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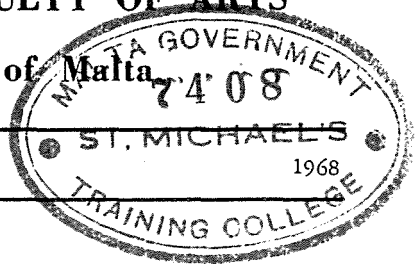
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ON OUR REVIEW

We hope our readers will like this number containing articles by members of the Faculty of Arts and also guest contributors from abroad. Another university review may appear soon after this number and, for all we know, it may also appear before. That review will be dedicated to Mediterranean Studies towards which recent university reforms have been orientated. We feel, however, that the Faculty as such must retain its medium for the publication of Faculty contributions whatever the subject chosen by the contributors. We leave it to the editor of the review of Mediterranean studies to explain how useful and opportune is the new publication in a characteristically Mediterranean country which can be described as the historical cross-bridge between Europe and Africa. We limit ourselves to one statement about the need for the continued publication of this review. An active and articulate Faculty must have its own mouthpiece on a wider level of academic subject-matter than could be catered for by a publication with a strictly defined area of interest excluding Faculty contributions of a non-Mediterranean nature.

We hope our readers will agree with us that this Journal should continue its own existence which started in 1957 as an organ of the Faculty of Arts. We take this opportunity to welcome the publication of another university review on a subject of vital interest to Malta. We expect it to be complementary to the vast field of universal knowledge which is the scope of a liberal university education. In a progressive university there is scope for reviews of specialised or general interest.



CHAUCER'S CONSTRUCTIONAL METHODS IN THE GENERAL PROLOGUE

By R.J. Beck

A great deal has been written about the framework of *The Canterbury Tales*, and the superiority of Chaucer's product to other mediaeval collections of tales, by Boccaccio or Sercambi; the results are admirably summarised in the introduction to Bryan and Dempster's *Sources and Analogues of Chaucer's Canterbury Tales*. Something has also been said about the various categories into which the individual portraits fall; J.M. Manly in *Some New Light on Chaucer* discusses Chaucer's debt to the characters of actual contemporary personages, while W.C. Curry in *Chaucer and the Mediaeval Sciences* establishes a physiognomical bridge between the outward physical appearance of certain pilgrims and their inward moral qualities. But even such valuable contributions as these have been put forward as single theses, and not considered as alternative methods of presenting character. I believe – and hope to show hereafter – that Chaucer consciously rang the changes on a number of different methods of building up his individual portraits. Thirdly, very little, if anything, has been written about Chaucer's artistry of arrangement in positioning his portraits within the framework of the General Prologue.

The relative proportions allotted to appearance and character in the portraits vary considerably from one pilgrim to another: were it not for the illustration in the margin of the Ellesmere MS, we should have no idea of what the Poor Parson looked like, though we know a good deal about his character; the portrait of the Squire, on the other hand, concentrates on his physical appearance, his dress, and his social and military accomplishments. The most obvious method of connecting these two basic elements of character and appearance was that postulated by the mediaeval physiognomists: outward bodily manifestations provide a clear indication of inner moral character. Four out of the final group of pilgrims listed in GP 542-4 fall within this category: the red hair, large mouth and short arms of the Miller – even the wart on the bridge of his wide-nostrilled nose – indicate a man of large appetites and fiery temper; the Reeve, like other choleric men, is thin of body, quick of wit, and easy to anger, while his pipe-stem legs betray the *senex amans*; the Pardoner's thin hair, clean chin and high-pitched voice show him to be 'a geldying or a mare'; but best of all is the Summoner, to whom Chaucer gives not merely

all the symptoms of *gutta rosacea* – gruff voice, swollen eyelids, advanced depilation and multiple sores – but also provides the established medical treatments of the day and three of the main causes of the Summoner's malady – wine, women and onions.

The second category is that proposed by Manly – the portraits based to a greater or lesser degree on living people. It has been established from surviving records that a certain Harry Bailly owned the Tabard Inn in Southwark during the 1380's, and that a 'Roger Ware of London, Cook', was alive in 1377. And it seems probable that Chaucer, in creating his Shipman, would think of Peter Risshenden of Dartmouth, owner of a barge called the Maudelayne, who figured in a famous piracy trial between 1386 and 1394; or of Gilbert Maghfeld, a rich merchant from whom Chaucer is known to have borrowed money. And he may well be punning on the name Pynchebek in GP 326 in his portrait of the Sergeant-at-Law; or even remembering himself as a young squire on 'chyvachie' in Flanders, Artois and Picardy. But it is impossible at this distance in time to estimate the extent of such debts, and very easy to overestimate their literary importance.

More interesting than these individualisations are the idealisations; three by type-character and three by subject. Chaucer produces, as might have been expected, an ideal representative of each of the main and interdependent levels of mediaeval society: a knight representing the military caste; a parson representing the ecclesiastics; and a ploughman to stand for the agricultural labourers. The knight's task – clearly brought out in *Piers Plowman* – was to protect both the Church and the workers; the priest's to care for the spiritual well-being of both knight and labourer; and the ploughman's to feed both knight and priest. Chaucer probably chose a poor parish priest as his ideal ecclesiastic for the very reason that such a man would be in close contact with the agricultural labourers; and strengthened the tie by making his priest the brother of his ploughman.

Idealisation by subject is also threefold. The Knight has fought the heathen in the three main centres of crusading activity open to him in the fourteenth century: in Southern Spain and on the neighbouring North African coastline in the 1340's; in the Eastern Mediterranean based on Cyprus in the 1360's; and as a respected veteran with the Teutonic Knights in the Baltic area during the 1380's. The Wife of Bath has visited four international centres of pilgrimage – Jerusalem, Rome, Cologne and Compostella, 'ferne halwes couthe in sondry londes'; a lesser one at Boulogne which Chaucer himself may have visited with his patron, John of Gaunt, and the Black Prince; and is now off to Canterbury to see the shrine of St. Thomas, the most popular of all centres of pilgrimage in pre-Reformation England. Thirdly, the authorities cited in the portrait of the Doctor

are also divided into the three main groups from which the fourteenth century drew its medical knowledge: the founding fathers of medicine in the classical world; the Arab writers of the tenth and eleventh centuries; and near-contemporary British writers like Bernard Gordon, John of Gaddesden, and Gilbertus Anglicus.

One form of linkage between appearance and character that we are surprised *not* to find in the General Prologue, particularly in the portrait of the Wife of Bath, is the astrological; but the connection between St. Venus' Seal and Dame Alison's amorous proclivities is saved for the Preamble. What the portrait of the Wife does contain, however, are certain satiric connections between character and costume. It is not merely that the Wife's taste in clothes is as loud as her personality. She flouts the Sumptuary Laws and dresses with great care and at considerable cost; the bigger anything is, the better she likes it. But there is a strong suspicion that the Wife's dress was amusingly provincial and out-of-date in the eyes of Chaucer's courtly audience – and had intentionally been made so; wimples were out of fashion, except for nuns, while riding astride had been replaced by the side-saddle introduced by Anne of Bohemia. This satiric connection is even more marked in the portrait of the Prioress: her name and facial characteristics are those of a heroine of Romance; she apes courtly manners and courtly fashions, keeping forbidden pets and wearing prohibited jewellery; and she reveals a most unseemly span of forehead to Chaucer's roving eye!

Turning from the internal construction of the individual portraits to Chaucer's grouping of them in the General Prologue, we see that he took certain predictable steps: the Knight's portrait begins the gallery just as his tale begins the pilgrimage, and for the same reason, that he is the most socially-acceptable pilgrim; affinity of business interests keeps the Guildsmen together, and attracts the Franklin to the Sergeant-at-Law; but it is not certain whether the Pardoner is drawn to the Summoner for this reason, or by a community of rascality, or merely by a desire to harmonise the popular songs of the day. More important for the future of the pilgrimage than these affinities are the antipathies which result in the Miller/Reeve and Friar/Summoner pairs of tales: but of these antipathies we naturally see very little before the very end of the General Prologue, when the cavalcade sets out, headed by the Miller, and with the Reeve, significantly, bringing up the rear.

Chaucer's second major motif in *The Canterbury Tales* – the first being mutual antipathy – is the Marriage Debate. Apparently, this idea of having a progressive discussion of the marital relationship did not occur to Chaucer until the whole project was well under way, and the resultant movement of some tales and the amendments and even cancellations of

the tellers' portraits that this entailed have damaged the structural unity of the General Prologue considerably; the character-sketch of the Second Nun was obviously crossed out when the life of St. Cecilia was transferred to her from some 'unworthy son of Eve', and the resultant half-line gap was hastily filled by the words 'and preestes thre', preserving rhyme and metre at the expense of mathematics. The unfinished state of the whole project, in addition, leaves Chaucer's constructional plan imperfect; it seems probable that the five guildsmen listed in GP 361-2 would eventually have been treated in the same way as the physiognomia/churl group in GP 542-4 – their characters would have been sketched in the General Prologue, motivated in the links, and confirmed by some suitable tale. But this was not to be. However, by looking at the first six complete portraits, which are largely uninfluenced by any of these damaging considerations, we can see Chaucer's powers of arrangement at work.

The Knight, the Squire and the Yeoman form a single social and military group; and each in his way is dedicated to his calling. The Knight and the Squire are linked by blood, but separated by a generation; the Yeoman is separated from both by degree, but is linked to them by service and a common military expertise – which had found so telling an expression at the battles of Crécy and Poitiers, won by English bowmen. This triangularism is repeated in the portraits of the Prioress, the Monk and the Friar. All are ecclesiastics, but all have lost their vocation; the Prioress is worldly in dress and manners, the Monk in his love of hunting, and the Friar in his lechery and greed. Prioress and Monk belong to the same class, but are separated by sex; while the Friar, like the Yeoman, is lower in the social scale than his two predecessors – indeed, Chaucer makes him more of a churl with his *fabliau*-tale than we might have anticipated.

One element in some of the portraits which provides a link of another sort is the trait of character which looks forward to confirmation in the tale. Amid the Prioress's courtly manners and worldly concerns, her 'conscience and tendre herte' are striking; but it is these qualities rather than the others which are brought out in her sentimental story of a child's martyrdom. Links like this – and the partial deafness of the Wife of Bath, which is manifestly a back-projection – give rise to the interesting supposition that Chaucer was sometimes more concerned to match the teller to his tale than the tale to the teller.

MARK RUTHERFORD'S AUTOBIOGRAPHY

By RICHARD RAYSON

ALTHOUGH 'Deliverance' was published four years later than 'Autobiography' - in 1885 - its full title is 'Mark Rutherford's Deliverance, being the second part of an Autobiography'. So the two books in fact constitute one work. In practice, not many readers of the 'Autobiography' embark on its sequel, and it must be admitted that their loss is not as great as it ought to be. 'Deliverance' is decidedly the less successful of the two parts, in spite of its deliberate and intricate relationship with its predecessor: and in what follows I shall concentrate entirely on the first book.

Alone in Hale White's books, the first person pronoun is used here for the central character; but Mark Rutherford is only Hale White himself to the extent that Stephen Dedalus is James Joyce and Paul Morel is D.H. Lawrence. In much of the work, Hale White has altered and added to autobiographical fact in order to convey his theme with as much artistry as possible. This is not to deny either that the theme itself was a product of Hale White's experience, or that Hale White had didactic as well as aesthetic aims. But the work has the form and structure of a novel, and should be read as such.

The story of the first part, the 'Autobiography', is as follows. Mark is the son of Dissenting parents, with vivid childhood memories of the cheerlessness of Dissenting Services and the embarrassments attending an obligatory 'conversion' in adolescence. Faced with the necessity to choose a profession, Mark goes to a Dissenting College near his hometown to prepare for the ministry. He is depressed by the mechanical pieties of his fellow-students, often involving them in unconscious hypocrisy, and also by the external, formalistic nature of the religious instruction given him; luckily he discovers Wordsworth's Lyrical Ballads, in which for the first time the depths of his nature are engaged. He is only attracted by those aspects of religion to which he can make a personal response, in spite of the consequent danger of heresy. After a practice sermon, pointing out the universal human relevance of Christ's sacrifice in terms of the innocent always and everywhere suffering for the guilty, he is gently but firmly reprimanded by the authorities for failing to conform to the established simplicity of the Gospel story. His first job on leaving college is with an Independent meeting-house in Water Lane, in

an unnamed small town in the eastern countries. He finds the same totally unsympathetic narrowness, externality and hypocrisy that he had met in his childhood and in the Dissenting college. He gives sermons expressive of his intense personal conviction that Christianity is the religion of the poor, the lonely, and the failures, but finds the same lack of response in his congregation as he had found in his superiors at college. The result is a breakdown, from which, after much suffering, he succeeds in making a partial recovery, but which is henceforward to dog him permanently. It is at this bleak period that he meets Edward Gibbon Mardon, a printer's compositor and an earnest atheist; also his daughter Mary. The effect of Mardon's rationalism is to clear Mark's mind of cant by destroying the inconsistencies in his brand of Christian heresy. And this coincides with a personal crisis: Mark has been unofficially engaged to a girl called Ellen, and now supposes that he no longer loves her; unable to decide what to do, he confides in a certain Miss Arbour, an elderly lady who is one of the few sympathetic members of his congregation, and by telling the story of her own unhappy marriage, long since broken up, she persuades Mark to face the unpleasantness of distressing Ellen now instead of risking permanent distress later. Soon after this, Mark quarrels with one of the most repulsive but also most influential members of his congregation and has to leave. He imagines he can reconcile Unitarianism with his newly-emancipated religious position, and accepts the post of minister at a Unitarian chapel some ten miles away – only to find the same situation as before, a congregation (what there is of it) with whom he can make no contact. Meanwhile his love for Mary, Mardon's daughter, is rejected, and he has to endure another attack of melancholia. Feeling totally ineffectual, he gives up his job and becomes a master at a private school at Stoke Newington; this post he leaves within twenty four hours, after a night's struggle with the worst bout of melancholia yet. After some rebuffs, he succeeds in becoming assistant to a publisher of sceptical books, called Wollaston, and comes to revere his niece, Theresa, despite his continuing love for Mary Mardon. He finds his work congenial and with the best will in the world is inefficient at it, and Theresa helps to cure him of 'self-despisings'. At this point Mardon, whom Mark has not seen since his Unitarian days, becomes very ill, and Mark once more visits him frequently, until his death; soon afterwards Mary dies too – her life had been devoted to that of her father – and Mark breaks down completely. Mark's supposed manuscript finishes here, but his fictitious 'editor', Reuben Shapcott, concludes the book with a brief account of how Mark managed to win through to a state of comparative serenity.

The autobiographical accuracy of the story extends only up to the point when Mark gets into hot water with the authorities on account of heresy. The result in Hale White's case was expulsion, but in Mark's case only a reprimand, followed by the continuation of his studies and the adoption as planned of the ministry as his profession. Only when Mark abandons Unitarianism do fact and fancy meet once more, with his short-lived decision to be a teacher and his employment as publisher's assistant. So the substantial section of the book describing Mark's life as Dissenting Minister — first Independent, then Unitarian — is an imaginative interpolation. And its purpose is that of repetition. A pattern that in Hale White's life was essentially repeated twice, in his childhood and in his college days, is repeated four times in the novel, through the addition of the two periods as minister. This pattern consists of a sharp contrast, between Mark and his environment. Mark is the first of a series of Hale White protagonists who all have in common an inner spiritual vigour that yearns for a response from outside; if it fails to find this response it is liable to become ingrown. However, Mark's environment — the chapel atmosphere of his childhood, the students and staff at the Dissenting College, the congregations at his Independent and Unitarian chapels — is incapable of providing the response for which he craves, because its mode of existence is purely external. By this I mean that it totally lacks the acute awareness of self that Mark possesses to the point of morbidity. The result is a lack of accord between what it is and what it professes; in other words hypocrisy, albeit unconscious. At its most unpleasant this becomes the preaching of loving-kindness and the practice of malice. Now Hale White has gone out of his way to repeat this pattern of frustration four times in order to create a desolating treadmill effect, the 'crowds of people walking round in a ring' of 'the Waste Land'. There is a change of scene, a change of personnel, time goes on — but the same impasse recurs; 'plus ça change ...' The need to evoke this structurally is more important to Hale White than fidelity to autobiographical fact.

The most obvious feature of Mark's environment, as Hale White conveys it, is drabness. This is the outward and visible sign of the betrayal of their real selves by those who inhabit it. Vivid evocations of this drabness occasionally interrupt the spare narrative texture of the first chapter — the lack of ventilation in the chapel in winter so that the windows stream with wet inside, the unappetizing sabbath lunch; and the same kind of thing pervades Mark's adult world. But of course it is the human beings in the environment who reveal its alien nature most directly. A telling piece of irony brings the first chapter to a close, with the brief

description of brother Holderness, the travelling draper: 'He never prayed without telling all of us that there was no health in him, and that his soul was a mass of putrefying sores; but everybody thought the better of him for his self-humiliation. One actual indiscretion, however, brought home to him would have been visited by suspension or expulsion'. The contrast between this and Mark's concern to relate outer profession to his innermost self is decisive; but brother Holderness is innocuous enough compared with a couple of Dissenting personalities with whom Mark has contact in his adulthood. The first of these two is unnamed, and Mark meets him at college. He is 'a blonde youth with greyish eyes, a mouth not quite shut, and an etemal simper upon his face'.¹ He discourses of elevated religious matters 'in a kind of watery rhetoric', but this does not prevent him from being mean in regard to money, nor from marrying a widow with a fortune. His attitude to women is significantly repellent: 'He was always dawdling after "the sex", which was one of his sweet phrases, and yet he was not passionate. Passion... is earnest as flame, and essentially pure'.² In the light of this the ubiquitous 'drabness' in Mark's world is a sign of drained vitality, the natural result of the split between 'inner' and 'outer' among the denizens of Hale White's Waste Land. Passion is a mark of vigour, and so far from being connected with prurience it is its direct opposite. This unnamed member of the Dissenting college is given a fuller portrayal in the Thomas Broad of 'Revolution in Tanner's Lane'. But his spiritual brother in this book is the terrible Mr. Snale, a member of the Water Lane congregation. So akin are they that Hale White is clearly using them as one means of drawing a parallel between the Dissenting College and Water Lane. 'His (Mr. Snale's) way of talking to women and about them was more odious than the way of a debauchee. He invariably called them "the ladies", or more exactly, "the leedies"; and he hardly ever spoke to a "leedy" without a smirk and some faint attempt at a joke'.³ The resemblance to the college student is clear enough. But Mr. Snale has a bigger part to play in the story than the student has, and he is much more substantially created. The picture of him in his domestic setting, in Chapter III, is the best thing in the book up to that point, and typical of Hale White's maturest passages of local description. A so-called 'Dorcas meeting', at which the womenfolk belonging to the chapel collect together and knit clothes for the poor, is being held at Mr. Snale's house. After a brief account of the drawing-room and the tea that has been prepared, Hale White gives us a relatively

¹ 'An Autobiography' (eleventh edition, T. Fisher Unwin) p. 17

² Ibid. p. 18

³ Ibid. p. 29

lengthy description of the pictures round the walls, and in so doing he evokes, obliquely but with vivid economy, the inadequacies of the Snale menage. There are four pictures, one to each wall, a fact in itself suggestive of a kind of dessicated neatness; vitality is commonly associated, in Hale White's fiction, with untidiness — Miss Leroy, in 'Deliverance', is one of many examples. The picture over the mantelpiece is a portrait of Mr. Snale, and opposite is a portrait of his wife. Mr. Snale's 'simper' is faithfully preserved (a facial attribute he shares with the college student 'dawdling after "the sex"'), while Mrs. Snale's portrait has caught 'the peculiarly hard, heavy sensuality' of her eyes; Mark comments that he knew her to be a cruel woman, 'not with the ferocity of the tiger, but with the dull insensibility of a cart-wheel, which will roll over a man's neck as easily as over a flint'.⁴ The full implications of this are suggestive of Gudrun's and Gerald's destructiveness in 'Women in Love'. In a life lived without integrity, without fidelity to one's inner self, passion is replaced by prurience: because it is dessicated, the clean vitality of the tiger's ferocity that is the result of passion (v. Blake!) is replaced by the dull destructiveness of malice — a malice usually disguised by pious gentility in Mr. Snale and the student, but crudely revealed in Mrs. Snale. So much for the two portraits. The passage continues: 'The third picture represented the descent of the Holy Ghost: a number of persons sitting in a chamber, and each one with the flame of a candle on his head. The fourth represented the last day. The Son of God was in a chair surrounded by clouds, and beside him was a flying figure blowing a long mail-coach horn', and so on. It is typical of Hale White's quiet but cutting irony that the two religious pictures should come after the portraits; this is the actual, though not ostensible, order of precedence in the Snale way of life. And the tone of the description vividly conveys the sort of significance 'religion' has in the household.

That is Mark's depressing environment, with which he is so starkly contrasted. The fact that Mark finds it depressing is, of course, one obvious way in which his own personality is conveyed to us. The implications are made clearer in the description of his absorption in 'the Lyrical Ballads' — an oasis in the desert — and in his attempts, so insensitively rebuffed, to teach in his sermons only what he has proved on his pulses. But Mark is in no way idealized, and it is partly his own fault that he is so miserable. In the last paragraph of Chapter II, the chapter describing Mark's college days, we are told that Mark had at that time a dream of 'a perfect friendship'. 'I wanted a friend who would sacrifice himself to me utterly, and to whom I might offer a similar sacrifice. I

⁴Ibid. p. 30

found companions for whom I cared, and who professed to care for me; but I was thirsting for deeper draughts of love than any which they had to offer'. Later in the paragraph Mark is made to judge this attitude from the vantage point of the maturity he has now reached, and he finds its idealism too uncompromising. It resembles too closely the kind of sentiment expressed in the following passage: 'If we reason, we would be understood; if we imagine, we would that the airy children of our brain were born anew within another's; if we feel, we would that another's nerves should vibrate to our own, that the beams of their eyes should kindle at once and mix and melt into our own, that lips of motionless ice should not reply to lips quivering and burning with the heart's best blood'. This is from Shelley's essay 'On Love', and its aptness to Mark's situation vis-a-vis his companions is striking. But we know what happened to the fictitious poet in 'Alastor'. And at the end of this paragraph in Chapter II Mark is made to express his conviction that if he had not set his sights so high much human affection would have been available to him. So although it is evidence of Mark's sensitivity and integrity that he should be distressed by his environment, it is his idealism, prompting him to withdraw too readily into himself when rebuffed, that drives his distress to the point of acute hypochondria.

He is the victim of three attacks of this hypochondria. The first comes after a sermon he delivers at Water Lane, a sermon whose theme illustrates both the virtues and the dangers attending his attitude; in it he stresses, though without using this text, that 'the kingdom of heaven is within you'. Christ tells us 'that each man should learn to find peace in his own thoughts, his own visions',⁵ that it is *his* response that matters, not anyone else's. Mark then goes on to affirm that Christianity is the religion of the unsuccessful, 'of the man who goes through life thinking much, but who makes few friends and sees nothing come of his thoughts'. In the light of the earlier passage about friendship, it is clear that accompanying the laudable insistence here on total fidelity to one's experience is the insidious threat of self-pity and self-centredness. The sermon meets with no response. As a result, Mark's sense of futility goes beyond its usual limits and he has the sensation of 'sinking into a bottomless abyss'; and this is accompanied by a sense of oncoming madness and a longing for death. The view we are meant to take of his condition is far from simple. On the one hand we see egocentricity taking refuge in illness, and on the other hand we see the anguished sensitivity of acute insight. Perhaps Hamlet's condition provides a parallel here (though no doubt this is as controversial as anything else about that play). Mark's

⁵Ibid. p. 35

second bout of melancholia is directly provoked by Mary Mardon's rejection of him. We shall touch on the circumstances leading up to this later: suffice it to say here that it forms a climax to his increasing sense of deprivation, of being stripped of all support, and so naturally causes him to relapse into a condition from which he had been free for many months.

But it is the third attack that is conveyed most vividly. At this point we are nearing the end of the book; Mark has left both his ministries and has arrived at Stoke Newington to take up his post as schoolmaster. Alone in his room on the night of his arrival, he looks out of the window. 'I went to the window and looked out. There were scattered lights here and there marking roads, but as they crossed one another, and now and then stopped where building had ceased, the effect they produced was that of bewilderment with no clue to it. Further off was the great light of London, like some unnatural dawn, or the illumination from a fire which could not itself be seen'.⁶ The symbolism is unobtrusive but intense, typical of Hale White's best passages. The roads, crossing one another at random, seem frustrated and to have lost their bearings: exactly Mark's case. And the 'unnatural dawn' of the city lights – later in the paragraph called 'the yellow flare of the city' – is suggestive of hell. The last sentence runs: 'I tremble to think how thin is the floor on which we stand which separates us from the bottomless abyss' – taking up a phrase used in the account of his first attack. Another striking feature of the episode is the disproportion between apparent provocation and actual suffering; the dreariness of the empty school and the sparsely furnished bedroom seems inadequate in itself to account for Mark's shattering experience. It may not be fanciful to recall Hamlet once more, dominated by an emotion, in T.S. Eliot's words, 'in excess of the facts as they appear'; or in Eliot's own play, 'The Family Reunion', the emotional plight of Harry Monchenssey, so much out of accord with any factual provocation that it drives his relatives to much obtuse and irrelevant speculation. This element of sheer arbitrariness in Mark's third bout of melancholia emphasises its intense subjectivity – 'the dialogue of the mind with itself', in Arnold's words. But unlike the other two bouts, this is a direct transcription from life. It is a record of the first time that Hale White himself had this terrible experience, as the periods during which Mark is made to have his earlier attacks are purely fictional. If Hale White had been writing straightforward autobiography, he would have had somehow to explain the apparent arbitrariness of this episode. As it is, the preparation, through fiction, of this third attack has been so convincing that there is no need

⁶ Ibid. pp. 112-3

for attempts at explanation that would inevitably muffle the impact.

By this time, however, Mark has emerged from the world of Nonconformist ministries; let us now return to it, and to its atmosphere of sterile repetitiveness. The only hope for a release lies in a change in Mark's attitude: no such change can be expected from the Snales and their spiritual kinsfolk, as they do not have the inner resources to effect it. Now at the height of Mark's 'treadmill' desolation, during his sojourn at Water Lane, two situations arise which begin to compel a change in him — his meeting with the atheist Mardon, and his break with Ellen. Both these situations involve renunciation, but a renunciation that is neither final nor complete: through Mardon, Mark gains the courage to abandon dogmas irrelevant to his purely 'personal' approach to religion, but he resists atheism; in Ellen's case (not *through* Ellen, for here she is the victim rather than the agent of renunciation) Mark gains the courage to remain faithful to his inner self, even at the cost of causing Ellen distress, and as he is not callous this is a high cost. Again the renunciation is incomplete, in fact only temporary, but it is not until we read 'Deliverance' that we find this out. Hale White is not being arbitrary in juxtaposing these situations in the book. In both cases the result is a sharpening of Mark's honesty, his loyalty to what he really feels — and it is this that radically distinguishes him from the Snales and their ilk. But of course giving something up is a negative matter, the necessary demolition that precedes construction. To emphasise this negativeness, as it were atmospherically, Mardon is made to fall ill and lie at the point of death just after Mark has given up Ellen; and immediately after that the tension between Mark and Mr. Snale comes to a head and Mark has to leave Water Lane.

Mardon has idiosyncracies of 'character' in the Dickensian sense. We are told that early in his life he changed his Christian names 'Edward Gibson' to 'Edward Gibbon' to accord with his scepticism. Then at his first meeting with Mark, once he has said what he has to say he leaves with an unceremonious abruptness. Both these oddities reflect, on another dimension, the cheerful vigour and uncompromising forthrightness of his spiritual life, qualities which have committed him to an unwavering atheism. Dickens, of course, would have exploited his oddities; but Hale White, after his initial hinting at 'personality', concentrates with typical economy on Mardon's function in the novel, which is to teach Mark honesty of mind through discussion. There is a direct vigour in Mardon's speech, however, that is sufficiently in character for us to feel that he is not simply the mouthpiece for a point of view in an intellectual debate.

Mark's relationship with Mardon reaches a climax when he is in a par-

ticularly forlorn state: he has broken with Ellen, and he has broken with Water Lane. Will he accordingly break entirely with his religious faith and follow Mardon into atheism? The episode that provides a decisive answer to this question seems to me the finest single passage in the entire work. It begins with Mark calling on Mardon to discuss with him what he should do now that he has given up his post at Water Lane. First Mardon gives Mark the advice one would expect him to give, that if he has any doubts about what he would have to profess as a minister he should 'leave the whole business and prefer the merest handicraft'. Mardon then goes on to define his atheism in a more logically elaborate manner than we have yet seen him do. The mere profession of the existence of God, he says, is meaningless unless one can define His attributes; and he challenges Mark to produce any divine attributes that he, Mardon, cannot simply interpret as 'the laws which govern the universe and man'. Mark speaks of 'an intellect of which these laws are the expression', but on Mardon's insistent probing he cannot give any account of what sort of intellect it can be. All Mark can do is to fall back on sentiment. He feels that an 'intellect' — God — exists, and that is that; he may, he says, be prostrated by Mardon's logic again and again, but he will always pick himself up with the aid of sentiment. Mardon's reply has its usual decisiveness and it closes the argument: 'When my friends go into the cloud, I never try to follow them'.

At this point Mardon's daughter, Mary, who keeps house for her father and looks after him, interrupts; and what follows demands a more extensive quotation:

'All this time Mary had been sitting in the armchair against the fireplace in her usual attitude, resting her head on her hand and with her feet one over the other on the fender. She had been listening silently and motionless. She now closed her eyes and said —

"Father, father, it is not true".

"What is not true?"

"I do not mean that what you have said about theology is not true, but you make Mr. Rutherford believe you are what you are not. Mr. Rutherford, father sometimes tells us he has no sentiment, but you must take no notice of him when he talks in that way. I always think of our visit to the seaside two years ago. The railway station was in a disagreeable part of the town, and when we came out we walked along a dismal row of very plain-looking houses. There were cards in the window with 'Lodgings' written on them, and father wanted to go in and ask the terms. I said that I did not wish to stay in such a dull street, but father could not afford to pay for a sea view, and so we went in to inquire.

We then found that what we thought were the fronts of the houses were the backs, and that the fronts faced the bay. They had pretty gardens on the other side, and a glorious sunny prospect over the ocean". Mardon laughed and said –

"Ah, Mary, there is no sea-front, and no garden".

I took up my hat and said I must go. Both pressed me to stop, but I declined. Mardon urged me again, and at last said –

"I believe you've never once heard Mary sing."⁷

After an initial protest, Mary got out 'the Messiah' and sang 'He was despised,' Mark is profoundly moved.

'I seemed to be listening to the tragedy of all human worth and genius. The ball rose in my throat, the tears mounted to my eyes, and I had to suppress myself rigidly. Presently she ceased. There was silence for a moment. I looked round and saw that Mardon's face was on the table, buried in his hands. I felt that I had better go, for the presence of a stranger, when the heart is deeply stirred, is an intrusion. I noiselessly left the room, and Mary followed. When we got to the door she said: "I forgot that mother used to sing that song. I ought to have known better." Her own eyes were full; I thought the pressure of her hand as she bade me goodbye was a little firmer than usual, and as we parted an overmastering impulse seized me. I lifted her hand to my lips; without giving her time to withdraw it, I gave one burning kiss, and passed out into the street. It was pouring with rain, and I had neither overcoat nor umbrella, but I heeded not the heavens, and not till I got home to my own fireless, dark, solitary lodgings, did I become aware of any contrast between the sphere into which I had been exalted and the earthly commonplace world by which I was surrounded.'⁸

Mary's tale about the seaside is an example, though a brief one, of Hale White's favourite device of dovetailing stories within stories. On the face of it, it is inconsequential. How does it establish her point that her father does not lack 'sentiment'? Presumably she implies that he was moved by the sudden, unexpected view of the sea from their lodgings. And Hale White has carefully prepared us for the symbolic force of this. In their dialogue just before, Mark tries to counter Mardon's logicity with the following assertion: 'I cannot help thinking that the man who looks upon the stars, or the articulation of a leaf, is irresistibly impelled, unless he has been corrupted by philosophy, to say, "There is intellect

⁷ Ibid. pp. 89-90

⁸ Ibid. p. 91

there."⁹ One of the most important elements in the two books is the stark contrast Mark feels between the drabness of his social environment and the glory of nature; he feels this even as a child, in the first chapter, he finds relief from Water Lane in walking along the riverbank to catch sight of the open sea; and it is on this note, in the last chapter of 'Deliverance', that the whole work ends. So here, in this tale of Mary's, we have the same contrast. Mardon is quick to make a cynical retort; but the fact remains that he has had the same experience as Mark, though his intellect (we are meant to feel) has refused to allow it any credentials. His reaction to Mary's song is, of course, more direct evidence of his capacity for feeling, and its position immediately after Mary's tale about the seaside is poignantly effective. But Hale White is killing several birds with one stone here, so that the conclusion has a complexity typical of his best passages. It is not only Mardon who feels the effect of the song, but Mark. The sentiment, 'he was despised and rejected of many', is one of the aspects of the Christian story to which Mark has been able to make an acute personal response. It was precisely on that theme that he gave the sermon at Water Lane whose dull, passive reception induced his first bout of melancholia; and the reason for his being so moved by the theme is, of course, his own sense of being lonely and isolated; indeed, there is an element of self-pity in his attitude that eventually has to be chastened. It is only too natural that he should experience a sudden upsurge of love for Mary at such a point; and his expression of it is a fitting and moving close to the chapter. But the Shellayan love-yearning (see again, the essay 'On Love') cannot be satisfied so easily. He proposes to her in the next chapter and she rejects him, thus causing his second acute attack of melancholia.

However, in his earlier affair of the heart — with Ellen — it was he who had done the rejecting. Now we have already seen that there is a parallel between Mark's rejection of religious dogma, through Mardon, and his rejection of Ellen. In both cases Mark is for some time, before the rejection, in a state of uncertainty. For years the Ellen affair had been jogging along comfortably in the form of a friendly correspondence; then a domestic crisis occurred which put Ellen in such a position that Mark was forced to bring matters to a head — either to marry her or reject her. In the account of his agony of indecision there is a touch that relates it to his increasing indecision over religion: 'In my distress I knelt down and prayed, but the heavens remained impassive as before, and *I was half ashamed of what I had done, as if it were a piece of hypocrisy.*' (italics mine).¹⁰ It is Miss Arbour who persuades Mark to be courageous

⁹ Ibid. p. 88

¹⁰ Ibid. pp. 58-9

and break with Ellen; and on the face of it this is the right decision. But in 'Deliverance' Mark recovers his love for her and marries her, and this is the last stage in his recovery. So, are we finally meant, with the benefit of hindsight, to regard his earlier decision as mistaken? This is not easy to answer. There is certainly a large measure of egotism in his reluctance to marry Ellen, as he himself acknowledges.

I became at once aware that my affection for her, if it ever really existed, had departed. I saw before me the long days of wedded life with no sympathy, and I shuddered when I thought what I should do with such a wife. How could I take her to Mardon? How could I ask him to come to me? Strange to say, my pride suffered most. I could have endured, I believe, even discord at home, if only I could have had a woman whom I could present to my friends, and whom they would admire. I was never unselfish in the way in which women are, and yet I have always been more anxious that people should respect my wife than respect me, and at any time would withdraw myself into the shade if only she might be brought into the light. This is nothing noble. It is an obscure form of egotism probably...¹¹

In fact the egotism is not all that obscure, consisting as it does of a plausible combination of shyness and snobbery. And there is a clear link between this and the immature idealism of his Shelleyan love-yearnings. Also, Miss Arbour's tale has only a superficial bearing on Mark's predicament, though it is intended as an awful warning. Mark is disturbed that Ellen has none of his intellectual interests; Miss Arbour's husband had none of *her* intellectual interests, and the marriage was disastrous. The inference is clear. But before his visit to Miss Arbour, while miserably attempting to weigh up Ellen's virtues and defects, Mark had been constrained to admit that she 'had no vice of temper, no meanness'; but 'meanness' is one of the defects in her husband that Miss Arbour singles out for special emphasis. The full extent of Ellen's worth only becomes clear to us in 'Deliverance', and at this stage we know more about Miss Arbour's husband. But at least we realize that they are in essentials quite unlike each other, even if they have in common a dislike of reading. This does not mean that the story is irrelevant, but that its relevance, with a profound irony, is the opposite of what Miss Arbour intends. As far as capacity for marital harmony goes, Mark, despite his love of reading, is more nearly akin to the cultureless Mr. Hexton than to Miss Arbour, since what his disaffection with Ellen really shows is an insensitivity to qualities not his own — exactly Mr. Hexton's case. This reveals a link

¹¹Ibid. p. 57

between Mark and those he feels most alien to, since Mr. Hexton has obvious affinities with Mr. Snale and the Dissenting College student. So it is fortunate that Mark follows Miss Arbour's advice and rejects Ellen, if only to avoid a prospect that neither he nor Miss Arbour envisaged, that of becoming — in his own way and far less harshly — another Mr. Hexton. And Mark is also right to make this painful decision from another point of view, that of preserving his integrity. However ignoble the reasons for the loss of his affection, it *is* lost, and he is faithful to his feelings in acting upon that recognition.

So far, Mark has been either the victim or the agent of a series of deprivations. He has rejected his environment (or his environment has rejected him — it works both ways), he has rejected Ellen, he has rejected the greater part of Christian orthodoxy while still remaining this side of theism, he has been rejected by Mary Mardon. The impression that all this produces is that of a sensitive individual driven both by his virtues and his defects into greater and greater isolation. Apart from Nature and 'the Lyrical Ballads', nothing has encouraged Mark yet to cultivate any positive zest for life. The influence of Miss Arbour and Mardon has certainly been salutary, in stimulating a courageous use of the will and clarity of mind; but this has been devoted to renunciation, a negative virtue. Only with the entry of the butterfly-catcher and Mrs. Lane, in the Unitarian period of Mark's life, is any sort of positive prescription for living suggested.

Mrs. Lane, in her non-intellectual vitality, is the first of a long line of Hale White characters. She is too independent to be patient with convention, and yet she is profoundly moral. Mark's religious speculations are quite outside her province, and yet 'she was the only person in the village whose conversation was lifted out of the petty and personal into the region of the universal.'¹² ('Universal', as we shall see, is a key-word in the book). The main point is that she, like Mark, is in total contrast to her environment, and yet manifests a down-to-earth vigour of which Mark is sadly in need. However, she is not one of the book's successes. Mary says she was of 'incalculable service' to him, a claim which makes the poverty of Hale White's rendering of her the more conspicuous. There is a brief anecdote to illustrate her independence of spirit; otherwise, just bare assertions.

The butterfly-catcher, also, is ineffectively rendered. The fact that he is referred to only by that title and is otherwise unnamed is at once ominous, as it suggests a vein of allegorical fantasy that is alien to the work as a whole. And he does not have the colourfulness of fantasy; in-

¹² Ibid. p. 102

stead, we are simply aware of a character whose thematic function Hale White is so concerned to emphasise that he scarcely troubles about characterisation at all. Nor is there the unostentatious but intense use of symbol that gives Mardon such memorableness in the scene with his daughter and Mark that we have looked at. Nevertheless, the attitude the butterfly-catcher represents is of central importance in Hale White's fiction.

This attitude is first touched on in one of those relevant allusions so characteristically unobtrusive as easily to escape attention. It comes in Miss Arbour's tale, when Mr. Hexton's meanness is being stressed; we are told that there was 'not a single chink, however narrow, through which his soul looked out of itself upon the great world around. If he had kept bees, or collected butterflies or beetles, I could have found some avenue of approach.'¹³ And this is the function of the butterfly-catcher's occupation: to enable his soul to 'look out of itself upon the great world around.' Mark first meets him while on a solitary walk in the contrary. The man is carrying a net and he tells Mark that he has come seven miles to try to catch a specimen of a particularly rare species of butterfly. He gives Mark an open invitation to see his collection, and after some weeks Mark calls on him. He then learns that the man's hobby is an antidote to an otherwise unendurable sorrow, whose cause he cannot bring himself to describe. His first reaction to grief was to indulge in fruitless and Hamlet-like speculations on death, and on what, if anything, comes afterwards. Collecting butterflies was a release from this sterile morbidity, because it was its exact opposite. Instead of occupying himself with cloudy pseudo-profundities, which in spite of their cosmic aura were essentially egocentric, he could turn his mind outwards with the aid of a scientific discipline. There is nothing dilettantist about his occupation; it is concerned with hard fact rather than romantic reverie. Mark goes away much impressed, and later finds out from another source the cause of the butterfly-catcher's sorrow. First his wife died in childbirth; then his son, to whom he was devoted, grew up crippled both in body and soul, and died in an asylum.

It is clear that the butterfly-catcher's history is another example of Hale White's favourite device of presenting us with parallel instances of his theme, a device we have already seen operating in the fourfold repetition of Mark's desolate environment, and also in Miss Arbour's tale (though in that case, ironically, a pseudo-parallel). The point here is that the butterfly-catcher's sad experience is Mark's own, though more extreme and melodramatic. Basically, it consisted of a brooding egocentricity

¹³ *Ibid.* p. 65

resulting from the thwarting of the ability to love, which is exactly Mark's plight. And the remedy – confining oneself to fact instead of losing oneself in an 'O Altitudo' – is a central preoccupation later of 'Miriam's Schooling', and to a lesser extent, 'Catherine Furze'.

The whole attitude is clearly relevant to Mark's incompetence as a publisher's assistant, in the last section of the book, although the butterfly-catcher does not appear and is not referred to. This incompetence Mark ascribes to 'forgetfulness and a want of thoroughness in investigation', and it produces yet another crisis of melancholia, this time not in solitude but in the presence of Theresa, to whom he insists that he is good for nothing. These two failings of his are directly opposite to the butterfly-catcher's 'outgoing' concern for scientific precision; by contrast, they suggest the ineffectualness produced by egocentric brooding. The butterfly-catcher himself may have gone from the scene, but what he stands for is here conspicuous in its stark absence.

We have seen that Hale White organizes his work through contrasts and parallels. Now in this last episode Wallaston the publisher is an atheist like Mardon, but of a rigid and insensitive kind. He has adopted his creed and attached it to himself; it is not the articulation of inner experience as in Mardon's case. We have, in fact, the contrast between inner and outer that is basic to the novel. On the face of it Wallaston is like Mardon, but in reality he is more like the Snales, even though he is much more agreeable. Theresa (in real life George Eliot – the whole episode is based upon Hale White's experience as assistant to John Chapman, the original for Wallaston) is parallel to several earlier characters. Like Mark, she is passionate and convinced of the overriding importance of passion; but unlike Mark, she is courageous, totally clear-thinking and uncompromising in her assertion of exactly what she thinks – all of which allies her to Mardon and his daughter; the piquant combination of Mark and Mardon in her is especially seen in the intellectuality with which, according to Mark, she seems to grasp the importance of passion: 'the senses at the tip of the intellect', to adapt T.S. Eliot's dictum on Donne; also, we are reminded of the butterfly-catcher when she rebukes Mark for preferring Beethoven to Mozart: 'He (Beethoven) encourages a luxurious revelling in the incomprehensible and indefinitely sublime. He is not good for you.'¹⁴

All this is conveyed with both vividness and economy, and Theresa is one of the book's conspicuous successes. The forceful directness of her speech is convincingly idiosyncratic. Take the following passage:

I happened to say that I wished people who wrote novels would not

¹⁴Ibid. p. 125

write as if love were the very centre and sum of human existence. A man's life was made up of so much besides love, and yet novelists were never weary of repeating the same story, telling it over and over again in a hundred different forms.

"I do not agree with you", said Theresa. "I disagree with you utterly. I dislike foolish inane sentiment — it makes me sick; but I do believe, in the first place, that no man was ever good for anything who has not been devoured, I was going to say, by a great devotion to a woman. The lives of your great men are as much the history of women whom they adored as of themselves. Dante, Byron, Shelley, it is the same with all of them, and there is no mistake about it; it is the great fact of life. What would Shakespeare be without it? and Shakespeare *is* life. A man, worthy to be named a man, will find the fact of love perpetually confronting him until he reaches old age, and if he be not ruined by worldliness or dissipation, will be troubled by it when he is fifty as much as when he was twenty-five. It is the subject of all subjects. People abuse love, and think it is the cause of half the mischief in the world. It is the one thing that keeps the world straight, and if it were not for that overpowering instinct, human nature would fall asunder; would be the prey of inconceivable selfishness and vices, and finally, there would be universal suicide. I did not intend to be eloquent: I hate being eloquent. But you did not mean what you said; you spoke from the head or teeth merely".

Theresa's little speech was delivered not with any heat of the blood. There was no excitement in her grey eyes, nor did her cheek burn. Her brain seemed to rule everything. This was an idea she had, and she kindled over it because it was an idea'.¹⁵

It is ironical that this vigorous repudiation of Mark's opinion is in fact an assertion of Mark's real position; so that the passage demonstrates both Theresa's force of personality and Mark's lack of it. Another irony is that Mark's assertion about Theresa that 'her brain seemed to rule everything' is precisely what she said of him at the end of her speech, and the irony is clearly in her favour. Then a little later comes another of those beautifully expressive uses of symbol of which we have already seen examples. The passage begins as follows:

'One evening there was a little party, and the conversation flagged. Theresa said that it was a great mistake to bring people together with nothing special to do but talk. Nothing is more tedious than to be in a company assembled for no particular reason, and every host, if he asks

¹⁵ *Ibid.* p. 127

more than two persons at the outside, ought to provide some entertainment. Talking is worth nothing unless it is perfectly spontaneous, and it cannot be spontaneous if there are sudden and blank silences, and nobody can think of a fresh departure.¹⁶

Someone resents the tone of Theresa's remarks and reminds her that she is the hostess and it is up to her to find some amusement. She agrees, and decides to give a recitation. She chooses 'the Lass of Lochroyan'.

'There is a passage in the middle of the poem, in which Lord Gregory's cruel mother pretends she is Lord Gregory, and refuses to recognise his former love, Annie of Lochroyan, as she stands outside his tower. The mother calls to Annie from the inside.

"'Gin thou be Annie Lochroyan
 (As I trow thou binna she),
 Now tell me some of the love tokens
 That passed between thee and me'.
 'Oh dinna ye mind, Lord Gregory,
 As we sat at the wine,
 We changed the rings frae our fingers,
 And I can show thee thine?
 Oh yours was gude, and gude enough,
 But aye the best was mine;
 For yours was o' the gude red gowd,
 But mine o' the diamond fine.'"

The last verse is as noble as anything in any ballad in the English language, and I thought that when Theresa was half way through it her voice shook a good deal. There was a glass of flowers standing near her, and just as she came to an end her arm moved and the glass was in a moment on the floor, shattered into twenty pieces. I happened to be watching her, and felt perfectly sure that the movement of her arm was not accidental, and that her intention was to conceal, by the apparent mishap, an emotion which was increasing and becoming inconvenient. At any rate, if that was her object it was perfectly accomplished, for the recitation was abruptly terminated, there was general commiseration over the shattered vase, and when the pieces were picked up and order was restored, it was nearly time to separate.¹⁷

Annie of Lochroyan may think that the love she has to offer is being

¹⁶ Ibid. p. 127

¹⁷ Ibid. pp. 128-9

spurned, but she is very well aware of its value: it is made of 'the diamond fine'. Theresa is much moved by this, because it clearly relates to something in her own nature. And not only hers, but Mark's too, since we recollect his intense, Shelleyan conviction that he had a fund of love within him and no object to expend it upon. Her emotion and her desire to conceal it – beautifully conveyed by the deliberate breaking of the glass – show that her views, expressed earlier, on the supreme importance for a man of a woman's love were proved on her pulses, and refute Mark's implied contention that she could think but not feel. The basic point that is being established in this section of the book is that Theresa is profoundly akin to Mark, but is also sufficiently different for her example to be a lesson to him; he could profit from her unflinching precision of thought and her courageous forthrightness of expression; and nobody could be less likely than she to give way to self-involved melancholia.

The last few pages of the 'Autobiography' concern the death of Mardon. 'One thing I am sure of', he says to Mark, one day during his last illness, 'is that a man ought to rid himself as much as possible of the miserable egotism which is so anxious about self, and should be more and more anxious about the universal'.¹⁸ We have met this last word before. It was used, as we noted, of Mrs. Lane, to stress the way in which she contrasts with the pettiness of her environment. Miss Arbour uses the word in connection with Mr. Hexton: 'I do not believe', she says, 'there was a single point in Mr. Hexton's character in which he touched the universal,'¹⁹ and she then goes on, in a passage we have already looked at, to suggest that it might have been different if he 'had kept bees or collected butterflies or beetles' – and we have seen that, implicit in the butterfly-catcher episode, is the paradox that a precise concentration on minutiae can touch on the universal.

Mary Mardon soon follows her father to the grave, and Mark is 'utterly broken-hearted.' He is more melancholy than ever before, as he is forced to stop working altogether and have a long holiday. But instead of becoming permanently embittered, he gradually acquires a peace of mind he had never known before. Partly this is the result of his renewed acquaintance with the butterfly-catcher, even though he never takes up a similar hobby. He gets a new job, as parliamentary reporter, and at this point the 'Autobiography' closes. Hale White's writing in this last section might well appear oddly perfunctory: Mark stops narrating altogether after the account of Mardon's death: his manuscript, we are told, comes to an end at this point and 'Reuben Shapcott', his fictitious editor, describes

¹⁸ Ibid. p. 133

¹⁹ Ibid. p. 65

the subsequent turning-point in Mark's spiritual history in a mere two pages. If this turning-point were anything akin to the spiritual rebirth described and celebrated by T.S. Eliot in his poetry, or to the blessing of the water-snakes in 'The Ancient Mariner', then this laconic treatment would undoubtedly be inadequate. But Hale White's theme is not sin and redemption from sin; Mark has never belonged to the Waste Land he has seen about him. So Mark's 'deliverance' is a gradual checking process rather than a sudden sense of spiritual release: a checking of over-subjectivity, with its concomitant egotism, and over-aspiration. All the materials for this process have been given us, and Mark's application of them does not involve anything new. Of course the brief conclusion would be anti-climatic if there were no sequel to describe the results of Mark's newfound tranquillity; but such a sequel is given us in 'Deliverance.'

LA LECANOMANCIE 'AUTOPTIQUE' DE THESSALUS

par F. CUNEN

AVANT d'aborder l'étude de cet écrit caractéristique du syncrétisme hellénistique, nous croyons utile d'en reproduire la traduction faite par le Père Festugière, en son étude *L'expérience religieuse du médecin Thessalos*, *Revue Biblique*, XLVIII (1939), pp. 45 s.s.:

'Thessalos à César Auguste, salut!'¹

'Beaucoup ont essayé durant leur vie, Auguste César, de livrer le secret de bien des choses merveilleuses, mais aucun d'eux n'a pu encore mener au terme son projet à cause des ténèbres fatales qui vinrent couvrir son esprit; et je suis donc apparemment le seul, de tous ceux qui ont existé depuis le commencement des âges, à avoir composé un traité merveilleux. En effet, bien que j'eusse entrepris une tâche qui passe les bornes des forces humaines, j'ai su la couronner de la fin qui lui était due, non pas, il est vrai, sans beaucoup d'épreuves et de périls.

Après m'être exercé dans la science de la grammaire en Asie et y être devenu plus savant que les gens de ce pays, je résolus de tirer parti, pour un temps, de ma science. Ayant donc fait voile vers cette ville où tous s'empressent, Alexandrie, muni d'une bonne somme d'argent, j'y fréquentai les philologues les plus accomplis, et tous me donnaient leurs louanges pour mon amour de l'étude et ma rapidité à comprendre.

J'étais aussi continuellement assidu aux leçons des médecins dialectiques, car je brûlais d'une passion incroyable pour cette science. Or, comme le temps était venu pour moi de rentrer à la maison, car j'étais déjà assez avancé dans la médecine, je me mis à parcourir les bibliothèques en quête de science; et, y ayant découvert un livre de Néchépso

¹ On trouvera de nombreux exemples de ce thème du secret confié à un roi, en FESTUGIERE, *La Révélation d'Hermès Trismégiste*, 1, Paris, Gabalda, 1950, p. 324 ss. Nous signalerons particulièrement la 'recette' 'pour avoir puissance sur le dieu Kosmokrator et obtenir ainsi un oracle par lécanomancie', de 'Néphôtès à Psammétique, le roi d'Egypte'. L'édition en est reprise (P IV, 154-285) dans PREISENDANZ K., *Papyri Graecae Magicae*, Leipzig, 1928, vol. 1, p. 77-81, que nous désignerons sous le nom de PGM; elle est consignée dans le *Papyrus Magique grec* de Paris, B.N. suppl. grec 574, lignes 154 à 285. Cette formule de divination prétend, comme celle de Thessalus, accorder une révélation par vision directe dans le bassin.

contenant vingt-quatre manières de traiter le corps entier et toute maladie selon chaque signe du Zodiaque au moyen de pierres et de plantes, je fus confondu par la grandeur merveilleuse de l'entreprise. Mais il n'y avait là, semble-t-il, que vaine fumée d'une fatuité royale: car j'eus beau apprêter la pilule héliaque préconisée par l'auteur et ses autres recettes, j'échouai dans tous les essais que j'en fis en traitant les maladies. Cette erreur me parut plus cruelle que la mort, j'en fus consumé de chagrin: et en effet, m'étant fié aveuglément à cet ouvrage, j'avais vanté dans une lettre à mes parents la vertu de ces remèdes et leur avais annoncé que je rentrerais dès que j'en aurais fait l'expérience. Je ne pouvais donc demeurer à Alexandrie à cause des moqueries de mes confrères: car c'est le propre des beaux exploits que d'exciter la jalousie; d'autre part, je n'étais plus pressé de rentrer à la maison puisque j'avais été convaincu d'incapacité à tenir mes promesses: aussi me mis-je à parcourir l'Egypte, poussé en avant par cet aiguillon qui me blessait l'âme, cherchant le moyen de faire tourner à bien mon espérance téméraire, ou, si j'échouais, résolu à quitter alors la vie par le suicide. Or, comme mon âme me prédisait sans cesse que j'aurais commerce avec les dieux, je tendais continuellement mes mains vers le ciel, suppliant les dieux de m'accorder, par une vision en songe ou par une inspiration d'en haut, quelque faveur de cette sorte, dont je pusse m'enorgueillir en regagnant, joyeux, Alexandrie et ma patrie. Etant donc arrivé à Diospolis (Thèbes), je veux dire la capitale la plus ancienne de l'Egypte, qui possède une multitude de temples, je m'y établis: il s'y trouvait en effet des prêtres, amis des lettres et savants en maintes sciences. Le temps passa, mon amitié pour les prêtres allait toujours croissant, et je leur demandai un jour s'il était resté quelque chose de la force opératoire de la magie. Je vis bien alors que la plupart s'indignaient de ma témérité à concevoir de telles espérances: cependant l'un d'eux, qui inspirait confiance par la gravité de ses moeurs et son grand âge, ne déçut point mon amitié. Il m'assura qu'il avait le pouvoir de produire des visions au moyen d'un bassin rempli d'eau.² Je l'invitai donc à une promenade avec moi dans la partie la plus

² Sur la lécanomancie, voir mon ouvrage en deux volumes: F. CUNEN, *La lécanomancie grecque et ses dérivés*, 1957. C'est un procédé divinatoire consistant à recourir personnellement, ou par l'intermédiaire d'un jeune médium, à l'inspection d'un bassin (λεκάνη) (ou d'une coupe ou un plat, φιάλη, κύλιξ, σκύφος, ποτήριον). Le magicien prétend y faire apparaître dans l'eau, des personnes, des objets, ou des scènes futures ou lointaines, ou même les signes émis par des êtres surnaturels, en réponse à des incantations et à des rites magiques. Le terme est attesté en STRABON, 762; dans la *Vita Alexandri* du Ps.-CALLISTHENE, 1, 1 ss.; dans les *Apotelesmata* du Ps.-MANETHON, IV, 213, et dans les papyrus magiques. On trouvera quelques pages sur le sujet dans la *Real-Encycl.* de PAULY-WISSOWA, XII, col 1879 ss. (art. de GANSZYNIEC).

déserte de la cité, sans lui dire ce que je souhaitais. Nous allâmes jusqu'à un bois environné d'une tranquillité profonde, et là, je me jetai soudain face contre terre et, tout en larmes, lui tins embrassés les pieds. Et comme, dans son ahurissement à ce coup inattendu, il me demandait la raison de mon acte, je lui déclare que ma vie est entre ses mains, qu'il faut absolument que je converse avec un dieu, et que, si ce désir n'aboutit pas, je suis prêt à quitter la vie. Alors, m'ayant relevé de terre et consolé par les propos les plus bienveillants, il me promit cordialement de se rendre à ma prière, et m'ordonna un jeûne de trois jours. Et moi, l'âme toute fondue à l'annonce de ces promesses, je lui baisai la main et le comblai de remerciements, pleurant comme une fontaine; car c'est une loi de la nature qu'une joie inespérée provoque plus de larmes que le chagrin. Puis, étant sortis du bois, nous commençâmes de jeûner, et ces trois jours, dans l'impatience où j'étais, me parurent autant d'années. Quand fut venu le troisième jour, parti dès l'aurore, j'allai saluer le prêtre. Celui-ci avait préparé une chambre bien propre avec tout ce qu'il fallait pour la consultation: de mon côté, toujours prévoyant, j'avais apporté, sans le dire au prêtre, du papier et de l'encre pour prendre note, le cas échéant, de ce qui serait dit. Le prêtre me demanda si je voulais converser avec le fantôme de quelque mort ou avec un dieu: 'Avec Asclépios', lui dis-je, ajoutant qu'il mettrait le comble à ses bienfaits s'il me laissait communiquer avec le dieu seul à seul. Il me le promit sans plaisir (les traits de son visage le montraient bien!), mais enfin le promit. Là-dessus, m'ayant enfermé dans la chambre et commandé de m'asseoir face au trône où le dieu devait prendre place, il évoqua Asclépios grâce à la vertu des vocables mystérieux, puis sortit en fermant la porte à clé. Et j'étais donc assis, anéanti de corps et d'âme à la vue d'un spectacle si merveilleux (car nulle parole humaine ne saurait rendre les traits de ce visage ni la splendeur des ornements qui le paraient), quand le dieu, ayant levé la main droite, me salua en ces termes: 'O bienheureux Thessalos, aujourd'hui un dieu t'honore, et bientôt, quand ils auront appris ta réussite, les hommes te tiendront en révérence comme un dieu! Interroge-moi donc sur ce que tu veux, je te répondrai de bon coeur sur toutes choses'. Pour moi, je pouvais à peine parler, tant j'étais hors de moi et tant j'avais l'âme fascinée par la beauté du dieu, néanmoins je lui demandai pourquoi j'avais échoué en essayant les recettes de Néchepso. Sur quoi le dieu me dit: 'Le roi Néchepso, tout homme fort sensé qu'il était et en possession de tout pouvoir magique, n'a cependant reçu de quelque voix divine aucun des secrets que tu veux apprendre; doué d'un naturel sagace, il avait compris les affinités des pierres et des plantes avec les astres, mais il n'a pas connu les moments et les lieux où il faut cueillir les plantes. Or la croissance et le dépérissement de tous les fruits de la saison dépen-

dent de l'influx des astres; en outre, l'esprit divin, que son extrême subtilité fait passer à travers toute substance, se répand en particulière abondance dans les lieux qu'atteignent successivement les influx astraux au cours de la révolution cosmique'.

Alexandrie était le lieu de rendez-vous du syncrétisme, et partant, de l'ironie, du scepticisme, du cosmopolitisme, le 'point culminant des cités', selon Ammien Marcellin, la 'grande école', selon Grégoire de Nysse, où se rassemblaient tous les amateurs de philosophie. La douceur de son climat lui valait un important contingent de valétudinaires, tels qu'on en rencontre de plus en plus aujourd'hui en certaines villes bien abritées de la Méditerranée, colonie élégante aux goûts intellectuels sophistiqués et éclectiques. Quant aux Alexandrins eux-mêmes, Vopiscus ne pouvait les comparer mieux qu'aux Gaulois pour la versatilité et l'inconstance de leur esprit. 'Sunt enim Aegyptii viri ventosi, furibundi, jactantes, injuriosi, . . . *novarum rerum* usque ad cantilenas publicas cupientes . . .'³ Je poursuis en adoptant, pour la ligne suivante, l'émendation de Lumbroso:⁴ 'Nam (sunt) mathematici, haruspices, medici, /judaei/, christiani, samaritae . . .' Thessalus entend donc se ranger ici dans la catégorie des *medici*, tout en s'intéressant vivement, nous allons le voir, aux idées des devins ('haruspices'), et sans dédaigner, loin de là, l'élément mystico-religieux que diffusait sur tout le savoir de l'époque, le syncrétisme religieux (religions égyptienne, juive, chrétienne, sectes gnostiques, religions orientales.)

Nous trouvons chez Vopiscus la célèbre lettre d'Hadrien à son beau-frère Servianus (*Saturninus*, Chap. VIII), dans laquelle l'empereur décrit l'attitude religieuse des Alexandrins: 'Aegyptum quam mihi laudabas, Serviane carissime, totam didici levem, pendulam et ad omnia famae momenta volitantem. Illic qui Serapim colunt, christiani sunt et devoti sunt Serapi, qui se Christi episcopos dicunt. Nemo illic archisynagogus Judaeorum, nemo Samarites, nemo christianorum presbyter, non mathematicus, non haruspex, non aliptes. Ipse ille patriarcha cum Aegyptum venerit ab aliis Serapidem adorare, ab aliis cogitur Christum. Genus hominum seditiosissimum, vanissimum, injuriosissimum, civitas opulenta, dives, fecunda'. 'L'Egypte dont tu me faisais un tel éloge, mon cher Servianus, je la connais bien maintenant, légère, capricieuse, prête à s'émouvoir à la moindre rumeur. Ici, les adorateurs de Sérapis sont chrétiens, et ceux qui se disent les évêques du Christ sont des adeptes du culte de Sérapis. Il n'y a pas, en cette ville, un chef de synagogue, un

³ VOPISCUS, *Saturninus*, dans *Scriptores Historiae Augustae*, ed. Peter, Leipzig, 1865, t. II, p. 208.

⁴ *Osservazioni antiche e moderne sul carattere degli Alessandrini*, dans *Atti della R. Accademia dei Lincei*, série III, t. iii, p. 354.

samaritain, un prêtre chrétien qui ne soit astrologue, aruspice ou devin. Même le patriarche (juif), de passage en Egypte, doit, selon les uns, se prosterner devant Sérapis; selon les autres, adorer le Christ. Ce peuple d'Alexandrie est on ne peut plus ombrageux, vaniteux, et toujours le gros mot à la bouche; cette ville nage dans la richesse, dans l'opulence, dans la prospérité'.

En fait, tous les Juifs n'éprouvèrent pas toujours des sentiments aussi bienveillants envers les Alexandrins. C'est sous Hadrien, qu'à la suite d'une révolte où les Juifs avaient détruit le temple de Némésis,⁵ les Grecs prirent leur revanche et tuèrent ou firent prisonniers tous les Juifs qui leur tombèrent sous la main. Cette précision montre qu'il faut prendre 'cum grano salis' l'opinion émise par Hadrien. Sérapis, par exemple, n'est certes pas le seul dieu que vénèrent à cette époque les multiples sectes d'Alexandrie. Le portrait ébauché par le royal visiteur présente néanmoins une vérité fondamentale. A cette époque, Sérapis, Hélios, Zeus, Mithra se confondaient en un seul dieu, auquel allaient les prières des adeptes du syncrétisme solaire⁶ et que croyaient pouvoir vénérer certains Juifs et Chrétiens, adeptes de sectes gnostiques. Ce dieu était en effet assimilé à Iao-Sabaoth,⁷ vénéré en plusieurs formules de lécanomanie et de lychnomancie du papyrus magique démotique.⁸

⁵Voir APPIEN, *Bell. civ.*, livre II, chap. 90; DION CASSIUS, *Hist. Rom.*, livre LXIX, chap. 11, et SPARTIEN, *Hadr.*, XIV.

⁶Ce syncrétisme est manifeste dans les recettes magiques, par ex. en PGM, vol. 1, p. 180: PV, 1-53: Consultation de Sarapis (avec) un enfant, à l'aide de la lampe et de la coupe, ainsi que du siège: 'Je t'invoque, Zeus-Hélios-Mithra-Sarapis, Invincible...'

On trouvera une étude de cette recette en F. CUNEN, *Lampe et coupe magiques*, dans *Symbolae Osloenses*, 36, 1960, p. 65 ss.

⁷Voir P IV, 3045 ss.; V, 176, 209, 352. Cf. HOPFNER Th., dans *Archiv Orientalni*, III, 1931, p. 340 ss., et EITREM S., *Orakel und Mysterien am Ausgang der Antike*, Zürich, 1947, p. 58. Sur le syncrétisme alexandrin, voir les textes latins et grecs réunis par HOPFNER Th., en *Fontes Historiae Religionis Aegyptiacae*, p. 538, 597, 716.

⁸La lychnomancie est un type de divination intuitive, recourant à l'effet hallucinatoire de l'inspection d'une flamme. Ces pratiques de divination par le récipient magique sont consignées dans le *Demotic Magical Papyrus*, DMP, ed. et trad. de F. LI. GRIFFITH et H. THOMPSON, Londres, 1904, vol. 1: col. I-III; IX-X; XIV; XVIII, 7-33; XXI, 1-9; XXII; XXIII, 21-31; XXVII, 1-12; XXVIII; verso XXII; v. XXVI.

D'autres recettes en langue égyptienne se rapportent à la lychnomancie: ce sont V, XVI; XVII-XVIII, 6; XXV, 1-22; XXVII, 13-36; v. XVIII; v. XXIV; v. XXXI. Pour les recettes XXII, XXIII, 21-31 et XXVII, classées plus haut, il est difficile de dire si elles sont des lécanomancies ou des lychnomancies. Il en est de même pour VI-VIII, 12. J'ai montré en plusieurs travaux que ces formules, écrites en égyptien, sont parfaitement similaires à celles que nous ont conservées les papyrus grecs de même époque.

La 'Lettre de Thessalus à l'Empereur' illustre parfaitement la mentalité des derniers siècles du paganisme, où semblent faire excellent ménage les pratiques les plus vulgaires et les formes les plus hautes de mystagogie. D'emblée, la lettre précitée semble avoir des prétentions que nous jugeons ridicules, mais qui ne laissaient pas d'impressionner les fervents des arts occultes. En plus d'un point, cette missive s'apparente étroitement à la littérature magique de l'époque. Tantôt l'heureux bénéficiaire d'une vision divine est censé en faire part à un empereur — c'est le cas ici —; tantôt, il en confie le secret à un pharaon tel que Psamétique, en assurant ainsi à son message une antiquité plus vénérable encore.

Est-il possible de dater cette *Lettre de Thessalus à un Empereur*? Graux, qui en entreprit l'édition d'après un manuscrit de la Bibliothèque de Madrid,⁹ voit en son destinataire l'empereur Julien, et en son expéditeur Harpocraton, l'auteur présumé des *Cyranides*. P. Boudreaux compléta l'édition de Graux et remit le passage dans son contexte médico-magique en donnant à l'ensemble de l'écrit, le titre qu'il méritait: 'Opusculum de plantis 12 signis et 7 planetis subjectis'. Si pour Boudreaux également,¹⁰ l'auteur est Harpocraton, auteur des *Cyranides* et du *Lexicon decem oratorum*, l'oeuvre a rajeuni elle-même de deux siècles. Comme l'éditeur établit en effet que la 'Lettre' n'est pas postérieure au deuxième siècle, il conclut que l'empereur désigné dans la suscription par Καῖσαρ Αὐγουστος était probablement Hadrien.

Hadrien fera à son tour place à Claude ou à Néron, selon l'estimation de F. Cumont.¹¹ En 1922, l'illustre savant édita la traduction latine de l'*Oeuvre du médecin Thessalus sur les vertus des plantes* et attribua au médecin Thessalus de Tralles le traité grec publié en 1912; il fit de Claude ou de Néron son destinataire.¹² L'écrit semble en tout cas trouver

Voici les lécanomancies grecques consignées sur papyrus: P III, 275-310; P IV, 154-285; P IV, 1928-2005; P IV, 3209-3254; P V, 1-65; P VII, 320-335. Il faut y ajouter le fragment du papyrus Warren, édité par HUNT, dans les *Studies presented to F. Ll. GRIFFITH*, p. 233-240, dont PREISENDANZ K., *Neue Griechische Zauberpapyri*, dans *Forschungen und Fortschritte*, 1939, XI, p. 151 reconnaissait le caractère hallucinatoire. PREISENDANZ a inclus cette recette en PGM, vol. III, p. 4, (P LXII). En ma thèse de doctorat, vol. I, p. 121-134, j'étudie cette recette, lacuneuse à bien des égards, et, à la lumière des parallèles qu'offre le DMP, je tente d'établir sa nature typiquement lécanomantique.

⁹ GRAUX, *Textes Grecs*, Paris, 1886, p. 99 ss.: d'après le ms. 110 de la Bibliothèque de Madrid.

¹⁰ BOUDREAU P., dans *Catal. Cod. Astrol. Graec.*, VIII, 3, p. 132 ss.

¹¹ CUMONT F., *ibidem*, VIII, 4, p. 253 ss.

¹² Sur la personnalité de Thessalus, cf. DILLER, dans la *Real-Encyclopädie*, VIa, p. 181, 20 ss.; sur les rapports des 'Lettres' latine et grecque, voir *ibidem*, ainsi qu'en CUMONT, *Ecrits Hermétiques*, dans la *Rev. Philol.*, XLIII, 1918, p. 85 ss.

sa place en ce second siècle de notre ère que Lucien illustre d'une *Nekyomanteia* sous maint aspect semblable à notre recette. Le R.P. Festugière assigne à la *lettre de Thessalus*, approximativement la même époque.¹³ Pour la lécanomancie, le bénéfique est immense. Car au quatrième siècle de notre ère, la missive n'eût été qu'un témoin de plus, parmi les nombreux papyrus magiques écrits à cette époque, si même leur contenu remonte à des recettes beaucoup plus anciennes. Au premier ou au second siècle, elle proclame l'extrême importance que prétend revêtir la lécanomancie aux yeux du médecin Thessalus ou du moins, des herbolistes de son temps.

Il n'est pas étonnant qu'en ces mêmes années, le rationaliste Pline¹⁴ voue la même exécration à Thessalus, 'prince de la médecine', et aux innombrables magiciens qui infestent l'Empire, prétendent évoquer les dieux dans leurs bassins et en obtiennent la révélation qui sauvera leurs clients en cas de maladie ou les tirera de leurs doutes en cas d'indécision. Le grand naturaliste manifeste cependant parfois une crédulité qui nous laisserait songeurs si nous ne nous rappelions avec quelle foi païens comme chrétiens rivalisaient alors dans l'exhibition des miracles les plus surprenants. Quelle que soit sa nature, le prodige valait la peine d'être pris en considération et contribuait puissamment à l'apologétique ou à la renommée.

Notre Thessalus, tout savant grammairien et philosophe que la culture alexandrine ait pu le faire, ne dédaigne pas davantage de recourir aux moyens surnaturels lorsque les voies humaines s'avèrent inefficaces. Brillant étudiant en médecine, il croyait avoir découvert dans un livre médical de Néchépso, maître légendaire en thérapeutique botanique, le merveilleux moyen de guérir toutes maladies. Mais la pratique réduit à néant ses espérances et ses prétentions. Rouge de confusion, il ne veut plus demeurer à Alexandrie où ses confrères jaloux jouissent de son échec. Plutôt que de rentrer en sa famille et de la décevoir cruellement, il parcourt l'Égypte, en quête désespérée du remède universel. Pressentant une inspiration divine, il tendait continuellement les mains vers le ciel. Tel l'adepte des cérémonies hermétiques qui, en vue de la révélation, doit se préparer dans le silence et l'invocation. Aux dieux l'entière faculté de choisir le mode de leur révélation, vision en songe ou inspiration directe. N'importe, pourvu qu'elle lui permette de rentrer joyeux en sa patrie. N'importe, dirons-nous, pour d'autres raisons encore: l'oniro-

Nous traiterons dans un autre article de l'identité de Thessalus, en même temps que de celle d'Harpocraton, de 'Kyrannis' et de Damigéron.

¹³ FESTUGIERE, *La Révélation...*, I, p. 56 ss.; 204, (note 3) — 207, et dans la *Revue Biblique*, 48 (1939), p. 55 s. Voir tout l'article, p. 43-77, *ibidem*.

¹⁴ PLINE, *Hist. Natur.*, XXVIII, 27; XXIX, 5.

mancie jouissait alors d'un prestige que ne parvenait guère à éclipser le mode de révélation directe, si prisé pourtant en ces âges de 'familiarité' avec les dieux.

Après ce préambule, destiné à exciter l'intérêt du lecteur, notre héros se rend dans la ville la plus ancienne d'Egypte, Thèbes, aux prêtres savants et puissants. Ne fallait-il pas puiser l'inspiration au centre le plus antique de la magie séculaire? Il fallut à Thessalus se lier d'une solide amitié avec les prêtres thébains, avant de se risquer à leur confier sa foi en cette 'force opératoire de la magie' dont ils détenaient le secret. Et encore ne reçurent-ils ses confidences qu'avec froideur. Il fallait s'attendre à ce que l'un d'entre eux se laisse attendrir par sa confiance ingénue et que cet honneur revienne au plus vénérable et au plus sérieux d'entre ces prêtres. La lécanomancie ne paraît pas être ici une affaire de charlatan ou de mystificateur; on n'y parvient qu'au terme d'une longue expérience et d'une vie irréprochable, garantes d'une initiation privilégiée. Mon allusion à la lécanomancie se justifie: ce vieillard austère revendiquait le pouvoir de connaître la 'puissance intuitive du bassin'.

Examinons un instant les premières données de ce roman. Trouvons-nous en ce récit une note assez originale pour nous prévaloir d'une description authentique de lécanomancie? Non. Avant Thessalus, Démocrite avait déjà rencontré dans ses pérégrinations en Egypte, en Chaldée, en Perse et dans l'Inde, des savants qui lui avaient révélé les arcanes de leur science.¹⁵ S'il fallait en croire une de ces affirmations recueillies par Clément d'Alexandrie, il aurait eu à se féliciter particulièrement de la complaisance des prêtres d'Egypte! Quant à Lucien, il n'ignore pas plus que l'auteur de notre 'lettre' le préjugé cher, en cette époque, aux tenants de l'occultisme. Comme son Ménippe ne comprend pas l'opposition qui règne entre les lois morales et les vices que les poètes prêtent aux dieux,¹⁶ et ne découvre pas mieux que Thessalus de réponse satisfaisante auprès des philosophes ou des livres, il recourt aux mages et à leur savoir occulte.¹⁷ La désillusion envers la science jette dans les bras des prophètes et des illuminés, la génération passionnée de savoir que représentent le Démocrite de Clément d'Alexandrie, le Thessalus de notre missive, ou l'ironique Ménippe de Lucien.¹⁸ Notre recette ne brille

¹⁵ CLEMENT D'ALEXANDRIE, *Stromata*, I, 15, 69, 4-6 (= DIELS-KRANZ, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, 68 B, 229).

¹⁶ LUCIEN, *Ménippe*, 3 (Loeb Classical Libr., IV, p. 78 ss.)

¹⁷ IDEM, *Ménippe*, 6.

¹⁸ Lucien tient probablement son information d'adeptes d'une école hermétiste rivale de celle à laquelle Thessalus prétend se rattacher. Le néophyte venu en Egypte, et qui fréquenta Thèbes après Alexandrie, ne diffère guère du brave 'pèlerin' de Babylone. Tous deux caressent les mêmes espoirs, soutenus par la

donc guère jusqu'à présent par l'originalité; elle reprend un thème courant en cet âge féru d'hermétisme. Mais la conformité du récit de Thessalus avec le Ménippe de Lucien apparaît en des détails encore plus typiques. Le vieux mage-mystagogue de Ménippe ressemble à notre prêtre thébain comme un frère: ses réticences ne sont-elles pas identiques, comme d'ailleurs, nous le verrons, ses préparatifs mystérieux? Il ne faut donc voir en notre Epître qu'un échantillon du genre qui faisait alors fureur. Mais au moins, consolons-nous: la lécanomancie de Thessalus semble promue à la même dignité que la vénérable nécromancie de Ménippe et tenir la vedette aussi brillamment qu'elle, dans la littérature hermétique des premiers siècles.

Il me paraît utile de donner ici une traduction du récit de l'initiation, narré par le sceptique et rationaliste Lucien. Elle permettra de mieux apprécier le caractère mystique du message de Thessalus, vibrant de foi et d'enthousiasme en la révélation d'Asclépius. Il sera aisé de voir à quel point Lucien avait su distinguer les rites caractéristiques de la consultation des êtres de l'Au-delà, et excelle à en dépeindre les aspects curieux, voire cocasses. Il affecte parfois de prendre au sérieux la crédulité et la ferveur du néophyte; il reprend les poncifs rencontrés en Thessalus: découragement du jeune consultant, fréquentation de sages vieillards, appel à l'un des plus sages et des plus chenus d'entre eux, désir d'atteindre la sagesse avant tout autre bien matériel, obtention de la grâce de l'initiation après mille prières et instances. Mais on remarque aisément que le satiriste n'éprouve guère le respect sacré de son héros lorsqu'il montre son mystagogue à l'oeuvre, lui crachant trois fois au visage, et prononçant des paroles indistinctes de façon, sans doute, à dissimuler l'inanité de leur signification. Mais je laisse la parole à son jeune héros.

'Déçu en cette attente, j'étais encore plus déprimé qu'auparavant. Je trouvais néanmoins quelque consolation à la pensée que, si j'étais encore stupide et ignorant de la vérité, j'avais au moins la compagnie de bien des sages, dont la renommée intellectuelle n'était plus à faire. Ainsi donc, tandis que je passais des nuits blanches à retourner ces problèmes, je résolus d'aller à Babylone et de m'adresser à un des mages, disciples et successeurs de Zoroastre. J'avais en effet entendu dire qu'à l'aide de

même foi, celle de trouver la sagesse antique, mère du savoir, dans un des deux pays réputés être les seuls détenteurs de la révélation divine: l'Egypte, patrie présumée de Néchépsos et de Pétoisiris; la Perse des mages, notamment de Zoroastre et d'Ostanès.

Sur l'oeuvre présumée de ces illustres personnages, en bonne part légendaire, voir J. BIDEZ — F. CUMONT, *Les Mages hellénisés, Zoroastre, Ostanès et Hystaspes, d'après la tradition grecque*, Paris, 1938. Nous étudierons ailleurs ce qu'il faut penser du caractère légendaire de Néchépsos et de Pétoisiris.

certains charmes et conjurations, les portes de l'Hadès s'ouvraient (devant eux) permettant d'y emmener sans crainte tous ceux qu'ils voulaient, et de les ramener de même. Par conséquent, j'ai cru bon de m'entendre avec un de ces mages pour ma descente (dans l'Hadès), et ma consultation de Tirésias le Béotien, en vue d'apprendre auprès de ce prophète, de ce sage, quel était le meilleur genre de vie, celui que devait adopter un homme de bon sens.

Je me mis donc sur pied et je me hâtai vers Babylone. A mon arrivée, je prends contact avec un Chaldéen, au pouvoir miraculeux, aux cheveux gris et à la barbe majestueuse; il portait le nom de Mithrobarzane. A force de supplications et d'instances, j'obtins de lui qu'il me servît de guide, mais au prix qu'il y mettrait. M'ayant donc pris en charge, d'abord pour un terme de vingt-neuf jours (dont le premier est celui de la nouvelle lune), il me fit descendre aux bords de l'Euphrate dès l'aube, me fit tourner vers le levant et me baigna. Il prononça ensuite une longue supplique que je n'entendis pas fort bien. Il s'exprimait en effet d'une voix rapide et indistincte, comme le font lors des compétitions sportives, les mauvais annonceurs. Il semblait bien pourtant qu'il invoquât certains esprits. Après l'invocation, il me cracha trois fois au visage, revenant chaque fois à la charge, sans regarder quiconque de ceux qui se trouvaient sur son chemin. Nous mangeâmes des noix et bûmes du lait, de l'hydromel et de l'eau du Choaspe; nous dormîmes à la belle étoile sur l'herbe.

Quand il jugea suffisamment long le stage de diète préliminaire, il m'amena en pleine nuit auprès du Tigre, me purgea, me purifia, me consacra à l'aide de bois résineux, d'oignons marins et *tutti quanti*, en s'accompagnant de force incantations. Après m'avoir enchanté tout entier et avoir tourné autour de moi, de crainte que les fantômes ne me fissent du tort, il me ramena à la maison, dans l'état où j'étais, en marchant à reculons. Ensuite, nous vaquâmes aux autres préparatifs de la traversée. Il revêtit, quant à lui, une tenue de magicien qui ressemblait à celle des Mèdes. Quant à moi, il m'affubla des insignes que vous voyez: chapeau, peau de lion, et lyre par-dessus le marché. Il m'enjoignit de dire à tout qui s'enquerrait de mon nom, que je m'appelais non pas Ménippe, mais Hercule, Ulysse ou Orphée... (*Ménippe*, 6-8)

Selon la version latine médiévale éditée par Cumont, c'est à la nécromancie que Thessalus aurait été initié à l'instar de Ménippe. 'Et ille promisit mihi monstrare evidens opus necromantiae in crypta'. Cette interprétation du traducteur latin n'est-elle due qu'à la confusion entre lécanomancie et nécromancie, courante dans les recettes médiévales? Le texte latin est manifestement corrompu. Quelle que soit l'explication proposée, il est difficile de voir une traduction des termes grecs ἐν ἑργεῖα

αὐτοπτικὴ λεκάνης dans l'expression latine 'opus necromantiae in crypta'. C'est dans une expression similaire, empruntée aux recettes transcrites sur papyrus, que les leçons latine et grecque de Thessalus se rejoignent et s'expliquent mutuellement. Αὐθοπτικὴ (sic) λεκανομαντεία ἅμα καὶ νεκροαγωγὴ (PGM, iv, 221): 'lécanomancie et nécromancie'; en un mot, consultation des morts par la *lécanè*. La consultation décrite par Lucien témoigne dans le domaine littéraire, comme celle de Thessalus parmi les écrits pseudo-scientifiques, du crédit que l'époque alexandrine accorde à la nécromancie, notamment lorsque l'évocation des morts s'opère grâce au bassin magique. Le vénérable prêtre demandera d'ailleurs bientôt à notre jeune médecin s'il veut parler au fantôme d'un mort ou à une divinité. A l'époque même de leur composition, les formules magiques de lécanomancie pouvaient passer pour des rites nécromantiques ou du moins s'y apparenter étroitement. Strabon, xvi, 2, 39, n'opérait-il pas le même rapprochement lorsqu'il écrivait: 'Chez les Perses, (nous rencontrons) les Mages, les nécromants et ceux qui pratiquent la lécanomancie et l'hydromancie?' En lisant Varron, Saint Augustin, (*Cité de Dieu*, vii, 35) tire une conclusion à laquelle nous pouvons souscrire: 'N'importe le nom donné, hydromancie ou nécromancie; les expressions se valent quand ce sont des morts qui semblent intervenir dans la divination (par le bassin)'.

Dans le texte 'opus necromantiae in crypta', la leçon 'necromantia' s'expliquerait bien plus facilement encore si nous lui voyions accoler la précision 'dans le bassin' ou 'dans la coupe'. N'est-il pas naturel que cette dernière glose soit sortie de la plume du traducteur latin qui pouvait ainsi compenser l'imprécision de son terme 'opus'? Aussi, F. Cumont tâche-t-il d'expliquer la présence insolite de 'in crypta', là où nous attendions une expression similaire à 'in concha' ou 'in pelvi'. Il est possible que l'erreur provienne du texte grec qu'avait devant les yeux l'auteur latin.¹⁹

Quant à la traduction du mot αὐτοπτικὴ par celui de 'évidens', son indigence s'explique par l'incompréhension du traducteur occidental. Les termes ésotériques αὐτοπτος, αὐτοψία, αὐτοπτικὸς appartiennent en effet au jargon des sages néo-platoniciens et des mages hermétistes. La prétention du vieillard à connaître la puissance 'intuitive' du¹⁹ Sans doute, l'allusion à la 'crypta' est-elle due au succès que connaissaient les cavernes (cryptae) dans les opérations nécromantiques. Elle est conforme à l'opinion que l'*Asclepius* et autres ouvrages hermétiques répandaient sur l'utilité des 'cavernes', à savoir des soubassements des temples dans les opérations magiques attribuées aux Egyptiens. Cf. FESTUGIERE, *La Révélation*., I, p. 46 s., 48, note 4; 57, note 3. On trouvera en HOPFNER Th., *Griechisch-Aegyptischer Offenbarungszauber*, Leipzig, 1921, vol. I, § 825, p. 226, de plus amples détails sur la magie dans les lieux sombres.

bassin nous emmène aux degrés sublimes de contemplation qu'ont tenté d'atteindre les néo-platoniciens. Jamblique, dans son traité *Sur les Mystères*,²⁰ parle d'une *αὐτοπτικὴ δεῖξις*, d'un *πῦρ αὐτοπτικόν* et d'une *ἀλήθεια αὐτοπτικὴ* et entend par là la vision extatique, le feu divin et la vérité, contemplés 'face à face'. Serions-nous donc avec Graux, ramenés au III siècle et à une forme de théurgie qui n'a de lécanomancie que le nom? Mais, au fait, cette 'autopsia' de Jamblique et d'Isidore,²¹ cette contemplation 'face à face' si chère à Plotin ne se manifeste-t-elle qu'au III siècle et seulement dans les milieux hautement philosophiques? Les recettes magiques parlent d'un *αὐτοπτος τρίπους*,²² d'une *αὐθοπτικῆ(sic) λεκανομαντεία ἅμα καὶ νεκροαγωγή*,²³ d'un *αὐτοπτος λόγος*,²⁴ d'une *λεκάνη αὐτοπτος*,²⁵ et revendiquent donc pour leur lécanomancie le haut privilège d'établir un contact personnel et immédiat avec Apollon, Typhon, Sarapis ou Anubis. A l'époque impériale, la vision 'autoptique' est donc pratiquée en Egypte par les simples magiciens. C'est à l'Egypte, son pays natal, que Plotin semble l'avoir empruntée. C'est en ce pays d'ailleurs que la théurgie paraît être née de la fusion qu'engendra la rencontre de la philosophie grecque et des apports théosophique et magique de l'orient.²⁶ Il n'est donc pas étonnant que dès le premier siècle, Thessalus, à l'école des prêtres égyptiens, apprenne le secret rituel de la vision 'seul à seul'. Théurges et magiciens entendaient le mot 'autoptos' dans un sens différent. Les charlatans ne prétendaient vraisemblablement pas à des visions extatiques. Mais ils ont trouvé habile, au risque de le galvauder, d'usurper un terme à la mode dans les milieux hermétistes. En l'occurrence, le ton élevé du récit de Thessalus, le respect infini qu'il voue à son 'mystagogue' permettent à l'habile auteur de la 'Lettre', de parer le terme *autoptikè*, du haut prestige qui honore à cette époque les initiations théurgiques.

Voyons si la suite du récit accorde à la *λεκάνη*, le pouvoir redoutable de rencontrer les dieux 'face à face'. La contemplation extatique par la coupe est en elle-même un grand secret que, seuls, les pleurs et les sup-

²⁰ JAMBLIQUE, *De mysteriis*, ed. Parthey, II, 6; II, 10; II, 4.

²¹ DAMASCIUS, *Vita Isidori*, 14, dans la *Patrol. Gr.*, t. 103, 1252.

²² *Pap. Gr. Mag.*, III, 291.

²³ P GM, IV, 221 s.

²⁴ P GM, V, 54; VII, 320.

²⁵ P GM, IV, 162.

²⁶ Voir COCHEZ, *Plotin et les mystères d'Isis*, dans la *Revue néo-scolast.*, 1911, p. 328 ss., 338 ss.; CUMONT F., *Le culte égyptien et le mysticisme de Plotin*, *Monuments Piot*, XXV, 1921-1922, p. 77 ss.; BIZEZ J., *Proclus sur l'art hiératique*, dans le *Catal. Manuscrits Alchimistes Grecs*, VI, 1928, p. 147; BIDEZ J., *La liturgie des mystères chez les néo-platoniciens*, *Bull. Acad. Belg.*, 1910, p. 415 ss.

plications déchirantes de Thessalus peuvent arracher au bienveillant grand-prêtre, à la faveur de la solitude de la forêt. Ce dernier, ébranlé, enseigne au pèlerin le moyen de s'unir à la divinité. Il lui ordonne un jeûne, de trois jours. Après ces trois jours 'qui lui avaient paru trois années', dès l'aurore, le maître et son néophyte se rencontrèrent dans une 'chambre' bien propre où tout était préparé en vue de la consultation. Prévoyant, Thessalus s'était muni d'encre et de papier pour noter ce qui serait de nature à l'intéresser.

Voici comment Thessalus décrit la suite de l'opération. 'Le prêtre me demanda si je voulais converser avec le fantôme de quelque mort ou avec un dieu; je répondis 'Avec Asclépios', ajoutant qu'il mettrait le comble à ses bienfaits s'il me laissait communiquer seul à seul avec le dieu. Il me le promit sans plaisir, mais enfin le promit', précise Thessalus, fidèle au ton romanesque et au style enflé qui caractérisent son récit.²⁷ Il assied

²⁷ Festugière, *art. cité, Revue Bibl.*, 1939, p. 76, propose une explication 'rationnaliste' du mécontentement du prêtre, dont les machineries risquent en son absence, de ne pas produire l'apparition'. Il songe aux trucs qu'utilisaient les lécanomants ridiculisés par HIPPOLYTE, *Refut. Omnium Haeresium*, IV, 28, ed. Wendland. Cfr. GANSZYNIEC R., *Hippolytos' Capitel gegen die Magier, Texte und Untersuchungen hrsgg. von HARNACK-SCHMIDT*, 3 R., IX, 2, 1913, p. 30 ss.; HOPFNER Th., *Griech.-Aegypt. Offenb.*, 1921, vol. II, § 292. Hippolyte montre à l'oeuvre un magicien flanqué de son médium. (Sur le rôle des enfants-médiums, voir HOPFNER Th., *Die Kindermedien in den griechisch-ägyptischen Zauberpapyri*, Rec. de N.P. KONDAKOV, *Ann. Inst. Kondakov*, Prague, 1926, p. 65-74.) Ce médium simulait des crises d'épilepsie et prétendait ensuite exprimer la réponse des dieux, à la question d'un consultant écrite sur un billet pourtant plié. En réalité, il lisait distinctement les termes de la question, car, écrits avec une encre spéciale, ils réapparaissaient à la chaleur du feu, ou encore, c'est un compère qui lit la question et souffle la réponse au médium.

Hippolyte décrit là une consultation 'per puerum', telle qu'en rapportent les Papyrus magiques grecs, (P GM, IV, 850-929; VII, 348 ss.) et APULEE, *Apologie*, 42 (consultation entreprise par Nigidius Figulus, à l'aide de jeunes garçons, sans recours à la lampe ou au bassin magiques. Voir ABT A., *Die Apologie des Abuleius*, dans *Religionsgeschichtliche Versuche und Vorarbeiten*, IV, 2, 1908.) Mais quoi qu'en pense GANSZYNIEC, *Real-Enc.* XII, col. 1886, 1.23 ss., il n'est nullement établi qu'il s'agit ici d'une lécanomanie, plutôt que d'une lychnomancie ou même d'un simple procédé divinatoire 'sans médium physique'.

Les magiciens avaient d'ailleurs plus d'un tour dans leur sac, comme le montrent les autres supercheries dévoilées par HIPPOLYTE, *Refut. omn. haer.*, IV, 35, 37 (*Patrol. Gr.*, XVI, p. 3099, 3102.B. Voir aussi la *Patrol. Gr.*, XVI, p. 3089 C et 3091 D.) Le vénérable mystagogue thébain ne me paraissait donc avoir rien à craindre d'une confrontation de Thessalus et d'un dieu, 'seul à seul'. Il était parfaitement en mesure d'avoir prévu l'éventualité d'une requête de ce genre de la part de Thessalus. Nous avons vu combien les consultations 'autoptiques' étaient en faveur dans les milieux théurgiques. Enfin, le récit de Thessalus appartient au genre du roman 'mystique': si les supercheries étaient courantes parmi les goètes, la haute théurgie dont la *Lettre de Thessalus* est un des

le jeune médecin en face du trône vide que le dieu doit venir occuper, il évoque Asclépios par des vocables mystérieux puis il sort en fermant la porte. Le corps et l'âme pantelants devant la prodigieuse vision à l'indicible beauté, il vit le dieu lever la main droite et le saluer en ces termes: 'O bienheureux Thessalus, aujourd'hui un dieu t'honore'. Quand les hommes connaîtront sa réussite, ils l'honoreront, lui aussi, comme un dieu. Qu'il demande donc ce qu'il veut et le dieu lui répondra 'de bon coeur sur toutes choses'. Le dieu reproche ensuite à Néchepso d'avoir dans son livre de botanique, négligé la doctrine astrologique, malgré toute son intelligence et tout son savoir. Puis il comble lui-même largement cette lacune en détaillant les moments et les lieux où il faut cueillir les plantes. Le médecin avait été bien inspiré d'emporter encre et papier car il lui fallut transcrire séance tenante tout un cours de son divin professeur 'sur les plantes soumises aux douze signes du zodiaque et aux sept planètes'.

Bien des détails de ce récit, si romanesque et élevé qu'il soit, s'accordent avec ceux que donnent les recettes concrètes et pragmatiques des papyrus démotiques et grecs. Ces formules recommandent en effet la pureté au magicien et veillent à la propreté du lieu où s'opère la consultation. Remarquons celle que consigna le Grimoire Démotique. (DMP, iv, Iss.) Elle est précisément relative à la consultation de notre Asclépios, l'Imhotep égyptien qui, évoqué dans une 'chambre propre',²⁸ parle

produits littéraires, n'aurait pas permis que le moindre doute subsistât quant à l'authenticité de ses 'autopsies'. Nous comptons revenir en une autre étude sur la question des témoignages littéraires et religieux en faveur ou en défaveur des formes de divination hallucinatoire.

²⁸ FESTUGIERE, *Revue Bibl.*, I. c., p. 61, n. 21, et *La Révélation...*, I, p. 57, n. 3, préfère voir dans Ὀΐκος, plutôt qu'une tombe (ce qui contribuerait à expliquer l'expression *in crypta* du texte latin de la *Lettre*), ou la 'chambre sacrée' d'un temple, ou encore une 'chapelle', préfère voir, dis-je, une chambrette, une cabane construite pour la circonstance. Il s'appuie très judicieusement sur le *Ghayat al-bakim*, traduit en latin sous le nom de *Picatrix*. Voir RITTER H., *Picatrix, ein arabisches Handbuch hellenistischer Magie, Vorträge d. Bibl. Warburg*, 1923, p. 23 du tiré à part (je cite d'après Festugière.) J'y trouve pour ma part une confirmation de la théorie avancée dans la note précédente. La trad. de Ritter nous apprend en effet que le consultant doit *entrer seul* dans la chambre 'propre', c'est-à-dire neuve, qu'il a construite. 'Baue ein sauberes Haus und stelle es auch so schön wie du nur kannst. . und gehe hinein allein'. Si l'on rapproche la recette de *Picatrix* de la narration de Thessalus, on admettra plus aisément encore que la demande du jeune médecin, désireux de rester seul avec le dieu, et l'acceptation du prêtre thébain entrent parfaitement dans le corps du récit. Les hésitations du prêtre s'expliquent par son désir prudent et jaloux de garder l'initiative en cette opération où tout faux pas risque d'ailleurs d'en compromettre le succès, voire de mettre en danger la sécurité du consultant.

Nous étudions ailleurs, en un travail qui paraîtra prochainement, dans le *Journal*

au magicien 'de bouche à bouche' et lui indique, lui aussi, l'heure favorable à son projet. Les recettes des papyrus magiques entourent aussi de mystère l'action sacrée et préviennent le médium ou son maître contre le trouble où les jette l'apparition du bel Anubis,²⁹ de la charmante Aphrodite³⁰ ou du visage éblouissant d'Hélios.³¹

Mais ces éléments communs à toutes les pratiques hallucinatoires ne constituent pas par eux-mêmes une vision par le bassin. Et tout d'abord, l'évocation d'Asclépios peut sembler déroutante. Bien entendu, la lécanomancie mettra souvent le magicien en rapport avec l'esprit d'un mort ou avec une divinité; mais jamais, elle ne fait apparaître Asclépios, même sous son nom égyptien d'Imhotep. Le privilège réservé ici à ce dieu se justifie pourtant aisément. Imhotep avait en effet son temple à Diospolis.³² En ses nombreuses apparitions en songe ou même en présence réelle,³³ il exerçait ses talents de thaumaturge et prédisait l'avenir. Thessalus fut donc heureusement inspiré en invoquant le Médecin-astrologue à qui Néchépso lui-même devait son savoir.³⁴ Ce sont d'ailleurs des médecins égyptiens, des disciples d'Imhotep, originaires de la région d'Oxyrhynque, voisine de Thèbes, qui sont censés d'après un texte du Grimoire Démotique, avoir livré les arcanes de deux importantes recettes lécanoman-

of *Mediterranean Studies*, l'utilité que présentent les 'chapelles' du PGM, les tabernacles du DMP, où sont censés apparaître les dieux ou les esprits. Voir par ex. PGM, III, 290 ss.

²⁹ DMP, X, 18.

³⁰ PGM, IV, 3209 ss. Il s'agit d'une consultation d'Aphrodite par 'phialomancie', autre espèce de la lécanomancie.

³¹ PGM, IV, 475 ss.

³² Voir OTTO W., *Priester und Tempel im hellenistischen Aegypten*, 1905, t. I, p. 235 s., et t. II, p. 74, n. 4. Dans une autre étude, nous comptons dégager l'importance que présente Imhotep dans le PGM, et le rôle que son culte a pu jouer en certaines sectes chrétiennes gnostiques, jusqu'au point de contribuer à l'élaboration de la formule du 'Sator-Arepo'.

³³ Cfr. CELSE, ap. ORIGENEM, III, 24 (ed. P. Koetschau, p. 220.) Voir O. WEINREICH, *Antike Heilungswunder*, dans *Religionsgeschichtliche Versuche und Vorarbeiten*, 1909, p. 1, n. 3. C'est à la requête d'un Celse que le satiriste Lucien écrit son *Alexandre, ou le Pseudo-Prophète*. Lucien y dévoile certains trucs de magiciens, comme le fait Celse. Enfin, il fait mention des excellents et très utiles traités que Celse lui-même écrit contre les magiciens (*Pseudomantis*, c. ap. 21, ed. Loeb, LUCIEN, IV, p. 204 et note 1.) Il semble bien que K. F. HERMANN avait raison de voir dans le chapitre 'contre les sorciers' d'Hippolyte l'inspiration de Celse. Sur la dépendance d'Origène par rapport à Celse, et les rapports possibles entre Origène et Lucien, par le truchement d'une source commune, l'oeuvre de Celse, voir Lynn THORNDIKE, *A History of Magic and Experimental Science*, Columbia Univ. Press, New-York, 5 ed. 1958, chap. XIX et XX, notamment la p. 469.

³⁴ Voir Kurth SETHE, *Imhotep, der Asklepios der Aegyptier*, dans les *Untersuchungen zur Geschichte Aegyptens*, II, 1902, p. 20 ss.

tiques.³⁵ La présence d'Asclépios-Imhotep s'explique donc dans une consultation par le bassin.

Ce qui est étrange, certainement c'est le long message didactique que, d'après sa lettre, Thessalus aurait reçu du dieu. Toutes les formules font mention de paroles ineffables et surtout de longues incantations; aucune ne mentionne la réponse du dieu. Il est vrai qu'elles ne sont – pour la plupart – que des schémas et ne s'encadrent pas comme ici, en un récit particulier. En tout état de cause, il est infiniment peu probable que, dans les consultations par la coupe, le dieu se soit révélé aussi dogmatique.

Ce qui est plus déroutant encore, c'est de ne pas trouver trace de bassin, dans une recette qui se prétend 'opération "intuitive" du bassin'. La recette lécanomantique la plus laconique à cet égard prescrit au moins l'emploi d'un vase rempli d'eau de pluie;³⁶ quant aux autres, elles entrent parfois dans une profusion de détails. Il semble qu'ici, la *λεκάνη* n'est plus qu'un nom, nom peut-être illustre dont le médecin veut user pour rehausser la valeur de la consultation entreprise. Le grimoire démotique, il est vrai, contient une formule de 'consultation par la coupe',³⁷ dont le titre est aussi prometteur que l'affirmation du prêtre de Thèbes, mais qui ne fait plus une seule allusion, dans la description de l'opération, à la coupe si solennellement annoncée dans le titre. Plus loin, nous lisons en ce même grimoire égyptien la consultation lécanomantique d'Osiris³⁸ et deux brèves invocations des dieux de la coupe,³⁹ aussi laconiques à propos de l'emploi du bassin ou du vase. C'est que nos recettes n'ont aucune prétention à être complètes; tantôt elles insistent sur la *materia magica*, tantôt sur les gestes à faire, tantôt encore – et c'est le cas pour les formules égyptiennes précitées – elles s'attardent uniquement aux formules incantatoires à prononcer.⁴⁰ Il n'en est plus de même pour un récit, tel celui de Thessalus, qui se prétend complet. Supposé même que l'auteur de la Lettre n'ait pas jugé nécessaire de rappeler la présence d'un bassin parce que dans une consultation par le bassin, cette présence était aux yeux de tous absolument nécessaire, il n'en reste pas moins vrai que Thessalus voit apparaître Asclépios, non dans l'eau magique mais en 'présence réelle', assis sur un trône préparé à cet effet, un siège bien

³⁵ DMP, I, 1 ss.; XVIII, 7 ss.

³⁷ DMP, XVIII, 7-33.

³⁶ P GM, VII, 320.

³⁸ DMP, XXI, 1-9.

³⁹ DMP verso XXII; verso xxvi.

⁴⁰ Voir mes articles dans *Symbolae Osloenses*, fasc. 36, 1960, p. 65 ss.: *Lampe et coupe magiques*, (P GM, V, 1-52); et fasc. 37, 1961, p. 141 ss.: *Une formule laconique du papyrus XLVI du British Museum*. Je compte reprendre le problème des apparitions de trônes dans la lécanomancie, et autres types de théophanies, dans l'étude, citée plus haut, sur divers auteurs hermétistes, Thessalus, Harpocraton, Damigéron.

palpable, curieux médium physique, avouons-le, d'une lécanomancie. Cette absence de la *λεκάνη*, cette présence effective du dieu assis sur son trône portent un coup décisif aux partisans d'une lécanomancie au sens propre.

Ils tenteront sans doute de recourir à nouveau aux grimoires grecs contemporains. Le papyrus XLVI du British Museum, discret comme Thesalus sur l'emploi de la *φιάλη*, met comme lui en évidence le rôle du trône qui, cette fois, doit apparaître en même temps que Sarapis.⁴¹ Notons toute l'importance de ce dernier détail. Quant au papyrus CXXI du British Museum, il demande au dieu Anubis de remonter sur ses propres trônes après la révélation lécanomantique.⁴² Si ces deux formules témoignent de la prédilection que les dieux du syncrétisme solaire, ici Anubis et Osiris, manifestent pour des trônes en leurs séjours célestes et dans leurs épiphanies, elles n'établissent nullement la préférence de ces dieux pour un trône plutôt que pour l'eau magique: cette dernière reste, en toutes ces recettes, le médium physique indispensable. Aux yeux de Thesalus au contraire, la lécanomancie importe peu et la *λεκάνη*, encore moins. Seule compte la publicité à faire autour de ses recettes médico-astrologiques.

Aussi, l'invitation, faite respectueusement au dieu, de prendre place sur un siège royal, loin d'évoquer des scènes de consultation lécanomantiques, rappelle des apparitions telles que nous en conte le *Pasteur d'Herma*s.⁴³ Ce texte édifiant écrit à l'intention des chrétiens du second siècle abonde en faits merveilleux, dont le récit dénote une inspiration grecque, en ce qui concerne l'affabulation. L'auteur était familiarisé de longue date avec les recettes magiques et avec les doctrines hermétiques, si appréciées en ces premiers lustres de notre ère. Jugeons-en plutôt.

L'apparition merveilleuse qui comble Hermas de ses révélations se présente comme Asclépios, assise dans une chaire préalablement re-

⁴¹ PGM, V, 1 ss.

⁴² PGM, VII, 334. Comparez PGM, IV, 921 et PGM, VII, 265. Il en est de même dans la magie byzantine: voir A. DELATTE, *Anecdota Atheniensia*, I, Liège-Paris, 1927, p. 38, l. 13.

⁴³ Le trône était, même vide, l'objet d'un culte chez les Orientaux. Voir *Antiquité Classique*, 1953, p. 422 ss. et la *Real-Encycl.*, VI, A, 1, col. 616, v^o. Cfr. la note de Robert JOLY, en son édition d'*Herma*s, le *Pasteur*, Paris, 1958, p. 100 s. R. JOLY rappelle que, si la pneumatologie et le dualisme d'Hermas offrent des parallèles avec la doctrine du *Manuel de Discipline* et son 'Instruction sur les deux Esprits' (cf. DUPONT-SOMMER, *Nouveaux Aperçus sur les mss. de la mer Morte*, p. 200, n. 17, et le P. AUDET, dans la *Revue Biblique*, 1953, p. 64 s.) et, par conséquent, dépendent essentiellement d'un courant de pensée juif essénien (éd. *Herma*s, le *Pasteur*, *Introduction*, p. 45-47, il n'empêche que l'élément hellénique n'est pas à dédaigner. Il concerne néanmoins la formulation, l'affabulation, plutôt que le fond, le corps même de la doctrine. (*ibidem*, p. 53).

couverte de linges fins et parée de vêtements blancs.⁴⁴ Comme notre dieu encore, elle salue son consultant la main levée.⁴⁵ Elle se conformait d'ailleurs là à une coutume assez répandue parmi les dieux qui apparaissaient à cette époque. Nous pouvons à présent retourner contre ceux qui voient une lécanomancie dans la consultation de Thessalus, l'argument qu'ils aimeraient tirer de la lecture des papyrus magiques. Si, dans une formule hydromantique, il est question de trône, ce dernier apparaît *en même temps que* le dieu, dans les reflets d'une eau magique. Lorsqu'au contraire, il s'agit de divination théurgique proprement dite, lorsque le dieu apparaît directement à son visionnaire sans instrument ni médium quelconques, il daigne s'asseoir *sur* un trône orné luxueusement, un trône réel et tangible. Nous en trouvons la preuve dans le récit du *Pasteur d'Herma*s aussi bien que dans les papyrus.

Mais la comparaison entre le *Pasteur d'Herma*s et la *Lettre de Thessalus* ne s'arrête pas à ce point. Les deux opérations théurgiques réclament du dieu une entrevue 'seul à seul', Herma sur un ton insistant,⁴⁶ Thessalus avec force jérémiades et plaintes. Ces parallèles nous amènent à conclure que nos deux visionnaires, le chrétien et le botaniste, répondent à un idéal commun, destiné, en ces siècles de magie et de foi puérides, à l'édification de leurs adeptes. Lucien, en bon redresseur de

⁴⁴ *Vision* I, 2, 2, ed. Joly, p.80 βλέπω κατενώπιόν μου καθέδραν λευκήν ἐξ ἐρίων χιονίνων γεγонуῖταν μεγάλην; *Vision* III, 1, 4 (Joly, p.98): βλέπω συμψέλιον κείμενον ἐλεφάντινον, καὶ ἐπὶ τοῦ συμψελίου ἔκειτο κερβινάριον λινοῦν. PETERSON E., *Beiträge zur Interpretation der Visionen im Pastor Hermae*, *Miscellanea de Jerphanion*, 1947, II dans *Orientalia Christiana Periodica*, Rome, XIII, 1947, p.624-635, a montré que plusieurs éléments des Visions s'expliquaient par le succès rencontré à cette époque par les séances de divination, notamment des récits dans le genre de celui de Thessalus.

⁴⁵ *Vision*, I, 2, 2 ἦλθεν γυνὴ πρεσβῦτις ἐν ἱματισμῷ λαμπροτάτῳ, ἔχουσα βιβλίον εἰς τὰς χεῖρας, καὶ ἐκάθισεν μόνη καὶ ἀσπάξεταιί με Ἑρμᾶ, χαῖρε. Comme dans la *Lettre de Thessalus*, l'apparition apaise d'un geste ou d'une attitude bienveillants (*Vision* III, 2, 4: Ἡ δὲ πάλιν ἐπελάβετό μου τῆς χειρός.); I, 4, 3 Ἴλαρὰ δὲ ἀπῆλθεν καὶ λέγει.). la crainte qui risque de s'emparer du visionnaire (II, 1, 5 Ἰδὼν ταῦτα κείμενα καὶ μηδένα ὄντα ἐν τῷ τόπῳ ἔκθαμβρος ἐγενόμην). Ce dernier manifeste le même désir angoissé de révélation (III, 2, 3 πρὸς αὐτῆς πρὸς πόδας ἠρώτησα αὐτὴν κατὰ τὸν κυρίον, ἵνα μοι ἐπιδείξῃ ὃ ἐπηγγείλατο ὄραμα.) et la même propension aux larmes et aux manifestations extérieures de douleur que Thessalus (II, 2, 4 ἡ περιπεσὼν ἐπὶ στόμα καὶ κλαίων).

⁴⁶ *Vision* III, 1, 8, μόνων ἡμῶν γεγονότων; III, 2, 3-4.

torts, ne pouvait manquer de transposer ces types de visions oraculaires dans une de ses satires. Nous avons déjà signalé que sa *Necyomancie* puise à la même veine que notre médecin-astrologue. Même mépris pour la science, même amour de la 'sagesse' des mages, même recherche passionnée de la vérité malgré les atermoiements du vieux prêtre, même recherche encore dans les détails; purifications, heure matinale, absence de médium physique. La conclusion s'impose cette fois, plus impérieuse encore: la conformité des trois évocations ne s'explique que si elles se réfèrent à un genre littéraire très répandu et inspiré directement de ces pratiques courantes que consignaient les papyrus magiques et que multipliaient à l'envi les admirateurs de l'hermétisme, les magiciens de bas étage et les simples mortels, prêtres et fidèles, païens et chrétiens, détenteurs de livres magiques.

Quant à la 'puissance intuitive de la coupe', l'auteur de la Lettre en use comme d'un slogan de propagande. A ses fins publicitaires, il sollicite d'ailleurs en cette épître, tous les modes de révélation prisés à son époque. Il ne lui suffit pas de faire converser son Thessalus 'seul à seul' avec son dieu: divination pourtant hautement théurgique et appréciée des plus grands sages. D'autres modes de présentation pouvaient alors allécher le public. Il ne les néglige nullement. Aussi tout son récit devient un message de la plus haute importance communiqué par un sage à un roi.

Quant au traité des plantes, il le doit à la révélation divine, transcrite fidèlement dans un livre dicté mot à mot. Thème de la Révélation directe ou – à son défaut – thème de la révélation transmise dans une épître du sage au roi, telle que celle de Néphôtès à Psammétique⁴⁷ ou celle de Pitys à Ostanès;⁴⁸ thème enfin du message écrit sous la dictée divine: toutes ces fictions concourent au même but d'édification, d'initiation que se proposent les adeptes gréco-égyptiens de l'hermétisme.⁴⁹

Insistons sur la parenté étroite qui assimile cette épître du botaniste-astrologue à ces recettes de même encre que répandent les ouvrages hermétiques. Cette parenté n'apparaît pas seulement dans la forme choisie mais dans le type de la consultation. Il ne s'agit pas de connaître un fait contingent: le sort du malade ou l'issue du combat, mais de se voir initié à toute une doctrine morale, religieuse ou scientifique. C'est à ce type même que se rattache la révélation hermétique.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ PGM, IV, 154 ss.

⁴⁸ PGM, IV, 2006 ss.

⁴⁹ Voir FESTUGIERE, *La Révélation...*, I, p. 318 ss.

⁵⁰ La plupart des sources étudiées en cet article n'étant pas disponibles en notre bibliothèque universitaire, j'eus la bonne fortune de les consulter en diverses bibliothèques européennes, grâce à la générosité de la bourse de voyage 1967 du 'Senior Scholarship' du Marquis Scicluna, de Malte, à laquelle je me plais ici à rendre hommage.

ON THE FUNERAL OF MAJOR YURI GAGARIN
AND COLONEL VLADIMIR SERYOGIN

Two birds caught in the lightning, their wings burnt off.
The wonderful feathers scattered about
Picked up by whirling winds. That was the end.
Never will they orbit our Earth again;
Not the world we touch and see,
Not this world from Red Square
Or anywhere in space or time.
Do you not hear the muffled drums?
They that were dynamic flesh.
Major Yuri Gagarin and his friend Colonel Vladimir Seryogin,
Are now humble dust.
Their people and their mothers mourn
The sudden Fate that struck them down
As sudden lightning strikes the pinnacles
Of a cathedral.
(No priest chants a requiem for their 'souls';
But soldiers guard their ashes in Red Square.)
What can the living do with a dead body?
Burn the bodies,
Burn them quick
Burn them clean.
Keep the ashes
Dust to dust,
Ashes to ashes.
Tearful eyes behold no more
But the heroes' spirit burns
Like a flame of astral dust
Beyond the frontiers of this Earth.
The funeral is over. The mourning friends disperse:
Some to remember, some to forget
Their heroes' ashes stored in little urns
Beside Lenin – silent in Red Square.
Man can give no greater glory than this;
All for this earth and for this earth alone –
Some tears, some sobs and a handful of flowers.
Must we be satisfied with so little
For so much daring?
A day's official mourning,

Long speeches, stiff salutes,
Ten or twelve shovels of dust
Heaped on their bodies
Or ashes scattered to the wind
Or kept in urns,
The end of all, non-being,
Physical survival in broken ribs and skulls?
This would indeed be for us and our heroes
Vanity of Vanities!
For these two astronauts whom we have loved
Our Faith creates the substance of true being
And ultimate fulfilment
Beyond the grave.
Flesh is fragile but the soul
Is wrought in God's own Furnace,
Unbreakable steel whose cutting edge
Pierces through the complexities of Earth
That keeps the rotting body
Prisoner of a silent grave
Or ashes in small urns.
These astronauts are steel
From God's own Furnace
In Eternal flight
Around His uncharted universe
Away from Earth that soaks in her own blood.
Alas for flesh emptied of God's own breath
And for man's plans emptied of good intent!
How strong and mighty must an empire be
To cure a mortal body of mortality?
To clip Death's wings
Or break his scythe
When one by one he mows us down
And piles our bodies like so many sheaves
Of flabby flesh at Satan's harvest time?
Yuri Gagarin and Vladimir Seryogin,
Ye more than ashes in small urns
Or passing memory of fleeting time
For brief salute,
Step off the Space Ship that travels within Time
Into Eternity:
Immortal citizens of God's proscribed domain.

THE FIRING SQUAD

The firing squad is ready, guns well-aimed,
The kneeling soldiers wait for the command.
He with eyes uncovered,
A sad smile on his lips,
Hands tied but head erect,
Cries with a loud
Unshaken voice:
'Shoot well! Shoot here!'
(Shows where his heart beats)
'When 'tis hard to live
'Tis sweet to die!'
The kneeling soldiers fired a hundred shots;
He fell down on his face
In a pool of bubbling blood.
His spirit, disembodied by violent act,
With the prompt lightness of a captured bird,
Leaving its cage,
Not in rage,
But singing happily,
Left the earth and flew beyond the sun,
Beyond the reach of Tyrant's Knife and Gun.
(In the City, traffic goes on as usual.
Freedom in chains – few really care).
The tyrants' loyal soldiers go away.
Poor souls! Poor devils!
What can they do but murder to obey?

4.iv.68.

J. AQUILINA

THE PROBLEM OF INTEGRATING MICROECONOMICS WITH MACROECONOMICS

By R. CIRILLO*

THE last few decades have registered attempts on the part of some economists to bridge the gap between microeconomics and macroeconomics. The results so far have not been encouraging. One is tempted to ask: is this because of half-hearted attempts? Or is it because the methods used might not have been the best or the most conducive to the construction of an appropriate bridge?

Before answering these questions it would not be out of place, I think, to give a brief account of the *raison d'être* of macroeconomics and the importance it has acquired in a short time. We have to go back to the Physiocrats and particularly to Quesnay's *Tableau Economique* to discover the origins of macroeconomic analysis. For the first time we find a model of the flow of income in the economy; for the *Tableau* was not concerned only with the allocation of resources but also with the size of the net product. This was a truly macroeconomic model despite its limitations due to the Physiocrats' belief in the unique productivity of land and the prime importance they gave to consumption in maintaining the circular flow of income.

Unfortunately the times were not ripe yet for macroeconomics to flourish. The main setback was inflicted by J.B. Say and his Law of Markets, which ironically was derived from the basic relationship established by the Physiocrats, but emphasised that production automatically generated the purchasing power required for consumption. Later, when Ricardo and Mill accepted Say's Law and concluded that overproduction and overaccumulation for the economy as a whole was impossible, macroeconomic analysis could hardly make further progress. Even Marshall accepted implicitly the stand taken by his predecessors, and except for the theory of the general price level, his analysis is essentially microeconomic.

However, the main challenge to Say's Law came from the proponents of the under-consumption doctrine on the one hand, John A. Hobson, William Roscher and Thorstein Veblen, and on the other, from the proponents of the disproportionate investment doctrine, namely, Tugan-Baranowsky, Arthur Spiethoff and Joseph Schumpeter. It was mainly due to these econ-

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omists that the problem of economic crises found its place in the economic history of the period from 1870 to 1914. Schumpeter (and of course, Mitchell) emphasised that cyclical fluctuations were an inherent part of the growth process in a changing economy. Unfortunately cycle theories until the 1930's were regarded only as a 'fringe' matter, useful perhaps to explain positions of disequilibrium, but not important enough to form an integral part of economic life itself. In other words, as long as it was held that the economic system inevitably tended towards full employment equilibrium, cycle theories had limited validity.

There are, of course, enough reasons to explain the lack of awareness of macro problems on the part of classical and neo-classical economists. For one thing, these problems rarely reached such dimensions as to command the attention they deserved. Till 1914 economic fluctuations, at least in Europe, were of short duration. At the same time trade unions were not strong enough to affect public policy; most governments, in fact, remained uncommitted to the problem of full employment till the second World War. Scanty statistics about national income and output forced cycle theorists to resort to generalisations which evidently weakened their case.

The Great Depression of the 1930's created the right climate for the emergence of contemporary macroeconomics. It was evident that traditional microeconomics provided tools that were incapable of coping with a depression of such magnitude and duration. Persistent unemployment on a large scale could never have been foreseen by the prevalent economic theory which as a consequence fell in disrepute. John Maynard Keynes was the man to salvage economics and to provide a theory with more realistic tools. His economics was in a sense a complete break from the past. It was also a rejection of the *laissez-faire* doctrines which moulded economic thought for so long. Keynes, in fact, produced a body of economic theories which represented an attempt to create an acceptable political economy at a time when people needed more action than analysis. As one economist very aptly put it, Keynes 'was able to give intellectual expression both to despair and hopefulness, while his use of aggregates and global figures seemed to make everything disarmingly simple.'¹

Of course, the new economics were not greeted with universal approval. The critics were numerous; some went so far as to hold that Keynes established merely diplomatic relations between standard theory and the business cycle. Others charged him with having arbitrarily selected his variables and constants.

¹ Ben B. Seligman, *Main Currents in Modern Economics*, Free Press of Glencoe, 1963, p. 746.

Notwithstanding the criticisms of the traditionalists, the aggregate economics of Keynes and his followers have come to stay. Micro-theory continued to retain its importance but within well defined limits. It could not pretend to understand general departures from full equilibrium. On the contrary, aggregate economics of full employment came to the fore because, among other things, it afforded a short cut means to account for the general level of employment and to provide tools for forestalling depressions.

In spite of the evident success macroeconomics has enjoyed during the last decades, some economists from time to time express serious doubts about the reliability of a number of its assumptions and hypotheses and raise the question whether serious attempts ought to be made to integrate microeconomics with macroeconomics.

In order to be in a better position to appreciate their views, it would be helpful, I think, if we recall the general framework of macroeconomics. It consists of:

Truisms: These are quite abundant; for example, savings must equal investments for the country as a whole though for individuals one might exceed the other; the exports of all countries must equal their imports though this might not necessarily be true for particular countries. The importance of these truisms is to present to our mind some fundamental truths in the economic system which have to be taken fully into account by economic analysts.

Next come the assumptions. One assumption holds that the composition of many aggregates remains relatively stable or varies systematically with changes in the magnitude of the aggregates. It is also assumed that under certain conditions it is possible to formulate aggregative theories of behaviour in the establishment of relationships among economic variables which express motivation and behaviour.²

Furthermore, in macroeconomics one ignores the effects on aggregate consumer demand of changes in the relative prices of goods and services. Though price changes result in redistributing total real demand among the various commodities, the total *volume* of demand remains unchanged. Hence, price changes as such do not disturb the stability of demand as a function of real income.

The critics of macro-theory, as it stands at present, argue that it assumes too much. They quote in particular the post-war experience in the U.S.A., when the relative prices of different categories of consumer goods underwent substantial changes and these were accompanied with changes in aggregate consumption. This happened during the upswings and down-

²G. Ackley, *Macroeconomic Theory*, Macmillan, New York, 1961, pp. 19-21.

swings of minor business cycles. If that was the case, they argue, then we can hardly feel sure anymore that aggregate real consumption is always independent of relative prices.

But the more serious criticism against macroeconomics is because of the inadequacy of some of its fundamental assumptions to produce predictions for economies with insufficient capital. One could point out that in such economies changes in the relative prices of certain commodities might be strong enough to affect the total volume of demand. Moreover, for an economy which is passing from a relatively primitive stage to a more developed one, aggregate output as a bundle of all outputs is meaningless. One could also argue that a shortage of capital in such economies would be more uneven in its impact on the economy than one set by a shortage of labour because the latter is more mobile and adaptable than capital.

Keynes is partly to blame for such criticism because of his implied conviction that the 'new' economics had universal validity. Present-day Keynesians, however, do not quarrel with this criticism, and almost everyone would agree that microeconomics which has been so useful for the analysis of the systems of the more developed and industrialised countries, is deficient in many respects when applied to the economies of the developing countries. Even such a universally accepted pointer of economic growth as 'income per capita', has to be substantially qualified when it is used to measure the growth of the economies of these countries.

But in order to make up for these shortcomings, is it necessary or even useful to integrate microeconomics with macroeconomics? If the answer were in the affirmative, we should not be satisfied before we see established a general theory which would embrace both individual behaviour, outputs, incomes as well as the sum of the averages of the individual results, but the generality of such theory would have little substantive content and would destroy the very essence of macroeconomics.

A glance at the more important contributions which were meant to build a bridge connecting micro- with macroeconomics, reveals that for various reasons they were not successful in achieving their purpose. They range from a proposal to build a full scale macroanalytic model of the U.S.A. economy to an ingenious analysis aimed at incorporating income distribution theory into macro-theory. Thus G.H. Orcutt in 1962 proposed that the federal government of the U.S.A. obtain 'a highly useful model of the U.S. economy by a suitable effort costing less than 10 million dollars per year for ten years or so'. He was convinced that such model 'could provide an instrument for combining survey and theoretical results obtained on the micro-level into an all embracing system useful for prediction policy ex-

perimentation and analysis on the aggregate level.³

S. Weintraub⁴ was perhaps the first to seriously try to incorporate the theory of income distribution into macroeconomics. But once more it seems that he was after establishing a 'general' theory. He was criticised for mistaking a union between the price and output aspects of macroeconomics for a true union between micro- and macroeconomics.⁵

The latest work on the subject is a contribution by two followers of Weintraub, P. Davidson and E. Smolensky.⁶ They work on the hypothesis that the distribution of income in the economy reflects the total revenue at the firm level. On this hypothesis they derive the aggregate demand and supply functions for the whole economy. Aggregate demand and supply are the result of the aggregation of the demand and supply curves of all the industries. Thus, they seem to be attempting once more to establish a general theory.

A realistic approach to the whole problem has been advanced by Abba Lerner,⁷ who, though at first seemed hopeful of a possible union between micro- and macroeconomics, in his more recent contributions appears very doubtful whether such union is feasible or even desirable. He argues that as long as the economist realises that he cannot consistently keep to microeconomics or consistently concentrate on macroeconomics, there is no need of combining the two in a single set of equations. Lerner believes that it is more important for the economist to enquire whether macro- or microeconomics cannot be treated as the extremes of a continuum or a spectrum. In a given situation if the conditions are such as to indicate that the macro aspects are more relevant than the micro aspects, one could safely make use of macro-analysis, and vice versa.

In spite of the doubts about some of its postulates and hypotheses, macro-theory has made much progress both in the quantity and quality of macroeconomic forecasting. In particular, forecasting of national income trends which has largely been confined to develop *ex ante* patterns out of *ex post* experience, now is being replaced by *ex ante* forecasting models based upon scientific enquiries. Numerous econometric models have been developed and their number will increase in the future.

But in spite of all this progress, in certain situations we do still require some disaggregation in order to explain the behaviour of aggregates.

³ G.H. Orcutt, 'Microanalytic Model of U.S. Economy', *American Economic Review*, May, 1962.

⁴ *An Approach to the Theory of Income Distribution*, Chilton, 1958.

⁵ Abba P. Lerner, 'On Generalizing the General Theory', *A. E. R.*, 50, 1960, p. 132.

⁶ *Aggregate Supply and Demand Analysis*, Harper and Row, 1964.

⁷ *Op. cit.*, pp. 133-142.

This, as mentioned previously, is particularly relevant for the understanding of the problems confronting the developing countries. Fortunately the more sophisticated macroeconomic models are made, or could be made, to involve sufficient disaggregation to render them meaningful and useful. One could mention as an example investment in housing. This type of investment, which is subject to demographic and institutional influences, is often treated separately from other forms of investment.

Furthermore, we must regard micro- and macroeconomics as complementary rather than as two exclusive compartments. The following instances could make this point much clearer. Nobody today questions the importance of national income and product accounts as a means of measuring fluctuations in the aggregate economy. But whenever we want to analyse their causes and try to discover the remedies we still need to use the series dealing with the micro-concepts of economic life.

Another illustration which is perhaps more significant could be derived from empirical studies made with reference to the wage theory.⁸

The Cobb-Douglas empirical production function, based on a 24 year period ending in 1922, which was later supplemented by the Kuznets series (1919-28) and the U.S. Department of Commerce data (up to 1957), suggests a fairly consistent ratio of return to labour and capital over time. But though the aggregate share of labour shows a fair degree of stability, its largest component parts are evidently less stable. This is surely a case where disaggregation can bring to light some important facts completely concealed in aggregation.

On the other hand, the consistency of the ratio resulting from the aggregation would justify us to conclude that the quantitative effect of collective bargaining on the real wage level over the long run (as opposed to its qualitative effect) has not been substantial enough to warrant us to dismiss traditional analysis on the microeconomic level. In other words, though it appears that in modern times, on account of collective bargaining, wage decisions are not any more the result of market forces, yet empirical evidence on the macroeconomic level supports the conclusions of traditional economic theory.

So it seems that the conclusion should be clear enough. Attempts to integrate micro- with macroeconomics are not of much use to the progress of economics. Both can flourish side by side, both could be useful as long as we keep in mind that the boundary between the two is not real, but fictitious.

⁸ Cfr. M. Carter, *The Theory of Wages and Employment*, D. Irwin, 1959, Ch. 11.

IDA REYER PFEIFFER AND MALTA

By BERNARD C. WEBER

Of the relatively few German-speaking tourists who came to Malta in the first half of the nineteenth century and left accounts of their visits surely one of the most interesting was Ida Reyer Pfeiffer (1797-1858), a native of Vienna. As a girl she was fascinated by stories of far away places, but the opportunity for her own travel abroad was not realized until she had reached middle age. When she was twenty-three years old she married a lawyer and widower from Lemberg named Dr. Pfeiffer, and domestic cares delayed any immediate realization of her dreams to visit those remote places which held so much interest for her. Later in life, after her sons were educated and she was approaching the age of forty-five, she was finally able to set out without companions on a series of travels which had been long contemplated. To retain more accurately the recollections of her visits she carefully kept a diary, a simple and unadorned relation of facts.¹ She herself expressed the view that her diary should not be judged as a literary work, for it was, she declared, 'a simple narration, in which I have described every circumstance as it occurred . . .'² She commenced her journey on March 22, 1842, taking a steamer from Vienna going down the Danube. Her first major objective was the Holy Land. From there she proceeded to Egypt, and from Egypt she came by ship to Malta. She remained in Malta from mid-September until October 4 when she embarked on the Sicilian steamer *Hercules* for a homeward journey. She reached Vienna in December, 1842. Here are Mrs. Pfeiffer's comments on her visit to Malta.

September 14th.³

We did not come in sight of land until this evening, when the goal of our journey appeared.

MALTA

We cast anchor in the harbour of La Valette at seven o'clock. During

¹Her work first appeared under the title *Reise einer Wienerin in das heilige Land* . . . 2 volumes (Vienna, 1843). The popularity of the work is evidenced by the fact that it went through several editions during the author's lifetime.

²This quotation is taken from an English translation of Ida Pfeiffer's work which appeared over a hundred years ago. See *Visit to the Holy Land, Egypt, and Italy*, translated from the German by H.W. Dulcken (London, Ingram, Cooke, and Co., 1852), p. 328. I have used this translation in the presentation of Mrs. Pfeiffer's comments about Malta.

³See pages 265-271 in Mr. Dulcken's translation of Ida Pfeiffer's account.

the whole of our journey from Alexandria the wind had been very unfavourable; the sea was frequently so agitated, that we could not walk across the deck without the assistance of a sailor.

The distance from Alexandria *via* Syra to Malta is 950 sea-miles. We took eight days to accomplish this distance, landing only at Syra. The heat was moderate enough, seldom reaching 28° or 29° Reaumur.

The appearance of Malta is picturesque; it contains no mountains, and consists entirely of hills and rocks.

The town of La Valette is surrounded by three lines of fortifications, winding like steps up the hill on which the town lies; the latter contains large fine houses, all built of stone.

September 15th.

This morning at eight o'clock we disembarked, and were marched off to keep quarantine in the magnificent castle of the Knights of St. John.

This building stands on a hill affording a view over the whole island in the direction of Civita Vecchia. We found here a number of clean rooms, and were immediately supplied with furniture, bedding, etc. by the establishment at a very reasonable charge. Our host at once despatched to every guest a bill of fare for breakfast and dinner, so that each one can choose what he wishes, without being cheated as to the prices. The keepers here are very obliging and attentive; they almost all know something of Italian, and execute any commission with which they are entrusted punctually and well. The building for the incarcerated ones is situated on an elevated plateau. It has two large wings, one on each side, one story high, containing apartments each with a separate entrance. Adjoining the courtyard is the inn, and not far from it the church; neither, however, may be visited by the new-comers. The requisite provisions are procured for them by a keeper, who takes them to the purchasers. The church is always kept closed. A broad handsome terrace, with a prospect over the sea, the town of La Valette, and the whole island, forms the foreground of the picture. This terrace and the ramparts behind the houses form very agreeable walks. The courtyard of our prison is very spacious, and we are allowed to walk about in it as far as a statue which stands in the middle. Until ten o'clock at night we enjoy our liberty; but when this hour arrives we are sent to our respective rooms and locked up. The apartments of the keepers are quite separate from ours.

The arrangements of the whole establishment are so good and comfortable that we almost forget that we are prisoners. What a contrast to the quarantine-house at Alexandria.

If a traveller receives a visitor, he is not separated from his guest by ditches and bars, but stands only two steps from him in the courtyard. The windows here are not grated; and though our clothes were hung on

horses to air, neither we nor our effects were smoked out. If it had not been for the delay it caused, I should really have spent the eighteen days of my detention here very pleasantly. But I wished to ascend Mount Etna, and was a fixture here until the 2nd of October.

October 1st.

The quarantine doctor examined us in a very superficial manner, and pronounced that we should be free tomorrow. Upon this a boisterous hilarity prevailed. The prisoners rejoiced at the prospect of speedy release, and shouted, sang, and danced in the courtyard. The keepers caught the infection, and all was mirth and good-humour until late in the night.

October 2nd.

At seven o'clock this morning we were released from thralldom. A scene similar to that at Alexandria then took place; every one rushed to seize upon the strangers. It is here necessary that the traveller should be as much upon his guard as in Egypt among the Arabs in the matter of boat-fares, portorage, etc. If a bargain is not struck beforehand, the people are most exorbitant in their demands.

A few days before our release, I had made an arrangement with an inn-keeper for board, lodging, and transport. Today he came to fetch me and my luggage, and we crossed the arm of the sea which divides Fort Manuel from the town of La Valette.

A flight of steps leads from the shore into the town, past the three rows of fortifications rising in tiers above each other. In each of these divisions we find streets and houses. The *town*, properly speaking, lies quite at the top; it is therefore necessary to mount and descend frequently, though not nearly so often as at Constantinople. The streets are broad and well paved, the homes spacious and finely built; the place of roofs is supplied by terraces, frequently parcelled out into little flower-beds, which present a very agreeable appearance.

My host gave me a tiny room, and meals on the same principle — coffee with milk morning and evening, and three dishes at dinner-time; but for all this I did not pay more than forty-five kreutzers, or about one shilling and six pence.

The first thing I did after taking up my quarters here was to hasten to a church to return thanks to the almighty for the protection he had so manifestly extended to me upon my long and dangerous journey. The first church which I entered at La Valette was dedicated to St. Augustine. I was particularly pleased with it, for since my departure from Vienna I had not seen one so neatly or so well built. Afterwards I visited the church of St. John, and was much struck with its splendour. This building is very

spacious, and the floor is completely covered with monumental slabs of marble, covering the graves of the knights. The ceiling is ornamented with beautiful frescoes, and the walls are sculptured from ceiling to floor with arabesques, leaves, and flowers, in sandstone.

All these ornaments are richly gilt, and present a peculiarly imposing appearance. The side-chapels contain numerous monuments, mostly of white marble, and one single one of black, in memory of celebrated Maltese knights. At the right-hand corner of the church is the so-called 'rose-coloured' chapel. It is hung round with a heavy silk stuff of a red colour, which diffuses a roseate halo over all the objects around. The altar is surrounded by a high massive railing. Two only of the paintings are well executed — namely, that over the high altar, and a piece representing Christ on the cross. The pillars round the altar are of marble; and at each side of the grand altar rise lofty canopies of red velvet fringed with gold, reaching almost to the vaulted cupola.

The uncomfortable custom of carrying chairs to and fro during church-time, which is so universal throughout Italy, begins already at Malta.

The predilection for the clerical profession seems to prevail here, as it does throughout Italy; I could almost say that every fifteenth person we meet either is a clergyman or intends to become one. Children of ten or twelve years already run about in the black gown and three-cornered hat.

The streets are handsome and cleanly kept, particularly the one which intersects the town; some of them are even watered. The counters of the dealer's shops contain the most exquisite wares; in fact, everywhere we find indications that we are once more on European ground.

When we see the Fachini here, with their dark worked caps or round straw hats, their short jackets and comfortable trousers, with jaunty red sashes round their waists, and their bold free glance, — when we contrast them with the wretched fellahs⁴ of Egypt, and consider that these men both belong to the same class in society, and that the fellahs even inhabit the more fruitful country, we begin to have our doubts of Mehemet Ali's⁵ *benignant* rule.

The governor's palace, a great square building, stands on a magnificent open space; next to it is the library; and opposite, the chief guard-house rears its splendid front, graced with pillars. The coffee-houses here are very large; they are kept comfortably and clean, particularly that on the great square, which is brilliantly illuminated every evening.

Women and girls appear dressed in black; they are usually accustomed to throw a wide cloak over their other garments, and wear a mantilla which conceals arms, chest, and head. The face is left uncovered, and I

⁴ Fellahs — peasants or labourers of Egypt.

⁵ Mehemet Ali (d. 1849) — pasha of Egypt.

saw some very lovely ones smiling forth from the black drapery. Rich people wear these upper garments of silk; the cloaks of the poorer classes are made of merino or cheap woollen stuffs.

It was Sunday when I entered La Valette for the first time. Every street and church was thronged with people, all of whom were neatly and decently dressed. I saw but few beggars, and those whom I met were less ragged than the generality of their class.

The military, the finest I had ever seen, consisted entirely of tall handsome men, mostly Scotchmen. Their uniforms were very tasteful. One regiment wore scarlet jackets and white linen trousers; another, black jackets and shoulder-knots, — in fact, the whole uniform is black, with the exception of the trousers, which are of white linen.

It seemed much more the fashion to drive than to ride here. The coaches are of a very peculiar kind, which I hardly think can be found elsewhere. They consist of a venerable old rattling double-seated box, swinging upon two immense wheels, and drawn by a single horse in shafts. The coachman generally runs beside his vehicle.

October 3rd.

To-day I drove in a carriage (for the first time since my departure from Vienna, a period of six months and a half) to Civita Vecchia, to view this ancient town of Malta, and particularly the celebrated church of St. Peter and St. Paul. On this occasion I traversed the whole length of the island, and had an opportunity of viewing the interior.

Malta consists of a number of little elevations, and is intersected in all directions by excellent roads. I also continually passed handsome villages, some of them so large that they looked like thriving little towns. The heights are frequently crowned by churches of considerable extent and beauty; although the whole island consists of rock and sandstone, vegetation is sufficiently luxuriant. Fig, lemon, and orange trees grow everywhere, and plantations of the cotton-shrub are as common as potato-fields in my country. The stems of these shrubs are not higher than potato-plants, and are here cultivated exactly in the same way. I was told that they had been stunted this year by the excessive drought, but that in general they grew a foot higher.

The peasants were everywhere neatly dressed, and live in commodious well-built houses, universally constructed of stone, and furnished with terraces in lieu of roofs.

Civita Vecchia is a town of splendid houses and very elegant country-seats. Many inhabitants of La Valette spend the summer here in the highest portion of the island.

The church of St. Peter and St. Paul is a spacious building, with a simple interior. The floor is covered merely with stone slabs; the walls

are white-washed to the ceiling, but the upper portion is richly ornamented with arabesques. A beautiful picture hanging behind the high altar represents a storm at sea. The view from the hall of the convent is magnificent; we can overlook almost the entire island, and beyond our gaze loses itself in the boundless expanse of ocean.

Near the church stands a chapel, beneath which is St. Paul's grotto, divided into two parts: in the first of these divisions we find a splendid statue of St. Paul in white marble; the second was the dungeon of the apostle.

Not far from this chapel, at the extremity of the town, are the catacombs, which resemble those at Rome, Naples, and other towns.

During our drive back we made a little detour to see the gorgeous summer-palace and garden of the governor.

The whole excursion occupied about seven hours. During my residence in Malta the heat varied from 20° to 25° Reaumur in the sun.

L'UMORISMO*

di GIOVANNI CURMI

È un fatto ammesso e sostenuto dalla unanimità dei filosofi e degli psichiatri antichi e moderni che l'uomo è il solo animale che ride. Ciò dimostra che il riso è un fenomeno caratteristico dell'uomo, e che esso è possibile solo a un certo grado della coscienza. Ora se questa verità filosofica e scientifica vale per il riso, tanto più dovrebbe valere per il sorriso che è un fenomeno certamente più spirituale del riso. E l'umorismo ci fa sorridere, e non ridere.

In che cosa consiste l'umorismo?

Moltissimi sono stati gli scrittori e i filosofi che hanno tentato di darci una definizione dell'umorismo, ma nessuno ci è pienamente riuscito. E nessuno ci poteva riuscire per 'la qualità di incognito e indistinto' che forma precipua caratteristica di questo fenomeno. Ecco come si esprime Giorgio Arcoleo a proposito della difficoltà quasi insormontabile in cui si trova colui che voglia definire l'umorismo: 'Vi ha una zona intermedia tra il cuore e la mente, dove vanno a rifugiarsi concetti errovaghi cacciati via dalla logica, o sentimenti indecisi respinti dal pregiudizio; zona impercettibile che diviene spesso tutto un mondo in cui si raccoglie, come in intimo asilo, lo spirito stanco di ordine, di leggi, di abitudini, di noia. Questo fenomeno può essere sentito, non analizzato, discusso, perchè sfugge al limite, è come il chiaroscuro: e lo chiamano *humour*.'

Do, senza discuterle, tre definizioni dell'umorismo: una di Richter, una del Panzini, e una di Alfredo Baccelli. E scelgo queste tre perchè mi sembra che siano esse le tre definizioni che meglio interpretino e spieghino l'essenza genuina dell'umorismo con non molte parole. Richter ha definito l'umorismo 'l'atteggiamento grave di chi compari il piccolo mondo finito con l'idea infinita: ne risulta un riso filosofico che è misto di dolore e di grandezza'; e il Panzini lo ha definito: 'La speciale disposizione che un'alta intelligenza ha nel penetrare facilmente, sottilmente, insino al fondo occulto delle cose, vedere le frondi e le radici, la scena e il retroscena; quivi le cose umane appaiono ben diverse e ben diversamente congiunte che non siano nell'apparenza: ciò che nella superficie è comico, al fondo può essere tragico, e viceversa.' Meglio del Richter e del Panzini l'ha definito il Baccelli, secondo il quale l'umorismo è 'speciale at-

* Conferenza letta il 14 febbraio 1951 all'Hotel Phoenicia sotto gli auspici del M.C.I.

titudine di un animo superiore a riconoscere, tollerare — talvolta con celato rimpianto, talvolta senza — la irreconciliabilità del reale coll'ideale ed a sorridere argutamente.'

La migliore definizione dell'umorismo resta sempre però quella data dal Dizionario d'Oxford nel quale leggiamo che l'umorismo è la 'facoltà di percepire ciò che è ridicolo o divertente, e di esprimerlo in discorso, in iscritto, o in altra composizione; distinta dal *wit* (arguzia) per essere meno puramente intellettuale e per possedere una qualità di simpatia in virtù della quale spesso s'accosta al patetico'. Definizione che, 'in mezzo a molto di vago — come osserva Mario Praz — contiene un importante elemento negativo (*humour* non è *wit*) e un non meno importante elemento positivo (*humour* è contraddistinto da una qualità di simpatia), nonché una sfumatura (si accosta al patetico) che permette di estendere il concetto al di là dei confini del comico'.

Enrico Nencioni fa consistere l'umorismo 'in una naturale disposizione del cuore e della mente a osservare con simpatica indulgenza le contraddizioni e le assurdità della vita' e aggiunge: 'un eroe in veste da camera osservato a tutte le ore tra le pareti domestiche da un arguto e affezionato servitore — tale è l'uomo sotto la lente dell'osservatore umorista'.

La definizione del Nencioni, pur molto precisa, non può considerarsi esauriente benchè contenga i tre elementi fondamentali che costituiscono l'essenza dell'umorismo: l'elemento del contrasto, che ne forma la base, l'elemento dell'arguzia, opera dell'intelletto, e l'elemento dell'affezione, opera del cuore. E non è esauriente perchè non racchiude tutte le variazioni e tutte le gradazioni dell'umorismo, ma si limita a definire un sol genere d'umorismo: l'umorismo sentimentale, così caro ai più, il quale 'sotto un sorriso nasconde sempre una lacrima'.

Se gli scrittori e i filosofi non hanno saputo cogliere e determinare in parole l'intima essenza dell'umorismo, non dobbiamo e non possiamo meravigliarci se presso i più la confusione che regna intorno al significato di questa parola sia davvero babilonica, credendo i più che l'umorista sia colui che fa ridere, e confondendo poi il riso beffardo col riso indulgente, confondendo cioè Molière, che è eminentemente satirico, con Dickens e Sterne, che sono eminentemente umoristici.

Letterariamente è impossibile definire l'umorismo perchè esso è una sfumatura dell'anima così sottile che necessariamente sfugge a qualsiasi analisi, a qualsiasi determinazione, e non può essere mai contenuta entro i rigidi termini di uno schema o di una formola. Definire l'umorismo — osserva uno scrittore umorista spagnuolo (E. Jardiel Poncela) — è come pretendere di trafiggere una farfalla adoperando quale spillo un palo telegrafico'.

Data la quasi impossibilità di definire l'umorismo, è sommamente necessario, per capirne l'essenza, precisarne i confini. In questo senso giova innanzitutto distinguere nettamente l'umorismo dai suoi principali cugini germani, che sono la caricatura, l'ironia e la satira. Nella caricatura lo scrittore ridicoleggia le persone, nell'ironia le fustiga, nella satira le demolisce, mentre nell'umorismo è 'la vita che agli occhi nostri deride se stessa'. Nel genere comico il riso è principio e fine a se stesso; nel satirico il riso diventa mezzo per raggiungere un fine morale; mentre nell'umorismo, se vuol essere genuino, deve mancare qualsiasi intenzione critica.

Ma c'è anche di più.

Nell'ironia e nella satira il riso e il sorriso denotano un sentimento di avversione o d'ostilità, mentre nell'umorismo il sorriso denota consentimento, e adesione, anzi fusione di spiriti. Perchè a differenza del genere comico, del genere ironico e del genere satirico, l'umorismo non ferisce, non morde, non urta la suscettibilità di nessuno. Non ha punte, non ha secondi fini. Impastato di senso comune, di tolleranza e di simpatica indulgenza verso gli errori degli uomini e della vita, l'umorismo è sano innocuo e, e nella sua purezza d'intenti, può anche scherzare sull'istituzione più nobile e più seria della nostra società, che è il matrimonio, senza minimarne o minarne la nobiltà o la serietà. Che male c'è, ad esempio, se un Anonimo definisce umoristicamente il matrimonio 'la Divina Commedia alla rovescia: prima il Paradiso, poi l'Inferno'? oppure se Montaigne, un altro umorista, osserva che 'un buon matrimonio sarebbe quello di una donna cieca con un uomo sordo'? Sono questi semplicemente due scherzi che ci fanno sorridere: ci fanno sorridere a spese del matrimonio, va bene, ma non fanno male a nessuno, non gettano alcun'ombra sulla istituzione del matrimonio, non producono alcuna reazione di disgusto, e non lasciano alcuna amarezza. Così pure non c'è nulla di male nel seguente commento di Shakespeare 'Gli uomini sono aprile quando fanno la corte, dicembre quando sono sposati; le donne sono maggio quando sono ragazze, ma il cielo cambia quando sono mogli'. E similmente non c'è nulla di male nella seguente osservazione d'un Anonimo: 'Dicono che il mese di maggio sia un mese infausto per prender moglie. Altri mesi infausti sono giugno, luglio, agosto, settembre, ottobre, novembre, dicembre, gennaio, febbraio, marzo e aprile'. O s'intacca forse l'istituzione matrimoniale quando un umorista tedesco (Saphir Moses), commenta che 'nel matrimonio la donna assume il cognome dell'uomo, come un vincitore il nome della battaglia vinta'?

E sempre in tema di matrimonio non credo che ci sia alcuna offesa a questa nobile istituzione quando un Anonimo dice che preferisce il matri-

monio al celibato perchè lo scapolo non è contento mai, l'ammogliato è almeno contento quando è fuori di casa. Nè credo che i più timorati debbano sentirsi giustamente offesi o scandalizzati da questa quartina di Filippo Pananti:

Dicono sette i Sacramenti. Sei,
del Papa con licenza,
piuttosto io li direi:
sono un sol matrimonio e penitenza.

So che ad alcuni non piace che si scherzi sulle cose serie, e in modo particolare sul matrimonio, il quale, oltre ad essere una istituzione nobilissima, è stato dalla nostra Madre Chiesa innalzato a Sacramento, contro cui si scagliano rabbiosi, specialmente oggi giorno, i nemici del Catholicismo e i fautori del divorzio. Però noi Cristiani, e in modo particolare noi Cattolici, dobbiamo essere superiori alle insidie e ai pettegolezzi di costoro: tanto superiori da permetterci il lusso di serenamente sorridere e di scherzare anche su questa istituzione senza per nulla intaccarne la nobiltà e la santità. Se poi i fautori del divorzio vorranno approfittare del nostro sorriso innocente per i loro sinistri fini, e tenteranno storcerlo maliziosamente in un sogghigno, basterà rammentar loro che negli Stati Uniti i figli di divorziati, sotto i diciotto anni, superano attualmente i cinque milioni: il che vale adire che negli Stati Uniti ci sono oggi cinque milioni di orfani di genitori vivi.

Per la stessa ragione, per il fatto cioè che l'umorismo non ha secondi fini, ma vuole soltanto suscitare un sorriso e nulla più, per la stessa ragione l'umorismo ci permette di scherzare anche intorno alla nostra e all'altrui dipartita da questo mondo, senza esser per nulla irriverenti verso questo terribile mistero dell'oltretomba, verso questo terribile passaggio dalla vita effimera alla vera vita. Tolgo, a proposito, due esempi: uno dai giornali e un altro dalla letteratura tedesca. 'A Bee Ridge, nella Florida, si svolgevano i funerali di una certa signora Smith, malvista da tutta la comunità per la sua lingua implacabile, per il suo carattere bisbetico e per i continui litigi con i familiari e con i vicini. La giornata era grigia e il cielo s'era fatto sempre più scuro durante la funzione religiosa. Appena il carro funebre giunse al cimitero, si scatenò una violenta tempesta accompagnata da un tuono che fece tremare le case vicine. Mentre i presenti trattenevano il respiro dallo spavento, si sentì chiara e sicura la voce del marito che esclamava: 'Accidenti, è già arrivata in cielo'. (Oggi 16 febbraio 1950).

Il tedesco Heine è prevalentemente satirico: però sa pure molto spesso essere umoristico; e umoristico volle essere quando parlando scherzosa-

mente sulla eventualità d'una sua prossima morte disse a un vecchio amico: '... del resto anche se crepassi, mia moglie non sarebbe granchè infelice; figuratevi amico, che l'ho lasciata erede universale dei miei beni, però a un patto: che si sposi subito. Perché? Oh, bella! così sarò sicuro che qualcuno rimpiangerà sinceramente la mia dipartita'.

L'umorismo non fa male, perchè non è mai provocato da astio o da vendetta, non è mai inquinato di pessimismo o di scetticismo, e quindi non intossica il cervello, non avvelena il cuore, non corrompe lo spirito. Ha vivacità, ma non ha acredine; ha arguzia, ma non ha malizia; ha prontezza d'ingegno, ma non ha bassezza d'animo: non oltraggia, non insinua, non infanga, non deturpa, non falsa, non demolisce, non stronca. Mettendoci innanzi agli occhi le contraddizioni e le assurdità della vita, rivelandoci il lato serio delle cose ridicole e il lato ridicolo delle cose serie, dimostrandoci il disaccordo fra le nostre aspirazioni e le nostre debolezze e miserie, palesandoci gli 'sdoppiamenti bizzarri' della nostra coscienza e le 'antitesi appariscenti' della nostra natura, l'umorismo ci fa sorridere, e pensare e meditare.

Ma principalmente sorridere, perchè se è troppo profondo, se è troppo filosofico, l'umorismo cessa d'essere genuino, e perderà la sua freschezza e la sua spontaneità.

Dunque, principalmente sorridere: e il sorriso è senza dubbio il più espressivo e simpatico atteggiamento dell'umana natura. C'è però sorriso e sorriso. C'è il sorriso che è spontanea manifestazione d'intima gioia dell'anima, quello che si potrebbe chiamare il sorriso della ragazza felice, e c'è il sorriso che esprime consentimento d'intelletto, e che è prodotto dall'umorismo. Il primo è stato cantato dai poeti, e da nessun poeta mi sembra meglio che dal Chiabrera in questa breve ode intitolata *Riso di bella donna*, che trascrivo:

Belle rose porporine,
 che, tra spine,
 sull'aurora, non aprite,
 ma, ministre degli amori,
 be' tesori
 di bei denti custodite:

 dite, rose preziose,
 amorose;
 dite, ond'è, che, s'io m'affiso
 nel bel guardo vivo ardente,
 voi repente
 disciogliete un bel sorriso?

Se bel rio, se bell'auretta,
 tra l'erbetta,
 sul mattin, mormorando erra;
 se, di fiori, un praticello
 si fa bello
 noi diciam: Ride la terra.

Quando avvien che un zefiretto,
 per diletto,
 bagni il piè nell'onde chiare,
 sicchè l'acqua, in sull'arena,
 scherzi appena,
 noi diciam che ride il mare.

Se giammai, tra fior vermigli,
 se, tra gigli,
 veste l'alba un aureo velo,
 e, su rote di zaffiro,
 move in giro,
 noi diciam che ride il cielo.

Ben è ver: quando è giocondo,
 ride il mondo.

Ride il ciel quando è gioioso.

Ben è ver: ma non san poi,
 come voi,
 fare un riso grazioso.

Ma tanto è. Sia che origini da un moto del cuore felice, sia che origini da un moto dell'intelletto, il sorriso è senza dubbio il più espressivo e simpatico atteggiamento dell'umana natura. E sorridere non è ridere.

'La parola sorridere e il suo derivato (sorriso) — osserva Francesco Bernardini — corrispondono perfettamente al latino *subridere* che, dal punto di vista della tonalità, potrebbe significare, come nella musica, "ridere una nota sotto"; quantunque poi il sorriso sia muto e non impegni per nulla le corde vocali ... Ma, affermando che il sorriso (*levis risus*) oltre ad essere foneticamente muto, è una sfumatura, una tenue gradazione di riso, non vuoi dire identificarlo nei caratteri e nelle cause con questo'. Tra il riso e il sorriso c'è una differenza enorme. Il primo — è sempre il Bernardini che parla — 'scoppia più o meno rumoroso al minimo urto di motivi esteriori' ed esprime 'un consentimento intimo, come l'uomo dicesse: gioisco, e mi congratulo con me stesso'; il sorriso, invece, 'attinge la sua natura a motivi prevalentemente interiori' e non è mai quindi

irriflessivo come il riso, ma presuppone sempre un moto intellettuale, una ragione psicologica: 'tanto vero che i bambini, in cui la coscienza è allo stato embrionale, ridono, ma non sorridono'.

Il riso del bambino non indica alcun moto della coscienza: è un fenomeno puramente fisiologico, una semplice contrazione di muscoli prodotta dal solletico. Il risveglio della coscienza nel bambino data dal momento in cui egli rivolge il primo sorriso alla madre, secondo la meravigliosa intuizione del Poeta latino (*Virgilio Bucolica* Ecl. IV, v. 60) 'incipit, parve puer, risu cognoscere matrem'.

Anche negli adulti il riso è un fenomeno fisiologico, origina sempre da uno stato di piacere e può essere provocato artificialmente; il sorriso, invece, è un fenomeno essenzialmente psicologico ed è sempre provocato da un moto della coscienza. La spiritualità del sorriso è del resto confermata in modo evidente — come osserva anche il Bemardini — dagli aggettivi che qualificano questo fenomeno: 'amabile, dolce, indulgente, compassionevole, triste, languido, amaro, sprezzante, ironico, beffardo' e simili.

Stabilita questa netta distinzione tra il riso e il sorriso, e affermata la spiritualità di questo, si è stabilita la natura spirituale dell'umorismo.

Determinato così lo sfondo da cui l'umorismo trae la sua ispirazione: il disaccordo tra l'ideale e il reale, la sproporzione tra i nostri sogni e la nostra miseria; stabilita l'essenza dell'umorismo, che consiste nella vita che deride sé stessa; circoscritti i suoi confini e affermata la sua indiscussa spiritualità; passiamo ora a indagare le fonti da cui l'umorismo trae gli spunti e gli argomenti.

Tra la ragione e il torto, tra il vero e il falso, tra l'affermazione e la negazione, c'è una zona neutra, ed è in questa zona che opera principalmente l'umorista. In questo mondo raramente avviene che uno ha completamente torto e un altro ha completamente ragione; raramente avviene che non c'è un po' di vero in ciò che dice uno e un po' di falso in ciò che dice un altro; raramente avviene che è tutto vangelo quello che afferma uno e tutta insipienza quello che un altro nega. C'è sempre tra i due campi avversari ermeticamente chiusi, c'è sempre tra le due sezioni diametralmente opposte, una zona neutra che partecipa in diversi gradi della qualità delle due fazioni intransigenti: quella zona che gli antichi, senza il bombastico strombazzamento filosofico e psicologico dei moderni, enunciavano alla buona col semplice principio: la virtù sta nel mezzo; oppure coll'altro principio, ugualmente semplice: gli estremi si toccano.

L'umorista non dà torto a nessuno e non dà a nessuno ragione, presenta d'un problema e l'uno e l'altro lato, vede la vita e le umane vicende non soltanto dall'angolo brutto ma anche dall'angolo bello. Rifugge dal pessimismo, che crea i disperati, ma rifugge pure dall'ottimismo, che crea

gli imbecilli, e sta al di sopra degli avvenimenti che abbattono e degli avvenimenti che inebriano. L'umorista non ha pretese, non ha ambizione: quello che dice lo sottomette piano, e quasi senza parere, al giudizio di chi ascolta, senza alcuna presunzione di convincere, di convertire o di dettare. Egli non prende nulla troppo tragicamente, non prende nulla troppo comicamente, ma nella sua indulgente bonarietà scusa tutti gli errori che non sono il prodotto della malizia, e sa perfino risolvere in un sorriso la compassione di sè stesso. Perciò l'umorista è proprio l'opposto del saccente vanitoso e borioso che parla sempre sul serio, che si crede costantemente un oracolo, che pretende siano sempre dogmi incontrovertibili tutte le false o puerili verità che scopre, e tutte le balordaggini e tutte le scempiaggini che dice.

E il vero umorista trova dell'umorismo anche nelle cose più noiose e più pesanti della vita. Si può ad esempio trovare una cosa più tediosa e meno umoristica del vocabolario? Eppure l'umorista Dino Provenzal trova che non c'è nulla di più umoristico del vocabolario, 'in cui l'àcaro della rognà è quasi addosso all'austero accademico e l'avvoltoio e l'avvocato si toccano e la fama precede la fame e poche righe separano il galantuomo dal galeotto'.

L'umorismo è più un prodotto della mente che del cuore; scaturisce più da una riflessione che non da un sentimento: ragione questa per cui l'umorismo è più proprio della prosa che della poesia. Infatti ove trabocca la passione, l'umorismo non può allignare. Diametralmente opposto alla poesia, anch'esso però, come la poesia, ha i suoi momenti felici d'ispirazione: ma non è una ispirazione generata dalla fiamma dell'anima, ma da un calcolo freddo della mente.

Avendo per base un raziocinio, l'umorismo riesce sommo nelle brevi definizioni. Provo quest'asserzione con alcuni esempi tolti da scrittori di diversa nazionalità e di diverse epoche, senza citarne la fonte. E, come comporta l'essenza dell'umorismo, sono tutte definizioni che ci fanno sorridere, ma che ci fanno allo stesso tempo pensare e meditare:

Caos: guardatevi intorno. (P. Vèron)

Uomo: l'uomo è un pacco postale che la levatrice spedisce al beccamorto. (E. Petrolini)

Storia: la fiera delle menzogne. (Anonimo)

Preoccupazione: l'interesse che paghiamo sui guai prima che essi arrivino. (J. Garland Pollard)

Bacco: una comoda divinità inventata dagli antichi per avere il diritto di ubriacarsi. (A. Bierce)

Cassazione: un tribunale che corregge gli sbagli dei tribunali inferiori e perpetua i propri. (J. Garland Pollard)

Giorno: periodo di ventiquattr'ore, quasi tutte spese male. (A. Bierce)

Cuore: il cuore è la stoffa che si lacera più presto d'ogni altra e che si rammenda più presto. (A. Dumas figlio)

Ore: le virgole dell'eternità. (A. Ariiss)

Eccetera: il meglio di molti libri. (Anonimo)

Pessimista: è un uomo che quando può scegliere fra due mali li prende tutti e due. (J. Garland Pollard)

Biblioteche: le biblioteche sono botteghe di farmacista: molti veleni e pochi rimedi. (A.P. Prémontal)

Altre definizioni sono più leggere e ci fanno quasi soltanto sorridere, ma racchiudono pure un pensiero profondo sotto la loro apparente superficialità:

Moda: il cambiamento delle mode è l'imposta che l'industria del povero mette sulla vanità del ricco. (Chamfort)

Classico: un grande classico è un uomo di cui si può fare l'elogio senz'averlo letto. (G.K. Chesterton)

Seppellimento: cerimonia che lascia freddo il maggiore interessato. (Trèbla)

Narcotico: sostanza che fa dormire. Si trova nelle farmacie, nei teatri e nei gabinetti di lettura. (P. Vèron)

Sposa: una donna che ha un bel prospetto di felicità dietro di sè. (A. Bierce)

Oca: animale ritenuto simbolo della stupidità a causa delle sciocchezze che gli uomini scrivono con le sue penne. (Anonimo)

Aristocratico: un democratico che ha fatto la sua strada. (A. Decourcelle)

Cassaforte: apparecchio che risparmia ai ladri noiose ricerche. (Ch. Torquet)

Monocolo: un oggetto che serve non per vedere, ma per esser visto. (J. Camba)

Farmacista: il complice del medico, il benefattore dell'impresario di pompe funebri; colui che dà da mangiare ai vermi. (A. Bierce)

Codardo: un uomo che, nel momento del pericolo, pensa con le proprie gambe. (A. Bierce)

Turista: il turista è un vagabondo che ha denari: il vagabondo è un turista senza denari. (Anonimo)

E ci sono infine definizioni umoristiche d'altro genere, definizioni plastiche, che racchiudono soltanto un'immagine:

L'*Architettura* è una musica congelata. (A. Schopenhaur)

Il *Ghiaccio* è acqua che è rimasta fuori al freddo e s'è addormentata. (J. Garland Pollard)

Il *Vento* è aria che ha fretta. (J. Garland Pollard)

I *Gorgheggi* sono gargarismi artistici. (A. Decourcelle)

Il *Vapore* è acqua impazzita per il caldo. (J. Garland Pollard)

Gli *Spettri* sono i geroglifici della paura. (F. Mezzina)

Dilettandosi soprattutto di dedurre 'conseguenze apparentemente logiche da ragionamenti volutamente sofisticati' l'umorismo trova nelle varie vicende della vita materiale copioso per le sue osservazioni argutamente spropositate: Eccone alcune:

'Gli alberi sono degli imbecilli i quali si spogliano proprio quando comincia a far freddo'. (Anonimo)

'Quando, in automobile, cammini troppo in fretta, ricordati che dietro ad ogni albero della strada è nascosto uno dei tuoi eredi'. (A. Frattini)

In italiano *Belladonna* è "una bella signora", in inglese è un mortale veleno; esempio persuasivo dell'identità essenziale delle due lingue'. (A. Bierce)

'Il re Salomone morì nel 975 a Gerusalemme e nacque nel 1015. È un'originalità dei personaggi anteriori all'era cristiana quella di morire prima della loro nascita'. (T. Bernard)

'E certo che quando il secondo uomo apparve sulla terra i diritti del primo furono divisi per metà. Dividete ora i vostri per la popolazione del mondo intero e vedrete quanto ve ne rimane'. (Anonimo)

'Com'è che, pur essendo tanto intelligenti i bambini, sono tanto stupidi la maggior parte degli uomini? Dev'essere il frutto dell'educazione'. (A. Dumas figlio)

'La filosofia ha questo di buono, che serve a consolarci della sua inutilità. (J.L.A. Commerson)

'La buona società è un branco di raffinati, formato da due potenti tribù: i seccatori e i seccati'. (Byron)

'La parola *gratis* è una parola così estranea ai nostri usi, che è stato necessario chiederla in prestito a una lingua morta'. (Anonimo)

'Vedete che è proprio il tabacco che abbrevia la vita. Matusalemme non fumava!' (P. Vèron)

'I pensatori sono persone che occupano tutto il tempo a pensare e perciò non hanno tempo di scrivere. Gli scrittori sono persone che occupano tutto il tempo a scrivere e perciò non hanno tempo di pensare'. (M.A. Fischer)

'A teatro, quando la commedia è stupida, si pensa ad altro; al cinematografo, quando il film è stupido, non si può guardare altrove. Ecco l'unica o quasi, superiorità del teatro sul cinematografo'. (D. Galli)

'Qualunque sia la direzione verso la quale partono, gli automobilisti imprudenti hanno la probabilità di arrivare in una clinica'. (M. Zamacois)

'Quell'antropogago che divorò la propria moglie risolse un grande pro-

blema economico: nutrirsi ottimamente, mangiando la metà'. (F.A. De Torres)

'Un astuto venditore di bretelle, dopo aver a lungo cercato un nome che lodasse la flessibilità e l'elasticità della propria merce, scrisse sulla vetrina: "Bretelle coscienza"'. (Anonimo)

C'è nell'uomo tra il sentimento e la ragione; tra il cuore e l'intelletto, una lotta continua, ed è solo naturale che l'umorismo, opera essenzialmente dell'intelletto, trovi in questa lotta materia abbondantissima per i suoi più azzeccati commenti. Niente è di fatti più piacevole che passare sotto la lente dell'osservatore umorista i vari moti del cuore, come l'odio, la gelosia, la superbia e la vendetta. Ma fra tutti i moti del cuore, quello più preso di mira dagli umoristi è stato sempre l'amore, perchè esso è il più sentimentale dei sentimenti, e forse anche il più cieco, e quindi il più opposto alla fredda e olimpica serenità della ragione. Ecco come vedono e interpretano l'amore alcuni umoristi. La contessa De Touchimbert definisce l'amore 'una febbre passeggera che comincia con un fremito e finisce con uno sbadiglio'. Un altro scrittore francese, Pailleron, lo definisce così: 'parolone dapprima, paroline mentre dura, parolacce dopo'. L'italiano Ferrante Alvaro ci fa questo commento: 'Chi disse che l'amore è un sogno, fu probabilmente lo stesso, che, poco tempo dopo, affermò che ai sogni non bisogna credere'. Altrove lo stesso scrittore commenta: 'Le amanti cui si dice addio, sono come le motociclette: prima d'allontanarsi, fanno un fracasso d'inferno'. Carlo Veneziani osserva: 'Le dichiarazioni d'amore somigliano alle dichiarazioni di guerra; appena esse sono fatte incominciano le ostilità'. E Alessandro Manzoni, colla sua solita bonarietà, commenta: 'Dell'amore ve n'ha, facendo un calcolo moderato, seicento volte più di quello che sia necessario alla conservazione della nostra riverita specie'.

E siccome l'umorismo è opera principalmente dell'intelletto, ed è perciò essenzialmente antipoetico, esso ama bersagliare la creatura più poetica: la donna. Ma vorrei prima d'andar oltre elucidare un poco questa mia gratuita asserzione. Che la donna sia la creatura più poetica non significa che la donna sente la poesia più dell'uomo: tutt'altro. La donna, anzi, e questo è per il bene dell'umanità, è molto realista, piuttosto fredda e insensibile, e molto raramente, ed anche questo è per il bene dell'umanità, e molto raramente gusta ed apprezza la vera poesia. La donna è senza dubbio la più dolce, la più amabile, la più elegante creatura, ma non sente la poesia. Ed è giusto che sia così; perchè se così non fosse, se la donna fosse anche poetica, se assieme ad altre meravigliose doti spirituali la donna possedesse anche questa dote sublime, essa sarebbe una creatura troppo perfetta per questa valle di lacrime. È creatura poetica la donna in

quanto che desta nell'uomo la poesia, in quanto che l'uomo, nella sua saggezza o nella sua follia, l'ha circondata, la circonda ancora e la circonda sempre d'un alone di grazia e d'affetto. La donna però molto spesso neanche arriva a capire l'esaltazione poetica che essa suscita nel poeta. 'Non cape in quelle anguste menti tale concetto' esclama il Leopardi in uno dei suoi più bei canti. E con questa osservazione il Leopardi non è, come al solito, pessimista, ma semplicemente realista. In altre parole è questa forse l'unica volta in cui il Leopardi parlando della donna abbia avuto completamente ragione. E dicendo questo non intendo fare dell'umorismo.

Dunque — e ne cito solo pochissimi — ecco alcuni commenti umoristici sulla donna. Tralascio quelli che parlano sull'età, perchè per troppa ripetizione hanno perduto ogni sapore, come per esempio questo: 'L'uomo ha un anno di più ogni anno e la donna soltanto ogni tre anni' (M. Donnay); oppure quest'altro: 'A quindici anni la donna si disegna, a trenta si dipinge, a quarantacinque, . . . Ma i quarantacinque non li compie mai'. (D. Galli). Pure tralascio tutti i commenti umoristici che parlano del cervello della donna, come il seguente di Schopenhauer: 'La donna è un essere che ha i capelli lunghi e le idee corte'. Commento questo che oggi non ha più alcun valore perchè le donne hanno smesso di portare i capelli lunghi.

Mi limito dunque soltanto a commenti generici: 'Le donne preferiscono non capire niente piuttosto che capire che hanno torto' (M. Arnac). 'Gli uomini guardano le donne per vederle: le donne guardano gli uomini per essere vedute'. (J. Normand). 'Secondo la Scrittura, la donna fù formata con una costa di Adamo. Ecco una costa su cui vi sono stati molti naufragi'. (P. Vèron).

'La donna muta accento nella vita
mutando stato, come ognun vedrà:
quando è zitella, ell'è una calamita;
dopo sposata è una calamita' (L. Folgore)

L'umorismo non limita i suoi commenti agli affetti del cuore: esso svolge la sua gioconda e salutare attività anche nel campo scientifico e filosofico. Così, tanto dalla filosofia quanto dalla scienza è ritenuto un principio assoluto che l'effetto segue sempre la causa. Eppure un umorista ha trovato un'eccezione a questo principio assoluto ed ha provato che la causa può seguire l'effetto: e questo avviene quando un medico segue il funerale d'un cliente. E perchè non si voglia credere che io, essendo avvocato, abbia riportato questo per invidia o per gelosia di professione, darò subito la definizione che dell'avvocato ci dà Lord Brougham: 'L'avvocato è un signore il quale vi salva i beni dai vostri nemici e li tiene per sè'. Anzi, perchè non si creda che io voglia in qualche modo discer-

nere anche minimamente fra medici ed avvocati leggo questa osservazione umoristica del tedesco M.G. Saphir che accomuna le due professioni: 'Quanto più numerosi gli avvocati, tanto più lungo il processo: quanto più numerosi i medici, tanto più breve il processo'. E vado anche più in là: metto in un sol fascio tutte le professioni, riportando la definizione che ci dà il Papini dell'Università. L'Università, ci dice il Papini è una 'fabbrica governativa a rotazione continua d'avvocati, medici, farmacisti, ingegneri, professori. Questi animali domestici, dopo essere stati debitamente verniciati di sapienza ufficiale, vengono registrati e bollati e quindi affidati alla Gran Madre Italia. La quale (Infelicissima!) purtroppo, a sua volta, si affida a loro'.

I numerosi esempi dati sin qui spiegano meglio d'ogni definizione e illustrano meglio d'ogni filosofica argomentazione l'essenza dell'umorismo. Passiamo ora a indagarne brevemente la data di nascita e il luogo d'origine. Due questioni queste molto discusse e dibattute, ma che credo possano essere molto facilmente risolte e decise ai lumi degli studi più recenti.

Quando e dove nacque l'umorismo?

Senza dubbio, contro l'opinione degli ellenisti Ruggero Bonghi e Giuseppe Fraccaroli, gli antichi non conoscevano l'umorismo, perchè non avevano, nè potevano avere il sentimento umoristico della vita. 'Nel mondo greco-latino - giustamente osserva Francesco Bernardini - tutto essendo alla mercè dell'inevitabile, del destino - al quale non sottraevansi nemmeno gli Dei dell'Olimpo - nulla restando all'arbitri degli uomini, cioè all'operosa iniziativa di essi, alle aspirazioni ed occulte forze del loro spirito, l'occhio umano rimaneva inerte e non poteva elevarsi in alto a contemplare quel profondo contrasto delle vicende della vita, di cui non aveva il sospetto, dal momento che tutto era preordinato ed immutabile'.

Scrive a questo proposito il Nencioni: 'L'antichità, nel suo felice equilibrio dei sensi e del sentimento, guardò con calma statuaria nelle tragedie del destino. L'anima umana era sana e giovane allora, nè il cuore e l'intelligenza erano stati tormentati da molti secoli di precetti e di sistemi, di dolori e di dubbi. Nessuna penosa dottrina, nessuna crisi interiore aveva alterato la serena armonia della vita e del temperamento umano. Ma il tempo e il Cristianesimo hanno insegnato all'uomo moderno a contemplare l'infinito, a paragonarlo con l'effimero e doloroso soffio della vita presente. Secoli dolorosi hanno *umanizzato* il nostro cuore. Noi guardiamo nell'anima umana e nella natura con simpatia più penetrante e vi troviamo delle arcane relazioni e una intima poesia, ignote all'antichità. Dante, Shakespeare, Goethe, Leonardo, Shelley e Browning, hanno visto nella natura e nell'anima umana più in là d'ogni antico'.

Dove nacque l'umorismo?

Osserva il Nencioni: 'Il cielo crepuscolare e l'umido suolo del nord sembrano essere più acconci a nutrire la delicata e strana pianta dell'umorismo'.

Veramente tanto il 'cielo crepuscolare' quanto l'umido suolo non hanno nulla a che vedere con la nascita dell'umorismo. Questo nacque in Inghilterra semplicemente perchè esso è un modo di sentire che corrisponde perfettamente al modo di sentire e al carattere della stirpe inglese. Precipua dote dell'umorista è infatti la serenità dello spirito: quella serenità che ci permette di scendere nel fondo delle cose, incuranti delle proteste del cuore e dei pregiudizi della società. Il temperamento passionale proprio delle razze latine, e in modo particolare delle razze meridionali, spesso offusca questa serenità e non permette allo spirito di restare indipendente osservatore della vita e di farvi delle indagini fredde e profonde. Dove c'è esuberanza di sentimento, la mente non gode vera autonomia, e per quanto si sforzi di liberarsene, non ci riesce completamente mai: perchè dove c'è esuberanza di sentimento non si possono soffocare del tutto le vibrazioni del cuore, nè del tutto diradare le nebbie della sentimentalità.

Questo non significa che le razze latine non sentano l'umorismo e non abbiano dato dei grandi scrittori umoristi. Oggi l'umorismo compenetra tutte le letterature moderne. Lo troviamo nei libri, nei giornali, nelle riviste di tutti i paesi. Si è insinuato in ogni genere letterario, perfino nei romanzi polizieschi che per ragione del loro contenuto sembrava fino ad un certo tempo che ne dovessero andare esenti. E non soltanto scrittori di razza, ma anche eminenti uomini politici lo coltivano e ne fanno largo uso tanto nei comizi e nei dibattiti parlamentari, quanto nei loro scritti e nella vita d'ogni giorno. Qui ne menzionerò soltanto uno, Churchill, il quale nella realtà può essere considerato tanto come un grande uomo politico quanto come un grande scrittore di razza. Voglio subito notare però che nell'umorismo di Churchill predomina l'arguzia. 'Durante un suo discorso elettorale, quando era ancora giovane e portava i baffi, una donna dalla folla gridò improvvisamente: "Winston, non mi piace la tua politica come non mi piacciono i tuoi baffi". Churchill s'interruppe e rispose calmo: "Non si preoccupi signora, Ella non ha nessuna probabilità di venire in contatto nè con l'una nè con gli altri"' (Oggi-6/7/50). 'Un'altra volta Churchill si trovava nello scompartimento d'un treno di fronte ad una signora che infastidita dal suo immancabile sigaro lo investì: "Ai miei tempi, un vero gentleman non si sarebbe mai permesso di fumare in presenza di una signora"; Churchill, indicando, con lo sguardo, la targa su cui stava scritto "E permesso fumare" rispose: "Signora, quando voi era-

vate giovane i sigari non erano ancora stati inventati.”’ (Oggi-12/10/50). Rivelatore del tipico umorismo di Churchill è il seguente aneddoto che circolava a Londra qualche mese fa. ‘Saliti in Paradiso, Truman, Stalin e Churchill vengono immediatamente ammessi alla presenza del Padreterno. Dio chiede loro cosa desiderano. Truman, interrogato per primo, risponde: “Vorrei che i Russi venissero completamente sterminati”. Stalin interviene furiosamente per chiedere, a sua volta, la testa di tutti gli Americani. Da ultimo, Churchill dice calmo: “A me basta soltanto un sigaro e un bicchiere di whisky. Ma, vi prego, prima accontentate pure i due signori che mi hanno preceduto”’. (Oggi-19/10/50).

Il vero umorista deve possedere serenità di mente, spirito d’osservazione ed una disposizione naturale a cogliere ‘con simpatica indulgenza le contraddizioni e le assurdità della vita’. Se non ha serenità di mente, l’umorista non potrà districare il suo argomento dai confusi labirinti della filosofia e dalla nebbia pesante del sentimento: se non ha disposizione naturale a cogliere le contraddizioni e le assurdità della vita, l’umorista non sarà genuino, ma ricercato, sforzato ed affettato, e nessuna cosa fa maggiore pietà di colui che pretende di fare dell’umorismo, mentre non ne fa che la parodia. Dice a proposito il Trilussa: ‘L’umorismo è lo zucchero della vita. Ma quanta saccarina in commercio!’ Per la stessa ragione anche fa pietà tanto colui che vuol fare dell’umorismo ad ogni costo, quanto colui che facendo dell’umorismo assume un tono accademico o cattedratico, perchè l’umorismo deve essere espresso con la massima naturalezza, senza messinscena alcuna, come se fosse la cosa più naturale di questo mondo.

Anche lo spirito d’osservazione deve essere nell’umorista naturale e scevro di troppa penetrazione profonda, perchè la troppa penetrazione ne distrugge la freschezza e la spontaneità. In una scuola inglese, per mettere alla prova lo spirito d’osservazione degli alunni, fu assegnato questo tema: ‘Che cosa pensate entrando in una stanza piena di ragnatele?’ ‘Alcuni scolari diedero le risposte più prevedibili: che quella stanza non era stata spazzata da molto tempo, che i suoi abitanti erano persone poco pulite, che quel luogo doveva essere stato abbandonato, e così via. Altri scolari diedero delle risposte imprevedibili e assurde. Ma uno scolaro scrisse semplicemente: “In quella stanza era certamente entrato un ragno”’. (Oggi-14/9/50). Ed è di questo genere lo spirito d’osservazione che è richiesto dall’umorismo.

Qualcuno ha detto che senza l’umorismo il genio è incompleto. Questa è una esagerazione. In Dante, in Milton, nel Manzoni degli Inni Sacri, non c’è umorismo, e non ce ne poteva essere, perchè ove c’è fede inconcussa l’umorismo non può e non deve allignare. Così pure inutile sarebbe cer-

care l'umorismo nel Leopardi, perchè la filosofia pessimista, vedendo soltanto il lato brutto delle cose non può ammettere umorismo. Infatti il Leopardi, riconosciuto da tutti come sommo poeta, è riuscito meno che poeta mediocre nei *Paralipomeni*, appunto perchè, essendo un poeta eminentemente doloroso non poteva fare vera satira, perchè non poteva vedere cose e uomini dal lato comico.

È pure una esagerazione il dire, come afferma il Mottini, che 'il vero umorista deve ridere anche mentre è travolto dal treno'. L'umorista non è nè un eroe, nè un santo; benchè neanche gli eroi e neanche i santi sorridano in tali circostanze. Neppure il comico sorriderrebbe in un tale frangente. Soltanto l'idiota forse continuerebbe a sorridere, ma lui sorride non perchè non si curi d'essere travolto dal treno, ma semplicemente perchè è un idiota.

Per il perfetto equilibrio tra i vari elementi psichici e spirituali che lo compongono, l'umorismo rifugge da ogni esagerazione, da ogni eccesso, da ogni estremismo. Mettendoci innanzi agli occhi — come già dicemmo — le contraddizioni e le assurdità della vita, rivelandoci il lato serio delle cose ridicole e il lato ridicolo delle cose serie, dimostrandoci il disaccordo fra le nostre aspirazioni e le nostre debolezze e miserie, palesandoci gli 'sdoppiamenti bizzarri' della nostra coscienza e le 'antitesi appariscenti' della nostra natura, l'umorismo ci fa sorridere, e pensare e meditare: ma, principalmente, sorridere.

L'umorismo perciò è l'antidoto del pessimismo, ed è la cura più salutare per tutti i moralmente depressi e per tutti gli ammalati di tristezza e di malinconia. Esso serve da meravigliosa e miracolosa iniezione cerebrale per tutti i lenti di mente, e per tutti i crepuscolari e i lacrimosi: come pure serve meglio d'ogni insensato gesto di rivolta perchè l'uomo sconvolto e travolto dalle contrarietà della vita ricuperi la fiducia in sè e nelle proprie forze. Tenendo la giusta via tra l'ottimismo e il pessimismo, l'umorismo frena l'entusiasmo eccessivo, argina l'eccessivo abbattimento, e mantiene un sano equilibrio nei nostri pensieri, nei nostri sentimenti, nelle nostre azioni; misurando con tranquilla bonarietà l'abisso tra le nostre aspirazioni e la vanità del tutto, l'umorismo demolisce le pretese vane dei boriosi e abbatte molto sussiego futile e inutile che crea ipocrisia e falsità; frugando con occhio attento e vigile nelle infinite assurdità della vita, l'umorismo conserva la vivacità della mente, la prontezza dello spirito, e la divina fanciullezza del cuore.

Impastato di senso comune, di tolleranza e di simpatica indulgenza verso gli errori degli uomini e della vita, l'umorismo corregge il sentimento, temprà l'arguzia, mantiene il senso della misura, fonde gli spiriti, crea un'atmosfera di cordialità, e, col miracolo del suo sorriso, risolve i

problemi più difficili e le situazioni più imbarazzanti, e sostituisce lo schiaffo; può far le veci della risposta a un oltraggio, e sostituisce il duello; può far le veci d'uno strascico d'acredine, e sostituisce il rancore, perchè ogni rancore sfuma, ogni acredine dilegua, quando c'è fusione di spiriti. Sempre ed ovunque, in tutte le contingenze, in tutte le vicende più varie della vita, l'umorismo, 'simile all'olio sulle molle d'un orologio, facilita le relazioni degli uomini fra loro', evitando gli attriti e assicurando il normale e regolare funzionamento della complessa e complicata società moderna.

Meglio d'ogni valanga di circolari pressocchè stereotipate e inconcludenti, servirebbe un po' d'umorismo negli alti afficiali governativi per il facile procedere dei lavori nei loro vari dicasteri; meglio d'ogni lungo discorso grave di accademia e di cifre o stridente di contumelie e d'insulti, servirebbe un po' d'umorismo nei membri dei vari parlamenti per l'amministrazione della giustizia ai vari popoli che abitano bene o male questa nostra divina e sfortunata terra; meglio di qualsiasi organizzazione più o meno utopistica, servirebbe un po' d'umorismo nei Capi di Stato per il mantenimento della pace nell'Europa e nel mondo.

AVVENTURE DELL'AGGETTIVO QUALIFICATIVO DERIVATO DA NOMI PROPRI

di FRANCO LANZA

NELLE grammatiche italiane un capitolo assai breve è generalmente dedicato agli aggettivi: ed è logico, poiché la morfologia dell'attributo è di norma assimilata a quella del sostantivo. Di conseguenza un settore assai nutrito del lessico, quello degli aggettivi derivati da nomi propri, manca dei necessari chiarimenti morfologici. Perché si dice *omérico* e non *omeriano*? perché *dantesco* e non *dantiano*? perché *manzoniano* e non *manzonico* o *manzonesco*? un'indagine in proposito, se tacciano le grammatiche, può essere condotta sui lessici e sui testi di storia della lingua, ed anche se limitata a sondaggi ed a parziali esplorazioni come quella avviata da noi (frutto, più che altro, di postille marginali prese durante letture di diverso intendimento) può consentire alcune conclusioni interessanti.

Prima di tutto, l'uso di siffatti aggettivi è relativamente tardo: vengono infatti conati in epoche di riflessione critica più che di invenzione fantastica, e tutti sappiamo (dopo le raccomandazioni di Giambattista Vico, e di tutto il Romanticismo) che le prime seguono di lungo intervallo le seconde. Per astrarre da un nome una qualità, di qualunque natura essa sia, occorre un discernimento, una sensibilità, una capacità di caratterizzazione che in genere mancano ai tempi di pura e franca attitudine creativa, e si sviluppano invece nelle epoche più mature e riflessive. È infatti nell'età alessandrina che retori e grammatici cominciarono a coniare i qualificativi, derivandoli dai grandi poeti e dai grandi filosofi (più raramente, dai grandi scienziati o uomini politici) dell'antichità. Non a caso insistiamo sull'attributo *grandi*: contrariamente all'uso che ne fanno molti nostri contemporanei, gli antichi riconoscevano soltanto a certe stature la possibilità di farne scaturire un vocabolo derivato (fanno eccezione alcuni esempi scherzosi o polemici: CATULLO: *odium Vatinianum*; CICERONE: *ius Verrinum*); ed anche il derivato non aveva un raggio d'azione troppo ardito, non poteva cioè estendersi a predicati troppo lontani. Per limitarci alle fonti latine (per brevità tralasciamo quelle greche, pur tenendone conto come dell'ovvia matrice delle forme latine) osserviamo che spesso il qualificativo esprimeva una semplice appartenenza, equivalendo perciò ad un genitivo oggettivo: *corpus Tibullianum*, *appendix Virgiliana*, *numerus Sapphicus*, *carmen Propertianus*. Rari i casi di una vera e propria significazione stilistica, ed anche questi limitati all'astrazione evidente di qual-

che carattere essenziale: *vis comica Plautina, Caesariana braevitas, Liviana patavinitas*, ecc., sono tutte espressioni che, in epoca soprattutto quintiliana, rispondono ai bisogni lessicali di un'estetica formalistica, intenta alla distinzione di alcune elementari categorie e non alla ricerca delle note inconfondibili di una personalità artistica.

Morfologicamente poi, non v'è dubbio che l'aggiunta del suffisso *-ian* al tema del nome proprio, che formava la stragrande maggioranza dei qualificativi latini, generi per analogia la formazione degli equivalenti italiani. Accanto a questo processo morfologico, che potremmo definire paradigmatico, ne annoteremo poi altri due, derivati evidentemente dal greco, tant'è vero che trovano la prima applicazione a nomi greci: quelli delle desinenze in *-icus* ed *-eus*, che danno origine ad una duplice serie di qualificativi (*Homericus, Platonicus, Sapphicus, Alcaicus, Phidiacus, Prassitelicus*, ecc.; *Hesiodeus, Parmendieus, Sophocleus, Aristophaneus*, ecc.) e che, coesistendo a lungo nel lessico latino accanto alla formazione regolare in *-ianus*, determineranno in parte i qualificativi italiani. Una rapida scorsa ai primi aggettivi così conati (a partire dalla Rinascenza) ci dice infatti che il discorso critico intorno ai nostri massimi poeti si servì, a preferenza, delle forme in *-ico* ed *-eo*, toscanizzato per lo più in *-esco*, ritrovando solo in un secondo tempo la normale desinenza latina in *-iano*. Prodotti per la prima volta dagli umanisti (ennesima conferma del carattere critico, sorvegliato, riflessivo di questo fatto lessicale) i qualificativi sembrano risentire dell'abito aulico, esoterico, aristocratico che impronta la terminologia umanistica. Ma ecco, per maggior chiarezza, la rassegna:

DANTE	= <i>dantesco</i>
PETRARCA	= <i>petrarchesco</i>
BOCCACCIO	= <i>boccacesco (boccacciano)</i>
POLIZIANO	= <i>polizianesco</i>
BOIARDO	= <i>boiardesco</i>
LORENZO DE MEDICI	= <i>laurenziano</i>
MACHIAVELLI	= <i>machiavellico</i>
ARIOSTO	= <i>ariostesco, ariosteo</i>
TASSO	= <i>tassesco (tassiano)</i>
GALILEO	= <i>galileiano</i>

Come si vede, quella che diverrà col tempo la forma abituale (ed applicata *a posteriori* alle figure meno famose dei primi secoli: *sacchettiano, cavalcantiano, pulciano, sannazariano*, ecc.) fu in principio accantonata a favore della desinenza in *-esco*. È significativo il fatto che *dantesco*, documentato fin dal secolo XV e divenuto usuale col Gelli e col Borghini, divenne insostituibile. Altrettanto può dirsi per *petrarchesco*: ma già il

Tommaseo registrava un interessante *petrarchevole*, come attributo di poesia artefatta e sdolcinata. Così il qualificativo *boccacesco*, usato fin dal Cinquecento, trionfò per indicare le caratteristiche più spiccate della narrativa di messer Giovanni: splendore di stile abbondante e libertà di argomenti licenziosi. Più tardi però si volle distinguere tra il boccaccismo della forma e quello del contenuto, riservando al primo derivato *boccacevole* (chi si trova nel Tasso, nel Parini, nell'Algarotti, fino al Panzini: '...in Italia si scriveva con una certa andatura un po' boccacevole e fiorita') e convogliando verso il secondo il vecchio *boccacesco*, che venne sempre più a caricarsi di implicazioni carnali e lascive. Tale infatti è rimasto quest'aggettivo ai nostri giorni, ed ha così lasciato scoperto uno spazio per un nuovo attributo, che significasse senza intenti positivi o negativi la prosa del gran certaldese. In tale spazio si è collocato finalmente *boccacciano*, che non inquieta né i prosatori antitradizionalisti né le pudiche fanciulle: esso, reperibile per la prima volta nel Baretti - 1765 circa - è oggi adottato con valore neutro dalla maggioranza degli studiosi. In modo analogo, per togliere al qualificativo *machiavellico* quel mordente volpino e tristo che i secoli gli avevano sovrapposto, i critici moderni gli accompagnano un *machiavelliano* che nulla sa di veleno, e può essere usato sia come specificazione oggettiva (*i 'Discorsi' machiavelliani*) sia come specificazione soggettiva (*le metafore machiavelliane*).

In genere, i qualificativi in *-sco* hanno una pregnanza soggettiva che ci orienta verso le caratteristiche peculiari dello stile, verso cioè quelle incrinature o quei vezzi che sono come le rughe o i nei sul volto di una bella donna, e come tali sono imitabilissime e reperibili altrove. Un accento, un movimento *tassesco* non è solo di un'ottava del Tasso, ma di qualunque poeta - e furono legioni - che al Tasso si sia ispirato. Proprio per servirsi di un attributo oggettivo i critici contemporanei hanno foggiato un *tassiano* che può finalmente esprimere (come ha fatto, credo per primo, Giovanni Getto in un suo saggio di quindici anni fa) l'equivalente di un genitivo di appartenenza: *l'ottava tassiana*, *l'esperienza tassiana*, e via dicendo. Quanto ad *ariostesco*, documentabile fin dai tempi delle grandi polemiche barocche intorno alla poesia epica, il suo uso è generale ed incontrastato fino ai nostri critici: soltanto nel secolo scorso, per il bisogno di una qualifica oggettiva e non soggettiva, gli si affiancò *ariostèo* (una nota piazza di Ferrara si chiamò così Ariostea - non *ariostesca!* - ed il Carducci, che sempre scrisse di poesia ariostesca e di stile ariostesco, riferì in una lettera al Ferrari le sue impressioni sulla 'celebrazione *ariostea*' del 1875).

Dal Romanticismo ai nostri giorni, trionfando la forma regolare in *-iano*, la desinenza in *-esco* fu deviata in senso peggiorativo: il Tommaseo, che non potevo soffrire il neopaganesimo estetizzante del Foscolo, scrisse

una volta 'roba *foscolesca* e pagana e carnale'; così in tempi di accese polemiche linguistiche, intorno al '70, non è difficile imbatterci in termini come *manzonesco*, *martinesco* (da Ferdinando Martini), *fanfanesco* (da Pietro Fanfani) e simili. Tutta gente intenta, per incandescenti decenni di discussioni sulla fiorentinità della lingua nazionale, a polemizzare sul *toscano*, sul *toscanesco* e sul *toscanaccio*, a seconda dei punti di vista.

Del resto, la forma in *-sco* è sempre proponibile, accanto a quella in *-iano*, in flessione burlesca o peggiorativa: e come abbiamo letto (nel Papini) una frecciata contro la sensualità *dannunziesca* (*dannunzianesca* negli imitatori), così sarà sempre coniabibile, da parte dei sapidi ricercatori di ghottonerie linguistiche, un *bacchellesco* accanto a *bacchelliano*, un *ungarettesco* accanto ad *ungarettiano*, un *moraviesco* accanto a *moraviano*. Anche questo capitolo dei qualificativi può diventare un campo sperimentale – praticamente senza limiti – per l'arricchimento della lingua viva.

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Una questione particolare riguarda i qualificativi derivati da nomi propri stranieri. Anche qui le grammatiche tacciono, e l'uso è quanto mai incostante e capriccioso: uso che, come per la maggior parte dei derivati da nomi italiani, è relativamente moderno: cinquecentesco per i nomi dei grandi riformatori religiosi, la cui portata storica impose subito al linguaggio degli attribuiti da sostantivare, secentesco e settecentesco per gli altri. Abbiamo così avuto, con immediata funzione sostantivante, *luterano*, – uno dei pochissimo che elidono la *i* del suffisso – *calvinista*, *zwingliano*, *sociniano* e via dicendo. Quando poté, l'italiano aggettivo non direttamente dal nome straniero, ma dalla sua forma latinizzata; era del resto il tempo in cui la cultura nostrana, godendo ancora di un prestigio europeo, poteva concedersi la libertà di italianizzare addirittura gli scienziati ed i filosofi d'oltr'Alpe, e discorrere di Leibnizio, Newtonio, Seldeno, Volfio. Ecco dunque coniato l'aggettivo *cartesiano* (e non *decartesiano*), *groziano* (e non *degroosziano*), ed altri simili. Per i letterati, si seguì la forma normale, con qualche semplificazione ortografica: da Racine *raciniano*, da Corneille *corneliano*, da Molière *molieriano* (anche se non mancarono i detrattori con un *molieresco* assai malizioso), da Cervantes *cervantaino*, da Diderot *diderotiano*, da Voltaire *volterriano* (il raddoppiamento della *r* è accreditato dal Tommaseo, adottato dal Manzoni e dal Fanfani, ma non sempre osservato dagli altri ottocentisti: dal Cantù al Carducci è documentabile anche la forma *volteriano*, che tra l'altro ha il vantaggio di togliere l'equivoco con *volterrano*, l'abitante di Volterra), da Malebranche *malebranchiano*, da Schiller *schilleriano*, ecc.

Ognuno vede però che passando dal nome all'aggettivo si compie praticamente una trascrizione da una lingua all'altra, e ne nasce un duplice

problema, di ortografia e di pronuncia, che non è di facile soluzione. Il dubbio è tanto più forte quanto maggiore è il divario tra il termine scritto e quello pronunciato: ed è evidente che per i nomi tedeschi, e soprattutto per quelli inglesi, la formazione del qualificativo comporta due possibilità assai diverse: *shakespeariano* o *scespiriano*? *goethiano* o *ghetiano*? *hegeliano* o *hegheliano* (o magari *egheliano*)? *dickensiano* o *dichensiano*? *heiniano* o *hainiano*? *macaulayano* o *mecoliano*? L'uso dei giornalisti più spregiudicati tenderebbe verso la forma grafica italiana con pronuncia straniera: che tra l'altro imprimerebbe alla scrittura una patina aristocratica, una sorta di banchetto riservato a pochi intimi (dando per scontato, infatti, che soltanto una minoranza di specialisti può servirsi con agilità di tali espressioni). Ma è evidente che il passaggio dal proprio al comune in tal caso non avviene senza sforzo: e se l'italianizzazione della scrittura era due secoli fa un fatto accettato e spesso ambito dagli stessi transalpini, oggi approderebbe ad effetti grotteschi e ad inevitabili equivoci. *Cantiano* anziché *kantiano* potrebbe sembrare una voce storpiata del verbo *cantare*, e *gioisiano* potrebbe connettersi a tutte le parole del dizionario, meno che al legittimo possessore James Joyce. Non dimentichiamo che la grafia straniera è per natura una sorta di semaforo o di bandierina che annuncia un nome straniero: di conseguenza il lettore colto (dello sprovveduto è inutile parlare) è subito guidato alla retta intelligenza della frase proprio dalle acca e dalle kappa che fanno la spia del nome proprio, inglese o tedesco o russo che sia.

Dovessimo pertanto suggerire una norma (quella che le grammatiche, anche le più aggiornate, non hanno ancora pensato di formulare), diremmo di rispettare sempre nel radicale la grafia straniera, e di mettere da parte anche quello *scespiriano* che, benché legittimato dalla grandezza di Shakespeare, fa un effetto eteroclito e insieme specioso. E non dimentichiamo che, essendo il qualificativo un termine che, come ogni attributo, aggiunge proprietà e colore alla proposizione, occorre conservargli tale carattere di chiarezza. Altrimenti sarà sempre preferibile il complemento di specificazione, con tutte le sue sfumature soggettive ed oggettive: le tragedie di *Jobnson*, i problemi di *Schopenauer*, la musica di *Haydn*, lo stile di *Richardson*.

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Ecco: la grandezza di Dante, la grandezza di Shakespeare. Per costoro anche il lessicografo più sospettoso dei neologismi deve inchinarsi, ed accettare i qualificativi come parole dell'uso comune, così come accoglie bianco e nero, dolce ed amaro, buono e cattivo. Ma proprio perché include un implicito riconoscimento di grandezza, di popolarità, di divulgazione, il qualificativo derivato dal nome proprio oggi è ambito come una decora-

zione. Il critico lo sfoggia come un elemento esoterico, un segno aristocratico di linguaggio circolante tra pochi, il poeta o il letterato lo desiderano come un nastrino nobilitante. Il cognome più opaco, più borghese ne esce trasfigurato: altro è dire 'la poesia del Brambilla' o 'i romanzi dell'Esposito', ed altro dire 'la poesia *brambilliana*', 'i romanzi *espositiani*'! Ed è significativo che l'uso (ed abuso) dei qualificativi da nomi contemporanei riguardi quasi esclusivamente i letterati e gli artisti, cioè i più smaniosi di personalità, di caratteristiche inconfondibili che 'qualifichino' una produzione. Tra gli esponenti della vita politica, per esempio, il qualificativo si usa quasi soltanto in accezione sostantivante, per definire i sottogruppi di partito ispirati ad un uomo-guida: i *fanfaniani*, i *rumoriani*, gli *scelbiani* (non gli *scelbini*, come gli avversari politici definirono i poliziotti nel periodo in cui l'on. Scelba era Ministro dell'Interno), i *vecchiettiani*, i *saragatiani* (molti vorrebbero *saragattiani*, col raddoppiamento della tronca davanti al suffisso, per analogia coi nomi francesi uscenti in -at: *murattiani* da Murat, ecc.) i *pajettiani*, i *malagodiani* e via dicendo. Sono aggettivi equivalenti a sostantivi: per il resto, se sono reperibili espressioni come politica *degasperiana* o *kenmediana* o *kruscioviana*, i requisiti di rapidità e di chiarezza che s'impongono alla pubblicistica politica tendono a formule nette e decise, esentando il lettore comune dalla fatica mentale che comporta il risalire dall'aggettivo al nome: ecco perché non s'usa scrivere 'legge *andreottiana*' o 'discorso *gronchiano*' o 'intervento *moriano*' (attenzione alle ambivalenze con le voci del verbo *morire!*), ma si adoperano quei sonanti binomi da cui il personaggio politico emerge in tutto rilievo: la legge Merlin, il piano Tupini, l'emendamento Rossi, la proposta Codignola. (Si può naturalmente ricorrere al qualificativo in funzione scherzosa: e più d'uno ha chiamato epoca *merliniana* quella in cui viviamo, facendola cominciare dalla famosa legge di chiusura di certe case ospitali).

Queste osservazioni ci spiegano come il qualificativo, abusato addirittura nelle lettere e nelle arti, abbia poco fortuna a proposito dei personaggi dello sport e del cinema. La popolarità non richiede dei derivati che sono pur sempre astrattivi: così, se l'Italia intera fu concretissimamente divisa in *bartaliani* ed in *coppiani* negli anni delle rivalità ciclistiche (aggettivi sostantivati), nessuno avrebbe mai arrischiato — neppure l'estroso Bruno Roghi — parlare di rete *mazzoliana*, di passaggio *riverano*, di pugno *benvenutiano*. Lo sport ama scandire dei nomi, non trastullarsi coi derivati. E lo stesso accade nel cinema: soltanto un burlone potrebbe discorrere di baci *loreniani* o di scollature *lollobrigidiane* o di fascino *mastroiannesco*. Più usato, invece, il qualificativo per i registi (produzione *felliniana*, fantasia *disneyana*): che potrebb'essere una conferma della ambizione, perseguita e riconosciuta, dei registi ad essere i veri autori

del racconto per immagini, ad imprimervi la propria firma indipendentemente dai soggettisti (che in tal modo vengono ad essere nulla più che delle occasioni) e dagli attori (che, qualunque sia il loro grido, vengono relegati alla funzione di mezzi). Se il qualificativo include un riconoscimento di stile e di individualità sufficienti ad entrare nel discorso dei critici e nelle storie del cinema – oggi sempre più numerose – è naturale che i registi se ne compiacciano, lasciando invece ai divi dello schermo la più elementare soddisfazione del proprio nome scandito ed idolatrato dal grosso pubblico, che è naturalmente attirato dall'interprete assai più che dall'autore.

Ma dove quel compiacimento dilaga, anzi straripa, è nella schiera dei letterati e degli artisti. Qui assistiamo ad un fenomeno d'implicita connivenza o complicità da parte dei critici: i quali servendosi dell'aggettivo qualificativo vengono incontro sia all'ambizione degli autori sia al loro proprio gusto, aristocratico o schifiltoso, d'un linguaggio ermetizzante ed esoterico, riservato ai pochi della cerchia. Se ad un lettore non è familiare il nome del pittore Morlotti, come reagirà ad un attributo *morlottiano*? se gli saranno sempre mancati i contatti con la scrittrice Dacia Maranini (e non è peccato mortale) quale sarà il suo disorientamento di fronte ad una *posizione maraniniana*? La cerchia si stringe, gli adepti sono pochi: eppure quell'inesauribile fabbrica di parole che sono i critici di letteratura e d'arte produce senza posa questi aggettivi, che equivalgono ad uno scambio di complimenti. Due secoli occorsero all'affermarsi del qualificativo *dantesco*, oggi basta un frontespizio per autorizzare il vocabolo derivato. Ed il complimento non va soltanto dal critico all'autore, ma anche dal critico al critico. Ogni bravo studente di lettere conosce l'estetica *borgesiana* (da G. Antonio Borgese) e gli studi *derobertisiani* sul Leopardi (da G. De Robertis, come già si dissero *desanctisiani* quelli di F. De Sanctis, con vocabolo irto e non gradevole: ci fu chi propose *desanctiani*, ma senza successo); ma gli specialisti parlano addirittura di lettura *gargiuliana*, di ipotesi *anceschiana*, di bibliografia *falquiana*... E la critica di Carlo Bo, come la chiameremo? forse *boiana*?

Se è lecito concludere con una raccomandazione pedagogica questi appunti, vorremmo proporre un'elementare cautela nell'uso dei qualificativi applicati ad autori contemporanei. Altrimenti il sottile piacere che sempre procura il conio d'un termine inusitato può mutarsi in gergo per iniziati, in una forma complimentosa e superba che va ad alimentare non le fonti della perenne produttività linguistica, ma la piccola vanità di chi assiste al vano proiettarsi del nome (debole fiato di una realtà passeggera) sulla polvere delle cose che passano.

THE PERIPLUS OF THE MEDITERRANEAN

By J. BUSUTTI

THE first reference to the Maltese Islands (Malta and Gozo) occurs in a passage of the Periplus – (an account of a coasting voyage) – of the Inner Sea. This coastal survey bears the name of Skylax of Caryanda¹, perhaps the namesake of the navigator who sailed for Darius the Great over the North Indian Ocean; but the author is usually dubbed Pseudo-Skylax to distinguish him from the old Indian voyager. From internal evidence scholars conclude that the Periplus must have been written in the middle of the fourth century B.C.²

This coastal description of the Mediterranean – the first of its kind which happens to survive fairly complete – is little more than a 'sailor's handbook' of places and distances all round the coast of the Mediterranean³. It is divided into three big sections: Europe (ΕΥΡΩΠΗ), Asia (ΑΣΙΑ) and Libya (ΛΙΒΥΗ).

In the third section of the work which deals with Libya the author treats of Carthage, indicates its geographical position and includes all the Islands (Pontia, Cossura etc.) which lay in its geographical and political domain. Then he goes on to mention the Maltese Islands and Lampedusa.⁴

This is the passage which mentions the Maltese islands:

Ἀπὸ Ἑρμαΐας ἀκρας πρὸς ἥλιον ἀνίσχοντα [μικρὸν ἀπὸ Ἑρμαΐας] εἰσὶ νῆσοι τρεῖς μικραὶ κατὰ τοῦτο ὑπὸ Καρχηδονίων οἰκούμεναι. Μελίτη, πόλις καὶ λιμὴν, Γαῦλος πόλις, Λαμπάς.

In this interesting passage the author gives the geographical position of the Maltese islands; he then states that they are inhabited by the Carthaginians, and finally he gives useful information about the islands themselves.

The author lays down the position of the islands by giving the distance from a fixed point on the African mainland. In this case the point de départ is the Hermaean promontory which lies in the gulf of Carthage. The Romans called it *Mercurii promuntorium*, modern Europeans know it by the

¹ The full title of this work is: ΣΚΥΛΑΚΟΣ ΚΑΡΥΑΝΔΕΩΣ ΠΕΡΙΠΛΟΥΣ ΤΗΣ ΘΑΛΑΣΣΗΣ ΤΗΣ ΟΙΚΟΥΜΕΝΗΣ ΕΥΡΩΠΗΣ ΚΑΙ ΑΣΙΑΣ ΚΑΙ ΛΙΒΥΗΣ.

² Cf. Muller, *Geographi Graeci Minores*, Vol. 1, p. XVIV, 62, Hildesheim, 1965; Dict. of Greek and Roman Biography and Mythology, pp. 758, 759, London, 1849; Thomson, *Hist. of Ancient Geography*, p. 88, London, 1949; Woodburn Hyde, *Ancient Gk. Mariners O.U.P.* p. 135, 1947; R.E., Vol. 111A, p. 639, 1927.

³ Cf. *Encyc. Brit.* Vol. XXI, p. 573, 1886.

⁴ Müller, *op. cit.* Skylax, 111.

name of *Cape Bon*, whilst the Arabs refer to it as *Ras Addar*. Having chosen his starting point, the writer gives the bearings of these islands in a rather vague manner based on the direction of the sun. Using a Herodotean phrase, he says that they lie in the direction of the rising sun. In other words they lie away from Cape Bon and to the east of the same cape. The author in fact says: 'Away from (ἀπὸ) the Hemaean Cape in the direction of the rising sun (πρὸς ἥλιον ἀνίσχοντα) there are three small islands.'

After having given the geographical position of the islands, the author goes on to say that they are ὑπὸ Καρχηδονίων οἰκούμεναι. Here a difficulty arises: how is one to render the word οἰκούμεναι? The verb οἰκέω, of which οἰκούμεναι is the present participle passive, could mean either (a) I inhabit, or (b) I govern. Were these islands inhabited by the Carthaginians or were they merely governed by them?

It is clear that in the fourth century before our era Malta and Gozo belonged to the Carthaginian sphere of influence. This explains why they are included in that section of the Periplus which deals with Libya. It also explains why they are mentioned, together with other islands, along with Carthage and why the bearings are taken from Carthage.

When one examines carefully the other passages in the Periplus where the word οἰκέω occurs, one is led to the conclusion that it must mean *I inhabit*. The author, when dealing with the islands of the Mediterranean, takes great pains to point out whether or not they are inhabited. He tells us that Aethalia is inhabited,⁵ that the middle part of Sardinia is uninhabited,⁶ that there live no people on the Echnides, that Greeks dwell in Crete etc.⁷ Therefore in the fourth century B.C. Malta and Gozo were not only in the Carthaginian sphere of influence, they were also inhabited by Carthaginians; there was, that is, a Carthaginian settlement on these islands. This is, incidentally, borne out by archaeological remains.

One should guard, however, against drawing general conclusions. Since Phoenician and Carthaginian colonies were nothing more than mere commercial depôts or 'rest and repair stations on as small a scale as possible'⁸ the presence of a Carthaginian settlement or trading station in Malta and Gozo does not rule out the existence of other groups of different

⁵Id. p.18: Καὶ νῆσος ἐν μέσῳ τῶ πλῶ τούτῳ οἰκουμένη, ἣ ὄνομα Αἰθάλια, καὶ ἄλλαι ἐρημοὶ νῆσοι.

⁶Id. p.18: καὶ νῆσος ἐρήμη ἐν τῶ μεταζύ.

⁷Id. p.42: οἰκοῦσι δὲ ἐν κρήτη Ἕλληνας.

⁸G. and C. Picard, *Daily life in Carthage*, p.26, London 1961; R. Pietschmann, *Storia dei Fenici*, p.306-307, Milano 1899; Dimitri Barambi, *Phoenicia and the Phoenicians*; p.37, Beirut 1961: "When Esarhaddon invaded Cyprus he found one Phoenician, as well as nine other Greek kings ruling different parts of the island".

nationalities.

The author does not tell us when the Carthaginians came over to Malta. Presumably they had been here long before the fourth century.⁹ It is not clear who occupied these islands before their arrival.

There is still another minor difficulty: how is one to translate the expression *κατὰ τοῦτο*? The usual meaning of this expression is 'in this view, according to this view' which does not make sense in this context. Müller renders it *de regione illius* which hardly improves on the sense. The only plausible meaning seems to be 'on account of this, for this reason'. Herodotus employs the expressions *κατὰ ταῦτα*, *κατὰ τοιούδῃ* in this sense¹⁰. The meaning seems to be this: there are three small islands, and because they are small and because they are islands they are inhabited by the Carthaginians. It is well known that the Carthaginians preferred small islands and places where they could withdraw and which could easily be defended.

One concludes, on the strength of this passage, that there was a city in Malta and another in Gozo during the fourth century B.C. Later writers call these cities by the names of Melita and Gaulos respectively, and probably these cities bore the same names during the fourth century. The author of the Periplus says of Carthage that it is a city and a harbour;¹¹ and it is well established that Carthage was the name of the city. The same holds good for Malta and Gozo: the writer says Melita, a city and a harbour, Gozo, a city. We can infer also that the harbour of Malta – perhaps the best in the Mediterranean – was already well known by navigators in the fourth century B.C.¹²

This passage is extremely important for our knowledge of the ancient history of Malta and Gozo. In the fourth century before our era Malta and Gozo belonged to the Carthaginian sphere of influence. Furthermore this passage sheds light on the ethnology of the Maltese inhabitants during the fourth century. Finally the cities of Malta and Gozo are mentioned for the first time together with the harbour of Malta.

We can end this short study on the Periplus of the Inner Sea in its relations with Malta and Gozo by giving the translation of the passage. It runs as follows:

Away from Cape Bon to the East there are three small islands and, for this reason, they are inhabited by the Carthaginians. Melita, a city and a harbour, Gaulos, a city, Lampedusa.

⁹ S. Moscati, *Il Mondo dei Fenici*, Il Saggiatore, p. 242; 'In ogni caso, è ragionevole presumere che i cartaginesi occupassero le isolette (Malta e Gozo) almeno dal VI secolo.' Milano, 1966.

¹⁰ Cf. Liddell and Scott, *κατά*; *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*, *κατά*.

¹¹ Cf. Müller, *op. cit.* Skylax, 111.

¹² Cf. Thomson, *Hist. of Ancient Geography*, London, 1949, p. 68.

BOU-RAS DE LAURENT ROPA

présenté par F. CUNEN

L'AVANTAGE que l'on éprouve à lire un roman tel que Bou-Ras, est celui dont jouit le voyageur en quête d'une terre vierge, et qui passerait, avant d'y parvenir, par mille lieux enchanteurs. Laurent Ropa est en effet un poète, et à ce titre, la découverte du roman de Laurent Ropa offre la satisfaction à l'esprit confronté avec l'énigme que pose tout roman, mais encore à l'âme invitée à communier aux sources mêmes de la poésie.

C'est là en effet que veut nous emmener l'auteur du 'Tombeau de Bou-Ras', et notamment de la 'Prière à Hippone', aux confins d'un monde réel, à l'entrée de l'univers originel. Mais ce monde nouveau et éminemment ancien à la fois, n'est pas irréel; il n'est pas fantasmagorique; il est le vrai, le pur, l'intemporel, l'éternel monde, tel qu'il sortit du geste créateur de la pensée.

'Bou-Ras' ne peut donc pas dépayser; il se situe hors de tout pays, et pourtant au centre même du monde; il n'a pas choisi son site; il accepta celui même que le Démoniaque lui assigna, la minuscule, l'éblouissante île de beauté, piquée au cœur même de l'Eurafrique, Malta, l'île de Miel. On dira que l'auteur, d'origine maltaise, s'est montré chauvin ou particulariste. Mais, d'abord, ne revient-on pas toujours au pays de ses premières amours, de ses antiques années? Ensuite, le poète choisit là un site idéal pour un séjour humain, sans plus, ni italique, ni punique, ni grec, simplement humain, celui des monuments mégalithiques qui, aujourd'hui encore, témoignent en cette terre hospitalière, telle l'île de Calypso ou les rives de Carthage, ses voisines, qu'elle fut le berceau, l'abri idéal des Bou-Ras.

Peu importe d'ailleurs le site pour ce berceau du monde. Et il faudra attendre le chapitre III pour lui donner un nom, celui du chapitre: Melita. C'est que l'expérience de Bou-Ras, si unique qu'elle puisse paraître, s'est produite partout où a jailli l'intelligence, où s'est épanouie la beauté de l'homme. 'Et la Pensée fut l'oeil droit de Bou-Ras; la Beauté fut son œil gauche.'

Peu importe également que l'auteur ait eu des réminiscences littéraires, et que l'ombre de Tite-Live veille sur le poète lorsqu'il narre la trouvaille de cet enfant sur la plage par un pauvre pêcheur, tandis que sa femme disait de ce petit Romulus, en voyant un aigle planer au-dessus de leur cabane: 'L'aigle lui a ravi le cœur.' Ou celle de la littérature orphique,

ou encore la lumière de l'Évangile de l'Enfance. Ou plutôt, il importait beaucoup que la meilleure littérature, celle d'Homère, d'Hésiode, de Virgile, de Luc, fût ici au service du poète; en son entreprise perpétuellement neuve, éternellement vieille, la narration de la Genèse. Mais ces souvenirs qui ont fécondé l'esprit de l'auteur, ne l'ont pas asservi. Tel l'aigle qui emporta dans l'Empyrée le cœur de l'Enfant, il se maintient à la hauteur vertigineuse de l'inspiration, sans jamais se commettre dans l'érudition ou l'artifice. Combien plus belle que Léto, est par exemple sa Fugitive. 'La Fugitive du Couchant, fécondée, alourdie et pensive, cherchait un refuge.' Et quand on lui eut offert pour lieu de maternité paisible l'île "des plus étroites, juste ce qu'il faut pour y construire un nid", la jeune épouse sourit, et c'est ainsi que vinrent au jour, mieux que les jumeaux de la mythologie grecque, les 'deux Jumelles divines, la Pensée et la Beauté', qui deviendront, nous l'avons dit plus haut, l'œil gauche et l'œil droit de Bou-Ras.

On concevra que, marquée sous le signe du vol majestueux de l'aigle, la pensée de l'auteur plane à des hauteurs qui n'ont pourtant rien d'abstrait ou d'inhumain, mais vibrent d'un vent revigorant. Comme Bou-Ras, il exige néanmoins que nous soyons 'attentifs à des voix secrètes'. Nous sentirons alors comme lui 'une éclosion': c'était comme une rose qui s'épanouissait. Bou-Ras dit: 'Je viens de naître, me voici né!' Cette connaissance de la naissance dont parlait admirablement Claudel, cette co-nnaissance à soi-même, cette reconnaissance du moi intime prend ici des proportions dévastatrices. "Il resta longtemps immobile, étonné de sa naissance, les yeux et la bouche grands ouverts. Quelque chose d'aussi vaste que le monde l'envahissait, faisait éclater les bornes de son âme."

La création de ce jeune Adam, son ouverture à la révélation du monde l'entraînent, tel Moïse, vers la montagne sainte. 'Quelqu'un lui commandait de marcher'. Il se mit à chanter ce chant du début du monde, "un chant appris de personne mais sorti de son cœur à sa naissance." Ce chant a le charme des poèmes orphiques; il est 'science du Grand Sahar inexprimée et à jamais inexprimable'. En cet enthousiasme, Bou-Ras, plein de son dieu, mais ne sachant son nom, se demande: 'Qui donc est en moi?' A cet Adam naissant apparaît une jeune Eve, mais dont on ne sait l'origine, ni l'avenir. "C'était comme si elle fût sortie de lui. Il la contemplait et s'enivrait d'elle. Au comble de sa joie, il tendit ses bras vers elle et l'appela par son nom: 'Ruh! Ruh!'" Il semble vraiment que Bou-Ras ait part à la création de cette radieuse beauté. S'il peut en effet l'appeler par son nom sans l'avoir jamais connu, c'est que cette appellation est un appel à l'être, celui de la Genèse, celui qui par la connaissance du nom, produit la naissance de la créature. Mais pour Bou-Ras, la charmante

Egérie, produit de sa puissance nouvelle, ou ange gardien de son existence nouvelle, ne sera pas l'objet d'une convoitise charnelle. Elle lui montre la route à prendre; elle n'est pas une Sirène, mais un ange de lumière: 'Va où tu dois aller!'

Bientôt, en ce chant de Genèse, prit part l'humble créature, celle que d'aucuns ridiculisent, et où d'autres plus sages, Apulée, l'Évangéliste, François d'Assise, Péguy, voient une image humble mais fraternelle, de l'immense communauté cosmique. "Un braiement puissant, gonflé de sensibilité, rauque et pénible, éclata dans un vallon et se répandit partout: d'autres le suivirent et l'accompagnèrent. Ce fut bientôt un vaste concert qui se prolongea longtemps, couvrant toutes les autres voix avec, parfois, des accents de triomphe, et s'acheva comme une plainte. Telles furent pour Bou-Ras les grandes orgues qui saluèrent la naissance de son esprit."

Cependant pour l'Auteur, l'intelligence n'est pas infuse; elle est oeuvre de long apprentissage. Comme l'adolescent de Nazareth, Bou-Ras s'esquivera pour apprendre des prêtres du Temple 'les paroles qui s'entendent, les écritures qui se lisent'. Il ira, selon ses propres termes, y chercher la Vie. Car la Gnose est salut et source de Vie. A son père adoptif en quête de son fils émancipé, l'oracle annonce, sybillin: "Il a fui le Serpent. Il voyagera sur l'Ane et sera sauvé". Je laisse au lecteur le grand plaisir de découvrir en quelles circonstances le jeune Elu fut amené à trouver le salut.

RESTITUTION

Give back, learn how, what you have learned to take
And call your own – all the gifts Life gave you
Before your time was up; the blue bird flew
Beyond the Dawn that crimson Youth's green lake.
Be brave and sensible; hand back; forsake
What greed of living would hang to: the blue-
Throated bird of youth, wild jungle cry, true
Call of the Spring in rhythm without break.

Pindar and Vergil, Dante, all the great
Whose names are trumpets on the Roof of Fame,
Surrendered one by one the gifts that Life
Withdraws from us by ancient common Fate –
End of all Flesh, our death, end of all strife
But end no less of ageing and its shame.

The Lyceum, Victoria,
Gozo – 5.vi.68.

J. AQUILINA

MENTAL DOODLING

On the whole,
I have grumbled too much about life
But always
Like a loving husband about his wife.
Frankly, my man,
Loving them both
I would part
With neither life nor wife;
For, mark my words,
The fun of it all
Lies in joint struggle and strife.

The Lyceum, Victoria,
Gozo – 5.vi.68.

J. AQUILINA

BOOK REVIEW

THORKILD HANSEN, *Arabia Felix*, English translation London, 1964. Originally published Copenhagen, 1962.

In 1761 a Danish expedition left Copenhagen on a tour which was to take its members, or rather those who survived, through the Mediterranean to Asia Minor, Suez, Bombay, Arabia and home again across Europe. On the way they collected a great deal of historical and scientific information.

The book is of particular interest to students concerned with Maltese studies for in June 1761 the expedition spent several days at Malta. In fact Hansen's book gives very little direct information about the island but some members of the expedition made copious observations and their diaries and notebooks are preserved, in some cases published. The author indicates these sources. One member of the expedition, apart from describing Valletta 'compiled a Flora Melitensis, which included 87 different plants; he described the big salt-extraction installations on the coast, studied the island's trade and discovered how the Maltese brought snow from the mountain tops of Sicily'. Another man made measurement of latitude and longitude which resulted in Malta's position on the map being corrected.

Clearly the expedition collected important information on late eighteenth century Malta and it would be useful if some further research was undertaken on the topic.

B.W.B.



OUR NEW CONTRIBUTORS

Aquilina, J., see vol. II, No. 3.

Beck Richard, J., Professor of English in the Royal University of Malta since 1960; editor of Chaucer's Prologue and Tale of the *Wife of Bath* (Oliver & Boyd, 1964); author of *A Critical Study of Shakespeare's Henry IV* (Edward Arnold, 1965); writer of literary articles in various learned journals; currently engaged on a critical edition of Chaucer's *Works* for the series 'Longmans Annotated English Poets.'

Busuttill, J., see vol. III, No. 3.

Cirillo, R., Associate Professor of Economics, University of Alberta Canada.

Cunen F. was educated at Universities of Louvain and Liege (D.Lit.; Agr. E.M.S.) Taught Latin and Greek Languages and Literature in French-speaking Colleges. Lectured on French Language and Literature as a Head of Department in Malvern Girls' College. Now Head of the French section of the Modern Language Department at the Royal University of Malta.

Translated books on religious and mythological matters from Dutch and German into French. Contributed papers to University Journals, specialising in the History of Religions, such as *Symbolae Osloenses* and *Revue de l'Histoire des Religions*. His thesis of over 600 pages analyzes a great number of Greek papyri and Byzantine manuscripts and traces religious and superstitious customs which they describe back to the Babylonian and Egyptian civilisations. He then follows up their survival in many Arabic, Jewish, Neo-hellenic, and Western beliefs.

Curmi, G., see vol. III, No. 1.

Lanza Franco, Holder of the chair of Italian at the Royal University of Malta.

Rayson Richard, J., M.A. (Oxon), B. Phil (Oxon). Lecturer in English, Royal University of Malta, especially concerned with 19th and 20th Century Literature. At present engaged in a full-length study of structural organisation in the novels of William Hale White.

Weber, B.C., see vol. II, No. 3.

