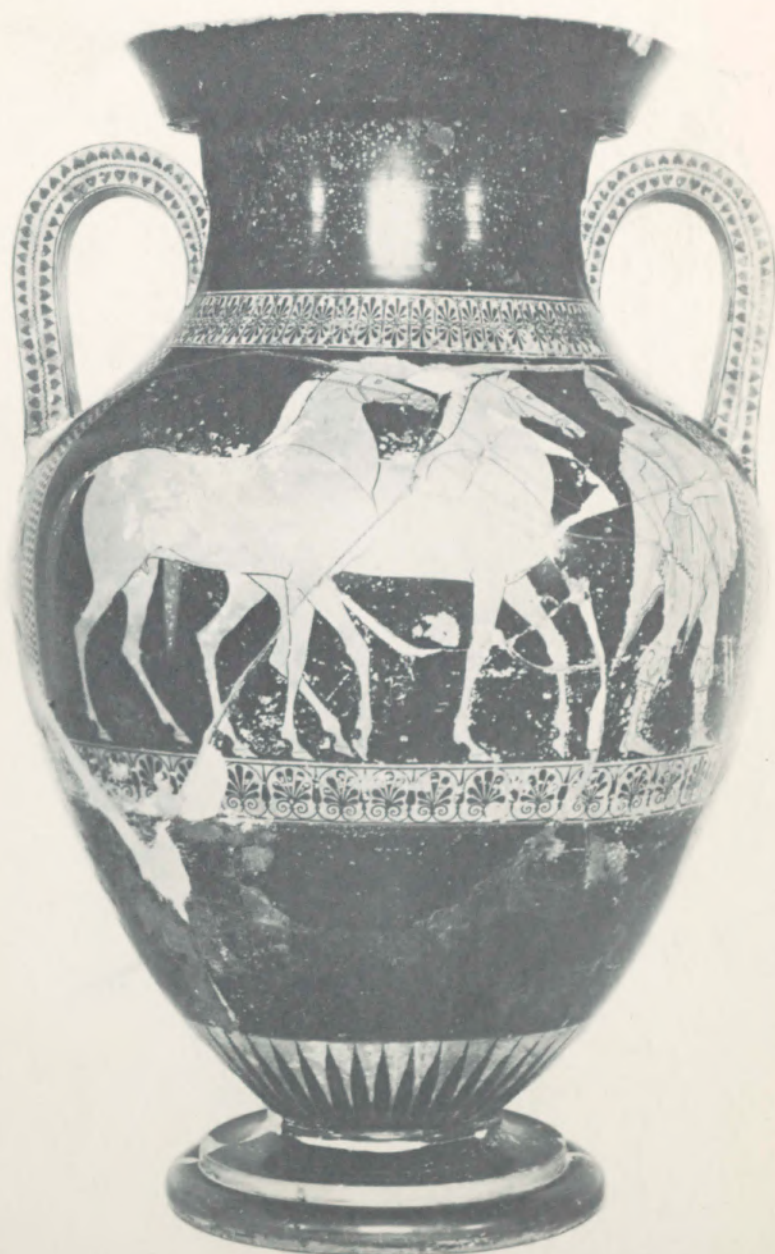


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'ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA' AS A WORK OF ART

I have chosen to write on *Antony and Cleopatra* for two reasons: first, because it seems to me that this play has been remarkably ill-served by observers who have come to it for emotional stimulation, for worldly knowledge, for moral judgments; and second, because it seems to me a very great work of art, one which when attended to consciously for its esthetic achievement, brings one of the fine, notable experiences attainable through dramatic art.

For the substance of this play, Shakespeare turned to the well-known story, preserved from classical antiquity, of a military commander and master of men who became involved with a glamorous queen, and the consequences of that involvement. This may be called the proto-esthetic matter of Shakespeare's literary, dramatic art. The story presents the potentialities, and the limitations, of any man, of all men, in the world of power and love, carried to their highest degree of glory and catastrophe. As such, this substance appeals to an interest which comes from outside art and extends beyond the experience with art. In vulgar terms, this outside relevance gives the story "guts"; or, in more elegant language, that of the philosopher Paul Weiss, it gives the work a "prospect"; it reveals the "promise or threat" which the human universe holds for us. And both promise and threat can be realized, be absorbed and transcended, as it were, through the work of art, and the direct experience with it.

The story itself had already been given some literary form, that of biography, by Plutarch in his long narrative of the life of Marcus Antonius. It had been given more concentrated form, that of medieval tragedy, by Boccaccio, as one of his examples of the falls of kings, in his collection *De Casibus Virorum Illustrium*. It is this medieval form, of falls of kings, which Shakespeare used for most of his tragedies, into which he, too, cast the story of Antony and Cleopatra. Sir Philip Sidney was speaking of this medieval form of tragedy when he said that it "openeth the greatest wounds." Just to trace, or retrace, the fall of Antony and Cleopatra as the main course of events in Shakespeare's play is to experience some of the perennial power of this seemingly crude medieval art form.

To bring all this home in the theatre, however, Shakespeare had to convey first both the glory of high places and the glamor of luxuriant sex, and then the sense of catastrophe which flows from both. He does these things both by carefully selected scenes and by his most magnificent use of language. Armies and navies, spanning the Roman world at the command of Antony and Caesar, testify to their lofty power, make manifest the high place of the chief actors. But more, the quality of grandeur is constantly suggested through the language: the triumvirs are called "sole Senators of the world," Antony has "half the world to play with." The glamor of Cleopatra is demonstrated by her continuing appeal to and effect on Antony; but again that quality of glamor is heightened through the language by which she is described: Cleopatra is "cunning past man's thought," "Age cannot wither her, nor custom stale/Her infinite variety." Finally, the magnitude of the fall is indicated by the frantic efforts and confusion of Antony after the battle of Actium, but especially by the language: Antony proclaims that Cleopatra has "Beguiled me to the very heart of loss."

But the proto-substance of Shakespeare's play, as handled by Plutarch, is essentially narrative: a long sequence of events in time. Even when Boccaccio cast it into the form of falls of kings, it still remained essentially narrative; the interest is in story, what happens next. Of course, Shakespeare fully exploited this story element: his play stretches across a full ten years. He does give the peculiar effect of narrative form; we get the sense of motion in time, the unfolding and impact of successive events. This is one of the esthetic achievements of the play.

Yet drama is essentially the art of the immediate present, a confrontation of the here and now, rather than accounts of the past or prospects of the future. To solve his problem in *Antony and Cleopatra*, Shakespeare presented his play in a series of forty-two short, separate scenes, each a little unit of time present. Each scene, each unit of the immediate, is fully realized, tightly organized, in some sense complete in itself. The effect is that of the living moment, directly apprehended. Because the play is presented in so many brief units, some observers have seen it as a regression to the old, loosely organized, chronicle type of play. If we look closely, however, we can see that each scene contains a dynamic core, springing from the past and driving toward the future. Through these scenes of the present, carefully linked together, we get a dramatically realized pattern of human life in time present, forming a larger whole through the progress of time. *Antony and Cleopatra* is perhaps Shakespeare's masterpiece in patterning the present into a sweep of time.

Within this larger pattern, Shakespeare concentrates upon the heart of drama: the impact of character upon character; individual persons, in dynamic struggle, as both the carriers and products of action. Their clashes, struggles, interpenetration, provide the revelation of drama. The ties, of attraction and repulsion, become both the form and substance of their lives. In the center of the play stands Antony—both dynamic and receptive. On the one hand he is both drawn to and stimulated by Cleopatra; on the other, both drawn to and repulsed by Caesar. These personal tensions, always dramatic, reveal not merely the flow of the characters' lives, but the inner structure of the play as a work of art.

Finally, it is within this realm of intimate life, made up of personal relationships, that Shakespeare finds and presents his major conception of tragic drama here. Through his power relationships, involving Caesar, and through his sensual-vital relationships involving Cleopatra, Antony finds both his fulfillment and his catastrophe; through her power relationship and her sensual-vital relationship with Antony, Cleopatra reaches both her heights and her depths. The very fullness of personal life leads to its own destruction. Yet in the process there is achieved, in both Antony and Cleopatra, a greatness of life which outshines the loss of life itself. It is this complex tragic conception, implicit in its every part, which controls and informs the play. Its conveyance is the major esthetic achievement of *Antony and Cleopatra*.

Let us turn now specifically to the details of the play as an object for esthetic perception. The opening is notable, first, in a negative way: it does not offer us Antony in military action as the captain of men; it does not even show the beginning of his affair with Cleopatra. Shakespeare presents Antony and Cleopatra already fully entangled. Antony, the hero; the infatuation of Antony and Cleopatra: both are to be accepted as established facts. And we notice how oddly, in fact, Shakespeare begins his scene. He undercuts the affair between Antony and Cleopatra at the start. We are shown a Roman soldier commenting on the lovers:

Nay, but this dotage of our general's
O'erflows the measure; . . .
 . . . his captain's heart, . . .
 . . . is become the bellows and the fan
To cool a gypsy's lust. . . .
The triple pillar of the world transform'd
Into a strumpet's fool.

In its language, its rhythm, and its meaning, this speech has an energy, a richness all its own, to be directly experienced. It does remind us of Antony's grandeur in the world, of that world of which he forms a

part, and of the unfavorable view from that world of his present state and conduct. Both this Roman world and view become a part of the larger substance of this scene and of the play as a whole.

With this view already in our minds, Antony and Cleopatra appear, accompanied by a train of Egyptian ladies and eunuchs. We can see for ourselves what the soldier had talked of. Both the glamor and the infatuation are palpably present. Here is their speech: "If it be love indeed, tell me how much," Cleopatra asks; and Antony answers: "Then must thou needs find out new heaven, new earth." Antony precisely confirms the soldier's view, that the infatuation "O'erflows the measure." But the soldier calls it "dotage"; both Cleopatra and Antony call it love. The language points up the difference, not only of two views, but of how the human tie feels, exists, from outside and from inside. Immediately a messenger from the world of Rome appears. Antony speaks brusquely, with a difference of rhythm:

"Grates me; the sum." We see that he is under-rating Rome, up-rating his love for Cleopatra. But now notice Cleopatra's role:

Nay, hear them Antony:
Fulvia perchance is angry; or, who knows
If the scarce-bearded Caesar have not sent
His powerful mandate to you: Do this, or this;
 . . . As I am Egypt's queen,
Thou blushest, Antony, and that blood of thine
Is Caesar's homager; else so thy cheek pays shame
When shrill-tongu'd Fulvia scolds. The messengers!

This stinging speech may be, as some commentators see it, merely playfulness by Cleopatra; or it may be in deadly earnest. (It is part of the quality of Cleopatra's dialogue that it always suggests hidden depths by its very ambivalence of intention.) The speech certainly presents a genuine encounter, involvement, with Antony, the person. She calls up the Roman world, and his relationship to that. She shows her own energy, confidence, and partiality. It is at least possible that she wishes to arouse him as the leader she expects him to be, to stand up and meet Rome on its own terms. Antony certainly responds; he is stimulated, activated by Cleopatra; but perhaps not wholly in the way she expects:

Let Rome in Tiber melt, and the wide arch
Of the rang'd empire fall! Here is my space.

The magnitude of his involvement with Cleopatra, the measure of his devotion, is revealed by the magnitude of his rejection. And he goes beyond this: "The nobleness of life/Is to do this," he declaims as he embraces her. Not only does he prefer being with Cleopatra, he glorifies his state as "nobleness." Outwardly this statement appears

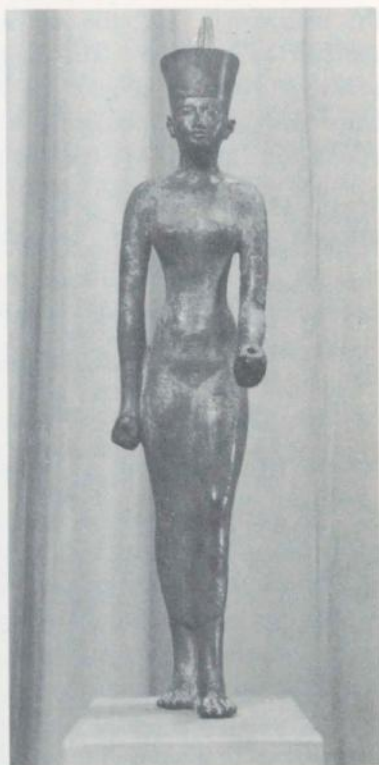
preposterous to the Romans—and to us—but it truly reveals the feeling of Antony at the moment. Thus, in fact, he raises his love for Cleopatra to a transcendental value. Paradoxically, the very presence of the Roman soldiers with their opposite attitudes makes Antony's attitude all the more real. Yet we note that if this love is to be considered "noble," the nobleness must depend to some extent on the status of the lovers as world figures of power, i.e. in a public situation. And it is this very status which Antony proposes to throw away. The catastrophe already looms. In the full curve of the play, as everything else is stripped from him, he'll have to prove with his own life and death the transcendent value of his love for Cleopatra.

But this is to look to the long structure of the play. Right now, to Antony's inflated assertion, Cleopatra answers, half jokingly, but perhaps half seriously: "Excellent falsehood! . . . Antony will be himself." Again she speaks to the man, as somehow more than, even different from, his present state; whatever her intention, she only succeeds in intensifying that state, as he replies: "But stirred by Cleopatra."

Here let us note that Antony is human enough to be sensitive to all Cleopatra's charm; he is also vital enough to accept her stimulation even to and through sensuality itself. The mutual give and take of sensual pleasure and personal vitality will become a continuing form, and essential substance, of their lives.

Finally Shakespeare concludes this brief scene (62 lines) by rounding it off with a return to the soldiers' view.

"Is Caesar with Antonius prized so slight?" "Sir, sometimes when he is not Antony." And so the scene stresses that part of Antony (the real part, according to the soldiers) is that of the imperial soldier; on that role depends his sense of grandeur in love; yet the world of power denies the world of his love. As the scene points ahead, we realize that Antony, in his full stature, must reconcile the two parts of himself, his two worlds, or be split and crushed by them.



*The Goddess Neith
(Representative of Kingship)
—University Museum*

The second scene opens with the court of Egypt, Cleopatra's ladies and Antony's soldiers, centered on the subject of pleasure. It is heavy, fetid, with reference to alcoholic and sexual indulgence. Alexis asks the soothsayer: "We'll know all our fortunes." Antony's lieutenant, Enobarbus interposes: "Mine, and most of our fortunes tonight shall be—drunk to bed." From this passage we may infer that Antony has experienced both the pleasure, and consequent repulsion, of debauchery. So when Antony now enters on the scene, he faces up to the messenger from Rome. He asks for the full report, all that he fears will be bad news. "Who tells me true, though in his tale lay death, I hear him as he flatter'd." We experience his shifting, complex humanity, pulled between two worlds, as he attempts to stride them both. As he hears of the wars in Rome, he insists: "These strong Egyptian fetters I must break,/Or lose myself in dotage." And when he is told that his wife Fulvia is dead, he asserts: "There's a great spirit gone." He determines to face and cast off Cleopatra. Yet at this very moment he remarks: "She is cunning past man's thought."

In the next scene, Cleopatra already knows of Antony's change. And she rises to the occasion. She asks Charmian, her lady, to go to him and report on her:

If you find him sad
Say I am dancing; if in mirth, report
That I am sudden sick.

"Tempt him not so too far," warns Charmian. It is a remark which haunts the future: we shall remember it when Cleopatra does tempt him too far. Even here, when Cleopatra sets out to enact in person her contrived effect, the results are not quite what she wanted: when she meets Antony, she moans: "I am sick and sullen." When he is not impressed, but tells her that he must return to Rome, and then adds that Fulvia is dead, Cleopatra is forced to respond with at least some genuine alarm: "Now I see, I see/In Fulvia's death, how mine receiv'd shall be." While the statement on the surface is meant to work on Antony's sympathy, underneath it reveals her own fear that Antony will treat her also as a pawn in his world of power. Now, Antony misses the true, personal revelation.

So, when she realizes he is determined to go, she stirs him handsomely: "Upon your sword/Sit laurel victory." Whereupon, Antony, touched now personally by Cleopatra, suddenly, unexpectedly, swings back partly toward her:

Our separation so abides and flies
That thou, residing here, go'st yet with me,
And I, hence fleeting, here remain with thee.

He is indeed leaving a hostage heart in Egypt, stirred by Cleopatra.

In this direct encounter, impingement of person on person, the wavering of Antony also keeps the tie with Cleopatra. This pattern, as we have noted, establishes the form of their relationship.

With the next scene, we do not follow Antony, but make a giant swing ahead of him to Rome. This large swinging movement is part of the esthetic effect of the play. It gives a sense of vastness to the drama as it moves us through the whole Roman world. Actually Shakespeare's next scene is not necessary to the so-called "plot" or action. Yet it is an essential part of the substance of the play. As it takes us to the seat of power in Rome, it introduces that picture of height, of grandeur, so important for Shakespeare's presentation of the tragedy as a fall of kings. There must be this height for Antony to fall from.

Swinging back to Egypt and Cleopatra, we see her mood:

Give me to drink mandragora . . .

That I might sleep out this great gap of time.

It is part of the world of Egypt, of Antony and Cleopatra, that time stands still; there is vastness in it. In many ways we experience this sense of spaciousness of time—for Antony and Cleopatra—as part of the esthetic effect of the play. As Cleopatra says: "Eternity was in our lips and eyes." In the movement in the play part of the tragedy is felt when time does close in on Antony and Cleopatra.

In this, her gap of time, Cleopatra calls up images of Antony:

Is he on his horse?

O happy horse, to bear the weight of Anthony!

Do bravely, horse, for wot'st thou whom thou mov'st?

The demi-Atlas of this earth, the arm

And burgonet of men.

If we wanted to know whether Cleopatra was bound to Antony, here is the full evidence.

And now, with all this preparation, we come to the big scene, the confrontation of the two Roman giants, Caesar and Antony. This scene of power is clearly set against the scene of Antony and Cleopatra in Egypt. Yet here the confrontation is not exactly what we (or Cleopatra) had expected. (The art of Shakespeare often consists of such surprises within a known framework.) Here Antony is no man on horseback; he is simply an uneasy partner in a unstable power alliance. Since the alliance is threatened from without, Antony should be in a strong position: Caesar needs him desperately. The play concentrates on the personal confrontation of the two. And it is here precisely that Caesar takes the moral initiative, puts Antony in the wrong, on the defensive:

I wrote to you

When rioting in Alexandria . . .

To lend me arms and aid when I requir'd them,

The which you both denied.

Antony, thus forced by Caesar to accept the Roman moral standard, must answer in exculpation for himself:

Neglected, rather;
And then, when poison'd hours had bound me up
From my own knowledge. As nearly as I may,
I'll play the penitent to you.

Whereupon Lepidus, eager for a reconciliation, hastily declares: "Tis noble spoken." Even so, Antony knows that Caesar has simply used him. There has been no personal consideration, no rapprochement. Indeed Caesar remarks: "It cannot be/We shall remain in friendship." Both men remain in a state of personal-power tension. A solution is found in the same terms: one of personal-power binding. Agrippa suggests that Antony marry Caesar's sister Octavia. Both Caesar and Antony quickly accept the suggestion. Antony, acquiescing still further in the Roman standards represented by Caesar, without apparent thought of Cleopatra, freely abandons her for the power possibilities of this marriage.

But this is not the end of Shakespeare's scene. As the major figures leave, the lieutenants come forward. Enobarbus presents his famous description of Cleopatra as she first appeared to Antony. This material may offer a flashback, but here it is quite outside the course of events, the "plot." Moreover, Antony is not present; this picture is not recalled to or for him; the account is given directly to the audience for us to be reminded of Cleopatra as Caesar has never known her but as Antony has. The verbal picture, most of which comes from Plutarch, is of the extreme ornateness most admired in the Renaissance. Cleopatra and her barge are shown as offering an appeal to all the senses. The substance of this account provides an example of what Shakespeare's contemporary, George Chapman, presented in his poem, *Ovid's Banquet of Senses*.

Initially, Enobarbus notes the effect of Cleopatra upon Antony: "When she first met Mark Antony she pursed up his heart (that is, both aroused and captivated him), upon the river of Cydnus." Then, Shakespeare follows Plutarch:

The barge she sat in, like a burnish'd throne
Burned on the water; the poop was beaten gold,
Purple the sails.

But Shakespeare adds: "and so perfum'd, that/The winds were love sick with them." Shakespeare thus introduces the direct amorous life-experience through the banquet of the senses. For Shakespeare here, Cleopatra's banquet of senses is both its own pleasure and something more. Sensuous pleasure becomes a stimulating, a life-fulfilling act. Hence the heightened life is shown not as something apart from full sensual acceptance, but as existing right in and through the senses.

Here Shakespeare makes it a central conception of the play in the lives of Antony and Cleopatra.

After this description, mindful of Antony's engagement to Octavia, a Roman soldier remarks:

Now Antony must leave her utterly.

"Never," insists Enobarbus, "He will not."

And Enobarbus sums up the appeal of Cleopatra:

Age cannot wither her, nor custom stale

Her infinite variety; other women cloy

The appetite they feed, but she makes hungry

Where most she satisfies.

It is a confirmation of the vitality which expresses itself through the senses. Thus in this scene, in direct contrast to the opening scene, Shakespeare shows Antony as the Roman, but frames the scene within Cleopatra's values, values which Antony, but not Caesar, is alive to.

Right after this magnificent scene Shakespeare inserts an odd little passage. Antony meets a fortune-teller from Egypt; as the fortune-teller leaves, Antony asserts:

I will to Egypt;

And though I make this marriage for my peace,

In the east my pleasure lies.

Enobarbus' description has made sure that we will understand why Antony makes this decision. But also we note that even before the consummation of the marriage which he has so cynically contracted, Antony proposes to betray it. Yet he thinks he can keep the fruits of that marriage (peace with Caesar) as well as the delights, the "nobility," of life with Cleopatra.

By contrast to the preceding scenes, Shakespeare now once again presents Cleopatra: "Give me some music; music, moody food/Of us that trade in love." She is not only a self-confessed dealer in indulgence, but feasts on her own trade.

Just at this point, in this mood, Cleopatra receives a shock. A messenger arrives from Rome to announce Antony's marriage. At first, Cleopatra tries to deny the news. Then, with an outburst of emotional fury, she drags the messenger around by the hair. Suddenly she shifts: "These hands do lack nobility, that they strike/A meaner than myself." Finally, the competitive female, she asks for a description of her rival, Octavia.

Shakespeare continues to hold both the Roman and the Egyptian worlds before us: contrasting, but both real. Immediately we return to Rome and the triumvirs in their power, as they meet for a parley with Pompey. He greets them.

To you all three

The senators alone of this great world,

Chief factors for the gods.

They proceed to buy off Pompey with some islands; he is fleeced by these grand politicians without even realizing it. Pleased, in his own deception, he invites them to a party on board his galley. At the party Antony starts to live it up. "Strike the vessels,/Here is to Caesar!" And Caesar, coldly, cold sober, but with moral unction, replies: "It's monstrous labor, when I wash my brain,/And it grows fouler." Thus Shakespeare stresses Caesar's imperviousness to physical pleasure in contrast to Antony's life through sensual indulgence.

Now we see Antony departing for Athens with Octavia. Notice how Caesar parts with his sister:

Sister, prove such a wife
As my thoughts make thee, and as my furthest band
Shall pass on thy approof.

Octavia, with all her virtue, is to be lost between the cold, mechanical power of Caesar and the robust sensuality of Antony: one of the human sacrifices of this world.

In the juxtaposed scene, we get Cleopatra's report on Octavia. Of the Roman messenger she inquires: "What majesty is in her gait?" "She creeps," he replies. It is enough for Cleopatra.

We are given only one scene of Antony and Octavia together. Already, Antony has heard that Caesar has tried to take sole power in Rome. Antony will oppose him. Octavia's main concern is to go to her brother, to restore the ties between him and Antony. Her decision becomes an excuse for Antony to go off on his own. Two of Antony's lieutenants report that Caesar has disposed of Pompey and Lepidus:

Then world, thou hast a pair of chaps, no more;
And throw between them all the food thou hast,
They'll grind the one the other.

With this horribly vivid image, Shakespeare previsions the world struggle, now inevitable.

Back in Rome, Caesar hears that Antony has returned to Egypt. And here is Caesar's imagery:

In Alexandria . . .
I' the market place, on a tribunal silver'd,
Cleopatra and himself in chairs of gold
Were publicly enthron'd.

These are images of disgusting luxury for Caesar. When Octavia returns, alone, unattended, Caesar marks the contrast. To his sister he expresses his self-righteousness in his account of Cleopatra:

Cleopatra
Hath nodded him to her. He hath given his empire
Up to a whore.

Thus he finds, in moral indignation, his justification for his own power move against Antony. Now Caesar will attack in strength.

In our final swing away from Rome, we do not see Antony actually returning to Cleopatra; he has already done so. There is no scene of self-justification for leaving Octavia, no joyous reunion scene with Cleopatra. They are simply shown together, united, as they were in the opening scene. But now how different! However stirred by mutual pleasure, in the power-world they are on the defensive, under attack. We discover that Cleopatra proposes to fight along side Antony. Enobarbus (the same Enobarbus who had related the appeal of Cleopatra in her barge), grumbles vulgarly, but in prophetic foresight:

If we should serve with horse and mares together
The horse were merely lost: the mares would bear
A soldier and his horse.

Yes, this battle will be a part of the personal pattern of the tie between Antony and Cleopatra, indulgence and all. Antony speaks to a general:

Is it not strange, Canidius,
That from Tarentum and Brundisium,
He could so quickly cut the Ionian Sea?

Suddenly, time has caught up with Antony. Cleopatra now thrusts in her word: "Celerity is never more admir'd/Than by the negligent." She means to sting him into action. She stimulates him all right—but only to a snap decision:

A good rebuke . . .
Canidius, we
Will fight with him by sea.

"By sea! What else?" Cleopatra chimes in, confirming Antony's hasty decision.

All the lieutenants realize the folly of the decision (and when we think of Cleopatra on the water, we think of her barge of senses on the Cydnus). Antony hardens in his decision. We feel the personal tie between Antony and Cleopatra, as we did in the opening scene. But now we know the others are right—in the world of power. Shakespeare rounds off the scene with the comments of Antony's captain, the military view. "So our leader's led,/And we are women's men."

Now Shakespeare speeds up time. The battle of Actium comes at once. And it is disastrous for Antony and Cleopatra, both in its conduct and its results. Enobarbus and Scarus report:

Yon ribaudred nag of Egypt,
. . . In the midst of the fight,
When vantage like a pair of twins appear'd, . . .
The breeze upon her, like a cow in June,
Hoists sails and flies.

Only the fact, in vulgar images; no explanation for Cleopatra's flight.

It is not only disaster; it is loss of military honor for Antony, betrayal of his men, loss of his own integrity—for he follows the fleeing Cleopatra. As soon as the battle has been lost, Antony is shown realizing his own sense of degradation: "I am so lated in the world that I/Have lost my way for ever."

Here is the fall of kings, in the tragic pattern Shakespeare has been using. We get the shocking effect of catastrophe. If this were merely such a tragedy, the play might well end here. Yet for Shakespeare there remains all the personal experience of Antony and Cleopatra, together and apart, in the depths of defeat. Shakespeare insists on carrying his drama through to the ultimate human consequences. As the world and time come crashing down on Antony and Cleopatra, they will be shown experiencing in full the agony of conscious ignominy. The extreme situation is a part of Shakespeare's substance and here reveals the mastery of his art. Of course, the action at Actium has already displayed the tragic irony of the play: the very vitality of personal ties becomes disastrous in the realm of power and responsibility. Now the play will probe and display the continuing inner vitality of these personal relationships through all outer disintegration.

The first scene between Antony and Cleopatra after the disaster sets the pattern. When Cleopatra appears, Antony blames her:

O! wither hast thou led me, Egypt? See
How I convey my shame out of thine eyes.

And she appeals to him:

O my lord, my lord! . . .
Forgive my fearful sails: I little thought
You would have follow'd.
"Now I must," moans Antony,
To the young man send humble treaties, dodge
And palter in the shifts of lowness, who
With half the bulk o' the world play'd as I pleas'd.

"Pardon, pardon," asks Cleopatra. Whereupon, Antony collapses into her arms: "Give me a kiss:/Even this repays me."

Antony asks for terms. Caesar will give none. With Machiavellian realism, Caesar knows he will never be safe in sole power as long as Antony lives. He pursues Antony (whom he calls "the old ruffian") for complete extermination. But he offers Cleopatra safety: he wants her for a display of his triumph. Having no sensitivity to her person, her charm or her vitality, he feels no fear of her spell.

Under this pressure, exerted unequally on Antony and Cleopatra, but never relaxed on either, what we see is a series of waverings, alternating responses, by and between Antony and Cleopatra. This pattern becomes like a vibration—a vibration of life—experienced as

such by the spectator. For these vibrations are signs of human vigor, vitality in sensitivity, in consciousness, in response. As it is pressed, Antony and Cleopatra's vitality flares and burns in magnificence. After each new wave of fire, life sinks lower in degradation, and then rises once again in exaltation.

Antony attempts a series of desperate forays against Caesar's army. Following each brief success, he exults in the arms of Cleopatra: after each new defeat, he condemns her as a traitor. But she is always the source and focus of his vitality, his mark in love and anger. And she is always there, to receive and respond to his passion. There is no real evidence of the treachery Antony accuses her of. He too often overlooks the fact that his loss is her pain, her tragedy, too.

All the while, Antony is deteriorating, in character, in self-control; his chances for mere existence are lessening rapidly. And he knows it all, he suffers the agony of his own disintegration. One by one his men desert him. At last under the pressure, the long-enduring, loyal Enobarbus himself deserts Antony, breaks his personal devotion. On hearing the news, Antony cries out: "O! my fortunes have/Corrupted honest men." In his degradation, Antony has dragged down others. In the anguish of realizing frankly his own disintegration of character, Antony the person is shown to be something more than either his character or his fate.

On his final defeat in battle, Antony turns on Cleopatra in wrath, curses her for a witch, threatens to kill her:

Vanish, or I shall give thee thy deserving,
And blemish Caesar's triumph. Let him take thee,
And hoist thee up to the shouting plebeians:
Follow his chariot, like the greatest spot
Of all thy sex.

It is nearly, though not quite, the lowest trough of the wave for Antony.

Cleopatra, unable even to answer in a life-preserving response, flees to her Monument—as a refuge both from Antony and Caesar. But in her desperation she still looks to Antony. She takes the suggestion of Charmian to send Antony word that she is dead. We remember, ironically, how Charmian had been the very adviser to warn Cleopatra not to tempt Antony too far. Cleopatra's own judgment now fails her; she does go too far. She is *in extremis* herself.

Back with Antony, we see him in utter collapse, having lost all, and bereft of Cleopatra; all is gone, his power, his own character, and apparently his love. He faces, feels, all loss. And nothing is well lost; he did not want, still does not want, to lose any of these things. Yet he is still Antony, his own reality. "Here I am Antony;/Yet cannot hold this visible shape. . ." More than his fate, he feels himself mere substance without form.

At this point he receives word of Cleopatra's death. Although he had accused her of trickery before, this time he does not suspect it. He takes the word of Cleopatra's death as the result of his own denunciation, evidence of her last full measure of devotion to him. The news energizes him, firms him to shape, into action, but not as Cleopatra had expected. He determines to match her deed. His vitality expresses itself in rushing into passionate death. He approaches death in sexual exaltation:

I will be
A bridegroom in my death, and run into't
As to a lover's bed.

Yet as he falls on his sword, he bungles even this. Subconsciously, he still wants to live. But he is fatally wounded. At this exact moment, he hears that Cleopatra is still alive. There is no recrimination for her false death notice; he simply wants to go to her. As he is carried up to her, she greets him: "Welcome, welcome! die where thou hast liv'd;/Quicken with kissing." Shakespeare here presents richly, by words and actions, the strange combination of death through life, of life through death, which Cleopatra has brought to Antony. He asks of her:

Please your thoughts
In feeding them with those my former fortunes
Wherein I liv'd, thou greatest prince o' the world,
The noblest.

This is precisely what he has lost through Cleopatra. Now, only death, through this transcendent attachment, is left of nobility to him.

On Antony's death, Cleopatra rises to her own sense of nobility in loss, but again in sexual terms:

The crown o' the death doth melt. My lord!
O! wither'd is the garland of the war,
The soldier's pole is fall'n.

By contrast, Caesar's words on hearing the news of Antony's death reveal his impersonal mastery: "We do lance/ Diseases in our bodies." With Antony's death, one part of the pattern of falls of kings has been carried to its extreme. But Shakespeare does not stop here. Shakespeare's art rises above anything previous here, to its highest challenge and proof. It is all done in one final scene.

Cleopatra, who wants to live, thinks she can adjust to her loss, and also make terms with Caesar. "My desolation does begin to make/A better life." Caesar comes to arrange terms for her. As he enters Cleopatra's room, she is with her maid: "Which is the Queen of Egypt?" he inquires. With this masterstroke, Shakespeare reveals Caesar's insensitivity to Cleopatra's particular appeal and vitality. But she does try her charm on him. Calmly, he offers her security:

Feed and sleep,
Our care and pity is so much upon you,
That we remain your friend.

Cleopatra senses immediately that he is impervious to her personal qualities; remote and impersonal in his attitude, his offer of friendship is wholly insincere: "He words me, girls, he words me, that I should not/Be noble to myself." She has made her last wavering. In her own vitality she immediately decides on death.

But her reason is first negative: she knows she is reduced to a state where she will be led in triumph to Rome; she visualizes the Roman holiday in the most vulgar terms; there will be cheap stage performances:

Antony
Shall be brought drunken forth, and I shall see
Some squeaking Cleopatra boy my greatness
I' the posture of a whore.

By contrast, she realizes a positive reason for death; she returns to the image of life and greatness with the true Antony: "I am again for Cydnus/ To meet Mark Antony." Images of nobility in love heighten her very vitality, purse up her courage for death. She takes the deadly asp:

Methinks I hear
Antony call: I see him rouse himself
To praise my noble act.

She greets death, as did Antony before her, in terms of physical, sexual pleasure:

Have I the aspic in my lips? . . .
The stroke of death is as a lover's pinch,
Which hurts, and is desir'd.

Thus the visualization of sensual but vital personal ties carries her to the height of life, gives her the strength to welcome death, a death which the license in love had made inevitable.

What the play conveys through the acts and words of Cleopatra and Antony in their relations is a human reality, indeed even magnificence, more significant than degradation and death, though a reality, magnificence, which can only lead to, in fact be seen through, such loss as defeat and death.

At the conclusion, Caesar finds her body:

She looks like sleep,
As she would catch another Antony
In her strong toil of grace.

He still sees her only in terms of snaring Antony. He still misses her charm and vitality—which Antony had tasted to the full—the devotion she had given him. But the audience has experienced these things. Yet, now safe in his own world power, Caesar declares:

She shall be buried by her Antony:

No grave upon the earth shall clip in it
A pair so famous.

Caesar has been forced to acknowledge some distinction in their life and death.

In the great sweep of events which is the structure of the play, a structuring of life; in the flow through time, the rise and fall of persons, which is the form of the drama; in the surface of words and presented lives of persons, which carries the substance of the play, we feel the impact of a whole society in being, of fulfillment in time, a grand, massive esthetic experience. Within the inner substance, the presentation of personal lives as sensible personal involvements, we experience both vitality and loss. There is no romanticising of love, no flinching of the reality of human indulgence. By any practical standard, the course of these personal lives is a horrible waste; by any ethical standard, is all appallingly wrong: Cleopatra, Antony, Caesar, all have morally reprehensible aspects. Yet as we follow the unceasing flow of human vitality—in receiving and giving—of personal life together, even through degradation and death, as presented in the grand sweep and individual intimacy of the drama, we experience a peculiar vibration of grandeur in human life. The tragic pattern of fullness-loss-transcendence celebrates for us the magnificence of human potentialities as discovered and transmitted through the act of art.

She has become improbable, this muse,
Lurking in the dust of the window shade,
No harder tits on stone statues—

I use

A blade to milk her, hacking from the staid
Untroubled silence of her retreat each
Reluctant echo, dull and unlikely.
Behind her, twittering on the unreachable snow,
A blur of sparrows, wary and grizzled,
Ducking for seeds against the galvanized droop
Of a frozen drainspout—
She would never confide such things to me,
Being of a more classical bent.
Outside, on the dog-yellowed snow,
She would grieve poor Hector's blood
Blacker than he'd believe.

—Charles Wyatt

LE ROMAN D'ALBIN: CHANT II

At the inception was the real thing.
Altamira: the goad which never stopped
nor can
stop in our time.
That was the real time . . .
awakening
in sunbursts after storm-black.
Through shallows they
saw glimmerings . . . saw fish fins
like quicksilver
from which tremors came of tint . . .
cloud white, lake blue,
ash gray:
precursors to the brighter hue.
Out of the ore of life itself,
death and
fertility,
they found their color
and their line.
Not man (mere sticks) but bull or beast,
Not love but flesh and phallic spear,
Not face but breasts . . .
Upon the cave wall lie the trademarks
of their life . . .
Billboards for
Their beddings and their beef . . .
Meat and sex, the main ingredients
of mankind.
In their utterance the first song
of the wind was heard . . .
and then transcribed.
—Eric Sellin



Spring is hanging from the trees
And I would like to pull it down
And see the sky again.

—Robert E. Jones

—*Philadelphia Museum of Art*
Bishop, France, Region of the Oise, 1260-80 A.D.



John F. Benton

A FRENCH MONK SENDS FOR A CASK OF WINE

Nicolas de Clairvaux, at one time a secretary to St. Bernard, advanced his career by writing for other people. Not only did he Compose letters and sermons for the abbot of Clairvaux, but he also later became a courtier of Count Henry the Liberal of Champagne and aided him with his correspondence. And while he was at Clairvaux, Nicolas composed many letters for his fellow monks, writing as if he had adopted the name and personality of another. In the collection of his correspondence made at Clairvaux are to be found letters which Nicolas wrote for abbot Bernard, the prior Rualène, Henry of France (brother of Louis VII), Gérard de Péronne, and a number of other monks. This literary activity at Clairvaux was ended by the charge, that Nicolas had carried "ghost-writing" too far, by writing unauthorized letters and improperly using Bernard's seal. In 1151 he was expelled from the abbey in disgrace.¹

This check did not, however, end Nicolas' literary career or his association with, as he put it, the leading people of this world.² Leaving France for Rome, he was supported by Cardinal Roland Bandinelli, soon to become Pope Alexander III, and by the current pope, Adrian IV. About 1158 he returned to Champagne and, finding favor with Count Henry, became prior of Saint-Jean-en-Chatel at Troyes, a dependency of the abbey of Montiramey, where he had been a monk before going to Clairvaux. He remained at Troyes as a sort of literary companion to Count Henry, until his death about 1176.

One wonders what qualities of spirit and charm permitted Nicolas to enjoy the esteem of so many people, in spite of a character which we find quite dishonest.³ And one also wonders what elements of style made him a writer sought out by his colleagues, people perfectly capable of writing their own letters. When one reads Nicolas' letters, one finds that for the most part they are turgid, mannered, and loaded down with rhetorical devices and rare words. To a certain degree one is forced to admit that his contemporaries must have admired this style and that Nicolas built his literary career on pomposity and his ability to cull phrases and ideas from other authors. But some of his work reveals a more attractive side as a writer and as a person. There is, for instance, lyric beauty in some of Nicholas' sequences, particularly in these honoring the Virgin.⁴ And among the few letters which remain unpublished there is one which deserves particular attention for its style and humor.

Unlike many of Nicolas' rambling letters, this composition shows an ability for succinct expression. Far from being over-serious, it makes its request with a smiling humor which even plays upon the author himself. And as a notable feature of style, Nicolas makes a game out of using Biblical quotations out of context. The unexpected use of scriptural language was common enough in the twelfth century, but here, instead of elevating his images to the level of allegory, Nicolas draws them down to the mundane concerns of his search for wine. The reader, however, is well into the letter before he is sure that Nicolas is writing on a practical and not a mystical subject. The letter follows, with the Biblical phrases in italics.

To the bishop of Auxerre his Nicolas [states] that [he is] his. Speaking in the words of the Gospel, *they have no wine* (John 2.3). Send me not *the wine of sorrow* (Ps. 59.5) but *the wine which may cheer the heart of man* (Ps. 103.15), whose purest color, finest savor, and *sweetest odor* (Exod. 29.18) show its quality. For in these three ways its perfection is attested, and *a threefold cord is not easily broken* (Eccle. 4.12). Send the wine, a cask, and a cart, since you left me with this hope and so promised me. But if there is any question about the cart (for this is a question I'm afraid of), I'll send [a cart] rather than lose [the wine]. I believe what you do. Putting off will mean going without. For the wines we have in our district are turbid and are not from those stocks which live in a state of blessedness among you, [stocks] whose juices have not *passed from nation to nation, and from one kingdom to another people* (Ps. 104.13). Give instructions that the cask be clear and clean, so that a liquor of such nobility may not be spoiled by the rudeness of the wood. Send some separately to the abbot, and some separately to me. *For the Jews do not communicate with the Samaritans* (John 4.9).

Domino Autusiodorensi suus N. quod suus. Ut verbis ewangelics vos alloquar, vinum non habent (Joan. 2.3). Mittite mihi non vinum compunctionis (Ps. 59.5), sed vinum quod letificet cor hominis (Ps. 103.15), cui color optimus, sapor dulcissimus, odor suavissimus (Exod. 29.18) testimonium reddant. In his enim tribus perfectio eius attenditur, et triplex funiculus difficile rumpitur (Eccle. 4.12). Mittite vinum, dolium, et vehiculum, quia in hac spe dimisisti me, sic mihi promisisti. Quodsi de veiculo questio est (nam et ego hanc timeo questionem), antemittam quam amittam. Credo quod vos creditis. Differre auferre erit. Nam turbata sunt vina que in circuitu nostro cunt, nec sunt de radicibus illis que vivunt apud vos in benedictione, quarum succi non transierunt de gente in gentem et de regno ad populum alterum (Ps. 104.13). Precipite ut dolium liquidum sit et mundum, ne tante nobilitatis liquor ligni rusticitate degeneret. Seorsum abbati, seorsum mitteris et michi. Non enim coutuntur Iudei Samaritanis (Joan. 4.9).

This letter is part of a collection of the letters of Nicolas which appears in Berlin Ms. Phill. 1719, a thirteenth-century manuscript which also includes letters of Hildebert of Le Mans and Symmachus. This manuscript contains 37 letters of the collection made while Nicolas was at Clairvaux, plus four later letters which appear at the end. In addition there is the letter just quoted, which has been crowded as an addition into a space on fol. 96 v^o at the end of a group of miscellaneous letters immediately preceding the letters of Nicolas.⁵ This position suggests that the letter came into the hands of the copyist separate from the rest of the collection, that it was not part of the well-known series of letters Nicolas wrote at Clairvaux, and that it was probably written after he was expelled from Clairvaux and after he returned to Champagne about 1158. But neither the date of the letter nor the bishop of Auxerre in question can be identified with certainty. It seems most likely, however, that the letter was addressed to Alan, bishop of Auxerre from 1152-1167, a former monk of Clairvaux whom Nicolas would have known well.⁶ If the letter was written while Nicolas was prior of Saint-Jean-en-Chatel, the abbot mentioned at the end of the letter would be that of Montiéramey, the mother house 18 km. from Troyes. This is more likely than that Nicolas, as secretary at Clairvaux, should ask that one cask be sent to Bernard and another to him personally.

This letter is another testimony to the fame of the wines of Auxerre, which, as Roger Dion has pointed out, were already famous in the twelfth century.⁷ Transport by cart from Auxerre to southern Champagne would not have been of great difficulty, and it is worth noting in this connection that in 1178 the count of Guines served wine

of Auxerre at a dinner for Archbishop William of Reims given at Ardres to the north of Champagne.⁸ Troyes, Montiéramey, and Clairvaux are all in the valley of the Aube and the same geographical region, so that wherever Nicolas was writing from, his letter is evidence of the mediocre quality of the wines of southern Champagne in the twelfth century.⁹

REFERENCES

1. For information which has come to light since Augustin Steiner wrote *Nicolaus, Mönch in Clairvaux in Studien und Mitteilungen zur Geschichte des Benediktiner-Ordens*, t. XXXVIII, 1917, p. 41-50, see Dom Jean Leclercq, *Les collections de sermons de Nicolas de Clairvaux* (*Revue bénédictine*, t. LXVI, 1956, p. 269-302) and J. Benton, *The Court of Champagne as a Literary Center* (*Speculum*, t. XXXVI, 1961, p. 555-557). Most of Nicolas' letters are published in Migne, PL, t. 196, c. 1589-1654.
2. Nicolas wrote to Count Henry about 1161, "Ab ineunte aetate mea placui magnis et summis principibus hujus mundi" (Migne, PL, t. 196, c. 1652).
3. Cf. Leclercq, *op. cit.*, p. 278.
4. The texts are edited in *Nicolas of Clairvaux and the Twelfth-Century Sequence, with Special Reference to Adam of St. Victor* (*Traditio*, t. XVIII, 1962, p. 151-180).
5. The manuscript is described by Valentin Rose, *Verzeichniss der lateinischen Handschriften der königlichen Bibliothek zu Berlin. I. Die Meerman-Handschriften des Sir Thomas Phillipps*, Berlin, 1893, p. 418-422. I plan to publish the other unedited letters of Nicolas in this manuscript. The present letter is printed with the authorization of the Deutsche Staatsbibliothek in Berlin, and through the courtesy of Dr. Helmut Boese and Dr. Hans Lülffing. Financial aid for research was provided by the Committee for the Advancement of Research of the University of Pennsylvania, and Professor Lloyd Daly kindly offered me advice on a number of points.
6. *Gallia Christiana*, t. XII, c. 293-5. Nicolas, Alan of Auxerre, and Pierre de Celleoe, all witnessed a charter of Count Henry for Larrivour in 1161 (Aube 4 H 29, printed in H. d'Arbois de Jubainville, *Histoire des ducs et des comtes de Champagne*, t. III, 1861, p. 453).
7. Roger Dion, *Histoire de la vigne et du vin en France des origines au XIV^e siècle*, Paris, 1959, p. 245.
8. Lambert d'Ardres in *MGH SS*, t. XXIV, p. 601.
9. Cf. Dion, *op. cit.*, p. 185 and 234.

The rain in the country is like your love,
 Arriving after the arid summer,
 After the despair of dying things
 And all the beauty faded.
 But it comes, the rain, and falls
 Into the thirsting earth
 Which, having taken it to wife,
 Relaxes and seems to smoke a cigarette.

—Robert Jones

ORPHEUS AND THE FOURTH *GEORGIC*: VERGIL ON NATURE AND CIVILIZATION

Does he belong here? No, out of both
realms his wide nature grew.
More knowing would he bend the willow's branches
who has experienced the willow's roots.

Rilke, *Sonnets to Orpheus*, 1.6

The fundamental theme of Vergil's *Georgics* is the relation between man and nature. Though the poem is ostensibly concerned with giving practical advice to farmers, probably as part of the renewed Augustan interest in the soil and farming, it is far more than a didactic poem in the narrow sense of the term. As any sensitive reader of the *Georgics* will feel, Dryden's celebrated judgment, "the best Poem of the best Poet," is not to be taken lightly. But these subjects are only the framework for the poet's deep exploration of larger matters: the alternation between creativeness and destructiveness, gentleness and force in the world, the pessimistic sense of human sinfulness and the hope for regeneration, the possibilities, positive and negative, for human civilization against the flawed back-drop of human history and the elemental violence of nature's powers.

These relations are expressed in part in certain contrasts of mood between the four books. Hence Book I ends with a long, gloomy excursus on the Civil Wars, pervaded by a sense of the perversity of human nature and absorbed with sin and expiation:

We have long since paid with our blood for the perjuries
of Laomedon's Troy. (501-2)¹

And it ends with an image of violence unleashed and out of control:

Over the whole world, godless, Mars rages; as when
chariots pour forth from their barriers, hurl themselves on
the course, and the charioteer, pulling back on the reins in
vain, is carried on by the horses, nor does the chariot heed
the reins. (511-14)²

The second book strikes a positive note with its description of a Golden Age and praise of a simple life of peace, work, reverence. The third book returns to violence again, with the theme of love, and ends amid desolation: a scene of winter barrenness and brutality (III. 349-83) and finally a long description of a plague which reduces man to a pre-civilized condition, leaving him scratching at the earth with bare hands (*ipsis/unguibus infodiunt fruges*, etc., III. 534ff.). The

fourth book reaffirms order and regeneration with its account of the bee-community as a model of harmony and good government. The latter half of Book IV is a mythical story of Aristaeus, whose bees die and who must seek to bring them back to life. Within this story is another tale, that of Orpheus and Eurydice, with Orpheus' descent to Hades and his failure to restore Eurydice to life.

In recent years several suggestions have been given for understanding the unity of the four books. Such schemes as Labor (Bk. I)—Life (II)—Love (III)—Law (IV) or War-Peace-Death-Resurrection or the balance between nature's resistance to man in I and III and her cooperation in II and IV have much to recommend them, although, as always with such structural analyses, there is a danger of oversimplifying and perhaps overintellectualizing a rich and complex work of art.

The fourth *Georgic* has its special problem. Why does Vergil juxtapose the Aristaeus-Orpheus episode with his account of the bees and why has he chosen to end the work in this way? In what sense is Book IV a unity, and how does that unity reflect on the entire poem? These are the questions to which I shall address myself here. As I hope will appear, these questions are of some importance—for on them turn the larger questions of the tone and meaning of the poem as a whole and hence of Vergil's views on man's place in the frame of nature and the value and difficulty of man's higher achievements, of civilization itself.

II

More than any of the three previous books, the fourth *Georgic* is only marginally concerned with practical advice *per se*. The significance of the bees lies in their similarity to and difference from man and man's political community. The metaphor that describes bee-society in terms of human society is the controlling element of the first half of the book. But here emerges the significance of the second half: bees are *not* men; the metaphor does not hold. And where the metaphor gives way, the human narrative, with human values and human suffering, breaks through.

Hence the selfless and sexless love of the bees contrasts with the passionate and all-absorbing love that man can feel. The bees' *amor* is aimed entirely at productivity (*amor . . . habendi*, 177; *tantus amor florum et generandi gloria mellis*, 205: "So great a love of flowers, such glory in creating honey"). Even procreation is seen in terms of this productivity. There is no passion, only work: *neque concubitu indulgent, nec corpora segnes/in Venerem solvunt*, 198-99 ("Neither do they take pleasure in sexual union, nor do they let their bodies melt to the languor of Venus"). The adjective *segnes* is significant: Venus,

sexual desire, would make them "sluggish," prevent them from work. And as they remain free of the involvements of sexual reproduction, so death holds no tragedy for them:

Hence, though the limits of a narrow lifetime constrains them—for they live not beyond their seventh summer—still the race remains immortal, and the fortune of the house stands for many years, and they number the grandfather of their grandfathers. (206-209)³

Bees, then, are totally reconciled to their function. Their lives subserve the ends of nature. Human as they may seem to be, they look not beyond these aims.

But the tragedy of Orpheus in the second part of the book is the tragedy of man and the tragedy of civilization. Unlike the bees, man cannot reconcile himself to the conditions of life and nature, does not accept the fundamental facts of existence, challenges death itself, even then loses the fruits of his victory because of *dementia* and *furor* (488, 495), yet is still unreconciled, still finds the laws of nature brutal, unfeeling, unjust: *ignoscenda quidem, scirent si ignoscere manes*, 489 ("things to be pardoned, if the shades below knew how to pardon"). And for man the disappearance of sexual desire marks not a whole-hearted accord with nature's purposes, but despair and death: *nulla Venus, non ulli animum flexere hymenaei*, 516 ("No love, no marriage-rites bent his mind"). This line, of the doomed Orpheus, stands in pointed contrast to the happy activity and chaste energies of the bees: *nec corpora segnes/in Venerem solvunt* (198-99). Instead of the unindividuated confidence in the *genus immortale*, we meet in Orpheus an individual, deeply human, who loves, suffers, dies. And what survives him is precisely that which arises out of his suffering and his love, the cry after his lost beloved which echoes over the natural world, the world that, as always, outlasts human grief:

Even then, as the Oeagrian Hebrus carried along in the middle of its stream the head torn away from the marble neck, the voice itself and the cold tongue, even as the life fled from them, cried out "Eurydice, Alas, poor Eurydice!" "Eurydice" reechoed the banks all along the stream. (23-24)⁴

If looked at in these terms, the Orpheus episode takes on a larger significance and raises the difficult question, which interpreters of the poem have not generally asked, namely, to what extent does Vergil's ending qualify the poem's persistent hope for the reconciliation between passion and work, *amor* and *labor*.

In his recent book, Otis makes the excellent observation of the difference between the styles of the Orpheus and the Aristaeus sections of the second half of the book: the style of the *Orpheus* is "empathetic," full of feeling and sympathy; that of the *Aristaeus*

is objective, less emotional, less personally involved and involving. But Otis does not draw from his analysis the logical conclusion, i.e. that Vergil means us to sympathize deeply with Orpheus as we do not with Aristaeus. It is not just that tragedy is more moving than success, but that the sufferings of Orpheus touch upon the greater complexities of the human condition and hence raise deeper questions. Aristaeus is still vaguely akin to the world of nature, to the bees he rears and regards as the glory and pride of human life (*ipsum vitae mortalis honorem*, 326). He completes the purposes of nature and is helped by its elemental powers: the sea- and river-gods to whom he is akin and even Proteus, the possessor of the *miracula rerum* (441), the things that are wondrous in the world.

Orpheus, on the other hand, is distinctly and nakedly human. No mention, in his case, of divine parentage or divine aid. He takes on himself, alone, both action and atonement. Aristaeus does almost nothing unaided, and has to be told, *magna luis commissa*, 454 ("Great are the crimes you are to expiate"). Not only do we "not quite realize," as Otis observes, "the crime of Aristaeus," but we are left to wonder whether *Aristaeus himself* realizes it.

This sharp contrast between the two heroes helps account for the difficult ending of the Orpheus section. Proteus concludes his account of Orpheus in line 527, and Vergil at once resumes the Aristaeus story in his own person:

So much Proteus [spoke], and he leapt into the deep sea,
and where he leapt he sent the water foaming up under his
eddyding plunge. But not Cyrene; for she at once addressed
her frightened son: "My child, you may put sad cares out of
your mind. . . ." (528-31)⁵

The abruptness of the transition has puzzled many critics. But may not this abruptness be intentional? The syntactically awkward "But not Cyrene" (530) (which even Otis thinks a mark of unskillful or incomplete revision) would then be part of this deliberate contrast, this intention to make the difference between the two heroes and their two descents—one into life, the other into death—as sharp and harsh as possible. Orpheus, the fully human figure, is left his full measure of suffering. Aristaeus is hastily protected from grief (531), told that the Nymphs are easily amenable to supplication (535-36), and given the necessary instruction (537-47) which he speedily (*haud mora*, 548) and efficiently carries out (548ff). That is all we hear of Aristaeus; and at once, with the bursting out of the bees as from a womb (*utero*, 556)

the bees hum over the whole womb throughout the
putrefying entrails of the oxen and burst through the sides
and trail aloft in measureless clouds (555-57)

we are back in the first half of the book, amid the tireless, mysterious, determined cycle of nature's life and processes:

Here when you look up and see the swarm, sent forth
to the stars of heaven from the dark cells, swim through the
pure summer air and marvel at them trailing along a dim
cloud on the wind, behold in wonder. (58-61)⁶

This significant verbal echoing between the two halves of Book IV is only one of many links between them.

III

The contrast between Orpheus and Aristaeus, then, is crucial to the broader meanings of the Fourth *Georgic* and of the *Georgics* as a whole. Around them center the recurrent themes of the poem: the interplay between man's control over nature and nature's independence—often destructive independence—from man. In them meets and culminates the poem's opposition between work and wonder; and from this opposition derives a still more pervasive tension, both stylistic and thematic, in the *Georgics*: that between practical advice and poetical description, toil and beauty. Hence of the two heroes, the one is an agricultural figure, a *pastor* and, according to the literary tradition, an agricultural god; the other is an artist, indeed *the artist par excellence*, often used by Vergil himself in the *Eclogues* as the symbolic prototype of the poet (see *Ecl.* 3.46, 4.55, 6.27-30 and 82ff).

But these oppositions are brought together only in a third person. It is through the traditionally elusive figure of Proteus that the two heroes confront one another symbolically in the narrative, that their separate and opposed destinies are interwoven. Proteus is an evasive but essential key to the poem, indeed more important than most commentators have seen. In order to understand Book IV fully, we must here consider his role and character.

Norden showed decisively that, as far as the narrative itself is concerned, he is really superfluous. Aristaeus' mother, Cyrene, does indeed say (397) that Proteus will give *praecepta*, the needed practical instructions. But, as has been seen above, he leaps abruptly away at the crucial moment (527ff), and it is Cyrene who in fact gives the *praecepta* (531ff), which forthwith prove their efficacy. Thus Cyrene has known what to do all along. She has not needed Proteus at all.

Vergil, then, has another reason for introducing Proteus and making him the narrator of the moving tale of Orpheus. First, obviously, Aristaeus is required thus to prove himself by a difficult ordeal. But, more importantly, Proteus' role as narrator sets him in different relations to Aristaeus and Orpheus respectively. To Aristaeus, by whom he has been forced to speak, he stands in the relation of an

accuser, almost a judge; and his first words are words of accusation, a demand for atonement:

It is the anger of some divine power that is troubling you; you are expiating a great offense: these punishments, by no means fitting your deserts, pitiable Orpheus stirs up against you, unless the fates should oppose, and rages because of his wife who has been snatched away. (453-56)⁷

Toward Orpheus, on the other hand—*miserabilis Orpheus* is, significantly, Proteus' way of introducing him—he is warmly sympathetic and full of pity, an admirer, and a vindicator of his rights. Here, then, emerges the significance of the different styles—the “empathetic” and the objective—of the two narratives.

Proteus' divided relationship takes on further meaning in the light of his symbolic associations, both those inherent in his figure and those Vergil has particularly exploited. The mysterious, symbolic aura around him goes back to the *Odyssey*; and if any figure in the *Georgics* is symbolic, it is he. He seems to occupy a middle ground between god and animal and to exist in a realm between myth and nature. He is connected with the primal forces of nature, and like them he is ambiguously both helpful and recalcitrant. He is a god, held in the highest reverence, endowed with profound and mysterious knowledge, a seer and a prophet:

Him we Nymphs adore and ancient Nereus himself; for he is a seer who knows all things, those which exist, those which existed, and those which soon are to be drawn into being. (391-93)⁸

As a *vates*, a word meaning poet as well as seer, he has some affinity with Orpheus, the inspired poet. Yet he belongs to the animal world too: he seeks shelter in caves (429), companionably pastures his foul-smelling seals (395), and dwells with “the wet tribe of the vast sea” (*vasti circum gens umida ponti*, 430). His ability to change into the basic substances of fire and water connects him with nature's elemental processes:

He changes himself into all sorts of wondrous things, fire and a fearful wild beast and a clear-flowing river. (441-42)⁹

These *miracula rerum* (a deliberately ambiguous and suggestive phrase) are perhaps to be associated with the wonder of life which surrounds the bees in the first part of the book (see *admiranda spectacula rerum*, 3; *mirabere*, 60 and 197, etc.).

Proteus, then, has about him something of the ambiguity, wonder, ungraspable mystery of life itself. One should not try to give too narrow or definite an interpretation to his role, for his dominant characteristic, after all, is changefulness of shape; and only bold and desperate heroes have sought to lay hold of him until he should return to his true and enduring form.

It is this mysterious figure whom Aristaeus is commanded to force. He is explicitly told that he must use violence:

For without *force* he will give no instructions, nor will you move him by prayer; with hard *force* and chains you must bind him when he is caught; against these will his wiles finally be broken and disappear. (398-400)¹⁰

The language of the attack itself puts the reader on the side of Proteus rather than of the hero. Vergil seems sympathetic to Proteus and emphasizes the violence done him; he is old and tired, and the youthful attacker's *clamor* comes abruptly and harshly upon his midday rest:

Since an opportunity against him offered itself to Aristaeus, he scarcely allowed the *old man* to lay his *weary* limbs to rest when he rushes upon him with a great shout and takes him fast with his bonds *as he lay there*. (437-440)¹¹

And the calm of the preceding simile (433-45), the comparison of the seals to sheep bleating in their mountain steading toward evening, makes Aristaeus even more of the violent and pitiless intruder.

Proteus' first words are in keeping with this tone of outraged peace, for he calls Aristaeus *iuvenum confidentissime* (445), "O most audacious of youths" (*confidens* seems to have a predominantly negative, rather than positive, sense from the time of Cicero). There is a subtle economy of narrative here, for Vergil, in showing us Aristaeus in action against Proteus, perhaps points retrospectively to that same quality of boldness, enterprise, trust in his power to act and compel that led him to pursue Eurydice and indirectly caused her death. Vergil tells us very little of Aristaeus' crime—the crime for which he is consulting Proteus—scarcely more than that Eurydice "fled from him headlong" (*dum te fugeret per flumina praeceps*, 457) and in her flight was bitten fatally by the snake. Yet the sketchy indication of Aristaeus' *confidentia* in the Proteus-episode is enough to provide a delicate hint at a quality of mind that separates him from Orpheus.

Aristaeus' treatment of Proteus, then, has larger ramifications within the framework of the *Georgics*. Aristaeus is the man of work and action; and his attack upon Proteus symbolically reflects man's confidently active effect upon the quiet and mysterious powers of nature, the realm of the *miracula rerum* wherein Proteus exists (441).

Orpheus, on the other hand, stands at the opposite pole from Aristaeus in his gentler relation to the world. He makes no attempt to use nature for his own ends, to work upon it. His task as poet is not work, but beauty; not control, but sympathy. This difference is essential to the meaning of the Fourth *Georgic*. It is strongly and beautifully conveyed in the simile of the grieving nightingale to which Vergil, toward the end of his narrative, compares the mourning Orpheus:

Just as a nightingale grieving under the shade of a poplar laments her lost brood whom the cruel farmer has noted and torn unfledged from their nest; but she weeps throughout the night and sitting on her branch renews the pitiable song and fills the region far and wide with mournful laments. (511-15)¹²

The second and third lines (512-13) are especially significant, for the bird is seen as a victim of man's vigilant and unfeeling work upon nature, a victim of the *durus arator*. Hence Orpheus, through the bird-simile, reveals a perspective on the world different from that of Aristaeus. He shows us the relation between man and nature from the point of view of *nature*, not man. Through him animate nature, given a voice, renders back the nature-centered, not the man-centered, view of things. So it is that even at his death Orpheus stands in a special intimacy with the natural world: the river carries his head and the banks re-echo his lament (523-27).

Yet it is Proteus, the wise and far-seeing narrator, the *vates*, who is the fulcrum for this basic difference between the two mortal heroes and the attitudes they embody. In his symbolic connection with the primal quietudes of life, he is violated by the bold and demanding energies of the man of work and productivity, *pastor Aristaeus*.

From Aristaeus Orpheus is strongly differentiated by his "unproductive" way of life, his gentler relation to the world, and the implications of the nightingale simile. And not only is he not connected with productivity, but he is soon to relinquish entirely that concern with life and procreation which it is Aristaeus' concern to foster (*nulla Venus, non ulli . . . hymenaei*, 516). He too, like Proteus, like his own Eurydice, like the nightingale, is a victim of Aristaeus and what Aristaeus stands for: he suffers from man's activism.

But Orpheus' sufferings are not due entirely to Aristaeus. He too is expiating a wrong of sorts that he has committed. Indeed, that part of his own nature that is active, restless, demanding, is the cause of his deepest unhappiness. In the *dementia* and *furor* that cause him to look back and hence lose Eurydice (488, 495), he shows his kinship (faint though it may be) with Aristaeus: a lack of that quiet trust in the processes of nature which plants and animals have. Aristaeus, with all his rashness—and in part *because* of this rashness—still has perhaps something of this trust, a trust that befits an Arcadian shepherd and is the positive side of his *confidentia*. Hence he succeeds in his attempted "rebirth" (the regeneration of the bees) as Orpheus fails in his (the revival of Eurydice).

There seems at first to be a contradiction here, but it is a contradiction inherent in the nature of things, one which Vergil does not oversimplify. It is the essence of his mythic form that it enables the

poet to present life's eternally conjoined polarities in all the truth of their complexity. Mythic poetry of this caliber celebrates life's generous and mysterious wholeness: life embraces and surmounts the opposites it contains.

So it is with the contrasts between Orpheus and Aristaeus. There is, on the one hand, the saving simplicity in Aristaeus' *confidentia* that manifested itself earlier in his boyish complaint about the dead bees (326-32). And what he is asking is, after all, in accordance with nature's laws, the alternation of death and regeneration, barrenness and fruitfulness. Orpheus, the more complex and inward figure (Vergil significantly keeps him silent, save for his final *a miseram Eurydicen*, 526) makes demands which are counter to these laws. Aristaeus' rashness and energy, then, are still ultimately in the service of nature. Orpheus, more fully human and hence more tragic, seeks the fulfillment only of an intensely personal, peculiarly human need—the passionate and individualistic love from which Aristaeus' bees, nature's most efficient creatures, are singularly free (197ff).

Through the contrast with Aristaeus, then, Orpheus is linked, also for contrast, with the bees of the first half of the book. Aristaeus and the bees on the one side, Orpheus on the other stand in a complementary relation: Orpheus' *amor* does not further nature's aims of reproduction. He has *amor* without procreation, a peculiarly human, inward and soulful form of *amor*; the bees have procreation without *amor* (in the human sense).

Yet the sad fate of Orpheus and the *furor* and *dementia* associated with him (488, 495) indicate that Vergil's attitude is more complex. Neither Aristaeus nor Orpheus is a faultless model for the right relation to nature's demands. Indeed the Ciconian matrons who tear Orpheus apart are not condemned outright. The narrative suggests shock and horror, to be sure, but not condemnation:

The Ciconian mothers, scorned by this tribute of his [to his wife], tore the youth apart and scattered him far and wide over the fields amid the rites of the gods and the revels of night-worshipped Bacchus. (520-22)¹³

The *matres* (and the fact that they are *matres* is significant in the light of the key theme of reproduction and the continuity of life) do not simply commit murder: they perform a religious act of a sort (*inter sacra deum*, etc., 521) and vindicate nature's laws. The question of condemnation does not arise, for they are instruments of nature's irrepressible surge. Hence they reveal too the brutality and horrifying elemental force with which nature can reclaim its own.

There is perhaps another implicit criticism of Orpheus' behavior in the lines that immediately precede this description of his death:

No Venus, no marriage rites bent his mind; alone he wandered over the Hyperborean ice and the snowy Tanais and the fields never widowed of the Rhiphaean frosts. . . . (516-19)¹⁴

The juxtaposition of *nulla Venus* and the barren winter waste is suggestive. Orpheus' rejection of Venus, the life-force, associates him with the sterility of winter. It is into the desolate wintry landscape that he goes to escape Venus and to live out his own "widowed" life (note *viduata*, of the snowy fields, 518). The passage recalls the powerful description of winter in the Third Book (349-383), especially lines 381-382:

Such a race of men, placed under the Hyperborean Wain
[Northern Star], is beaten by the Riphean East-wind.¹⁵

The contrast between the life and activity of IV and this lifeless inertia of III is one of the important structural contrasts of the poem. Hence Vergil, without suggesting anything so strong or specific as that Orpheus' attitude may bring a recurrence of such barrenness, yet points to a subtle connection between an aspect of Orpheus and the harshness and barrenness from which Book IV has moved away.

Neither Aristaeus nor Orpheus, then, represents in himself a fully valid image of man in his relation with his world. The ideal lies, if anywhere, in a balance between them. But Vergil is seeking not to define an ideal, but to state a basic reality. And over against both Orpheus and Aristaeus, the two men who have such different relations to nature, stand the bees of the first half of the Book, full of self-restraint and self-sacrifice, partaking, with unthinking and untroubled instinct, of the given morality of nature. What emerges is the sense of the complexity of man between the two extremes of Aristaeus and Orpheus, external effectiveness in the realm of nature and devotion to man's peculiar inward capacities: emotion, art, love.

If this analysis of the differences between Orpheus and Aristaeus is valid, there appears another explanation for the apparent contradiction in the narrative. Proteus, it will be recalled, tells Aristaeus that he must expiate his crime against Orpheus (453ff); but Cyrene, who gives the actual *praecepta* (530ff; cf. 398), says nothing of Orpheus and mentions only the anger of the Nymphs (*irasque remittent*, 536; cf. Proteus' *irae* . . . Orpheus, 453-54). Is it again possible that this change is intentional? If so, what purpose does it serve?

The answer suggested by the foregoing analysis is that Vergil at the end wishes to separate the two heroes whose fates have become so closely intertwined in Proteus' narrative. Aristaeus, who reaches an accord with nature's aims, is not, ultimately, to be pulled down by the suffering and unreconciled humanity of Orpheus. Life as work and possibility will not be destroyed by life as tragedy. The positive attainments of *labor* will not be cancelled by the negative effects of

amor. Hence Cyrene, the beneficent goddess-mother, re-enacts her sheltering role and keeps her son from a final confrontation with the tragedy of Orpheus. She performs for her son what her Homeric counterpart and literary ancestor, Thetis, cannot do for hers. Hence she mentions the appeasement of Orpheus only late in her instructions and almost parenthetically (545; cf. 553). Instead she turns the narrative away from tragic loss and failure, the underworld descent, mortality and death, to the Nymphs, the happy and fruitful powers of life, and to nature which restores and repairs without brooding over the past. Thus her reappearance (530ff), though technically contradicting the pronouncement of the mysterious and ambiguous Proteus (453ff), marks a return to a positive and hopeful future.

Yet there is still the contradiction, still no full resolution of the dissonances implied in Proteus' narrative. We are still reminded at the very end that the bees' rebirth takes place out of violence, putrefaction, death: "The bees buzzed over the whole womb throughout the *putrefying* entrails of the cows and *bursting* the sides swarmed out" (*liquefacta boum per viscerea toto/stridere apes utero et ruptis effervere costis*, 555-56). Characteristically Vergil leaves us with the full complexity of the situation. This is part of his deep truthfulness and his greatness. How should the poet, after all, resolve what life does not?

IV

Despite the apparently limited frame of the *Georgics*, then, their riches and complexities are profound, and Vergil already exhibits that depth and fineness of insight that characterize the *Aeneid*. In the Fourth *Georgic*, in fact, he is already dealing with some of the issues of the *Aeneid*. To equate Aristaeus with the active Augustan ruler, Orpheus with the poet or artist is an over-simplification; but the *Aeneid* too is concerned with the delicate balances between inner life and external effect on the world, there rephrased in part to a contrast between humanity and duty. In the single character of Aeneas Vergil fuses together (though does not always resolve) the opposites which in the *Georgics* are separated into two in the figures of Orpheus and Aristaeus. The Aeneas who suffers loss and through loss feels the inestimable preciousness of his human ties, the precariousness of life, the futility of success without love—the Aeneas who comes to sense the *lacrimae rerum* and who describes (in lines partly taken from the *Orpheus* of the Fourth *Georgic*) the pain of his final parting from his wife, a disappearing ghost now infinitely beyond him, *par levibus ventis volucrique simillima somno* (2.794)—this Aeneas is foreshadowed in Orpheus. But the Aeneas who is aided by his goddess-Mother, who confidently lifts the shield of Rome's destiny

on his shoulders (8.731), who at the end seems to submerge his *humanitas* in the act of bloodshed that seals the success of his mission—this Aeneas is anticipated in Aristaeus.

And just as Vergil in the Fourth *Georgic* has separated what is later to be fused with greater complexity into a single figure, so his style is divided: the heroic, "objective" style of success, Homeric achievement and impact on the world for Aristaeus; the subjective, "empathetic" style for the private tragedy and aloneness of Orpheus. It is the essence of Vergil's *humanitas* that he gives us *both* figures, just as he gives both Aeneases. If one may paraphrase a modern parable, the two figures, the successful hero and the tragic lover and poet, the hero who serves destiny and mankind and the individual who suffers within himself, are "two locked caskets, of which each contains the key to the other."

The Fourth *Georgic*, then, poses the question to be put more sharply and more profoundly in the *Aeneid*: the question of happiness for a being whose life moves both in an inner and an outer world, the value of success in the service of nature or destiny as weighed against the continual losses within the personal realm—losses of loved ones, friends, feeling itself—losses that are the price of conquest and achievement. In contrasting the two journeys and the two styles, Vergil suggests the largeness and complexity of man's condition both as a creature of the natural world and as a being endowed with an inner life, both a creature who furthers nature's ends, throws himself into the struggle for life, and a being who negates those ends by his equal capability for unreasoning passion as for love, art, devotion. But, more profoundly, what the Orpheus-Aristaeus episode does is to suggest—and Vergil's way is always to suggest—that human life as framed between the two figures may be *essentially* tragic. And here emerges the significance of the first half of the book, the bees: instead of collectivity selflessly devoted to the *genus immortale*, we have in the second part individuals engaged in their personal emotions almost to the exclusion of everything else, individuals who not only do not continue the race, but themselves die when their intensely personal passion is frustrated. Even Aristaeus feels the loss of his bees with an intensity that blindly blots out the rest of life, throws to the winds nature's demand for continuity and self-preservation:

Come then and uproot with your own hand the fruitful
forests, bring hostile fire to the stalls and destroy the harvests,
burn the crops and wield the strong axe against the vines if
such disgust for my honor has taken hold of you. (329-32)¹⁰

If Aristaeus is seen from this point of view, the differences between him and Orpheus become less than the difference between both of them taken together as men and the world of the bees.

This thematic contrast of man and bees involves also a stylistic contrast between the two main halves of the book, analogous to that within the second half itself: the language of the first half is highly Lucretian; that of the second, more Homeric and characteristically Vergilian. The difference suits the contrast between the sure, unquestioned, eager fulfilment of nature's processes and the feeling realm of humanity with its passions, hesitations, failures. This difference corresponds also to that between the light and humorous tone of the first half of the book and the tragic coloring of the second half. It is a contrast between the didactic and the mythic styles, but with a curious inversion: the "real" world of bees and practical instruction is lively and happy; the "ideal" world of myth and poetry is filled with death and disaster. Yet this "poetic" world is simultaneously the highest point artistically to which the *Georgics* attain; and, as Otis has suggested, the emotional, "empathetic" coloring of the Orpheus episode is a kind of stylistic culmination of the work. But the price of feeling is separation from nature, challenge of her laws, refusal to heed the universal demand for the preservation and continuity of life.

It is curious, then, that Vergil should end the *Georgics* with the alienation from nature that man's very humanity creates. This alienation is anticipated in the ending of III, where a subhuman brutality brings a fearful coarsening of the relation between man and nature (see III. 373-80). Book IV carries the problem to a profounder level, to the question of whether such a separation may not be inherent in the nature and condition of man. To have arrived at the view and then to look back at the simple and joyful world of the *Eclogues* in the closing lines of the *Georgics* is a touch worthy of the highest poetic genius:

At that time sweet Parthenope [Naples] nourished me,
Vergil, flourishing with the pursuits of unheroic leisure, who
playfully sang the songs of shepherds and bold in my youth
sang of you, O Tityrus, under the shade of a spreading beech.
(563-66)¹⁷

The poet who could so easily confide in that trustful and easy interchange between man and nature that characterizes the pastoral view, looks back on himself from the higher, but more sombre and clouded vantage-point of the *Georgics* as indeed *audax iuventa*, "bold in his youth."

This more personal and gentle ending mitigates the tragic and negative elements in the Fourth Book, as does, to be sure, the success of Aristaeus' atonement. But the irreconcilables, the unbridgeable gulf between soul and instinct, nevertheless remain. They give the poem a perhaps more pessimistic coloring than many commentators would admit. All is not confidence in Augustan renaissance.

Pessimism, however, is too crude and inadequate a word. It is rather that a deep perception of an eternal truth underlies and qualifies whatever hope for the specific, immediate present the poem seems to contain. Recently Otis has suggested that we can regard the four books as contrasting movements of a musical composition: *allegro maestoso—Scherzo—adagio—allergro vivace*. The analogy is suggestive, but perhaps we should more fittingly label the final movement *allegro, ma non troppo*.

REFERENCES

1. "satis iam pridem sanguine nostro || Laomedontae luimus periuria Troiae."
2. "saevit toto Mars impius orbe; || ut cum carceribus sese effudere quadrigae, || addunt in spatio, et frustra retinacula tendens || fertur equis auriga neque audit currus habenas."
3. "ergo ipsas quamvis angusti terminus aevi || excipiat (neque enim plus septima ducitur aestas), || at genus immortale manet, multosque per annos || stat fortuna domus, at avi numerantur avorum."
4. "tum quoque marmorea caput a cervice revulsum || gurgite cum medio portans Oeagrius Hebrus || volveret, Eurydicen vox ipsa et frigida lingua || a miseram Eurydicen! anima fugiente vocabat: || Eurydicen toto referebant flumine ripae."
5. "Haec Proteus, at se iactu dedit aequor in altum, || quaque dedit, spumantem undam sub vertice torsit. || At non Cyrene; namque ultro adfata timentem: || 'Nate, licet tristis animo deponere curas. . .'"
- 5a. "liquefacta boum per viscera toto || stridere apes utero et ruptis effervere costis, || immensasque trahi nubes."
6. "hinc ubi iam emissum caveis ad sidera caeli || nare per aestatem liquidam suspexeris agmen || obscuramque trahi vento mirabere nubem, || contemplator."
7. "Non te nullius exercent numinis irae; || magna luis commissa: tibi has miserabilis Orpheus || haudquaquam ad meritum poenas, ni fata resistant, || suscitāt, et rapta graviter pro coniuge saevit."
8. "hunc et Nymphae veneramur et ipse || grandaevus Nereus: novit namque omnia vates, || quae sint, quae fuerint, quae mox ventura trahantur."
9. "omnia transformat sese in miracula rerum, || ignemque horribilemque feram fluviumque liquentem."
10. "nam sine vi non ulla dabit praecepta, neque illum || orando flectes; vim duram et vincula capto || tende; doli circum haec demum franguntur inanes."
11. "cuius Aristaeo quoniam est oblata facultas, || vix defessa senem passus componere membra || cum clamore ruit magno, manicisque iacentem || occupat."
12. "qualis populea maerens philomela sub umbra || amissos queritur fetus, quos durus arator || observans nido implumis detraxit; at illa || flet noctem, ramoque sedens miserabile carmen || integrat, et maestis late loca questibus implet."
13. "spretae Ciconum quo munere matres || inter sacra deum nocturnique orgia Bacchi || discerptum latos iuvenem sparsere per agros."
14. "nulla Venus, non ulli animum flexere hymenaei: || solus Hyperboreas glacies Tanaimque nivalem || arvaeque Riphaeis numquam viduata pruinis || lustrabat."
15. "Talis Hyperboreo septem subiecta trioni || gens effrena virum Riphaeo tunditur Euro."
16. "quin age et ipsa manu felicitis erue silvas, || fer stabulis inimicum ignem atque interfece messis, || ure sata et validam in vitis molire bipennem, || tanta meae si te ceperunt taedia laudis."
17. "illo Vergilium me tempore dulcis alebat || Parthenope studiis florentem ignobilis oti, || carmina qui lusi pastorumque audaxque iuventa || Tityre, te patulae cecini sub tegmine fagi."

I AM CALLED CRUEL

I am the man that others fear when love
Invades a silent, crowded room at night.
For there I lie and wait for love to come,
To lightly grasp it by its amber neck
As passing by it stumbles on my feet.
I am called cruel by others there
Who dreamed that very thing but had no strength
To tempt that passing fair in vestal dress,
To lure her through the smoke-filled, silent air
And gently cut her throat with finite grace.

—Robert E. Jones



Come now, say good night to me,
Hold my hand and let me find
On your face the traces of the rouge
I smeared in yesterday's embrace.
Yesterday we walked a long long way.
At last you cried. And I was tired.
We meet and leave again, you spurn my hands
And touch the ribbon I admired.
Where do you go in parting if I say
That the hand that brushed away your tears
Now firmly parts tonight with yours
And a Saturday's mistake is sworn away?

—Marc Egnal



CHARRED

He banked his inner fire
Each day
In a hundred little ways
Not seeing how the flame grew weaker
As he hid the coals of smothered longings
From the light.
Others called him selfless
But one day
(No one knew when)
His fire went out.
He went on
To walk his charred efficient way.

—Ruth Flick

THE BLIND DATE

I had a blind date with some creep that night so I had to leave the library earlier than usual. The library building was brand new and looked absurd in the middle of the barren, old city campus. Early Disneyland. I spent my afternoons there, hidden in an alcove between Gothic Literature and German History. There were rows and rows of quiet books to look at, or a small square window through which I could see only the top branches of a leafless tree and a patch of sky. It was so still you could hear the electric lights and it was always too hot.

I don't remember actually studying there; mostly I'd just count the pages I should have been reading. Sometimes I tried to write poems. That day I had to learn the Romantic poets by dinner but I kept falling out of the window with my eyes and flying around with the pigeons outside. They were going South I think but I smoke too much and never could have made it. Andrew Marvell typified the seductive poets' use of hyperbole, *vis à vis* to wit:

My vegetable love should grow
Vaster than empires and more slow;
An hundred years should go to praise
Thine eyes and on thy forehead gaze
Two hundred to adore each breast
But thirty thousand to the rest. . . .

Note the lush allusions to tropical growth as contrasted with "marble vault," "worms," "ashes," "deserts," at the end. AABBCC. Iambic. It made me sick to operate on poetry like that. I closed my eyes and was a rose growing from a hard rough stone and then I was looking again at the patch of sky and rows of books. I tried to write something about being a rose but it just came out corny. Anyway, I knew I had to leave because the stupid creep would probably pick me up on time.

I walked back to the dormitory slowly because I hated the dormitory. It was February and cold and there was no twilight.

There is a fountain before you reach the dorms, dry in winter and empty except for cigarette butts. For a moment I stopped and swam with the mute gold fish in the green light of the water but the debris kept getting in the way. Once I won a goldfish at Palisades

but it died the next morning because I forgot to remove the artificial coloring in the water. The symbolism was nice. I moved into the lobby of the building. It was Early Dinner and three hundred lovelies jammed the door of the dining room waiting for it to open. Like Auschwitz. They would press forward and scratch each other's eyes out so they could save seats for their friends. I had Late Dinner; there was less of a crowd.

I might have liked college if it hadn't been for the dorms—"an experiment in community living," they called it. Which meant that each girl was forcibly plunked down in suites of ten or twelve rooms inhabited by about twenty girls who never ceased to please one another with their sameness. All the rooms looked alike, of course, but then they were functional—which is as good a rationalization as any. My roommate was sitting on the floor of our room with her guitar. Catherine was O.K. She hadn't gone to class in over a week since she broke up with her boyfriend.

"Hiya kid, you look crappy." I liked Catherine because she was terribly frank.

"Little ray of sunlight. Thank you." I lay down on the bed.

"D'you know what time it is, for God's sake?" Catherine got up and looked at me. She rarely looked right at you unless you were lying down or sitting because she was four feet eleven inches and would rather die than look up at anyone.

"5:30. Dinner isn't for an hour. Who the hell cares what time it is." But I knew who the hell cared.

"If you forgot," said Catherine, raising her voice. "If you forgot, so help me . . ."

"I didn't forget, dammit. How could I forget? It's all you've talked about since Monday. I can't help it if I don't care."

I closed my eyes and screamed. So loud I couldn't hear, but I knew Catherine was telling me to take a shower and set my hair. Asking me what I was going to wear on the blind date, telling me again what a wonderful guy he was—how sharp. The scream rose in my chest and filled the room until the functional furniture shook like jello and Linda in the next room fell out of bed and was killed instantly. But Linda and Catherine were together, standing over the bed and looking at each other nervously.

"Will you *please* open your eyes and get up! Cathy, for crying out loud he's going to be here and she's just lying there like a mummy. She's just lying there. Mike'll kill me if she's late."

"Ah, leave her alone. She'll get up."

"Like when? At five to eight or something?"

"She wouldn't stand him up. For your sake, anyway." A big sigh. "Too bad we couldn't get Laurence Olivier."

"Shut up Catherine," I said in a quiet monotone. If they started in on me about Laurence Olivier I would light a fire beneath my bed and consume myself like a phoenix. And then be re-born as a peacock and alight on the dinner table to scatter my rainbow feathers in everyone's soup. I had this big crush on Olivier; I always got a lot of gas about it.

"Well, I'm sorry. But at least you opened your eyes."

"Look, Cath—don't cater to her moods. You ought to know not to cater to her moods." Going out of the door, Linda turned to me again and said "If you think I'm going to do you any more favors you're nuts."

This was not necessary. I never asked to be fixed up and I obviously didn't even *want* a blind date. I could have had a lot of boyfriends but between not smiling at them and spending all my time in the library I never met anyone. Once I went with a boy for a few months; we were both on one of those student tours of Europe. But he lived in Texas, far away. I never missed him anyway—boys just didn't matter that much to me. Nothing really meant *that* much to me. On Saturday nights, I watched "Perry Mason" until the trial part came on and then took brief trips, sometimes to Alexandria, sometimes Mexico. Once in awhile I tried to write: "College had seemed a vague oasis eyed thirstily from across the barren expanse of adolescence." It always came out phony. But writing and traveling were a great deal more satisfying than sharing popcorn with some creep who never seemed to be satisfied with sharing just popcorn. College boys could be button-down or turtleneck phonies but it was always Sexsexsex all the same. I must have been drunk or something to accept the date with Linda's friend's friend.

Catherine and I were alone again. "Eeeeaagh. I'm exhausted. Dead, absolutely dead. What time's this character going to be here?"

"Seven," replied my roommate. "Get going, huh? I'm not your nursemaid."

"Thank God. Just thank God for that. Your brand of mother's milk would kill a hippopotamus."

"Veree funnee. You make beeg joke. Excuse me while I die of laughter." Then she shut up while I got ready.

The only place to be alone at college is in the shower; you can talk to yourself or cry or sing. The spray was a waterfall coming down in slanted syncopation onto my body. I could smell the wet trees and the wild hungry flowers growing along side of it. I held my breath and let it stroke my face. Within me a tiny oasis of over-ripe

blossoms opened their petals and cried one tear in unison. When I finally turned off the water my skin was quite red.

In the halls everyone was running around as if it were Judgment Day; it was Saturday night. Catherine and Linda were playing bridge and listening to the radio in our room. I dusted powder on my face and put "Nile Green" on my eyelids. Stockings. Slip. The radio sold pork sausages and true love. Someone came in to ask Linda what time she was going to the fraternity party. Most of the girls were going to the same party. Liquor and blasting rhythmless music. Warm beer and perspiration, empty laughter and drums. Bodies pressing anonymously and blurred muted passes. At home there had always been a party going on and I was put to bed early upstairs in my room. The tinkle of my mother's laughter and pink wine glasses. I watched through a crack in the door—the women in black, white skin swollen red in wide smiles, long perfumed necks and the deep dark eyes of the men lit by candlelight and gin. I watched, moving among them with my eyes, until I got too tired.

The two girls went to Late Dinner but I stayed behind to finish dressing. I was even going to miss dinner; what a huge pain. I put some jewelry on and fixed my hair. High heels. Dress. My sleep-walking outfit. I thought about flunking my Romantic poets and then about the pigeons and did they ever get there. I picked up a *T.V. Guide* and saw that "Perry Mason" was a repeat. There wasn't much to do. I turned the radio off. It was six forty-five. I ate an apple and had to brush my teeth again. Outside it was very dark. The telephone rang and it was him; they knocked on my door again. They knew I was inside because of the light. I said I was coming and got my pocketbook and gloves and put out the light. Then, I don't know why, I put more perfume on. "Hidden Desire." All of that for some creep.

I saw my date before I was half-way across the lobby and it was too late to turn back. He was pretty ugly, though in an inoffensive sort of way. At least if you're going to be ugly, don't do a half-assed job of it. He was leaning against the counter of telephones near the door with a trench coat slung ridiculously over his shoulder; after all, it was February. Peter Frankel was about twenty-two with medium-sized eyes, mouth and pimples. His hair was medium-brown. The only thing that saved him from complete oblivion was his big nose. He was tall and had a good build; as I approached he smiled cautiously and I saw that his teeth were o.k. And that he had tried to burst a few of the pimples on the sides of his face quite recently. How flattering. If his suit wasn't Brooks Brothers it should have been.

"Hi," said Peter Frankel.

"Hello. I'm sorry I'm late."

"That's all right. We're doubling with Sue Barnes and Howie Graber and they're not here yet anyway. Do you know them?"

"I don't think so. What year is she?"

"Junior, I think. Kind of short and blonde."

I smiled. "What a graphic description." But my smile cut the sarcasm.

Peter Frankel was not thrown. He smiled back. "O.K. You've scored a point already."

I laughed. Ha Ha. Its amazing how clothes affect people. This guy thought he was cool.

"Are you very friendly with Linda Shore?" Linda had fixed us up. Gee thanks, Linda.

"Pretty friendly. Great girl."

"She's a riot, that kid. I met her at undergraduate school in Boston last year. I met her at a party and she was dancing on someone's shoulders, completely pie-eyed."

"Where did you go?" You've got to keep the questions rolling.

"You mean before Law School? Tufts. Jesus I wish I were back there."

"Don't you like Penn?"

"Ugh," said Peter Frankel. "I mean it's not the school itself. It's the work. Law School is really tough, you know. I fooled around a lot at Tufts. Parties, booze, you know. It's hard to get used to grinding. My last year at college I never even bought half the books. Don't remember sitting through a morning class sober." He grinned boastfully.

"How did you get into *Law* School?" I asked with phony awe. That question really set him up.

"Bull. It's the key to my success. I perfected the art at an early age. You brown up the teachers and sling it on exams. Take the professor for coffee after class. Learn the key words before exams. You know. But it doesn't seem to work now."

"That's too bad." I replied, and couldn't think of anything else to say. There was a pause as we pretended to look around for the other couple.

"What do you major in?" asked Peter. Original, too.

"English. And I have no specific interests or hobbies."

"You've got an answer for everything, don't you?"

"Oh, don't mind me."

The boy, still not thrown, regarded me with his medium eyes narrowed, and said: "Look, we're not going to have any fun if you fight me. Why don't you just drop the bitterness?"



I smiled charmingly again. "I just kid. It's the way I am, so don't take it personally. I just get on the defensive sometimes." If you act like you're confessing some hidden neurosis it melts their hearts.

"We'll get a few drinks. Maybe I can break down the defense. I used to play football. Used to play pretty well."

I didn't really know if the double entendre was intentional. Sexsexsex. Behind everything. It was seven-fifteen and I wished we could get going. The other couple appeared and there were introductions. The girl was indeed short and blonde and the boy was slight with sandy hair and horn-rimmed glasses. They truly did look like that. They seemed to know each other very well.

We piled into a Volkswagon. I sat in front and didn't say much. As we drew away from the dorm a neon sign made the windshield glow red and blue, red and blue. We passed the library—its glass face was blind, indifferent. We were going to some bar downtown. There was talk of basketball scores and flunked exams. I thought about my poets again.

"Should I turn the heat on?" my date asked.

"I'm not cold. Are you cold?" I turned to the couple behind me.

The girl, Susan, had an obnoxious giggle. "I'm never cold." That was a scream. It broke everybody up. BoyOBoy that Susan was cool.

We stopped for the light on 15th Street. I could have gotten out of the car, then, and run into a movie theater. "Lord of the Flies" was playing, and next to it, "How the West Was Won" in Cinerama-CineramaCinerama. From a record store Frank Sinatra seduced the passersby. The car started again and Cornell had beaten Princeton. Unheard of. My date asked me if I liked basketball.

"Sports are my downfall. I flunked gym every year in high school. And by the time I learned what baseball was all about I was too confused to understand anything else." Which was an acceptable answer, a cute answer, as it were.

"Oh, I'm crazy about it," said Susan. Nobody had asked her.

"Yeah, especially half-time," commented horn-rims. This brought down the house.

Then we arrived at the bar. It wasn't really a bar, more like a copy of a Greenwich Village joint—very dirty and in a deserted part of town. It was small and cheap. It was a find. Very authentic. You might almost believe you were really in Greenwich Village. Boy. My parents and I always went to the Art Show in the Village twice a year. We never bought anything except popsicles.

The place was almost full when we got there. A Negress sang and played the piano. The four of us had to sit at a table for two and Peter and I were cramped close together in the corner of the small

booth. The other couple ordered Johnny Walkers. I ordered a screwdriver. The Negress sang "I Loves Ya Porgy." She had a low weepy voice and looked only at the keys. On the piano there was a small tray in which you were supposed to put money.

"Are you comfortable?" Peter asked.

"Oh yes. Fine."

"Ever been here before?"

"No. It's nice. The singer is awfully good."

"God, I don't know how they fit so many people in here. God, it's hot." He was perspiring more than just a little.

It was hot, and smoky noise smothered the room.

"Smells, too. Part of the flavor I guess," he added.

"Flavor of what?"

"You know, the singer and all. Hey, Howie, they're playing your song."

"Ah, cut it out Pete." The singer was doing a jazz arrangement of "Blue Moon." What was funny was that Howie, it seemed, used to moon a lot. Mooning is when you drop your trousers in front of people. You let them see your rear. A real wild one, this Howie.

Peter turned back to me. "How come you're so quiet?"

"Oh, I'm just listening." Which was true. For once there didn't seem to be anything to think about.

"Where're you from, anyway?"

"New York."

"Huh?" It was very noisy and you sort of had to shout.

"New York," I repeated.

"Whereabouts?"

"Manhattan. The City."

"Great town. I try to get in as often as I can. See the shows, do a little bar-hopping. Great entertainment in New York. But they rob you blind. Right and left."

"I love New York. It spoils you for other cities." I thought of Broadway and the East River being chased into the jaws of the 59th Street Bridge but couldn't work up any really sustaining imagery. Did I want to please him by talking in clichés? "Philadelphia seems like a hick town in comparison. Three Newarks."

"Don't you ever miss the country?"

"No."

"Want another drink?"

"Yes, o.k. Same thing." I wondered if there were such a thing as double screwdrivers.

"Howie, Susie, want some more happy milk? Waiter, more of the same, buddy-boy."

We finished our second round and then Peter put his hand on mine. I was absolutely shocked to find it wasn't sweaty. People stood up around the bar and piano and sang along. Everyone was smiling and singing and touching.

I remarked that I hated that.

"What?"

"When everyone starts singing like that. It makes me nervous." It was easier to talk with his hand there for some reason.

"You're kinda weird, aren't you? You interest me." He applied studied pressure to my hand. Ouch, you jerk. But I wasn't so angry.

"Am I supposed to say I'm glad, or what?"

"Hey, look; I'm only trying to be nice."

"I'm sorry. My defenses again." Ha Ha again. But it didn't make too much sense to be nasty anymore.

"What's on your mind, anyway? Something bugging you? Blind dates are such a drag. I mean, you've got to be able to get through to a person."

This made me awfully nervous. "No, I'm having fun. Honest."

"You smell nice," said Peter Frankel.

Peter's skin problem was illuminated by the red lights. Limpid pools of perspiration formed around his hairline. Charming. But his smile was all right. If his skin ever cleared up . . . Oh, what was the use? A boy's hand was on mine and I let him keep it there. If he wanted to "get through" to me, he really didn't have to use small talk. There were lots of easier ways, like telling me I smelled nice. Which I did. His free hand tapped along with the jazz-beat of the music and his other hand moved against mine. Across the table Howie and Susan looked into each other's eyes with fuzzy lust. God knows what they were doing under the table.

And then a very strange thing happened. This man, who had been seated directly opposite me, alone, and had all along been making out with his beer, suddenly raised his head and winked at me. He drew back these thin lips and smiled. Smiled and winked at me. He was colored, but not bad looking. Oldish. At the same time, Peter pressed his knee against me like in Mickey Spillane. That was all. For a minute I turned towards the singer who now played without singing. When I looked back at the man he was caught up with his beer again. I got sort of dizzy—the laughter became muted and far-off. Colors and lights smeared together. It was so hot. Like my whole mind was washed out—there was nothing to focus on. No Doberman, no waterfall. No picture appeared to tell me what I was supposed to identify with. I was just a girl at the end of someone's damp hand. Without that hand, what would I be? I knew, I absolutely knew that

when I opened my eyes everything would be the same. Finally I was jostled by Peter getting his coat on. We were going to his apartment. I didn't say anything. I guess I could have asked to be taken back to the dorm but I didn't say anything.

His apartment had been decorated by some perverse collegiate tradition—pennants, Playmates and the usual Renoir reproductions were hung on the walls. The furniture was Danish Modern and you could tell the couch opened up. As soon as we got there, the other couple took over one of the bedrooms. I wasn't particularly sorry to see them go. It was only 9:30.

"Like Johnny Mathis?" Peter was putting some records on.

"I don't care, really."

"Well, I've put a lot of junk on. You're bound to like something." I think this was meant as a dig. "Can I get you a screwdriver? I think we've got some orange juice somewhere."

"I'd love it."

Peter went out of the room. I looked around but couldn't find anything interesting to occupy my attention. I was somehow sorry to be left alone. My mind was blank, and I was tired.

Earth Angel, Earth Angel, will you be mine?
My darling dear, love you all the time;
I'm just a fool, a fool in love with youuuu!
Earth Angel. Earth Angel. the one I adore;
Love you forever, and evermore!

He finally returned and asked me to dance. Right in the middle of the living room, by ourselves. There wasn't much else to do, though. We danced for awhile and I can't actually say it was too bad. It would have been a lot better if Peter hadn't sung along with the records and if he hadn't pressed me against him with such consistency. At the end of each lyric he'd squeeze me very tight and then relax his grip until the end of the next lyric. Time sort of drifted by, quietly and slowly, and it was nice just to stand there, close to someone, with my eyes closed, and not think. Neon flashed in spasms over the couch and after a while there were no more records. It was about 10:15 when he asked me to go into the bedroom with him; I didn't think it was a particularly dumb question.

A CONVERSATION WITH RALPH ELLISON

Q. I know you attended Tuskegee . . .

A. Yes, I left the school because I couldn't earn enough money to pay the expenses for my senior year. So I went to New York to work during the summer and I didn't make enough money to return. But the longer I stayed in New York the better I liked it. Toward the fall of that year after working at the Harlem Y.M.C.A., where I served at the food bar in the cafeteria while several of the regular employees took their vacations, I got a brief job working for Dr. Harry Stack Sullivan, the psychoanalyst. His secretary was away and his house was being renovated, thus I worked for a few months as his receptionist and clerk. It was a very interesting job, but I still didn't have enough money to return to Tuskegee and with the school term well along I decided to remain in New York. I kept trying to save money with hopes of going back, but then, during the fall of 1937, I lost my mother, who was living in Dayton, Ohio, and had to leave New York for seven months, during which a change in plans took place. I had been interested in writing, though not too seriously, since discovering Eliot during my sophomore year; and during the summer of 1937 I had published a book review and had been asked to write a short story for a magazine edited by Richard Wright. He had also requested the book review and liked my story well enough to send it to the printer, but before the story could get out of the galley stage the magazine folded. Nevertheless, seeing the story in print made me decide that writing was my form of expression and I gave a lot of intensity to it. I spent the seven months of unemployment in Dayton reading and trying to develop writing technique. When I returned to New York I didn't have a job, so I went on relief so that I could get on the W.P.A. Writer's Project. You might say that the N. Y. Writer's Project was my "college" as far as writing was concerned—or kindergarten perhaps.

Q. Do you feel the pressures of people who try to turn you into an oracle? Into the voice of the Negro people? In your writing, do you feel these pressures?

A. Well, yes, there are people who feel that a writer is someone to be exploited and that he is less important for what he writes than

This conversation was edited from a tape recording made on February 24, 1965. Mr. Ellison was talking to Robert D. Bamberg, Assistant Professor of English at the University of Pennsylvania and Daniel Alkon, the editor-in-chief.

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for the attention that he is capable of bringing to a cause. And if he has a little reputation then it seems the natural thing to move in on him to get him to become a mouthpiece for whatever program they promote and as a projector of their slogans and so on. I have always refused to do this; at least I've refused to do this since, roughly, 1940. And this has made for many attacks. I understand that I was attacked recently at a public conference of Negro writers held out in California. It's odd that *writers* would attack another writer for not doing or saying those things which they might well do or say themselves. I have enough trouble trying to write fiction and whatever else I write. Nevertheless, I think that I am as good a Negro and as good an American as those people are. I don't tell them what to do—I don't see why they insist on telling me what to do.

Q. I think that was the major criticism of Irving Howe.

A. Well, Irving has this feeling—and it is one of the old Socialist beliefs—that the writer has to be engaged in a political way, while I think that the novel is a political form, certainly a *social* form, in its own right. The reality that I try to deal with in the novel is the same social reality that politicians deal with, that the people who are interested in improving society deal with, in *their* own way. But I can't deal with it their way and I don't think that they can deal with it in mine. No one asks Jim Brown to stop crashing football defense lines in order to walk picket lines and I hope no one is after Martin Luther King to put aside his civil rights activities to write a novel. The form of the novel needs no apology—it is its own excuse for being. I must be true to the Civil Rights movement in my fashion, just as I must be true to reality in my fashion, and my fashion is the novel.

Q. Does making the narrator of *Invisible Man* anonymous lead the reader into a kind of misjudgment, whether he assumes that you, the author, are the narrator, or whether he tends to see the narrator as having the whole experience of the Negro people, from the Southern agrarian environment to the northern urban environment?

A. Well, that was intended. I hoped the narrator would be both individual *and* representative of a group experience. There is a historical parallel, a historical allegory, underlying his experience and very consciously done. But this historical level of the novel also embodies a literary theme and an orchestration of traditional symbols. Negro songs, from the spirituals on, have always found a rich symbolism in a northward movement, and that symbolism has followed the paths of freedom. I don't mean merely symbolically here, because the escape from slavery was first to the south toward the Seminole Indians, and then often to the west toward the Indian Territory where Huck

Finn also decided to go to escape civilization. But mainly during the 1840's and 1850's and indeed as early as the 1830's the slaves moved toward the Northern star, going even as far as Canada. This actual movement has been given artistic meaning in the folklore and in the spirituals and sometimes in the Blues. Yes, you're quite right, the narrative draws its form from the movement of a black rural people north into a highly industrialized society, and it tries to be aware of the transformations in outlook, in time-sense, and in political awareness which take place when a rural people are subjected to the pressures of a more rapidly accelerating society.

Q. You remarked in an essay: "How is it then that our naturalistic prose—one of the most vital bodies of twentieth century fiction, perhaps the brightest instrument for recording sociological fact, physical action, the nuance of speech yet achieved—becomes suddenly dull when confronting the Negro?" Were you implying that to write about Negroes means to discover a new prose, a new way of perceiving and expressing the rhythms and the sounds of our language?

A. Yes, I did mean to imply that and something more: I was also pointing to the direction that my own prose had taken, and I was carrying on a little polemic with several writers whose work I really admired but whose failures in certain directions helped determine that which my own writing would take. I was also implying that the attitudes which our society brings to Negroes makes for deep reservations against knowing a broad area of American experience which, on the level of language alone, is rich, complex, and relatively unexplored. These reservations, I felt, had blunted not only the broad descriptive accuracy of these writers' prose, but had fogged their moral perception as well. Since this was a general statement made in a short speech, I couldn't deal with specific writers, but speaking generally I felt that the writers' ability to render experience was flawed by their inability to see Negroes, one tenth of the population, as human. Some did much better than others, one must admit, and perhaps they were able to do certain things with prose fiction so superbly precisely because they left out much of the complexity of American life that is symbolized, both materially and morally, by the situation of Negroes. I hoped that these extra-literary implications would be dramatized by the fact that a Negro American was making a statement concerning the potentialities of the language.

To answer your question more precisely I would point to Faulkner. His work draws not only upon white Southern speech, but upon Negro idiom and folklore. He recognized not only the differences between the white and black background but also that complex unity which marks them as parts of a total Southern culture. In his fiction you

can also see that Negro American speech is in many ways a richer language, or at least a *different* language, a more expressive and flexible language, than those used by many writers who didn't trouble themselves with either the particular social and political reality or the moral and social dilemmas to which Faulkner addressed his fictions. Perhaps the added richness of language was a gift made available through the heroic attention which he paid to the complexity of social reality.

Q. You were talking about Jimmy Rushing in one of your essays and you pointed out how eloquent he could be within the linguistic limitations of the Blues or the linguistic limitations of the Negro in Oklahoma at that period. Must the Negro writer turn to southern roots, the way the jazzman turns to the Blues, if he's going to be any good, if he's going to do anything new and different, like Parker, for instance?

A. Well now, let's step away from it. We know, for example, that Pushkin discovered certain implicit poetic possibilities of the Russian language, that he defined the social situation and certain basic character types in a most enlightening and suggestive manner. Gogol was able to abstract certain insights and approaches through these definitions and depictions, out of which he created his own. Dostoevsky did the same, as did Tolstoy and Turgenyev. All of these writers were highly individual, perhaps geniuses to a man. Nevertheless, all wrote about the superfluous individual in a chaotic, changing society, about the man of intellect and sensitivity who felt alienated and bitter and without creative direction. What I'm saying is that a literary tradition is, after all, a *tradition*, a definition of social reality made at a specific time and a technique of dealing with personality within society, and it exists to be used. It is there to be built upon. The same thing has happened to jazz, which is the joint creation of many talented individuals who have worked upon and added to forms that have engaged the Negro American jazzmen's imaginations for well over fifty years. One reason much of modern jazz is so thin, to my mind, is that individuals are trying to create without benefit of tradition and no individual talent can carry such a load. Someone has said that we are little men who stand on the shoulders of giants, and we see what we see are able—and do—precisely because we're up there on their shoulders. This is very true of the richly endowed individual jazz performer who knows his tradition, who possesses it within his ear. When he needs material to help give eloquence to his individual vision it is there in the form of the old, the tried and the enduring, to be used in giving voice to that which is unique and new. So much for the musician.

As far as Negro writers are concerned (and with literature being the broad intercultural and international stream that it is) there are many ways into it. For myself, I can only say that I happen to come not only out of American literature, but out of the Negro American folk tradition. I happen to be close to both traditions but I know quite a lot about the folk tradition because I have studied other literatures and learned how they have made use of their folk backgrounds. This has helped me see the possibilities, to see the wonders, of that phase of my background; and I have used it.

There are, however, Negro Americans who were born in the North, some of them quite gifted, who don't know the South and the oral tradition found there. To these it is not so much an "alien" culture as an unknown, unpossessed, heritage. Thus if they would use it they must do the same kind of job that any outsider would do, because this heritage isn't transmitted through the genes or through pigmentation but *culturally*. Such writers are in the position of doing research or plunging themselves—and I would suggest this with a sense of humility and respect—into a cultural realm which is very subtle and complex, and which requires the highest conscious attention. The worst mistake they could make would be to approach this slow accretion of experience and imagination as though it were automatically simple because its creators are lost in history, or because it is the product of the sense of life possessed and projected by slaves and their descendents. Nor should they underestimate its quality because sociologists have reduced its meaning by confusing its expressive value with the social status of its creators. Indeed, it is in the lore that Negro Americans have projected their own sense of life, have defined the human condition as they have lived it. It is here that they have projected the values which they look upon as life-preserving and human. It is here, too, that they've made their judgments on society. It speaks with rich resonance to those who would listen. Yes, one must go back to the Blues, to the folklore, to the spirituals—not for racial reasons, but because literature is made of fundamental experiences that have endured, and the form of that endurance is cultural.

This said, I would point out that the speech heard in Negro communities of the U. S.—whether Philadelphia, Los Angeles, Oklahoma City, Birmingham, or Harlem—is apt to be an extension of that rich Southern tradition of oral literature which has for a hundred years or more been undergoing a process of transformation in the North and West. Some meanings have been lost but basically it retains its music and its wonderful expressiveness. The language one hears in the streets of Negro communities can be as witty and as interesting and, if you will, as colorful as the speech heard in a Yiddish-speaking

community. I don't speak Yiddish, but then quite a lot of the Yiddish wit and phrasing is to be heard in our larger cities, on television and the radio—all to the enrichment of the language. The idiom is being “nationalized” just as the Negro American idiom has been “nationalized” for a very long time. For the writer who would make use of these possibilities of language it is a matter of possessing consciously the culture out of which he comes—or the highly pluralistic culture through which it is possible to express himself. To imagine that this requires no conscious effort is as naive as though I were to try to become a singer of German “lieder” without giving myself over to the discipline, the traditions, the subtleties, the nuances, that the art has developed over the long years.

Q. Do you ever feel as a writer what the jazz musician feels when he's “swinging”?

A. Yes, there's something close to it. You know: when I hit a long passage of invention over which I have little control. This is close to swinging. It's that sense of knowing where you wish to go and realizing that you're going there but being unaware of the country through which you're traveling to get there. You are swinging when you can feel the process of creation as it takes place and you go with and against its rhythm as it flows. Perhaps this is similar to what a jazz musician feels when he's got all of his combinations working toward a meaningful and transcendent pattern; when his ideas are fitting into a pattern supported by the rest of the band and he's building structures of sound. These are wonderful moments. They are much rarer for the writer than for the musician but they offer the rare delight that makes all of the hard work, the discipline, worthwhile.

Q. With the jazzman, it's generally a part of a group experience.

A. Maybe you aren't considering what really happens when you're writing fiction. Because while you might not be conscious of the writers who have worked certain themes before you, the knowledge of their discoveries has to be in your head. Especially if you've done your homework, if you've mastered anything of the culture of the form in which you're working. Thus you're not completely isolated, you're not really alone. You've got all those other guys, all the great writers with all their great passages, scenes, characters, images, symbols, insights, feeding your imagination. They form, along with the reality out of which you're working, the rhythm section and the chordal background upon which and against which your imagination moves. It was like my writing that doggone incest scene in *Invisible Man*. I almost threw it away, I almost stopped writing it even as I was developing it. I said, “Why, this is absolutely outrageous—who will read *this*?” Well, it's really a pattern from ancient tragedy: the outraged mother,

the incest pattern—all of that. And yet I was re-creating it in this outrageous fashion, and not only doing it, but *rendering* it in dialogue and graphic action, very heightened action, and with certain comic overtones despite the pity and terror that are implicit in such developments. Well, there's a kind of laughter that comes over you during these moments. You don't know, you really don't know what you're doing. You don't know where you're violating good taste, or developing a believable situation with believable characters. But you continue through faith, and through inspiration, and through the thrill of discovery or invention. You're moving into the unknown and flying blind—but not quite, because sometimes you know almost intuitively that what you're doing is quite possibly a parody of something serious that some other writer has done, that you're playing a variation on an enduring theme. You're not really trying to parody, or burlesque, or plagiarize, but this sense of parody, of doing something familiar which it yet *unfamiliar*, guides you and feeds your invention and so you continue until you've completed the action and brought forth, hopefully, the new. That's swinging!

Q. I'm interested in your experience with Richard Wright and how he influenced you.

A. Well Wright came to New York in '37 to edit a magazine. I had been reading Eliot and Pound and Gertrude Stein and studying the books mentioned in the footnotes to "The Waste Land" and such critical commentaries as those of Babette Deutsch and Harriet Monroe—you know, just swimming in all of this wonderful material, the poetry and criticism of the 'twenties, and I began to wonder why I couldn't find a similar sensibility in the works of Negro poets. Well, I found a poem, a bad poem, by Richard Wright, but one that bore the mark of modern technique and sensibility, and I asked Langston Hughes if he knew Wright. He did, and was kind enough to write Wright that I wished to meet him. In a few days, I received a card from Wright asking me to come to his place; thus I met him a few days after he arrived in New York. This was June, 1937, and I went to see him. He was very enthusiastic about writing. He hadn't published a book, but he had written most of the stories that were to appear in *Uncle Tom's Children*. During that year, once his magazine had folded, he worked as a reporter out of the Harlem bureau of the *Daily Worker* and I used to go up there to talk with him and read his stories. No one else would read them. The Communists were afraid of him, because they thought of him as a rival. They thought he was going to be a political leader. These were just local people trying to protect their territory.

Q. Were they really afraid of him?

A. They were afraid of anybody. They accepted the myth of the

intellectual as "devil"—one of the Communist notions that is still very much alive. "Who," they asked "is this outsider from Chicago come up here to Harlem and getting his name in the papers? He's a writer and an intellectual and those guys can't be trusted." Wright wrote very exciting reportage for the *Worker* for a year or so, but no one in the bureau would read his fiction. The stories lay there in an open desk drawer and although I wasn't seriously interested in becoming a writer myself at that point, I read these stories with great interest and thought them wonderful. They are among the best of Wright's work.

And yet, I never wanted to be like Richard Wright. This is one of the things that confused Irving Howe. My talent, and tastes were different even in the beginning, and I remember when Wright first realized this. I had published a story during the war titled "The King of the Bingo Game" about a guy winning at movie bingo. During the intermissions between pictures at the movies, you'll remember, they used to flash a huge wheel with numbers and a whirling pointer on the screen and if the pointer stopped on several of a series of numbers printed on the bingo card that you were given upon entering, then you were called to the stage to spin the counter to try for a selection of cash prizes. Well, my character made the first step and then, because he needed the money desperately, became locked in indecision; because he knew that when the counter stopped whirling his fate was sealed. He had to be dragged from the stage. Wright was quite surprised by the tonality of the story, which in itself was not significant. The point here is that the prose and approach were the beginning of the basic style of *Invisible Man*. Wright was very generous in talking about writing and fictional theory. I first read Henry James' prefaces at his suggestion, and some of Conrad's and so on. He had benefitted a great deal from having been a member of the Chicago John Reed Club where young writers met to discuss their craft and its relationship to social issues. The clubs were really part of the Communist culture front—though not all who participated were Communists. They were disbanded sometime before I reached New York as a result of some big international Communist decision. Nevertheless, they touched some important young writers and Wright, like the founders of the *Partisan Review*, was among these. Phillips and Rahv took *Partisan Review* and built it into an important non-Communist literary magazine. They were more interested in culture than in politics. Anyway, Wright had become consciously concerned with the craft of fiction and attendant matters in Chicago and this was fortunate for me. Since I had been trained to be consciously concerned with art through my years of studying music I was prepared to listen and

learn from his approach. As I said before, I had already been reading criticism in order to understand what Eliot was doing, what Pound was doing, what underlay Hemingway's prose. So it was very good for me to run into a man who was well informed and very enthusiastic and so generous in sharing his ideas. Wright was a marvelous person to know in those days. Later, he began to have terrible experiences in the Communist Party, this political business, and wasn't so easy to get along with. He became distrustful of many, many people. Even so, he was quite helpful to James Baldwin; and it was through Wright that Baldwin was given the Eugene Saxton Award long before Baldwin was a known writer. Much remains to be told about Wright and his influence.

Q. When you talked about your art consciousness, first in music, then in writing, it seemed that something was assumed here—this interest in art, this interest in expression. Is this something that you don't know the origin of, or was there a time in your life when you reached a decision that this was the kind of pursuit you wanted to follow?

A. Well, I read a lot as a kid, and I could get terribly absorbed in what I read. And I was terribly moved by music as by anything that involved the imagination. As a kid, going through pre-adolescence even, I could get into a state almost like sleep, in which I would be hearing everything, following all the developments, in a piece of music. I had a high capacity for empathy, even for the dances taught us in the early grades. That was one reason I caught the eye of Mrs. Zelia N. Breaux, the supervisor for music in the Negro schools in Oklahoma City, and she became my first music teacher. Also, I felt a certain delight in creation. My brother and our friends used to make our own toys. We were always trying to construct something. At thirteen, I worked for a dentist who taught me to make his models and to cast inlays and to make bridges—so somehow I decided quite early that I would be some kind of artist and I hoped I'd be a composer. Now there was nothing solemn about it, it was just a kind of feeling that that would be the way it would be.

Q. An attraction?

A. Yes, an attraction; a fascination. Earlier, I just wanted to be a train porter and brakeman like my cousin Tom. There was something frightening about the decision to become a composer, however. I was very shaky about it, because it seemed a rather arrogant decision. No one else seemed interested in the creative arts although many of my friends were interested in becoming performing musicians. But I didn't have to go around telling anyone about my intention—it was just a secret between myself and me. Still, I gave quite a bit of

attention to music. I was reading all of the biographies of composers, and histories of music, and I was listening and trying to play creatively. In fact I was also trying to compose even before I had any instruction. One summer our school band went with the Negro Elks out to Colorado Springs and Denver and on the way out I wrote a little popular song, which, when we returned to Oklahoma City, I showed to a jazz musician who played in one of Charlie Christian's brothers' outfits—this was Edward, he was a violinist and pianist and leader. This other musician took my song and promised to orchestrate it, but instead he took that song and sold it to a visiting orchestra for twenty-five bucks and they used it as their theme song. I didn't even have the satisfaction of being able to say, "I wrote that song." Still, even this helped firm me in my decision to become a composer. The jazz musicians were very important in this. After all, I was always around the leading jazz people of the Southwest, they were always coming and going, and to me they stood for glamour and good times, and possibility. So you might say that they pointed to the path that I was to take. My father had admired Emerson and, I learned years later, after I had become a writer, that he hoped I'd become a poet—but the jazzmen were the known creators in my community. So I moved from the familiar world of music out into the vast unknown of literature—isn't this so very much American? Isn't it wild and at the same time wonderful?

I remember standing in a meadow.
The ground hushed before me, a twisting sound
Came from the weeds behind. I heard the slow
Drifting of roots in soil. Flowers winked, round
And sullen—

Then, in the fading light, birds
Spilled through the tangled air like water, each
Silent, caught in a web that feeds on words
And let through only motion, a dusky leech
That drains the voice of evening, leaving
A husk of shadows.

The immense clock work
Of birds began to rise, fiercely turning.
Weeds scratch at a fence post—the flowers jerk
Shut, a mist comes from the river, huddling.
Everything's alive! The leaves are bending!

—Charles Wyatt

STRAINED PERSPECTIVE

I

For a moment you gasped
In the second's revelation
You saw the instant
Lived now
Felt and experienced before
You saw the door
Passed through again
And smelt the taste
Of coming rain

II

Again those blurred shapes
Stalked the tunnels
Of your mind
And melted the baited hooks
The tangled lines
Of thought
And like a whip
Lashed you
To a deeper concentration

III

And finally
Then
You looked up
And flashed your teeth
Grinned
And called time a thief
Glanced in your cup
Ordered cream and tea
Spat, cursed
And laughed a
Breathless laugh
Strained
And not quite free
And with eyes wide
As the sheeted snows of June
You whispered harshly
And all out of tune
"What I took to
Be a picture
Light and clear
Of a fixed boulder
On a firm plain
I now fear
Is a confused vision
of a battered buoy
On a storm-streaked sea"

IV

More rum
waiter
More rum
waiter
And a dash of sun
in my tea . . .
—Eugene Stelzig

THE FOREIGN RELATIONS OF ANCIENT RUSSIA FROM THE NINTH TO THE MIDDLE OF THE THIRTEENTH CENTURY

PART II

The "Norman" theory—according to which the first Russian state or Kievan *Rus'*, as well as its social, economic, political, and cultural institutions, was created by Scandinavians—was originally proposed in the first half of the eighteenth century. Subsequently, it has been subjected to severe criticism, resulting in a number of fundamental revisions. Nineteenth century "Normanists" (e.g. N. M. Karamzin, E. Kunik, to some extent V. Thomsen, and others) abandoned most of the cultural claims of their predecessors and contended that the chief contribution of the Scandinavians lay in erecting the political and social structure of the Kievan state. More recently, V. A. Moshin and G. V. Vernadsky have presented even further debilitated versions of the "Norman" theory. These twentieth century authors have argued that the Scandinavians merely guided and influenced the native Slavs, providing the catalyst, as it were, for the process which resulted in the formation of the first Russian state.

While some modern scholars such as Ad. Stender-Peterson and H. Paszkiewicz have in general continued to adhere to the mainstream of "Normanist" thought, a compromise theory was also suggested. According to this theory, there existed contemporaneously in the eighth-ninth centuries two political centers, each called *Rus'*, the one founded by Scandinavians and the other by Slavs. This "twin-*Rus'*" hypothesis, sometimes elaborated into a "multiple-*Rus'*" hypothesis involving Asiatic as well as Scandinavian and Slavic peoples, found support from V. A. Moshin, P. Smirnov, V. A. Brim, G. V. Vernadsky, and in the early writings of the Soviet medievalist B. D. Grekov. Owing to mounting archeological and documentary evidence, these scholars could no longer deny, as did eighteenth century "Normanists," that a native Slavic *Rus'* already existed as a political entity in southern Russia at the time when the Scandinavians first began to appear in the area. The modern critics of "Normanism"—F. Knaur, D. I. Bagalei, M. S. Hurshevsky, V. A. Riasanovsky, S. Lesnoi, and the Soviet

medievalists, B. D. Grekov in his later works, V. V. Mavrodin, M. N. Tikhomirov, B. A. Rybakov—have rejected even the “twin-Rus’” compromise. They have presented instead their own explanations of the origins of the first Russian state, assigning primary importance to native rather than foreign contributions. The debate persists, however, and the final word on the subject has yet to be said. The assessment which individual scholars make of the role played by Scandinavians in the foreign relations of Ancient Russia depends largely on the stand they take with respect to the “Norman” controversy.

Ancient Russia also maintained extensive contacts with Iranian, Turkic, and Semitic peoples, and Russian merchants penetrated as far as Africa, India, and China. These relations, based primarily on trade, were carried on over a period of several centuries, and they left discernable cultural traces. Commenting on the number of Eastern loan-words in the Old Russian language, the noted archeologist and historian N. P. Kondakov wrote: “Clearly, we are dealing here with broad Asiatic or Eastern influence . . . at times Syria, then Persia, then India and Central Asia appear, in some fashion, as directors of Russian culture.”

Eastern influences, and especially those emanating from the Iranian peoples, the Scythians, the Sarmatians, and later the Persians, were particularly strong on Russian decorative arts, dress, pre-Christian religion, and language. The so-called “animal style,” adopted from the Scythians and Sarmatians, found wide application as a decorative motif in Ancient Russia. The full and flowing costume worn by Russian males, as contrasted to the more tightly fitting Western European dress, had its origin in the East. The use of neck-bracelets in Kievan Rus’, of ornamental bells, and of certain other kinds of personal ornaments has been traced to Scythian-Sarmatian influence. The Persian god Kersh was worshipped as the sun-god Khors in pre-Christian Russia. The Persian poem *Shanāmeḥ* inspired the Russian epos about Il’ja Muromets and Sokol’nik. Interestingly enough, unlike the Persian original, the Russian version has a happy ending. The Russians apparently learned the art of ceramics from the Persians and adopted from them the eight-cornered rosette design. Contact with the Arabs influenced Russian crafts and decorative arts: the tempering of steel and the making of swords, the use of arabesque designs and ornamental hangings, the manufacture and wearing of rings. Altogether some one hundred words and expressions, approximately one third of them dealing with commerce, entered Old Russian from various Eastern languages. Several dozen Finnish words, mostly toponymics, were also incorporated into Old Russian.

Trade between Ancient Russia and the East was highly developed.

P.S. Savel'ev dated the beginnings of large-scale East-West trade with Russian participation to the eighth century, and noted that it reached its peak in the ninth-tenth centuries. This overland trade, involving the use of Russian rivers, followed the route marked by the cities of Itil, Bulghār, Novgorod, and Völlin-Vinesta. The Russian people played a very active part as middlemen in this vast commercial enterprise. Merchants from Novgorod carried Eastern spices, wines, manufactures, and precious metals to Völlin-Vinesta, Gdansk, Kolobreg, Shchetin, and other Baltic ports, exchanging these goods for amber and other products of Western Europe, which were then conveyed down the Volga River south and southeast. The Russians also traded on their own with various eastern countries. Among items regularly exported by the Russians, linen enjoyed considerable popularity; it was known as "Russian silk" in the East. Furs from Russia were in large demand, especially after they were made fashionable in the Muslim world by Zubaida, wife of Caliph Hārūn 'ar-Rashīd. The Russians also exported grain, slaves (usually prisoners of war), honey, animal hides, and lead.

The Caspian Sea served as one of the main arteries for Russian trade with Muslim and other eastern countries. After crossing that sea, Russian merchants went to Balkh, Maverannahr, or overland by camel caravan, to Baghdad. There are reports that they also reached China. Persian and Arab merchants, travellers, and adventurers came regularly to countries neighboring Russia, e.g. to Great Bulghār and the Khazar Empire, where they encountered their Russian counterparts; a few penetrated into Kievan *Rus'* itself, visited Kiev and other places. Accounts left by Muslim authors, some of them eye-witness descriptions, have proved a valuable source of information on the Ancient Russians, on their customs and way of life.

An unusual feature of Persian and Arab accounts of Ancient Russia produced in the tenth-twelfth centuries is the repeated allusion they make to the existence of three Russian "tribes," or major centers of the Russian population. Two of these "tribes" have been identified as the inhabitants of the Kiev and Novgorod regions. The cities of Kiev and Novgorod were in fact the most prominent political and commercial centers of Kievan *Rus'*. But the identity and the geographic location of the third Russian "tribe" have puzzled historians. Persian and Arab sources are indefinite on these points, while other sources, including Russian sources, contain no mention of this elusive "tribe." To add to the puzzle, Muslim authors have imputed certain practices and characteristics to the third "tribe" in its relations with the outside world which seem radically at variance with customary procedures followed by the other segments of the Russian population.

Such tenth century Muslim writers as Jaihānī, Balkhī, Istakhrī, Ibn Hauqal, and Muqaddasī, as well as the later authors Idrīsī, Vardī, and Dimashqī, have all mentioned the existence of the third Russian "tribe." But these authors characteristically used different names to designate the third "tribe" itself (Barmāniya, Arthāniya, Arthsāniya, War-Outhāniya, etc.) and its chief or capital city (Abarka, Arkā, Arbā, Arthā, Arfā, Arthan, Ourthab, etc.). While some of these forms may reflect variations in spelling or pronunciation, others do not seem to lend themselves so easily to this explanation.

One of the earliest surviving Muslim descriptions of the Russians was written by Balkhī. He noted:

Russia (the Russian population) consists of three tribes. One is (located) close to Bulghār, and its king lives in a capital called Kuyābā (Kiev). The second, a tribe far removed from it, is called Selāwiya (most probably, a reference to the inhabitants of the Novgorod area, who were called *slovene*). The third tribe is called Barmāniya, and its king lives in Abarka. People come to Kuyābā to trade. Concerning Abarka, there are no reports that a foreigner has ever reached it, for they kill every foreigner who comes to their country. They themselves come by water to trade; at the same time they reveal nothing about their affairs and their trade; likewise, they do not allow anyone to accompany them and to come to their country. From Arfā (Abarka?) they export black sable and lead. The Russians cremate their dead, and maidens are burned voluntarily with the wealthy among them . . . and they border the northern side of Rūm (i.e. Rome—in this case, the Byzantine Empire)."

Tenth century Muslim authors who wrote after Balkhī, generally speaking, repeated the basic information already supplied by him. But usually they gave different names to the third "tribe" and to its capital city. Sometimes, they added new and interesting details. Istakhrī, for example, wrote:

Arthā is located between the Khazars and Great Bulghār (here, the Danubian Bulgars) who border Rūm (the Byzantine Empire) to the north. They (i.e., the Russians from the third 'tribe') are numerous and so powerful that they have levied tribute upon the border regions of Rūm.

Muqaddasī, another Muslim writer of the period, reported that the third Russian "tribe" was one hundred thousand strong and inhabited an "unhealthy island."

As noted already, Muslim sources do not give precise geographical information about the third Russian "tribe." But they do describe the general area in southeastern Europe where that "tribe" and its chief city were located: north of the Byzantine Empire, west of the Volga River, and east of the Danube River ("... between the Khazars

and Great Bulghār . . ."). The third Russian "tribe," therefore, was either all or part of the Russian population inhabiting this territory. The regions around Novgorod and Kiev can be dismissed from consideration, since the Russians living there, according to Muslim authors, belonged to the other two "tribes." Consequently, the search narrows down to the southern extensions of Ancient Russia, and more specifically, to the Russians living just north of the Black, Azov, and Caspian seas.

Did the Russian population appear in this area early enough, and was it sufficiently large and powerful to be regarded as a distinct and separate Russian "tribe" by ninth-tenth century Muslim authors? Were these "Russians" really Russians, i.e. Slavs, or were they actually Scandinavians, as has been suggested by some "Normanist" scholars? Muslim sources help to answer these and other questions. Thus, Ibn Khurdādbih, who wrote in the ninth century, described Russian merchants as people belonging to a Slavic tribe, and went on to say

. . . they bring their goods from the distant corners of Slāwīya [most probably, a general reference to lands inhabited by Slavs, and hence, at least partially, by the Russians] to the Sea of Rūm [Black Sea] or else they navigate the Slavic River [either the Don or the Volga Rivers] and the Gurgān Sea [Caspian Sea] landing on any shore they please. Sometimes, they carry their goods on camel-back to Baghdad. At other times, they make their way in the country of the Slavs beyond Armenia, and then towards the Bay of the Khazar capital [Itil, located at the mouth of the Volga River], the Gurgān Sea, Maverannahr, Balkh, and up to Sina [most probably, China].

This account of the activities of Russian merchants, first of all, provides direct evidence that the Russians were regarded as Slavs. The land from which these merchants came was apparently large in size, as the reference to "distant corners" would imply; it lay "beyond" Armenia, i.e. north of the Caucasian Mountains, since Baghdad was the point of reference from which Ibn Khurdādbih wrote. Russian merchants seem to have travelled freely and rather extensively on the Black and Caspian seas. This would suggest that a Russian center or centers, probably containing various trade facilities, the means for equipping sea-going expeditions, warehouses for the storage of goods for trans-shipment inland, etc., were located in close proximity to these two major arteries of Russian commerce with the East.

Ibn Rusta, writing between 903 and 912, compiled a description of six peoples who inhabited southeastern Europe, including the Russians. According to Ibn Rusta, the Russians lived in two places: along the Volga River, and on an "island," or "peninsula," since Muslim authors did not differentiate between the two terms. A number of "Normanist"

scholars have maintained that the "Russian island" mentioned by Ibn Rusta was actually the Scandinavian Peninsula, and that the inhabitants of this "island" were Scandinavians. This conclusion seems far-fetched. The "island" was most probably located in southeastern Europe, since this was the only part of Europe with which Ibn Rusta showed any familiarity. His description of the "islanders" helps to identify them as Slavs or Russians, rather than Scandinavians. Ibn Rusta stated that they were ruled by a Khaqan. This title was of Eastern origin, and the prince of Kiev was the only European ruler who is known to have used the title as his own. It was never employed on the Scandinavian Peninsula or elsewhere by Scandinavians. Ibn Rusta noted that the Russians had many cities. Indeed, Ancient Russia was famous for its cities, while the Scandinavians, at the time in question, had few cities of their own. Ibn Rusta reported that among the "islanders," widows committed suicide upon the death of their husbands. This was a custom followed by the pagan Slavs in general, and more specifically, by the Russians, but not by Scandinavians. Several other customs attributed to the "islanders" by Ibn Rusta, such as marriage after death, reflected Slavic and Russian rather than Scandinavian religious observances.

Mas'ūdī noted that the Russians were a numerous people, that they were divided into many tribes and inhabited the shores of the Black Sea, which he, as well as several other authors of the period, called "Russian Sea." Mas'ūdī also reported that the banks of the Tanais (Don River) held a large population, which included the Slavs. Although Mas'ūdī himself wrote between 920 and 950, the information he gave related to the last quarter of the ninth and the first quarter of the tenth centuries. Ca. 980, Miskawaih described the Russian expedition across the Caspian Sea, and stated that the land of the Russians was located near that sea. It may be mentioned in passing that in the year 852, Armenians fleeing from the Arabs appealed for help to the rulers of the Slavs, the Byzantine Greeks, and the Khazars. This would suggest that in the middle of the ninth century, the Slavs (Russians) in southeastern Europe were regarded as sufficiently powerful to be a factor in resisting Arab attacks. The fact that ancient documentary sources refer to the southern tributaries of the Don and Donets Rivers by their Slavic names provides further evidence for the early presence of a significant Russian population in the area.

When accounts mentioning the third Russian "tribe" are integrated with other Muslim description of Ancient Russia the following picture emerges. The Persians and the Arabs believed that Russia was a large nation, located partially in the north, around Novgorod, and partially

in southeastern Europe, with extensions of the Russian population stretching to the coasts of the Black and Caspian Seas. Muslim sources, in general, tend to stress the importance of the Russians in the Black Sea area. Mas'ūdī and other authors actually referred to that sea as the "Russian Sea." Here the Russians from the "third" tribe (Istakhrī) were apparently powerful enough to levy tribute on the border regions of the Byzantine Empire. Frequent and rather detailed mentions of trade with the third "tribe" (e.g. Balkhī) argue for rather easy lines of communication between it and the Arab Caliphates such as the Black Sea would provide. Some segment of the Russian population (Ibn Rusta), and more specifically the third "tribe" (Muqaddasī), lived on an "island." As noted already, Muslim writers of the period did not distinguish between the terms "island" and "peninsula." It seems reasonable to conclude, therefore, that the third Russian "tribe," all or part of it, inhabited an island or a peninsula somewhere in the Black Sea area. Given these indications, the Taman' Peninsula, situated due east across the Straits of Kerch from Crimea, would appear to be the most likely choice.

The geographic location and the physical characteristics of the Taman' Peninsula fit well within the scope of the rather scant information about the home of the third "tribe" supplied by Muslim authors. Because of its swampy, marshy soil, and damp climate, Taman' may indeed be described, in the words of Muqaddasī, as an "unhealthy island." An important Russian commercial and political center, the city of Tmutorokan', was in fact located on the Taman' Peninsula. It was the only major Russian city in the entire Black Sea-Caspian Sea area. Consequently, Tmutorokan' was most probably the city which Muslim writers believed to have been the capital of the third "tribe." The Byzantine Greek name for Tmutorokan' was Tamatarka; sometimes, the shortened form Matarkha was also employed. Some of the names used by Muslim authors for the chief city of the third "tribe"—Arkā, Arthā, Arbā, Arthan—may be philologically derived from the Greek Tamatarkha Matarkha. Analogously, some of the names given to the third "tribe" itself, e.g. Arthāniya, Arthsāniya, War-Outhāniya, seem to bear at least a phonic kinship to Ourdanes, Wardan, Warthan, the ancient names of the Kuban' River, which flows through the Taman' Peninsula, near Tmutorokan'.

On the basis of the supposition that the center of the third Russian "tribe" was located on the Taman' Peninsula, what may be deduced about Muslim reports that this "tribe" killed foreigners? A number of scholars have discounted all such statements, contending that their source was an ancient legend which Balkhī accepted as truth, and which was then perpetuated by other Muslim authors. But this

explanation of a mystery by a legend seems unsatisfactory, at least until other possibilities have been exhausted. Moreover, in other respects Balkhī's account is trustworthy. His references to Kiev, to the *slovene* of Novgorod, to the Russians bordering Byzantium indicate some factual knowledge of Ancient Russia. His statement that the Russians exported "Black sable" and "lead" is confirmed by other and independent sources. Cremation of the dead and the burning of maidens were in fact pagan Russian funereal customs.

Scholars, however, have tended to doubt Balkhī's report that the third Russian "tribe" killed foreigners primarily because it contradicts the generally held conception regarding the attitudes and behavior patterns of the ancient Russians. Trade was one of their chief economic activities. The seemingly purposeless slaughter of foreigners was conduct radically out of character for a people obviously concerned with maintaining trade relations. One does not bite the hand that feeds one.

Balkhī's account, however, provides a clue to a possible explanation and suggests a compelling motive for the strange behavior of the third "tribe." He noted that merchants from this "tribe" were reticent about their commercial activities and place of origin: "... they reveal nothing about their affairs and their trade; likewise, they do not allow anyone to accompany them and to come to their country." When considered in this light, the reported killing of foreigners appears as part of a general policy of secrecy pursued by the third "tribe." Balkhī himself indicated the reason behind it: "... they kill every foreigner who comes to their country." The policy of secrecy, it would seem, was aimed at preventing foreigners from entering the territory inhabited by the third "tribe," i.e. the Taman' Peninsula. Apparently, this was the only area so affected, since there are no reports that the Russians from the other two "tribes" had attempted to enforce similar prohibitions.

If Balkhī's report is accepted, at least provisionally, as the basis for further speculation, it would follow that the foreign relations of the third "tribe" were ambivalent. The third "tribe" obviously desired foreign trade; merchants from the third "tribe" visited the Muslim world. On the other hand, the third "tribe" went to the extreme of killing foreigners in order to deny them access to or knowledge of the territory it occupied. What could have been the reasons behind such conduct? Balkhī's report again indicates a possible answer. He noted that merchants from the third "tribe" had two commodities to sell: "black sable" and "lead." Of these two commodities, "black sable" fur was especially valuable. Zubaida, wife of the famous Caliph Hārūn 'ar-Rashīd (d. 809), began the fashion of wearing furs

at court, which caught on, and slowly spread throughout the Muslim world. The highly prized "black sable," actually sable with a dark back, was supplied by the third Russian "tribe." But the Taman' Peninsula and adjacent territory was not the natural habitat of the sable (*Martes zibellina*). Sable is found in areas with colder climates, such as, for example, the Ural-Altai region. Merchants from the third "tribe," therefore, were obtaining sable fur outside of their own country, probably from the Ural-Altai region, and reselling it at a profit to the Persians and the Arabs. They served as middlemen in this very lucrative fur trade. Indeed, scholars are of the opinion that the Russians held a monopoly on supplying sable fur to the Muslim as well as to the Western world.

Consequently, it seems reasonable to conclude that economic considerations motivated the policy of secrecy pursued by the third "tribe." The killing of foreigners becomes understandable, then, as a measure adopted by the third "tribe" to protect its fur monopoly. If Persian and Arab merchants were allowed to come at will to the Taman' Peninsula and other territories occupied by the third "tribe," they might have discovered that sable was not native to the area, and traced the source of supply to the Ural-Altai region. By crossing the Caspian Sea and penetrating further inland, they could have entered into direct trade relations with the Ural-Altai natives, thus entirely eliminating the third Russian "tribe" from the transaction.

If the third Russian "tribe" was actually the southeastern extension of the Russian population centering around Tmutorokan', then other puzzling questions concerning the third "tribe" can also be answered. Tmutorokan', located on the periphery of Ancient Russia, was not as significant politically, economically, nor culturally as were Kiev and Novgorod. Tmutorokan', therefore, was not given equal status to these two cities (i.e. as the third major Russian center) by Russian, Byzantine Greek, and Western European documentary sources of the period. Indeed, it is only Muslim sources which speak of a third Russian center and of the third Russian "tribe." The reason for this was probably the following. The Russians had no need to adopt special or unusual measures for protecting their sable fur monopoly from the Byzantine Greeks and the Western Europeans. Sheer geographical distances precluded the possibility that they could have circumvented the Russian merchants as middle-men in the fur trade. The Persians and the Arabs, on the other hand, could have broken the Russian monopoly (e.g. by using the Caspian Sea route, to which Byzantine and Western merchants had no ready access). It seems probable, therefore that the prohibition against the entry of foreigners into certain sections of Russian territory, and specifically

those areas from which sable was exported, applied only to the Persians and the Arabs. Since this prohibition was aimed at the Persians and the Arabs and affected them most directly, it was duly noted and reported by Muslim authors exclusively. The conduct of the Russians seeking to protect their sable monopoly (the policy of secrecy, the killing of foreigners) was markedly different from the normal behavior of the Russians in the Kiev and Novgorod regions, where foreign merchants were allowed to travel rather freely. The difference was sufficiently striking to create the impression in the Muslim world that a distinct and separate third Russian "tribe" was involved. That is why Muslim authors, and they alone, wrote about the existence of the third Russian "tribe."

The preceding account (Parts I and II) has concentrated primarily upon the peaceful economic and cultural contacts between Ancient Russia and its neighbors. It should be noted, however, that warfare, both defensive and offensive, also played a very important role in the foreign relations of Kievan Rus'. But this subject is best left to the military historian. For the purpose of the present discussion, it seems sufficient to note that the Kievan state, already past the summit of its glory and power, fell finally at the hands of a foreign invader. The capture of Kiev by the Mongol-Tatars in 1240 marked its demise.

The fall of Kiev and the subsequent centuries-long overlordship by the Mongol-Tatar conqueror wrought fundamental changes in Russia internally and in its relations with the outside world. After a period of feudal disintegration, the center of Russian political power shifted north; it coalesced, grew, and developed around the city of Moscow and the Moscow principedom; from there came the impetus for the liberation and reunification of the Russian land. Meanwhile long and oppressive night descended on Kiev and the south of Russia.

DOLMEN*

Here we passed. Here we passed.
Here we paid obeisance.
Here we raised a stone.
Here we dropped the dolmen
In the mountain we had made.
Dolmen. Dolmen.
We raised our arms
And our shadows
Flew over the grass. Here men's shadows
Outdistance the sun.

—Eric Sellin

* A prehistoric tomb or monument consisting of a large flat stone laid across upright stones.

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