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A Model of Making: Notes Towards A Theology of Writing

In this paper Miss Etchells, Vice-Principal of Trevelyan College, Durham, explores the analogy between God as Creator and human creations as exemplified in the poet's art. The paper was read to the Victoria Institute in the Symposium on "The Christian and Modern Culture" held in London on 18 May 1974.

Any approach by a Christian to works of literature, particularly modern ones, must inevitably lead to thinking about that activity which defines 'the writer', be he novelist, poet, or dramatist. What happens when a writer writes, and what is the theology of this 'happening'? That is, on what Christian understanding of the act of creation does the writer's work rest?

There are two obvious ways of approaching this. The first is from the angle of the writer: the second from the biblical perspective of a creation as a 'happening'. To these one could valuably add a third (in fact Dorothy Sayers has done so): an approach from those credal formulations, hammered out by the Christian church through the ages, which have bearing on the problem. The doctrine of the Trinity is one such.

I propose to start with our human knowledge of the human activity. From there we shall move out to that frame of reference which so many critics recognise as extra-human.

For in Eliot's words,

What we call the beginning is often the end
 And to make an end is to make a beginning.
 The end is where we start from. And every phrase
 And sentence that is right (where every word is at home,
 Taking its place to support the others,
 The word neither diffident nor ostentatious,
 An easy commerce of the old and the new,
 The common word exact without vulgarity,
 The formal word precise but not pedantic,
 The complete consort dancing together)
 Every phrase and every sentence is an end and a beginning,
 Every poem an epitaph.¹

So let us begin with that "ending" of the creative act of writing, a poem. Eliot has drawn attention, in his ambiguous use of the word "end" ("the end is where we start from") to the fact that aim, intention, not only envisages the consummation of the creative act but is also its stimulant, its initiating force. In "intention", in "idea", lie both the beginning and end of the writing, and what lies between is the formulation of that intention with exactitude and justice: the word, which is always an image or symbol of the thing it represents, being chosen as exactly co-extensive with that to which it relates. When this happens then there is unity and delight in the thing created: "The complete consort dancing together". The poem completed is "an epitaph" in the sense that it stands as a memorial with power to an activity which has taken place and been embodied. Something new has been created and the energy of that creating is now complete and finished. It is another kind of power which informs what lies before us on the printed page.

Even in this brief extract, therefore, certain essential and defining aspects of the writer's activity appear. One is its mysterious relation to time — it looks towards a point in the future while drawing from the past, in the present. There is, in other words, a time continuum. The second is the notion of exactitude of correlation between the final form and that which it expresses; the writer's activity is one of justice. And thirdly there is in his activity, successfully consummated, something which gives both coherence and felicity, the two qualities seen in organic relationship to each other.

At the end of her most enriching selection of poems for *The New Oxford Book of English Verse* (1972), Dame Helen Gardner has placed a single poem under her own title "Epilogue". It is a short section of Louis MacNeice's "Autumn Sequel".

A CLOUD of witnesses. To whom? To what?
To the small fire that never leaves the sky.
To the great fire that boils the daily pot.

To all the things we are not remembered by,
Which we remember and bless. To all the things
That will not even notice when we die,
Yet lend the passing moment words and wings.

* * *

So Fanfare for the Makers: who compose
A book of words or deeds who runs may write
As many do who run, as a family grows

At times like sunflowers turning towards the light,
As sometimes in the blackout and the raids
One joke composed an island in the night,

As sometimes one man's kindness pervades
A room or house or village, as sometimes
Merely to tighten screws or sharpen blades

Can catch a meaning, as to hear the chimes
At midnight means to share them, as one man
In old age plants an avenue of limes

And before they bloom can smell them, before they span
The road can walk beneath the perfected arch,
The merest greenprint when the lives began

Of those who walk there with him as in default
Of coffee men grind acorns, as in despite
Of all assaults conscripts counterassault,

As mothers sit up late night after night
Moulding a life, as miners day by day
Descend blind shafts, as a boy may flaunt his kite

In an empty nonchalant sky, as anglers play
Their fish, as workers work and can take pride
In spending sweat before they draw their pay,

As horsemen fashion horses while they ride,
As climbers climb a peak because it is there,
As life can be confirmed even in suicide.

To make is such. Let us make. And set the weather fair.²

Presumably Dame Helen positioned that poem as the best expression she could find, in poetry, of the making of a poem and what was involved in it. Since in poetry we tend to see an intensification of that creative activity which is writing, it is helpful to look through this particular magnifying glass at what happens, what qualities or activities are called into play, when a writer writes.

The “makers” are “a cloud of witnesses” to the whole creation which is their context, which exists beyond them but which gives their lives meaning and progression, (“words and ways”) and which they therefore recall and celebrate (“which we remember and bless”). This is the framework within which MacNeice explores those qualities which are held in common by the makers who compose, either in words or deeds; a framework of celebration of certain qualities in the universe, light, heat, the beautiful and the utilisable in their changeless and daily relations to mankind.

The qualities of creating, then, are in some profound connection with this natural context; indeed they may arise within and from the natural cycle of time: “who runs may write/As many do who run”. This normal progression of time has one inherent inevitable quality, that of growth. MacNeice emphasises one particular kind of growth here: that is, the growth of the group, the quality of “unity”. He uses two examples of this. First, that of the “family”, the basic natural unit, which “grows/At times like sunflowers turning towards the light”. And, second, even more clearly, a ‘group’ which is held together by a sense of security (“an island in the night”) not because of,

but within, the dark which contains it, through the sharing together of laughter and its cause during the bombing raids of the Second World War. The context of both groups as that of the cosmos — light and dark; and within it, and in response to it, or in defiance of it, in this unifying activity.

One simple unit can initiate this unity, “one joke”; and similarly a single stimulus can give rise to the next quality of creating. “One man’s kindness” can supply the pervasiveness which is an aspect of creativity, that coherence of ethos which makes of a room, or a house or a village — the dwelling places of people — a work of art. There is, through the use of the word ‘kindness’, a moral element in this quality, and this is reinforced in the verse’s second illustration of creating. For here making includes ‘setting right’, even so simple a thing as the making true of the screws or blades, the devices which can hold together or split cleanly apart. It includes significance, too, — “can catch a meaning” — and together the two homely examples in the verse suggest some redemptive quality about the morality of the making. (“Anyone”, said a character in *A London Family*, “can make a thing all new and nice. But to make a good thing out of an abandoned one is far more creative work — a work of redemption”).³

This leads us naturally into the thought of the next two verses, whose connection is that of the time continuum. “To hear the chimes at midnight” does not only refer us back to the ironies of *Henry IV Part II*, with two old men chuckling together reminiscently over the delights of their madcap youth. The point for the poet here is that, divided as their ways have become, at the moment of remembering past shared pleasures the old have come together in the present. This is one kind of creativity possible to old age, and leads us into the next, that element of visionariness where the future is real to its maker before it is realised in actuality, so that planting in old age an avenue of limes he shares in vivid vision with his descendants their scent and shape. Such a quality in ‘making’ defies death and suggests the “now-ness” of creativity, which realises its artefact *in* time and space but also on the plant of eternity, where

time crosses it. And this leads us to the next pair of examples where making is seen as an activity stimulated by adversity, where tenacity, moral courage, informs the act: whether it is so trivial a domestic creation as when “in default/Of coffee men grind acorns”, or so crucial a one in war as when “in despite/Of all assaults conscripts counterassault”. Creativity here is endurance, vitality, adaptability. It grows naturally out of the visionariness of the previous verse: rewards are not the point for the maker.

It will be apparent that MacNeice has deliberately used as examples of the qualities attaching to the acts of making, the homely, domestic and everyday. So, having struck the note of creative moral courage in the face of unusual adversity (in time of war) he develops it in a series of cameos where humanity is creative in its more ordinary encounters with nature, each ‘maker’ standing in relation to his or her creation through engaging in natural rhythms, resources, forces, phenomena. Some achieve their creation through weariness, effort, and distress: as “mothers” who “sit up late night after night/Moulding a life”, “workers work and can take pride/In spending sweat before they draw their pay”; and “life can be confirmed even in suicide”. Others are using the forces of nature to achieve their creation “as a boy may flaunt his kite/In an empty nonchalant sky” — for the sheer joy of doing; the reward being in the flaunting. Others have a more tangible ‘creation’: “as anglers play/Their fish”, and “As horsemen fashion horses while they ride”. All of these are examples of creativity, either where there may be something material to “show”, or where the vision itself is sufficient reason.

So the simple statement of the poem, through a series of related examples, has been about what goes into the making of a book. The book can be “of words or deeds”; MacNeice suggests that both are creative “happenings” from which something new emerges. These qualities, broadly, are, of unifying, i.e. there is in some way a socialising force in this process: of redeeming; of “now-ness”, a realisation of past and future in the present; of moral courage and vitality; and of engagement between creator and certain natural forces.

In the brief first section MacNeice defines the actions of the makers as "witnesses" and sets them in a cosmic and extra-cosmic context, cosmic in the reference to the moon and sun, extra-cosmic in the allusion behind "the cloud of witnesses". In its original setting (Hebrews 12: 1) this has reference to the Church triumphant in its widest sense, patriarchs, prophets and servants of God who have completed their "making". The scale is at once vast and domestic: "the great fire that boils the daily pot". The inexorable unconcern of Nature for its human inhabitants, ("that will not even notice when we die") that source of so much literary *angst*, is seen here as something which does not diminish either humanity's use of natural resources and power, or dilute humanity's thanksgiving for it. Acceptance, in other words, of a particular role in the universe marks this maker's view of proper creativity; through it the passing moment is lent "words", realisation, concretisation, and "wings", vision and fluency.

There is one other point in this poem we ought to note, in relation to what a writer does. It lies in the first line of the poem. A writer, or maker, is a witness: yes. But "to whom?" "to what?". The questions are ambiguous, because they can express either the accusative or the dative. In other words they ask both of "what" and "whom", the writer speaks in his witnessing; and "to what" and "to whom" that witnessing is addressed. A writer creates a book. It tells of something or somebody. It is possible, also that it tells this *to* something or somebody. We do not know. The very form of the question makes clear that both meanings are not inevitable. A readership is a possible "end" from which the writing begins, but it may not be so. Art may be its only witness to its own work, like the boy flaunting the kite in "the empty nonchalant sky": or the witness may be something posterity will enter into and most fully comprehend, like the "greenprint" of the avenue of limes which reach their bloom and "perfected arch" after the creator's death.

To sum up, then: those aspects of the writing activity that Eliot noted, the mystery of the time continuum, the 'justness'

of the activity, the unity and the felicity, are reiterated in MacNeice's verses (though in some cases with different emphasis) with the addition of the quality of redeeming, of moral force and vitality, and of engagement between creator and certain natural forces. To this idea of the writer is added the crucial notion of witnessing, with the transitive/intransitive ambiguity attached to it. Is art, whether of writing or painting, as David Jones suggests, the sole intransitive activity of man? ^{4a} Or, like the tree in the Quad, do we have to posit "Yours faithfully, God," as recipient of our witness, though the cosmos we "remember and bless" is deaf to our celebration and our fellow creatures seem to share its insensitivity? Connected with this is that quality of "pervasiveness" we noted as an attribute of the creative activity, and the problem that arises when the culture within which a writer writes is, like that of today, far from being pervasive, fragmented and dislocated. The nightingale indeed sings in the garden/"' Jug Jug ' to dirty ears: " ⁵ and how shall the writer speak among those who have no ears to hear or eyes to see?

This last question in relation to the act of writing is explored most movingly by W. H. Auden in his poem "In Memory of W. B. Yeats, (d. January 1939)". The whole poem is well worth detailed study in this context, but space only allows us to note particularly section III.

In Memory of W. B. Yeats
(d. January 1939)

III

Earth, receive an honoured guest:
William Yeats is laid to rest.
Let the Irish vessel lie
Emptied of its poetry.

In the nightmare of the dark
All the dogs of Europe bark,
And the living nations wait,
Each sequestered in its hate;

Intellectual disgrace
 Stares from every human face,
 And the seas of pity lie
 Locked and frozen in each eye.

Follow, poet, follow right
 To the bottom of the night,
 With your unconstraining voice
 Still persuade us to rejoice ;

With the farming of a verse
 Make a vineyard of the curse,
 Sing of human unsuccess
 In a rapture of distress ;

In the deserts of the heart
 Let the healing fountain start,
 In the prison of his days
 Teach the free man how to praise.

The state of humanity at the point at which Auden is writing therefore, is suggested by what has happened to two of its defining qualities, intelligence⁶ and pity. The two are linked in the verses so that what has happened to one affects the other. The "seas of pity" are "locked" and "frozen" — again there is this elemental natural reference — "seas" — and the moral evaluation of what has happened to man's intelligence, "intellectual disgrace", is attendant upon the un-naturalising of these seas.

All this is the cultural context within which the writer of today must write, and as such relates back to the question as to how the writer shall speak amid such alienation. Auden proposes the writer's task in creating at such a moment. It is to follow where such elements in his culture lead him ; "follow" in the continuous present (the word is repeated) to the "bottom" of the night where the nightmare is happening. That is, by a subliminal continuity from the image of the "seas" in the preceding verse, to sound the depths. "Pity" and the "nightmare" thereby become linked. From amidst that sounding of the depths the writer's task is to "persuade" us (not "compel" ; "unconstraining" is the adjective used of his address) to rejoice.

So the writer is one who from his profoundly sensitive response to the darkness of man's spirit is capable of retaining within that darkness that felicity which will win us to rejoicing. The *tone* of the challenge is important here. It is not a rejection of trial and grief, not even a confrontation with it. Rather it is a bearing the reality of it to such creative effect that a cause for rejoicing, a new reality, is created out of the encounter.⁷

Hence there naturally follows in the next two (concluding) verses a series of images of fruitfulness, for such must be the result of the writer's searching out of the dereliction of his age:

With the farming of a verse
Make a vineyard of the curse.

Sustenance for the spirit is available through the poet's labour, a harvest of food and drink, of bread and wine. Though his 'imaginative soil' be eroded,⁶ parched by "the curse" (surely of primeval reference, this, as well as culturally immediate?) yet with the craft and tools of his writing insight and skills there will be harvest song.

Sing of human unsuccess
In a rapture of distress.

The paradox continues in the song, which is to be of human "unsuccess"; contrast this with "Arms, and the man, I sing"⁸ the heroic and the victorious subject matter of epic literature of the past. It is not of valorous deeds and heroic endeavour that the writer is called to proclaim at this cultural point in time, yet "rapture" is an achievement possible even in that state of distress to which his journey "to the bottom of the night" has led him.

"Poetry makes nothing happen", Auden wrote in an earlier stanza of the poem. We are reminded of it in the last verse of the poem, where Auden suggests the kind of "happening" which is both what poetry *is*, and what it *does*. Man's heart, however desert it may be, can be healed by the "fountain" of such a

poet's writing. In the "prison" of his days (the image referring back both to "locked" seas of pity and to the "raw towns" we believe and die in), in such a prison the "free man" will learn from the writer "how to praise". So the "end" of the writer which is his beginning is again "felicity"; not simply the poet's own rapture but so real a mode of being that "praise" becomes the spontaneous activity of the free man also.

Praise of what? of whom? to what? to whom? On the whole Auden does not help us here. Praise, perhaps, of all those positives referred to; earth, fruitfulness, intellectual honour, pity. Poetry does not necessarily free a man but it can teach the man who is free to it how to live in his prison, praising. So perhaps rather than 'praise of' or 'praise to' the key phrase is 'praise in'.

Auden adds to our understanding of what a writer 'does', therefore, the notion of a "way of happening" which has reference to all experiences of man's spirit, including the arid. It rejoices even in the midst of a truthful appraisal of horror, because its construct is a new creation and therefore affirms life. For this reason, therefore, literature is for the healing of the nations, measurable in fruitfulness, order, and praise; the celebration of freedom, even in the prison of his days man's proper state.

We are able, therefore, to address ourselves now to the first part of our inquiry from the writer's point of view: "what happens when the writer writes?" Putting together the insights we have just gained, certain key categories of the activity emerge. One is its "*now-ness*", that quality by which it relates the notion of time, (past, present and future) to the notion of eternity, both in the writing as a process, the writing as a completed artefact, and the writing as an experience within the reader/hearer. Continuousness and indestructibility attach to this category. The second category, organically connected with the first, is that of the activity as an event in its own right, measurable in the qualities that pertain to it rather than in its effects; though some of these qualities are by their nature affective. The qualities which attach to writing as a "happening" are seen to be judgment/justice,

both in the sense of “appraisal” and in the expression of that appraisal; synthesis, in the sense of both “unifying” and “ordering”; fruitfulness, in the inherent life of the artefact itself and/or in that which it causes elsewhere, generates; reclamation, both in a new sense of significance (“catch a meaning”, MacNeice) and in that from which a sense of meaning arises, the redemption of dereliction; joy/delight; and celebration, the gathering together of these qualities in a formal unifying expression of felicity.

There is, of course, a theological model for this. As we proposed in our inquiry, “a Christian understanding of the act of creation” does exist on which such a notion of the writer’s work can rest, and it is to be located, appropriately enough, in the extraordinarily rich meaning gathered up in the Biblical use of “Logos”, the theology of the Word.⁹

We may begin, in fact we must begin, with the original Word of creation. It is here that the first strong reason appears for recognising in the Biblical perspective of “the Word” a model for what the writer does today. Dorothy Sayers reminds us that in the account in Genesis I of creation by the word of God, man is made in God’s image. But in what way? she asks. The first chapter of Genesis does not tell us much about God except that “God created”. “The characteristic common to God and man is apparently that: the desire and ability to make things”.^{10a} So man is in the image of God in his capacity as maker. This leads us to look at the nature of God’s creative activity and immediately we find ourselves in the realm of Logos, the Word. The gospel of John in the *New Testament* is linked with the first book of the Old, deliberately, by opening with the same phrase: “In the beginning . . .” In Genesis it is, “In the beginning God created”. In John it is, “In the beginning was the Word”, through whom “all things were made” and without whom “was not anything made that was made”.

The Word is in some way connected with the origin of life, vitality: “in him was life” (or as the marginal reading puts it, “that which has been made was life in him”). And the Word is also identified with the figure of Christ: “And the Word became

flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth”.

The link that is made in the gospel of John between God's original creative activity, the Word, and Jesus, is adumbrated in the *Epistle to the Hebrews*, where, too, the first conclusion we must draw from this bringing together, that of the continuousness of God's creative activity, is observed:

In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets; but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. He reflects the glory of God and bears the very stamp of his nature, upholding the universe by his word of power.¹¹

Three elements emerge from this immediately. One is that God's creative activity was certainly conceived as continuous up to and including the life of Christ. The second immediately transfers this continuousness into a new and strange category by suggesting that it was not to be understood as wholly in a sequence of time since, as well as being co-extensive with the physical incarnation of Christ in space and time, it was also coincident with Christ in the creation of the world. And the third is that this creating is firmly linked with “word”: the word of creation, the word of the Law, the word through the prophets, the word through Christ the Son, and Christ's “word of power” which in some way is “upholding the universe”, i.e. maintaining its structure and balance. This last suggests a present activity as the writer to the Hebrews understood it.

At this point we realise we are coming close to that concept of “now-ness” we saw as being an essential element in the creation of literature. Certainly something very strange is happening to the notion of time. There is a linking force, “the Word”, equally present and active in the creation of the world, in the time span represented by the Mosaic Law and the utterances of the prophets, in the life of Christ, and in the periods when *Hebrews* and *John* were written. Is there, one is forced to ask, any logic by which it should suddenly cease to be present and

active? Or do we have here something on which to base our demand for the perpetual intersection, in literature, of eternity by the present moment?

Gustaf Aulen has well expressed this “now-ness” of creation. God, he suggests, is “the God who ‘acts’, (the he who was, is and shall be)” . . . and so . . . “The act of creation loses its meaning . . . if it is reduced to be only an initial action performed once in the past, if creation were something that has stopped, if it were not an action of God constantly going on anew.”¹²

So God is one who acts, whose act is creating, and whose creating is constant. And in some way the Word is the embodiment of this principle of creative constancy.

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in Him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or authorities — all things were created through him and for him.
(Col. 1: 15–16).

In what ways can we understand the Word, the Logos, as being the embodiment of this creativity? Here reference must be made to the extensively thorough study of the word *Logos* by Kittel, and others in Volume IV of the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*.¹³ Of the great richness of allusion and concept available here, I want to lay stress on two main areas of understanding. One is the Greek-Hebrew tension in the use of the word Logos, with totally different concepts being brought into harmony in its use in John’s gospel.^{13a} The other is the equating of the speech, actions, and being of Christ with the Logos and the implications that follow.

For the Greeks, as Kittel points out, Logos was in no sense a word of creative power, and thus its usage stands in contrast with the “Word” of the Hebrews. It always referred to something natural “even to the extent that the account of a thing and the thing itself coincided, so that “Logos” is to be translated

“thing”.¹⁴ Or it was a principle or law discoverable through calculation, or reason. Or, more profoundly, it was the establishment of nature or essence. Logos could therefore be a “significant utterance”. The important element in the Greek usage for us, therefore, is that it contains a *nous*, thought, by which a thing is known and grasped. To grasp the Logos in this sense is to grasp the thing itself — i.e. its nature is brought to light.

But there is no sense in which this is revelation from God to man. Rather it is “revelation only in the sense that one perceives the inner law of the matter, or of self, and orientates oneself thereby.”^{13b}

By contrast the Hebraic use of the verbal equivalent, predominant in New Testament usage, even in *John*, was revelatory and dynamic. Kittel writes: “Only in the Hebrew is the material concept with its energy felt so vitally in the verbal concept that the word appears as a material force which is always present and at work, which runs and has the power to make alive.”^{13c}

Thus it is that the prophets, for instance, are seized by God, by His spirit and His word; the power of God finds recognisable expression in that logos which is Law, which is prophecy, and which is often accompanied by signs and images. (There is a connection between ‘image’ and ‘word’ from the earliest prophecy.) Thus it is, too, that the other sphere of revelation, Nature, has everywhere in the Old Testament its creation attributed to the word of God. *Genesis*, Chapter one, embodies this, and may itself be a re-fashioning of an older account; the work God does (Chapter 2 v. 2) being replaced by the word He speaks.

It is the coming together for us of both the Hellenic and Hebraic understandings of Word that makes the account in John’s gospel and in the Epistle so peculiarly rich. The Word is a message that corresponds to a reality; and that reality corresponded exactly with the historical figure the apostolic age had known:

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life — the life was made manifest, and we saw it, and testify to it . . . and we are writing this that our (your ?) joy may be complete. (1 John 1: 2-4).

Hence there is in the figure of Christ as Word both the Hellenic suggestion that by this, reality can be known and grasped, "the account of a thing and the thing itself merge" in a way and in a sense not guessed at by the Greeks; and yet there is the dynamic and revelatory "seizing" which is wholly Hebraic. And it is this fusion which leads us on to see the Logos Christ figure as that model for creation as "event" which was the second category in which we understood the act of writing. Christ the Word, is not a symbol. He is an event, a revelation assessable only in its own terms, owning its own vitality and life. And it is in *this* sense, rather than in the thought of Christ the metaphor of God, that we find the true theological basis for that "way of happening" which is writing. For as we have seen, writing is an event. A poem is not an idea put into words, but something discovered by the putting into words, living its own life by virtue of that act of creation.

Nor is any distinction to be drawn between the speech, action, and being of Christ. They are a unity; three aspects of the same event, and to be experienced as such. This unity is so extended that ultimately Logos comes to contain the whole range of the Christian message: "There are not two Words of God but only one, which is given as such in the continuity and unity of salvation history, from the prophets to the Son. The first part of this in time is meant to point to the second, the second to fulfil the first."^{13a}

Once we have understood that in the theology of Christ the Word there is the unity of God's revelation to mankind, we then begin to realise those other elements which are relevant to our study of the Word as a model of making.

Gustav Aulen has pointed out one aspect of this unity.^{13e}

The acts by which God makes Himself felt are classified in Christian language under three heads: creation, judgment, redemption. We have already noted the sense in which Christ the Word embodies the creative power of God. But He is also the expression both of God's judgment and of His redemption; and in the sense that creation has been completed, and yet is continuous, so also is the activity of judgment and redemption.

All three, as Aulen reminds us, refer also to the present: "Behold, now is the acceptable time, now is the day of salvation."¹⁵ (2 Cor. 6: 2). He speaks, therefore, of "God's acts of creation, judgment and redemption as ever-continuing and of the relation of this his three-fold activity to the here and now."^{12a}

It will be remembered that judgment/justice, (in the sense of appraisal and its proper expression) and reclamation, (in the sense both of discovering meaning and redeeming dereliction) were qualities attaching to that category of "event" which was essential to the nature of writing. In the theology of the Word we find these qualities linked with the activity of creation. And it is this point which helps shape Tolkien's view of the act of writing. He sees every writer as "making a secondary world" . . . as being "a sub-creator", who, deriving his creative power from elsewhere, "wishes in some measure to be a real maker, or hopes that he is drawing on reality; hopes that the peculiar qualities of this secondary world . . . are derived from Reality, or are flowing into it."^{16a}

To illustrate such a structure of reality he justifies, in the writing of fairy tales, two elements which exactly accord with those qualities we have just noted as consonant with Creation: judgment and reclamation. He calls them, in the categories of his own writing, Taboo and Eucatastrophe; and in his own work they are exemplified by 'prohibition' and 'the consolation of the happy ending'. He writes of

. . . The great mythical significance of prohibition.
A sense of that significance may indeed have lain behind

some of the taboos themselves. Thou shalt not — or else thou shalt depart beggared into endless regret. The gentlest 'nursery tales' know it. Even Peter Rabbit was forbidden a garden, lost his blue coat and took sick. The Locked Door stands as an eternal temptation.^{16b}

and secondly he speaks of the Consolation of the Happy Ending.

Since we do not appear to possess a word that expresses (it) — I will call it Eucatastrophe. . . . The good catastrophe, the sudden joyous 'turn' . . . This joy, which is one of the things which fairy stories can produce supremely well, is not essentially 'escapist' nor 'fugitive'. . . . It is a sudden and miraculous grace, never to be counted upon to recur. It does not deny the existence of *dyscatastrophe*, of sorrow and failure. The possibility of these is necessary to the joy of deliverance; it denies (in the face of much evidence, if you will) universal final defeat, and in so far is *evangelium*, giving a fleeting glance of Joy, Joy beyond the walls of the world, poignant as grief.^{16b}

Now granted that Tolkien is speaking about one particular form of writing, there is an element of truth in what he has to say about the *evangelium* of the writing act which is not so particular and narrow. Speaking more generally of writers he acknowledges their attempt to achieve a quality "that can fairly be described by the dictionary definition: inner consistency of reality."

'Is it true?' The answer to this question that I gave at first was (quite rightly) 'If you have built your little world well, yes; it is fine in that world', that is enough for the artist, (or the artist part of the artist). But in the 'eucatastrophe' we see in a brief vision that the answer may be greater — it may be a far-off gleam or echo or *evangelium* in the real world . . . The Gospels contain many marvels; . . . among (them) is the greatest and most complete and conceivable eucatastrophe. The Birth of Christ is the eucatastrophe of Man's history. The Resurrection is the eucatastrophe of the story of the Incarnation. This story begins and ends in joy. It has pre-eminently the "inner consistency of reality".

. . . For the Art of it has the supremely convincing tone of Primary Art, that is, of Creation. To reject it leads either to sadness or to wrath . . . Because this story is supreme ; and it is true. Art has been verified. ¹⁶

“ The God of creation ”, that is, (both the writer’s God and the God of Christian theology), “ and the God of salvation, are one and the same.” ^{12b} Hence, although the power of the Word is “ dangerous ” as both Dorothy Sayers and David Jones have pointed out, because of its “ capacity to bring to Judgment ”, in the dereliction of that hour there is eucatastrophe, there is grace, there is *evangelium*. ^{10b, 4b}

Only the power of the Word is adequate to encounter the power of the Word. The only power which can compass the Word of judgment, the Law, is the Word of reclamation, and hence both these qualities pertain to the Word as event, in time and out of time. The word of joy, of eucatastrophe, to be rooted in reality, in power, must be no mere mechanistic contrivance, but, as we saw in the poems we looked at, a word that could “ catch a meaning ” and/or could “ make a vineyard of the curse ”. Such a word will not be escapist or fugitive. Rather, as in Auden’s poems, it experiences dereliction and in the encounter affirms life. Helen Oppenheimer ⁷ insists that this joy expressed through æsthetic arises from a dereliction which is redeemable finally because grounded in God’s, not one’s own ; a suffering God is essential to the concept. That is, God the artist is willing to pay the full price of tragedy. It is this which makes for the combination of dereliction and glory in the Word, a combination that affirms meaning, significance. The Greek notion of the Word fuses fully here with the Hebraic ; ‘ meaning ’ and ‘ power ’ become one.

‘ Thy words were found, and I ate them, and thy words became to me a joy and the delight of my heart ; for I am called by thy name, O Lord, God of hosts . . . Therefore thus says the Lord : . . . If you utter what is precious, and not what is worthless, you shall be as my mouth ’. (Jer. 15: 16, 19). ¹⁷

“ A joy and delight ”. Poussin has been quoted as saying

“the goal of painting is delight”, and David Jones comments that festal qualities ought properly to be associated with all art including that of writing, however difficult it is to posit the delight. Part of this delight is the result of that ordering, unifying, making coherent which we saw as another quality attaching to writing as event.

. . . “a new ‘something’ has come into existence . . . partakes in some form, however difficult to posit, of that juxtaposing by which what was *inanis et. vacua* became radiant with form”.^{4c}

But another element in this delight is that it has no end beyond itself. It is not only that, theologically speaking, creation of the world “was not a necessary but a gratuitous act”,^{4d} (and) that this gratuitousness in the operation of the Creator is reflected in the art of the creature. The boy “flaunts his kite” and “climbers climb a peak because it is there.” It is, perhaps, even more than this, the notion of creating “for fun”; a Maker who scatters primroses on a bank behind a shed, where they will never be seen, rather than neatly displayed in serried ranks where they will be most visible. A Creator whose masterpieces are not necessarily ‘witnessed’, who creates for the joy of it. The human creative spirit often thrives on appreciation; but it is at its most mature and most relaxed when it creates in joy, writes for fun, and accepts response as a secondary pleasure. The notion of “play” which Moltmann is exploring¹⁸ in his theology of joy seems to me strongly present here. The Knox translation of Proverbs Chapter 8 alluding to Wisdom as with the Logos when all things were formed, playing before Him at all times, runs.

I made play in this world of dust, with the sons of Adam for my play fellows.^{4d, 19}

‘Play’, ‘fun’, can be transitive or intransitive in nature, and seem to me to gather together both the notion of ‘delight’ and the ambiguity of ‘witness’ we noted earlier. They hint too at that celebration which is the formalising of fun, and which marks the order the writer imposes on his material. “It is still perfection

we are at", as Charles Williams said.

It is Williams who leads us to the final part of what he himself calls "the religious diagram of art."²⁰ He speaks of the need for "accepting in the re-creation the original creation".^{21a} That is, of receiving in the human maker's art an awareness of the original divine activity, and this, of course, is where the work of the Holy Spirit, "the Comforter" appears (how relevant the name to the work of the writer as we have seen it rooted in Logos!). He has the continuation of the work of the Logos by the continuity of empowering. I do not wish to go into all the ramifications of the Trinitarian doctrine here, even where it is relevant to the making of writing: Dorothy Sayers has already done this most fully and provocatively in the book from which I have quoted, *The Mind of the Maker*. And the delightful story she tells of the Japanese gentleman is sufficient *caveat*. (This apocryphal sir exclaimed "Honourable Father, very good; Honourable Son, very good; but Honourable Bird I do not understand at all!"^{21b})

But in looking at the extended and developing theology of the Logos we noticed that it was seen as continuing and continuous, in the work of the ascended Lord and His Spirit. Perhaps we may be helped here by T. de Chardin's comment²² that the power of the Word Incarnate penetrates matter itself, and stimulates collaboration in *us* so that Christ can reach plenitude. Hence each man builds a work, an opus, and in making his own soul contributes to the making complete of the world, the universe in its temporal and eternal categories, the Heavenly Jerusalem. In such an activity, the "soul wedded to creative effort" the power at work is the Spirit, the direct continuation of the "word of power" which we saw upheld the universe. Dorothy Sayers commented

The Power, the Spirit . . . is . . . a social power, working by bringing all minds into its own unity, sometimes by similarity and sometimes by contrast. The Power . . . is also within you, and your response to it will bring forth further power, according to your own capacity and energy . . . and a communication of Power

to the world about you.^{10c}

This is precisely in accord with what Kittel called the “genuine and all pervasive New Testament dialectic of grasping and being grasped”. There is for the writer both a passive and an active role in relation to this creative power, and that same dialectic is inherent in the work he produces, in its potential effect on the reader. Hence the “now-ness” of his activity; hence its existence as event. The readiness is all . . .

To make is such. Let us make. And set the weather fair . . .

REFERENCES AND NOTES

1. Section V, “Little Gidding” in T. S. Eliot’s *Four Quartets*, Faber, 1944.
2. MacNeice, L., *Collected Poems*, Faber, 1966. Canto VII “Autumn Sequel”.
3. Hughes, M. Vivian, *A London Family*, Oxford, 1946.
4. Jones, David, *Epoch and Artist*, 1959; (a) p. 149; (b) p. 160 “These forms . . . came into being by the operation of a mind free to judge . . .”; the “virtue of art” is said to be “to judge”; (c) p. 166; (d) p. 157.
5. Eliot, T. S., “A Game of Chess”, *The Waste Land*, Section ii.
6. Martin Jarrett-Kerr, in *Studies in Literature and Belief*, Rockcliff, 1954, p. 178, quotes Thomas Mann as saying “Peace . . . signifies a gift of intelligence before God” and comments, “There is a sense in which any work of real integrity, a work arising from true disinterestedness, is the product of ‘intelligence before God’. And to however small an area the field of creative imagination may seem to have shrunk, so long as man is man there will still be this intelligence.”
7. Helen Oppenheimer in the Pastoral Theology lectures in the University of Durham, February 1974, speaking in her lecture on “Felicity” of the necessity for teleology to involve some element of happiness, referred to the “aesthetic” power in this. Beauty penetrating into song was a form of reality; that is, the aesthetic gave a form of disclosure where the glib statement did not. So — as in the Book of Job — the aesthetic expressed a moral truth where the flat narration could not. The extra element at the end of that book, therefore, even if “tacked on” was self-authenticating, a disclosure of glory, of blessing which “goes with the grain of the universe”.
8. Vergil, *Aeneid*, Bk. 1, 1.
9. It will be apparent in the ensuing pages that I am not attempting an apology for the Christian view of creation, but assuming its validity in order to explore its value as a base for literary aesthetic.
10. Sayers, Dorothy L., *The Mind of the Maker*, 1941; (a) p. 17; (b) p. 88; (c) p. 96.
11. Heb. 1: 1-3. See also Rom. 1: 4, 8: 3; 1 Cor. 8: 6, 10: 3f; 2 Cor. 8: 9f; Phil. 2: 6f; Gal. 4: 4.

12. Gustaf Aulen, *The Drama and the Symbols*, SPCK, 1970; (a) pp. 51, 52; (b) p. 58.
13. Ed. Gerhard Kittel (Trans. G. W. Bromiley), Eerdmans, 1967, pp. 69-143; (a) p. 91, "From the very first the NT Logos concept is alien to Greek thought. But it later became the point of contact between Christian doctrine and Greek philosophy."; (b) p. 90; (c) p. 93; (d) p. 129; (e) pp. 51-2.
14. I am indebted to Mr. H. L. Ellison for pointing out to me that since the Q'umran discoveries Johannine exegesis has been more emphatically on the basis of the Hebraic elements than Kittel suggests.
15. Aulen glosses this, "now is the day of creation, now is the day of judgment".
16. Tolkien, J. R. R., "On Fairy Stories", in *Essays Presented to Charles Williams*, OUP, 1947; (a) pp. 82, 83; (b) p. 47.
17. Kittel comments on the profound theological understanding of 'the Word' expressed in the Book of Jeremiah.
18. Moltmann, J., *Theology and Joy*, SCM, 1973.
19. I am indebted to David Jones for pinpointing this translation, and for much else in these latter pages.
20. In Introduction to the *Letters of Evelyn Underhill*, 1943, p. 13.
21. In *The Image of the City and Other Essays*, Ed. Ridler, (a) p. 104; (b) p. 97.
22. *Le Milieu Divin*, Fontana, 1969, p. 60-63.

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