

his shows, since he had long ago decided you could take it pretty much for granted their *tits* were never any good, to put it bluntly, no great shakes at all. It was Trevor's indiscretion to inform Cherry on this matter, and she was much indignant and mentioned that her name wasn't Kreem, nor indeed Cherry. She revealed a name well known to all readers of English history. Plainly she was not the sort of girl to endure lightly the insults of Mark Cullem. What he had said wasn't true anyhow, and she could if required call on Trevor for witness.

So very soon Trevor and Cherry had contrived to ditch their sponsor. They worked in closest harmony until they succeeded in inventing their own act, which was soon to become known throughout Europe. Done against a black background it was all so simple, the very essence of life itself as the pair were often to say to each other. First Cherry was revealed seated at a little table, and clad in a glittering skin-tight dress. She was writing with a feather pen, perhaps a sweet little letter to someone she loved, and she did not notice that Trevor was standing in the shadows behind her (nobody noticed, because Trevor was masked and wearing leotards, and it wasn't until a suitable spotlight had activated a suitable paint that he was suddenly revealed as his own skeleton). Now he approached Cherry, peering over her shoulder while skeletal fingers reached to close on her writing hand. She was transfixed but she did not cry out, even though Trevor caressed her arms before swinging around the table to confront her. He plucked away the feather pen, which he used to stroke and brush her nose and eyebrows until she had relaxed into a trance—then he took her in his skeletal arms, and to the accompaniment of music suitably macabre they danced. They danced with Cherry coming temporarily to life, and endeavouring to match the intricacy of supple embraces which became ever more and more vigorous and frenzied: Trevor twisted himself into more and more unimaginable positions, and as Cherry became more and more indifferent and lifeless, she was loved as probably no woman had ever been stage-loved before.

And it all ended with Cherry dead, a tumbled heap, while women who had bitten their knuckles and screamed, were choking now on their sobs.

After Europe there was the United States, then Latin America; but one night in Rosario, Trevor complained about a sudden searing pain in his left leg. Fortunately there was

246a courteous little Spanish doctor staying in their hotel, and 'rheumatism' was his reply to their

anxious requests for a diagnosis. In the morning Trevor's knee was swollen and inflamed. 'We know little about this disease,' the doctor said. 'Perhaps it will go away, but perhaps it will be permanent.' And he expressed so much enchantment with Trevor's figure and good looks that he refused to accept any fee.

After all had been wound up, their arrangement terminated and their profits divided, they said goodbye; and Trevor returned to his Homeland.

About this time his mother had by an unforeseen stroke of good fortune inherited a large Fyfe-Windtoep estate in Scotland; and his father had become so silent about his flyovers and all other items of engineering activity, that he too was glad to return to the old country, where he could live a life which might at times almost resemble that of an old-style Scottish laird.

As for Trevor and Cissy, they are happy together in the house with the grandstand view. They were, of course, married the afternoon Trevor flew away overseas to find his fortune. Trevor has to sit in a wheelchair, but Cissy for the most part prefers it that way, after all she has him right under her control; and there is nothing to prevent Trevor from admiring his arms while he takes in television and listens to the news. Cissy loves him very much, and she would be well capable of dealing adequately with Mrs Crouchlowe (who in any case never calls). She is never known to say nasty things to Trevor, except that some days she calls him a drizzle-patch.

JOOST DAALDER

'Disputed Ground' in the Poetry of Charles Brasch

In his worthwhile article, "Brief Permitted Morning"—Notes on the Poetry of Charles Brasch (*Landfall* 92), Vincent O'Sullivan correctly emphasizes the importance which 'the tested ground' has to Brasch in such a poem as 'Hawk Over Bowen Peak' (from *Ambulando*). Nevertheless, the value of that ground seems to remain disputed: Brasch wonders whether the hawk does not show

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'weakness' in returning to it. Two forces seem to pull at the hawk, and, of course, at man: 'we are that mortal ground/ The spiritual and temporal powers dispute' ('To C. H. Roberts', in *Disputed Ground*).

The poems in *Disputed Ground*, as well as in the other volumes, explore various alternatives of allegiance. 'Waitaki Revisited' seems to show the spiritual powers ascendant. The poet wonders: 'Is it not to us then our living belongs?' In order to answer the question, it would appear, he attempts an identification with the physical phenomena of nature. While fields may momentarily reassure him that our living is ours, ultimately security can only be found by yielding the soul up to 'powers' that 'through all sensible process . . . distantly, fleetingly touch us'.* Mr O'Sullivan wants to make little of Mr Brasch's affinity with Wordsworth; but how many poems are there, outside Wordsworth's own work, that are so reminiscent of him?

Such a resemblance should not prevent us from seeing very considerable differences. However, we should not underrate Charles Brasch's persistent fascination with a world beyond time. 'Genesis' shows men travelling into such 'a timeless land of no graves', and although it is marked by 'rigid, sombre presences', yet it leads to 'a new knowledge' and a 'sense of gradual reconciliation'. Like Lazarus in *The Estate*, we can in a 'single vision' hold 'the worlds/ This world divides'. A *single* vision, of course, is at peace with the knowledge that man is a potential battleground for the temporal of this world and the spiritual of another, of which he can nevertheless partake.

Like Lazarus, again, the Colossi of Memnon, in the poem of that title, are presented as 'Piercing the divisions between world and world'. Of course they are not human, but the important point is that the poet imaginatively identifies with their vision. 'Purged of their human weakness', they are 'presences' and 'By their mere neighbourhood to man endue him/ With more than human stature.' It is clear that they enable us to transcend our mere earthly status because their vision has released itself 'from the time of man'. Granted, they remain on earth, and the travellers of 'Genesis' and Lazarus are also, despite their vision of another world, once again subjected to earthly existence. But a single vision can of course embrace *two worlds*, and a sojourn in the one does

* Here, and elsewhere in this article, the italics are mine.—J.D.

not deny the reality of the other, even if such a sojourn, as in 'The Colossi of Memnon', is likely to be permanent.

With this in mind, we should consider the possibility that 'life', too, is held in such high esteem by the poet because it can transcend the concrete, or even the temporal. In some places, at any rate, it would seem that Brasch does hold this view. In 'A View of Rangitoto', the poet laments that the mountain has 'A useless throat that time gradually stopped/ And sealed at last with smoky lichen-skin.' But the concrete obstacle, the result of time's workings, can be overcome internally: '. . . the mountain still lives out that fiercer life/ Beneath its husk of darkness', and one would think that this life is not only superior to what has tried to stop it, but is also eternal, because the mountain 'belongs to/ A world of fire before the rocks and waters.' Indeed, Brasch himself gives the fact of the pre-existence of this life as the reason for its continuity. In 'Waitaki Revisited', the poet wants

with the endurance of the shadowy forms
Of earth to stand in pure submission, timeless,
Entering imperceptibly the dance
Of substance .'

The dance of substance is hardly likely to be a state in which concrete merges with concrete, temporal with temporal, but one in which the individual soul feels 'timeless' because it merges with an eternal world. Yet, admittedly, if this is a world of 'life' seen as something abstract and spiritual, 'life' also is an earthly affair. Charles Brasch does leap out into the abstract while forgetting what happens on earth; it is by submerging himself into the 'fire' of earthly life that man learns

. . . in the fire the nature of fire,
Upon the wheel replenishing the wheel,
Caught in the dance that sifts unreal from real.
Metter From Thurlby Domain', *The Estate*)

Nevertheless, the 'unreal' is clearly to be found on this earth; it seems to be the sum of those things on earth which man must ignore if he is to know the 'real'. The 'real' is not entirely beyond our reach, existing merely in some other world; it may well be fully accessible to us. But the word 'fire' suggests an area of existence which, while tangibly alive, is nevertheless more boundless and admirably intense

than some things on earth, and the image of the 'wheel' suggests an eternity of life beyond the individual's temporary life-span.

Of course, Mr Brasch himself often makes it difficult for us to tell just to what extent he believes that the life of the spirit, or, for that matter, life in nature, is securely part of another world. But our world is always his starting point, and there *is* no imaginative flight into another world without return to this world, from which, however, the other world can be viewed. His vision is not static, and the notion that we are disputed by spiritual and temporal powers allows considerable flexibility. But that does not mean that he invariably comes down firmly on one side, and we can hardly confidently claim, with Mr O'Sullivan, that the importance of nature to Brasch is merely in itself. Whatever the ultimate status of the 'life', 'fire', 'heart' in nature, it is to these that we find Brasch addressing himself at least *as* often as to such a thing as the mere physical security of rocks. Or the 'dance' includes the physical as well as the animate; but even if the animate is temporal rather than timeless, it readily provides something the poet's spirit wants to identify with. This is not to deny the occurrence of poems in which the mind finds its anchor in the purely concrete, but an insistence on the need to live in the 'here' and 'now' may well turn out to be an implicit order for us to become aware of our bond with heaven. In *The Land and the People*, poem IV with that title concludes:

And with us go
Dream of prey and dream of cloud,
But not to see or divine
And never here to grasp and now.

This does not exhort us to limit our vision to the immediate present or the concrete. Though we should start there, and not have false 'dreams', we ought to *see* or *divine* 'What, from creation planned,/ Is imposed by mediate fate.' To *grasp* here and now means that we can in a single vision hold the present and the concrete as well as the eternal and the abstract. In his discussion of this poem, Mr O'Sullivan says: 'Perfection is itself part of the "disputed ground" which gives its name to Brasch's second collection. The perfection we have at our disposal is to be as close as modern man can come to the enduring tutelage of element and season.' But,

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as I have indicated, 'disputed ground' in the second volume refers to something quite different, and the poem under discussion offers a synthetic vision in which the 'ground' of our mortal existence is not 'disputed': we can live in harmony with the temporal 'now' and concrete 'here' as well as with the spiritual perfection of the stars. However, even when no such clear context of an eternal spiritual world is provided, the animate looms large, in a number of poems, *as* the object of the poet's quest. 'The Land And The People (II)', for example, complains that in our confrontation with the land we have learned only 'its obvious look'. However, we should 'care/ To listen for its heart'; it is simply not true that New Zealand offers no living context: the 'heart' is there for those prepared to find it. Insofar as its full potential is still to be brought out, we should help 'prepare' a 'passionate hand':

Shades impatient to put the future on
Loom and beckon us from the teeming dark;
Waiting for our songs, the woods are still,
The stones are bare for us to write upon.

('The Islands', 3; *Disputed Ground*)

Yet, in the same volume (and in the others), we also find that the ground is indeed disputed. Of course a man who does not place 'time' in some sort of context, but yields to its movements, may find that the world appears to make sense at one moment, but not at another. One example seems 'Soldier In Reverie'. The world is single in the vision of the soldier, all lives seem to have meaning, though despite their individual goals, fragments dissolve into wholeness,—amidst the 'proliferation' there seems to be a purpose, there are 'the waters of kindness' amongst the world's wildernesses. It is not clear whether this single vision is supported by a faith in a purpose established by the presence of some abstract power that transcends time, and indeed it may very well not be. However, the poet at any rate sees the vision as fragile: 'in that very instant the world unwittingly/ Shatters the singleness he alone had given it'. No matter whether the soldier's vision is that of a purpose in the world of time as such or of some power that through all sensible process only distantly and fleetingly touches us, the vision of the poet very easily shifts towards an awareness of the world's 'incoherence'. Certainty therefore seems to be a matter of mood and circumstance, and as these change so does the poet's conviction

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of what is 'real'. Sometimes the universe seems orderly, sometimes chaotic. Symbols taken from nature seem to shift their meaning accordingly. While in 'Great Sea' the sea assumes the status of a life that is eternal and secure if we merge with it, in 'Henley On Taieri' the poet sees the stream as

No duct of life but
Cold seeker
Of self-dissolution
In the bitter and formless
Light-engulfing
Pit of the desolate sea.

Such changes are changes in the poet's actual vision. For this reason, we cannot draw up glossaries of symbols. While rocks appear meaningless symbols of infertility 'stained/With crepuscular lichen' in 'On Mt Iron', stones, amongst other things, can

. . . answer a gaze contemplative
Of all things that flow out from them And
back to enter them again.

in 'Ambulando' (*Ambulando*). And it is because of the changing, transforming vision of the poet that he speaks, in 'Towards Leafbreak' (*Not Far Off*) of 'the rocks' *fleeting/Concretion*'; the seeming security of the physical may appear to be just as transitory as everything else.

Despite these vicissitudes, the recurring doubts about 'what we are and are not', there seems to be a set of characteristic moods that persist throughout, forming some sort of tough core in Brasch's verse. In the poems reflecting these moods, we are not in fact made aware of a 'disputed ground', because the poet is in harmony with the universe, and the struggle between various possible loyalties need not become an issue. Indeed, in such a state, where we feel we have a place in the stream of life (which *is* not necessarily viewed in terms of eternal spirits etc.), death, suffering, the passing of things, the concrete *as well as* the abstract, all are embraced as fitting into what seems a meaningful whole. It is true, of course, that such a mood is not with Brasch at all times. But he is a poet, and human, and not a philosopher of granite of whom consistency should be expected. Time and again, he admits that such a mood is of the moment. This admission prevents him, correctly, from appearing like a poet who in his

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transitory cheerfulness claims that life is easier than careful stocktaking over an extended period makes it out to be. I suppose this may be one of the things that makes Mr O'Sullivan speak of the 'sincerity' in Brasch's verse. I think, however, that in a poem like 'Autumn In Spring' (The Estate) Brasch's poise is even more careful than Mr O'Sullivan suggests. Mr O'Sullivan sees the poet as praying for 'a small area of remission, drawn from the world itself, where adversities press less severely—"A brief permitted morning." In Mr O'Sullivan's view, Brasch places much on: '. . . brief oblivion from the giant clock/ A dream of wholeness, draught of peace.' However, Brasch in the progression of the poem as a whole places very little on this, and he is very careful to dissociate an escapist sentimentality, such as these lines might evoke in a reader, from the phrase 'A brief permitted morning'. In the first instance, he speaks of a 'dazzled moment' that leads him to make an 'intolerable prayer' for 'brief oblivion from the giant clock'. But when he says that 'we may arise and enter/ A brief permitted morning', much has intervened. The first prayer is—Brasch uses the word himself—revoked. He does not want to escape time:

I revoke my prayer.
I would forget nothing, escape nothing.
If there be an end or a reconciling
Let it be inward and slow, out of the habit of time Whose
days return and pass, are gone and endure In their
strictness and their latitude
Wearing the white drawn mask of death;
For pain does not leave us, being of flesh and soul,
Yet can he kinder than its rule commends, Is our
condition and our confessional,
From which innocent again we may arise and enter A
brief permitted morning.

If we are mortal ground disputed by temporal and spiritual powers, I suppose a statement like this commits itself very firmly to the temporal, except, of course, that the cycle of time is an eternal thing. But there is no wish to flee the cycle for a spiritual realm divorced from it where one can 'move secure among the abstract stars' (*Word By Night*, *Disputed Ground*). Such consolation as we are offered may be something that can eternally recur, but if we admit that we long for it and enjoy it, we must also accept the pain of life.

In Leavisite terms, I imagine that this is a poem that 'comes

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to terms with life'. However, that life is not a meaningless jungle of concrete and transitory phenomena. While the cycle is that of life, it is an ordered pattern, perceived by the spirit of the poet even if not explicitly presented as handed down to us by some spiritual power ultimately controlling it.

* I refer to poems in the five volumes all published by The Caxton Press. *The Land and the People* (1939), *Disputed Ground* (1948), *The Estate* (1957), *Ambulando* (1964), *Not Far Off* (1969)

JOHN M. JENNINGS

Christchurch Society for Contemporary Music: An Evaluation

On the evening of 20 April 1967 the Union of Graduates in Music (Canterbury District)—an exclusive association, unique in New Zealand—called a meeting in the University of Canterbury Hall, Christchurch, where nearly 200 people heard Douglas Lilburn deliver a lecture entitled 'What is meant by contemporary music?'. After a short recital of music by David Farquhar, Kit Powell, Edmund Rubbra and Malcolm Williamson given by Maurice Till (piano) and the University of Canterbury Madrigal Singers, an even shorter meeting formally established the Christchurch Society for Contemporary Music. This took place barely seven months after *Landfall* 79 (p.284) published Frederick Page's report of a 'flat disinterest' in Christchurch to any suggestion of forming a local branch, although the Wellington society (known as the 'International Society for Contemporary Music, New Zealand Branch') had already existed for eighteen years (see *Landfall* 38 and 79).

Armed with a carefully-worded constitution, the C.S.C.M. conducted its first Annual General Meeting two months

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later, registered as an incorporated society, listened to another lecture by Professor Lilburn, this time on electronic music, and then set about promoting three more concerts during that same year. The first of these, a 'Glass Concert' devised and executed by Anna Lockwood and Harvey Matusow on 21 July, drew a response from the musical public as well as music critics. This helped with the Society's publicity, but possibly hindered the ready acceptance of the new organization by a public not yet prepared for such entertainment. An October recital by local artists was a rather mixed bag of piano and chamber music by Samuel Barber, Benjamin Britten, Peter Racine Fricker, Olivier Messiaen, Bo Nilsson, Zvi Ragan and Nikos Skalkottas, while in contrast the final concert in November was given by the Wellington pianist, Margaret Nielsen, whose lecture-recital concentrated on piano music by the New Zealand composers Robert Burch, David Farquhar, Douglas Lilburn, Jenny McLeod and Ronald Tremain.

During the next two years the Society increased its activities and 1968 began with two lunchtime concerts (one of chamber music, the other of organ music) for the Pan Pacific Arts Festival in March. Four evening recitals were spread through the remainder of the year: in June, chamber music played by Dobbs Franks, Ruth Pearl, Elizabeth Hellawell and Farquhar Wilkinson; in August by local singer Anthea Moller accompanied by William Hawkey, Wallace Woodley (harpsichord) and 'cello ensemble directed by Thomas Rogers; in September by members of the Alberni Quartet of the University of Canterbury with Maurice Till; and in October, piano music presented by Frederick Page.

A more varied programme in 1969 saw the introduction of a three-session workshop seminar of contemporary teaching music in early April (in association with the Christchurch Society of Registered Music Teachers) with demonstration performances of 'new' music—new, that is, to many Christchurch teachers—by music pupils of all ages. The year ended with another joint venture and the most ambitious to date: an evening of music and mime in association with the University of Canterbury Drama Society, presented for three nights in mid-November. Included in the programme were the premiere of John Cousins' *I Sing of Olaf* (a stage cantata, produced with the support of a Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council grant), *A Sequence of Mime* (with music by David Sell) and a stage production of Igor Stravinsky's *L'Histoire du*

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