TITLE :

THE NOVELS OF JOHN HAMPSON

A DISSERTATION FOR THE COMPLETION OF THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS (BY ALTERNATIVE REGULATIONS)
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF WALES

SUBMITTED BY
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STATEMENT :

This dissertation, which is being submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of M.A., is the result of my independent investigation. The extent of my indebtedness to other sources is fully indicated in the text, footnotes and bibliography.

SIGNED..

SUMMARY :

This dissertation examines both development and decline in the work of John Hampson, a regional writer whose novels, with one exception, were published during the 1930's. Brief reference is made to the novelist's unpublished Mss. discovered among his papers, though limitations of space have relegated their more detailed treatment to an Appendix.

An account of Hampson's life and work in which the inter-reaction of his psychological aetiology and his life experiences is examined, together with their relationship to his artistic development, precedes the more detailed examination of his novels. His frank depiction of homosexuality rendered his earliest work unpublishable except where this could be subsumed as a part of a normal adolescent phase prior to maturation. His progression from working out personal problems and the resultant family conflicts with himself to his examination of the problems of, and tensions between individual family groupings, coincides with his developments in novelistic technique which achieve formidable complexity and are often handled with considerable skill. Here Hampson's interest in the solution of problems of novelistic form emerges most clearly. However, once Hampson has achieved maturity as a novelist by sublimating the personal elements in his work, his creativity wanes. Even then, his later novels subsist on technique until, in his final novel, he returns to personal obsessions in an attempt to ward off an increasing creative sterility. Only in his best work did Hampson succeed in achieving the necessary compromise between his obsessions and his art.

Nevertheless, Hampson's involvement in problems of form and of technique, as perceived in his employment of contrasting narrators, his sympathy for the working-class, his accurate depiction of regional settings, and a sometimes harsh but unadorned, direct style that reflects his personal honesty, are all indications of the artistic integrity that motivated a flawed but interesting novelist.

To my cousin Roger Hubank,

ultimately the literary executor of John Hampson,

whose kind co-operation facilitated my access to

so many letters, documents, notebooks and manuscripts

associated with the subject of my research,

this dissertation is gratefully dedicated.

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CHAPTER I : THE LIFE AND ITS INFLUENCE ON THE WORK.

John Frederick Norman Hampson Simpson, who adopted the pseudonym of John Hampson, was born on 26th. March, 1901, at Handsworth, Birmingham, the fifth child and third son of eight children born to Mercer and Kathleen Hampson Simpson.[1,2] The artistic, theatrical family tradition, associated with characteristics of independence and initiative, was an inheritance from Hampson's paternal great-grandfather and grandfather.[3] The former ran away from his parents in Nottingham to become an actor, taking up the management of the Theatre Royal in Birmingham in 1837, the year after the birth of his first son. The latter had been trained in dentistry but insisted on joining his father, taking over responsibility first for the financial, and then for the entire management on his father's retirement in 1864.[4] Both Mercer Hampson Simpsons showed financial astuteness and as lessees built up considerable fortunes, the son's judicious investments enabling him to retire by his mid-fifties.[5] He set up his elder son, Mercer, as a partner in the brewery business of Moore and Simpson in Aston ; his younger son, Frederick, qualified in medicine ; and his eldest daughter, Marion, married Jordan Lloyd, Professor of Surgery at Birmingham University.

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1. The original family name was Hampson ; the novelist's great-grandfather acted under the pseudonym of Simpson until, being better known by this name, adopted it : John Hampson reversed the process.

2. Their eight children were Dorothy, Mona, Mercer, James, John, and then twins -- one stillborn, the other, Shelagh, dying in early childhood - and finally Bettie.

3. All eldest sons are traditionally christened Mercer Hampson Simpson: thus Mercer Hampson Simpson("the great-grandfather") 1801-1877; Mercer Hampson Simpson("the grandfather") 1836-1902; Mercer Hampson Simpson("the father") 1867-1930; and Mercer Hampson Simpson("the brother"), alive today, these relationships being depicted vis-a-vis John Hampson.

4. Anon., The Birmingham Theatres. A Local Retrospect, 1862-1889, 1889, pp. 14-15.

5. His rents brought in approximately £1,750 per annum, which included £1,100 from the Duke of York's theatre, St. Martin's Lane, in London.

Thus, in his early childhood, John Hampson possessed the advantages of being reared in a secure, affluent, upper middle-class environment, his delicate health being carefully cossetted. Then disaster followed with the financial collapse of the brewery business.[1] Suddenly the family was reduced to the living standards of a working-class artisan. They left Birmingham to begin a new life in a terraced house in Narborough Road, Leicester, in 1907. John Hampson's mother gave swimming lessons to augment the family income ; but it was not until 1912 when his father was appointed manager of the Rudge motor-cycle depot in Leicester that they became tolerably free of financial anxieties. Hampson's autobiographical novel O Providence depicts the trials and struggles as well as the domestic moves of the family until 1915, when his father and his brothers, Mercer and James, enlisted in the R.A.S.C. and he left school to work in industry.[2]

Before this, however, they had moved from Narborough Road to "The Oaklands" in Broughton Astley, a village twelve miles south-east of Leicester. Despite the desired improvement in the family's health, neither Dorothy nor John was robust enough to join Mona, Mercer and James in their daily bicycle journey to and from their respective schools in Leicester.[3] Thus John Hampson attended the village school, albeit intermittently : though reading at home stimulated his imagination, a lack of formal education would prove a handicap in the early part of his literary career.[4]

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1. Hampson's father was obliged to forfeit his share of the inheritance from his father's estate, held in trust for him by his mother, in return for family pledges to satisfy the brewery's creditors.

2. O Providence is autobiographical, not an autobiography : the family's affluence before the disaster is exaggerated; the eldest brother, Mercer, (Victor in the novel) is given a twin, Paul, who dies in a symbolic fall from the balcony of their mansion shortly before the financial crash; and there is no mention of the children born after John (Justin), Shelagh and Bettie. Dorothy (Clare), Mona (Mercy) and James (Roddy) comprise the rest of the family.

3. Mercer and James attended Wyggeston Grammar School. Dorothy had been seriously ill with meningitis.

4. Vide Forrest Reid's criticism of Hampson's Mss. of his early novel, Go Seek A Stranger, 1928, in his letter to Hampson, 1st. February, 1929. Sentence construction and punctuation always gave Hampson some difficulty.

John Hampson's father's managerial appointment with Rudge brought the family into a pleasanter Leicester suburb to 8,Wentworth Road,overlooking a park. Hampson's description of this house in O Providence is both arresting and truthful:

> The houses in Green Park Road all faced the same way,staring at the park. They rose in steps like a row of sisters,tall,thin and rather ugly children,standing stiffly ; staring. 1

This house witnessed the dispersal of the family during the war years. In it,in 1913,Bettie,the youngest child,was born, and,in 1914,Shelagh,the next youngest,died from tuberculosis: and from it,in 1915,the father and his elder sons,Mercer and James,left to join the army,and,in 1917,John left to look for work in Nottingham after dissatisfaction with his job in a munitions factory.

In 1918,the family moved to Derby,but were not reunited by the Armistice. Mercer,although a talented amateur actor, took up industrial work. James,after several years in West Africa,returned home and eventually became a world-famous racing motor-cyclist.[2] He,Dorothy,Mona and Bettie all married.[3] John,despite his literary ambitions,had already asserted the family characteristic of independence by leaving Leicester in 1917 owing to tensions at work and at home. From working as a kitchen-hand in a Nottingham hotel,he moved to Liverpool, working first as a billiard-marker and then as a commis-waiter; then a period as a waiter in a London hotel was terminated by his joining his sister Mona in running a public house in the North Derbyshire mining village of Ashover ; John was barman. On the abandonment of this venture,he became a chef at the Royal Hotel,Derby,thus returning to the family home. However,

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1. John Hampson, O Providence, 1932, p.305.

2. James's meeting Peter Chamberlain when the latter was a motor-cycling journalist was instrumental in his meeting John and becoming a member of the Birmingham Group, vide Ch.1, p.21, of this dissertation.

3. Michael McEvoy,Mona's husband,son of the artist Ambrose McEvoy,provided a foreman's job at Rolls Royce for the unemployed miner Walter Brierley who joined the Birmingham Group and whose novel Means Test Man, 1935, was revised for publication by John Hampson and Walter Allen.

early in 1925 he found the post that was to occupy the rest of his life. He became the male-nurse companion to Ronald Wilson, a mongol boy whose wealthy parents and sister lived at Four Ashes, an Elizabethan country house at Dorridge, a village seven miles south-east of Birmingham. In a congenial and cultured atmosphere, Hampson found sufficient leisure to commence his literary apprenticeship.[1]

The unusual amalgam in the Hampson Simpson family of artistic talent and its associated individualism and independence with the practical, unromantic realism of persons possessing mechanical skills and being compelled to work in an industrial environment created its tensions between the individual members of the family as well as tensions within individual personalities. Family economics had made the embryonic novelist a realist but had forced him into a minority of one - the image of "the secret enemy" who, according to Hampson's friend William Plomer, is personalised in Hampson's novels as

> the lone hand, the private heart, the individual of catlike independence... in full development...the artist.... 2

Thus Hampson's view of himself and of his family and the resultant interplay of tension and conflict is, in his earliest work, an intensely personal one, presented against a regional, mainly industrial background spanning both middle-class and working-class, over which hangs the shadow of poverty and unemployment, observed with an honest, almost crude realism. But a further personal factor intensifies the loneliness, the privateness, the catlike independence referred to by Plomer : Hampson was a homosexual.

1. Hampson gives some information about his working life in Under Thirty, An Anthology, ed. Michael Harrison, 1933, p.207; however, his earliest novel, the unpublished Go Seek A Stranger, describes a wide range of working experiences with a vividness that would seem to proceed from personal experience, particularly since Hampson would have lacked the novelistic technique at this stage of his development to have written convincingly about situations that he had not experienced himself. Similarly, Hampson's first published novel, Saturday Night at the Greyhound, is based on an incident taken from life during his period as barman at Ashover, vide Ch.1, p.16, footnote 4, of this dissertation.
2. William Plomer, introduction to 1950 reprint of Saturday Night at the Greyhound, ix.

Although the scope of this dissertation precludes a detailed investigation of the causes of Hampson's sexual bias, one of the clearest expositions - and one with which Hampson was certainly familiar - occurs where Havelock Ellis cites Freudian theories:

> When inverts are psychoanalytically studied, Freud believes, it is found that in early childhood they go through a phase of intense but brief fixation on a woman, usually the mother, or perhaps sister. Then, an internal censure inhibiting this incestuous impulse, they overcome it by identifying themselves with women and taking refuge in Narcissism, the self becoming the natural object. Finally they look for youthful males resembling themselves, whom they love as their mother loved them. Their pursuit of men is thus determined by their flight from women. 1

Hampson's childhood ill-health isolated him from the rough-and-tumble of normal boyish pursuits and friendships and made him dependent firstly upon older women and ultimately upon himself. His sister Mona "mothered" him and protected him from his older brothers who resented his frequent immunity, on health grounds, from punishment. These relationships are clearly defined in O Providence as well as the development of Narcissism when John (Justin in the novel) examines his naked body, is "fascinated and repelled" by it, and then tries "to conceive a boy of great beauty and yet the boy must be himself." [2]

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1. Havelock Ellis, Studies in the Psychology of Sex (1901), 1915, II, 304. Other relevant sections of this work which deal with this condition are found on pp.264-265; p.278; p.293; p.294; p.317; and pp.322-323. Freud deals with this question in 'Some Neurotic Mechanisms in Jealousy, Paranoia and Homosexuality', 1922, The Complete Psychological Works (1957), 1973, XVIII, the most important passages occurring on pp.230-232. Hampson's unpublished essay on 'Blank', viz. homosexuality and contemporary attitudes to it, together with a bibliography which not unexpectedly includes Havelock Ellis, was found among his papers.

2. John Hampson, op.cit., p.305 and p.306.

Hampson's "brief fixation on a woman" would seem to have been on his sister Mona, though he presents Tom Oakley's sister-fixation on Ivy in Saturday Night at the Greyhound as enduring, the key relationship in this novel. What is evident, however, is that Hampson's dominant relationship is with his father. In the novella Tuneless Numbers, completed in November, 1928, Hampson attempts a classical homosexual case-history based on intense father-love after rejection by the mother.[1] The sickly Paul Davril even throws himself down the stairs and suffers a spinal injury in his attempts to retain his father's affection, which he fears he will lose after the birth of a younger daughter ; there is also intense jealousy through rivalry with his elder brothers, this being accounted a contributory cause of homosexuality by Freud.[2] Such a rivalry experienced by Hampson is described in O Providence, from which the arrival of his two younger sisters is nevertheless omitted.[3] Shelagh's birth when he was seven, shortly after the economically depressing move to Leicester, would have created a problem of adjustment, one with which he would have nevertheless coped more successfully when Bettie was born five years later.

One of Hampson's notebooks, dated 1933, provides further psychological insights. Brief character-sketches of his mother and father show his mother as an efficient organiser, a dominant, almost masculine personality : his father, despite humane ideals and principles, as prone to sudden and ungovernable outbursts of violent anger. Notes on the circumstances of beatings received at his hands are followed by a reworking of passages from O Providence in which his father (Mr. Stonetun in the novel) thrashes him (Justin), even though this novel had been published the previous year.

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1. Dedicated, as would be expected, to his father. The latter part of this 11,000 word novella is far from autobiographical since Paul Davril's father is killed in Flanders in the War and his mother remarries : Paul's step-father Gilbert Threll is a sadistic bully who delights in chastising him.

2. Sigmund Freud, op. cit., XVIII, 230 - 232.

3. Vide Ch. 1, p. 9, of this dissertation, footnote 2.

In what is evidently an obsession with beating, Hampson's masochistic urge is to be beaten, preferably by his father. Freud claims, "In the male phantasy....the being beaten stands for being loved." [1] The father is taken as the object of love in the homosexual attitude, the beating-phantasy having its origin in the incestuous attachment to the father.[2]

Hampson's obsession with beating appears in all his novels. It is strongly in evidence in the unpublished Tuneless Numbers in the person of Paul's sadistic step-father, Gilbert Threll ; it smoulders below the surface in O Providence, where Justin's narrow escapes are more frequent than the beatings he receives ; Freddy Flack threatens violence to his brother-in-law Tom and then inflicts it on his wife, Ivy, in Saturday Night at the Greyhound ; Alf Borlay gives his devoted brother Ted an unjustifiable hiding, submissively received, in Strip Jack Naked ; Gilbert Walton thrashes his son Alan in Family Curse, his account of the incident giving undisguised pleasure to his in-laws ; Francis Blake is beaten by his father, Stephen, indirectly through the influence of Jim Townsend, in The Larches ; the "free-manning" of the kitchen-boy Harry in Cave of the Grand is the reworking by Hampson of an incident involving crude horseplay in which his persona, Alec, was the victim in the unpublished Go Seek A Stranger.[3] The worst violence, however, is done to Joseph Hadden by his father in A Bag of Stones :

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1. Sigmund Freud, 'A Child is Being Beaten', op.cit., XVII, 198.

2. The desire for a beating from the father being, perhaps, the expression of a desire to expiate one's guilty feelings at one's homosexual impulses or desires. On the other hand, both Mario Praz, The Romantic Agony (1933), 1951, pp.415-41[illegible] & pp.476-479, and Ronald Pearsall, The Worm in the Bud, 1969, draw attention to the upper-class, public school Englishman's penchant for flagellation. As Mr. Pearsall observes on p.328: "Primarily intended as a punishment, flagellation became, for generations of schoolboys, a form of sexual pleasure...."

3. "Free-manning", an initiation ceremony for engineering apprentices, consisted in removing the victim's trousers and anointing the lower parts of his body with lubricating oil. Vide also p.15 of this dissertation.

an upbringing of sickening brutality is revenged by murder.[1] On the other hand, Joseph looks for corporal punishment as a just reward from his friend Archie's father, as Francis Blake solicits it from his father by a deliberate act of vandalism.[2,3]

If one accepts the autobiographical veracity of *Go Seek A Stranger*, Hampson was fourteen when introduced to homosexual practices by a schoolmaster. In this novel, two more permanent homosexual liaisons occur, first with Bill, killed in a motor accident in Northern France, and then with the wealthy but more mature Dick.[4] Alec, the Hampson persona, is recognised as a homosexual by many people encountered during his working life ; but by the time he has arrived in London, he has developed concealment and discretion. Alec's leaving home for Nottingham where he finds work as a kitchen-hand in a hotel, though motivated ostensibly by his dismissal from a factory after he has complained to the manager about a free-manning assault by the other apprentices, was due to the difficulty of concealing his emergent homosexuality from his family - presumably Hampson's reason.

Hampson's personal problems are now established as the motivation behind his earliest work - though he cannot achieve publication until he has learned to disguise them,

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1. Violence in Hampson's novels runs from beatings to sudden and violent deaths: as, for example, Paul's fall from the balcony and Joe Tuke's suicide in *O Providence* : Mrs. Tapin's slaughter of the greyhound [illegible] in *Saturday Night at the Greyhound* ; Alf Borley's fatal motor-cycle accident in *Strip Jack Naked* ; and Joseph Hadden's murder of his father (though only reported) in *A Bag of Stones*. Deaths of parents, more frequently the mother, sometimes hated or despised, occur in almost every novel.
2. John Hampson, *A Bag of Stones*, 1952, pp. 113-135, esp. pp. 120-124.
3. John Hampson and L. A. Pavey, *The Larches*, 1938, pp. 120-124; pp. 163-169; & esp. pp. 178-187.
4. The dedication of *Go Seek A Stranger* would seem to possess autobiographical significance: "To W.V.C. who was" - W. for William, Bill in the novel, killed in the car accident; "To R.S.S. who is" - R. for Richard, Dick in the novel, still living; "And to N.N.M.H.S."- Hampson's sister Nona Nellie Mercia (Mercy of *O Providence*) Hampson Simpson, who mothered him in his childhood and probably understood his personal problems more clearly than the rest of the family.

as in O Providence.[1] His sheltered life, in a cultured environment with the Wilson family, allows him the leisure to develop his novelistic technique without the pressures of earning a living in a hotel or by full-time writing. Finding in Ronald someone who needs his care and affection has enabled him to achieve an increasing degree of sublimation of his homosexuality.[2,3] He can come to terms with his personal problems and learn to write about other people's problems. With this development in mind, a return can be made to his literary chronology, and to an examination of the circumstances of rejection or publication of his work, commencing with his earliest novels.

Hampson followed the family theatrical tradition in that his first known work was a three-act play, based on an incident that occurred at the Ashover public house, and later rewritten as the novel Saturday Night at the Greyhound after its failure to arouse the interest of theatrical management.[4,5,6] However, after completing the

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1. Justin's feelings for Dicky Bird could be held to represent a stage of early adolescence through which many normal boys pass, rather than a precursor of adult homosexuality.
2. Mr. Graham Greene's letter to me, 9th. June, 1975: "I particularly admired John's relation with the mongol he looked after for so many years with great affection."
3. Vide Hampson's love affair with Miss Martha Dodd in Berlin in October, 1933; the consummation of his marriage to Therese Gift, May, 1936; Mr. Leslie Halward's letter to me, January (undated) 1975, recalling Hampson's reply to his question on whether he was a homosexual. "I used to be"; and Hampson's sublimation through work for young people, delinquent, disadvantaged, physically or mentally handicapped -- from Ronald Wilson to his work with Ford Thomson in Madras Province and back in Britain.
4. Mrs. Mona McEvoy, letter to me, 10th. August, 1974: "Sat Night was a story of my episode of life (sic) during the short time I was landlady of a Derbyshire pub near Clay Cross and is fairly truthful. John joined me as part protection."
5. Originally written for his brother Mercer's amateur dramatic society in Derby.
6. Hampson's draft of a letter to Jonathan Cape, 20th. December, 1929: "About the Greyhound, it was originally drafted out in the form of a play. I could not get anyone to take the slightest notice of it...I rewrote 'the Greyhound' on the rebound in the form of a novel."

play version, Hampson began gathering material for O Providence in 1926.[1] Although he had completed Go Seek A Stranger by the summer of 1928, which novel he started first is uncertain, even from his own account, which presents conflicting evidence.[2] What is certain is that the rewriting of Saturday Night at the Greyhound as a novel was not completed until after Jonathan Cape had refused Go Seek A Stranger.[3] Certainly O Providence had been completed by the summer of 1930, since both it and Saturday Night at the Greyhound were being submitted to publishers at the same time.[4] However, the long period of time devoted to O Providence seems to have produced a debilitating effect, contributing to its unevenness and formlessness, as contrasted with the unity of form and energetic pace of Saturday Night at the Greyhound, hurriedly rewritten.[5] Even

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1. Another draft of a Hampson letter to Cape, undated, but probably late 1929 or 1930, since seven chs. of O Providence are enclosed with the comment, "I have now been gathering notes and material for this book for the last four years."

2. Hampson's 20th. December, 1929, draft of letter to Cape, refers to O Providence as "my new book" and "the first I have ever written" and then, conflictingly, to finishing Saturday Night at the Greyhound "after your refusal of Go Seek A Stranger". Cape acknowledged receipt of the Mss. of Go Seek A Stranger on 27th. August, 1928; Leonard Woolf's letter rejecting it on behalf of the Hogarth Press is dated 13th. October, 1928, so that Cape's refusal must have been immediate. According to Raymond Savage, Hampson's literary agent, Cape returned the Mss. of Saturday Night at the Greyhound to him by 12th. December, 1929, so that Hampson now attempted to interest him in O Providence.

3. From the above evidence, during September, 1928, Go Seek A Stranger was returned from Cape, so the completion of Saturday Night at the Greyhound would have taken place by the autumn of 1929, if not earlier.

4. Hampson's draft of a letter dated 8th. June, 1930, to an unnamed publisher (who may have been Leonard Woolf) to whom Hampson's agent, Raymond Savage, is "to forward the Mss. of both books to you" (and the Hogarth Press eventually published both novels).

5. The earliest drafts of O Providence in existence among Hampson's papers showed "Guy" as the hero, aged 28, a confirmed homosexual, looking back on his childhood; such a stance would have vitiated publication. A later draft shows him as Justin, aged 30; finally, this scaffolding is abandoned.

so, Hampson was wrong in his critical verdict of the two novels, his preference for O Providence indicating that he was still immersed in private concerns.[1]

Prior to this, however, in September, 1928, Hampson had submitted Go Seek A Stranger to the Hogarth Press ; though obliged to refuse it, Leonard Woolf's response was encouraging.[2] This prompted Hampson to send the Mss. to Forrest Reid for advice.[3] The latter gave him a tactful English lesson in sentence construction and punctuation ; constructive criticism of Hampson's novel contained useful obiter dicta on the novelist's technique:

> Keep to picture and drama and rule out every conversation that does not push the story forward...Don't let your characters talk of things happening, but show them happening. 4

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1. Hampson's draft letter of 20th. December, 1929, to Cape contains both an inlated estimate of O Providence as well as a denigratory one of Saturday Night at the Greyhound, though Cape had just refused the latter. Of O Providence: "Naturally I beleive (sic) I am doing the best long work that I have ever attempted, and while not satisfied completely, I know the book is good, my own desire to write has never been so great as it is now..." He adds that he finished Saturday Night at the Greyhound "without much hope, (very badly I'm afraid)..." and that "at the moment I am not interested in it. The characters lack resistance to providence. For that reason, I feel half hearted about them." Also in the draft of Hampson's letter of 8th. June, 1930, possibly to Leonard Woolf, he still holds to the same viewpoint six months later: "Saturday Night at the Greyhound is (I feel) a far less important achievement than O Providence..."

2. Leonard Woolf, letter to John Hampson, 13th. October, 1928: Go Seek A Stranger "has interested us greatly and has such merits that we should have liked to publish. Unfortunately we do not think that this would be possible under present circumstances." The explicit depiction of homosexual relationships proved a deterrent. The risk of prosecutions for publishing obscene material was too great in the 1930's.

3. Havelock Ellis, op. cit., p. 340, mentions Forrest Reid's The Garden God : A Tale of Two Boys, 1905, as "a charming and delicately written idyll" in the context of boys' feelings of attraction for each other. Hampson had read Havelock Ellis, vide Ch. 1, p. 12, footnote 1, of this dissertation, and may have thought that Forrest Reid would be sympathetic to his problems as expressed in Go Seek A Stranger.

4. Forrest Reid, letter to John Hampson, 1st. February, 1929.

The latter part of Hampson's novel, however, had degenerated into a tract ; a new novel, using much of the material from the central character's early life, was advised.[1]

It was Leonard Woolf who accepted Saturday Night at the Greyhound, publishing it in February, 1931, with Hampson's dedication to Forrest Reid ; and after its success, following it with O Providence in February, 1932.[2] Hampson's short story, 'The Sight of Blood', appeared in Life and Letters in April, 1931, after which the Ulysses Bookshop printed a limited edition of 145 copies of it in September.[3,4] In November E. Lahr produced an artistic printing of 250 copies of two Hampson short stories, 'The Mare's Nest' and 'The Long Shadow', entitled Two Stories. Nevertheless, since many critics disliked Justin Stonetun, O Providence's failure to follow up the success of Saturday Night at the Greyhound caused Leonard Woolf eventually to reject Strip Jack Naked which he had received late in 1932 ; ultimately Heinemann published this novel in June, 1934.[5]

In September, 1933, Hampson completed Foreign English, which describes the demise of an apparently homosexual relationship, its decline being rapidly accelerated when one of the protagonists falls in love with a girl encountered on the train from Ostend to Berlin. A rapid courtship during a fortnight's holiday is successfully concluded by an engagement during the Channel crossing :

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1. Ibid. Though parts of the Mss. are now missing, Hampson may have destroyed the latter part on Forrest Reid's advice. Some of the material describing work in hotel kitchens was drawn upon by Hampson in Care of the Grand, 1939.

2. Leonard Woolf, Downhill All the Way, 1919-1939, 1967, p. 173, lists Saturday Night at the Greyhound as the Hogarth Press's third greatest success for Spring, 1931, with 3,000 copies sold. The June, 1937, Penguin reprint sold 79,947, but no figures were available for the 1950 Eyre & Spottiswoode reissue.

3. Life and Letters, ed. Desmond MacCarthy, VI, 269-273.

4. Edward O'Brien included it in his anthology, The Best Short Stories of 1931.

5. Leonard Woolf, letter to John Hampson, 5th. January, 1933: "We have read your MS. and I should very much like to have a talk to you about it." No further correspondence on this matter has survived, but they evidently remained on friendly terms, Hampson dedicating Family Curse to Leonard Woolf in 1936 and writing a letter of sympathy on Virginia Woolf's suicide.

the other young man has solaced himself with a new male friendship in Berlin. As late as 1937 Mr. Christopher Isherwood commented on this novel's "unprintability" despite the "interesting situation" it depicted.[1] In *Strip Jack Naked* Hampson had depicted a brother-fixation in a young man who spurned women but who later learned to marry and love one of them : now he is continuing to explore the possibilities of sexual change in a young man from apparently homosexual to heterosexual. Coincidentally, less than two weeks after the completion of *Foreign English*, Hampson travelled to Berlin to report on the Reichstag Fire Trial for *The New English Weekly*.[2] Here, also, occurred Hampson's love affair with Miss Martha Dodd, daughter of the United States ambassador.[3,4]

Also in 1933, Hampson met Walter Allen ; they began to meet regularly in Birmingham.[5] This was the origin of the Birmingham Group, whose meetings continued through 1935 and 1936.[6] As a group it was amorphous, its members originating

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1. Christopher Isherwood's letter to John Hampson, 23rd. September, 1937. Mr. Isherwood's comments infer no basic revision of the 1933 Mss. Isherwood did not show Hampson any of his Mss. (such as *The Lost*, later rewritten as *Mr. Norris Changes Trains* and *Goodbye to Berlin*): this he confirmed in his letter to me, 26th. January, 1975.
2. His article, 'Swastika Night', among his papers, was described as "provocative and exciting" by Victor Gollancz in 1938, and angered the Nazis.
3. Miss Martha Dodd, daughter of William E. Dodd (1869-1940), U.S. ambassador at Berlin 1933-1937, had reviewed *Saturday Night at the Greyhound* for the *Chicago Evening Post*, 24th. July, 1931. According to Hampson's friend A.W. Dodd, their relationship became intimate and marriage was contemplated; Miss Dodd's letters to Hampson were destroyed on the latter's death.
4. 'Swastika Night' infers an earlier Hampson visit to Berlin in August, 1931, a date cited in comparisons about improved living standards and the Nazi closure of the most notorious night-clubs. A 1931 visit would account for the accurate depiction of the Berlin background in *Foreign English*. Since, however, the Dodds do not seem to have arrived in Berlin until 1933, Hampson's love affair presumably began in the October of that year.
5. Initially through Allen's radio talk, 'The Young Men Speak', in which Hampson was featured. Mr. Walter Allen in his letter to me dated 12th. July, 1974, stated: "I met John in 1933, and for ten years or so he was my closest friend."
6. According to Mr. Allen, the Lord Nelson, a public house off Corporation Street in the centre of Birmingham, was the venue of the meetings held every Thursday evening.

from contrasted social backgrounds and possessing divergent literary aims.[1] Walter Brierley, an ex-miner whose first novel Means Test Man (1935) was rendered publishable by Hampson and Allen, lived in Derby and attended meetings very rarely.[2] Leslie Halward and Peter Chamberlain, however, attended the meetings regularly with Hampson and Allen. Leslie Halward, mainly a short-story writer whose naturalistic approach reflects his varied working experiences in a working-class environment, introduced himself in February, 1935 ; and shortly afterwards, Peter Chamberlain, from a wealthy, sophisticated background, who had met Hampson through the latter's motor-cycle racing brother James, followed him.[3] Edward O'Brien, an American journalist who had published individual members of the Group in New Stories admitted that the Group "lay no claim to a common purpose" and added that the work of each "has developed spontaneously without any close common association" though he had discovered a "natural community of achievement" when its members first contributed to New Stories. Leslie Halward, in his autobiography Let Me Tell You (1938), is more explicit:

> We never regarded ourselves as a group; it was left to O'Brien to so christen us; we were simply four young men who, having common interests and vaguely similar ideas, met periodically for the purpose of explaining each to the other where he was wrong. [4]

With Halward moving to Guarlsford, a village near Malvern, on his marriage, and Chamberlain to Chelsea, only Allen and Hampson remained in Birmingham.[5]

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1. Also geographically divergent: O'Brien, the American journalist who gave the Group its name, possessed an American conception of English geography.
2. Another Derbyshire "member" who did not attend the Birmingham meetings was Hedley Carter, a short story writer. Mr. Walter Allen did not include Carter in his article on the Birmingham Group, 'Literature Made in Birmingham', Sunday Mercury (Birmingham), 6th. June, 1937. but does so in his letter to me of 12th. July, 1974. Brierley attended meetings only twice. Hampson's assistance in finding Brierley a job is recorded on p. 10, footnote 5, of this dissertation.
3. Vide p. 10, footnote 2, of this dissertation.
4. Leslie Halward, Let Me Tell You, 1938, p. 251: pp. 244-251 describe the formation of the Birmingham Group. Halward also provides the O'Brien quotations, above, but fails to give their source.
5. In 1936 Hampson was best man at Leslie Halward's wedding: the Halwards named their cottage "O Providence": ibid, pp. 95-289.

During these years, Hampson was also widening his circle of friends outside Birmingham, whether fellow-novelists and short-story writers, editors of magazines and reviews, publishers, or B.B.C. producers. Grayson Books published, in a limited edition of 285 copies, Hampson's short story, *Man About the House*, in 1935, dedicated to Leonard Pavey, one of O'Brien's fellow editors of *New Stories*, with whom Hampson commenced his collaboration in the novel *The Larches* this same year. Halward's penetrating criticism of this short story, however, supports his view that Hampson is not a working-class writer ; even though he may place his characters in a working-class environment, they still behave as middle-class.[1] Indeed, Hampson's next two novels are securely middle-class in their setting, *Family Curse* (1936), describing the death of a matriarchal figure as members of a materialistic, conventional, middle-class Birmingham family gather like vultures, with the Hampson persona of "the secret enemy", the last major character in Hampson's novels who is clearly homosexual, as the *deus ex machina*.[2] *The Larches* (1938), a study of a father and son relationship, sees Hampson contributing his chapters from the son's viewpoint, Pavey from the father's, in a remarkably smooth collaboration.[3] Both these novels, and the next, *Care of the Grand* (1939), in which Hampson uses his experience of working in hotels, previously documented in *Go Seek A Stranger*, display an increasingly effective use of novelistic technique ; so that

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1. Leslie Halward, letter to John Hampson, 13th. February, 1935: "Only middle and upper class fathers explain to their children why they are thrashing them" - which is precisely what Reuben, the working-class father in Hampson's short story *Man About the House* was depicted as doing. Mr. Halward, in his letter to me dated 23rd. July, 1974, makes the same comment about Hampson in more general terms: "I always felt that although he had a great compassion for the working class he was too genteel to write convincingly about them."

2. *Vide* Ch. 1, p. 11, of this dissertation.

3. Mr. Halward in conversation with me recalled meeting Pavey, some fifteen years Hampson's senior, who had had part of his jaw shot away in Flanders during the first World War. Pavey, a London civil servant, married, of middle-class background, commenced writing at the same time as Hampson, his first published novel, [illegible] Line, appearing in 1931, the same year as *Saturday Night at the Greyhound*.

his growing detachment from personal concerns reaches its zenith in the naturalistic, objective reportage of the life of the Grand Hotel.[1]

The circumstances of Hampson's marriage in 1936 are linked to his hatred of the Nazi regime and to his friendship with W.H.Auden.[2,3] In 1935, Auden had married Erika Mann to provide her with the security of British citizenship. She and her friend Therese Giehse, as refugees from the Nazis, had satirised the Hitler regime in the Pepper-mill Revue in Zurich. Auden may have suggested that Hampson should marry Therese Giehse to make her a British citizen and certainly supervised the arrangements ; he, Louis MacNeice, Walter Allen and R.D.Smith witnessed the ceremony.[4] Although after this "arranged" marriage the partners followed their respective careers, Therese Giehse returning to Zurich where she was later to spend the War years, her letters show a sincere affection for her husband ; and whenever she visited Britain they would spend some time together at Four Ashes.[5]

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1. This novel's first chapter was published separately in New Letters in America, I, 26-36, September, 1937, as a short story, 'Care of Grand Hotel'. However, the novel's British publishers, Chapman and Hall, objected to Hampson's scatological terms and his references to sexual perversion ; Hampson kept their reader's report, discovered among his papers. Nevertheless, on the evidence of a comparison between the two extant versions of Ch.1, he acceded to approximately only one-third of their requests prior to the publication of the novel in 1939. Vide Ch.4, p.83, footnote 2, of this dissertation for further details of the reader's report.

2. Vide 'Swastika Night', Ch.1, p.20, footnote 2, of this dissertation.

3. Auden's father was Medical Officer of Health for the city of Birmingham.

4. At Solihull Register Office on 20th. May, 1936. Walter Allen was best man. Vide Ch.1, p.16, footnote 3, of this dissertation. Therese Giehse was Mrs. John Hampson's professional name ; her maiden name was Gift.

5. According to Hampson's sister, Mrs. Mona McEvoy, the marriage was consummated: "John said there should be no mistake about her being a British subject" - letter to me, 10th. August, 1974. Therese Giehse eventually rejoined the Berliner Ensemble shortly before Brecht's death in 1954. Some critics regarded her as the finest actress appearing in the German-speaking theatre at that time. She died in Munich on 3rd. March, 1975, aged 78.

Hampson hated the tyranny of the Nazis but also disliked the War. Despite this, he attempted to enlist in the R.A.F. in 1943 but was rejected on medical grounds.[1] Thus an experience that might have turned his imagination into a new and outward direction was denied him. Poor Fancy Riches, an unpublished novel probably commenced shortly before the beginning of the War, is an escapist fantasy, its attempts at ironic humour a failure, its characters and settings largely outside his range : it seems as though Hampson's powers of creativity had dried up at the same time as his powers of self-criticism.[2] However, the shell of technique remained, the documentary detailing of Care of the Grand initiating documentary work for the B.B.C.[3]

In 1944, Hampson employed his gastronomic expertise acquired as a chef, in The English at Table, in Collins's Britain in Pictures series.[4] Then, with rationing and war-time food problems disappearing, Hampson turned his attention to delinquent and maladjusted children in his B.B.C. work.[5] Documentary programmes on approved schools and Borstals drew him into examining the experimental work of Lieut.-Col. James Ford Thomson as Educational Psychologist for Madras State. An advance on the reprint of Saturday Night at the Greyhound enabled Hampson to depart for a three-month Indian lecture tour in 1948.[6] He returned to Britain a disciple of Ford

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1. Dr. Dorothy Jordan Lloyd, Hampson's cousin, in a letter to John Hampson, 23rd. December, 1942: "The R.A.F. will be fresh background if they take you in."

2. Mr. Walter Allen supports this view, vide Ch. 4, p. 76, footnote 1, of this dissertation.

3. 'Rationing', On the Food Front, Civilians' War, No. 15, 22nd. August, 1941; 'So You Don't Like Christmas Pudding', 17th. January, 1946. Another documentary work, 'Coventry Cathedral', The Stones Cry Out, No. 29, described the destruction of Coventry Cathedral by German bombers : the programme was broadcast on 17th. November, 1941.

4. Hampson received £50 for this work, with no royalties.

5. 'Approved Schools', Difficult Children, 3, 22nd. October, 1947; 'Borstal', Difficult Children, 4, 29th. October, 1947. Hampson's historical fantasy about Banbury as seen through a child's eyes, 'Ride A Cock Horse', was broadcast on 13th. July, 1951.

6. Hampson's friend E.M. Forster cabled him £50 to enable him to stay on in India for a further three months.

Thomson and in 1949 completed Madras Adventure, his account of the latter's work in the Madras Province, but was unable to interest a publisher in it.[1]

In 1952, Hampson's last novel, A Bag of Stones, was published. Though evidence suggests that it may have been near completion before he travelled to India, it shows the influence of Ford Thomson's ideas.[2] This novel's almost unrelieved gloom and incessant violence, its unconvincing characterisation which seems linked to its failure to sustain an artistic life of its own, are features that make it read like a psychological case-history. Shortly before this novel's publication, Hampson and Ford Thomson (who had returned to Britain) collaborated in a television documentary-play, A Happy Little Family, a study of childhood delinquency, eventually rejected by the B.B.C.[3] The only late work of Hampson's which shows new developments is his short stories with Indian settings.[4] Attempts to adapt Saturday Night at the Greyhound for filming had been frustrated, initially through disagreements with script-writers, but then by the financial embargo imposed by the War : at the end of his life, Hampson was once more working at a stage version. The wheel had turned full circle.

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1. Ford Thomson's own account of his theories, Ask the Children, was published by Cassell in 1950, though he devoted only pp.203-207 to his work in reorganising the Certified (Approved) Schools in Madras Province. The lack of support for Ford Thomson's ideas among contemporary child psychologists was largely due to his advocacy of corporal punishment. An unsigned review of Ford Thomson's book in the Times Educational Supplement, 24th. March, 1950, p.211, criticises him on these grounds. On account of his beating obsessions, Hampson may have been subconsciously attracted to Ford Thomson's theories. He certainly continued to assist him in his work in Britain after he had resigned his post in Madras. With Ford Thomson's book on the list of forthcoming publications and his theories failing to command professional support, Hampson's Mss. did not arouse enough interest to find a publisher.

2. Vide Archie Jenkins' relationship with his father. Hampson's attempt to portray an ideal father-son relationship, as contrasted with that between Bert and Joseph Hadden.

3. Submitted under the pseudonym of T.F. Jones. Hampson even attended a television writers' course provided by the B.B.C.

4. 'The Post' appeared in Penguin New Writing, XL, 1950, 51-59.

In his last years, Hampson's attempts to diversify his literary career met with only limited success. His psychological problems seem to have reasserted themselves, despite their partial sublimation in social work for maladjusted or deprived boys. In this, unfortunately, his association with Ford Thomson contributed to his decline in creativity as a writer.[1] Moreover, his physical health, never strong, also declined during the last two years of his life.[2] This was certainly exacerbated by "Skipper" Wilson's death in 1954 and the resultant move from Four Ashes, with its happy associations, to a much smaller house in Solihull.[3]

Finally, Hampson's death is symptomatic of the unhappiness and anger resulting from the frustrations implicit in his work and life. Shortly before Christmas, 1955, Hampson was admitted to Solihull General Hospital after a heart attack. Thereafter, the Christmas festivities, in denying him the rest and quiet that he needed, so incensed him that on Boxing Day he discharged himself : he demanded his clothes, dressed himself - and dropped dead.[4] This unnecessary tragedy, his premature, dramatic departure, reads like an incident from one of his novels - which so often depict sudden, unexpected, and sometimes violent death.[5]

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1. This is not a merely personal opinion, but one expressed independently by Mr. Walter Allen, Mr. Leslie Halward, Mr. A. W. Dodd, and Hampson's nephew, Mr. Roger Hubank, who had met Ford Thomson. Ford Thomson was a dominant personality: to achieve what he did in Madras Province, he needed to be thus. But perhaps Hampson was still looking for a father-substitute. Ford Thomson was certainly a father-figure to hundreds of orphaned children.

2. A minor operation, not detailed, and a short period of a fortnight spent in a private nursing home in Solihull, are recorded on bills paid for by John Wilson on behalf of John Hampson in 1953, and kept by the latter.

3. Ronald Wilson would have been much more difficult to manage in the smaller house ; Hampson had sufficient room at Four Ashes to carry out his literary work in privacy, but this seems unlikely in the house in Widney Manor Road.

4. Hampson's sister Mrs. Mona McEvoy furnished this account of his death in her letter of 10th. August to me. John Hampson was only 54 years old.

5. A characteristic that Hampson shares with his friend E.M. Forster; for instances in Hampson's novels, vide Ch. 1, p. 15, footnote 1, of this dissertation.

CHAPTER II : THE AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL ELEMENTS AND THEIR REFINEMENT AND STRUCTURING IN THE EARLY NOVELS :

from Go Seek A Stranger (unpublished,1928)
Tuneless Numbers (unpublished,1928)
and O Providence (1932)
to Saturday Night at the Greyhound (1931).

V.S.Pritchett's comment on Gissing might well be applied to Hampson:

> We are driven back,as always with imperfect artists,to the entanglement of the person and his work. 1

The main influences on the recurrent themes of John Hampson's novels are the tensions experienced and felt in his own family. He often tries to define his relationship to his own family as well as to society at large,as Walter Allen points out:

> In almost all Hampson's novels there appears the figure of the young man,often a youngest son....who is,or sees himself to be,in permanent estrangement from society because he is homosexual. He is wiser,more clear-sighted,more disinterested,than the other characters ; he sees through them and foresees the consequences of their behaviour, even though he may be powerless to prevent them ; though he participates in the action, he is also its chorus. 2

This detachment is less present in the central figure in the earlier,unpublished work,to which there is room for only brief reference. That a novelist begins with autobiographical material is a truism : all these four works are autobiograph-

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1.V.S.Pritchett,The Working Novelist,1965,p.62.

2.Walter Allen,Tradition and Dream (1964),1971,p.247.

ical in some measure.[1] Go Seek A Stranger and O Providence conform most closely to this pattern : the former deals with Hampson's life from 1915 to about 1923, from fourteen to his early twenties ; the latter, from earliest childhood to early adolescence, to past his fourteenth birthday. Their single narrator is Hampson speaking through the central, dominant character.

O Providence was publishable because an early adolescent bias towards homosexuality may be construed as a stage in normal development ; Go Seek A Stranger with its seduction of the main character, Alec, by a schoolmaster, his attempted rape by a tramp in a Liverpool doss-house, and his two homosexual relationships, with Bill, and then, after Bill's death, with Dick, was unpublishable owing to its explicitness, as Leonard Woolf tactfully pointed out.[2] This novel describes Hampson growing up into a homosexual, and the personal, family, and social tensions engendered. On the other hand, Tuneless Numbers, though it depicts Hampson's dominant love for his father and fear of rejection by his parents in favour of other, especially younger children, is a clinical exercise : having read Havelock Ellis and Freud

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1. Vide Harry Levin, James Joyce. A Critical Introduction (1944), 1971, pp. 47-48, esp. p. 47: "The history of the realistic novel shows that fiction tends toward autobiography. The increasing demands for social and psychological detail that are made upon the novelist can only be satisfied out of his own experience. The forces which make him an outsider focus his observation upon himself. He becomes his own hero, and begins to crowd his other characters into the background. The background takes on a new importance for its influence on his own character. The theme of the novel is the formation of character ; its habitual pattern is that of apprenticeship or education..."

2. Vide Ch. 1, p. 18, footnote 2, of this dissertation.

on homosexuality, Hampson invents family relationships to account for it.[1]

O Providence, however, returns to pure autobiography, albeit still devoted to the working out of a personal problem.[2] Notes discovered among Hampson's papers concentrate on the means to achieve his purpose rather than on the purpose itself ; the latter is implicit. Under the heading "Arguement" (sic) Hampson merely states that his theme is the exploration of the meaning and purpose of life:

> Justin is thirty and dubious about life, has it any purpose and if so what? By retracing the path of memory can he arrive at some reasonable conclusion about the future? He beleives (sic) that this may be possible; so begins the attempt. 3

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1. Vide Ch.1, p.13, footnote 1, of this dissertation. This work is marred by a lack of emotional restraint uncommon in Hampson, but this may be due to its private and personal nature, since there is only one possible instance of Hampson's having attempted to find a publisher for it, and this was a tentative preliminary enquiry (vide Desmond MacCarthy's letter to Hampson, 19th. November, 1926, quoted in the Appendix to this dissertation, p.100). Family tensions present in the Prologue to Go Seek A Stranger before Alec is excited by these and the desire to live his life as he wishes to live it, and in the second, third, and fourth parts of O Providence, after the Stonetum family have lost their wealth and have descended to the economic level of the more fortunate working-class, artisan, and small shop-keeper society, are intensified in The Larches. Characters - as whenever there is a theory to be proved - tend towards stereotypes : Alice Davril is the bad mother, sensual, desiring sex but not the resultant offspring, and hating Paul Davril in particular because his delicate nature and ill-health make greater demands on her ; and Paul's sadistic step-father, Gilbert Thrall, is the male version of the archetypal cruel step-mother.
2. Hampson commenced working on O Providence before he began rewriting Saturday Night at the Greyhound as a novel; though the order in which these novels are considered in this Ch. was influenced by the closer relationship of the former to the first, unpublished works.
3. This "retracing the path of memory" of a thirty-year old central character relates to E.S.C.Jones's review of O Providence in Adelphi, London, May, 1932, in which he reveals a weakness, not in Hampson's technique but in his choice of method: "The author has not attempted to solve the chief problem entailed by his theme: how to portray a child's thoughts unadulterated by the writer's thoughts about him, a child's reactions uncoloured by the writer's retrospective knowledge."

The homosexual, being denied procreation through his nature, sees no biological immortality ; and if agnosticism undermines his belief in an after-life, his sole purpose in existence becomes his artistic creativity with its prospect of immortality through his work. Disillusionment with his mature self leads him to examine the insights associated with childhood innocence : here, Hampson's intention is to be both patient and psychoanalyst.

In his search for truth, Hampson sets down principles as means to this end.

> Vol. one. Everything shall be subject to memory, including suppositions about minor characters. Period has no real importance to the child, therefore it shall be allowed no importance in the book. An attempt shall be made to recover childlike impressions of people, places & things. Simple language shall be striven for. Romance shall be excluded and the imagination shall be kept under control.
>
> Vol. two. Memory may be aided by the play of imagination. Sex life has a large part here. Period begins to assume importance. People places and things gain importance through contact with the inner boy. He begins a concious (sic) search for experience and sensation, and he attempts self expression. Net result.
>
> Vol. three. Dissatisfaction with Life. (He is Life). Retreat from a purely material life and aims. The new life compared with the coming of conciousness (sic). Dissapointment (sic).
>
> Vol. four. Fair comment on the past. The future reveawed (sic). [1]

These principles attempt to impose an inner form on the novel through the development of Justin, as shown by what he experiences and how he interprets it, within the more clearly defined structure of the family's life in their four successive houses, one to each volume, and each placed in a different socio-economic ambience.[2] Nevertheless, the main

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1. Holograph notes among Hampson's papers.

2. O Providence is sub-divided thus, into "parts" instead of "volumes" : I, Five Ways; II, The House in Laurel Road; III, Seventree End; IV, Park View. The opening paragraphs of each section

weakness of this novel is its lack of form : a conclusion is imposed when Justin is about to start work, his father and two elder brothers having left home to fight in the 1914-1918 War.[1] Insofar as Justin's character has developed, at the age of fourteen he would hardly have realised that homosexuality will be his permanent attribute rather than a transient stage in the process of maturation.[2] In _O Providence_, therefore, a plot in the conventional sense would be alien to the novel's dominant theme and outside Hampson's intention. Instead, a series of incidents occurring to Justin are narrated through him in linear succession, and in his rare absences from the narrative, minor characters discuss him, so that the entire novel relates to him.[3]

Justin Stonetun, the youngest of six children, being delicate, suffers a cossetted upbringing until he is six. His wealthy parents appear more interested in their social life than in their children, surrounded by nannies, governesses and servants. Furthermore, Justin is largely isolated from his brothers and sisters because of his ill-health. To compensate for his mother's lack of affection, he invents a fairy godmother. Visits to his grandmother's house at Christmas, to a pantomime, and to a party where he forms a temporary attachment to an older girl, all indicate Justin's growing awareness of the world outside Five Ways. Later, in the garden, Justin's portrait is being painted by his Uncle Adrian. One day, to watch the progress of a sitting, the other children rush on to a first-floor balcony from which Paul falls to his death, the fall being witnessed by Justin, who is blamed indirectly for the tragedy by Paul's domineering twin, Victor. While Victor is sent away to recuperate, Justin

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1. L.P. Hartley, reviewing _O Providence_ in the _Week End Review_, London, 30th April, 1932, made this point: "When we leave him (Justin)...we do not feel any sense of climax. The design is not completed ; the wool has come to an end."

2. _Vide_ Ch.1, p.16, footnote 1, of this dissertation. Hampson has to conclude his novel at an arbitrary point, rather than continue past the point of unprintability, so that its form is inevitably vitiated. Thus also the excision of the Prologue found among his notes, with 30-year-old Justin a confirmed homosexual looking back on his early life.

3. This point is discussed in detail on pp.33 & 34 of this dissertation.

is tormented by recurrent nightmares. Shortly afterwards, Mr.Stonetun's business partner absconds after having embezzled the firm's capital ; Five Ways and its furniture are sold,and the staff given notice. Justin is temporarily accommodated in a workhouse infirmary before the family are reunited in a working-class,terraced house in Laurel Road, Shafton,a Midlands industrial town,where Mr.Stonetun has secured the post of manager of an ironmongery business.

Family relationships are now forced by proximity into intimacy ; and the mutual antipathy between Justin and Victor is intensified. Justin,in improved health,attends an incompetent private school. He has few friends except for middle-aged women,though he begins to nurture a romantic attachment to his brother Roddy's friend,Dicky Bird. One day Justin wanders off alone to a distant park where he meets a little girl who is subsequently indecently assaulted in his presence by a drunken man.

Improved finances permit the Stonetuns to move into the country to Compton Bradbury. The children enjoy more freedom in village society : accepted by the gentry because their family is genteel while accepted by the village children because they are poor,they transcend the social norms. Justin learns the facts of life from the rector's son,and is disgusted. He forms close friendships with middle-aged women,first with the unconventional Mrs.Frost and then with the squire's sister,Miss Gaunt. Alby,his only friend among his contemporaries,and handicapped by a heart condition, offends Justin by his dog-like devotion. A finely-described village fair is followed by the drama of Joe Tuke's suicide and the stoning of his family after the funeral. Justin's awakening consciousness of both the beauty and the destructiveness in nature presents a counterpoising in his mind, during this rural interlude,of the idyllic and the realistic.

Justin seems surprisingly happy at the family's return to Shafton,to a much larger house in which he enjoys the privacy of his own bedroom. As his talent for drawing

develops, so is his passion for Dicky Bird renewed, exacerbated by Dicky's becoming the hated Victor's friend instead of Roddy's : Victor recognises Justin's feelings and discloses them to Dicky, thereby accomplishing Justin's humiliation. Nevertheless, a swimming expedition enables Justin to sketch Dicky naked ; he makes a copy of this drawing and, at Dicky's request, gives it to him. In the early days of the War, Victor, Dicky Bird, Roddy and, a little later, Mr. Stonetun join the army. At the same time, the fourteen-year-old Justin obtains employment in a leather business ; the novel ends with his optimism at the prospect of his new-found independence.

Hampson's intention is to work out his personal problems in terms of Justin's relationships, mainly with his own family but also to a lesser degree with other members of society, with whom his relationships are impermanent. Although the narration proceeds through Justin's mind, whenever he is too immature for self-analysis Hampson may reveal other people's opinions of him. For example, Nurse Grew discusses Justin with Miss Cuffe, matron of the workhouse infirmary:

> He's affectionate, but...I don't believe he's got a spark of heart feeling in him! Not a spark! Sensitive and surface feeling he may have, but the real thing, no. Neither hate nor love. All the time his mother was at Bournemouth he never once mentioned her, never once! He made friends with a girl years older than himself. Talked of her all the time, between visits. Well! she went off to a school in Germany, and my little lord there never so much as asked about her once, since. You'll see when I'm gone. He'll neither pine nor fret, nor ask for any of us. No love, that's it, no love! 1

About to relinquish her post as Justin's nannie after six years, Nurse Grew's final comment is:

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1. John Hampson, O Providence, 1932, pp. 92-93.

> Neither years, change, nor love will alter him....and there is that other queerness which I can't explain, because I've never fathomed it. 1

On the other hand, the staff of the workhouse infirmary consider Justin full of affection. Nurse Dillon criticises Justin's family: "None of 'em could have loved him. They can't have done, else he would miss them." [2] Nurse Wilder criticises Justin's old nannie for her opinions: "No love in him! No love!why, the darling's full of affection", but is to recant after Justin's overt lack of feeling at leaving her ; he is more interested that trams will pass his new home.[3,4]

What is emerging is the loneliness of a delicate, physically unattractive, sensitive small boy, his loneliness the precursor of that of the homosexual, presented, initially, as the loneliness of the artist. In Justin, the isolation of early ill-health, the company of nurses and governesses and sometimes, at best, his sister Mercy, instead of the parental affection he craved, is followed by the shock of Paul's death and Victor's violent, unjustifiable accusation of his indirect responsibility for it, the fall from the balcony symbolically presaging the financial fall of the house of Stonetun. In the overcrowded terraced house in Laurel Road, with the Stonetun's initial reluctance to associate with working-class neighbours, family relationships become intensified as they are all forced into an unaccustomed close proximity with each other, sharing tasks previously performed by servants. Raymond Williams's comments on D.H. Lawrence's childhood are relevant to Hampson's in Leicester, the effects being magnified by the family's sudden reduction to poverty:

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1. <u>Ibid.</u>, p.93
2. <u>Ibid.</u>, p.93.
3. <u>Ibid.</u>, p.94.
4. <u>Ibid.</u>, p.101 & p.102.

> What such a childhood gave was certainly not tranquillity or security...not even ...happiness. But it gave...the sense of close quick relationships, which came to matter more than anything else. This was the positive result of the life of a family in a small house, where there were no such devices of separation of children and parents as the sending-away to school, or the handing-over to servants, or the relegation to nursery or playroom. Comment on this life...tends to emphasize the noisier factors : the fact that rows are always in the open ; that there is no privacy in crisis ; that want breaks through the small margin of material security and leads to mutual blame and anger. [1]

Raymond Williams emphasizes how a writer would learn of the continuous flow and recoil of sympathy in a close, contained and active life shared by all the working-class family, "a continuous life which, in good and bad, makes for a whole attachment." [2]

As he adjusts to this new situation, Justin should emerge from his self-protective shell. But he does not make friends with other children as his brothers and sisters ; his friendships are for mother-substitutes, mature or middle-aged women, both at Laurel Road and at Rowantree End. He dislikes Victor, is indifferent towards Clare and Roddy, and displays affection only for Mercy : he shows no warmth towards his mother, and reserves his enduring love for his father, albeit unconfided.

> Above everyone he loved him...Of all the people he had ever loved his father was the best.... [3]

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1. Raymond Williams, Culture and Society, 1780-1950 (1958), 1971, p.205.

2. Ibid., p.205. In O Providence, with the move to Laurel Road, children's bedrooms are now shared, Justin sees his father shaving for the first time, and the latter starts chastising his children as any other working-class father. Justin dislikes the lack of privacy : he welcomes the move from Rowantree End to Green Park Road because the latter, larger house permits him to have a bedroom of his own. (John Hampson, op.cit., p.304).

3. Ibid., p.392.

Nevertheless, when his father is about to join the army, Justin cannot express his feelings:

> Self-conscious and miserable, he longed to make his father aware of his love. That was impossible now, he had left it too late. The thoughts he wished to utter should have been spoken before....His father might not understand any more ; might think him silly; mawkish ; affected. He could not risk that. [1]

The secretiveness and reserve of Justin's nature has developed out of the isolation of his initial upbringing, together with the reserve shown between parents and children in the upper-middle-class stratum of society at that time, a reserve which, on Justin's side, has not been broken down by the changed family circumstances.[2] Justin fears rejection, despite his craving for affection, so that his craving becomes a perverse one. He does not care long or deeply for those who quickly return his affection, nor does he respect such people, boasting over his easy conquests of middle-aged women, whom he uses, as Mrs. Frost, and more so, Miss Gaunt.[3] However, as with Dicky Bird, he perversely seeks affection where its return seems impossible. He is drawn to physical beauty but realises that he is physically ugly. At Park View, in the privacy of his attic bedroom,

> He started examining himself, body and mind, and was frightened. The physical part of him had little or no beauty, yet his naked body both fascinated and repelled him. 4

Yet he notices that his eyes are lovely, so that the rest of him does not matter. He rationalises his regret at not being good-looking like Roddy or Dick by believing that he would have been vain, proud and haughty if he had possessed physical beauty ; but even so he attempts an act of mental Narcissism:

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1. *Ibid.*, p.392.
2. Leslie Halward has made the point that John Hampson's middle-class upbringing had an enduring influence on the formation of his character and on his writing, despite his subsequent experiences, particularly during his working life, of the working-class: *vide* Ch.1, p.22, footnote 1, of this dissertation.
3. John Hampson, *op. cit.*, p.293, reveals Justin's own opinion of his abilities to charm middle-aged women: "Whenever he set out to gain a woman's affection he was successful. But with men it was another story."
4. Ibid., p.305.

> He tried to conceive a boy of great beauty and yet the boy must be himself. It could not be done successfully, there were too many faults in the real he for him to exclude them all from the imaginary, impossible he. 1

His failure to win love from where he wants it or, more so, the feeling that he is likely to fail if he should try, also contributes to the gradual formation of "a thin protective shell of secretiveness and independence." [2] But this is also the self-protective introversion of the developing artist, fearing ridicule and destructive criticism from those who understand neither himself nor his work.[3]

Thus O Providence, in providing an insight into the early development of the artist and the potential homosexual, also provides Hampson's most detailed character-study. Forced to express his personal concerns as overtly as he dared, it was a novel that he had to write as part of his development as a novelist, as an exploration of the tensions within himself and within his family. Yet as a novel, it was far from an artistic success.

Firstly, the autobiographical novel describing a child's growing up often becomes dominated by private themes which fail to hold the reader's interest. As Gerald Bullett observed,

> The danger of making fiction out of particular personal memories...is that it encourages slackness in the imagination and bemuses the critical faculty of the author; with the result, first, that the events of the story are reported instead of being created, and, second, that the author, in his fondness for the past, cannot discriminate, as an artist should, between what is to the purpose and what has value for himself alone. 4

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1. Ibid., p.306.

2. William Plomer, op. cit., viii.

3. Ibid., viii. Plomer refers to Justin's being surrounded by "robust young male and female extroverts".

4. Gerald Bullett, New Statesman, London, 5th. March, 1932, from his review of O Providence.

Thus O Providence projects interludes of trivia, often expressed in uninspired writing betraying technical inadequacies in sentence construction, punctuation, and expression:

> Justin was well. Better than he had ever been before. His health was almost normal. Things were better. Much better. They would continue to improve. The Stonetuns were happy, very happy.[1]

To have concentrated on the truly significant events of Justin's life would not merely have imposed concision on a too-lengthy novel but also might have provided a recognisable framework of form ; as it is, the four domiciles superimpose a merely workable division into four sections.[2]

Moreover, the novel's conclusion is arbitrarily imposed for, if Hampson had continued Justin's story further, he would have faced increasing difficulties in concealing his hero's nascent homosexuality. Instead, with Britain involved in the War and Mr. Stonetun and his two elder sons departed into the army, Justin marches off with false optimism to his first job for, despite his new-found independence, he is facing a situation which will expose him to further problems.[3]

Passages of arresting description, truthful insight and characteristic honesty in O Providence show that Hampson has the ability to become an original and competent novelist if he can escape from the shadow of his personal problems and rivet his attention on solving those of novelistic technique. The limitations of the single, dominant character approach

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1. John Hampson, op. cit., p. 304. Among reviewers of O Providence attacking Hampson for his technical weaknesses in English were L.A.G. Strong, The Spectator, 5th. March, 1932; L.P. Hartley, Week End Review, London, 30th. April, 1932; and Ralph Straus, Sunday Times, 28th. February, 1932. To quote from Mr. Straus: "I found myself time after time held up momentarily by Mr. Hampson's insistence on his commas doing the work of semi-colons, colons, and even full-stops..."

2. L.P. Hartley had also criticised Hampson for his weakness in form, vide Ch. 2, p. 31, footnote 1, of this dissertation. For these sub-divisions, vide Ch. 2, p. 30, footnote 2, of this dissertation.

3. As described in Go Seek A Stranger, vide Ch. 1, p. 14, footnote 3, of this dissertation.

through linear narrative are exposed, often to the detriment of the novel's supporting characters. It is not clear how consciously Hampson was aware that he would have to diversify his novelistic technique by visualising life through characters different to his own. That he put this precept into practice in Saturday Night at the Greyhound, however, may be due to the fortunate accident of this novel's having been conceived as a play.[1]

The compact, neat form of Saturday Night at the Greyhound is another legacy of Hampson's original dramatic version. The three parts of the novel, 'Nightfall at the Greyhound', 'The House Opens', and 'The House Closes' signify, respectively, exposition, complication, and resolution.[2] A conflicting triangle of relationships - Tom, Ivy, and Fred - is augmented by two pairs of characters, the first, Mrs. Tapin and her daughter Clara, destructive and active ; the second, the young squire, Roy Grovedon, and his sophisticated London friend, Ruth Dorme, sympathetic but passive : in the background the less articulate and generally unsympathetic villagers provide a Hardean chorus. A complete community encompassing the whole social spectrum is therefore presented. Furthermore, the dramatic unities - of time (eight hours here), place (with two brief exceptions), and action - are observed. The first part, the exposition, by means of the retrospective interior monologues of the five active protagonists - Mrs. Tapin, Tom, Ivy, Clara, Fred, in that order - presents the events leading up to the present, with each narrator's personal commentary augmenting his or her section of advancing narrative in turn. The second part, the complication, adds Ruth Dorme and Roy Grovedon to the five narrators, whose contributions are now commingled and can no longer be confined to separate sections. The increasing space devoted to Tom's viewpoint as Hampson's persona now becomes evident. The third part, the resolution, reverts to the original five narrators in the same order as in part one but with occasional interventions, the one of greatest significance being Tom's coda to Fred's final section, emphasising Hampson's personal

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1. Vide Ch. 1, p. 16, footnotes 5 & 6, of this dissertation.
2. In other words, the three acts of a play.

viewpoint. Another traceable pattern woven through this tight form lies in the movement from unspoken thought,mosts common in part one,to spoken thought and thence to action, with its resultant increase of pace and tension as the novel moves to its climax. With the inescapable nature of the situation being imposed by the predictable,inflexible behaviour of the main characters,especially Fred,the novel's deterministic conclusion is achieved with an Ibsenite certainty. The only departure from realistic attitudes occurs in Tom's falsely optimistic and inconsistent sentiments in the final pages of the novel,as if Hampson is attempting to superimpose a personal optimism running counter to the reality of events. Perhaps he wished to ameliorate the "resistance to providence" which he considered was lacking in Saturday Night at the Greyhound, and one reason for his critical undervaluation of the book.[1] Ruth Dorme expresses Hampson's own neat interpretation of the central impasse:

> Ruth saw it all in a flash. The situation told bluntly savoured of comedy rather than tragedy. The boy trying to help the landlady and her husband,the woman trying to save her man,the man refusing to help himself,remaining unhelpable ; they too because of it. 2

Round this inflexible conflict of personalities,Hampson constructed his plot with assured technical craftsmanship.

Irresponsible,spendthrift,promiscuous and hedonistic Freddy Flack has married Ivy Oakley,daughter of a Birmingham publican. After her parents' death,the Flacks rent the Greyhound Inn at Grovelace,a North Derbyshire mining village. Although the public house can yield a bare profit only under stringent economies,Freddy employs Mrs.Tapin as charwoman and her daughter Clara as barmaid,and Ivy persuades her brother Tom to give up his position as waiter in a London hotel and join them. Tom's conscientiousness is offset by Freddy's idleness,drunkenness,gambling,and indescriminate

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1. Vide Ch.1,p.18,footnote 1,of this dissertation,Hampson's draft letter of 20th.December,1929,to Cape,in which he asserts:"The characters(in Saturday Night at the Greyhound) lack resistance to providence."
2. John Hampson,Saturday Night at the Greyhound,1931,p.157.

treating of customers, so that Ivy's capital of £250 is gradually being squandered in payments to the brewery. Meanwhile Clara has become Freddy's mistress : in the evening spanned by the novel's action, the village wise-woman confirms her pregnancy, but Clara nevertheless is confident that Freddy will leave Ivy for her.

Part One of the novel, 'Nightfall at the Greyhound', describes the relationships of the five main narrators with each other, each telling his or her version of how these relationships developed, achieving about two hours' forward movement of present narrative.

Part Two, 'The Open House', deals with the evening's events at the inn between six and ten p.m., bringing the villagers into the inn as witnesses and commentators on the action, with the addition of Roy Grevedon and Ruth Dorme, dining together upstairs, the latter staying the night. Meanwhile, Clara's pregnancy having been confirmed, she has arranged a secret meeting with Fred in the cellar after stop-tap.

Part Three, 'The House Closes', shows the evil Mrs. Tapin's murder of the Flack greyhound Pertinax, symbolising disaster to the Flack menage ; Freddy's detaining of Clara in the cellar until Ivy can discover them kissing, so that he can unburden himself of Clara through Ivy's dismissal of her; Clara's report to her mother of the circumstances of her pregnancy, during which she mentions Freddy's after-hours' guests ; and Mrs. Tapin's revenge, when she summons the village policeman to disturb the landlord's illegal party. In this instance, the drunken Fred has been cheated at cards of the night's takings, nearly all the bar stock, and all his clothes except his shirt ; Tom has disturbed the party and ensured fair play for Fred to recoup some of his losses before P.C. Gaunter, accompanied by a gloating Mrs. Tapin and Clara, bursts in. Subsequently the Flacks will be evicted and will never be granted another licence.

A superficial verdict of the theme of this novel is the obstinate refusal of a man to adapt himself to circumstances and forego some of his pleasures for the sake of other people, and his childish faith in his ability to escape from the consequences of his actions, encouraged by his ability to win his wife round to his viewpoint against her better judgment. Though Ivy knows that Fred will never reform, she continues to deceive herself that one day he will do so, this hope sustaining her marital relationship. Tom, the realist, knows the truth, that Ivy's only hope of happiness is to leave Fred:

> With brutal earnestness he assured her: "You'll be in the gutter with him too, if you stop. He'll never alter. He'll never be any good to you as long as he lives." Ivy knew, but false hope led her on. "If only he'd try," she said. "I don't grudge him a drink. If only he'd keep sober and not give the stuff away." 1

Ivy is the prisoner of Fred's physical attractiveness and charm, as many other women:

> Ivy could never dissociate what was from what she hoped would be. The two things blended in her thoughts, unbalancing her judgment.
>
> Time had fled by bringing no improvement in her husband's character. Yet she always felt another day would produce the desired qualities in him. Hope was so vivid in her thoughts that she found it incredible to believe that Freddy remained the same easy-going man.
>
> She lacked honesty of mind where he was concerned. The truth about him was too unpleasant to believe ; she only accepted the obvious faults which could not be disregarded. 2

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1. Ibid., p.198.
2. Ibid., p.62.

Tom's intense devotion for his sister would have made him jealous of any man she married, but her marriage to an unworthy man, who uses a sexual charm which the physically unattractive Tom lacks, intensifies his feelings against Fred. Even from their wedding day,

> His hatred and jealousy of Fred grew steadily....The thought of the young couple being all in all to each other made him bitter. Since the beginning of memory he loved Ivy, worshipped her. No matter what fault others found in her, always he had sought to shield and defend her from them. That love had been the one thing in his life. Ivy returned it till Freddy Flack came on the scene, then she was hurt at Tom's lack of kind feeling for the man she had chosen. 1

On the other hand, Fred resents Tom's influence over his sister as well as the latter's moral superiority and occasionally spoken but more often unspoken criticism of him implicit in his attitudes. Tom's rectitude is diametrically opposed to Fred's irresponsibility ; serious-minded, conscientious and hard-working, he despises Fred's use of charm and good looks to influence women, particularly Ivy.

> Tom is against those who, like his brother-in-law, "take life lightly"; and against those who scheme wickedly for their own advancement, especially at the expense of the Flack menage ; and against those who by want of feeling increase the asperity of circumstances. 2

Thus the central trio of characters are locked in static opposition, in set positions of family tension, of disregarded love and smouldering contempt and dislike.[3]

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1. Ibid., p.34.
2. William Plomer, op. cit., x.
3. As summed up neatly by Ruth Dorme, vide Ch.2, p.40, footnote 2, of this dissertation.

In such a short time-scale of eight hours there can be no change of character but only a change of perception of character : as in Clara's realisation that Fred is merely amusing himself with her.[1] Fred consistently loves himself first and Ivy a poor second, and then only provided she will eventually forgive him after each periodic unfaithfulness. He is unconcerned at Ivy's threats to leave him ; if she ever did so, he would quite cheerfully find someone else. Whatever happened, whatever Ivy threatened,

> she might rave her head off, but in the end he would do just as he liked. Always he had done so. The woman was not born who could make him alter ; she never would be. It was about time Ivy knew that much, too. She might be more reasonable then. 2

Tom Oakley is as much the victim of love for his sister as she for her husband. Tom, moreover, is what William Plomer personified as Hampson's recurrent image of "the lone hand, the private heart, the individual of catlike independence, faithful, gentle, constant." [3] Such a person is "an embodiment of personal devotion and loyalty, a champion of a beloved person through trials or beyond death...." [4] Thus Tom Oakley is

> an enemy of all that threatens the happiness and well-being of his sister, who, to Tom, stands for all that is gentle and cherishable and who, through no fault of her own except loving unwisely...., has been caught up in a fatal current of events. 5

The relationship that dominates Saturday Night at the Greyhound is not between Fred and Ivy but between Tom and Ivy. Underlying the whole novel are Hampson's private themes, his suppressed homosexuality, his fixation on his

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1. John Hampson, op.cit., pp.202-205.

2. Ibid., pp.82-83.

3. William Plomer, op.cit, ix.

4. Ibid., ix.

5. Ibid., x.

sister Mona.[1] Tom Oakley is the Hampson persona most closely in accord with Walter Allen's depiction of the typical Hampson young man, homosexual, and thus in estrangement from society, perceptive of the motivation behind others' actions, which he is nevertheless powerless to prevent, so that his role is passive, despite his personal involvement in the action ; and thus, reduced to the status of commentator, often achieving an ironic detachment reflecting a good-humoured acceptance of his limitations.[2] However, Tom's homosexuality or, perhaps, asexuality, does not impinge on the novel except to arouse Clara's hostility at his lack of response to her overtures.[3]

> Tom was the only man she had ever met at close quarters who failed to respond to her charm and delicate overtures. For that she hated him. She had not desired him except as a scalp for her collection, but his failure to respond infuriated her. When the boy became conscious of her interest, his coldness turned to scarcely veiled hostility. So provoked, her feelings turned quickly to hatred. Everything that she could do to widen the rift between the lad and his brother-in-law was done. 4

Tom's passivity is the natural concomitant of his lack of direct, active heterosexuality, as contrasted with the womanising Fred. Tom is uninterested in competing for women's favours, except to retain his sister's love, so precluding his forming any other close relationships, either with other women, or even, apparently, with men.[5]

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1. Vide Ch.1, p.12, p.13, p.15, footnote 4, p.16, footnote 4, in this dissertation, for biographical references to Hampson's sister-fixation and its influence on his life.

2. Walter Allen, op. cit., p.247, quoted in full on p.27 of this dissertation.

3. Vide Mrs. Tapin's perhaps prejudiced interpretation of Tom's sexual bias: "She knew a thing or two about him, and what she did not know she could guess. Dirty little swipe...Only half a man ; the little shrimp. Mrs. Tapin liked a man to be a man, not an oily-headed, fancy-socked little snot." (John Hampson, op. cit., p.74)

4. Ibid., pp.72-73.

5. Ibid., p.34, Tom's feelings for Ivy: "That love had been the one thing in his life."

Thus Hampson's personal themes of the passive young man suffering family tensions and displaying middle-class sensibilities are present, the latter revealed in Tom's reactions to the Grovelace villagers' behaviour, which often breaks out into violence, another Hampson preoccupation ; these latter themes underlie Hampson's relation of his novel to the themes of social amelioration, so popular among his contemporaries of the 1930's, in his realistic depiction of social conditions obtaining in the area. It is Tom who expresses his concern at the grimness and harshness of life as lived by the villagers, with its poverty, unemployment, miners' deaths, and rural countryside scarred with pit-shafts.[1] Thus Tom exhibits Hampson's sympathy and admiration for the working-class although he is shocked by their behaviour. Tom respects them when they show truthfulness and courage but can bring himself to like only a few individuals. Indeed, he maintains an aloof detachment on account of his business relationship with them, and is respected for it : they cannot cheat him as they cheat Fred. Tom feels scruples about selling alcoholic drink because of its effects, as reflected in the hypocritical singing of sentimental songs and "then going home and beating their wives when the orgy of sentimental sloppiness was over." [2] Violence is commonplace in such a community "in which human suffering is of little account." [3] Smouldering passions lying close to the surface in a community where sudden deaths in pit disasters are not uncommon and where poverty is the rule rather than the exception make credible such incidents as Mrs. Tapin's carefully-planned slaughter of the greyhound, Pertinax, Josh Brightman's

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1. Ashover had much in common with D.H. Lawrence's Eastwood, only about 15 miles away. Tom admits, ibid., p.166: "He could not have endured life as they led it....The poverty of the countryfolk seemed to him even more distressing than that of townspeople. It seemed the rule rather than the exception." But Tom expresses admiration when he confesses, ibid., p.95, "their particular struggle to gain the means of their existence was great in its way", though his final verdict is expressed in the strongest possible terms: "There was not one of them with whom he would have changed places ; sooner he would have died." (Ibid., p.95).

2. Ibid., p.160.

3. Ibid., p.123.

indecent assault on Ivy in the tap-room, and the resultant dog-fight between Brightman's greyhound Lightning, allegedly fed by its master on live hares, and Pertinax. Such cruelty - but also the cruelty inherent in the villagers' situation - revolts Tom:

> They were difficult to understand, these people ; their hard exterior hostility was something he had never met before. The gaunt countryside was reflected in their grim faces. Suffering and poverty made them hard and callous in their speech....Even the children possessed no pity ; the harshness of life eliminated it from them. At first Tom thought them animals, their fierceness frightened him. They laughed harshly at stories of cruelty that turned him sick. 1

From violence, reflected in wife-beating and in cruelty to children and animals, to stealing, scrounging, cheating to win money at cards and dominoes, lying, and drunkenness, the catalogue of inhuman behaviour seems endless. Yet Hampson, a realist, does not moralise, even in his presentation of the young squire. Roy Grovedon tells Ruth Dorme that she can do nothing to save the Flacks ; indeed, that attempts to interfere in local problems are doomed to failure and misinterpretation:

> "They will suspect your motives, try and discover some baseness in them. Or else they'll think you mad." 2

By dressing up his private themes on occasions in the disguise of social responsibility, Hampson has nevertheless stated the truth as he had observed it from experience, with sympathy and honesty towards his material, and without moralising. Basically, however, he is a middle-class writer examining his Grovelace villagers and squire with a lonely, personal detachment, permitting the emergence of a promising irony except when he becomes personally involved, as in the

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1. *Ibid.*, p.95.

2. *Ibid.*, p.154.

Tom-Ivy relationship.[1]

In many ways, Saturday Night at the Greyhound is Hampson's best novel. The tight control of form, the technical skill that has emerged in his positioning and dove-tailing of the sections of the successive narrators, so that, from the first, all the main characters' inter-relationships are clarified while at the same time the narrative is carried along at a rapid pace in a terse but vivid style, is both effective and exciting. The emergence of an irony lacking in O Providence further sharpens the impact of events and shows the greater distancing achieved by Hampson from personal concerns. The fine impasse, moreover, of the central situation, with its inevitable but credible disaster, maintains a nice balance of continuous tension throughout the novel between the main characters.[2]

A weakness of the novel lies in the characterisation of Ruth Dorme and Roy Grovedon, the former more than the latter, but both outside Hampson's range, and in their rather contrived appearance on the scene.[3] Another weakness lies in the intrusion of the personal element, producing sentimentality in Hampson's depiction of Tom's feelings for Ivy, albeit perhaps true of a sister-fixation of this kind, still nevertheless a disturbing personal element at variance with the ironic detachment achieved elsewhere. Moreover, Tom's

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1. Vide the sentimentality of Tom's feelings for Ivy: "Conscious of Ivy's faults, she still remained to Tom a creature of beauty. His thoughts dwelt on her always with tender possessive affection. That she was his sister seemed in itself a miracle. The feeling he had for her was sunk too deep in his memory for him to analyse it. She was lovely, tender and sweet. She came and took the love he offered graciously ; he knew unwillingly that she was not conscious of its depths. To suffer in her stead was his constant aim. Though he seldom achieved this, to do so gave him emotional happiness. To him her welfare was his religion." Ibid, p.191.

2. William Plomer, op. cit., x, categorised the Flack marriage as "a mating of attractive irresponsibility with wishful thinking", and added that Hampson's presentation of it in close-up allowed it to acquire awesome dimensions.

3. Hampson's intention, presumably, was to give social depth by providing a complete cross-section of Crowlace society as well as added comment from intellectual, sophisticated London.

optimistic and charitable coda does not ring true : to refer to the hated Fred as "his brother" is inconsistent, and to helping Ivy and Fred "towards another finer goal" is wishful thinking.[1] However, characterisation is usually consistent, if over-simplified and, in the villagers, sometimes, in its boldness, approaching caricature, a point made by Miss Martha Dodd in a contemporary review:

> The method of characterisation again is that of simplification and emphasis. The psychological background of the action is suggested and never elaborated. There is no irrelevant detail in character ; we see only the traits that directly impinge on the action, and are necessary to it. 2

Ultimately, however, this method was technicaly limiting:

> Almost inevitably in technical methods such as this one the characters are resolved into caricatures that are, when the reader looks for a deeper significance and truth in the novel, mechanical and depressing. 3

Miss Dodd, however, admired the novel's "structural poise" achieved by a "technique-conscious" author.[4] Harold Nicolson summarised more succinctly:

> This is a first novel of outstanding merit.. [Hampson's] line is firm, his construction is determined, his characterisation incisive. 5

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1. John Hampson, op. cit., pp. 241-242.

2. Martha Dodd, Chicago Evening Post, 24th. July, 1931. The character of Mrs. Tapin might well be cited as an example of "simplification and emphasis" leading to caricature in support of Miss Dodd's contentions.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.

5. Harold Nicolson, The Daily Express, 12th. February, 1931. This, the first review to appear, did much to boost the sales of the novel : publication date was 12th. February ; the second impression appeared on 13th. February, and the third on 20th. February. L.P. Hartley and Bonamy Dobree were among perceptive reviewers who praised the novel. Nevertheless, L.P. Hartley was much less enthusiastic towards O Providence, vide p. 31, footnote 1, and p. 38, footnotes 1 and 2, of this dissertation.

Already, then, Hampson has shown himself a young writer of artistic leanings with the ability to sustain a competent technical level for most of a short novel, particularly when his viewpoint is undistorted by personal considerations. He has progressed from the single-narrator and personal viewpoint of O Providence to examining other roles and viewpoints, even if still partially dominated by the personal one, in Saturday Night at the Greyhound. Although he is still too influenced by his personal concerns and by his passivity, he still has family problems to solve. The next set of novels, those of the middle period, indicate that he thought that the technique of the novel could accommodate his problems. In the next chapter, his attempts to remove himself from the centre of his novels and to achieve a more diversified approach through the development of his novelistic technique will reveal too slight a success in the former particular but, paradoxically, too great a success in the latter.

CHAPTER III : THE ASSIMILATION OF PERSONAL CONCERNS WITHIN THE DEVELOPMENT OF TECHNIQUE IN THE MIDDLE NOVELS :

from *Strip Jack Naked* (1934)
and *Foreign English* (unpublished, 1933)
to *Family Curse* (1936).

Hampson must have been aware that his own viewpoint, that of the passive observer, the homosexual young man, the younger son in revolt against his family, had imposed limitations upon him which had hitherto been stifling his creativity. Consequently, he must have felt that the time had come to attempt an artistic escape from the limitations of his personality. He would have to imagine himself in other roles. Thus there is an attempt to move from homosexual to heterosexual, from passive to active roles, and to create positive centres in the novels instead of flatly homosexual ones.[1] This chapter will examine the effectiveness of Hampson's attempts to extend his range successfully outside his personal limitations by means of his developing novelistic technique.

The plot of *Strip Jack Naked* is a vehicle for the development of Ted Borlay's character from apparent abnormality into normality. Saul Borlay's wife Jane has died, leaving him to bring up their sons Alf, aged 13, and Ted, aged 10 ; and so, with the money she has left, Saul relinquishes his coal-heaver's job and buys a shoe shop. He teaches his sons to be independent of women and to perform their share of household tasks. Although this womanless family is happy, once both sons are working, Saul, to relieve them from domestic duties, marries Ellen, narrow-minded, chapel-going, and lacking in human warmth. Saul's act of self-sacrifice is a mistake, and family tensions result.

1. Thus Hampson's depiction of the central character, Ted Borlay, in *Strip Jack Naked*, and one of the two central characters, [illegible], in *Foreign English*, as being freed by a woman from the domination of another male.

Both brothers inexorably dislike their step-mother. Alf, dominant, extravert, works as a lorry-driver for a hosiery factory in the town : Ted, submissive, introverted, deeply attached to his brother and the latter's willing slave, runs the family shoe shop conscientiously and efficiently.

Alf then falls in love with Laura Neot ; his affection is reciprocated. Ted is at first jealous of Laura, but comes to accept her and then to like her. Subsequently Alf confesses to Ted that Laura is pregnant by him and that he has promised to marry her. Not long afterwards a stray dog causes Alf's fatal motor-cycle accident. Ted now realises that marriage to Laura will keep him in contact vicariously with his dead brother through his brother's child, and so asks Laura to marry him. At first she gratefully accepts but then shows misgivings ; she likes Ted, but he is timid and unenthusiastic as a lover compared to Alf, whom she cannot forget and with whom Ted suffers by comparison.

Eventually Laura comes to terms with the situation, marrying Ted three months before Alf's child is due ; nevertheless, the marriage is consummated on the wedding night. The final section of the novel portrays the growth of love between Ted and Laura, the birth of Alf's son, and Laura's second pregnancy. Ted has achieved manhood, having escaped from his brother-fixation into a normal, hetero-sexual love ; and Ellen, softened by the present of Laura's kitten, Ruddy, has become a more human step-mother, now accepting Laura and the circumstances of her marriage : all family conflicts have been resolved.[1]

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1. Though the form of this novel is less obtrusive, less clearly apparent than in the rest of Hampson's published novels with the exceptions of _O Providence_ and _A Bag of Stones_, it represents the natural divisions of the story. _Strip Jack Naked_ is divided into three parts, 'Alf', 'Laura', and 'Ted', Hampson clearly indicating which character plays the dominant role in each section. Alf dominates the first section - as he dominates both Ted and Laura - which concludes with his death. Laura dominates the second, which concludes with her wedding, since the fulcrum of the novel lies in her decision to marry Ted. Ted dominates the third section in his increasing assertion of his role as husband.

Ted Borlay begins as the typical Hampson figure as categorised by Walter Allen : the young man, often the youngest son, of apparently homosexual tendencies which initiate family conflicts, a clear-sighted observer but passive, ineffective in action and in influencing others.[1] Ted Borlay, however, cannot maintain this critical detachment towards his brother Alf when his initial jealousy of Laura Neot comes between them, though his prejudiced estimate of her character was founded on gossip and is thus dismissed when he comes to know her better and to like her for herself. In this novel, the sister-fixation of _Saturday Night at the Greyhound_ has been replaced by a brother-fixation, but with a difference - the fixation-object is destroyed. After Alf's death, Ted can continue to love his brother only by loving the object that his brother loved; by fostering the child that his brother fathered. Thus Ted's feeling for Laura begins as a vicarious love, as a substitute for his brother ; and from Laura's viewpoint, out of economic and moral necessity, Ted becomes a substitute husband for Alf. Gradually they both move out of the dead Alf's shadow and develop their own relationship though, in so doing, Ted's personality has undergone a more striking change than Laura's. The artistic success of _Strip Jack Naked_ depends not only on the psychological acceptability of the central situation but more so in its credibility as presented by Hampson in his narrative.[2]

As a background to the tensions between Alf and Ted and, after Alf's death, between Laura and Ted, lie the Borlay family tensions, the brothers' refusal to accept Ellen as a member of the family, followed by Ellen's refusal, in turn, to accept Laura after her marriage to Ted. In both

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1. Walter Allen, _op. cit._, p.247 : _vide_ also p.27, footnote 2, and p.45, footnote 2, in Ch.2 of this dissertation.

2. A more difficult technical feat since Hampson would appear to have experienced a sister-fixation similar to that of Tom Cahley for his sister Ivy in _Saturday Night at the Greyhound_ but no biographical evidence supports a Hampson brother-fixation ; _O Providence_ reveals initial antipathies towards his brothers. Fictional creation in the situation depicted in _Strip Jack Naked_ is therefore required.

situations, Saul enforces acceptance. In the former, even though he himself has realised that his second marriage has been ill-advised, he attempts to justify it as having been to his sons' advantage, and exacts filial duty in return.[1] The importance of marriage for love and not from a misapprehended sense of family duty provides an interesting gloss on Ted's marriage proposal to Laura, in that by offering legitimacy to his dead brother's child, he is at the same time protecting the family's good name. It might appear that Ted is sacrificing himself in marrying Laura in the same way as his father in marrying Ellen. Nevertheless, Ted would not have been able to bring himself to marry until freed from his brother's domination.[2] Paradoxically, Ted is, in a sense, still under Alf's domination since he is acting as a surrogate for him. After the death of his brother, he gradually transfers his fixation to the person whom his brother loved ; thus he is freed to feel sexual love for a woman for the first time, and outside his family. Therefore Strip Jack Naked encompasses a freeing from family ties of a kind, but a cheerful acceptance of those remaining since Ted and Laura are given their own room in Saul's house, with Ted continuing in the shoe shop and Laura assisting him as a buyer. Laura has, in effect, replaced Alf in the Borlay family.

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1. John Hampson, Strip Jack Naked, 1934, pp. 10-12.

2. The American edition carried the title Brothers and Lovers with inescapable Laurentian associations. In Sons and Lovers Paul Morel's mother-fixation prevents his marrying until after her death as, it seems, with D.H. Laurence himself. Hampson's American title is perhaps more apposite than his British one since, though Tom was mentally - psychically, in his imagination, not physically - his brother's lover, both brothers are, in turn, Laura's lovers ; and, as with Lawrence, not until the death of the dominating loved one in the family is the surviving lover free to choose another partner outside his family. Hampson's change of title in the American edition may have been due to Douglas Goldring and he both choosing the title of Strip Jack Naked for the novel they were writing ; presumably, by the time Goldring discovered the clash of titles, Hampson's novel was being printed. Goldring's letters on the subject, found in Hampson's files, were amicable in tone, so that any dispute between the two novelists would appear to have been settled without any difficulty.

Since the main interest of the novel lies in the development of Ted's character and its effectiveness in whether Hampson presents this in a manner credible to the reader, it is not surprising that most of the narrative is observed through Ted's viewpoint, introverted and more sensitive than Alf's extravert forthrightness.[1] As Ted's personality is undergoing a change, so his viewpoint becomes less introspective, less passive. But it is important that Ted is observed from outside, particularly by Alf ; and to this effect, in the first part of the novel, prior to Alf's death, Hampson creates dual centres, emphasising the brothers' contrasted viewpoints. After Alf's death, as Ted's more positive attitude to life emerges, which he translates into action, emulating his dead brother's role, though not fully, as if he had moved into a position between his old self and his brother's, others, especially Laura, observe the changes taking place in him. Contacts with different, minor characters, very few in number in the novel, have a particular significance for Ted. His brief contact with Joyce Parker encourages him to accept his own valuation of people and shows him that the opposite sex are not the predators portrayed by the gossips, so that he achieves a more relaxed relationship with Laura, accepting her as Alf's fiancee. Later on, Alf's commonsense viewpoint is taken over by Laura's brother Bert, who supplies an element of male companionship in place of Alf. A further level of commentary on the actions and events involving the limited number of characters in the novel is provided by Hampson's crude experiment of a proletarian collective unconsciousness.[2]

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1. Thus Ted is more closely aligned to Hampson's personal viewpoint.
2. Direct speech(or possibly thoughts)are uttered by several members of a crowd in rapid and undifferentiated succession, usually platitudinous in content, albeit realistic and sincere, though merely adding social concern or sympathy and the blurred inaccuracies of gossip. This interesting but failed technical experiment of Hampson's is employed only in this novel, for example, on Alf's fatal accident as follows: "..Who is it?Alf Borlay?Not Alf Borlay?Yes!Oh, I say!Isn't it awful!Where does he live?Is he married?How did it happen?A dog!A black dog!A dog as run out from an entry!A dog done it! A dog?Not a dog?A dog!Has he got a mother?A sister?A wife?A father?A brother?Any children?Is he dead?How awful!..." *Ibid.*, p.85.

In the first part, Alf's dominance over Ted is clearly established in the early childhood incident when Ted remains distressed at having beaten his brother at cards until he persuades his mother to reverse the verdict.[1] The mutual devotion of the brothers is stressed as, later, their united opposition to their father's second marriage:

> The boys were devoted to each other. Alf often tried to shoulder his brother's faults, but Ted would plead his own share of the guilt with equal vehemence....Alf was older, and with his superior strength protected Ted, and also led him into mischief. Ted's devotion was so tenacious, that nothing ever disturbed its flow. 2

Later, when Saul is rebuking Alf and Ted for their attitude to Ellen, he warns Ted of the consequences of always following Alf's lead:

> "You've got to be enough in yourself, without thinking you can share someone else all the time. You've got to lead your own life, just as Alf has got to lead his. And one fine day he'll drop you, whether you like it or not." 3

Since their mother's death, the ties between the brothers have been strengthened, aided by their father's taciturnity. But when Alf starts to become secretive, Ted suspects he has acquired a girl friend.

> But now Ted was becoming anxious. Alf seemed very discontented ; he was becoming secretive. It was painful for Ted to believe this ; but the signs could not be ignored completely, and his father's remarks about living one's own life had startled him. He did not want to live his own life. He could not bear to think of an existence in which Alf had no part. And now he had got to realise that he did not mean as much to his brother as he had imagined. 4

"He did not want to live his own life" is the key to Ted's character at this stage : but Alf is unwilling for Ted to share the new part of his life that he is developing with Laura ; angered by Ted's constant questioning, he strikes him.

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1. The card game from which the novel takes its name, ibid., pp.4-6.
2. Ibid., p.4.
3. Ibid., p.12.
4. Ibid., p.18.

Ted, in passive resignation, lies on the floor of their bedroom ; he will not move until Alf goes to him. Alf must forgive him, though it is he who should forgive Alf, the physical aggressor : Ted's attitude is completely passive - as passive as not wanting to live one's own life, but to live vicariously inside the life of the loved person.[1]

Ted's attitude is also reflected in his laying out Alf's clothes after pressing them, his bending down to tie up the latter's shoelaces, and his cooking for him, preparing his tea when Ellen is at chapel meetings, prompting Alf's comment, "Proper little mother, aren't you, ducky?" [2] Alf tells Laura that Ted "can work and sew with any woman." [3] However, in his unspoken thoughts, Alf "wished that Ted could be more ordinary, more like other lads." [4] Nevertheless, he does not despair of Ted's marrying at some time in his life:

> He'd make a funny sort of husband ; but, from his tender ways, a good father, if he ever got that far in life. It was difficult to picture him taking up with a young woman... [5]

The flirtatiousness and sex-talk of the street corner and factory floor is anathema to Ted, who looks at his feet when a girl is mentioned and wants to run away from Joyce Parker on the first occasion he meets her.[6] In human relationships, Alf is a realist, Ted a day-dreamer, yet in running the shoe shop, Ted shows himself capable and practical in an activity where any decisions he makes will not involve personal relationships.[7]

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1. Ibid., p.36: "He (Ted) was often pre-occupied with the other's (Alf's) separate and private existence." This passivity of Ted's is contrasted with Alf's active nature which sometimes expresses itself in sudden violence, for he has struck Ted on previous occasions, and threatens Laura with physical violence if she should be unfaithful to him.

2. Ibid., p.38.

3. Ibid., p.45. After their mother's death, Saul had taught the brothers how to do housework: "It was a source of great pride to him that they quickly became independent of women." (Ibid., p.4).

4. Ibid., p.31. 5. Ibid, p.31. Ted's day-dream of marriage is to a woman of such refinement that he does not have to share her bed, ibid., pp.18-19. 6. Alf is relieved when the news of his courtship of Laura spares him the attentions of husband-hunters at the hosiery factory, ibid., pp.28-30.

7. Tom Oakley, as barman of 'The Greyhound', shows similar experti

Suddenly Alf's death forces Ted to face reality and frees him to make decisions about personal relationships which lead to action. Thus Ted forces himself to go to Laura Neot's house to break the tragic news ; but, because she is out, once he has told Mrs. Neot, he cannot summon up the further resolution to await Laura's arrival and tell her himself. Nevertheless, once the funeral is over, Ted sees the position with inescapable clarity, and his role in particular. He knows that Alf had promised to marry Laura, and that Laura's unborn child is Alf's, that people will guess who has fathered it, and will gossip ; but

> That was not thepoint. What did matter was Laura, her child, and their future. He knew now what must be done. He must marry Laura.1

There is, moreover, a passionate honesty in Ted's marriage proposal:

> "I was that fond of Alf, you'd never believe. I'd like to help look after his kid. If we were to get married - if you could see it that way - it'ud be easy - it'ud give the kid a better chance ; if you'd marriage lines, an' all that. The child 'ud be like my own. That I swear. I mean it, Laura. If you'll marry me you'll never regret it! Never! 2

Laura's acceptance is for moral and economic reasons ; though she has liked Ted from the first time Alf had introduced him,

> Laura wept. "It was him that I loved", she said in a dim voice. 3

She, like Alf, is a realist; Ted has become a realist. Thus her tacit acceptance proceeds from her perception of her situation, her liking for Ted and gratitude to him. A later revulsion of feeling, in her belief that Ted can never replace Alf, almost causes her to abandon the scheme. The

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1. Ibid., p.103.
2. Ibid., p.103. This passage represents Hampson's best qualities as a writer - simplicity, honesty and realism; the right feeling, and deep feeling, successfully achieved without any apparent straining after artistic effect - and artistic sincerity is the result.
3. Ibid., p.103.

consummation of the marriage on the wedding night perhaps owes more to symbolic truth than to realism.[1]

In effect, the fulcrum of the novel is Ted's decision to propose marriage to Laura rather than her tacit acceptance of him. Circumstances have made Ted the active figure, Laura the passive. Ted has assumed his dead brother's role. Nevertheless, Hampson must ensure that, in the interests of credibility, Ted's change of character must be seen to be gradual : decisions are one problem, but acting on them is another. For example, Ted acknowledges his unsolved personal problems when he realises how Laura's death in childbirth would destroy him:

> If death overtook her, he would be beaten and finished. There would be no purpose left in being alive. He had lost one dependency and gained another. It was a mistake to cling on to, and suck from, another personality. It was better to stand alone, solitary, self-sufficient. 2

Ted, though, has visualised a positive approach to life. As a hitherto passive character, he has been enabled to perceive that physical activity is worth pursuing. He has Alf's role to emulate, and does emulate it : he makes his bold decision, acts upon it, and holds firm to it even when Laura expresses her doubts ; even towards sexual contact, which he has shunned, he makes his first faltering steps, though it is Laura who takes the initiative.[3] Ted progresses from action for Alf's sake, to guard Alf's reputation, to remain in contact with Alf through Alf's child, and then in sexual activity, following Alf's path of love, to action for his own sake, for the procreation of his own child after Alf's has been born, so that he has learned to love Laura for herself, and Laura him for himself.

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1. Hampson's technical achievement is to portray this scene with such delicacy that it becomes credible to the reader, ibid., pp. 187-190. However, it seems that Ted's sexual awakening would have been more gradual ; and that, in relation to this, Laura would have suffered from tensions related to her memories of Alf. Such a mating in symbolic terms only would indicate mutual acceptance and a determination to set aside the past, as in the exchange of vows and rings in the marriage service.
2. Ibid., pp. 202-203.
3. Ibid., pp. 162-163.

Strip Jack Naked is a sincere, honest, tender, moving novel, most of its characters possessing a moral rectitude that triumphs over personal and socio-economic problems and reflects Hampson's faith in ordinary people and in social amelioration.[1] The form is unobtrusively neat, the central situation original and interesting.[2] Working-class life with a fairly lightly sketched-in background is portrayed realistically and sympathetically.[3]

Nevertheless, *Strip Jack Naked* is not a complete artistic success because its concerns are too personal. Ted Borlay's psychological make-up seems initially very similar to Hampson's, albeit of different origin ; but then Hampson places Ted in a situation which enables him ultimately to escape from his personal, psychological limitations - an analogue of Hampson's situation as a writer, and representing a wish-fulfilment of the solution of his personal problems. Nevertheless, there are important divergences here from Hampson's personal experience : and thus the crucial point is not whether Ted's development is psychologically credible but whether Hampson, through his technique, presents it as convincing.[4]

However, Hampson is more successful in portraying Ted's psychological state before his marriage to Laura than after it. Ted is aware of his brother's physical attractiveness,

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1. *Vide* Harold Strauss, *The New York Times*, 5th. August, 1934: "A simple, gently flowing story of the psychological relationship of three people ; its theme is delicately illumined by the goodness of its characters and by the comfortable, homely details of their lives."

2. *Vide* p. 52, footnote 1, of Ch. 3 of this dissertation for a more detailed examination of the form.

3. The harshness of Grovelace village in *Saturday Night at the Greyhound* is lacking, but so is the Hampson irony : goodness seems regrettably less interesting than evil, the latter also affording opportunities for humour lacking in the former.

4. Contemporary reviewers do not seem to have challenged Hampson's psychology.

but also responds to Laura's.[1,2] His shyness towards women proceeds from an immaturity caused by his brother-fixation and his upbringing during an impressionable age in a male household. If he had been homosexual, he would have sought male companionship after Alf's death.[3]

Hampson's failure in the portrayal of experiences outside his range lies in his omission of detailed exposition where its inclusion was, nevertheless, most necessary. Ted adjusts too rapidly to the physical side of marriage, his victory over himself being too easily won, as Laura's over her past relationship with Alf.[4] Hampson draws attention to these forthcoming problems of adjustment before the marriage but after it fails to subject their apparent solution to detailed scrutiny. The third part of the novel is flat and lifeless because the tensions that should have supplied the interest have been too quickly worked out. Moreover, a sentimentality at variance with Hampson's realism often clouds his writing when personal elements obtrude, pointing a comparison between Ted Borlay

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1. John Hampson, _op. cit._, p.38: there is a Lawrentian quality in Hampson's depiction of the physical attractiveness of Alf as seen through Ted's eyes. "He was of medium height, with broad shoulders and long legs ; his dark hair curled slightly. Once again, noticing the disarray of clothing, Ted thought: How pleasant he looks."

2. _Ibid._, p.71: "Laura was beautiful. Her appearance, manner, and voice gratified him in a subtle fashion." Moreover, Ted tells Alf that he thinks that Laura is beautiful, _ibid._, p.72.

3. Instead, Ted chooses Laura ; eventually, through her, he strikes up a friendship with her widowed brother, Bert, who possesses a positive, realistic attitude to life akin to Alf's. Bert, however, does not dominate Ted as Alf had dominated him ; this is a friendship on more or less equal terms.

4. If there had been the expected tension arising from the physical side of the marriage being unsatisfactory, Hampson should have drawn his readers' attention to it, but he does not do so ; though before the marriage he draws attention to Ted's diffidence as a lover, and Laura's immediate comparison of him with Alf, to the former's disadvantage, _ibid._, p.147 & pp.162-165.

and Tom Oakley.[1,2] Therefore Hampson's reluctance in this novel to explore in sufficiently convincing detail areas of experience alien to him has vitiated an effective escape from personal concerns.

The genesis of Hampson's next novel, the unpublished _Foreign English_, is another attempt to chart a pseudohomosexual's escape route into normality, but one uncomplicated by family relationships as in _Strip Jack Naked_. If a young man has been presented as having been drawn into loving a young woman through both formerly having loved his brother, then another possibly credible situation might arise if another immature, girl-shy young man was freed from an apparently homosexual relationship by falling in love with a young woman, particularly if his male friend has already become interested in another young man. Since the setting of this emotional imbroglio is a holiday in pre-Nazi Berlin, family influences and relationships, except that between the girl and her mother, are set aside. The heterosexual love affair develops with extraordinary rapidity

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1. _Ibid._, p.258. An element of personal self-pity obtrudes in Ted Borlay's final philosophising which, if Ted is as happy as recent events should have made him, must represent Hampson's viewpoint rather than Ted's: "He felt the sleeping babe stir against his breast. A surge of tenderness went out from him towards all manifestations of life. He would no longer demand, childishly ; but instead, would take what came, savouring it with enjoyment whenever possible. He would not think of a negative futile struggle ; of only pain and grief and nothingness. He must rise again and again; he must live. There were a million things to know and experience : the sun, the seasonal changes, the rush of water, the flame of fire, the air, flowers, the fact of life. They made being alive worth while."

2. Two passages dealing with Tom Oakley's thoughts in _Saturday Night at the Greyhound_ are somewhat similar in tone. On p. 195 Tom describes his vision of the flowers in the Grovelace woods awakening to beauty in the following Spring: "The thought gave him a moment's fleeting joy. After the shower the sun would come out, the land would be all beauty. Spring was hope awake and refreshed. Life would seem more kind because of the beauty. If he were there to see, if he were there to see...." Then again on p.241: "In Grovelace woods the flowers would bloom, anemones, bluebell flowers, the trees put out their young leaves...he would not see...Yet he would know them there...He could be brave...."
Tom Oakley has far more cause for self-pity than Ted Borlay, however.

and directness.[1] Space does not permit a detailed account of the plot, briefly outlined in Chapter 1 ; but the "unprintability" of this novel lay in Hampson's overt presentation of homosexual feelings.[2,3,4] The most significant development is Hampson's more detailed and direct treatment of heterosexual love ; this, the middle-class social setting, and some Forsterian ironies attendant on English middle-class matriarchal behaviour abroad, all indicate the direction to be followed by Hampson in his next novel, Family Curse.[5]

As yet, Hampson clearly has not escaped from the limitations of his viewpoint, enmeshed in personal and family conflicts. Though Foreign English in its Berlin setting had eschewed direct family influences, it presented further variations on the Hampson persona, albeit more objectively, self-critically and ironically, though still with its modicum of self-pity.[6] Hampson now realised that he needed to remove his persona from the centre of his next novel if he was to develop further as a novelist. Thus the dominant feature of Family Curse is the family, its collective failings subsuming the failings of its individual members, with the Hampson persona in a minority of one out of

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1. Norman Clinton, who falls in love with Madelaine Verschoyle, is transformed into an active figure, resisting his friend Simeon Dudefend's attempts to dissuade him from pursuing Madelaine, showing initiative in arranging secret assignations with her in Berlin, and by means of a faked telegram, with her connivance travelling back to England with her, and proposing marriage to her, and being accepted, on the Ostend boat.

2. Vide Ch. 1, pp. 19-20 of this dissertation.

3. Vide Ch. 1, p. 20, footnote 1, of this dissertation, for Mr. Christopher Isherwood's comments.

4. As an example of the above, vide John Hampson, Foreign English, 1933 (unpublished), p. 191 of the Mss : "Once they had loved each other ; finding excitement and delight in their close companionship. Once a day seemed incomplete unless his (sic) (Simeon) saw Norman."

5. There is an aspect of self-criticism in Hampson's less attractive portrait of Simeon, active, bitter, ironic, that is followed up in Johnny Sumerle in Family Curse.

6. Hampson is more critical of his homosexual alter ego Simeon Dudefend who remains set in his ways than of Norman Clinton, his former friend who, though converted to heterosexual love at the remarkably late age of 30, is shown to have fallen in love with a superficially attractive, shallow girl.

thirteen.[1] To present the narrative of each member with equal conviction and equal prominence, Hampson would have to apply new resources of technique, through which he would attempt to enlarge and objectify his art.[2] That Hampson's persona, the homosexual Johnny Sumerle, should compare favourably with the rest of his family was symptomatic of the liberation achieved by Hampson, the outsider, exposing the family as a hypocritical institution and thereby working his conflicts with it out of his system.[3] A death-bed is a convenient family meeting-place around which memories and emotions can be indulged ; upper-middle-class Birmingham, moreover, is familiar Hampson territory ; thus the setting of this novel ; its plot now follows.

Victoria Sumerle is dying. Her eldest daughter, the unmarried Florence, runs the family mansion in a prosperous Birmingham suburb, posing as the martyred daughter who has devoted her life to her mother. Florence summons the family to her mother's sickbed by ordering Nellie, the long-serving housemaid, to telephone the same message to a list of all the near relations except Johnny.[4] Him Florence deliberately excludes, for he is her mother's favourite child ; an artist,

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1. Ironies are implicit in the title of this novel, which is possibly deliberately ambiguous, since it could refer to the dying matriarch, a family curse for her influence on the upbringing and later lives of her children, to Johnny for the slur on the family reputation through his suspected homosexuality and his later inheritance of the family fortune, or to the family collectively for the false, hypocritical, materialistic values that they represent, Johnny excepted.

2. Given that Hampson's intention was to use technique to enlarge and objectify his art, it is possible that, in reality, he still misused technique so that it served a psychological function, though, nevertheless, this point is difficult to prove conclusively.

3. The more varied the viewpoints, the greater the opportunities for Hampson to exercise his irony effectively, irony being symptomatic of a detached way of looking at life, an objectivity that Hampson was aiming for in writing Family Curse.

4. Nellie eventually telephones the nursing home where Johnny is convalescing from an operation, acting on her own initiative, but Johnny has already left ; she is careful to do this when Florence is safely upstairs in her mother's bedroom. Vide John Hampson, Family Curse, 1936, pp. 196-197.

a suspected homosexual, an enemy to the conventional bourgeois milieu. Johnny is in hospital recovering from an appendicitis operation ; there he is visited by his sister-in-law Melisant, who has just received Florence's message which she passes on to Johnny when she realises that he has not received it independently. Although still physically weak, Johnny discharges himself from the hospital ; he makes a dramatic, last-minute entrance so that he is by his mother's bedside, holding her hand, when she dies. Although she has been asking for him, it is doubtful whether she recognises him. All the rest of the family have arrived earlier. After their mother has died, Johnny reveals to the assembled family - already bickering among themselves - how Florence had deliberately refused to summon him to the death-bed and produces, in front of her, the damning evidence; but he does not reveal that he is the sole beneficiary of his mother's will. After the necessary business has been settled, he intends to move to London, away from the other members of the family, most of whom he dislikes intensely ; he will live in a flat, with Nellie looking after him, anticipating Florence's dismissal of her. In a just reversal, he will turn Florence out of the family home which, on his orders, will be demolished and its site redeveloped as a cinema and car park.[1]

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1. The plot is based on an anticipated event round which is woven an act of deception and its unmasking, together with an unexpected revelation in the final pages. The complexity proceeds from the large number of main characters and from the presentation and inter-relationships of the different angles of vision. Further interest and variation were provided by the complications of the plot, listed in the unsigned review in the Times Literary Supplement, 24th. February, 1936, p. 181, as Melisant's pregnancy, Henry's anger at his children's refusal to accompany him, Charles's incestuous passion for Lucy, Josephine's adultery and Gordon's discovery of the incriminating letter from her lover, Gilbert's beating of his son Alan, and Edward's enthusiastic approval; Jenny's malice; the general though not complete distaste for Johnny; Johnny's not being sent the message, and his dramatic arrival; Edward's bringing his children and their being sent home as Henry's had refused to come; Charles's resentment at Jenny"s comment on himself and Lucy; Melisant's revelation of her pregnancy, and Jenny's minor heart attack; Florence's scheme to dismiss the faithful Nellie Bratt once her mistress is safely dead. All these complications and incidents highlight the essential contrasts between the individual characters.

In this novel,every event leads to the central death. Individual narrations of the receipt or,in Johnny's situation,the non-receipt of Florence's message,and the preparations for the journey to the death-bed,together with reminisceneces and family portraits,mostly unflattering,make up the mosaic that comprises Part 1. Part 2 observes the inter-reactions between different members of the family as they arrive,talk together in the drawing-room, and are shown upstairs to the bedside. Since arrivals occur at different times,no one sees everyone else together,not even at the death itself ; people move in and out of rooms, groupings are varied,absentees discussed.[1] Thirteen separate narratives intertwine into one with a thickening of the pattern and many inevitable repetitions. Hampson's technique in detailing and dove-tailing these elements is of a very high order.[2]

The form of Family Curse with its thirteen successive narrators,each describing the events depicted in his or her section in the manner that these appear to him or her,with the same narrators repeated in the same order in both parts of the novel,was successful in Part 1 where the basis of character could be established through retrospective memories ranging back to childhood and by developing individual characters by assimilating an agglomeration of each narrator's private opinions of the others.[3] Thus,in

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1. There is a sense of theatre staging in these groupings.
2. For example,Melisant does not see her mother-in-law die because her pregnancy has made her too ill to climb the stairs;Jenny is sent down to look after her,but relinquishes her post gladly when Josephine comes down to the drawing-room because she cannot bear to see her mother-in-law suffer any longer.On the other hand,Jenny wants to see her die,and despite feeling ill herself,climbs the stairs to witness the death,afterwards being rewarded with a slight heart attack.Such different movements and groupings of characters provide some differentiated points of vision for the narrators but these are often illustrative,as here, where a character has a choice to make,of the different characters of the narrators as revealed in the particular choices made by each of them.
3. The dominant figure through whom these narrators relate to each other is the dying matriarch,Victoria Sumerle,through whose eyes the reader never sees the others.

Part 1, anticipations of future confrontations are nicely built up in preparation for their taking place in Part 2; these family tensions outlined in Part 1 develop in the face-to-face relationships of Part 2, being perceived with subtle differences by the different narrators, this factor illuminating and differentiating each character further. The problem in Part 2, however, is that certain events are perceived by almost every narrator. Even the development of psychological insights achieved by this meticulous detailing cannot offset the tedium of the narration of virtually the same events thirteen times in succession. Both the virtue and the main failing, much intensified, of the epistolatory novel prevented Family Curse from achieving the success that its high degree of craftsmanship deserved. Hampson succeeded here in a more subtle and sophisticated portrayal of character in this middle-class setting than in any other of his novels. The paradox is that the achievement of the technical mastery to enable Hampson to depict other people's problems with credibility has seduced him into evolving a form that, in Part 2, almost entirely removes the element of surprise from most of the narrations after the first so that foreknowledge dulls the reader's interest. Despite his admiration for Hampson's technical skill, Richard Church perceived the weakness in his method:

> The novelty of the story lies in the method of telling. It proliferates like the growth of a tumour, fibre interweaving with fibre as the author passes from one character to another, animating each to a series of soliloquies, every strand of introspection and recollection tying a new facet to the whole...The drawback of the method is that by the intervolutions the reader is made to witness the old matriarch's death some dozen or so times, and this replication, especially as it affects other incidents as well, becomes tedious and clumsy. 1

E.D., an American reviewer, made the same point more forcefully:

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1. Richard Church, John O'London's Weekly, 29th. February, 1936.

> The account of that afternoon...is told thirteen times from thirteen different points of view,and by the time you have heard it four or five times you have heard enough. Mr.Hampson has skilfully executed a difficult undertaking,but so does the man who carves the Lord's Prayer on a peanut. 1

The similar unpleasantness of almost all the characters intensified the boredom produced by the repetitious manner of narration,according to Osbert Burdett:

> The method involves a great deal of repetition,and as these people are petty and sordid,a cycle of weariness is the result. 2

The anonymous reviewer in the Times Literary Supplement concedes that the Sumerles must be presented as "an assorted yet recognizably similar set of persons,individuals but tarred with the same brush" but considers this a defect from the reader's viewpoint since the characters are "completely uninspiring",motivated by "pomposity,greed and narrowness",and "products at root of cupidity and stupidity":

> In consequence,while the incidents as seen by each person are subtly varied,some monotony is almost inevitable. Mr.Hampson writes with skill and care,but it is difficult not to feel that either his matter or his method has been bravely rather than wisely chosen. 3

Miss Phyllis Bentley also disliked the Sumerles intensely:

> I found the Sumerles too monotonously brutal to be interesting. The men are sexual perverts or sexual bullies,who think of nothing but sensual enjoyment or flogging their children ; the women, with only one exception,are tyrants, perverts,or cowards. 4

1.E.D.,Saturday Review of Literature,New York,29th.August, 1936.

2.Osbert Burdett,Morning Post,25th.February,1936.

3.Unsigned review in the Times Literary Supplement,29th. February,1936,p.181.

4.Miss Phyllis Bentley,Yorkshire Post,26th.February,1936.

Miss Bentley also claims that "these fearful results" are not "referred to their deep causes", a statement less than fair to Hampson, since Edwin Muir, in a more balanced review, sees the novel as a successful attack "on the pitilessly strict convention of family life", showing also "the consequences that flow from it." [1] Muir, however, criticises Hampson for shallow characterisation ; Hampson's characters possess the quantitative elements such as "flesh, blood, clothes, and money in their pockets", but Muir finds the treatment of their emotions "external, almost statistical." [2] Perhaps Hampson's technique has not yet become sufficiently objectified, since

> this book shows that he has an insufficient apprehension of the qualities of character as distinct from its elements. His characters are very clearly differentiated, but we do not feel that we know any of them very intimately. [3]

This implies a lack of depth in Hampson's technique, as if his characterisation is too contrived.

On the other hand, William Plomer considered _Family Curse_ Hampson's "most ambitious and perhaps his best book." [4] Moreover, he explored more fully than any other reviewer the significance of Johnny's role, as

> the black sheep who is neither black nor a sheep, the artist among the bourgeois, an instrument of... the power that fluttered and struggled with dim insistence against the rule of orgganised formal authority... Johnny Sumerle [is] an idealist among Philistines, a facer of facts among prevaricators, and a homosexual among the much married.... [5,6]

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1. Edwin Muir, _The Listener_, 26th. February, 1936, p. 416.
2. _Ibid._ Muir's further comment, that _Family Curse_ "should be read as a powerful demonstration of the effects that flow from a certain kind of education", is a corollary to his envisaging "the pitilessly strict convention of family life."
3. _Ibid._ 4. William Plomer, _The Spectator_, 28th. February, 1936, p. 366. 5. _Ibid._
6. An almost identical passage from Plomer's review of _Family Curse_ is repeated in his introduction to the Eyre and Spottiswoode reprint in 1950 of _Saturday Night at the Greyhound_, viii-ix, except that Johnny Sumerle is described as a "bachelor" instead of as a "homosexual" as in his review.

Plomer, a friend of Hampson's, would have perceived that the latter is depicting in Johnny the emergence of an artist independent of his family after reacting violently against a strict, conventional upbringing, perhaps as a latter-day Justin Stonetun, also an artist ; reacting as Hampson himself probably reacted against family pressures of this kind, enduring the alienation of the artist in a bourgeois, Philistine society.[1] Still the odour of a personal problem lingers in Family Curse, albeit by now largely solved : Hampson is living the kind of life he has wanted to live and, by 1936, is doing the work he wants to do, has received critical and public recognition of his work as well as financial independence, and can therefore discount whatever family opprobrium still persists. However, Johnny will not receive his creator's freedom until his mother's death, when he will inherit the family fortune on condition that he has continued to reside in Birmingham during his mother's lifetime, this condition enabling his mother to keep her favourite child near her. Nevertheless, his mother's devotion is not truly reciprocated ; the artist is independent of family, living for his work and for himself. Johnny has used his mother's affection to secure his conditional independence when he resigned from the family business against the opposition of his father and his brothers ; but he does not scruple to use harsh words on this occasion, his twenty-first birthday:

> "I've lived for this day," he told her brutally. "To be a man, to be free of you, of father, Henry, of you all." 2

Later on he promises not to leave the family home without informing his mother ; he will certainly not leave it to marry:

> "I am my life's own subject, - not yours... Besides, I shall never marry. I do not see myself settling down to a woman and four walls, to another tyranny, such as your own." 3

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1. With the caveat that Hampson's family were probably more liberally-minded than he depicted them in Go Seek A Stranger and in O Providence: economic vicissitudes militate against culture. The point is that the Sumerles could afford culture but rejected it in their pursuit of material wealth.
2. John Hampson, op. cit., p. 173.
3. Ibid., p. 176.

She confesses that he has been her favourite child ; he finds this incredible:

> If he was her favourite, if she had always loved him, why had she been so cold and remote, so harsh and lacking in sympathy?... If she loved him now, then it was too late. He could feel vague pity, but that would never outbalance the resentment and bitterness of years. She was growing old, weakening, losing grip ; that was why she needed him, wanted to hold on to him by any means that she could muster. 1

Hampson highlights the central tragedy of family relationships : a lack of communication, particularly inherent in a failure to display affection, perhaps more common in an English upper-class or upper-middle-class setting such as this. The elder generation fall back, in argument, upon the moral, conventional stance ; this only emphasises the differences in outlook that have developed between them and their children. Through the failure of parents to communicate with them, children grow apart ; Johnny has develpoed his intellectual and moral independence by reacting against his parents' ideas, an intellectual and moral independence which is reinforced by his role as an artist and by his consciousness of the alienation of the homosexual from the more conventional, bourgeois members of society.[2] His mother attempts self-justification:

> "Your father and myself always acted for your own good."
> Johnny laughed lightly. "That is the old story, mother. You acted by your own conception of goodness. Mine is quite different. We shall never agree on such subjects." 3

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1. Ibid., p.177.
2. Ibid., pp.138-139, quoted by William Plomer in his review in The Spectator, 28th. February, 1936, p.366, vide Ch.3, p.59, footnotes 4, 5, & 6, of this dissertation also. Mrs. Sumerlds orthodoxies are listed (by her daughter-in-law Elizabeth) as chapel-going, sick-visiting; opposition to alcohol, cards and tobacco; belief in appearances, orderliness, tradition, ritual, capitalism, capital punishment, success. "She was a good woman. 'Don't let mother know : it would upset her.' That was her reward." Hampson's irony, making a welcome reappearance in this novel, is at its best in this passage.
3. Ibid., p.177.

Over the years, however, Johnny's feelings for his mother have softened into pity, as he tells Melisant:

> "I used to hate her bitterly, but now I am only sorry. All her victories have brought her nothing but bleakness and futility. She is pathetic and all her children are largely what she intended them to be...."[1]

Johnny's feelings for his mother, however, do not represent the antipathy he feels for the rest of his family, with the exception of some of his in-laws.[2] Moreover, at her death-bed, he feels more affection and sympathy for her than any of the rest of the family. He holds her hand as she dies ; his sorrow is genuine, sincere:

> Tears slid down Johnny's face, he felt futile pity for the frightened creature whose hand fluttered like a trapped bird in his own. He realised the dignity, the courage and the pathos of humanity again.[3]

At the conclusion of the novel Johnny secures his deserved triumph over his Philistine, materialistic family, voicing his private opinions of them and then, in view of everyone, returning Florence's incriminating scrap of paper on which is written the list of names of relatives whom Nellie had been ordered to telephone, as well as the message, which forms both the opening and concluding words of the novel, indicating Hampson's successful completion of a

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1. Ibid., p.33: cf. p.177, Johnny's statement to his mother, "I am what YOU have made me", which relates to the above and to Edwin Muir's critical statements of the central theme of the novel, vide Ch.3, p.69, footnotes 1 and 2, of this dissertation.

2. Johnny confesses this to Melisant: "I don't like any of my family. I much prefer some of my in-laws, Elisabeth, Gilbert and yourself, for instance." (Ibid., p.36). He then gives his reasons: "My family are all too interfering and conservative. They all treated me indifferently when I was young, so that you cannot expect me to develop a passion for them now." (Ibid., p.37).

3. Ibid., p.372. Johnny and in-laws Elisabeth, Gilbert and Josephine want to spare the dying Mrs. Sumerle further suffering by persuading Dr. Ryde to administer euthanasia; but the rest of the family react with predictable horror at this humane suggestion.

formal pattern.[1] Johnny does not reveal, except in interior monologue to the reader, that he will inherit everything and that Florence's plans for spending her undeserved inheritance will not materialise. Hampson's ironic restraint here is admirable, exemplifying the technical discipline that he has acquired.

Thus the Hampson persona has triumphed in Family Curse as in Strip Jack Naked but, with the completion of Johnny Sumerle's liberation from the family instead of Ted Borlay's acquiescence to it, much more actively, self-assertively than in the earlier novel.[2] Such a liberation as Johnny's is symptomatic of Hampson's as a writer from his personal concerns, so that family influences are no longer an obstacle to personal or artistic self-expression. In Family Curse, the family has been presented as a hypocritical institution, collectively and also individually unhappy, sexually and maritally, morally and financially unhappy, with parental

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1. "Mother failing rapidly, please come to see her this afternoon." Hampson writes of Johnny "he read" but does not clarify the point whether he read out the contents of the scrap of paper aloud to the rest of the family, though the list of names on the reverse side of the paper is written "in Florence's bold handwriting" and everyone is gathered round and so would see. Nellie has given the damning evidence to Johnny : "Nellie smiled at him queerly, slipping a screw of paper secretly into his hand, on her way to the door." (Ibid., p.375).

2. The institution of family is being considered here as well as the family as a physical entity.

unhappiness being visited on the children.[1] It is a nice irony that the one Sumerle who despises material values will inherit and achieve his financial emancipation from the family and thus achieve the complete freedom necessary to the artist.

Since the family needs to be defeated by the one outsider in its midst, Johnny's domination of the final section of the novel after the death of the matriarch is unavoidable.[2] However, the future problem Hampson has to solve is the creation of a novel without his persona, now that he has demonstrated the technique to create a range of characters outside himself.[3] On the other hand, he should not create a novel as dominated by technique as <u>Family Curse</u> where the form of the second part, albeit handled with technical virtuosity, nevertheless vitiated, through its

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1. The Sumerle sexual, and associated marital unhappinesses comprise a formidable list: the embittered and domineering spinster Florence was not allowed to marry the conscientious working-man she loved because of class barriers; pompous, conventional Henry misunderstands sympathetic, instinctive Elizabeth; oversexed, sadistic Edward and neurotic, nagging Jenny deserve each other; Charles cherishes an incestuous passion for his sister Lucy - a fleshlier extension of Tom Oakley's sister-fixation - while his wife Josephine proceeds from one adulterous association to another; Lucy possesses a better husband than she deserves in Gilbert Walton; and Gordon, insensitive and domineering towards Melisant, is blind to her pregnancy. In comparison, despite the problems of his homosexuality, Johnny would appear to have come to terms with his situation more effectively than the other members of his family with theirs; despite his feelings for Dick Penny, he has accepted the latter's marriage with a good grace, and through having achieved a greater measure of freedom is more self-assured and happier in himself than the rest of his family.

2. The matriarch's death symbolises a freeing from central authority associated with past restrictions towards the family, but also the freeing of the last of Johnny's emotional ties with the family, even though he himself would have been reluctant to admit this.

3. With disputable effectiveness, according to some reviewers: <u>vide</u> Ch.3, p.68, footnotes 2, 3, & 4, and p.69, footnotes 2 & 3, of this dissertation. Notwithstanding the sources quoted, critical opinion was sharply divided on this issue. A very small minority, as, for example, Miss Phyllis Bentley, seem to have been critical of the novelist's technique on account of the material he had selected, claiming that Hampson's characterisation was ineffective because they disliked the characters that he had chosen to depict.

repetitiveness, its success as a novel.[1] Instead, Hampson should employ his newly-realised freedom to probe deeper into characterisation while retaining his admirable concern with form, but mastering it instead of allowing it to master him.

In *Family Curse* Hampson has demonstrated the necessary technical competence to progress as a novelist and has liberated his personality. Mere crafsmanship, however, is insufficient ; what is needed is the "something outside order" of *Family Curse*'s epigraph ; the inspiration of discovering a major theme on which Hampson could employ his proven technique without clouding it by personal concerns ; not the retrograde step of collaboration, however technically and personally harmonious, with another novelist.[2]

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1. The paradox is that, though *Family Curse* was technically Hampson's best novel, it was his very technique that prevented it from becoming his best - a point that is referred to again in the concluding summary of his work, *vide* Ch.4, p.94, including footnote 3, of this dissertation.

2. The epigraph, suggested by Mr. Walter Allen - in his letter to me dated 12th. July, 1974, he makes reference to "*Family Curse*, for which...I supplied the epigraph" - is taken from W.B. Yeats' play *The Resurrection*, in *The Collected Plays of W.B. Yeats* (1934), 1972, and is found on p.591, lines 12-1[illegible], in which the Syrian's speech is the heart of the matter: "What if there is always something that lies outside knowledge, outside order? What if at the moment when knowledge and order seem complete that something appears?"

CHAPTER IV : : THE UNFULFILLED PROMISE AND THE DECLINE IN CREATIVITY AND SELF-CRITICISM IN THE LATER NOVELS :

from The Larches (1938, with L.A.Pavey)
and Care of the Grand (1939)
to Poor Fancy Riches (unpublished, 1940)
and A Bag of Stones (1952).

With the publication of Family Curse in 1936, Hampson seems poised to become a successful novelist : he has matured emotionally, having achieved a necessary sense of detachment from his personal problems which, though they still influence his writing, no longer dominate it, so that he is now able convincingly to present characters very different from his own ; even though, in so doing in Family Curse, he has employed an extreme of technique, he should subsequently be able to trim away his excesses. He has displayed competent craftsmanship in his grasp of form and in his realistic detailing of varied social backgrounds. Nevertheless, Hampson's unexpected failure to develop during the few years before the war is followed by a marked deterioration, as confirmed by Mr. Walter Allen in a letter to me in which he confesses his admiration for Hampson's work until after Family Curse:

> The latter novels seem to me less good. I think that finally he did lack self-criticism.... 1

As might be expected, this lack of self-criticism led Hampson to retreat into those personal obsessions which had marred his early work. Curiously, the first signs of such a decline occur not in a novel of his own but in one written in collaboration, The Larches, with Leonard Pavey. In this Hampson wrote the sections narrated by Francis Blake, the eighteen-year-old only son of widower Stephen

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1. Mr. Walter Allen's letter to me of 12th. July, 1974.

Blake whose narrated sections were written by Pavey.[1] Pavey's first and most successful novel, Mr. Line (1931), had explored a father's relationship with his children.[2] Given the complementary nature of Pavey's and Hampson's concerns, the collaboration might at first seem fortuitous; indeed, the novel it produced is interesting. It is only in the wider context of Hampson's career as a writer that it registers as a possibly unwise move.

The Larches is divided into nine sections. The odd-numbered ones deal with present time, the penultimate day before Stephen Blake's marriage to Kathleen Norman, his second marriage, and are presented in chronological order. The first and last sections are divided into three sub-sections, in which the action is narrated in the first by Stephen, in the second by his son Francis, and in the third, Stephen and Francis together ; the third, fifth, and seventh sections comprise only two sub-sections, with Stephen's narration appearing before his son's in the third and

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1. John Hampson, letter to L.A. Pavey, 31st. March, 1935, MS 6 II, Ha. 10, Dept. of Special Collections, Kenneth Spencer Research Library, University of Kansas, to whom grateful acknowledgement is made for permission to make the following quotation: "Enclose (sic) are a few notes and queries re The Larches: section one. Shall be glad if you will let me have them back with any notes and additions that you may care to make. I think that it conveys lucidly the boys (sic) strange character, explains some of the traits that worry Stephen, and also indicates Francis' queer affectionate regard." A further reference - to an abandoned wheelbarrow, mention of which has just beenmade as having appeared in Pavey's section - confirms Pavey's authorship of Section V, sub-section 2, the reference being found on p.146 of the novel.

2. Pavey's short Story, 'The Son', which describes a father's feelings for his son as he watches him perform at a school sports day, was dedicated to Hampson; a proof copy, corrected in Pavey's handwriting, was found among Hampson's papers and was dated 21st. October, 1932. First published in the Criterion, it subsequently appears in Pavey's collection of his short stories, Moving Pageant, 1935, pp. 145-156. The collaborators in The Larches would seem to have developed complementary personalities, each habitually adopting a contrasting approach, since Hampson always examines family relationships from the viewpoint of the youngest or only son whereas Pavey most frequently examines them from the viewpoint of the father.

seventh sections but with this order reversed in the fifth. Pavey provided all Stephen's sub-sections as well as the third and final combined sub-section in the last, ninth section, whereas Hampson provided all Francis' sub-sections as well as the third and final combined sub-section in the first section. The even-numbered sections interposed between the present-time narrations run through the past chronologically from Stephen's courtship of, and marriage to Margaret Vernon, followed by the birth of Francis, until her protracted illness and death. Here the collaborators' contributions alternate, Pavey providing the material for Sections II and VI, and Hampson that for IV and VIII.[1] Section II describes Stephen's courtship, marriage, the beginning of married life at "The Larches", and Francis' birth. Section IV introduces the disruptive effects of Stephen's friend, Jim Townsend, on the Blake family, as both Margaret and Francis dislike him and fight against his influence. This section spans the first world war, Jim being invalided out from Flanders.[2] Section VI, introducing the post-war period, examines both Francis' constrained affection for his father and his closer relationship with his mother. Francis is taunted by Jim "to prove himself a man" by cheating at school to gain a beating ; nevertheless, he spends Jim's proferred half-crown on a cricket ball to hurl through the greenhouse roof, a deliberate act of vandalism which ensures a second but paternal chastisement.[3] By Section VIII, Margaret's declining health, now diagnosed as heart disease, reduces her to semi-invalidism, in which state she tries to bring Stephen and Francis closer together in compensation for her gradual withdrawal from life. Jim's appointment to a

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1. *Vide* p.77, footnotes 1 & 2, and stylistic evidence for the identification of the authors' individual contributions. Hampson's short, disjunctive sentences, sometimes strung together by commas in place of a longer pause, is the stylistic quirk which makes identification of his work easy. On the other hand, Pavey's longer, more complex sentence construction often conveys technically complex interior monologues occasionally achieving the subtlety of Virginia Woolf's; thus Pavey's style is in contrast to Hampson's. 2. As Pavey was, *vide* Ch.1, p.22, footnote 3, of this dissertation. 3. John Hampson & L.A. Pavey, *The Larches*, 1938, pp.178-187: Francis revealing his contempt for Jim.

post in the West Indies and Stephen's undertaking not to recruit the unpractical Francis into the family business against his will ensure that Margaret dies peacefully.

The main theme of the novel is the transference of son from mother to father, in accord with the normal maturing process which, however, ought to have been accelerated by Margaret's death. Nevertheless, this transference has been hampered by the mutual reserve between father and son, recently intensified by Stephen's decision to marry Kathleen Norman. The present-day narrative subtlely delineates the re-establishment of intimate communication between father and son.[1]

Francis conforms to Hampson's pattern of the introspective, reserved young man, though he is neither artistic nor apparently homosexual but merely immature for his age, being puzzled by the mutual attraction of the sexes ; many of his characteristics are attributable to his sheltered, middle-class upbringing.[2]

The central tension of the retrospective narrative lies in Margaret's struggles against the influence of Stephen's extravert friend Jim, particularly on Francis' upbringing.[3]

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1. Francis feels that his father should have spent his last day of widowhood with him. The thoughts of both Stephen and Francis are focussed on the forthcoming marriage and how it will affect their relationship, and on the necessity of putting their thoughts into words in face-to-face conversation, against which reserve and delicacy for each other's feelings have erected a barrier. Thus Stephen forgets his season ticket for his train journey to work, and Francis forgets to deliver some articles to Kathleen Norman despite his having volunteered to do so: his guilt about this omission makes him avoid his father when the latter returns from work.
2. John Hampson & L.A. Pavey, op. cit., pp. 82-83: "Of couse, men and women did like going with each other, he'd known that long enough, but he could never really understand why - the facts that he had learned never seemed a satisfactory explanation of the state. But the state itself existed, and that in itself was enough to convince most people. He wished that he himself could have been convinced."
3. Jim, for example, is an advocate of corporal punishment whereas Margaret's attitudes are protective towards Francis. Jim's half-crown wager against Francis receiving a beating at school and the subsequent cricket ball incident is an example of this, vide Ch. 4, p. 78, footnote 3, and Ch. 1, p. 15, footnote 5, of this dissertation;

Margaret's dislike of Jim proceeds from their contrasted, antipathetic personalities as well as from a wife's resentment at her husband's need for friendships, however normal, outside his marriage.[1] There is no situation in The Larches that lies outside the range of normal experience of most middle-class families.

Nevertheless, this normality's lack of interest and tension provoked adverse criticism ; reviewers praised the novel for craftsmanship and sensitive delineation of family relationships but, as Ralph Straus observed, the story "folows a course which is at no point unexpected."[2] Similarly, the unsigned review in the Times Literary Supplement probed its lack of tension:

> The thoughts are, in effect, the book. Such static analysis demands, however, to hold the attention, a dynamic subject here (sic) all too largely lacking.[3]

Miss Kate O'Brien discovered the same "flatness" and described the novel as "more or less boring".[4] Her opinion that "whereas it states certain domestic problems, it does not create them", led her to criticise its characterisation, Jim being "merely stated and over-stated" and "a worry where he should have been a potent theme."[5]

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1. As in D.H.Lawrence, for example, in Women in Love (1921), 1971, pp.472-475, when Birkin discusses Gerald Crich's death with Ursula.
2. Ralph Straus, The Sunday Times, 20th.March, 1938.
3. Unsigned review in the Times Literary Supplement, 18th.June, 1938.
4. Miss Kate O'Brien, The Spectator, 29th.July, 1938.
5. Ibid. Miss O'Brien also found Stephen showing occasional moments of perceptiveness well beyond his generally stated native capacities, whereas Francis often seemed too dull and also adaptable in action and conversation for a boy who was supposed to have been established as a sensitive personality. However, she praised the characterisation of Margaret as "a touching, gently lighted figure."

The Larches bears Hampson's individual imprint in its finely-wrought form and in its presentation of a short period of domestic crisis as seen by more than one narrator, interspersed with the authors' narratives showing the history of family relationships during a twenty-year period.[1] However, Hampson has not escaped from his personal concerns since he is still exploring the son and father relationship, with the same emotional barriers existing as between Justin Stonetun and his father in O Providence.[2] It seems as if Hampson wanted a second opinion on his personal problems and so chose a suitable father-figure in Leonard Pavey, some fifteen years his senior. Collaboration, which might have helped him to escape from himself, brought him back to self-analysis.[3]

In his next novel, Care of the Grand, Hampson succeeded in keeping his personal obsessions at a distance while continuing to impose the same formal patterns on his material as in Family Curse and The Larches.[4] Seven narrators, four staff and three guests at the large, provincial Grand Hotel, are each allocated three sub-sections in which to tell the story of their same week at the hotel. The seven days are each divided into sub-sections of morning, noon, and night, each narrator describing one morning, one midday and one evening period, each occurring on a different day.[5]

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1. The retrospective narratives are observed mainly through Stephen's or Margaret's eyes, and occasionally through Francis, though no single viewpoint is confined to any single section.
2. John Hampson, O Providence, 1932, p.392, vide this dissertation, Ch.2, pp.35-36, and footnote 3, p.35, and footnote 1, p.36.
3. Hampson possibly thought collaboration would further distance him from personal obsessions but the result was a return to that maundering self-attention which was his most dangerous personal weakness.
4. Vide Forrest Reid, The Spectator, 28th. July, 1939: "Each of his (Hampson's) novels keeps austerely to a predestined method of presentation...One of his principal aims is to achieve shapeliness of outline."
5. Viz: (staff) Seth, kitchen, kitchen-boy, Monday morning, Thursday noon, Saturday night; Arthur, waiter, Tuesday morning, Saturday noon, Sunday night; Rachel, chambermaid, Wednesday noon, Thursday night, Sunday noon; Jean, barmaid, Tuesday night, Thursday morning, Friday noon : (guests) Miss Ingerham, Monday noon, Wednesday night, Friday morning; Bernard Fuard, Esq., Monday night, Wednesday noon, Saturday morning; Mr. Randall Mannoring, Tuesday noon, Friday night, Sunday morning.

By the end of the week, Seth, the kitchen-boy who fears dismissal because of his inability to keep up with work that is too physically demanding for him, is about to be allocated a more suitable job as assistant to the new floor waiter, Arthur. However, Arthur, who has spent almost the whole week in the self-imagined shadow of dismissal for an uncharacteristically careless mistake, is given this newly-created post of floor waiter because titled guests have commented on his expertise to the manager. Jean, a widowed barmaid with a young daughter, is plunged into a lightning romance by the wealthy Peter, three years her junior. Rachel, a new chambermaid, settles down happily despite finding her work exhausting. Of the guests, the elderly spinster Violet Ingerham degenerates further into private alcoholism, paranoic fears, and unjustifiable complaints against the long-suffering staff. The actor Randall Mannering, a homosexual, is visited by his friend and impressario, Archie, and is promised a West End part.[1] Bernard Fuard, a middle-class civil servant of allegedly humbler origins, prepares his local public lecture, ruminating on social amelioration in the context of the overworked hotel staff.[2]

Paradoxically, though Forrest Reid praised Hampson's form as suitable for his subject-matter, he also exposed its weakness, as

> there is either no story or else there are seven stories. Certainly there is no single theme in which all the characters are involved and which is worked out to a dramatic climax. 3

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1. In return for continuing homosexual favours, it seems, though Hampson may have excised pasages of greater explicitness at the publishers' request, vide Ch.1, p.23, footnote 1, and also Ch.4, p.86, footnote 1, of this dissertation.

2. Fuard claimed working-class origins, having been brought up in a house without a bathroom even though his father was headmaster of a school: John Hampson, Care of the Grand, 1939, pp.41-44.

3. Forrest Reid, op.cit. In this review he also states that the object of the novel is "to show us,...from the inside and the outside, the life and working of a big provincial hotel"; but he adds, "I cannot see how by any other method...Mr. Hampson could have given that with an effect of unity. The material in the raw is fragmentary and amorphous; by giving it form Mr.Hampson makes it a work of art."

This lack of a centre save in the hotel's unity of place pinpoints the structural weakness of Hampson's novel. The form he evolved is suitable for a socially realistic documentary, but he has not moulded his material into a unity suitable for a novel.[1] Indeed, he evolved, instead, a highly disciplined form as if to compensate for the lack of unity between seven narratives unconnected except by place ; a unity of time is superimposed on these disparate narratives but does not encapsulate them. In this brief time-scale, all but one of the conclusions of the individual narratives achieve a rather indefinite happiness, expressive of Hampson's faith in humanity and in social amelioration and consistent with the often unjustifiable optimism inherent in the conclusions of most of his novels.[2] The surprising contentment, in general, of the hotel's employees is sustained by unfulfillable day-dreams. Hampson realistically communicates the indefinable pathos underlying the circumscribed lives of the working-class of the 1930's.[3] Sean O'Faolain emphasised this novel's documentary aspect and its lack of qualities associated with fiction ; for him it was

> less a work of fiction than a piece of reportage, and it has that appeal...of being first hand documentation. As fiction it usually has very little to offer in the way of plot, development, tension, characterization...[4]

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1. Hampson's motivation for writing a novel about a hotel in realistic terms was the success of Vicki Baum's _Grand Hotel_ (1930) which Hampson criticised as "phoney", according to Mr. Walter Allen in a recent conversation with me.
2. Among his published novels, _O Providence_, _Saturday Night at the Greyhound_, and to a lesser degree _Strip Jack Naked_ and _The Larches_, and in most of the individual stories, particularly those of the hotel staff, in _Care of the Grand_.
3. In his narration, Bernard Fuard wonders, "How could they ever rise in the world...except...an odd individual?...As long as their simple requests were granted, they stayed fairly content with the dope of parks and picture palaces...A hopeless lot, really, hopeless. And yet, as individuals, how good they were ; real and unpretentious, often with a strong and bawdy sense of fun which made the middle class appear emasculated by contrast. They were so real, for all the limitations under which they worked and lived ; the very urgency of their simple needs gave their lives a rich vitality, lent them justification for being alive." (John Hampson, _op. cit._, pp. 51-52).
4. Sean O'Faolain, _John O'London's Weekly_, 4th. August, 1939.

The novel's main virtue is its social realism, drawn from Hampson's early experiences, first as kitchen-hand and then as waiter.[1] For example, not only is the physical reality of washing up interminable breakfast plates described, but also Seth's mental reactions to his task:

> Already his hands were glistening shrimps, already the front of his apron from chin to navel was sodden and cool. Its heavy dampness was like a weight pressing on his belly. People left egg yolk, fish skins, tomato sauce, on their plates, left what greed could not consume, to confound, frighten and threaten him. The egg yolk was the worst; his nails were so soft that he could not scrape its yellow filth from the plates. 2

The newcomers to hotel work, Seth and Rachel, soon reach exhaustion ; even the experienced Arthur suffers from tiredness. All fear dismissal and unemployment, so that relationships are poisoned throughout the hierarchy of the hotel, rumour presenting the benevolent despot of a manager, "Papa" Leslie, as an ogre : as Arthur explains,

> Hotel atmosphere was always the same. The bosses held the workers tightly...because there were spies in their ranks who could, and did, advance themselves by betraying their fellows. 3

It is these fears, however, that provide such minor tensions as exist in the novel ; as a sometimes unjustifiable projection of the narrators' fears, they do not grip the reader, however sympathetic. Hampson's naturalistic approach is not conducive either to tension or to interesting characterisation since he must portray routine events disturbed only by minor, personal crises, involving ordinary

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1. Vide Ch.1, p.10, of this dissertation. Hampson also made use of this working experience in Go Seek A Stranger where Alec is first a kitchen-hand and then a waiter, and in Tom Oakley's experience of working as a waiter in the Bristol Hotel in London in Saturday Night at the Greyhound, pp.37-38.

2. John Hampson, Care of the Grand, 1939, p.16.
3. Ibid., p.77.

people.[1] Indeed, Mr. O'Faolain was critical of Hampson's characters since he found

> none of them particularly significant, attractive or emotionally revealing. In sum, the hotel is the hero and the villain and the plot rolled into one. 2

Inherent in the novel's division into seven separate narratives where "the various characters... scarcely touch each other though they live under the same roof" is the narrators' revelation, in respective isolation, of self-absorption and sometimes self-pity, traits that do not make for a balanced presentation of character.[3] Nevertheless, where Hampson portrays these traits, as with Seth and Miss Ingerham, he is most successful. Seth is a touching figure, though too prone to tears and fears, Miss Ingerham a well-drawn type, Arthur adequate but commonplace, but Jean's realistic approach to her working life is at variance with her romantic attitude to Peter.[4] Randall Mannering is a

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1. Guests, because they pay, possess greater freedom than staff to indulge their idiosyncrasies. Edwin Muir, The Listener, 17th. August, 1939, points out that though "We are made to see that all these people have lives of their own, in most cases drab ones", Hampson's presentation of these lives "mostly by retrospection in confined surroundings" is "a method which eschews dramatic effects."

2. Sean O'Faolain, op. cit.

3. Edwin Muir, op. cit. On the other hand, to interpret Hampson's characters in this novel as the results of particular social problems is an interesting exercise though it seems unlikely that Hampson constructed them with this aim. The guests are contrasted between the considerate Fuard and the inconsiderate Miss Ingerham, with the self-absorbed Randall Mannering merely indifferent towards the hotel staff. However, guests in hotels tend to remain in isolation whereas the staff in such a hierarchical organisation sustain their particular, expected roles, vide footnote 1, above.

4. John Hampson, op. cit., p. 194: "He would come. And if he didn't, what of it? Was she a young girl, gone lovesick for a pretty face? What had he that she had not? What if she never saw him again?... She would go on working in this bar until she left it for another. She would go on like any other working girl, and work, keeping her head screwed on tight and straight, seeing that no one took advantage of her ; that the job did not get her down." Here the simple, almost crude style of the writing reflects fidelity to truth, the dismissal of illusions : even so, within two days of the start of Jean's relationship with Peter, intimacy has occurred (p. 263) as well as their engagement (pp. 259-260) : surely unrealistic.

type, observed perhaps necessarily from the exterior, Rachel a boring nonentity, and Fuard fails to come to life since he is merely a mouthpiece for Hampson's ideas.[1]

Hampson's personal obsessions obtrude in the Chef's homosexual relationship with the kitchen-boy Harry and Randall Mannering's with his impressario Archie.[2] A central point of reference was needed to give the novel unity, possibly through one character depicted in greater depth than the rest, even if this implied Hampson's reversion to self-depiction, to involvement in personal problems.[3] It seems that Hampson needed to project himself into his novels in the persona of the homosexual young man for him to bring his work to life, despite the inherent limitations of this viewpoint. Care of the Grand with neither this central viewpoint nor a central dramatic climax possesses the sterility of a documentary.[4]

Even so, Care of the Grand exhibited Hampson's virtues of control of form, a realistic background honestly presented, and sympathy for working-class problems, as well as the furthest distancing of personal obsessions achieved

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1. Rachel's sections become interesting only when her lively and wayward colleague Nell is present.

2. *Vide* the publisher's reader's report referred to on p.25, footnote 1, which includes the following comments: "The most objectionable aspect of the book is the atmosphere of homosexuality which infects it at intervals. I draw attention to the relationship between the Chef and the kitchen boy Harry, as suggested on slips 2 and 67; and the really disgusting episode between Randall the actor, and his financier (slips 95-112). These passages are both offensive and unnecessary." Objections were also made by Chapman and Hall to Hampson's scatological terms. A comparison between the freer version of Ch.1 of the novel, published as a short story 'Care of Grand Hotel' in New Letters in America, I, in September, 1937, (pp.26-36), *vide* p.25, footnote 1, of this dissertation, shows that Hampson went less than half way, possibly only one third towards meeting his publishers' objections. It seems, however, that "the really disgusting episode between Randall the actor, and his financier" must have been subjected to considerable revision.
3. Seth and Arthur represent Hampson's working experiences; Bernard Fuard, his ideas; the Chef and Randall Mannering, his sexual bias : but none of these, his personality.
4. Hampson presumably disdained to develop the character of the manager, "Papa" Leslie, as a central, unifying viewpoint since his sympathies lay with the staff, and Arnold Bennett had depicted Imperial Palace(1930) from an upper-class management-

in any of Hampson's published novels. Nevertheless, a lack of unity in the novel's structure, unevenness in characterisation, and an overall lack of tension -- as in The Larches -- so that bleak, unexciting passages of documentary were spread through most of the narratives, meant that technical experiment disappointingly resulted in a decline from the tensions and ironies of Family Curse. In Care of the Grand, Hampson escaped from the doom of himself but could offer his readers only a less exciting alternative.

Hampson's next novel, the unpublished Poor Fancy Riches, is completely divorced from his personal concerns but also from his life experience : a fantasy whose wealthy aristocratic characters, outside Hampson's range, become humourless caricatures ; its irony fails because its theme and the story illuminating it, both lacking in significance, fail to arouse interest.[1,2] All Hampson's weaknesses except

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1. The typescript is undated, but its assignment to 1940 is based on these factors: Hampson met its dedicatee, the Birmingham writer A.W.Dodd, in September, 1937. Mr.Dodd in conversation with me recalled the one occasion Hampson mentioned this novel to him, prior to the Dodds being bombed out of their home in late 1940. Hampson's then literary agents, Pearn, Pollinger and Higham (now David Higham) destroyed their records of Mss. not accepted for publication before 1945 and cannot trace any correspondence in connexion with the Mss., though the typescript bears their imprinatur. Finally, the paper on which the Mss. is typed is of pre-war quality, similar to that used by Hampson's typist for several short stories written between 1937 and 1940, including 'Good Luck', which John Lehmann published in Penguin New Writing in December, 1939.

2. Vide Ch.1, p.24 of this dissertation. The plot of Poor Fancy Riches reveals Hampson's depressed and creatively sterile state of mind at that time; it is a grim comment on how people waste their lives on valueless activities, particularly the wealthy. Dame Patty Bowditch wishes to purchase a kind of immortality. She persuades herself into believing that she has discovered a painter of genius in the Italian Alberto whom she brings to her Midlands country seat, together with his unhappy wife and family. He is then commissioned to paint innumerable portraits of Dame Patty. These she will leave to the nation in trust as the centre pieces of an art gallery that she will build to house a considerable art collection. All is vanity : all her great wealth is expended ultimately on this project so that she dies in poverty with the buildings nearing completion. After her death, the portraits of Dame Patty are kept hidden from public view, to be revealed by the curator only at the request of fellow experts in search of hilarity.

his obsessive personal concerns are paraded, the overall impression being creative sterility since this novel fails to come to life.

Hampson's final novel, A Bag of Stones, was not published until 1952, and provides a final illustration of how he did not make the progress that seemed likely after the publication of Family Curse.[1] Indeed, it shows a complete reversion into his personal obsession with the father and son relationship, as illustrated in the following account of the plot.

Elizabeth Weston, a lonely orphan, is browbeaten into marriage by the sour-tempered, taciturn Bert Hadden who, three years after his son Joseph's birth, departs to fight in Flanders in World War I.[2] The idyllic relationship that develops between mother and son is rudely shattered when Joseph is six by the return of this bullying tyrant. Immediately Joseph secretly begins to collect stones in the guise of a David plotting to destroy Goliath.[3]

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1. Mr. Graham Greene nevertheless wished that his firm, the publishers Eyre and Spottiswoode, could have had "the offer of the novel" in a letter to Hampson as early as 5th. January, 1948. Mr. Greene in a letter to me dated 9th. June, 1975, subsequently confirmed that "the novel" referred to in that letter was A Bag of Stones, though he did not indicate whether he had seen the final version. Indeed, this seems doubtful since there are signs of Ford Thomson's influence, vide Ch. 1, p. 25, footnote 2, of this dissertation, as well as Ch. 4, p. 89, footnote 1, and Hampson did not meet him until later in 1948. Furthermore, Mr. A. W. Dodd informed me that the publisher of the novel, Mr. Derek Verschoyle, made the suggestion concerning the final section of the novel, its only ironic passage, vide Ch. 4, p. 91, footnote 1, of this dissertation: John Hampson, A Bag of Stones, 1952, pp. 283-285.

2. Hampson's attempt to render credible the warped development of Bert Hadden's character is the account of an incident when, as a twelve-year-old, the youngest of a gang of boys, Bert was posted as look-out while the others began to take their turns at enjoying sexual relations with a mentally-retarded girl ; Bert became so engrossed in the proceedings that he gave warning of the girl's father's approach too late ; though the others escaped and subsequently denied all responsibility, Bert was caught and blamed and became the butt of the town : ibid, pp. 95-103.

3. This symbolism, with sections of the novel mainly named after different stones found by Joseph, does not impose a clear form on the linear narrative.

In order to set up a market-gardening business, Bert now moves his family to the outskirts of a large Midlands industrial town where he owns a pair of cottages. Joseph gains an unexpected insight into a happy father-son relationship, so emphatically contrasted with his own, when he returns to his former village to stay on two occasions with his friend Archie Jenkins.[1] Some months later, terrified at losing a sixpence Bert has given him to purchase some nails, Joseph runs away, developing a temporary amnesia, though he succeeds in finding the Jenkins' home ; unluckily they are away, and he is brought back to another sadistic thrashing.

To purchase an extension to his small-holding, Bert now bullies Elizabeth into parting with £107 she had saved for Joseph ; an assistant, Greg, is now employed, though Joseph is also kept occupied when he is not at school. After Joseph finally leaves school, however, Mr. Jenkins helps him to find an office job in a chemical firm, but he is too unintelligent to hold down this or a subsequently less demanding one at the firm's warehouse, so that he returns to labouring, now full-time at 4/- a week, for his father. Shortly afterwards, Elizabeth dies suddenly.[2]

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1. The relationship between Archie and his father is based on the ideal father and son relationship advocated by Ford Thomson in _Ask the Children_ (1950), _vide_ Ch.1, p.25, footnotes 1 & 2, of this dissertation, and may indicate later revisions to the text of the novel in, or after 1948, _vide_ Ch.4, p.88, footnote 1, of this dissertation.

2. The episodes after her death and up to and including her funeral comprise the most sensitively written passages in the novel, _vide_ John Hampson, _op.cit._, p.195:
"He gazed at his mother. Her eyes were shut. There were wisps of white hair, which the sun touched, lending them life against the deadness of the white face, framed in what looked like paper lace, such as was found in chocolate boxes. She looked tired, as though she had fallen asleep after a hard morning spent at the wash-tub. Someone had scattered a few cottage pinks on her breast. She would have liked this, the boy knew, as he sniffed the delicate, clove-like fragrance. But there was another smell in the room - a smell of darkness quite unlike any other he could remember."
Joseph's stunned lack of feeling at his mother's death is well conveyed ; he hears "discreet feet moving in the room overhead...it seemed to him the wood screamed in protest against the implacable screws." (_Ibid._, p.195).

Later, the Jenkins family move away from the district, though Joseph finds a friend in Mrs. Stringer, a widow, his father's tenant in the next-door cottage. Through her widowed niece, Mrs. Wing, Joseph meets Ruth, a schoolteacher friend of Mrs. Wing's daughter, Maureen. An unconvincing courtship follows, with Ruth surprisingly amenable to Joseph's proposal of marriage.[1] A secret wedding is arranged with Mrs. Stringer's connivance, and Joseph, finding some bundles of notes in his father's drawer, absconds with £50 as part of the £107 due to him from his mother.

Joseph and Ruth, now married, flee to a town on the other side of the Midlands where Joseph shows himself incapable of retaining any kind of job, so that eventually Ruth insists on their returning to confront Bert Hadden, despite Joseph's desperate opposition. Bert then lays down terms : Joseph and Ruth may live in the next-door cottage from which Bert has evicted Mrs. Stringer for her assistance in the marriage arrangements ; Ruth is to cook and clean for Bert, Joseph to return to work in the small-holding and repay the £50 by instalments from his wages.[2] Shortly afterwards, Bert notices Ruth's pregnancy and taunts Joseph who knocks him down with a chair, Ruth intervening to prevent serious injuries.[3] Joseph, on Ruth's persuasion, agrees to attend a mental hospital for treatment but, alienated by its clinical atmosphere, insists on postponing this until after the birth of their child. Before this event, however, when Ruth is

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1. That Ruth has to leave her lodgings to make room for her landlady's son, returning home to take up a new job, and that she has also quarrelled with her headmistress and impulsively resigned her post at the school where she has been teaching seem insufficiently potent reasons for her to accept a proposal of marriage from someone with whom she is not in love and whom she has known for only a short time.

2. Mrs. Stringer has subsequently died in the workhouse. One would expect to find such a detail in the novels of Thomas Hardy rather than in those of John Hampson.

3. There is inconsistency here. Ruth's pregnancy is revealed to Joseph on pp. 274-275 when his father's comments on her condition provoke Joseph into knocking him down with a chair; yet on p. 282 Ruth tells Joseph again, and he seems surprised at the news.

shopping, Joseph kills his father.[1]

The theme of the novel, then, is the gradual destruction of a son's personality by his father until, defeated in his various attempts at self-assertion, even after marriage, the son resorts to murder to achieve his freedom. However, conflict between son and father has been a recurring preoccupation in Hampson's career as a novelist.[2] Hampson recalled the effects of his father's occasional outbursts of anger and beatings ; he then presented the extreme situation of an only son, an only child, unable to escape from a consistently tyrannical father who showed no affection.[3,4] A possible though extreme interpretation of the genesis of A Bag of Stones is that Hampson's psychic murder represented his ultimate attempt to free himself from a father-fixation, the puny David slaying Goliath : the symbolic significance of Joseph's collection of stones is obvious.

To divide the novel into sections connected with Joseph's collecting individual stones is arbitrary ; this form is merely superimposed on the narrative.[5] This linear

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1. This final incident is merely reported by two middle-class ladies in a tea-shop, ibid., pp.283-285 ; their blissfully ignorant comments representing the popular misrepresentation of the truth – "that poor hard-working old man being hacked to death by his only child" and that "such a wretch" will be hanged. Unexpectedly, in this epilogue to the novel, Hampson displays his former irony to such effect that the reader is made acutely aware of what has been lacking in this novel. Nevertheless, this passage was added at the publisher's suggestion, vide Ch.4, p.88, footnote 1, of this dissertation.

2. Vide Go Seek A Stranger, Tuneless Numbers (more step-father than father), O Providence, Strip Jack Naked (less frequently), Family Curse (Johnny in retrospect), The Larches : but A Bag of Stones represents an extreme of hatred only previously achieved in the relationship between Paul Davril and his step-father, the sadistic Gilbert Threll, in Tuneless Numbers, vide Ch.2, pp.28-29, in particular, footnote 1 on p.29, of this dissertation.

3. Vide the Hampson private notebook dated 1933, Ch.1, pp.13-14, of this dissertation.

4. Influenced no doubt by case-histories of delinquent or disadvantaged children in Hampson's recent documentary work for the B.B.C., vide Ch.1, p.24, footnote 5, of this dissertation, and by his enthusiasm for Ford Thomson's work and ideas, vide Ch.1, p.25, footnotes 1 & 2, of this dissertation.

5. Vide p.88, footnote 3. Form indicates a belief in order and progress, perhaps even of faith in human nature and in eventual justice, all these qualities being deficient in A Bag of Stones.

narrative is most frequently presented as if observed through Joseph's eyes, occasionally through Elizabeth's, but rarely through Bert's, since his thoughts become communicated only with financial profit in mind.[1] The father's character, and why it developed thus, is unconvincing, as is much of the characterisation and motivation in this novel. For example, Joseph's successful courtship of Ruth is unacceptable ; he would have lacked the charm to attract a girl of her intelligence as well as the cunning and intelligence to outwit his father in keeping both courtship and marriage ceremony secret. Again, the shrewd Bert would not have left his savings unguarded. Furthermore, Joseph might well have left Ruth rather than return to confront his father. Bert Hadden is too inhuman, Elizabeth too submissive, and Ruth unconvincing since, if Joseph's characterisation is acceptable, Ruth's is not.[2,3] Hampson has manipulated his characterisation to fit his plot rather than to allow his plot to evolve naturally from his characters. Hampson's customary craftsmanship as revealed in neat, formal construction, with clearly-defined, contrasted narrators in often ironic juxtaposition, is lacking.[4]

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1. Bert Hadden's thoughts are very rarely revealed to the reader, and since he is taciturn, what he says reveals little more ; his state of mind is revealed mainly through his actions which are either violent or cunning.

2. Vide John Betjeman, The Daily Telegraph, 14th. November, 1952: "I doubt if any father would be quite so unrelievedly brutal to his only child... whom he has bullied into a blinking, inarticulate oaf. I doubt, too, whether an attractive school-mistress would marry so uncouth a boy as Joseph."

3. Vide Richard Church, John O'London's Weekly, 28th. November, 195 : "Mr. Hampson... loads the dice against the father, making him a monster without a redeeming quality. It is difficult, too, to believe that the wife, with so large and intelligent a maternal instinct as she first shows, should not have been able to put up even a show of resistance to the immediate brutality of the husband when he returns to the home."

4. Vide Ch.4., p.88, footnote 1, for Mr. Derek Verschoyle's suggestion that Hampson should append an ironic epilogue; and vide Ch.4, p.91, footnote 1, of this dissertation, for some details of this passage, the only example of irony in A Bag of Stones.

Stephen Spender, in the most comprehensive and perceptive review of this novel, accepted that Joseph's character-development was realistic in view of what had happened to him, though he would not accept the reality of the circumstances that had caused this development.[1] The result was a deterministic situation, a psychological case-history. From this argument Mr. Spender derived his main criticism of _A Bag of Stones_, that

> as a novel it fails because in drawing attention to repressed life, it does not create enough life of its own. It is as though the writer himself had some of his vitality sapped in contemplating Joseph Hadden. 2

Basically, then, this novel fails because it is a case-history and lacks a life of its own - a lack of artistic, imaginative life that may have been caused by Hampson's involvement in documentary work, that stand-by of fact when the creative imagination falters. To this is linked the repetitious way in which certain basic points are presented, according to Mr. Spender, as well as the morbid symbolism, the stifled lives - and his concluding verdict on the novel's failure, a cause that lay deeper than unrealistic elements in characterisation and plot:

> Altogether this is a book for readers interested in an admirably constructed case history, but it fails to achieve the life of a novel. 3

Thus _A Bag of Stones_, Hampson's last published novel, is his weakest. Though all his work is flawed, an examination of positive values shows that his best work achieved an artistic life of its own. Whereas _Family Curse_ is technically his most assured novel, _Saturday Night at the Greyhound_ is

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1. _Vide_ Stephen Spender, _The Listener_, 25th. December, 1952: "Mr. Hampson's...plot...artistically seems overweighted with factors working against his hero."

2. _Ibid._

3. _Ibid._

his best.[1] A brief recapitulation of their qualities precedes a concluding evaluation of Hampson as a novelist.[2]

Family Curse is dominated by its form. Hampson's most sophisticated novel, it is his largest canvas, successful in a considerable range of predominantly middle-class characters. By the necessity of completing the pattern so successfully employed in bringing together the different members of the Sumerle family, the repetition, despite Hampson's ingenuity in providing variations and surprises, creates longueurs in the second part : the problems of this form with thirteen narrators describing the same event lie in retaining the reader's interest, an impossible task.[3] Nevertheless, this novel contains Hampson's most assured writing, his most penetrating irony, and his most vivid depiction of "the secret enemy", the artist who must transcend family and social taboos to fulfil his artistic destiny.

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1. Though there is more violence in *Saturday Night at the Greyhound* and in *A Bag of Stones* than in the other Hampson published novels, the violence in the former novel proceeds in part from the economically depressed nature of the community, whereas in the latter it proceeds from the warped character of Bert Hadden, so that the former possesses some justification which the latter lacks, its violence producing revulsion in the reader.

2. Space does not permit a recapitulation of the relative strengths and weaknesses of all Hampson's published novels, but the relevant passages are found on the following pages: *O Providence*, pp. 37-39; *Saturday Night at the Greyhound*, pp. 48-49; and recapitulation, p. 93; *Strip Jack Naked*, pp. 60-62; *Family Curse*, pp. 74-75, and recapitulation, p. 94; *The Larches*, pp. 80-81; *Care of the Grand*, pp. 84-87; and *A Bag of Stones*, pp. 91-93. A recapitulation, as above, of the qualities of Hampson's best work may then be perceived in the wider context of his qualities as novelist, evaluated in the concluding summary. A comparison of the passages listed above indicates that Hampson's most frequently recurring weakness is a lack of tension, often arising through the commonplace nature of his material, the latter being the reverse side of the coin of his honesty as a novelist, an honesty which nevertheless provides compensatory virtues, *vide* Ch. 4, pp. 96-97, of this dissertation.

3. *Cf.* pp. 74-75, footnote 2, above. *Family Curse* exemplifies the paradox that although a novel may be its writer's technically best work, it is the very form worked out with such skill and mastery that precludes its success from the reader's viewpoint.

Saturday Night at the Greyhound's minor blemishes arise from its characters being slightly larger than life, though still convincing, well-defined, and memorable except for Roy Grovedon and Ruth Dorme.[1] It provides Hampson's best constructed and only really taut plot, the central situation arising naturally from the tensions between the main characters. Its energy and pace rarely flag, except with the slightly patronising detachment with which Roy Grovedon and Ruth Dorme survey the inexorable progress towards tragedy.[2] Though their presence in the novel is a weakness, Hampson is attempting to view the complete society of a North Derbyshire mining village, from the young squire downwards.[3] The social hub of the community at the climax of one of its few periods of leisure - the village inn on a Saturday evening - is an ideal focal point from which to examine a community in all its aspects. Hampson's discoveries are expressed in a concise and spare manner, both in form and language. Wherever exaggeration might detract from realism, the novel's imaginative power and energy promote the necessary suspension of disbelief.[4]

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1. Vide John Betjeman, op. cit: "Only a fine artist, such as Mr. Hampson, can exploit the improbable, exaggerate an emotion, and yet produce an overwhelmingly truthful effect." This comment on A Bag of Stones could be applied more effectively to Saturday Night at the Greyhound where characterisation, though exaggerated and sometimes over-simplified towards caricature, as with Mrs. Tapin, is nevertheless basically truthful, and more credible, because of its consistency, than that in A Bag of Stones.

2. Roy Grovedon and Ruth Dorme were less successful because outside Hampson's effective range though he wanted a complete social picture as well as a source of uninvolved comment on the central situation. Tom Oakley's lapses into sentimentality over Ivy also slow down the pace of the novel, though there are obvious advantages in these variations of pace.

3. Hampson's diversification of narrators creates a varied range of impressions of Groveluce - the "foreigners" from Birmingham, Fred, Ivy, and Tom; a sophisticated stranger from London, Ruth Dorme; the local squire, Roy Grovedon; and the villagers, Clara Tapin and her mother. Differences of social background and education further diversify these viewpoints.

4. Vide John Betjeman's comment quoted in footnote 1, above.

John Hampson is a flawed artist. As a regional novelist, aware of, and sympathetic towards the social problems of the 1930's, he developed a very fair standard of technical competence, and wrote from an original and interesting viewpoint ; he was interested, in particular, in problems of form ; and, above all, he tried to be truthful and honest, both to himself and to his readers. Hampson is most effective as a novelist when employing a brief, present time-scale in a closely-knit form with the story being presented through several narrators whose viewpoints may differ substantially but through whom the reader will perceive the central situation developing towards its inevitable crisis. That Hampson's most frequently presented viewpoint is that of the homosexually-orientated young man, usually the youngest son of a family with whom he is in conflict, makes him an outsider who is not permitted to explain clearly the nature of his difference so that, though there is detachment through isolation and loneliness, there are omissions, a lack of definition, in certain significant areas. Hampson's concentration on personal and family tensions because of the nature of his personal problems meant that, when he had learned to come to terms with these, his main source of inspiration gradually disappeared ; and he was left with the protective shell of technique which he had gradually acquired but which was nevertheless insufficient to cover his flagging inspiration. Thus his novels acquired an increasingly naturalistic background and his writing moved more and more into the sphere of the documentary, and a declining inspiration was offset moderately successfully, until the war years, by an improving technique. Before his final novel he does not countenance improbabilities of plot to sustain his readers' interest.[1] Unillusioned rather than disillusioned, he eschews sentimentality and searches for objectivity. His insistence upon regional settings, based on his personal knowledge of the Midlands, is another aspect of his veracity. Moreover, according to Walter Allen, Hampson's avoidance of verbal decoration, of "fine writing", and his adoption of a deliberate

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1. *Vide* Ch.4, pp.92-93, of this dissertation ; *vide* also footnotes 2 & 3 on p.92 and footnote 1 on p.93.

harshness of style is symptomatic of the honesty and stoicism reflected in that style:

> Its angularity reflects the angularity of a mind intransigently honest, not cynical but unillusioned and sardonic, stoic. 1

Thus Hampson's greatest virtue is his determination to be truthful at all costs, even with himself, and not to diverge from life's most unpleasant issues, whether poverty, unemployment, violence, or death.

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1. Walter Allen, <u>Tradition and Dream</u> (1964), 1971, p. 247.

APPENDIX : A BRIEF SURVEY OF THE MSS. OF UNPUBLISHED WORKS DISCOVERED AMONG JOHN HAMPSON'S PAPERS.

GO SEEK A STRANGER

Five independently bound sections of typoscript are extant, each section comprising approximately 25pp. except for the short Prelude, as follows:

Section 1: Prelude, pp.1-13;
Section 2: Part I, Chs.1 & 2, pp.14-39; (⅔ of p.19 cut off)
Section 3: Part I, Chs.3 to 8, pp.40-63;
Section 5: Part I, Chs.12 & 13, pp.89-114;
Section 6: Part II, Chs.1 to 3, pp.115-139 (pp.137-139 torn out).

Thus Section 4: Part I, Chs.9 to 11, pp.64-88, is missing, presumably lost rather than destroyed since its matter would appear to have been unexceptionable. The truncation of p.19 was presumably due to its frank depiction of the climax of Alec's seduction by his English master. Similarly, the tearing out of pp.137-139 (the page corners are tied in) seems to have indicated the beginning of the physical expression of the homosexual relationship between Alec and Dick. The missing sections of Part II - possibly Sections 7, 8 & 9, and an Epilogue, since Hampson always attempted to evolve a balanced form - were probably destroyed by Hampson himself on Forrest Reid's advice (vide Ch.1, p.19, footnote 1). There is no evidence about who was responsible for the destruction of the other missing pages.

Forrest Reid, in his letter of 1st. February, 1929, gives Hampson detailed advice concerning this novel (vide Ch.1, pp.18-19). The novel held Forrest Reid's interest up to the end of the first chapter of Part II (p.124) but beyond that point it did not do so since it degenerated into a tract on homosexuality.

> "Where you keep to your novel, where you dramatise your subject, your work has great merit ; where you discuss homosexuality in general it has very little... Your business is not to theorise, not to explain, not to make pleas ; but to present your drama without comment, exactly as if you were writing of a normal person."

Forrest Reid praises Hampson's realistic presentation of "the most brutal episode in the book", the tramp's attempted paedicatio of Alec against the latter's will in the lodging-house in Liverpool, for this episode possesses

> "colour, life, actuality: it really happens: and all the novel should have been done in this way. Don't let your characters talk of things happening, but show them happening."

Evidently, in the destroyed sections of Part II, according to Forrest Reid's letter, Alec and Dick go away to Paris together : but "the Paris scenes to not ring true." Alec's eventual success as a playwright is also unconvincing, in Forrest Reid's opinion; in the extant sections of the novel Alec has been unsuccessful, the parallel here being Hampson's original version of Saturday Night at the Greyhound as a play in which he was unable to interest theatrical management (vide p.16, including footnotes 5 & 6, of this dissertation).

Forrest Reid concludes: with kidly encouragement:

> "There is excellent work in your book and there is no reason why you should not use a great deal of Alec's early life in a new novel."

Alec's experiences in the hotel kitchens in Nottingham reappeared in a less kindly form as Seth's in Care of the Grand.

In its complete form Go Seek A Stranger would probably have comprised approximately 230 pp. and 50,000 words, of which about half is extant. Earliest evidence of submission for publication is August, 1928 (vide Ch.1, p.17, footnote 2, of this dissertation).

References to this novel appear on pp. 14, 15, 17, 18, 19, 28 & 29 of this dissertation : details of its plot, the autobiographical nature of its material, Hampson's unsuccessful attempts to find a publisher for it, and further details of Forrest Reid's advice to him after reading the typescript, are given in the above pages. Verification of page numbers and quotations from the text cited and quoted by Forrest Reid in his letter with those of the typescript found among Hampson's papers prove that either this one or an identical copy was sent to Forrest Reid.

TUNELESS NUMBERS

Identical in binding, paper, and typescript to Go Seek A Stranger : complete, 52 pp., approximately 11,000 words, a novella rather than a short story. Though not directly autobiographical, it is an intensely personal work, dedicated to Hampson's father. The typescript bears the concluding words "Paris____Derby, Nov.28". The reasons for accepting the dating of this Mss. as 1928 rather than Nov.28th. of another year are as follows:

Firstly, the similarities in binding, paper, and typescript to Go Seek A Stranger ; secondly, the dedication to Hampson's father as a living person (he died late in 1930, and O Providence 1932, was dedicated "To the memory of my father, Mercer Hampson Simpson"); thirdly, an existing holograph version in the larger, more rounded writing in blue ink, similar to that of an unnamed short story dated 1928 and to early drafts and synopses of O Providence (Hampson adopted his characteristic brown ink later, as in the 1933 holograph Mss. of Foreign English). Finally, a letter from Desmond MacCarthy, then editor of Life and Letters (he later published, in April, 1931, Hampson's short story, 'The Sight of Blood', prior to its printing in a separate, slim volume by the Ulysses Bookshop (vide p.19, footnote 3)), provides the final confirmation of the date of November, 1928, for the completion of Tuneless Numbers since Mr. MacCarthy's letter is dated 19th. November, 1928. Hampson has evidently attempted to ascertain whether the theme of Tuneless Numbers, with its homosexual connotations, would be publishable; if so, he would submit the Mss. However, Mr. MacCarthy replied:

> "I do not think that it is likely that I should be able to publish for sometime such a story as your letter suggests, and therefore I do not ask you to send it me."

Tuneless Numbers is a story, not a novel as Go Seek A Stranger whose length would have precluded acceptance in Life and Letters Mr. MacCarthy's letter, by being dated 19th. November, 1928, would appear to confirm the date of completion of the Mss. Moreover, it is addressed to Hampson's sister Mona's address in Derby, the address that Hampson used for his literary transactions at that

time; until 1929 he seems to have wished to conceal these activities from the Wilsons. However, by 1929 he is using their (and his) address at Four Ashes, Dorridge, in respect of later negotiations concerning Saturday Night at the Greyhound and O Providence.

References to Tuneless Numbers occur on pp.13,14,28 & 29 of this dissertation ; footnote 1 on p.29 gives some details of the subject-matter that rendered it, as Go Seek A Stranger, unpublishable in the moral climate of the times, as Desmond MacCarthy pointed out tactfully in his letter.

FOREIGN ENGLISH

Complete in holograph Mss. in Hampson's later characteristic brown ink, bearing the date 25th. September, 1933; Miss Nancy MacFarlane is named as Hampson's typist, and is known to have typed Family Curse, since a reference is made to her being engaged in this work in Hampson's letter to Leonard Pavey of 31st. March, 1935 (vide Ch.4, p.77, footnote 1, of this dissertation).

This work is approximately 60,000 words in length, and the Mss. comprises 261 pp., 56 pp. in Part I, 121 pp. in Part II, subdivided into four sub-sections, and 84 pp. in Part III. Some of Miss MacFarlane's typescript has survived: Part I, pp.13-56 of the holograph Mss., has become pp.14-58 in the typescript, with minimal revisions by Hampson; Part II, sub-section 4, pp.21-44 of the holograph Mss., has become pp.23-45 in the typescript, but in this section several passages have been deleted in Hampson's brown ink. It seems certain, therefore, that the version of the text which Mr. Christopher Isherwood read as late as September, 1937, (vide p.20, footnote 1, of this dissertation) would have incorporated these revisions and would have been retyped. Nevertheless, the novel as it stands appears the most publishable of Hampson's unpublished works according to modern standards.

The material of this novel may be more autobiographical than suspected, since Hampson's article on the Van der Lubbe trial, 'Swastika Night', published in The New English Weekly after his October, 1933, visit for the purpose of reporting on this and on Nazi Berlin, contains two comparisons about standards of living and night-clubs between August, 1931, and October, 1933, which infers an earlier visit, this accounting for the convincing

portrayal of Berlin scenes, especially night-clubs, in this novel. The portrayal of heterosexual love between Norman Clinton and Madelaine Verschoyle is unlikely to reflect the circumstances of Hampson's own heterosexual love affair with Miss Martha Dodd since her father, William E.Dodd, was not appointed United States ambassador in Berlin until 1933, so that Hampson seems unlikely to have met Miss Dodd until his later visit in October, 1933 (vide Ch.1, p.20, footnote 3, of this dissertation).

References to this work occur on pp.19, 20, 51, 62 & 63 of this dissertation.

POOR FANCY RICHES

Complete in typescript, XIV Chs. and Epilogue, 195 pp., approximately 50,000 words, but bears no date ; this may have been inscribed on the torn-off from page, of which a trace remains tucked inside the ribbon securing the pages. Assigned to the period 1939-1940 for the reasons listed in Ch.4, p.87, footnote 1, of this dissertation, the typescript shows tentative attempts to improve its expression of ideas, as if Hampson had experienced passing thoughts of once again attempting to find a publisher for it in the late 1940's or early 1950's. Thus, before these attempts at revision, he would probably have removed any evidence of the novel's having been written (and therefore probably rejected) at a much earlier date. The corrections in Hampson's handwriting are in an unfamiliar lilac ink which he also used for similarly minimal revisions to Madras Adventure, the typescript of which dates from 1949. Another hand, using black ball-point, has underlined a few poorly-expressed passages and has appended one marginal note, on p.121 of the typescript; possibly this may be Ford Thomson's handwriting, albeit unverifiable from Hampson's correspondence files; he collaborated with Hampson in the rejected documentary television play, A Happy Little Family (vide p.25, footnote 3, of this dissertation).

The paper, however, on which this novel is typed, is of pre-war quality, unlike that of the typescript of Madras Adventure. Poor Fancy Riches is dedicated to Hampson's friend the Birmingham writer A.W.Dodd.

References to this work occur on pp.24, 87 & 88; a brief summary of its subject-matter appears on p.87, footnote 2.

MADRAS ADVENTURE

Complete in typescript, XVI Chs. and Postscript, 389 pp. of text comprising approximately 120,000 words, this documentary work was written in the latter part of 1948 and in the early part of 1949. Both the type face and the paper are different from that of Poor Fancy Riches. A letter from a friend of Hampson's (signed "Jack", it is possibly from John Brierley, son of Hampson's Birmingham Group colleague Walter Brierley, vide. Ch. 1, p. 10, footnote 3, and p. 21, footnote 2, of this dissertation) dated 9th. April, 1949, includes detailed criticism of the text, which therefore must have been completed before this date.

Though this work is irrelevant to this dissertation insofar as it is a documentary work and not a novel, it exhibits a lack of organisation of ideas and of Hampson's usual clarity of form, as well as indicating the extent to which Hampson had fallen under the influence of Ford Thomson. If Ford Thomson's theories, given a full exposition in Ask the Children (1950), had become generally acceptable, then Hampson's documentary, with suitable excisions, might have achieved publication; but Ford Thomson's book received an unfavourable review in the Times Educational Supplement on 24th. March, 1950 (vide Ch. 1, p. 25, footnote 1, of this dissertation). Hampson retained a publisher's reader's report, found among his papers, on the revisions required to render Madras Adventure publishable : the work's excessive length and its divided approach between educational and social psychology on the one hand and travelogue on the other received adverse criticism. A more general approach was recommended in order to relate the material to the problems of children everywhere, not merely those designated as delinquents in Madras State: "All children are problem children to their parents" was the departure point recommended for a revised version.

However, the significance of both the existence and the artistic failure of Madras Adventure lies in the fact that it is symptomatic of that division of interests that led Hampson away from the novel, accounting for his declining performance in that genre during his later years.

Reference to Madras Adventure is made on p. 25 of this dissertation.

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* The Hogarth Press edition of *Saturday Night at the Greyhound* (1931) has been used for references because the type is set in a larger point than in the other editions and is of a similar size to that of Hampson's other pre-war novels. However, reference has been made to the 1950 Eyre & Spottiswoode reprint for William Plomer's valuable critical introduction to Hampson's novels, vii-xi of this edition.

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* The few novels listed under OTHER MATERIAL were read for a
specific purpose, viz. the hotel novels of Vicki Baum and Arnold
Bennett in connexion with Hampson's Care of the Grand, and
Christopher Isherwood's early novels, in particular those with
Berlin settings, in connexion with Hampson's unpublished Foreign
English; E.M.Forster's Maurice for its depiction of homosexual
relationships; and L.A.Pavey's work in connexion with The Larches

ERRATA :

p.23,footnote 1,& p.82,footnote 2, ADD "ed.Horace Gregory" after "*New Letters in America*".

p.87,footnote 1,"*Penguin New Writing*" SHOULD READ "*New Writing*,II,iii,175-178".