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Volume One : Number Three

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Subscriptions to be sent to Miss Judith Wild, 23 Hardy Street, Lower Hutt. Price 2s. 6d. copy, 10s. annual subscription.

Published by the Crocus Publishing Company Ltd. Registered office: 140-150 Lambton Quay, Wellington.

Printed at the Pegasus Press Christchurch New Zealand

Arachne

The Place of Maori Poetry

December 1951

NEW ZEALAND has an extremely homogeneous culture, far less varied than the British with its class differences and cosmopolitan contacts. In New Zealand the people we meet are apt to have all the same background and philosophy. The question, 'Who is this other person? What does he stand for?' does not arise so frequently. The result is an impoverishment. To persons of another background one feels both repelled and attracted; this leads to greater mental clarity and the development of ideas which enrich the existing culture.

The only major contact with alien ideas lies in the contact between Maoris and Pakehas. This is the contact which leads a great number of New Zealanders to consider the virtues and especially the vices of another mode of life. Here the idea is still met that work has a communal, not an individual, purpose; time is not yet conquered by the clock; land is understood not as farm land but as the fertile earth which brings forth all manner of animals and plants on which man may subsist. The Maori dances very differently from the Pakeha; he laughs and also drinks differently; his heart has a softer spot for fellow creatures; he still has his aristocracy.

These differences lead to many questions which seem to make people think in unending vicious circles. Quite justly, moral questions are asked as to the rightness or wrongness of this mode of life, but Maori thought has never been probed and absorbed by the Pakeha imagination. This could only be done if we went back to Maori culture in its purest and deepest manifestations: the art and especially the poetry.

It is possible that the sense of being isolated would tend to become much less acute among New Zealand intellectuals if such culture contacts as are possible in this country were actually made.

The essay presented here is a translation of Sir Apirana Ngata's introduction to a collection of Maori verse, *Nga Moteatea* (1929). It gives an authoritative review of the forms and nature of Maori poetry. It is significant that this essay, the only one of its kind in existence, should have remained inaccessible to English readers for over 20 years.

Thanks are due to the translator, Mr W. T. Ngata, Sir Apirana's son, a licensed interpreter, and to the publishers, The Maori Purposes Fund Board and Sir Apirana's executors, for permission to print this translation. The essay ought to establish beyond all doubt that New Zealand possesses an important poetic heritage in the Maori 'waiata', whose verbal and imaginative power and controlled rhythmic strength still make it a formidable rival for the Pakeha verse that came after, and that the assimilation of this body of verse into the New Zealand poetic tradition would mean a considerable enrichment of that tradition.

Introduction to Maori Poetry

By Sir Apirana Ngata

SUPPLEMENT TO 'TOA TAKITINI'

THIS COLLECTION OF MAORI SONGS first appeared in the supplement to issues of *Toa Takitini* of September, 1924 (3) Waiatas), October, 1924 (13), November, 1924 (8), December, 1924 (11) and January, 1925 (5), making 40 waiatas in all. Those were all the waiatas I could collect and annotate for other things occupied my time and I had to lay the task aside. Last winter I took it up again at the request of that venerable gentleman, Archdeacon Herbert Williams. I continued collecting and annotating waiatas and publishing them in the supplement of *Toa Takitini*. Ninety in all were thus collected and are reprinted here.

MAORI AS A UNIVERSITY SUBJECT

The Board of Maori Ethnological Research made representations to the N.Z. University Senate that Maori should be a subject for the Degree of Bachelor of Arts like French, Italian and Spanish.

The question was asked: 'Where are the Maori texts for the students to read and study?' Williams replied: 'Here they are: *Nga Mahi a Nga Tupuna*—The Works of the Ancestors, written by Sir George Grey. This work could be revised, and *Nga Moteatea*—The Poems, also collected by Sir George Grey. *Nga Mahi a Nga Tipuna*, as revised by Archdeacon Williams, has been published by the Board of Ethnological Research. *Nga Moteatea*—The Poems, has been assigned to me by that old gentleman for revision.

'NGA MOTEATEA' AND OTHER COLLECTIONS

It has been my fervent hope for many years that the songs, the satires, the prayers of the Maori should be collected, that their authors and origins should be fully investigated and that they should all be fully annotated. The meanings of obscure words should be explained and also allusions to myths, to the old battles, to the catastrophes and sorrows that befell our ancestors. The time when all this should have been done was when the old people who possessed the knowledge were alive, but my time was fully taken up pursuing the knowledge of things Pakeha, and here I am now somewhat belatedly performing this task.

Many of the Maori waiatas have been collected and published in the following books:

Some may be found in *Te Waka Maori* and in the Journal of the Polynesian Society, the Transactions of the N.Z. Institute, the Dominion Museum Bulletins, and in the publications of S. Percy Smith, Elsdon Best and T. W. Downes.

Many waiatas are contained in unpublished manuscripts held by numerous collectors. While I was gathering the waiatas published here I had occasion to look through those collected by S. Locke, W. L. Williams, Elson Best and Tiwana Turi. Some again were sent to the Polynesian Society by Whatahoro and T. W. Downes. I collected some of the waiatas myself in the Ngatiporou district. More recently Ngakura Pene Haare, of the Ngapuhi tribe, Taite te Tomo, of Ngati Tuwharetoa (who is also of Raukawa descent), and the Hon. William Rikihana, M.L.C., either sent me waiatas or explained allusions in many songs collected by myself.

Some of these songs are contained in five or six different publications, each time in a different version. This came about through the popularity of such songs; when different tribes sang them additions or deletions were made. The same happened when they were copied, especially when the copyists were Pakehas not quite conversant with Maori. Mistakes were made and we who came after may never be able to rectify them.

The only possible way is to go to the tribe where the waiatas originated and study the words sung there; perhaps also the explanations are contained in the tribal traditions. For this reason these waiatas were published in the supplements to *Toa Takitini* and such explanations as I could give were added so that people might see and send in their versions or criticisms of my annotations.

"UTAINA"—Load the Canoe

This is the motto on the seal of the Board of Maori Ethnology calling on us to load the remnants of the treasures of the Maori on to the canoe. Some of you may perhaps look askance at this and make the accusation that these treasures would be sold for money.

We have seen that our ancestors did not withhold these waiatas altogether from the Pakeha. The songs were

laid down in many books but the explanations were lost. Perhaps they had been given but they are nowhere to be found.

Would you rather that these waiatas were left alone with all their obvious mistakes? Taite te Tomo and Ngakuru Pene Haare have sent in their corrections. The call has gone out to bring all the treasures of the race to a focal point.

The Board of Ethnology has spent nigh on £9,000 on the publication of modern works by Elsdon Best, Te Rangihiroa and others, explaining the customs and the migrations of the Maori. These writers received no monetary reward for their labours. Such assistance as was given was expended on the publication of their works.

THE POETS' SKILL

In these waiatas the skill of our ancestors at expressing their ideas in the Maori language may be seen. In these days of Pakeha influence we are apt to be verbose and stilted, our mode of expression can be likened to a toddler taking a long time to go a little way.

In the days of our ancestors ideas were expressed pointedly in brief and euphonious idioms. Let us consider the following examples illustrating what I have said.

- *Na tona rite he paenga whakairo ki roto o Kaiweka*
'It was as if carved panels had been cast up at Kaiweka.'
Explained in today's language, this means, 'It was like the whales cast up at Kaiweka, so many were the hundreds of braves, the hundreds of chiefs, the wearers of tattoo, the emblem of greatness'.
- *Ko ana kai makamaka i aroha nei an, ko te zoaka te toia, te haumatia.*
'I fondly remember him for the food he gave away; his canoe was hauled without bidding.'
Expressed in today's language this would be, 'I fondly remember this man because of his generosity. When he went out to fish he returned with a haul and gave fish away to the many that awaited him. For that reason many gathered to haul his canoe ashore without being bidden.'

Tirohia mai ra
Aku pewa i taurite tenei ka titoko
Kai te ngaru whakateo e tere i Taupo.

'Look at my eyebrows
That were once even but now are jagged
like the waves whipped up at Taupo'.

Explained in today's language, 'Look at my eyebrows, hitherto they have been even, but since I have been stricken by an ailment they are uneven, like the waves at Taupo. When the storm breaks they are whipped up like the uneven jagged edges of trees.'

E kore au e mihi mei riro ana koe
I te puta tu ata i whakarakea i te awatea

'I shall not lament if death take you in battle;
it is disaster bursting upon the bright daylight.'

Expressed in today's language: 'I shall not lament, I shall not grieve over you if you were killed in battle while the sun is shining even if it is a disaster that sweeps men aside as trees are felled in the bush.'

There are innumerable examples. You, the students, can seek them out in these waiatas, or poetry of the Maori language.

The difficult waiatas are those filled with allusions to place names, names of ancestors and references to battles and catastrophes. The authors of the poems regarded these allusions as all-important. When reference is made to *E koro i Tongariro*, 'You old man of Tongariro,' the people of the Tuwharetoa tribe would immediately

understand that the reference is to Te Heuheu, a chief and a holy man who was buried by a landslide at Te Rapa and whose body lies at rest on Mount Tongariro.

Te Wharepouri lamented Nukupewepewa at Nukutawa and said:—

*Nga tai tangi max o Manukau i raro
Ki Ngapuhi ra ia, ki Wainukumamao
Ki Morianuku.*

The tides at Manukau below mournfully lament
And cry out to Ngapuhi to Wainukumamao
To Morianuku.

These names pass fondly through the thoughts of Te Wharepouri; they were the haunts of his loving friend Nuku, a man filled with noble thoughts who saved Te Wharepouri's wife and daughter in battle and returned them to him safely. It is his spirit that is speeding to the place from whence the Spirits take off for the Spirit World, *Te Rerenga Wairua*, and it travels there by way of the beach at Manukau, a name famed in the Maori world, and from there to the Ngapuhi district north of Auckland, and onwards until they approach the place where the spirits say farewell before taking their leave for Hawaiki, the Great Faraway, the remote Island, the far faraway land, the link with the Spirit World.

The Spirit rests but briefly at the lookout post at Morianuku with a backward glance, before it continues its journey.

Again we have this allusion—

*Ka riro aku taonga i a Te Hanamai.
'All that was mine Te Hanamai has taken.'*

Who can understand this without an explanation as to Te Hanamai's identity? Te Hanamai was an ancestor of the Ngati Whatua tribe, a chief of people afflicted with leprosy. Te Rohua's lament then becomes clear, for she was a beautiful woman in her time while she was in good health. When she was, however, afflicted with leprosy, caused by the hand of Te Hanamai, she was robbed of all that was hers, even to the beauty of her body.

For these reasons it becomes apparent that we must have the explanations of the many names that occur in the waiatas. Likewise we must have explanations of the Maori ideas and customs alluded to in the poetry. For instance:—

•

*Whangaia iho ra ki te umu ki tahaki.
'Give him food from the oven set aside.'*

That is, give him food from the oven set aside for chiefs, and not from the oven in which food for the multitude has been cooked.

•

*Kore tohunga mana hei wehe rawa ra ki te wai.
'No chief would ever separate by water.'*

This alludes to the ceremony of thwarting love, in which a person is taken by the priest to the water's side and incantations are said for thwarting love.

•

*Ra pea koe kei mua te waitapu.
'You are perhaps in front of the holy pool.'*

This is the holy pool of the seers seeking out the causes of death and seeing whether death has been caused by sickness.

THE TUNES

Maori poetry and song cannot be properly understood and memorised without a thorough knowledge of the tunes. How are these tunes to be learnt. The reason why some of the young people nowadays will not stand up and sing these songs is that they do not know the words of the songs. The words are being laid down in writing in the present collection.

Some of the tunes may be picked up by those who have an ear for music. However, the people able to sing these Maori songs are every day diminishing in number, the occasions on which they are sung are becoming fewer and a generation is growing up which is not very interested in these heirlooms of the Maori people.

The Pakeha has two means of recording the tunes of these Maori songs. First, it may be done by musical notation. The Hawaiian songs were dealt with in that way. Nobody has yet taken on this task, but maybe this will be done in the future.

The second method is by means of gramophone records. The Board of Maori Ethnology is giving this method much thought, and when this has been achieved the first of the methods mentioned, musical notation, may follow.

CLASSIFICATION OF MAORI POETRY

Maori Songs or Poems may be classified under several headings according to the theme and circumstances under which they were composed.

(1) *Lullabies (Popo, ara, oriori)*

When a child was born, a child of chieftain lineage whose ancestors performed feats of valour, a lullaby would be composed by its mother, father or grandparents. Some of the most famous Maori poems belong in this class.

The narrative would open as far back as Hawaiki, the feats of arms, the catastrophes would be recounted, and then would come the migration to these islands; the famous ancestors would be mentioned and the battles and disasters that happened here.

If perhaps an unavenged defeat or insult lay somewhere on the child's ancestral line, he or she would be incited to deeds of valour.

Associations of his ancestors with the brave chiefs of old would be recited and sometimes curses would be showered on the heads of the doers of the evil deeds that brought defeat and disaster upon the child's ancestors. Scholars are delving into waiatas of this type for allusions that will confirm historical data found in the tales of olden times. It is a well known fact that there is much Maori lore, the lore of the *Whare Wananga—House of Learning*, of the priests of the various tribes, contained in these poems.

(2) *Laments (nga waiata tangi)*

The majority of the Maori poems that have been recorded fall under the heading of laments. They are laments for the dead who may have died through sickness, accident, murder or some other disaster. In this class many of the most famous Maori songs are to be found and poetic style reaches its highest excellence.

Genealogies tracing back to Hawaiki also occur in these laments. The lament of Turaukawa, a great chief from Taranaki (*Nga Mokaka*, p. 322) the lament of Rangiuia, the last of the priests of Te Rawheoro, the greatest of the Houses of Learning of the East Coast, for his child Tuterangiwhaitiri, are two of the greatest Maori poems recorded. Some of the greatest poems are the laments for Te Heuheu, killed by a land-slide at Te Rapa, Te Heuheu's lament for Rapaka and the lament for Tupoki, killed by Ngati Maniapoto at Parawera.

(3) *Satires (nga patere, nga kaioraora)*

Satires are works containing ridicule, curses, boasting or jeering. Here may be found some of the really base expressions of the language, curses are flung from party to party. Stories are told of low and base deeds perpetrated in the olden days. These poems are similar in cadence to hakas, they are recited in the savage style of hakas. The words are given emphasis by the hands, the body and facial expressions. When a patere is chanted on the marae it is almost as if the performers are engaged in battle, so greatly does the frenzy of the words excite them, even in these Pakeha days the Maori blood is then really whipped up.

(4) *Love Songs (nga waiata whaiaipo)*

Most of the songs of this type have disappeared. They lasted but a day and vanished with the death of their

composers. Some have stayed and are sung today.

The vocabulary of affection is found in these songs. There were other expressions contained in these songs good enough perhaps for the cannibal days but requiring some toning down in the more modest modern times. Expressions of this sort were not peculiar to Maori in the embellishment of love ditties but find their parallel in Pakeha literature. Shakespeare is not free of them, but then he lived in the days of Queen Elizabeth, when such unrestricted expression of ideas about the relationship between the sexes was tolerated and often quoted in the assemblies of the rich and the great.

20 MAY, 1928

Translation: W. T. NGATA

Die Pelzenaffen

Charles Spear

By flowers of china-pink and lily pads
Metallic with the burnish of the sun,
Beneath a sky of lint, the village lads
Run out and cheer for holidays begun;
And decades later out again they run.

It is the long frontier; the Cossacks ride
And smoke and swing their curling whips;
The boys peer from the German side,
Like bergamasks with grinning lips.

'Fur apes', they jeer, 'You showed your heels
At Balaklava. Cowards!' Snakelike they slip
Beneath the boughs. The shaggy rider wheels
And swears and brings the carbine to his hip.

Shaken as leaves in a great wind,
Across the cramping glass again they swerve
Into the convex, and their voices thinned
Entwine like harp-notes on time's weltering curve.

The Blind

Short Story by Helen Shaw

THE HOUSE IS OLD. Early colonial. Its wooden walls are faded; weathered a pale, green-tinged ochre. They soak up the rain and darken, like damp clay.

Above the broken lipped chimneys rises a small octagonal shaped turret room, a great suspended prism of windows where, at certain times, opalescent pools of colour melt, drift and glister over the glass. One frill of scallops runs round beneath the spouting while between this and the windows shines an insertion of blue and frosted panes. Like a bubble the little room upstairs lets through the outside light in contrast to the verandahs which have been half closed in at the corners with a geometry of red and purple glazing and gloomily dampened by a knitwork of shrubs. The great belly of bow windows is draped in velvet, the glass being patterned with lace roses and perpetually half-drawn bottle green blinds, blinds that curb the lace impatient to

sneak outside with the wind.

Lillas Howell stood at one of the turret windows. She could have put out her hand and touched the winding wistaria heavy with flowers that curtained a downstairs verandah, but her big ringless hands, glazed, nobbled, faintly freckled from age, lay resting on a wet chamois leather and a piece of white jap silk, worn almost transparent. Her drawn back hair was iron grey, fuzzy where it escaped from a tor-toiseshell pin; her features were strong; the expression was dour, the short sloped line between the brows deep, puzzled, frowning; and the reddish purple frock, reaching high and tight around a prominent throat exactly matched the little cobweb of thickening veins on each cheek. And yet the face suddenly changed, the eyes brightened and the sparse sandy brows lifted eagerly as sheets in the yard beneath strained from their lines, cracking like whips.

'Mother', Lillas shouted, 'it's a grand day for the washing.'

And the answer came, tremulous and irrelevant. 'As sure as my name is Ellen-Christine Howell that's an angel with long curls looking in my window.' The tone ranged from thin soprano to broken contralto. It was the voice of a very old woman. Lying deep in her bed, the soft, collapsed, simple looking face framed with a neat plait of white hair showed among the many frilled pillows.

'You're seeing things, mother. I've told you it's nothing but a nor'west cloud', the daughter said, her smile going.

'Look at his beautiful eyes', the old woman went on. 'I wonder what he thinks of this wicked world. And don't you go whispering about me to your sister. I want the binoculars. Do you hear me? Bring them at once.'

Lillas trod heavily down a creaking, carpetless stairway; very narrow; but by the time she came up again bringing the binoculars her mother was asleep. She returned to the kitchen where her sister was lifting shut the little iron door across a grating, in front of the stove, with a short, bow shaped handle. The woman turned to Lillas.

'As mother used to say, this range just eats up the coal', she said.

'But you've forgotten to turn down the damper. Can't you hear the flames gallivanting up the chimney, Nell? Before we know where we are we'll have all those clean night-gowns ruined with soot.'

Nell slipped the fresh ironing from a high drier and stood nursing it, folding the things into her apron with arthritic shaky hands while Lillas drew down the pulley cord, winding it round a hook on the wall. The mellowed lengths of bamboo swayed and creaked above their heads. A red and blue checked cloth for dusting the bars hung over one end. Nothing had been changed in fifty years. The golden hammer of an eight-day glass-cased clock whirred and struck eleven.

'These stairs will be the death of me, Nelly. I'm weary to the bone, and I don't like the look of mother at all. She's cantankerous. She's getting quite queer. We shall have to move her down to the big bedroom.'

'And put up new curtains then, Lillas dear?'

'Indeed we won't. Where's the money for curtains? There's still some life in mother's old red serge. If we hung lace ones underneath. And that'll cover up the borer and keep out the glare. Maybe they'll keep out some of mother's angels if there's less light.'

Nelly nodded.

Two two women paused, burdened with memories, between them the kitchen table scrubbed into a grey map of smooth hollows and knife cracks.

Years ago the mother had slept in the turret room with the younger children. One of them had been born there, brought in a basket carried by an angel, so had believed the children. Divided from the plushy rooms and varnished dados downstairs the airy retreat for children had protected the late James Howell from their early crying. Later the room fell into disuse. From the northern windows there had been a fine view of their garden and orchard until, after the father's death, they had been forced to sell half the property. The boundary then ran through the rose garden. A new house sprang up and new children played over a tidy lawn where once the young Howells had filled their pinny pockets with apricots and pears. At first the mother lamented her loss day and night, but after a while she transferred her tin box of wills and insurances to the turret room for extra safety and so she was able to make this box an excuse for spending some of each day staring from the windows, noting every movement of her neighbours, as if by knowing how often they changed their sheets she was able to possess them in return for the loss of her land. When she became deaf and bedridden she forsook her domination of the house and returned to this room, where she had slept for the last three years, the tin box under her bed, its keys hanging round her neck in a black satin bag.

But she had been seeing things for weeks.

And so they carried her, wrapped in blankets, down into the core of the house, through the kitchen, along the hall, under the chandelier that had been her pride, past the picture she had painted on silk. Nelly turned a loose cream doorknob. It was cool and dim in the spring cleaned bedroom but for a beam of dustmotes that sloped from the blind down to a foot-worn rose on the carpet. The old reddish furniture had been wonderfully polished, the white curtains starched and all the fussy gilt handles rubbed up. The cleanness was like a scent,

Nelly thought, but the brown walls dropping with dark grapes and huge leaves were surely further than ever from the garden outside.

The mother seemed smaller now in the large double bed, in the larger darker room where the space was swallowed up by a massive mahogany wardrobe with crystal handled tiny drawers running down each side of the full length mirror, the mirror alone giving back some sense of distance and of reflected though subdued light. Here, among yellowing faces staring from ornate gilded frames she lay quiet enough although once she cried out sharply that there was a man in her room, near the wardrobe, with waxed red whiskers. The sisters hastened to sooth her, to pass it off lightly, for hadn't she always been fanciful and superstitious they told each other; hadn't she always wept if she saw the new moon through glass. Hadn't she always suspected every man who knocked at the door, of evil intentions.

But they heard no more of the man in the mirror and she was easy until the day the young Presbyterian minister came to call on the Howells.

She asked him at once, wasn't the manse damp? 'It has been damp from the beginning. I think it's built over a stream', she said. 'They must have been wicked elders to buy such land for a minister of god.' And then she whispered to the young man, though loudly and hoarsely in her deafness, that he put her in mind of her own little Jamit who died. 'Wrap up warm, Parson', she told him. The young Reverend Lawrence moved up closer to Ellen-Christine's bed. He chatted pleasantly shouting a word every here and there in the old woman's ear.

She kept nodding her head as if she were understanding, then her mouth fell open and she dozed while the sisters poured and handed tea, but she woke with a start crying 'Bless me', and tugging at the minister's sleeve she began to whisper that the 'man' had come back. He was over there by the wardrobe making glad eyes at someone and, sure as eggs were eggs, it was Tom Mathias, her poor dear Nelly's rogue of a husband.

Lillas Howell went on talking, from long habit ignoring her mother's mumbo jumbo, but the mother's cracked voice shrilled at them; her wrinkled arm rose up out of the pink knitted sleeve, pointing and quivering.

'Pity's the day you set eyes on my Nelly. Have a care, Tom Mathias. Maggie Moyle's leading you a pretty dance, the bissom, just like you led my poor Nelly. Nab him Parson. Spring off your tail Lillas. O my poor heart. He's slipped through your fingers. He's run off—in his father's gig—with my brandy. My head! Stop it, can't you stop the noise of the wheels.'

'Now mother', Lillas said quietly, 'don't fret yourself and drink a little tea.'

'He's stolen his father's gig, has he! That'll hurt the old man. But who'll pay the piper, you girls . . . she moaned now lying still, her nose and her eyes outlined with blue and the face like wax. ' . . his little bairn, Nelly's new born bairn sleeping in its crib . . . but don't think father and I are made of money . . . don't tell the parson I'm dotty . . . '

For the young parson it was just another old woman with a wandering mind. He'd seen such things before. The sun made his face hot, burning in under the half-drawn blind. Next door the neighbour trundled his child on a barrow of leaves down the path, past a hedge. The young laurel leaves at the top were gleaming. In the wardrobe mirror the reflections were tinged with a disconcerting yellowish hue. 'Our Father . . .' the parson began to pray.

Nelly Mathias was shaking. That dead and dreadful past that she had tried to outlive through Oliver her son. She rose up and carried away the tea cups. Hurt? She had nothing in common with the young parson but her nerves were not what they used to be, and for the life of her she could not speak for herself. I've been happy, mother, she longed to answer, but she knew that nothing she could ever say would impress her family, or the town for that matter, like the stale tale of her husband Tom going off in his father's gig with the fast handsome widow, Magdalen Moyle. Humbly she washed the thin china cups, carried them to the dresser. It dismayed her to hear her feet shuffling across the worn linoleum, to see that her slippers were familiarly shaped with the same bulges and worn down heels she had watched coming in her mother's shoes. She emptied the tea-pot, rinsed it, and left it upside down to dry; she carried the blue rimmed strainer to the back door and threw away the tea leaves on to a mound under some geraniums. She unpegged tea towels and put away the peg basket on a shelf beneath the mangle, taking care to drape the mangle with its turkey red cover. The family habits were now fitting her like her own gloves. How often she had told Oliver stories of her life in this house, and yet now that she had come home she felt as if the very hooks and shelves were intent to destroy the last of her youth, as if the damp drab walls were compelling her to accept old age. And what an effort, a burden, had become this struggle with the dust that would keep rising up between the widening cracks in the floor boards. Even though it had all been done in the morning she could see even now the tiny heaps of yellow dusty powder near the legs of the umbrella stand, and in the slanting afternoon sunlight the dumpy turned legs showed up their lace-work of borer holes.

Nelly Mathias came slowly into the front of the house to find Lillas.

Lillas was speaking with a school girl. The girl's hair, tied by a ribbon, hung down her back in a heavy tail, coarse shining kindy hair, and she was fiddling with a long end of braid knot tied about her tunic.

'This is Mary', Lillas said. 'You remember Mary's mother, Kathy Essler, Nelly?'

Essler, Nelly thought. Kathy Essler, the young Irish servant blushing to the roots of her black hair. And now, so soon, Kathy's likeness, Mary.

'I remember your mother as if it were yesterday, Mary,' Kelly said.

But Mary had to go. She would tell her mother had bad poor Mrs Howell had been taken. Her mother would be sorry. The sisters watched Kathy's daughter flying down the hill beyond their garden, steering her bicycle with one hand, the other pressed on the crown of her white hat. The brim blew back from her rosy face and at the end of the brick wall she waved. Then the bicycle raced out of sight.

'She's a headwind every stone of five miles', Lillas sighed.

'Don't fash yourself, Lillas dear, the girl's young,' Nelly whispered. Tears came into her eyes. But Lillas thought her sister wept for their mother.

'Shut the door', she said briskly. 'We'll be having dust all through the house.'

It seemed that the Reverend Lawrence thought the mirror in the wardrobe was giving Mrs Howell her fancies; but even if something, something sudden, should be done about it, first they must send for their brother Will who had always, Nelly remembered, when all was said and done, been able to twist their mother round his little finger.

Will Howell, the lawyer, was shocked to see the change a few months had brought, to see his mother so much at all their mercy—no more ruling the roost, no more keeping up of appearances. The tight plaited wreath of hair above her soft shrunken face reminded him that at last old age had placed her beyond vanity, not that he would remember her like this, but rather how she had with long strokes brushed her hair down from the wide pink parting into a snowy flying cape and then, separating it into three strands had fluffed it up, rolling it over her two fingers, and finally stabbed it with pins into the shape the world knew her by—not this tidy wreath that other hands had woven.

At first he made a pretence of conversing with her, sitting close, shouting simple questions, but he could no longer reach the mind he had known, so he held her brittle fingers and listened to her memories. She was wandering through the eighty odd years of her life, living in whatever time she chose. Although he knew emphatically that his mother's mind had gone to pieces it still left him feeling an outcast, when he saw that the child she doted on was neither himself nor any of his living sisters but Jamie, a boy who had died before his parents emigrated. Will Howell had always seemed the Prodigal son had come home, a banked on his mother's affection. Now it figure in a glass; a delusion. That his mother's mind was failing was one thing, but to see her wanly smiling and crooning to the empty mirror left him with a feeling that was close to shame. For Lillas this mirror-gazing was just another daily worry. What, indeed what would be left for Lillas when she need no longer answer mother's life-time of habits. For poor old Nelly a word in passing was enough to send her hysterical with a theatrical kind of sympathy; it made his blood boil to hear her speak of little Jamie in the present tense: 'Little Jamie's lost in the heather with his grandpa Baillie Howell, and they've nothing but a communion cloth to keep out the cold, Wil'—it was as if she really believed the twaddle his poor mother told them. And worse than this were the long solemn lustful faces of neighbours who gathered round the door in the evenings to be astonished, lugubriously beguiled, by stories of Ellen-Christine's latest fancies.

To end it all he came to a quick decision. They must remove the wardrobe. No, not that, for she had never cared for changes. They must cover up the glass, tell her they were sparing her eyes from the light.

Lillas took a long length of lilac print and hung it over the mirror, leaving the little drawers showing, and seeing the stuff again the mother was pleased, for she remembered that from lilac print she had made the children's sunbonnets and she thought for a long time about how well it had worn and she was calm again. For days she was calm.

But one morning, all at once, her sickroom bell, crazily tinkling, brought them all running. She was moaning, her head turning slowly towards them. 'Are you stone deaf?' she whimpered. 'Listen, Lillas. O Nelly there's a little child lost in our roof, up under the rafters. Mammy, mammy mammy. It's lost. It's under the rafters, crying, Nelly; mammy, mammy mammy. It's lost. Go and look.' The last flicker of vivacity, of suspicion, had died down in the once large eyes which were filmy now and small under the drapery of the lids, and the cheeks were never without tears lying passively in the first met wrinkle. There was no rest for Lillas and Nelly for morning, noon and night, no matter how hard they worked to keep the sickroom fresh, except when she slept they must answer her bell until each one was dropping with tiredness, they must pretend to be searching, high and low, for the lost child calling, for the silent sobing that only the deaf could hear.

Mammy mammy—Nelly would hear it in her sleep. It was a wee bit of a cry a long way off but in the dream she would hurry between narrow walls, just as a long time ago, after Tom had left her, she had hurried to her own child, to the white cot in the room at the end of the hall.

Since she had come home Nelly had been given a spare room. She lay there now trying to sleep. There was little in this room but its bed and table; a photograph of herself as a girl, with a cloud of long waving hair tied

on top; but the features were fogged and the large placed eyes seemed to know nothing of life. Once she had seen her mother kneeling on this very same yellow hearth rug, going through the servant girl's trunk, feeling right down to the bottom. Triumphantly her mother had held up a slipper and shaken out from the toe two little silver earrings, two crosses. The girl had been packed off with tight-lipped advice and the crosses returned to a green leather jewel box. To the vault of the family's past.

Shall I not be stifled . . . ? Yes, mother had often thrilled them to the marrow with her dramatics, and she'd learned all her lines from the theatre itself, not from books. Mother had always been a simple soul, ruling the roost, but simple tastes. I met a little cottage girl. She liked putting out the crumb tray to the birds. Where had all the birds gone when the orchard was cut down?

Into the Mathias pine trees across the gully? Mathias—her name and Oliver's all these years. An old man—old Donald Mathias, going like the Lord of Creation, in his knickerbockers, down the main street, on a daily tour of inspection; down the winding track his father's bullocks had travelled, carrying wool; the name of a Scottish village painted on his five-barred gate in the tussocks; hard as nails; mean as dirt.

An old man. Near with his money. But an old man. No little Oliver had ridden on his knees. She had taken all she could from old man Mathias and his childless daughters. She had disowned him just as his son had disowned her. Hadn't it been enough to endure his screaming and cursing and keaning over his stolen gig and grey? She had looked but once, before she left her home town, into his sagging face, and had passed him without recognition.

Hard as stones, little Nelly Howell, the youngest of five, father's pet. She had left him, jogging in his pony cart up the long hill to his sonless house, his knees covered with a fur rug, his hand blue and slack on the rein. That town house was still there, a stone's throw away, and for all she knew there might still be Mathias kith and kin sleeping under the sodden greening slates, watching small new busy houses springing up on the land where their stables and pigeon house had once lured romantic boys and girls. But she—she had had to watch the Mathias full slack lips and handsome disguising moustache re-shaping on her son's face.

.....
When Nelly Mathias woke she felt stifled. Her throat was dry. Her heart was going at top. She had had a dream and in the dream she had seen little Jamie leading Tom across a street. Tom was walking with timid shuffling steps, and together he and the child went up to the door of a public house. There Tom had stood underneath a splintered glass verandah roof while the rain poured down on him, and he was playing on a toy concertina as if his life depended on it. His face, blank and leering, looked kind of daft until suddenly he began to bawl like the raving loony old drunks who had scared her stiff as a child; but when he turned round to go inside the pub she read *Come Into the Garden, Maud*, hanging in a golden text across his shoulders. Then Jamie had danced up to her shaking a sailor cap and whispering, *A penny for the Guy, sister dear*. But just as she put out her hand to touch Jamie's curls the tenderness that had welled up in her was bitterly quenched by the sight of her Celtic grandfather, Baillie Howell, standing high up above her in a pulpit, thumping and haranguing with his clenched fist, and his long white Scottish beard was burning round the edges. She was choked by the dust that rose up and clouded out of the pulpit cushion, while Baillie Howell shouted *Adultery and Charity* until she saw dimly, through the dust, that the pulpit was really a small white box, narrow, with six silver handles.

The relief that the dream was over. But she left her bed. Who were they, who were Lillas, Will, and herself to take away sight from the dying? She must go and take down that old bit of lilac from mother's wardrobe mirror. She must go now.

Now.

She slipped into the windowless hall where it was still dark and began to grope her way along, feeling the bubbled up patches on the wall paper, patting at doors, running her hand along the umbrella stand, the way she had trodden that very hall as a child, but then much faster, in a frenzy to be past the hump-backed shadow thrown by her father's black coats. If only she were not so stupid and weak, blind as a bat in the darkness, toddling past the skirting boards like a done old man tapping gutters with his white stick. And then she must have taken a step too few before turning, for her face met thick musty smelling cloth, the velvet: of winter coats, the coats of the dead or departed that had been saved for a rainy day, and she knew that the tiny knocking sound was the rim of a bowler hat rocking on its hook. Cold rushed through her, the old guilty fear at disturbing taboo possessions; daring to open mother's best umbrella in the hall and bring bad luck on the house; mother; mother going with a thin ebony brush all over father's hard hat, her ring clicking on its brim. It used to hang on Sundays at the back of the church in the cloakroom where the elders left their hats and umbrellas. It was all muffled in there with solemn whisperings under the low ceiling and the heads were bald and the beards were white. And then she had followed father's slow tread; his coal black boots. She had always been in time under father's wing.

She pushed at the wall to free herself but her loose hair had wound round one of the coat buttons and, fumbling for it with chilly fingers she thought, it used to be mother's hair, the silvery rolls enclosed in the white

net, that had snagged on father's waistcoat button when he kissed her. She started to weep and giggle.

'Lillas,' she called softly, 'Lillas.'

At once, almost at once her sister came towards her and untangled her hair, and Nelly, following Lillas, walked slowly back to the spare room. In the doorway she saw that it was morning; the light was coming, showing up little wreaths of silver on the wallpaper. A gust of wind whirled out the curtain, fanning on her face.

'Fell the nor'wester blowing up, Lillas', she said. But Lillas Howell elbowed away the meshes of curtain and clasped the blind, pressing around its frail papery edges with her big vein rippled hands. Then she began to draw it down, letting it slide over the window at a snail pace that hushed the click of the roller, and dark slipped over the walls and took away the colour from the wreaths, the gleam from the glass.

'Mother's gone, Nell', the elder sister said and drew the blind down beneath the sill, holding it there a moment before letting go, for the spring had a habit of jerking back with a snap.

'You didn't call me', Nelly whispered, going cold.

'Dinna say that. Dinna. She went in her sleep', Lillas answered without turning round.

But Nelly Mathias knew she had been called, only she had gone too late to give back the mirror, and so nothing could be altered. Ever. She pressed her hands to her ears. Now she would hear the poor bairn crying in the rafters until Kingdom Come.

A little gust blew out the blind, tapping the slat and cord bobble gently against the wall. Lillas Howell slipped her hand in behind it and closed the window.

The house is old. Early colonial. Its wooden walls are faded; weathered a pale, green-tinged ochre. They soak up the rain and darken, like damp clay.

Cherry Lockett

Legend

Far in the north a maiden lies,
Deep in the ice her flesh like pearl
Burns through the still blue crevices,
Binding the brittle region round
With hidden warmth.

She lies asleep,
And all the waste bends o'er head.
Crusted with rime the frozen trees
Lean down their boughs. The tortured stone
Heaves up the weight of ice and snow,
While gelid waters underground
Pulse through the night without a sound.

But twice within a thousand years
The link-mailed feet of paladins
Rang through those caves of singing stone,
The crisp snow churned about their heels,
Their nimble blades chipped at the ice,
With no man bold to speak a word,
Only the ringing metal cried,
Splintered upon the air and died.
Then whiteness filled their purblind eyes,
And out they stumbled, half-alive,

The jealous waste caught at their breath,
Rolled in the mighty gusts of cold,
Leaving the desert to its love.

So let this endless time conspire
To fold my love in its embrace.

Prayer for a Wanderer

Father, your child is abroad;
Heaven knows what prayers he is singing
In the desolate streets;
Heaven knows where he is going,
Even the hour of his coming,
And so does he.
But Father, it is a long journey;
Let him pause at the darkened alleys,
Guide him in even ways,
Protect him from men and demons.

When the bravos lift up the bar
And straggle into the night,
Well-girt, nimble and able,
Their daggers under their hands,
Red gold bulging their pouches,
Be ready at hand, O Lord,
Tumble them into the Arno,
That he may pass over unharmed,
Seeing the stars in the water.

When the mohocks whoop and call,
Leaping in mid-career,
Twisting the jewelled cane
To wrench out the vandal blade,
Then may his lighted face
Strike all their hearts to stone,
So that they jostle him lightly,
And leave him alone.

Father, your child is abroad;
When the beggars, the worst of all,
The tapping and creeping tribe,
Come swarming across the cobbles
And rattle their cups by his knees,

Send Thy still hosts to his side,
That his charity may be pure,
Then as they cringe in shame,
Behold how undismayed
He sleeps with the coming of dawn.

On a Verandah

J. R. Hervey

In the full embrace of sunshine I look upon
The cold and cruel grass, upon the damp
And crumpled leaves, and, warm with confidence,
I am withdrawn from the welter of decay
And glistening winter. O residence of life
In which I sit, the heat of love about me
And comforts cringing, resist the rainy wind,
The sly disaster creeping through the night,
The thieving hand of loss, the heavy tread
And possessive voice of sorrow, or if thunder
Leaving the sky splinter my solid peace,
Support the heart and let no ruin ravish.

Cool and green
Let death lie, and the token leaves betray
To no friendless fall, but let the path sing
With the romances of spring, and let the heat burn,
And the growing gold wipe winter from the grass.

Hubert Witheford

A harvest shaken on the axle-tree
His senses dazed. Back to his pulsing heart
He did not harken.
His pinioned limbs, the bandage on his eyes
Did not compel his powers to the dark.

The seasons passed. Riding to execution
Around some corner, heaven knew which one,
Avid he twined the rags of phantasy
To jejune effigies of pain or freedom.

An hour chimes. Pangs of despair and pride
Resolve themselves in a more blinding birth,
The welling of a wound, a tiger spring,

Identity and how he is and where
And how, say each millenium or so,
He would awake like this and in this manner
Thrust back his hands and on this jagged nail
From the wrist-binding cord break just one fibre.

Here on a shipwreck, Ariel, Caliban
Ariel in earth and Caliban in town,
From their captivity they cry out their parts
With no curtain of monument to shroud
Behind them the empty night —

'Here we endure the love that burns the stars
And from our narrow stage you must decipher
The purport of that play or must depart.'

'Depart' their summons is 'back to the flood
That swamps the sun here and in Lombardy
Or else receive what we have here to show
of the incompetence of human action
And the dim appetites that build the rose.'

Six Sonnets, Unpleasant

Louis Johnson

What Frightens Most

What frightens most is not being able
to see through the door at who knocks
or under the solid surface of the table
at the dark secret place the frocks
conceal; the place where it seems
half-wanted, a hand moves damply, where,
you are sure, you hear a scream's
nerve Your alive only supersonic ear —
Listen: detects. Yes: it is true, if
only you could, but not in company,
twitch, put the hand there, in a jiff
all would be smiling and sweetly
and it wouldn't be what most shocks
the gooseflesh to stand straight when something knocks.

Bells

We do not ask you to suspend disbelief
unwillingly, but rather give something
of love, something of effort and grief
and there will sure enough be the real ring
to the diminished illusion. I do not tell
you, 'here in a minute I shall ring a bell',
to no purpose without preparing you for
something to jangle like thunder at the door.
You are uneasy already, I see, not knowing
who the magician is who is talking
glibly thus. Shall I uncover myself, showing
how really your own sweet terror is walking
you unawares out at midnight and you
are shuddering, naked, wondering what you will do ?

The Kiss

Something soft and loose he kissed her with,
as though the juice had all run out
of something hard between his teeth,
oozed, yellowly, unheard, into her mouth.
She shuddered, closed her eyes — and tried again
and fainting, fell against dark sensual breath
fetid upon her wishes. She felt death —
for always life is death — stroke with its pain
of teasing pleasure there where coming of age
taught most. Like hairs upon her tongue.
All necessary words are found for buried parts;
who knows how much hurts or where hearts,
so sudden in fierce heat most fiercely burn,
or where is most that pulped kiss makes her yearn ?

Dreams

Well, sing to them, lullaby lines
my loves whose voices a mirage
of tears will mirror. Sleepers
walk through the midnight mirrors;
the medieval streets and squares
rouse from squalor and the signs,
palaces, are bright to the fond eye
finding at last the outward poetry
sensed and seen hidden beneath
time's ageing, dirty overbrooding sheath.
There's isn't need to wake — dance
in this time reclaimed and know France
is again promise and fair and sleep
will kiss you kindly through what else you weep.

The Children

More violent only since their hands accomplish
so little meaning, frustrant then destroy:
Children ! children ! the bridges falling; the skies
a menace of fantails: and the decoy —
that foreign officer with suave accent, polish,
breathing upon his fingers in the frost.
They have stolen and hidden his gloves.
And do they remember histories
written, perished for less, and lost
in the rectories of time: such symbols love's
hands willingly (glass-slipper-myth) fitted?
Upon such meagre breakages have filtered
light of a dozen baroque domestic days,
and never the careless children mend their ways.

The Music Teacher

Boarding-School Sonnet

The music teacher, dread in this girls' world,
seemed all their fates — to them — doom
wrapped in one small man whom wild
dreams raptured with in each dark room
at summer nightfall. Singing they
would rise on tides of dreams — love
lave, lay naked by — surge upon do, me, ray,
and 'never, never, do not ask me, leave',
Each, in her heart, felt a base earthbound
urge to seize his flesh in hand
and leap all hidebound laws
to fasten him one moment, swiftly hers.
Oh, but what trick of fate the dream destroys.
He was deported for his affairs, with boys.

I Want to Torpedo you

Short Story by Erik Schwimmer

Note: Before the invasion of Normandy, it was said that the Germans were calling for volunteers for a special type of man-directed torpedo for use in the Channel.

—These are two good ones, Heinrich. What about them?

—Hello girls, ever been in a submarine?

The two girls turned around, one blonde, tall with a lightly browned skin; regular features.

The other white-yellowish, with large black eyes, there was a hidden tension in her flesh, not pretty but hidden and fierce, mysterious.

The one was Jeannette and the other was Jeanne.

—What happens if a torpedo hits you? asked Jeanne.

Heinrich told her: you just explode. He decided to have Jeanne although he did not like her. He said:

—I'd like to torpedo you.

—What do you mean? said Jeannette.

—You know, it is dark and wet and slides underneath the water.

—I've never seen a submarine.

—Well, come along; we'll show you over.

—Where is the submarine? asked Jeannette.

—You will see.

—What type of submarine could that be, eh? said Jeanne.

—A very queer type of submarine.

—I'll bet.

—But first let's go to the Republique and have a chat.

—Heinrich took Jeannette and Friedrich took Jeanne. Heinrich's admiration for girls like Jeannette was a habit.

They entered the Brasserie de la République, ordered a bottle of Moselle and sat back.

—Let's not talk about the submarine any more, said Heinrich.

—Where are you going to take us?

—To heaven, said Friedrich.

—The usual way?

—No. We are going to heaven in the big wheel.

.....

There is nothing frightful about it, said the captain. You live—now. An enemy cruiser costs £1,000,000 and carries about 500 men. If you can achieve the destruction of one cruiser your life has not lacked usefulness. You will not feel anything. You will explode and die. At the moment—you live, and make of it what you can. You can't expect more of life, than joy without limits and a death your one great deed.

.....

O God—Still alive—In the air—where are my legs—and my waist—and my arms. God, O my God, I am still alive—the story was untrue. O pain.

Down into the water he dived.

Poor man; he tried to swim with one head and one arm showing.

.....

That night Friedrich made love to Jeanne.

—Jeanne, let us go down into the darkness, let us go down into the submarine. Darker, still darker. Deeper still—is it possible—deeper still into the darkness.

—Jeanne, I love you. Jeanne. I don't love you, you are just a portal to, Jeanne I don't know what you're a portal to, your're a portal to darkness, to sub, sub, to death.

.....

Heinrich made love to Jeanne that same night, later. At that very late hour when the night itself had developed its sophistication to the full, Jeanne and he delivered themselves to an unbounded desire for destruction.

—Jeanne, don't you feel we are both in the water wet and cold and deep. I am going to explode you, my victim, my nimble cruiser, my cunning destroyer, my burning torpedo-boat.

—No there is nothing wrong with me, Jeanne.

—I don't understand what you are saying.

Oh thank God. He suddenly feared his talk had given away the secret. It was impossible to know whether she had guessed it. Was she pretending? Was she a spy?

'Do not trust French women?'

What is wrong? Why can't I stay with Jeannette, why do I have to go to Jeanne. Why can't I caress and kiss and love and admire as a golden Greek goddess Jeanette who is light, life, play with one movement of her arms. But I can't go on. If I loved her, it would be like playing football while waiting to be executed. I've got to leave her and go and 'live', my God, 'live'. I must look for the darkness and ferocity to fight it.

.....

Look at the streets being neat and tidy.

Look at the shopkeepers and their polite talk.

—Is there any other way in which I could oblige you, monsieur.

—Now Heinrich, what are you casting your eyes about for, sizing up each of the girls at the tables as if you had to give them marks. Close your eyes, dash off in any direction and sit down at the table you get to.

—And then? said Heinrich. Then there will be a shrivelled man of fifty at the table with a wife like a balloon. Or a young woman with a low décolleté which looks very nice and a repulsive face.

—Come along, never mind where.

Melbourne, 1944

Elegy 1944

James K. Baxter

The Flower-Venus of our Tropic day
Makes aim of anarchy, virtue of anger,
Beguiles with glittering the gilded flies
Who sack her hoard. She meshes them: they die.
Error and Truth have mated. These afford
The paradox of Love housed in the hangar,
The sleek, the svelte and unobtainable
In mannequins marvelled once, in sculpture lines,
By metal mastered. And as the forest boar
Apulian, whose stroke is lightning — he
Like gnarling torrents fearless in brute valour
Must bear with weight of seasons and their war
Deformity more monstrous. The sword-tusk
Which had unbellied hounds that yelping tore
His iron flank — this natural armament
Does now unseat its bony citadel
With curved enforced growth, boring each hour
More in his maddened skull, till Life aghast
At self-rebellion part, and immolate
His bones wake wonder in some rocky den.
So are we stricken mad in enmity
By our own steel ensanguined more with years.
The tyrant-crushing hand studying snares
Of tyranny, will grow all-tyrannous also —
Vain then the early vengeance, venom and bloody tears.
And some must paint a face of purpose
Upon the inane mask that Fortune bears;
Hope with dead Hope in them are warriors,
Seek love or violence to gloze,
Politics in the quarrelling of drunks
And Beauty as the whorish Babylon.
Of each volume published in England
One copy is presented to the British Museum,
Whose neo-Grecian pillars thus contain
Trash and tragedy, religion and pornography.
The inference is plain —
That Art is regarded as the mirror of Life,
Not as one bough of the everlasting Tree
But a quiet and interesting miniature
Which in future days may be inspected with pleasure
As men in ruined Pompeii walk to see
The Temple of Love though hate may gnaw their skulls.
O Blake !
I see you stand above the continents
Shadowing Asia, and the earthquake hordes
Of steel and turmoil, pointing to Heaven
With the left hand, with the right hand to Earth.
The tree of healing blossoms from your palms.
A sword from your mouth
I hold and am invincible

To grapple with the toils of leonine Mars,
Behold the heart of Man in love and pity,
The fire of healing flowering in my veins.

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Blake on War and Hunting

Pat Wilson

AT THE LAST JUDGMENT Noah stands with Shem at his right hand, Japhet at his left, ' . . . the three Powers in Man of Conversing with Paradise, which the flood did not Sweep away . . . '

'Blake's Poetry and Prose', ed. Keynes (Nonesuch Press, reprinted 1948), p. 643.

and the names of the Powers are Poetry, Painting and Music. But in eternity there had been a fourth and the name of this fourth art or Power was Architecture. When it was swept away and all its buildings gone, in its place there remained a void filled with the raging seas and rocks of the flood, which is the sea or chaos of memories of the former state.

The three powers that remained now lacked a dwelling-place. Formerly they had lived by the activity of the fourth, the Architect, and his activity was the skill or Science by which the three gave bodies and homes to their creations. But after the flood they could only live in the homes and the bodies, not of activity but of reactivity, seeking to compensate for the power that was swept away. Ham,

Genesis ix.

the son whom Noah cursed, is the father of all those who are cut off or barred out from a power or energy of their own, becoming instead a reaction to the remaining powers. Their own power gone they are left, like Ham, imbued with the alternate reactions of mockery and flattery. Only when they are in doubt do they cease from flattering the two, such as Shem and Japhet, by mocking the one, such as Noah; and therefore doubt is their greatest virtue.

The powers that remain are able to remain only if they dwell in the universe and take on the bodies built by the now-reactive fourth. Blake calls this universe Canaan and the Bible says that Ham was the father of Canaan. It is entirely composed—as we know today—of the two forms of reaction and the one of doubt which are spread out and objectified in time and space as positive and negative and neutral. In this world live the fallen forms or representatives of the three powers, and the bodies in which they live are composed of the same positive, negative, and neutral. All men become the inhabitants of the universe descended from Ham its father, and the descendants of Ham are their servants—this was Noah's curse on them—to teach men how to make use of sufficient of life for themselves to remain alive. 'Science remains thro' Mercy', Blake says,

'Poetry and Prose', p. 411.

and the three powers 'Become apparent in Time and Space', by means of Science, in all the occupations of men.

In the time of Peleg,

Genesis x & xi.

the seventh from Noah, we find the first of these reactive representatives in the form that we know them best. The name Peleg means Division, for Peleg became divided from his brother Joktan. And the state of Peleg is like the state which Blake calls 'the poor infected',

'Poetry and Prose' p. 384.

for Joktan became just like a negative of the infection—like an antidote with which 'to beat it unmercifully which is roughly what the word Joktan

c.f., Arabic 'wakata'.

means in English. And along with these developments in people, the lost buildings of the arts of eternity began to be rebuilt in the time of Peleg by the embodiment of their forms in a reactive energy, for want of a better, an energy which would conserve them until the Last Judgment. The Bible, speaking of the actions of men in this time, has the following words:

' . . . and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do . . . '

Genesis xi : 6.

Lacking active forms for the arts of eternity, the arts to fly, to explore the deeps, to move mountains, to see a thing when another is between it and the eye, the new science began to supply the reactive forms for these lost ones. In our day, although they have become increasingly complex and powerful (as aeroplanes, diving-bells, bull-dozers, and television), they are still the same as in Peleg's day in their genesis, their purposes, and their fate.

From Peleg's day onwards, then, the whole imagination of Man began to be turned inside-out in a sort of unrestrainable exhibitionism of all that men had ever 'imagined to do'. The wonders that are now exhibited are still, Blake would say, as useless as was the original one built in Peleg's time, which was Babel, a tower meant to 'reach unto heaven'.

Genesis xi : 4.

With the aeroplane, for example, men pretend to fly but, by comparison with this activity as seen in the imagination, men flatter themselves with a mere pretence of flying and therefore feel mocked or ill-used by some mythical Fate or Mischance when they fall. The aeroplane has no power to care whether it should fly or crash or never leave the ground. If it is a Mischance that it falls, then by Chance it stays up. In itself it is no more fit for one use than another, for it is nothing but positive and negative and neutral, and these do not fly and nor can men fly by their means. By believing that wonders are useful the day is put off for a little when wonders shall fail in their uses, which is Judgment Day.

This making a use out of things and, when things try to use us as we would use them, this calling for a cudgel 'to beat them unmercifully'—these alliances and counter-alliances, the War of positive and negative over the body of the victim is all that is left to men if they forsake imagination. It is all that is left of the three arts of eternity in the occupations of men, and the Hunting for ways which may increase the efficiency of the occupations is left to the fourth. But Art in eternity was a War to create the forms which would bring life to the victim, not death. Science, since science was an art, was the Hunting-part of War, the part that goes out and searches around to make contact with the enemy. The enemy is the opponent of the imaginative form; it is the spoiler, the botheration, the indefiniteness which hides the form. The function of the Hunter was to bring it into the tent, into the intellectual focus, and there the other three powers would carefully strive with this form-resisting enemy till the form was revealed as a friend, and everyone would then love him, and he would take his place in the tent.

This was the 'Primeval State of Man' called 'Wisdom' comprising 'Art and Science' 'Poetry and Prose', p. 434.

which are War and Hunting—the wisdom to cope with trouble by putting-off the indefinite form which seeks to conceal it and keep it an enemy, and by creating the imaginative form,

Creating form and beauty around the dark regions of sorrow,
Giving to airy nothing a name and a habitation
Delightful, with bounds to the Infinite putting off the Indefinite
Into most holy forms of Thought; such is the power of inspiration . . .
Creating the beautiful House for the piteous sufferer.

p. 411.

These were the occupations of men as artists and scientists in eternity. In time and space the artist is everywhere divided from his occupation, and the scientist must seek to compensate men for the power they have lost, and the poet no longer 'converses with Paradise' but with himself, and preaches in every direction.

This brings us to the character of Blake. Was he too only conversing with himself when he arrived at the ideas described above? Certainly he preached them on every occasion that occurred to him—even to the extent of a Public Address, which no Public would ever bother to hear. In his old age they say that to walk with him down the street was like walking with the prophet Isaiah. And this would have been all right if the kings of Blake's England had been like the kings of Isaiah's Judah and Jerusalem. But 'our poor George'

p. 892.

as Blake called him, meaning George the third, was out of his mind by the end, and most men said that Blake was so too. 'Our poor Blake' was the way that his friends usually thought of him.

However, unlike George the third, who probably went mad from drink rather than from intellect, Blake was mad from his very earliest years, in fact, right from the word go :

The Angel that presided o'er my birth

Said: 'Little creature, form'd of Joy and Mirth,
Go love without the help of any Thing on Earth.'
p. 124.

By the time help arrived, Blake had found helps of his own—a symbolic life and labour, a symbolic reward, and the symbols were much the same ones that have haunted and distracted men since the day when they first grew 'wearied with joy'
p. 365.
and turned aside in their sleep.

Advance Note ! In production now at the Caxton Press, is a subscriber's edition of *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* by S. T. Coleridge. This work is being hand-set in 16pt Poliphilus with marginal glosses in 12pt Blado Italic, and it will be printed on Hayle Mill hand-made paper. Size demy 4to, 44pp. Price three guineas. Publication in March 1952. A prospectus is now available. CAXTON PRESS 119 VICTORIA STREET CHRISTCHURCH

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I am the Dark

Helen Shaw

The Poetry of Ursula Bethell

AS THOUGH she had understood blindness and taken Milton's 'dark in light' as her text Ursula Bethell's poetry is filled with praise of light and haunted by its inevitable eclipse. But it is a contemplation of death made in the mood of the hermit in love with the life in nature.

She is alone with her mountains, solitary in her conclusions. Her regret for passing time and spent life is tempered with the resignation of one who acknowledges faith. It is never the cynical regret of the sensualist faintly saving himself with wit.

The experience is limited but rarefied. Her poetry moves between narrow boundaries although she herself, in the greater part of her writing, sought fulfilment at least twice over. Shall we say she asked for a state of grace both as poet and as mystic. Fusion of the two states was perhaps her most difficult task.

Everywhere is intensification rather than variation. The poems 'Night Rain' and 'Waves' might almost have sprung from the one great creative moment. Certain images are ardently pursued but seldom repetitively since those upon which her vision depends—Rose, Sea-bird, Wave, Mountain, River—are continuously being developed. Phrases are turned and returned, recharged with significance and deepened as they are made to climb the spiral of the poet's spiritual experience. Her development of the single image is very clearly seen through the recurring use of Rose and of Sea-bird. She seems always to have been adding to their emotional quality. She carries forward many words which must have become curiously necessary to her, their necessity made more manifest now that the total collection of her poems is available. And so are found : homing, established, whiteness, clear quickening, initiate, responsive, record.

There is nowhere in the background any sense of a peopled world. The poet's world is peopled with dark rocks, white mornings, birds and roses and these are the images through which she feels her existence and by which she considers the doom of man. The imagery of flowering earth and moving waters bulks so large that Ursula Bethell is easily thought of as a pure landscape poet; but with few exceptions, from the collection 'Time and Place' onwards brief lines resolve her spiritual experience of nature and these are the lines that shift the emphasis and value from natural description to vision. 'Evening Walk in Winter' holds this:

So airy light I seemed to climb, the earthy path so gilded,
the illumined hill appeared in that transmuted hour
olympian,
the self a quenchless effluence of fire.
But overhead marmoreal white now hung the cold moon ominous
in ashen blue of empty dome, our doom exhibit thus
even so to frozen death we must all come.

The further the work recedes from the volume 'From a Garden in the Antipodes' the more the poet is felt to be in a state of mystical communion, coldly remote from the breath of humanity. There is no return to the gay and personal verse of flowers and gardens. It must be said that when she fails to communicate her experience she is sometimes failed by poetic intuition and the result is near to bathos. But when she succeeds those few words with which she transmutes the Rose or Mountain into a spiritual blazing are the ones that count.

Alas, alas, to darkness
Descends the flowered pathway,
To solitary places, deserts, utter night;
To issue in what hidden dawn of light hereafter?

Everything was white, this morning,
Untroubled, luminous and tranquil pure;
Bright as an affianced bride, adorning
Herself with white upon the plighted morning;
Past all debate, all hazard, still, and sure.

Ursula Bethell's poetry is a conscious statement of Canterbury landscape. Its geography is concisely told that the work falls naturally to a group with land-conscious N.Z. poetry, but it is also a language of death. The intense preoccupation with the doomed rose and the deepening dark is at the same time accompanied by an intense infatuation for light which aces some of her poetry in the tradition of Henry Vaughan. What they have in common the power to shift the stress from life swiftly on to death by a movement of contrasting words, by passing from an image that suggests light to one that is startlingly sombre, by swinging the image. Not by imaginative symbols or by the elaborate conceits of Donne that flash with wit—their way is simpler, the journey of a lamp carried across a dark field. It can be seen in Vaughan's 'The Retreat', 'The Timber', and 'The Night'; his star is the tomb, his lilies in the dust.

With Ursula Bethell the swinging of the image works either in the detail of a single line: 'Thy great stars scattered on black immensity . . .' or throughout a whole poem such as 'Evening Walk in Winter'. It is a heightened sense of death that leads her to choose the image which will glow in order to suggest more overpoweringly the finality of darkness: red-robed beside death-dusty; ardent lilies on the clammy ground.

You can see the same kind of thing in Katherine Mansfield, who consistently moved her characters into the intensity of brilliant light and who frequently suggested the obliteration of hope, the snuffing out of life by clouding the sun or darkening the sea. And it is interesting that in their late, mature work both Ursula Bethell and Katherine Mansfield involved seagulls, rocks and waves with their premonition of death.

Ursula Bethell moves then between the extremes of light and dark. She uses many variations of darkness—dark, darkly, darkening, negation, muffled, quench, silence, abyss—and ways in juxtaposition with her obsession for light—snow, sun, water, stars, moon, cloud. The

title 'Day and Night' is the physical term for the underlying content. Day is light, light is life and for life she cries: 'All is well'. Night is dark, dark is death, or at least its herald.

There is no other poetry in N.Z. which so dwells on the dark through its constructions of light, which presents so maturely the theme of death in terms of a landscape; but it is in the theme rather than in the concisely told landscape that the essence of this poetry is to be found, and it is by consideration of the theme rather than of the native background that we can see where Ursula Bethell belongs. Here, I think, it is with Katherine Mansfield, because in each there is a technique of light meticulously evolved; and to a lesser degree with Hubert Witheford. There must be reservations because Witheford embraces a more imaginative symbolism

and his one published volume, 'Shadow of the Flame', is far from being a life-work.

There is no claim here for greatness, rather for definition. Ursula Bethell's poetry arises out of an overruling impulse to face death, which is a darker reality because of the glowing light she threw on the mountains in her verse and as the poet personally hastened towards finality the pursuit of light was made ever more consciously resulting in a craftsmanship of contrast. Contrast is not restricted to one image balancing with another, to the counterpoint of light and dark, but is frequently found between one state of being and another, between opposite kinds of actions or feelings where it is in effect a perceptible movement that represents the stirring of conflict and doubt. Many passages from her poetry can be read for contrast. I follow and end with three beside which the New Zealandness of her descriptions seems to take a somewhat minor place.

Now in the dark of night disposed
Sleepwards, but aware meanwhile,
(Night of cloud, sky speechless,
Lights on alluvial plain muffled,
Neighbouring hill-lights long extinguished),
Under the silence I hear
Deep calling to deep.

(from 'Waves')

Beauty, now in Death's disguise,
silencing these stammering lips,
sealing these astonished eyes,
that our sight closes
on earth's dear mummery,
to wake upon your counterpart,
mirage roses, . . .

(from 'Rose-Wreath')

Oh ! to ride, seagull, surely
over the abyss of whirling waters,
to plunge into the tumult
unseeing, safe, in the dark crypt of the breakers
(loosed, my soul, from earth-lust)
secured through insecurity.

('Kaikoura. Winter, 1941')

In the first is a swing from the darkness of sleep to the remaining light of wakefulness, from the negation suggested by 'speechless sky' to the positive and resolved 'I hear', while in a verse suggesting not only night but the dimming of light, of life, 'aware meanwhile' the active state of mind, is the glowing pin-point. In the second the play of life and death moves within each line with an ascent of hope from 'sealing' to 'wake', a dramatic impression of movement and imagery in 'mummery' that is shrivelled with 'closes', while 'Mirage roses' becomes the more brilliant in juxtaposition with the weight of stifling death. But it is in the last that the method of contrast achieves a multiple effect. The seagull is in the light of air, the abyss in the dark waters. The riding seagull is free and compares with the released soul, ascending from the earthly body, while the 'Life' in the seagull swings again downwards to the poet's imagined death, to the crypt, the waiting tomb; the final swing occurring between the certainty with which the bird hovers resolved (surely) above the 'whirling waters' for the poet the unfathomed uncertainty of infinity. The poet longs to face death 'unseeing' as the bird will plunge, but for her is left 'tumult', the turmoil which her mind glimpses without resolving.

'What if the light go out? . . .

... I am the dark.'—is the single and unifying theme of Ursula Bethell's subject, craft and experience.

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Happiness to Mrs Flanagan

Short Story by Lily H. Trowern

FATHER TO SON the Flanagans were fishers. Their hands brown and stub fingered knew the salt heaviness of lines and nets, and the congealed-lard smoothness of dead schnapper, tera-kehi, kahawai, gurnet, and the tuna-slim bodies of mullet. They lived in a rough shanty by the waters' edge, and knew nothing of land life, nor store food, preferring to fish heaped gunwell high on the boats. And as they lived on fish, in their turn the fish lived on them, for the Flanagans went down with their boats with punctual conventionality.

So in the end there was only Jess Flanagan and young Michael living there in the shanty, and all the rest were somewhere beyond the gulf with the 'Peregrinethe', 'Petre', and the 'Mary Lucy'. Being Flanagans neither of them thought of moving inland, and Michael served his sea-apprenticeship with an O'Shea, and bought a boat of his own.

His feet grew splay with the bare footed grasping of rocks, his fingers stub and salt calloused. Michael grew to the sea as all the Flanagans before him, and Jess walked proudly among the shore women.

All storms on the coast are sudden, springing from a feather ruffling of the grey sea to a gale within an hour, keeling the boats rail under in one burst; Jess saw the shiver run up the estuary, heard the first white smother hit the rocks, almost as the fishers saw the sails fill, and the long wall of roused sea bear down. With the nets out the boats were unable to swing bow breasting the waves, to tread the wind whorl of water. Only the 'Seagull', close under the bluff, escaped and fled half-laden to harbour.

So once more men in seaboots, or barefoot, with salt on their beards, and the empty handedness of the grief-heavy, went up the cockle

path to the shanty, unnoticing how the sea water trailed in an ambling path behind them. But Jess at the sight of them did not wail with the departed Flanagan women, but welcomed them with smiles, and tea, and the best seed cake cut thick in buttery slices.

She moved easily among them, their talk and their mutterings, not seeing the averted eyes, and the puzzle of the red faces. 'He was the last', she said, as though she exulted, 'the last of the Flanagans. There are no more to wait for in the sunset of the evenings, or see depart in the blackness before dawn. And now I can be happy and feel no more the lift of anxiety in the heart, or the fear clutch in a sally of wind. Jess Flanagan is a happy woman'.

As the men went home, they left no keen of death in the shanty, but the shrill joy of Jess's singing in the fire warm kitchen.

Only . . . that night she slept her way out of the friendly world in which she was to be without fear nor

anxiety, and in which she was to be at last a happy woman.

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