies. In the stories of Ged and Frodo, we see the greatest difference between the world-views of the authors. Although perhaps not consciously intended by either, the experiences of these two characters obviously reflect the different orientations of their creators. Both characters are almost classic cases, from the Jungian perspective, of attempts to integrate the elements of personality.

Both Ged and Frodo have to deal with shadow figures which are connected to them in a very personal way and which are inescapably metaphors for the Jungian shadow, that collection of all those aspects of the personality which the conscious mind is least willing to recognize. Frodo's shadow is Gollum, the pitiful creature that Bilbo first meets in the depths of the earth and from whom he gets the Ring. Drawn by the desire for the Ring, Gollum later attaches himself to Frodo, the Ringbearer, and accompanies him to the very end of his quest. In a sense, Frodo inherits his shadow, not as a direct result of any action of his, but because Gollum's fate is bound up with all the other events that Frodo gets drawn into. Ged, on the other hand, brings his shadow into the light of day by a single action of pride and the misuse of power. Goaded by a rival, he works a dangerous spell in which he summons the dead merely to prove that he can do it. He succeeds, but he hasn't the skill to control the effects of the spell, and through the door he has opened into the realm of death

comes "something like a clot of black shadow, quick and hideous, and it leaped straight out at Ged's face." (*WE* 61)

Difference and Similarity

Here we have one great difference between Tolkien and Le Guin, and one great similarity. Frodo becomes involved in the events of *The Lord of the Rings* not because of any action on his part but by acceptance of a call to adventure that has aspects of a religious vocation about it. Throughout *The Lord of the Rings,* there is a definite sense of a guiding hand behind events, something like Providence or Fate. Frodo accepts his call but not primarily for personal individuation. From the first, he is aware that the future of Middle-earth hangs on the success or failure of his journey. Ged's burden is heavy, too, because this shadow-thing that he has loosed upon the world is capable of doing great damage to others as well as himself. He has no one but himself to blame, however, and no sense of being part of some great Providential scheme possessed of hidden meaning. Although the characters in Middle-earth do have free will and could theoretically refuse, the conflict between free will and omniscient, omnipotent Providence has never been adequately explained away. Knowing that one is part of a "Great Plan" can be comforting or irritating, depending upon one's point of view. Contrariwise, there can be a sense of either satisfaction or terror in knowing that no matter what the magnitude or possible consequences of a mistake, one has no one but oneself to blame; and that one's own actions can put things right, no matter how much it hurts.

The question of consequences brings up another area where Tolkien and Le Guin are in agreement. A strong theme common to both is that actions have consequences that reach out, like ripples in a pool, far beyond the individual. No one person can foresee what those consequences might be, so one should never act rashly. In Tolkien, one has the feel of a Christian appreciation of the value of good works and the far-reaching effects of evil; in Le Guin it is central to her ideas of "Balance" and "Equilibrium," on which the whole of magic on Earthsea depends and which owes a great deal to Taoism, a Chinese religio-philosophical system based on reverence for nature and living in harmony with it. Taoism stresses the importance of humility and discourages action.

So Ged and Frodo begin their journeys toward individuation. Ged takes one book to deal with his shadow and Frodo takes three, because both must deal with their society as well as themselves. Ged fights his personal battle first and deals with the social later, while with Frodo the two are intertwined throughout the course of the journey. One of Ged's greatest battles is with pride—an impatient pride, a desire for power and mastery without really going though the necessary steps to earn them.

Ged's first real teacher is the wizard Ogion the Silent, who has been seen as the model of Taoist sage.[8] In his impatience, Ged does not appreciate the lessons Ogion has to teach, although he grows to love the old man. Given the choice, Ged departs for the school of wizards on Roke. In the court of the school, when he arrives, he feels himself to be "a word spoken by the sunlight" and wishes to learn the art of magic in order to "drive back darkness with his own light." He learns power before he learns wisdom, however. He develops the light of consciousness and fails to see the dark until it literally leaps at his face.

Ged learns humility, and that actions have consequences, the hard way. He almost dies, and takes so long to recover that he is set back more than a year in his studies. Nemmerle, the Archmage, gives his life to heal the immediate consequences of Ged's rash act. So shaken is Ged that he almost cuts himself off from life altogether, wishing to hide and afraid to act at all. Eventually he finds the courage to go out into the world again and to act, but more carefully. He fears the shadow that he knows is out there waiting, but he begins to learn some measure of wisdom and responsibility. As wizard for a village of rather poor fishermen, he meets the first of two great temptations to destroy the shadow the easy way. In an attempt to save the life of a fisherman's child who is sick, he follows the boy too far into the land of the dead. There he encounters the shadow once again, and it almost prevents his escape. He does escape, but fears the shadow will seek him out and endanger the people he lives among. Ged wishes to leave, but he took the position of wizard to these people to protect them from a brood of dragons who live on an island not far away. Before he can leave he must fulfill his promise to protect them, so he goes to the dragons, rather than waiting for them to come to him. Here he faces his first great temptation.

Ged has discovered the old dragon's name, which gives him power over it. But the dragon offers him a bargain, which involves the thing Ged wants most: the name of the thing that follows him, the name he needs to defeat it. All he need do is betray the people who trust him to protect them. He does not do so and binds the dragon to an unbreakable oath never to fly eastward to harass the people he serves. He then leaves and soon discovers a similar temptation. He is saved from an encounter with the shadow—which now follows him in the shape of a man—by Serret, a figure that fits into Campbell's category of "woman as temptress." She is a sorceress and tempts him with the Terrenon Stone, one of those "old powers" like the ones Tenar served in Atuan. But by now Ged has learned something of the use and abuse of power. Despite the fact that this power, too, would give him the knowledge he seeks, he rejects its use.

Ged escapes in the form of a hawk, a dangerous thing to do for long, because one can forget one's own identity. He manages to get back to Ogion—his "Wise Old Man"—who restores him to human form, gives

him a breathing space, and shows him what he must do: stop running, turn around, and confront the thing that pursues him. Ged follows this advice and finally confronts the shadow:

> . . . In silence, man and shadow met face to face, and stopped.
>
> Aloud and clearly, breaking that old silence, Ged spoke the shadow's name and in the same moment the shadow spoke without lips or tongue, saying the same word: "Ged." And the two voices were one voice.
>
> Ged reached out his hands . . . took hold of the shadow, of the black self that reached out to him. Light and darkness met, and joined, and were one. (*WE* 179)

A more apt symbol for the Jungian principle of psychic integration through acceptance of the unpleasant and lost aspects of the personality could hardly be found. No slaying of dragons here, no driving out darkness with one's own light. Curiously, one finds almost the same image at the climax of *The Lord of the Rings*—the hero grappling with his shadow—but the outcome is very different, both for Gollum and Frodo.

Some of the same themes can be seen in Tolkien. The use and abuse of power is one thread that runs as much through Middle-earth as Earthsea. Like Ged, Frodo must resist the temptation to use power wrongly. The Ring is like the Terrenon Stone in that both are not merely neutral powers, but evil. Ged realizes that if he used the Stone its power would take him over so completely that his very identity would be lost. Likewise, the Ring takes over those who succumb to it; they become wraiths, with no will of their own.

Pride and arrogance are condemned in both, perhaps for different reasons. It is pride that prompts Ged to commit his rash act, and pride he must overcome. In Tolkien, there is an almost classical feeling of the dangers of *hubris*. In *The Lord of the Rings*, the fates of both Denethor and Boromir are brought about by their arrogance. One can view this either in Christian or Taoist terms if one wishes; either "he who exalts himself shall be humbled," or

> Wealth and place breed insolence
> That brings ruin in its train.[9]

Model of Christian Hero

Few would dispute that Frodo is the very model of a Christian hero. He is certainly humble enough to begin with; no great wizard or son of kings is trusted with the task of carrying the Ring, but rather the unremarkable

scion of a race that most of the denizens of Middle-earth have never heard of. Despite his fear and misgivings, he accepts his call.

The theme of renunciation is strong. Frodo's task is opposite to that of the usual quest hero. "The charge that is laid on him is absurd; whereas Bilbo, his predecessor, went to find a treasure, Frodo goes forth to lose one."[10] Curiously echoing Le Guin's Taoist influence, Frodo seems to become increasingly aware of the wisdom of inaction. Just as Ged learns that a wizard's power does not give him untrammeled freedom but constrains him so that eventually he does only what he must do, Frodo is reluctant to act against Gollum when he has the chance. Although he once had called for the creature's death, he spares him now as did Bilbo and Aragorn before him.

The important point, however, is that Frodo does not master himself—he actually fails the quest. After toiling through Mordor and up the sides of Mount Doom, at the penultimate moment his ego asserts itself: "I do not choose now to do what I came to do. I will not do this deed. The Ring is mine!" (*RK* 223) After all that everyone has gone through, the quest would fail at the crucial point if not for the action of Gollum, who, in struggling with Frodo for possession of the Ring, falls into the fiery heart of the mountain where both he and the Ring perish. What are we to make of this reversal? Possibly Tolkien, as a Christian, could not quite bring himself to allow Frodo to succeed alone, because that would suggest that man could achieve his salvation without God's grace.

The outcome of that identical struggle with the shadow is quite different for Frodo and Ged. Whereas Ged has accepted his darkness, Frodo has lost his. The consequences for Ged are realized by his friend Vetch:

> . . . he began to see the truth, that Ged had neither lost nor won but, naming the shadow of his death with his own name, had made himself whole: a man: who, knowing his whole true self, cannot be used or possessed by any power other than himself. . . . (*WE* 180–1)

Frodo certainly does not emerge whole from his ordeal, neither in body nor in soul. In the struggle, Gollum has bitten off Frodo's finger to get the Ring, and this physical loss is a metaphor for an even greater loss. In true Christian fashion, salvation has come through sacrifice.

> . . . in the act of saving the West, Frodo has in a sense precluded his own self-realization. That possibility fell with Gollum into the fire-mountain . . . In time Frodo will feel the loss, the emptiness that is the cessation of growth.[11]

Frodo is maimed in more ways than one. With the loss of his shadow,

his dark self, he seems to have lost much of his vitality. When the hobbits return to the Shire, he takes little part in the activities necessary to clear out the evil individuals that have taken over. He never again wields a weapon (Freud, take note) and on the anniversary of Sauron's fall suffers great pain. It is somewhat ironic that if Frodo had succumbed to the dark power of the Ring earlier, he would have become a wraith; in losing his darkness completely, he becomes almost equally insubstantial. Sam had described him earlier as a "glass filled with clear light," but such an image has disturbing implications of nonentity.

Frodo never really completes successfully the third stage of the hero's journey—the return and reintegration with society. He leaves Middle-earth for he is no longer capable of living in the world of men.

There is a pervasive series of images in Middle-earth that connects loss of the shadow with loss of potency. Gandalf the Grey becomes Gandalf the White and gains great power, but this gain is diminished with the destruction of Sauron and the One Ring. The three rings worn by Gandalf, Galadriel, and Elrond were bound up with that evil Ring, and its destruction has taken with it much of their power. Loss of their shadows, their evil sides seems generally associated with the waning of the elves' power. The elves of *The Silmarillion* were capable of murder, deceit, pride, and rebellion. By the time of *The Lord of the Rings,* they seem almost thoroughly good; the only real glimpse we get of their former selves is brief: when Frodo offers Galadriel the One Ring. Like Frodo, with the loss of their shadow, they have lost much of their power and also their wholeness, their substantiality. They too must leave the circles of the world.

This image seems to me to be a Christian conception, and is unlike Earthsea, which is definitely a world of the here and now. What powers there are in Earthsea are powers of earth, not heaven; and death is no Blessed Realm, but the "dry lands." What joys and sorrows Ged can look forward to will come to him in the flesh, in that short interval between birth and death. The goal of Christianity is to transcend the flesh, to leach the darkness out of the soul, and to look for the reward of one's labors after death. Perhaps Frodo, by his own lights, was successful.

Social Integration

The journey of the hero has more than a personal dimension. It has been shown that the quest can be viewed as a metaphor for that coming-of-age process which Jung defined as individuation. The hero of high fantasy generally does not act only for himself, however. Although his activities may bring about much growth in the hero as an individual, his quest has social dimensions as well. The object of the quest is usually to accomplish something that will benefit the world at large or even be required for its survival.

In both Earthsea and Middle-earth, the integration of the heroes on the personal level parallels a similar integration in the social plane. Just as Ged's personal integration is more successful than Frodo's, so is the social integration of Earthsea more complete. In Middle-earth, as with Frodo, something is irretrievably lost, and the integration is only partial. The symbol of this social integration in both worlds is the return of the king, the True King, whose throne has stood empty for centuries but who has come back to his people at last.

At first it might seem strange that an anarchist-Taoist and a conservative monarchist should choose the same image. One must realize, however, that the symbol of the True King really has little to do with politics. It has many layers of meaning: it suggests order against chaos, the rule of law, the legitimate use of power, the union of sacred and secular. It is a powerful symbol of social and spiritual unity. Social integration is bound up most closely with the third and last part of the hero's journey, and the social function and final task of the hero. The phase of the return spotlights the rejuvenating aspect of the boon the hero has won.

In Earthsea, the individual development of the three heroes—Ged, Tenar, and Arren—is paralleled by the development of social integration which culminates in *The Farthest Shore.* The classic pattern is followed, in which the hero brings back a boon, a magic talisman. In Earthsea, the talisman is the Ring of Erreth-Akbe, a powerful symbol of social integration. When Ged is first given part of the broken ring in *A Wizard of Earthsea,* neither he nor the giver realizes its significance. Ged learns by the time of the second book, and the search for its other half brings him to Atuan and to Tenar. With *The Tombs of Atuan,* the theme of social integration grows in importance. There are Runes of Power carved on the inside surface of the Ring. When it was broken, it broke across one of those Runes. Ged explains to Tenar:

> . . . the broken rune was the one that bound the lands. It was the Bond-Rune, the sign of dominion, the sign of peace. No king could rule well if he did not rule beneath that sign. No one knows how it was written. Since it was lost there have been no great kings in Havnor. There have been princes and tyrants, and wars and quarreling among all the lands of Earthsea. (*TA* 110)

It is plain from this that the figure of the king is a metaphor for unity and social harmony; it is also noteworthy that the sign of dominion is the sign of peace.

In orthodox Campbellian-hero fashion, Ged and Tenar return to the city of Havnor "at the center of the world" bearing their boon, the reunited Ring of Erreth-Akbe. Its return does bring a certain measure of

peace; the "barbarians of Kargad" stop their raiding and begin making treaties with the Inner Lands. Some of them even become wizards, the chief of whom is now Ged, aged about 40 or 50. Ged now realizes that the return of the Ring is not enough; he must also accomplish the return of the king.

In *The Farthest Shore,* Ged faces the greatest threat to the survival of Earthsea. Arren, young prince from the north, comes to Roke, the center of wizardry, to bring disturbing news: there are places where magic no longer works. To appreciate the gravity of this situation, one must realize that magic on Earthsea is bound up with the nature of existence; its principles are those that hold Earthsea together, its physics and theology at once. The ruling principle of this magic is balance rather than power—not the static balance of sameness but the dynamic balance of an equilibrium maintained by the tension of opposites. Holmes Welch's definition of Tao could serve almost equally well for a definition of Earthsea's magic:

> . . . the order of the universe. It is the laws of nature, the God that exists by argument from design; not identical with the universe and yet at work everywhere within it. Tao is impersonal, "unkind," and beyond the reach of prayer. It is real, but no more real than the universe it governs.[12]

The threat Ged faces is the total ruin of both the social order of Earthsea and the natural order. His opportunity is to complete the final integration of Earthsea by overcoming this threat with Arren's help. Arren is of the line of the old kings of Earthsea, but Earthsea has not had what we might call a "High King" since the Ring of Erreth-Akbe was first destroyed. We now see the three themes of integration—personal, social, and spiritual—come together. *The Farthest Shore* is both Arren's individual coming-of-age and the final act in the social integration of Earthsea. It is also the restoration of the natural order, magic, which on Earthsea is the closest thing to a religion that we can find.

Ged is only partially the hero now; he functions in *The Farthest Shore* more as a guide, Wise Old Man, and kingmaker. The idea of wizard as kingmaker is at least as old as Merlin and is used by Tolkien as well. Because with Le Guin, individual development must precede social, Arren must learn to be a man before he can be a king. In the course of his journey with Ged, he learns to be both. Arren is an awkward provincial boy of 17 when he meets Ged, having seen little of the world outside his homeland. He is also of the line of the last king of all Earthsea, whose line has died out elsewhere (the similarity to Aragorn is obvious). Aware that Arren is the True King, Ged chooses him to accompany him on the journey to track down the cause of the failure of magic. In the course of

their journey, Arren learns a great deal about the kingdom he will rule.

In *A Wizard of Earthsea,* the shadow Ged came to accept is a double image. Although it is a perfect representative of the Jungian shadow, it also stands for death, and in accepting it Ged is accepting the fact of his personal mortality. Just as he named "the shadow of his death with his own name," Arren must now do the same.

> . . . unlike epic heroes like Tolkien's Aragorn, Arren will not achieve throne and crown by overcoming hosts of evil orcs, but by subduing his own desire for immortality, by conquering "the traitor, the self; the self that cries *I want to live; let the world burn so long as I can live!*"[13]

It is this traitor personified in Cob the sorcerer who offers Arren the temptation, as he has offered it to countless others. To gain immortality, they must give up magic, however, which is understandable if magic signifies the natural order of things. It is death that is natural, and immortality is a perversion of that order. In Tolkien, of course, death is transcendence.

Cob was in terror of his own death, and spurred by terror he discovered how to do what no one else could do—to die in the flesh and return in the flesh from the dry lands of the dead. Le Guin's idea of the afterlife is no Blessed Realm, no Tir-na-Nog, no Eressëa. It is closer to Hades, only somewhat less attractive. Her shades have no real identity; they are but "a shadow and a name." But it would appear that without the body, the name alone is nothing, for the dead have no feelings, and no awareness of who they are in relation to others. Lovers, parents, and children ignore each other.

Given the alternative, the magnitude of Arren's temptation can now be seen. The only kind of immortality that Ged can offer Arren is a limited one. In the final confrontation with Cob in the land of the dead, Ged tells the sorcerer:

> Erreth-Akbe . . . even he, is but a shadow and a name . . . He is there—*there* not here! Here is nothing, dust and shadows. There, he is the earth and sunlight, the leaves of trees, the eagle's flight. He is alive. And all who ever died, live. They are reborn and have no end, nor will there ever be an end. (*FS* 180)

This passage is strikingly reminiscent of the Taoist vision of Chuang Tzu as Holmes Welch describes it:

> Chuang Tzu says that life and death are one, for they are phases of the grand process of nature in which death can no

> more be avoided than life and to which submission is the only wisdom . . . even physical decomposition is, in Chuang Tzu's view, something wonderful and moving, for new life arises from the materials of the old.[14]

Arren is being given the choice to act from fear of death, or from love of life. He chooses to turn away from the promise of personal immortality, to submit his own desires to the guiding principles of balance and equilibrium.

Return to Society

To complete the cycle, the hero must return to his society and revitalize it. In Middle-earth, as we have seen, Frodo is incapable of doing this. Gandalf's career somewhat parallels Ged's in that after his long labors to defeat a major threat to the stability of his world and to train and guide the king-to-be, he retires from the world. In Ged's case this withdrawal is figurative, in Gandalf's it is literal. By the end of *The Lord of the Rings*, the elves, wizards, and Frodo have lost the major part of their powers. Campbell reminds us that the "return and reintegration with society . . . the hero himself may find the most difficult of all."[15] It is left to Aragorn, the King, and to the remaining hobbits to accomplish this last of the hero's tasks.

Sandra Miesel has done an extended study of Aragorn as the fructifying king,[16] pointing out that one of his names means "Lord of the Tree," his symbol is the green elfstone, he is crowned on Beltane and married at the summer solstice. One of the ancient symbols of his kingship is the White Tree. The actual tree lies dead in Minas Tirith, the king's city, symbolic of the withering of the royal line there. Aragorn, as the only heir of that line (preserved in the north, like Arren) fears his line will meet the same end. Gandalf takes him up the mountain and shows him a sapling descended from Telperion, Eldest of Trees, which grew on Valinor. This prefigures his eventual marriage with Arwen and indicates that their union will be fruitful.

Sam follows a similar pattern when he returns to the Shire. He brings back a boon quite literally, a gift from the elf-queen Galadriel, which appears to be a box of dust with a seed in it. The Shire has been ravaged by unsavory characters controlled by the wizard Saruman, who was defeated by Gandalf. Sam, Merry, and Pippin rouse the folk of the Shire to put things right again. Sam discovers that Galadriel's gift magically accelerates growth and is able to repair much of the damage done to the Shire's growing things, especially trees. The seed proves to be that of a mallorn, one of the great golden-leaved trees of Galadriel's kingdom, and quite a wonder in the Shire.

The coming of Aragorn into his kingdom has echoes of Christ the King and of the divine-right, annointed king of medieval Christianity. Like them he has the king's gift of healing. The most important aspect from the standpoint of social integration is that the God-king, or his descendant the divine-right king, represents the union of sacred and secular.

> When a king rules by the Grace of God . . . there is a link between ruler and people stronger than slogans and an erected structure of responsibility. . . . The king is a little like the cosmic mountain (in fact he often lives on it)—the highest point, the point of orientation.[17]

Aragorn lives in Minas Tirith as King, a many-tiered city. Even King Arren of Earthsea lives on the cosmic mountain. Havnor is literally in the center of Earthsea, a true world navel; it is called "heart and hearth of the Archipelago."

Aragorn's role as symbol of unity and social integration, if interpreted in Jungian terms, can be seen as similar to Ged's. The main difference is that Aragorn can achieve only a partial integration; Middle-earth, like Frodo, has suffered an irretrievable loss. The elves and wizards are leaving, the ents are on the wane. Middle-earth will be a peaceful place but only men and hobbits will prevail.

Still, Aragorn achieves a certain integration for his own people, the Númenoreans, the Men of the West, beyond what he achieves for Middle-earth as a whole in the role of king. As noted above Faërie has often been used as a symbol of the unconscious. Timothy O'Neill[18] has interpreted the history of the Númenoreans as a metaphor for the over-development of consciousness at the expense of estrangement from the unconscious. The people of Númenor became overconcerned with worldly glory, "inflated" if you will; they become overconcerned with temporal things. The Valar (the equivalent of demigods or angels) forbad the Númenoreans "to sail west out of sight of their own shores or to attempt to set foot on the Undying Lands." (*RK* 315)

Sauron tempted Ar-Pharazôn, the King of Numenor, who was "besotted by fear of Death" to break the ban. Ar-Pharazôn believed that by going to the lands of the Valar he would gain physical immortality: just as Cob had tried to do in Earthsea and for the same reasons. The breaking of the ban caused the destruction of Númenor; like Atlantis it sank beneath the waves. Aragorn is descended from that remnant that escaped its destruction and fled to Middle-earth.

O'Neill equates the sinking of Númenor with the loss of the link to the deeper powers of the unconscious; what follows is the "spiritual impoverishment of the West."[19] Aragorn restores this link. The main symbol of the reforging of Númenor's link with the life-giving powers of

the unconscious is Aragorn's marriage to the elf Arwen, a living part of Faërie; it is a form of the *hieros gamos.* As Sam marries Rosie Cotton, his hobbit sweetheart, King Elessar marries his elven queen. Both unions are fruitful and symbolize the power that both heroes have brought back, the boon of peace and prosperity for Middle-earth.

Conclusion

The Journey of the Hero, as it is repeated in Earthsea and Middle-earth, can be read as symbolic of integration, both personal and social. In Le Guin, this integration, expressed in the concept of balance and equilibrium, is the central theme of the work. To her the most important thing is the individual, acting to bring harmony within himself and to preserve the natural order. The tenets of philosophical Taoism have been influential for Le Guin, particularly as interpreted by Holmes Welch.

In Earthsea, life is of great importance, but only if it is lived in harmony with the principles of balance and equilibrium, which entail the acceptance of death. Action should be taken but only when absolutely necessary; inaction is usually the wiser course. This view has certain associations with the Taoist concept of *wu wei,* "action through stillness." Ogion's method of teaching Ged is an excellent example of this principle.

Earthsea is not a world without meaning; there are the principles of magic and social rituals such as the Long Dance, based on reverence for the seasons and the natural order. There are hints of a rich mythology embodied in song and poem. But there is no hint of a personal God, and no real personal survival after death. In death we are but "a shadow and a name." There is no resurrection of the body, for the body has become part of the natural world; feeling, emotion, wholeness are lost when the body is lost, not to be regained. It has been said that Earthsea is a world of immanence, not transcendence.[20]

Middle-earth is certainly a world of transcendence. *The Silmarillion* outlines a complex theology which resembles closely that of the Old Testament. There is one God: Eru, Iluvatar, the One, who created first the angelic Valar and then, with their contribution, the land of Middle-earth. This pantheon has its Lucifer: Melkor, whose machinations bring greater ruin during the First Age than his lieutenant Sauron ever does in the Third.

Tolkien has managed to combine somewhat his Christianity and his love of pagan mythology in creating his pantheon. Eru has little to do with his creation after it is completed; the only direct intervention he takes in Middle-earth is the sinking of Númenor. The Valar and Maiar suggest a combination of angels with gods and goddesses. It is they who interact with elves during *The Silmarillion* and are revered and called upon—at least in the person of Varda/Elbereth—at the time of the Third Age.

This complex theology and cosmology, so foreign to Earthsea, clearly indicate a world of transcendence. Eru/Iluvatar can transcend the natural order and does so when Ar-Pharazôn sets his foot on Valinor. Númenor was destroyed and "the Undying Lands were removed forever from the circles of the world." (*RK* 317) Death is not the end of personal survival here as it is in Earthsea. Although the exact nature of the afterlife for either elves or men is not made clear, it is clear that Eru has plans for both, and they are different. There is Eressëa, a sort of transitional Elysium, for the elves and selected others such as the Ringbearers.

Despite these important differences, there are similarities. Both Tolkien and Le Guin share a reverence for the natural world and associate those who despoil it with evil. For Le Guin, the order of nature, of which humanity is an inseparable part, is the only sacredness. For Tolkien, the reverence for nature is deep, but in some ways incompatible with the idea of a God who can transcend it.

Both share a deep concern for the use and abuse of power and recognize that to make the wrong choices, to use power wrongly or with no heed for the consequences, can bring about the destruction of the natural world. Both possess what one might describe as an "ecological consciousness." Le Guin's is embedded in her principles of magic, in which to change the smallest thing is "to change the world." Tolkien's is expressed in his depiction of Mordor and Isengard, and the horror expressed by his hobbits at the despoiling of the Shire.

Connected to this concern for the abuse of power is the overriding and pervasive theme found in both, that actions have consequences far beyond what we can see. In Le Guin, this idea is expressed mainly in a Taoist attitude in which action is taken, but only at need, and its implications carefully considered. In Tolkien is found the theme of unlooked-for good coming from what were apparently neutral or even negative actions. The theme is most clearly expressed in the survival of Gollum, who is there to complete the quest only as a result of a series of acts of compassion over the years on the part of many people. In Earthsea, most of the first book has Ged dealing with the far-reaching consequences of a rash act. In *The Farthest Shore* one of the precipitating causes of Cob's search for immortality was an action of Ged's. Angered by Cob calling up the spirits of the dead for the mere amusement of his clients, Ged drags Cob to the very walls of the land of death to show him the seriousness of his actions. He succeeds in exacerbating Cob's fear of death to the point where Cob sets out in earnest on his perverse search for immortality.

Taken together with their intriguing differences and similarities, these two fantasy trilogies exemplify the variety and richness possible in the genre.

Notes

[1] References to the following editions have been incorporated into the text using abbreviations: Ursula K. Le Guin, *The Farthest Shore (FS); The Tombs of Atuan (TA); A Wizard of Earthsea (WE);* (N.Y.: Bantam, 1975). J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Fellowship of the Ring (FR); The Return of the King (RK); The Two Towers (TT);* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1967).

[2] Joseph Campbell, *The Hero With a Thousand Faces.* 2nd ed. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1968), p. 30.

[3] Clyde S. Kilby, "Mythic and Christian Elements in Tolkien," in *Myth, Allegory and Gospel,* ed. John W. Montgomery (Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship, 1974), p. 141 and Tolkien, "On Fairy Stories," in *Tree and Leaf* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1965), pp. 47ff.

[4] Le Guin, "Dreams Must Explain Themselves," in *The Language of the Night,* ed. Susan Wood (N.Y.: Putnam's, 1979), p. 55.

[5] Le Guin, "The Child and the Shadow," in *The Language of the Night,* pp. 65–66.

[6] Especially Marion Zimmer Bradley, *Men, Halflings and Hero Worship* (Baltimore: T-K Graphics, c1973).

[7] *Ibid.,* p. 38.

[8] Douglas Barbour, "On Ursula Le Guin's *A Wizard of Earthsea,*" *Riverside Quarterly* (April, 1974), p. 120.

[9] Lao Tzu, *Tao Te Ching,* trans. Arthur Waley. In Arthur Waley, *The Way and Its Power* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1956), p. 152.

[10] Daniel Hughes, "Pieties and Giant Forms in *The Lord of the Rings,*" in *Shadows of the Imagination,* ed. Mark R. Hillegas (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1969), p. 85.

[11] Timothy R. O'Neill, *The Individuated Hobbit* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1979), p. 136.

[12] Holmes Welch, *Taoism: The Parting of the Way,* Rev. ed. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1965), p. 58.

[13] Margaret P. Esmonde, "The Master Pattern: The Psychological Journey in the Earthsea Trilogy," in *Ursula K. Le Guin,* ed. Joseph D. Olander and Martin Harry Greenberg (N.Y.: Taplinger, 1979), p. 29.

[14] Welch, p. 93.

[15] Campbell, p. 36.

[16] Sandra Miesel, *Myth, Symbol and Religion in The Lord of the Rings* (Baltimore: T-K Graphics, c1973), ch. 2.

[17] Gracia Fay Ellwood, *Good News from Tolkien's Middle Earth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, c1970), p. 130.

[18] O'Neill, especially Chapters 3 and 8.

[19] *Ibid.,* pp. 150–52, for this quotation, and p. 143 for the next.

[20] John H. Crow and Richard D. Erlich, "Words of Binding: Patterns of Integration in the Earthsea Trilogy," in *Ursula K. Le Guin,* p. 202.

Utopia As a Distancing Device

Elisabeth Hansot

THE widespread belief that "utopia" is a bad word depicts utopian authors—as in the tradition of Dostoyevski's Grand Inquisitor—as having chosen happiness over freedom, conformity over individuality. The result is an orderly world in which nothing of much significance takes place any more.[1]

This belief extends to utopian writers as well as to students of utopia. H. G. Wells incorporated into his utopia a sweeping critique of his predecessors. Utopias written before Darwin were, to him, perfect static states in which change or development was excluded so that a balance of happiness could be won forever. In older utopias, he argued, freedom was different from and less important than virtue and happiness, but in the modern utopia freedom should become paramount. Wells's claim for his own work, appropriately entitled *A Modern Utopia,* is that it would break with tradition to portray, for the first time, the maximum amount of freedom commensurate with the liberty of others. And following close on his heels, anti-utopias from Eugene Zamyatin's *We* to Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* grimly portray the stultifying and finally ignoble conditions that obtain when bland and mediocre happiness becomes the norm.[2]

This tension between freedom and happiness is a modern dilemma that characterizes utopias written from roughly the 19th century on. But the problem is misconceived if it is thought that utopias signal a preference for happiness over freedom. Rather the problem is the modern utopian attempt to respond to two quite different agenda: that of criticizing and that of creating. Recent utopias provide a critique of society, often detailed and devastating. But at the same time they offer an alternative, an actual blueprint for future change.[3]

This second function is a recent one, signaled in the utopian literature

by a shift from spatial to temporal utopias. The dominant character of modern utopias is temporal; they locate themselves in time (the future) rather than in some remote, as yet undiscovered part of the globe. One reason for this shift from spatial to temporal utopias is the absence, by about the 17th century, of sufficient unexplored geographical space to protect the fiction of utopia's existence. In *The New Atlantis* Francis Bacon already found it necessary to explain how his utopia could have remained undiscovered and at the same time have access to western knowledge.[4] But the shift to the temporal goes beyond the need to maintain verisimilitude. It is linked with the claim that utopia is not merely a device for providing a standard by which contemporary institutions may be judged and found wanting; but, in addition and more importantly, it is a serious alternative to those institutions, a plan for future change.

By contrast, when utopias function only as critiques of current institutions, they serve as distancing devices. Utopias are one of a number of such devices that can be used to gain critical distance from one's own society. Perhaps the most accessible distancing technique is travel through time, which may take the form either of absorption in the past through historical experience or of absorption in the future through an act of the imagination. The latter is most often the purview of science fiction and its close cousin, utopian literature. Utopian travellers may become so immersed in the institutions and customs of another society that upon their return they find the institutions of their own society strange and problematic. Both Bacon and Descartes commented on the dislocating quality of this experience, calling it profoundly disorienting and uncomfortable. Familiar institutions seem cut loose from their moorings, and travellers risk running adrift themselves.[5]

Sir Thomas More understood well the exigencies of this travel in time when he commented that in writing utopias it is necessary to "smear the truth with honey." What, we might ask, is the bitter taste that needs to be so disguised? It may be the feeling of being a stranger, the sense of dislocation referred to earlier. We are, understandably, ill at ease when familiar institutions turn opaque and become problematic. The sense that things seem or could be otherwise robs the present of some of its accustomed solidity and rightness; it is as if one re-enters a world where customs and institutions are semi-transparent, shadowed by the many alternate possible others, the luggage of utopian travel. Raymond Ruyer has called this experience an awareness of the lateral possibilities of reality.[6]

More coats his pill with honey in order to make the truth slide "a little more pleasantly into men's minds." Why do utopian authors put so much stock in enticing their readers? Is it to disguise the bitterness of the pill until too late? Is it to clothe the strange institutions of utopia with a patina of familiarity (often in the form of a rather insipid romance) so the

traveller will not panic and bolt? Or is it simply that the utopian author follows the impulse basic to any story teller—the impulse to create a world as rich and various and captivating as the one he inhabits? Whatever the case may be, it seems clear that, as one of several distancing techniques, utopia makes it possible for the reader, without moving from an armchair, to travel in time. The result of such travel, whether readers know it or not, is to hone their critical faculties, to give them a means to judge for themselves the adequacy of existing institutions.[7]

Disorientation

In a brilliant passage, Edward Bellamy explores the disorientation that time travel has upon his hero, Julian West, who reawakens in 19th century Boston, after having thought himself permanently in utopia.

> A dozen times between my door and Washington Street I had to stop and pull myself together, such power had been in that vision of the Boston of the future to make the real Boston strange. The squalor and malodorousness of the town struck me, from the moment I stood upon the street, as facts I had never before observed. But yesterday, moreover, it had seemed quite a matter of course that some of my fellow-citizens should wear silks, and others rags, that some should look well fed and others hungry. Now on the contrary the glaring disparities in the dress and condition of the men and women who brushed each other on the sidewalks shocked me at every step, and yet more the entire indifference which the prosperous showed to the plight of the unfortunate. Were these human beings who could behold the wretchedness of their fellows without so much as a change of countenance? And yet, all the while, I knew well that it was I who had changed. . . .[8]

The choice to locate a utopia in time rather than in a particular locale—in space—carries with it some interesting consequences. Utopias located in time take on a double function, that of serving as a critique of existing society while at the same time offering an alternative to it. How do utopias do this? By locating themselves in the future, utopias acquire a past—their own history, which is, roughly speaking, also our future as it issues in utopia. Recent utopias, such as Bellamy's or H. G. Wells's are Janus-faced. They both critique existing institutions and at the same time answer that critique in the form of a blueprint for social change. They not only make the case for a more desirable future; they also include directions for how to get there. And it is just this historical thrust—this impulse

to give existence to utopia—that gets modern utopias into trouble.

To make a convincing critique of existing institutions, utopias employ the technique of vivid contrast. It is the disparity between what is—economic exploitation, class privilege, political injustice, as the case may be—and what could be, measured by the standard of utopia, that utopian writings bring into stark relief. But when such a critique is combined with a blueprint for future change, complications arise. The double focus, criticizing what is while attempting to change it, entails both a limited toleration of current institutions—they are after all, while manifestly imperfect, the stuff from which utopia will be forged—while at the same time giving one's allegiance to that which does not yet—and may not ever—exist. This tight rope act requires the author to maintain at one and the same time the sceptical stance of the critic and the enthusiasm of the reformer. There is something more than human—something that defies comprehensibility—in a successful new beginning for an entire society. For the sceptic, continuity is, after all, more plausible than the quantum leap to a new and more perfect state: the new beginning must always have something inchoate and incomprehensible about it. The Greeks, for whom the notion of divinity defied human understanding, had a saying that marks the difficulty: "beginnings are divine."

When Greek city-states exceeded a comfortable size, they often deliberately founded new ones. These city-states were planned, and by tradition they were often thought to be the work of one legislator, the design of one mind. But the Greeks were wary of these "new beginnings." The lawmaker who designs the new city-state is a man of preeminent talents to begin with, a Solon or Lycurgus. The act of creation endows him with further mythic qualities. At the extreme, he takes on the superhuman, even divine, attributes of his act: to have created something where nothing was before. Were the legislator to become part of the polis he was responsible for, that polis, overwhelmed by his god-like characteristics, might easily fall under his direction. And, in the process of being ruled or guided by the superior wisdom of the legislator, the new inhabitants of utopia would inevitably come to depend on him and in the process let atrophy their own ability to participate in the affairs of the polis. The consequence of this dependence would inevitably be that the citizens of the new polis would lose their freedom. One solution the Greeks devised for their problem was to ban the creator from the new city-state after its founding. The creator was to be in perpetual exile from his creation.[9]

It is a similar fate and a similar fear that the modern, time-oriented utopia evokes for the cautious reader. When the ideal society is described as located in the future, the author must also describe how that society was achieved. That is to say, the author must provide a historical narrative, a future founding so to speak, that leads from here to there. From the

point of view of the reader in the present, these histories are a double-edged sword. The history of utopia is both future and past, depending on whether one imagines oneself in utopia or regretfully remembers that one is not. Readers who desire to bring about utopia must make an effort of the imagination and project themselves into the future, for the appeal of the utopia is precisely in its radical departure from the present. And to locate oneself imaginatively in utopia is to see its history as a *fait accompli,* as a necessary, almost inevitable process.

Thus, this curious double focus of situating oneself simultaneously in the present and in the future is one source of the trouble in which the modern utopia finds itself. When authors induce the belief that change in the direction of utopia is quasi-inevitable, the effect may be to constrain rather than to persuade the reader to accept the utopian ideal. For to refuse the inevitable is to risk being judged not merely mistaken but, more important, immoral by the standards of the future utopia. H. G. Wells displays a typical utopian incomprehension of why anyone would refuse utopia:

> What is there to prevent a . . . movement of all the civilized Powers in the world toward a common ideal and assimilation? Stupidity—nothing but stupidity, a stupid brute jealousy, aimless and unjustifiable.[10]

The modern, time-oriented utopia employs a tactic opposite to that of the Greeks who exiled the founders. The future utopian citizen is practically propelled into utopia, willing or not. The coercion of the perfect anticipated future robs the present of the legitimation that says: imperfect as things are, that is the way they are and probably will remain. That legitimation now rests with the future society and with the historical judgment that the past can be of little merit unless it issues in utopia.

Furthermore, if the history that issues in utopia appears coercive to the reader in the here-and-now, an even more serious difficulty arises that that history is incomprehensible from the vantage point of a permanent citizen of utopia. A society whose citizens have no experience or intellectual grasp of injustice or inequity have no basis from which to understand history and hence to understand themselves. Lacking any experience of the lateral possibilities of reality, they lack the ability to be critical. To put it at its bleakest, utopians have no place to which to travel. They live in a society that, by definition, has solved all its major problems, hence it is a society that does not experience significant change. The inhabitants of such a society lack any distancing devices, any leverage with which to gain critical perspective on their own society. One such device, of course, is history. A passage from Bellamy's *Equality* illustrates the problem. The heroine says of the 19th century whence her visitor, Julian West, has come:

> You have no idea how hard I have been trying to post myself on the subject so as to be able to talk intelligently with you, but I fear it is of no use. . . . you have been telling me how the old world appeared . . . yet I cannot say that [it] appears a bit more intelligible than before.[11]

Throughout *Looking Backward,* Dr. Leete, Julian West's utopian guide, tells his visitor that his job in the new Boston will be to tell people what it was like in the old days, in pre-utopian times. But the proposal is not convincing. Why would utopians, rid of the problems that have beset human kind throughout recorded time until the arrival of utopia, care about an outdated tale of woe? The motives: self-satisfaction, gratuitious (because outmoded) indignation, seem hardly the stuff of utopias.[12]

The difficulty can be pinpointed by comparing the classical utopian paradox with the modern one. The classical paradox is the Platonic one. The conditions under which a philosopher might become a king, or a king a philosopher, virtually presuppose the existence of the utopia that the philosopher-king is to bring into being. The classical utopia is based on principles so different from those that operate in contemporary society that it is difficult to find a foothold in contemporary society that can lead to utopia. Utopia serves as a distancing device; the power of its perfection is directly related to the supreme difficulty of bringing it into existence. Plato's paradox is, in effect, a profoundly pessimistic assessment about the possibility of realizing utopia.

By contrast, the modern utopian paradox might be called a historical paradox. The modern utopia is based on principles formulated as a corrective to problems of pre-utopian society. The *raison d'être* of modern utopias, extrinsic to the utopia itself, is located in pre-utopian problems that require change. The modern utopia is designed to expedite change by providing a definite solution to pre-utopian problems. But the rub is that once utopia is brought into existence, it eliminates the pre-utopian conditions that constitute its *raison d'être.* The great achievement of the inhabitants of modern utopias is that they have eliminated the terrible inequities of pre-utopian society. But in the process, inadvertently, they have lost a key distancing device that is a major source of justification for the utopia: the understanding that things could be otherwise.

Pinpointing the Problem

The problem may be pinpointed by comparing the building of a utopia and the building of a house. The building of a house may eliminate the need to build that house, but it does not eliminate the ongoing need for shelter, which is the need that justifies the continued existence of the house. That need can be experienced, simply and vividly, any time its

inhabitants choose to spend an inclement night out of doors. But utopias offer no such comparative experience to its inhabitants. They are most frequently universal states, reflecting not only technological developments but also the absence of unoccupied geographical space that might act as a shield for the utopia. A state that wishes to preserve itself inviolate in the modern world must have the power to control other states, but such control implies the responsibility of ruling over subject states and thus leads to the establishment of a universal state. As Harrington observes:

> . . . to ask whether it be lawful for a commonwealth to aspire to the empire of the world, ... is to ask whether it be lawful for it to do its duty, or to put the world into a better condition than it was before.[13]

In a universal utopia there is no place to go, in physical reality or in the imagination, to get a critical purchase on one's own society. And such experiences are necessary because modern utopian authors, heirs to David Hume's scepticism, are loathe to postulate any innate or inherent human nature.

So while agreeing with Elliott that the modern utopia is a troubled genre, I think the source of the discomfort lies not in the particular values embodied in utopia—freedom versus happiness—but rather in the double agenda of modern utopias: to offer a blueprint for change as well as a critique of the present.

Jorge Luis Borges and Ursula Le Guin see this problem but choose to depict, not resolve, it in fictional rather than discursive terms. In his "Utopia of a Tired Man" (1975) Borges tackles head-on the utopian Achilles heel: once the transition to utopia is safely achieved, the inhabitants lose the key historical knowledge that things could have been otherwise. Borges' utopian responds to his visitor's introduction thus:

> I remember having read, not without pleasure, two works of an imaginative nature, he said. "Travels of Captain Lemuel Gulliver," which many people take to be true, and the "Summa Theologica." But let's not speak of facts. Facts matter to no one anymore. They are mere points of departure for invention and reasoning. In our schools we are taught doubt and the art of forgetting—above all, the forgetting of what is personal and local. We live in time, which is successive, but we train ourselves to live *sub specie aeternitatis*. Of the past we retain a few names, which language tends to lose. We shun pointless details. We have neither dates nor history. Nor have we statistics. You said your name is Eudoro. I can't tell you my

name, because I'm simply called Someone.
And what was your father's name?
He had none.[14]

Borges intimates what cannot be said: the sheer unimaginability of utopia, of an unchanging contemplative life *sub specie aeternitatis*. He has captured the mentality of a people for whom the past and its facts no longer have any purchase. These facts are no longer part of the reasoning process. And reason itself has become depersonalized and anonymous, almost beyond the point of comprehension. Borges' utopians, engaged in the arts of doubting and forgetting, seem to waver on the borderline of intelligiblity for the reader and perhaps for themselves as well.

Le Guin's utopia is explicitly contrasted to the finished perfection of the utopias of her predecessors, Bellamy and Fourier. The narrator deliberately designs a provisional utopia with few absolute requirements. Drooz—a non-habituating drug—would be allowed, for example, but the narrator would personally find beer more than satisfactory. But despite the effort at provisionality, by the author's own admission, utopia is fatally flawed. For the utopia to be imaginable to us, it must deliberately contradict its utopian premise. Le Guin describes the brilliance of her utopia, "the nobility of its architecture, the poignancy of its music, the profundity of its science" as depending on the continued misery of one innocent child. Were the child to be released from its misery, it would not any longer make any difference; the maiming has been done. But, Le Guin postulates, were this to nonetheless to happen, all the beauty and grace of utopia would disappear.[15]

By this metaphor of the miserable child, Le Guin pinpoints the terrible contradiction of utopia, when it is taken seriously as a blueprint for change. Either its inhabitants acquiesce in injustice so that the knowledge of good and evil may make them truly human and creative, or else they risk utopias like Borges's: worlds that baffle the imagination because their inhabitants have no human impulses, no *raison d'être*. The logic of Borges's utopia is carried to its inexorable conclusion when Borges has his utopians go by themselves, at no particular time and for no apparent reason and without anyone taking particular notice, to the crematorium.

While agreeing that there is a malaise within the utopian genre of writing, this paper has argued that the problems of modern utopias do not result from embodying one particular set of values—freedom or happiness—over another. Rather, the utopian difficulty results from the dual and incompatible aims of modern utopias. The attempt to use utopia as a standard by which to criticize existing institutions is at cross purposes with the attempt to use utopia as a blueprint for solving those problems. Utopia's perfection comes into its own by making vivid—and

intolerable—the defects and injustices of the reader's familiar, taken-for-granted society. But utopia imagined as real is, as Borges knew, finally unimaginable. Its inhabitants, living in an eternal present in which all problems have been solved, become enigmas to the reader, as they finally would, in Borges's suggestive conclusion, to themselves as well.

Notes

[1] For an excellent summary of this view, see Robert C. Elliott, *The Shape of Utopia* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), pp. 84–101.

[2] H. G. Wells, *A Modern Utopia* (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, Ltd., 1905), pp. 92–93; Eugene Zamyatin, *We,* trans. Gregory Zilboorg (New York: Dutton, 1959); Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World and Brave New World Revisited* (New York: Harper and Row, 1960). For further discussion of the nature of modern utopias see George Kateb, *Utopia and Its Enemies* (New York: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1963); Chad Walsh, *From Utopia to Nightmare* (New York: Harper & Row, 1962); Glenn Negley and J. Max Patrick, "Introduction," *The Quest for Utopia* (New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1952).

[3] For a fuller discussion of the tension between these two functions of utopia see Elisabeth Hansot, *Perfection and Progress: Two Modes of Utopian Thought* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1974).

[4] Francis Bacon, *The New Atlantis* in *Ideal Commonwealths,* ed. Henry Morley (New York: The Colonial Press, 1901), p.113.

[5] René Descartes, *Discours de la Methode,* (Paris: Librarie Larousse, 1934), pp. 15 ff.; Arthur Johnson (ed.), *Francis Bacon* (New York: Schocken Books, 1965), pp. 85 ff.

[6] Thomas More, *The Complete Works of St. Thomas More,* Vol. IV: *Utopia,* ed. Edward Surtz and J. H. Hexter (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965), p. 251; Raymond Ruyer, *L'Utopie et les Utopies* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1950), p. 9.

[7] Prior to the 19th century, utopias often take the form of extended essays, but 19th century authors seem to prefer to clothe their thoughts in novel form, which frequently features a romance between the traveller to utopia and one of its denizens. See, for instance, Edward Bellamy, *Looking Backward: 2000–1887* (New York: The Modern Library, 1917; orig. ed. 1887); William Dean Howells, *Through the Eye of the Needle: A Romance* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1907) and *A Traveller from Altruria* (New York: Sagamore Press Inc., 1957, first published in 1894.)

[8] Edward Bellamy, *Looking Backward: 2000–1887,* pp. 255–56.

[9] Ernest Barker, *The Politics of Aristotle* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1958), pp. 135 ff. For an interesting reworking of this theme see Wystan Hugh Auden, "Paysage Moralisé," *Modern Poetry* ed. Maynard Mack, Leonard Dean, and

William Frost (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1950), pp. 185–86.

[10] Wells, *A Modern Utopia*, p. 336.

[11] Edward Bellamy, *Equality* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1897), p. 4.

[12] Edward Bellamy, *Looking Backward*, pp. 143–45. Dr. Leete's name may well be intended as a reference to Lethe, a river in Hades whose waters, according to Greek mythology, induce forgetfulness of the past in those who drink it.

[13] James Harrington, *The Commonwealth of Oceana* (reprint of the 1771 London edition) in *Works: The Oceana and Other Works* (Darmstadt: Scientia Verlag Aalen, 1963), p. 185.

[14] Jorge Luis Borges, "Utopia of a Tired Man", translated by Norman Thomas di Giovanni, in *The New Yorker*, April 14, 1975, pp. 32–33.

[15] Ursula K. Le Guin, "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas," *The Wind's Twelve Quarters* (New York, Bantam Books, 1975). As Naomi Jacobs notes (letter to the author, January 7, 1987), Omelas cannot be seen as emblematic of all utopias. In *The Dispossessed* Odo walks away from Urras to found a new utopia on Anarres. That utopia also becomes flawed, but the flaw is not wrought into its basic being, as it is in Omelas. Ursula K. Le Guin, *The Dispossessed* (New York: Avon Books, 1974).

Adam's Rib: The Girl Guides and an Imperial Race

Richard A. Voeltz

ROBERT Baden-Powell, founder of the Boy Scouts, called the British Girl Guide Movement, ". . . a rib from the Adam of the Boy Scouts."[1] At the present there are several studies that attempt to place the Boy Scouts and Scouting in the history of British society before World War I.[2] Robert Baden-Powell, retired military officer and the "Hero of Mafeking" during the Boer War, leading his troops of young men through the streets and countryside, is a familiar image to students of Edwardian England. A more cynical generation viewed Baden-Powell as a ridiculous figure in short pants who tried to institutionalize adolescence, putting off the harsh realities of manhood in favor of a dream world where one could act like a man but without the responsibilities.[3]

But what of the Girl Guide movement? It has received little serious attention from historians, which is especially puzzling, given the new interest in both social history and the history of women. The literature on the Girl Guides consists of official histories from the association, laudatory and often inane biographies, and some pamphlets. These works can be helpful and revealing, but they have to be used with caution. The early handbooks of the movement are far more useful in gaining an impression of the Girl Guides.[4]

The Girl Guide movement is hardly an insignificant social and cultural movement, in view of the fact that in the early 1970s surveys indicated that some 60 per cent of British women had been Guides at one time.[5] With such popularity one has to be curious about the effects on young women and girls of social and cultural conditioning through an organization based upon the ethos of Baden-Powell, a Boer war hero whose initial interest was to promote character, patriotism, and above all manliness in

his male compatriots so that the British Empire could avoid the fate of the Roman Empire.

In fact, it is impossible completely to understand Baden-Powell and the founding of the Scouting movement in 1908 except in the context of pervasive fear among the upper and middle classes that the British "race" was deteriorating to such an extent that it could no longer produce the soldiers needed to defend the Empire in an increasingly hostile world.[6] There was much talk about declining "racial energy," especially after the Boer War had shown how ill-prepared Britain was in dealing even with a completely overmatched foe. The Boy Scout movement was intended not only to make pale, stoop-shouldered, working-class youth stand erect and proud, but also to condition and prepare them to serve King and Country. Such was the vision of the former soldier Baden-Powell, who watched with pride as the Scouts became "the Youngest Line of Defence for the Empire" in World War I.[7]

In the discussions about a declining race and how to rejuvenate it in Edwardian England, attention focused upon mothers and child-rearing. If the decline in the "Imperial Race" was to be permanently halted, doctors and eugenicists stressed the role of women both as mothers and as moral guides for the men. The home became "the cradle of the race . . . Empire's first line of defence." Because of the importance of women for the creation of a strong "Imperial Race," all women, but especially those from the working class with its high birthrate, had to be of good character and know the importance of cleanliness, thrift, and temperance.[8] This upper and middle class preoccupation with motherhood and race rejuvenation provided the justification and program for the British Girl Guides.

The origins of the Girl Guide movement can be traced back to a rally in 1909 where some 11,000 Boy Scouts went on parade review. This program also featured a mock attack upon a village at which some Scouts were encamped. While the "enemy" was driven off by members of the Territorial Forces and the Legion of Frontiersmen, the Boy Scouts showed their value by acting as messengers, tending the wounded and rescuing women and children from buildings that had been set ablaze. Such a maneuver, the highlight of the show, indicated the strong military purpose behind the Scouting movement.[9]

Girl Scouts Appear

In the midst of these festivities a small band of "Girl Scouts" appeared and demanded to be reviewed by Chief Scout Baden-Powell. This incident has since assumed legendary qualities in Girl Guide literature. The Chief Scout, initially totally opposed to allowing females into his movement, saw the enthusiasm and patriotism of the girls, led by three Pinkney's Green Scouts, and ". . . his heart melted within him." Thus

was born ". . . an army destined to become even larger in Great Britain than that of the Boy Scouts themselves."[10]

In fact by 1909, some 6,000 girls had joined Boy Scout troops, whose members totaled about 200,000 in that year. The girls participated usually in the form of affiliated units and were active in all forms of Scouting activities.[11] They would march with the boys on their outings but would make their own fires and tea in their "billy-cans." Later they would join the boys in Scouting games.[12] More research is needed on the motivations of both the parents and the girls who sought to join the Scouts before they were officially welcome. For instance, how much resentment and friction existed on the local level when girls tried to emulate their brothers by forming Scout troops? The official Guide history says that Baden-Powell in his usual wisdom appreciated the strong desire of girls for Scouting and therefore promptly moved to set up the "Girl Guides" as a separate organization run by women and with its own goals and program. Research might reveal, however, that the Chief Scout took this action to stop cold the influence of coeducation that might destroy the military mission of his beloved Scouts. A man intent upon instilling public school Christian manliness in every boy in every economic class in Britain would perhaps be unlikely to condone boys and girls playing Scouting games together. He approved of girls' participating in the lore and adventure of Scouting, but he could be expected to find them a special purpose to suit their gender.

For whatever reasons, Baden-Powell, with the help of his unmarried sister, Agnes, did set out to establish the Girl Guides. The name "Guides" was given to distinguish the girls' movement from the boys. The new name was said to have been taken from India where a famous troop of Guides on the frontier were known for their strength and courage. Such a derivation provided the necessary exotic flavor needed for the lore of Scouting. In the November, 1909, issue of the *Headquarter's Gazette,* the first program of the Girl Guides was set forth:

> If we want the future manhood of the country to be men of character—which is the only guarantee for safety for the nation—it is essential in the first place that the mothers, and the future wives (the guides of those men), should also be women of character.

The training laid down for the Boy Scouts was also to be followed by the Girl Guides, but not so painstakingly. Training for girls had to be administered ". . . with great discrimination," lest a refined girl be turned into a tomboy. But the training had to have the capability of raising "the slum-girl from the gutter." "The main object is to give them all the ability to be better mothers and Guides to the next generation."[13]

The official reason for the establishment of the Girl Guides resembled the rationale behind the Boy Scouts, "decadence" and racial decline. The mothers were singled out for blame:

> Decadence is going on in the nation, both moral and physical; proofs are only too plentiful. It is preventable if taken in time. Much of this decadence is due to ignorance or supineness of mothers, who have never been taught themselves.
>
> Physical defects exist to an enormous extent, a large proportion of which are preventable.

It was to be the responsibility of wives and mothers to reverse the trend toward decadence:

> Moral education is left by the mothers pretty much to the schoolmasters.
>
> Girls must be partners and comrades, rather than dolls. Their influence in after-life on the actions and quality of the men is very great; they become their "Guides." They, therefore, need character training quite as much as boys.

It turned out that there was a list of bad habits and defects that needed correcting:

> Loafing, trusting to luck, want of thrift, unstableness, are increasing defects among our men. So they are among the women—though possibly not, as yet, to so great a degree. Good servants are hard to get, homes are badly kept, children are badly brought up. There is great waste of their life among women of every class.

As noted, the Chief Scout gave his sister the responsibility for running the new movement. Agnes was thoroughly Victorian in outlook, possessing all the values of a wealthy spinster who in the 19th century might have been active in the Girls Friendly Society. Rose Kerr, who wrote an official history of the Guides in 1932 and who had been active in the movement since 1909, made a revealing remark when she wrote that anyone who knew Agnes ". . . would scoff at the idea of her being the President of a sort of Amazon Cadet Corps."[14] Indeed while Agnes and her friends might have held the top positions in the Guide Association, young, articulate, and active Edwardian women like Rose Kerr, who found the Guides an outlet for their talents, were destined to play a much larger role in the years ahead.

8,000 by 1910

In spite of the tepid leadership of Agnes Baden-Powell, some 8,000 girls had registered as Guides by 1910.[15] What were the activities of these new companies of Girl Guides and how did they function?

The age of the Guides ranged from 12 to 16; for group leaders, 15 to 18; officers had to be over 21. A Guide Second Class wore a badge with the motto "Be Prepared" on the left arm. She also had to be able to pass a test in the knowledge of the "Rules of the Corps," lay and make a fire, make a bed, and cut out and sew a Union Jack. A Guide First Class wore a fleur-de-lis badge on the left arm and had to have one shilling in the bank, be able to prepare a "simple dish," and finally be familiar with first aid and hospital nursing. As with the boys, there were efficiency badges won after passing tests in areas from stalking to clerking, with some obvious additions such as nursing sister. The names of the troops also were marked for change, from animal names to those of flowers. At first this change met with opposition. One Glasgow troop very much resented changing their name from the Cuckoo troop to the Thistle Patrol, probably fearing that they would not have as much fun as previously.[16]

The following account by Miss Veronica Erskine, a Guide in a company founded by her mother, Lady Erskine, in 1910, sheds further light on what it was like to be a Guide in a model company in Scotland:

> The Guides assembled outside Venlaw front door, soon after lunch; the captains were given sealed orders for the day; each patrol then went off on a different activity, both inside and outside the house, i.e., to make beds, and have a sick-nurse talk; to light fires (indoor and out); to have some sense-training competition, such as smelling; to track; to harness the ponies; to learn to use the telephone between the house and stables, etc.
>
> Each Guide brought her own food, and each one possessed a billy-can; each patrol made its own tea. . . . The company generally had drill or dancing to finish up with. . . . Quite early a drum and two bugles were brought, and the company marched away down the hill, and through the town to the strain of a fine band.

This particular company was lucky enough to have the use of an entire hall, presented by Lady Erskine and "equipped in every detail, with cooking stove, sink, piano, platform, etc." Miss Erskine remembers that the Guides were "very proud of this hall, and the floor was kept spotlessly clean; the walls were mainly decorated with Union Jacks, made by

each Guide. . . ."[17] While certainly more lavish than most Girl Guide companies at the time, the training received in 1910 conditioned these girls, who during World War I might not have had men around to light the fireplace or saddle the horse.

In 1912, Agnes Baden-Powell and her brother wrote the first official handbook for the Girl Guide movement, *The Handbook for Girl Guides or How Girls Can Help Build the Empire.* The aim of Girl Guiding was "to get girls to learn how to be women—self-helpful, happy, prosperous, and capable of keeping good homes and of bringing up good children." While attractive to all classes, Girl Guide training was said to be especially needed by "the girls of the factories and of the alleys of our great cities" who might someday become "the mothers . . . character trainees of the future men of our nation." Young women "who have had a better upbringing" and wanted to do something that "counts" would be invaluable as "captains and instructors to their less well-to-do sisters."[18]

Motherhood and good health received renewed emphasis in the handbook:

> Girls can do a great work for the country by learning the rules of health, by practising them personally, and by applying them to the care of children in their own homes, and by teaching them to others.

Girls were also given a lesson in patriotism and career advice. The Girl Guides now had their own marching song "Daughters of Britain" which contained the following stanza:

> Be prepared, true Guides of Britain, be prepared for what may be,
> To you belongs the empire world that rules in every sea;
> Then march to meet the future, fearing nought whate'er betides—
> Be strong for truth and empire, for the honour of the Guides.

And in regard to careers, clerical positions were mentioned but nursing was considered especially favored, for "every woman is a better wife and a better mother for having been a nurse first." *How Girls Can Help Build the Empire* remained the official handbook of the Girl Guides until superceded by *Girl Guiding—The Official Handbook.* With Robert Baden-Powell as sole author, it was first published in 1918.[19]

The Girl Guide movement before 1914 grew slowly. In fact it was nearly absorbed by the Young Women's Christian Association. Although beginning in 1915 Baden-Powell had started to reorganize the Guides

and bring in younger women, like Rose Kerr and his wife, Olave, World War I really provided the impetus for the organization's tremendous wartime expansion that continued in the post-war period.[20] On July 20, 1918, 6,000 Guides assembled on the Guards' Parade Ground in Hyde Park for the first big London rally. During the war as women started to move into industry and their role in society expanded, Baden-Powell saw the Guides as providing the "preliminary course of training" in "discipline and health . . ." before women moved into new positions such as office management and "motor driving."[21] His new handbook for Guides seemed to appreciate the new position of women brought about by the war, because the training for girls was now much more in line with that of the boys. In 1920 Baden-Powell wrote the following in *Aids to Scoutmastership:*

> The term "Scouting" has come to mean a system of training in citizenship, through games, for boys or girls . . . The girls are the important people, because when the mothers of the nation are good citizens and women of character, they will see to it that their sons are not deficient in these points.[22]

In the post-war world, the evolution of the view that motherhood was the solution to new social and economic tensions was now complete.

Moral Guides for Men

When the Girl Guides were established officially in 1910, they were perceived as a vital imperial factor in the defense of the British Empire and the "British Race." As potential mothers and moral guides for the men, the girls of the Empire were the ones who had to stop the deterioration of British stock. Edwardian England abounded with doctors, eugenicists, Social Darwinists, and public health officials who documented the degeneration of the British people in the form of lower birth rates, high infant mortality, and physical deformities that kept men from potential military service.

Particularly alarming to the upper classes was Karl Pearson's contention that the British were becoming less intelligent and creative and that their birth rate was declining. Many of these contentions came from faulty reasoning and bad statistics.[23] But they were embraced by the upper and middle classes because these views supported beliefs and fears about modern industrial society. These people sought refuge in programs or schemes designed to rekindle "the spirit of the race" and to rejuvenate the "blood." For Baden-Powell, the establishment of the Boy Scouts and Girl Guides was such a program. Regardless of the possible joys of Scouting experienced by the youth of Britain, the Boy Scouts had as its

purpose the creation of an ideal British soldier who would defend the Empire. In the case of the Guides, on the other hand, Scouting was intended to create an ideal woman who would become a mother who would not only defend the Empire but produce and preserve the "Imperial Race" as well.

In fact, the Scout movement was always tinged with matriarchal elements, as when Baden-Powell called upon his scouts to accept his mother, to whom he was close, as their spiritual grandmother.[24] Baden-Powell did not marry until after his mother's death in 1914, when he was 55. His wife was 32 years younger than he. She worked tirelessly on behalf of the Girl Guides, giving them the kind of strong authority figure that Baden-Powell was for the Boy Scouts.

The British Girl Guides, along with the Boy Scouts, rifle clubs, school meals, the National Service League, eugenics, the Empire Day Movement, and tariff reform all represented social and cultural responses to Britain's diminishing influence and power. Victorian optimism gave way to Edwardian pessimism, and a new quest for stability and power arose through these and other social movements and enthusiasms.

Notes

[1] Robert Baden-Powell in the Foreward to Rose Kerr, *The Story of the Girl Guides,* (London: The Girl Guide Association, 1932).

[2] John Springhall, *Youth, Empire, and Society, British Youth Movements, 1883–1940,* (London: Croom Helm, 1977) and "The Boy Scouts, Class and Militarism in Relation to British Youth Movements 1908–1930," *International Review of Social History* 16 (1971), pp. 125–58. See also Paul Wilkinson "English Youth Movements, 1908–1930," *Journal of Contemporary History,* 4 (April, 1969), pp. 3–23. Finally, there is a recently published book by Michael Rosenthal, *The Character Factory: Baden-Powell and the Origins of the Boy Scout Movement,* Pantheon, 1986.

[3] See, for example, Norman Mackenzie, "Sweating it out with B-P," *New Statesman,* October 15, 1965, p. 555.

[4] Springhall has a bibliography of these works and the early Girl Guide handbooks.

[5] *Ibid.,* p. 131.

[6] See Richard Soloway, "Counting the Degenerates: the Statistics of Race Deterioration in Edwardian England," *Journal of Contemporary History,* 17 (1982), pp. 137–64.

[7] Cartoon in *Punch,* September 1, 1909.

[8] Anna Davin, "Imperialism and Motherhood," *History Workshop,* 5 (Spring, 1978), p. 53. Davin argues that "The inadequacy of individuals—mothers—and perhaps of the particular family, was a more acceptable explanation of infant mortality and ill-health than the shortcomings of society. It seemed more 'attackable.' " pp. 53–54.

[9] London *Times,* September, 1909.

[10] Kerr, pp. 12–13.

[11] Samuel Hynes, *The Edwardian Turn of Mind,* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), p. 28.

[12] Kerr, pp. 60–61.

[13] "The Scheme for Girl Guides," *Headquarters Gazette,* November, 1909. The next quotations are from *Ibid.*

[14] Kerr, p. 37.

[15] Springhall, p. 132.

[16] "The Scheme for Girl Guides," *Headquarters Gazette,* November, 1909.

[17] Kerr, pp. 60–61.

[18] Agnes Baden-Powell in collaboration with Lt. General Sir Robert Baden-Powell, *The Handbook for Girl Guides or How Girls Can Help Build the Empire,* (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1912), pp. vii–viii. The next quotations are from *Ibid., pp. 320, 467, 395.*

[19] Robert Baden-Powell, *Girl Guiding—The Official Handbook,* (London: Arthur Pearson, 1921).

[20] Eileen K. Wade, *Olave Baden-Powell, The Authorised Biography of the World Chief Guide,* (London: Hadden and Stoughton, 1971), pp. 49–50.

[21] *Girl Guiding,* p. 174.

[22] Quoted in John S. Wilson, *Scouting Round the World,* (London: Blandford Press, 1959), p. 14.

[23] Soloway, pp. 153, 159–160.

[24] W. S. Adams, *Edwardian Portraits,* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1957), p. 134.

The Supremacy Clause

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I WOULD not care to say that any one clause in the U.S. Constitution is its most important, but certainly the supremacy clause is one of the most important. Madison, in *Federalist 44*, described it as one of the powers and provisions of the Constitution "by which efficacy is given to all the rest."

In the years of the Constitutional bicentennial, it is, perhaps, appropriate to affirm that we really do have something to celebrate. The modern written constitution was invented in the United States, starting with the state constitutions written during the Revolution. The document of 1787 gave an example to the world that has been followed ever since. With the exception of Britain, a written constitution is now one of the marks of civilized nationhood. The special achievement of the United States, however, is not just inventing the written constitution, but drafting one so wisely and making it work so well that 200 years later we are still using what is substantially the same document.

It is not just a matter of putting ponderous words on paper. The French have had, since their revolution that started in 1789, five republics, two empires, and two kingdoms, each with its own written fundamental charter. For a current example, Brazil is about to draft its eighth constitution, and we all have heard that the Philippine Republic has just adopted a new one. The United States has used the same one for two centuries, with some changes but without wholesale revision. That constitution is an achievement to be proud of. Part of its longevity may be luck, but part of it is certainly the wisdom and judgement of the men who drafted it and of the subsequent generations who built a nation on that foundation. Simply to praise the founders, however, is not the purpose of these remarks. An informed understanding of their work is more important than praise. With that, let us turn to the document.

What is the supremacy clause? It is the second section of Article VI of the Constitution; it reads as follows:

> This Constitution, and the laws of the United States which shall be made in pursuance thereof, and all treaties made, or which shall be made, under authority of the United States, shall be the supreme law of the land; and the Judges in every State shall be bound thereby, anything in the Constitution or laws of any State to the contrary notwithstanding.

Although written by lawyers and for lawyers, the section is not obscure. It is so clear, indeed, that quite a lot of U.S. constitutional history can be summarized as a record of efforts to avoid reading it literally.

Why is the supremacy clause important? So long as we have a federal system—one in which governmental authority is formally divided between central and local units—it is imperative that there be a formula for resolving conflicts between them and a mechanism for enforcing the decision. The supremacy clause provides both.

That there will be conflicts is inevitable. With the best will in the world, the autonomous units we call states, as long as they really have any freedom to make their own decisions, are bound sometimes to make decisions that clash with those of the central authority that we call the federal or national government. This was true when there were 13 states; it is even more likely to happen now that there are 50.

The formula of Article VI, Section 2, is a simple one: the Constitution, valid federal law, and federal treaties, are supreme in case of conflict with state law. Who is to say when there is a conflict and to what extent state law must give way? The courts, state and federal. The resolution of these conflicts is a judicial function.

The supremacy clause has been called the cornerstone of national sovereignty. Without it we would not have one country, but rather a loose, anarchic structure of the kind which in fact we did have under the Articles of Confederation. A kind of political physics is at work in all large systems. There seems to be a centrifugal force operating; the component parts tend to move outward. If the system is to survive, a centripetal force must be created. In the local units, it is easiest for officials and citizens to give priority to local problems and concerns. These local views will predominate unless offset by some agency or body, taking and enforcing a national position. Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr., once wrote that he did not think that the Union would come to an end if the Supreme Court lost its power to declare an act of Congress void. But he went on to say, "I do think the Union would be imperilled if we could not make that declaration as to the laws of the several states. For one in my place sees how often a local policy prevails with those who are not trained to national views. . . ."

The formula of national supremacy is not enough; there must also be national agencies, which have national views, to see that national poli-

cies are not destroyed or confused by local pressures and concerns. The Supreme Court of the United States is one, and perhaps the most significant one, of those agencies.

Early Impact

In one of the early attempts to mitigate the impact of national on local law, the highest court of Virginia refused to carry out a U.S. Supreme Court decision based on a U.S. treaty. The Virginia Court of Appeals was willing to accept the formula—that the U.S. Constitution, laws, and treaties were supreme—but not the mechanism, a final decision in such cases by the U.S. Supreme Court. In that case, *Martin* v. *Hunter's Lessee* (1816), Justice Joseph Story demonstrated, first, that the Constitution, in providing that the Supreme Court shall have appellate power over all cases arising under the Constitution, laws, and treaties of the United States (except where it has original jurisdiction), clearly authorizes appeals from the state supreme courts in such cases. He then went on to refer to the "necessity of uniformity of decisions throughout the whole United States upon all subjects within the purview of the Constitution." "Judges of equal learning and integrity," he wrote,

> in different states, might differently interpret a statute, or a treaty of the United States, or even the Constitution itself. If there were no revising authority to control these jarring and discordant judgements, and harmonize them into uniformity, the laws, the treaties and the Constitution of the United States would be different in different states, and might, perhaps, never have precisely the same construction, obligation, or efficacy, in any two states. . . .

In other words, if the supremacy clause were not enforced in the last instance by a single national agency, we might have as many versions of the U.S. Constitution as there are states.

Where did this supremacy clause come from? Which of the framers at Philadelphia in 1787 thought it up? We tend to give Madison and Hamilton credit for almost everything in the Constitution, but neither man was the originator of the supremacy clause.

The resolutions presented to the Convention at the outset by the Virginia delegation, constituting what is called the Virginia Plan, were in considerable part Madison's work. The Virginia Plan recognized the need for a rule of national supremacy and a means of enforcing it. Madison's researches had informed him perhaps of the attempts of other federal systems to deal with the problem, and the Virginia proposals on this point may have been drawn from such historical examples. To main-

tain the supremacy of national law, the Virginia Plan proposed that Congress should have a veto over all state laws and that national authority over non-cooperating states was to be maintained by military force. The Convention accepted neither proposal.

The notion of military coercion was quickly dropped, at Madison's own suggestion, and, in the end, the notion of a congressional veto was rejected as unworkable. From what we know of the debates in the Convention, several delegates seemed to have taken it for granted that the courts were the proper agency to deal with state-national legal conflicts; and finally Luther Martin of Maryland presented a motion, originally a part of the New Jersey Plan presented by the small states, describing federal law as supreme and as binding state judges to follow it. This the Convention adopted unanimously and—it would seem from Madison's notes—without debate. The final form of Article VI, Section 2, was rephrased by the Committee on Style, headed by Gouverneur Morris of Pennsylvania, in the broad and absolute form we have today. Martin, it may be noted, did not sign the Constitution, opposed its ratification, and disavowed the final version of his supremacy motion.

Two of the characteristics of the U.S. Constitution are its brevity and generality. It is not, however, vague. The lawyers, such as Morris who prepared the final draft, knew how to employ words and phrases rich with implications on which future interpretations and applications could be based.

For instance, in the supremacy clause, we see the phrase "laws made pursuant to the Constitution"; this implies a limitation on Congress, a standard of constitutionality. The treaties, however, which are part of the supreme law of the land are those "made, or which shall be made, under authority of the United States," language that validates pre-existing treaties such as the treaty of alliance with France and the peace treaty with Britain. This language also, as Holmes once pointed out, suggests that the scope of treaties may be greater than the scope of federal domestic legislation. The reference to the judges, in "the judges in every state shall be bound thereby," implies that conflicts between state and federal law shall be settled by courts in law suits. Indeed, to say that the Constitution itself is "law," part of the "supreme law of the land," supports the conclusion that Chief Justice John Marshall drew later, that the courts are the proper agency to interpret the Constitution in all cases. Finally, the statement that federal law is "supreme" plainly means that it overrides all other law, i.e., state law, and this is emphasized by the concluding phrase "anything in the constitution or laws of any state to the contrary notwithstanding."

Dual Federalism

Perhaps because the language of the supremacy clause is as clear and positive as it is, states and others who have sought to avoid its impact have been forced rather to ignore it than to attempt to interpret it. It should be remembered that, read literally, it provides that federal law is supreme over state law always—no exceptions. The constitutional theory or doctrine known as "dual federalism" in effect seeks to replace the mandate of the supremacy clause with another rule, according to which the states and the United States have each an assigned sphere of operation, with each being supreme within its own sphere. The Constitution does not contain any list of functions or powers reserved to the states, and the supremacy clause does not say that the states are supreme in any respect. Nevertheless, in the name of states' rights, dual federalism was the accepted theory for several decades of the 19th century. Its last faint gasp may have been the 1976 decision of the U.S. Supreme Court in *National League of Cities* v. *Usery.* There the Court held that the federal wage and hour laws, based on the commerce clause of the Constitution, could not be applied to state and local governments. However, the Supreme Court reversed itself in 1985, in *Garcia* v. *San Antonio Transit District,* and so we may say that dual federalism has now finally breathed its last.

From the turn of the century to the middle 1930s, dual federalism was associated with an ideology of laissez-faire economics, which likewise has no express support in the language of the Constitution. But those cases aimed at limiting both state and federal power to regulate the economy fell by the wayside after 1937.

While these efforts to limit the sweep of the supremacy clause prevailed in certain periods and certain areas of concern, throughout most of its history and in most kinds of cases, the U.S. Supreme Court has been willing, very willing, to read and apply the clause broadly. When Chief Justice Marshall wrote, in *McCulloch* v. *Maryland* (1819), that "the power to tax is the power to destroy," he was in fact arguing that the supremacy clause invalidated not just state laws in actual conflict with federal laws but also state laws that might only threaten to obstruct the operation of federal law.

More recently, the supremacy clause has been given a similarly broad application under the preemption doctrine. Even where Congress has not legislated on a specific topic and there is no actual conflict between state and federal law, if Congress has passed laws in and around a general area the courts may hold that Congress has preempted the whole area and that any state legislation, even non-conflicting legislation, is barred.

The significance of preemption may be seen in modern legislation dealing with air pollution. California required pollution controls on auto-

mobile engines before there was any federal law on the subject. When federal law was enacted, the standards it set were lower than California's and might have eliminated the higher California standards by preemption. The California standards remain in force only because California representatives were able to have inserted in the federal law language to the effect that preemption was not intended in that instance.

Justice Holmes's statement that the language of the supremacy clause supports the position that the scope of U.S. treaty power is greater than the federal government's authority in domestic affairs appears in his opinion in *Missouri* v. *Holland* (1920), a case upholding congressional legislation to protect migratory game birds under a treaty with Canada and displacing state laws. While this treaty was a formal one, duly ratified by a two-thirds vote of the Senate, subsequent decisions, such as *U.S.* v. *Belmont* (1937), have given the same effect—displacement of state laws—to international agreements made by the executive alone.

In sum, the supremacy clause means at least what it says, not less, and sometimes more.

The addition of the 14th Amendment to the Constitution after the Civil War opened up a whole new range of possibilities of state-federal conflict, and it is in the expansion of this amendment that the impact of the supremacy clause has been most conspicuous in recent years. The story is a long one.

The 14th is the amendment that forbids the states to deprive anyone of life, liberty, or property without due process of law and to deny anyone the equal protection of the laws. The process of defining these terms has gone on for nearly a century. At first the attention of the courts was focussed on economic liberty, the protection of free enterprise. The first ten amendments to the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, were not involved, those provisions having long since been held to bind only the federal government. But since the 1920s, when the Supreme Court accepted the notion that the liberty protected by the due process clause included freedom of speech and press under the First Amendment, more and more of the Bill of Rights has been held applicable to the states. At the same time, substance has been given to the phrase "equal protection of the laws." And these decisions bring the supremacy clause into play.

Although the bulk of these Fourteenth Amendment decisions came with the Warren Court, they neither began nor ended there. It was in the Scottsboro cases of the 1930s, for instance, that rights to counsel and to a non-segregated jury were found to be within the scope of the Amendment's due process. The end of racially restrictive real-estate covenants by force of the equal protection clause occurred in the 1940s.

It was in the next decade that the equal protection clause was held to prohibit both racially-segregated schools and legislative districts of unequal population; that almost the whole range of rights of the accused

specified in the Bill of Rights became, as part of due process, rights of persons charged with crime in the state courts; and that the First Amendment in all its clauses, and these clauses read broadly, were held to bind state as well as federal government. Since it is state law that controls most of our everyday activities, the fact that the supremacy clause makes these rulings binding on the states is the chief source of their power.

The responsibility of the U.S. Supreme Court in making decisions with such impact is a heavy one. Its rulings impose a uniform standard on the varying practices and procedures of 50 states. In some cases, most states will already have adopted a similar standard on their own. For example, in 1963, when the Court decided *Gideon* v. *Wainwright,* the basic right-to-counsel decision, all but four states already provided counsel to felony defendants at public expense.

In some cases, more states will be affected, but in different ways. Some may have experimented with worthwhile improvements and reforms which it would be undesirable to eliminate. The trial-by-jury cases, starting with *Duncan* v. *Louisiana* in 1968, can serve as examples. All states made some provision for jury trials in criminal cases. Some limited trial by jury to major crimes; others extended it to all but the pettiest of crimes. Some allowed juries of fewer than the twelve members required by common-law tradition; some allowed verdicts by less than the unanimous vote required by the common law. When the Supreme Court held that jury trials in criminal cases were part of the "due process of law" guaranteed by the 14th Amendment, the court had somehow to take these variations into account in laying down what would become a national minimum standard. As a result of this series of Supreme Court decisions, states are permitted to retain the jury of twelve and to require a unanimous verdict; but they may, for instance, reduce the number of jurors to as few as (but not fewer than) six and, if more than six, allow a non-unanimous verdict. The result, although it sounds complicated, seems a good one in that it maintains the principle of a national standard but still allows the states some flexibility.

All of the decisions just summarized have some warrant in the words of the Constitution. It must be acknowledged, however, that the U.S. Supreme Court has also made decisions, binding under the supremacy clause on the states, which have found in the Constitution rights not based on any very specific language. Some years ago, a right to travel was the basis of several decisions. More recently, a right of privacy has been identified, and the Burger Court gave it substance in such a controversial area as abortion. This whole course of constitutional expansion, increasingly limiting state autonomy by virtue of the supremacy clause, has been criticized.

Content-Free

I should make it clear that the supremacy clause does not itself embody the substance of any law, treaty, or court decision. It is, so to say, content-free. It serves to enforce today's treaties, statutes, and judgements, and will enforce different laws and rulings tomorrow with total impartiality. Those who disagree with, say, the abortion decisions of the Supreme Court should not direct their attack on the supremacy clause. It will enforce just as effectively a federal decision overruling the abortion cases.

A few months ago the U.S. Attorney General, Edwin Meese, found occasion to challenge the Supreme Court in a supremacy clause context. He did not argue that the Constitution itself was not the supreme law of the land. His point was the more subtle one that the Supreme Court's interpretation of the Constitution was not necessarily the supreme law of the land. It seemed to be his position that the Supreme Court is not necessarily the ultimate authority on the meaning of the Constitution, that Congress and the President have some independent claims to interpret the document and need not always follow blindly the latest pronouncement of the Court. This is not a completely original argument. Jefferson, Jackson, and even Lincoln can be cited to the same effect, although distinguished supporters of this view have been rare in more recent times. As a practical matter, it is true, of course, that Congress and the President have not always been quick to accept and support controversial decisions.

Mr. Meese's particular target seems to have been the Court's statement in one of the Little Rock high school cases, *Cooper* v. *Aaron* (1955), to the effect that it is a basic constitutional principle "that the federal judiciary is supreme in the exposition of the law of the Constitution" and that this principle is "a permanent and indispensable feature of our constitutional system." Referring to its basic school segregation decision, *Brown* v. *Board of Education,* the Court then said,

> It follows that the interpretation of the Fourteenth Amendment enunciated by this Court in the *Brown* case is the supreme law of the land, and Article VI . . . makes it of binding effect on the states "anything in the Constitution or Laws of any State to the contrary notwithstanding."

Mr. Meese's criticism is directed not at the supremacy clause but at the doctrine of judicial review. Judicial review, the authority of the courts to hold legislative acts unconstitutional, has been a matter of controversy ever since its first exercise in *Marbury* v. *Madison* (1803). Today, however, after 180 years of experience, that controversy is only academic. If it is

legitimate for the courts to interpret the Constitution at all and to pass judgement on the constitutionality of legislative and executive policies and decisions, the logic of the statement from *Cooper* v. *Aaron* is inescapable. The supremacy clause, with its specific reference to the courts, does make these interpretations part of the supreme law of the land.

What can we do to restrain the Supreme Court if, as I assume Mr. Meese does, we disagree with some of its decisions? There are certainly remedies. The Supreme Court might be persuaded to change its holdings. The Department of Justice has asked it to do just that in several recent cases, although the Court has not, so far, shown any signs of a positive response. The appointment of new justices might expedite changes, and Congress has a degree of control over the Court's jurisdiction and procedure as well. The Constitution can be amended; at least two amendments were adopted just to overrule Supreme Court decisions. Impeachment of justices is a possibility. But I suggest that we do not waste time trying to quibble away the clear language of the supremacy clause.

I said at the outset that I did not wish merely to praise the framers as statesmen of Olympian rank and the Constitution as a document of more than earthly wisdom. Meaningless praise of the Constitution is not desirable. The Constitution will bear examination. It has worked well. It still meets the practical, prudential tests that institutions of government should meet. The founders gave us what John Marshall once described as a constitution "intended to endure for ages to come and consequently to be adapted to the various crises of human affairs." It will serve us as well as it has past generations only if we know how it was put together and how it works. It must be understood, not merely admired. I hope my remarks have contributed to that understanding.

* * *

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