Faith in literature: a study of some critical writing in the field of theology and literature from 1950 to 1982

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This thesis investigates some of the connections between the two disciplines of Theology and Literature. It asks, for example, What is the relation between the kinds of faith characteristic of each?

It begins with an overview of some of the major critical writing in this field since 1950, especially in the anthologies edited by Abrams (1958), Scott (1964) and Gunn (1971). The thesis also draws on the Journal of the American Annual Conference of Christianity and Literature. It contrasts the conservative and liberal perspectives of Leland Ryken and Giles Gunn and identifies where each characteristically places value and weight in the debate. It examines sympathetically the theories of Giles Gunn and Frank Kermode concerning the place of an existential faith in literature, and the function of literature as a source of personal and social meaning. It investigates the various elements of narrative which by their very form have religious or theological reverberations. It concludes with a critical study of Bellow's Henderson the Rain King as a way of earthing the analysis.

The thesis begins as an exploration but soon identifies as of most interest those arguments which give literary method a place within the whole sense-making experience of man. The theological interest of the thesis is probably in the hermaneutical function of literature for the individual and for society, and the discovery, in literature, of faith and existential belief as an authentic response.

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Declaration

No part of the material contained in this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree in this or any other university, and it is solely the author's individual work.

Prologue

I began work on this thesis as a search for integration. Having in some measure studied literary criticism and theology separately, I was aware that they often have concerns, insights and techniques in common. I wanted to investigate this perception, to test it and to articulate it, as it appeared to me. I was confirmed in this, and to some extent excited, in discovering that there had been a growing body of literature published, especially in America, with the same questions in mind. Is there something about story and the elements of narrative which is, in its very nature, theological? How does the world of meaning created by a work of literature relate to meaning within a confessional religion? How does our literary 'belief' in the world of a novel relate to religious belief and philosophical truth? What place has the imagination as a way of knowing? Is there, in the vitality of the images of literature, a source of life for tired theological arguments?

I did not know the quotation as I began, but Gunn's description of the literary experience seems to put a finger on the pulse of the issue;

> "We have been drawn into a mode of experience where, in all our unexpectedness, the act of belief suddenly becomes again an authentic form of response." (1)

Literary faith and religious faith may be very close. To find the parameters and the heart of this relationship is the burden of this work.

The shape of the thesis reflects more the exploration and evaluation of a wide area than the systematic presentation of a single idea, and yet, within such a general brief I have selected and pursued what I have felt to be the most important issues and fruitful contributions.

In the First Chapter I examine some of the seminal studies which reflect the emergence of critical interest in the relations of the two disciplines. In that sense the first chapter is an overview. I have

organised the material in five areas. The first two areas were, perhaps, more intriguing to those who first worked in this field than to recent contributors, but with the other three they identify issues to which reference is made at various stages. These lay down essential foundations for the study. The fifth section of the first chapter raises the issue of the place of dogmatic religious faith in the literary enterprise. This I felt to be a way into the heart of the matter, and it became the point of departure for the following two chapters.

Thus, Chapter Two is a comparison of the typically conservative religious perspective of Leland Ryken with the more liberal position of Giles Gunn. The two have characteristically different expectations of the relationship of theology and literature, which can be summarised respectively as proclammation and search. My argument is that the liberal approach in which faith and meaning are to be discovered, and even forged, is far more fruitful, and has more integrity, than the programmatic presuppositions of the conservative stance.

However, the implications of this are pushed to the limit in the third chapter in a study of the work of Frank Kermode. There, the functionalism of literature, its ability to provide an idea of order and meaning in the absence of religious faith, and thus to involve the replacement of religious meaning by literary sense, this very functionalism is undermined by moral and theoretical considerations. We are thrown back part of the way towards Ryken's a priori faith by the inevitability of our practice of hermeneutics, the need to understand by interpreting. Thus, Chapters Two and Three pursue the heart of the relationship between the two disciplines and the powers appropriate to each.

In contrast, Chapter Four investigates the various elements of narrative which by their very form have religious or theological reverberations, irrespective of the conservative or liberal assumptions of individual authors. Certain elements of narrative are correlatives of characteristics of religion, not necessarily stretching as far as God, but

nevertheless concerning belief. The material and argument of this chapter has a certain objectivity to balance the competing subjectivities of the previous two chapters.

The final chapter is concerned to test out some of the observations and theoretical arguments of the earlier work against a piece of fiction, Saul Bellow's Henderson the Rain King. There is a danger that abstract language can lose touch with its subject: it should be possible both to illuminate a particular novel with some of the insights already discussed, and to give some weight to those theories if they are not disconfirmed by immersion in a piece of fiction. But it is not possible to prove them by such a method, and in that sense the final chapter is a conclusion by virtue of confirmation and consonnance rather than by attempts to tie up all loose ends. It would seem that a survey such as this is unlikely to arrive at one single conclusion: the value will lie in the perspective gained and the weight of several arguments, some of which may be circular. I hope that, in the final chapter, some of the arguments of this thesis will achieve a "cash value"(2) in practical criticism, and that will be their strength.

Ch. 1 REGISTERING FAITH IN LITERATURE

An overview

The rise of the study of theology and literature has been part of that flourishing of interdisciplinary study that has taken place in America since 1960. In 1957 Abrams gathered various essays on the theme of literature and belief but the first anthology to attempt a wider analysis was The New Orpheus by Nathan Scott in 1964. Since then, other anthologies have been assembled to make the discussion more accessible, the Conference on Christianity and Literature has become much more than the marginal Modern Languages Association sub-group it was originally and the newsletter which Elva McAllaster circulated to teaching colleagues and friends has become the quarterly publication Christianity and Literature and a focus for teaching and writing interests throughout America.

Many of the ideas and insights in this field of study are ancient and already well established. Giles Gunn, in the introductory essay to his 1971 volume Literature and Religion quotes the four literary approaches which Abrams demonstrated in 1958. Plato and Aristotle considered the nature and significance of literature to centre on the world of the literary work and he calls that orientation 'mimetic'. Sir Philip Sidney's 'pragmatic' approach assumed that literature should imitate the possible more than the actual with the purpose of pleasing and ultimately instructing the audience. The Romantics placed fullest emphasis on the artist and the process of 'expression'. Finally, the moderns concentrate on the work itself, its 'objectivity' as a special kind of meaningful expression or the expression of a special kind of meaning. Each of these perspectives on the literary enterprise has its own implications for the nature of literature's relations with theology, and thus different theological ele-

ments have consistently been involved in the study of literature. But conscious study of this area has only been entered recently, partly because of the decline of religious certainty and as a result of the New Criticism's contracted critical endeavour "with its concomitant tendency to separate 'the values of art' from 'the facts of our existence in contemporary society'". (1)

In the Preface to Literature and Religion Gunn describes three things that scholars and artists attempt in their study of literature and religion. They "account for relations in conceptual terms", they "explore them in the concrete materials in which they occur" and they "try to assess the effects literature and religion, when taken together, seem to have upon one another both in the abstract and in the concrete". This occurs from both sides. As Nathan Scott asserts in the introduction to his earlier volume, there is "nothing more repugnant to the Christian consciousness than the 'groupist' outlook and the mischief that is created in cultural life by a politics of exclusion" (2) yet Christian critics attempt to discover if there is the possibility of a Christian theory of literature. Others, in practical criticism, refuse to separate aesthetic preoccupations from their various existential and theological commitments and so exert pressure on the 'mystique' of the text which has governed the last thirty or forty years. The contributors to Christianity and Literature show the same broad variety of interest and approach, some as university teachers of English, some theologians, some parish priests and novelists. It is not surprising, then, that it is necessary to group our discussion of the issues that are emerging from this field of study according to broad themes and not to attempt a linear analysis or to follow up every allusion as it occurs. Perhaps it is fitting that this is a characteristically literary methodology (and there are, perhaps, theologians who would not find it unsuited to the development of religious insight). It must be emphasised, moreover, that the analysis which follows is a study

of some of the issues in this interdisciplinary field only as they are represented by some of those engaged in interdisciplinary study in the field; it is not a free-ranging study of the issues in themselves, for the field is very wide indeed involving the disciplines of literature, theology, philosophy, linguistics, semantics, sociology, psychology, anthropology, history and theories of culture. In the bibliography to his 1975 Horizons of Criticism Vernon Ruland has 365 authors and four times as many titles from the period from 1950 to the early 1970's. In the anthologies which have been assembled and in some of the major works much of this wealth has been assimilated from various perspectives and is implicit. Whilst we must be aware, therefore, of the widest implications our frame of reference is rather more modest.

First in our thematic outline is the problem of belief which Abrams focussed in his own anthology. Although it has not been resolved the centre of discussion has moved away from this issue. Second, there are a number of attempts to create systematic or organic religious theories of literature focussed on the doctrine of the Trinity, the Incarnation or the sacraments. Third, the broadest category of work, in attempting to relate the two disciplines, is distinguished by its tendency to treat religion and literature respectively as something other than themselves, and thus effect an equation or at the least a relationship on what appear to be false pretences. Fourth, there is some fruitful attention to the implications of symbolic and metaphoric modes of expression. Finally, the issue of 'normativity' is exposed.

a) The Problem of Belief

The issue of belief, around which Abrams collected the essays in Literature and Belief, arises because those who hold some religious beliefs as central and definitive are conscious of the need to explain the validity of literature which either expresses contrary beliefs or no beliefs at all. Why is a Christian interested in pagan literature? There is also the question Wallace Stevens set himself 'What is the nature of poetry in a time of disbelief?'

There is unanimity in these studies that a work functions by its appeal to a common humanity. Abrams distinguishes between "overt assertions which we apprehend without consent as purely histrionic moments and built-in, common-sense and moral pre-suppositions from which, because they are essential to the work as a whole, we cannot withhold our consent without collapsing the poetic structure and draining it of its emotional power". (3) Douglas Bush argues that great works presuppose in their readers "a central and essentially ethical humanity which transcends particular creeds ... a common base of human sympathies and values", (3) and Cleanth Brooks that a work depends for its success on shared "general human responses ... the pattern of human nature that exists within us". (4) Walter Ong draws attention to the author's voice which "expresses itself less in manifest doctrines than in the silent understructure of suppositions, norms and beliefs." (4) Nathan Scott concludes that "in this fallen world the only workable requirement is not that of consent to the poet's doctrines but that of consent to the poet's general view of life as "a possible view" such as might follow from an intelligent, sensitive and sober consideration of the facts of experience." (5) This perspective is effectively summed up in the final essay by Louis Martz on Wallace Stevens, a poet who uses the meditative imagination to impose a structure on the universe, creating a value he does not find.

It is purely secular and naturalistic enterprise.

> The poem of the mind in the act of finding
> What will suffice.

It is "the bold venture of a man in search of what will suffice, for whom 'the human self', as he declared, seemed 'all there was'". (6)

In the opening essay of the collection Abrams reflects on the background to the problem. In The Republic of Plato poetry is asked to do what philosophy does better, to give access to truth. The problem is that poetry is an imitation of what is already an imitation of the real Forms or Ideas. In contrast, in the eighteenth century it is science that is the major claimant to truth and in its own defence poetry falls into two arguments; that poetry is a special emotive language used to express and evoke feeling and therefore is immune from the criteria of valid reference or of belief, or that poetry is an autonomous world of its own and therefore is immune from criteria of correspondence to our knowledge and belief about the world revealed by science. In the wake of Jeremy Bentham's "all poetry is misrepresentation" J S Mill defended poetry as an expression of feeling, the logical opposite of science. Science addresses itself to belief by presenting propositions to the understanding: poetry offers interesting objects of contemplation to the sensibilities, which the reader accepts without belief for its emotional effects. Poetry therefore extracts from a conception known to be untrue the same benefits to feelings which would be derived from it if it were a reality. Thus, in defence against a prevailing positivism, Arnold could argue that poetry was able to take over the role of religion (whose facts were irrevocably challenged) in support of morality. Early in this century I A Richards could support this emotive theory with a fully developed positivist poetics. The alternative view, that poetry is a world sui generis independent of correspondence to reality, is developed through the eighteenth century image of poet as creator of a new world not exhibiting the truth of correspondence but of coherence. Baumgarten related

this created world to the real world by analogy. Poetry is thus able to evade the criticism that it is a language game insulated from life, which is not our experience of literature. The idea of an analogical relationship preserves the autonomy of the coherent world of the artistic work without making it irrelevant, but the truth of the work is tied to its internal coherence and not to any correspondence with the real world involved in the idea of analogy.

Today, contends Abrams, we are uneasy about art for art's sake since all poems have a structure of symbols, images and meanings which are governed by a theme which turns out to be a moral or philosophical commonplace able to be discussed independently of the poem. He quotes as examples 'union preserves the commonwealth and discord destroys it' of Troilus and Cressida and 'no-one is to be called happy until death' of Oedipus. This may seem shallow as an account of the two plays but that is a danger inherent in this kind of theoretical discussion. Abrams is actually trying to draw our attention to a divided premise, that literature engages the whole mind, including common-sense and moral beliefs and values derived from our experience of the world, and also that the poem is a self-sufficient whole read for its own sake as a poem and not as something else, independent of truths either moral or social which it might communicate. Though Abrams does not put it in this way, the essence of the issue is that literature must not be held to the rules of truth and language that apply to any other discipline (especially philosophy) but it must nevertheless be acknowledged that it does deal with the same ultimate values and meanings that concern human beings. Thus he is able to claim that a poem makes a constant call on a complex of beliefs which are the product of ordinary human experiences of life not in propositional form but in unverbalized attitudes. In line with this rejection of the propositional he draws on Kant to argue that the function of art is not to persuade us to beliefs or actions but is to be a terminal

good. This distinction between literature which is intransitive and other disciplines which have an object and purpose we shall take up in discussing Kermode, who argues that the purpose of literature is not action but knowledge. Abrams contends that although the poet is not concerned to persuade us to take up positions outside the poem it is his constant concern to persuade us to concur with the common-sense and moral positions presupposed by the poem and to acquiesce in the probability of the thoughts, choices and actions of the characters. These responses, however different from our responses in practical life, depend in great part on the beliefs and dispositions which we bring to the poem from life and which are the indispensible conditions for our aesthetic response. "The skillful poet contrives which of our beliefs will be called into play, to what degree, and with what emotional effect." (7) Before a truly impassive reader (an audience from Mars) he would be helpless. If the artist succeeds we "so recognise ourselves and our lot in him as to consent imaginatively to his experience until it is resolved, in both artistic and human terms, in a way that is formally complete hence beautiful and intellectually and emotionally satisfying." (8) There is here, clearly, both an emphasis on the involvement of our own opinions and common-sense values, and yet a description of meaning in literary terms.

It is contended therefore that there exists a range of general human responses that may be separated from religious belief. These responses are indispensible to the literary enterprise. In using them literature achieves its own resolution in a manner appropriate to itself and not any other discipline. The resolution is achieved in terms of both artistic (and beautiful) form and human, intellectual and emotional satisfaction.

At this stage, the defense against the importance of differences of belief in literature seems to be that literature is not propositional. Nathan Scott argues that the poet is not an expositor, nor a Platonist,

nor an allegorist, nor a merchant in the business of ideas but a certain kind of technician or maker. Poetry does not involve the reduction of language to conceptual signs but captures attention intransitively to itself, functioning not ostensively but reflexively, not semantically but syntatically. The perception of meaning awaits not an act of comparison between component terms and external objects or events which they symbolize but

> "awaits an act of imaginative prehension that will focus upon the entire pattern of internal reference apprehended as a unity .... the living pattern of interrelated themes and resolved stresses the work contains". (9)

Thus, retreat into a denial of reference outward (which we may call correspondence) and with it a concentration on internal coherence arises from a propositional conception of religious belief. This is very significant for two reasons. Firstly, it is open to debate amongst theologians whether religious belief is necessarily or predominantly or exclusively propositional. Different theological and philosophical persuasions are involved here. But it is clear that the degree of embarassment caused by the problem of belief in literature depends on the degree of commitment to a propositional understanding of religious belief. Secondly, propositional belief involves the literary artist in reference out of the literary artefact to problems, questions and methods which are more appropriately the province of other disciplines like philosophy and theology. These are questions, for example, of metaphysical truth and depend on methods, for example, of philosophical argument, with which the literary artist per se does not deal. Since the time of Plato the critic has recognized that literature does not use the methods nor perform the tasks demanded of philosophy. Propositional belief seems to require this of the literary artist. Therefore, in his attempt to escape this kind of involvement in alien disciplines, the literary theorist risks over-emphasis on the non-referential, reflexive, special kind of discourse that the literary enterprise entails. Like Nathan Scott he uses metaphors like "maker" and invents

terms like "Imaginative prehension" that will indicate a distinctively literary way of understanding. It is then his duty to give an account of how this distinctively literary discipline resolves the human elements with which it deals in a way that is as satisfactory in its own terms as the resolutions offered in their own terms by philosophical or theological discussion. But at this point he is severely embarassed by a dilemma. Either literature must retreat so far into itself as a non-referential, totally enclosed method that nothing can be said of it, or it must submit an account of the reference it makes to the human and religious matters which are its concern. To escape from belief understood as propositional by over-emphasis on the non-propositional nature of literature is not therefore to escape the problem of belief.

The theorist has to acknowledge both the referential nature of language and the need, if a work is to be successful, to engage our total response to it as human beings with all our presuppositions and beliefs. In these two issues we are necessarily involved in beliefs. The responses suggested in this collection of essays are, firstly, that referential though language is, it is renewed in the new context of the organic work of literature, and secondly, that though we must indeed be 'engaged' in a work if it is to succeed, that which is engaged is merely 'human' and somehow excludes belief. The first of these defences, that words have new significances in the literary work, if it is understood radically robs literature of any meaning or significance and if it is understood more loosely it ceases to be a defence against the ubiquity of belief. The second argument hides behind the notion that belief is propositional to evade a closer definition of what these general human responses are and how they relate to belief (which is, surely, the original problem).

In order to make way for the presence in literature of belief that may be called religious Nathan Scott is sympathetic to the views of J Maritain in Creative Intuition in Art and Poetry that poetic activity

does not begin until the poet permits himself to be invaded by the reality of things. Maritain does not make clear what he means by reality: it seems to be another of these special and rather mystical literary useages which in this case conceals the impossibility of excluding the beliefs and presuppositions of the one who sees, from the act of seeing. But he seeks to rescue literature from its impregnable isolation: it is not language which brings meaning to birth but vision, the vision of a man. Henry James remarked that really, universally, relations stop nowhere and the problem of the artist is to draw a circle within which they appear to do so. Thus the artist gives shape and significance to the primary data of experience only by virtue of his own vantage point; he gives a pattern of meaning to contingency only in accordance with his fundamental, sharply felt insights into the meaning of the human story. Of course, we must not fall into the Intentional Fallacy (10): what is important is that which is discovered in the work itself, where "the meaning of what we look at appears to be quite indistinct from the form in which it is presented to us". (11) This is because the poet does not expound a thesis but renders his vision of the human story, dramatizes it and makes it concrete.

It is this element that he has called vision or belief that Nathan Scott wishes to suggest is the religious dimension of literature. It is in contrast to "any special iconic materials stemming from a tradition of orthodoxy" which might "be something peripheral and inorganic to the nature of literature itself". (12) He draws on Tillich's theory of the mutual immanence of religion and culture: "Religion is the substance of culture and culture the form of religion". (12) Tillich also says that religion is "ultimate concern". Thus criticism is inevitably bound to identify the 'ultimate concern' at the centre of every work even if it is expressed in secular terms. Literary criticism is, therefore, ultimately theological. This is, of course, a very different understanding of relig-

ious faith than the propositional or creedal perspective and we shall investigate some of the implications of this in Chapter 2.

Ultimately, however, on the problem of belief, Nathan Scott agrees in principle with Roy Battenhouse that "the artist who takes up his location in Plato's cave has not the same chance as he who sets up shop by Christ's open tomb". (13) Yet, in practice, he agrees with Eric Heller that the dissociation of faith from sensibility "has made it impossible for most Christians not to feel, or at least not to feel also as true many 'truths' which are incompatible with the truth of their faith". (13) The Christian reader will therefore respond with the same latitudinarianism as any other sensitive reader; he will require that the view of life of a particular novel or poem commend itself as a possible view, one to which an intelligent and sensitive observer of the human scene might be led by a sober consideration of the facts of experience.

Thus the problem of belief has not been resolved. Clearly, only a humanist could find the retreat into generalizations about a common base of human sympathies and values to be anything other than the lowest common denominator. Human values include religious values no matter how loosely defined. However, the insipience of theology in literature may be approached from a different perspective.

b) Some Theological Models of Literature

Dorothy Sayers argues (14) that whereas the work of art was to the Greeks a techne, a manufacture, the word that Christianity has given to aesthetics is 'creation'. God the Trinity creates through the Son who is continually begotten. Thus the artist "images forth" something which expresses that which it images forth, just as the Son is one with God and not only a copy of Him. Just as the Son is God so the poem is the experience - we cannot find out about the poem by researching the poet. Thus the act of the poet in creation is a Trinitarian one, of experience, expression and recognition.

For two thousand years, she contends, we have been trying to reconcile a pagan, Unitarian aesthetic with a Christian, Trinitarian and Incarnational theology: now we must recognise the religious origins of art. Two kinds of art are described by Plato and Aristotle, 'amusement-art' which is our experience of emotions without the appropriate event and is escapist, wish-fulfilment; and 'spell-binding-art' which seeks to produce certain behaviour without the appropriate experience and is magic or propaganda. These falsify consciousness: they are to art as the idol to the image. We must begin, she asserts, from the Trinitarian doctrine of the creative mind and the light it throws on images. Art is one of the images of God - although we "see through a mirror darkly".

Perhaps, in her emphasis on the essential oneness of the Trinity, Dorothy Sayers is trying to maintain some continuity between artist, work and audience in response to the prevailing critical emphasis on the autonomy of the work of art. However, she is unable to establish a direct correspondence between the poet, work and audience on one side and the Father, the Son and the Spirit on the other. For the poet to occupy the position analogous to that of God the Father in this Trinitarian aesthetic she would at the very least need to develop a theory of

man deriving from the doctrine of Creation which would in some qualified way connect the creative powers of man made in the image of God with his Creator's continuing work of Creation. This she does not do. To establish a parallel between the Trinitarian position of the Son and the work of art she would have to take such account of the Son's utter dependence on the Father that it is doubtful if any critic would recognise the resultant proposition about poetry. Even that critical theory which Abrams calls Romantic, which places so much emphasis on the poet, would have some difficulty in recognizing the work of art as both icon and substance of the artist. Dorothy Sayers would have special difficulty because she sees the work of art as an image of God: it cannot therefore also be an image of the artist, except in some extremely qualified way which would evacuate the comparison of any force. Finally, she makes no indication of how the Trinitarian role of the Holy Spirit might illuminate the position of the audience or reader of a work of art.

The image of a child has often been used of a work of art. This expresses both the parental origin of the work of art and its independence from the artist responsible for its existence. Similarly, the word 'Son' is used of Christ to indicate his relationship with God the Father. But the doctrine of the Trinity, especially in the use of 'homoousios' and of 'logos', establishes more identity between the Father and the Son than is usual between human parents and children. When Dorothy Sayers argues that "the poet reveals himself in the poem" she is alluding to the Trinitarian relationship and not to the human one. In fact the human relationship represents more accurately the degree of relationship between poet and poem. A poem is not autobiography: it may be about something quite other than the poet. Yet Christ, the Son, is, precisely, in the utmost entirety, about God the Father. Thus the poem is not to the poet what the Son is to the Father.

Although there is no ontological parallel between the Trinity and

poetry she suggests what amounts to an epistemological Trinitarianism about artistic creativity. The words she uses are "experience, expression and recognition". In these words lies the contention familiar to many modern theorists of poetry that the poet does not know what his experience is until he first expresses it in words and then recognises it in that expression which has fixed its identity and meaning. There is no doubt that a comparison in these terms is much more defensible. However, it is not clear what the significance of it is. She says we must start from this Trinitarian doctrine of the creative mind and the light it throws on images. Using Paul's words "we see through a mirror darkly" she seems to be suggesting the dark, merely reflected nature of the images which arise from this poetic process and which, like our perception of Christ, are only partial. Thus, when she says "art is one of the images of God" she seems to identify the revelation of God in Christ and the revelation of God in literary images on the basis of this shared Trinitarian epistemology. Surely this is too insecure a foundation for such a far-reaching synthesis. Yet if this is not what she means it is not clear what conclusions may be drawn from her suggested Trinitarianism. Furthermore, there are many secular writers who do not fall into either of her rejected 'idolatrous' art-forms (amusement-art which is escapism and spell-binding art which is magic or propaganda) but who pursue the most serious literary aims with integrity and who would strongly object to any literary theory that, against their will, organically committed them to the creation of images of God and effectively involved them in the Trinity's self-expression.

Denis de Rougemont seems hardly more successful in entertaining a partially Trinitarian theory based on his assumption that man is a 'maker'. Art is part of this capacity and character, differing from other activities of man only in that its raison d'etre is to "signify organically and by means of its own structures". (15) Its purpose is meditation.

He does not follow Dorothy Sayers in aligning the poet with God the Father by virtue of creativity. Indeed, he objects that it is only since the loss of belief in God the Creator that man has spoken of literary creativity: before that he engaged in 'composition'. Thus he concentrates on the work of art as what Sayers calls 'techne' and his theory displays all the marks of what she calls a Unitarian aesthetic.

> "It is impossible 'to deliver a message' in so far as we have not mastered its means of expression to the point of being able to adapt them, to make them serve, to orient them - and this even to the last detail - in the direction and according to the sense of that which we wish to communicate". (16)

There are two assumptions in this emphasis on craftsmanship. First, the artist is assumed to be in control, clearly perceiving what he wants to say and needing only skill and intention to communicate it. The message itself is not enigmatic and elusive and the act of communication is the artist's servant and in no way his master. Language is a tool only. Art is technology, the expression of man's control. It does not find out about the world for him. Any truth he knows is his by sovereignty of nature or by the grace of religious revelation. There is, here, little epistemological doubt and art certainly has no part in epistemology. It is one of the works of man, in Thomist terms a "virtue of the practical intellect", which is to reflect the religious truth of God.

The second assumption, which is a corollary of the first, is that the truth of the message depends on the felicity of its expression. This view may be contrasted with that of Maritain quoted by Nathan Scott that technical expertise is less important than vision. This difference of emphasis is largely because de Rougemont assumes that man is in possession of a certain vision whilst Maritain argues that he is in pursuit of it. Thus, as de Rougemont says in his introductory remarks, art cannot have a mission; only man can have a mission. Art is therefore the felicitous expression of that mission. On the other hand, for Maritain art is

an agent of revelation, a vehicle of vision, an unveiler of truth. This is the widest of distictions about the nature of man, of art and of epistemology that we shall discuss further in Chapter Two.

De Rougemont distinguishes art from other crafts practised by man by the claim that it must signify, with the aim of meditation. This softens his emphasis on technical craftsmanship, but he is still far from Maritain's desperate dependence on creative intuition for insight. He is still close to Louis Martz' work on the poetry of meditation (17) which risks valuing poetry not in its own right but as something else. Poetry is given religious significance by defining it in this case as meditation. But this is simply to play with words and the majority of healthy, robust, leading writers and critics would simply disown the redefinition. Nevertheless, if we separate de Rougemon't description of literature as "an oriented trap for meditation" from his assumptions about truth it is a useful statement. (18)

To understand de Rougemont's general position in this way is to illuminate his gesture towards a Trinitarian aesthetic. Although only God creates ex nihilo he allows that the artist 'creates' in the sense of re-arranging. This he sees as a parallel with the divine Fatherly love and action. Secondly, artistic expression incarnates certain realities and veils that which it expresses whilst manifesting it and being inseparable from it. This catalogue of qualities establishes the parallel with the Second person of the Trinity. Thirdly, the artist speaks of being inspired which is the peculiar characteristic of the Holy Spirit. This Trinitarianism is undeveloped and we cannot make too much of it except to point to the characteristic weakness of the perspective in the third parallel. He is happy with the notion of creation understood in a qualified way as re-arrangement, and the image of Fatherly omniscience and omnipotence which his religious picture of God suggests allows for the uninhibited craftsmanship of a perfect design. It is an extension of this origin that

the work itself should, like Christ, be a perfect incarnation of what was to be expressed. But it is in the third element that he can only point to the use of the word 'inspiration' in both contexts without giving any account of the connection. The notion of poetic inspiration refers to the heightened vision in the artist that is responsible for the production of the work of art and it has traditionally been described in whatever metaphysical terms are current, whether the muses and the gods or the levels of the subconscious. But in view of the account he gives of Fatherly Creation both divine and, by analogy, literary de Rougemont cannot develop an understanding of the work of the Holy Spirit on these lines. In this account creation and vision inhere in the Father who has no need of the inspiration of the Spirit (though, of course, there is a theological unity in the Trinity). Yet in literary theory the notion of poetic inspiration exists solely to account for the gap between the author and the art he creates, whose vision, it is felt, does not inhere in him. Therefore it is not possible to develop a Trinitarian theory of inspiration that will complement what Dorothy Sayers would call de Rougemont's Unitarian aesthetic. I will argue later (19) that the appropriate aesthetic function of the Holy Spirit in any Trinitarian theory of art is hermeneutical and not primarily to do with inspiration. Here, it is significant that de Rougemont can speak so loosely of the Spirit's function as 'inspiration' in the context of a view of art that comes so close to seeing it not as art but as something else. In summary he says

> "art is an exercise of the whole being of man, not to compete with God, but to coincide better with the order of creation, to live it better, and to re-establish ourselves in it. Thus art would appear to be like an invocation (more often than not unconscious) to the lost harmony, like a prayer (more often than not confused) corresponding to the second petition of the Lord's Prayer 'Thy Kingdom Come ..'" (20)

Art is, here, perilously close to becoming devotional prayer and de Rougemont, having so clouded the issue, is unable to pursue his Trinitarian

aesthetic: the whole of art (redefined as devotional prayer) is, in this view, about recognizing and worshipping God in Christ. Furthermore, since he shows only a token concept of uncertainty or darkness in the aesthetic (or spiritual) process he has little theoretical need of the Holy Spirit to illuminate or interpret, and therefore no incentive to develop a fully Trinitarian aesthetic.

In describing art as a virtue of the practical intellect de Rougemont, like David Jones, gives us what Nathan Scott in his introduction calls a characteristic Roman Catholic synopsis of Aristotle and Aquinas. That great metaphysical system is capable of accepting into itself and redefining anything offered to it. Thus Jones begins with the assumption that "man is a prudential animal whose nature is to practise an intransitive activity to which adheres a gratuitous quality". (21) In short, man is a sign-maker. Clearly this excludes Positivist insights. The logic of development is equally uncompromising: a sign imitates something, some reality, therefore something good, therefore something sacred - art is therefore a religious activity. This argument, like its companion 'man is a moral being, therefore a religious being' operates in a closed system and is not subject to anything outside of it. It relies on precise and specialised definition of the terms involved. But if we were to introduce anthropological or sociological evidence that many people show moral behaviour without any religious behaviour the system is endlessly able to assimilate it without essential change. The humanist in his turn would argue that 'man is a sign-maker' implies not that he is a religious being but simply that he is a human being: sign-making may be predicated of the human as well as of the religious. Therefore it is necessary to investigate presuppositions and terms.

However, it is less the gesture towards a sacramental view of literature than his ability to place literature within a larger religious context where it occupies a strictly defined role that distinguishes Jones' theological approach to literature. It is this that is characteristic also of

W H Auden, though his argument is slightly different. Auden seems concerned to separate what so many critics in this field wish to unite. To be able to hold, as he does, that "no artist qua artist can understand what is meant by 'God is love' or 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour' because he doesn't care whether men are loving or unloving" (22) is to separate the artist from the human. Yet he recognises that to the imagination the sacred is self-evident. As meaning and value are implied in the idea of 'the sacred' we must suppose that he is distinguishing between what the artist does by virtue of the imagination (which can perceive value) and what he does apart from the imagination (which must be value-free). Perhaps, therefore, by 'artist' he refers to the craftsmanship of literature as distinct from its conception. The imagination, he argues, is a natural human faculty and retains the same character whatever a man believes. Certain objects, beings and events arouse in his imagination feelings of sacred awe while others leave his imagination unmoved. To grasp clearly what Auden is saying we may imagine this faculty as a laboratory instrument which every human being possesses but which is tuned in each case to respond differently to the same range of stimuli according to the beliefs and presuppositions of each individual. As artist he is not concerned with what his feelings of sacredness ultimately signify: he considers that as man. Thus there can be no Christian art, in that Christianity cannot inhere in the nature of art, but only in the convictions of man as de Rougemont holds. An artist may work in a Christian spirit but his Christianity pertains to himself and not to his art. The division between the sacred and the nature of art is so strong for Auden that even overt Christian references in a work are questionable, for they

> "seem to assert that there is such a thing as a Christian culture, which there cannot be. Culture is one of Caesar's things .... the only kind of literature that has gospel authority is the parable, and parables are secular stories with no overt religious significance". (22)

Thus, he says, the Incarnation of Christ, who cannot be recognized by the eye or flesh and blood but only by the eye of faith, has put an end to the imagination's claim to be the faculty which decides what is truly sacred and what is profane.

Thus, in these extremely aphoristic pronouncements we appear to have a characteristically traditional Catholic conception of the literary process. Art is simply craftsmanship, to do with execution and not conception, inherently value-free and under the complete control of the man. Imagination is a neutral faculty to do with conception but tuned to respond to stimuli in accordance with the beliefs and presuppositions of the man. Meaning, sacredness, truth, vision belong to the man quite independently of the literary process. No knowledge or understanding can be gleaned from literature or the imagination: rather it is imposed on them and forms them in a one-way process. There is a Pauline gulf between Caesar's things and God's things, between literature or culture and the truth, between the eye of the flesh and the eye of the spirit. As the paradigm of the parable illustrates literature may be used as a means of expression or as a teaching-aid but it contains nothing essentially Christian or valuable.

Malcolm Ross and Allen Tate (23) understand the Incarnation quite differently. For Ross the Incarnation means that our frail flesh has been redeemed and existence has become inherently meaningful. Our central Christian symbol is historical: thus the cosmic is absorbed into the historical and sacramentalism, the presence of the divine in the human, becomes the essence of Christian life and art and can exclude nothing of the chaos of modern secularism. Tate argues that the Incarnation affirms the world as an adequate theatre for God's Son and thus 'a glass of vision'. The essential stoutness and reliability of the finite world of contingent reality in this view legitimise the transaction in which the artist's imagination mingles with the world. The imagination which dis-

integrates the image in illusory pursuit of the essence is a diseased imagination in need of the Christian's realistic attitude to Creation. This diseased 'angelic imagination' contrasts with the 'symbolic imagination' of Dante where wisdom is won through the analogical mind which apprehends the finite world as ultimately real. Tate's study of Dante focusses on the symbolic imagination which involves the bringing together of various meanings at a single moment of action. Thus Tate opposes Auden's separation of the Christian and the literary.

> "Catholic poets have lost the power to start from the 'common thing': they have lost the gift for concrete experience. The abstraction of the modern mind has obscured their way to the natural order. Nature offers to the symbolic poet clearly denotable objects in depth and in the round, which yield the analogies to the higher syntheses." (24)

There are two assumptions in this perspective. It is believed that the Incarnation transforms the contingent world that Auden dismisses as Caesar's world into something inherently valuable and potentially meaningful. The poet may examine it in its own right for what he might find there rather than merely use it in antiseptic detachment. Yet this is not a total affirmation of the world, for it is the specifically symbolic imagination which sees the significance that is incarnate in it. The symbolic imagination affirms the reality and authenticity of the contingent fact but sees in it something which points beyond it. It is not dualist. A symbol is not an allegory: it is not intended to lose the image in the attainment of the essence.

These two elements, the Incarnation and the symbol, constitute an alternative aesthetic. Contrary to Auden's belief poetry can be used to discover and explore the world as a theatre appropriate for spiritual knowledge. This risks the danger of pantheism, as if the Incarnation is simply a reinforcement of the indwelling of God in Nature that is one of the elements of a doctrine of Creation but is by no means exclusively

Christian. Yet Tate is using it in an exposition of Dante's specifically Christian poem. Thus it is a matter of perspective: a Marxist will create symbols that operate in a Marxist perspective and a Christian will create symbols that depend on Christian faith. To link the Incarnation and the symbolic in this way is not to define a Christian aesthetic (as the Trinitarian aesthetic is exclusively Christian) but is simply to counter Auden's separation of spiritual knowledge and poetic exploration, and to affirm that the world (of contingency and of literature) matters in Christian terms.

In the comments of William Lynch which support Tate against Auden we return to the general insights of the debate about belief. There is no such thing, Lynch argues, as a purely spontaneous, autonomous literary image free from metaphysics and theology: Auden cannot therefore separate the role of artist as craftsman from his convictions about value and meaning. Secondly, theology is not pejoratively transcendental as Auden suggests, for the specificity of human experience and the 'meaning' of it are not two different things; rather theology gets into the interior of our images.

It cannot be said, however, that any of these attempts, different though they are, to see the function of literature within the framework of a theological model has any great theoretical integrity. But it is clear that there is enough of a problem involved and yet a sufficient degree of interconnection between the two diciplines to prompt substantial critical insights on the nature of the interconnection.

c) Mistaken Identities

If we were to enquire how two similar but not identical entities might be reconciled within some coherent theory we might foresee certain dangers. We might suspect that the drive towards conformity would be capable of exaggerating the similarities and passing over the differences or even of redefining one of the entities in a way more favourable to the accommodation of both than a just appraisal would permit. It is not surprising, then, that we can assemble evidence of both these tendencies.

Eliot is a seminal figure for many of the critics in this field, either in agreement or in dispute. He falls broadly into Abram's mimetic theory in which literature represents less the actual world than a possible one and aims to instruct and improve. His general critical remarks are always subject to his sense of himself as a Christian: he writes for Christians. He makes his position quite clear when he says that modern literature has been corrupted by secularism and that it cannot understand the primacy of the supernatural over natural life. Thus as Christians we must allow for the difference between the view of life presented by secular fiction and our own view. Fiction affects us wholly as human beings; it is not vacuous and innocent entertainment. Indeed, the common ground between religion and literature is behaviour. Non-Christian novelists, he says, have sensitivity but little intellect. This is not intended as a gratuitous insult but is a sign of the dominance of a certain religious perspective as beyond dispute in a Christian: failure to see it and therefore to interpret correctly is a failure of intellect that does not prejudice the secular writer's ability to be sensitive to human experience. We ourselves, he says, need to distinguish between what we like and what we ought to like. Presumably the former is a product of sensitivity and the latter of interpretation and therefore of intellect. As human beings we follow the line of least resistance: we are most impressed with what

we are previously prepared to accept and therefore there is no assurance that through literature we will become better men. Incumbent, therefore, on all Christians "is the duty of maintaining consciously certain standards and criteria of criticism over and above those applied by the rest of the world! (25)

But this is not simply a neo-Pauline exhortation to Christians to keep themselves unspotted from the world in splendid isolation, Eliot wants to insist that his view comprehends the whole of the literary enterprise, that "literary criticism should be completed from a definite ethical and theological standpoint". (26) Purely literary standards such as he faces from modern secular critics he admits may determine whether literature is indeed literature, but the 'greatness' of literature cannot be determined solely by literary standards. He seems unwilling to accept the minority position of Christianity in modern society: he seems to envisage a Christian society in which all would conform to Christian theory. This is behind his desire for "a literature which should be unconsciously, rather than deliberately and defiantly, Christian". (27) Only in a uniform society are its values organically integrated and unconscious: the more a group feels its separation and difference the more conscious and defiant its values become. Though the New Testament promises an eschatological society of complete and unchallenged Christian integrity whose values are so organically integrated as to be unconscious it nevertheless envisages before the eschaton the need for proclamation and a defiant, distinctive, self-consciousness that is appropriate to the conflict of good and evil, of light and darkness, of wheat and tares. Thus Eliot's comment, though he himself does not face its implications, raises the question of Christianity as proclamation. (28)

What is the significance of the distinction Eliot makes between literary criticism and criticism from a definite ethical and theological standpoint which, he contends, should 'complete' it? Eliot's answer must

be that literature is not an autonomous thing, a world apart with its own system of meanings that are adequate in their own terms without reference to the world in which it functions. Rather it is a part of its nature and meaning that it is a part of the world. It is the critic's duty not only to test the generic integrity of literature but to place it against a scale of ethical and theological values. We might illuminate this with a simple but consonant analogy: the biological scientist's analysis of man as a certain species of animal must be completed by the theologian's analysis of him as a creature of God. Just as a particular specimen may not qualify, in respect of certain deficiencies, as generically human so, in respect of certain theological abnormalities, a particular specimen may not qualify as a man, despite its biological perfection. The importance of this is that, in Eliot's view, just as the form of a work must meet certain criteria so the meaning must be measured against criteria: it is impossible that a work should be open-ended. A work may be perfectly formed, but it must also conform to the critic's "ethical and theological standpoint". One may call this 'programmatic criticism' and it has connections with our discussion of the problem of belief.

Eliot's view is reinforced by W.K. Wimsatt's remark that the greatest poem for the Christian "will be morally right". (29) Wimsatt calls Dr. Temple, the Archbishop of Canterbury, mistaken in declaring "Hardy's great masterpiece, Tess" to be "among the worst books ever committed to paper". Poetic value and moral value, he argues, cannot be separated in this way. Eliot's theory of literature, then, in its allegiance to his Christian view of the world does not incorporate the secularity of our age. Literature must be defined in such a way that its meaning is no less a matter of realizing the perfection of 'Truth' than of its technical composition. Literature, in short, must conform: it becomes a handmaiden of religious life.

In response to this Hillis Miller points to a vicious circle in which

the problem of religious meaning involves the literary critic. On the one hand Eliot, in effect, substituted censorship for criticism in his attempt to face the specifically religious content of literature. On the other hand a great work must surely be more than just one way of looking at things, which is the inevitably pluralist or relativist position of those who refuse Eliot's perspective.

He asks where religious meaning lies in three critical approaches. Those who argue for the autonomy of the work of art contend that words assume new meanings in a poem. But, Miller objects, this reduces the poem to a vacant mirror of words in which religious meanings are no different from other meanings, whose only significance is the pattern they make within the work. There are also those who respond to this autonomy-critique by pointing to the non-musical referential character of words: they have a cultural history. These literary associations are, however, endless and eventually incidental. The work is then merely a symbol of the culture that generated it. Religious meaning in this perspective is present as 'world-view'. This accepts a historicism that turns religion into something else: if the religious meanings are accidents of time and place, Miller says, of what interest are they? Though he does not put it in these terms Miller is clearly looking for a 'truth-value' to religious meaning rather than a historical or anthropological one. Finally, critics who focus on the author's experiences and training reduce religious meaning to the human dimensions of one individual: it therefore becomes merely a part of the pageant of human history.

> "Any method of criticism which presupposes that meaning in literature is exclusively derived from the interrelation of words, or from the experience of a self-enclosed mind, or from the living together of a people will be unable to confront religious themes as such ..... Only if some supernatural reality can be present in a poem, in a mind, or in the cultural expressions of a community can there be an authentic religious dimension in literature. Only if there is such a thing as the spiritual history of a

> culture or person, a history determined in part at least by God himself as well as by man in his attitude towards God, can religious motifs in literature have a properly religious meaning". (30)

Clearly, Miller defines 'religious' in terms which go beyond anthropology or psychology to a supernatural history of God's activity. In short, religion is about God acting, not just about man thinking about God.

This forthright argument preserves the identity of religion from erosion but it is not so blunt as to result in Eliot's self-conscious censorship. It is possible from this position to fall into the barren circuity of Muir's argument. (31) Muir judges that modern stories have no endings and therefore no meanings because we have lost confidence in a transcendent reality. Normal human life, he assumes, has transcendent reality and stops short of meaning if it seeks meaning entirely in itself. Without a permanent background there is no whole picture of life: seen against eternity life is a complete story but against time it is unfinished. This argument is circuitous and barren; circuitous because transcendence is the problem at issue and cannot simply be assumed, barren because it dismisses anything which does not share the same conception as meaningless and worthless.

Hillis Miller avoids this vicious circle by the interpretation of criticism as an act of love. The critic does not relate to the work as a scientist to physical objects, he suggests, but as one man to another in love. "Love wants the other to be as he is in all his recalcitrant particularity". (30) Similarly, the critic introduces the work to his readers as beloved, to let them meet it as it is, even though he disagrees with its 'meaning'. "Only in this way will those religious meanings which are in the work and not in the beholder's eye be made visible." (30) This use of 'love' brings to the act of criticism tolerance instead of censorship. It releases the integrity of the work from the opprobrium of partisan opposition, without blurring any gap that there might be between

the critic's belief and the work's meanings.

This is something of a high point of discrimination and tolerance and serves as a contrast for the more partisan of Eliot's adherents. One of these, D S Savage, perhaps overstates his case when he argues that it is not technique but vision which transforms the raw materials of human experience into art, but his argument is a very reasonable interpretation of Eliot's position. The poet in this view becomes a 'seer' not a 'maker' and the test of art becomes less the perfection of form and content than the probity of vision. Literature is not, here, being treated as itself but as something else. The problem arises from the inherent Platonism of a commitment to a certain religious position. "All art", he says, "arises from the creative need to raise content into its proper form". (32) He goes on "Truth, the absolute, forms in every integrated work of art the invisible centre around which everything in it coheres and in relation to which it becomes a communication of value". (33) It is not difficult from this position to make the connection with religion - "orientation to truth is essentially a religious act" (34) and "Religious dogma, cult and ritual are the communal concretion and consolidation of man's transcendent apprehension of truth". (34) Literature is, surely, too closely associated here with religious truth to be true to itself. This is the fate of all those who build a theory on Eliot's foundations.

Hillis Miller argues against religion understood in anthropological, historical or cultural terms on the basis that such a conception of religion is less than adequate. For Miller religion has some supernatural objectivity, which places him in Eliot's company, though he is rather more tolerant. But what is the view against which he is arguing?

Vincent Buckley emphasises the anthropological nature of literature. Thus he proposes that the discussion of religion and literature be widened from the 'revealed' or the 'dogmatic' to the 'religious' or the 'sacred'. He uses Moby Dick as an illustration of the kind of implicit

redefinition of God undertaken to render dynamic man's interaction with the forces that overshadow his life. In this perspective God is understood as mysterious and 'the Holy' (35) and man's life is implied to be, in some sense, sacred. To Buckley the 'religious' is not a strictly anthropological concept but a sense of man's life

> "bonded with forces in the universe which have their correlations in his own psychic life ... but which cannot be accounted for in terms of his psychic life, are in some sense superior to him, in some sense govern him, are manifest to him in terms of power and presence, and in some sense require of him adoration, worship and celebration". (36)

This notion of the 'religious' therefore supposes some element of transcendence. The 'sacred', on the other hand, takes place in the world of common experience, the profane, which experiences a movement to transcend or complete itself but is never completely transformed by its sacred use. There seems to be a real difference between the contents of these terms, therefore, but Buckley intends us to understand in both of them the integration and continuity of the religious and the sacred with common human life, in distinction from the radically discontinuous nature of 'revealed' doctrine. He is then able to agree with Roethke (37) that the religious venture is implicit in the poetic act: poetry is "extending and completing in language a contact with the world which is religious in its nature". (38) He sets this basic anthropological argument in the perspective of a Christian debate about the relevance of the concept of the 'supernatural', especially following J A T Robinson's association of demythologization and desupernaturalism. With a glance at Bonhoeffer's "religionless Christianity" he asserts that Christian commentators are coming increasingly to suggest that the Incarnation has assimilated God to the historical process so that there is no world outside of history which can be the object of religious aspiration.

The use of anthropological insights in this way serves to refine both concepts of religion and of literature. Religion is tied more firmly and

exclusively to anthropocentric perceptions in place of transcendental data, and lent all the religious functions which anthropology detects in man. But we may think that they have both become something other than themselves in the process. However, this approach makes much more of an attempt than anything on Eliot's side of the argument to come to terms with the rise of critical theology and the complexity of religious belief.

It is this emphasis on the dynamic of faith, on the place of literature and its insights and methods in theology's own metamorphosis, which characterises R W B Lewis's plea that we 'Hold on Hard to the Huckleberry Bushes'. By this he means that we should not organise works according to their degree of awareness of Original Sin as Randall Stewart does (39) before the work itself has been examined in its own terms, in its "actual ingredients and the inner movement and growth" (40) of its attitudes and insights. This emphasis is designed to allow for the transformation of Christianity, above all by the change of focus from elements which are propositional and doctrinal to those experiencial and religious. Lewis compares Emerson's transformation of the idea of evil to Augustine's reformulation of it as non-being, an absence of good. But it was not conscious.

> "Emerson did not knowingly aim at the restoration of anything: except of the soul's fresh and immediate perception of certain aspects of the universe, getting rid of the linguistic and institutional clutter in which those aspects had gone stale, and relating them anew to the instant of experience .... the voice of a man disentangling the Idea from the historical record of it ... and arriving by mistake at the very heart of some ancient doctrine long since smothered by Calvinism". (40)

There seems to be some confusion, here, between the idea of a writer exploring without preconditions the world his 'soul' perceives and the theologian (or even the historian) translating ancient religious dogma into modern idiom. The former is open-ended and creative, the latter is

bound by strict methodological rules. Furthermore, it may be that to disentangle the Idea from its historical record is to substitute Platonic categories for properly Christian ones, for Christianity may be essentially inseparable from its story which is also its history. However, since he speaks of the author "arriving by mistake" at the heart of an ancient doctrine the metaphor of translation is inappropriate to describe the work of the author, even though the critic may discern in the finished work a reformulation.

There is, in Lewis, great confidence in the religious character of literature. He uses the same terms as Buckley. The religious sense is conveyed by "intensifying the human drama to the moment where it gives off intimations of the sacred". (41) But clearly, here, the religious or sacred is seen as an extension ('intensification') of the human; it has largely replaced doctrine which is seen as little more than the cultural expression of a previous age's religious experience.

The essence of Buckley and Lewis here is that literature may retain its own disciplinary integrity, not being suppressed into servility by the weight of religious dogma but able to contribute to theology something that is inherently of value and that theology actually needs. The benefit of this is that literature may be valued as itself, and Christian and non-Christian critics may stand side by side in this: to treat literature as religion, on the other hand, is to deny the validity of the non-Christian critical stance. Thus Louis Martz draws a close analogy between poetry and meditation which "points towards poetry in its use of images, in its technique of arousing the passionate affections of the will" (42) and "in techniques of self-dramatization". (43) Equally, for Eric Heller poetry is a vindication of the worth and value of the world, of life and of human experience: "At heart all poetry is praise and celebration", (44) Both of these are examples of perspective that treat literature as something else in establishing its religious significance. Secular critics and artists are

excluded from this account. Buckley and Lewis, however, in granting the integrity of literature as literature, include the whole range of critical approaches in their own terms, although they may give a different value to the insights these approaches produce. Surely it is a crucial thing that in describing the relations of literature and theology the definition of literature involved should be one to which all those taking part in it can subscribe.

The degree to which this requirement is violated is evident in Nathan Scott's confused and often contradictory essay. He begins with the nature of a poet. Abbé Brémond in Prière et Poésie argues that poetry is a sort of mystical apprehension propelling the poet towards Transcendence, passing through prayer to the Divine Presence. This gives poetry significance only in its non-literary consequences, and falls into the Affective Fallacy of Wimsatt and Beardsley. (45) Nor is the poet an expert in vision. He is first and foremost a certain kind of maker: as Rosalind Murray expresses it, the poet "is never, in fact, saying 'Speak, Lord, for they servant heareth' but always 'Tell me something that I can make use of'". (46)

From the notion of poet as maker he attempts to outline what we might understand as the religious nature of the making. In the tradition of late Kantian thought (in E Cassirer, W M Urban, Susan Langer, P Wheelwright) the imagination reaches 'intentively' beyond experience to contemplate what that experience symbolises or means. According to Cassirer man is therefore the 'animal symbolicum', inhabiting not only a world of facts but also of arts, myths and religions "which give significant forms to the mind". And yet to establish that man is by nature symbolic (that is to say, creates and recognises symbols) is not to acknowledge any ontological status to the symbol but merely to give insight into the particular imagination of which it is an expression.

Secondly, Scott argues that in revelling in the raw concreteness of

reality man encounters the 'otherness' of things which provokes the aware-ness of "being placed in a universe whose ontological amplitude does not already lie within the depths of man himself but entails, rather, dimensions of Transcendence". (47) This appears to be a refinement of Platonism, that otherness implies and evokes the Other.

Thirdly, he emphasises the difference between scientific interest in generalities and poetic interest in the radically specific and individual only apparently to dissolve it with the contention that poetry eventually achieves vision of what Hegel called 'the concrete universal'. "It is this habit that poetic art has", he continues, "of dwelling upon the inter-relationships, the clusters of analogy among things, that makes it essentially symbolic". (48) Thus, for Scott, poetry (besides man) is by nature symbolic, and God is laid within man's grasp by the power of analogy. Furthermore, poetry shows "how deeply resemblance and analogy are characteristic of reality itself". (48) Thus, even reality becomes, by nature, symbolic.

He continues: "the ontological dimension in other words to which poetic experience belongs is the dimension of depth". (48) To know ourselves 'spoken to' by that depth is very nearly to be in the situation of prayer. Thus it is evident that Scott can only acknowledge the religious nature of literature by evaluating it as something else. It is significant that he chooses Hopkins' understanding of 'inscape' to illustrate what he means by the dimension of depth. Hopkins' eyes are not uncommitted when he examines the phenomena of the world. He interprets what he sees but his interpretation differs from that of Sartre who looks as closely and deeply at contingency without approaching a state of prayer. Thus, when Scott calls the depth of perception involved in literature "a threshold" or "the borderland of something more" it is because he has a prior commitment to the existence of that dimension.

In conclusion he contrasts the nihilism of the modern literary vision

with the Christian gospel where man is "trailing clouds of glory". It is to be suspected that he focusses on this aspect of Christianity to allow his earlier arguments about symbolism to have maximum effect. He refers to glory as a Creation ordinance because man is made in the image of God and, as Augustine has it, is turned towards God. Despite the contingencies of nature and the relativities of history, "through reason and memory and imagination he can surmount himself and his world ... and is driven therefore by the inner dynamism of his nature towards a transcendent norm". (49) Thus reason, memory and imagination are seen as the glory given to man in creation, making him in the image of God and being the source of his ability to perceive God. But in referring to 2 Corinthians 3:18 - "transfigured from glory to glory" - he employs also the idea of glory given in Redemption, for the passage to which he refers is focussed very clearly on the ministries of the Church and particularly of the Spirit in distinction from what existed before these ministries. Thus, when he says "to be human is, in short, in the Christian sense of reality, to be stamped by and bear the imprint in oneself of the glory of God" (49) he refers to man as understood in Creation and Redemption. It is hardly surprising, then, that when faced with modern literature Scott calls for a baptism of the imagination. Since he does not elaborate on it we must understand 'baptism' in its normal sense as an entry into the Church and into possession of the Spirit's perspective of glory.

In summary, therefore, Scott urges us not to go back to religious dogma, nor to submit to secular nihilism but to baptize the imagination to conceive the Transcendent afresh. If we take 'baptize' in its loosest sense as 'incorporate into the Church' then it seems that the imagination is to be given the task of providing a new substance to the Church's conceptions and faith. But we may ask by what token has the imagination this power and how are the fresh conceptions of the modern

imagination to be reconciled with the historical nature of the faith? Has it not become a new faith? And has he not already argued that the poet is not to be understood primarily as an expert in vision? If, on the other hand, we accept the stricter understanding of baptism as defined in the liturgy or the confessions of the Church as entry into a historical Church and faith in which a real death and new life are experienced then we are contemplating the gift to the imagination of structures and patterns with which to conceive (albeit freshly) whatever comes within the imagination's grasp. But the imagination alone cannot be baptized: it is the whole man who becomes a Christian. Thus Scott appears to be proposing that all men become Christians in order that literature may function as he has described it (which is the legacy of Eliot).

We have here, then, a Christian theory of literature that satisfies the Christian. Man is a symbol-maker, the poet is by nature a symbol-maker, symbols are at the heart of reality itself, and to the Christian they will be symbols of that Christian meaning to which he has committed himself. But to others, what symbols there are may have other meanings or none and there may even be no symbols at all but only contingency. The poet is, indeed, therefore, a maker and not a visionary, for vision and interpretation are prior to the literary work. Literature may, indeed, as Scott suggests, be a confrontation with otherness, but whether it carries the presence of God, the Ultimately Other, or the simple nausea of otherness, is not the function of literature to determine.

Nathan Scott's view is exclusively a Christian one, largely unacceptable to the rest of the literary community. The value of Hillis Miller's clear focus on the nature of modern literature is that it falsifies nothing and excludes no-one but offers a possible ground of contact in the close proximity of the concepts of Immanence and Being. He begins by contrasting modern poetry with the dualism of Romanticism. In the latter the realms of heaven and earth, natural and supernatural,

are sharply divided, and man as subject regards everything else as the object of his mind's knowledge. The supersensible world is to be reached by bringing together subject and object in poetry. During the nineteenth century God seemed to have withdrawn and in the twentieth he seems to be non-existent. Man now gives his own arbitrary value to things and nihilism reigns. But if it is to be transcended man needs to leap into the concreteness of the world as into something he has not made. This requires an abnegation of will that is an effacement of the ego to enable things to be as they are in the integrity of their presence. Involved in this is the abandonment of depth both spatial and theological and a distancing of mind from mind. This isolation of the ego makes the conflict of subjectivities the theme of modern fiction and the gulf within the mind hides the deep, buried self.

> "The disappearance of dimensions of depth in twentieth century art provides special difficulties for someone trained in the habits of Romanticism. An abstract expressionist painting does not 'mean' anything in the sense of referring beyond itself in any version of traditional symbolism. It is what it is ..." (50)

The new poetry, Miller argues, is "not ideas about the thing but the thing itself" (50), and the French 'new novel' has little psychological depth.

> "If any spiritual power can exist for the new poetry it must be an immanent presence. There can be for many writers no return to the traditional conception of God as the highest existence, creator of all other existences, transcending his creation as well as dwelling within it. If there is to be a God in the new world it must be a presence within things and not beyond them". (50)

The elision, here, of a literary preoccupation with Being and theological replacement of the propositional by the existential offers a common philosophical vocabulary. The insights of both disciplines are brought into contact in ways that do not falsify them but offer the possibility of mutual comprehension and contribution.

d) The Interpretation of the Symbol

We have already noticed in Nathan Scott how the Christian critic can make use of the idea of symbol to construct a Christian account of literature. From a conservative angle Preston Roberts attempts to relate the function of the symbol with the central dynamics of his Christian faith. He describes a symbolic nature as the primary feature of a Christian play. Resisting exclusive realism on one hand and exclusive allegory on the other a Christian play "presents what is actual in this life with what is possible for it" (51) in "a real fusion and discrimination of events and meanings in such a way that the meanings of this life are represented as illustrated within the events of this life and in such a way that the events of this life are presented as exemplifying the meanings of this life". (51) Greek dualism is overcome by

> "the radical character of God's Immanence and Transcendence; by the radical character of man's freedom, guilt and sin; and by the radical character of the redemption and damnation which occur within life and history. A harmony between the events of life and the meanings of life is possible in principle by virtue of God's immanence, is sometimes lacking in fact by virtue of man's capacity for guilt and sin, and yet is realized in fact at certain points and moments by virtue of that redemption which can come of conjunctions between the transcendent working of God's grace and man's faith" (51)

There is a danger, here, that the doctrine of the symbolic nature of literary reality will give the dogmatic Christian a key to interpret every literary work in terms of his own metaphysical or spiritual system, thus losing the integrity of the work. Roberts is clearly one of those whose literature is not epistemologically a part of their theology: theology for him is a body of doctrine which has certain implications for the literary discipline but remains autonomous. Thus he argues that a Christian tragedy is both possible and necessary, possible because there

is no inner contradiction between Christian theology as a kind of story and dramatic tragedy as a kind of literary form, and necessary because there is no other way by which Christian theology and dramatic tragedy can rise to their full and proper heights. "Dramatic tragedy deepens the deeper side of Christian theology, and Christian theology deepens the deeper side of dramatic tragedy". (52) Clearly the relationship between the two diciplines, one of deepening, confirms them in what they already are but is given no opportunity to develop them beyond that nor to change them. However, he is certain that they are so complementary as to make it impossible for either to achieve its own fulness except with the other. Thus literature is set unhesitatingly in a metaphysical doctrinal hinterland and theology is tied to the use of the creative imagination. Yet it must be said that on the one hand this kind of 'programmatic' literature which he outlines in detail becomes something of a blue-print that threatens to stifle that very creativeness without which literature cannot 'deepen' theology, and on the other hand the creative imagination's part in theology is so limited to 'deepening' and not exploring that it can give little of its immense promise to the theological enterprise.

This approach does not only risk distortion of the literary work but it is forced methodologically to ignore that modern literature which resists symbolism in an attempt to describe mere contingency. For Tom Driver, however, the symbolic has been utterly lost in our society. It is not only that our cultural fragmentation precludes the social cohesion of common values, symbols and myths that can produce the shared response that is at the heart of drama but that between a prevailing positivism and its counter-tendency of ethereal spirituality (which is fantasy) we have lost the middle ground in which the actual world bears symbolic and analogical meaning. Thus, the play, in which the symbol is a necessary element of the form, yields to the novel whose form reduces the symbolic

to the casual. The theatre is no longer in the Greek sense the 'Place of Seeing', a Temple, but has become a shop. 'Authentic existence' tends to mean only that of the individual, now. For its part theology has pushed history towards myth when there is no adequate way to understand myth philosophically. All of this is the background to what Driver calls the loss of the histrionic, by which he means plot, story, character, finite space and ritual form. Yet for Driver the very

> "roots of theology lie in the Biblical witness to the divine activity and in the religious experience of the community of faith created by that activity. Thus both the Biblical and the ecclesiastical understandings of god have largely been shaped by elements that are if not identical with the histrionic at least parallel to it and consonant with it. Since modern experience is increasingly out of touch with that histrionic quality the principle concepts of theology are gradually eroded of their cognitive content". (53)

He is thinking of such concepts as creation, sin, incarnation, redemption, salvation and providence which were never oriented to scientific modes of understanding but to anthropological ones, relying on

> "man's sense of himself as an occupant of space, an actor in ritual, one capable of going out of himself by imaginative reach and returning to himself by the incorporation of his imaginative adventure. The loss of the histrionic creates a quandary for theology because it tends to render of no credit the content of the theological vocabulary and syntax". (53)

Here, because theology is conceived as an unchanging datum, being tied to certain concepts and vocabulary, Driver is very gloomy about the possible continuance of theology and of drama and even of man himself. But change need not imply evaporation: there seem to be two broad metaphors employed to manage it creatively. The first is of translation, in which the essential content remains the same but is communicated freshly. The second is evolution, in which even the content may be transmuted in accordance with certain rules of continuity. The former tends towards absolutism and idealism, the latter towards functionalism.

In the former art ranges from decoration to interpretation; in the latter it may have an epistemological function. Beyond the metaphor of evolution is the finding of 'what will suffice' which may pay little attention to what has gone before.

Both Roberts and Driver, then, see the symbolic nature of literature as the point of connection with theology. One is hopeful in consequence and the other despairs, but neither establishes a satisfactory relationship between the two disciplines. There is, however, a more positive method which considers the nature of human thought and experience. Ingli James and Walter Ong illuminate the concept of 'person'. James argues that the Greek mind was biased to the universal, to ousia, but that in the first four centuries of Christianity there developed a greater understanding of 'person'. This personal experience requires dialogue because it is a mystery. It eludes monologue, labels and clear rational discourse and needs metaphor, analogy and paradox, qualities that had seemed to the Greek mind a dangerous perversion and failing of language. "The old Rhetoric treated ambiguity as a fault in language and hoped to confine or diminish it; the new Rhetoric sees it as an inevitable consequence of the power of language and as an indispensible means of most of our important utterances". (54) A poem is autonomous, he contends, because our deepest experiences are profoundly personal and can only be embodied in the oblique, indirect methods of imaginative literature: literature is autonomous, then, in the same way that a person is autonomous.

Walter Ong is anxious to balance the modern focus on the autonomous work of art itself with a personalist suggestion, since, he argues, a work frays out in many ways into personalities; characters are psychoanalysed, autobiographical elements are detected, works are grouped together, creative periods are categorised. The critical activity, he suggests, is dependent on the person-to-person situation since man's deepest orientation is personal. This is clearly the surfacing of a submerged

Christian a priori in Ong's position: man cannot give himself in love except to a person. A literary work, he contends, is not only an object but a surrogate for a person - "anything that bids for our attention in an act of contemplation is a surrogate for a person". (55) He goes on, "in the last analysis, as a matter of full, serious protracted contemplation and love it is unbearable for a man or a woman to be faced with anything less than a person". (56)

It may be that this concept of person, especially in this exalted tone, is one of those ideas dear to Christian history and doctrine but which finds less than total acceptance outside, for it is part of the suggestion or assumption of some modern art and criticism that this personal dimension is absent. Thus the rule of contingency exiles the concept of 'person': contingency rules precisely because 'Person' has been lost. Implicit in Ong's position, therefore, is the assumption that a literature of contingency is less than the fullest that literature or man himself can achieve.

What neither James nor Ong has quite pointed out is that literature is not only an act of contemplation but of imaginative empathy. I become Othello for a while in some sense, so that any existence he has is within me. That communion is an interpersonal one and needs the personal language James speaks of. To that extent Ong does not require an a priori assumption about man's deepest orientation being personal since the literary enterprise itself functions on the personal level. Ultimately, then, it is pre-eminently James' notion of the language that is appropriate to the personal that survives from this potentially theological insight. It has very great significance for theology and for literature: theology may not escape the kind of ambiguities and paradoxes which literature may present to it and literature cannot hide in a doctrine of autonomy from the religious significance of human words and meanings. This was the conclusion of our discussion of the problem of belief.

In the light of these insights on the language appropriate to the concept of 'person' we may move to the philosophy of Paul Ricoeur and in particular to hermeneutics. He reflects on the phrase 'the symbol gives rise to thought' from the position of a philosopher. Philosophy is not possible without presuppositions and a radical beginning in philosophy must be won. Thus it has recourse to the archaic, the nocturnal, the oneiric as the birthplace of language: we start from the fulness of our language as heirs of philology, exegesis, phenomenology of religion and psychoanalysis of language. Thus, as we use the symbol as a starting-point for our thinking, if it is not an allegory we shall need an interpretation that respects the original enigma of the symbols and begins from there to form the meaning in the full responsibility of autonomous thought. There exists nowhere a symbolic language without hermeneutics: though the immediacy of belief in the symbol has been lost we aim at a second naivety, which is that by interpreting we may hear again. "Thus it is in hermeneutics", Ricoeur argues, "that the symbol's gift of meaning and the endeavour to understand by deciphering are knotted together". (57) The hermeneutic circle is the religious one, that we must believe in order to understand and understand in order to believe. On the one hand the interpreter never gets near to what his text says unless he lives in the aura of the meaning he is inquiring after. As Bultmann says, all understanding, like all interpretation "is continually oriented by the manner of posing the question" (57), is always directed by a prior understanding of what it pursues. The presupposition, therefore, of all understanding is the vital relation of interpreter to the thing about which the text speaks. This is not psychological coincidence but 'kinship of thought' with the thing in question. On the other hand, being can no longer speak to us under the form of pre-critical, immediate belief but only as the secondary immediacy of hermeneutics, as post-critical equivalent of pre-critical hierophany.

It is possible, Ricoeur argues, to remain within the symbolic mode as comparative phenomenology does and understand symbols through symbols. This breaks with "explicative and reductive" thinking in its discovery of the multiple intentions of each symbol, the analogies between myths and rites and the levels of experience unified by the symbol. Eliade's work functions in this way, placing the symbols in a whole which is homogeneous but vaster and which forms a system. However, in such understanding of symbols in symbols the question of truth is unceasingly eluded.

"Although the phenomenologist may give the name of truth to the internal coherence, the systematicity of the world of symbols, such truth is truth without belief ... from which one has expelled the question: do I believe that? what do I make of these symbolic meanings, these hierophanies? That question cannot be raised as long as one remains at the level of comparativism, running from one symbol to another, without onesself being anywhere .... It has been necessary to enter into a passionate, though critical relation with the truth-value of each symbol". (58) Thus the mythical space is read from a certain point of view, it is an 'oriented space'.

The philosopher, however, seeks to transcend this adoption of one point of view, to begin to think no longer <u>in</u> symbols but with the symbol as <u>starting point</u>, as a wager that greater understanding will be achieved by symbolic thought. Creative interpretation of symbols does not simply increase self-awareness since every symbol is finally a hierophany, a manifestation of the bond between man and the sacred. The symbol therefore speaks to us as "an index of the situation of man at the heart of the being in which he moves, exists and wills". (59) Thus, 'know thyself' does not primarily refer to structures of reflection (self-awareness) but to structures of existence (being). (59)

It is clear that Ricoeur is not speaking here primarily of literature

but of a certain approach to philosophy. Nevertheless, there are certain important elements of the analysis that may contribute to our understanding of the literary enterprise. The first might be addressed to those who argue that it is possible by literary skill and vision to pierce to the objective essence of things independently of beliefs and presuppositions. Ricoeur argues that presuppositions are implicit in language itself and in the seeing eye. Secondly, we cannot have symbolic language without hermeneutics: that which concerns the kind of meaning and significance which symbols carry only releases its meaning by interpretation. Furthermore, though within the work the symbol may relate to the symbol in its own terms we must enter into a passionate, though critical relation with the truth-value of each symbol. We read from a point of view: For us it is an 'oriented space'. Thus we must reject phenomenology, which arose to combat explicative and reductive thinking, and which set symbols in a vaster system without taking a stand in relation to them. Literature, therefore, both in the writing and the reading is 'oriented': just as Ricoeur's symbolic thought is a wager that he will achieve greater understanding through symbols so literature is a hypothetical mode (60) which does not take any particular points of view as absolute, indeed, seeks to refine and exchange them, but cannot function absolutely without them in what Ricoeur calls "the exile of the remote and disinterested spectator". (58) Rather, as Ricoeur suggests in his title, the symbol, or we might add literature itself, gives rise to thought, which is to say that the act of reading or hearing or seeing, which has its own character and methodology, finally stands in relation to other non-literary human elements and methodologies: as a literary experience Kafka's The Trial evokes for me the depths of existential guilt but, as I relate it to many other of my experiences of despair, anxiety and fear, it helps me to know better the meaning of sin. The Christian and the non-Christian critic may therefore make exactly similar readings of the novel and yet interpret it in relation

to different assumptions, for though literature is read as itself it can never contain its own meaning exhaustively but must be interpreted by that which is outside it.

Finally, two elements of Ricoeur's analysis support this analogy with literature. Firstly, he says we need to respect the original enigma of the symbol and not treat it as allegory. This is the essence of literary understanding. Secondly, the need to believe in order to understand and yet understand in order to believe is equally descriptive of the literary process.

In speaking of symbolic meaning, however, the concrete that refers away to religious significance must not establish a Platonic dualism between the ideal world of forms and the real world. Christianity emphasises the redeemed or redeemable nature of all contingency: natural life matters. Something is a symbol, therefore, not in virtue of what it is alone but in virtue of the eyes that see through a certain perspective of faith and are prompted to 'thought'.

This focus on the hermeneutics of the symbol is taken up by Hopper. He reflects on what the breaking of the conceptual mirror of the West might involve. Despite what he calls the charismatic dead weight of scholastic, supranaturalistic literalism of language and method in the early work and influence of Barth he argues that theology has been edging into Auerbach's 'figural interpretation' and that where symbols function hermeneutics becomes important. He cites Carl Michalson's discussion (61) of whether theology is really the hermeneutical analysis of being or whether such an ontological hermeneutic is unsuited to a radically historical faith because in theology the question of the historical form of God's word will be given priority over the question of its being. But, Hopper contends, we are speaking metaphorically of 'historical form' and 'God's Word', for otherwise we would still be thinking scholastically, literalistically, metaphysically. The failure of our formulae, he suggests,

releases us to retrieve Being. What kind of language is appropriate to a fundamental ontology but a language that does not commit objectification? Thus he is led to assert the primacy of metaphor - "Everything is only a metaphor; there is only poetry" (62) - which, from a propositional, metaphysical point of view, implies that the nature of reality is hidden and must be grasped in perspectival and contextual modes, mythically, metaphysically and symbolically.

Two paradoxes flow from this. Firstly, according to Dilthey every part of a work requires the whole to make it intelligable, yet the whole by which we manage the interpretation of the parts must itself be built up by careful scrutiny of the parts. Secondly, according to Heidegger, "Any interpretation which is to contribute understanding must already have understood what is to be interpreted". (63) Thus the truth that must be unconcealed is structurally rooted in the understanding which interprets.

There are two implications that arise from this argument. To model theological hermeneutics on literary hermeneutics in this way does not escape the idea that although the truth is intrinsic to and inseparable from the metaphors which contain it it cannot be 'unconcealed' except by an act of interpretation. Secondly, that interpretation is an active not a passive process, a constructive participation in the creation of meaning which is subjective as well as objective: literature is only 'true' for me as it finds an answering spark of assent within me, and religious faith is a laying of hands to the plough. This is the substance of Trinitarian epistemology, that God is indeed intrinsically in Christ, but we need the Holy Spirit to reveal it to us before we can see it. There is a circularity to this process that answers to our understanding of how, in response to literature, we both contribute to the literary enterprise and receive from it, we bring our knowledge of how things are in the world and we have that understanding enriched and extended.

Thus investigation of the symbol has involved analysis of the nature of our knowledge of ourselves and of our world and has therefore emphasised the role of the reader or audience in the literary process. But the great advantage of the perspective is that the literary work is allowed to be itself, and that the same theory of literature that satisfies the Christian critic does not alienate the secular critic. Furthermore, it emphasises the importance of literature to theology not as an expendable appendage of illustration or amplification but as a human way of knowing.

e) The Implicit 'Normativity' of the Christian Perspective

Finally, we may consider Amos Wilder's contribution as in many ways an excellent summary of some of the concerns of this debate, but ultimately as an example of the Achilles heel of the issue, the 'normative' Christian perspective.

He assumes that all artistic assessments have presuppositions and that a Christian criticism can only be like a Marxist or some other criticism distinguished by its perspective. On the other hand he hopes that the current interdisciplinary exploration might encourage the Church to shake off asceticism and bad taste, to alert it to modern letters, to enable it to repossess its religious tradition and to renew its language. Contemporary culture relativizes critical orthodixies, he argues, opening interpretation to interdisciplinary resources and

> "a total anthropological and linguistic approach. Literary criticism has had to take account of new explorations of the whole phenomenon of language, not only in the global sense of comparative literature and the history of genres, and not only in the socio-psychological dimension of the study of myth and symbol, but more fundamentally in all that has to do with the correlation of language and reality". (64)

In this crucible of language and sensibility we must examine present witnesses, he suggests, but not in isolation from the past. In the end he says, returning to his original comments, we judge as we see things, and as a Christian it is necessary continually to repossess what it is to be a Christian without abandoning it. The tension for the Christian critic is therefore on one hand not to violate proper method by a prior dogmatic, and on the other to maintain a cutting edge and not to be unsure of his base. The heart of Wilder's argument is that life attitudes cannot be separated from aesthetic judgements. For our part we must engage with the language of our contemporaries; for it is not enough to have a stance or perspective. On the other hand, although the Christian view of the world carries assumptions that are

widely held to be incredible today, such matters cannot be excluded as extra-aesthetic unless we give the arts that autonomy which only ends in the arts being credited eventually with a sacred character. "Life and language", he argues,

> "at whatever level cannot finally evade or deny the dimension of the sacred .... aesthetic criticism cannot stop short of a total criticism and such ultimate sanctions should be as explicit as possible". (65)

In his reading the Christian will ask first, of course, is it adequately rendered? But he will also recognise what faith knows from its extra-aesthetic wrestling.

The implicit normativity of a Christian perspective, however, becomes evident when Wilder stresses the Christian contribution to literary criticism of a wider context than the contemporary alone. A Christian necessarily looks backward into history for the source-facts of his faith and though Wilder urges him to repossess his faith in the face of modern questions it is clear that this involves continuity with the past and not renunciation of it. It is with this perspective that Wilder faces the radical innovation of modern criticism and suggests the Christian virtue of continuity. It is organic to his perspective, but it may not be so for his non-Christian contemporaries for whom the view that the past is a distorting and stifling consciousness may be both cogently and sincerely argued. Wilder's presupposition about continuity rules out a certain existential perspective which may be both sensitively perceived and inherently valuable. But this is Wilder's confession of presupposition, which, he claims, a Christian will necessarily assume: "There are more permanent aspects of man than are evoked in our modern classics". (66) Involved in this confession is the conservative critical stance that though fashions of criticism "may see the writing on the wall at the feast of Belshazzar they are not able to decipher it". (66) But Wilder does not allow the possibility that it may be less the ability to decipher that is lacking than

the ability to find a certain interpretation valid or the willingness to accept it. Thus, like so many Christians in this field, he confuses a difference of vision with a failure in technique.

Wilder is very ready to argue that life attitudes cannot be separated from aesthetic judgement although he does not make clear what the nature of the connection might be. Does he, for example, accept the terms of Eliot's judgement that literature must first be analysed as literature before criticism is 'completed' by religious and moral discrimination? Does what Wilder calls aesthetic judgement include the religious orthodoxy of a work or is a religious assessment something that supervenes upon an aesthetic analysis? This kind of distinction is suggested by Wilder's comments that the Christian will ask, first, if it is 'adequately rendered' before including his extra-aesthetic insights. Yet it is difficult, if life and language inevitably involve the sacred as he claims, to see how literary adequacy and religious probity can be separated even procedurally.

It is important in this area of discussion to appreciate quite how vital a part is played by the idea of literary autonomy. "Literary criticism has its own sophisticated and scrupulous procedures; yet all such rightful autonomy can only be penultimate". (65) Critic after critic in this field attacks this idea of literary autonomy for two reasons, both of which Wilder adequately voices here. Firstly, in principle it is irreligious and idolatrous: it ends in literature "being credited after all with a religious or sacred character". (65) Secondly, it excludes the kind of reference out of the literary work to non-literary standards of judgement on which those who wish to acknowledge some a priori religious faith depend. Yet what this argument with the spectre of poetic autonomy fails to perceive is that those who make a gesture towards autonomy are attempting to escape precisely this subjection of literature to external standards of truth and value that prevents it from realising its new,

developing, epistemological function. In fact, existentially, those who make a gesture towards autonomy are attempting what theology understands as a leap of faith to 'find what will suffice' which, it is felt, cannot be achieved except in freedom from 'programmatic' thought. Wilder himself at the end of his essay outlines the programme:

> the Christian critic "assigns purpose and meaning to the human story and is confident that grace operates in the most baffling labyrinths of the individual or of societies .... The Christian reads human experience and judges the monuments of time in terms of the Biblical epic and its vision of providential strategies". (67)

He even acknowledges the charge of dogmatism that this might provoke but proposes to "blunt the charge by moving the discussion to the literary level and by invoking the evidence precisely of the supreme literature and literary forms provided by the charters of his faith". (67) But this does not blunt the criticism. The 'autonomists' are not unable to appreciate 'programmatic' literature: they are simply unconvinced by it. Thus there are two kinds of sacredness and religious awareness at issue; one is that which is anthropologically inherent in man's (literary) exploration of the meaning of his life and the other is the sacredness of the religious system to which a Christian gives allegiance. It is supremely important that the difference between the two should be grasped for there are two things that can be said of it. Firstly, non-Christian literature and criticism is not a failure of technique but a difference of vision, and therefore its literature and criticism are not per se deficient; despite what Christians would sometimes like to think literature is not "by sovereignty of nature" Christian. Secondly, literature functions differently in each case; for the "Christian" it tends to be decorative and must be only an adjunct to his faith which serves, 'deepens' and completes it. For the 'autonomist' literature is for finding out about the world and about man, it is a dangerous quest that may lead anywhere. It has not lost contact with the world, for that would make it meaningless; it has simply set no limits to

what it might discover or to the rules according to which it can conduct the exploration.

This is a very crucial contrast, but as the inverted commas show it is unsatisfactory to characterise the opponents with these simple labels. In our next chapter we shall attempt to clarify what is involved.

Conservative and Liberal perspectives

Three times in Chapter One we became aware of the conflict which forms the subject of the present chapter. With reference to the problem of belief we saw that religion may be thought of in propositional or creedal terms on the one hand and in terms of 'ultimate concern' on the other. (1) This distinction is reiterated when those who value literature primarily for its technical excellence oppose those who value its vision: the former assume possession of religious truth and the latter intend pursuit of it. (2) Thirdly, the dispute concerning the autonomy of literature is aroused by the same tension: is literature religious only according to the degree of its conformity to a particular 'programme' of belief or is it free from such constraint? (3)

Clearly there are a number of different ways in which we can formulate the distinction in a preliminary manner. On the one hand there is the specificity of dogma (which may or may not be propositional). Religious identity here is defined by the confessional model as allegiance to the truth of a metaphysical system. Such allegiance is given on the basis of a 'leap of faith' which invokes a mystical shield against the perplexing demands of the mind to understand. However, it is precisely these demands which motivate those on the other side of the divide. For them, whatever the 'leap of faith' might be it cannot be an evasion of the need for a continuous, systematic world of meaning governed by epistemological integrity and intellectual good faith. In this view literature is a way of knowing, and potentially a handle on truth: in the other view it is merely an appendage of illustrative or amplificatory value, for there are two worlds, the Christian and the

pagan, and literature, being "one of Caesar's things" (4), is per se of more value as beauty than as truth. Thus the dogmatic Christians possess their faith and the humanists desire to repossess it. There is, of course, rigour on both sides. For the former it is a confessional rigour whose strengths are clarity and confidence and whose weakness is the naivety of its methodological assumptions. For the latter it is an epistemological rigour whose strength is the integrity of its continuous system of meaning and whose weakness is the perpetual inclination to minimalism.

Of the books which have been published in 1979 and 1980 only Giles Gunn's The Interpretation of Otherness and Leland Ryken's Triumphs of the Imagination are works of theoretical and inter-disciplinary analysis but for our present purposes they are most useful. Both writers stand on opposite sides of the issue we are considering here and being prominent protagonists of the American scene they are able, in these two recent books, to represent contemporary concerns not only with accuracy but with rigour and feeling.

Ryken's book may best be described as a handbook, not sustaining a single thesis but attempting to counter-balance what he feels are predominantly liberal contributions to the inter-disciplinary debate. It addresses the general Christian reader rather than the specialist and Ryken displays something of Eliot's sense of being the representative of a certain religious community. In the context of the American debate this is significant. The separation of Church and State in America drives confessional theology outside the state system of education and university courses therefore tend towards liberal and humanist perspectives. Coupled with this there seem to be a large number of fundamentalist or Evangelical Christians who view the educational enterprise with skepticism and yet enroll for at least a part of their studies on courses which promise some apparently familiar religious content. (5) Those

who teach these courses thus face special problems that we might not share in Britain. Furthermore, the Annual Conference of Christianity and Literature was originally a very Evangelical news-sheet and is still considerably influenced by Evangelical university teachers. Ryken's contribution is therefore perhaps more important in terms of the American scene than it might seem to be in Britain. It tends to offer an account of the place of literature within a Christian's life rather than to occupy itself with the theoretical relationships between the disciplines of literature and theology. But it is important to understand that it is not only the ideas of the conservative wing which distinguishes them from the liberals but the form in which they express themselves, which is as revealing. Characteristically, the conservatives ask "how should a Christian treat literature?" and the liberals "how are literature and theology related?"

Ryken is critical of the lack of clarity in much modern theory because, of course, he is not sympathetic to the problems which draw the more liberal critics into complexities. He is also extremely critical of the neglect of the Bible as a source of Christian doctrine and as a guide to the uses of literature. He is comparatively certain of his text and its meaning whether it is Biblical or literary. His theology is based on a firm belief in the inspiration of the Bible and the authoritative status of its teaching considered in an uncomplicated, Evangelical sense. Because the Bible is his depository of truth he expects less truth than beauty from literature. He is concerned to reject the equation of literature and religion on the basis of resemblances between them: both Christianity and literature point beyond the physical to a mystery but literature is not therefore a religious experience, both use signs and symbols but literature is not therefore a religious enterprise. He rejects the widespread use of the term 'sacramental' and with it the modern disposition to the widest possible definition of Christianity and literature

to include everything. He quotes Sallie TeSelle that neither the integrity of art nor the specificity of Christianity is taken seriously in much of the present debate. Literature, he contends is not a means of salvation; it is for the glory of God and for fun. He criticises equally the modern concentration on the ideas or content of literature rather than on literary form and he finds himself most in agreement with the literary theory of Sir Philip Sidney as the foundation of a literary aesthetic; consequently he is equally content with T S Eliot. It must be said, however, that because of Ryken's polemical stance in the book and his commitment to the clarity of one comparatively dogmatic and confident theological position he is unsympathetic to much of the thought (and the questions behind the thought) of the current interdisciplinary debate.

There are two things to consider when Ryken says

> "Christianity is a revealed religion based ultimately on the Bible, not on people's opinions". (6)

The first is that theological use of the concept of revelation has real value and is acknowledged in some way by all those who from any perspective call themselves Christian. Specifically Christian theology is oriented: it is not open-ended. The second is a question: how are we to separate the Bible from people's opinions? What the Bible says and its significance for us is not such a simple matter as Ryken's position implies and it is one of the grounds on which the liberals and conservatives differ. It is also very clear that although Ryken stresses so heavily the need to return to the Bible, when we examine the things he actually says about it we may find his position both superficial and uncritical. He notes that "the clearest evidence of the literary bent of Christianity is the Bible" (7) but when he goes on to argue its "preoccupation with literary form" (8) he offers no further evidence. The fact that it "contains numerous literary forms" is no evidence of

"concern with literary form". To the liberal the literary character of the Bible signifies something concerning the historical evolution of religious meaning and even its typical nature: to Ryken it is analogous to the lawyer's use of precedent. He goes on to argue that because Paul's letters twice (9) and the Acts once (9) use quotations from secular literature "the principle that emerges is that the Bible affirms, in a variety of ways, the value of reading literature". (9) This distillation of Biblical principles is, essentially, methodologically dishonest since it conceals the assumptions of the writer from the searching light of critical attention. "Whatever the literary problem might be", reflects Ryken,

> "the Bible usually has something to say about it, whether directly or indirectly, whether by doctrine or by example. The critic whose viewpoint is Christian should not ignore one of the richest sources of answers about the theoretic problems of literature". (10)

To substantiate this he quotes Roland N Hein's essay A Biblical view of the novel which in response to the question 'What has the Bible to say to me as a reader of novels?' deduces five Biblical principles; the worth of the novelist's preoccupation with 'the real qualities of human experience', his 'full and uninhibited probing of the meaning' of human experience, the Biblical archetypal pattern of spiritual quest (that is "all but inevitable in any narrative of serious purpose") that leads to illumination, solution or meaning within an imagined world, the need for the work to validate itself by its own data and finally, the example of Christ as 'the perfect model for making moral judgements' about the truth or falsehood of a novelist's speculations about moral and spiritual experience and man's relation to God. The first four of these are so general as to be unhelpful even if their biblical origins were to be adequately demonstrated and the fifth is simply the dogmatic veto. The essential point is that though the distillation of Biblical principles in this way seems to be based on argument it obeys no adequate rules of evidence;

there is nothing which might serve to disprove any particular conclusion.

The epistemological naivety of this view is again apparent in Ryken's use of the word 'truth'. He acknowledges that all literature contains ideas

> "but only a small part of the corpus of literature contains truth. In other words most literature has not presented a Christian view of reality". (11)

Here truth is ultimate, absolute and dogmatic: few writers have proclaimed Christian truth in literature and it is therefore not generally a source of truth. There can be no question of the literary vision per se piercing through to the perception of truth: truth is revealed Biblically. On the other hand there is another use of the word: the truth writers give "consists of faithfulness to reality and human experience". (12) As a professor of English Ryken is most anxious to safeguard this literary 'truth'. Yet the distinction between the truth of literary observation and the truth of doctrine is more complex than he acknowledges. He is prepared to support the truth of the writer's observation of reality but to deny the truth of his world-view if it differs from Christian dogma. Yet there can be no neutral observation: the world-view, reality and human experience are inextricably bound together. Human insight, perhaps expressed in literary form, must either be potentially as truthful as religious doctrine and able to stand alongside it and perhaps qualify it or, if it must always remain subservient to dogma, it is less than truth. Literature, he asserts, "offers the possibility of enlarging our being" and "has a recognised power to embody universal human experience". (13) How is it that our being may be enlarged but our understanding of our religious faith be untouched? If "great literature offers a heightened and clarified vision of reality" (14) what of the vision which is at odds with religious dogma? He is able to acknowledge literature as "the most accurate index to human values, longings and anxieties that exists" (15) only on the basis of a distinction between objective and

subjective knowledge:

> "Literature presents reality, not as it objectively exists, but as it is of concern to people". (16)

And yet it is the constant objection of the liberals that what objectively exists cannot be known as Ryken supposes except subjectively. Ryken comes close to the issue when he acknowledges that writers "do not simply present experience in an objective manner" (17) but have perspectives, opinions and world-views peculiar to themselves. Thus, he argues, literature becomes a record of the world-views by which people have lived.

> "Such a perspective is important because before we can truly understand our own civilisation and culture, and even our own world-view, it is necessary to know how we got where we are". (18)

But instead of reflecting on how historical perspective might begin to offer new ways of understanding one's religious heritage he preserves the absolutist isolation of religion and speaks only of increased ability to compare other views with the Biblical view and of a greater sense of discrimination. A Christian "world-view is given by God in the Bible" and

> "for a Christian, studying the important world views increases his sense of discrimination as he compares his own Christian world view with the world views of literature". (19)

Thus, finally,

> "a Christian should place every work of literature on trial, with Christian principles serving as the jury". (20)

Thus the naivety of the textual fundamentalist position seems to arise from an almost wilful epistemological blindness in matters of religion.

Giles Gunn's book is one of those against which Ryken would argue because it broadens the issues from theology and literature to religion and letters as a whole. Gunn traces and describes the development of the religious use of literature and enlarges on Abrams' four character-

istic forms of meaning in literature. On this foundation he builds a relationship between the 'otherness' characteristic of the 'sacred' and that 'otherness' which literature mediates. By arguing that classic works of literature both reflect and form a culture he passes into the broad area of culture and mind. Classic literature provides an 'idea of order' which helps us to interpret our experience. Through our experience of the 'otherness' of great literature we are enabled to reinterpret our experience and ourselves. This transcending of the self by the imagination of otherness can never save us, Gunn acknowledges, but it can make us a little more human. Thus he does not look for the same confessional religious meaning within literature that Ryken pursues. His theory might be called more organic: it is based on the hermeneutical function of literature for the individual and within society, and it is strongly existential. "We are driven back", he concludes,

> "to that in both literature and religion which is prior to creed or conviction, to felt possibility and the imagination of desire. Rather than arriving at something like an expressed article of faith or principle of doctrine we have been drawn into a mode of experience where, in all our unexpectedness, the act of belief suddenly becomes again an authentic form of response". (21)

Gunn's opening assumption is that the common ground between religion and literature is culture: they are both forms of culture and they both use symbols. Clearly this is more 'scientific' than Ryken's approach since it is possible to investigate culture and symbols. This is important to the liberal who is strongly influenced by empiricism, scientific method and the need for safe epistemological ground on which to construct hypotheses. Furthermore, Ryken pays no more than lip service to the need for historical perspective, whereas Gunn, in his use of Nietzche's Use and Abuse of History, develops a detailed and reasoned analysis of the varying stages of critical concern over the relation of theology and literature. Nietzsche's three forms of history, antiquarian,

monumental and critical, correspond in Gunn's analysis to three generations of criticism. The first consist of those antiquarians who indiscriminately accept everything cultural as potentially of equal religious significance and their apparent opposites who preserve continuities by differentiating orthodox inheritance from heretical accretion. The former are those liberal, pastoral critics who see literature as an index to the times and as a challenge to the churches to rethink by showing non-dogmatic forms of implicit religion outside. For them nothing human is foreign to religion. The latter are conservative, dogmatic critics who, like Ryken and Eliot, discuss the definition of a Christian literature and what literature Christians ought to read. According to Nietzsche this antiquarian perspective betrays a need for a rootage in the present which preserves the status quo through often indiscriminate veneration of the ordinary circumstances of past life.

To avoid the danger of either extreme it is necessary to develop a method and a theological position which can make use of more supple, capacious and precise terms. In Reinhold Niebuhr and Paul Tillich Gunn describes this process. Niebuhr searched for political, social, ethical and religious realism to offset Barthian separation of the sacred and the profane. As theologian he was less concerned with the theological themes of Ryken's analysis (Creation, Atonement, Eschatology) and more occupied with practical concerns such as anxiety, the international balance of power, the dangers of national pride and the dialectic between love and justice. His apologetic intent was to show that the Christian faith provides a more adequate interpretation of the problems of existence than any other spiritual or religious tradition. His method was a cultural and historical analysis of man at war with himself. This apologetic concern to make clear that Christianity makes sense not only because of doctrinal consistency but because it addresses genuine human problems is coupled with a certain theological insecurity and a

need to justify Christianity itself. Ryken's perspective could never allow such a possibility and therefore his historical perspective is condemned to wilful blindness on this issue. Niebuhr, however, and Gunn after him, face the 'truth' of reality that Ryken would like to espouse, and in the wake of the second World War they can face without precondition the question about where one might look for the conquest of evil by good: instead of telling what to think as Ryken would direct the theologian must explore how to think in the face of such overwhelmingly serious historical problems. For his part, Tillich posed this question about good overcoming evil in a distinctive manner:

> "In the midst of brokenness, distortion and the alienation of life where does one find 'the courage to be'?" (22)

For him Christianity became relevant only in the language of classical philosophy and ontology: it is a translation for which Ryken never feels the need. Like Niebuhr Tillich's method is an analysis of culture as a source of theological insight on the basis that although theology alone has the answers it must listen very carefully to the questions that come from outside itself and attempt to respond in kind.

This produced what Gunn distinguishes as a second generation of scholarship following the impact of Niebuhr and Tillich from 1940 to 1965. It corresponds to Nietzsche's monumental stage of history in which men perpetuate apologetic and correlative models by searching for a usable past to shore up present ruins and reify elements of the past to lend greater force and meaning to the works of the present. Apologetic critics demonstrate how faith and theology resolve the problems of culture and literature and correlative critics interpret correlations between faith and culture, theology and literature. The more liberal of these critics (among whom stands Amos Wilder) demonstrate how literature can inform our understanding of faith and modify and complicate belief. Nathan Scott has gone on to consider the demands made by

certain modern writers to be considered as religious visionaries: our literary landscape often has a theological horizon because literature involves itself relentlessly with those questions with which religious faith has traditionally dealt. In other critics like William Lynch the apologetic orientation has led to consideration of how theology can instruct the literary imagination in its place in the divine economy of salvation and redemption. More traditional critics merely use beliefs from the Judeo-Christian tradition as a hermeneutical key to unlock the meaning of a variety of texts, figures and genres. This may be in terms of a concept or doctrine like providence, or a theological system like Augustinian piety in New England poetry, or a religious movement like Ignatian trends of spirituality in metaphysical poetry. Both emphases risk theological imperialism which values literature according to its 'correctness', the usefulness of its testimony or its paradigmatic gestures and they risk historical and religious reductionism when, for example, Christ-figures and atonements lurk around every narrative corner.

Nietzche's third historical form is critical, born out of suffering and the need for deliverance: in the service of the future it questions, judges and even condemns an entire historical inheritance. This, Gunn suggests, is characteristic of the modern generation, and he describes five elements which determine its nature. Firstly, the neo-orthodox edifice of Protestant theology (by which he refers to Barth) has been replaced by contending conceptual and methodological options: Process theology, Death of God and other radical theologies, theologies of liberation, of hope, of black power, of feminism, of play, the Marxist-Christian dialogue, the new hermeneutics, revived interest in theological phenomenology and anthropology, and the new analytical theology generated by the language philosophy of Ayer and Wittgenstein. Secondly, there has been the discovery of an immense body of scholarship devoted to religious aspects of literature from Auerbach and Tillyard to Martz

and Wilson which has been fruitful and has made the field respectable. Thirdly, connexions with the new materials, concepts and methods of cultural anthropology, comparative philology, socio-linguistics, folklore, sociology, psychology, ethnology, archeology and semiotics have refocused attention on religion as a manifestation of the human race rather than as something mystical and supernatural. Fourthly, the old metaphysics of substance has lost confidence and credibility: allegiance to revelation has been abandoned in favour of radical spiritual honesty. This is the trend which Ryken would like to deny. Fifthly, parallel to the collapse of theological method and conceptions has come a similar transformation in literary theory and methods both in reaction against narrow Anglo-American Formalism and as a result of new ideas and procedures from the Continent. Confessional barriers have been broken here too and the New Criticism's trinity of poetry, fiction and drama has been replaced with the need to look at all forms from autobiography and history to the verbal units of myth and proverb. There is especial consciousness of the complexity of the relationship between text and reader in the plight of interpretation. As Gunn explains so cogently, the Romantic hope of sympathetically imagining our way back to the first reader's response or even the author's interiority has been destroyed by our techniques of accomplishing it. So subtle are our techniques that they emphasise the distance between us and the original and some critics find a way out by understanding not the text itself but the experience it generates in the reader. However, it may be that the commitment to understand through interpretation is itself a form of belief, an act of faith, and we shall return to this.

This short summary of Gunn's historical perspective begins to fill in the details of the liberal stance, to lay out the building bricks with which such a critic must toil to build a cogent understanding. But it also demonstrates the nature, seriousness and integrity of the liberal

vision. Christianity and literature are elements of a changing world: the eye which interprets is itself the child of a particular culture. There is to be no avoidance of the fullest possible examination of everything that is open to the human mind, for it is all relevant and the greatest critical skill of all is that of self-criticism. The double vision of Ryken, Christian and pagan, is alien to this attempt to create a single, unified account. Ryken's vision is tied to the dichotomy inherent in his metaphysical creed: Gunn's perspective is bound to the unity of a single human understanding.

This unified understanding is not the product of a historical perspective alone but also depends on an ability to examine in an almost empirical way (taking its example from the new sciences) exactly what is happening, not in order immediately to assess whether it is right or wrong according to an a priori measure but in order to enlarge and refine the understanding itself. Thus there is a great range of perspective to consider from the writer who intensifies his rendering of the human story to the point where it gives off 'intimations of the sacred' to the writer who makes a religious demonstration by putting his theological case in the language of philosophy or literature rather than theology, and from the critic who assumes that literature is instructed by doctrine or doctrine 'fleshed out' in literature to the critic who treats literature as a 'metaphysics made sensible to the heart, expressing itself in images'. As a mirror to nature literature may be an index to cultural and religious distress, or in the perfection of its formal organization it may stand against our confused world as an alternative. The artist may sacrifice himself to his craft so that its meaning may live in a re-enactment of the crucifixion or he may so express his own personality to the extreme as to demonstrate that religious truth is only revealed to man under the shadow of ultimacy. Or again he may simply pierce to the deepest sources of life as a spokesman for Being itself.

All these widely differing assumptions have intelligent and respected supporters and, perhaps in a zoological manner, they need observation, categorization and systematization. How else shall we understand if we cannot accept Ryken's assumptions?

Gunn builds on Abrams' four categories of literary theory (23) because they systematically account for all the elements of a literary work, the artist, the audience, the work itself and the world the work creates. He examines the inherent possibilities and limitations of each orientation. For example, in the semantic orientation's use of symbol we come close to that unification of opposites of which the Incarnation speaks, and archetypes resident in concrete particulars are expressed through contextual language that is appropriately soft of focus, paradoxical and plurisignative. But the problem is to discuss religious motifs without either making literature a surrogate for philosophy and theology or reducing religion to any work's dimension of depth or seriousness. Having assessed the possibilities and limitations of religious meaning in each orientation he incorporates them into his single theory concerning the hypothetical nature of literature. According to this a novel starts from the empirical data of experience, and though we recognise that what follows is not 'true' it must resonate with our deepest sense of ourselves. Thus, with the imitationists it assumes that every work is unified by the presiding principle that gives the various parts their ordered coherence, with the pragmatists it asserts that in creating a possible world more than an actual one literature is critical of the established world, with the expressionists it agrees that every work springs from or appeals to our common humanitas thus asserting what is ultimately characteristic about life itself, and with the objectivists it acknowledges that nothing in literature is rendered but in words which remain the most essential concrete element in every poem, novel or play. Essentially therefore great literature takes the known and pushes

it into the unknown, enabling us to think and feel other than as we do, to erect a larger context of experience within which we may define our own. Here is a unified theory, but is there something intrinsically religious about this conception of literature? Gunn suggests the spiritual significance of a work's "commitment to vital possibility", of "our deepest sense of ourselves" to which the work appeals for our assent, and of our experience of reality in literature as ultimate. But he is only really convincing when he describes the otherness which literature mediates. A scientist deals in facts, a philosopher in ideas and an artist in feelings, he argues. Thus the literary artist's appeal is not to understanding and belief but to the wonder, delight and pity of fellowship which evokes the solidarity of men. This, he contends, is the basis of the relationship between literature and religion. Is this, as Ryken would claim, minimalism in literature and religion? Does not literature deal as much with our understanding as our feelings and is not the Christian faith more than human solidarity? Or is this merely a step on the way towards a redefinition of the concept of love for one's neighbour which forms the second strand of the Christian law?

Gunn's argument, we recall, began with culture. Religion cannot be known apart from its various manifestations in history and culture and to understand it we must go beyond the religious texts to consider the particular kinds of sense-making involved. There is little consensus on the meaning of the word religion: it may range from the 'other' which produces wonder (Leuuw), the Holy derived from experience of the numinous (Otto), Being (Maritain), to a feeling of absolute dependence (Schleiermacher), a capacity for concern or commitment (Tillich), a need for social stability (Malinowski) or some other subjective capacity (Eliade). These are attempts to define religion by some property of human nature or experience. Gunn follows the anthropologists in looking for essences and patterns of resemblance, and concludes that what

typifies the experience of the sacred is the prior claim of 'otherness'. Thus there is a parallel between the otherness of the sacred and that otherness which literature mediates. It is largely existential: he argues that the author's ordering of our response to his work in terms of tension and release, involvement and detachment, movement and delay, sympathy and disapproval is analogous to a religious experience. The writer seeks to realign our affections, to reorder our values and give us a new heart, but the 'truth' he aims to uncover is something that has less to do with external absolutes than with the integrity of individual experience. Thus the two 'truths' to which Ryken refers are inverted in priority. In Gunn's conclusion literature is religious not because of its content but because of its form, not because it tells us something but because of the nature of the experience. Belief in the other "becomes again an authentic form of response". (24)

Gunn's analysis, is, of course, only one possible assessment. We may think it weak in its sense of the religious: Gunn himself is modest about the transcendence of the perimeters of the self by the imagination of otherness. "Such knowledge can never save us but it can at least make us a little more human by teaching us how to respond both to the me we are not and to the me we are". (25) But in its method it is consistent. Thus it is the appeal to scientific method, the use of the insights and techniques of many other disciplines, the capacity for self-consciousness and the need to define terms and justify judgements which characterises the liberal approach. And yet it is not the adoption of a certain method alone which constitutes the essential difference between Gunn and Ryken. Ryken stands before the demands of an authoritative text and Gunn before the demands of a rigorous method: both have a degree of freedom to shape their conceptual universe and a certain bondage to the dictates of it. There is a prior disposition which makes each man able to accept and work within certain conceptual horizons.

The reasons for these initial alignments are certainly beyond this particular study. (26) Why men find such different positions satisfactory is perhaps the most interesting question of all, but we must confine ourselves to an awareness of the range of possible positions, their peculiar logic and foundations and the points of contact of religion and literature within each perspective. Gunn has given us his 'hypothetical' synthesis of the mimetic, expressive, pragmatic and semantic positions. Vernon Ruland gives us an enlightening alternative. (27)

In an attempt to achieve a balance between on the one hand the narrow doctrinal particularity of literature which deals only with Christ-figures, sacramental imagery and explicit theological vocabulary, and on the other hand the vacuous universality of calling literature religious whenever it is serious or hopeful, Ruland adopts a functional definition of religion. He develops this from Otto's argument that explicit beliefs issue ideally in attitudes and behaviour marked by awe, commitment, moral seriousness, shuddering and ecstasy. Often, he argues, someone's political ideology or characteristic moral style will function more as his actual religion than his nominal creedal positions will. Thus, he concludes, we may understand religion as whatever drive, credo or value system lies at the root of such recognizably religious behaviour. In this case the religious-literary critic cannot settle into a tidy conventional slot alongside literature and psychology or literature and sociology, for religion is a quality, atmosphere or texture in the total meaning of a work.

Having made clear his own position Ruland describes four orientations which characterise literature and religion. The Autotelist perspective of disciplined textual formalism, logical positivism and biblical fundamentalism focusses on the text irrespective of its human situation. Whether we consider semiotic or Russian formalism, the empirical rigour of analytical positivism or Ryken's biblical dogmatism there is a very

narrow and precise validating principle in this perspective which in the service of clarity and purity of method excludes the contributions of external sense-making referrents and renders it impregnable, isolated and potentially meaningless.

The Humanist-Semiotic perspective depends on rhetorical, phenomenological and hermeneutical methods in investigating the text within its human situation. In this perspective the literary text is essentially a semiotic unit of discourse and therefore autonomous but it is organically related to the wider human tradition of literature and functionally religious experience. The critic must draw on the full resources of human knowledge to construct an ideal cultural tradition as a context in which to appreciate the text. Thus the rhetorical critic (among whom Ruland lists T S Eliot) listens to the idealized past and never tarries over textual details but seizes on the metaphysic of a work. The Phenomenological critics see a literary work as a semiotic moment in consciousness: a novel gains life in the consciousness and the critic must describe the transaction between the existent experience and that new life in the mind. Thus the critic cocreates alongside the author, repossessing the work in an idiosyncratic way. Similarly, with reference to theology, rhetoricians and hermeneutists analyse religious meaning and phenomenologists use their own techniques to describe the content and structure of religious presuppositions. Thus, for example, Otto argues that interpretation of a text does not proceed simply between the two points of ourselves and the text but it constitutes a triangle: by means of the text we perceive the object which addresses the text as well as ourselves. In this perspective the text is still the important object of attention but it is acknowledged that understanding of it cannot be separated from a wider background of human meaning.

The Ortho-Cultural approach focusses less on the text than on the human situation in history, politics and eschatology. Historically, there-

fore, a critic may research an author's notes, letters and influences and the wider milieu of his period. Politically, criticism may move out from the particular literary text to the far reaches of moral and political argument: art is a critique of values, a counter-proposal to life in the name of a deeper possibility. Thus Trilling asks of each work 'is this true? is this to be believed? is this to shape our future judgements of experience?

> "The judgement of literature is overtly and explicitly a moral and intellectual judgement. The cogency, appositeness, the logicality, the truth of ideas must always be passed upon by literary criticism". (28)

Theologically, this approach focuses not on the religious factor alone but on its congruence, correspondence, conjunction and transaction with the world. It develops a coherence between human questions and divine answers. It may

> "remythologise theos as the innermost entelechy of culture and of all that is most genuinely human in human experience", (29)

Jaspers, for example, holds that reality itself is iconic. Peter Berger describes our

> "shared symbolic universes, one of which is Christian" which function as "sheltering canopies over the institutional order as well as over individual biography, by which we conceive of ourselves as part of a social history with a common past and anticipated destiny". (30)

The objective human situation constitutes the validating appeal of those who work from this perspective.

Finally, the Psycho-Mythic perspective focuses on the subconscious human situation, the chthonic depths of the full human myth, personal and collective. The Psycho-Mythic critic draws on psychology and anthropology to explore the inner individual and social meaning of a work. Norman Holland describes three types of psychoanalytic criticism, critical autobiography which reaches towards the author's mind, character analysis which reaches towards the fictive character's mind and criticism

of affect which reaches towards the audience's mind. The basic questions of a psychoanalytic critic are 'What are my critical assumptions?' and 'Can I offer more than a common-sense humanist understanding of catharsis, negative capability, stock responses, irony and emotions like love and courage?' There are three varieties of mythic criticism; that which superimposes a myth to reveal unseen patterns, that which analyses overt allusions and that which concerns itself with the unconscious depths of collective memory. A theology of archetypal experience, for example, can distinguish 'belief' that implies a mature, authentic faith from 'belief' that disguises shallow, neurotic attitudes: the religious dimension in this view can not be seen in isolation but only in a total human, functional context. The work of Freud and Jung is seminal to those in this orientation but they may go beyond the revelatory qualities of dreams and archetypes to Ricoeur's arguments for myth and symbol and the narrative quality of experience. Theologians of prophetic secularity and theologians of radical immanence are close at this point. Theos is, thus, remythologized within human consciousness.

As we have seen with the example of Ryken the Autotelist position makes it difficult to relate the disciplines of theology and literature. Textual and methodological allegiances are too exclusive and dogmatic. But as Ruland's own position demonstrates the Psycho-Mythic perspective is fully able to unite literature and theology in a continuous, unified theory. Ruland's four-fold analysis is so useful because it includes an understanding of the nature of the two things being related within any particular perspective. Since there may be a very great difference between the definition of God or religion in different perspectives this is valuable. Our initial distinction therefore between conservative and liberal has been modified and complicated but not denied. It remains the principles, assumptions and values to which appeal is made to validate an argument which prove decisive in the

conclusions of those who seek to relate theology and literature.

In conclusion two things remain. We entered this particular discussion as a response to the distinction between literature which has a 'programme' to proclaim and literature which is part of a quest for meaning. (31) In the distinction between Ryken's understanding of belief as dogma and Gunn's existential understanding of belief as "an authentic form of response" this concern remains. There remains a fundamental, unbridgeable gulf between proclamation and search which corresponds to what we generally refer to as an open or a closed mind. They are such different ways of seeing that they can never, as the proverb goes, see eye to eye.

Secondly, Gunn's argument about culture and mind leads us into the subject of our next chapter:

> "Our writers help form what can be called our mind in so far as they produce what can be called a classic. Our classics, in turn, create our mind and define it by shaping and colouring that numinous background against which we draw such interpretive resources as we have at our disposal for comprehending them .... Our classics create us, or, better, create a common mind among us, not because of anything they say about our experience but because of the light they cast it in. That light is the light shed by those paradigms we not only live by but live within. And we live within them only so long as we can see by them. Whatever their intent, their effect is to illumine our otherwise darkened and uncertain way through life by providing an "idea of order" which for the time being suffices." (32)

Here, Gunn is suggesting the logical extension of the liberal position, though he himself does not pursue it. To become "more human" by "the imagination of otherness" is a stage on the way towards a kind of liberal salvation, but there is more to be explored. When, however, we are drawn into speaking of classics and paradigms and the formation of a common mind or interpretive framework we are facing squarely the entire replacement of religious systems of meaning by a kind of literary sense.

We must ask how this literary sense-making functions and to what extent it is an adequate substitute for that which it replaces? In these questions the work of Frank Kermode may prove as valuable to us as it has been to so many in this field who constantly declare their debt to him.

Hermaneutical Functionalism in Frank Kermode

Kermode's work in The Genesis of Secrecy (and earlier The Classic and The Sense of an Ending) comes towards the end of a long career of detailed and wide-ranging literary criticism. In that sense he is very expert. But more significant even than that, is the secular perspective from which he is writing of precisely those concerns which Gunn raises but does not pursue, and this is significant and useful for our purposes for two reasons. First, it demonstrates how the liberal method of Gunn makes common cause with 'outsiders' as well as those of a religious persuasion in a way that Ryken could not tolerate. Second, it offers the benefit of theologically disinterested observations, though, as we shall see, Kermode is by no means detached and generally disinterested: despite the urgency and ultimacy of the search which he describes (and in which he is involved) he has no prior theological investment.

In these three works Kermode's emphasis is on the functional significance of literature. Literature is honoured not because of any claim to truth or vision but on the basis of its ability to construct an order that will make sense of an apparently disordered world. Thus it is related to real life by a kind of hermaneutical functionalism. In an age whose increasing secularism is nevertheless conscious of the religious nature of its sense-making precedents this modern, literary sense-making may seem to be closely related to the ancient religious systems. The question is, how shall we make sense of our world in the absence of the great religious interpretations? Inevitably we shall be involved in some kind of continuity with the past. We cannot simply start afresh because we are unable to find a neutral point: we must begin where we are and

adapt our understanding. But what are the vehicles of continuity and by what rules shall we use them?

In the first two of the four T S Eliot Memorial Lectures which comprise The Classic Kermode makes two observations on the problem of continuity. He takes as his point of departure what he calls "Eliot's myth of the Classic" (1) which entails the doctrine that

> "the ancient can be more or less immediately relevant and available, in a sense contemporaneous with the modern - or anyway its nature is such that it can, by strategies of accommodation, be made so". (2)

There are, he contends, broadly two ways of maintaining a classic's access to the modern mind. The first of these depends on philology and historiography which ask what the classic meant to its author and best readers and what it may mean to those who have the necessary knowledge and skill to regain that perspective. The second method is that of accommodation, that is,

> "any method by which the old document may be induced to signify what it cannot be said to have expressly stated". (3)

The chief instrument of accommodation is the ancient skill of allegory: the other more scientific method is a later development. These methods are well known in the study of theology. Thus, by this identification of critical technique and procedure he demonstrates an alignment of classic texts both religious and literary.

We shall return to The Classic and his specific conclusions about continuity. For most of this chapter, however, we must carefully consider Kermode's earlier work of biblical and literary sense-making parallels, The Sense of an Ending, in terms of its replacement of religious meaning by literary sense. This is Kermode's most influential and revealing contribution, remarkable in its use of biblical categories as models and sources of meaning and in its grasp of modern biblical scholarship. It combines great breadth and range of thought with a

precise disciplinary integrity. As we examine his specific literary functionalism in detail we shall be able to evaluate both the basis of argument and the conclusions of this confessedly secular perspective.

Originally in lecture form, Kermode's writing has such broad reference and such a cumulative and allusive method that it is sometimes difficult to be sure precisely what is being presented. His first chapter raises themes around the association of apocalypse and peripeteia. He uses a theological treatment of apocalypse, indeed of the whole Biblical corpus, as a model of what we might expect to find in the literary treatment of radical fictions in general. There seem to be two different uses of the literary term peripeteia. We might normally expect the word to refer to that reversal of outcome in the plot of a single novel or play which denies our expectations but satisfies us with its aesthetic, dramatic, artistic, moral or human integrity. But most often Kermode uses it in a derivative sense to describe that altered structure which we recognize as characteristic of the modern novel as presented to us by Proust, Camus or even Robbe-Grillet. There is a reversal in our expectation of the fictive form itself. This epocal change he is able to associate tellingly with parallel developments in biblical interpretation that focus the meaning of apocalyptic less on the future than on the present crisis of the eschantological moment.

It may seem odd in the twentieth century to approach the construction of a literary theory through an obscure biblical genre. But Kermode's attention is on the history, formation and characteristics of a specifically Western consciousness. Perhaps because of the dominance of the Christian faith in the West the linear structure of the Biblical narrative has become deeply embedded in our culture. He contrasts Homer's cyclical view of the world, in which episodes are related by correspondence to a cyclical ritual, with Virgil's Aeneas moving from Troy to an empire-without-end Rome, which is closer to our apocalyptic

tradition. In this rectilinear model episodes are related internally and all exist under the shadow of the end. He draws on the first chapter of Auerbach's Mimesis: the story of Abraham is modified by reference to the whole plan from Creation to the Last Days. It is meaningful because of its place in the sequence that leads from beginning to end. Thus Kermode contends that the Bible's harmonious, concordant model of history has become deeply embedded within our consciousness: to make sense of our span of life we need fictive concords with origins and ends.

However, the most significant thing about the Biblical narrative is its concordance. Of course, there are many discordant elements within the Biblical texts, but it has always been the delight of Christians like Augustine to reconcile them, so that, paradigmatically, it may be assumed that the Christian story is one, single, exclusive and concordant whole. Apocalypse, on which Kermode concentrates, 'ends, transforms and is concordant'. The dissonance to which he points lies not in the narrative itself but in its understanding and interpretation. He goes into some detail to describe attempts both mediaeval and modern to tie the Apocalypse to a specific historical moment. When these failed the Apocalypse itself was not discredited; new calculations were made. Thus he accumulates evidence of two things; what he understands as the inherent human need to create patterns with endings that may give significance to lives, and the human capacity to accept the disconfirmation of apocalyptic without allowing it to be discredited. We are creatures, he says, who project arbitrarily chronological divisions onto history to help us find beginnings, and ends. Men 'in the middest', a phrase he takes from Sidney, make considerable imaginative investment in coherent patterns which by providing an end make possible a satisfying concordance. It is his argument that men accepted this Christian pattern for centuries and that now, in its absence, they need to create

such patterns. The prime quality of the patterns is to be satisfactorily concordant; it is only their application to a chaotic and fluid world which involves disconfirmation, though a disconfirmation that is neither discrediting nor dissonant. It is therefore clear that Kermode's subject is not apocalyptic in itself but the experience of apocalyptic.

In peripeteia, he argues, we reenact the readjustment of the expectation of the end that is so notable a feature of apocalyptic. A story that proceeds simply to an obviously predestined end is nearer myth than the novel or drama. Peripeteia is present in every story of the least structural sophistication: it depends on our expectation of the end. We wish to reach our discovery by an unexpected route. However, Kermode's parallel with literary peripeteia must not be overindulged. In the case of apocalyptic it is the same ending which is to be applied at a different time or in a different way: in the case of peripeteia it is the same moment which sees a different ending. To that extent the parallel is not exact. Kermode himself, in order to give a definition of peripeteia sufficiently accommodating to the comparison he has in hand, is forced to reduce that rich literary device to a bland

> "falsification of expectation, so that the end comes as expected but not in the manner expected". (4)

The term itself comes from Aristotle who links it with anagnorisis (discovery) as integral to tragedy and of major importance in the arousal of pity and fear, which is the assumed object of tragedy. In serving to bring about the ending it is deeply connected with meaning. The qualitative gap between this and Kermode's use of the term ('a disconfirmation followed by a consonance') is an indication of the allusive, non-systematic nature of Kermode's argument and the singleness of his vision. He is determined to concentrate on the two things he has established, the need for patterns with satisfactory ends, and an adherence to these patterns which in the face of disconfirmation asserts a continuance

of meaning and consonance.

Kermode's second use of the term, to refer to a reversal in our expectations of the fictive form, is equally imprecise but allusively attractive. There are conventional plots which hold to the established conventions of the end, which Henry James describes as

> "a distribution at the last of prizes, pensions, husbands, wives, babies, millions, appended paragraphs and cheerful remarks". (5)

This is an image of apocalypse. There are also what the clerisy call 'major' novels which tend to vary the conventions and falsify our expectations of the end. Robbe-Grillet to an extreme degree and Camus and Sartre rather less discourage our expectations from the start, demanding our co-operation in the discovery of meaning. Thus there is a changing relation between the paradigm and the text. By 'the paradigm' Kermode means to refer to our expectations of the linear form of the novel and the conventional apocalyptic ending which 'ends, transforms and is concordant'. Hence our experience in encountering modern fiction is like our experience of apocalyptic; the paradigm we have in our mind is not confirmed in the course of history or the course of the modern novel, but it is not therefore rejected. On the contrary, it is understood in a different way. Thus the old and the new are integrated in a developing perspective.

However, this peculiarly Kermodian concept of peripeteia is not the only way in which he is able to relate apocalyptic and the modern novel. He pays attention to the demythologization of theological apocalypse that has taken place since Bultmann. Naive apocalypticism has been modified under the pressure of new systems of knowledge and technological and social change. Eschatology has substituted conscience for historical prophecy. We have reached the position of Jaspers who remarked that to live is to live in crisis: in a world which may or may not have a temporal end people see themselves much as Paul saw the

early Christians, men "upon whom the ends of the ages are come". (6) Theologically, therefore, we live in the crisis of the eschatological moment. The end has been brought into the present as depth. The imminent has become immanent. This, Kermode contends, is a parallel with the trend he has described in modern fiction, particularly in Camus, Sartre and Robbe-Grillet, a trend away from the paradigmatic fictive form in which the end that transforms and is concordant is revealed literally at the end, a trend towards the moment of crisis in which the meaning of the end is felt in the present and our expectations are fulfilled in an unexpected way. In a second sense therefore Kermode is less concerned with apocalyptic itself than with our experence of it, in this case the use of a modern critical method. He expects to discover a parallel development in the literary treatment of radical fictions. He expects to see the meaningful concordance associated with the end not in terms of temporal ends but in terms of crisis. This reflects a change in the structure of time and of the world and produces more complex plots.

At this point we may pause and consider the main themes that Kermode has introduced. First, there is the historical perspective. Deep in our culture and in our consciousness, he contends, we need fictions with ends. This is the burden of his argument, which is developed and demonstrated in the rest of the book. But in this opening chapter it is introduced to us in a historical perspective. By drawing on our Western, Christian heritage, a past in which meaningful stories, with beginnings and ends, were no elitist concern but related to the self-understanding of a whole culture, he preserves the link between these stories and essential human meaning. The mediaeval society he describes looked on the apocalypse not as a fiction but as a divine prediction which could (and soon would) be literally fulfilled in the history of the world and its inhabitants. Just as Genesis described the 'historical' origins of the world Revelation described in advance the 'historical' end of the world.

It was no fiction: it was religious belief held with such sincerity that it governed both the meaning and the actions of the human beings who lived in the light of it. Having set this scene, he is able, by reference to theological demythologization, which locates the significant reference of apocalyptic not in the predictable future but in the existentialist present, to argue that modern fiction retains this ultimate, meaningful status. It is not a collection of fantasies, a series of narrative diversions, mere entertainment. It is that apocalyptic which we can no longer believe of the future but which is eschatologically realized in the present. We plumb the present crisis to discover its eschatological depths. Our fictions, in which the past and the future, the beginnings and the ends, are extensions of the present, these very fictions which we can no longer regard as true in a simple mediaeval way, these fictions are as definitive of the meaning of our lives as the anciently-believed religious apocalypse.

Kermode does no more justice to the idea of eschatology than to that of peripeteia by concentrating on one aspect of it in this way, but here at least is an impressive (if incidental) attempt to establish systematic grounds for a relationship between theology and literature. It is a bold challenge to the theologian: if the 'end' is to be discovered or revealed in the crisis of the present what will the theologian say of the novel which attempts to do this? Can he be content to say that it is merely a secular vision when it shares such a similar epistemological base? Of course, it is a challenge from an 'outsider' and a theologian might wish to refer to a paradigmatic Christian framework by which to interpret the present crisis. But it is his argument that the literary paradigms are changed by interaction with the fictions which are sufficient to our changing crisis, and this awareness of the way that the application of the paradigm to changing circumstances actually modifies the paradigm is necessarily of real interest to the theologian. However,

unlike Arnold, Kermode is not proposing that literature take over the role of religion in support of morality. Nor is he much interested in the social function of literature as a religious substitute. He is solidly secular, as he is proud to be in The Genesis of Secrecy, an "outsider". He is concerned with the structure of narrative meaning within the literary form. Apocalyptic ends, transforms and is concordant. These are the characteristics of meaning that once resided in a religious, metaphysical system and now dwell in the literary form itself. It is because men, he contends, need these elements that the literary form which of its nature provides them is so significant. Thus, despite his biblical subject, apocalyptic, and his theological argument, his reference is wider, in The Genesis of Secrecy to the classical Hermes, and here to Alkmeon through Aristotle - "men die because they cannot join the beginning and the end. What they, the dying men, can do", he asserts,

> "is to imagine a significance for themselves.... I shall be talking not only about the peristence of fictions but about their truth and also about their decay. There is the question also of our growing suspicious of fictions in general. But it seems that we still need them". (7)

His criterion of truth is clearly not religious but human - whether the fictions satisfy us. And though he makes general statements about human nature and social or cultural history his focus is only clear on the literary form. He speaks not of man, the religious creature, nor of man, the sociological animal, but of man, the reader of the literary text.

The second major point to emerge from this opening chapter is that, in focusing on the narrative of the Bible which ends in Apocalypse, Kermode is describing essentially narrative meaning. There are, of course, other kinds of meaning. There is generically religious meaning, whether of creeds which are broadly rational and metaphysical, or of rituals which may be illuminated by the social sciences and anthropology, or even mystical meaning which epistemologically is essentially religious.

But whether credal, ritual or mystical, religious meaning is experienced as received, as given, as an 'input'. The meaning is not inherent only in the human situation to which it belongs: it has reference to something beyond as the fount and limiter of meaning. This is what it means to call it religious meaning.

Other kinds of meaning may be described in philosophical terms. These may have their origins in philosophical argument about knowledge: the logical positivists would accept only very limited meaning such as is consonant with mathematical proof or the possibility of empirical verification. Meaning is therefore limited in this instance by prior dogmatic. On the other hand it may be that philosophy is employed to give an account of something which has intuitive origins: existentialism grows from the experience of depth and authenticity, that wholistic moment of eternity in time, of piercing beneath the surface. Equally, it may be a Romantic or secularly mystical moment of intense feeling which gives meaning. It is not clear which of these categories is most appropriate for the kind of ideological meaning with which a Marxist like Raymond Williams measures in Modern Tragedy. (8)

However, one of the most significant things about Kermode's book is that it describes a specifically literary meaning mediated through plot and narrative. Imagination is the source and narrative form is the structure of this meaning. He pays little attention to the source, to anything remotely like a doctrine of literary inspiration, but concentrates on the reader's experience of narrative, on the way we make connections between things and interpret contingency in significant patterns. He expands on this throughout the rest of the book. At this point of association with biblical categories he notes only the connection between literary and religious revelation in the peripeteia which is a discovery. When our expectations are upset we feel we are encountering something more 'real' and that something is being found out for us. But it is

interesting to note, again, here, that Kermode's interest is not in whether what we encounter actually is more real, or what the status of the experience is, but only in the fact of our experience of it. This is typical of Kermode's literary critical position, to comment on our experiencing of a piece of literature, not to engage in philosophy or in theology. It would be fair to say that his perspective is largely reader-based. In his second chapter Kermode attempts to justify the analogy he has drawn between eschatological and literary fictions as he relates 'fiction' and 'concordance' by a discussion of 'time'. Since Nietzsche, he contends, it has been possible to say with Stevens "the final belief must be a fiction". This postpones the End (when fiction may be said to coincide with reality) forever. Such a fiction is like 'infinity plus one' or imaginary numbers in mathematics; we know they do not exist but they help us to make sense and to move in the world. This is a functional satisfaction which ignores the problem of religious or philosophical truth. In its dependence on the analogy of science it is dangerously incomplete. Kermode registers this reservation in ethical terms (since ethics is nearer to his individual and social functionalism than either religion or philosophy). According to Nietzsche "the falseness of an opinion is not ... any objection to it" but "how far it is life-preserving". (9) On the scientific front this is the basis of the theoretical physicist's life when he aims at the experimental confirmation of his mathematics. On the political front, however, there are the gas-chambers, since if the value of an opinion is to be tested only by its success in the world the propositions of dementia are as valuable as other fictions. As Kermode puts it pithily "if King Lear is an image of the promised end so is Buchenwald". (10)

To deal with this ethical problem Kermode makes a distinction between fiction and myth. The myth of anti-Semitism is a fiction of escape telling nothing about death but projecting it onto others; the fiction of King Lear involves encounter with self and the image of one's

end. Fictions degenerate into myths whenever they are not held consciously to be fictive. Myth is ritual that presupposes a total, adequate explanation; fiction is for finding out. Myth is an agent of stability calling for absolute assent; fiction is an agent of change calling for conditional assent. Myth makes sense in terms of a lost order of time; fictions make sense of the here and now. Thus, in Vaihinger's view, the fictional 'as if' is distinguished from hypothesis because at the end of the finding out process it will be dropped. Literary fictions are not subject, like hypotheses, to proof or disconfirmation, only, if they lose their operational effectiveness, to neglect. You do not rearrange the world to suit them, nor test them by experiment in gas chambers. It is I who am rearranged as I read them: they are tested in the process of reading. "Of course", Kermode adds, "it may be said that in changing ourselves we have, in the best possible indirect way, changed the world." (11)

This is a very important element in Kermode's perspective and there are considerable problems with it. The perspective is reader-based: fictions must satisfy us. They do not have to be true in the way mediaeval apocalyptic was believed to be true but they must have the same function as a source of satisfying and concordant ends. The scientific analogy confirms that this satisfaction in a functional one. The function, according to Nietzsche, is to be life-preserving. Kermode takes this position because of his general argument about fiction being a human way of self-preservation, of staving off death by the creation of meaningful beginnings and ends, and because it is a broadly adequate representation of the proposed purpose of scientific study which is his analogy for the functional fiction. The problem he identifies is that scientific hypotheses are satisfactory when there is a concordance between them and the world of nature, but that this is not a reliable test for literary fictions. That the fiction of anti-Semitism was consonant

with Buchenwald is highly unsatisfactory. (This is, of course, a political fiction but the objection applies equally to literary ones). The example of Buchenwald has reference to social ethics where, in this case at least, there is a measure of agreement about what is intolerable. It is also clearly in conflict with the principle he takes from Nietzsche that our fictions should be life-preserving. Here is a fiction which clearly is not life-preserving and is, in fact, immoral. Kermode attempts to preserve his general thesis and yet account for this particular disconfirmation by the theoretical distinction between fiction and myth. In a social context this distinction is satisfactory: literary fictions do, indeed, function in the way he describes: they are consciously false (for finding out) and call for conditional assent. Political myth is quite different, in a way which is reprehensible. However, in an individual context there is no clear agreement about what is intolerable to prompt this kind of distinction. The individual reader may find almost anything life-preserving. Furthermore, the individual's relation with the literary fiction is quite different from its social aspect. The best literature which does not aim to change society as if it were a political programme nevertheless does aim deeply to engage and perhaps to change the individual reader. In the act of reading the reader does not consciously hold the fiction to be fictive but agrees to be overwhelmed by it so that it may have its effect on him. Kermode allows that in changing the reader the fiction has indirectly changed the world. He considers this the "best possible way" to change the world. But what if this vision, caught from a literary fiction, produces Buchenwald? The distinction between myth and fiction has gone some way towards excluding evil fictions from this functional paradigm in a social context but it has not been able to account for the individual. We may contrast this reader-based thesis that fictions satisfy us with a Christian theological claim that they be true and good. This focuses attention on their origins and their essence.

Thus an interpretative framework, a fictive paradigm, such as the Apocalypse, which is perceived as essentially true and good cannot be responsible for the evil of Buchenwald. Of course, evil has occurred in response to that good and true paradigm, but always due to those who have received and interpreted it and never because of its own theoretical imperfection. So the Christian argument might run. It is Kermode's functional paradigm, that fictions must only satisfy us, that leaves no theoretical defence against the development of evil and destructive fictions.

However, Kermode continues to investigate the nature of the fictions which satisfy us. They are, he suggests, far too elaborate and ingenious to be explained simply in terms of survival in a hostile environment, an analogy drawn in his final chapter from the experience of a prisoner in solitary confinement. The writing of history is part of the same process: the imposition of a plot on time is a substitute for myth. Thus there is no history, says Karl Popper, only histories. The satisfactions we require from our history and from our fictions are too subtle for the paradigms, and yet the paradigms survive. At root, Kermode argues, they must correspond to a basic human need, biological or psychological. At some very low level we all share certain fictions about time and we should expect to learn more about sense-making paradigms from experimental psychologists than from scientists or philosophers, from Augustine than from Einstein or Kant. Again this is characteristic of Kermode's functional approach. He concentrates on what it is to experience these fictions and is content to be both general and mystical about their origins. He goes on to use four ideas which develop the apocalyptic significance of fiction.

The 'tick-tock' of a clock, he asserts, is a model of plot.

> "It can be shown by experiment", he says, "that we can easily grasp the interval between tick and tock but not at all that between tock and

> tick. In a novel, all that comes between tick and tock will have to maintain a lively expectation of tock, that is, it must be purged of simple chronicity (the disorganized emptiness of tock-tick) a humanly uninteresting successiveness. It is a macroscopic example of what psychologists call 'temporal integration'. Within this organization that which was conceived of as simply successive becomes charged with past and future; what was chronos becomes kairos. This is the time of the novelist, a transformation of mere successiveness which has been likened, by writers as different as Forster and Musil, to the experience of love, the erotic consciousness which makes divinely satisfactory sense out of the commonplace person". (12)

Tick-tock, this "transformation ... which makes divinely satisfactory sense out of the commonplace" is clearly a concept with considerable theological significance. The distinction between kairos and chronos is from O. Cullmann and J. Marsh. Chronos is 'passing time', 'waiting time', the time that in Revelation shall be no more. Kairos is a season, a significant crisis charged with 'end'. James Barr argues that this is unbiblical, but Kermode contends that theologians need this distinction and, in the manner of Wittgenstein, make up the rules as they go along. Normally, we associate 'reality' with chronos, and in every plot the escape from mere chronicity therefore involves also a retreat from 'reality'. But he argues that our minds work in ways that are not wholly successive and our memory is able to retain impressions which we fail to 'take in' consciously. This revalues temporal structure, memory and expectation as against the reduction of bibliocosms to a merely spatial order. As readers we share some of the abnormally acute appetites for ends and crises that are associated with schizophrenics, children, the elderly and the emotionally disturbed. In granting the narrator something like total recall we move away from normality into pathology.

> "It seems that there is in narrative an atavism of our temporal attitudes, modified always by a refusal quite to give up our 'realism' about time; so that a modern novel has to hold some

kind of balance between the two". (13)

Kermode asserts that the form of the novel requires that the realism of the ego and the desires of the lower mind be simultaneously satisfied and therefore the paradigms must be modified, extensive middles given remote origins and ends in such a way as to preserve its difference from dreaming or some other fantasy gratifications. There must, also, be some submission to fictive patterns involved in what we call 'form'.

> "As the theologians say, we 'live from the End', even if the world should be endless. We need ends and kairoi and the pleroma ... we recreate the horizons we have abolished, the structures that have collapsed: and we do so in terms of the old patterns, adapting them to our new world. Ends, for example, become a matter of images, figures for what does not exist except humanly". (14)

Books may therefore be serviceable as fictive models of the temporal world only if they pay attention to this mixture of chronos and kairos in 'real' time.

"Concord or consonance is really the root of the matter". (14) As the New Testament rewrites and requites another book and achieves harmony with it so we achieve our secular concords of past and present and future, modifying the past and allowing for the future without falsifying our own moments of crisis. Continuing his use of a scientific analogy Kermode alludes to the Principle of Complementarity which relates discrete events to an acceptable human pattern. Light behaves like waves and like particles. They may be covered by a single set of equations and yet outside mathematics you could only speak of them as being 'complementary' explanations. In classical physics uncertainty is an epistemological issue of the human mind; in quantum physics it is part of nature, a part of the world. Classical physics still 'works' over a huge area of nature and is not therefore called 'wrong' but a special case of modern physics. The old law (expressed in a manner consistent with the observational situation at the time) with certain qualifications

is still lawful, though not in accord with the facts. In this way the past is complementary with the present. Thus as Newtonian mechanics is to quantum mechanics so King Lear is to Endgame. We must not enjoy complementarity for its own sake,

> "playing fast and loose with the law of contradiction in the name of complementarity" (15)

but the Stoic allegorists used such concord-fictions to close the gap between their world and Homer, as did Augustine in explaining, against the evidence, the concord of canonical scriptures. Later biblical scholarship has sought a different explanation and more sophisticated concords. Yet when we have found 'what will suffice' the element of the paradigmatic will vary. Time seems ever more diverse, the time of the art-historian from that of the geologist, of the football coach from the anthropologist. Fictions change

> "because we no longer live in a world with a historical tick which will certainly be consummated by a definitive tock. And among all the other changing fictions literary fictions take their place. They find out about the changing world on our behalf; they arrange our complementarities. They do this, for some of us, perhaps better than history, perhaps better than theology, largely because they are consciously false; but the way to understand their development is to see how they are related to those other fictional systems. It is not that we are connoisseurs of chaos, but that we are surrounded by it, and equipped for coexistence with it only by our fictive powers. This may, in the absence of a supreme fiction or the possibility of it, be a hard fate". (16)

Finally, in this theoretical outline, Kermode introduces the term 'aevum', a time-fiction coined by Aquinas which stands between time and eternity as the time of the angels. Kermode, however, applies it to moments of 'temporal integration'. He argues that tragedy is the successor to apocalypse: declining faith in the religious Apocalypse is replaced by the representative death of the tragic figure enacted before us, a peripeteia which ends, transforms and is concordant. In apocalypse

there are only two orders of time and the earthly runs to a stop; the cry of woe to the inhabitants of the earth means the end of their time. In tragedy the cry of woe does not end succession, and if we want the great crises and ends of human life to serve our needs as we stand 'in the middest' we must give them patterns that defy time. The concords of past, present and future towards which the soul extends itself are out of time and belong to the 'aevum', a duration which was invented for angels to bridge the dissonant gap between a finite world and eternity. To close that great gap we use fictions of complementarity which now may be novels or poems, as they once were tragedies and, before that, angels.

By these four references, then, to tick-tock, chronoskairos, the Principle of Complementarity and the 'aevum', Kermode intends to develop and illuminate the connection he has tried to establish between the sense-making functions of religious apocalyptic and of literary fictions. When men were able to understand themselves between a historical Genesis and a predictable Apocalypse they possessed the ultimate, authoritative tick-tock of organised time, chronos and kairos were essentially one and would soon be demonstrably so, the Apocalypse would achieve total consonance with all that had gone before, would be, in fact, the ultimate complementarity, and there would be no need of the 'aevum'. In the absence of this Supreme Narrative the world appears to be eternal and merely contingent. Yet, as commentator on our literary fictions, Kermode is forced to acknowledge our refusal to accept that we are limited to mere contingency. We continue to organise time, to create our own significance, in the ways he has outlined. He can only conclude that we need to do so, that it is an essential human activity, but he does not ask why it should be so or what implications that might have for our understanding of the human situation.

Nevertheless, he insists that it is the patterns of apocalyptic which

are relevant to our own times. Crisis, a prominant feature of apocalyptic is also a dominant feature of our modern cultural tradition, but it is not inherent in the moment. It is a way of thinking about it. To cope with this modern crisis we cannot create our new orders without reference to the past. New modernism, that of total contingency and shuffled pages, becomes merely a schismatic, private dialect. Novelty in the arts, if it is to communicate and satisfy, is inescapably related to something older. On the other hand, Eliot, who

> "was ready to rewrite the history of all that interested him in order to have past and future conform ... was a poet of apocalypse". (17)

But, together with Yeats, Pound and Wyndham Lewis, he was an example of the correlation between early modernist literature and authoritarian politics. The eschatalogical fictions of modernism are innocent as ways of ordering the past and present of art, and prescribing for its future, but they are quite different when backed by a police and civil service devoted to a Final Solution. (At this point Kermode makes the extraordinary statement "people will live by that which was designed only to know by". (17) We shall return to this very shortly.) The first of these two modernisms ignores the past, the second uses it as a source of order. Between them Beckett's signs of order and form are almost continually presented but with a sign of cancellation: they are cheques that will bounce. However, even when ironized, the Christian paradigm gives Beckett the structural and linguistic features that enable us to make sense of his work. Kermode concludes that the significance of apocalypse for literature is two-fold. It is the justification of ideas of order in terms of what survives, and in terms of what we can accept as valid in a world different from that out of which they come (resembling the earlier world only in some kind of biological and cultural continuity).

Finally, in a study of Sartre, Kermode highlights some of the a priori limitations of the novel. A novel must give a novel-shaped

account because it necessarily has a beginning, middle and end, cause and potentiality. A metaphysic will look different in the water of a novel. The hero will recur and is, in a way, a legislator for mankind. What is characteristically modern about Sartre is the treatment of fiction as deeply distrusted and yet humanly indispensible. The pressures which require the constant alteration of the novel are the need to mime contingency and the power of form to console. This, of course, parallels apocalypse's inherited form but constant reapplication to a changing history. Thus, Kermode concludes of both apocalypse and fiction, that out of the experience of chaos grows a new form "that satisfies both by being a repetition and by being new". (18)

There are one or two things we can say in summary. In the first place Kermode is less a theorist than a literary critic, that is, a commentator on the experience of reading (or hearing or seeing) literature. He observes what is the case with our fictions. Apparently we need to organise ourselves in these ways. He goes no further into an explanation of this than his historical perspective on the dominance of the Biblical model in our culture and tradition. This is the source of our 'paradigms', a word which refers both to general human sense-making and to the forms of literary fiction. Just as the dominant Biblical paradigm was the source of meaning in an age of faith, the secular critic uses the same paradigmatic elements to create a consciously fictive order in a secular age.

But it is only an apparent parallel. If modern fictions are not held to be consciously fictive they become myth. As myth they are both distorted as agents of knowledge and dangerous as agents of action. Indeed, Kermode argues that these modern fictions are not intended for us to "live by" they are only for us to "know by". It is because they are false that we must not live by them; they are only for finding out. It is only necessary that they should satisfy us in the account they give of

the world, satisfy us in the complementarities they arrange for us, satisfy us in the way we used to be satisfied before we lost faith in the Biblical narrative. It is therefore only a functional parallel; it helps us to live in the world and to live with ourselves.

It is the strict distinction between action and knowledge that seems to be most misguided in this view. The age of faith to which he refers certainly made no such distinction. It is almost inconceivable that any Christian theological system could fail to integrate knowledge and action. Even a functional parallel between the Biblical narrative and modern fictions is therefore impossible. It is also increasingly realised in the scientific world from which he draws his analogies, especially since the breakthrough to sub-atomic physics, that observation cannot be detached from participation, that knowledge and action are interdependent. Even if he were to claim (as, here, at least, he does not) that the critic is involved vicariously in the experiencing of the fictive world, so that in the process of reading he is assimilated into its conflicts, values and resolutions, nevertheless as he himself contends, when the reading is over the fiction must revert to being consciously false and the knowledge involved in the fiction must be distanced from any action the critic might take. Kermode's critic is therefore an entirely passive figure satisfying himself about the world in the privacy and inaction of his own study.

Kermode has chosen to use Apocalyptic to illuminate literary fictions, but he has chosen ground which betrays him. The student of the Christian story is the theologian. The student of literary fictions is the literary critic. The theologian has the widest possible brief, embracing God and man, purpose and design, origins and final end, meaning and motivation, ethics and ideals, goods and greater goods and love and life itself. The critic qua literary critic is, on the whole, a commentator on texts, an elucidator of the meaning of texts, an augmenter of the appeal

of texts. Of course, there is considerable debate about how closely the critic is limited to the text and those who argue for a wider brief do so in response to the very issues this study brings to light. But Kermode himself shrinks from the work of the philosopher, the historian and the theologian both in method and in range. In short, the account he gives is deficient because of its limited range. It is the literary critic's job to ask if fictions satisfy. But the disciplinary boundary is artificial. The subject demands further questions: are these fictions true and what effect do they have? Is an understanding of the natural world (that is, a scientific hypothesis) an adequate model for an understanding of the life of man? Is it acceptable to pursue falsehood as a guarantee of peace and functional behaviour? Is our society best erected on conscious falsehood? These questions point beyond narrow disciplinary boundaries in the direction of philosophy and theology, and constitute evidence of the link between the two disciplines. However, they also uncover the frustration of Kermode's position. In his account literature may use the same paradigmatic elements to create order in a secular age as biblical paradigms provided in an age of faith, but the consequent ethical dilemma with which he wrestles exposes the need for some attention to truth instead of mere utility.

Truth, however, as we have seen in Chapter Two, is an equivocal thing. Kermode develops his theory about the sense-making qualities of literature precisely because we have, in our century, lost our capacity to be certain about truth. It is precisely because there is no accepted truth that utilitarianism develops: whatever fits the facts as we see them will suffice.

At this point we may return to the argument of The Classic. There Kermode analyses the nature of the continuity with the past which is involved in the concept of a literary classic;

> "It would not be read, and so would not be a classic, if we could not in some way believe it

> to be capable of saying more than its author meant." (19)

Yet the classic

> "cannot be, as the Bible had been, and Virgil too, a repository of unchanging truths. Truth in art - itself a dangerous and perhaps ambiguously evil activity - will have the hesitancy, the instability, of the attitude struck by the New World, provincial and unstable itself, towards the corrupt maturity of the metropolis". (20)

Classic texts, Kermode argues, with their different voices and "controlled lapses into inauthenticity" (20) are "invitations to co-production on the part of the reader". (20) Such accommodations needed after many years by old classics are required by modern classics from the very beginning, he adds, so that the modern classic

> "offers itself only to readings which are encouraged by its failure to give a definite account of itself. Unlike the old classic, which was expected to provide answers, this one poses a virtually infinite set of questions". (21)

Stated boldly this may appear more like an attempt to make black white than to resolve the question about truth. But the apparent paradox reflects the complexity of the nature of truth and insight. The classic calls for us to respond creatively to the indeterminacies of meaning inherent in the text precisely because its "surplus of signifier" (22) allows it the possibility of transcending the limitations of specificity, the specificity of the individual, the culture, the language, even of the literary form itself.

Kermode takes his analysis of the indeterminacies of the text to its limits in The Genesis of Secrecy. There he examines in great textual detail the ending of Mark's gospel and certain other relevant documents and demonstrates the many causes that act in concert to ensure that

> "texts are from the beginning and sometimes indeterminately studded with interpretations". (23)

and that they both demand and yet resist further interpretation. Interpretation, he argues, begins so early in the development of narrative texts that

> "the recovery of the real, right, original thing is an illusory quest". (24)

He draws very heavily on Kafka's parable of the entrance to the law:

> "No-one, however special his point of vantage, can get past all those doorkeepers into the shrine of the single sense. I make an allegory, once more, of Kafka's parable; but some such position is the starting-point of all modern hermeneutics except those which are consciously reactionary. The pleasures of interpretation are henceforth linked to loss and disappointment, so that most of us will find the task too hard, or simply repugnant; and then, abandoning meaning, we slip back into the old comfortable fictions of transparency, the single sense, the truth". (25)

Once more, then, in this account of modern hermenautics we have a glimpse of two kinds of truth: as we noted in our discussion of Ryken and Gunn (26) there is static truth and a questioning truth, sterile faith and an existential, fluid faith. In our discussion of hermeneutics in Chapter One and of a common existential vocabulary (27) we drew the same distinction. Just as we were able to distinguish between modes and qualities appropriate to proclamation and search at the end of Chapter Two (26) so we may distinguish the same modes and qualities operating to cause narrative both to function as paradigm and also to question and reform those paradigms. The same modes and qualities qualify the determinacy of the text. Just as the dispute between Ryken and Gunn remains insoluble so there is no resolution of Kermode's dual dilemmas; the indeterminacy of the text and the paradigmatic, sense-making function of narrative. The epistemological question concerning authority always remains and is acknowledged by Kermode in his comments about 'insiders' and 'outsiders'

> "what is the interpreter to make of secrecy considered as a property of all narrative, provided it is suitably attended to? Outsiders

> see but do not perceive. Insiders read and perceive, but always in a different sense. We glimpse the secrecy through the meshes of a text; this is divination, but what is divined is what is visible from our angle". (28)

Kermode is worried that Hermes, the patron saint of interpreters, is also the patron of tricksters, that the narratives which comfort us with under -stood relations

> "may be narratives only because of our impudent intervention, and susceptible of interpretation only by our hermetic tricks". (29)

Thus, for Kermode, a self-confessed outsider, the pessimism of Kafka's parable comes to define all our attempts to make sense of our lives. And yet the religious truth which is tied to faith, which must face all the problems of epistemology and hermeneutics and an uncertain world, this questing faith which is a laying of a hand to the plough (30) and therefore also a proclamation, this faith itself needs such insights as Kermode has given it to free it from proposition and dogma, from sterility and inauthenticity and to give it its life and hope and integrity. Once again, the theoretical framework has been made clear and the decisive factor in the establishment of worlds of meaning, the sense of an ending and of a beginning, is the mystery of religious faith.

Theological Elements in Narrative

It has not escaped the notice of certain critics in this field that the Bible, the primary Christian source, is itself largely in narrative form. Certain books of the Old and New Testaments are straightforwardly narrative, books like Genesis, Samuel, Ezra, Ruth, Matthew, and Acts. In addition, in the light of modern critical techniques the books of the prophets and the epistles, and to some extent the books of the law, may be understood as elements of a larger implicit narrative. Furthermore, whether our focus is narrowly on the development of the Pauline Churches (understood from the Acts and the epistles) or more widely on the progress of the whole of Christianity to the present day there is about the Christian faith a single narrative character (1) which extends from Creation to Apocalpyse and which defines in a distinctively narrative manner the revelation of God of which it speaks. Christianity, then, is first of all a story.

There are two directions of implication that arise from this element of narrativity shared by the Christian religion and narrative literature. The literary critic, skilled in the elucidation of narrative, asks if his skills may be of more use in religious investigation than those of the historian or the philosopher. Is there a literary way of understanding the Bible and the Christian faith and, if so, what are its parameters? This is not just the concern of those who promote Bible-as-Literature courses as part of a humanist enterprise (2) but a genuinely theological line of enquiry pursued, for example, from a structuralist perspective by John Dominic Crossan. (3). Moving in the opposite direction the theologian asks if the apparent fact that God reveals himself in stories has anything to teach us about the nature of God and his relationship with man, and the epistemology of religious faith? It is a potential escape route from the philosophical stranglehold of empiricism on the one hand

and a very anti-philosophical mysticism on the other. (4). Furthermore, it might not only provide an alternative or even complementary methodology for the theologian but it might also extend his scope beyond the Biblical texts. Accordingly modern literature may be investigated both for what it reveals of the human state and what it may contain, in narrative form, of God himself.

However, there has not yet developed a systematic theory of the religious significance of narrative that traces its philosophical origins and assumptions. The language games of the later Wittgenstein must lie behind it to some extent, for it is observed that narrative creates and stabilises meaning by context and use rather than by a priori, formal linguistic theory. This is particularly appropriate to the discovery of religious meaning since language is at its least referrential when it relates to religion and there is a need to infer and suggest what is felt to be ultimately transcendent. Nevertheless, in the middle of the 1970's there appeared a number of books and essays on various elements of narrative which stimulated critical discussion. In 1974 the Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Religion and the Society for Biblical Literature devoted twelve sub-groups to the study of some aspect of the relation between religion and narrative and in 1979 the Conference on Christianity and Literature convened a seminar on 'The Word in Space and Time: Theological Implications of the Narrative Mode'. In its report on this Christianity and Literature (No. 5) called for more work on the prolegomena to the subject, especially on the relation of this question to philosophies of language and the nature of religious knowledge, to an incarnational view of the world and the Judeo-Christian view of history. A further session was devoted to this subject in 1980 but failed to address this philosophical background. The discussion therefore remains for the moment in a fractured state: there is considerable insight but no unifying vision. Accordingly we shall impose our own order: we

shall discuss first some insights about narrative itself, and then consider what has been argued about individual elements of narrative and about various specific genres, and finally weigh the unfinished work of Wesley Kort.

In the first of the papers delivered at the 1979 Conference (5) Lyle Smith takes as his starting-point one of the conclusions we recognised in Ch 1 that

> "narrative is simply words doing a certain thing. The thing the words do may, or may not be religious in orientation. If the narrative mode can be said to have theological implications it will have them precisely to the extent that the writer or reader projects them." (6)

Religion inheres in the man. And yet the question about the religious significance of narrative resists such apparent solutions, largely, Smith argues, because of "what imaginative narrative implies about the nature of reality". (6) The appeal of narrative to the imagination, may, he contends, be interpreted in two ways. It may be that it satisfies a psychological need, the objectification of some element in our common humanity. He connects this with a formalist aesthetic and with the "simple-minded materialism" (7) of B.F. Skinner that "describes all cognitive responses to stimuli as electro-chemical events occuring in the central nervous system". (7) However, since this makes the world and art ultimately meaningless he inclines towards the other way of interpretation, that the appeal of narrative is "evidence of a more than strictly material component in the make-up of man and of the universe in which he lives". (8) Such genuine transcendences as that to which such a view points must assume that a reality outside the limits of space and time exists. Now and again, he asserts, a novelist will set up a system of symbolic significance that depends on an emotional response originating from the reader's sense that the world is finite and has an edge, and that something might lie beyond that edge. "This is usually described as a response to an archetypal symbol". (9) For Smith there is no great

problem in accepting this 'transcendence' view rather than the formalist or materialist one. If we are living in a closed universe of merely psychological events, he asks, "how do we account for the power of art to move us?" (7) This is something that literary theory itself cannot settle but it may

> "force us to consider other questions which are not literary at all but which, if considered, will bring us to literature from a different angle of approach". (10)

This is a very defensive opening to the discussion and one which relies heavily on creating a dichotomy between an austere formalism and an inherently Platonic appeal to transcendence through the use of the symbol. It offers no systematic argument in support of a prior religious commitment. However, it does establish that the religious character of narrative is not direct but indirect. As Ted Estess says, "Several religionists have located in narrative structure a significant hermeneutic device by which to interrogate the nature of human meaning". (11) It is at the level of human meaning, our interpretation of ourselves and our reality, that narrative may make a contribution of theological significance.

Estess gives three examples of his contention in Sam Keen, Michael Novak and Stephen Crites. Sam Keen, he says,

> "has been interested in the heuristic possibilities residing in the metaphor of story for the discovery and creation of personal identity". (11)

Keen's is a somewhat individualistic interest which emphasises the primacy of the experiencing subject:

> "Our starting-point must be individual biography and history. If I am to discover the holy, it must be in my biography and not in the history of Israel .... I have a story". (12)

Michael Novak's starting-point is social and historical rather than individual when he advances story as a model by which to understand the "logic of political action". (11) Stephen Crites underpins both perspec-

tives when he claims that "the forms of possible experience are narrative" and that stories are able to "give qualitative substance to the form of experience" because experience is "itself an incipient story". (13) Genuine stories, Crites argues, are always primary sources which invite interpretation as secondary. Interpretation cannot make any story superfluous since its validity does not depend on its explanatory power. Story is 'populated': "Persons are incarnate in the action of stories". (14) This is a crucial insight. It accounts for the inevitably hermeneutical function of abstract language. Narrative form, like personhood, is irreducible. Memory and anticipation are joined to present experience to create an incipient narrative form of which story is the linguistic expression. Thus the narrative quality of experience makes narrative a particularly potent expression of human meaning. But this insight about 'person' and the argued primacy of story over abstract language has, as we concluded in Ch. 1, (15) considerable significance for theology. As we have seen, the Bible itself, in narrative form, is the major source of Christian faith: perhaps it is important that its narrative form is organically revelatory of personhood. In The Uses of Scripture in Recent Theology Kelsey selects seven theologians' uses of scripture to illustrate possible approaches. Of these, only two, Warfield and Bartsch, who take scripture as systematic doctrine and a lexicon of technical terms respectively, propose an abstract function for scripture. The other five make appeals which Crites would call primary, to the Bible as the narrative of a nation's history (Wright), as the revelation of the central figure in a novel (Barth), as a complex poem (Thornton), an expressionist icon (Tillich) and the possibility of authentic existence (Bultmann). (16) Thus there is considerable evidence that the sources of Christian faith only yield their revelation according to the peculiar powers of narrative and that the substance of Christian faith and revelation is that Personhood which narrative is almost exclusively equipped to contain. In

addition to this theological perspective we can refine the conclusions of Ingli James' work which we examined earlier (17). Not only must theology manage the ambiguity and paradoxes of metaphorical and symbolic language: it must also face the irreducible mystery of personhood in narrative itself. It is an intermingling of narratives which can relate persons to God. (18) There is more work to be done on this aspect of narrative theology but Crites' observations on the primacy of narrative experience and the inherence of personhood in it are clearly seminal.

> "We awaken to ourselves as persons in a story-like situation, already involved for all we are worth with the other personae in our incipient drama. They become 'visible to us' as persons precisely to the extent that our transactions with them begin to take on a narrative shape. But we also come to self-awareness in so far as our role in the story gets clarified in relation to them. Yet neither we nor they can simply make up or impose a plot on the story. The plot unfolds, partly, to be sure, of our own doing, but it is something we must struggle to comprehend, and indeed sometimes comically misperceive. For precisely as persons, mysterious and whole, who materialize in the story, each of us has an existential density that keeps him from being entirely transparent to the others or entirely malleable at their hands. He cannot be reduced to a character in a story someone else has made up. The rest of us must contend with him; the story is ours only insofar as it is also his. Even in a work of narrative art the storyteller must respect this density in his characters that makes the story theirs as well as his. The story makes its own demand to be told". (19)

Crites has one further observation to offer, on the subject of angels. He reflects on the appearances of God in Old Testament narratives, especially in the stories of the wrestling Jacob and the visitors to Abraham's tent. The narrative ambiguity introduced by angels was later resolved theologically as the figures were rationalised into intermediate beings, instruments of the divine will. But it could not be resolved within the narrative frame whose continuities of space and time are shattered when a numinous figure advances the action in a marvellous

manner precisely by breaking those narrative continuities. Crites argues that when an angel appears something like the squaring of a circle must occur: narrative temporarily converges with a more lyrical form in which a pattern of sound and rhythm gain the ascendency.

> "When the musical presence of an angel sounds in a story it, too, is a kind of fragment, but of another sphere of existence that is otherwise unseen and unheard here below". (20)

This is another approach to transcendence such as we have seen already in the symbol and now in the structure of narrative itself. But there is a little more here too. Crites is inclined towards the need for mystery, though this inclination may be an evasion. Narrative ambiguity is a feature of the story-like quality of experience, he says, and unambiguous discrimination of sacred powers distances them from their narrative sources - people are never clear what prayer is to! Similarly he contends that monotheism is a secondary-order language, that

> "nothing so abstract as the absolute monad can figure in concrete imagery and first-order language of immediate experience and praxis. It cannot, for example, appear in stories or be expressed in narrative language". (21)

This may appear a little doctrinaire. The essential point about angels, however is that they exist in narratives as a musical presence which breaks open the narrative continuity in space and time and cannot be reduced conceptually to a general theory of human behaviour or religiously to a closed, motionless archetype. Thus, from a different perspective Crites agrees with Smith that narrative may contain transcendence which will exist in an irreducibly narrative form, its tensions preserved, its evocation guarded. The 'musical presence' of God may emerge from the concrete materialism of the narrative or it may not: however, narrative will always incarnate persons and be an irreducible but vital source of human meaning.

There are two more introductory perspectives to narrative, the first of which is the work of James Hillman, a psychologist writing in

Wiggin's collection of essays. A point of departure for psychology, he claims, may be brain physiology, structural linguistics, analyses of behaviour or, as here, the imagination, assuming a poetic basis of mind. Thus the 'plot' of Freud's case histories was 'repression' and that of Jung his theory of archetypes. Case histories are fictions to which the therapist gives a new plot. He describes four narrative genres that occur; the epic, the comic, the detective and social realism. The relation between archetype and genre has been worked out by Northrop Frye in Anatomy of Criticism and it is only necessary here to quote the words of Patricia Berry

> "The way we tell our story is the way we form our therapy. The way we imagine our lives is the way we are going to go on living our lives. For the manner in which we tell ourselves about what is going on is the genre through which events become experiences". (22)

Thus the rhetoric of the archetype is the 'god' that persuades us to believe in the myth that is the plot in our case history. To find the 'gods' in psychology, he argues, we ought to look first at the genres of our case-history writing as literature. This is not merely an internal campaign about psychological methods. It confirms the inherently literary-narrative quality of experience, for psychology attempts a scientific analysis of experience and yet, in Hillman's estimation, it is the narrative genre implicit in the particular approach which is the most formative element in the analysis. He goes on to explain soul-history (best represented by dreams, emotions and fantasies) as composed of psychic events not ego events, for reflection not control, to be pondered over but not identified with. (23) Thus it is this psychic imagination that gives distance and allows us to see events as images. An image, he contends, is

> "not a content that we see but a way in which we see. The essence of word-images is that they are free from the perceptible world and free one from it. They take the mind home to its poetic base". (24)

Case histories are therefore fundamental to depth psychology not as empirical fundamentals or paradigmatic examples of theorists' plots but as soul stories which give us a narrative

> "that deliteralizes our life from its projective obsession with outwardness by putting it into a story. They move us from the fiction of reality to the reality of fiction. They present us with the chance to recognise ourselves in the mess of the world as having been engaged and always being engaged in soul-making, where 'making' returns to its original meaning of poesis .... Perhaps our age has gone to analysis not to be loved or get cured, or even to 'know thyself'. Perhaps we go to be given a case history, to be told into a soul story and given a plot to live by. This is the gift of case history, the gift of finding oneself in myth. In myths gods and humans meet". (25)

This is an expert witness, strictly outside the literary-theological debate, and yet it is easy to see why his observations are included in Wicker's collection of essays about story. They underline the significance of narrative in the formation of human meaning and in doing so make a glancing reference to theology. Hillman's 'image' defined not by content but as a way of seeing mirrors the conclusions of Paul Ricoeur on symbol as a perspective of faith. (26) His reference to the soul, whilst not intending any metaphysical significance, pierces beneath the surface of contingency to the dimension of depth in which theology functions. Finally, his identification of myth as the place both of human self-discovery and discovery of God further cements the link between the narrativity of meaning and theological significance, a link which has already been implied. The logic of narrative, then, is at the very centre of human meaning, indeed it is at the centre of our psychological development, and we must look for the 'musical presence' of God in the peculiar qualities of the narrative mode.

In addition to the psychological perspective there is the linguistic argument. In The Story Shaped World Brian Wicker argues at length that metaphor is endemic in all communication since it is simply one

of the two 'poles' of language and that metaphor is never an 'innocent' figure but always implies a subterranean metaphysic. He draws on the legacy of Coleridge in emphasising that "to make and to understand a metaphor are alike acts of the creative imagination" (27) but the substance of his argument, based on the linguistics of Saussure and Jakobson, is that language itself is an agent in the creation of meaning. Thus language involves the two acts of choosing and combining which form the axes of language. Leaving aside the complexities of the structuralist argument about paradigmatic and syntagmatic relations it is sufficient to quote certain illustrations by which Wicker carries his argument. The analogies Shakespeare used between an eagle and a king and between a schoolboy and a snail were only available to him because of the underlying analogical 'great chain of being' which Lovejoy describes. (28) By virtue of its place in the hierarchy a particular species could serve the philosopher or poet as a reliable sign of some other level in the hierarchy. Underlying this particular hierarchy was the concept of creation, a causal concept. Similarly, in God's Grandeur, when Hopkins says that "the Holy Ghost broods" we must deny the literal truth of the metaphor - God is not a broody bird - but we may not deny the analogy's literal truth: the statement is true as long as we understand it analogically. Thus metaphor is more than the simple perception of similarity; it is always the perception of likeness within a larger dissimilarity. Levi-Strauss reveals that tolemic societies are governed by gigantic metaphors of the animal kingdom to make tolerable the tensions of the human community. The two axes of language function in this case as follows: by choice of metaphor a father-in-law is compared to an eagle-hawk and a son-in-law to a crow, but the logic of these choices relies on the axis of combination, that is, on the relation of eagle-hawk to crow. Eagle-hawks are hunters and crows are merely thieves: the crow must forever submit as stealer to the true hunter. Both axes are necessary to 'think

with'.

This linguistic analysis of metaphor and analogy has implications for 'Nature' and 'God'. "Metaphor", Wicker argues,

> "exerts a relation between man and a world which is properly called 'Nature', that is to say, a world ordered and intelligible and subject to discernable natural tendencies inherent in things themselves". (29)

Similarly metaphor in theology works by taking it for granted that it is possible to affirm certain human characteristics of God and in this way brings God into direct contact with the world.

> "But it does so only because it presupposes that we already know that these characteristics are not literally true of God. Somehow therefore we have to know already that God is not literally what the metaphor affirms him to be". (30)

Wicker suggests that, historically, the result of failing to appreciate the true nature of the relationship between analogy and metaphor is the root cause of the profound divorce between the God of the philosophers and the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob which Pascal diagnosed. Whitehead and Teilhard de Chardin, he says, assume that the tension is between the God of religion and the God of philosophy and must be resolved by a theory about God. But Wicker proposes that it be solved only by a theory about the way we speak about God: this, he feels, his use of analogy and metaphor according to structural linguistics achieves.

> "An analogical conception of God must accompany, and even precede, any metaphysical speech, and indeed any religious understanding of him". (31)

Thus, he argues, we have a conception of God as Creator and Most High before we read the metaphor of Yahweh.

> "The only person who can tell us what Yahweh thought is Yahweh - so God is in the stories of Yahweh, but not as character, or as part of what is told, but as the implied teller". (32)

However we evaluate the detail of this argument it is clear that there is considerable linguistic evidence that narrative, which thrives on metaphor, must have metaphysical implications about the world and even

about God. It is appropriate now to examine the narrative mode itself to see where these theologically significant elements lie.

As the title of the American seminars (5) makes clear narrative is essentially an occupant of space and time: a combination of these elements constitutes the form or the shape of a narrative. Consequently some attention has been given to the space, time and form of narrative. As might be expected there are some impulsive and unreflective statements made, not least by John Reist. He begins by drawing our attention to the intimate relationship of theme and form within narrative:

> "the story does not simply 'contain' a dictum, or truth about life; it incarnates it. The narrative is that truth. Thus, narrative is moved out of the rational discourse of the courts into an aesthetic mimesis of experience, and instead of Q.E.D. the more appropriate conclusion is Q.E.C. or Quod erat carnificiendum". (33)

Despite the flourish this is, of course, an essential point, but he goes on to speak about form as if the only form by which we preserve ourselves against the flux of existence is literary and narrative, as if narrative is necessarily a container of truth and as if the Eucharist is the only narrative shaping of life. "I think it is not excessive to claim", he says, "that whenever the desire for narrative form exists (tell me a story .... listen, children!) there you have a longing for the truth about human kind". There are perhaps few child psychologists who would agree with this interpretation of such a child's request. It is also the substance of his argument that the Eucharist may be considered as a narrative structure of events which re-orders both space and time. "The bread and wine (phenomena in space) become symbols of transcendent realities; and this happens through an action in time where Jesus reconstitutes historical reality into a powerful representation of all of life". (34) Similarly, he argues, the narrative mode itself takes the world of flesh and bone and transforms it:

> "narrative provides a formal structure in which historical reality may be distilled into an enduring whole revelatory of our immanent sin and possible salvation". (35)

But, of course, narrative may be revelatory of anything else as Robbe-Grillet has ably demonstrated; has it contributed very much to our under-standing either of narrative or of theology to point out that both the eucharist (understood as narrative) and narrative itself transform space and time? Reist indeed shows how a Christian may impose the narrative 'form' of Christianity on the world in the eucharist and in the novel, but not why 'form' itself (any form) is connected with truth nor, therefore, has he said anything about secular art and hence about art in itself.

Jo Turk draws attention to the double perspective on time in Forster's A Passage to India. This split between the cyclical time of primitive and oriental man and the linear time of Western man gives evidence, she argues, of his dual perspective on religion. (36) John Cox explores this relation between attitudes to time and religious orientation in relation to the contrast between Greek and Hebrew narratives. "Aristotle", he argues,

> "is the critic who first thought of a process that unfolds in time (that is, narrative or dramatic action) as if it were a static object in space with an identifiable, integrated structure". (37)

This underlies the Greek assumption of a military principle behind the apparent flux of visible reality. As J.J. Pollitt observes:

> "If the apparent mutability of the physical world and of the human condition was a source of pain and bewilderment to the Greeks, the discovery of a permanent pattern or an unchanging substratum by which apparently chaotic experience could be measured and explained was a source of satisfaction, even joy, which had something of a religious nature". (38)

In contrast to the unitary explanation favoured by the Greeks the Hebrew scriptures are multigeneric and episodic. They are most sharply

distinguished from Homer by their history-likeness. Their adaptation of remembered events to a sequential, chronological narrative points to a paradoxical affirmation of 'profane' time as the locus of sacred action. In the mythic view of the Greeks

> "profane time must be abolished periodically because of its uncertainty and vicissitudes: only in such abolition can one re-enter an unchanging sacred time. Mythic narratives of the human past therefore aspire to (even when they do not achieve) the kind of timeless design that Homer perfected, and they do so by continual readaption of past events to the timeless patterns of myth. But Israel's sacred history lacks a mythic shape, in spite of the strong influence that Near Eastern mythology always exerted on her. Her narrative of the human past depicts Yahweh as sponsoring and participating in the on-going, open-ended sequence of profane time". (39)

Thus, "if Yahweh does not act in history, as the advocates of Biblical theology claimed, he certainly acts in history-like narratives, whose structure is therefore a divine revelation of peculiar character and power". (40) Thus narratives are the products of particular cultures and reflect different religious visions in their form and shape.

However, as Ted Estess observes,

> "it is deeply ironic that while some humanists engage in a concerted effort to resurrect the metaphor of story as a way of understanding the deepest matters of human existence, many literary artists speak of the death of the novel and despair over the story-form itself". (41)

In a study of Beckett Estess traces a movement from an active to a contemplative stance toward the desire for stories, and identifies four factors involved. First, Beckett wants to admit chaos into art since he fails "to surprise any principle of right order submerged in the contrarieties of experience". (42) Story, however, has an order-giving intent, establishing linkage among various incidents in time which may be casual, logical or teleological. "To construct a plot is to perceive in narrative incidents either the cradle or the grave of something else". (43) Second, Beckett is caught in a dialectic between fidelity to

finitude and fascination with the infinite. Thus his characters experience failure and impotence against the grain of story's implied ability to transcend momentary experience in a more comprehensive perspective. "His characters, either crawling in the mud or closeted in a small room, are powerless to view the horizons of life". (44) And yet the refusal of story equally relates to fidelity to infinitude. Beckett's narrators resist the finality of an ending with a premonition of beginning over again in a new cycle. Thus

> "Beckett's characters abdicate incarnate existence, they deny the limits of temporality implicit in an interpretation of life through the metaphor of story". (45)

Third, Beckett's characters' descent into the private world of the self runs counter to narrative's shared fabric of many destinies and defeats itself, for the nominative 'I' can only speak about itself by becoming other than itself as the accusative 'me': thus the 'I' is not said by telling a story about the 'me' and story itself, therefore, prevents an adequate account of the self. Last of all, Beckett's characters are bound to inaction and cannot be, as in a myth, in a story in which some-thing happens, for story affirms implicitly that something significant has been done.

Thus, if we suppose that artists are to be of some assistance in forging new metaphors of meaning we need to be aware of the disruption of the form of story in modern literature if we are meaningfully to engage contemporary consciousness. Estess alerts us to two challenges. Firstly, we must understand story in such a way as not to exclude chaos. Religionists, he argues,

> "tend to make much of the necessity for cosmocizing human experience in a syntactical fashion, indeed the word re-ligio connotes tying things together in a meaningful whole". (46)

This is exactly the failing of Reist's comments about the inherent narratability of the world, whose order is given anticipative realization

in narrative art. He errs because of prior dogmatic convictions about order, but it is equally possible, as we have seen from Wicker's work on linguistics, that the disorder of life might be compromised by the syntactical order of narrative. Secondly, "religionists interested in story", as Estess calls them, must carefully attend to the relation of life and literature. "One sometimes receives the impression that instead of literature imitating life the religionists interested in story want life to imitate literature". (47) There is, of course, room for a difference of opinion here. As Reist's arguments about the eucharist amply illustrate there is a real theological interest in the function of a religious narrative (even one as ritual and contextual as the eucharist) in transforming the flux of contingent life. The flavour of this concern may be caught in the Pauline injunctions to "put off the old man" and "put on Christ". (48) Nevertheless, Estess intends to alert us to the falsification which may occur in this process, not merely at the religious level of substituting idols for God, but at the methodological level of discrimination between a legitimately religious function (which he defines as allegiance to life) and the ritual function of a definitive religious myth within the religious community which it constitutes. There is also variance among theoreticians about the relation of narrative structure and human existence. Barbara Hardy and Stephen Crites maintain that story corresponds to a fundamental structure of consciousness whilst Frank Kermode sees narrative as an aesthetic structure imposed upon life events. (49) Finally, however, Estess cautions us that "Life is distinguishable from literature, and the aesthetic categories applicable to storied literature do not exhaust human reality". (49)

Thus it is clear that though narrative literature in its form and shape has broad theological implications it is necessary for us to be very discriminating about the kind of meaning that is and is not involved in narrative. In Beckett Estess has studied the battle of narrative against

its own characteristics, but there are forms of narrative whose particular shapes are at one with the kinds of meanings they each carry. These, according to some of the papers which have been produced, are folk narrative, romance, epic, parable and myth.

In a study of one of Grimm's tales called Our Lady's Child Nicolaisen demonstrates that the motifs of folk-narrative are well suited to convey the deepest human meanings. The particular motif to which he draws our attention is the 'unique prohibition' motif. In this folk-tale the child is forbidden to open the thirteenth door though she may open the others. This is a direct parallel with the Garden of Eden prohibition about eating fruit. Both encapsulate one of the most basic human dilemmas; extensive, but ultimately severely limited, freedom of choice. "Our Lady's Child is", he argues,

> "a highly persuasive example of the folk-narrative mode, with all its familiar, expected attributes, having been conveniently and without much strain pressed into divine service". (50)

Thus he concludes in two ways.

> "Just as the song, the proverb, the riddle, the gnomic saying and other genres of verbal folk-art can be, and have been, filled with theological significance when the word is to be the Lord's, so the sub-genres of the folk-narrative mode, with its peculiar, linear, two-dimensional, stark, precise, selectively highlighting style, its structuring, frequently incremental repetitativeness, and especially its notable embeddedness in time, lend themselves with humble ease to something more demanding, more transcending, more sublimating than the stories of Lazy Jack, Tom-Tit-Tot, of The Well at the World's End, even of Our Lady's Child". (51)

But equally narration did not begin as divine discourse and in fact "shies away from the religious domain". (51) Of course, the folk-tale knows of the numinous and otherworldly but

> "the supernatural representatives of the other world with whom folk-tale protagonists come into contact as both helpers and adversaries inhabit a zone of folk-belief far removed from the realms of theology. Their advice, their tricks, their magic objects are fundamentally

> wishful projections derived from the conditions, desires and demands of this world and from a direct response required on the folk-cultural level to the natural habitat". (51)

This separation between folk belief and theology is clearly the result of Nicolaisen's own perspective on theology (51) but it is clear that folk-narrative deals only with human meaning even though this may coincide with religious meaning. The 'unique prohibition' motif with which he deals in this tale encapsulates the limitation of human freedom: this knowledge is clearly something that needs no specifically religious origin though it may be of great religious significance. Thus the wisdom of folk-narrative is world-orientated and to do with human wishes, projections' and demands. However, the fact that it has been so successfully pressed into divine service, as Nicolaisen admits, begs the question about the theological status of this human wisdom, (52) a question Nicolaisen's own theological perspective excludes.

Jeanne Murray Walker describes George MacDonald's turning from realistic novel to romance at the end of his career as a strategy designed to reawaken awareness of the transcendent in an age dulled by values rooted in the commonplace. Lilith is a particularly illuminating romance because through the portrayal of the central character as an inept reader the image of reading becomes a metaphor for construing the traditions of the past and, more precisely, an analogy for the efforts of a Victorian to grasp and place himself within the Christian tradition. Romances, as Northrop Frye defines them, are organised by laws other than the ordinary laws of nature.

> "The hero of romance moves in a world in which the ordinary laws of nature are slightly suspended: prodigies of courage and endurance, unnatural to us, are natural to him, and enchanted weapons, talking animals, terryfying ogres and witches, and talismans of miraculous power violate no rule of probability once the postulates of romance have been established". (53)

Thus the very form itself escapes from any implied naturalism or mere

mimesis of contingency with the religious meaning implied in those emphases and unashamedly invokes the function of perspective in the discernment of metaphorical meaning. To understand metaphor requires stereoscopic vision, to preserve a tension between the two referents of the metaphor and so to comprehend a meaning which resides in neither alone. As David Tracy asserts "claims of metaphor are central to" descriptions of religious meaning. Western religions are "religions of the book", he argues, of "books which codify root metaphors through various linguistic and generic strategies". (54) One of the key insights, therefore, of Walker's study is that the references to readings scattered throughout Lilith "call attention to the fact and process of metaphor in order to argue that our way of understanding religious meaning is similar to our way of perceiving meaning when we read".(55) Thus

> "MacDonald wishes to turn his readers' minds to the uses and limits of metaphor in the search not merely for literary but also for religious meaning. On the one hand Lilith argues that individual redemption and cultural renewal can come about only through means described by traditional religious metaphors. On the other hand it pictures the Christian tradition through metaphors so difficult, because they are disjunct, that the search for meaning must become a painful, idiosyncratic, and threatening journey".(56)

By calling attention to his metaphors rather than making them invisible, and by defying the pretense to fictional realism of the contemporary Victorian literary scene MacDonald "threw in his lot with the theological profession" of his day, declaring that the way to truth lay through metaphor. Clearly this is of historical importance, but for our purpose it draws attention to possibilities of religious meaning inherent in the metaphoric nature of romance. It is what Ian Ramsey calls the "odd logic" (57) of religious metaphor that MacDonald has pressed in his romance.

Of the third literary genre considered in these papers we shall say very little. Mario di Cesare (58) calls for a renewed appreciation of the

religious dimension of epic as an essential incredient in that genre. He defines a characteristic "epic irony" which arises out of the fundamental incongruence between the hero's actions and the epic context of his actions. It comes out of the coexistence of gods and men, a coexistence central to epic, and out of the divergent interests and diverse moralities appropriate to gods and heroes. Thus epic irony ordinarily occurs at the intersection of the divine and the human. In the Iliad epic irony consists in Achilles not achieving the promised glory, for the heroic choice is brushed aside by the very force that sanctioned it and the blessing he receives becomes a kind of curse. Because the gods are taken with full seriousness epic irony releases the most profoundly religious significance. In some critical opinion the gods are made to disappear from view or are labelled as ornamental in an attempt to evade theological, anthropological or religious problems. The stress is also one-sidedly placed on an anthropomorphism which obscures the gods' function within the epic and hides a subtler element, "the theomorphic movement (as Goethe called it)", the figure of men striving to be "as gods". But it is in the interplay of the divine and the human within epic that man's religious perceptions are tested against the tradition he inherits.

Thus in these three highly stylized genres, in folk-narrative, in romance and in epic, we have varied examples of specifically literary ways of containing and developing human, and almost inevitably religious, meaning. They are, however, distinct genres. In myth and parable we have narrative modes which function within many genres as the establishment and subversion of worlds of meaning. Ulreich attempts to illustrate this in a study of Spenser as iconic and Milton as iconoclastic. Spenser, he argues, is a maker of religious mythic images, hierarchical in structure and sacramental in imagery: to read his poetry is to share his values. Milton's poetry is radically iconoclastic, its form anarchic,

its imagery secular, its tone prophetic and disturbing. This is a dogmatic contrast which he goes on to soften by recognising in each traces of the other, but he makes two general conclusions. Firstly, Ulreich claims that the religious imagination is characterised by this polarity between iconic and iconoclastic vision. Secondly, the 'religious' nature of poetry lies not in its subject but in the formal relation between poet and his audience "to whom he needs must appear as in some sort a spiritual guide". (59) Even though he is describing specifically religious poetry we may not wish to agree with the note of spiritual didacticism implicit here, but whatever the nature of the relationship it will become clear that where myth and parable function the audience is actively engaged in religious experience and response.

John Dominic Crossan offers a systematic theory of myth and parable from a structuralist perspective. Thus he believes that reality is structure, especially linguistic structure, and he therefore rejects three conventional assumptions about reality. Neither art nor science is the fount of truth and location of reality: both are successive ways of knowledge. Progress is not necessarily amelioration. Reality is not objectively observed 'out there', for "theory precedes observation". Having rejected these three assumptions he concludes that "there is only story".

> "If there is only story, then God, or the referent of transcendental experience, is either inside my story and, in that case, at least in the Judeo-Christian tradition I know best, God is merely an idol I have created; or, God is outside my story, and I have just argued that what is 'out there' is completely unknowable. So it would seem that any transcendental experience has been ruled out, if we can only live in story. In all of this I admit most openly a rooted prejudice against worshipping my own imagination and genuflecting before my own mind." (60)

He tries to illuminate contemporary atheism with an allegory of a raft. People were adrift on the raft but in contact with a lighthouse-keeper ashore who knew their position and could always guide them. But the

dry land itself has been removed, and with it has gone the lighthouse and its keeper and has left the people alone on the raft at sea. This corresponds to the failure of belief in a fixed centre of reality 'out there', independent of us, that guaranteed our existence and our knowledge. The raft is language itself.

If, then, there is only story, the raft adrift on the sea, and God is either within language and therefore an idol or outside it and therefore unknown, there is only one possibility left to the theologian; this is what we may experience in the movement of the raft, in the breaks of the raft's structure and above all what can be experienced at the edges of the raft. We cannot talk of the sea itself but only of that which is experienced at the edges of the raft. Thus the "excitement of transcendental experience is found only at the edges of language and the limits of story" (61) and to find that excitement we must test those edges and limits; this is the work of parable.

It has been necessary to make clear the philosophical background to Crossan's work in order to appreciate his comments on myth and, particularly, parable. It is unnecessary to render in full his application to literature of the techniques of structural anthropology culled from Levi-Strauss and based on "a persistent series of binary discriminations". (62) It is sufficient to refer to his categories of story and the qualities he attaches to them.

> "Story establishes world in myth, defends such established world in apologue, discusses and describes world in action, attacks world in satire and subverts world in parable". (63)

Parable is his main concern. He demonstrates how it undermines our complacent security with reference to the books of Jonah and Ruth and the works of Kafka and Borges.

> "In the parabolic book of Jonah there is again no destruction of the magnificent traditions of election, covenant and prophecy. All that happens is what always happens in parable.

> God is given a little room in which to be God and we are reminded of our finitude and our humanity... The question posed by the books of Ruth and Jonah is this. What if God does not play the game by our rules?" (64)

The same is true of the secular parables of Kafka and Borges.

> "Parables serve what might be called an epistemology of loss. Their value, as knowledge, is to enhance our 'consciousness of ignorance' - but that is the beginning of philosophy". (65)

Crossan suggests that it is also the beginning of religious experience.

Crossan's main concern seems to be epistemological: how is it possible to know God? We might wish to speak of the limits of human perception where he speaks only of the limits of language for it is possible to experience in a non-linguistic way. However it is very clear in this work on parable that he associates religious experience with the experience of human limitation. As in the work of Brian Wicker there are two Gods, the God who is within human myth and therefore, in Crossan's terms, an idol and the God who is 'out there' and therefore outside human knowledge. It is Crossan's argument that parable, in questioning the God of our myths, creates an area of indeterminacy in which the real God 'out there' can make himself known to us. In its allegiance to the principles of linguistic structuralism as a basis for human knowledge this is itself a rather limited view of God and man. It lacks an adequate understanding of the Incarnation and of the immanence of God in the Holy Spirit. Epistemological doubt - 'we might be wrong' - is in itself no substitute for the redemptive presence of God. In confining itself to the structure of reversal in parable structuralism fails to allow for the content of the parable which may have a positive as well as a negative intent.

Janet Larson, however, articulates from Crossan's analysis a saving balance between myth and parable. As Crossan says we are open to transcendence when we "dwell in the tension of myth and parable", but as Tillich also says in Dynamics of Faith myths cannot be removed for

they form the "language of faith". Thus, in Crossan's words,

> "To break free of idolatrous faith the believer must recognise the myth as a story which is not in itself sacred but points beyond itself as a provisional symbol of his ultimate concern". (66)

Thus myth and parable are equally concerned with human meaning at a point where in its gesture towards transcendence it becomes most nearly religious meaning.

Finally, having considered many separate contributions to theory about theology and narrative we turn to the single perspective and dedication of Wesley Kort. He warns against four critical mistakes in this field; of dividing religious meaning from literary form, of addressing narrative with a religious problem and measuring it by the problem, of limiting attention to narratives containing religious words, and of describing anything aesthetic as religiously important. Rather, he argues, modern narratives are often found to carry or imply religious or religiously important meanings because the elements of narrative have a natural relation to corresponding moments in religious life and thought. Thus he isolates the elements of narrative, atmosphere, character, plot and tone, demonstrates the kind of religious meaning each draws to itself or by which each tends to be complicated and enriched, and extends his consideration of that element to its moment in religious life and thought. His is a text-centred approach, though he acknowledges the work done on the author by Nathan Scott and on the reader by Sallie TeSelle. (67)

Atmosphere establishes the boundaries of the world of a narrative, what can and cannot be expected to occur. It is more than setting (time and place) for similar settings could be quite different in atmosphere. In some modern novels atmosphere assumes the role of an antagonist when, for example, the hero is diminished in his fight against impersonal, anti-human powers. Atmosphere suggests otherness and

otherness, as we have seen (68), is a religiously significant category.

> "Atmosphere is an image within a narrative of possibilities or powers beyond the borders of human alteration, understanding and control, and a religious man is a person who, among other things, is primarily oriented to what lies beyond human understanding and control". (69)

Kort acknowledges that confrontation with what is beyond human understanding and control should not by itself be called religious but argues that

> "the more a character becomes aware of otherness, the more he allows it to preoccupy him, the more oriented he becomes to it, the more it displaces in power and worth what he can understand and control, the more he becomes like a religious person... who should be understood, among other things, as one to whom, to use a marketplace expression, the transcendent is primary." (70)

Kort assembles several expert witnesses: Karl Jaspers (71) describes a consciousness of limiting situations as man's gratuitous housing which is the source of his "philosophical faith", Gordon Kaufman argues that behind the specific limiter is absolute, universal limitation, Martin Buber (72) that the Eternal Thou hovers at the fringes of each I-Thou relationship and Paul van Buren (73) describes the limits of our inadequate language and concludes that God is a limit-word. Thus the context and the weight of Kort's case is clear: atmosphere is related to limitation and otherness which is the orientation of a religious person.

Kort's second element, character, is, he suggests, paradigmatic of human possibilities.

> "It is often the dominant element in modern narrative because the modern period is obsessively oriented towards individual human existence, resourcefulness for creativity or destruction and position in relation to society and nature". (74)

Neo-Aristotelians will object, he admits, that character is subservient to plot and those sympathetic to the New Criticism will object that the power of fiction comes from the 'voice' within it, but Kort maintains

that there are four levels on which the power and meaning of character may be generated. It always operates on a literal level in relation to the other fictional elements. It may operate in relation to extra-literary counterparts by forcing us to acknowledge 'this is what people are like'. A character may rise above its literary context and become paradigmatic of some style, problem, perversity or virtue as Captain Ahab or Don Quixote do. Finally, it may open up something beyond itself as Paul does in Sons and Lovers and thus be tropological.

> "It is in the process of actualizing possible meanings at these levels that character becomes a dominant element in a narrative, and, as it increasingly does so, becomes paradigmatic for human nature as it is, could, or even should or should not be. The position character gains as it becomes important in a narrative is religiously suggestive because character as paradigm takes on a kind of exemplary and even revealing role, one similar to the force felt by a religious community from its authoritative figures". (75)

We may be less willing than Kort is here to emphasise the 'paradigmatic' as exemplary. In his 1980 paper (76) he himself replaces the term 'paradigmatic' with the word "potential" which is perhaps more acceptable. Otherwise we might wish to exclude the didactic emphasis with the words 'focus' or 'model' or even 'example'. With this revaluation would have to go a modified appeal to the function within religious communities of the lives of heroes and saints. Such communities do not characterise only exemplary conduct but also that which is to be avoided and many delicate positions between these extremes. Indeed, we conduct our discrimination about potential human behaviour in narrative terms by use of such models of character as are relevant, from saints and tyrants to figures of mythology and literature. The appeal to the function of exemplary saints in religious communities is therefore a little weak. However, character remains inherently suggestive of religious value in the terms of Kort's later paper: "whether human nature is mean or worthy, whether it is in a state of decline or ascent, whether

it is principally individual or communal", such questions as these

> "Cannot be answered with certainty, do not yield to answers open to verification, and they are questions which people either consciously or not answer differently from one another." (77)

Kort's analysis of the third element, plot, becomes a discussion of time. Narrative time, he argues, is meaningful movement and thus leads to belief. But the question which results concerns the relation of narrative time to human time: "is human time at once both movement and meaning?" (77) Kort contends that this is the most important issue embedded in modernism. Cyclical time, which is repeated myths and rituals that returns linear time, returning people to their origins, has been superceded by linear time since the divine revelation is located in history. This has resulted in an imputation of novelty and of irreversibility to all actions, a temporal definition of man, the dissociation of time from nature and the separation of public and external from private and internal time. These problems, of the meaning and coherence of history, are examples of the way in which time is a matter of major modern uncertainty which unsettles the discussion of plot in narrative. There are equally difficult formal concerns, especially of the spatialization of narrative. (78) Yet Kort is able to draw on the myth critics in arguing the cyclical character of plot-time. Cassirer and Jung assert that art is expressive of human relationships to the world, and not, as Kermode would have it, an imposition of alien forms on it. Northrop Frye also integrates plot and the cycle of nature. In his 1980 paper Kort describes the time of narrative as rhythmic, human time as repetition, polyphonic time as the consequence of contrary forces or factors interacting with one another, and melodic time as a line of internal development. Thus he is able to argue that the element of plot has religious associations derived from ritual and the rehearsal of great events in religious life.

Finally, tone, the image of the teller in the tale, has three aspects, material selection, an attitude towards that material and

language use. Sometimes referred to as 'world-view' or 'vision' or even 'intention', tone has been subject to attack when it is felt that the illusion of reality is threatened by authorial presence. Equally, it has its defenders, notably Walter Ong who insists that the relation between reader and author is the principle aesthetic matter. Kort's synthesis is that "tone is an image of the creative act, and the creative act is the moment in which material, language and attitude arise as one thing". (79) This has associations with relation and wholeness, affirmation and belief, above all, with value.

> "When reflected upon, then, tone naturally takes to itself enrichments and complications from that moment of religious life and thought having to do with religious experience, orientation and response." (80)

Clearly Kort's argument can be opposed, especially by those who wish to insist on the mere contingency of the world and of human experience. However, it is not the burden of Kort's argument to prove that narrative is religious: it is his concern to demonstrate how and why it may be religious. Atmosphere, character, plot and tone, that is to say, boundaries, human nature, time and value constitute the four corners of an ordered human world. This is unavoidably intertwined with belief. Fiction thus has in common with religion a fund of resources to constitute an entire world. Kort is ready to acknowledge that the otherness of fiction is not the same as the 'transcendence' of religion: but what can be said of transcendence by a religious person can be said of those forms through which the transcendent is made accessible to him. It is "mistaken to call the imagined world of a narrative religious", he claims, but

> "narratives do help clarify and give, so to speak, concrete instances of those major matters of which a religious man's life are constituted .... Although they stand as well at some distance from one another, the elements of narrative are correlatives of the characteristics of religion." (81)

Furthermore,

> "the 'ordered world' of narrative is a reflection of that ordered world which is pre-supposed by any ongoing human life. The matters of belief to which the elements of narrative lead us are not casual or optional matters for human existence and experience." (82)

In life as in fiction we need beliefs about what is possible, about human nature, about the movement and meaning of time, and about value.

Finally, in his 1980 paper Kort gives the preliminary results of some unfinished analysis of modern religious systems. The general sense of distance between modern narrative and belief implied by specialists in the field is, he argues, inappropriate. It is his "working hypothesis that modern narrative is related to beliefs which arise from a religious system by which modern narrative is enfolded." (83) A religious system, he argues, gives rise to beliefs concerning three matters: that which cannot be understood or controlled; the form of what cannot be understood or controlled in the human world; and the spiritual and moral needs of a person or people and the satisfaction of those needs. All three need to be present in a religious system and one of them will dominate. It follows, then, that there are three kinds of religious system; the 'prophetic' in which what cannot be understood or controlled is dominant, the 'priestly' in which the form in the human world of what cannot be understood or controlled is dominant, and the 'sapiential', in which the moral and spiritual needs of a person or people and the satisfaction of those needs is dominant. Kort sees mediaeval Europe as having been enfolded by a 'priestly' system, the movements that led up to the Reformation as expressive of a 'prophetic' system and the system that has been most prominent since the seventeenth century as a 'sapiential' system.

> "The conclusion which may now be drawn suggests that the beliefs to which the elements of narrative lead us in the modern situation are beliefs that must be appropriately studied first of all in relation to a sapiential religious system and not to a system of a prophetic or a priestly kind." (84)

Thus in his studies of character in recent American fiction he has seen the nature and status of human experiences and their relation to nature, to cultural conflict and to transcendent ideals as beliefs related to a sapiential religious anthropology. He even hints that the principle source of the sapiential system is not classical or pagan but Biblical. This is unfinished and awaits detailed application, but it confirms that the discussion of Chapter 2 is a crucial one to the prospect of progress in this field. He suggests further work on whether narrative is more suited to a sapiential system and drama or the lyric to priestly and prophetic systems than any other combination. In this perspective, however, the 'moral and spiritual needs of a person' and 'belief in an ordered world' imply each other and we can understand some of Kort's reasoning about the four narrative elements, particularly why he is prepared to accept as 'religious' what other critics might call 'human'. We must await further analysis of this issue which may prove most fruitful.

Readings of Henderson the Rain King

Two broad arguments seem to emerge from these investigations and each indicates a certain circularity. The first is that theology and literature are, indeed, bound together. On one hand, theological concerns are implicit in literature. On the other, theology must accept the questing, testing and forging of new currencies of meaning that goes on within the literary mode.

The second is rather more difficult to express. On the one hand, we are forced to concede that certain forms of literary creativity (like myth or parable) contain or shape meaning (especially religious meaning) in certain ways, and that certain qualities of literary fiction (for example, the incarnation of persons) give power to religious themes and such awareness as no discursive method could attain. Yet nevertheless, on the other hand, we are compelled to recognise that vision inheres in the writer or reader: the medium is dependent on the participants and what they bring to it. Within both arguments the circularity is important, for each endlessly refines and complements the other.

To weigh these and earlier arguments against a piece of fiction is not to attempt to prove anything, but it may bring extra clarity and focus, and it does seem appropriate to conclude with a discussion of a piece of creative fiction itself rather than with parasitic, analytical documents. Henderson the Rain King by Saul Bellow is a relatively arbitrary choice. It is revealing to compare two quite different critical readings, by Tony Tanner and Ruth Etchells.

Tony Tanner (1) relates his study of Henderson the Rain King to an account of the major concerns of Bellow's fiction, and his development

throughout his literary career, within the context of the contemporary American world. Thus he begins with the immigrant and urban experiences of modern American life of which Bellow, the writer, is a part. With the aid of Bellow's own autobiographical and critical comments on his surroundings Tanner broadly sketches the world of Bellow's fiction and consciousness. Thus

> "Bellow admits that society with its increasing materialism threatens to suffocate the soul with its profusion of things. But, he asserts, the human spirit is inextinguishable." (2)

He outlines how Bellow draws on the great Russian writers and on Whitman and Dreiser, and passes into a general outline of Bellow's enduring concerns as they appear in his fiction. There is, for example, the problem of reconciling individual freedom with a mode of social life to which the individual can give his allegiance without impairing his moral, spiritual or psychological integrity.

This is not an accidental method but intrinsic to Tanner's approach. In terms of the categories Giles Gunn outlines (3) Tanner concentrates on the artist and thus on what calls for 'expression', the values and insights that are felt to be significant, in a manner that goes back to the Romantics. This relates to his perception of the artist contributing to the possession and development of meaning within our world, the artist as 'seer' or visionary, by his special sensitivity and technical skill delivering himself of what a Biblical theologian might call prophetic vision (4). Thus, it also involves him in speaking about Gunn's category 'world', and therefore in a mimetic concern, a clear-sightedness that is also, in theological terms, prophetic.

Henderson is a strong, rich man of "mad habits", drinking sacrilegiously, raising pigs in the ancestral home, flailing around with his inordinate strength and wealth, and

> "shouting out at life in a voice loud enough to bring sudden death to an old servant. His great tradition cannot provide him with a function, a satisfying role, a mode of self-

> realisation. His violence is really a form of immense, brooding frustration.... He feels the need to find out some basic truths about the self and its destiny before he can make terms with society. For like most Bellow characters he does not know how to relate himself to other people.... He is too rich and strong to submit to society's net.... He is the quintessence of ignorant, questing, well-intentioned individualism... his prime need is to release that vehemence and waken to reality.... All of which qualifies him as a member of that rare class of people that Dahfu characterises as 'the fighting Lazaruses'." (5)

Tanner accounts for Henderson's trip to Africa on two grounds. Firstly, there are the two rooms, his own insulated, carpeted, "swept and garnished" (6) until he feels like a "trophy": and there is his daily help's room packed with the accumulated junk of ages reminding him of the grave. These are symbols of his pointlessness and fear of death, especially a meaningless death, the death of a person who has not significantly 'been' anyone. Secondly, there is the inner voice "I want", an

> "extreme manifestation of boundless desire, that longing without focus which Bellow has described as particularly American. And what Henderson wants, as he gasps or bellows his needs, turns into a sort of anthology not only of all the desires of all the other characters in Bellow's work, but of the vast range of romantic and post-romantic aspirations in general.... Almost, one might say, he acts out... a whole chapter in the history of Western sensibility." (7)

Henderson plants himself in Africa, "the ancient bed of mankind" (8) where his life becomes harsher and more rigorous until he approaches the ultimate secrets of savagery and annihilation. With the gentle, peaceful, animal-loving Arnewi, whose Queen Willatele is the incarnation of stability, Henderson recognises the "grun-tu-molani. Man want to live." (9) But he is too much the restless, over-dynamic interferer to be able to evaluate their acceptance and offering of their sufferings: he fights, with all the self-confidence of alien technology to remove suffering, and failing again, is again forced to flee. He goes on beyond "man-want-to-live" to face how to die:

> "instead of coming to Henderson in tears, the Wariri approach with guns; they use his tactics". (10)

They are "chillen dahkness" as Romilayu puts it; they greet Henderson with an ambush, a cell with a corpse, scenes of drinking, quarelling, abuse, human bones worn as ornaments, and bodies hanging from a scaffold. Yet there is also the calm of the Bellovian guide, in this novel Dahfu, gleaming with some unusual intensity of life, himself a bringer of chaos, Henderson learns "what savagery can be" and comes "nearer to a proper confrontation of what he calls "the biggest problem" - the encounter with death". (11) Dahfu is an equivocal figure,

> "a potential redeemer of mankind but not without a hint of Faustian over-reaching.... His ideas often threaten to topple over into absurdity". (12)

But here Henderson comes to a clearer understanding of his main problem which is, Tanner argues,

> "how should a man properly submit to reality and at the same time how can he attempt to transcend himself and slough off hampering limitations?" (13)

Through the imagination Dahfu suggests Henderson can transform himself and need not be locked in a meaningless cycle of "fearing and desiring". Yet when Dahfu is killed by a real wild lion, not a tame one, reality

> "turns out to be more a ferocious, alien thing than he had realised; while the effort to break out of the cycle of endless Becoming seems doomed to remain the dream of the advanced imagination". (14)

Tanner's assessment of the novel is equivocal. He feels that Henderson "has no new solutions perhaps, but he does have some convictions" (14), notably that nobility and human greatness are no illusion. He judges that much of Henderson's ranting, insatiable egotism has fallen from him and at least his life promises to exhibit more peace and purpose, but that this stops short of any concept of salvation. He concedes that, in a sense, the ending is an evasion, "We never see Henderson back in the United States". (14) But he feels that "the basic

drive and effort of the book is sincere and convincing". (15) The "vital experience", when Henderson feels flooded by the possible poetry of existence, as he does before the octopus or the beauty of the sunlight on a wall in an African morning, gives embodiment to the positive potentialities of life, before death robs him, and us, of all chance to experience them. "Humankind has to sway itself more intentionally towards beauty": (16) this is the gesture the book makes. On the other hand, the supreme importance of love is, he feels, only asserted; Henderson's relationship with Lily is"amiable burlesque" and it is hard to see him ever having real relationships with anyone, or ever transcending his ebullient and tormented individualism.

We shall return to Tanner's evaluation and other relevant elements of Henderson the Rain King. At this point it is clear that Tanner has no religious or theological presuppositions beyond his general observations on contemporary human spirituality. This may, indeed, be another form of dogmatism, but nevertheless it contrasts strongly with the assumptions of another critical reading by Ruth Etchells. (17) Drawing, likewise, on Bellow's own essays, she identifies the thrust of his concern as a moral question, "in what form shall life be justified?" (18) She sees Henderson's quest as a gradual recognition of the place of 'justice' and 'mercy' within the concept 'truth'. Although she does not herself use the phrase it would be appropriate to hint that she means something like 'God's truth', that is, not 'reality' as Tanner would understand it, but something to do with the framework and values of revealed Christian religion. She identifies the incessant 'I want' as a desire for justice. She would agree with Tanner that it is a universalised quest, representative, in some sense, of Western man in the mid-twentieth century. She traces the stages of the quest and the "clusters of images and allusions, some Biblical, some literary" which help us to make sense of what the quest finally achieves. The recognition of "grun-tu-molany" she takes as the first time the "I want" within him takes a form, that of the desire

to live. Undeserving as he is, however, he must alter his views of himself as a self-appointed Messiah who wins love by the success of his operations; thus his attempts to deal with the "plague" end in disaster. He is forced out again into the "wilderness".

When he is with the Wariri she sees the incident of the corpse in the hut as an ordeal testing Henderson's suitability for a new role, not only overtly in terms of whether he is strong enough to lift Mummah and become Rain-King, but whether he can accept his own death in the royalty of nature which she detects coming upon him. She sees him involved in a kind of substitute death:

> "As if dressed in a second man and groaning.... I stumbled and went down under the burden of the corpse. This was a hard fall and I lay caught in the dusty sand...something within me begged the dead man for his forgiveness". (19)

This, she argues, is another stage in his search. "Faced with a substitute death he has begged forgiveness." (20) Presumably she is here glancing at the substitutionary death of Christ as she does at Christian baptism in commenting on the rain ceremony -

> "He is, as it were, baptised into a new name and role, 'Henderson-Sungo', the Rain-King. He enters, that is, upon royalty." (21)

In both cases we may feel the allusion is ill-fitting or over-stretched, but it forms part of the web of meaning she detects (and helps to construct). Dahfu's task, she argues, is to "convert" Henderson's nature to the role to which he is summoned (she might almost have said 'predestined', since there is, in the novel, a strong sense of compulsion which controls Henderson's destiny). His assumption of royalty grows, in Miss Etchell's reading, through the letter to Lily asking her to enrol him for a course in medical studies under the name of Leo Henderson, and through a series of allusions to the life, death and resurrection of Jesus and to the ministry of the Church. Thus his assumption of royalty continues through the experience of sharing with his friend the King the treason and disloyalty of men who plot the King's death (like the disciple, Judas, who

betrayed Christ and the other disciples who abandoned him), and through entombment with the King after the King's death until he should emerge resurrected as the new King (which glances at St Paul's teaching about being buried with Christ in baptism so that we might "rise to newness of life" (22) and to the formal Christian doctrine of baptismal regeneration). Thus renewed in understanding, Henderson is led to return to his own world and put his new royalty of nature to the service of others (which parallels much of the teaching of the New Testament and is encapsulated in the final response of the modern Anglican Eucharistic rite, "Go in peace to love and serve the Lord. In the name of Christ, Amen." (23) In a ritual of resurrection Henderson carries away the lion cub embodying the dead King's spirit (like the Holy Spirit) and wanders through a purgatorial wilderness (the scene of Jesus' temptation and the classic spiritual experience often called "the dark night of the soul"). Finally transformed he runs with lion's grace in royalty of nature round the plane which has brought him to the northern environment where he will serve as did his model Wilfred Grenfell. Pausing in her argument she gathers this together:

> "It is also clear that Henderson's quest is a religious one: even at this stage we may note in passing how many biblical themes are picked up and re-arranged, re-explored, re-defined in this book. Such elements are the essential royalty of redeemed man, of the potential for 'becoming' of the inheritance to be entered upon, of the infusion of old ritual with new life, of the necessary period in the wilderness, of the terror and solemnity of the 'holy place' where the implications of the new understanding of 'justice' are learnt. So many of the concepts, images and themes of the 'new contract' in Christ as affirmed in the New Testament are discoverable in an entirely new setting and with a different emphasis in a novel concerned with the relation between justice and mercy and the means by which a human life may be justified". (24)

The "quest" narrative gives unity, she argues, but other patterns render it more dense and subtle. Firstly, there are the overt Biblical strands such as the controlling image of the prophecy of Daniel, the

Messiah, the "day of tears and madness", and images such as deluge, rainbow, desert, plague of frogs, the burning bush, the lion's den and the risen Lazarus whose 'sleep' has burst. Secondly, there is the progress towards salvation of such books as The Pilgrim's Progress. Thirdly, there is the pattern of 'service-motivation' where knighthood is associated with chivalry, purity and service, and is achieved through ordeal, struggle and commitment. Of the image of Nebuchadnezzar she says,

> "Supposing the beast whose nature is cultivated is a royal one? Then that which is a curse may indeed become a blessing". (25)

Thus she suggests an elision of a number of Christian ideas, amongst them the prophecy of Daniel, the 'fortunate fall', the 'cursed' cross of Christ and St. Paul's notion of identification with the death and resurrection of Christ. For her, Africa becomes "the primeval landscape", in fact, "Eden lost", allowing "so contemporary a figure" as Henderson

> "to work out there the implications of the justice at the heart of man's moral situation". (26)

The "bursting of the spirit's sleep" she sees as the awareness gained of forgiveness, awareness that comes through commitment to suffering ("a brave man will try to make the evil stop with him").

> "It's too bad, but suffering is about the only reliable burster of the spirit's sleep. There is a rumour of long standing that love also does it". (27)

He comes to an understanding of love, she contends, when the inner voice "I want" has ceased to be selfish -

> "I had a voice that said, I want! I want? I? It should have told me she wants, he wants, they want. And, moreover, it's love that makes reality reality". (28)

- and when, "now that the sleep is burst", he longs to see his wife and children, "I love them very much - I think".

Ruth Etchell's critical account is clearly in contrast to that of Tony Tanner, and to be fair, it is not designed to stand alongside his account.

In the reading she offers she makes the fullest use of Biblical references and allusions which are clearly present in the text, and she weaves them into a coherent framework of meaning. Is that meaning superimposed or is it a valid elucidation of the main thrust of the novel? In her conclusion she argues,

> "Bellow has avoided, as he must by the very terms of the definition of his art to which he is committed, any message to be extrapolated from Henderson the Rain King. What he has done is to invest with imaginative force the question he proposed, 'in what form shall life be justified?'". (29)

Has she extrapolated a message in this reading?

She certainly seems to stand between Ryken and Gunn in the terms already outlined. (30) Like Ryken, her reading is clearly dependent on revealed Christianity. It must, of course, be admitted that symbols and motifs like the burning bush and Daniel's prophecy are part of the text: she does not import them. But Tanner's reading makes little of these same features. For him they are one of a number of possible signifiers, but presented as cheques that may bounce. Nietzsche offers other meanings in Thus Spake Zarathustra, ideas and images of nobility and transformation, of "metamorphoses of the spirit" into a camel, a lion and a child (as in Zarathustra's first discourse). "Now, of course, there is no exact copying", Tanner concedes,

> "or even a direct parallel; but there are hints and clues that Bellow has included some deliberate echoes of Nietzsche's work". (31)

Thus one of the tasks of the spirit is to

> "enter the foul waters if these be the waters of truth, and not to repulse the chilly frogs and hot toads therein". (31)

Again, the lion can "create freedom for new creation" as Dahfu taught in the pit. Finally though,

> "the lion must become a child, for whereas the lion can only say 'nay' to false duties and restrictions, the child is 'an holy yea-saying'". (31)

Henderson does repulse the frogs, does learn something of the recreation of himself with the lion, and his last act of unqualified affirmation is Nietzsche's 'holy joy' achieved by literally embracing a child. "This is clearly not mere borrowing on Bellow's part". (31) Another critic, in sympathy with Tanner's approach, Clayton, goes even further in placing Henderson the Rain King alongside some of the other twentieth century novels of personal or mythic quest into dark regions, novels like Lord Jim and Kerouac's Big Sur,

> "in which his King of the Beatniks tries to find his salvation in a Thoreau-like Eden on the Californian coast". (32)

The reading Ruth Etchells offers ignores these competing systems of allusion and potential significance. For her the Christian signifiers of meaning offered are valid: her reading is therefore dependent on them and evades the others. She has brought her assumptions about truth to the text. Perhaps for that reason she has not commented on the tone of the novel. Tanner detects the satirical, parodic style but is himself unsure what to make of it. How much is Bellow committed to his story, he wonders? "Is it an allegory, a parody, a romance, a fantasy?" (33) As we have argued, (34) each mode has its own relation to its proclammation and search for truth or meaning. For his part Clayton is quite certain,

> "we are to laugh at Henderson's quest.... Critics have tried to apologise for Bellow, not seeing that the symbolism of the novel is a put-on. Of course the novel is symbolic. Of course there are patterns of Freud, Jung, Fraser; but we should see the patterns as parody". (32)

Malcolm Bradbury argues that the myth of Henderson the Rain King

> "both asserts and mocks itself, takes on a neo-parodic form; and it is the method of comic fabulation, of expansive and pyrotechnic farce, of absurdity finding a path to human measurement". (35)

It teases the imagination. This self-critical tone resists any Henderson-like certainties; it affirms the value of the quest and the pursuit of

meaning but resists all the meanings that pose as truth. In a world where meanings have been lost, Bellow seems to ask, how can we live with the threat of meaninglessness: how shall we relate to the meanings which are less than convincing and yet stave off death? Perhaps the only way is a self-conscious quest that is always aware of its own potential absurdity and yet launches out in the hope of stumbling upon something valuable. As Bradbury concludes,

> "the mythic intent makes it very much a book of the fifties: a decade obsessed with the hope that the imagination might generate at last the saving fable, the tale of the wasteland redeemed, the desert of civilisation watered by some humanist or metaphysical discovery". (35)

Bradbury would therefore not admit a reading such as Ruth Etchells gives us which is so partial in both senses of the word. However, by placing a hero in a scene of competing meanings Bellow has created the possibility of an even deeper accomplishment than that to which Bradbury alludes. In an essay a week before Henderson the Rain King was published Bellow gives a warning about systems of meaning:

> "Novels are being published today which consist entirely of abstractions, meanings, and while our need for meanings is certainly great, our need for concreteness, for particulars is even greater. We need to see how human beings act after they have appropriated or assimilated the meanings. Meanings themselves are a dime a dozen". (36)

With respect to Henderson the Rain King this may mean that, more important than affirmation of any particular system of meaning, it is authentic existence within certain moments that is valuable. Thus Henderson's dance around the stationary plane is the achievement of a moment, at least, (if not a life) of integration and joy that contrasts so strongly with the intensely negative moments before the octopus or with the cat or in the daily help's room. Perhaps Bellow is suggesting that the novel functions on this level first, less as a quest for general, systematic meaning, the testing, proving and refining of it, and rather more at the level of an existential revelation and achievement, the

particularity and concreteness of an experience of value and significance (and humanity). This is like the contrast between the propositional and creedal faith of the Church and a more dynamic and personal act of faith (like Abraham's in attempting to offer his Son). It is the conviction of Giles Gunn outlined earlier,

> "We are driven back to that in both literature and religion which is prior to creed and conviction",

he argues, and we are presented with

> "felt possibility and the imagination of desire". (37)

This is not like "an expressed article of faith or principle of doctrine", religious (as in Ruth Etchell's reading), nor psychological (as Clayton presents), nor literary (as Tanner suggests), but is rather

> "a mode of experience where, in all our unexpectedness, the act of belief suddenly becomes again an authentic form of response". (37)

Belief produces integration which allows the possibility of the joy we see in Henderson around the plane.

Finally, in this context, Gunn's argument about 'otherness' also applies. Tanner concludes his brief study,

> "when the book reaches away from negation towards celebration: when we feel the full force of Bellow's refusal to accept despair, then it takes hold of us in a positive way beyond the scope of mere parody.... Henderson is a kind of fool, but persistent enough in his folly to reach the threshold of wisdom, and when he struggles to grasp and hold the notion of a new nobility attainable by men, then, whether he is waking or sleeping, comic or profound, we listen to him; and listening we suddenly seem to glimpse what it might mean to burst the spirit's sleep". (38)

In Gunn's terms, therefore, the novel creates the 'otherness' that is Henderson, whose experience of anxiety and moments of integration we share empathically, and thereby we are stretched and our vision is illuminated to the point where we may ourselves experience our own authentic response, and in fact, in a manner of speaking, be inspired into our own faith. But clearly, the experience of Henderson the Rain King

does not necessarily lead to an intuition of the 'Otherness of God', indeed, it is difficult to see how it could do so. Even Ruth Etchell's reading, making full use of all the Christian allusions in the novel, is theologically anthropocentric: it is about what man may learn and how he may develop in Christian terms, but it stops short of invoking God. This is inevitable, for the horizon of the novel does not in its imagery or argument stretch to the perception of God.

At this point we may return to Ruth Etchell's reading. We have noted various alternative systems of meaning implicit in the text and the parodic tone of the novel, and we have accepted the possibility of at least a humanist act of faith, "an authentic response", as one of the positive affirmations of the novel in place of the underwriting of a whole system of meaning. We must, however, pay more attention to the function of the symbol. In conceding the absence of "message" from Henderson the Rain King she focuses attention on the way Bellow is able to "invest with imaginative force the question he proposed". (29) The symbol is a focus of this imaginative force. We saw, earlier, Lewis' argument that religious sense is conveyed by "intensifying the human drama to the point where it gives off intimations of the sacred". (39) In Henderson the Rain King Africa is clearly rich with symbols: the burning bush is a symbol of Henderson's hubris (40) and his bomb a symbol of his reliance on technological solutions within situations that are more complex both spiritually and socially. There is nothing specifically sacred about these. The rain-making ceremony, the lion's den and the King's tomb contain more that is imaginatively 'sacred'. The final scene of joy, however, running round the plane, though symbolically dense, seems to have little of the sacred about it, at least overtly, in terms of imagery. Yet what Ruth Etchells has offered is an interpretation of that final moment whose implications are sacred, that Henderson is set free to serve others, and by implication, God.

At this stage we may draw on Paul Ricoeur's essay, The symbol gives rise to thought. (41) Firstly, he admits that presuppositions such as Ruth Etchells and Tony Tanner bring to the text are implicit in language itself and in the seeing eye. We must therefore be cautious in criticising presuppositions. Secondly, we cannot have symbolic language without hermeneutics:

> "though the immediacy of belief in the symbol has been lost we aim at a second naivety, which is that by interpreting we may hear again". (42)

Thirdly, the interpreter never gets near to what his text says unless he has a vital relationship to the thing about which the text speaks, a "kinship of thought" with the thing in question. The question of truth, he argues,

> "cannot be raised as long as one remains at the level of comparativism, running from one symbol to another, without onesself being anywhere.... It has been necessary to enter into passionate, though critical relation with the truth-value of each symbol". (43)

As we have argued, this is what Ruth Etchells has done in offering a Christian interpretation. The risk she takes, however, in the emphasis given to Biblical allusion, is to treat the symbol as allegory. Allegory is a form of hermaneutics (44) in which the interpretation is so precise that the richness and liveliness of the symbol may be lost. Ruth Etchell's reading is decisive: in the light of Ricoeur's reminder, that it is by interpreting that we are able to understand, we may find it both perceptive and illuminating. Yet we may feel that it is unreasonable to accept one framework of meaning when there is evidence in the text that the power of the work arises from the ironic juxtaposition of competing meanings, and that such a state reflects the confused nature of the world to which the novel is addressed.

One of the problems of interpretation confronted by all the critics of Henderson the Rain King concerns the future we might expect for

Henderson. Is he redeemed, with a new royalty of nature and a service motivation, as Ruth Etchells argues, is he a modified Henderson, slightly quieter and more peaceful, as Tanner suspects, but not qualitatively different, or is there no indication of any substantial change? These questions are closely related to what we understand to have happened during the novel, what 'events' have taken place. It is part of his presentation of ambiguity that Bellow has stopped short of a fictional, narrative solution to this problem: we do not, indeed, see Henderson back in the United States. But that directs us back into the novel in search of our own hermaneutics: the very absence of narrative resolution focuses our attention on the qualities of the experiences that come before the ending. This confirms Kermode's arguments earlier (45) about modern literature as apocalyptic, not in the narrative ending it is able to supply but in the eschatalogical depths of the moment of crisis. Perhaps Bellow hints at this when Henderson says that truth comes "in blows". (46) In a sense, demythologisation must come to literary hermaneutics as it has in the Biblical world. Narrative gives us the opportunity, with the aid of symbol and myth, to plumb the present crisis. Certainly, the whole energy of the novel, as well as that of Henderson within the novel (and sometimes it seems doubtful if there is any difference between these two) is directed towards what Kermode calls turning chronos into kairos. (47) Chronos is 'waiting time', simple successiveness: it is this which makes Henderson so restless and frustrated, it is this from which he flees to Africa. There he expects and finds significant time, charged with past and future, a crisis in which he may cease 'becoming' and discover 'Being': this is kairos. From another angle, therefore, the reader is involved in the creation of the text's meaning, since Tanner and Ruth Etchells interpret the crisis in such different ways. As Kermode argues the modern classic provides no answers

> "but calls for us to respond creatively to the indeterminacies of meaning inherent in the text". (48)

This argument may be taken too far: it is perhaps more appropriate to Ulysses than to Henderson the Rain King, but even in Bellow's work indeterminacy gives room for a critical act of faith on the part of the interpreter.

Thus, in conclusion, it is evident that a novel of serious intent, like Henderson the Rain King, may give rise to questions which have religious significance, but it is equally clear that it does so only in accordance with the author's creative control and the reader's critical presuppositions. In itself it offers no dogmatic faith, but it is "an oriented trap for meditation" (49), drawing the reader towards the release of sympathy, the recognition of truth and the emergence of an existential faith (50). The discovery of meaning, however, is not necessarily the discovery of religious meaning.

Discrimination of meanings is aided by the concreteness of creative literature (51) but literature per se is not the servant of any particular theology. We must look within a work itself for a definition of the kind of meaning it offers, and the meaning, whatever it is, has still to be tested against the world which it addresses. Henderson the Rain King is potent. Its symbols may ring true in our world; yet Henderson's possible salvation is the servant of our own salvation: his story is for us to "know by" (52). What we "live by" is in the pages of our own story.

Epilogue

At the end of this work it is clear to me that I find most stimulating and of interest for further study those arguments which give literary method a place within the whole sense-making experience of man. This is reflected in the work of Gunn and Kermode, and the work on narrative. Perhaps I have been hard on the earlier writers in the field and not allowed enough for the strengths of some of their theories: it is easy with hindsight to be over-critical. Their work was embryonic and others built on it. But it is the quest for the hermaneutical function of literature for the individual and for society, the refinement of old meanings and the forging of new meaning, which seems to me to offer most in this field. Thus I have been less concerned with why a Christian may be interested in literature which expresses contrary beliefs or no beliefs at all (1), and I have been rather more fascinated by Gunn's discovery, in literature, of faith and existential belief as an authentic response (2).

Gunn argues that transcending the self in the imagination of "otherness" can never save us but can make us more human (3): nevertheless, I think I am, indeed, feeling after our salvation. I sense in the cumulative argument of the thesis, the choices I have made and the focus I have had, that I want to push the argument further and ask whether literature is part of God's movement towards us - to save us? In literature, we are drawn into a mode of experience where, as we have seen in the chapter on narrative, the complexities of our lives may be incarnated, given life, set against each other, without any need for the kind of resolution which is often a falsification, such falsification as may often be the by-product of abstract language. "Persons are incarnate in the action of stories" (4), and we need to see how they act (5) if we are to recognise ourselves and make choices, not least, of faith. And the

way to this kind of faith is, itself, through faith, a literary faith kept by author and reader with the world of the fiction, which is also our world. In this "oriented trap" (6) where "the symbol gives rise to thought" (7) we may "find the courage to be" (8). Thus I am interested in literature as religious not because of its content but because of its form, not because it tells us something but because of the nature of our experience of it (9). It seems to me that there is more work to be done to clarify our response to fiction in the context of Hillman's references to our "soul story" (10): there is a creative mingling of stories that takes place imaginatively in that "willing suspension of disbelief" (11) that is participation in fiction, and there is great theological significance in this, for God' himself is also revealed in stories. Stories motivate, stories have competing meanings, stories live and grow, stories mingle, stories inspire and recreate. Henderson's struggle with the symbols of the wilderness may be as much a part of our religious life as Agamemnon's first step onto the carpet (12), the temptation of Jesus and the dark night of the soul (13). For a Christian, the Biblical story will have special authority, but Henderson the Rain King may have a balancing, contemporary spiritual realism.

Poetry may no longer be the handmaiden of Piety (14); perhaps, in the twentieth century, they have become lovers. It is the union of these two disciplines, each retaining its integrity, that may give birth to a most promising faith.

Footnotes to the Prologue

1. Giles Gunn, The Interpretation of Otherness (1979), p.222.

2. I am aware of the use of the phrase "cash value" by A.J. Ayer to refer to the weak sense of his principle of verification: I use it in an analogous sense. Alfred J. Ayer and Frederick C. Copleston, Logical Positivism - a Debate, in P. Edwards and A. Pap(Eds.) A Modern Introduction to Philosophy (1965), pp.726-756.

Footnotes to Chapter One

1. Giles Gunn(ed.), Literature and Religion (1971), p.3.
2. Nathan A. Scott(ed.), The New Orpheus (1964), p.ix.
3. M.H. Abrams(ed.), Literature and Belief (1958), p.x.
4. Abrams(ed.) (1958), p.xi.
5. Abrams(ed.) (1958), p.xii.
6. Abrams(ed.) (1958), p.xiii.
7. Abrams(ed.) (1958), p.17.
8. Abrams(ed.) (1958), p.18.
9. Abrams(ed.) (1958), pp.111-112.
10. Abrams(ed.) (1958), p.127. "By now surely we have all taken to heart the lesson of Wimsatt and Beardsley on "the Intentional Fallacy", and we understand the irrelevance of any essay in literary criticism that is based upon some process of armchair psychoanalysis which seeks to elevate the biographical category of the artist's conscious intention into a category of aesthetic discrimination. But the designation of "intentionalism" as fallacious becomes itself a fallacy if it is made to support the view that a work of literary art is a merely formal structure devoid of embodied meanings and values".
11. Abrams(ed.) (1958), p.129.
12. Abrams(ed.) (1958), p.130/31.
13. Abrams(ed.) (1958), p.137.
14. Dorothy Sayers, Towards a Christian Aesthetic in Scott(ed.) (1964).
15. Denis de Rougemont, Religion and the Mission of the Artist, in Scott(ed.) (1964), p.62.
16. de Rougemont in Scott(ed.) (1964), p.67.
17. Louis Martz, Meditative Poetry in Gunn(ed.) (1971), pp.142-154.
18. cf. Ch.3. (especially p.103) on Kermode and literature as knowing.
19. cf. Ch.5. (especially p.154), Ch.3. (especially p.108) and the Epilogue (p.156).
20. de Rougemont in Scott(ed.) (1964), pp.72-73.
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23. Scott(ed.) (1964), pp.83-114.

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33. Savage in Scott(ed.) (1964), pp.294-295.

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35. Rudolf Otto, The Idea of the Holy (1917).

36. Vincent Buckley, Specifying the Sacred, in Gunn(ed.) (1971), p.59.

37. Roethke's argument is described in Gunn(ed.) (1971), p.64.

38. Buckley in Gunn(ed.) (1971), p.64.

39. R.W.B. Lewis, Hold on Hard to the Huckleberry Bushes, in Gunn(ed.) (1971), p.89.

40. Lewis in Gunn(ed.) (1971), p.90-91.

41. Lewis in Gunn(ed.) (1971), p.100.

42. Louis Martz, Meditative Poetry, in Gunn(ed.) (1971), p.147.

43. Martz in Gunn(ed.) (1971), p.151.

44. Eric Heller, The Hazard of Modern Poetry, in Gunn(ed.) (1971), p.175.

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50. J. Hillis Miller, The Poetry of Reality, in Gunn(ed.) (1971), p.185.

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58. Ricoeur in Gunn(ed.) (1971), p.217.

59. Ricoeur in Gunn(ed.) (1971), p.219.

60. cf. Ch.2. (especially p.75) and Ch.3. (especially p.94).

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62. N.O. Brown, Love's Body (1966), p.266.

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64. Amos N. Wilder, The Uses of a Theological Criticism, in Gunn(ed.) (1971), p.39.

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66. Wilder in Gunn(ed.) (1971), p.47.

67. Wilder in Gunn(ed.) (1971), p.50.

Footnotes to Chapter Two

1. cf. Ch.1. pp.16-20.
2. cf. Ch.1. pp.24-25.
3. cf. Ch.1. pp.59-61.
4. W.H. Auden, Postscript: Christianity and Art, in Nathan A. Scott(ed.), The New Orpheus (1964), p.76.
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7. Ryken (1979), p.21.
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10. Ryken (1979), pp.210-211.
11. Ryken (1979), p.100.
12. Ryken (1979), p.102.
13. Ryken (1979), p.27.
14. Ryken (1979), p.28.
15. Ryken (1979), p.76.
16. Ryken (1979), p.31.
17. Ryken (1979), p.108.
18. Ryken (1979), p.112.
19. Ryken (1979), p.113.
20. Ryken (1979), p.114.
21. Giles Gunn, The Interpretation of Otherness (1979), p.222.
22. Paul Tillich, The Courage to Be (1955).
23. cf. Ch.1. p.10.
24. Gunn (1979), p.222.
25. Gunn (1979), p.207.
26. cf. Epilogue p.156.
27. Vernon Ruland, Horizons of Criticism (1975).

28. Lionel Trilling, A Gathering of Fugitives in Essays (1956), p.135.

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31. cf. Ch.1. pp.60-61.

32. Gunn (1979), p.174.

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2. Kermode (1975), pp.15-16.
3. Kermode (1975), p.40.
4. Frank Kermode, The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction (1967), p.53.
5. Kermode (1967), p.22.
6. Kermode (1967), p.26.
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9. Kermode (1967), p.37.
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15. Kermode (1967), p.61.
16. Kermode (1967), p.64.
17. Kermode (1967), p.112.
18. Kermode (1967), p.180.
19. Kermode (1975), p.80.
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21. Kermode (1975), p.114.
22. Kermode (1975), p.135.
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24. Kermode (1979), p.125.
25. Kermode (1979), p.123.
26. cf. Ch.2.
27. cf. Ch. 1 (especially pp.51-54).

28. Kermode (1979), p.144.

29. Kermode (1979), p.145.

30. Luke 9:62.

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17. cf. Ch.1. (especially pp.49-50).

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19. Crites in Wiggins (1975), p.54.

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40. Cox in Huttar(ed.) (1980), p.40.

41. Estess (1974), p.416.

42. Estess (1974), p.422.

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44. Estess (1974), p.424.

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48. Ephesians 4:22,24; Colossians 3:9; Romans 13:14; Galatians 3:27.

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82. Kort in Huttar(ed.) (1980), p.12.

83. Kort in Huttar(ed.) (1980), p.13.

84. Kort in Huttar(ed.) (1980), p.16.

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(In this chapter references to Henderson the Rain King appear as Henderson and not under the author's name).

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2. Tanner (1965), p.5.
3. cf. Ch.1. p.1.
4. cf. Ch.1. (pp.19,43-44,52-53) and Ch.2.
5. Tanner (1965), pp.72-73.
6. Henderson the Rain King, p.26.
7. Tanner (1965), p.74.
8. Henderson, p.43.
9. Henderson, p.81.
10. John J. Clayton, Saul Bellow: In Defence of Man (1968), p.178.
11. Tanner (1965), p.77.
12. Tanner (1965), pp.77-78.
13. Tanner (1965), p.78.
14. Tanner (1965), p.80.
15. Tanner (1965), p.81.
16. Henderson, p.282.
17. D.R. Etchells, an unpublished manuscript entitled Henderson the Rain King, dated 1978, and held at St. John's College, Durham. (In view of the relative inaccessibility of the manuscript I have quoted from it quite fully.)
18. Etchells (1978), p.2. (quoting Bellow, The Writer as Moralist, The Atlantic (March 1963), Vol.211. pp.58-62.)
19. Henderson, pp.132-133.
20. Etchells (1978), p.6.
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22. Romans 6:4; Colossians 2:12.
23. The Alternative Service Book 1980, Mowbrays, p.145.
24. Etchells (1978), p.10.
25. Etchells (1978), p.12.

26. Etchells (1978), p.14.

27. Henderson, p.75.

28. Henderson, p.267.

29. Etchells (1978), p.17.

30. cf. Ch.2.

31. Tanner (1965), pp.82-83.

32. Clayton (1968), p.169.

33. Tanner (1965), p.84.

34. cf. Ch.4.

35. Malcolm Bradbury, Saul Bellow (1982), p.66.

36. Saul Bellow, Deep Readers of the World Beware! in New York Times Book Review (15th February 1959).

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38. Tanner (1965), pp.85-86.

39. cf. Ch.1. p.40.

40. Exodus 3:2ff; Agamemnon of Aeschylus, lines 914ff.

41. Paul Ricoeur, The Symbol gives rise to Thought, in Giles Gunn(ed.), Literature and Religion (1971), pp.211-220.

42. cf. Ch.1. p.51.

43. Ricoeur in Gunn(ed.) (1971), p.217.

44. cf. Ch.3. p.85.

45. cf. Ch.3. (especially pp.86,90-91,102).

46. Henderson, p.199.

47. cf. Ch.3. pp.98-99.

48. cf. Ch.3. p.106.

49. cf. Ch.1. p.25.

50. cf. Ch.2. p.69 and p.77.

51. cf. Ch.5. p.149.

52. cf. Ch.3. pp.103-104.

Footnotes to the Epilogue

1. cf. Ch.1. p.13.
2. cf. Ch.2. p.69.
3. cf. Ch.2. p.77.
4. cf. Ch.4. p.113.
5. cf. Ch.5. p.12 note 36, cf. Ch.5. p.149.
6. cf. Ch.1. p.25.
7. cf. Ch.1. pp.52-54.
8. cf. Ch.2. p.71.
9. cf. Ch.2. p.77.
10. cf. Ch.4. p.117.
11. "that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment, which constitutes poetic faith". Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Biographia Literaria (1965), p.169.
12. The religious and ritual heart of Agamemnon, lines 914ff. The Oresteia of Aeschylus (1976), Penguin Books.
13. St. John of the Cross, The Ascent of Mount Carmel (1958), and The Dark Night of the Soul (1976).
14. "When Poetry thus keeps its place as the handmaid of Piety, it shall attain, not a poor perishable wreath, but a crown that fadeth not away." John Wesley, Hymns (1840), p.A3.

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