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Screed, Volume I, Fall 1972

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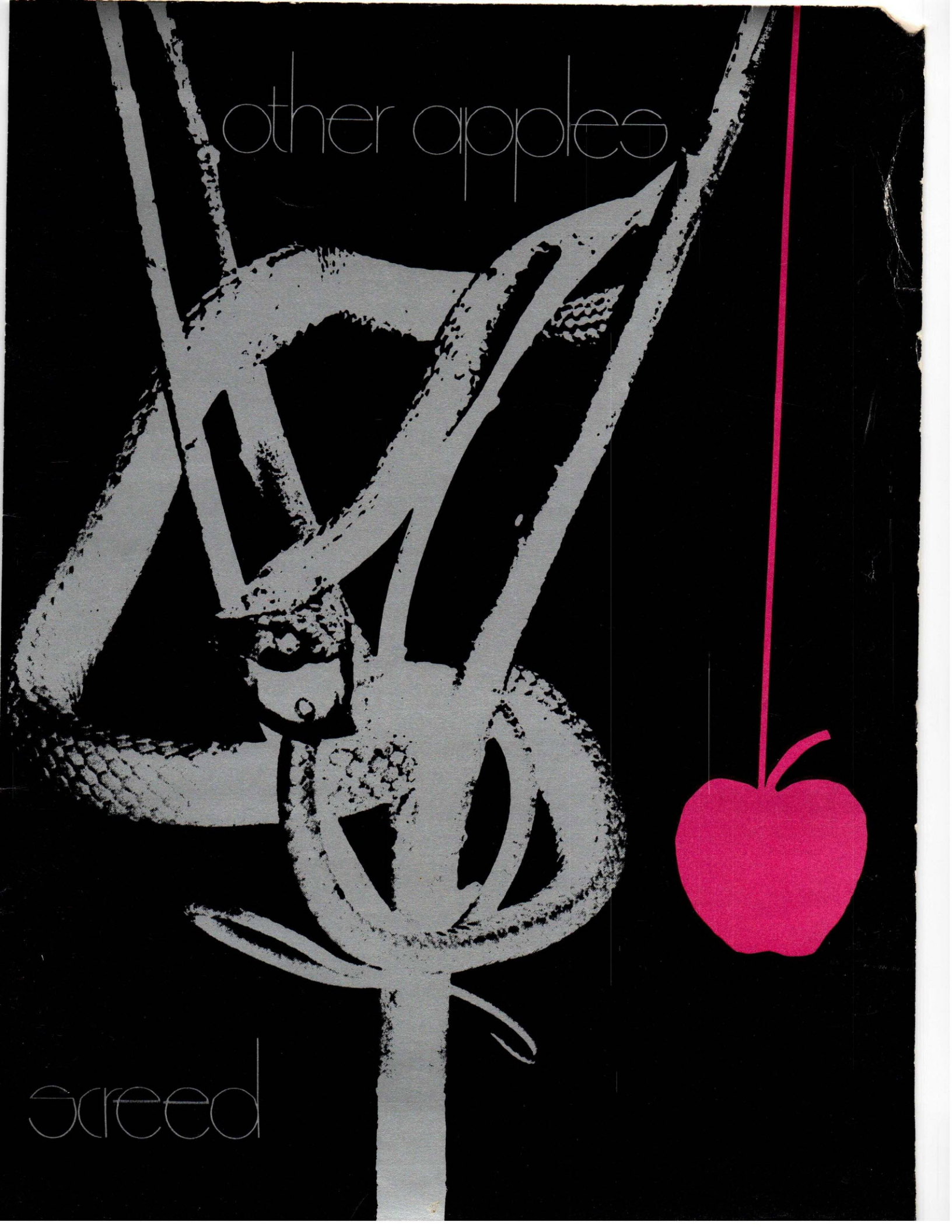
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Authors

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other apples



screed

SCREED

vol. 1

fall 1972

This is Volume 1, Number 1 of the University of Dallas Literary Journal, but the name *Screed* has already appeared on a University of Dallas publication. The first *Screed* was a fine and innovative magazine which appeared (once) in the spring of 1968. A product of the combined efforts of students and faculty, it featured fine writing, exciting graphics, and good ideas. From that first magazine we have taken the title and the concept of a literary journal devoted to a single theme. We have also placed ourselves under the disadvantage of following, even if remotely, a pretty good act.

Screed—a fragment—a part of a whole. In every issue we will try to deal with some part of the literary tradition; a theme, a symbol, an era. We will, however, attempt to make this treatment sufficiently broad so as to appeal to a wider audience than the typical literary journal, without sacrificing its essential literary character. But the central critical section is in itself only a fragment. *Screed* is intended to provide a forum for the entire university community, a vehicle for the publication of the best student writings. We feel that such a forum is absolutely essential for an institution and a student body as creative and vocal as this.

As we originally conceived it, *Screed* was to be divided into three parts; a central section, a section of student prose, poetry, and fiction, and a foreign language section. While we still believe this is a valid approach, there was not enough foreign language material to warrant a separate section. And there was not enough fiction turned in to include any in this issue—a condition we hope will be alleviated in the future.

One last note—the idea of this issue was entirely the product of the editors' fevered imaginations, and those of the people who so generously contributed their own individual expertise. It was necessary that we exercise some control over what was written for us, in order to assure sufficient quality and fidelity to our topic. But anyone is welcome to participate in *Screed*. Come to us with any ideas or writings you think are important. Our door is always open—even if we're not there.



ther
pples

SCREED: A Student Publication of the University of Dallas

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POEETREE etc.



gambler mary steers the year in

to stay in the gold keep of his hold—
there is danger in that wager
for beat of sun-heat ghosts his kiss.

so near to his sky-call
yet how fearsome to answer:
will she lose in the manger,
will babe the angel sang of
be born a toad, a searing joke?

to stay in the palace of his hold—
there is danger in that wager
for scourge of sun-word hosts his kiss.

so near to his high call
yet how fearsome to answer:
when kings come, will they kneel on
ermine and silk before some
savage lamb which leers and sucks
the ravaged land of her breast?

to stay in the vast hall of his hold—
there is danger in that wager
for no man-movement guests his touch.

—mary johnson

And Her Body Will Hang From A Tree

“Where are you, God?”

Beatrice, in reply,

Charioted through the ceiling window,

Descending to light the circles

Which led to His flickering

Under the fountain.

The girl who questioned would not follow

Until an unseen Siren

Wavering in a floating bubble

Serenaded her without a Virgil near

To strip the spectre

Of its questionable virtue;

And this comedy drowned

Abruptly, in the wrong canto.

—Sherri Monique Werne

Atoms aren't certain little universes
Koans will not stand
In perfect line.
But tear the twining syllables
Like the leaves around a cabbage:
Eat the core,
Share the force within the peach
That splits the pit.

—Lawrence Kaster

So shocked was I
With the dried husk
Of the spider's trussed prey,
And the hollow shell of the spider
Cast into a dusty corner.

—Lawrence Kaster



Cumae: A Vision of the State

Beneath an ancient olive tree
with two winds whispering in her ears
a radiant child split the caul
and stepped into a bloodwarm sea.
No nectar touched her perfect tongue
nor wine passed through her lips at all
but she was nourished by a star
and breathed the air that burned her lungs.
Like a bridegroom, bright Apollo
held a jewel from afar,
a spitting cinder in his hand.
This holy word she would not swallow
begged entrance through the bloody door,
but for a thousand grains of sand
she shunned the Archer-god's temptation
and would not make herself a whore,
even to divinity. And still
his love grew stronger than a nation
and would not tolerate defeat,
until at length, against her will,

a furious eagle bore her away.
Like the lamp that gives no heat
the maiden served her obscure lord,
seeing with his eye by day
and dreaming with her curse by night.
Then the eagle took up the sword
and swore to shape an empire, carving
the bitter darkness into light.
He built a castle out of bone
and bade the wretched and the starving
fill its walls. There at that court
the sibyl stood behind the throne
like a mind behind the word
and saw its noble prince's short,
uneasy rest. There a retinue
like the demon ceiling's herd,
passing out of Apollo's hand
and into the barbarian's grew
across the sky a thousand years
to shrink at last into the land.

Will Porter

VARIACIONES EN UN TEMA

Que le soleil est beau quand tout frais il se lève,
Comme une explosion nous lançant son bonjour!
—Bienheureux celui-là qui peut avec amour
Saleur son coucher plus glorieux qu'un rêve!

Je me souviens!... J'ai vu tout, fleur, source, sillon,
Se pâmer sous son oeil comme un coeur qui palpite...
—Courons vers l'horizon, il est tard, courons vite,
Pour attraper au moins un oblique rayon!...

—Charles Baudelaire, "Le coucher du soleil romantique"

El maestro Rubén Darío toca las primeras notas de su "Sinfonía en gris mayor" en la tarde prolongada antes del ocaso romántico. Apenas rompe el reposo febril de la siesta, convirtiéndose en toda clase de artista—poeta, músico, pintor, aún fotógrafo—para mejor reproducir este mundo trópico. El primer movimiento de la orquesta insinúa el tema en términos de la señalada clave en gris, los ecos repitiéndose como las "lejanas bandadas de pájaros" del verso tercero, en la infinitud del mundo solipista donde

El mar como un vasta cristal azogado
refleja la lámina de un cielo de cinc.

El doble espejo es imprimido en un plato de cinc—un método de fotografía que causa un efecto muy diferente del de negro y blanco, y aún más del de los colores. La escena es pintada con una paleta de distintos tonos de gris, desde el más delicado hasta el negro; después de que su pincel lo ha delineado, el artista toma su espátula y suavemente mezcla sus colores grises para que no se dé cuenta del perfil, aunque sí sabe que hay cambio de luz y de sombra.

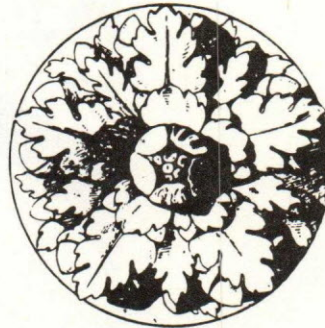
El ambiente de una realidad torcida lo envuelve todo. Se puede oír resonancias de los decadentistas en la segunda estrofa. Perdida la fresca bella de la mañana, el sol mueve lentamente hacia la mortalidad inexorable del día, y el viento rendido también necesita la siesta. Especialmente en el libro de donde viene "Sinfonía en gris mayor," *Prosas profanas*, el nicaragüense ha sido muy influenciado por las escuelas francesas del siglo XIX; ha introducido en España muchas formas extranjeras. En esta misma orquestación usa Darío el alejandrino dodecasílabo que viene de Francia. Hay cuatro versos en cada estrofa, con excepción de la tercera, con asonancia simple en los versos segundo y cuarto. En los quince versos de la tercera estrofa la asonancia aparece en el segundo y el quinto; aquí se juntan el mundo sensorio sufriente, el hombre marinero, y su país de humo, que forman las tres melodías del tono gris de la vejez.

Desde esta estrofa Darío permite la penetración del país soñado y los contornos del otro mundo irreal, aunque físico. El estado enfermizo de éste, señalado anteriormente, aflige aún al mar, que debe ser seno de la fecundidad, pero que da lugar al malparto de un pesado metal. El gris del azogue y del humo—lo tangible y lo intangible—es condensado en la caracterización del marinero, por la estrofa cuarta, como lobo, vagabundo con el pelo de la experiencia y de la desilusión, que la han traído a su triste vejez. El sol del Brasil, el viento de la China, y la "espuma impregnada de yodo y salitre"

(verso 18), las tres fuerzas ya decayentes en las primeras estrofas, le hacen concreto al marinero con los detalles de cuerpo y de vestido de la quinta. Pero tan pronto que se le tiene a la vista, se derrite en el humo gris de su pipa: aparece por apenas un momento el oro y el vuelo suave y sano de un barco...

Por un espacio bien grande entre las estrofas, Darío, ahora dramaturgo, permite que caiga lentamente el telón: el telón *gris*. El viejo existe en el limbo entre la juventud dorada y la certidumbre plomosa de la sepultura. Ni el país de la memoria ni la nublada esfera circundate permanecen con el hombre que va desvaneciéndose poco a poco en el sueño y la muerte. "Ya todo lo envuelve la gama del gris" (verso 27). Y suben las notas finales de la coda en el silencio que queda iluminado por el último "oblique rayon." Pero las criaturitas también son viejas, sus instrumentos rotos, sus músicas perdidas. Y ante tal platea el maestro baja la batuta.

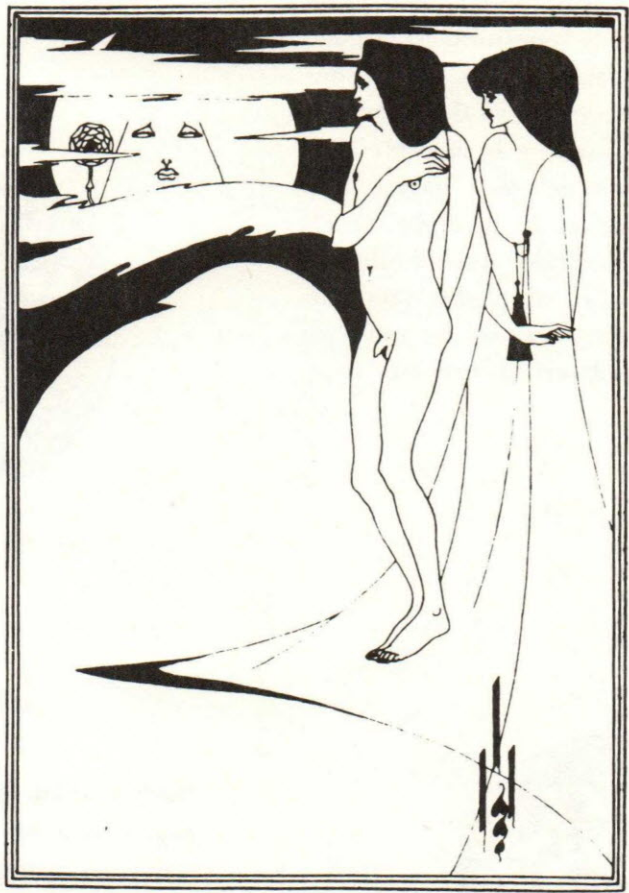
Victoria Grant



Me and my Pap

Bach milked the mother-uddered organ with his toes, while I must be content to suck my tunes from the nozzle of a hose, being equipped with tone-dumb feet. (Even humming with my hands I trip.)

Will Porter



REFLECTIONS

Do not research my eyes.
As satellites they advertise
A fire not you nor me.
If you love specific me
Do not struggle to baptize,
To confirm and canonize
Resident infinity.

Ease your scrutiny to see
Where on my face half moons may rise
In light surprise for shadowed you.
Do not research my eyes.
They tell no lies,
Nor what is quickly true.

—Mary Gottschalk

showdown

the star shone like white sea
on your chest like points of white sea
on your chest:
i came down the street
with my swindler's sweet eyes,
with my big unmovable body—
feuled on years and chase, larceny
and wily women;
your hand rested quiet
as a baby's first breath on the air,
your hand floated on the air
like a rattler's head—
to game me, to measure me, to welcome me.
our heavy guns choked and spoke finally.

i heard drums and women and thumped glasses
full of yellow beer
as i fell in the mild dust:
your boots as they came toward me
shone like a sun-hit steer's back,
you whispered the law's apology
 to miss lily, my loving cafe lady
who had woman-witnessed it all;
 you uncurled my blue gun
 from my white hand.
she knelt by me, her petticoats
drinking from the new wild fountain
at my beating chest.
a blue backed fly quietly
stamped and traced territories,
drew domains of silence
 upon miss lily's wide thigh.

—mary johnson



Attente

Sur la cime d'un pin de sable

Solitude partagée

Mais le sable blesse toujours

Il enfante une algue vivante

Choc de deux grains de sable

Mais le sable blesse toujours

Grain de sable

Dans son oeil vivant

La pupille

S'est rétrécie à la lune

Je bouche mon lait solaire

Et m'endors

Au fond du flacon.

—Beatrice Rossi

Eau que l'herbe ne mouille pas

tu coules

Quand tombent tes pensées du ciel

Et ton idée feuillue

Eau que l'algue ne courbe pas

où sont tes angoisses de roses

Et tes clins d'oeil de vent

Quant s'élèvent tes pensées des eaux

Et tes idées arbues

Eau que le feu n'éteint pas

Eau qui ne bouge pas

Puisque tu vas trop vite

terre

tu coules—

—Beatrice Rossi

On Dressing from the Dryer

As Peleus' son himself will testify
there is no more engaging zeal
no deeper sense of might and purpose
than that effected by the touch
of new-forged armor cold and rude
pressed upon the vulnerable back
and over the reluctant shoulders
strapped tight to the timid chest
readying the unfledged ear
the diffident lips for prayers to Aties
and lending courage to the eye.
And I sense this sometimes myself
when slowly pulling on my socks
warm like the tomb (just cleaned) just entered:
it is as if a host of virgins
bathed my feet in the sweetest oils
and read aloud for me to hear
passages from the Angelic Doctor
a comfort for my ticklish faith:
Then I am Achilles and Aquinas all at once
prepared for mortal combat with immortal foes
armored resplendently like a bishop
booted like an audacious prince
to crush Satan beneath my heel
singing *Gaudeamus* with curled toes.

WmPorter









views of
The Fall

farrington
micchelli
porter
weber

Man is, in truth, a myth-making animal. Man, as the sole earthly agent of the rational, is confronted by a universe of infinite and unclassified matter; in consequence, he attempts to give coherent form to "the secretive depths and the implacable advance of that infinite host of beings, aspects, events, physical and moral tangles of horror and beauty — of that world . . . with which Man the artist is faced." Man, says Jacques Maritain, seeks, by penetration into the "secret life" of the universe, to formalize his own position in the cosmic hierarchy. The myth is the most primary attempt of Man the artist to deal with the inner realities of human life.

The most enduring and pervasive myth is that of the *Golden Age*. Men play out their lives in the imminent awareness of evil and of their own mortality — this is tangible reality. And yet just as eternally, men struggle to give expression to the fact that they are drawn toward the supra-real, toward vision upon vision of the "ideal." The disparity of these two "realities" is laid tenuously to rest by the myth of a former, lost time of perfection. In the Judaeo-Christian tradition the image of the Golden world becomes the image of Eden, the Earthly Paradise, and a "simple" myth is infused by divine revelation — a tale told by the Father of words himself.

And so we shall deal with "Other Apples" — with some of the diverse ways in which man has dealt with the myth of the Fall, with those men who found it to be the base of their work, with those who rejected it out of hand, with saints, and poets, and politicians (as many as may fit on the head of our pens), and with

GENESIS

of course: THE GARDEN, and how to lose it.

What was the sin of Adam?

Pride
Gluttony
Egoism
Naiveté
Disobedience
Lust

have all found their champions in the great Post Facto dispute, but in the final analysis our own interest in the Fall of Man must funnel down to the hope of repatriation.

Get back
Get back
Get back

But DID we once belong?
Can we ever return?
Should we try?

Persons of an optimistic turn of mind extract from the biblical account of the fall a firm belief that man, having once been perfect, is not inseparably bound to the "dying animal" of his imperfect mortality. This belief assumes that the story of the Fall recounts the demise of a world already cast firmly into the mold of perfection. We contend, on the contrary, that the story of Adam relates the rejection of a *proffered* way of life. Hesiod, Plotinus, Empedocles and their Christian counterparts Ambrose and Augustine, postulate that our present world traces its origins to a *primaeval* flight from God, to an act of the will which separated him from the Edenic. Man, says Augustine, is "corrupt by choice and condemned by justice."

But can this be the definitive, the final statement of the human condition? Even the grim Augustine makes provision for a "fixed number of saints" in his *City of God*. Man has never, it seems, been able or willing to accept the finality of this state of affairs. He has, in brief, never ceased to search for the lost Garden.

The image of that garden, that "delicious Paradise," has haunted the human imagination since its literal or analogical loss, and has pervaded the literature of the world. Homer and Milton, Pindar and Keats, Dante and Dostoevsky — all wrote of the Garden, exploring it, forming it, perhaps themselves formed by the force of the image.

The Earthly Paradise resonates the yearning of men for structured freedom, for mobility within cosmic order, for the strength of a "Chain of Being." The **PROBLEM OF THE FALL** has ever been one which turns on the issue of free will, the possibility of and justification for moral freedom. In the Garden the past innocence of man and his hopes for future joy hang suspended, like the pendant apple, in an irrevocable moment of will; it is the tension between desire and possession which gives the garden its desperate beauty. The image is overpowering, for Eden is the measure of man — what has been, what must be regained.

And the Road to Oz? Ah, "goes ever on and on, down from the door where it began." If the Earthly Paradise is the longed-for destiny of man, then that life within its boundaries is the ideal life, the joyous lamb-and-lion existence, the Song of Innocent Experience. But, what is this life, and how does man set about to follow the yellow-brick road? The crux of the matter lies here: man's goals may be but ill-defined, and, as every archer knows, an ill-aim reveals itself most clearly in the great distances and the stalking of great prizes. This ill-aim has become a corollary to the myth of Eden, and the false Eden a myth unto itself. The search for Eden reveals and magnifies the flaws, the limitations, the partial perception which we see — in retrospect — to have doomed the search at its outset. Man in this quest is winnowed like wheat, the reality he seeks seeming unattainable, the illusion he sustains becoming the destruction of his soul. Illusion, or reality — joy or enchantment? What man sees shifts sinuously before him, elusive and yet magnetic as that serpent who tempted man, as Milton says, "with glozing words and illusions of him." Illusion, or the subtle distortion of the rational — this was man's sin, and his own illusions bar him still at the gates of Eden.

The false Eden is the product and the expression of these illusions. Man will ever seek to create a more fortuitous existence, and his ultimate triumph or despair hinges on two concepts: his reaction to reality, to material creation, as the vehicle of the journey; and his intellectual, psychological vision of that which he would term the "ideal." I intend to probe two abortive routes to the Edenic which, for the ease of the analogies, I term **SUTPEN** and **CIRCE**.



For he that lives retired in mind and spirit is still
in Paradise.

And the glory of the Garden, it shall never pass away.

Weiss doch der Gartner, wenn das Baumchen grünt, Dass
Blüt' und Frücht die Künft'gen Jahre zieren.

Groves whose rich trees wept odorous gums and balm;
Others whose fruit, burnished with golden rind,
Hung amiable—Hesperian fables true,
If true, here only—



HOW. FOVR. QVEENS.
FOVND. LAVNCELOT.
SLEEPING.

circe

THE BOWER OF BLISS serves as the touchstone for what has been called the FEMININE, the CIRCEAN illusion of Eden. The Garden of Alcinoüs in *The Odyssey*, the island of the Lotus Eaters, the domain of "La Belle Dame Sans Merci" — the spectre of those voluptuous gardens enfolds a portion of our literary sensibility, and their chatelaines are the daughters of Lilith, heirs to all in her that was and is sensuous but dispassionate, passive but unable to sustain any vestige of the masculine. Circe enchants all, and casts Odysseus' men into the wallow, Keats' knight is "alone and palely loitering," sapped of all chivalric vigor by his encounter with the lightfoot "faery's child."

The Bower is anathema to all that is heroic. The long voyage home, the knightly adventure — all those clearest expressions of the Questing Beast in man seem to end here in a morass of velvet and silk, white arms and bright eyes. Bliss is, though, a tawdry exchange for high deeds, a gilt and baroque travesty of the joy revealed in the figures of Dante's Great Dance. The Bower is a precious and luxurious opiate whose promise *appears* to be that of freedom; this freedom is nirvana, and freedom only in a *priori* exemption from the exercise of those options which make men human and, occasionally, wise. The taut knightly will atrophies along with the taut knightly body, and with them are engulfed all those constructs which are sustained by the active principles. The Siren's Song is the eternal homewrecker, the blight of family and polis.

And Merlin slept, who had imagined
her

sutpen

"I raise my lamp beside the golden door." The image of America filled the dreams of modern Europe — America the pure, the vast, the purple-mountained. The image of the American frontier parallels that of Eden, being the intense juxtaposition of past innocence — the wilderness — and present complexity — civilization. For 19th-century New England, the past was the vanished west, and the west was the surviving past. For America there were no centuries of attenuated consciousness; the continent would be vanquished within the span of one lifetime.

This messianic vision of America the Golden is not mere historical retrospection. Many a latter-day Odysseus thrust himself from the shores of Europe in quest of the Great Society, men steeped in the milieu of Descartes, Rousseau, Condorcet — rational, empirical, humanist, the fruits of three centuries of intellectual inbreeding now to be unleashed on this green land. Progress, Perfectibility, Manifest Destiny — the words roll across the plain, links in the "chaîne éternelle des destinées humaines" which Condorcet so passionately urged.

And the goal? The destiny so clearly manifest? One must ultimately say that it is a sort of physical dominance or possession. Much has been made of the roofless optimism of America, and, curiously, it is that very optimism which most clearly expresses our "peculiar institution" — the false Eden of the masculine, the aggressive, the linear. The stark Puritan mythos of the New Jerusalem has **not** been the impetus of the nation, although its hollow shell has fronted many an intriguing enterprise. America did not "fall for" that curiously limited and

circe

Of water sounds and the deep un-
soundable swell
A creature to bewitch a sorcerer,
And lay there now within her towering
spell.

Slowly the shapes of searching men and
horses
Escaped him as he dreamt on that high
bed;
History dies; he gathered in its forces;
The mists of time condensed in the still
head

Until his mind, as clear as mountain
water,
Went raveling toward the deep trans-
parent dream
Who bade him sleep. And then the
Siren's daughter
Received him as the sea receives a
stream.

—from "Merlin Enthralled"

Wilbur's "Merlin Enthralled" is a variation on the theme, as the sorcerer here is himself held in thrall by the fruit of his own enchantment. Niniane, "her voice like dark diving water," is a Circean figure, a priestess of the elements whose qualities she incarnates. The subtle vision of the poem lies in the fact that her story is enveloped by that of Merlin himself. If illusion is the downfall of man, then Merlin has doomed himself. "Fate would be fated . . ." Merlin the power, Merlin who held the strings of history, has willed himself into oblivion; his own illusion, Niniane, draws him into the "deep transparent dream" — the Eden of the unconscious.

Do men tend towards this dream of bliss?
Ah, yes — The Bower, the lotus, the faery's
child, the dream—who would indeed trade
this eternal quietus for the pressures of

sutpen

apologetic measure of human capacity; the right to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" in effect guaranteed that man *could* attain his desires and that obstacles intrinsic or extrinsic were to be regarded likely game.

America, the Eden of unbridled will — the act of will is linear in nature, historic, moving irrevocably forward in linear progression. Linear time is forbidden the tools of the philosopher and poet — repetition, consideration, still-ness, and, ultimately, the application of a continuous body of belief to human life. The rugged individualist, the self-made man, are the children of the American Eden — men whose paths and patterns may not be retraced, men thriving in the vacuum of hierarchical value, men bearing little beyond the insensate fruit of the material.

Thomas Sutpen, a central character in William Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!*, is archtypical of those who stormed the American Eden. He is above all a creator; his life is one vast progenitive effort, a violent and linear act of the will which is reflected in Faulkner's vision of the birth of Sutpen's Hundred:

Then in the long unamaze Quentin seemed to watch them overrun suddenly the hundred square miles of tranquil and astonished earth and drag house and formal gardens violently out of the soundless Nothing and clap them down like cards upon a table beneath the up-palm immobile and pontific, creating the Sutpen's Hundred, the "Be Sutpen's Hundred" like the oldentime "Be Light."



circe

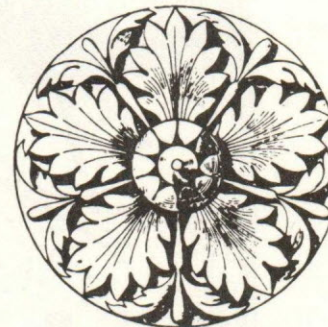
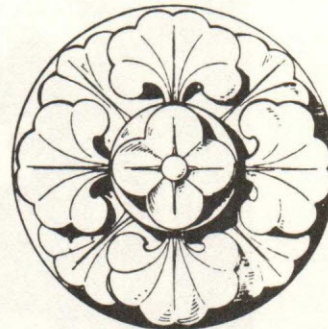
reality had he no ideal beyond this still repose. The nature of the Circean illusion is ahistoric, cyclical; it moves toward no triumph, no final and magnificent gathering of forces. The sense of destiny and of progress is absent here in the voluptuous, cyclical world of pagan time. The hopes of the Christian man for salvation have always been founded on the belief that life is **MOTION** towards the Ultimate Good, that man must **ACT** in order to be saved. He must front evil itself, his own guilts and weaknesses, and grow stronger through this penance of recognition. The Circean Bower is, finally, man's cushion against the unbearable impact of reality.

sutpen

Sutpen is man in a civilization which is to him a shell, a tool to be employed when it is suited to the task. He is man stripped of heritage, home, and belief who must make a dream to sustain his life. Sutpen's dream is "just Sutpen." He bequeaths no legacy, imparts no values, holds nothing sacred save his indomitable will. This absence of mythic or simply paternal foundations ravages his family.

Ultimately it is the concept of individual genius or will which cripples the Eden of the "Sutpens." It is difficult to imagine the enlightened man *en famille*—did John Wayne have a mother? This road to Eden was blocked by the complete dominance of the solitary man, by the rapacity of the "hyperactive" will. The Eden of America was not razed by the Puritan's outraged guilt, but by the ultimate triumph of the continental perfectionists.

These two visions of the ideal, the Edenic, are rendered impotent by their separation. The specialization of the active and the passive, the masculine and the feminine in the post-Cartesian world is the hallmark of the modern age: Eve as temptress preached and purged by Calvinist fire, Adam as either victim or brute, unmanned by woman or by his own insensitivity.



C.S. Lewis is among the most articulate champions of that medieval sense of cosmic integrity. The central novel of his space trilogy, *Perelandra*, is an exploration of an Eden rooted deeply in the classic myth of the Garden. To this myth Lewis brings the entirety of the myth of conversion. This myth is vertebral not merely to the Christian world, as it concerns itself with the existence and efficacy of evil, with the loss of the Edenic and its possible reconstruction. This trilogy has been accusingly termed a "spiritual thriller—paradise almost lost, always regained." The judgment is superficial: *Perelandra* does not deal with *a priori* loss and reestablishment of order, but with a cyclical world which by an act of the will may or may not move itself into Christian linear time.

Perelandra is an unconsummated and suspended world, a virgin land of illimitable possibility. The Lady of *Perelandra* is a true Eve—an innocent, queenly being of what Eliot terms "undivided sensibility." She is the Name-giver, that quasi-mystic steward of creation who perceives in herself the essences of things within their manifestations. The innate, cyclical integrity of her world is fragile, and the fate of the planet hangs suspended while the Lady and her King seek one another. Each must undergo an ordeal before their union sets in motion the physical life of the planet. One comes to see that this physical consummation must be prefaced by an act of the intellect, of the will—a reaching out to God. The task of the philologist Ransom is to guide the Lady towards this act, to make her aware of progression, of evil, of the irrevocability of action. The man himself becomes aware of evil as a kind of aggression, a desire to possess oneself, to control life by saying to God " 'Not thus, but thus'." The Fixed Land is, appropriately, the forbidden fruit of this world, for to live there in this land of floating islands is to hold sway over one's geographical fate, and ultimately one's life. God, as Ransom comes to say, "will make good of whatever you do. . . The first King and Mother of our World did the forbidden thing and He brought good of it. . . but what they lost we have not seen." In brief, he becomes aware that the loss of the garden and the loss of innocence are irretrievable and real even within the Christian world. The *felix culpa* brought Christ into the world, but it did not return the garden, and the reality of personal redemption or damnation is no less clear.

The clear new vision of the Lady, in contrast to the illusion of Eve, brings *Perelandra* uncorrupted into the Christian linear world. This Eden survives the move from potential to kinetic, from innocence not to evil, but to an awareness of evil and its "place" in the hierarchy of things. Male and female are united in common enterprise, having freely made an act of fealty towards the transcendent.

This essay has employed the images of the line and the circle to reveal more clearly the essence of these non-Edens. It seems pre-ordained, then, that one should end by speaking of Dante and the great Christian spiral. The final chapter of *Perelandra* is Dantesque in its synthetic vision of the Dance of the Spheres. In the Dantean tradition, the Christian tradition, both cyclical and linear are united in a motion which, while progressing towards a destiny, retains those "considered" cyclical forms which (in proper proportion) provide for continuance of belief, for the sustenance of the human community. Line, circle, and spiral—the images are simple, the ramifications infinite. But at the end of one path lies—the city of God, the Earthly Paradise, Oz, Eden. It is the greatest and most enduring quest—and the prize bears consideration.



The modern world has perhaps been most directly shaped by the *florissant mine* of the European Enlightenment, by the seemingly inexhaustible exhortations of Fontenelle and Saint-Pierre, Turgot and Condorcet. The equation of human perfectibility with social advancement has been urged for centuries: Augustine's *City of God* is a subtle assault on this synthetic view of moral and temporal perfection. Yet never before had the "love of no living creature but the very seed itself" been sounded abroad with such impact.

The tone of this strident age is curiously formal—not that meta-physical and structural form to which Coleridge gave the name "organic", but an inductive and mechanical formality imposed as a buffer against the dubious onrush of the essential. Vice, said Socrates, is always a form of ignorance, and to a startling extent this idea is the keel of European progressivism. Both Turgot and Condorcet assume man's rational list towards the ultimate good, and seek to provide the impetus of a rational system of education.

This system is curiously akin to the metaphysical order of scholasticism in the scope of its exploration, yet the same breadth of interest reveals most clearly the disparity between the two. The metaphysical order of Thomas is an ascendance toward the transcendent mind of God as Act, as the progenitive impetus of creation. The very concept of relativity is thus obliterated by the immutable reality of Presence; paradoxically, the unequivocal nature of this absolute order provides for the liberality of the "dubito, ergo sum": the absolute encompasses and endures all exploration.

Relativity is the keynote of the Enlightenment, and yet it is never viewed of itself, but as a formless vision interred within the perfect heart of Holy Method—scientific speculation. The age is infused by what Maritain terms "the adoration of the perfection of means." Method here is no longer a manifestation of order, but its catalyst—methodical exploration becomes, finally, the act of creation.

This sort of quantitative education is ultimately a charm against the horror of human limitation; facts may be taught with small regard to a larger scheme—the fact pleads no causes, demands no fealty either of teacher or student. The "dubito" of the Christian order finds its refraction here: I think; therefore, I am—the cry of personality transcendent within itself, the quietus of the mind left quite to its own devising. The very concept of doubt is rendered invalid by the denial of the absolute, the hierarchical.

The effect of the vacuum of qualitative belief is for the most part correspondent to the linear view of history, that straight and narrow path to human perfection. Inevitably, the sloughing off of all spatial, moral, and material bonds which bar man from "un elisee que sa raison a su se creer"—the "elysium of the mind"—tends toward the even swifter path of the angelic imagination.

Dostoevsky's Prince Myshkin is one of the touchstones of a probe into the angelic imagination. At first glance he is the golden boy sprung full-blown from the mind of the Enlightenment—an orphan removed from the dubious, sacramental milieu of "Holy Russia" and carefully educated in western Europe, a man without a country. One begins to see after a time that his gentle detachment is that of a child standing passive and trembling before a vision that he will not understand, that he is so denuded of any "knowledge carried to the heart" as to be incapable of carrying on a relationship with The World. He withdraws into idiocy as a result of his brush with two essential spirits, Nastasya and Rogozhin; both have "sinned," both feel the need of expiation. Myshkin destroys them by his inability to confront evil, his facile attempts to "surface" or to smooth over the reality of their sins.

It is rather ironic to be forced to conclude that the final issue of an age so apparently dependent upon the material, the real, is that most fragile of spirits—the angelic. And yet, what is man stripped of the “phantasms” of reality—age, home, family, nation—but the mere shell, the hollow surface of being? The denial of transcendent reality and the subsequent substitution of method as (relative) truth in the eighteenth century are, finally—other apples?

après nous...

Abstract reasoning and clever philosophizing all have their place, as does literary scholarship. But the controversy over the Perfectibility of Man is of considerably more practical significance than the number of angels on the head of a pin. At the end of the 18th century the world got a very practical lesson in just what happens when man forgets who and what he is. . . .

In 1776 a group of disgruntled British colonists met in Philadelphia and signed the Declaration of Independence. By doing so they gave formal status to what was already in fact happening—a Revolution. But the Declaration of Independence was not a very revolutionary document. After its initial appeal to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, the document devotes itself largely to listing the grievances the colonists had against King and Parliament, who had deprived them of their rights as *Englishmen*. It was a practical document, attempting to show the world that the colonists were not wild-eyed radicals, but men whose rights had been violated. In this the War of Independence was very similar to the Glorious Revolution in England in 1688. Professor Charles Andrews suggests that the Revolution was a revolt against the mercantile system and its implicit assumption that the colonies existed only for the profit of the mother country. The colonists had governed themselves for over a hundred years, and saw no reason to knuckle under to England now.

If the Revolution was practical, its resulting Constitution was supremely so. It was a document which tried to balance personal liberty against the efficient governing of the country. There is no cynicism intended in this view of the Revolution and the Constitution, because the

Constitution was based upon a keen insight into the nature of government and of man. This insight is most clearly expressed in the *Federalist* papers, the seminal documents of American political thought. The framers of the Constitution recognized that unenlightened men, incompetent men and even tyrannical men would arise and seek power. The American people recognized it too, and so Madison, Jay, and Hamilton went to great lengths to explain how the new Federal Constitution would guarantee that even an evil man could not do irreparable damage to the system or to personal liberty. The checks and balances familiar to every high school civics student represent clear awareness of the part of the Founding Fathers that in a fallen world we must do the best we can with fallen men. Federalist 9 and 10 are particularly valuable in this respect. They delineate clearly the safeguards in the Constitution against ambitions and factions. The compromises, checks and limitations under which we live even today are the price men pay for their imperfections—sales tax on Eden's apple. They would be unnecessary in an unfallen world, but as those practical Sons of Liberty clearly saw, this world is not that world.

In 1789 a group of disgruntled French subjects destroyed the Bastille in Paris, and set about to establish an unfallen world—a completely egalitarian society whose equality was not the practical American equality before the law, but an ideal brotherhood of man. Their rallying cry was "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity!" Brave ideas, noble sentiments—but within a decade thousands had been beheaded in the Reign of Terror, and to this day the symbol of the French Revolution is not the tricolor but the guillotine. What caused such a promising Spring to move into such a terrible Winter? The key to an understanding of what happened in France is an understanding of the radical new idea of man introduced into that country a hundred years earlier.

In *Out of Revolution*, Mr. Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy reminds us of the absolutely central position occupied by Paris and its great University throughout the Middle Ages. Philosophy and theology for the whole of Christendom was determined by the great minds of Paris—Abelard, Albertus Magnus, Bonaventure, and Aquinas himself. But sometime after the Reformation a curious re-orientation took place in French thought. Beginning with Descartes

and reaching fruition in the works of Rousseau, Fontenelle, and Condorcet, this is the idea of "l'esprit." "L'esprit" is not exactly translatable into English, but it refers to the man of genius, the man of inspiration. He is said to have "l'esprit." According to Rosenstock-Huessy "l'esprit" replaced the guidance and inspiration of "Le Saint Esprit," the Holy Spirit, and French thought became man-centered instead of God-centered. Any imperfections in man's world or his society could be corrected by the genius of the inspired man. His genius was the determining factor in the universe, he himself Creation's Lord, and no barriers of space, time, ignorance or custom could prevent him from re-shaping and perfecting the world. From here to the scaffold for those who stood in the way of progress is no distance at all. When there is no higher authority than man's "esprit," those who oppose it have no recourse.

While it is very neat and convenient to contrast the wisdom of the Americans and the foolishness of the French, it is not in fact historically clear. America is heir to all of Western civilization, and the French tradition is part of that heritage. But conditions in America were different than in France. The locus of the French "esprit" was the Parisian salon. There the inspired men produced their literature and philosophy and planned their ideal Age of Reason and Enlightenment. The American man of genius, however, had no salon. His enemy was not the corrupt society of France but the wilderness of America. Nature provided the opposition, not a noble Nature as Rousseau knew it but a cold and pitiless and often fatal Nature. So the inspired American became the despoiler of the Continent. The American man of genius is Sutpen, whose inspired mind and indomitable will destroys Nature and wrenches forth from it his own world. We are today paying for this single-minded creative destructiveness. Wherever man feels he can make his own rules, exceed his own limitations, there does he do his most terrible deeds. The last man of genius our world knew, who tried to reshape the world by his own inspiration, was not French but German, and we use his name as a synonym for horror.

One judges a work of art, and a work of literature in particular, by many criteria, of which the most commonplace—and the most profound—is simply whether the work is “true to life.” This critical inquiry may take the form of someone’s delighted exclamation, “Why, it’s just like the Real Thing!” Or it may be the insistence of Aristotle that the work be truly mimetic; that is, that it be truly an “imitation of an action.”

It has been our contention that a view of man which does not include a recognition of his capacity for evil is false. By the standard of veracity considered above, a false view of man should produce an inferior form of art. Of course, many modern critics have rejected the existence of any standard of human truth by which to judge. We believe, however, that an exploration into one of the most basic literary forms, tragedy, will show that the vision of the great playwrights does come to grips with man’s imperfect and limited nature, while those who do not, do not create convincing tragedy.

The typical ending of a modern tragedy portrays the hero standing bravely amidst the ruins of a shattered life, still shaking his fist and crying out in defiance to heaven. Though he has been beaten, he has not been broken; he remains unconquered and unconquerable. No force in the universe can overcome his soul. So Dr. Stockman at the end of *An Enemy of the People* proclaims that “the strongest man in the world is he who stands alone.” A noble picture, doubtless, but not similar to any in *Oedipus Rex* or *King Lear*, for instance. In those plays, and in all great tragedies, the hero at the end of the play is broken, is conquered. There is no attempt on the part of Sophocles or Shakespeare to deny that there are forces in the universe greater than man, forces which, if man should be so foolish or unfortunate as to oppose them, will destroy him. Modern tragedy, on the other hand, would maintain that there is no force capable of defeating the essential human spirit.



The ancients describe tragedy as as cathartic action, as justice leading man through suffering to wisdom. “Justice” here indicates that the forces man opposes are greater than himself—Oedipus and Lear are guilty of “sins,” and their sufferings are the “just” penalties of opposition to the super-natural. And the wisdom? Wisdom lies in the re-learning of that oldest of maxims—that man is not perfect, that he is not infinite, that he is not the measure of the universe. The Church reminds us of it every year—“Remember man that thou art dust.” To prove the truth of this vision, consider in what regard Sophocles and Shakespeare are held. Or if you want a more personal demonstration, compare the slight romantic uplift of *An Enemy of the People* with the shattering emotional catharsis of Oedipus’ blindness or Lear’s death.

Great tragedy—and great art—turn upon the interrelation of finite and infinite, upon the vision of mortal man in the grip of the cosmic, the divine. The drama of the unconquerable man is of necessity confined within the boundaries of finitude and mortality, and thus is limited in scope and impact. In brief, it is a lesser, an inferior tragedy. The vision of the great tragedy is both true and transcendent, demanding a clear perception of the ties that bind man to the forces of the universe.

Heart of Darkness

In 1890, Jozef Teodor Konrad Nallesc Korzoniowski took command of a steamship exploring the upper reaches of the Congo River. He returned from this voyage thin, fevered, and permanently changed. "Before the Congo," he wrote a friend, "I was a mere animal." It was almost ten years before he was able to coalesce this experience into literary form, the result being a short novel entitled "Heart of Darkness," a novel considered by many his finest work.

"Heart of Darkness" profoundly affected a generation of critics and authors, and it is therefore startling to consider that even at this late date there is a paucity of first-rate criticism on "Heart of Darkness," and almost none which attempts to explore the faint but audible stirrings of the "modern agony" within the work. Yet if one considers the peculiar nature of Conrad's art, the reasons for the critics' reluctance to come to grips with the novel become clear. Conrad's style is difficult to the point of inexactitude, and he struggles exhaustively with issues largely ignored by the body of nineteenth-century literature. Yet these difficulties are not truly prohibitive: that quality of "Heart of Darkness" which makes definitive critical interpretation a chancy business is precisely the professed intention of Conrad himself:

My task... is, by the power of the written word, to make you hear, to make you feel—it is, before all, to make you *see*. That—and no more, and it is everything.

Conrad sets no seal upon this novel. The reader is left to shape his own experience, an experience which, by virtue of the vast "open-endedness" of the novel, has the absolute legitimacy of personal experiential knowledge.

The bare bones of the story of "Heart of Darkness", which provide the framework for all interpretative speculation, can be summed up quite neatly. Marlow, the narrator, recounts his experience of an educated European, Kurtz, a man whose friends describe him as a "universal genius," a man whose talents include oratory, painting, music, and literature. Kurtz takes the position of manager of an isolated ivory station far up the Congo River in order to teach the natives. "Each station," he says, "should be like a beacon on the road toward better things, a center for trade of course, but also for humanizing, improving, instructing." Nothing certain is known about Kurtz' operation of the station but when Marlow arrives a year later he discovers that the noble Mr. Kurtz has changed

dreadfully. Human heads impaled on stakes surround Kurtz' hut, and within the great teacher is presiding over what Marlow can only call "unspeakable rites."

You can't understand. How could you?—With solid pavement under your feet, surrounded by kind neighbors ready to cheer you on or fall on you, stepping delicately between the butcher and the policeman, in the holy terror of scandal and gallows and lunatic asylums—how can you imagine what particular region of the first ages a man's untrammelled feet may take him into by the way of solitude—utter solitude without a policeman... These little things make all the difference.

One of the few things of which Marlow is certain is the immediate reason for Kurtz' disintegration: he falls because he is alone in a universe stripped of the "little things" of civilization. In Marlow's eyes the jungle represents the primordial and absolute center of the world. Kurtz journeys to the jungle in unconscious paradigm of an action as old as man himself—the testing in the wilderness. Kurtz, however, is surfaced over with the Cartesian optimism of the European intellectual, and he sees in this journey an opportunity to re-enact the story of Eden, that great stumbling block in the lightfoot leapfrog path of the Parisian Adam. The green, brooding jungle becomes for Kurtz a new Eden within whose boundaries he will demonstrate the superfluity of sin and the historical accident of the Fall.

He is abysmally ignorant of the darkness within himself; face to face with that solitude and silence, Kurtz learns the terrible secret of the jungle: that at the very center of things is a "heart of darkness," a core of pure and brooding evil. The discovery of this truth affects Kurtz

profoundly, but he is ultimately destroyed by his realization that he experiences an active response to the evil. He is unprepared for the discovery of his own dark core. "...his soul was mad. Being alone in the wilderness it had looked within itself and, by heavens! I tell you it had gone mad." Kurtz gives up any attempt to moderate his behavior and surrenders himself to the "colossal scale of his own vile desires."

Marlow presents an intriguing counterpoint to the story of Kurtz' degradation in his description of the thirty-five cannibals aboard his ship. They are starving to death, their sole food supply—one dead hippo—having spoiled. Yet despite their extreme hunger, these savages forbear to fall upon and consume the five white men on board. Marlow is astonished:

Restraint! I would just as soon have expected restraint from a hyena prowling amongst the corpses of the battlefield. But there was the fact facing me—the fact dazzling to be seen... like a ripple on an unfathomable enigma...

The disparity between Kurtz' final excesses and the rigorous restraint of the cannibals is a paradox which Marlow feels compelled to probe. The cannibals, unlike Kurtz, possess something which acts as a curb upon their baser impulses, a presence which he defines variously as "inborn strength," "capacity for faithfulness," "your power of devotion, not to yourself but to an obscure, back-breaking business." In an exceptionally intriguing passage he speaks of this attribute as "deliberate belief." This belief is not merely an intellectual construct, but "something you can set up and bow down before and offer sacrifice to..." This germ of mythic theory is carried no further directly, but it is essential to the understanding of the novel.

"Deliberate belief" is a response to the "heart of darkness" within all living things. It must be noted that the unbearable truth which so appalls Kurtz is a daily reality for the Congolese savage living in the very core of the world, face to face with the "amazing reality" of intrinsic evil. This body of belief is an inner substantiality which serves to repel the temptations of the surrounding darkness. Kurtz and his contemporaries have somehow lost sight of these integral myths.

The process of civilization is one of surfacing, veneering. Marlow, for whom the city of Brussels is the European polis, refers to it as a "whited sepulchre," a mausoleum whose chief function is the obscuring of the noxious facts of guilt, retribution, and inevitable decay. Civilized man has constructed an immense artifice above the wilderness which, like the white man's tenuous settlement along the river, is terrifyingly unreal, yet manages to "busy" man, to cushion him against the dangers of undue speculation.

When you have to deal with things of that sort (the incidental details of navigating the ship), the mere incidents of the surface, the reality—the reality, I tell you—fades. The inner truth is hidden luckily, luckily.

Man is stripped of myth by his willful loss of that condition of life to which it is a necessary response. The educated European in "Heart of Darkness" is merely a vast emptiness enclosed in the veneer of civilization, his interaction with reality enduring only on the most superficial plane.

Mr. Kurtz lacked restraint in the gratification of his various lusts. There was something wanting in him—some small matter which...could not be found under his magnificent

eloquence... But the wilderness had found him out early, and had taken on him a terrible vengeance.

Kurtz' "great plans" for the vindication of the rational are powerless before the "awakening of forgotten and brutal instincts, the memory of gratified and monstrous passions."

Marlow, on the other hand, does not have the dubious impetus of these "great plans." He is a man who has spent his life upon the sea, who has had experience both of the essential darkness and the superfluity of the city. This confrontation does not give him a deliberate myth, but it does impart to him a kind of experiential or associational wisdom. Marlow is not drawn to the Congo by an intellectual enthusiasm, but by his very tangible delight in the "blankness" of a map of East Africa which he sees in a London shop window:

There was in it one river especially, a mighty big river that you could see on the map, resembling an immense snake uncoiled with its head in the sea, its body at rest curving afar over a vast country, and its tail lost in the depths of the land. And as I looked at the map of it in the shop window, it fascinated me as a snake would a bird—a silly little bird.

Marlow's awareness of the snake in the garden is neither instinctive in the true sense of the term, nor the result of an act of faith. He perceives the intrinsic nature of evil because his diverse and very earthy experience has impressed upon him the active role of the "heart of darkness" in the lives of men. Brutal confrontation with reality destroys Kurtz. Marlow's broad grounding in the verities of common experience allows him, conversely, a more rational vision of the "heart of darkness" than the eloquent Mr. Kurtz is able to muster.



les fleurs du mal

The ambiguity of Baudelaire's moral attitude, which caused *Les Fleurs du Mal* to be condemned within weeks of its first publication in 1857, and which accounts for most of the misunderstanding of Baudelaire which persists even today, can be elucidated by a reading of one of his poems, "Au Lecteur." Originally entitled "Préface," this poem stands as a prologue to *Les Fleurs du Mal*, in which Baudelaire places his flowers in the context of an earlier Garden.

Baudelaire's concern is with sin, rather than evil. Recognition of this fact is of paramount importance. The "flowers of evil" themselves are sins, with evil as their seed. In the dedication to Théophile Gautier, Baudelaire refers to the poems as "ces fleurs malades" ("these sickly flowers"), with the implication that sin is an infirmity in man's nature.

La sottise, l'erreur, le péché, la lésine,
Occupent nos esprits et travaillent nos corps. (lines 1-2)

(Foolishness, error, sin and avarice
Occupy our minds and waste our bodies.)

The infirmity is both psychological (“esprit” means simply “mind”) and somatic: it affects man’s entire personality and being, so that he cannot muster the strength to recover, and in any case it is uncertain that he wants to. Throughout the poem Baudelaire suggests that man not only does not struggle with the evil which wastes him, but in fact he encourages it and delights in it.

...nous alimentons nos aimables remords
Comme les mendiants nourrissent leur vermine. (lines 3-4)

(...we feed our polite remorse
As beggars nourish their lice.)

These lines are echoed in the next stanza.

...nous rentrons gaiement dans le chemin bourbeux,
Croyant par de vils pleurs laver toutes nos taches. (lines 7-8)

(...we return gaily to the muddy road
Believing we will wash away all our spots with vile tears.)

The contrast between the delight with which we return to the “chemin bourbeux,” and the despicable tears with which we hope to cleanse our muddy feet, recalls the beggar feeding his lice. The “chemin bourbeux,” of course, is not simply the way of sin but moreover the way of life itself: man’s tears are “vile” because man fails to see that, far from being able to cleanse him, it is the tears of mankind which have muddied the road.

Here Baudelaire proceeds to an observation which is remarkably orthodox in such a seemingly unorthodox poet. Man is weak, but he is not the cause of his own downfall.

Sur l’oreiller du mal c’est Satan Trismégiste
Qui berce longuement notre esprit enchanté,
Et le riche métal de notre volonté
Est tout vaporisé par ce savant chimiste. (lines 9-12)

(Upon the pillow of evil it is Satan Trismegistus
Who endlessly rocks our enchanted mind
And the rich metal of our will
Is completely vaporized by that clever chemist.)

This stanza is crucial. “Hermes Trismegistus” (“Thrice-great”), god of alchemy and sorcery, is a title originally used by the third-century neo-Platonists to refer to the Egyptian god Thoth. “Satan Trismégiste” (who, “savant,” is clever as well as wise), is likewise an alchemist, but his art is the reverse of that of Hermes. Rather than manufacturing gold, Satan takes the gold of our will and transforms it into a state in which it loses its value and potency. The image of vaporization is particularly apt. The contrast between “le riche métal de notre volonté” and the ineffectuality of the vapors suggests that the concrete power of the will is disintegrated by the abstraction of the intellect. And this, in turn, suggests the Fall, where Adam, eating from the tree of knowledge of good and evil, became self-conscious, at once proud and ashamed. The abstract knowledge of the intellect, unlike the direct apprehension of the will for its object, introduces the possibility of delusion. (I am not speaking here of the sin of Adam and Eve, but of our sins, which are not “original” but in a sense consequential.) While the primary meaning of the verb *bercer* is “to rock” or “to lull asleep,” it has the secondary meaning “to delude.” “L’oreiller” (“pillow”) seems to be a pun on *oreille* (“ear”). Thus, the first two lines of the stanza subtly identify the temptation of Satan, the way he confounds our minds, with the neutralization of the will.

The result of this neutralization is a kind of spiritual paralysis which makes man easy prey for one

who is himself beyond temptation or inclination.

C'est le Diable qui tient les fils qui nous remuent!
Aux objets répugnants nous trouvons des appas. (lines 13-14)

(It is the devil who pulls the strings which move us!
In repulsive things we find that which lures us.)

The dilemma of the will is resolved by the Devil, who controls us as if we were puppets. The second line just quoted is paradoxical. Note that the adjective "répugnants" is unqualified. Baudelaire does not say that these objects *should be* repulsive, or *used to be*, but that they *are*, and yet at the same time we are drawn to them, because the Devil's sway influences our wills.

Chaque jour vers l'Enfer nous descendons d'un pas...(line 15)

(Each day we descend a step towards Hell...)

This descent does not have the connotations of the epic descents of Odysseus, Aeneas or Dante. There will be no return, and the shadows have nothing to teach or to tell us.

Sans horreur, à travers des ténèbres qui puent. (line 16)

(Without horror, towards the shadow which stinks.)

This line qualifies the meaning of "appas." It is the Devil who moves us, and the lures merely make us insensitive to the real horror of the situation.

No part of man's being is clean, no part is not infected. Utterly debased, he desperately tries to steal from the descent some secret pleasure, as a person tries to squeeze a last drop of juice from a dry orange (lines 19-20). Our brains are no longer filled with ideas, but teem with demons as if infested with a million maggots (lines 21-220).

Et quand nous respirons, la Mort dans nos poumons
Descend... (lines 23-24)

(And when we breathe, Death into our lungs
Descends...)

Here is another descent. While we are drawn into hell, Death is drawn into us. This death is not that of the body, which in a Christian context (Baudelaire was a Catholic) would have certain joyous overtones, but the death of the soul, as we see in the next stanza. It is important to see that to breathe the foul air of Death is not exactly equivalent to being dead. But even this sense of incompleteness in the image is turned by the poet to add strength to his vituperation. After suggesting in the early lines that the infirmity lay in man's desire to repent ("nos aimables remords" implies a remorse less than profound, and "nos repentirs sont lâches" likewise depicts a weakness of the will), without retracting his earlier condemnation he speaks even more forcefully by reversing the charge: man's weakness is not in his will to repent, but in his will to fully accept the evil which draws him.

Si le viol, le poison, le poignard, l'incendie
N'ont pas encor brodé de leurs plaisants dessins
Le canevas banal de nos piteux destins
C'est que notre âme, hélas! n'est pas assez hardie. (lines 25-28)

(If rape, poison, the dagger and arson
Have not woven yet with their pleasing patterns
The banal canvas of our piteous fates
It is because our soul, alas! is not bold enough.)

The irony of this stanza is severe. "Le viol, le poison, le poignard, l'incendie," all are instruments of "la Mort"—the ultimate consequence of our utter sinfulness. The implication is that if man were a little tougher he would have damned himself long ago. The reference here is not to a tragic drama:

our fates are "piteux," and man is certainly not magnanimous. Drawn by the "plaisants dessins" of our sins, but revolted by their grim finality, man is too weak to move.

Thus far in the poem Baudelaire has presented the wretched condition of man, showing man to be evil and attributing this fault to the Devil. Stanzas one and two serve to introduce sin as Baudelaire's subject. In stanzas three and four he reveals the Devil as the cause of man's misery and his weakness. Stanzas five, six and seven depict man after the Devil has perverted his will, and conclude with the image of the death of the soul as the purpose of Satan in seeking man's surrender to sin. There is a movement and a tension in these stanzas which culminates in the "hélas!" of line 28, and then is dissipated.

Baudelaire's tone and direction change suddenly in the final three stanzas. Having presented the external plight of man, Baudelaire turns to something which seems greater and more fundamental. The change of tone is signaled by the word "But..."

Mais parmi les chacals, les panthères, les lices,
Les singes, les scorpions, les vautours, les serpents...(lines 29-30)

(But among the jackals, panthers, bitches,
Monkeys, scorpions, vultures, serpents...)

It has been suggested by more than one scholar (for the fullest treatment of this point see William F. Aggeler, "The Seven Beasts in Baudelaire's *Au Lecteur*," *Phil. Quar.* XL: 596-602, Oct. '61) that the seven beasts represent the seven deadly sins, but as Aggeler's article shows, there is no conclusive evidence for this. At any rate, it is sufficient simply to read the beasts as sins, as the poet himself suggests in line 32, referring to the beasts as "la ménagerie infame de nos vices," ("the infamous menagerie of our vices"). Yet there is one more horrible than all the sins represented by the beasts:

...Il est un plus laid, plus méchant, plus immonde! (lines 34-36)

(...There is one more ugly, more wicked and more foul than all!)

With consummate rhetorical skill Baudelaire moves his poem swiftly toward its denouement. While he is quiet unlike the others, "les monstres glapissants, hurlants, grognants" (line 31, "the monsters squealing, yelling, grunting"), the danger of this mysterious figure is of greater magnitude.

Quoiqu'il ne pousse ni grands gestes ni grands cris,
Il ferait volontiers de la terre un debris
Et dans un bâillement avalerait le monde... (lines 34-36)

(Although he does not make great gestures or great cries,
He would willingly turn the earth into debris
And swallow the world in a yawn...)

In the last stanza, then comes the climax of the poem, the revelation of the identity of this sin of sins.

C'est l'Ennui! —l'oeil chargé d'un pleur involontaire,
Il rêve d'échafauds en fumant son houka. (lines 37-38)

(It is Boredom! his eye filled with an involuntary tear,
He dreams of gibbets as he smokes his hookah.)

The subtlety of this image is that of a master and a genius! The emphatic tone which accompanies this revelation demands that Ennui be understood as something more than a mere boredom with things: it is the moral spinelessness which the poet has hinted at throughout the poem, now given a more concrete (and, in a sense, more social) metaphor. Compare the "pleur involontaire" with the "vils pleurs" of line 9: here the tear is significant of the profound pathos of the sin. It suggests that man recalls, involuntarily and, if you will, unconsciously, some finer, some more beautiful state. This tear is the clue which uncovers the memory of Eden hidden deep in every man, but suppressed by

the stupor of our existence. The second line seems to echo the tone of "notre esprit enchanté" in line 10. The senses are deadened. Our knowledge of the world is of false appearances, our thoughts are artificial. But there is more to this image than presents itself at once. The word *échafaud* means a scaffold or a gibbet upon which a man is hanged. In order for the word "rêve" to be consistent in tone and meaning with the "pleur involontaire," the reference cannot simply be to "la Mort" in stanza six. "Échafauds" as well refers to the cross of Christ, whose death made possible the redemption of man in spite of original sin. (It must not be forgotten that Ennui *dreams* of scaffolds: it is uncertain whether this dream can ever have any efficacy. The dream is a yearning, a kind of subliminal hope, but Baudelaire is not interested in justifying it here.) At this point it should be evident that the greatest of the sins, l'Ennui, is the personification of original sin itself. (Thus Aggeler's conclusion, in the article referred to above, that the beasts could not refer to the seven deadly sins because "surely the apostle of ennui could not have believed man ingenious enough to have invented an eighth mortal sin," is false. Original sin is outside and behind the seven deadly sins. This also explains why Ennui is personified rather than allegorized as an animal. While the deadly sins are the tools of Satan, original sin is man's own.)

Baudelaire seems to be pointing his finger directly at the reader when he says,

Tu le connais, lecteur, ce monstre délicat... (line 39)

(You recognize him, my reader, this delicate monster...)

The paradox inherent in the words "ce monstre délicat" is intriguing. It complements the description of Ennui in stanza nine, but I am unable at the moment to unravel further its meaning. In this line, it is as if the poet accuses the reader of trying to hide from the recognition of the sin which is at the very core of his being. But the ironic last line adds an entire new dimension to our understanding of the poem:

—Hypocrite lecteur,—mon semblable,—mon frère! (line 40)

(Hypocrite reader, my fellow man, my brother!)

The accusing tone of "Hypocrite lecteur" is consistent with our interpretation of the accusation implied in the preceding line. But when Baudelaire addresses his "Hypocrite lecteur" as "mon semblable, mon frère" we are no longer certain that this interpretation is correct, at least, it is apparent the poet does not claim for himself a position of moral righteousness, a position of purity. "Mon frère" is Baudelaire's affirmation that the poet is also a member of the human race, and thus is implicated in original sin.

It is outside the scope of this essay to answer the question which arises now, after the poem has been read: Is there finally any hope for man's salvation, or is man condemned eternally by his imperfection, the fact of original sin? The answer is not in the poem, but rather in the rest of the book. After all, "Au Lecteur" does not stand at the end of *Les Fleurs du Mal* as a summary, but at the beginning as a prologue. Its purpose, as I suggested at the opening of this essay, is to define the poet's "moral attitude," both toward his subject and his audience. With respect to the poet's attitude toward his subject, I have tried to show that Baudelaire is not a Satanist: his concern is with sin, not with evil. Certainly, he finds an inescapable attractiveness in his subject, but this is a manifestation of the truth to which his poem appeals. Recall that he himself says (line 14) that we find something alluring in the most repugnant things. If anything, Baudelaire is, as Allen Tate says of Poe (whose work Baudelaire was familiar with and deeply admired), not Satanic but "Angelic"—a criticism only slightly less unsavory, but one whose support, like the answer to the real question raised above, must be sought outside the poem at hand. With respect to his attitude toward his au-

dience, there is a striking directness, an intimacy, about the final address, "mon frère," but the tone of the words is ambiguous, and seems to suggest little more than a profoundly felt empathy. Baudelaire does not seem to take comfort in the fact that all men share a common plight. Perhaps in the end there is little comfort to be found there. At any rate, it is sufficient at the outset for the poet to achieve a rapport with his reader, a rapport which, however ironic and uncomfortable, is absolutely necessary if the poet is ever to get beyond his prologue.

INCONCLUSIONS

One is left, I suppose, with theology. One can speak at interminable length about Human Reason, the Perfectibility of Man, the Idea of Progress. One can dally on the edges of it with the myths of Eden and Original Sin. But the problem is, at the end of it all, a question of man and God.

There is a cliché that "nothing is new under the sun." In Christian times the question of the perfectibility of man was raised by Pelagius, a priest of the fifth century A.D., who preached that man could achieve salvation by virtue of his own efforts. This teaching won its author immortality—as the author of the Pelagian heresy. Orthodox Christians (and before them the Jews) have always believed in original sin—it is one of the dogmas of the faith. But for the Christian world the denial of the necessity of God's saving grace was first put forth by Pelagius. It has been said that all of Western history since the birth of Christ revolves around theological issues, and this speculation holds firm here, for all the theories, ideas, and works of man that we have discussed are merely echoes, expansions, or refractions of the single idea—that man can save his own soul.

It was not until the twentieth century that a concept of similar magnitude (and similar dubiousness, according to many) was introduced into Western thought. The work of Teilhard de Chardin is highly controversial, much of it overblown and rhetorical. But Chardin *does* offer an alternative to the Pelagian heresy which still credits perfection as the viable goal of human life. Beginning with the scientific theory of evolution, Chardin views all of material creation as directed, as progressing toward union with God. The theme of human perfectibility is thus lost in the larger view of the perfectibility of all creation. Chardin's work is synthetic in nature, and encompasses many of the disparate ideas we have treated. Man *is* progressing, and his inspiration or impetus comes from within. Yet the impetus is not man-fashioned, but an infusion of the "breath of life" which fills all material things—it is an innate direction toward the Creator, the Source of all life. The very modern problem of Cartesian duality—the sundering of spirit from matter—is reduced to triviality by Chardin's assertion that matter, by nature, moves upward toward spirit. The great upward spiral becomes the thrust of all creation with man as its spearhead.

One last observation is in order. We have, I believe, amply demonstrated the fallacy of using man to measure the universe. In the main, it produces bad art, bad government, and bad theology. We must, however, reconcile our conclusions with Christ's exhortation: "Be ye perfect, even as my Heavenly Father is perfect." The difference is elementary—alone, man's achievements are confined by his own mortality; with the inspiration of the divine, perfection is not only a possibility, but the goal and the great glory of man.

