

COWLEY, MARVELL AND THE SECOND TEMPLE

'The second temple was not like the first'

—Dryden, 1694.

AT the opening of the Restoration period, Abraham Cowley was generally conceded to be the most eminent and representative literary figure of his time. In addition to having achieved great popularity in the modes of drama, epic, elaborate ode, and conceited lyric, and a satirist of the Puritan movement, he had been one of the chief promoters of the Royal Society project and his *Proposition For the Advancement of Learning* suggested the main outlines and aims of the Society. A statement from the preface of Cowley's 'Proposition' will show how directly he is in the pattern of thought which we have extracted from the writers already considered:

'Our reasoning faculty as well as fancy does but dream, when it is not guided by sensible objects. We shall compound where Nature has divided, and divide where Nature has compounded, and create nothing but either deformed monsters, or at best pretty but impossible mermaids'.¹

On the followers of Aristotle, his comment takes the characteristic contemporary line—they could 'not grasp, or lay hold on, or so much as touch Nature, because they caught only at the shadow of her in their own brains'. And in his 1667 Pindarics *To the Royal Society*, appended to Sprat's *History* at publication, Bacon is once more brought forth as the saviour, in lines which suggest in tone the epics of *Paradise Lost* or *Absalom and Achitophel*, and which enforce the connection of this whole movement toward natural philosophy with the affirmation of monarchy and the counteraction of Puritanism:

Bacon at last, a mighty man, arose
Whom a wise king and Nature chose
Lord Chancellor of both their laws.

The idea of the Monarch is throughout the period identified directly or indirectly, by its proponents, with the idea of external Nature. And Man's first disobedience is once more shadowed forth in the form of the notorious Puritan individualism:

¹Abraham Cowley, *A Proposition for the Advancement of Learning*, (1661), Preface, par. 3.

Yet still, methinks, we fain would be
 Catching at the forbidden tree,
 We would be like the Deity,
 When Truth and Falsehood, Good and Evil, we
 Without the senses' aid within ourselves would see;
 For 'tis God only who can find
 All Nature in his mind.

This is the Puritan *inward light* which Butler pokes fun at on the basis of its arrogant and unverifiable character—the same by which Donne said 'every man alone thinks he hath got to be a Phoenix'. The antidote to this is a return to the solid and disinterested substance of external nature, through the empirical approach which Bacon fostered—Bacon who was at the same time right hand man to the great Queen, and whose essays have as their *fiat* the preservation of the social organism:

From words, which are but pictures of the thought,
 (Though we our thoughts from them perversely drew)
 To things, the mind's right object, he it brought.

Like Sprat, and in nearly the same words, Cowley combines the return to Nature with the return of monarchy:

Those smallest things of Nature let me know,
 Rather than all their greatest actions do.
 Whoever would deposed truth advance
 Into the throne usurp'd from it . . .

Such contact with 'the smallest things of Nature' is not readily gained in the urban confines of London's flourishing metropolis—in what Cowley elsewhere calls

. . . all th'uncleanness which does drown
 in pestilential clouds a populous town.²

What is more, London was the great business centre and stronghold of the Puritans, so it is to be expected those of Cowley's convictions should lend intellectual support to an anti-urban revolt. The verses to the Royal Society were not written from the Court, nor does their defence of monarchy represent courtly adulation; Cowley had in fact received rough treatment at the hands of the restored king, and had been denied the preferment which was his expected lot. They were composed at Chertsey, in the pastoral retreat which occupied Cowley's last years—but one should not take this position to be a disgruntled alternative to success in the world of affairs. Cowley wrote:

'And I never then proposed to myself any other advantage
 from his Majesty's happy restoration but the getting into some

²Cowley, *Several Discourses By Way of Essays, In Verse and Prose*, (1668), 'The Garden, to J. Evelyn, Esquire', stanza 5.

moderately convenient retreat in the country, which I thought in that case I might easily have compassed, as well as some others, who, with no greater probabilities or pretences, have arrived to extraordinary fortunes . . . However, by the failing of the forces which I had expected, I did not quit the design, which I had resolved on, I cast myself into it *à corps perdu*, without making capitulations or taking counsel of Fortune'.³

However disappointed Cowley might have been with his personal lot under the monarchy, he remained a staunch supporter of the system, and found in its framework the philosophical and literary implications which we have noted in others. The move is in substance one towards the agrarian world which represents the old monarchy as against the new urban society. Cowley had little sympathy with this last—either with the Puritan mercantile side or with the dandified court gentlemen—'all the female men or women there':⁴

Hail, the poor Muses' richest manor-seat!
Ye country houses and retreat,
Which all the happy gods so love,
That for you oft they quit their bright and great
Metropolis above.

. . .

While this hard truth I teach, methinks I see
The monster London laugh at me;
I should at thee too, foolish city,
If it were fit to laugh at misery,
But thy estate I pity.⁵

This is clearly a conservative move in the direction of *stability*. David Mathew, in his recent book, *The Social Structure of Caroline England*, observes:

'It was precisely in this quality of land ownership that the English secular sense of worth found its expression. It was here that Englishmen placed their true stability, in the landed men of property, not in the court'.

Or, as Cowley writes:

Let cities boast that they provide
For life the ornaments of pride;
But 'tis the country and the field
That furnish it with staff and shield.⁶

³*Ibid.*, par. 1.

⁴*Ibid.*, stanza 5.

⁵Cowley, *Several Discourses*, 'Of Solitude', stanza 2.

⁶Cowley, *Several Discourses*, 'The Garden', stanza 2.

One comes to see, as the growth of industrial, mercantile, and metropolitan culture progresses, how much this constitutes a fugitive movement. Professor Tawney provides evidence here:

'The rapid absorption by absentee aliens of estates in Northamptonshire and Nottinghamshire was noted with disfavour under James I, and much the same statement as to properties in Berkshire was made half a century later by Fuller; while nearly two-thirds of the gentry owning land in Bedfordshire in 1620 were said to have sold it and left the county by 1668. The oft-quoted remark that half the properties in conservative Staffordshire had changed hands in sixty years does not, in the light of such evidence, appear too unpalatable. The passing of familiar names, the break-up of patriarchal households, the unpleasantness of the *parvenus* who rose on their ruins, provided dramatists with materials for satire and moralists for sermons. If Sir Petronel Flash and Sir Giles Overreach were successful as parodies, it was that the nauseous reality was not too grossly caricatured'.⁷

For Cowley himself it seems to have been undertaken very much in a spirit of *carpe diem*, a latter-day version of the Cavaliers. He ends his pastorals always on the note:

These unbought sports, this happy state,
I would not fear nor wish my fate,
But boldly say each night,
To-morrow let my sun his beams display,
Or in clouds hide them; I have lived to-day.⁸

Or again:

Enjoy the present hour, be thankful for the past,
And neither fear nor wish th' approaches of the last.⁹

He leaves little doubt that he is inimical to the 'men of business'. In translating some lines of Horace beginning 'God made not pleasures only for the rich', he remarks:

'This seems a strange sentence thus literally translated, and looks as if it were in vindication of the men of business (for who else can deceive the world?) . . .'.¹⁰

So when Cowley argues for a retreat from the world into the realm of solitude, Nature, and gardens, he is furnishing in amalgam an antidote to Puritanism and the milieu of business progress, a defence of the natural empiricism which is officially represented by the aims of the Royal Society, and an affirmation of the idea of 'social

⁷R. H. Tawney, 'The Rise of the Gentry', in *The Economic History Review*, Vol. XI, No. 1, 1941, p. 21.

⁸Cowley, *Several Discourses*, 'Of Myself', stanza 11.

⁹*Ibid.*, from Martial, Book X, Epigram 47.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, 'Of Obscurity', par. 1.

organism' which we have described, stressing particularly its philosophical correlative of bringing the torn and divided 'soule' back to unity. The terms of his apostrophes to solitude are noteworthy—he refers it back, in the line of others we have noted, to the state of a pristine early world, 'first state of humankind',

Before the branchy head of number's tree
Sprang from the trunk of One.¹¹

We need not doubt that he has in mind another world of England, not so long since past. The state which he describes possesses the great virtue of organizing his own personality so that he can produce works:

Thou the faint beams of Reason's scatter'd light,
Dost like a burning-glass unite,
Dost multiply the feeble heat,
And fortify the strength, till thou dost bright
And noble fires beget.¹²

It is this sort of integration, of providing a firm and orderly structure where it had disappeared and was needed, in the organism of society and in its mirror, the individual personality, that Cowley looks for in his country retreat:

'I never had any other desire so strong and so like to covetousness as that one which I have had always, that I might be master at last of a small house and large garden, with very moderate conveniences joined to them, and there dedicate the remainder of my life to the culture of them and study of Nature,

And there (with no design beyond my wall)
whole and entire to lie . . .¹³

So behind Cowley's return to Nature, and his revolt from all that is associated with the rising urban world of London and the shaky Court of Charles II, is firmly fixed the idea of the social organism which was dying. It is philosophically the idea of a static hierarchic order which will permit him 'to lie, whole and entire'. There is nothing of the Romantic impulse toward wild freedom in Cowley's view of Nature—and here Cowley speaks for his period. He makes his conception of the natural scene quite clear, finding in Nature the quality which he can no longer find in society, when he begins his pastoral poem to Solitude:

Hail, old patrician trees, so great and good!
Hail, ye plebeian under-wood!
Where the poetic birds rejoice . . .¹⁴

¹¹Cowley, *Several Discourses*, 'Of Solitude', stanza 8.

¹²*Ibid.*, stanza 10.

¹³Cowley, *Several Discourses*, 'The Garden', par. 1.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, 'Of Solitude', stanza 1.

The evidence of Andrew Marvell provides a useful parallel to Cowley in corroborating this analysis of the place of Nature in the Restoration dialectic. He left the University for the Continent in 1646, and returned to England four years later to see the Cromwell government flourishing. His *Horatian Ode Upon Cromwell's Return from Ireland*, written in that year, expresses respect for the power of the man and an English satisfaction at Cromwell's having impressed the Irish and Scots, but ends on the sceptical note of whether he will stand the real test and be able to hold on to what he has gained. Marvell himself went into different surroundings, to a position not too different from that of Cowley's retreat. He became, that same year, tutor to Lord Fairfax's daughter, and went to live at Nun Appleton, the Fairfax country estate in Yorkshire. In his few years there he produced all his good poetry, small in quantity but possessed of a brilliance, imagination, and excitement far beyond the reach of Cowley. It owes these qualities largely to its contact, often quite visionary, with the world of external Nature in which Marvell was living—a contact which has something hectic and fevered about it, to remind us that this work was done before the Restoration. Nature is for Marvell imbued with far more of the sensory and sensual than it is for Cowley, far more easily related to his 'vegetable love' (which justifies the conventional inclusion of Marvell with the Donne school), but it also performs the same function for Marvell as for Cowley—that of being a stable comforter in a world upset by movement:

How vainly men themselves amaze
To win the palm, the oak, or bays;
And their uncessant labours see
Crown'd from some single herb or tree,
Whose short and narrow verged shade
Does prudently their toils upbraid;
While all flow'rs and all trees do close
To weave the garlands of repose.

Fair Quiet, have I found thee here,
And Innocence, thy sister dear!
Mistaken long, I sought you then
In busy companies of men.
Your sacred plants, if here below,
Only among the plants will grow.
Society is all but rude,
To this delicious solitude.

Except, perhaps, for the hint of sensualism in the final adjective, this, so far, could be taken, in sentiment and execution, for a characteristic Restoration product. And true to the convention, Marvell like Cowley rings the change on the Garden of Eden:

Such was that happy garden-state
While man there walked without a mate

Marvell too gives strong voice to the notion of *carpe diem*, though his complaint that he had not 'world enough, and time' and admonition that we should

Rather at once our time devour,
Than languish in his slow-chapped pow'r

have a fierceness and a body which distinguishes them from any of Cowley's frequent rehearsals of the sentiment as he looked round his garden retreat, and we are again reminded that, though moving clearly in the direction of Cowley's late period and the Restoration generally, Marvell is still in 1650-53 a transition figure. Two more stanzas of Marvell's *Garden* enforce that observation, and serve to round out the picture of Nature's philosophical—and as I have tried to indicate, even social—correlatives. The first is completely sensory in the way we associate with some of the major Romantic poets of the nineteenth century—only a word here and there might keep us from thinking that this is the world of Keats, and if we consider literally the picture it calls up, of the poet thus gambolling in his garden, we may be overcome by a sense of the ludicrous which makes the poetic antics and poses of some of the later Romantic sensualists such meat for cartoon and burlesque:

What wond'rous life is this I lead!
Ripe apples drop about my head;
The luscious clusters of the vine
Upon my mouth do crush their wine;
The nectarine, and curious peach,
Into my hands themselves do reach;
Stumbling on melons, as I pass,
Ensnar'd with flow'rs, I fall on grass.

Yet something in this stanza obviously makes it a different affair. I would say it is the compelling quality of the bizarre—the realized nightmarish hyperbole of Nature as a sort of giant fleshy orchid, deliciously hostile and unbridled by any rational end or discipline, which closes around the man and devours him. The 'curious' peach does not strike us as innocent. There is an ominous air of uncontrol about this picture of sensory pleasure, in which man becomes not agent but victim. I cite it because it represents one of the two realms which could be observed as moving dangerously apart in the Metaphysical poetry of the first half of the century—the departments of body and mind, passion and reason, sense and thought. The next stanza furnishes the other realm:

Meanwhile the mind, from pleasure less,
Withdraws into its happiness:
The mind, that ocean where each kind
Does straight its own resemblance find;
Yet it creates, transcending these,
Far other worlds, and other seas;
Annihilating all that's made
To a green thought in a green shade.

This image of the mind as a green ocean swallowing up and destroying the outward form of all 'sensible objects' can claim basic kinship with the phrasing given to the same issue by Shakespeare's Antony, in his conversation with Eros:

That which is now a horse, even with a thought
The rack dislimns, and makes it indistinct,
As water is in water.

And when Marvell, in the last couplet, transforms the image of the sea to that of the garden, heightened so as to be felt almost as the disembodied essence of a tropical vegetable gloom which destroys the sensory properties of everything, 'annihilating all that's made to a green thought in a green shade', the atmosphere is once more, as in the preceding stanza, thoroughly sinister. With the growing separation of these two realms of sense and thought, each in its pure state becomes dangerous and destructive, and Nature is felt by Marvell, as by Donne in *The First Anniversary*, as Nature in crisis. Yet it is this same garden which, earlier in the poem, was 'to weave the garlands of repose', leading on to Cowley, Evelyn, Sir William Temple, and the whole cult of the pastoral retreat. Marvell in the 1650's was politically unsettled as well, and was even to perform academic services as tutor of Cromwell's ward, and, along with Milton, Latin Secretary to Cromwell. With the Restoration his position became clear and he became an active member of Parliament. His career as an exciting poet, however, ended when he left Nun Appleton.

Now that we have seen some of the meanings attached to Cowley's desire for 'a small house and a large garden', it belongs to a consideration of background to look at the character of these houses and gardens as they were being built at that time, expecting that their forms would in some way bear out their rôles in the spheres of values and ideas. We find the architecture of the houses taking on a formal character of order, balance, regularity, and harmony of parts, modelled on the Palladian scheme, and the leading architect Sir Christopher Wren, son of the Dean of Windsor and nephew to the Bishop of Ely, anatomist, astronomer, and leading member of the Royal Society. In contrast, we find the gardens and grounds rambling according to the vagaries of untouched Nature, or even tampered with in such ways as to increase the sense of rambling. This relation, which Professor Nikolaus Pevsner in his *Outline of European Architecture* calls 'the puzzling parallelism between classicist architecture and natural gardening'¹⁵ actually falls in line to strengthen the foregoing analysis of the anti-urban movement. Those belonging to the group who felt the need for preserving or affirming the qualities of order, stability, and proportion (they being, of course the group who would build a country house) as a bastion against the bourgeois progressive character of

¹⁵Nikolaus Pevsner, *An Outline of European Architecture*, London, John Murray, 1948, p. 185.

the City merchant or Puritan pilgrim, naturally incorporated these qualities into its design. Furthermore, we can logically assume that house and grounds were conceived of as a unit, so that the grounds are looked at in the same spirit. Thus the fact that the grounds were kept natural and unarranged is witness to our former observation that in turning their attention and their faith toward external Nature and away from the City, these men were actually turning to an idea of order, such as that which had once been embodied in the 'social organism' but had now disappeared from the Puritan-mercantile picture of urban society. It was only in man-made artifices such as the house that this order had to be intruded—in the natural scene it was presumed to be already there, as indeed 'before the Fall' it had been in the social scene as well and had needed *no* synthetic expression or special seeking. The contrast here is with the Elizabethan house, which roamed naturally over the natural grounds. It is also appropriate that Wren should have been a pillar of the Royal Society, since we have seen that the Royal Society apologists explained and justified their aim in turning attention to Nature as being a safe antidote to civil chaos and 'ambitious disquiets'. This faith in the character of the natural landscape develops with the fleet of 'Augustans' in the first half of the next century (Pope, Gay, Collins, Thomson, Dyer, Shenstone, the Wartons, etc.) into a brand of 'Nature' poetry which leads directly into the nineteenth century Romantics—a process which is too much looked upon as involving a reaction against the 'Age of Reason'. Professor Pevsner observes:

'Boileau's objections in his *Art of Poetry* against the Baroque of the South were that it was unreasonable and therefore unnatural. Reason and nature are still synonyms with Addison and Pope, as we have seen in Pope's comments on Blenheim'.¹⁶

And Pope speaks for himself in *Windsor Forest*, published 1713, to corroborate this view of Nature:

Here hills and vales, the woodland and the plain,
Here earth and water seem to strive again;
Not chaos-like together crush'd and bruised,
But, as the world, harmoniously confus'd:
Where order in variety we see,
And where, though all things differ, all agree.

Furthermore, since I have indicated this development as having its roots in the English social crisis, it might be well to remark that the house-garden scheme just described was a purely English phenomenon and has no such parallel in the contemporary foreign cultures as might lead one to attribute the set-up to fortuitous fashion (though our needs often dictate our fashions as well). The prevailing fashionable influences were French (in France, indeed, some of the same factors were at work), but Professor Pevsner draws

¹⁶Pevsner, *loc. cit.*

the sharp contrast between the French scene, where the monarchy was as yet undisturbed, and the English post-Rebellion picture:

'So while one remembers the grandeur and elegance of French seventeenth and eighteenth century architecture as urban all the way through—for the straight avenues in the park of Versailles are urban in spirit too—one should never forget in looking at the formality of English Palladian houses between 1660 and 1760 that their complement is the English garden. John Wood's Prior Park possesses such informal natural grounds'.¹⁷

Nor should we assume that only the house was being considered in the creation of this picture of order. Pevsner enforces this when he writes of Palladio himself, in a discussion of the earlier Italian scene:

'Here for the first time in Western architecture landscape and building were conceived as belonging to each other, as dependent on each other'.¹⁸

And in the sociological sphere as well, the English scene interestingly contrasts with the French, and with the rest of the Continent. Professor Tawney remarks this, in beginning his article, 'The Rise of the Gentry':

'The first English translator of Locke's *Thoughts on Education* introduced it with the remark that foreign readers, in order to appreciate it, must remember the audience to whom it was addressed. It was composed, he explains, for the edification of an element in society to which the Continent offered no exact analogy, but which had become in the last century the dominant force in English life. To M. Coste, in 1695, the triumphant ascent of the English gentry—neither a *noblesse*, nor a bureaucracy, but mere *bons bourgeois*—seemed proof of an insular dynamic of which France, with the aid of his translation, would do well to learn the secret'.¹⁹

I have in the foregoing account deduced the conception of Nature as orderly structure by referring natural gardens back to their concomitant man-made structures in which the character of order is outwardly apparent. It might be felt, however, that some added justification is needed for relating of this type of architecture to the character of the social changes with which I have linked it. Furthermore, since I have indicated this architecture as 'Palladian', it is proper to ask whether, in its native source of Renaissance Italy, orderly or formal architecture owed its character to any similar social circumstances—a question which, if answered in the affirmative, would strengthen the above analysis of its English manifesta-

¹⁷Pevsner, *op. cit.*, p. 186.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, p. 106.

¹⁹Tawney, 'The Rise of the Gentry', *The Economic History Review*, Vol. XI, No. 1., 1941, p. 1.

tion. For these answers I would look briefly at the scene in Northern Italy two centuries earlier.

The most salient feature of the social organization confronting us there is that it is based on the city-state, ruled by the merchant-prince. Professor Butterfield, we might remember, has given encouragement for making a parallel in this respect with the basis of English society in the Restoration period:

'And just as the Renaissance was particularly associated with city-states (or virtual city-states) in Italy, South Germany and the Netherlands, where the commerce and economic development had produced an exhilarating civic life, so in the last quarter of the seventeenth century the intellectual changes were centred on the English Channel, where commerce had been making so remarkable a rise and so much prosperity seemed to have been achieved. The city-state disappeared from history in the first half of the sixteenth century; but on the wider platform of the nation-state the future still belonged to what we call the middle classes'.²⁰

Florence, perhaps the leading seat of culture in the period, was such a city-state, and its presiding merchant-princes were the Medici family. The Medici position was in no way a stable one; constantly threatened, they even fled briefly from the city in 1494, though their hold was not long broken; a plot against Giuliano, Giovanni, and Giulio Medici failed in 1513, and in 1537 Lorenzino Medici murdered the Duke Alessandro, also a Medici. Their characteristic type of building was the *palazzo*, an urban fortress-mansion, and it is interesting to note that the architectural style of these *palazzi*, whose lower quarters were 'massive yet orderly, faced with heavily rusticated blocks', presents an exterior aspect of ordered formality strikingly suggestive of that developed by Sir Christopher Wren. (Compare, for instance, the Palazzo Rucellai and Trinity Library). We have some index to the literary correlative of this Italian architectural style, and of the prevailing spirit which dictated it, in the famous poem written about 1490 by Lorenzo di Medici himself, beginning:

Quant'e bella giovinezza
Che si fugge tuttavia.
Chi vuol esser lieto sia.
Di doman' non c'e certezza.

How lovely is youth.
But it flies from us.
If you want to be happy, be happy now.
There is no certainty of to-morrow.

Such were the phrases penned by Cowley, Marvell, and many others of their period, as has been illustrated. Professor Pevsner comments

²⁰H. Butterfield, *Origins of Modern Science*, p. 166.

on these lines by *Il Magnifico*:

'Now these men, if they built a church, did not want to be reminded by its appearance of that uncertain to-morrow and of what may come after this life is ended. They wanted architecture to eternalize the present'.²¹

One approach to an eternalization of the present in the Restoration period lay in making much of the moment and of the material world of the senses. Another lay in the scramble for 'reputation', a fame of achievement which would outlast the mortal coils. As for the life after death, that was so directly the goal and province of the Puritan ethos that those in opposition to the fact and implications of the social movement associated with Puritanism felt driven by contrast to put their faith in the corporeal world, and, since Puritanism was an urban business movement, in the non-urban corporeal world of the natural countryside, which led into the implied atheism of Hobbes and the Deists. But if this removed that 'uncertain to-morrow' of life after death which is a central part of Western religion it did so to enthrone an idea of order for which a more immediate need was felt. When the church had capped the social pyramid, in Tawney's picture, the two issues had been as congruent as afterwards their divergence was inescapable. And the corollary here is, of course, that the return to the non-urban natural scene was to be associated with a return to the agrarian basis of society representative of the old order which had been invaded by the host of economic and religious appetites. In these country surroundings the best appearances to put up in order to distinguish oneself from the business enterpriser or Puritan zealot was that of scholar and dilettante. But the city was growing daily in importance, and there is no mistaking in all of this literature the marks of a defensive Old-Guardism. Its exponents seem to dominate when we look at the literature only because they constitute the literary segment—this activity of producing and talking about literature constitutes an important part of their dilettante character. If the side of the opposition seems largely unrepresented, it is because their interest was not in literature but in more practical and remunerative pursuits. They were too busy in the exciting world of mercantile progress, and were quite willing to leave it to those who decried that interest to be the self-chosen guardians of 'culture'. They read the newspaper and their interests were in prosaic terms. When literature finally made its way to them, as was inevitable it should do for its own sake, it was through that medium, and in those terms. And for those who stood apart in defence against the unsettling activities of these progressive philistines, the Palladian country house with its natural grounds was a symbol of stable order, both bygone and desired. Their houses were not 'faced with heavily rusticated blocks' like those of the Medici, Pitti, or Strozzi, 'but 'tis the country and the field that furnish it with staff and shield'.

²¹Pevsner, *op. cit.*, p. 84.

Before quitting the Italian scene, we might further confirm our parallel by a glance at the character of the architect who designed *palazzi* such as are described above, and are a testimony to his guiding principles. That illustrated here is Palazzo Rucellai in Florence, and its architect Leone Battista Alberti. Pevsner writes of him as follows:

'Alberti is the first of the great dilettante-architects, a man of noble birth who first took an interest in art and architecture in the way Count Castiglione demands it from the educated courtier. He wrote a book on painting and one on the art of building (in Latin), and he spent years in Rome studying the ruins of Antiquity. It is obvious that directly the essence of architecture was considered to be philosophy and mathematics (the divine laws of order and proportion) and archaeology (the monuments of Antiquity) the theoretician and the dilettante would assume a new significance. Roman architecture, both system and details, must be studied and drawn to be learnt; and the system behind the styles of Antiquity was soon—with the help of Vitruvius, the newly re-discovered Roman writer on architecture—found to lie in the orders, *i.e.*, the proportions belonging to the Doric, Ionic, Corinthian, Composite and Tuscan columns and entablatures'.²²

We cannot feel that we are far, in this account, from the character of Sir Christopher Wren of the Royal Society. Burckhardt gives a more personal portrait of Alberti:

'In three things he desired to appear faultless to others, in walking, in riding, and in speaking. He learned music without a master, and yet his compositions were admired by professional judges. Under the pressure of poverty, he studied both civil and canonical law for many years, till exhaustion brought on a severe illness. In his twenty-fourth year, finding his memory for words weakened, but his sense of facts unimpaired, he set to work at physics and mathematics. And all the while he acquired every sort of accomplishment and dexterity, cross-examining artists, scholars, and artisans of all descriptions, down to the cobblers, about the secrets and peculiarities of their craft. Painting and modelling he practised by the way, and especially excelled in admirable likenesses from memory. Great admiration was excited by his mysterious 'camera obscura', in which he showed at one time the stars and the moon rising over rocky hills, at another wide landscapes with mountains and gulfs receding into dim perspective, with fleets advancing on the waters in shade or sunshine . . . At the sight of noble trees and waving corn-fields he shed tears, handsome and dignified old men he honoured as "a delight of nature", and could never look at them enough. Perfectly formed animals won his goodwill as being specially favoured by nature; and more than once, when he was ill, the sight of a beautiful landscape cured him'.²³

²²*Ibid.*, p. 87.

There is perhaps here, as well as a portrait of the complete dilettante and amateur investigator a hint of the view of Nature as embodying an ideal of perfect order which I have suggested in the Restoration English view. And of the plan of Palazzo Rucellai itself, Pevsner writes:

'The relation of height to width in the rectangular parts of the windows is equal to the relation of height to width in the bays. Thus the position of every detail seems to be determined. No shifting is possible. In this lies, according to Alberti's theoretical writings, the very essence of beauty, which he defines as 'the harmony and concord of all the parts achieved in such a manner that nothing could be added or taken away or altered except for the worse'.²⁴

This indicates the completeness of what Pevsner calls 'the principle of an all-pervading order which Alberti postulates in an interior as well'.²⁵ And if, in England in the period we are considering, 'the principle of an all-pervading order' (in which, as Tawney says, 'movement means disturbance') had withdrawn from the body of society, those who felt it essential to themselves and basic to the nature of things looked for it in the other sphere of Nature, which remained eternally unchanged, and tried also, by every means of artifice at their command, to replace it through the works of their hands.

Professor Pevsner's statement that, in the work of Alberti, 'the essence of architecture was considered to be philosophy and mathematics (the divine laws of order and proportion) and archaeology (the monuments of antiquity)' serves to introduce another important aspect of the English Restoration parallel. Having examined the ways in which the English scene was attempting to reinstate the divine laws of order and proportion, it remains to remark the closely related renewal of interest in the monuments of antiquity, as it constituted a full-blown classical revival extending into all branches of culture and entering prominently into literary theory and practice. The interest in the modes of ancient Greece and Rome was the theoretical one of vindicating principles of order and proportion in construction rather than any disinterested investigation of, or admiration for, the old Mediterranean world. This is witnessed by the rapid appearance of the school of the 'Moderns', who claimed that the classical world was not orderly or proportionate enough, and had to be improved upon in this respect. However, the idea of this early world itself had certain felicities to recommend it for Restoration sympathies. It recalled the old world of England before the 'Fall', with its own claim to order; it was, in a sense, a version

²³Jacob Burckhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, Phaidon Press, Oxford and London, 1945, p. 86.

²⁴Pevsner, *op. cit.*, p. 90.

²⁵*Ibid.*, p. 92.

of Eden. And what was more, it was a stable quantity, since it was a past and completed fact, less likely to change than Nature's laws themselves. So, hopefully Charles II was dubbed 'Augustus'²⁶ and the ideas of 'Vitruvius, the newly-discovered Roman writer on architecture', whose book had been dedicated to Augustus, were once more revived to affirm the orderly and proportional relationships of Doric to Corinthian. Dryden illustrates the literary liaison in lines from one of his many extravagant eulogies of his various contemporaries:

Our builders were with want of genius curst;
The second temple was not like the first;
Till you, the best Vitruvius, come at length,
Our beauties equal, but excel our strength.
Firm Doric pillars found your solid base,
The fair Corinthian crowns the higher space;
Thus all below is strength, and all above is grace.²⁷

This to Congreve. We need not credit the justice of the appraisal, since Dryden even exceeds his period's fashion for preposterous flattery freely dispensed, and was profligate in bequeathing his laurels, but the lines illustrate the architectural conception as constituting also a conception of literary and dramatic construction, and, being meant as a superlative compliment, reveal the standard of aspiration. If the country set could throw up its *palazzi* in the form of house and grounds, those of the Town could cast theirs in the lines of literature, with carefully formed words as so many building blocks harmoniously disposed, so that 'all below is strength, and all above is grace'. In place of the shattered social pyramid could be set the classical tympanon.

I am aware that this seems a radical analysis of a development which is customarily charted under the title of the 'spread of humanism', the 'growth of Reason', and the 'spirit of enquiry' directed toward the 'rediscovery of the learning and culture of the past'. These phrases are not useless or unrelated, but are too easily worked into schemes presupposing the *in vacuo* march of ideas, with a too inclusive and bright-eyed assumption of constant forward

²⁶Dryden articulates a political parallel:

'Thus (under the three Roman Commonwealths) the Roman people were grossly gulled twice or thrice over, and as often enslaved in one century, and under the same pretence of reformation'.

Then:

'the Commonwealth was turned into a Monarchy by the conduct and good fortune of Augustus'.

Dedication of the Aeneis, ed. Ker, Vol. II, p. 170.

²⁷John Dryden, *To My Dear Friend, Mr. Congreve, On His Comedy Call'd The Double Dealer* (1694).

movement onward and upward. I would suggest rather that the classical revival, seen in the context of Restoration England, actually represents a conservative reaction within a radical change—as radical as the Civil War was radical, and that though both the progressive mercantile individualistic revolution and the attention to certain aspects of antique culture are legitimately described as partaking of the terms and spirit of the Renaissance, they can profitably be seen as antagonistic within that frame, and the latter as stabilizing and reactionary rather than exploratory and progressive. I stress this because, when we come to looking to the linguistic and literary applications, the attitude or philosophy behind the ‘neo-classic’ rules and standards is more revealing than the mere fact of the rules themselves.

Of the many available testimonies to this attitude underlying the ‘neo-classic’ linguistic standard, that given by Edmund Waller is as clear as any, and Waller, member of the Royal Society and of Parliament, called by his contemporaries ‘the parent of English verse’ and by his epitaph ‘inter poetas sui temporis facile princeps’, a figure representative enough to deliver it.²⁸ He writes, *Of English Verse*:

Poets may boast, as safely vain,
Their works shall with the world remain;
Both, bound together, live or die,
The verses and the prophecy.

But who can hope his line should long
Last in a daily changing tongue?
While they are new, envy prevails;
And as that dies, our language fails.

When architects have done their part,
The matter may betray their art;
Time, if we use ill-chosen stone,
Soon brings a well-built palace down.

Poets that lasting marble seek
Must carve in Latin, or in Greek;
We write in sand, our language grows,
And like the tide, our work o'erflows.

More than merely refinement can be seen to be implied in the terms of Dr. Johnson's translated compliment to Dryden, ‘He found our language brick and left it marble’. The point of basing the English language on the Greek and Latin is to stabilize it—to put order and permanence into its flux by building it on the dead languages which were no more liable to change or revolution than were the immutable laws of Nature in the eyes of the Royal Society

²⁸Dryden writes of Waller: ‘He first made writing easily an art’. *Epistle Dedicatory of The Rival Ladies* (1664), ed. Ker, Vol. I, p. 7.

or the landscape gardeners.²⁹ As with the other Restoration trends which we have examined, the remodelling of English on the cut of the classical tongues was an attempted return to the static and the permanently ordered as an antidote to progress, the dynamic social philosophy, and the attack on the old social framework. Waller's verse continued by illustrating how change had damaged Chaucer, and Dryden prefaces his 'translations' of Chaucer with similar sentiments by saying:

'The words are given up, as a post not to be defended in our poet, because he wanted the modern art of fortifying'.

Clearly the poets were building their literary *palazzi*.

As I have indicated, far more than merely the English language was in a state of flux, or 'chaos', as it was generally termed. What was felt as shifty and uncertain was a whole way of life and thought, political, religious, social and personal, for these men of the Restoration period, caught as it were between the two worlds of old order and bourgeois progressive individualism. They were split on several of the most fundamental orientations, and though, as Dryden wrote,

'. . . we live in an age so sceptical that, as it determines little, so it takes nothing from antiquity on trust'.³⁰

nevertheless it was not a scepticism of choice but of confusion, and the will, even need, to determine, was strong. Hence there was an element of the classical literature equally congenial and greater in range than merely the stability of the language in which it was written—that was the 'moral centrality' of its content, which is the key to 'classicism' and constitutes the internal determinant of the external form, whose regularity bears only surface testimony to this ordered condition at the heart of the matter. Furthermore, one must bear in mind that this content was of the nature of an *ideal*, a composite abstraction of the admirable qualities which demand

²⁹Of Aeschylus, Dryden says:

'In the age of that poet, the Greek tongue was arrived to its full perfection; they had then amongst them an exact standard of writing and speaking; the English language is not capable of such a certainty; and we are at present so far from it, that we are wanting in the very foundations of it, a perfect grammar'.
Preface to Troilus and Cressida (1679), ed. Ker, Vol. I, p. 203.

Dryden was appointed by the Royal Society in December, 1664, along with Sprat, Evelyn, Waller, and others, to a committee for recommending ways to improve the English language. One contemporary project in stabilization was the compiling of a dictionary which should fix one and only one unequivocal meaning for each English word.

³⁰Dryden, *Defence of the Epilogue* (1672) ed. Ker.

a shying away from the 'incompletion' of realism toward a pattern of general principles.

When we consider the Restoration 'classical revival', however, the invited comparison³¹ appears absurd. The Restoration work was, in the worst sense, 'literary' and 'theatrical', directed to a limited public of the *beau-monde* with the professed design 'to please' which generally meant to amuse, distract and compliment. (What is more, the comedy was vulgar and distasteful, centreing around permutations of physical libertinism and the shallowest of *weltanschauungen*—they are most unclassically specialized—while the tragedy, once the unclassical noise and spectacle is removed, leaves us with nothing but elaborate bodiless repetitions of the words Honour, Love, and Duty to attest to its supposedly general nature.) There is little common ground between the comedies and the tragedies unless it be that of providing the most blatant entertainment for a special and increasingly fugitive group, and a comparison with the Greek is absurd.

The Restoration had been deprived of any firmly organized frame of moral reference, since in that sphere as in so many others, the social schism was at work. On the side of the growing Puritan-merchant class, there was that oft-invoked quality, 'bourgeois morality', which soon found its literary ascendancy in Joseph Addison.³² The conservative opposition naturally took the line of *épater le bourgeois*, and the scandal of their exploits perhaps better testifies to the zeal of their opposition than to the intrinsic dissoluteness of their souls. But from the King down, the pattern ran to the type of behaviour described by Beljame:

'Sir Charles Sedley, whom Charles II used to call the Viceroy of Apollo, was supping one evening in a London tavern with Lord Buckhurst (later the celebrated Earl of Dorset) and Sir Thomas Ogle. Flown with good food and wine, all three went out on to the balcony, hailed and abused passers-by, and exhibited themselves in the most indecent attitudes. (à Wood states: "Putting down their breeches they excrementiz'd in the street".) Finally, Sedley,

³¹*e.g.* Dryden, *Examen Poeticum* (1693), ed. Ker, Vol. II, p. 6.

'I know, you judge for the English tragedies against the Greek and Latin . . . For if we, or our greater fathers, have not yet brought the drama to an absolute perfection, yet at least we have carried it much further than those ancient Greeks; who, beginning from a chorus, could never totally exclude it, as we have done; etc.'

³²Late in his career (1697), Dryden writes:

'The most ingenious Mr. Addison of Oxford has also been as troublesome to me as the other two, and on the same account'. After his *Bees*, my latter swarm is scarcely worth the hiving'.

Postscript to Translation of Virgil, ed. Ker, Vol. II, p. 244.

in order to outdo his friends, presented himself stark naked and cut such grossly coarse Rabelaisian capers that the crowd rioted, threw stones, and tried to force an entrance in order to knock him down'.³³

This was the group for whom the 'heroic tragedies' were composed.³⁴ Their external lineaments were ordered as much after the classical convention as the frivolity of a novelty-loving audience (or 'spectators', as Dryden said they were more aptly termed) would take, and would have been more strictly so had it been made possible by soberer attention—however, the standard is constantly invoked.³⁵ It was not too difficult to supply this order on the surface of the work, but as to that conception of an inner moral ordering which dictated the original classical lines, the state of mind represented by the above account—a temper and pattern which included the King himself but was despised by many of his own group as well as by the growing bourgeoisie which it was designed to oppose—could hardly be expected to include such a universal frame. And not only was this taking place in the very terms of the political state, but the other official organ of a moral order, the church was con-

³³Alexandre Beljame, trans. Lorimer, ed. Dobrée, *Men of Letters and the English Public in the Eighteenth Century, 1660-1744*, London, Kegan Paul, 1948, p. 5.

³⁴Dryden:

'The favour which heroic plays have lately found upon our theatres has been wholly derived to them from the countenance and approbation they have received at Court'.

³⁵Dryden, *Preface to the Fables* (1700), ed. Ker, Vol. II, p. 270.

'... only it includes a greater length of time, as taking up seven years at least, but Aristotle has left undecided the duration of the action, which yet is easily reduced into the compass of a year by a narration of what preceded the return of Palamon to Athens'.

We recall, in noting the reverence here for Aristotle, Dryden's contrasting scorn for that same Aristotle in his verses to the Royal Society, where Aristotle is called the Stagirite to whose 'tyranny . . . our ancestors betray'd their free-born reason'. The reconciliation of this contradiction is instructive. The latter case represents faith in the intrinsic order of Nature empirically observed as against the mental 'scholasticism' which leads to disputation on vague and unverifiable grounds, such as Puritan 'inner light'. The approval is registered, not for Aristotle's approach to Nature, but to artifice—in this case, the dramatic or literary—where he is understood to prescribe a strict order and proportioning. In each instance Dryden's case is for stability and desire for order; the two apparently conflicting aspects are interestingly analogous to the co-presence of the natural grounds with the proportioned and formal artifice of the country house, already discussed.

comitantly divided, so that this little battle of public morality was only putting in other terms the division of royal church against dissent.

The actual effect, however, of this neo-classic trend, was to focus primary attention on the formal element, with the accent on the ordering of externals, since that was always feasible for the craftsman whatever the state of his philosophy. This amounted to an exaltation of manner over matter, and with it that deadening self-consciousness of the medium itself which damages so many attempts at 'creative' production in our own day no less than in Dryden's. As to the content of—say, the tragedies—so long as it was noble and abstract, which was judged to be the classical example, and ordered into a pattern some general issues, no more was asked of it, and in fact, everything else would have been condemned. The fact that the pattern behind Greek tragedies comprised the most deep-seated myths of their people while that of the Restoration tragedies was the vapid arrangement by any self-appointed 'man of letters' of a few empty and unexplored generalities never deterred Dryden from making comparisons of the two on the same grounds, and even finding in favour of his own, as exhibiting 'greater perfection'. However, the disparity between the second temple and the first can be seen to exist on such a fundamental level that far more than Mr. Congreve would be required to put it right.

With this background understood, then, we can see the Restoration products as designed in line with Horace's *prodesse et delectare*—in Dryden's phrase, the rule that 'to instruct delightfully is the general end of all poetry'.³⁶ As I have noted, the Restoration reversed this order of emphasis, but it is still worth examining in the actual work the attempt at *prodesse* which is so constantly attested to in the various contemporary critical defences. As to the comedies, their emphasis was more on *delectare*, but they are certainly also extended instructions on the etiquette of being a proper member of the *beau-monde* and the absurdity of being anything else. The instruction of the tragedies is assumed to be in larger terms, but comes down to the same thing. If the moral structure underlying great tragedy was not available to these men, one simple ideal was clearly present and all-important, as I have indicated in other fields—the necessity of an embracing monarchy. If instruction in this was not needed by the Royalist group who attended the theatre and read the poetry, at least an affirmation of it was pleasant. When later, after about 1680, their fortunes had declined, and a generous part of the audience were antagonistic Whigs, propagandistic instruction *was* needed, and comprised such lines as:

. . . Learn here the greatest Tyrant
Is to be chose before the least Rebellion,

from Crowne's *The Misery of Civil War*, or:

³⁶Dryden, *Preface to Troilus and Cressida*, ed. Ker, Vol. I, p. 209.

. . . This Maxim still
 Shall be my Guide (*A Prince can do no ill!*)
 In spite of Slaves, his Genius let him trust;
 For Heav'n ne'er made a King, but made him just³⁷

from Bankes' *Vertue Betray'd*. In the earlier 'heroic tragedies' the pattern is not made so obvious because of the absence of controversy, and is carried out even more in abstractions, but is no different. The Restoration playwrights did not exercise their classical imitation by ordering *any* general issues into *any* pattern, but conventionally pitted the abstraction of Love against that of Honour, with a view to ennobling their hero by showing him willing to sacrifice in the end the private passion of Love for the Honour of the general public duty. Thus the Love-Honour conflict is the issue of private versus public orientation. We might summon Waller's lines 'upon the Earl of Roscommon's Translation of Horace':

But where a brave, a public action shines,
 That he rewards with his immortal lines.
 Whether it be in council or in fight,
 His country's honour is his chief delight.

To continue from Waller, the protagonists of Restoration tragedies can well be described as:

Law-giving heroes, fam'd for taming brutes,
 And raising cities with their charming lutes;
 For rudest minds with harmony were caught,
 And civil life was by the Muses taught.
 So wand'ring bees would perish in the air,
 Did not a sound, proportion'd to their ear,
 Appease their rage, invite them to the hive,
 Unite their force, and teach them how to thrive,
 To rob the flow'rs, and to forbear the spoil.

The type of civil life to be taught was not one to the encouragement of private enterprise, but an invitation to the hive where they may be united in the cells of a central order. Thus the decorum of the subject matter in heroic tragedy was the classical sentiment *dulce et decorum pro patria mori*, with the obligations to *patria* clearly defined. The individual interest, the private light, the personal perception, had to be sacrificed to the general order—a choice had to be made, since it was just these, the private dissenting religion and the individualistic economic spoiler who had overturned that order in civil war, and who were still steadily pulling it apart. Thus when Fletcher's *Philaster* is seen 'wounding his mistress, and afterwards his boy, to save himself' he is violating, according to Dryden, 'that which they call *the decorum of the stage*', in which the Elizabethans were not instructed. His brutal self-interest is termed 'indecent', so he is censured as providing no fit ideal. We are not

³⁷Quoted in Beljame, *op. cit.*, p. 145.

to look at Philaster, for example, as a living creature with natural urges, but as a hero—that is, as a paragraph from a book of ethical etiquette, an abstract of recommended qualities delivered after a prescribed convention. It is small wonder that plays constructed after such principles had to rely heavily on spectacle and noise, verbal and otherwise, to supply the interest and attract the attention. It is easy to see that there was little impulse toward the Romantic—that is, the enquiring, exploratory, unknown, specific, or individual—but ample reason has been indicated for the unpopularity of such qualities amongst the shaky conservatives. We see, rather, a new set of terms for the schism—the *private* or *individual* versus the *public*. There can no longer be an identification of the two. On the other hand, 'classical' is far from a deserved alternative, and if 'neo-classical' is used instead, it should only be considered as shorthand for artificial, abstract, and conventionally patterned with generally propagandistic intent.

HAROLD WENDELL SMITH.

Note: Related essays by Mr. Smith, parts of the same book, have appeared in *Scrutiny*, Vol. XVIII, Nos. 2, 3 and 4.

‘KING LEAR’ (III)

AT the stage we have now reached in our analysis of *King Lear*—the conclusion of the central tempest episode—it is difficult not to feel that Shakespeare was faced by an artistic problem of tremendous difficulty: the problem, that is, of balancing the disruption so thoroughly traced in the first part of the play by a corresponding harmony in the second. Neither morally nor artistically could the remaining Acts be allowed merely to continue in the spirit of their predecessors. The very intensity of the pressure, material and spiritual, to which Lear and those around him have been subjected during the tempest calls at this stage for a compensatory reaction of the kind already anticipated, in the form of broken hints, in the later stages of their exposure to the elements. The assimilation of these hints into a positive moral conception, through the gradual development of a pattern of significant imagery linking the various related themes with which the play is concerned, is the purpose of the last part of the tragedy.

The reaction, indeed, begins to take shape almost immediately. The blinding of Gloucester (III, vii) represents, as we have seen, the lowest depth reached in terms of physical action as a result of man's subjection to the bestial elements in his nature. The series of episodes which leads up to Lear's final reconciliation with Cordelia—in some ways the most ample and varied in content of the whole play—balances against a continued sense of almost intolerable strain new emotional power of a more constructive kind. The end of the storm is followed by a kind of lull in the emotional development of the tragedy, perhaps the only possible transition from the unchecked savagery we have just witnessed to another mood. With the reappearance of Edgar, whose frequent changes of disguise and spirit invariably reflect successive stages in the development of the play, misery seems to pass into a tired resignation to the worst. As Edgar himself put it in the course of an utterance clearly intended, like the similar speech of Ross in *Macbeth*,¹ to mark a point of balance in the unfolding of the action—

The lamentable change is from the best;
The worst returns to laughter.

The connection between this mood of exhaustion and the events recently witnessed by Edgar is clear enough. A closer reading, however, reveals that the bitter irony suggested in 'laughter', although evidently a direct reaction to recent experience, does not stand alone. The speech has, in fact, a definite positive content. More clearly than ever before, it lays stress upon the advantages of

¹ Things at the worst will cease, or else climb upward
To what they were before. (IV, ii)