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Stanley M. Wiersma
Grand Valley State University

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CHRISTOPHER FRY'S MANIFESTO FOR WOMEN IN "VENUS OBSERVED"

STANLEY M. WIERSMA

The main plot of VENUS OBSERVED* concerns the autumnal Duke of Altair who has invited three former mistresses to his observatory to watch an eclipse of the sun. He has instructed his son, Edgar, himself of marriageable age, to award a golden apple to one of the three mistresses. The chosen one will become the duke's duchess and Edgar's stepmother.

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Rosabel is the Venus of the piece: a temperamental actress, she is quite aware of her own physical attractiveness and impatient with competition. Jessie is the Hera: her passive virtues are practical and wifely. She pretends to be a little more stupid than God made her, but her naivete serves her well, sometimes as a weapon--she can disguise insult as compliment--and sometimes as a benign trick of stopping an argument by changing the subject. Jessie, then, is a shrewdly diplomatic Hera, but unintellectual. Hilda, cast as Athene, is possessed of a wisdom that is clear and uncompromising, yet so much like common sense that it tends toward dullness:"I know," she says, "I have/No particular heights or depths myself;/No one who thought me ordinary or dull/Would be far wrong"(45). "The case of Athene," observes the duke, "is minutely complicated/By a husband" (15). However, Hilda's marriage hardly disqualifies her as a symbol of chastity, for her marriage seems to be curiously sexless, indeed, meaningless. By her own account, Roderic, her husband, is a "level depth of dullness" (45). Here, then, are Athene, Hera, and Venus, the goddesses of the myth of Paris and the golden apple, metamorphosed into recognizable twentieth-century female types.

According to the ancient myth, the three goddesses argue as to which of them is loveliest. They invite Paris to arbitrate their disagree-

* (London: Oxford University Press, 1949). All references by page number in the body of the text.

ment. Paris chooses Venus, who has promised him the loveliest mortal for his own; Hera and Athene become jealous and bring about the burning of Troy, Paris' native city, through the instrumentality of the Athenians. Priam, father of Paris and King of Troy, must assume responsibility for conducting the resulting war, even though Priam knows nothing of the choice.

The situation is different in the autumn of Fry's play. The argument as to which of the three goddesses is loveliest takes place not among the goddesses but in the mind of the duke. Paris-Edgar is not elected judge by the goddesses, nor does his choice imply any reward for him; he chooses for his father at his father's request. Fry, in short, has changed the myth from a parable about the absolute categories of women into a parable about a very wrong, though prevalent, male attitude toward women.

To the anonymous pre-Homeric myth makers, to Homer himself perhaps, and certainly to the interpreters of the myth after him, the three goddesses were the absolutes of all womanhood. All women are to be typed as sex object, as wife and mother, or as wise companion. The categories say more about the men who framed them than about the eternal reality of womanly nature. The makers of the myth and its interpreters until the present tend to be male chauvinist pigs—the duke too.

But not Fry. His new attitude toward women is the reason for his removing the conflict from among the goddesses and placing it in the mind of his Priam.

Edgar awards the apple to Rosabel, erotically the most attractive of the three women, but Rosabel, though not understanding that she is elected into wifedom, is very much troubled by the apple and by the duke. After an emotional outburst on her part, Edgar has second thoughts and reclaims the apple. He gives it to his father with the suggestion that he give it to Jessie. But the duke is delayed by the arrival of Perpetua Reedbeck, daughter of the duke's steward. She has just arrived from serving a prison sentence in America for disturbing the peace as a member of the Society for the Desecration of Ancient and Modern Errors. Both Edgar and the duke fall immediately in love with her, and the duke offers her the golden apple, but Perpetua produces a pistol and shoots the apple out of his hand. This unladylike gesture does not at all diminish the desires of Edgar and the duke for her, and while the three ignored goddesses disport themselves individually, the two gentlemen

compete for Perpetua's affections. Attracted to Edgar, Perpetua is nevertheless persuaded by her brother, Dominic, to favor the duke because their father, the duke's steward, has systematically embezzled from the duke's exchequer over the years, and the duke would not be likely to press charges against his father-in-law. Therefore, when the duke invites Perpetua for an afternoon of archery, she consents, although Edgar intrudes into their afternoon. When Edgar invites Perpetua to a Hallowe'en party and when the duke invites her to spend the night with him in his observatory, she pleads travel fatigue to Edgar but agrees to go along with the duke. She understands the politics of sex.. Alone with the duke at night, Perpetua explains the ambiguities of her situation, though she does not complain of them or use them as an argument against making love. She simply cannot love the duke as she loves Edgar.

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The addition of Perpetua is Fry's boldest adaptation of the myth of Paris.

> And I am the eight duchesses
> And the three housekeepers and the chambermaid
> Combing their hair. I am any girl; Perpetua
> Perpetual, making no gesture I can call
> My own, engraving theirs one lifetime deeper. (65)

Perpetua is the perpetual renewal of womanhood, the perpetual breaking through prescribed categories, the perpetual refusal to adjust to a world that males establish for females. Perpetua is any girl; she fits all categories at once. Erotically desirable, she attracts the duke and Edgar irresistibly when she first enters, and she also can be irresistibly attracted to Edgar in the magic of love.

But Perpetua is also like Jessie.While the other mistresses are full of agitation, Jessie reacts to the upheavals of the morning by writing her father a letter. He cannot read any longer, but he likes to have the postman stop. Perpetua is indulgent of her father in a similar way: "Let me look at you. Every feature where I left it/Ten years ago! I'd forgotten you were so beautiful" (25). Perpetua is also like Jessie in her skill at diverting a line of thought.

Perpetua is also a wise and analytical Athene. Like Hilda, she can recognize what is dull; she can also recognize "the unsightly,/The gimcrack, the tedious, the hideous, the spurious/The harmful" (30). Hilda can see herself as "ordinary and dull" (45); Perpetua says to herself,

"Perpetua. . . you're no one, you're everybody's color" (31). And like Hilda, Perpetua is eminently practical. She knows that prudence and emotions cooler than love may require her to marry the duke; if Perpetua married the duke, their relationship would probably be much like Hilda and Roderic's.

Perpetua is more than a combination of the qualities of the three goddesses of legend, of course. For the golden apple coveted by Venus is shattered by Perpetua on behalf of complete women. The rationalistic, categorizing tradition of Greece and Rome has taught the western world to categorize women along with everything else. The dumb blond is our Venus; the only reason for her to study at a university is to hook a man. The good cook and loving mother is our Hera; we buy her cologne for her birthday but never a bikini. And who considers the erotic needs of a lady scholar? Let her be Athene, content with her intellectual probing. Perpetua shoots the golden apple to smithereens because Fry understands that only by violence can women assert that they will no longer submit passively to the typing which a male-dominated society inflicts on them. In any contemporary production of the play, Perpetua must have lanky hair, wear faded jeans, and go braless.

But Perpetua is different from Women's Lib too. By Fry's standards, the party-line Women's Libber rejects the artificially imposed roles of Venus, Hera, and Athene, only to be trapped in the Diana role: Actaeon-killing, man-castrating, and celibate. Women's Lib protests on behalf of equality with men. Perpetua protests on behalf of an identity emerging within her, the freedom to be what life reveals her to be. The golden apple was "a threat to my new-come freedom" (20), says Perpetua; the golden apple, an ancient and modern monumental error, is not to come between a person and the mystery of self-discovery.

Perpetua does not renounce the qualities of the other goddesses in order to be Diana, but she is like Diana in some respects. Not only does she fire a pistol at the golden apple; the duke and Perpetua disport themselves with bow and arrows—Diana's traditional hunting equipment—during the afternoon. Like Diana, Perpetua is chaste, though in a large and special sense, for she agrees to spend the night with the duke. But she does so with the chaste intention of marrying him, and that with the coolest, most sexless motive: keeping her father out of jail.

Thus Perpetua is a flirtatious Venus, a domestic Hera, a wise Athene, and a pistol-shooting Diana. In Perpetua Edgar will achieve

everything that any man needs in a woman: lover, wife, companion,and, yes, opponent too.

Not only is Perpetua a complete woman; she is the cause of completeness in other women. Rosabel says it for the others: "The girl Perpetua/Has the courage that makes a person come true" (57). Again, Fry's play differs from the classical myth, for though the mythical goddesses appear on the scene in character and on good terms with each other, they leave, after the apple episode, still in character but polarized against one another: Athene, articulate about injustice; Hera, frankly jealous; Venus, defensive. They are frozen in their roles forever. In Fry's play, the women abandon their narrow roles.

Immediately after Perpetua demolishes the apple, Rosabel is much interested: "If only I/Could be such a brave one, there might be/Some justification for me"(31). Rosabel becomes brave enough to set fire to the duke's observatory as a demonstration. The observatory is as much a symbol of male chauvinism as the golden apple, for in that observatory the duke observes women and stars with equal detachment. He feels no personal relationship with any of his mistresses; so Rosabel commits arson: "He must be made to feel," she explains (57). Following Perpetua's example, in Diana's aggressive manner, Rosabel desecrates a monumental error. Moreover, she refuses to be indulged as the duke's naughty, darling girl; she insists on going to prison like Perpetua before her. No longer simply a Venus, she has expanded her feminine repertoire. She is on the way to being a complete woman.

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Perpetua is the cause for completeness in Jessie too. Jessie is excited as much as anybody by the apple scene, and characteristically works off her frustrations by writing a letter to her father. But she also eggs Edgar on into aggressiveness. Edgar, envious of his father's teaching Perpetua archery, says, "From here I think I could send an arrow right past him/Into the target," and Jessie says, "What you think you can, then do." When he shoots and hits the target, Jessie says, "What did you do? Did I encourage you/To be mischievous? I was thinking about my letter." But Jessie knew all the while what she was thinking about:

> . . .as you didn't kill anybody, I may say
> I think it was splendid, and I think perhaps
> You should do it more often. (49-50)

Characteristically domestic about her aggression, she nevertheless becomes more Diana-like; on the other hand, she becomes more Venus-like. Jessie, of all people, accompanies the much younger Edgar to the Hallowe'en dance, since Perpetua is unable to go. Jessie's feminine repertoire has broadened.

As has Hilda's.

> Because of the strange business
> Of the eclipse this morning, and what went on,
> We've been thrown into each other's confidence
> Unexpectedly soon. And for my part
> I think I'm thankful. I've always hidden more
> Than was good for me. (44)

Every clever woman needs to hide more than is good for her in order to survive in the western world. But now Hilda has the courage to admit to herself and to Jessie what her wise and probing mind has long known: her husband Roderic is dull. But she also discovers that there is more to herself than probing intellect, for when word comes that Roderic has been thrown from a horse and injured, Hilda is full of a most Hera-like concern. She urges Jessie to "forget I laughed at him" (48), rushes to be with him, and when she returns she has blended her intellectual convictions about Roderic's dullness with a new sense of the essential mystery of all human life:

> . . .and I sat
> Beside him and marvelled, and wondered how
> So much could lie there in a human shell,
> The long succession of life that led to him,
> Uninterrupted from the time
> Of time's aching infancy;
> In the beginning was Roderic; and now
> Haunting the same shell were a childhood
> And a manhood, half a hundred years
> Of sights and sounds which once echoed and shone
> And now may only exist in him. And though
> He tries to be a copy of all his kind
> How can he be? He is Roderic-phenomenon,
> Roderic only, and at present Roderic in pain.

I felt I must tell you so. This afternoon
I made a cockshy of him, but this afternoon
I could no more truly see him than he, poor darling,
Can truly see half there is to see. (92)

As intellectually penetrating and honest as before, Hilda is now also full of domestic concern like Hera and even capable of genuine romantic ardor for the uniqueness (in spite of dullness) of Roderic-phenomenon. Roderic's injury alone would not have changed her so drastically. Perpetua's shooting the apple gives Hilda the courage to admit to herself and to Jessie that Roderic is a bore. Without that honest admission, she would have gone home to tend him with Athene's grim sense of duty, but she would not have been open to discovering anything besides dullness in Roderic.

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Fry makes other adaptations. In the classical myth, Troy is burned. The pity, one feels, is that a proud city should burn for selfishness and stupidity. But pity is not the point of the fire in Fry's play. Rosabel's motive in setting the observatory ablaze is to help the duke:

. . .nothing less than fire will do to open his eyes
On to the distances that separate him
From other people . (58)

The fire is meant to be, and proves to be, redemptive.

The necessity for violence is one of Fry's chief preoccupations. It is one of two ways people learn. Paradoxically, violence is also immoral for Fry. One feels that Fry considers it no more than right that Rosabel should sit in prison for her act of arson. But when violence occurs, evil though it be, it becomes the occasion for insight and growth. The proper response to the experience of violence is never pity, but a creative alertness for how to turn evil into good.

Violence is one of the two ways people learn. The other is pacifism. The classical myth says that the youthful, passionate decision of Paris led to the difficulties; in Fry's rehandling the passive indecision of an old man is to blame.

The duke cannot choose because he has imprisoned the ladies in mutually exclusive cells. He, with all society, has made each woman what she is by defining her role too rigorously as either a sex machine,

or a domestic servant, or a brain, and the women have been only too happy to fit into the compartments. No wonder the duke shrinks from choosing any one of them. His prescribing the roles—rather than simply observing life and letting it reveal itself to him—has turned the women into one-dimensional monsters to whom he cannot commit himself. The women are the passive victims of male chauvinism, but males are also the passive victims of the women. The women have passively become what the men insisted they should, and they now have some right to say, "Now choose." The sexes are in bondage to each other.

As serious as the duke's bondage to women is the duke's bondage to himself. The duke's chauvinism is less a sign of healthy aggressiveness than of fearful passivity. Observing Venus, rather than dictating to her, calls for flexibility and versatility the duke is not sure he has. Sexually potent in bed, the duke is nevertheless passively impotent in his relationships with women outside of bed. His suavity is only the cover-up for his inadequacy. His male passivity masking as male strength dictates the acceptable roles for women and becomes, therefore, covert aggression.

The only effective weapon against unrecognized violence is recognized violence. It is the contemporary meaning of the word DEMONSTRATION . The exposure of the duke's hostile passivity requires the shooting of the apple and the burning of the observatory. VENUS OBSERVED is Fry's demonstration against the duke's attitudes as they appear in society—in us all.

The choice of Paris leading to the burning of Troy provokes astonished pity that passion could cause such devastation. Fry replaces pity with paradox. For Fry both passivity and violence are hostile and wicked, and not to be condoned,yet they are both inevitable in an imperfect world and the only effective methods man has of learning. Marriages—like schools, governments, and all civilized institutions—hold together by means of controlled violence and controlled passivity. On that paradox VENUS OBSERVED rests.

The choice of Paris occurs in a myth about the beginning of things, and the myth itself is one of the oldest treasures of western civilization: nothing but astonished pity to sustain a civilization barely underway. Fry's rehandling occurs at the end of a civilization, and proposes a merry, if paradoxical, future. Why so dismal at the beginning of a civilization and so merry at the end?

Fry's merriment is rooted in the Christian hope, which informs VENUS OBSERVED throughout. One must immediately add that for Fry, hope by definition is not a settled orthodoxy, delivered once and for all. VENUS OBSERVED is not a propaganda piece for Anglican marriage as prescribed by Canterbury. For Fry, the Christian hope and the Christian gospel are always synonymous with exploration, discovery, and openendedness. For Fry the search for who we are is not furthered much by St. Paul's "Wives, be subject to your husbands as to the Lord," so legalistic, prescribed, and inapplicable to twentieth-century mores; the search for who we are is furthered much more by St. Paul's "There is no such thing as Jew and Greek, slave and freeman, male and female; for you are all one person in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28) and by St. John's "Here and now, dear friends, we are God's children; what we shall be has not yet been disclosed, but we know that when it is disclosed, we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is" (I John 3:2). In VENUS OBSERVED, the phrases "no such thing as male and female" and "what we shall be has not yet been disclosed" resonate recognizably.

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For if "male and female" are not our genuine and profoundest identities and if "it is not yet disclosed what we shall be," then surely typing a woman as lover, as wife and mother, or as intellect is certainly not compatible with Christianity's best definition of personhood. Indeed, traditional Christian marriages, with their prescribed and inflexible roles for husbands and wives, come closer to the pagan idea of women, as expressed in the myth of Paris, than to the dynamic of the Christian gospel. That is why the golden apple, that ancient and modern monumental error, must be shattered. Christianity has taken many pagan elements into itself, among them the typing of women, and by institutionalizing them has given them a spurious absolute sanction.

Perpetua, the perpetually renewed person, is Fry's model for Christian womanhood: lover and wife and intellectual companion and withal a chaste woman, having at once a casualness toward and a respect for marriage. Suppose she marries the duke for pragmatic reasons; her marriage will not define her totally. On the other hand, she prefers to marry Edgar for love. The whole woman embodies all such contradictions in patterns which change as life changes.

The fire in the observatory is a demonstration against victimizing women by label, but it also suggests the redemptive fire at the end of time, when Christ will return "from heaven with his mighty angels in blazing fire" (II Thessalonians 1:7). and both fires, the protesting and

the redemptive, are at once desired and dreaded. They are necessary for growth, yet are fearful, even hateful,in their violence. Further, a closely parallel ambivalence is evoked by the concept of passivity. Waiting on the Lord (Psalm 130:6) can be simple laziness; yet without waiting, patience, and openness, no relationship with God is possible. The duke's passivity, as noted above, is aggressive, for his inability to choose, or even to make encouraging and compassionate gestures, forces the women to make ever more self-abnegating bids for his attentions, for his love. Rosabel must become sexier, Jessie more domestic, Hilda more intellectual and companionable—each more hopelessly confined by the role in which she has been cast. The proper sort of passivity, for the duke, would lead him to observe Venus with love rather than with silent demand. In other words, the duke might better let Venus define herself, become herself. Properly observed, the mistresses might, to adapt T. S. Eliot's phrase, be like flowers that have the look of flowers that are looked at.

The ambivalences that attach to violence and passivity may all be subsumed in the central paradox of Christianity: Is God or man the agent of man's redemption? Fry's play is valuable because it treats this question in its more immediate forms and without dogmatism. The play does not force an unequivocal choice between mutually exclusive alternatives. The very word PARADOX implies a merely logical problem while Fry presents a human condition to be lived in all its particularities and uncertainties. Fry may suggest a theological problem but his terms are less recondite, less abstract: PASSIVITY and ACTIVITY carry their resonances of MASCULINITY and FEMINITY and their associations with violence and pacifism, which in turn imply the conflict, so agonizing in our time, between ideal commitment to truth and justice, on the one hand, and the necessary loyalty to institutions, on the other. Such dilemmas are appropriately realized in comedy, for comedy deflates the pretensions of humans before such grand theoretical formulations without making light of the real problems themselves.

A playwright less poised than Fry would make main plot and subplots all move in the same direction. If the main plot holds that the traditional idea of women needs to go, then the subplots must say the same. But at that point art becomes propaganda for a cause and the cause becomes idolatry. Necessary as liberating women is, it is not an absolute necessity. Women are not God.

And so Fry uses his subplots to put the liberation of women into a

broader context. Any woman's search for her identity is part of a still broader search of every person for identity. The subplots deal with the quest for identity and thus support the main plot, but they do not deal specifically with the quest of women to be free. The contrary motion provided by the subplots is typical of Fry's commitment to a cause like women's liberation, even whole-hearted commitment, but not absolute commitment.

One subplot deals with the duke's decadent staff. The duke is so poor he needs to hire help wherever he can get it. Reddleman, the butler, is a lion tamer who lost his nerve through shell-shock during World War II. In battle he is subjected to violent discipline of the sort that he imposed on the lions before. The war is over, and he cannot bring himself to tame lions. Reddleman feels ambiguous about it. "I lost me nerve." (4) is the only way he can articulate the change in himself. He is frustrated.

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Bates, the footman, is an ex-burglar:

He was caught
Red-handed with the silver, and his Grace,
Being short of staff at the time, asked him to stay
And clean it. (8)

The duke's principle is right: substitute positive action for negative. But the duke has mistaken Bates's fondness for silver as his weakness. Actually, Bates is a more complicated thief. He had a pathological fondness for climbing ladders, and had to "rationalize it when he got/To the top" (8) by going through with the theft. Polishing silver is a way of staying out of jail, but it is not exactly what Bates had in mind.

So both Reddleman and Bates are alienated from themselves, frustrated, and on very bad terms with each other. Says Reddleman:

I have to tell your Grace, in all decency
To the footman Bates, who I religiously despise,
If the fellow comes on duty with a bloody nose
'Tis my doing, and long may it bleed. (4)

Says Bates:

But don't lets say anyfing good about

> Captain Fussing Reddleman, lord of the kitchens.
> He can go tame his lions on some uvver poor bastard's
> mug.
> I prefers to keep mine natural. (49)

The syndrome of frustration leading to violence is as strong in Bates and Reddleman as it is in Rosabel and Perpetua. The fire which Rosabel sets is the salvation for both Bates and Reddleman, for they rescue the duke and Perpetua from the burning observatory. Bates can indulge his passion for ladders, and Reddleman recovers his nerve by fighting the flames as though they were lions. "Relax yourself as though you was mink,"says the former mink thief, carrying Perpetua down the ladder (76). "Tossing your mighty manes, roaring yellow murder!/The Captain's not afraid!" cries the lion tamer to the flames (76). The thief and the coward are restored to themselves.

The plot of the servants reinforces several themes of the main plot. Violence is necessary, for apart from Rosabel's arson, neither Reddleman nor Bates would be put together again. But passivity is also necessary. Bates and Reddleman need to wait; nobody could have rushed the arson. Yet passivity may carry its own built-in aggression. The waiting for they-know-not-what is almost too much for the servants to bear, so they are violent with each other. Their violence is pointless, unredemptive, pathetic, funny—but not profoundly comic. Bates and Reddleman become comic figures only when they are integrated by Rosabel's arson.

The main plot is reinforced also by the subplot of the Reedbecks. Dominic's moralism is in fact a habit of placing people in socially approved categories; hence, his very moralism is a variant of the duke's failing. When Dominic discovers that his father has been stealing from the duke, he accuses his father of "unrelieved, wicked cupidity" (8). But Dominic's righteous indignation is provoked by a rather selfish and a very petty concern for public opinion:

> Of course I go down from Cambridge. I couldn't stay there
> When any morning I might wake up and find
> I'd become the son of a convict. (89)

But the duke has known for years of Reedbeck's thefts and has indulged them secretly, since "we were being so happy together" (69). For Dominic's priggishness the duke has a generous and good humored contempt:

My dear conscience-nudging,
Parent-pesting, guilt-corroded child,
If I may address you with so much affection,
The arrangement was perfect. It embarrassed
Neither of us. Take a drink to wash
Your conscience down. (87-88)

In this case, at least, the duke perceives that human relationships have nothing to do with labels or with absolutes: theological, psychological, or moral. A thief is never so ultimately a thief as the label would imply. Dominic must learn this from the duke, just as the duke must learn that women cannot be labeled.

The subplot of the servants and the subplot of the Reedbecks form a context of the search for identity which has nothing specifically to do with women's search for identity. To champion freedom for women, for thieves, and for the shell-shocked is not yet to champion the freedom God has in mind for us. That freedom is not to be confused with any of the lesser freedoms which comprise it. The arrangement of main plot and subplots is so effective because it shows the duke in the process of becoming: having achieved some freedoms, he must achieve more. In the past he learned to be free toward thieves and shell-shocked cowards; now he is learning how to be free toward women. Who shall say how many freedoms the duke has still to acquire? For he is God's child, ever stretching his perspectives and his sensibility, and it is not yet disclosed what he will be.

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The scenes of the play reinforce both the finding and the more-to-be-found. The play alternates between spots: the duke's observatory and a classical pavilion in his garden, "The Temple of the Ancient Virtues." Among the ancient virtues which the temple celebrates is the acceptance by women of their prescribed roles in society. It is a laughable temple, as Reedbeck explains it:

Now this, my dear, called sometimes the Temple
Of the Ancient Virtues, and at other times
The White Temple, both because it is white
And because it was designed by Martin White
In seventeen hundred and ninety-three, was erected
By the third Duke of Altair for his wife Claire
For her use when she played the part of the Delphic
Oracle,

A way she had of informing the Duke of her pregnancy
Which she did on twenty-seven separate occasions. (35-36)

Based on prejudices, on prescribed roles, and on human bondage, the temple nevertheless represents a definite life style. Perhaps it is a life style that deserves to be laughed into a waning, autumnal existence, but what will replace it?

The observatory represents a magnificently expanding universe: discovery, open-endedness, and freedom. But the danger of the observatory is remoteness. At the beginning of the play the duke appreciates his women as he appreciates the stars: remotely. His remoteness freezes his women into roles as irrevocable as the "Temple of Ancient Virtues" ever did. The temple is an ancient error, the telescope a modern one, and Perpetua's Society for the Desecration of Ancient and Modern Monumental Errors must desecrate both as models for human relationships.

But some life-style is necessary. The duke is finally liberated from his remoteness toward women, but just how will his new insight be lived? Rosabel will not be the type to announce her pregnancy disguised as the Delphic Oracle, but will she announce it with such charm? Will Roderic need to be less compulsive about hunting now that Hilda loves him? Will Jessie enroll in the university now that she is liberated? And granted that thieves are never merely thieves, but how is society to cope with thieves? Are prisons to be obsolete?

Open-endedness ought not to mean vagueness. A definite life-style which is to the observatory what the old life-style was to the "Temple of Ancient Virtues" needs to be established. Comic aloofness ought not to mean remoteness. Remoteness toward one's own problems allows for genuine comedy; remoteness from other people's problems alienates a person, not only from those people but from himself. Making the telescope the symbol for remoteness toward self and for involvement with others is necessary if the telescope will be to the new life style what the Georgian pavilion was to the old.

Fry insists as strongly as Germaine Greer that the present life-style, with its unjust relationships between men and women, needs to go. For Germaine Greer, that is the one thing needful. For Fry, as for St. Augustine of Hippo, our souls will be restless until they rest in God. The restlessness between the sexes is only symptomatic of a more basic restlessness. But restlessness is not the same as hopelessness. An important

difference is that restlessness gives endless occasion for laughter. Any laughter is only a temporary respite from the unavoidable restlessness, but laughing with Fry—heartily, with complete awareness, free from bitterness, full of hope—almost makes the restlessness seem worthwhile.

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