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### The Otterbein Miscellany - December 1977

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**Authors**

Sylvia Vance, Paul L. Redditt, William T. Hamilton, Elwyn M. Williams, James Carr, and Norman Chaney

# THE OTTERBEIN MISCELLANY

HOMMAGE à JACQUES PRÉVERT (1900-1977)

James Carr

TOLSTOY AND CHEKHOV: TWO FOXES AS HEDGEHOGS

Norman Chaney

A CHILD'S MAP OF REALITY: USES OF FANTASY  
IN ARTHUR RANSOME'S *SWALLOWS AND AMAZONS*

William T. Hamilton

RIGHT-BRAINED AND LEFT-BRAINED RELIGION:  
AN ESSAY ON THE CONVERGENCE OF RELIGION,  
CULTURE, AND THE HUMAN PSYCHE

Paul L. Redditt

"SERVING IN DIFFICULT TIMES":  
THE INTENDANCY OF NICOLAS LAMOIGNON  
DE BÂVILLE IN LANGUEDOC, 1685-1718

Sylvia Vance

## FOREWORD

The *Otterbein Miscellany* is published once or twice a year as an outlet for faculty writing on a wide variety of topics. The college underwrites this publication in the belief that it will help maintain a genuine community of scholars. Papers are accepted, therefore, on the basis of their interest to the whole academic community rather than to members of a particular discipline. Editorial responsibility rests with a committee of the faculty.

Contributions are considered from the Otterbein College faculty and administration, active and emeritus — others on invitation only.

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## WONDER

Plato says in the dialogue *Thaetetus* that "wonder is the feeling of a philosopher, and philosophy begins in wonder" (155 d). Our English word, "wonder," often carries the connotation of "miracle." In English translations of the Bible, for example, the word frequently carries this meaning. As the writer of Exodus says, "Who is like thee, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like thee, majestic in holiness, terrible in glorious deeds, doing wonders?" (15:11). But for Plato "wonder" does not seem to include a supernatural sense. To grasp what it means for him we might go back to the root of our English word, which in Old English is *wundor*. And this is probably a cognate of the German word, "Wunde" or "wound." So our English word "wonder" might be used to suggest not a miracle, but simply a breach in the membrane of awareness, a sudden opening in a person's system of established and expected meanings, a blow as if one were struck or stunned. For Plato, in short, "wonder" has to do with the awakening of human consciousness.

Plato assumed that wonder was the "feeling of a philosopher" because it was a virtue born in leisure and nurtured in consummatory contemplation. Not all persons who wonder, however, are philosophers. It is the "feeling" of any intuitive person who entertains thoughts and perceptions that press upon him with the demand for completion. Not the least of persons who should nurture the feeling of wonder is the teacher. Such a notion is suggested by the eminent teacher, Huston Smith. He writes:

When I face the preparation of a lecture the sensations that come over me are those of painter rather than scholar. My canvas is the time available for the product, say, the fifty minutes of the class hour. My palette is my desk and memory, daubed with smirches of fact and surmise that bear in some way on the painting's theme. Problem: how to transfer these discrete colors onto the canvas with form, contrast, unity, and shading to produce a masterpiece. This is the challenge. The visceral excitement mixed with equally visceral anxiety. The mix of hope and despair that is our human lot. The retrospective triumph or dejection, with usually a clear sense of where things went wrong. The prospect of redemption through another chance.<sup>1</sup>

The authors of the essays which comprise this edition of *The Otterbein Miscellany* are teachers. The essays themselves are the results of wondering about certain topics which bear upon classroom experience. In perusing them the reader might have a

clearer sense than the authors themselves "where things went wrong." Nevertheless, in offering the essays the authors invite the readers to wonder with them, even beyond them.

This is the thirteenth edition of the *Miscellany*. As the publication increases in longevity so does our appreciation for those persons who make it possible, writers, financial-supporters, editorial board, and proof-readers. We especially thank Margie Shaw, typesetter, and Forest Moreland, printer, whose dedication to their separate tasks is exceptional.

Norman Chaney

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<sup>1</sup> "Two Kinds of Teaching," *Excellence in University Teaching: New Essays*, ed. Thomas H. Buxton and Keith W. Prichard (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1975), p. 211.

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“SERVING IN DIFFICULT TIMES”:  
THE INTENDANCY OF NICOLAS LAMOIGNON DE BÂVILLE  
IN LANGUEDOC, 1685-1718

September, 1685. Southern France – the province of Languedoc, its eastern boundary the Rhone River, route of migrations and trade from time immemorial, on which the most recent major movement had been that of Reform from sixteenth century Calvinist Geneva. Languedoc, where the western reaches of the province climb swiftly into the Cévennes mountains in the north, and move in the south away from the salt marshes along the Mediterranean coast to the higher, somewhat rugged country of Carcassonne, on to Toulouse. Country where the mountains had proved to be a fertile ground for Reform propaganda, the Catholic faith never having quite eliminated the old folklore; from the year 1000 or earlier herdsmen were said to have prophesied from the summit of Mount Lozère. Country of wines, of grain, of silk, of textiles, of salt works and the resulting contraband salt carriers. Transport by night on hill trails of cheap salt to northern France, the area of high salt tax in the crazy quilt pattern of *ancien régime* administrative regulations. Languedoc – country of rebellion, religious and fiscal, sixty or more major and minor ones in the seventeenth century. Country of over one and one-half million people, of whom some 200,000 were *Réformés*. Protestants – in urban areas largely artisans, leather workers, metal workers, textile workers, with some intellectuals, doctors and lawyers included; in rural areas, peasants of the subsistence level agricultural country of the Cévennes, farmers of the somewhat more prosperous lower Languedoc area. Protestants, increasingly deprived of civil rights in this province by the pressures of its Estates, where the twenty-three Catholic bishops and archbishops were solidly entrenched. A Catholic clergy, in the enthusiasm of Counter-Reform, constantly pushing a not unwilling Versailles to an imminent revocation of the Edict of Nantes. Revocation of that charter of toleration of Protestants, which dated from 1598 but had been eroded away throughout the seventeenth century until Louis XIV thought (having been led to believe) he would be cancelling out a dead letter.

September, 1685. A new royal administrative intendant – and with him the monarchical policy of dragonnades – arrived in

Languedoc to replace Henri Daguesseau. Nicolas Lamoignon de Bâville, Parisian born and bred, thirty-seven years old, accompanied the military governor (the duc de Noailles) and the dragoons and fusiliers on their mission to bring about mass conversions through the forced abjuration of the Protestant faith. He had the reputation of an "irresistible missionary"<sup>1</sup> stemming from his recent conversion activity with troops in Poitou; the conversion of Protestants to Catholicism was a part of his commission as a royal intendant. Within a few weeks of his arrival Bâville wrote to the controller general Claude LePelletier at Versailles, "There isn't a parish that hasn't been swept clean."<sup>2</sup> What L. Dermigny calls the "sinister halo" of dragonnades elsewhere had enabled Bâville to proceed quickly in his new area of responsibility.<sup>3</sup> Yet he knew the superficial level of conversions made by fear and force. From the time of his earliest reports as intendant in Languedoc to the controller general at Versailles he frequently used expressions such as "It is now a question of winning over hearts," and called for missionaries, priests, and especially for good *curés* to instruct those who were converted "by a blind obedience to the orders of the King."<sup>4</sup> He understood that this aspect of conversion was a matter for the religious authorities to handle, and did not wish to confuse his role with that of the bishops. His view was that his authority was only involved with public order, not religion in the interior sense. He was repaid for this sensible administrative practice by a charge on the part of many of the bishops of Languedoc that he was settling for a mere surface conversion.

Bâville appraised the "new converts" (as he always called the Protestants) as useful members of the province.<sup>5</sup> Their own self-interest, he said, would lead them to become truly Catholic. His role as intendant was to see to it that quick retribution came to those who attempted to continue the reformed worship which had become illegal in the land. The king's desire for religious unity in his realm could have had no more loyal enforcer than Bâville. So when in the early years of the eighteenth century he was confronted with the Cévennes revolt (the one major rebellion during the long personal reign of Louis XIV) certain unfriendly and "enlightened" elements at Court blamed it on his harshness, and historiography ever since has tended to blame his "brutal" and "repressive" policies for the bitter guerrilla type warfare in the province.

Yet there is a puzzle here; letter after letter in his correspondence with Versailles reveal his efforts to aid the financially hard-pressed province, to soften the sting of punishment of "new

converts” after an example had been made. Bâville himself said in a letter to his brother Chrétien-François de Lamoignon in April 1704 that he had not favored revocation of the Edict of Nantes.<sup>6</sup> But no one could have enforced the king’s law more diligently than he, with the “reward” of a reputation for brutality down through the years. To understand the paradox that Bâville presents to historians we need to understand something about the characteristics of the intendant system under Louis XIV, something of the nature of the administration of Languedoc as a *pays d’Etats* (province with an Estates of its own), and something of the financial pressures of the last half of the reign of Louis XIV as they affected this area.

Bâville, like most of Louis XIV’s intendants, was of a family of high robe nobility with a long tradition of administrative service to the Crown. His was that of the Lamoignon, whose nobility extended back to 1552 and whose roots were in the bourgeoisie of Nivernais. His father, Guillaume I<sup>er</sup> de Lamoignon, was the highly respected *premier président* of the Paris Parlement and had presided with impartiality at Fouquet’s trial. The father’s personal piety, as a *dévot*, was beyond question; his semi-official *Académie* (dating from 1667) was visited regularly by Père Lalemant and by several Jesuits from the Collège de Clermont as well as by Gui Patin and his son and by Pellisson. Boileau-Despréaux was coming to it regularly by 1668, and *Le Lutrin*, his delightful mock-heroic poem, reflects a true incident arbitrated by the *premier président*.

The younger of Guillaume’s two sons, Bâville was present at some of the early meetings of this important weekly discussion group. He was already establishing himself in the world of magistrates. At eighteen he was admitted to the bar in Paris. In normal progression he became a *conseiller* of the Paris Parlement (1670) and later a *maître des requêtes* (1673). In purchasing this latter office, he was making the choice of serving in the administrative hierarchy of the Crown instead of remaining in the courts. He served Turenne in Alsace in an army payment and provisioning capacity in 1674, and became intendant in Montauban, then in Pau and later in Poitou. Capable, industrious, and eloquent, he had absorbed the lessons of Colbert’s policies; his *Mémoires* of 1697-98 and his letters reflected these views.<sup>7</sup> He could have posed for the model of the men described by Vivian Gruder in her *The Royal Provincial Intendants*, whose influence, wealth, and family ties all played their part in a profession where administrative training shaped men devoted to the interests of the Crown.

Roland Mousnier generalizes on the role of the *ancien régime* royal intendant as that of seeing to the satisfaction of the ordinary, routine needs of the public, as contrasted to that of the governor, who was charged with keeping order and taking care of unforeseen events. The intendant represented "administration" in the major divisions known as generalities; he was to see that laws on justice, policing and finance were observed. He was to prevent abuses; he was to give advice in councils held by the governor, and in other ways. He had the right to issue ordinances. He was charged with the feeding, supplying and disciplining of troops. He judged and punished deserters. He presided in city councils and supervised elections. He audited accounts of administrative units within his area; he had the right to call armed force when he deemed it necessary. He was charged with the conversion of Protestants.<sup>8</sup> Typically he chose three or four clerks for correspondence. A local lawyer became his legal officer. He also had a secretary and *sergents* to execute his orders. He commissioned his own *subdélégués* (regional assistants), creating a network of agents in the province.<sup>9</sup> Marcel Marion's overall judgment of the powers of the intendency is that "They are, in truth, unlimited."<sup>10</sup> This is, of course, in theory; there were obviously certain practical limitations, as there were on the king's absolutism.

When we apply these general statements by Mousnier and Marion to Bâville's intendency in Languedoc, several further, particular observations need to be made. First of all, the shaping of policy administration characteristic of Bâville's personal style (as revealed in his letters and other sources) followed consistent principles. He was strongly supportive of the king's authority; this is most clearly revealed in jurisdictional disputes where fiscal matters were concerned. He was strongly supportive of the commercial health of the province, and was concerned as the years went by that the debt-ridden dioceses not be utterly discouraged. He followed the law and expected that others in authority would do so. He believed firmly in making an example of an offender for an offense that had the potential of spreading, thus nipping in the bud possible further trouble whenever he could. In regard to the "new converts" his policy was aimed at not giving any impression that the Edict of Nantes was to be reestablished. Like that of Versailles itself, his policy had a carrot-and-stick flavor; he was severe when disturbances occurred, but then urged a relaxing of restrictions when obedience seemed established.

Secondly, in regard to his relations to the governor, it seems

that after the departure of the duc de Noailles in 1692 the powers of Bâville included in many respects the taking care of what Mousnier calls unforeseen events which might normally have fallen on the governor, though he was never the military commander as the governor would be. The duc du Maine (named governor after Noailles) seems to have seldom, if ever, been in the province. Saint-Simon's saying that Bâville was given complete power in Languedoc so as to keep him there was perhaps in this sense true.<sup>11</sup> What clearly emerges from reading Bâville's letters to the controller general and from other sources is the impression that he was an extremely hard-working administrator. The fact that his alone among the intendants' *mémoires* requested by Beauvillier in 1697 came up with an adequate census<sup>12</sup> would testify to the general high standard of his administrative work.

In the third place, when one considers the average length of intendants' terms, it is obviously exceptional that Bâville stayed so long in Languedoc — from 1685 until 1718. Denied permission to leave the province and come to court in 1700, and again after the Cévennes revolt, Bâville eventually seems to have resigned himself to the "perpetual exile."<sup>13</sup> The reasons for this semi-disgrace are not clear. Armogathe and Joutard suggest that the enmity of Noailles (archbishop of Paris) played a part, and the intrigues of court relative to his situation are explored in their article on the 1698 consultation of bishops. Bâville's deafness (beginning evidently fairly early in life) may well have made him ineligible for a ministry, when his obvious ability and strength as an administrator would have indicated it.

Finally, one last and very important qualification of Bâville's position as an intendant is the fact that Languedoc was a *pays d'Etats* whose Estates possessed financial powers of self-apportionment and self-collection of direct taxes for the royal treasury which were unique among the provinces.<sup>14</sup> It seems appropriate at this point to say two things about the Languedoc Estates. First, its role by the time Bâville came on the scene was largely administrative. The attitude of its presiding officer, the Archbishop of Narbonne (Pierre de Bonzi until 1703) was strongly oriented to support the Crown's policy and requests, and he was an influential and colorful man within the province. Whatever may have been the motivation for Bâville's pressures on him (the results of which were a weakening of Bonzi's influence), it seems not to have been for any lack of support for the King, but for the use of his influence as presiding officer of the Estates to direct lucrative financial arrangements to his sister and at least one of his mistresses.

The second thing which it is necessary to say about the Estates is that in essence they were a bank, as well as a debating society and ceremonial event. The Estates had a system of proportional distribution of tax levies to the dioceses. This proportion could have been changed at any time by the Estates, but it remained the same throughout Bâville's administration (and, in fact, was never changed). Once the amounts of direct taxes were set, the total was divided according to this fixed percentage system. The diocese of Toulouse, including the city, always paid roughly one-tenth of the total; Albi paid one-fourteenth; Narbonne, LePuy and Béziers paid one-fifteenth; Montpellier, Uzès, Mende, one-seventeenth, and so on down the list, according to an old arrangement originally ordered for the *don gratuit* and subsequently extended to all direct taxes. By Bâville's day, this proportion was not in conformity with the wealth of the various dioceses, and grave inequities resulted. Albi and Narbonne had been especially hard hit by crop failures and a high death rate during this period, and yet their proportion of the tax load was not changed.<sup>15</sup> The intendant, as a result, appealed repeatedly to the King (through the controller general) for a rebate for these two dioceses, or a lifting of some part of the tax for a period of time.

Once the apportionment to the dioceses had been made, the financial divisions of each diocese made the distribution to communities who in turn made the distribution to individuals. Collectors of taxes at the community level might be voluntary or forced — often the latter, though they received payment for their services. It is of interest that the treasurer of the Estates, M. de Pennautier from 1654 to 1711, was responsible for the tax receipts imposed by the Estates whether they came in or not, and it was up to him to do something about it (legally, of course — through the *Cour des comptes, aides et finances* at Montpellier) if the money was not forthcoming. The delays in payments from the dioceses were the reason he so often had to make advances from the Estates' "bank" to pay the taxes due from the province.

Before we turn to the role of the intendant in this financial picture, interacting with the Estates, we should perhaps look at the composition of the Estates themselves. The fourth part of chapter three of Bâville's *Mémoires* speaks of the Estates as they existed in his day. Three archbishops and twenty bishops constituted the First Estate; the nobility also had twenty-three representatives — one *comte*, one *vicomte*, and twenty-one barons whom Bâville names. The Third Estate (with votes equal to the first two combined) consisted of mayors, consuls, deputies from

the cities, leaders in the dioceses, etc. The Estates met in the fall of each year; the date they were convened varied in Bâville's day from 31 August to 15 December, with late October or early November being the most common. They met in various places, most frequently in Montpellier. The King called them and the governor or his representative convened the assembly. When the Estates were not in session their presiding officer remained their spokesman, and the syndics remained their agents, acting according to what the Estates had directed them to do.

At this point we are ready to look at the role of the intendant in regard to the Estates. Nothing so far outlined suggests how strong it was, but his letters to and from the controller general in this period and the detail furnished by the records of the Estates reveal that it was a preponderant one. It is appropriate to say that as far as basic support of the King was concerned, the intendant and the Estates were not seriously at odds. There were disagreements, but the Estates in the end were largely obedient to what was requested through Bâville and the royal commissioners. The rhetoric sometimes showed reluctance, but the actions were obedient — and it was to obtain this result that the role of the intendant was so important.

As can be seen from what has been explained above, the intendant obviously shared with the Estates and the *Cour des comptes* many financial powers, through his auditing of accounts, his power to grant extensions, and his role as an arbitrator in jurisdictional disputes. It is useful here to note in some detail, as examples, two occasions where we can see Bâville interacting with the Crown and the provincial Estates in the matter of finances.

During the winter of 1685-86 (his first year in Languedoc) Bâville described the difficulties of the peasants: ". . . many peasants are living at present only on acorns and grass."<sup>16</sup> The alms being distributed at the mission of Alès drew some eight hundred people down from the Cévennes, and Bâville was confident that this part of the King's policy would help keep them from revolt and bring them to the true practice of Catholicism. By August, 1686, Bâville was concerned about the ability of certain hard-pressed communities to pay their taxes and had written to the controller general (LePelletier) to ask which would be better — to let them borrow to pay the *taille* or to grant them a year's extension. The answer (19 August 1686) said that the first expedient was contrary to the need to rid them of their debts; the King was more inclined to grant an extension.<sup>17</sup> The extension

Bâville then granted, directly affecting, of course, the tax levying by the Estates.

On 15 October 1686 Bâville wrote<sup>18</sup> to LePelletier of having been in the Cévennes six days because two officers of the dragoons had been killed breaking up an assembly of "new converts." He had made an example of a gentleman present, who was executed, and of seven others who were hanged. Most of the trouble Bâville blamed on rumors of a league in Germany formed to force the reestablishment of the Edict of Nantes. Punitive measures being required by the Crown, on 18 November 1686 he was reporting<sup>19</sup> that he had just established in the Cévennes winter quarters for royal soldiers at purely local expense. The Estates, meeting in Nîmes, were informed on 29 November 1686 that winter quarters were to be imposed on the whole province, though not at local expense for those communities not in the Cévennes. An outline follows this notice in the record of the Estates, stating what His Majesty will pay and what must be furnished. The record goes on to say that Bâville had told the syndic Joubert that it was possible that the Cévennes area could not pay the whole expense, or that they might be relieved of some or all of it if their good conduct warranted. For this reason Bâville suggested that the Estates should anticipate (in their orders to the syndics) what might need to be done after they adjourned. The syndics were then authorized to borrow up to 67,000 *livres* for those dioceses not in the Cévennes and more if the ones there were spared. Bâville would handle reimbursement and any other adjustments if these latter communities were to be repaid.<sup>20</sup>

This is very interesting, because as early as 15 January 1687 Bâville proposed to the controller general that the "new converts" of the Cévennes be reimbursed. ("I believe . . . that it is very necessary to blend in some softening and some repayment with the severity we've been obliged to take in this area.") The reply of 26 February said that the King thought that all the good effect of winter quartering would be lost if the communities were repaid. The letter continues:

The King has directed me to write to you that in no way does he wish his alms or his charity to appear to be applied to any repayment to those who have suffered because of this [local expense for] winter quartering. Nevertheless, His Majesty has ordered me to send a draft for 20,000 *livres* payable to bearer, to use on your orders as alms within the province of Languedoc, and His Majesty leaves to you the liberty of using whatever you deem appropriate as alms to the poor in the Cévennes.<sup>21</sup>

How can we see in this exchange a "brutal" Bâville? At this early date he seems only very realistically aware of what financial aid might be capable of accomplishing— or financial pressure capable of provoking.

And yet in a certain way Bâville was not at all realistic about the people of the Cévennes, and this was perhaps his major difficulty in understanding the dimensions of the problem he faced with the "new converts." For one thing, as a good Catholic Bâville simply could not accept the validity of any other religion; he always wrote of the "new converts" as if they did not have any religion at all unless it was Catholicism coming to life in them. Neither he nor the bishops seem to have understood the prophetic fervor of the younger generation of the *Réformés*, growing up to resent the denials their fathers had been forced to make. Doubtless both he and the bishops were limited by the tendency of *notables* to consult only other *notables* and the city bourgeoisie. The opinions of the rural masses were not considered, though Bâville had in the line of duty questioned "new converts" from the Cévennes. A sentence from his official *Mémoires* on Languedoc of 1697-98 is very revealing here. In discussing the "new converts" Bâville says that few of the gentlemen have more than 3000 *livres* of income, and none higher than 12,000. "It is easy to see by this detail that there is no one among them who cuts a great figure or who could be the head of a rebellious party."<sup>22</sup> Four years after these lines were written he was faced with a major rebellion of these very people, led by wool carders, a blacksmith, a forester, a shepherd — and Jean Cavalier, that "near Cromwell."<sup>23</sup> What L. Dermigny calls the "intellectual and moral genocide" resulting from the effects of the Revocation in the Cévennes, the overturning of a whole way of life, a whole way of thinking which it implied<sup>24</sup> was simply not comprehensible as such to Bâville. He marveled, as a well educated Catholic, at the religious ignorance of the "new converts" from the mountain communities, commenting that one of them whom he had questioned considered Father, Son, and Holy Spirit three separate gods. But he did not understand — this son of a cultured Parisian family — the fanaticism of those who heard a mysterious singing of psalms in the hills, or the hopes of those who looked for the return of a liberator such as the legendary William of Orange, that medieval hero who was to be (they said) brought back with his army by angels.<sup>25</sup>

As Armogathe and Joutard document in their two articles on Bâville, he had come by 1698 to a certain hardening or intransigency of position in regard to policy toward the "new con-

verts." His view that they must be constrained to attend mass was shared by all but two of the bishops in his province, and later one of those (Colbert de Croissy) came to share his view also. This approach was in line with Bâville's view of the King's authority in regard to public order, though both the Revocation itself and Bâville's position recognized that internal belief was a private matter.

When rebellion came — that rebellion for which many at Court blamed Bâville — what was done? It is of this time that provincial historians speak of such violence as that of young Camisard rebels slaying newborn Catholic babies, or that of the dragoons bearing triumphantly to Bâville on bayonet points thirteen rebel heads, or of the razing by Bâville of ten or so communities in the Cévennes which never saw rebirth.<sup>27</sup> A violent and tragic time, especially when Montrevel headed the King's forces and (as Bâville saw it) flouted the law in attempting to control the situation. The reading of Bâville's correspondence with his brother reveals the depth and the frustrations of Bâville's disagreements with this general. Only with the arrival of Villars (and also of what Armogathe and Joutard call "the hard lesson of reality"<sup>28</sup>) did the intendant and the military commander in the war see eye to eye on the handling of fighting and of negotiations. Villars' testimony is worth noting here: "I believe with the wisest — and M. de Bâville whom I shall always place at the head of them — that the ways of conciliation [*douceur*] were more appropriate to bring them [the rebels] back [to obedience] than violence alone."<sup>29</sup>

And Bâville himself, knowing he was charged by many at Court with responsibility for the uprising, on what did he blame it? Looking back, during the conflict, to its origins, he wrote 25 May 1703 to Jean-Hérauld de Gourville, the elderly diplomat, that here in Languedoc men had been led to revolt by lack of the exercise of religion (as from his point of view the case seemed to be). Administratively he blamed the mistakes of Versailles in limiting the intendants' judicial powers in 1697; when they were restored three years later it was already too late. Another problem was the restriction on available troops at the beginning of the War of the Spanish Succession.<sup>30</sup> One might see here the excuses of a subordinate blaming his inability to carry out policy on lack of means. But the frustrations of Bâville at the difficulties of his position emphasize the real heart of the paradox he represents — the impasse to which the Crown policy of religious unification had led.<sup>31</sup> Indulgence — the Court and Bâville knew — would only encourage more disobedience on the part of the Protestants,

but Versailles (and the intendant) very rightly feared the worst from a policy of too rigorous enforcement of the Revocation in a time when financial pressures from general economic hardship and wartime taxation might activate fiscal rebellion, provoking in turn religious clashes. It seems that precisely because of the necessity for a certain firmness in religious matters (as Bâville saw it) he was especially careful to try to bring any financial relief he could to the hard-pressed province. The breadth of his concern is generously documented in his letters to the controller general.

The efforts which we noted earlier for tax relief for hard-pressed districts continue. The period of the War of the Spanish Succession, which was also the period of the Cévennes revolt and of a series of disastrous crop failures due to bad weather, was an accumulating disaster for the finances of Languedoc. Hampered by wartime restrictions on exporting grain, burdened by ever-increasing taxes and weight of debt, the Estates and Bâville tried to cope with matters and keep the dioceses from being utterly discouraged and the processes of government functioning. For example, by May, 1708 (when the worst winter was yet to come), Bâville was reporting sadly to the controller general that the *présidial* court of Carcassonne was almost unable to function, with only nine officers remaining, and some of them very old. The problem was that the *présidial* owed over 100,000 *livres*. These debts had been contracted on various occasions for the service of the State, and creditors were pressing for payment. Many of the offices in the court had remained unsold for over fifteen years — to buy them would mean financial ruin. The remaining officers wanted the King to give them the vacant charges, and they would make an effort, they said, to find someone to fill them. Bâville did not think this would work, but he did hope somehow to be able to reestablish judicial procedures in Carcassonne.<sup>32</sup>

This sale of offices was, of course, a characteristic policy of the *ancien régime* throughout its existence. During wartime especially it became not simply a means of acquiring public servants but also a money-making device for the Crown, and needless offices were created for the sake of selling them. The Languedoc Estates often were granted the option of buying up these offices, distributing the cost of them as part of the direct tax in the province. They often chose to do this rather than permit the operation of new and encumbering officials. One reason for this is well illustrated by the following incident, involving an office which the Estates, hard-pressed to collect even obligatory taxes, had not chosen to buy up when it was first announced. In

a letter of 6 May 1705 to the controller general Bâville reported that a new tax being collected by the new vehicle inspectors had been causing protests. Peasants who hauled wood, coal, and provisions into the cities from the villages were threatening to stop hauling. The syndics had asked him to write, saying that the Estates would surely buy up the office when they met in the fall, and urging that some kind of delay of the operation of the office be enforced. Bâville described what was going on: "The holder of the office of vehicle inspector had, without my knowledge, begun to establish at city-gates employees of his to collect a *sou per livre* of the value of the vehicles [passing into the city], without distinction as to vehicle use and in a violent and compulsive way."<sup>33</sup> This tax was supposed to be only on vehicles hauling for another party from city to city and from province to province, and not on goods sent by peasants into the cities from the villages.

This burdensome office selling became more and more prevalent as the war wore on, and Bâville and the Estates saw eye to eye on its undesirability. Increasingly unable to invest in buying up these offices (and thus avoiding their encumbrance on trade and industry) the Estates, through Bâville, protested their creation — generally in vain. The letters flowed to Versailles, urging, for example, that an office of textile inspector not be sold (April, 1704), or protesting the proposal to establish a major office of receivers general (24 July 1705). Also scattered through the correspondence are letters such as the one from Bâville urging that the exit duty on Languedoc wine be reduced by one-half to help sales (12 December 1706 — request refused), or that from the controller general Chamillart revealing the Crown's lack of money to pay royal troops in the province, and the urging to Bâville to use any credit he had to get loans from financiers such as Sartre and Bonnier (6 June 1707).

The fiscal extremities to which Crown and province were reduced by the late years of the war brought on much epistolary eloquence from Bâville on behalf of beleaguered Languedoc. He seems by this point to have been genuinely concerned for the survival of provincial governmental institutions, and only partly motivated by his undying passion for order and legality on behalf of the Crown. But they were brutal years; is it any wonder that his long term of intendency would not be pleasantly remembered in Languedoc?

Nor is it any wonder that Bâville himself characterized his intendency as "serving in difficult times" ("*servir dans des*

tems difficiles").<sup>34</sup> This phrase might well serve as his epigraph. Raised in a cultured atmosphere in touch with the Jesuit approach to political problems, this administrative casuist had to confront a most difficult series of practical situations. Supremely loyal to Crown law and authority, it was his fate to have represented it in years of that crisis of European consciousness which began the shaping of Enlightenment. The very exigencies of Revocation enforcement – rational and necessary as they seemed to Bâville, tempered by what he saw as humanitarian considerations – reaped the ultimate harvest of a new "order" and a new mentality he could not foresee.

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#### NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Dom. Cl. Devic and Dom. J. Vaissete, *Histoire générale de Languedoc avec des notes et les pièces justificatives* (15 vols.; Toulouse, 1872-1892), XIII, 555.
- <sup>2</sup> Arthur de Boislisle, ed., *Correspondance des contrôleurs généraux des finances avec les intendants des provinces (1683-1715)* (3 vols.; Paris, 1874-1897), I, Item 207 (19 October 1685). Translation of quoted material from this and other sources in French is by the present author.
- <sup>3</sup> Philippe Wolff, ed., *Histoire du Languedoc* (Toulouse, 1967), p. 361.
- <sup>4</sup> Boislisle, *Correspondance*, I, Item 207.
- <sup>5</sup> "Généralement, tous les nouveaux Convertis sont plus à leur aise, plus laborieux et plus industrieux que les anciens Catholiques." Nicolas Lamoignon de Bâville, *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire du Languedoc* (Amsterdam [=Marseille], 1734), p. 78.
- <sup>6</sup> Jean-Robert Armogathe and Philippe Joutard, "Bâville et la guerre des Camisards," *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine*, XIX (1972), 62.
- <sup>7</sup> "Le commerce des laines est le plus considérable. Il seroit à souhaiter qu'il plût au Roy d'en diminuer les droits, pour augmenter le commerce et les Manufactures. Au reste, je puis dire qu'il n'est plus question de faire de nouveaux Réglemens. Feu Mr. Colbert en a fait de très-beaux, et a épuisé cette matière." Bâville, *Mémoires*, p. 303.
- <sup>8</sup> Roland Mousnier, *Etat et Société en France aux XVII<sup>e</sup> et XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècles: I Le Gouvernement et les corps* (Cours de Sorbonne), (Paris, n.d.), pp. 114-119.
- <sup>9</sup> Bâville had some thirty of these *subdélégués*. Wolff, *Histoire*, p. 356.
- <sup>10</sup> Marcel Marion, *Dictionnaire des institutions de la France aux XVII<sup>e</sup> et XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècles* (New York, 1968; reprint of original edition, Paris, 1923), p. 294.
- <sup>11</sup> Saint-Simon, *Mémoires*, ed., Arthur de Boislisle (41 vols.; Paris, 1879-1928), XI, 8.
- <sup>12</sup> Bertrand Gille, *Les sources statistiques de l'histoire de France des enquêtes du XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle à 1870* (Geneva, 1964), p. 50.
- <sup>13</sup> This phrase is Bâville's in a letter to Esprit Fléchier, bishop of Nîmes (a good friend of Bâville), 23 February 1700. Jean-Robert Armogathe and Philippe Joutard, "Bâville et la consultation des évêques en 1698," *Revue d'histoire et de philosophie religieuses*,

- LII (1972), No. 2, 165.
- 14 It is interesting to note that Fénelon idealized this Estates system in his reform plans. One wonders if he understood how the system operated, for it was not an equitable one, financially, in practice.
  - 15 Louis H. Monin, *Essai sur l'histoire administrative du Languedoc* (Paris, 1884), pp. 46-47.
  - 16 Boislisle, *Correspondance*, I, Item 256.
  - 17 Boislisle, *Correspondance*, I, Item 309.
  - 18 Boislisle, *Correspondance*, I, Item 334.
  - 19 Boislisle, *Correspondance*, I, Item 344.
  - 20 Devic and Vaissete, *Histoire générale*, XIV, columns 1353-1355 (*procès-verbal* of the session of the Estates, 29 November 1686).
  - 21 Boislisle, *Correspondance*, I, Item 379.
  - 22 Bâville, *Mémoires*, p. 77.
  - 23 Wolff, ed., *Histoire du Languedoc*, p. 370. The term used by L. Dermigny, author of the chapter "De la Révocation à la Révolution" is in French "un Cromwell manqué."
  - 24 Wolff, ed., *Histoire du Languedoc*, p. 365.
  - 25 Wolff, ed., *Histoire du Languedoc*, p. 368.
  - 26 Wolff, ed., *Histoire du Languedoc*, pp. 369-370.
  - 27 Wolff, ed., *Histoire du Languedoc*, p. 380.
  - 28 Armogathe and Joutard, "Guerre," p. 54.
  - 29 Le marquis de Vogüé, *Villars d'après sa correspondance et des documents inédits* (Paris, 1888), p. 280.
  - 30 Armogathe and Joutard, "Guerre (Annexe)," p. 71
  - 31 Armogathe and Joutard, "Guerre," p. 61
  - 32 Boislisle, *Correspondance*, III, Item 50. (1 May 1708)
  - 33 Boislisle, *Correspondance*, II, Item 797.
  - 34 Letter to Bishop Fléchier, 26 August 1709, quoted in Armogathe and Joutard, "Guerre," p. 67.

*Paul L. Redditt*

**RIGHT-BRAINED AND LEFT-BRAINED RELIGION:  
AN ESSAY ON THE CONVERGENCE OF RELIGION, CULTURE,  
AND THE HUMAN PSYCHE**

On a recent visit to Washington, D.C., I was impressed by the religious pluralism of our capital, the existence of buildings utilized by diverse religious groups being an indication of this pluralism. My hotel room commanded a distant view of the National Cathedral in its lofty setting, but directly below my window was a "colony" of Sikhs, around the corner was a building displaying the name of the Unification Church, and on the street were young people belonging to the Hare Krishna movement. I was aware, of course, that the Latter Day Saints had opened a new tabernacle in Washington, but I was unaware of the existence of the mosque at the Turkish Embassy until I passed it en route to a party at a friend's house. On that same drive through town I noticed a building dedicated to Scientology. Seeing all this, I remembered that the Deuteronomistic historian of the Old Testament had bemoaned the temples of the foreign gods of King Solomon's wives in his capital (I Kings 11:7-8) and wondered what he would say about ours! This essay is a reflection upon that diversity and what I consider to be one of its causes. In the pages that follow, I intend to describe three seemingly unrelated phenomena selected from that diversity: renewed interest in the occult, the appeal of Eastern religions, and the rise of the method of structural exegesis in biblical studies. Then I will turn to the research of Robert Ornstein and several like-minded psychologists for an insight into the human psyche that may provide part of the explanation of why these varied forms of religious expression are arising. In conclusion, I will assess the implications of the various forms for American Christianity.

For purposes of this essay, the word occult will be used to refer to that whole series of approaches to secret knowledge such as magic, satanism, witchcraft, astrology, and alchemy, which once were more or less widely accepted, but have now been forced underground, largely by Christianity and/or science. In a challenge to religious academe to make these practices the subject of serious academic study, Gary Kessler notes their function in contemporary society. Magic, he tells us, embraces a determinism which contradicts the liberal notion of freedom of choice and labels such optimism as illusion. Second, black magic values evil and destruction. Going further, satanism affirms the exist-

ence and benefits of the personification of supernatural evil. Witchcraft provides one with personal answers which explain why evil occurs to him and not his enemy. Astrology personalizes the universe and establishes relationships between the individual and the cosmic forces surrounding him. Alchemy discerns in natural transformations indications of spiritual metamorphosis.<sup>1</sup>

Kessler repeats the usual conclusion that the occult represents the esoteric side of religion, but he goes on to say that the occult provides a mirror image of the dominant view of reality and values in our country. "To look into the occult is to look into a mirror. A reflection is seen which in all respects except one looks like what we ordinarily see. That exception is reversal. What is right becomes left and what is left becomes right. What is good becomes sinister, and what is sinister becomes good. What is accepted becomes unacceptable and what is unacceptable becomes accepted."<sup>2</sup>

Robert Ellwood helps us fill out part of this reversal. The occultists experiment with different rites and festivals and sometimes use only their imagination to create a secondary world which in time is viewed as the real world. Thus, their religion is cosmic and ahistorical.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, the "cults" of the occult are led by new shamans, each of whose role is to serve as a charismatic center of a cultus, around which a new symbolic cosmos will form itself. With these insights from Kessler and Ellwood in mind, let us now turn to the second form of religious expression with which this essay is concerned, the rise of Eastern religions in the West.

Ellwood offers a valuable distinction between Eastern and Western religion. The former he terms "exemplary" religion and the latter "emissary." The exemplary leader is a founder who is full of the divine, in harmony with the universe. What one learns from him is not so much his teaching, but his technique to repeat his experience. By contrast, the emissary prophet is one who comes as the bearer of a message from God for repentance and obedience individually or collectively. The two types of religion, then, are "those grounded in cosmic wonder and communicated by the exemplary personalities and those grounded in revelation within history and emissary communication."<sup>4</sup> Moreover, the cosmic type of religion is mystic and holistic/monistic sensing the universe to be unlimited, timeless, and the revelatory type is analytic, sequential and in some senses at least dualistic. Eastern religions thus embrace a different worldview than Western religions, a view that is cosmic, holistic and timeless and

reminiscent of the cosmic, ahistorical worldview in the occult. This holistic (as opposed to analytic), synchronic (as opposed to sequential) emphasis also appears in the third phenomenon that I wish to address, the rise in this decade of structural exegesis among biblical scholars in the United States.

Structural exegesis rests upon the foundation of structuralism, a philosophical system associated with such figures as Claude Levi-Strauss, Roman Jakobson, and Roland Barthes. Michael Lane has listed six distinctive properties of structuralism.<sup>5</sup> (1) It is a method whose scope embraces all social phenomena including the social sciences, the humanities, and the fine arts. (2) The method has as its most distinctive feature an emphasis upon wholes, upon totalities. (3) Structuralism seeks its structures below or behind empirical reality. Indeed, it emphasizes the essential oneness or indivisibility of the social phenomena deriving from a given society. (4) The method describes the relationships of a society in terms of binary opposition. It does not argue, however, that the categories are mutually exclusive; it stipulates that binary categories are perceived as mutually exclusive in specific contexts, but may well be complementary. (5) Structural analysis is basically concerned with synchronic rather than diachronic structures. "History is seen as the specific mode of development of a particular system, whose present, or synchronic nature must be fully known before any account can be given of its evolution or diachronic nature. Moreover, the synchronic structure is seen as being constituted or determined not by any historical process, but by the network of existing structural relations. Hence structuralism is rather atemporal than strictly ahistorical."<sup>6</sup> (6) Structuralism replaces causality with laws of transformation. It says that observation can lead one only to say that a given structure is always transformed in a particular manner, not that one factor caused a structure to change.

In the hands of biblical scholars,<sup>7</sup> this philosophy and its method stand in sharp contrast to other methods. All previous methods employed by critical scholars (text criticism, philological study, literary criticism, history of traditions, form criticism, rhetorical criticism, and redaction criticism) play their role in reconstructing what the text meant to its original author and to subsequent authors, editors, and others. That is, the methods are sequential in their emphasis. By contrast, the structural exegete notes that language imposes upon an author certain limitations, ambiguities, and connotations accompanying his words of which he is not specifically conscious and perhaps in which he is not

interested. Discovering the author's meaning is not the object of structural exegesis, though the legitimacy of uncovering that meaning is not denied. Structural exegesis, however, is an attempt at an in-depth, vertical study of the possible meanings of a text, some of which are assumed to be timeless because of man's own inner structures. In short, structural exegesis in biblical studies is a deliberate, self-conscious attempt on the part of a scholarly discipline to supplement its historical, sequential, linear methods with a psychological, holistic, atemporal method of investigation.

We have seen in these three current movements the following phenomena. In the occult we found a reversal of accepted values and views, a left for right mirror image of dominant views displaying a cosmic, personalized, ahistorical worldview. In the rise of popularity of Eastern religions, we have seen the attractiveness of an exemplar rather than an emissary and a holistic rather than a sequential worldview. In the rise of structural exegesis we have seen the conscious attempt of a discipline to supplement sequential analysis with in-depth synchronic means of interpretation. It is now time to ask if there is anything to explain why these diverse movements seem to converge on an atemporal, holistic perspective? I think a partial explanation does lie at hand in the work of Robert Ornstein and a number of other psychologists who study the nature of human consciousness. To their work I now turn.

We need first to remember that the right side of the brain controls the left side of the body and the left side of the brain controls the right side of the body. Ornstein further explains that the two hemispheres of the human brain tend to specialize in different processes, indeed that they seem to exist simultaneously as two semi-independent information-processing units. "The left hemisphere (connected to the right side of the body) is predominantly involved with analytic, logical thinking, especially in verbal and mathematical functions. Its mode of operation is primarily linear. This hemisphere seems to process information sequentially:

If the left hemisphere is specialized for analysis, the right hemisphere (again, remember, connected to the left side of the body) seems specialized for holistic mentation. Its language ability is quite limited. This hemisphere is primarily responsible for our orientation in space, artistic endeavor, crafts, body image, recognition of faces. It processes information more diffusely than does the left hemisphere, and its responsibilities demand a ready integration

of many inputs at once. If the left hemisphere can be termed predominantly analytic and sequential in its operation, then the right hemisphere is more holistic and relational, and more simultaneous in its mode of operation.<sup>8</sup>

This bimodality of the human consciousness, moreover, has basic societal as well as individual ramifications. To put it as simply as I can, a given society tends to emphasize the functions of one side of the brain more than the other.<sup>9</sup> This conclusion has been argued very convincingly by Dorothy Lee, based on her studies of Trobriand Islanders, which she shows to be right-brained and non-linear in contrast to our own left-brained, lineal culture.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, we can surely agree that much Western culture is left-brained in its orientation.<sup>11</sup> We are a people with a mission; that is, we are lineally motivated and see progress and direction in history. Our graduate schools ask for verbal and mathematical scores, both left-brained functions. In fact the decision by the major testing firms to build in a section to measure more creative, right-brained measures made the headlines of many professional education journals during the past year. Our science, of course, is analytical. Even our religion is predominantly left-brained with its emphasis on right belief or doctrine, right conduct and historical (i.e. sequential) revelation.<sup>12</sup> However, individuals are bimodal. That is, there is a psychic pressure towards balanced bimodality on an individual who lives in a culture which overemphasizes the functions of one mode of the brain. I would suggest that psychological pressure is one of the causes for the rise of the three movements we have briefly examined in this essay.

We found that all three movements share to varying degrees a right-brained aversion to Western culture's linear, sequential perspective of time. Both the occult and Eastern religions denigrate analysis as a means of achieving the highest knowledge and instead favor the right-brained function of intuition. Both are also concerned with the shaman or exemplar, who teaches by doing rather than by talking and who attempts to help the novice experience more than comprehend. Both perceive man as a part of a cosmos, a whole vastly greater than himself and impinging upon him in many ways<sup>13</sup> (though I would suppose that impingement is felt more deterministically in the occult than in groups influenced by the East). Arthur Deikman, noting the effects of LSD, speaks of the interest in Eastern religions among its users and concludes that the effect is right-brained. "This orientation toward Eastern mysticism can be understood if Yoga and Zen are viewed as developments of the receptive mode: a perception and cognition that features the blurring of boundaries, the merging of

self and environment, coupled with affective and sensory richness, and marked by a detachment from the object-oriented goals of the action mode."<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, structuralism also posits underlying psychological structures at the preverbal level. I could continue to adduce such examples, but these are sufficient to illustrate my point.

I do not mean to leave the impression that I see no differences in the way these groups develop right-brained functions. The occult does it through elaborate ritual; the Eastern religions tend more toward meditation; the biblical structural exegete never stops analyzing! Moreover, we should note that Eastern thought is not completely right-brained. Ornstein often used the Chinese notion of yin and yang as a paradigm of bimodality.<sup>15</sup> Yet it is only the right-brained tendencies in Eastern Religions like Zen that have caught on in the West, not the elaborate analytical systems of Hinduism and Buddhism. Further, structural exegetes have no far been careful to avoid eliminating historical methods alongside structural exegesis. Nevertheless, the recognition of the bimodality of the human brain and the pressure toward wholeness that it can exert upon individuals in a society that emphasizes one mode does seem to offer at least a partial explanation for religious diversity today.

In conclusion, I come to ask what the implications are for American Christianity of this pressure. In the first place, I would agree with Martin Marty's recently stated opinion that the novelty of Eastern religions is wearing off in the West; enrollment in non-Western religion courses is dropping, newspapers give them less coverage, there are few Americans who have Eastern "roots." Nevertheless, Americans give every impression that they are willing to continue borrowing from the East on large scales.<sup>16</sup>

This raises in the second place a question with which I am more interested. From a Christian point of view should we resist borrowing especially from the occult and Eastern religions as syncretism? Or should we assimilate more of what they are saying? I would respond (employing H. Richard Niebuhr's categories of the relations between Christ and culture) that unless either we assume that Christ is against all culture or that He is uniquely of modern American culture we will assimilate rather than reject; we will consider how rather than debate whether. Historically, of course, there is rich precedent for reinterpreting the Gospel in new cultural dress. As the early Jewish church reformulated its faith and sharpened its theology in the dialogue with Greek

culture, so also we face a time of reinterpreting our faith and clarifying our theology in dialogue with world cultures. Perhaps the model for this dialogue is not Christ above Culture but more Christ and Culture-in Paradox.<sup>17</sup> What I mean by this is that theology must ever remain bifocal with the lower part of the lens ground for discerning the needs and currents of contemporary society and the upper part of the lens ground for distant viewing of Eastern and other concepts which impinge upon us. More and more we will be called upon to hold to two (or more) traditions – Western and Eastern – which do not always agree or make similar demands upon us. Indeed, if we believe that God does not leave himself without witness anywhere, it may well be that Eastern religions and Western philosophies like structuralism will be the new means God uses to transform Western Culture!

Finally, in addition to leading us to borrow, this psychological pressure may (and already has in the case of structuralism) enable us to take more seriously the right-brained elements in our own scripture and traditions. We in fact emphasize the static qualities of God in the Bible; we speak of Being. But the Bible also represents a restless God, change, a process, a dynamic quality, and Western theology has long ignored that side. Process theology may well be only the first in another series of “new theologies”! This pressure may either force or allow us to pay more attention to mysticism within our own tradition.

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#### FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Gary Kessler, “The Place of the Occult in Academic Religious Programs,” *Bulletin of the Council on the Study of Religion*, IV (December, 12-13).

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>3</sup>Robert Ellwood, Jr., *Religious and Spiritual Groups in Modern America* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1973), p. 194.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 194.

<sup>5</sup>Michael Lane, *Introduction to Structuralism* (New York: Basic Books, 1970), pp. 13-17.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 16-17.

<sup>7</sup>See, for example, Daniel Patte, *What Is Structural Exegesis?* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976), especially pp. 1-20 upon which my comments are based.

<sup>8</sup>Robert Ornstein, *The Psychology of Consciousness* (San Francisco: W. H. Freeman, 1972), p. 63. This conclusion raises an interesting question, which I cannot address in this article, namely whether the structures of our brains determine for us our comprehension of reality or whether reality determines how the brain comprehends. That is, is structure a category of the mind or an element of existence?

<sup>9</sup>Robert Ornstein, *The Nature of Human Consciousness* (New York: Viking, 1973), p. 65.

<sup>10</sup>Dorothy Lee, "Codifications of Reality: Lineal and Non-linear" in *The Nature of Human Consciousness*, edited by Robert Ornstein (New York: Viking, 1973), p. 128-142.

<sup>11</sup>Ornstein, *The Nature of Human Consciousness*, pp. xi-xii.

<sup>12</sup>To be sure Christianity and Judaism have had their mystics, but the predominant development of both in the West has been left-brained.

<sup>13</sup>Considerable research collected by Ornstein sounds very occult in orientation and conclusions. I will report this research, but I have formed no opinion about it. For example, several psychologists working in the general area of biofeedback have concluded that the human body is affected by geographical variations such as gravity, the ionization of air, and the turning of the earth on its axis with its day/night, light/dark alterations. (See *The Nature of Human Consciousness*, pp. 15-16.) Gay Luce has argued that the magnetic field of the earth also seems to affect us (p. 442). That is, there are cosmic forces surrounding the individual and affecting him, though these sources of energy produce highly subtle influences. Ornstein himself, commenting (p. 316) on a speculative article by Carl Gustav Jung, suggests that these forces are linked with a view of time outside the normal linear made of science (Jung calls it synchronistic, i.e. it takes chance into account thus disrupting precise measure), which Ornstein links to the simultaneous processing of the right hemisphere.

<sup>14</sup>Arthur J. Deikman, "Bimodal Consciousness," in *The Nature of Human Consciousness*, edited by Robert Ornstein (New York: Viking, 1973), p. 81.

<sup>15</sup>It is interesting to note that the great Chinese historian of philosophy Fung Yu-Lan argued for a complementary, almost bimodal relationship between Chinese yin and yang thinking and Western dialectical thinking! See *A Short History of Chinese Philosophy*, edited by Derk Bodde (New York: Free Press, 1948), p. 342.

<sup>16</sup>Martin E. Marty, *Context*, (July, 1977), pp. 4-5.

<sup>17</sup>I am aware, of course, that Niebuhr does not single out one of his types as the best model for the church to follow. I am merely suggesting that two of his categories — Christ and Culture is Paradox and Christ the Transformer of Culture — together may partially illuminate the value of Eastern religions for my question.

William T. Hamilton

## A CHILD'S MAP OF REALITY: USES OF FANTASY IN ARTHUR RANSOME'S *SWALLOWS AND AMAZONS*

I'm not sure when I started playing with maps: dreaming over real ones in atlases and drawing my own of imaginary, usually hostile kingdoms and republics, whose borders always had to be drawn in pencil to allow for the vicissitudes of war. I seem to recall that, for the purposes of childish reverie, the real maps and the ones I drew for myself served equally well, though the time came when other people's maps — Tolkein's fantastic ones and the kind that made Alan Moorehead and Samuel Eliot Morison the best of all possible biographers — served my needs better than the crude ones I made for myself on odd bits of paper.

There came a time, in other words, when I was willing to hand over more of my imagination to others, when, to put the best face on it, I felt comfortable enough with a shared adult view of reality to abandon my attempts to create my own. To paraphrase Thomas Hardy, one acquires a certain sophistication with one's ruin: sophistication like the knowledge that Brontë children were cartographers of their own fantastic kingdoms and made more of the creative forces thus unleashed than I ever would, and that Tolkein's mountain ranges were more convincing than my own.<sup>1</sup> Perhaps there was also the sense that the maps Columbus and Captain Cook made and that others corrected encompassed all the kingdoms I'd have time to think about.

As I say, I don't know when I started to play with maps, but one early influence on the game was Arthur Ransome (1884-1967). Ransome was an English essayist and war correspondent who turned in middle age to writing for children.<sup>2</sup> The dozen novels he wrote in the *Swallows and Amazons* series, like most successful children's fiction, show that Ransome understood the Romantic discovery that, for the imagination of both the child and the poet, reality is less fixed in meaning than in the ordinary adult "understanding." His books make powerful use of the child's and the author's ability to fantasize, but what made these books particularly attractive to me, and apparently to thousands of other American and British children in the same era, was the special kind of fantasy Ransome invited his young readers to share. It was a kind of fantasy derived from his profound understanding of children's play, in which children do not escape from reality so much as learn to participate in its creation.

Though Ransome wrote a dozen books in the series, each of them splendid enough in recollection and rereading for me to want to dwell on far longer than I could expect an adult reader to sit still for, I'll confine myself largely to the first of them, *Swallows and Amazons*. It is set in the English Lake District and concerns the adventures of six children, the Walkers, including John, Susan, Titty, and Roger, and the Blackett girls, Peggy and Nancy. The Walkers are the "Swallows" and the Blacketts the "Amazons," each group taking its name from its sailing dinghy. The book derives much of its interest from Ransome's sense of the relationship between a child's fantasy and the real world in which it functions. The book has a realistic base: it is set in a real place and a considerable part of it is devoted to information about the landscape, about fishing and sailing, farming and the esoteric local industry of charcoalburning.

And yet, there is a considerable amount of fantasy throughout the book. What distinguishes *Swallows and Amazons* and the other novels in the series from most fantasy literature is Ransome's understanding that, while the adult may fantasize as an escape from reality, the child often does so as a means of understanding reality through participating in its creation, and making it his own. As the Walkers set off on their trip to the as-yet-unnamed island in the lake, John says, "We ought to have a chart of some kind. It'll probably be all wrong, and it won't have the right names. We'll make our own names of course."<sup>3</sup> The adult map in the local guidebook is inadequate for the fantasy they are about to embark on: John has established for himself and his siblings the right to provide their own map of local reality, thus giving their fantasy a tangible shape.

The children, of course, "know" where they are: on a small lake in the North of England. They are able however, to treat this fact with considerable flexibility. They are not only children on a summer holiday: they are also readers of history and adventure books. They spend some of their time as explorers, shipwrecked sailors, and, in the case of Susan, as nurse, first mate, and cook for a large family. Thus, where they are can be adjusted to who they are at a given moment in their imagination.

The adult world, we grownups seem to agree, must be baffling to a child. Parents and other adults are clearly related to children in some way, yet they have a kind of otherness about them which is puzzling when it isn't actually frightening. If nothing else, there is the problem of size: adults tend to spoil the fantasy simply by not fitting in scale. The first solution to this problem

for the Swallows and Amazons is to formalize the difference by labelling all of the adults "natives." It is not then surprising that "natives" have peculiar attitudes and customs, even at times a foreign language.

However, simply calling the adults natives and their principal village Rio is not an adequate response for these children. The adults are too important for that: they are the source of food, pocket money and, more crucially, approval. If these children share with their author a sense of fantasy, they also share a view of reality and a standard of responsibility with their parents and other adults. John Walker, one of the most active architects of the fantasy, is particularly aware of the need to keep reality in mind. Early in their stay on the island, the Swallows see a sailboat, rather like their own but flying the skull-and-crossbones. They chase these pirates (who will eventually become their new friends, the Amazons) for a whole afternoon without making contact. "The next morning, John woke not very happy. Yesterday seemed unreal and wasted. Those pirates, the gun in Houseboat Bay, the chase up the Lake to Rio were a sort of dream. He woke in ordinary life. Well, he thought, one could hardly expect that sort of thing to last, and it was almost a pity it had begun. After all, even if there were no pirates, the island was real enough and so was *Swallow*. He could do without the pirates." (p. 104)

A few minutes later, John is in the shallow water by the island, fantasizing about being carried away by seagulls. As he moves in and out of the realms of play, he always keeps in touch with real things: the boat, the island, and himself.

The adult world not only imposes an occasional dampening effect on fantastic elements like pirates; it also makes moral demands on the children. Even in the midst of play, knowledge of a "native" code exacts from the Walker children a sense of responsibility. For Ransome one of the functions of childhood fantasy is moral development. Such development is clearly taking place in one of the major strands in the plot, the relations between the Swallows and the Amazons and the Blackett girls' Uncle Jim. The conflict in these relations is eventually resolved by drawing Uncle Jim, under his more amenable name of Captain Flint, into the fantasy world of the children. Significantly, Captain Flint joins children only after they have demonstrated adult virtues of responsibility, courage and persistence. These virtues spring directly from their play: the roles the children, particularly Titty, have developed in their fantasy enable them to triumph in adult ethical terms.

Like Arthur Ransome, Uncle Jim Turner has spent much of his life travelling. The previous summer, he had returned to the Lake District to settle down, bought the *Amazon* for his nieces and spent the summer sailing with them and providing them with a substitute for their father, who was killed in World War I. He had a parrot and a houseboat with a cannon and was, during the first summer, the best of all possible uncles. When he returns during the summer of *Swallows and Amazons*, however, he is finishing a book and has no time to play with his nieces and their new friends. He has in fact forbidden the distracting children to set foot on his houseboat, and they have declared a war of mischief on him.

Inadvertently, the Swallows get involved in the quarrel between Nancy and Peggy and their Uncle. The Amazons set off a firecracker on the roof of the houseboat, which starts a small but destructive fire. When Uncle Jim comes on deck, the *Amazon* has disappeared round a promontory, and the boat he sees is the *Swallow* with John at the tiller. He assumes that this unknown boy has set the fire. At this point, John does not know the connection between the pirates and the bald man of the houseboat, and he is disturbed by the coolness of some of the "natives" towards the Walker children as the story of this vandalism spreads.

At this point, the atmosphere of the novel becomes somewhat more threatening. The children have a strong sense of their involvement in a community that includes the adults of the neighborhood. As Ransome puts it in the characteristic language of this novel, "Natives . . . were useful in a way, but sometimes a bother. They all held together, a huge network of gossip and scouting, through the meshes of which it was difficult for explorers and pirates to slip." (p. 261). In the episode of Uncle Jim's book, the Swallows and Amazons become a part of this network, which becomes less threatening to them as they come to share the responsibilities of the community.

One day the Swallows go ashore in the fells surrounding the lake, to visit the "Billies," two very old charcoal burners who carry on their ancient craft in a setting deep in the forest. They are ideal "natives." They live in a hut that looks very much like an Indian tepee; the younger Billy keeps a pet adder in a cigar box, and Susan learns from the charcoal burning process how to bank a fire with dirt so that it will keep burning all night, a useful skill for a camp cook. The modern middle-class Walker children (and of course their readers) learn something of a totally

different way of life: one of the minor glories of the whole series is the way in which it expands the young reader's social knowledge. The charcoal burners are contented in the same kind of outdoor environment the children are living in, and they give the Walkers experience in dealing with adults without the help of their parents. They also provide some important information for the advancement of the plot. Young Billy tells them to ask the Amazons to warn their uncle to padlock his houseboat because there are burglars about.

When the Swallows return to their camp on the island after this ominous warning, they find that they have received an ultimatum from Uncle Jim himself. He has written them a note, telling them they "had jolly well better leave my houseboat alone." John takes both warnings seriously. He visits the houseboat, both to attempt to set the record straight about his supposed vandalism and to warn Uncle Jim. John thinks the threat of theft is too important to leave to the Amazons to pass on to their uncle. He is not confident that they can rise above their play war with their uncle to relay this serious adult concern.

When John rows to the houseboat and tells Uncle Jim that the Swallows have never been near it, Uncle Jim calls him a liar. John is unable to relay the warning from the Billies. John, who considers himself an honorable young man, the son of a British naval officer and so on, is devastated by this personal attack. His younger sister, Titty, responding in terms of their fantasy, proposes that they sink the houseboat. She is not yet aware that this problem cannot be solved strictly on the level of play. It is, however, Titty herself who will perform the most significant actions to resolve the conflict, and those actions will stem from the roles she has created for herself in their communal fantasy.

Rebuffed in their attempt to warn Uncle Jim of the possible burglary of his houseboat, the Walker children return to their games with Uncle Jim's nieces. They have agreed to a mock war, in which the Swallows and Amazons will attempt to capture each other's boat, the winning captain to be commodore of the little fleet for the rest of the summer. The Swallow's plan, which is eventually victorious, is one of the most exciting, elegantly contrived strands in the novel. Its success involves Titty remaining along on the island until she gets the chance to seize the Amazon and hide in it, by herself, for the night until the Blackett girls surrender the next morning. Her vigil, first on the island and then in the little dinghy, gives Ransome the opportunity to develop the important relationship between childhood fantasy and

adult ethical conduct. The virtue Titty is unconsciously learning is self-reliance. The main obstacle, at first, is loneliness; though she has volunteered to stay and man the lights her ship-mates will need to return in the dark, she has to combat her childish fears of being alone. Later, an even more powerful obstacle will present itself: the failure of both the other children and the adults to support her in her determination to recover the stolen manuscript of Uncle Jim's book.

Uncle Jim's houseboat is burglarized during the night Titty spends alone. She has gone from the island, where she has alternately pretended to be a lighthousekeeper and Robinson Crusoe, to an anchorage off a small rock island, and finally fallen asleep, only to be half awakened by the sounds of two men talking and digging in the rocks. The noises frighten her, but in the morning she thinks she may have been dreaming.

The next day Titty returns to Wild Cat Island to find that she is the hero of the "war." The Blackett girls have surrendered, and her brother John is the commodore of the fleet. In the excitement of the morning, filled with plans for the rest of the holiday, in which Nancy and Peggy will come to camp on the island, the news comes that Jim Turner's houseboat has been ransacked and a large sea chart with the manuscript is missing. The Amazons confess that they were the ones who set off the firecrackers on the roof, and Uncle Jim nobly apologizes to John. He further concludes that he has wasted precious time on the book — time that could have been spent with his nieces and their new friends.

As it turns out, Captain Flint has given up on his stolen manuscript too easily. While the others go off on a fishing expedition, Titty gets her younger brother Roger to return to the little rocky islet where she heard the night noises. They have been promised a reward if they find the sea chest, and they enter the fantasy of being treasure-seekers eagerly. The chest proves difficult to find, and twice during the day the others invite Titty and Roger to drop the search and come fishing with them. But Titty has attained a great deal of self-confidence from her night alone, and she persists in the quest in spite of the blandishments of the others. Further, she has developed some leadership and is able to keep her younger brother Roger at the task. The two finally find the chest and the manuscript becomes a bestseller. Titty receives Captain Flint's parrot as her reward, and Roger is given a pet monkey. Trained in the adult virtues of self-reliance, persistence and leadership by the fantasy of the summer, Titty proves herself in the moral terms that must regulate her adult

life. By entering the fantasy of being a treasurehunter, she has become one.

The greatest treasure Titty has found for the children is the companionship of Captain Flint. Though he remains in some respects an adult, a "native," he has been absorbed into the fantasy of the summer as fully as have the lake and its islands. His relationship with the children is a crucial one, both in the remainder of this novel and in most of the other books in the series. He is of course in one sense a father figure, substituting both for the Blackett's dead parent and for Captain Walker, who is away in the Navy and seldom appears in person in these novels. But to call him a substitute father does not adequately describe his role: he is a "father" the children themselves elect and define in their own terms. He is a much less remote, worshipped and feared figure than Captain Walker, whose main role in *Swallows and Amazons* is to give his permission, by telegram, for the island camping in these terms: BETTER DROWNED THAN DUFFERS IF NOT DUFFERS WON'T DROWN." (p. 16) That message is accepted by the Walker children and their mother as half humorous, but it implies a stringent code in which small errors may be quickly punished. Captain Flint is more forgiving, as Captain Walker might be in person. In the second novel in the series, *Swallowdale*, when John makes a bad mistake and runs his boat against a rock, Captain Flint puts the blunder in perspective. When John tells him he hates himself for being a duffer, Captain Flint responds, "I wouldn't mind betting you've been just as much of a duffer lots of times before when nothing's happened. We're all duffers sometimes, but it's only now and then that we get found out."<sup>4</sup>

Captain Flint not only knows how to repair the bows of a damaged dinghy; he is childlike enough to enter into the children's fantasy enthusiastically. In effect, Captain Flint plays the same role for the children in the series that Arthur Ransome plays for the child reader: both are adults who are able to encourage children to participate in the creation of their own reality. Because Ransome does not end the story of the burglary with the recovery of the manuscript: something must be done about the burglars. Captain Flint decides to "frighten them off burglary for the rest of their lives." (p. 336) Titty remembers that the men had said "we'll come fishing and catch something worth having." Captain Flint resolves that this prediction will be accurate. He carves a fish out of a piece of driftwood, with the message "Honesty is the best policy," and leaves it where the burglars will find it when they return for the trunk.

It seems to me that the adult world here adopts values from the child world of fantasy. The idea that a burglar can be reformed into something else echoes the fantasy system in which a young girl can become an explorer, a lighthousekeeper, or Robinson Crusoe. The burglars are thus absorbed into a game they didn't know they were playing, and the children are confirmed, at least for the time being, in their conviction that even the most threatening kind of adult reality — the existence of evil — can be transformed into something more benign. The psychological accuracy of the children's map of reality is thus verified.

The value of creating both a physical world and a moral world through the rich fantasy of childhood play is thereby confirmed. The children, both the characters of the novel and the readers, discover that the real world is within their imaginative and intellectual control, that it is not merely a given that they must adapt themselves to. The world of Arthur Ransome's novels is not one in which fate triumphs over free will. One can have an impact on one's environment; how one chooses to behave is significant.

Throughout the series, this philosophy is important. Imagination is crucial, because the way we define the world makes a difference in our conduct, and good conduct accomplishes things. The children learn a series of virtues in these books: they learn a proper esthetic response to the British landscape, a tolerance and affection for people like the charcoal burners who are different from themselves, and a respect for the tackle and gear of a sailboat and a camp kitchen. They learn, most of all, a confidence in their physical and mental abilities; this applies equally to the boys and the girls in the series. Further the children demonstrate a kind of imaginative appreciation of life and its joys and challenges.

Much of this learning comes from the rich fantasy of their summer holiday, a fantasy that is based on reality but not controlled by it. In *Swallows and Amazons*, Arthur Ransome shows how some bright children draw a map of the world in which they live. Behind their map is a secret that adults tend to forget: the true power of a map (or a book, for that matter) is its ability to exert an arbitrary, imaginative control, not over a fixed reality, but over a fluid one that can be made to correspond to the delights and terrors of our own minds. On that map, the Walkers and the Blacketts put themselves in the varying roles they find themselves able to fill, and thus they not only discover but begin to create their own adult selves. I don't make maps myself

anymore, but I return to those books often, always with the secret satisfaction that even an adult road map might not "have the right names on it" and that I could still, if I wished, put in my own.

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#### REFERENCES

<sup>1</sup>I am indebted to my student, Joan Rank, for reminding me of this aspect of the Brontës' childhood.

<sup>2</sup>Ransome's posthumous *Autobiography* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1976), has all of the narrative attraction of his children's books. He had an inside view of Bohemian London in the first years of the century and was something more than a passive observer of the Russian Revolution. The book is also a charming, insightful view of the career of a professional writer of considerable versatility.

<sup>3</sup>*Swallows and Amazons* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1930), p. 33. Subsequent page references are to this edition.

<sup>4</sup>*Swallowdale*, (London: Jonathan Cape, 1931), p. 109.

## SPRING BEING

Noiselessly creeping into being, the welcome season tiptoes  
through March days, carefully avoiding a premature presence  
in the midst of obvious coldness and tenacious snow ...

A wee patch of green intrudes upon the receding snowline ...  
a fresh shoot pokes through the winter crust ...

Presumptuous winds test the mood of change which  
lies incipient in the increasing hours.

Quietly persistent, the inevitable transition begins so slowly  
that we are caught unaware of the magnitude of minute changes  
which pass unnoticed by senses attuned to greater and  
more decibel happenings.

So marches the inexorable drama of spring stirring  
within the rebirth of our own being.

Have we not sensed our need, or established our framework of values  
which accepts each day for its momentary truth?

Sensitize us to the awesome meaning of imperceptible growth.  
Stir within us that longing for change within which  
recreates our mortality in integrated wholeness.

Shake our spirits with the visual promise of warmer days.

Shape us anew in recognition of the constant eternities  
which surround and lift us.

Sing within us the music of spring in response to  
the budding world.

So may we find our way from season to season in  
an unending quest for being and beauty.

*Elwyn M. Williams*

James Carr

## HOMMAGE à JACQUES PRÉVERT (1900-1977)

“ . . . et vous écrivez votre nom dans un coin du tableau.”

Jacques Prévert has written his name in the corner of life's portrait. April 11, 1977 marked the completion of the final tableau of a man who excelled in portraying his fellowman. His mixture of humor, satire, and pathos, sprinkled with a soupçon of sarcasm and/or tenderness, gives his poetry a visual quality, nuanced with a touch of obscurity which envelops his characters and themes with a magical halo.

His brief association with the Surrealists of the 1920s no doubt accounts for his poetic uniqueness and left its slight, but indelible, imprint upon his life-style and his works. It was not until the 1930s that he began to do some professional writing: film scenarios. By the mid-forties he was devoting himself full-time as a screenplay writer, and his co-laboring with Marcel Carne (film producer) created numerous cinema successes. He also delved into songwriting and was a success in this field of endeavor. But for the most part Prévert will be revered and remembered for his poetry. For quite a few years he merely jotted down his lines, circulated them among friends, and published isolated pieces in various French periodicals. It was not until his later years (1946-72) that he reached a general reading public with his several collections: *Paroles* (Words), *Histoires* (Stories), *La pluie et le beau temps* (Rain and Fair Weather), *Choses et autres* (Some Things and Others), *Spectacle* (The Show), *Arbres* (Trees).

To acquaint the American reader with Prévert, I have chosen a few representative pieces from *Paroles*, accompanying them with brief commentary. I have also proposed an English translation in a “dual language” format. Prévert excelled in the short, pithy form of writing and only rarely produced lengthy works. As a writer, he made his point, clarified his stand, and moved on to his next poem.

Bon appétit!

No sensitive reader can finish *Barbara* without feeling the

warmth, then the coldness; the tenderness, then the violence of the scene:

Rappelle-toi Barbara	Remember Barbara
Il pleuvait sans cesse sur Brest ce jour-là	It was pouring down rain on Brest that day
Et tu marchais souriante	And you were walking smiling
Epanouie ravie ruisselante	Joyful delightful dripping wet
Sous la pluie	In the rain
Rappelle-toi Barbara	Remember Barbara
Il pleuvait sans cesse sur Brest	It was pouring on Brest
Et je t'ai croisée rue de Siam	And I met you on Siam street
Tu souriais	You were smiling
Et moi je souriais de même	And I was smiling too
Rappelle-toi Barbara	Remember Barbara
Toi que je ne connaissais pas	I didn't know you
Toi qui ne me connaissais pas	You didn't know me
Rappelle-toi	Remember
Rappelle-toi quand même ce jour-là	Anyhow remember that day
N'oublie pas	Don't forget
Un homme sous un porche s'abritait	A man was standing in a doorway
Et il a crié ton nom	And he shouted your name
Barbara	Barbara
Et tu as couru vers lui sous la pluie	And you ran toward him in the rain
Ruisselante ravie épanouie	Dripping delightful joyful
Et tu t'es jetée dans ses bras	And you threw yourself in his arms
Rappelle-toi cela Barbara	Remember that Barbara
Et ne m'en veux pas si je te tutoie	And don't scold me if I call you "tu"
Je dis tu à tous ceux que j'aime	I say "tu" to everyone I love
Même si je ne les ai vus qu'une seule fois	Even if I've seen them only once
Je dis tu à tous ceux qui s'aiment	I say "tu" to everyone who is in love
Même si je ne les connais pas	Even if I don't know them
Rappelle-toi Barbara	Remember Barbara
N'oublie pas	Don't forget
Cette pluie sage et heureuse	This gentle and happy rain
Sur ton visage heureux	On your happy face
Sur cette ville heureuse	On this happy city
Cette pluie sur la mer	This rain on the sea
Sur l'arsenal	On the armory
Sur le bateau d'Ouessant	On the boat from Ouessant
Oh Barbara	Oh Barbara
Quelle connerie la guerre	What a mess war is
Qu'es-tu devenue maintenant	What's become of you now
Sous cette pluie de fer	In this downpour of iron
De feu d'acier de sang	Of fire of steel of blood
Et celui qui te serrait dans ses bras	And the one who was holding you in his arms
Amoureusement	Lovingly
Est-il mort disparu ou bien encore vivant	Has he died disappeared or still living
Oh Barbara	Oh Barbara
Il pleut sans cesse sur Brest	It's still raining on Brest
Comme il pleuvait avant	As it was before
Mais ce n'est plus pareil et tout est abîmé	But it's not the same and everything is destroyed
C'est une pluie de deuil terrible et désolée	It's a rain of terrible and desolate sorrow
Ce n'est même plus l'orage	It's no longer the storm

De fer d'acier de sang  
 Tout simplement des nuages  
 Qui crèvent comme des chiens  
 Des chiens qui disparaissent  
 Au fil de l'eau sur Brest  
 Et vont pourrir au loin  
 Au loin très loin de Brest  
 Dont il ne reste rien.

Of iron of steel of blood  
 But simply one of clouds  
 Which collapse like dogs  
 Dogs which disappear  
 In the downpour over Brest  
 And go to rot far away  
 Far Far away from Brest  
 And nothing remains of them.

This coastal city of Brest was a heavily fortified submarine base of the Nazi regime during the 1940-44 Occupation and underwent devastating bombardment in WW II. Prévert's sudden switching from happiness and gentle rain to sorrow and violence is noticeable. He became one of the post-war spokesmen of the French and their inner feelings about the disasters suffered during the Occupation years and the subsequent liberation battles. The reconstruction of many bombed-out northern French cities carried on into the 60s and most of them lost their pre-war characteristics of medieval quaintness and tranquil living. In many instances blocky, austere, high-rise apartment buildings rose from the ruins on government subsidies and stood as immediate solutions to the housing crisis. Many of the French still lament the fact that the modern architectural replacements will never attain the stature of the former structures which collapsed. Under American attack and German retreat they disappeared.

Family unity and its posterity also underwent stringent circumstances. Prévert never overlooked the everyday effect of war, the doleful atmosphere of his occupied France, the monotony and grief of daily life. These themes and tones are expressed poignantly in *Familiale*; doubly so, if one is aware of French phonology. The repetition of the phonetic sound [er] (English "air") dominates the entire piece: mère, guerre, père, affaires, cimetière. These five words appear a total of thirty-four times in this one hundred seventy-one word piece. A critical analysis would normally dismiss such composition as trite. And rightly so. But in this instance, this is the very point of Prévert's lines. He conveys his feelings effectively by means of a harmonious blend of sound and content:

*Familiale*

La mère fait du tricot  
 Le fils fait la guerre  
 Elle trouve ça tout naturel la mère  
 Et le père qu'est-ce qu'il fait le père?  
 Il fait des affaires  
 Sa femme fait du tricot

*Of the family*

The mother is knitting  
 The son is off to war  
 The mother finds that quite natural  
 And the father what's the father doing?  
 He is in business  
 His wife is knitting

Son fils la guerre  
 Lui des affaires  
 Il trouve ça tout naturel le père  
 Et le fils et le fils  
 Qu'est-ce qu'il trouve le fils?  
 Il ne trouve rien absolument rien le fil  
 Le fils sa mère fait du tricot son père  
 des affaires lui la guerre  
 Quand il aura fini la guerre  
 Il fera des affaires avec son père  
 La guerre continue la mère continue  
 elle tricote  
 Le père continue il fait des affaires  
 Le fils est tué il ne continue plus  
 Le père et la mère vont au cimetière  
 Ils trouvent ça naturel le père  
 et la mère  
 La vie continue la vie avec le tricot  
 la guerre les affaires  
 Les affaires la guerre le tricot  
 la guerre  
 Les affaires les affaires et les affaire  
 La vie avec le cimetière.

His son off to war  
 He is in business  
 The father finds that quite natural  
 And the son and the son  
 What does he find?  
 He finds absolutely nothing the son  
 The son his mother knitting his father  
 in business he at war  
 When he finishes with the war  
 He will go into business with his father  
 The war goes on the mother goes on  
 knitting  
 The father goes on doing business  
 The son is killed he doesn't go on  
 The father and mother go to the cemetery  
 They find that quite natural the father  
 and mother  
 Life goes on life with knitting  
 the war the business  
 Business war knitting  
 war  
 Business business business  
 Life with the cemetery.

We have said nothing yet of Prévert's preference for little or no punctuation. This style rarely leads to confusion and/or obscurity in Prévert. At times he seems whimsically to insert a period or question mark, but more often than not he simply attaches the final period and uses capital letters to begin each verse.

Prévert never hesitates to use an old metaphor, an overworked pun, or alliteration. But he offers up these "creations" unencumbered by flowery description or lengthy narration. His verses flow naturally in a conversational style, a matter-of-fact tone. If rhyme occurs, it may be sustained for a few lines and then fade. But the rhythm of the whole does not suffer. The rhyming is never forced, artificial, it is there; artfully magically. Prévert's free verse is free, not only from forms and rules, but also virtually free from obscurity.

Many of his French predecessors wrote of feminine beauty, love, and the passing into oblivion of both. François Villon (15th century) bemoaned the fact that life, love, beauty all pass to some great beyond: "Mais où sont les neiges d'antan?" (Where are the snows of yesteryear?). The Prince of Poets, Pierre Ronsard (16th century) stated his philosophy thus: "... une telle fleur ne dure/ Que du matin jusques au soir!" (... such a flower only lasts from morning until evening). The immortal Baudelaire regretted the passing of time (aging) and rather

bitterly proclaimed:

- - - O douleur! O douleur! Le Temps mange la vie,  
Et l'obscur Ennemi qui nous ronge le coeur,  
Du sang que nous perdons croit et se fortifie!

- - - Oh! what sorrow! Time devours our life  
And this dark Enemy who gnaws at our heart  
Grows and becomes stronger on the blood we lose!

(from "L'Ennemi," *The Flowers of Evil*)

The inevitable tomb awaits us all and Prévert expresses the same concern, regret over the passing of all that is beautiful and lovable, seasoned with a bit of anger and pessimism.

*Le bouquet*

Que faites-vous là petite fille  
Avec ces fleurs fraîchement coupées  
Que faites-vous là jeune fille  
Avec ces fleurs ces fleurs séchées  
Que faites-vous là jolie femme  
Avec ces fleurs qui se fanent  
Que faites-vous là vieille femme  
Avec ces fleurs qui meurent

J'attends le vainqueur

*The bouquet*

What are you doing there little girl  
With those freshly cut flowers  
What are you doing there young lady  
With those flowers those dried flowers  
What are you doing there pretty woman  
With those fading flowers  
What are you doing there old woman  
With those dying flowers

I await the conqueror.

What could be more precise and concise? In these nine brief lines the poet has concretely and metaphorically combined the passing of time and beauty. The progression from freshly cut flowers to dying ones, interwoven with the four phases of life, leads to the common denominator of all Life.

Brevity is a Prévert trademark. In the following three short pieces we have examples of this abrupt, yet casual, style in which he vents some of his inner feelings toward man and man's institutions. We witness a sort of "nibbling" satire: not angered or biting. The playful puns subtly strike the reader and evoke a smile or chuckle, but certainly the reader does not feel that man's political grandeur (*French Composition*), religious beliefs (*The wheelbarrow*), and self pride (*The great man*) have been swept away completely. The poet has merely once again called attention to the fact that all is vanity in the end. Didn't some wise man pronounce a similar dictum centuries ago (Ecclesiastes 12:8)?

*Composition française*

Tout jeune Napoléon était très maigre  
et officier d'artillerie  
plus tard il devint empereur  
alors il prit du ventre et beaucoup  
de pays  
et le jour où il mourut il avait  
encore du ventre  
mais il était devenu plus petit.

*La brouette ou les  
grandes inventions*

Le paon fait la roue  
le hasard fait le reste  
Dieu s'assoit dedans  
et l'homme le pousse.

*Le grand homme*

Chez un tailleur de pierre  
où je l'ai rencontré  
il faisait prendre ses mesures  
pour la posterité.

*French Composition*

When Napoleon was very young he was very thin  
and an artillery officer  
later he became emperor  
then he acquired a tummy and many  
countries  
and the day he died he still had a  
tummy  
but he had become smaller.

*The wheelbarrow or  
great inventions*

The peacock makes the wheel  
chance does the rest  
God sits down in it  
and man pushes him.

*The great man*

At a stone cutter's shop  
where I met him  
he was having his measurements  
taken for posterity.

The Prévert poem most likely encountered initially by the student of French and most likely remembered by the native speaker is "Pour faire le portrait d'un oiseau." Some have said that this piece of writing alone will ensure Prévert's poetic immortality, is the very essence of the word *charme*. It is more often than not the poem chosen from Prévert's collections for inclusion in both French and American poetry anthologies. Akin to another "natural setting" poem, Mallarmé's *L'Après-midi d'un faune*, the Prévert portrait is much more accessible to the average reader. Even the surrealist critics cannot agree on the interpretation of Mallarmé's frolicking fawn! Admittedly, it may take more than one reading of Prévert's piece to decide on one's own grasp of the poem's themes, but it hardly defies meaning, which is often the case with hard-core surrealist poetry.

*Pour faire le portrait  
d'un oiseau*

Peindre d'abord une cage  
avec une porte ouverte  
peindre ensuite  
quelque chose de joli  
quelque chose de simple  
quelque chose de beau

To do the portrait  
of a bird

First paint a cage  
with an open door  
then paint  
something pretty  
something simple  
something beautiful

quelque chose d'utile  
 pour l'oiseau  
 placer ensuite la toile contre un arbre  
 dans un jardin  
 dans un bois  
 ou dans une forêt  
 se cacher derrière l'arbre  
 sans rien dire  
 sans bouger . . .  
 Parfois l'oiseau arrive vite  
 mais il peut aussi bien mettre  
     de longues années  
 avant de se décider  
 Ne pas se décourager  
 attendre  
 attendre s'il le faut pendant des années  
 la vitesse ou la lenteur de l'arrivée  
     de l'oiseau  
 n'ayant aucun rapport  
 avec la réussite du tableau  
 Quand l'oiseau arrive  
 s'il arrive  
 observer le plus profond silence  
 attendre que l'oiseau entre dans la cage  
 et quand il est entré  
 fermer doucement la porte avec le pinceau  
 puis  
 effacer un à un tous les barreaux  
 en ayant soin de ne toucher aucune des  
     plumes de l'oiseau  
 Faire ensuite le portrait de l'arbre  
 en choisissant la plus belle de ses  
     branches  
 pour l'oiseau  
 peindre aussi le vert feuillage et la  
     fraîcheur du vent  
 la poussière du soleil  
 et le bruit des bêtes de l'herbe  
     dans la chaleur de l'été  
 et puis attendre que l'oiseau se décide  
     à chanter  
 Si l'oiseau ne chante pas  
 c'est mauvais signe  
 signe que le tableau est mauvais  
 mais s'il chante c'est bon signe  
 signe que vous pouvez signer  
 Alors vous arrachez tout doucement  
 une des plumes de l'oiseau  
 et vous écrivez votre nom dans un  
     coin du tableau.

something useful  
 for the bird  
 then place the canvas against a tree  
 in a garden  
 in a woods  
 or in a forest  
 hide behind the tree  
 without saying anything  
 without moving . . .  
 Sometimes the bird arrives quickly  
 but it can also take many  
     years  
 before deciding  
 Don't get discouraged  
 wait  
 wait years if you have to  
 the swiftness or the slowness of the  
     bird's arrival  
 having no bearing  
 on the success of the painting  
 When the bird arrives  
 if it arrives  
 stay very very quiet  
 wait till the bird enters the cage  
 and when it has entered  
 gently close the door with the brush  
 then  
 erase one by one all the bars  
 taking care not to touch any of the  
     bird's feathers  
 Then do the portrait of the tree  
 choosing the most beautiful  
     branches  
 for the bird  
 then also paint the green foliage and  
     the freshness of the wind  
 the dust particles in the sun  
 and the noise of foraging insects  
     in the summer heat  
 and then wait until the bird decides  
     to sing  
 If the bird does not sing  
 it's a bad sign  
 sign that the painting is poor  
 but if it sings it's a good sign  
 sign that you can sign  
 Then you pluck out very gently  
 one of the bird's feathers  
 and you write your name in a  
     corner of the painting.

With successive readings, any hermetic "spots" usually become unsealed and the reader's perception is more closely "tuned in." Abstract images of man's loves, labor, hopes, and fears emerge. Samuel Beckett's play, *Waiting for Godot*, evokes

somewhat the same sentiments. Is Beckett's character Godot (who never arrives on stage) the author's symbol of an un-caring God, man's success/failure, life's fortunes/misfortunes? Prévert presents similar dilemmas, but he too refuses to give a categorical answer: "When the bird arrives/*if* it arrives"; and later he says, "*if* it sings." But, whereas the Beckett work accentuates pessimism, vulgarity, and pathos, Prévert's piece is sprinkled with optimism, charm, and gentleness. His setting is Prévert's mini-universe. Man is portrayed as a methodical creature whose approach to this world's offerings is cautious, whether it be to love, to fame, or to faith. And when life's course has been run, or that certain *je ne sais quoi* plateau has been reached, Prévert says plainly that you sign your name in the corner of your life.

The world will always regret her loss of Préverts. She always has, but she remains detached, records their contributions, and waits for the next. In what we hope is approaching the Prévert style, we dedicate these concluding lines which perhaps express a philosophy:

*Sentinels silencieux*

Tout le monde passe  
 et le monde l'ignore  
 Le monde passe  
 et tout le monde s'endort  
 Les amants se trouvent  
 et les aimés continuent  
 Les amants ne s'aiment plus  
 et les aimés continuent  
 Qu'est-ce que ça veut dire  
 ce flux et reflux humains  
 Où est-ce que ça mène  
 et devons-nous offrir la main?

Silent sentinels

People pass on  
 and the world ignores it  
 The world passes on  
 and we care not a bit  
 Lovers find one another  
 and loved-ones just go on  
 Lovers leave one another  
 and loved-ones just go on  
 What does it all mean  
 this human ebb and flow  
 Where does it all lead  
 and do we have to go?

## TOLSTOY AND CHEKHOV: TWO FOXES AS HEDGEHOGS

Reading Leo Tolstoy (1828-1910) we are often struck by two opposing traits of his character. Two spirits seem to inhabit his breast, one asserting the primacy of feeling, the other of thinking. Isaiah Berlin has called our attention to this inner conflict in a paradox he derives from a line by the Greek poet, Archilochus, which reads: "The fox knows many things, but the hedgehog knows one big thing."<sup>1</sup> He calls those writers "foxes" who seize "upon the essence of a vast variety of experience and objects for what they are in themselves, without, consciously or unconsciously, seeking to fit them into, or exclude them from, any one unchanging, all-embracing, sometimes self-contradictory and incomplete, at times fanatical, unitary inner vision."<sup>2</sup> He calls those writers "hedgehogs" who "relate everything to a single central vision, one system less or more coherent or articulate, in terms or which they understand, think and feel — a single, universal, organizing principle in terms of which alone all that they are and say has significance."<sup>3</sup> Berlin then sets forth the notion that "Tolstoy was by nature a fox, but believed in being a hedgehog."<sup>4</sup>

Readers of Tolstoy often have asserted that his belief in hedgehogism proved the folly of his art, so clearly did it conflict with his finest literary instincts. Whether or not such an assertion is true is a question with which I am not immediately prepared to grapple. My main concern in this essay is to suggest how Tolstoy's belief in hedgehogism influenced another great Russian writer, Anton Chekhov (1860-1904), one whom critics have often characterized as purely a fox, thus denying his characteristics as a hedgehog and giving only a partial notion of the scope of his art.

A main hallmark of Chekhov's early serious writing was his ability to create in his characters the "biography of a mood developing under the trivial pinpricks of life."<sup>5</sup> He seemed oblivious to those critics who maintained that literature should contain a message, or express an ideology, that would enhance man's general social condition. Perhaps at the prodding of such critics, however, he increasingly concerned himself with man's social condition, and the role he as an artist might play in its improvement. At any rate, the main literary figure on the Russian scene to whom he could turn for the formulation of an ideology

was Tolstoy.

Chekhov and Tolstoy did not meet on a personal basis until 1895, when Chekhov's own literary reputation was firmly established. By no means was Chekhov merely an imitator or devotee of Tolstoy, for in spite of his admiration for the older writer he strove to be original in perfecting his own talent. Yet, the meeting between the two men must have been a kind of intellectual consummation, in which Chekhov saw in the flesh the literary mogul who had exerted a profound influence on his art. Evidence of this influence is most clearly reflected in several stories Chekhov wrote between 1886-88. I propose to describe briefly the climate of Tolstoyan ideas in which Chekhov was writing in these years, and then cite parallels to those ideas, in the stories themselves, which influenced his thinking.

"What I Believe" (1884) and "What Then Must We Do?" (1886) were two of Tolstoy's most important essays. In "What I Believe" he tells how he came to understand Christ's injunction not to resist evil, as it is given in Matthew 5:38-39:

And suddenly, for the first time, I understood this verse simply and directly. I understood that Christ says just what he says, and what immediately happened was not that something new revealed itself, but that everything that obscured the truth fell away, and the truth arose before me in its full meaning. "Ye have heard it was said, an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth: But I say unto you, resist not him that is evil." These words suddenly appeared to me as something quite new, as if I had never read them before.<sup>6</sup>

Tolstoy interpreted Christ's teaching to mean that no physical force of any kind should be used to resist evil. This understanding led him not only to condemn all forms of government that employed force to compel obedience to its laws, but also to condemn any economic system that held the poor in slavery through the power of money. His most detailed analysis of economic slavery appeared in "What Then Must We Do?"

Tolstoy had gone to live in Moscow with his family in 1881, and he was appalled by the poverty and squalor he saw there. In "What Then Must We Do?" he gives a moving account of his reactions to these conditions, and he follows this with an attack on the structure of a social order that makes these conditions possible. Tolstoy's own personal attempts at philanthropy among the poor convinced him that private or organized charity was not the solution to poverty. People constantly told him lies in order

to get money, and he realized that the money he gave often did more harm than good. This caused him to question whether money is not in itself an evil? Further thought on this question convinced him that money did not usually represent work done by its possessor. Rather, it represented the power to make others work. Tolstoy therefore concluded that money was a worse form of slavery than serfdom, since it made the poor the common slaves of all the rich. At the bottom of this economic exploitation was the division of labor and the possession of property. The safeguarding of property, he declared, occupied the whole world, and it created a deadly quarrel between those who had it and those who did not. The division of labor, on the other hand, fostered sloth and avarice among the privileged class, while it created vice and suffering among the workers, who sold their bodies and souls in order to live.

As a result of this theorizing, Tolstoy examined his own aristocratic way of life, and decided to appropriate as little of the labor of others as possible in order to minimize human suffering. He was convinced that no one should have special rights or privileges, but only endless duties and obligations. Man's first duty in life, he concluded, was to struggle with nature in order to support his own existence, and also the existence of others. Tolstoy set forth a fourfold program (commonly known as a program of "simplification"<sup>7</sup>) which he thought would define all the necessary actions of every person: (1) before breakfast everyone should do heavy manual labor and earn his bread by the sweat of his brow; (2) between breakfast and the noon meal everyone should improve his skill at some craft; (3) from noon to vespers everyone should engage in some mental exercise to sharpen his wits and imagination; (4) and in the evening everyone should devote himself to the cultivation of good relations with his fellow human beings. Although Tolstoy's passionate analysis of the economic problems in society was plausible his suggestions for solving these problems were impracticable. Nevertheless, Chekhov seems to have fallen under their spell.<sup>8</sup>

"Excellent People" (1886), for instance, is little more than an exercise in dialogue in which Tolstoy's theory of non-resistance is discussed. Vladimir Semyonitch is a young literary critic whose chief aid in life is to write fashionable literary articles for the newspaper. Chekhov depicts him as a kind of fop, a "genuinely feminine flutter." Vera Semyonovna, his sister, comes to live with him after the death of her husband. Although Chekhov characterizes her as a cold, passionless person (perhaps as a satire on the asceticism of Tolstoy's followers) she is at

least of a more serious turn of mind than her brother. One evening she asks him:

“What is the meaning of non-resistance to evil?”

“Non-resistance to evil!” repeated her brother, opening his eyes.

“Yes. What do you understand by it?”

“You see, my dear, imagine that thieves or brigands attack you, and you, instead of . . .”

“A logical definition? Um! Well! Vladimir Semyonitch pondered. “Non-resistance to evil means an attitude of non-interference with regard to all that in the sphere of morality is called evil.”

Saying this, Vladimir Semyonitch bent over the table and took up a novel. This novel, written by a woman, dealt with the painfulness of the irregular position of a society lady who was living under the same roof with her lover and illegitimate child.<sup>9</sup>

In the end of the story, Vera ceases her habit of disputing with her brother about the shallowness of his life. One summer morning she dresses, takes her satchel, and sets off for a distant province to do vaccination work among the peasants. Her brother, on the other hand, continues his purposeless existence, until one day he falls ill. Vladimir eventually dies of inflamed lungs and an abscessed knee. The story concludes on the moralistic note: “No one remembered Vladimir Semyonitch. He was utterly forgotten.”

If “Excellent People” explores the Tolstoyan themes of non-resistance, and the futility of a selfish existence, “The Beggar” (1887) explores the Tolstoyan theme of economics. The story is essentially about Lushkov, who invents lies in order to play upon the sympathies of passersby. One day he stops a Petersburg lawyer by the name of Skvortsov, and asks him for a few kopecks for a night’s lodging. He tells the lawyer that he had formerly been a schoolmaster, but had been unjustly dismissed from his job. Skvortsov recognizes Lushkov as being the same beggar who had accosted him two days earlier, only at that time he said he was a struggling student who had been expelled. When Skvortsov confronts the beggar with these lies, he shamefully admits that he knows of no way of making a living except by begging, and that he lies in order to make his begging seem necessary. Skvortsov then offers Lushkov a job cutting wood, which he reluctantly accepts out of a sense of shame. When he comes to the back door of the lawyer’s house, Olga, the cook, meets him and shows him to the woodshed. As Skvortsov looks out the window of his dining-room, he sees Olga violently scolding the beggar for his

laziness. Eventually the lawyer offers Lushkov a job as a clerk, which he accepts and disappears for a period of two years. During this time, Skvortsov prides himself on having set a lost mortal on the path to rectitude through his own generous actions.

But one day Skvortsov sees Kushkov standing in line at the ticket office of a theatre. In the conversation that follows, Skvortsov learns that it was Olga the cook who had set the beggar on a straighter path. For it was actually she who had cut the wood, as well as shed tears in imploring the beggar to give up his useless way of life. Seeing her genuine concern for his moral welfare, Lushkov had "climbed out of the pit" of degradation.

In reading Chekhov's moralistic stories "Excellent People" and "The Beggar" — as well as such stories as "The Letter" (1887), "The Cossack" (1887), "The Bet" (1888), and "The Shoemaker and the Devil" (1888) — one feels that Tolstoyan ideas do not touch Chekhov in his artistic depths. Yet these stories do reflect a strong desire to influence human behavior, and this desire became more artistically realized as Chekhov progressed towards literary maturity.

In 1889, for instance, one of Chekhov's most important stories appeared, "A Dreary Story," which D. S. Mirsky cites as the beginning of Chekhov's mature masterpieces.<sup>10</sup> The story is philosophical in character, and it bears out the conviction of Vladimir Yermilov that "all ethical problems, everything connected with the most intimate side of human relationships, merged in Chekhov's mind with the problem of the individual's outlook on life."<sup>11</sup>

A main theme of the story is that without an overall purpose or objective in life, human behavior has little meaning. In "A Dreary Story" Chekhov deals with much the same theme that appears in Tolstoy's "The Death of Ivan Ilych" (1886). The protagonists of both stories are faced with imminent death because of illness. And both of them realize, as they look back over their lives, that their time has been spent in vain pursuits. But there are basic differences in the two authors' handling of this theme: differences between the detached and skeptical Chekhov, and Tolstoy the believer; between Chekhov searching for a principle of existence, and Tolstoy declaring that man must desire nothing if he is to find his own soul.

Throughout "The Death of Ivan Ilych" Tolstoy depicts Ivan

as a man who lives only for himself. He has attained a respectable position in society as a judge, and lives in the constant hope of reaching a still higher goal. But despite his worldly success, Ivan has never learned that the basic moral law of life is to show love for others. As he is painfully dying from an injury incurred in a slight fall, he sees his own moral attitude reflected in his wife and daughter, who look upon his suffering as an imposition on their care-free lives. Eventually, however, Ivan comes to experience the meaning of selfless love through the devotion of a peasant boy, Gerasim, who tries to comfort him in his agonies of dying. At the end of the story, Ivan recognizes that life only takes on meaning through love, and that the fear of death is only overcome through faith and renunciation. In his final hours he has a revelation in which the secret of life and death dawns upon him. He says:

"So that's what it is!" he suddenly exclaimed aloud.

"What joy!"

To him all this happened in a single instant, and the meaning of that instant continued for another two hours. Something rattled in his throat, his emaciated body twitched, and the gasping and rattle became less and less frequent.

"It is finished!" said someone near him.

"Death is finished, he said to himself. "It is no more!" He drew in a breath, stopped in the midst of a sigh, stretched out, and died.

Tolstoy therefore makes known to his hero, in one supreme moment, the life which is death and the death which is life. As he says, "At that very moment Ivan Ilych fell through and caught sight of the light."<sup>12</sup>

In "A Dreary Story" Chekhov also views the problem of death through the eyes of a single person. Nikolay Stepanovitch is a famous professor of medicine who knows that he has little time to live. But it is not the fear of death that creates in him a pessimistic view of life; it is his lack of any "general idea" of what life is about. This general idea is a comprehensive faith, either philosophic or religious, which would give life some overall purpose. The Russian critic Leo Shestov has said that Nikolay Stepanovitch's pessimistic attitude towards life was also Chekhov's and that Chekhov was only interested in portraying people who had lost all hope. In reading Chekhov's stories, says Shestov, we get the feeling that one must "beat one's head eternally against the wall."<sup>13</sup>

It is doubtful, however, if Chekhov's attitude towards life

was as pessimistic as Shestov assumes. Chekhov does not portray Nikolay Stepanovitch as a person who has lost all hope, but as a person who is well learned in the arts and devoted to the study of science. As Nikolay says:

Just as twenty, thirty years ago, so now, on the threshold of death, I am interested in nothing but science. As I yield up my last breath I shall still believe that science is the most important, the most splendid, the most essential thing in the life of man; that it always has been and will be the highest manifestation of love, and that only by means of it will man conquer himself and nature.

Nikolay's chief lament is that in spite of his devotion to science he is unable to answer the question, "what do I want?"

In my passion for science, in my desire to live, in this setting on a strange bed, and in this striving to know myself — in all the thoughts, feelings, and ideas I form about everything, there is no common bond to connect it all into one whole. Every feeling and part exists apart in me; and in all my criticisms of science, the theatre, literature, my pupils, and in all the pictures my imagination draws, even the most skillful analysis could not find what is called a general idea, or the god of a living man.

In these speeches Nikolay Stepanovitch, like the author who created him, is not denying life (as Shestov suggests), but he is trying to discover some undergirding principle of existence. Like Chekhov, Nikolay Stepanovich has a firm belief in science, but like Chekhov this belief is not enough to qualify as a general idea. In contrast to Tolstoy's Ivan Ilych, Chekhov does not conduct his protagonist through inexorable circumstances — from health to sickness, from sickness to death — to thrust upon him with telling force a single principle: the law of love and renunciation. Instead, he permits him to carry on a probing soliloquy in which he observes, criticizes, questions, and suffers, partaking of existence as an enigma.

Increasingly Chekhov came to realize that Tolstoy's hedgehogism could not become his own. After a trip to the prison island of Sakhalin in 1890, where he went to perform humanitarian deeds as a doctor among the inmates, he recognized that at a basic level of human suffering men are not responsive to philosophical ideals. And he concluded that his work as a writer was not to preach higher moral standards (*à la* Tolstoy) but to awaken in the reader a realization of the cruelties and injustices of life by evoking in him the same feelings, both good and bad, that

animated the characters in a story.

We see this new approach to fiction in several stories Chekhov wrote in the nineties, as his opposition to Tolstoyan ideas was mounting. Some of these, such as "The Duel" (1891), "Ward No. 6" (1892), and "My Life" (1896), were among his finest literary productions. If Tolstoy's influence on these stories is felt in a more negative than positive manner, as a result of Chekhov's reaction to Tolstoyan ideas, Tolstoy's influence at least forced Chekhov to seek for himself a new conception of man's social condition. In the thought of both writers there were two well established elements: a strong condemnation of existing conditions in human society, and an underlying hope of improvement. But whereas Tolstoy wished to overcome the evils of society by first subduing the passions of the heart, Chekhov came to assume that something more external was required. Though he could not say exactly what this need was, he believed that education, cultural advancement, and freedom from the kinds of moralistic limitations that Tolstoy and his followers imposed upon themselves would most likely be conducive to it. One of Chekhov's most poignant indictments of Tolstoy's theories appears in "Gooseberries" (1898).

Ivan Ivanovitch, a veterinary surgeon, and Burkin, a high school teacher, have been out walking all day, when suddenly they are caught in a rainstorm. They seek shelter at the farm of a mill-owner, whose name is Alehin. Ivan and Burkin readily accept Alehin's invitation to spend the night. That evening, while gathered in the drawing-room, Ivan begins to tell a story about his brother, Nicholas Gimalaysky.

Nicholas had always been a poor man, Ivan says, who was forced to earn his living by taking a job as a clerk in a government office. He hated town life, and his great ambition was to buy a country estate where he could retire from the city and raise gooseberries on his own land. He denied himself all pleasures, married an old and ugly woman for her money, and contributed to her early death by depriving her of food. Eventually, however, he achieves his goal of purchasing an estate.

Ivan had visited Nicholas on his new estate after many years of separation. They embraced one another and shed tears over the fact that they had once been young, but now were both grey-haired and near the grave. But Ivan noticed that Nicholas' character had completely changed. He thought of himself as quite an important person, and he kept saying "We members of

the upper class," in spite of the fact that his grandfather had been a peasant and his father a common soldier.

When Nicholas showed Ivan about the estate, he took greatest pride in displaying his gooseberry bushes. He ate the berries with great gusto, even though they were unripe and sour. That night as Ivan lay in bed, he could hear Nicholas in the next room pacing to and fro, and eating gooseberries from a plate. Nicholas appeared to be a man who had achieved his aim in life and who was entirely satisfied with his fate.

But Ivan, even now as he tells the story of Nicholas to his friends in the drawing-room, can only think of his brother with sadness. In light of the vast potentialities of the human spirit, the narrow-minded ambition to live in the country and grow gooseberries seems shameful. As Ivan says:

He was a gentle, good-natured fellow, and I was fond of him, but I never sympathized with his desire to shut himself up for the rest of his life in a little farm of his own. It's the correct thing to say that a man needs no more than six feet of earth. But six feet is what a corpse needs, not a man. And they say, too, now, that if our intellectual classes are attracted to the land and yearn for a farm, it's a good thing. But these farms are just the same as six feet of earth. To retreat from town, from the struggle, from the bustle of life, to retreat and bury oneself in one's farm — it's not life, it's egoism, laziness, it's monasticism of a sort, but monasticism without good works. A man does not need six feet of earth or a farm, but the whole globe, all nature, where he can have room to display all the qualities and peculiarities of his free spirit.

In this passage, Chekhov supplies an almost perfect answer to Tolstoy's didactic story, "How Much Land Does a Man Need?" (1886). Where Tolstoy says a man needs only enough land to inter his body, Chekhov says he needs the whole earth and an abundance of freedom if he is to realize true human happiness. For Chekhov there was something selfish in the Tolstoyan idea of self-sufficiency, and in the desire to withdraw from the world. It was a "monasticism without good works" into which the intellectual class frequently withdrew.

After Ivan's trip to his brother's estate, he realized that he too was guilty of this egoism:

"That night I realized that I, too, was happy and contented," Ivan Ivanovitch went on, getting up. "I, too, used to say that science was light, that culture was essential, but for

the simple people reading and writing was enough for the time. Freedom is a blessing, I used to say; we can no more do without it than air, but we must wait a little. Yes, I used to talk like that, and now I ask, "For what reason are we to wait?"

In the conclusion of "Gooseberries" Ivan tells his friends that man's responsibility in society extends far beyond his own personal and introspective life:

Why wait, I ask you? What grounds have we for waiting? I shall be told, it can't be done all at once; every idea takes shape in life gradually, in its due time. But who is it says that? Where is the proof that it's right? You will fall back on the natural order of things, the uniformity of phenomena; but is there order and uniformity in the fact that I, a living, thinking man, stand over a chasm and wait for it to close of itself, or to fill up with mud at the very time when perhaps I might leap over it or build a bridge across it?

Ivan's call for a new life of man in society, based upon progressive human action, is, in the end, also Chekhov's.

D. S. Mirsky has said that to compare Tolstoy to Chekhov "is as impossible to a level-headed Russian as it is to say Brussels is a bigger city than London."<sup>14</sup> Chekhov was well aware of the peculiar qualities of the gifted Tolstoy in whose footsteps it was impossible to follow. As he wrote, "when there is Tolstoy in literature it is easy and pleasant to be a literary worker; even to be aware that you have done and will do nothing is not so terrible, because Tolstoy does enough for all."<sup>15</sup> Nevertheless, Chekhov himself was a writer of the first magnitude whose stories, in the words of Gorky, are "exquisitely cut phials filled with all the smells of life."<sup>16</sup> In examining a few of these phials I have attempted to suggest that even in ultimately rejecting Tolstoy's hedgehogism, Chekhov adapted it to the complex of his own artistic work. And while we may continue to regard him as essentially a fox, we can hardly ignore that his art owes a good part of its magic to a Tolstoyan desire for the universal welfare of man, and the desire to see life whole.

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#### FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>*The Hedgehog and the Fox* (New York: A Mentor Book, The New American Library, 1957), p. 7.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>4</sup>*ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>5</sup>D. S. Mirsky, *A History of Russian Literature* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1958), p. 359.

<sup>6</sup>*A Confession, The Gospel in Brief, What I Believe* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), p. 317.

<sup>7</sup>"Simplification" was a populist slogan, not necessarily Tolstoyan, but Tolstoy's ideas were the embodiment of much the slogan represented.

<sup>8</sup>In a letter written March 27, 1894, Chekhov himself refers to Tolstoy's influence upon him, by which time he had gained a clear perspective of this influence. He writes:

After cutting out smoking I no longer get into a gloomy or anxious mood. Perhaps because of my no longer smoking, the Tolstoyan morality has stopped stirring me, and in the depths of my soul I feel badly disposed toward it, which is, of course, unjust. Peasant blood flows in my veins, and you cannot astound me with the virtues of the peasantry. From childhood I have believed in progress and cannot help believing, as the difference between the time when I got whipped and the time when the whippings ceased was terrific. I liked superior mentality, sensibility, courtesy, wit, and was as indifferent to people's picking their corns and having their leg puttees emit a stench as to young ladies who walk around mornings with their hair done up in curl papers. But the Tolstoyan philosophy had a powerful effect on me, governed my life for a period of six or seven years; it was not the basic premises, of which I had been previously aware, that reacted on me, but the Tolstoyan manner of expression, its good sense and probably a sort of hypnotic quality. Now something within me protests; prudence and justice tell me there is more love in natural phenomena than in chastity and abstinence from meat. War is evil and the court system is evil, but it does not therefore follow that I have to walk around in straw slippers and sleep on a stove alongside a workman and his wife, etc., etc. This, however, is not the crux of the matter, not the "pro and contra"; it is that somehow or other Tolstoy has already passed out of my life, is no longer in my heart; he has gone away saying, behold, your house is left unto you desolate. I have freed myself from lodging his ideas in my brain. (*Selected Letters of Anton Chekhov*, trans. Sidonie Lederer, ed. Lillian Hellman [New York: Farrar Straus and Company, 1955], pp. 178-79.)

<sup>9</sup>In quoting and alluding to stories of Chekhov I am dependent on *Works of Chekhov*, trans. Constance Garnett (London: Chatto and Windus Company, 1916-50).

<sup>10</sup>*A History of Russian Literature*, p. 359.

<sup>11</sup>A. P. Chekhov, trans. Ivy Litvnow (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1946), p. 188.

<sup>12</sup>In quoting and alluding to stories of Tolstoy I am dependent on *The Works of Leo Tolstoy*, trans. Louise and Aylmer Maude (London: Oxford University Press, 1959).

<sup>13</sup>*Anton Tchekhov and Other Essays*, trans. S. Koteliansky and J. M. Murry (London: Maunsell and Company Ltd., 1916), p. 60.

<sup>14</sup>*A History of Russian Literature*, p. 245.

<sup>15</sup>*Letters on the Short Story, The Drama, and Other Literary Topics*, ed. Louis S. Friedland (New York: Minton, Balch, and Company, 1924), p. 212.

<sup>16</sup>*Reminiscences of Tolstoy, Chekhov, and Andreyev* (New York: The Viking Press, 1959), pp. 98-99.

## CONTRIBUTORS

James Carr, Assistant Professor of French, has published previously in *Miscellany* (1968), treating the poetry of a sixteenth century French writer, d'Aubigné. Several of Professor Carr's poems also have appeared in this publication. His current essay on Prévert was inspired by the poet's death in 1977.

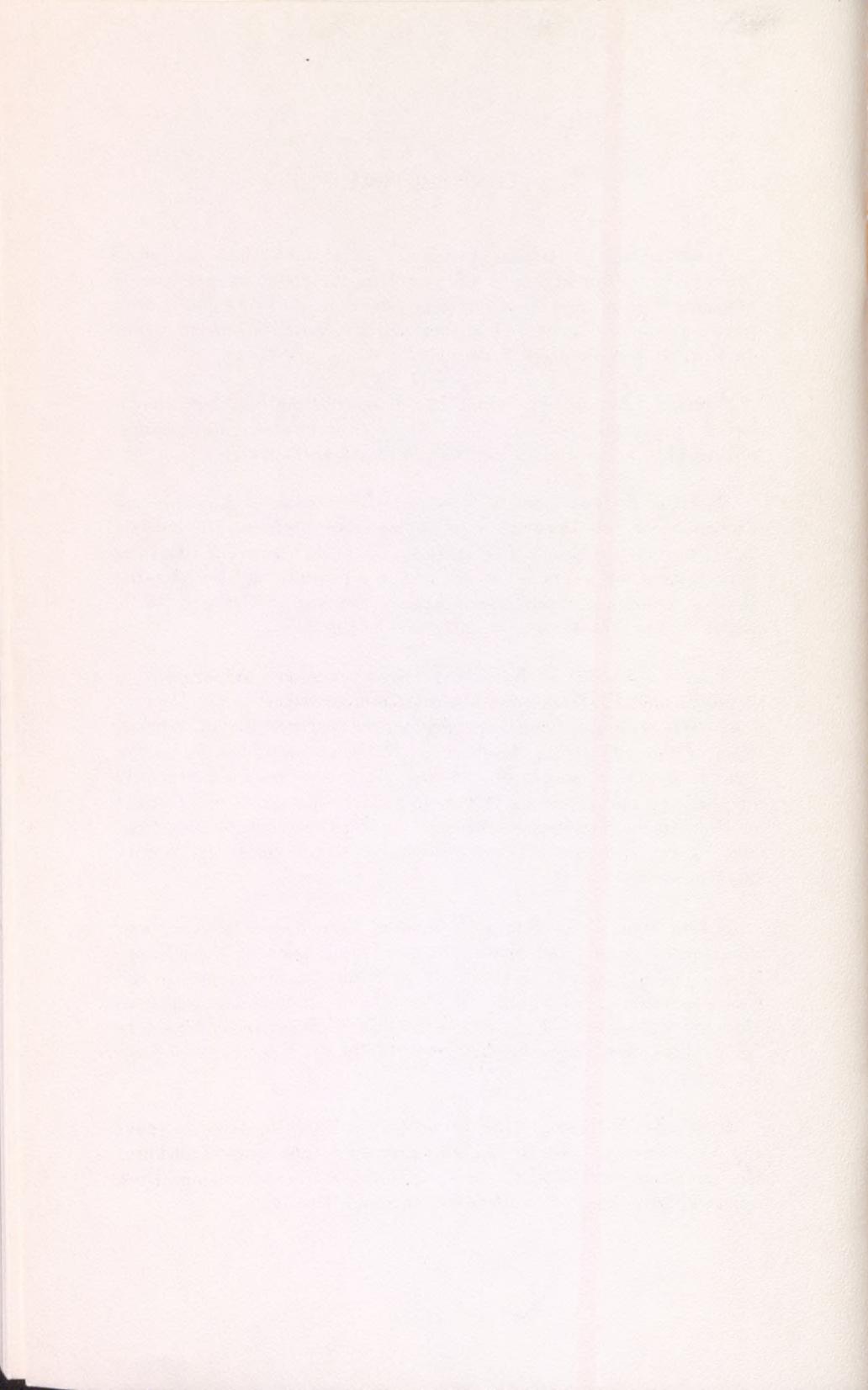
Norman Chaney, Assistant Professor of English, has contributed frequently to *Miscellany*. Apart from essays in literature, philosophy, and religion, he has also published poetry.

William T. Hamilton is Associate Professor of English and Chairman of the Department of Integrative Studies. He became interested in children's literature as a child. Professor Hamilton participated in a panel on children's literature at the Midwest Modern Language Association Annual Meeting in October, 1977, where he presented a paper on Sarah Orne Jewett.

Paul L. Redditt is Assistant Professor in the Department of Religion and Philosophy and a regular contributor to the *Miscellany*. His essay in this issue is a modified version of a paper read at the 1977 Ohio Academy of Religion, of which he is the current secretary-treasurer. He has also been involved recently in planning and reporting Otterbein's participation in the Project on Institutional Renewal through the Improvement of Teaching and is researching causes influencing involvement in faculty development projects.

Sylvia Vance, Assistant Professor, French and History, has contributed poetry and essays to previous issues of *Miscellany*. A continuing interest in the topic of feudal jurisprudence in the *Encyclopédie* (1973 volume of *Miscellany*) shaped her paper on Boucher d'Argis for the Midwest Section of the American Society for Eighteenth Century Studies, meeting at the University of Iowa this past fall.

Elwyn M. Williams, Vice President for Development, is leaving Otterbein to assume an administrative position elsewhere. He leaves us with thoughts of spring. Mr. Williams' writings have appeared previously in editions of this publication.



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