

# THE DRAMA OF THE SPIRIT

*Essays in Memory of Michael Paul Gallagher sj*

Edited by Francesca Bugliani Knox



# Preface

by ROSSANO ZAS FRIZ DE COL SJ

In November 2016 the Heythrop Institute for Religion and Society (Heythrop College, University of London), directed by Michael Kirwan, SJ, hosted a two day conference in memory of Michael Paul Gallagher, SJ, who had died twelve months previously. The Conference, entitled ‘Dive Deeper: Explorations in Faith, Poetry and Culture’, was organized by Francesca Bugliani Knox. After the conference Francesca wrote to me asking whether *Ignaziana* might consider publishing the papers, ‘most of which’, she mentioned, ‘were written in an Ignatian mode’, as a special issue. If such a publication were possible, the papers could then appear as a structured whole rather than be dispersed in journals and other forms of publication. The Editors of the Centre for Ignatian Spirituality of the Pontifical Gregorian University replied enthusiastically, saying that such a publication would indeed be possible. It would, they added, provide a fitting memory of Fr Gallagher, who had been for many years a professor at our University and had devoted much of his life to exploring how faith could enter into fruitful dialogue with contemporary culture. Spirituality was not for him an academic exercise, familiar though he was with the scholarly literature on the subject. Rather, it was a living engagement both in a secular and in a Christian, specifically, Ignatian sense. This approach is apparent in his many books and articles, and, we hope, in the essays included in this special issue. May they enlighten and nurture the hearts of those who knew him and equally those who did not.



*'Faith can be stifled by mere prose:  
it needs some touch of poetry to find its fire'*

# Introduction

by FRANCESCA BUGLIANI KNOX

Following an intellectually challenging gap year (1960-1961) at the University of Caen Normandy, Michael Paul Gallagher felt called to explore the reasons of the existing split between faith and culture, later defined by Paul VI as 'the drama of our time' (*Evangelii Nuntiandi* § 20). When, shortly after, he entered the Society of Jesus as a novice, he did so 'with an intuitive sense of a mission of making faith real in a world of unbelief', a world for which, as a result of his stay in France, he had now 'much more feeling and sympathy' ('A Passion for Faith' 86). He had parted with a 'world-despising spirit' and discovered the passion of his life which was to 'focus and develop slowly in the years ahead - a passion to make sense of God for people today' ('A Passion for Faith' 85).

The 'convergence' of his life, as Gallagher explained later, asked him 'to stand at various crossroads or frontiers and to reflect on what he found there' ('A Passion for Faith' 92). Long before he was invited, in 1990, to work in the Holy See's Pontifical Council for Dialogue with Non-Believers, Gallagher had uncovered the silent obstacles to faith present in our culture from the standpoint of the frontier explorer. In his writings he had highlighted experiences of belief and unbelief shaped by contemporary culture, listening attentively to the world around him and applying constantly Ignatius's principle of presupposition and Ignatius's manner of helping souls. Hence Gallagher's reflections, although solidly anchored in orthodoxy and the Tradition, were not born out of books, theories and ideas but out of his many personal experiences with people he had accompanied, in answer to their needs. *Help My Unbelief* (1983), for example, aimed at helping readers puzzled about why God seemed unreal to them and so paved the way towards a new ecumenism of believer and unbeliever. *Free to Believe* (1987) unveiled the importance of personal self freedom before any journey to explicit faith. *Struggles of Faith* (1990) commended the role of the imagination in literature and the liturgy as a way to lead people to be receptive of mystery. *Where Is Your God?* (1991) was a response to the spiritual hunger he had detected among young university students.

Gallagher's early works were inspired by the conviction that faith could not be arrived at slowly through a cerebral approach. At a time when explicit atheism was becoming rare and religious indifference was spreading, faith could only be discovered, he thought, within a certain disposition or attitude. Like Ignatius of Loyola in the sixteenth century and Karl Rahner in the twentieth, Gallagher promoted the liberating power of the heart and the imagination, shifting the agenda of faith from issues of truth to issues of freedom, from doctrinal content to spiritual experience. His ministry in the zones of disposition and desire was a way of re-thinking 'pre-evangelization'. 'Religiousness of the spirit is

deeper than our religion of the Church', Gallagher wrote echoing Karl Rahner, adding that 'ultimately they need each other for a full language of faith' (*Where Is Your God?* 19).

Not surprisingly, Gallagher maintained that literature and the arts had a vital role to play in opening up the heart and the imagination to faith. As a university student, and later as a lecturer of English literature, he became aware that people were ready for the recognition of God only if their roads towards truth could find room again for the aesthetic, the symbolic and the affective. In a culture where the absence of God was 'an unquestioned assumption', delving into works of literature could lead, he thought, to a richer and more personal road to meaning than the colder paths of rationality ('What Might St Ignatius Say About Unbelief Today?'). His first publication (1977) was a study guide to T.S. Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral*, a play which divides up its characters into those of greater or lesser spiritual awareness and also raises the spiritual responsiveness of its audience. As the knights in the play step forward and, in modern language, try to rationalize away the spiritual significance of the event, the audience is forced to undergo a trial of discernment (*T.S. Eliot: 'Murder in the Cathedral'* 13). Like the women of Canterbury of Eliot's play, they eventually 'glimpse a sanctity that is rare and beyond them', which is at the same time a sanctity that 'reveals the cowardice that cramps their vision'. In short, the spectators become 'conscious of this and aware of their weakness' (37). Since that first publication Gallagher often drew on literary texts facilitating the process by which a work of art can reach our feelings, awaken our imagination and call for discernment.

At the end of the five years during which he served as a research officer of the Secretariat for Dialogue with Non-Believers in Rome and also wrote *What Will Give Us Happiness* (1992) and *Letters on Prayer* (1994), Gallagher published, in a spirit of service and with great sensitivity to human realities, the acclaimed *What Are They Saying About Unbelievers?* (1995), a learned and timely survey of theological and pastoral approaches to unbelief. When, in 1995, he began teaching fundamental theology at the Pontifical Gregorian University Gallagher continued to regard himself as 'a convergence thinker asked to communicate between worlds' ('A Passion for Theology' 90) and kept investigating the intersections between faith and culture (*Clashing Symbols* 1997), literature and spirituality (*Dive Deeper* 2001) and theology and culture (*Faith Maps* 2010). *Clashing Symbols*, the more academically learned of the three, intimates that in dealing with contemporary culture from the perspective of faith we need a richer and converging spirituality which embraces cultural realities with hope, discerns them, transforms them with love and trusts the guidance of the Spirit towards unity-in-diversity. *Dive Deeper* (2001) shows in practice how literature and creative writing, including the dialogues between authors and thinkers imaginatively envisaged by Gallagher in his book, can open the readers up to a disposition towards faith, put them in touch with the depths of their hearts and guide them to discover unexpected correspondences between diverging standpoints. *Faith Maps* surveys difficult theological questions by 'translating' into accessible language the work of major Catholic thinkers and theologians of the last one hundred and fifty years, from John Henry Newman to Joseph Ratzinger, through, among others, Maurice Blondel, Rahner and Bernard Lonergan. The distinctive paths to faith offered by these major Catholic thinkers in response to contemporary cultural challeng-

es, reveal one common direction, that is, the necessity to go beyond conceptual faith. By balancing scholarly competence and imaginative skills and restoring a community of intent among modern theologians and thinkers – the novelist Flannery O'Connor included – *Faith Maps* becomes in itself a faith map for common readers.

That Gallagher envisaged an audience of non-specialized searchers is obvious. 'I never felt called to highly specialist work', he wrote, 'instead I chose, rightly or wrongly, to serve a "middle-brow" or popular market' ('A Passion for Faith' 90). Some saw in his attitude a danger of eclecticism, of simplification, of vagueness even. By contrast, he saw that highly specialized work ran the risk of becoming self-referential and narcissistic and he took on himself the difficult task of showing how academic work could be less esoteric. In short, his calling was to stand not only at the crossroads between faith and culture but also between the academic, the pastoral and the spiritual endeavor.

At the end of Gallagher's life one topic remained to be explored, at the crossroads between life and death: finding and serving God in his sickness. The result was *Into Extra Time* (2016) a book about letting go and sharing with others the sense of an ending in the awareness that, in words attributed to Teilhard de Chardin, we are all 'spiritual beings on a human journey'. But above all *Into Extra Time* God invites us to imagine our lives as grounded, even in the darkest moments, in a consoling love beyond all imaginings, a love of which, as Gallagher strongly believed, we have intimations through the exchange of human love. Not by chance his last words in his last publication happen to be a moving recollection of a transforming experience of human love in his youth. They are contained in a poem where, again not by chance, theology, spirituality and life experience merge:

The heart carries more than memories:  
 When I think of you, of us, or see a photo,  
 All is alive like yesterday.  
 I wonder what happened to you,  
 what you did with that tenderness,  
 With the shy strength of your gaze.  
 Did the years harden or soften your beauty?  
 Did you forget me, hurt by my silence  
 Let down by my different path? Or can you visit,  
 as I do, wonder echoes  
 Of hands held and eyes knit,  
 Symbols of a love bigger than  
 we were able for at twenty one,  
 but changing me at least forever. ('Monique in Caen')

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This special issue of *Ignaziana* pays tribute, in general, to Michael Paul Gallagher as interpreter, for our culture today, of the principles deriving from Ignatius's *Spiritual Exercises* and to his Jesuit mission centered, as mentioned above, on dialogue, discern-

ment, dwelling on the frontiers and the service of 'souls'. In particular, it validates the recognition that his work has received from academics.

The first three essays highlight Ignatian motifs in Gallagher's works. Nicolas Steeves looks at the role of the imagination and of the Ignatian *magis*, Gemma Simmons discusses the cardinal Ignatian principle of 'finding God in all things', while Mark Bosco addresses, as a third Ignatian theme, difference as a source of depth and key to a creative vision through the writings of Gallagher's two favourite authors, G.M. Hopkins and Flannery O'Connor. The authors of the following three essays apply Ignatian features running through Gallagher's works – discernment, listening and openness to wonder – to their own areas of research, respectively literature, translation and the liturgy. Discernment was Gallagher's constant practise both as spiritual exploration and as a way of reading literary texts and engaging with contemporary culture. By dealing with the theme of discernment in Shakespeare's *King Lear*, David Lonsdale gives us, 'a window', to use his own words, 'into what is going on beneath the surface of the action of the play, into Shakespeare's understanding of tragedy and the readers and playgoers understanding of themselves' (see below 35). Over the years, Gallagher, a skilled listener, began to see himself more and more as a translator into a non-specialized language of the insights of major theologians. Picking up on the importance of translation as a skill akin to listening, and drawing on her own personal experience, Jean Ward elaborates on the complexities of translating as a process of yearning and exploring analogous to what Gallagher calls 'diving deeper'. David Jasper in keeping with Gallagher's high regard for reverence and wonder, looks at the dangers of seeking the wrong kind of clarity and simplicity in our worship. In an age that has limited the mystery of language both philosophically and practically, Jaspers echoes Gallagher's concern that liturgy seems to 'lack mystery, stressing human togetherness at the expense of mystical dimensions' (Gallagher, 'What has Literature to Say to Liturgy?' 83).

Two of the remaining contributors concern themselves with the themes of cultural desolation and death, two topics that Gallagher had also explored in, respectively, *Clashing Symbols* and *Into Extra Time*. Inspired by an affinity with Gallagher's work, Jennifer Reeks picks on the first theme and shows how the voices of artists can be seeds of hope in times of cultural desolation. Her essay resonates with Gallagher's belief that 'consolation breaks the negative magnifying glass that can see only decadence or disaster' and that 'discernment means being able to interpret smoke signals of hope rising from what may at first seem like a burnt-out desert' ('Christian Discernment of Culture'). With Gallagher's last book in mind and conscious of his mission among non-believers, Piero Boitani reconsiders the deaths of ancient philosophers, recognizing in their 'dying deeper' what Simone Weil called 'intuitions pré-chrétiennes'. Boitani writes from a perspective of an enlightened pagan, one, however, that Gallagher would have understood and engaged with. Finally, Frank Turner and Elena Buia Rutt bring this special issue to a completion on two notes of personal exchanges with Gallagher's literary interests and ideas.

Unity in diversity is the aspiration of this special issue. All the contributors share, from their different standpoints, fundamental humanist values. They believe in the hidden anthropological level of our spiritual imagination, in the common ground for dia-

logue between believers and non-believers and, using Newman's expression, in 'real' knowledge transcending the limited horizon of easy certainties. While agreeing, in line with Gallagher, 'that universities remain indispensable in the task of re-discovery of cultural identity', they also see, like he did, the need of overcoming, in the academic world, what Lonergan called the 'problem of specialization' leading to fragmentation, sometimes even to incomprehension ('University and Culture: Towards a Retrieval of Humanism' 172, 155). The present issue is thus an invitation to continue in Gallagher's footsteps to dive deeper into constructive dialogue between disciplines and different faith commitments, ever discerning what he called the 'drama of the Spirit in our lives' (*Dive Deeper* 3).

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# ‘Enlarging the Mind’: Michael Paul Gallagher and the Imagination

by NICOLAS STEEVES SJ

One of the paradoxes Henri de Lubac’s witty wisdom wrought in his waning years ruefully runs, ‘Our ideas grow old with us, that is why we pay no particular attention to them, and we are quite astonished at younger minds not falling in love with them in their turn, as we did’ (Lubac 98). With all due respect to the great French Jesuit, in the case of Michael Paul Gallagher, things seem to be happening today in quite a contrary fashion. Gallagher had a wonderfully wry sense of humour and would doubtless have enjoyed a tongue-in-cheek Continental *hors d’oeuvre* of contrariness. But the claim that is being made here goes deeper than mere rhetorical flourish. In the aftermath of Fr Gallagher’s death, many students and staff at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome, in public or private conversations, shared their admiration, enthusiasm and deep love for him, as a person, priest and thinker. As far as one can tell, younger minds are still falling in love with his ideas. But why is that so?

Let us first recall a basic fact: many of us mere mortals plod along in life with one or two ideas at most, as the great German theologian Karl Rahner is said to have quipped. The narrowness of our pursuits and creeds, or just sheer lack of time, lead us, more often than not, to that quick obsolescence that seals the sorry fate of today’s electronic devices. By contrast, Gallagher’s thought demonstrates a remarkable ‘freshness’ which one has good reason to believe will keep in years to come. To pursue the line of geeky, techie metaphors, the Irish Jesuit’s thought might well be branded ‘self-upgrading’.

In great part, this is due to the fact that Gallagher himself was on a constant quest for more light and knowledge within the varied realms of the intellect, the arts and the faith. In the course of a lifetime, he managed to summon and engage a variety of authors and themes few people today can claim to match. Not only that, he made those novelists, theologians, philosophers, mystics and artists enter into real or imaginary conversations. He made them spark off each other in various genres, as one would in a play, a musical, a sit-com or a rap battle. Such a talent was to be expected: in his early years as a lecturer in English literature at University College, Dublin, with the help of students and staff, Dr Gallagher had staged many plays, including Shakespeare’s best comedies.

The obvious risk of such an approach – and one Gallagher did not avoid entirely throughout his career – is eclecticism; consequently, readers are left somewhat bewildered or bedazzled on rare occasions. Its obvious benefit, however, one he very often elicits from his many readers, is wonder, gratitude and joy. Who expects to enjoy a

verbal sparring match between St. Thérèse de Lisieux, the ‘Little Flower’, and the great, gruff Nietzsche? In the dialogue Gallagher imagined between them, she bests him with a Gallic surprise: her sincerely topping his atheistic feelings, so she can finally coax him out of his German gloom. Every year in Rome, during Gallagher’s class on atheism and unbelief, he would get two students to act out that dialogue, often stirring lasting emotions in those who watched Mercy take on Despair.

The quiet but dogged determination with which Gallagher delved into the knowledge of human life, and of human life with God, is quite exceptional. This may suggest that his quests and thoughts will live on. They will do so in both explicit and implicit ways. Thus, they will sometimes feed overt research on his own written works and numerous conference papers. More often, though, they will probably operate in less obvious ways, discreetly but powerfully lending realness and breadth to contemporary thinkers, thanks to the strong cultural and theological currents he uncovered and gladly made available for others. Given Michael Paul’s admiration for John Henry Newman’s *University Sermons*, and in particular for the one entitled ‘Implicit and Explicit Reason’ (Newman, *Fifteen Sermons* 251–77), it is likely that he would draw greater satisfaction from humbly fuelling other people’s research work and beliefs than from being republished himself for the tenth time.

One of Michael Paul’s favourite wishes, for people and for cultures, he drew precisely from Newman: the sincere wish that, for their own good and the good of others, they would ‘enlarge their mind’ (*Fifteen Sermons* 283). He also often pointed out that Benedict XVI had invited our post-modern cultures to experience a similar change, most prominently in his famous Regensburg address, namely the experience of daring to ‘broaden the concept of reason’ (Benedict XVI). Now, both these expressions of change are parallel to ‘Dive Deeper’, the title of a book published by Gallagher in 2001 which was picked as the name for a two-day conference in November 2016 at Heythrop College, London, where this article was originally delivered as a paper. ‘Enlarging the mind’, ‘broadening reason’, ‘diving deeper’: all these expressions point to change, progress, growth and dynamism. And therein lies the key to the attractiveness and discreet staying power of Gallagher’s thought.

This article will now verify this hypothesis in three consecutive points. The first point is biographical: it seeks to grasp how Michael Paul’s personal exploration of vaster horizons – geographic, cultural, literary and theological – sustained his own growth, intellectually, theologically and spiritually. The second point beckons great friends that Gallagher made along his quest. These friends matched his dynamism and fuelled it, and he loved to introduce them to others. The third and final point identifies sub-currents of the main tow pulling us out to sea with Michael Paul. There, we will meet the God-who-walks-on-waters (see Matt. 14:22–33) and who bids us to trust him that we, too, can do so. This open invitation is one of Gallagher’s enduring gifts, beyond his untimely death.

## Living Beyond Limits: Biographical Callings

In 'Roots and Horizons', the epilogue to *Clashing Symbols*, Gallagher recounts how, in middle age, he revisited the village of his childhood, Collooney, Co. Sligo, in the North West of Ireland. He was born there as World War II was starting, in August 1939. He comments, as he did in several other books, on how closely knit and protective the culture of his childhood had been. 'We were as Danes in Denmark all day long' is a line from Wallace Stevens to which Gallagher turned time and again to describe the traditional Catholic Irish culture of his youth. Back then and there, not attending church on Sunday was simply unthinkable. Great cultural upheavals on the European continent were happening too far away to have a real impact yet.

It is no surprise, then, that Gallagher's gap year in Normandy as a twenty-year old student of literature in 1960 came as a big cultural and religious shock. For the first time in his life, atheists and nonbelievers became very real. Nonetheless, they turned out to be not as evil or disagreeable as he had probably been brought up to believe as a boy. Love for a French girl, to which Michael Paul discreetly alludes in his posthumous book *Into Extra Time* (144), doubtless added depth to his experience of being taken outside of himself, not only geographically, but also culturally and emotionally.

Back in Ireland in 1961, his joining the Jesuit novitiate took him to new places, spiritually and culturally. His pursuit of literary studies as a Jesuit after the novitiate led him on a long path where he got to know and love many poets, playwrights and novelists. For his doctoral work at Oxford, he eventually focused on the great Welsh-born preacher and poet George Herbert. This growth in mind, heart and horizon was furthered yet by over ten years of teaching literature at University College, Dublin. Dr Gallagher's academic service to his students often took on a deeper human and spiritual dimension, bringing them to expand the horizons of their faith and culture simultaneously.

Later trips that took the priest and professor to India and Latin America did this in a different way, removing social blinders and religious prejudices. One trip brought him particular joy: his time in Vietnam, towards the end of his life, teaching the Jesuit scholastics and delighting in their fraternal welcome, respect, energy and youth.

A major turn in his life happened in 1990: an unexpected call to Rome to work for the Secretariat for Non-Believers – later integrated into the Pontifical Council for Culture. Gallagher used this new opportunity not only to benefit from the Vatican's international character, but also to make several deep and lasting friendships with local Italians, yet again enlarging his mind. His obituary on the Pontifical Council for Culture's webpage is an eloquent portrait and a heartfelt tribute: 'He was known for sporting his deep learning lightly, for his diligence in work and friendship, his dialogical approaches to difficult issues, and his gentlemanly disposition' (Pontifical Council). Gallagher eventually returned to academic life in 1995, now as Professor at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome where he worked with fellow Jesuits and taught academic theology for the first time. This led him once again to stretch his knowledge and expand his geographical and cultural horizons as he met younger, post-modern and multicultural students, staff and faculty.

After retirement, in early 2015, Michael Paul's third encounter with cancer suddenly brought him home to Ireland, upsetting plans for his retirement in Rome and his mission as the much-loved Rector of the Collegio San Roberto Bellarmino. His posthumous book, *Into Extra Time*, reveals how much he revelled in returning to his own culture, having been exposed to so many others, although he recognized how much it had changed, and not always for the better. But what was there was there: sweet Irish banter from friends and soft-spoken care from nurses lent new light to his last months, with an ever-growing sense of wonder, and 'at-one-ment', as he moved toward the threshold. He passed away quietly on 6 November 2015.

## A Host of Friends: A Challenge to Open Up Horizons

It would be a daunting task to try and size up exactly how many poets, playwrights, pundits, philosophers and theologians Gallagher introduces to his readers in his many, varied writings. Most of his works are short; some even tend toward the aphoristic. His reader's impression is often close to being taken through a large party by a gracious host who helpfully stands by your side and introduces you to people you never would have dreamed of talking to in a personal, trustfully open way. Although in real life, Gallagher was friendly and personable, but far from being a socialite, his writings attest to a vivid imagination when it came to making minds meet.

To pursue the metaphor of such a social setting, some guests at Gallagher's parties stand out more prominently; they are his staple clients and stable friends, hanging out in bunches. Obviously, various readers of Gallagher will single out and mingle with different such bunches. This writer's favourite crowd would include John Henry Newman and William Lynch among the theologians, and Shakespeare, Dostoyevsky and Flannery O'Connor among the *literati*. Most of these guests are giants, but they are not so in a way that shames those who dare to approach them with Gallagher at their side. Why? Because they are truly great minds with inspiring lives; because they accepted the dare to move beyond their comfort zones; because they rose to the challenge to enlarge their minds. These authors therefore struck Gallagher's fancy, or more accurately, his *imagination*, his trust and his Catholic faith.

Now, this is a key element to understanding Gallagher's thought and method. His choice of conversation partners was never a mere whim, but rather a decision guided by that ability to which the old word 'fancy' points, i.e., the imagination. Gallagher was no ideologue. Both in real life and on paper, he would not decide ahead of time who, in a crowd, was worth speaking to. His determination to remove cultural blinders and reject predeterminations lent him a *largeur d'esprit* that made him genial in his life and books. This open-mindedness gave him an uncanny ability to pair up odd bedfellows.

*Dive Deeper* thus offers the most outlandish dialogue combinations: Jane Austen and D.H. Lawrence, Flannery O'Connor and George Eliot, William Shakespeare and Oscar Romero, Rahner and Rilke, and most strikingly of all, as mentioned above, Thérèse de Lisieux and Friedrich Nietzsche. It takes a pretty enlarged mind, indeed, to make

such people listen to each other and converse in a quiet mode or even in angry flashes. Gallagher's imaginary dialogues have an eerie conjuring power that certainly flesh out one of his favourite lines from Emily Dickinson: 'the Possible's slow fuse is lit by the Imagination' ('The Single Hound' xxvii).

It is essential to understand, however, that to make such giants converse is not to stage mere intellectual fencing or downright name-calling; it is to call these men and women of strong convictions – and their sometimes over-zealous disciples – to leave their usual entrenchments. Such dialogues weave something quite like a vocation, where great minds are lured out of their dens by the prospect of encountering a strangely heart-warming love. This graced encounter is obvious in their patient dialogue with someone who, till then, may have seemed an ardent opponent. The theological quality of these talks is made stronger yet in the one which closes and crowns *Dive Deeper*: an inner conversation between the self and Jesus, where post-modern self-centeredness is drawn through its frailty and limitations to a burning encounter with God's incarnate, down-to-earth mercy.

If one stops to think about it, Gallagher's drive toward enlarging the mind and making the imagination real is a true Christian work of *reconciliatio oppositorum*. It is that etymologically 'Catholic' work, a work for 'the whole', a work to which the human imagination is beckoned by Jesus Christ, 'who hath made both one, and breaking down the middle wall of partition, the enmities in his flesh...that he might make the two in himself into one new man' (Eph. 2:14–6). It is a vocation to let one's mind be enlarged enough so that it can be receptive to the reality of a creation reconciled with itself and with the Creator. It is a call to dive deeper in hope and love, to receive this divine Revelation and, in response to this Revelation, to make our faith more real.

To conclude with the social imagery that has fuelled this second point, one feels that if two guests had broken out into a fistfight at one of Michael Paul's imaginary parties, he would not have called security to take them out. He would have broken up the fight with Irish wit and kindness, and brought the warring factions to sit down, calmly express their views, and listen to each other over a glass of good whisky. This is a talent not easily found in our antagonistic age, and one that requires great personal convictions. It leads one to see God at work in wondrous ways and in places unexpected both for religious believers and professed unbelievers.

### ***Duc in altum* (Lk 5:4): Dive Deeper**

It has become a fruitful trend in certain theological circles to single out hospitality as a hallmark of the Gospel (See Theobald). In this vein, Michael Paul Gallagher was more one to walk the walk than talk the talk. It should be quite obvious by now how hospitable his horizons were – if the reader will forgive this use of 'clashing symbols' – but Gallagher did not gather his guests merely to engage in garish navel-gazing. Michael Paul, in the experience of those who met him, was a friendly man, a fraternal Jesuit, but also a fatherly figure who sometimes rather sternly forced his conversation partners out of their natural and supernatural haunts. They were called to let out into the deep.

His involvement with the Scientific Committee of the *Istituto Paolo VI* in Brescia reveals how close his mindset was to Papa Montini's tireless appeal for dialogue, as evidenced in the late pope's 1964 encyclical *Ecclesiam Suam* or in his tragic negotiations for the release of Aldo Moro. More largely, Fr Gallagher's mindset, as evidenced by his writings and personal relationships, discloses how deeply he integrated the teachings of the Second Vatican Council and of recent popes into his efforts to engage in true, respectful dialogue with men, women and children of every creed and culture. It is easy to claim 'openness' in the name of Vatican II, but Michael Paul was one who really lived it out, albeit quietly.

Dialogue, in fact, is not a way for the weak. Fr Gallagher's soft stubbornness in this realm betrays an especially graced use of that old Latin virtue *fortitudo*, or courage—a rare gift. He knew that men's minds are not in the least enlarged by rape, wrath and plunder; they are only effectively moved by a constant, courageous call to dive deeper. This was an experience that John Henry Newman had as he grew older, and one that Gallagher shared and put to good use.

Ploughing chronologically through Gallagher's many short volumes, it becomes clear that his invitation to imagine a world of new possibilities expanded gradually. In his early years, further to his doctoral research and his job at the Pontifical Council for Culture, he mainly addressed non-believers (See Gallagher 1983, 1987, 1995). As he grew older, and as Western culture took the turn towards secularism, he sought to extend that same invitation to men and women steeped in Christianity from their youth, but who had lost touch with the real Gospel, even though they might still nominally consider themselves Christian, or even practicing believers (See Gallagher 1997, 2001, 2010).

In 1974, the young Fr Gallagher had already stirred up a fuss when he published a controversial article, 'Atheism Irish Style'. As his friend Tom Casey put it,

at a time when the general consensus held that Irish Catholicism was in a thoroughly healthy state, he alarmed many by suggesting that it was actually dying a slow death. He claimed that Irish Catholics (most of all young Irish Catholics) were becoming increasingly disillusioned with many of the externals of Church life – religion taught impersonally or in an authoritarian manner in school, dull Sunday rituals, and boring sermons. ('Messenger of wonder & wonderful messenger')

Whereas Christians might be tempted to consider smugly that only the 'disbelieving' or the 'unchurched' should enlarge their minds to welcome the dogma and mores of the Roman Church, Gallagher, like Newman before him, also invited cradle Catholics to 'be real,' as he jokingly put it. He knew that the great tides of cultural change were bringing everyone out of their depth. Yesterday's unquestioning believers would be tomorrow's comfortable agnostics, at a high, but often unspoken, personal and social cost. Gallagher took stock of changing tides, and, neither opposing them nor submitting to them unreflectively, sought to make the best of expanding horizons and sometimes dizzying currents. Having often lived by the sea, he knew that choppy waters sometimes offer the best fish. There was the place to let out one's nets in the deep.

All of this explains why our opening quotation from Henri de Lubac's *Paradoxes* fortunately runs contrary to the life and thought of Michael Paul Gallagher. In a way, Gallagher's thought stays youthful because its strength lies less in its material content than in its dynamic form and force. His youthfulness is linked to his playfulness. That is not to say that he was creedless by any standard; in agreement with Ratzinger, although somewhat less explicitly, relativists made him rueful. Christ the reconciler always stood at the centre of the Irish Jesuit's mind and heart. Here again, Gallagher echoed Newman, who grounded his theology of Revelation in the dynamic 'idea' of Christ (Newman, 'Preface' xlvii). He also echoed Balthasar, who sung the luminous form of Christ, 'image of all images' (419) and Karl Rahner, who marvelled at the sense-driven perception of Christ's Spirit at work in the world (Rahner). At the crossroads between faith and culture, Michael Paul left future generations a powerful testimony, not just as a memorial of his own forays into the deep, but as an invitation that we ourselves dive deeper.

'Faith itself,' wrote Gallagher, 'is a God-given way of imagining existence – not a cold truth, easily captured in concepts. And my conviction,' he continued, 'is that imaginative writers, like biblical prophets, can deepen our angle of seeing.' (*Dive Deeper* 6). Michael Paul never quoted poets for mere purposes of aestheticism, nor did he name-drop theologians to dazzle his readers. He strove calmly, but vigorously, so that everyone who crossed his path would leave with a deeper faith and a more realistic imagination. Those who were fortunate to meet him would grow paradoxically both more questioning and more trusting. The surface of things would not suffice where salvation was at stake.

## Conclusion

Any *confrère* writing on Michael Paul would be remiss not to mention one final feature – his being a Jesuit. His knack for preaching and his wisdom in spiritual direction and conversation – as witnessed by many after his passing – testify to his faithful affiliation to the life and spirituality of St Ignatius Loyola.

One of Ignatius's key words is the Latin adverb *magis*, a word that has undergone a revival in recent years in the international youth ministry of the Jesuits. The word *magis* can be traced back to the Second Week of the *Spiritual Exercises*, in which the retreatant begins to contemplate the life of Christ. The grace to ask for in those contemplations is 'ut magis ipsum amem, eumque sequar' (*Exercitia Spiritualia* [104]), or, as the musical *Godspell* has it, 'to see him more clearly, love him more dearly and follow him more nearly.' This *magis*, this 'more,' is a call to see, love and follow Jesus with an increased intensity, with a larger mind, with a more real imagination.

As a Jesuit, Michael Paul strove to live this out and to bring others to do so, to live more intensely as Christ might want us to. His invitation to imagine and realize our lives according to the Ignatian *magis* finds great poetic expression in the well-known words of G. M. Hopkins (19):

I say móre; the just man justices;  
Kéeps grace: that keeps all his goings graces;  
Acts in God's eye what in God's eye he is –  
Christ – for Christ plays in ten thousand places,  
Lovely in limbs, and lovely in eyes not his  
To the Father through the features of men's faces.

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# Finding God In All Things

by GEMMA SIMMONDS CJ

‘Finding God in all things’ is a key Ignatian concept which can easily become a cliché, and, as such, it can hide more profound challenges. On the one hand there is the challenge, to which Michael Paul Gallagher alludes frequently in his work, that religious experience and consciousness in an overt sense are closed to many, because they see such experience and consciousness as belonging to an order which they reject for ideological reasons, or to which they have no access. On the other hand, there is the challenge that many consciously religious people fail to engage effectively with the material world or the world of ideas and experiences that are not specifically religious because they do not intuit the religious content in so much of what surrounds them. Finding God in all things is no easy task. It requires the ability to see and understand the significance of the apparently ordinary or to engage with the extraordinary when they do not come clothed in religious garb.

When we listen to people trying to articulate and make sense of their experience, we often hear them doing exactly what Gallagher advocated, namely undertaking exploration and archaeological excavation, as it were, through multiple layers of feelings, intuitions and insights in order to reach a level of meaning which provides them with a context for faith encounters. How to enable such intuitions to move from something vague and barely coherent to a conscious turning to faith does not lie within the grasp of a spiritual director. It is a matter for God and the individual person, though a spiritual companion can act as a bridge-builder, enabling the one receiving the intuition to make better sense of it. A classic example of such intuitions is found in the autobiography of British art historian Kenneth Clark. He tells of a religious experience received entirely unexpectedly in the basilica of San Lorenzo in Florence. ‘Irradiated by joy’, Clark recognizes the experience for what it is, and is emphatic that this is not a surge of aesthetic wonder based on the beauty of his surroundings. He is also lucid in his analysis of the demands made on him by such an experience and remarkably candid about the challenges this poses: ‘My life was far from blameless’, he writes, ‘I would have to reform. My family would think I was going mad, and perhaps after all it was a delusion, for I was in every way unworthy of receiving such a flood of grace’ (Clark 108).

His reaction is an almost textbook illustration of one of the reactions in Jesus’ parable of the sower (Matt. 13:22), where the seed of the word falls on receptive soil at first, but is then choked by worldly cares and considerations, fails to thrive and ultimately dies. It also illustrates Ignatius’s ‘Rules for the Discernment of Spirits’, where he says it is characteristic of the evil spirit to raise ‘obstacles [...] that disturb the soul’ in order ‘to

prevent the soul from advancing' and to 'fight against [...] happiness and consolation by proposing fallacious reasonings, subtleties and continual deceptions'(Puhl #329). God reaches out and touches a soul with a gratuitous flood of grace, or what Ignatius calls 'consolation without previous cause' (Puhl #336). The individual recognizes it for what it is, but is overwhelmed by other considerations and lets it go.

God is not so easily defeated, however. Robert Carver's review in *The Tablet* of James Stourton's biography of Clark relates that he was received into the Catholic Church on his deathbed. Somewhat ungenerously, Carver suggests that this was in order to please Clark's long-suffering wife (Carver 18). It may well have pleased Lady Clark that her reprobate husband got in under the wire at the last moment, but the reviewer is either oblivious of this key experience in Clark's past, or chooses to ignore the impact that such an experience will have had on him, given that he was so well versed in reading the stories which lie beneath the surface of such spiritual encounters as they are illustrated in the great art of Europe. Having listed for the reader the reasons why, at the time, he decided to ignore this flood of grace, Clark nevertheless ends, 'but that I had "felt the finger of God" I am quite sure, and although the memory of this experience has faded, it still helps me to understand the joys of the saints' (Clark 108).

The quotation that Clark uses to convey his sense of divine encounter is telling. It comes from the first stanza in 'The Wreck of the Deutschland', a poem by the Jesuit poet Gerard Manley Hopkins, written in memory of five Franciscan nuns drowned in a shipwreck while fleeing the Falk Laws in Germany in 1875. The stanza begins, 'Thou mastering me/ God!', and finishes, 'Over again I feel thy finger and find thee' (Hopkins 110), while further on, in the fifth stanza, the poet says, 'I greet him the days I meet him and bless when I understand' (Hopkins 111). It would appear that God did finally 'master' Kenneth Clark, who had been blessed with a divine encounter and indeed understood it for what it was, but declined for his own reasons to respond to it at the time.

In a talk given to Ignatian spiritual directors in the 1990s but not published, Gallagher spoke of his experience as chaplain to the students at the Sapienza University in Rome. Many of these were nominal or cultural Catholics, with little sense of personal engagement in a life of faith. In order to help them to move towards a positive, deliberate option for faith, he claimed that it was necessary for them to have additional experiences: a direct, personal encounter with God in Jesus Christ, a sense of belonging and a commitment to works of justice; in other words prayer, community and good works. Without these components, Gallagher maintained, not only could faith not mature, but it would also grow in misshapen ways should one or more of them be missing. Thus he frequently encountered young people who, while eager for 'spiritual experience', were looking for it in any direction but that of Christian revelation. Or he met people who, while joyfully taking part in group activities like pilgrimages to Taizé or retreats and spiritual festivals, found no anchorage in parish or other faith communities. Finally he met many young people who were generously giving themselves in heroic good works for the sick, the poor and those afflicted in any way, but he found that their self-giving was entirely humanitarian and had no connection with a sense of faith or divine call and indeed was often an expression of disenchantment with religious institutions which they saw as corrupt and

self-serving. While he recognized that among his students there was often what Grace Davie has called ‘believing without belonging’, he also conceded that faced with joyless, sterile liturgies, communities interested only in recognizing and valuing ‘people like us’ and hierarchical leaders fixated on the minutiae of orthodoxy while ignoring glaring injustices on their doorstep, it was small wonder that many young people turned away. A church concerned principally with its own survival will offer little in terms of direct encounter with the living God and engagement with a world ‘charged’, as Hopkins says in another poem, with ‘the grandeur of God’. Yet, in that same poem, Hopkins claims that, ‘There lives the dearest freshness deep down things; / [...] Because the Holy Ghost over the bent/ World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings’ (Hopkins 128).

The capacity to intuit the God who is present ‘deep down things’, even if those things wear no religious clothing, is precisely what Ignatius means when he speaks of ‘finding God in all things’. It may have been Hopkins’s own Jesuit training that enabled him so spontaneously to do this, even in the many terrible bouts of depression from which he suffered. It is this activity of making connections that the Jesuit in Gallagher was so keen to impress upon his chaplaincy students. The disconnect between what is often presented to the faithful in their religious engagement and what they meet in a secular context is precisely where, according to Gallagher, faith is either lost or found.

This insight is repeatedly referred to by Pope Francis in his exhortation on evangelization, *Evangelii Gaudium*. He challenges a church obsessed with its own security and procedures to look beyond its self-erected safety barriers and into the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of ordinary people in order to encounter God among them. ‘I prefer a Church which is bruised, hurting and dirty because it has been out on the streets’, he says, ‘rather than a Church which is unhealthy from being confined and from clinging to its own security.’ (Pope Francis #49). If Pope Francis’s conscience is disturbed, it is less by fear of going astray and more by the fact that so many live separated from the consolation of friendship with Christ and a supportive community of faith. While he challenges moral transgressions, he is sterner about structures that provide a false sense of security, rules which render people harsh judges, and habits that lead to complacent self-righteousness and the fragmenting of Christian community. In this he echoes one of Gallagher’s three fundamental categories of faith, that of a sense of belonging not only to a faith community but to the human community in and of itself.

Gallagher picks up this theme in his book *Faith Maps* in which he sketches the life and work of ten ‘religious explorers’. One of these is Maurice Blondel, a nineteenth-century French philosopher who greatly influenced Jesuit theologian Henri de Lubac. Blondel believed that it was important not so much to speak for believers but to say something that might be worthwhile to unbelievers. He criticised as futile the positions taken up by some modern philosophers who claim that there could be nothing in the human spirit except what originates in it. At the same time Blondel was equally critical of those aspects of contemporary Catholic thinking which saw the supernatural as entirely distinct from human thought and will. For Blondel, as later for Gallagher himself in his work on belief and unbelief, the only true and appropriate response to the divine indwelling within humanity is action which brings the divine alive in reality. One can see

why such notions might take hold of the minds of de Lubac and his generation of Jesuits, formed in the spirituality of Ignatius Loyola of which this is such a strong echo, and in touch with the toxic atheistic ideologies of the twentieth century which would bring so much death and horror in their wake in the name of human progress and achievement (Blondel 7). Finding God in all things for Blondel becomes the notion of faith as solidarity. It was this understanding of faith that led de Lubac and several of his contemporaries to support the French Resistance in its opposition to Nazism and to its murderous ideology of anti-Semitism. For de Lubac, as also for Gallagher, redemption is not only a restoration of the harmony between individuals and their Creator, but also a recovery of the lost unity of human beings with one another. This happens as a result not only of the death of Jesus but of the incarnation itself, since 'Christ from the very first moment of his existence virtually bears all men [*sic*] within himself' (de Lubac 37). This unity of all human beings in Christ is a mystic reality which results in a 'fraternal charity, a radiant novelty in the midst of a world grown old in its divisions' (54).

While fraternal charity is where de Lubac finds God in all things, for Hans Urs von Balthasar faith is discovered in and through beauty. In *Faith Maps*, Gallagher describes how Balthasar points to an experience of the beauty of God with us as a manifestation of God's glory and as a realization and reception of God's yes to humanity which is prior to our own yes to God (50-64). All human beings are gifted with the capacity to detect God's presence in beauty, but not all choose to do so or to respond to the clues offered. We see this famously in Elizabeth Barrett Browning's epic verse novel *Aurora Leigh*. Like Hopkins, she affirms that 'Earth's crammed with heaven,/And every common bush afire with God'. This is not, however, the means to an epiphany for everyone, since, 'only he who sees, takes off his shoes,/ The rest sit round it and pluck blackberries'. (Browning 246)

Having the eyes and mind to see God's grandeur within nature seems to suggest to this poet possession of some special religious genius, given only to a gifted few. This is a theme of William James's second Gifford Lecture of 1902, published in *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, in which he refers to religion as '...the feelings, acts and experiences of individual men in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider the divine' (31). While James attempts, in a way that could be considered Ignatian, to place these extraordinary experiences outside the strictly religious sphere, in order to claim for non-believers a capacity for epiphany, he does so in a thoroughly anti-Ignatian way. This is part of James's critique of organized religion as fundamentally distorting and threatening what he calls 'personal religion pure and simple', which is reserved for a few. For James the corporate ambitions of ecclesiastical institutions with their 'lust of dogmatic rule' contaminate the original innocence of inward personal religion, leading to a religious orthodoxy which stonies prophets and allows the faithful to live only at second hand, without personal experience of God (26-52), .

British theologian Nicholas Lash, decades later, offers a fierce critique of any such notion. He finds that this contrast between the material and the spiritual, or 'external' and 'internal' religion, constitutes the dominant narrative of both Liberal Protestantism and its secularized successors, and that it expresses deep-rooted anti-Catholic and anti-

Semitic prejudices (26–37). In contrast to James, and in a way that is implicitly Ignatian, he claims that it is possible not only for ‘geniuses’ but also for ordinary people to engage in the continual task of discerning the presence of God in the material world and in human structures, including the institutional church, thus making of that world both the context and content of their personal spiritual experience. In a way that echoes much of Gallagher’s work on culture, he sees that the symbolic, linguistic and affective resources available to us as the foundation of an experience of faith are mediated to us by culture and by the traditions, structures, institutions and relationships by which we identify ourselves. Thus Lash denies any intrinsic conflict between personal and ecclesial faith (51–70).

We find echoes of this again in *Faith Maps*, where Gallagher considers the work of Canadian Jesuit philosopher and theologian Bernard Lonergan, who points to the distortions within culture and within ourselves that prevent us from including faith within our field of vision (67–71). He also looks at aspects of the work of German theologian Joseph Ratzinger, later Pope Benedict XVI, in particular Ratzinger’s affirmation of Jesus as the human face of God and of the universal Church as containing within itself God’s self-communication as the truth and love which speak to our deepest desires and unite us to God’s eternal yes and eternal now (135–40).

Whereas for Elizabeth Barret Browning blackberry picking is a sign of those who are incapable of detecting the God with whom every common bush is afire, for Gallagher’s friend, Irish poet Seamus Heaney, it is a source of profound reflection, though not in any way one that is dominated or even underpinned by religious thought. In ‘Blackberry Picking’ contained in his first collection of poems, *Death of a Naturalist*, Heaney describes in lush detail the overwhelming sense of richness and lavish fruitfulness in the harvest of blackberries avidly picked by children, only for them to face the disappointment of finding that the berries do not keep, but rot and ferment (8). Heaney makes no mention of finding God in nature, despite his richly detailed descriptions of it, yet his reflection on his yearly longing for the pleasure of the harvest to last and his disillusionment when it does not is in itself a coming to awareness of time, of the ephemeral nature of much of human longing and of a sense of maturing identity.

How, then, are we to ‘find God in all things’ in a way that might lead us to faith, as Gallagher aimed to do in his reflections on faith, culture and literature? For him there are several pre-requisites: first, solitude and a reflectiveness that counters the over-busyness of our present culture; second, an honesty in admitting our inner fragilities, weaknesses and failures that counters the prevalent celebrity culture and the competitiveness that arises from it; third, the ability to empathize with the sufferings of others; fourth, a capacity for true friendship; and last but by no means least, a recognition of the value of the ordinary along with an openness to the meaning of the extraordinary. All of this is part of the trajectory of the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises which lead from an awareness of our God-given and God-infused creaturehood to a deep affirmation of our own capacity for affective and theological responses to God who is deeply embedded in all that is human and material. In his reflections on literature, on culture and on faith in a secular world, Michael Paul Gallagher leads us in ways both explicitly and implicitly Ignatian to an encounter with the divine that is open to all.

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# Plunging Into the Depths: A Catholic Aesthetics of Difference

by MARK BOSCO SJ

I was first introduced to the work of Michael Paul Gallagher as a doctoral candidate in Berkeley, California in the late 1990s. My interest in the strategies of Catholic aesthetics in twentieth-century literature led me to appreciate his work for, like him, I was convinced that there was a difference, a texture to the cultural productions of artists and writers who were deeply engaged with Catholic thought. I was often told by my brother Jesuits that I needed to meet Father Gallagher and that I would find in him a worthy companion to explore the relationship of faith and culture. Sadly, the only meeting we had was at a Flannery O'Connor symposium hosted by John Cabot University in Rome, just months before Father Gallagher became ill and died.

I often use Gallagher's 'Ten Commandments of Radical Postmodernity' with my undergraduates, found in his book, *Clashing Symbols: An Introduction to Faith and Culture*. Though an ironic title, these commandments articulate how much of our contemporary cultural, political and religious discourse is built upon these ten fundamental rejections: a rejection of reason, of history, of progress, of meta-narratives, of institutions, of faith, of uniformity, etc. The result of much of this negation over the last forty years, I would argue, has nourished what former Father General Adolfo Nicolas has called a 'globalization of superficiality', in which data information has replaced our ability – our desire, even – to think deeply and, even more so, to be moved deeply. And this resonates with Pope Francis's cry against the 'globalization of indifference' that numbs our consciences. Yet Gallagher, like Nicolas and Pope Francis, sensed among us a hunger for a creative alternative to the nihilistic and self-absorbing consequences of postmodernity, an alternative that celebrates difference as a source of depth. How we see difference – whether in passive or superficial strains, or whether we see difference as the key to a creative vision – these are crucial to the Christian faith. Two Catholic artists well studied by Fr Gallagher offer us a way to understand a theological aesthetics of difference: one from the industrial age of nineteenth-century Britain, Gerard Manley Hopkins, and another from the post-war southern gothic tradition of the United States, Flannery O'Connor. Indeed, I would like to suggest in the remainder of this paper that Catholic beauty is a pied beauty, and that this pied beauty says something about how we praise God. I want to compare how a poet and a short story writer offer the play of difference as a very Catholic way into artistic insight.

First the poem that will act as guide to this exploration, 'Pied Beauty':

Glory be to God for dappled things –  
For skies of couple-colour as a brindled cow;

For rose-moles all in stipple upon trout that swim;  
 Fresh-firecoal chestnut-falls; finches' wings;  
 Landscape plotted and pieced – fold, fallow, and plough;  
 And áll trádes, their gear and tackle and trim.

All things counter, original, spare, strange;  
 Whatever is fickle, freckled (who knows how?)  
 With swift, slow; sweet, sour; adazzle, dim;  
 He fathers-forth whose beauty is past change:  
     Praise him. (Hopkins, *Poems and Prose* 35)

Right away one notices Hopkins's generous aesthetics, seeing difference, not sameness, as the site where beauty resides. One can appreciate the poem as a poetic argument for a theological aesthetics of difference – dappled things – an intense acknowledgement of divine presence at the heart of the diversity of matter. Hopkins was well aware how provocative this was, taking a philosophical stand that straddles the centuries-old conflict between two historical polarities in the development of western aesthetic theory. Prior to and up through the Renaissance, the classical or objective pole dominated, grounded as it was in Platonic Idealism. Artistic production was understood in terms of mimesis, as an imitative art. This theory of art was expressed in the phrase, *ars simia naturae*, art imitates nature. The creation of work of art was a limited – and thus imperfect – reflection of metaphysical beauty, a transcendental quality that nonetheless could be detected in all things. Bernard Bosanquet suggests that the classical art of the Greek and Roman world was 'not merely a consideration of the object to be presented, but a consideration of the art of imaginative production by which [beauty] is born again under the new condition imposed by another medium' (12). By copying a thing of Beauty, the artist produced a beautiful work of art that shared in a new way some universal quality of life. Beauty, as a metaphysical attribute of being, shared with and illuminated the other qualities of being – the True and the Good. The objectivity of Beauty, Truth and Goodness, could, thus, be discovered in the way a work of art conformed to these metaphysical attributes.

The eighteenth century began a shift in thinking about the ontological claims of Beauty. With the Enlightenment's 'turn to the subject', philosophical aesthetics shifted from emphasizing the objectivity of Beauty to its subjective creation and reception as the beautiful. Following Immanuel Kant's relegation of aesthetics to the sublime, the emphasis moved from a metaphysics of Beauty to a transcendental analysis of the subjective process within human experience. The foundational assumption is expressed in the phrase *de gustibus non est disputandum*, one must not dispute what is a matter of taste, or, in the more evocative paraphrase, 'beauty is in the eye of the beholder'. With this move to subjective analysis, that which we find beautiful is no longer tethered to a metaphysical reality that might ground it in rational or moral truth. That which is beautiful could make no universal claims upon us.

The theologian Alejandro Garcia-Rivera argues that this conflict in contemporary aesthetics between the formal quality of Beauty and the subjective reception of what is beautiful ultimately ends in a standoff: 'One is forced to choose between the mistaken,

primitive discussion that had Beauty as purely objective (from the modern perspective) over the irrational, modern overemphasis on the subjectivity of the beautiful (from the Classicist perspective). These two perspectives coexist in contemporary philosophical aesthetics but only as irreconcilable differences' (13–14). One is thus forced to choose between a supposedly flawed, classical discussion of Beauty or the more modern stress on the subjectivity of the beautiful. Yet, neither pole seems to suffice. Theologians like Hans Urs von Balthasar and Alejandro Garcia-Rivera invoke the need to turn to a theological aesthetics as a solution, as a way to bring together the objective encounter with beauty and the transformation it has upon the subject as the receptor of such beauty.

We see this movement through Hopkins's poem, where the two poles become rather a two-part experience. In the first line, 'Glory be to God for dappled things' and throughout the entire first stanza of the poem, we get acknowledgement of the play of Beauty, of the unique and dynamic ways in which beauty is everywhere in the material world. For Hopkins, this revelation is immediate and unavoidable, a simple instantiation. Hopkins privileges the pied beauty of life, giving us a catalogue of 'dappled things'. Yet by the end of the poem, the poet's descriptions cannot be contained any longer as merely a list of 'things'. The poet is so moved by the power beyond his own subjectivity, by the power of the strangeness of what he sees, that he ends the poem simply praising God as the only viable reply. In the final line of the poem, 'Praise him', the poet responds to such beauty, for Beauty is, in the Christian tradition, the first name for God.<sup>1</sup> What Hopkins's aesthetic vision makes room for, in the words of Flannery O'Connor, is 'mystery'. And mystery irrupts within the depths of the human imagination, moving the human heart. Hopkins's theological aesthetics allows for the interplay of a Beauty 'past change' radiating out in the particularity, the uniqueness of the natural world, the objective and subjective realms of experience organically connected.

But more to the point, Hopkins's 'Pied Beauty' is an exploration, an explosion into difference, an aesthetics of contrast, not sameness. All things counter, original, spare, strange, reveal themselves. It is this strangeness that, for Hopkins, points to the presence of a God, a Beauty past change. Like God, the *strange* is hard to categorize. Language fails and we are forced to break its boundaries. Hopkins breaks every grammatical rule in an effort to get at this reality, 'Fresh-firecoal chestnut-falls'. Adjective, noun, and adverb mix as he tries to name that which cannot be named even as he strives to do so. He transforms language to startle us, to confront us, to stop us in our tracks, to wake us up.

With Hopkins, we are far from Plato's vision of a changeless world of forms that exists independent of the world of appearances. Whereas Plato would say that true Beauty requires the uncompromising white light of the intellect with absolutely no shadows or color, Hopkins finds Beauty not in spite of the shadows, the colors, but because of them. In his discovery of the medieval theologian of Oxford, Duns Scotus, Hopkins found a

<sup>1</sup> Beauty as a name for God resonates throughout the Christian tradition, but perhaps the church father Hilary of Poitiers says it most succinctly: 'Surely the author of all created beauty must himself be the beauty in all beauty'. For a concise introduction, see Forte.

philosopher that validated his own poetic instincts.<sup>2</sup> Scotus celebrated difference over sameness, what he called *haecceitas*, the thisness-and-not-thatness in all things, the property that makes each thing individual and unique. Rather than Plato's metaphor of Beauty as a colorless white light, one might describe Scotus's understanding as a beautiful spectrum of a rainbow, Beauty differentiated as if through a prism, white light arrayed across a color continuum. The metaphor of the rainbow is a sound analogy of the deep incarnationalism found throughout Scotus's theology. The divine Logos is found within all creation, various in its depth and realization in and through Christ's Incarnation. For Scotus, as for Hopkins, the doctrine of the Incarnation changes everything about being – conceptually, materially, spiritually. The world is 'charged with the grandeur of God'.

Confirmed by Scotian philosophy, Hopkins fashions his own neologisms, 'inscape' and 'instress', to describe his aesthetics. The Jesuit literary critic, Walter Ong, in his own study of Hopkins, describes these terms in the following way: 'The inscape of being is the distinctive controlling energy that makes a being itself and connects it distinctively with all else. Instress is the action that takes place when the inscape of a given being fuses itself in a given human consciousness'(17).<sup>3</sup> Instress brings the human self, this particularized, subjective human being, into the dynamics of the otherwise objective inscape. Subject and object are given a moment of contact. Only then can one see a larger, cosmic connection at play within reality. If discerning the inscape of a thing is, in part, the experience (the instress) of Christ's Incarnation, then all art has the possibility of being sacramental, a unique mediation of the glory of God. Hopkins's poems provide a moment that makes present and felt the unprocessed, primeval nature of a thing in a way that discursive argument cannot comprehend. The poetic stress of a poem forces an encounter with the 'givenness' of a thing in its self-expressive power.

However, for all the wonder of it, Hopkins thought that in his own time the experience of inscape was not common. He notes in his journal how difficult the perception of inscape can be for most people: 'I thought how sadly beauty of inscape was unknown and buried away from simple people and yet how near at hand it was if they had eyes to see it' (Hopkins, *The Journals* 221). Hopkins lived in a time overshadowed by the tedium and grime of his industrial age. He found the undifferentiated and superficial experience of city life dehumanizing and monotonous. He was interested in the experience of a beauty 'past change', but always revealed in a particular, fallen, sinful, and suffering world. It is what Garcia-Rivera notes about the foundational proposition of a theological aesthetics of difference: we always experience beauty only in the context of 'the garden of good and evil', in and within the backdrop of shadows and sin in the world.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Hopkins dedicated a poem, 'Duns Scotus's Oxford', in celebration of his kinship with Scotus's thought. Hopkins's neologisms such as inscape, instress, and the 'thisness' of things preceded his discovery of the Subtle Doctor. The attraction for Hopkins was finding in Scotus a thinker that could affirm his theories of poetry. On Hopkins's reading of Scotus, see Ballinger (108–10).

<sup>3</sup> See especially pages 15–21 for further development.

<sup>4</sup> Garcia-Rivera (34–7; 155–86) uses this phrase in reference to the American philosopher, Josiah Royce.

To hold for an aesthetics of ‘pied’ beauty, then, suggests that the discerning eye is in search of the beautiful, of a way of seeing that wades through the catalogue of material life to discover the good or, better stated, a way of uncovering what is behind or within the fallenness of the world. It is, in the end, a sacramental aesthetics, the objective glory of God in things revealed in the quotidian, in everyday differences, as ordinary as bread and water, or as ordinary as a woodlark, a cloud-fleeced sky, ploughed earth, tools, but also a piece of music, a poem, even a short story.

For O’Connor, steeped in the same Catholic intellectual tradition as Hopkins, the doctrine of the Incarnation is the fundamental reality that allows the beautiful to be revealed in such grotesque ways throughout her fiction. The Incarnation is not merely a momentary event in history but the ultimate expression of human history, an event that marks the unique nature of human flourishing. In orthodox Christian theology, it is the birth of Christ ‘according to the flesh’ that brings the universal form of the divine into the particular and finite realities of all life. In Christ’s resurrection, the sacredness of each and every person is transformed and uniquely participates in this renovation of nature: ‘For me it is the virgin birth, the Incarnation, the resurrection which are the true laws of the flesh and the physical’, she observes in a letter to her friend, Betty Hester. ‘Death, decay, destruction are the suspension of these laws. I am always astonished at the emphasis the Church puts on the body. ... the resurrection of Christ seems the high point in the law of nature’ (O’Connor, *The Habit of Being* 100).

Without a doubt, O’Connor’s own vision finds congruence, and often times amplification of, Hopkins’s aesthetics of contrast and difference. There is undeniably something strange, spare and original in O’Connor’s short stories, as characters manoeuvre their way through dark and often impenetrable plots that seemingly lead to nowhere. And yet there is something surprisingly counter to the surface nihilism of her stories, for the endings repeatedly reveal a surplus of meaning that redirects and re-orders the reader toward a deep religious insight about the mystery of human life. Her art is effective because her readers – if not her characters – experience a transformation of consciousness in which the story is imbued with a new perspective, a deeper possibility of meaning. O’Connor explores the way the shock of divine grace achieves what she describes as the essential displacement of the reader, a moment when the revelatory flash of insight unexpectedly becomes the interpretive center of her stories. The following excerpt from her essay, ‘The Nature and Aim of Fiction’, is directly in line with Hopkins:

The longer you look at an object, the more of the world you see in it; and it’s well to remember that the serious fiction writer always writes about the whole world, no matter how limited his particular scene. For him, the bomb that was dropped on Hiroshima affects life on the Oconee River, and there’s not anything he can do about it. (*Mystery and Manners* 7)

The particular and the universal, the passing and that which is past change, are held in creative tension in the artist. Furthermore, O’Connor’s level of specificity in her narratives gives her an opportunity to hone in on the strangeness and originality of both nature and the human person. It is an aesthetic impulse that critic Farrell O’Gorman describes as an ‘emphasis on the concrete and a faith that the immediate world itself

holds a mystery and a meaning that does not have to be imposed by the artist but is already present, if only recognized'(108). It is often the function of her grotesque characters to engage the reader in this present mystery. O'Connor says as much in another essay, affirming that 'what [i.e. the writer] sees on the surface will be of interest to him only as he can go through it into an experience of mystery itself' so that one's art 'will always be pushing its own limits outward toward the limits of mystery ... until it touches that realm which is the concern of prophets and poets'(Mystery and Manners 41, 45).

The particularity of her vision of the natural world is often placed center stage in her texts. Her violent endings, almost all of which end with some reference to the natural world, break narrative expectations much like Hopkins's enjambed use of language does in his poetry. O'Connor's texts always denounce the estrangement of the physical world from the spiritual, deconstructing the barriers between the human and the natural. The natural world – the tree-line, the sky, the clouds, and especially the sun – becomes like a chorus in a Greek tragedy, bearing witness to a Beauty past change, and a beauty certainly past the consciousness of her characters, but made alive to the reader. The natural landscape reveals what her characters cannot see, the particularity of place as a manifestation of the cosmic and the transcendent. Just as Hopkins's poetic landscapes are neither mythological nor romantically ideal, O'Connor's forests and clouds have a primeval literalism to them, a 'brute beauty' that expresses the presence or power of something greater at stake. We see this especially in O'Connor's use of language. She metaphorically paints the natural world as oddly colored, ready and waiting for a moment of grace to be violently revealed to characters that suffer from delusions of grandeur or myopic vision.

There is the echo of worship and liturgical discourse on baptism in Flannery O'Connor's dramatic story, 'The River'. O'Connor suggests that the drowning of a young boy is a spiritual encounter of baptism, and the reader is startled by any staid associations he or she might have about its significance for Christian life. The story climaxes when the boy returns to a river where his babysitter has previously brought him to be baptized. Through these waters the Baptist revival minister had assured the boy that he would now count where he didn't count before, and that he could now enter the Kingdom of God. The four-year-old's logic is simple and direct, at least in his naïve spiritual economy. If, as he feels, his parents do not want him around, then why not go 'home' to God's Kingdom under the river? The story offers an insightful illustration of O'Connor's use of Hopkins's aesthetic vision. O'Connor describes the baby sitter in the story as a 'speckled skeleton' (*The Complete Stories* 157), the word echoing Hopkins' inscape and emphasizing her uniqueness. Her children on the farm are described as having 'identical speckled faces', perhaps signifying both their sameness and their own particularity (160). On their way to the river we get O'Connor's homage to Hopkins' poetry:

They walked on the dirt road for a while and then they crossed a field *stippled with purple weeds* and entered *the shadows of a wood* where the ground was covered with thick pine needles. He had never been in woods before and he walked carefully, looking from side to side as if he were entering a strange country. They moved along a bridle path that twisted downhill through *crackling red leaves*, and once, catching at a branch to keep himself from slipping, he looked into two *frozen green-gold eyes* enclosed in the darkness of a tree hole.

At the bottom of the hill, the woods opened suddenly onto a *pasture dotted here and there with black and white cows* and sloping down, *tier after tier*, to a broad orange stream where the reflection of the *sun was set like a diamond*. (*The Complete Stories*, 164; emphasis added)

This last image of a sun set like a diamond resonates with the charge of God's glory, just as the black-and-white cows echo the 'brinded cows' of 'Pied Beauty'. We even can imagine the sloping tiers of land to be a vision of 'landscape plotted and pieced', all of God's handiwork incarnated within the particularity of the world. And when the young boy listens to the Baptist preacher, his eyes follow 'drowsily the slow circles of two silent birds revolving high in the air', and we are told that there is a 'low red and gold grove of sassafras with hills of dark blue trees behind it and an occasional pine jutting over the skyline' (165). With this image of birds conjuring the Holy Spirit, we have the unmistakable influence of Hopkins on O'Connor. Here the natural world does not stand so much as cosmic, choral witness of the tragedy at hand, but as the site of redemption, the beautiful arrayed on a walk toward the 'River of Life'.

And yet who registers this poetic inscape? It is the reader. Rarely ever is it the characters, except perhaps at the moment of their absolute crisis, which, for O'Connor's stories, is often the moment right before death. Characters don't seem to notice the sky and the sun as a revelation of pied beauty, nor do they see it in the particularity of each other. The young boy in 'The River' walks almost unaware 'into a strange country' of speckled and brinded beauty; he does not quite understand all of what is going on. It is up to the reader to sense, to feel this contrast, this difference. It is as if we are reading a text in the midst of the monotony of grayness, in a world intermixed with the color palette of sin and redemption. O'Connor invites the reader to have the discerning vision, to see the difference between the two.

Perhaps only in her story entitled 'Revelation' do the character and the reader both get to see the same pied beauty at work. The main character, the self-indulgent Ruby Turpin, confuses the righteousness of faith with the pride she feels as a white, Christian lady, and is thus wrapped up in the moral superiority of her race and economic class. O'Connor builds up Ruby's spiritual deformity in the first part of the story as the characters sit in a doctor's office, assessing the worth of various representatives of the South's class structure in terms of sameness: how similar or dissimilar they are to her. Ruby's habit of 'naming the classes of people' turns the dissimilarity of each human person into a liability (*The Complete Stories* 491). Difference is not a celebration of a pied beauty – the variety of the beautiful – but a threat to her own understanding of herself. Instead of leading Ruby to praise, difference causes anxiety of the Other. As she falls asleep at night thinking about the complexity of human diversity 'moiling and roiling around in her head', she dreams that the classes of people 'were all crammed in together in a box car, being ridden off to be put in a gas oven' (492). O'Connor makes this explicit analogy to what happens when we 'classify' difference: the Holocaust. Ruby's vision of reality forces Beauty into sameness. It prescribes what is beautiful from the abstractions of race and class. Just as Beauty is coerced into the prevailing manners of a privileged class, so too are the notions of goodness and truth, the other attributes of being. Ruby's aesthetic

judgment about the people in the room assumes that a good woman is not so hard to find, for she is right there in her own skin.

When the college girl, Mary Grace, sitting in the doctor's waiting room, has had enough of Ruby's talk of her 'good disposition', she hits Ruby in the eye with a book she is reading and tries to strangle her, telling her to 'Go back to hell where you came from, you old wart hog' (500). Ruby finds this violent revelation hard to understand but cannot deny the force of truth in it. The aesthetic question for Ruby, and for the reader, is: how can I be 'a hog and me both, how can I be saved and from hell, too'? In the theological language of Hopkins, Ruby is saved precisely because of the particular blemish, the dappled quality of her life. She can be 'a hog and me both' only in Christ, the inscape that presses upon her worldview. Quoting from Hopkins's 'As Kingfishers Catch Fire', only then can Christ 'play in ten thousand places,/ Lovely in limbs, and lovely in eyes not his/ To the Father through the features of men's faces' (*Poems and Prose* 51). Ruby will be lovely – beautiful – the more she comes to reflect Christ.

As Ruby wrestles with this revelation in the final scene of the story, we return to the natural world, as she marches out to her pig parlor. O'Connor's use of the realistic, natural setting reinforces a Hopkins-like moment in the story, as if some transformative light shines upon her. From the brightness of the afternoon setting to the deepening blue hue of evening, Ruby rages at God for giving her such a revelation, as she angrily hoses down her pigs:

The color of everything, field and crimson sky, burned for a moment with a transparent intensity ... Mrs. Turpin stood there, her gaze fixed on the highway, all her muscles rigid ... Then like a monumental statue coming to life, she bent her head slowly and gazed, as if through the very heart of mystery, down into the pig parlor at the hogs. They had settled all in one corner around the old sow who was grunting softly. A red glow suffused them. They appeared to pant with a secret life. (*The Complete Stories* 507)

O'Connor literally paints with words the final revelation where the heavens and the earth open up before the reader:

There was only a purple streak in the sky, cutting through a field of crimson and leading, like an extension of the highway, into the descending dusk... A visionary light settled in her eyes. She saw the streak as a vast swinging bridge extending upward from the earth through a field of living fire. (508)

We reach an overwhelming moment in which the pied beauty of nature and the pied beauty of Ruby collide into one another and the only response is praise. The story ends with O'Connor's version of Hopkins's poem: 'In the woods around her the invisible cricket choruses had struck up, but what she heard were the voices of the souls climbing upward into the starry field and shouting hallelujah' (509).

Readers are drawn to this strangeness, what is counter, original, spare, as part of the glory of her work, a kind of radiance of careful observation. In the words of the poet Richard Wilbur, she 'calls us to the things of this world' (65). We might even say she calls us into the dappled things of this world. This is the glory of Hopkins – and O'Connor's – aesthetics, a recognition of objective Beauty played out in difference, the

unique ‘inscape’ in each and every thing. And what about our own subjective grasp, our own ‘instress’? Is this not the surplus of meaning that lingers with us in the endings of her texts and in the ending of his poems? I think this is analogous to Hopkins’s final exhortation: ‘Praise. Praise God whose beauty is past change’. The reader senses exaltation not through the usual path of triumph but rather in a counter-path, an original path, a path that goes down into the depths of our materiality. Difference, uniqueness, moves us: it leads us to praise.

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# Discernment of Spirits in Shakespeare's *King Lear*

by DAVID LONSDALE

A recurring theme in the published writings of Michael Paul Gallagher is the value of discernment of spirits, as described and practised by Ignatius Loyola, in understanding, evaluating, making and guiding choices for Christians in everyday life in today's world. In an article in *La Civiltà Cattolica* in 1995, for example, he applied the practice of discernment of spirits to making good judgements and choices about the art we contemplate and the films we watch. Later his book *Clashing Symbols: An Introduction to Faith and Culture* offers a sustained and insightful discussion of ways in which the Ignatian approach to discernment of spirits may be fruitfully practised in regard to contemporary culture as a whole. A few years ago, my own reflections on reading and discernment as a means of personal transformation followed a similar path (Howells and Tyler 41–56). In this present paper I take a different approach. Starting with the supposition that Ignatius Loyola and Shakespeare shared elements of a common Christian culture, I use the guidelines for discernment of spirits, as set out in the Spiritual Exercises, as a conceptual framework or tool with which to reflect on certain aspects of Shakespeare's *King Lear*. My hope is, first of all, that this might give us some insights into what is going on in the play and, secondly, that it might illuminate aspects of discernment itself. I am using Ignatius's guidelines because they offer a clear and representative summary of a long-standing tradition of religious wisdom based on scripture and centuries of Christian teaching and experience.<sup>1</sup>

## Loyola and Shakespeare: Shared Assumptions and Beliefs

Ignatius died in 1556, Shakespeare was born in 1564 so they belong in the same century and it is reasonable to suppose that they shared certain elements of Christian culture, belief and practice, even though they lived at opposite ends of Europe and were formed by different churches. These elements have to do with aspects of theological anthropology such as the purpose of human life, the moral order in the world, the power and influence of original sin and grace, and more especially the role of the three powers of the soul in human knowing and choosing, the relationship between reason and the passions or affections and ideas of ordered and disordered affections and attachments.

<sup>1</sup> See also two articles by Robert V. Caro SJ in Works Cited.

In the Spiritual Exercises Ignatius Loyola described the purpose of human life in these terms: ‘the human person is created to praise, reverence and serve God and by so doing to save his or her soul’ (Munitiz and Endean 289). I suspect that Shakespeare and most people in his audiences would agree with that statement. This, or something very like it, was what they had been taught since childhood and had repeated to them in countless sermons. The service of God was seen as including both acceptance of God’s will in sickness and health, in prosperity and adversity and actively conforming to and carrying out God’s will in their thoughts, words and deeds in the course of everyday life. Shakespeare and his audience might not have lived this out in practice; they might also have been aware of how much they fell short of their vocation to praise, reverence and serve God, but most of them would probably have agreed that human life has this beginning in God and this purpose.

Another common assumption has to do with the moral ordering of the world. Just as there is a physical order, so too there is a moral order in the universe, which grounds human values, laws, rights, duties and responsibilities. The universe is ordered by God. Human beings in their turn are capable of ordering their personal lives and what the Elizabethans called ‘the commonwealth’ in right and wrong, good and evil ways; that is to say in conformity with or in opposition to this divine order. The divinely created order in the universe is not, moreover, an arbitrary one, dependent upon a God whose will is fickle or capricious. The order of the universe exists for the ultimate salvation, well-being of humanity. Some theologians of the time saw in the world a pattern of *exitus* and *reditus*: humanity comes from God and humankind’s ultimate destiny is to return to God and find complete happiness in God. Moreover, the instruments by which human beings move towards that destiny are the judgements and choices they make between good and evil. They move towards their ultimate salvation by choosing good and rejecting evil, and they put their salvation in jeopardy by choosing and doing evil, by sin.

It is this view of a divine moral order and the laws and customs which support it that Edmund seems to reject in his first speech in *King Lear*:

Thou, Nature, art my goddess, to thy law  
 My services are bound. Wherefore should I  
 Stand in the plague of custom and permit  
 The curiosity of nations to deprive me? (1.2.1–4)

R.A. Foakes, in a recent edition of *Lear*, comments on these lines: ‘Edmund appeals to the law of the jungle, in effect, and aligns himself with beasts (“lusty stealth”) as against custom, morality and order, as a way of justifying himself’ (179). Later in the same speech Edmund threatens to go further, to invert the moral order, to turn the divinely established moral world upside down: ‘...if this letter speed/And my invention thrive, Edmund the base/Shall top the legitimate’ (1.2.19–21).

We may also note assumptions shared by Ignatius and Shakespeare about the nature and composition of the human person and more particularly the human soul as a battleground of contending forces of good and evil. The soul is endowed with various ‘powers’, memory, understanding and will. Reason is the power given to human beings to

direct them towards the end for which they were created, namely God. Reason, enlightened by faith and aided by grace, is the guide to a life of virtue. It is reason that has the task and the power of guiding the will to choose what is good in the light of the end for which human beings are created.

Concepts of ordered and disordered passions and affections are also among the assumptions shared by the writer of the *Spiritual Exercises* and Shakespeare's plays. The passions or 'affections' constitute another natural element in the make-up of the human person. The passions are not in themselves bad; they may work for good or ill. According to Shakespeare's contemporary Thomas Wright, an Englishman writing at the end of the sixteenth century, they are both 'means to help us and impediments to withdraw us from our end' (Wright 89).<sup>2</sup> It is the passions, especially when they are inordinate or disordered, which hold the potential for bad judgements and evil choices, made under the influence of disordered affections and not in conformity with the end for which human beings are created. Disordered or inordinate affections lead to disordered or inordinate attachments. The task of reason is to direct the passions, set them in right order. Thomas Wright names four effects of inordinate passions: 'blindness of understanding, perversion of will, alteration of humours (and therefore by them maladies and diseases) and troublesomeness or disquietness of the soul' (Wright 125). This is not wholly unlike the language of the *Exercises* which, earlier in the same century, Ignatius Loyola had described as a way of 'preparing and disposing one's soul to rid herself of all disordered attachments so that once rid of them one might seek and find the divine will in regard to the disposition of one's life for the good of the soul' (Munitiz and Endean 283). Good judgements and choices are made when right reason, under the influence of grace, controls the passions and guides the will.

## Discernment of Spirits

In early modern Europe, scholastic philosophy and theology and the theory of discernment of spirits provided a conceptual framework by which to analyse, understand and guide human judgements and choices. Ignatius offers 'Rules for understanding to some extent the different movements produced in the soul and for recognizing those that are good, to admit them, and those that are bad, to reject them' (Munitiz and Endean 348). Literature contemporary with Shakespeare uses the word 'spirit' in several ways. In medicine, spirits are vital forces, influences and 'humours' in the mind and body. Theological, moral and devotional literature portrays the human soul and its powers as subject to the influence of two kinds of 'spirits'. These spirits are either good or evil. Good spirits are the Spirit of God and the good angels; evil spirits are the devil and his minions, the fallen angels. These spirits are at war with each other and, acting on the soul, move a person in opposite directions, towards the choice of good or evil (or, more subtly, to the lesser of two goods, when the good is enemy of the better) in particular

<sup>2</sup> For information about Thomas Wright see the article by Peter Milward in *Works Cited*.

situations. The intention of the good spirits is the good of humanity, individually and collectively. The evil spirits represent the ‘enemy of our human nature’ and their aim is to destroy human good, both now and in the life to come. The spirits have the ability to work on the ‘powers of the soul’, reason and will, according to their good or evil nature, in order either to direct the soul to its proper end or to subvert it with potentially disastrous and destructive consequences.

Both good and evil spirits cause ‘motions’ or movements in the soul, mind, will and affections. The language of motions or movements in the soul prior to choice is common to both the Spiritual Exercises and Shakespeare. In Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar*, for example, thinking about his own part in the plot to murder Caesar, Brutus says:

Between the acting of a dreadful thing  
 And the first motion, all the interim is  
 Like a phantasma, or a hideous dream:  
 The genius and the mortal instruments  
 Are then in council; and the state of man,  
 Like to a little kingdom, suffers then  
 The nature of an insurrection (2.1.63–9).

The effects of the ‘spirits’ in human consciousness are affective movements, dispositions, moods, feelings, desires, accompanied by thoughts and images. These movements precede and influence memory, understanding, judgement and will. Discernment of spirits, therefore, means paying attention to and reflecting on thoughts and images in the mind and on affective impulses, movements and moods. Its purpose is to distinguish between those which are good, in order to act on them, and those which tend towards evil in order to reject or act against them. In other words a human person experiences inner movements and counter-movements: a fundamental orientation or movement towards good, which is the action of the Spirit of God and ‘the good angels’, and counter-movements luring or pressing in the opposite direction.

The felt effects in human consciousness of the activity of the two kinds of spirits, in Ignatius’s view, are what he calls ‘consolation’ and ‘desolation’. Examples of experiences of consolation include ‘any interior movement’ which increases or deepens, faith, hope and love, or an ‘interior happiness’ which leaves ‘a soul quiet and at peace in her creator and lord’ (Munitiz and Endean 348–9). Desolation, on the other hand, is the exact opposite and typically includes, for example, ‘darkness and disturbance in the soul, attraction to what is low and of the earth, anxiety arising from various agitations and temptations’ (Munitiz and Endean 349).

These states of consolation and desolation are not static but dynamic: they move a person in a particular direction. Hence the central practical issue in discernment is the direction in which these moods and states of mind are moving a person. What are or might be the consequences of following the direction in which this person is being moved and acting it out in practice? At its heart, the movement of consolation is towards an increase and an acting out of faith, hope and generous, self-forgetful love; desolation typically leads to a downward spiral, a focus on self, a diminishment of faith, hope and love, a loss of generosity of spirit, bitterness, cynicism and even violence.

## Discernment of Spirits and *King Lear*

Evil spirits are as present and active in *Lear* as the weird sisters are in *Macbeth*. One of the striking features of the play is the number and variety of references to the devil, the ‘foul fiend’ and other evil spirits. Poor Tom’s ravings name the foul fiend over and over again as well as including a rich and varied collection of contemporary names for evil spirits, as in ‘Five fiends have been in Poor Tom at once, of lust, as Obidicut; Hobbididence, prince of dumbness; Mahu of stealing, Modo, of murder, Flibbertigibbet, of mopping and mowing, who since possesses chambermaids and waiting women’ (4.1.61–6). All Poor Tom’s study is ‘how to prevent the fiend and kill vermin’ (3.4.155). There is an indirect Jesuit connection here. Shakespeare has lifted the names of the spirits and many phrases in Tom’s colourful demonology directly from *A Declaration of Egregious Popishe Impostures*, an attack on Jesuit exorcists by Samuel Harsnett, Chaplain to the Bishop of London, published in 1603.<sup>3</sup> Later in the play, the Duke of Albany tells Goneril, his wife: ‘See thyself, devil!/ Proper deformity seems not in the fiend/ So horrid as in woman’ (4.2.60–2). And ‘Thou art a fiend/ A woman’s shape doth shield thee’ (4.2.67–8). Shakespeare also uses the language of discretion and discernment in this play. In Act 2, Regan tells her father: ‘You should be ruled and led/ By some discretion that discerns your state/Better than yourself’ (2.2.337–9).

## Choice and its Consequences

It can be argued that choice and its consequences are central driving forces in Shakespearean tragedy. The tragedies raise issues about moral evil, its nature, its causes and its effects, and clearly recognise that moral evil springs from human choices. The souls of Shakespeare’s tragic heroes are a battleground for struggles between forces of good and evil, and the choices they make affect not only themselves but also the moral, social and even cosmic orders they inhabit. *Macbeth*’s reason and power to choose are moved by supernatural solicitings represented by the witches. *Othello*’s actions are influenced by the deceits of Iago, while in *Hamlet* much attention is given to the central character’s capacity or incapacity to choose wisely and well. Similarly, the tragedy of *Lear*, in terms of both plot and character, is driven by the choices Lear makes early on in the play and their personal, social and political ramifications.

In approaching the issue of making good choices through discernment of spirits, Ignatius describes a distinction between two groups of people. This is important because for each group the activity of discernment involves very different processes (Munitiz and Endean 348). One group is made up of, in the words of the Exercises, ‘people

<sup>3</sup> See also the article by Shakespearean scholar Kenneth Muir in Works Cited. Muir comments: ‘... it may be argued that Harsnett’s book contributed more to *King Lear* than the source play. Holinshed, Spenser, or Sidney’ (11).

who go from one deadly sin to another’, which the Jesuit Michael Ivens in his commentary glosses as ‘anyone whose orientation in relation to the call to renounce sin and to love and serve God is one of regression, even if subtle and slow’ (Ivens 212). By contrast, ‘people who are making serious progress in the purification of their sins, and advancing from good to better in the service of God our Lord’ make up the second group (Munitiz and Endean 348). At least at the beginning of the play it seems clear that if we were to place Lear in one of these two groups, it would be the first. It cannot be said that Lear is ‘advancing from good to better’, though he may think he is. A dominant feature of his character and behaviour is excess: Kent begs Lear ‘in thy best consideration check this hideous rashness’ (1.1.151–2), and later Goneril comments: ‘The best and soundest of his time hath been but rash; then we must look from his age to receive not alone the imperfections of long-engrafted condition but therewithal the unruly waywardness that infirm and choleric years bring with them’ (1.1.296–300).

Other characters comment on his lack of self-knowledge and self-control. From the start the audience receives the impression that there is little rational order or control in the passions and attachments which rule his conduct. His main intent appears to be the satisfaction of his own needs and desires, however excessive they may be, and he is outraged when this is denied him.

His daughters Goneril and Regan perform the role of evil spirits by tempting him with flattery, fallacious reasoning and deceit, attacking him where he is most weak. This, according to the Spiritual Exercises, is a tactic adopted by ‘the enemy’ (Munitiz and Endean 351). Lear’s judgement of good and evil and his ability to ‘discern the spirits’ in his own heart are badly distorted and disordered. The personal consequence seems to be that, thwarted of the satisfaction of his disordered passions and attachments, he is plunged into a state of profound desolation. And this is played out not only in – what Ignatius describes as – ‘darkness and disturbance in the soul, attraction to what is low and of the earth, anxiety arising from various agitations and temptations’ (Munitiz and Endean 349) but even violent, destructive rage directed at his daughters and his closest followers, of which his treatment of Cordelia and Kent, his curses and the cruelty of the mock trial are examples. Furthermore, Lear’s choice, like Macbeth’s, generates more evil. The kingdom is divided between Goneril and Regan, who use their father’s conduct to justify their own cruelty. There is increasing hostility between the factions. Adultery flourishes, murders abound and the people who represent fidelity, generosity and integrity are banished. Lear acts out the impulses of his desolation and the evil spirits are let loose upon the land.

## **Dealing with Desolation**

A positive view of desolation as a potential source and moment of spiritual growth is a feature of Ignatian discernment. Whether the outcome is destructive or creative, however, depends on how it is handled, how a person chooses to respond to the experience. To follow out in thought, word and deed the direction in which the desolation is leading

is ultimately a destructive path. This is what Lear appears to be doing before and during the storm in his immoderate and barely controlled rage. The healthy and creative way to deal with desolation, on the other hand, by which it becomes an occasion for creativity and for genuine growth, is to resist it or act against it. Ignatius descends to considerable detail in his concern that the experience of desolation might have a positive outcome (Munitiz and Endean 350–2). One essential underlying disposition is this: ‘A person in desolation must endeavour to remain in an attitude of patience, for patience is opposed to the annoyances which come upon one’ (Munitiz and Endean 349–50). Returning to the play, therefore, it could be that the first sign of a profound moral change in Lear occurs even before the end of Act I when, after a violent outburst against Goneril’s ingratitude, Albany says, ‘Pray, sir, be patient’ (1.4.253). From that point onwards Lear prays and struggles for patience, the antidote to desolation. Likewise, towards the end of the play, showing ‘reason in madness’, Lear himself counsels blinded Gloucester: ‘Thou must be patient’ (4.6.171–4).

The Christian literature of spiritual guidance, like that of other faith communities, recommends the services of a wise guide or spiritual friend, a faithful, experienced companion to help with discernment of spirits and fostering spiritual growth. Ignatius suggests that such a person ‘should not be swayed or show a preference for one side or the other’ but should be ‘like the pointer of a balance’ (Munitiz and Endean, 286). Such companions are effective only when they have a measure of detachment and freedom, so that they are not sucked into the other’s consolation or desolation in such a way that their ability to offer help in discernment is compromised or weakened. They are aware of the other person’s pain or delight, but are able to stand firm on their own ground. They are committed and faithful to those whom they walk alongside, but not interested in possessing, dominating or manipulating them. This kind of companion is especially important if a person is experiencing extremes, powerful movements, of either consolation or desolation.

One of the beautiful paradoxes and ironies of this play is that it is the mad vagrant, Poor Tom, who turns out to be the wise and faithful companion, the ‘pointer of a balance’, who helps Lear and Gloucester to practise patience and to resist and act against the destructive power of their desolation.

## Change in Lear

In describing some features of discernment in the case of those who have little interest in spiritual progress, Ignatius points out that such people are not beyond the reach of the Spirit of God nor do they lack the capacity for moral change. He writes that : ‘with people of this kind, the good spirit ... caus[es] pricks of conscience and feelings of remorse by means of the power of rational moral judgement’ (Munitiz and Endean 348).

Earlier on, I pointed to a few features of Lear’s character which seem to be dominant at the beginning of the play: an excess and disorder in his passions and judgement – which are also reflected in his followers who make up a ‘disordered rabble’ (1.4.247) –,

an angry insistence on having his needs and desires satisfied and a lack of true self-knowledge. In the last part of this paper I want to suggest that there are signs that in the course of the play *Lear* is presented as undergoing change in each of these areas and that this is in line with what Ignatius says about discernment of spirits.

First, even as he begins to lose his wits, *Lear* has glimpses of understanding of the world and himself that show signs of a new attention to the fortunes of others, truer and more rational judgements and a recognition of his own shortcomings. Whereas at first he had insisted violently and angrily on the satisfaction of his own needs and desires, however excessive they might be, later, kneeling in prayer, he shows, for the first time, understanding and compassion towards the plight of the poor and his own neglect of this in the past:

Poor naked wretches, wheresoe'er you are,  
That bide the pelting of this pitiless storm,  
How shall your houseless heads and unfed sides,  
Your looped and windowed raggedness, defend you  
From seasons such as these? O, I have ta'en  
Too little care of this (3.4.28–33).

Again, a meeting with Edgar disguised as a shivering, ragged beggar, prompts the comment: 'Unaccommodated man is no more but such a poor, bare, forked animal as thou art' (3.4.105–6). When, later still, *Lear* meets Gloucester, he who had disregarded justice and insisted on imposing his own power on others, shows a clearer understanding as to how justice and power are used and abused in the world: 'See how yon justice rails upon yon simple thief ... change places and, hand-dandy, which is the justice, which is the thief?' (4.6. 147–50). And, a few lines later on:

Through tattered clothes great vices do appear;  
Robes and furred gowns hide all. Plate sin with gold,  
And the strong lance of justice hurtless breaks;  
Arm it in rags, a pigmy's straw does pierce it (4.6.160–4).

As he descends into madness, therefore, Shakespeare gives *Lear* moments of a more genuine moral insight into the reality of himself and the world and the faintest beginnings of a moral conversion by way of the 'prick of conscience'. It is in the depths of his brokenness that *Lear* starts to change.

## Concluding Comments

I am not assuming or claiming that Shakespeare knew the Spiritual Exercises or that he had Jesuit connections in Lancashire or elsewhere, as has sometimes been suggested. But it does seem clear that Shakespeare and Ignatius shared elements of a common Christian culture and the vocabulary that goes with it. Some of this language, including for example, such phrases as 'motions in the soul', and 'ordinate' or 'ordered' and 'inordinate' or 'disordered' affections and attachments, had no doubt passed into everyday

speech via sermons and the literature of spiritual guidance and care of souls. Some of these terms and ideas are found in Shakespeare's plays and were no doubt easily understood by his audiences. Here I have tried to show that looking at *Lear* through the lens of discernment of spirits does in fact give us a window into what is going on beneath the surface, so to speak, of the action of the play and, as a consequence, into some aspects of Shakespeare's mind and intentions and his understanding of tragedy. Those insights also have repercussions in the readers' or playgoers' understanding of themselves and their world and, for those of us who are concerned with fostering and supporting spiritual life and growth in others, they have echoes relevant to the practice of discernment in our own times. Finally, what I also find fascinating is the coincidence or convergence between, on the one hand, Shakespeare's intuitions about character, sin and virtue, the workings of good and evil and the paths of spiritual growth and, on the other hand, Ignatius's rather cautious and carefully worded guidelines drawn from his own and centuries of Christian experience and reflection.

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# Translation: A Space of Yearning and Exploration

by JEAN WARD

The image used in the title of Michael Paul Gallagher's 2001 study *Dive Deeper: The Human Poetry of Faith* has implications which, because of their very obviousness, might easily be overlooked: one can only 'dive deeper' in one very specific and sharply defined place at a time; and that place is no wider than the width of the diver's own body. In this discussion I shall argue that translation, which has come to be so much a part of my life, is similar to diving in both these ways. Its essence is detail and the local; and the voyage of discovery on which it sends us is limited by aspects of one's own particular person and experience. My comments are therefore set unapologetically within a framework of personal reference. So often I have been surprised by the way that a translation, read beside the original, will reveal something in it that I had not seen, or that the process of translating will draw attention to details that might not seem important when the original text is read alone. Translation – by which I mean both the activity and its outcome – involves a negotiation between cultures, and when we translate we enter a space of exploration, where the ground is uncertain and the searching never finished. Correspondingly, when we experience a translation as listeners or readers, we find ourselves in a place where the sands are inclined to shift and where we may suddenly catch glimpses of things unfamiliar and strange.

Although a sense of being unfinished and provisional, of being no more than a compromise with the infinity of the possible, attaches to most kinds of writing, in the case of translation this sense is undoubtedly heightened. If we want to read Homer or Dante in English now, we do not usually turn to the translations of past centuries; indeed, we probably recognise very few of the names of the people responsible for them. Instead, we look for a modern 'Englishing', into a version of the language as we know it. Translations are written for their own times, and most are subject to continual superseding. In this respect, then, they are temporary and provisional, an ever-open invitation to others to go back to the original text and try again, each translator in turn straining after an impossible ideal. If Ronald Knox is right, what is expected of a translator seems straightforward: 'you must find out what the original means; you must try to express in your own language what the other man was trying to express in his' (67). In practice, this simple-sounding goal proves endlessly elusive, and every approximation to it prompts as many questions as it answers.

The searching and unfinished nature of the activity of translating, and the fact that its outcome is never the final statement, is well captured in the almost epic simile with which Knox begins the last chapter of his reflections on translating the Bible, from

which I have just quoted. Knox carried out this task single-handed, in the space of nine years, an astonishing achievement that may remind us of St Jerome, whose Vulgate version of the Bible was in fact the basis for Knox's: a translation of a translation. Literary as this remark is, it also bears the rueful marks of a translator's real experience:

As the traveller, lost in some impenetrable jungle, and convinced that he will never make his way out of it alive, sits down to blaze on a tree-trunk the record of his wanderings, for the benefit of some luckier *explorer* [emphasis added] in times to come; so the translator, *seeing the end before him of a task which can never be complete* [emphasis added], is fain to draw breath, to look around him, and to meditate on the *reflex principles* [emphasis added] which have guided him *thus far* [emphasis added]. (84)

Many aspects of translation that will be important to my discussion are implied in this passage. First, there is its exploratory nature, and the immense difficulty of the enterprise; second, there is a sense of the intuitive, not entirely conscious, faculties that it involves ['reflex principles']; and third, there is the conviction that even the end-product of the task is a compromise, its completeness only illusory. The exploration goes on; we have only come 'thus far'.

In Michael Edwards's book *Towards a Christian Poetics* – one of the works which has inspired my discussion, and one which certainly arises out of the writer's own experience as a creator, translator and reader of poetry in two languages – there is a startlingly original suggestion concerning translation. It is the idea that in between the original and its translation a silent space, a 'third text' (163), comes into existence, which is an expression both of yearning for one absent, perfect language, imagined as existing in Eden, and of hope reaching out towards a new heaven and a new earth. This silent 'third text', if it is not that absent language, is at least the yearning towards it; and in so being, says Edwards, it 'becomes the most eloquent of the three utterances, its absence a powerful presence, its blankness and silence a way towards Pentecost' (176).

This is to place the activity of translation, which as every translator knows is deeply 'down-to-earth', grounded in the particular, in what Edwards would probably call a rather 'steep' perspective, in which the local becomes the site of infinite play and 'possibility', to use one of the terms most important to him. In the following reflections, I shall consider translation from the point of view of its earthliness and practicality, the sheer hard work involved; its extreme 'localness', like the extreme localness of diving; and also in the light of this astonishingly bold conception of Edwards, which lifts the activity and its result into the realm of what can only be termed spiritual exploration. For if the conception of the 'third text', the unseen and silent space, holds, then it means that translation – as long as it is not purely utilitarian, as long as it has about it even the remotest element of art, of the gratuitous, to invoke the terms of David Jones's discussion (143–79) – always has the potential to be a spiritual activity. It can always be a witness to and expression of spiritual longing, for a lost or looked-for oneness and completeness, regardless of whether the 'first' and 'second' texts involved register any overt interest in such matters, still less whether they recognise the concepts of Babel or Pentecost, which are central to Edwards's discussion. In this way the always incomplete na-

ture of translation can be a way of ‘pointing beyond [...] to what is perfect and whole’, as William Blissett puts it in another, not utterly different context, in an early review of Jones’s *Anathemata*, a long poem which moves continually among the words of different languages and of different subsets of English.

I have suggested above that the ‘diving deeper’ of translation demands a high degree of personal involvement; it is in a sense a way of thinking, even a way of living. In my case, I see that its origins go back at least to the end of my school days. At the time that I took the entrance exam to read English at Oxford, the papers included so-called ‘unseen’ written translation from Latin and from a modern language, in my case French. I knew not a single word of Polish in those days (I was only to begin learning the language thirteen years later), but I always found moving between one language and another an exhilarating experience. When during my first year of studies we were required not only to study nineteenth and twentieth century texts, but also to learn the Old English of the ninth and tenth centuries, a language that was effectively foreign, requiring to be translated, I was not in the least inclined to complain. I found it exciting when the choir I sang with performed Brahms’s *Deutsches Requiem* because although I had never learned any German, with the help of my newly acquired knowledge of Anglo-Saxon I could recognise many words in the text and sometimes see how their meanings and associations had evolved in different directions in English and German. Take, for example, the very first sentence of Brahms’s text, taken from Luther’s translation of the Bible: ‘Selig sind, die da Leid tragen, denn sie sollen getröstet werden – Blessed are they that mourn; for they shall be comforted’ (Matt. 5: 4). It was thrilling to notice the correspondence of *selig* with the Old English word *gesælig*, ‘happy, fortuitous, prosperous’ and then Middle English *sely*, ‘innocent, guileless’, knowing how far in meaning the modern English word ‘silly’, the descendant of Old English *gesælig*, had moved in meaning from that of a common Germanic root. To think of such things is to be taken deeper into one’s own language and find everyday words defamiliarised, so that what seemed obvious ceases to be so.

In the second and third year of my degree course I chose the much less popular option, the so-called Course II, which gave me leisure, instead of having to gallop through everything in between Chaucer and the nineteenth-century novel, to dive still deeper into the language and literature of Old and Middle English and the early modern period. In more recent years the delight of this choice has returned to me as I have become acquainted with the work of David Jones and pondered the inspiration of the Anglo-Saxon poem known as ‘The Dream of the Rood’ for him, as well as the ways in which the tradition represented by this remarkable work has made itself felt over the centuries. It was also translation, in a broad sense, that led me later to the subject of my doctor’s thesis, on what I called the ‘image’ of Eliot in Polish literary consciousness. I happened to come across some poems by Tadeusz Różewicz in a bilingual edition – published by Wydawnictwo Literackie, a venerable Polish publishing house with a tradition in this area. In the moving metaphysical yearning expressed in these poems, I felt an undercurrent of hidden, subtle and usually rather contrary reference to Eliot, though I had never heard that Różewicz took any interest in this poet, and the world-views and style of the two seemed on the surface extremely different. It was this intriguing discov-

ery, the looking at Eliot's poetry, from one point of view so well-known to me, from another angle, and reading both poets 'in translation', as it were, each reflecting on the other, that brought me consciously into the space of exploration that translation involves and was eventually to lead me towards a deeper study of religious poetry.

I wrote my thesis in Polish; but it is located in a borderland where two languages, literary traditions and conventions of discourse, and various kinds of historical experience converge and diverge. In a sense, also, the course of my own life has brought me into this kind of border territory, where I live 'in translation': a Polish-speaking English woman, a convert to Roman Catholicism brought up in the Anglican Church, striving to explore the places where these various cultures meet. And it is Eliot who defines these places for me: they seem to me indeed to be spaces of spiritual exploration, where I constantly hope finally, as Eliot puts it at the end of 'Little Gidding', to 'arrive where we started / And know the place for the first time'.

It is often through the tasks of translation that I have undertaken over the years since becoming familiar with the Polish language that I have been taken deeper in understanding of cultural and historical difference. Translation makes us reflect on the processes and developments that lead us to find some things familiar and others alien and challenging, taking us into an exploratory space beyond our daily habits and horizons of thought. For example, in the year 2000 I was asked to translate some texts for an album to commemorate the opening of the military cemeteries at Katyn, Charkov and Miednoye, where thousands of Polish officers and citizens secretly massacred in 1940 were finally given recognition. It was a task that brought me face to face with incomprehensible strangeness. In such a context, phrases like 'They fell on the field of glory' sounded impossible to me, brought up as I was on the poetry of Siegfried Sassoon and Wilfred Owen. It was this that really brought home to me the force of Paul Fussell's thesis that one of the 'casualties' of World War I was the 'high diction' of war poetry, which poems such as 'Base Details' or 'Dulce et Decorum Est' rendered unusable. I learned then that the discomfort I felt with such innocent expressions of patriotism as I found in the Polish album was culturally conditioned, and the experience of translating became one of 'diving deeper'. At the same time, I realised that Fussell was wrong to imply that the 'high diction' collapsed principally under the pressure of appalling experience, that of the trenches of World War I. If appalling experience in itself were sufficient to destroy that diction, then how could it survive in Poland after Katyn? It is surely something else that accounts for the fact that such passages as the one below sound so *odd* in English, so awkward and embarrassing, as if English words were being used to express concepts that do not belong to the language:

I SUMMON YOU!

You who were murdered in Charkov, Katyn, Tver and other as yet unknown places of brutality in the East.

All of you whose bodies were turned to nothing, crowded into nameless ditches and mutilated by those who many times tried to keep the site of this brutal massacre hidden from the world.

ANSWER THE ROLL-CALL!

FALLEN IN GLORY ON THE FIELD!

This passage, in spite of its brevity, reveals much about what it means to be Polish, based as it is on assumptions that are deeply rooted in the nation's tradition and at the same time very remote from the outlook of most present-day English speakers. I translated its title as 'Roll of Honour for the Murdered Dead'. But the roll of honour, in which the names of those who died in battle are listed, is only the equivalent of the Polish here in the respect that it honours the memory of the dead. It is not a summons of any kind. Perhaps, then, a more accurate translation of the title might be 'roll call', the phrase I used in the text itself. A roll-call, however, is a summons to the *living* to answer to their names, and here the summons is not to the living but to the *dead*; the words are spoken not only about them, but to them. To the English ear, the direct appeal to the 'murdered dead' in a cemetery is spine-chilling; for in the collective consciousness reflected in English literature since at least the times of the Gothic novel, the graveyard is a haunted place, a place to stay away from at night, unless one has a taste for witchcraft. But in the culture that produced Mickiewicz's *Forefathers' Eve*, cemeteries are not places to be avoided or feared. Instead, as the customary celebrations of All Saints' and All Souls' Days imply, they are places where one goes to sense the friendly presence of the dead. As an expression of culture, regardless of how it corresponds or does not correspond to individual and personal belief, the direct appeal to the dead could be seen as a sign of thought patterns shaped by a Roman Catholic rather than Protestant approach to the doctrine of the communion of saints.<sup>1</sup> Prayers for the dead are not typically associated with most forms of Protestant liturgy, and calling *on* the dead to be present in a cemetery, in an English-language context, might smack less of appropriate reverence for one's fathers than of crossing into forbidden spiritual territory.

Thus the short passage quoted leads us to ponder issues of cultural and religious history and difference. Most forcibly of all, the language of the passage strikes the English reader as almost indecently inappropriate: when we have heard how the dead were killed and what was done with their bodies, the words 'Fallen in glory on the field' sound like a mockery, or like the most crass and shocking of insensitivities.<sup>2</sup> Why should this be? To find a possible answer to this question, it seems to me that we must look back to how the writing of such poets as Sassoon and Owen affected concepts of patri-

<sup>1</sup> 'Prochem jesteś i w proch się obrócisz, ale Pan cię wskrzesi w dniu ostatecznym. Żyj w pokoju' [Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return, but the Lord will raise thee on the last day. Live in peace] – these are the words spoken by the priest *to* the person whose body lies in the coffin as he casts earth on it. Whereas in the traditional Anglican rite of burial we find words spoken *about*, not to, the dead:

'Then, while the earth shall be cast upon the Body by some standing by, the Minister shall say, UNTO Almighty God we commend the soul of our *brother* departed, and we commit *his* body to the ground; earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust; in sure and certain hope of the Resurrection unto eternal life, through our Lord Jesus Christ, at whose coming in glorious majesty to judge the world, the earth and the sea shall give up their dead; and the corruptible bodies of those who sleep in him shall be changed, and made like unto his own glorious body; according to the mighty working whereby he is able to subdue all things unto himself'.

<sup>2</sup> For a possible way of talking about these events in English, we might turn to Hilary Davies's poem, 'The Prisoner of Katyn', from the sequence of the same name in *The Shanghai Owner of the Bonsai Shop*.

otism. During the years 1914 – 1918, the revelation of the horror of the trenches coincided with a sense of betrayal by those in authority, a breakdown of the nation's sense of unity and common purpose. Whether this was justified is another matter; I am well aware that the tendency today is to regard the poets' judgments of the conduct of the Great War as unfair. But even if these judgments have wrongly dominated the narrative and distorted the public perception of that war, nevertheless, their influence has been profound, casting doubt on the concepts of nation and patriotism. In contrast, very broadly speaking there has never been any doubt in Polish history as to who the aggressors were, and they have been outside. As a result, the whole national-Romantic tradition is still alive, and it is still possible to refer to a soldier's death, even in the most treacherous and degrading circumstances, as 'glorious'. Indeed, some even find it possible to apply the vocabulary of the fallen patriotic hero in ways which are deeply ambiguous and painfully divisive, as for example in reference to those who perished in the Smolensk plane crash in 2010. In English, I suggest, Horace's maxim 'Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori' evokes a response of cynicism, if not revulsion, because the concept of 'patria' has become suspect. The pointless, wasted sacrifice of so many lives in a uselessly prolonged war came to be seen, not as glorious, but only as pitiful and terrible.

Where does this leave the translator? When such a clash of assumptions between the original and the translation makes itself felt, there may be nothing to be done but to leave the foreignness to speak for itself. Its very strangeness will then be a sign pointing beyond, bringing us into a space of exploration, where we transcend the boundaries of our own history and cultural experience and go out to meet the other. The principle generally favoured by the great Polish translator-poet Stanisław Barańczak is to find a paradigm in the language of the translation that will liquidate the sense of strangeness, making the translated text part of the culture of the new language; and this might also seem to be the goal that Ronald Knox sets himself when he writes, 'Any translation is a good one in proportion as you can forget, while reading it, that it is a translation at all' (94). But sometimes communication may be better achieved if the reader of the translation is shocked into realising how, specifically, his or her thinking is different from that of speakers of the original language. This can be a way of stepping out into a space of exploration: of ourselves and the cultures that shape us. Translation can make us reflect on questions that without it we might not even think of asking.

To take another, very different example of how translation can lead us into that exploratory space, let us now turn to a piece of correspondence between the Polish poet Czesław Miłosz and the American Trappist monk, Thomas Merton. During the centenary of Miłosz's birth in 2011, I was invited to contribute to a conference held in Kraków on the 'American Miłosz'. The aim was to focus attention on the Polish poet in relation to the context in which he lived for a large part of his creative life, and I chose to speak about the decade-long correspondence that he conducted with Merton. The exchange has a curious publication history. It was conducted in English (a choice that in itself calls for attention, since Merton offered to write in French, which at that stage would certainly have been easier for Miłosz); but its first publication was in a Polish translation, made not by Miłosz himself but by Maria Tarnowska in 1991. It was only later, in 1997,

that the original English letters were published, with the title *Striving Towards Being*. Now it is very interesting to compare this extremely unusual 'original' with its translation. Anyone who knows Miłosz's poetry must surely be struck by the impression of struggle and incomplete command of the language that his letters evoke in their original English, and this becomes even more noticeable when contrasted with the linguistic elegance and control implied by the Polish translation.

Whether the task of rendering the letters of Thomas Merton into Polish entailed any particular difficulties for the translator, I cannot say; but I am quite sure that she encountered no problems at all in translating the letters of the other partner out of English. For Miłosz's 'original' letters were already effectively a kind of translation: from the Polish in his head. Under the English word surface, the sentences flow as if 'in Polish'; and when translated back into the language that was in his head, they become natural-sounding and deeply refined. To illustrate this, we need look no further than the opening of Miłosz's reply to Merton's attempt to initiate contact:

Dear Mr Merton,

Your letter travelled quite a long time. I thank you cordially for it and feel it created already a tie between us.

It would be unfair, given the rarity of the circumstances (it is not every day that one engages in correspondence with a Trappist monk, in a language not one's own to boot!) to criticise Miłosz for not being cognisant of the accepted mode of address. But in this short passage we find a whole range of other linguistic and stylistic phenomena, which, even if they are not precisely mistakes, are nevertheless in subtle ways not quite natural in English. For the passage to sound like something a native speaker of English might conceivably write, a whole range of changes would have to be made. Something like this, perhaps: 'Thank you very much for your letter. It took a long time to reach me, but I feel as if what you wrote has already somehow made a bond between us'.

Countless examples of this kind are to be found in Miłosz's letters to Merton. But all the 'mistakes' – or rather, departures from natural English – evident in them become explicable when we try 'translating' the letters into Polish, or when we compare them with the translation made by Tarnowska. It then becomes clear that in order to obtain a stylish and elegant Polish text, one only has to restore the Polish sentences that lie hidden under the cloak of the English words. Miłosz's slightly foreign English is thus in itself a symbol of the problem of exile, of existential and spiritual estrangement that preoccupies him here as in all his writing. At the same time, however, writing in English – writing 'in translation', as it were, from his own language – enabled him to enter into a space of exploration and discovery, where he could find, paradoxically, a childlike freedom and innocence of expression and meet his 'correspondent', a fellow-sufferer from spiritual homelessness, in sympathetic understanding, despite every difference in external experience. Each partner in this exchange, searching for someone who 'spoke the same language', as Merton put it (40), found what he sought in a person who, in the literal sense, did not. In Miłosz's original English letters, already effectively translations, the boundary between original and translation becomes blurred. Perhaps we might even

say, following Edwards, that the boundary, instead of being a dividing line, acquires a third dimension; it becomes a conjoining space, a third text, in which two 'correspondents' of different origins and different experience can each go out beyond themselves, 'striving towards being', as implied by the English title of the correspondence.

Translation, however, with all its inspiring potential for joyful exploration and spiritual growth, is also frequently a painful labour, as we can see when we compare the English of Miłosz's letters to Merton with the Polish that was evidently in his head. Stanisław Barańczak writes with a sense both of the immense effort involved and of the hopelessness of the task of the writer who attempts to translate his work into another language: 'While attempting to hammer the peg of his work into the hard, resisting log of a foreign culture, he cannot help but damage both bits of timber' (431). Seamus Heaney makes the following wonderfully vivid comment on his first essays at translating *Beowulf* in the mid 1980s:

It was labour-intensive work, scriptorium-slow. I proceeded dutifully like a sixth-former at homework. I would set myself twenty lines a day, write out my glossary of hard words in longhand, try to pick a way through the syntax, get the run of the meaning established in my head and then hope that the lines could be turned into metrical shape and raised to the power of verse. Often, however, the whole attempt to turn it into modern English seemed to me like trying to bring down a megalith with a toy hammer. (xxii)

Ronald Knox's image of the labour of translation is similarly lively: 'The translator who understands his job feels, constantly, like Alice in Wonderland trying to play croquet with flamingoes [sic] for mallets and hedgehogs for balls; words are for ever eluding his grasp' (11). For words in one language do not have exact and unchanging equivalents in another that apply in all circumstances; most ordinary words in any given language have a range of meanings and associations, and moreover these constantly change and evolve (see Barańczak 435–6). For Knox, the only remedy for these problems is to keep in mind the extreme particularity, the localness, of the translator's work: 'Your duty as a translator is to think up the right expression, though it may have to be a paraphrase, which will give the reader the exact shade of meaning *here* and *here* and *here*' (11–12) – where each 'here' may require a different expression in the target language for the same word in the original.

The 'diving deeper' of translation, as suggested by the remarks of all the practitioners I have mentioned, is always particular, and always immensely demanding. In addition, it requires a kind of humility of the translator, who is often largely invisible. His or her name on the published work is frequently not prominent, while the original author's is – so in a strange kind of cross-over, the original text and the translator disappear, replaced by the translation and the original author. The self-effacingness expected of the translator can be a painful experience of being overlooked by people blissfully unaware of the time, commitment and love involved, who regard translation as a service that needs no acknowledgement after it has been paid for, since it is seen as belonging to the sphere of the merely utile rather than that of art, to use David Jones's distinction. Fame does not accrue to translators *as such* in the way that it does to other authors;

Heaney, for example, is known as a poet, and only incidentally as a translator. More often than not, the work of translation is only noticed and valued by other translators. This of course was not always the case; it is sufficient to recall John Donne's poem, placed at the opening of the *Sidney Psalter*, in praise of the translators' achievement, or John Keats's frequently anthologised sonnet 'On First Looking into Chapman's Homer'. But in our own time, even in a culture highly conscious of the importance of translation, the Polish scholar Anna Legeżyńska has had to argue anew for something that in the past was clearly self-evident. Legeżyńska has written extensively on the authorial capacities of the translator, which she places on a level with the capacity of the writer of the original text, calling the translator its 'second' or 'other' author.

Edwards makes still higher claims for translation, viewing it as a process of re-connection and recovery, an 'undoing' of the Tower of Babel, in which human language moves away from its 'confounding', restoring communication, hinting towards community. While it would be too much to see in this more than a faint glimpse of the idea of the communion of saints, there may nevertheless be in translation a means towards a kind of spiritual communion between writers or texts, linking what Legeżyńska calls the 'second author' with the 'first'. There is some way in which, whatever critical framework we apply, we hear the text, in the original and in the translation, as the voice of a person, and in between them, I suggest, there is a space of a kind of dialogue, a perhaps surprising space of sympathetic communication. As a translator, I listen, and I try to show that I understand, or how I understand, what the original writer is saying by reshaping it in my own words – which are also the words of a different language. In this way I am drawn to the original writer, I try to think and feel as he or she does. If this communication really works, it can lead to an astonishing and humbling consequence, in which the distinction between author and 'second author' seems even to disappear. The seventeenth-century translator of Horace, Wentworth Dillon, advised translators to 'choose an author as you choose a friend' and suggested that in the 'sympathetic bond' of intimacy with the writer of the original, in which 'Your thoughts, your words, your styles, your souls agree', the translator becomes 'No longer his interpreter, but he' (34–5).

In Mark Burrows's introduction to a recent anthology which includes translated poetry, it is suggested that poetry calls us to 'attune our minds through the practice of attention'. In a world in which '[s]peed has come to measure the outward shape of our experience' (xiv), poems belong to an inner dimension which cannot be harried or hurried, where instead we must 'attend to the surfaces of things', finding there 'traces of a larger and deeper excess' (xviii). David Jones, attempting to explain the significance of the title to his first work of literary art, *In Parenthesis*, writes: 'I have written it in a kind of space between—I don't know between quite what—but as you turn aside to do something' (38). The motif of turning aside, of taking time to pay attention, which occurs so frequently also in the poetry of R. S. Thomas, takes us back to the story of the burning bush; it was only when God saw that Moses 'turned aside to see', that He spoke to him (Ex. 3). If Moses had passed by without paying attention, there would have been no revelation. From this, in the poem 'The Bright Field', Thomas, with one of his heart-stopping enjambments across a stanza break, draws the following conclusion:

... . Life is not hurrying  
 on to a receding future, nor hankering after  
 an imagined past. It is the turning  
 aside like Moses to the miracle  
 of the lit bush, to a brightness  
 that seemed as transitory as your youth  
 once, but is the eternity that awaits you.

It is matters of this kind that Heaney seems to have in mind when in the same essay he refers to ‘Stephen Dedalus’s enigmatic declaration that the shortest way to Tara was via Holyhead, implying that departure from Ireland and inspection of the country from the outside was the surest way of getting to the core of Irish experience’ (40). The process of translating, and sometimes, as in this case, the reading of a translation, can be a way of temporarily leaving behind one’s own experience and world-view. It can be a means of opening the imagination to other ways of seeing and revealing how much of ourselves we may find in them. This exploring can then also allow us to return, with deepened understanding and fellow-feeling, to what we are and where we stand. Even if, while we live, the journey of exploration can only take us, as Ronald Knox put it, ‘thus far’, translating, and translation can nevertheless help us in our exploring and bring us back to what we thought we knew, but learning, in Eliot’s words, to ‘know the place for the first time’.

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# ‘Heaven in Ordinary, Man Well Dressed’. Poetry and the Language of Prayer and Worship

by DAVID JASPER

In an introduction written in 1927 to R.C. Trench’s now forgotten but in its day oft-reprinted work *On the Study of Words* (1851), the literary scholar George Sampson wrote of the truth ‘that words have a genuine life of their own’, but that now a lively interest in words has been ‘almost swamped by indifference. Purley has other diversions’ (ix). His final allusion to Purley will, I suspect, escape most people today. But at the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century any reasonably well-read person interested in language would have known John Horne Tooke’s *Epea Pteroenta, or, The Diversions of Purley* (1786-1805). Far and away the leading philologist of his day and a friend of the poet S.T. Coleridge, Tooke deserves greater attention than he has lately received in the attention given to linguistics and philology. In the first part of his work Tooke sets out to establish language within the context of the empiricism of John Locke. Thus Tooke denies the mind any creative role in the formation of language. Rather he seeks to show that all speech can be reduced to the noun and the verb, nouns being, following Aristotle in *De Interpretatione*, both historically and logically prior to verbs.

The noun/verb debate actually goes as far back as Plato’s *Sophist* and *Cratylus*, and has more recently been revisited by Catherine Pickstock in her argument in *After Writing: On the Liturgical Consummation of Philosophy* (1998) that it is actually in Platonic philosophy that we encounter a primacy of liturgical theory and practice. To this thesis we will return later in more detail. But it is Coleridge’s development of Horne Tooke’s linguistic theory that is of most significance. In September 1800, Coleridge wrote to William Godwin encouraging him to ‘*philosophize* Horn [sic] Tooke’s System’ for, Coleridge goes on, ‘I would endeavor to destroy the old antithesis of *Words* and *Things*, elevating, as it were, words in *Things* & living *Things* too’ (*Collected Letters* 351–2). This is a brief summation of what has become known as the ‘fiduciary’ understanding of language (Coulson 14–37), perceiving words as living organisms that resist any reduction into what Coleridge calls ‘a Chaos grinding itself into compatibility’ (Snyder 138). In these discussions we are not very far from the later Wittgenstein of the *Philosophical Investigations*, but more significantly for us, language that is understood as fiduciary suggests a form of liturgical language that was rarely discussed in the energetic debates on the language of worship in both Roman Catholic and Protestant churches that followed the Second Vatican Council.

Certainly I do not wish to rehearse here, as an Anglican, the language debates that have focused upon the loss of the linguistic glories of the Cranmerian liturgies, or the attempts to produce liturgy in a straightforward and comprehensible 'modern' English. For, we are neither citizens of the sixteenth century, nor should liturgical language be straightforward or necessarily be easily understood. But it is not the vocabulary and particular words that I am concerned with here so much as the form of liturgical language. Most of my examples will be from the liturgies of the Church of England, though no doubt they will illuminate issues in other traditions as well.

Prior to the publication of *Common Worship* in 2000, Michael Perham wrote that 'the main texts of any future service book will be in modern English, not unlike the style of the present book' (Perham 67). A few years earlier the Preface to the *Alternative Service Book* (1980) suggested that 'words, even agreed words, are only the beginning of worship' (11). Both of these statements are incorrect. Liturgical language, like all theological language, but perhaps especially so, is odd and strange. Nor are words the *beginning* of worship: they are the very heart of worship, living things that, in Coleridge's description, reflecting upon Ezekiel's vision, 'move in conjunction and form the living chariot that bears up (for us) the throne of the Divine Humanity' (*The Statesman's Manual* 29).

Words are gestures, becoming physical in their utterance, and the words of our liturgy are suspended between the oral and the textual, with a clear bias towards the former. Such words have a shaping power, resisting the privatization of religion that has crept upon Christianity in the Western churches. The words that are uttered in the liturgy are never quite straightforward, for like poetry, the language of worship defamiliarizes and makes strange, thereby shifting the very categories of time and place. To repeat the direct theology of Bishop Lancelot Andrewes on the Incarnation, used again by T.S. Eliot in 'Gerontion', we hear and behold 'the Word within a word, unable to speak a word' (Pfatteicher 29).

Underlying these reflections on the language of worship is a broad thesis that has been proposed most clearly by Catherine Pickstock in her book *After Writing: On the Liturgical Consummation of Philosophy* (1998). I have many reservations about this book, but its proposal is persuasive, not least in its careful examination of the 'space of doxology' in the Medieval Mass of the Roman Rite. Beginning with the orality and suspicion of writing in Plato's *Phaedrus*, Pickstock seeks to show:

How philosophy itself, in its Platonic guise, did not assume, as has been thought, a primacy of metaphysical presence, but rather a primacy of liturgical theory and practice. This same primacy ... was developed, and more consistently realized, in medieval Christendom. However, it will also be described how it was during this period that the destruction from within of a liturgical city and doxology, took place, culminating eventually in the restoration, during the early modern period and beyond, of those very Greek sophistic positions which the Platonic liturgical philosophy had initially refused. (xii)

It is precisely this liturgical and doxological loss in early modernism that characterizes the difficulties of articulation in twentieth century liturgical reform, and I will suggest that a radical review of the deep structures of the language of worship is necessary,

rather than simply an adaptation of languages and vocabulary, too often textual rather than oral, to the conventions of the contemporary world. As Philip Pfatteicher has succinctly expressed it, ‘Changing language is generally not the place to begin. It is too easy, and it is too deceptive’ (Pfatteicher viii). Furthermore, it should be noted that liturgical language is not natural to us; rather it is a language that must be learnt, like music or poetry (Pfatteicher 68).

Behind Pickstock lies the work of the French philosopher Jean-Luc Marion, the theologian Jean-Yves Lacoste and his Heideggerian sense of ‘living liturgically’, and above all, Henri Cardinal de Lubac in his magisterial work on the Eucharist and Church in the Middle Ages, *Corpus Mysticum* (1944). But important though this is my concern here is with language more immediately and simply.

Although the processes of liturgical reform in the later twentieth century have seen somewhat anxious, and finally unsuccessful, exchanges with poets, it is correct to affirm that ‘liturgy is not poetry’ (Ramshaw 10). Yet this is not to suggest that liturgical language is not, in a sense, ‘poetic’, and it will be valuable to examine the form of such language through a reading of a poem of one of the most ‘liturgical’ of English poets – the seventeenth century priest George Herbert. As an ordained Anglican, Herbert was saturated in the languages and rhythms of both the Bible, and the Elizabethan Book of Common Prayer of 1559, which, might be described as a handbook of Protestant humanism, the prayer book of a queen ‘who read Isocrates and Cicero, Saint Cyprian and Philip Melancthon, and was well acquainted with the works of Desiderius Erasmus’s (Booty 332). Herbert wrote two poems entitled ‘Prayer’, and here is the less well known of these.

Of what an easie quick accesse,  
 My blessed Lord, art thou! How suddenly  
 May our requests thine eare invade!  
 To shew that state dislikes not easinesse.  
 If but I lift mine eyes, my suit is made:  
 Thou canst no more not heare, then thou canst die.  
 Of what supreme almightie power  
 Is thy great arm which spans the east and west,  
 And tacks the centre to the sphere!  
 By it do all things live their measur’d hour:  
 We cannot ask the thing, which is not there,  
 Blaming the shallownesse of our request.  
 Of what unmeasurable love  
 Art thou possesst, who, when thou couldst not die,  
 Wert fain to take our flesh and curse,  
 And for our sakes in person sinne reprove,  
 That by destroying that which ty’d thy purse,  
 Thou mightst make way for liberalitie!  
 Since then these three wait on thy throne,  
*Ease, Power, and Love*; I value prayer so,  
 That were I to leave all but one,  
 Wealth, fame, endowments, vertues, all should go;

I and deare prayer would together dwell,  
And quickly gain, for each inch lost, an ell. (Herbert 371–2)

I will restrict myself to a few observations on this poem under four headings, recognizing that this is a conversation of the soul with God, both a private devotion and a communal prayer.

Firstly, the poem is based upon a biblical premise: ‘And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive’ (Matt. 21:22 AV). Biblical phrases and resonances sound throughout the poem. ‘If I but lift mine eyes’ in verse one echoes the psalms set for Morning Prayer on Day 27 each month in the Prayer Book – Psalms 121 (1) and 123 (1). Secondly, the vocabulary is simple, somewhere between oral and written language. But by careful use of figures of speech, above all metaphor, Herbert, in true ‘metaphysical’ manner, is continually challenging, defamiliarizing the everyday in riddles and shifting images. In verse one God’s court is contrasted with the highly formal protocol of the Elizabethan and Stuart English court by its ease of access through prayer, by which my ‘suit is made’ (Herbert 371). And there is the use of ‘invade’ – a violent war-like quality, even in prayer – ushering in the military theme of the second verse. Thirdly, in the final couplet of the poem, Herbert takes the familiar proverb of the inch and the ell, which he uses elsewhere in his poem ‘The Church-porch’ (Herbert 62). Then, by chiasmus he reverses its normal use, developing further the theme and metaphors of measuring that run through the whole poem. Finally, verse three embraces the theology of incarnation and the redemption achieved through it. Good prayer, in Herbert, is always theological, embedded in dramatic metaphors and images.

These brief observations serve to indicate the carefully crafted language of Herbert’s poetry as it bleaches into prayer and worship. The developing themes and images of the poem, echoing scripture and resonating dramatically, challenging and creative, are motivated by rhetorical tropes – there are examples in these four short verses of metaphor, oxymoron, asyndeton, apostrophe, anaphora and chiasmus, used deliberately and effectively but carefully hidden, requiring few technical or theological words.

And so I turn to some examples of liturgical prayer and language in the twentieth century, their difficulties and their success when compared with the elements and form of Herbert’s verse. It needs to be emphasized that liturgical language requires to be both taught and learnt, for it is not the language of common social communication. Reflect on these two statements: ‘I saw Brian at the station this morning’ and ‘I saw Eternity the other night’. Quite clearly they refer to two very different human experiences of ‘seeing’, the latter expressed in a poem by Henry Vaughan, and it is perfectly possible for anyone to ‘learn’ the different uses of common words, although ‘seeing eternity’ needs practice in prayer and worship. One of the limitations of liturgical reform in the twentieth century has been in its repeated insistence that the language of the liturgy should be clear and understandable. In the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* of the Vatican II we read:

The rites should be distinguished by a noble simplicity; they should be short, clear, and unencumbered by useless repetitions; they should be within the peoples’ powers of comprehension, and normally should not require much explanation. (34)

This statement was a mistake. In the Anglican Book of Common Prayer, the Athanasian Creed (*Quicumque vult*) speaks of: ‘the Father incomprehensible, the Son incomprehensible: and the Holy Ghost incomprehensible.’ It does not mean that the Trinity cannot be understood (even if this is the case): but rather it is that the Trinity cannot be bounded or embraced. That is something very different.

One of the few prayers in the Anglican tradition of the Eucharist that can be safely ascribed to Archbishop Cranmer is that which is known as the Prayer of Humble Access, spoken, in the 1662 Book of Common Prayer (and first finding this form in 1552), by the congregation immediately after the utterance of the Sanctus:

We do not presume to come to this thy Table, O merciful Lord, trusting in our own righteousness, but in thy manifold and great mercies. We are not worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs under thy Table. But thou are the same Lord, whose property is always to have mercy: Grant us therefore, gracious Lord, so to eat the flesh of thy dear Son Jesus Christ, and to drink his blood, that our sinful bodies may be made clean by his body, and our souls washed through his most precious blood, and that we may evermore dwell in him, and he in us. Amen.

Here we find a form of prayer that was the liturgical school for George Herbert. It is rooted in scripture – the incident of Jesus and the Syrophenician woman (Mark 7:24–30; Matt 15:21–8) who seems to upbraid him with her insistence that ‘the dogs under the table eat of the children’s crumbs.’ Its vocabulary is simple, and within it is embedded the theology of atonement. But now we see how, in the *ASB* of 1980 (and before that the experimental services known as Series 2 and Series 3), is proposed the omission of the words ‘that our sinful bodies may be made clean by his body, and our souls washed through his most precious blood.’ The omission is continued in the simplified proposal in *Common Worship* (2000), which reads:

So cleanse us and feed us  
with the precious body and blood of your Son,  
that he may live in us and we in him. (181)

The difficulty in this abbreviation, as David Frost – a member of the Church of England Liturgical Commission and a Professor of English Literature – commented, lies in the contemporary ‘desperately literal approach to all language’ (10). In short, we have lost the linguistic capacity to engage with metaphor in our radical distinction between the literal and the metaphorical. In Frost’s words, written not long after the publication of *Honest to God*, ‘John Robinson would never have got a hearing in Cranmer’s day, because few then took images quite so literally’ (10).

The point is that we seem to have lost the capacity to engage at a deep level with theology through liturgical language. This is, above all, a failure of the ear for metaphor. The problem with the Prayer of Humble Access seems to have begun early in the Age of Reason with the Latitudinarian Bishop of Salisbury, Gilbert Burnett, who argued in his three volume *History of the Reformation* (1679-1714) that the words (‘that our sinful bodies may be made clean by his body, and our souls washed through his most precious

blood') cause grave disquiet to many people inasmuch as they appear to indicate that the Bread cleanses the body and the Wine washes the soul. The shift was, in fact, a victory for literalism and the death of liturgical language, which, while deeply theological is very capable of breaking the rules of safety. As David Frost expressed it:

[The phrase] was thought to mislead the simple into thinking that the Bread cleansed one's body, and the Wine washed one's soul. To which my answer has always been, if so, *so what?* Was anyone ever seriously led astray by thinking that? (10)

The point is, of course, that if liturgical language is to have the capacity to move us, it must employ the resources of image, metaphor and the tropes of rhetoric. When Paul Ricoeur embarks upon his discussion of metaphor in *The Rule of Metaphor* (1975), he acknowledges that when 'metaphorical discourse says something about reality [this] collides with the apparent constitution of poetic discourse, which seems to be essentially non-referential ...' (6). Metaphor thus necessarily both 'is' and 'is not', a redescription of reality that dissolves common boundaries of time and place. Ricoeur continues: 'From [the] conjunction of fiction and redescription I conclude that the "place" of metaphor, its most intimate and ultimate abode, is neither the name, nor the sentence, nor even discourse, but the copula of the verb *to be*' (Ricoeur 7).

In short, liturgical language that is inspired by the life of metaphor takes us to the very heart of being itself. This is a truth known to the early Church Fathers and as late as the poetic sermons of St Bernard of Clairvaux, and it explains their fascination with the Song of Songs. In his *Commentary on the Song of Songs*, Origen in the third century CE reverses the modern understanding of literal and metaphor in a chiasmic move that regards the metaphorical as literal and the literal as 'mere metaphor'. 'This book', Origen begins his *Commentary*, 'seems to me an epithalamium, that is a wedding song, written by Solomon in the form of a play, which he recited in the character of a bride who was being married and burned with a heavenly love for her bridegroom, who is the Word of God' (217).

But the language of the Song is to be adopted only by those mature enough, for there is danger in such powerful words, in confusing the literal and the metaphorical in the description of erotic love. This living power of language should not be given to the immature or those who have not had – Origen quotes from Hebrews 5:14 – 'their faculties trained by practice to distinguish good from evil' (218).

My point is that Origen *thought liturgically*, and with this we return to the work of Catherine Pickstock. We catch a glimpse of such thinking in the fiduciary language of the poet Coleridge for whom the symbol, expressed in metaphor, 'abides itself as a living part in that Unity, of which it is the representative' (*The Statesman's Manual* 30). But the retreat from the liturgical in modernity is forewarned even in Plato's suspicion of text, writing and 'written speech' (100) in the *Phaedrus*, and the decay of the living power of words, a power that Pickstock finds exemplified in the language and shape of the medieval Roman Rite. My concern here is not with vocabulary and the choice of words so much as with the form of language and its shaping power. Nor is simplicity or even clarity, in a rational sense, the issue. Liturgical reform during and after Vatican II

seemed to work upon the argument that liturgy has had a tendency to develop in mazy complexity from an original, simple text such as in Hippolytus' *Apostolic Tradition*, although it does not actually provide any written 'text' for the liturgy. Thus Louis Bouyer writes in his influential book *Eucharist* (1966) of the medieval Roman Mass:

Concurrently with the melodic and soon to be polyphonic developments of the old chants, interpolative words came to be introduced into the flowery vocalizations which had begun by indefinitely extending the individual syllables. Either in Latin or the vernacular, they started out as a paraphrase of the *basic text*. But from paraphrase a transition to free amplification was soon to be made, and this became less and less connected with the *original text*. (380) [Emphases added]

This presupposes, of course, that there actually was an original, basic text and that the liturgy, indeed, is a 'text'. For it may better be seen as a communal utterance always in the process of making and re-invention within the eschatological vision of the Church. Pickstock then defends the complexity of the Roman Rite, dismissing the idea of its mere decadent confusions. She writes:

... the many repetitions and recommencements in the mediaeval Roman Rite can be situated not within a context of secular interpolation, but rather of oral provenance conjoined with an apophatic reserve which betokens our constitutive, positive, and analogical distance from God, rather than our sinfulness and humiliation. According to such a perspective, the haphazard structure of the Rite can be seen as predicated upon a need for a constant re-beginning of liturgy because the true eschatological liturgy is in time endlessly postponed. (Pickstock 173)

This sets liturgical revision in a rather different context from the pragmatic, ecumenical movement engaged in by many churches after Vatican II. As regards language, what is required is an acknowledgement of the strangeness of the words of worship, their stretched quality setting them apart from everyday speech, though this does not necessarily imply the deliberate use of archaic or dated forms. But, as Pickstock has suggested, there is a need to give attention to those tropes and rhetorical devices that have the capacity to expand the living power of words in the forms of poetry and oral speech. For example:

1. *Asyndeton* is a rhetorical device wherein conjunctions and connecting words are omitted. It can be seen as a characteristic of contemporary utilitarian language, but it is also used to great accumulative effect by Herbert in the poem we have reviewed ('Wealth, fame, endowments, vertues....'), and is used effectively by such twentieth century poets as W.H. Auden, Robert Lowell and John Berryman (Crudon 60–1).
2. *Anaphora* is the repetition of a word or phrase in successive clauses (Crudon 40–1). Its frequent use in medieval literature – it is a favourite device of Chaucer and Malory – may account for its presence in the sixteenth century English vernacular liturgies of Cranmer and the Reformers. An obvious example of it in liturgy is the *Agnus Dei*.
3. *Oxymoron*, wherein apparently contradictory terms are brought together for effect (Crudon 471–2). A good example is Milton's description of hell in *Paradise Lost* as

‘darkness visible’. A more complex but powerful oxymoron can be found in Hopkins’s poem *The Wreck of the Deutschland*:

[She] Was calling ‘O Christ, Christ, come quickly’:  
 The cross to her she call Christ to her, christens her  
 Wild-worst Best (Hopkins 19).

I have chosen this last example precisely because it is not easy. It requires us to slow down, think, absorb, and contemplate its strangeness and power to arrest.

To such forms liturgical language aspires. I could also consider the resources of *chiasmus*, *ambiguity*, *apostrophe* or the genre of *satire*. The list is extensive. This last suggestion of *satire* might seem an odd one until one returns to its origins and etymology in the Latin *satira*, a later form of *satira* which means ‘medley’ (Cruddon 598–603). The complex, polyphonic texture of the Roman Rite, the multiplicity of voices available in the liturgical action, the complexities of action and changes of mood (from the Sanctus to ‘On the night that he was betrayed...’) allow a liturgical celebration that requires daring, imagination, and flexibility. The origins of the term *satire* seem to have been in a dish of various fruits offered to the gods..... (Pickstock 213–14). Perhaps already we are not so far from the Eucharistic, sacramental offering.

As I draw to the close of this brief essay concerning the nature of liturgical language that raises as many questions as it resolves, I will give some attention to a twentieth century liturgical prayer that, in some ways, bears comparison with Cranmer’s Prayer of Humble Access. For like its predecessor in the sixteenth century, David Frost’s post-Communion prayer which begins ‘Father of all we give you thanks and praise’, has gained a place in the affection of worshippers in the Anglican tradition, the majority of whom will have no idea of its origin or have thought about why it ‘works’ so well at this point in the liturgy. Just as Cranmer wrote very few original Collects or prayers, so this prayer, written by one who is neither a theologian nor a liturgist, is one of the few ‘original’ prayers that have taken their place in contemporary Anglican worship. Oddly it is susceptible to the same theological criticism as the Prayer of Humble Access in its contravening of the doctrine of concomitance, though in the modern case no-one seems to be very concerned about it. Here is the prayer.

Father of all, we give you thanks and praise that when we were still far off you met us in your Son and brought us home. Dying and living, he declared your love, gave us grace, and opened the gate of glory. May we who share Christ’s body live his risen life; we who drink his cup bring life to others; we whom the Spirit lights give light to the world. Keep us firm in the hope you have set before us, so we and all your children shall be free, and the whole earth live to praise your name; through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Frost’s prayer is, like the Prayer of Humble Access, based on a biblical passage, the parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15: 11–32). It also follows the four elements of Herbert’s poem ‘Prayer (II)’: the biblical foundation, simple vocabulary, challenge to thought and theological content in the incarnation and redemption.

All prayer begins in praise: ‘Father of all, we give you thanks and praise’. The address to the Father draws together both God as Father and the human father of the parable, who is then merged with God. ‘You met us in your Son’ offers a nicely complex convergence with the Son of the parable – who here becomes the Father, met in Christ the Son. ‘Dying and living’ is a good instance of oxymoron, while the centre of the prayer makes fine dramatic use of asyndeton, drawing us forward in our Christian commitment as we prepare, after Communion, to go into the world at the end of the liturgy. The dramatic narrative is suspended on a simple structure of verb and noun (back to *The Diversions of Purley!*):

He declared your love  
gave us grace  
opened the gate of glory.

This final metaphor of the gate of glory (with its use of alliteration) opens the eschatological dimension of the prayer – liturgy is always anticipatory – and prepares us for undertaking the task of each member of the Communion body. We pray that we may live his risen life (as Maximus the Confessor and many others in the Early Church insisted, we are already living the risen life in Christ); bring this life to others; and give light to the whole world (Matthew 5:14). The final sentence, requesting that we be made firm in our hope, expands the light from ourselves to the body of the Church and finally to the whole earth, concluding, as it began, on the note of praise.

As regards the doctrine of concomitance, we may recall that the Prayer of Humble Access has suffered the loss of the words ‘our sinful bodies may be made clean by his body, and our souls washed through his most precious blood.’ The issue was the division made between the effects of the body and of the blood, in contradiction of the doctrine of concomitance between body and soul. But we have seen how a powerful sense of metaphor can dismiss the dilemma of literalism, and it is in this dramatic and unified sense that Frost’s prayer should also be said.

It is indicative of the crisis in contemporary liturgy and its language that the fine prayer that we have just considered suffered diminution through the political processes of Synodical approval in the Church of England. Liturgical language, like the language of poetry, is rarely encouraged by dealings in the corridors of church power even though it is certainly subject to the discipline of theology and tradition. The sentence beginning ‘Keep us firm in the hope you have set before us,’ originally began with an image drawn from Hebrews 6:19, ‘Anchor us in this hope.’ This reference caught nicely the paradox of free will, emphasizing that as we may be kept in the living hope of Christ, so we may be – as his slaves – truly free (Jasper and Bradshaw 243). The anchor was, in the early Church, a symbol of hope, mentioned by Clement of Alexandria as often engraved on Christian rings and frequently found in conjunction with the symbol of the fish. It is a pity that the more energetic and densely allusive phrase is now replaced by simply ‘keep us’.

This final point is worth mentioning, not only to illustrate the dangers of seeking simplicity and the wrong kind of clarity, but also to indicate the synchronic density of liturgical language and its rootedness in tradition without any abandonment of the de-

mands of contemporary speech and context. And if Anglicans are tempted to think that nothing can replace the sixteenth century glories of the Prayer Book, composed and compiled when English was about to produce Shakespeare, then we should recall that every age has a tendency to look back to times of earlier glory, not least in its language. Even Sir Thomas More found it necessary to defend the English of his day against its detractors:

For as for that our tong is called barbarous, is but a fantasye. For so is, as euery learned man knoweth, euery strange language to other. And if they would call it barayn of words, there is no doubt but it is plenteous enough to expresse our myndes in anye thing wherof one man hath vsed to speke with another. (Quoted in Brook 19–20)

So we now must also speak in defiance of the inevitable decay of language. In the Appendix to George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949) Orwell writes on 'The Principles of Newspeak'. 'The purpose of Newspeak,' he says, 'was not only to provide a medium of expression for the world-view and mental habits proper to the devotees of Ingsoc, but to make all other modes of thought impossible' (Orwell 241. Emphases added). 'Newspeak' is about utter control – while the language of the liturgy is about freedom and hospitality to the other. It is the language of praise and worship, and of life not death. It seeks to make all things possible. Above all it is a living language. Archbishop Cranmer would have been dismayed at the survival of his Prayer Book for four hundred years. For the language of prayer and the Bible must be integrated within the living development of words, occupying a place that challenges and yet speaks to the language of everyday, a poetics that is at once 'common' and defamiliarizing. As early as 1540, in his preface to the *Great Bible*, Cranmer affirms that regular re-translation is the 'more ancient custom' of the Christian Church.

For it is not much above one hundred years ago, since scripture hath not been accustomed to be read in the vulgar tongues within this realm; and many hundred years before that it was translated and read in the Saxons' tongue, which at that time was our mother's tongue. ... And when this language waxed old and out of common usage, because folk should not lack the fruit of common reading, it was again translated in the new language. (Cranmer 2)

Thus it is also with the language of the liturgy. And yet, as the language of praise and doxology, it is also conservative, strange and stretched, as in ancient rhetoric. Liturgical language follows the devices of the poetic, and yet, for all its strangeness it remains the language of the common person in the community of the Church seeking communion with God.

I would suggest that the glories of Cranmerian liturgy partake also of an element of what the eighteenth century dissenting hymn-writer Isaac Watts pursued (in the term of Pope and the Scriblerus Club) – that is the 'art of sinking' (Davie 24). It is the art of 'sinking' language to the level of a whole congregation, and yet it also takes a genius to sustain this in a form of words, and in an age that has limited both philosophically and practically the mystery of language (see Crystal 157–89) that glorifies the incomprehensibility – the unboundedness – of God in an eschatological vision that stretches, in the tropes and liveliness of words, between heaven and earth.

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# The Ignatian Tradition and the Modern World: Women Writing and Rahner's Depths of the Heart

by JENNIFER REEK

I regret that I never met Michael Paul Gallagher, and I am sorry that I only began reading his work recently, for I think we might have much in common. That affinity was doubtless one of the main reasons I was invited to participate in the conference that was the origin of this special issue. In this essay I want to explore this sense of affinity that will, I hope, in a roundabout way, take me to my proposed topic on women writing and Karl Rahner's depths of the heart. The women I have in mind are two particular women writers for whom I have an affinity: the French thinker H el ene Cixous and the Dutch diarist Etty Hillesum. My bringing them together in this way with Rahner and Ignatian tradition is a beginning exploration that yet may bear fruit.

This idea of affinity, of having much in common, is key, I think, to Gallagher's book that gave the conference its name: *Dive Deeper*. The aim of that work, Gallagher wrote in the opening paragraph, is 'to evoke our human adventure ... to make Christian faith more real through exploring our ordinary but deep experiences' (1). Gallagher's choice of pronoun makes that adventure and ordinary but deep experience something shared. We are on an adventure together, in a community of faith, exploring the depths of our existence.

He also tells us that we share a 'cultural desolation', an incapability of 'imagining God', an inability to reach the depths of ourselves (1), themes that often appeared among the conversations and presentations of the participants of the conference. These past few years in the UK and U.S., both of which have been my homes, have been full of what could certainly be called 'cultural desolation'. The theme of my panel was 'Ignatian Tradition and the Modern World', but the world I wanted and want to consider is the desolate one we inhabit now, one that seems in many ways far removed from at least what I would consider the 'modern' one. I want to know what Ignatian tradition has to say to us after Brexit and Donald Trump, amidst the spread of an extreme right on both sides of the Atlantic and across continental Europe. We live in something else now that cannot be named modern, or even postmodern, though I do not know what to call it. It has taken many by surprise. After the U.S. election last November, not long before the Heythrop meeting, the philosopher Judith Butler spoke to this response of shock and surprise: 'Who are they', she asked, 'these people who voted for Trump, but who are

we, who did not see their power, who did not anticipate this at all, who could not fathom that people would vote for a man with racist and xenophobic discourse, a history of sexual offenses, the exploitation of workers, disdain for the constitution, migrants, and a reckless plan for increased militarization? Perhaps we are shielded from the truth by our own isolated form of left and liberal thinking? Or perhaps we believed in human nature in some naive ways. Under what conditions does unleashed hatred and reckless militarization compel the majority vote?

These conditions she speaks of grow increasingly cruel and brutal. It seems the lessons of the modern world, of twentieth-century horrors, are forgotten. In the U.S. there is talk about registering Muslims, of imprisoning and deporting hundreds of thousands or even millions of immigrants, of making lists of 'liberal college professors'.<sup>1</sup> In the month after the election the American Civil Liberties Union, the Southern Poverty Law Center, and Shaun King of Black Lives Matter and *The New York Daily News* tracked thousands of hate crimes around the country.<sup>2</sup> Anti-Semitism has been on the rise. Bomb threats to Jewish Community Centres, Jewish cemeteries vandalized, Jewish journalists threatened. Swastikas on playgrounds, in the subways, on synagogues, on the doors of a Rabbi's home.<sup>3</sup> African Americans, Muslims, women, the disabled have been targeted by mail, by phone, in person. Mosques have been attacked, burned, defaced (Goldberg). At a white nationalist conference in Washington one of the group's leaders posed the question of whether Jews are really people (Goldstein). Non-white Americans whose families have lived in the U.S. for generations have been cursed and told this is Trump World now and to get out. Two Indian men in a Kansas bar were shot and killed by a man who yelled at them to 'go back to their own country' (Berman).

This disturbing list is ongoing, seemingly endless, for every week is another shock and surprise. I am part of another 'world', a secret (though is anything ever really secret anymore?) Facebook group called 'Pantsuit Nation' that is full of daily anecdotes of hatred against the other and how these have been and might continue to be resisted. It was created 'to harness the power of collective storytelling. Millions of voices telling millions of stories. We amplify the voices of those who have historically been underrepresented or excluded. We listen. We empower our members to speak with honesty and without fear of attack. We are strong in our diversity. We invite conversation—true conversation—about the issues that are most fundamental to us and our identities.' That these social media experiences are shared ones provides support and staves off despair about those incidents of hate that come closer than social media. A university teacher the day after the election sent out an email offering safe space for students and faculty who might have reason to fear. A Muslim student came into his office, he told

<sup>1</sup> See, for example, Bennett; Graham; Mele.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Okeowo; the Southern Poverty Law Center's 'Hate Watch' at <https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2017/03/23/hatewatch-headlines-3232017>; Shaun King's Twitter account at <https://twitter.com/ShawnKing> and his column at *The New York Daily News* at <http://www.nydailynews.com/authors?author=Shaun-King>; and the ACLU's website at <https://www.aclu.org/>.

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, Adesioye.

me, and sat down and wept. She told him she was afraid to leave her house. What should she do? The teacher's wife teaches in Iowa. Two of her women students were walking from town to campus when men in a pickup truck flying a confederate flag on election night yelled 'We will grab your pussies! Trump Nation!' The fear was and is palpable. My dearest and oldest friend urges me to buy a gun and go to the gun range for practice. I am afraid for my Jewish friends, for my gay friends, for women, Hispanics, people of color, Muslims. I am afraid for myself, for my students. I teach seminars in the Catholic Intellectual Tradition in which I am expected to show the students how to have scholarly conversations that are respectful, honest, open, community building. In this climate, it often seems an especially impossible and hopeless task. My students exist in a world with infinitely less hope in human progress and in faith in God than the America of the last century's modern world.

What can Ignatian tradition offer such a world? In *Dive Deeper*, Michael Paul Gallagher speaks of a world in ruins, turning to 'a haunting line at the end of T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*: "those fragments I have shored against my ruins". We are all aware of the ruins around us: the end of an era, the collapse of many traditions, the uncertainty about our roots, the loss of religious anchors, the skepticism about any possible wisdom, and the larger shadow of a world often in terrible pain' (Gallagher 6). And yet, despite that, he goes on to claim that whatever the circumstance, his life had taught him 'to believe both in humanity and in God' (6). That disposition is perhaps the best of what Ignatian tradition can offer. To foster it, Gallagher urges that we dive deeper, and his conviction was, he wrote, that 'imaginative writers, like biblical prophets, can deepen our angle of seeing' (6). Karl Rahner also believed this to be true, and Gallagher notes this. For Rahner, Gallagher writes, 'great poetry exists only where one faces radically what one is' (85). In Rahner's theology, poetry can reach the heart, unite the scattered self, and prepare for recognition of revelation' (85).

In one of the books feted the night of the conference, *Poetry and Prayer*, the second volume of the Power of the Word project, I have written of Karl Rahner's neglected attentiveness to and love of poetry, of how he notes an affinity between poetry and prayer, of how, he says, Christianity must have an intimate relationship with the poetic word because of its 'special intrinsic relationship to the word' (Rahner 357). To be a Christian, he believes, one must have the power of hearing and understanding 'words of the heart', words that 'effect what they signify and penetrate into the primordial centre' of the human being (360). One must have the power of hearing authentic, reconciling words (361) – and I cannot think of much that is more important in these dark times than that, to have the gift of speaking and hearing reconciling words. 'This power to hear', Rahner wrote, 'means that one has heard the poetic word and abandoned oneself to it in humble readiness, till the ears of the spirit were open for it and it penetrated his [and I will add 'her'] heart' (363).

Gesa Elsbeth Theissen recognizes Rahner's love of poetry and links it to what Rahner referred to as 'anonymous piety', a 'piety *outside* the Church' that is sustained by 'the experience of God' (230). Theissen writes that this piety 'does not simply arise in the specific sphere of the Church but connotes the fundamental relatedness of the human

being to God, and his/her witness to sincerity, truth, love, all actions founded on and pointing to God's universal grace. This witness includes authentic artistic creation and commitment' (230). I confess it had been several years since I had turned to Rahner when I began to think about this essay. But when I did, I was struck again by the same qualities that drew me to his work ten years ago when I read his *Christian of the Future* for the first time in my Jesuit divinity school, Regis College, in Toronto. What appealed then and still does now is a gentleness and humility I found in him, his constant concern for the pastoral, traits sorely needed in our aforementioned cultural desolation. And then there is his awareness of grace outside the Church and his desire to reach out in friendship to those of other religions and no religion. I loved his basic optimism and intense concern for the integrity of the human being. He was very much an inhabitant of the modern world, yet he ought to be welcomed as a balm for this one. He creates, for me and perhaps many others, a rare space in the Catholic Church in which to find welcome and consolation.

Gallagher speaks of Rahner in a way that suggests he, too, felt a resonance similar to my own. For Rahner, he writes, 'experiences of God happen not only in contemplative adoration or in moments of special self-transcendence, but mainly in humdrum and hidden fidelities. Whenever we live with trust or courage, we encounter the mystery of God [here quoting Rahner] "in the concrete experience of our everyday life". One cannot live in pure inwardness. One cannot make oneself a pure spirit ... One must have concrete actions as well' (85).

This space of affinity I seek to delineate has such concerns held in common: living with trust and courage while being attentive to those humdrum and hidden fidelities, while taking concrete action. And yet the commonalities must not blind us to the differences between Rahner and Cixous and Hillesum. Particularly problematic for me is considering these two Jewish women in this Christian context, as there may be for me a temptation to find in their strange and moving writing a 'Christian' message. Yet I also know that it has often been out of such discomfort, of writing of Cixous and Church in particular, that I came to an important recognition, that Cixous – and now I am also able to add in gratitude Hillesum in her unconventional religiosity – has a profound awareness of grace, love, joy, community, and soul that would put many 'Christians' to shame. I turn to these Jewish women because they challenge and transform my own Christian identity. I reach out in friendship, finding grace more often now, I confess, outside the Church than inside. Inspired by Cixous, I seek in my reading and writing a religious practice that is a dive deeper, a literary mingling of religions in a search of a theology beyond dogmatic certainties. As Hillesum writes in her journal, 'I shall not intervene but shall simply have faith' (237).

The women writers may need to be introduced to those who are unfamiliar with the work of either or both. Cixous was born in 1937 in French Algeria, to Jewish parents who were part of the diaspora, her mother from Germany, her father from Spain. Many members of her extended family on both sides were killed in the Holocaust. She grew up as an other among Arabs. As a schoolgirl, she fell in love with the French language, perhaps the only space in which she truly felt at home. 'Neither France, nor Germany

nor Algeria,' she would write in 'My Algeriance' in 1997, 'No regrets. It is good fortune. Freedom, an inconvenient, intolerable freedom, a freedom that obliges one to let go, to rise above, to beat one's wings. [...] I feel perfectly at home, nowhere' (155). In *Rootprints*, she writes, 'From 1955 on, I adopted an imaginary nationality which is literary nationality' (204). Cixous is not easy to label or to write 'about'. Verena Andermatt Conley, who has written well and often on Cixous, notes this difficulty when she writes, 'The question arises on how to proceed. How does one write 'on' someone who is plurivalent, mercurial, and as mobile as the style of her writing?' (*Hélène Cixous*, xiv). Jacques Derrida, whom Cixous considered an intellectual and spiritual companion, called her 'the greatest writer in the French language', a 'poet-thinker, very much a poet and a thinking poet'.<sup>4</sup> She is a teacher, for decades a Professor of Literature at the experimental Université de Paris VIII, which she helped found as an alternative after the political and pedagogical turmoil of 1968. She is prolific, author of more than forty books and over a hundred articles, crossing multiple genres – theater, theory, experimental fiction, memoir, interview, notebooks – though she flouts the restrictive descriptions those labels suggest as she deliberately crosses boundaries of fiction and theory, poetry and prose, interior and exterior. 'The constant in her writerly endeavour over these years', Conley notes, 'remains a call to freedom – personal, collective – and a need to do away with all forms of repressions' (*Hélène Cixous: Writing the Feminine* xi).<sup>5</sup> Cixous knows the interior depths and feels an affinity for those willing to go there. 'The writers I love,' she writes, 'are descenders, explorers of the lowest and deepest' (*Three Steps on the Ladder of Writing* 5). She places Etty Hillesum among them.

Etty Hillesum (1914–1943) was a young Dutch Jewish intellectual whose journals and letters provide an account of her life in Amsterdam for two years during World War II before she was killed in Auschwitz in November 1943. Hillesum had degrees in law and Slavonic languages and made her living teaching Russian (Gaarlandt xix). She described herself as an aspiring writer, exclaiming in her journal, 'How much I want to write', but never had the opportunity to publish (268).<sup>6</sup> It is only through her journals and letters, the vast majority unpublished until 40 years later, that we know what a fine writer she already was.<sup>7</sup> As Jan Gaarlandt writes of Hillesum in his introduction to *An Interrupted Life: The Diaries and Letters of Etty Hillesum: 1941-1943*, 'At her desk in the small room on Gabriël Metsustraat she produced one of the most remarkable texts of

<sup>4</sup> Jacques Derrida's introduction to one of Cixous's 1990 Wellek Library lectures in Critical Theory at University of California, Irvine, which were published as *Three Steps on the Ladder of Writing*, front cover.

<sup>5</sup> For biographical material on Cixous, see, for example, Conley (1991, 1992) and Cixous and Calle-Gruber.

<sup>6</sup> As Eva Hoffman notes, 'Etty wanted, aspired to be a writer, and she has a writer's knack for conveying herself onto the page with fluent immediacy, for drawing us right into her personal world' ('Preface' vii).

<sup>7</sup> Two letters from Westerbork, a transit camp in the east of the Netherlands where Etty worked in the camp hospital, were published by the Dutch Resistance in 1943. Not until 1981, when the relative of a friend of Hillesum's showed the diaries, were the diaries and numerous letters published (Gaarlandt xxvii-xxviii).

our time – a testimony of faith and love written in the darkest hours of modern history’(xxi). While Hillesum was experiencing personal liberation, ‘the scenario of extermination was being played out all over Europe. Etty Hillesum was Jewish and she wrote a counter-scenario’ (xv).

Hillesum has a terrific effect on Cixous, who describes the diaries as ‘an account which struggles from hour to hour to save, in the enclosure which becomes more and more narrow, more and more monstrous, the vestiges of life, until, when there is no more earth, the sky remains, then less and less sky, until finally no more sky at all’ (‘From the Scene’ 6).

Do you know of Etty Hillesum? I find solace reading her diary and letters, especially after my mother died several years ago, especially lately. She kept a diary from 1941 in which she records the gradual constriction of her outer world and the simultaneous expansion of her inner one. Living in an increasingly cruel and brutal world, as Cixous notes, she manages an incredible equanimity and magnanimity. I find there is something in the tone of those traits of hers that is Ignatian. Listen to her entry of 24 July 1942:

I would very much like to do an hour’s hard studying before I start on this day. I feel a great need to do so, and I also have the necessary concentration. When worries started to assail me again this morning, I simply jumped out of bed. ‘God, take them away from me, please.’ I don’t know what I shall do if they send for him [Julius Spier, her lover], what influence I can use on his behalf. We must accept everything as it comes and be prepared for the worst. Don’t brood and don’t be afraid, but be calm and think clearly. When the crucial moment comes, you will surely know what you have to do. My roses are still in bloom. I shall take that half-pound of butter to Jaap. If all this suffering does not help us to broaden our horizon, to attain a greater humanity by shedding all trifling and irrelevant issues, then it will all have been for nothing. Tonight I shall dine with him in the Café de Paris. It is almost grotesque, an outing like that. Liesl said, ‘It is a great privilege, isn’t it, that we have been chosen to bear all this?’ Liesl is a great woman, a truly great woman. I would like to write about her one day. We shall come through, no doubt. (233)

Hillesum’s words bring to light the mystery of God encountered in the humdrum and hidden fidelities of life. The next day she writes, ‘It is now 9:30. I want to sit here at this desk until noon; the rose petals lie scattered among my books. A yellow rose has opened as far as it can and now looks at me large and wide. The two and a half hours I have left seem to me like a year’s seclusion. There is a vast silence in me that continues to grow’ (235). Gallagher realized that the calling of artists ‘is to the concrete drama of life and they specialise in speaking to our intuitive levels of consciousness: they hit us below the belt of reason. They awaken wonder and develop it into wisdom. They confront pain by going further into depth’ (6).

I admire Gallagher’s big little book. He took a risk and listened to the friends and readers of a ‘mostly academic’ earlier work and wrote this one, ‘mixing lived situations with religious reflection’ (5). Gallagher affirms something I like to do, which is to put literary and spiritual pairs in conversation, often unlikely matches: D.H. Lawrence and Jane Austen (20–7), George Eliot and Flannery O’Connor (41–7), William Shakespeare and Oscar Romero (58–64), Rainer Maria Rilke and Karl Rahner (93–101). He actually imagines the pairs in conversation, a method not always successful to my mind, but still,

there is something in the form of the book that mirrors, or perhaps illuminates, the content. Gallagher is enacting what he refers to as ‘a disposition of wonder’ (6), ‘a certain receptive wavelength in us’ that ‘means allowing ourselves to be changed by the experience [of reading] itself, not just by its content’ (5).

Reading Cixous reading Hillesum creates such a disposition in me. I feel, like Cixous, ‘a mysterious affinity’ for these authors, what she calls ‘a certain music’ she is attuned to (*Three Steps* 5). The question first raised by Hölderlin in his poem ‘Bread and Wine’ is apposite now. What good is a poet in these desolate times? The implication of the question may be that it is folly to turn to poetry, to literature, in desolate times such as our own. It is impossible. Adorno questioned whether poetry could exist after Auschwitz. In *Prisms*, Adorno states: ‘To write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric. [...] “I’m thinking Auschwitz” must accompany all my ideas’ (34).

Gallagher, Rahner, Cixous, Hillesum, all suggest Adorno was wrong, that poetry is more important in desolate times, after Auschwitz, *in* Auschwitz. What are poets for in a destitute time. A Hölderlin question, dealt with by Heidegger, then picked up by Cixous and brought to Hillesum. Cixous changes the question, relating writing in and out of the depths to the violence of history. Of Hillesum in Westerbork, a transit camp in the Netherlands that was the last stop before Auschwitz, Cixous writes:

When one has reached regions of such tragedy, one truly learns about the wealth of life and living, because poverty, literal nakedness, anguish, and loss make one discover it. There is an almost necessary conjunction or encounter between those who have the gift of writing and thinking and the violence of history. Is it possible to write a poem in a concentration camp? Perhaps I am wrong in asking the question. Is it rather the poem that allows one to stand the concentration camp. At least, that is what Etty Hillesum tells us, and nothing could be more moving than to read this from such places of repulsion and agony. While she was sitting on trash cans, people marched by on their way to death. Etty was reading Rilke and she thanked him. Rilke owes an immense amount to Etty Hillesum, since she gives him a life. An exchange of life exists between the two and, admirably, the chain is not broken. That is how strong the continuity between poetry and a soul can be. (‘Poetry, Passion, and History’ 113)

In an early work, the 1979 *Vivre l’orange/To Live the Orange*, Cixous writes of an apropos dilemma to our discussions. She has discovered the Brazilian novelist Clarice Lispector. She describes the experience in terms of someone coming out of a desert into an oasis. The reading transforms her. She writes in a new way. But she is guilty in her writing. A friend calls on the telephone demanding political action to save women of Iran. What to do? Shouldn’t one go to the barricades? No, Cixous continues to write, asking, ‘Where does the question of Iran touch us? Far from the borders, from the tanks, from the laws, far from the chayattollas, from the frenchlife, from the American farce, in this inner clearing ... where women invent without maps new kinds of happiness’ (34). Though they are so very different, I like to think Gallagher would have appreciated Cixous, as, like her, he wrote his book ‘for those more on the margins [...] who feel themselves disappointed and undernourished by their surrounding culture’ (7).

That is what I experience also in the ‘Pantsuit Nation’ group: women, and men, disappointed and undernourished by their surrounding culture, inventing without maps

new kinds of happiness. In the concreteness of life, they re-discover their imaginations and in doing so together, find grace and courage. Such affinity may not feel like enough for our desolation. But if we are considering Ignatian tradition clearly, isn't that what's at the heart of Ignatius's exercises, a delicate affinity? What comes to mind is rule 335, where mention is made of 'the action of the good angel' on souls progressing to greater perfection. The action is, Ignatius says, 'delicate, gentle, delightful. It may be compared to a drop of water falling upon a stone'.

What use are poets in desolate times? Etty responds in the last entry of her diary, writing of the imagined fragility of Rilke if he were writing in her circumstance:

Is that not further testimony that life is finely balanced? Evidence that, in peaceful times and under favourable circumstances, sensitive artists may search for the purest and most fitting expression of their deepest insights so that, during more turbulent and debilitating times, others can turn to them for support and a ready response to their bewildered questions? A response they are unable to formulate for themselves, since all their energies are taken up in looking after their bare necessities? Sadly, in difficult times we tend to shrug off the spiritual heritage of artists from an "easier" age, with "What use is that sort of thing to us now?" It is an understandable but shortsighted reaction. And utterly impoverishing. We should be willing to act as a balm for all wounds. (282)

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# Colonus, Athens, Rome, Alexandria, Pavia: Ways of Dying and Diving Deeper

by PIERO BOITANI

When I was invited to this conference and learnt it was going to be entitled *Dive Deeper* (Gallagher 2001), I thought I would entitle my talk ‘Die Deeper’. It was, in a way, too beautiful as a title in the context of this conference and in the light of Michael Paul Gallagher’s own life. But, alas! it means nothing in English – at least if one looks at it from the point of view of traditional grammar and syntax. How can one ‘die deeper’, or ‘more deeply’? To a medieval audience of Dante, it might mean that second, eternal death to which mortal, non-repentant sin brings you and for which you are punished in Hell. That was certainly not what I had in mind, nor what Michael would think I had in mind. What I have in mind is a way of dying that shows us something deeper than the simple stopping of heart, lungs, and brain – in sum, of the flesh – and suggests whatever else might be associated with it. I have chosen antiquity – almost a thousand years of dying – in the spirit, as it were, of Simone Weil’s *Intuitions pré-chrétiennes* (1951) and *La source grecque* (1953), two fascinating books now nearly seventy years old.

When, in 1975, Michael, together with Monsignor Tom White, officiated at my wedding in the University Church, Dublin, he did not know I was at heart such a staunch pagan. Twenty years later, I had written the last chapter, on the New Testament, of my book on the Bible and its rewritings, *Ri-Scrittura* (Boitani 1997). I gave it to him to read and see if there was any error in it, either factual or doctrinal – in other words something heretical. A couple of months later, he came to dinner and pronounced his verdict: no, there were no errors; the chapter was solid and indeed beautiful, but ‘a bit Protestant’. I think I know what he meant – it was not Protestant, it was Greek! Or, at most, Roman. Or both. I was writing from the perspective of an enlightened pagan in the fourth century AD. And this, I am afraid, is the perspective from which I will write now, too.

We begin with a play presumably composed in the year 406 BC, Sophocles’s *Oedipus at Colonus*. Sophocles wrote it at the age of ninety, shortly before his death in the winter of 406–5 BC, and this – as well as the fact that Colonus had been his birthplace – might of course have some bearing on the major themes of the play. The static quality of *Oedipus at Colonus* is part of a structure that already the ancients considered splendid and nearly unique. Its plot is made of words and aura, of lines where an echo resounds that is earthly and otherworldly, historical and mythical, political, ethical, and metaphysical.

Old and blind, accompanied by his daughter Antigone and joined immediately afterwards by his other daughter Ismene, Oedipus reaches, after a long life of exile and wandering, the grove sacred to the Eumenides in the village of Colonus, just outside Athens. He knows this is the place where destiny has decreed he should die, and he asks the citizens of Colonus to shelter him from any possible attack. He also asks that the ruler of Athens, Theseus, protect his and his daughters' lives. In exchange, he will be the protector of Athens after his death.

Shelter is not granted immediately, for when the inhabitants of Colonus learn who has arrived in their city, they are horrified and would have him leave immediately. Oedipus, they know, is he who killed his father Laius and married his mother Jocasta, with whom he had four children, the boys Polynices and Eteocles, and the girls Antigone and Ismene, who are thus also his brothers and sisters. Sophocles had staged that terrifyingly tragic story, lending its plot the quality of an amazing time-bomb, twenty years earlier in *Oedipus Rex*. And in the first section of *Oedipus at Colonus* he has those events recalled by the Chorus representing the citizens of Colonus. When pressed, Oedipus confirms he is indeed guilty of parricide and incest, but consistently maintains he did those things unwittingly. There of course lies the difference between the classical and Christian meaning of the word *hamartia*, error in the Greek of Sophocles and Aristotle, sin for St Paul and the Gospels, the former including guilt, *culpa*, but excluding the involvement of awareness and will.

After hearing him out, the Chorus shows compassion and grants hospitality, which is confirmed by Theseus, who hastens to Colonus as soon as he hears that Oedipus is there. Athens, the city of law, must enforce the law in its own territory, and no one shall be allowed to harm Oedipus and his daughters. When, shortly afterwards, Creon, Oedipus's brother in law and ruler in Thebes, comes to invite the former king to return home, and kidnaps Antigone and Ismene to force Oedipus to follow him, Theseus pursues him and frees the two girls. Polynices also comes to Colonus for Oedipus's blessing in his struggle against his brother Eteocles, but his father curses him, forcing him to leave. Oedipus has thus come to terms with, and successfully defended, his past. We feel he is presented as the scapegoat of destiny and universal guilt, as the suppliant of the Eumenides, as indeed 'someone sacred, filled / with piety and power, bearing a great gift' for the people of Athens (Sophocles, *The Three Theban Plays: Oedipus at Colonus* ll. 312–3). The second part of the play can now begin. Oedipus is in Colonus,

... glistening, brilliant in the sun –  
 where the nightingale sings on,  
 her dying music rising clear,  
 hovering always, never leaving  
 down the shadows deepening green  
 she haunts the glades, the wine-dark ivy,  
 dense and dark the untrodden, sacred wood of god  
 rich with laurel and olives never touched by the sun  
 untouched by storms that blast from every quarter'. (ll. 764–772)

Here strides Dionysus, followed by dancing nymphs. Here bloom crocus and narcissus, crown of Demeter and Persephone, ‘the two goddesses of the Eleusynian mysteries, which promised their initiates a blessed existence beyond the grave’ (n. 779). There is ever-quickening life, here, in the waters of the river Cephisos, and Aphrodite and the Muses dwell here. Two extraordinary marvels are also present, ‘a creation self-creating’ (l. 794) that grows to greatness – the gray-leaved olive, ‘mother, nurse of children’ (l. 797), gift of Athena – and the ‘glory of horses’ (l. 761) bestowed by Poseidon, god of the seafarers, he whose ship ‘flies like a marvel past the land / [his] long flashing oars whipping the sea / mounting the white manes of the sea / racing the sea-nymphs dancing past the prow!’ (ll. 814–17).

Colonus and Athens are not just random places, they are sacred and divine, shine with mystery and life and death, smell of animals and flowers and trees, extend over land and sea. This is where Oedipus has come and where he must die. Colonus is a holy threshold: wonderful and disturbing, it prefigures, with its grove of the Eumenides, the dark life of Hades as well as what can only be read as a passage to *τον αἰεί βίοντον*, life forever, eternal life (Sophocles, *Edipo a Colono* 372).

There are two moments of this in the second section of the play. First, as thunder sounds several times in the distance, Oedipus understands the ‘destined end’ has come. He sends for Theseus. When the ruler of Athens arrives, Oedipus announces ‘great mysteries’ and says they shall be revealed only to him, Theseus, in token of Oedipus’s unfailing protection of Athens. As he feels the god within him urge him on, Oedipus advances, now relying on his strength alone, leading his children and Theseus. He bids farewell to the light of the sun while the Chorus pray to Persephone, Hades, and the Furies. Then, he leaves the stage. At this point, the second stage opens up. A Messenger picks up the story and announces that Oedipus is ‘gone’. ‘Dead?’ the Chorus ask. The Messenger answers with the phrase I have already quoted, ‘Passed to eternal life’, and begins to relate the last and greatest wonder. Oedipus had left their sight. He then proceeded to a steep descent and in a hollow between rocks sat down, loosed his filthy rags and asked his daughters to fetch fresh spring water for him. They bathed him in it, and then dressed him up in shining linen, the custom for the dead. When Zeus once more thundered from the depths and Antigone and Ismene shuddered and cried, Oedipus flung his arms around them both and said:

... My children,  
 this is the day that ends your father’s life.  
 All that I was on earth is gone:  
 no longer will you bear the heavy burden  
 of caring for your father. It was hard, I know,  
 my children, but one word alone repays you  
 for the labor of your lives – love, my children.  
 You had love from me as from no other man alive,  
 and now you must live without me all your days to come. (ll. 1826–34)

Deep silence ensued, then a voice was heard crying out: ‘You, you there, Oedipus – what are we waiting for? / You hold us back too long! We must move on, move on!’ (l.

1845). ‘Knowing it was the god that called him on’, the Messenger says, Oedipus turned to Theseus and implored him never to abandon his children, then exhorted Antigone and Ismene to leave. ‘Only the appointed one, / Theseus, [...] must see this mystery’ (l. 1865), he said. And those were the last words he spoke. A minute later, he disappeared. Only Theseus was visible now, shielding his eyes as if something terrible was flashing before him and he could not bear to look. He bent down and kissed the ground, praying at once to the gods of Olympus and the Earth. ‘But by what doom / Oedipus died’, the Messenger concludes, ‘not a man alive can say, / save Theseus, our king’. Then he continues:

No blazing bolt of the god took him off,  
 no whirlwind sweeping inland off the seas,  
 not in his last hour. No, it was some escort  
 sent by the gods or the dark world of the dead,  
 the lightless depths of Earth bursting open in kindness  
 to receive him. That man went on his way,  
 I tell you, not with train of mourners,  
 not with suffering or with sickness, no,  
 if the death of any mortal ever was one,  
 his departure was a marvel! (ll. 1882–91).

A few instants later, when Antigone and Ismene return chanting a dirge, the Chorus ask them if Oedipus is really gone. Antigone confirms the *τηαυμαστός*, the wonder the Messenger has witnessed. She adds that ‘neither war / nor the crashing waves struck down’ her father, ‘but he was snatched away by the fields unseen / swept away by a strange, swift doom ...’ (ll. 1907–10).

Thirty years before, *Oedipus Rex* had staged, amongst other things, the tragic conflict between the prophetic knowledge of the seer Tiresias and the rational knowledge of Oedipus. The pride the latter felt in promoting rational research of the truth had ended up in disaster, when the detective discovered that he himself was the criminal. That conflict, and that pride, has disappeared in *Oedipus at Colonus*. But by giving up his rational knowledge, Oedipus, now holding the Inscrutable in himself and in his destiny, has gained the status of sacred mystagogue. He is the mystery and the proposer of mysteries. He is victim and saviour. Of course, he neither forgets nor forgives, nor indeed does he ask to be forgiven. Rather, he defends and absolves himself. But he finds love for his daughters, and the recognition of that *πήλειν* is one of the crucial and most moving moments of the play.

This new Oedipus dies surrounded by wonder. He dies, no question about it – fulfilling the oracle’s prophecy, in the grove of the Eumenides, in Colonus. He dies in the strangest and most wonderful fashion. ‘Snatched away by the fields unseen’ of Hades, he passes to a kind of ‘life forever’. And the actual moment of his passing away is presented as a sort of invisible, dark and numinous transfiguration, something terrible (*δεινό*) radiating from him, which makes Theseus shield his eyes with his hands. Oedipus’s dying is ‘deep’, deeper than any kind of dying we might have seen from Homer onwards. It is *τηαυμαστός*: wonder, marvel, *miraculum* (Sophocles, *Edipo a Colono* (ll. 1651 and 1586). Perhaps one should point out that this approach to death is so consol-

atory that it is not surprising the Athenians rejected Paul's teaching of the *kerygma* when he preached in the Areopagus (Acts 17:32 KJV).

Sophocles's *Oedipus at Colonus* was finally staged in 401 BC. Two years later, the philosopher Socrates was found guilty by the Athenian tribunal both of corrupting the minds of the youth of Athens and of impiety ('not believing in the gods of the state'), and condemned to death. Socrates accepted the sentence, went to prison, drank the poison hemlock, and died. Plato recounts the whole story in three of his dialogues, the *Apology of Socrates*, the *Crito*, and the *Phaedo*. Socrates's actual death takes place at the end of the third, *Phaedo*, but the theme of death runs through all the three dialogues from the moment the death sentence is pronounced.

At the end of the *Apology*, Socrates addresses the judges who have just condemned him. He says he expected the death penalty and goes on maintaining that this is not necessarily a bad result. As a matter of fact, he thinks it is a 'blessing' and goes on to explain that death is one of two things. 'Either it is annihilation, and the dead have no consciousness of anything; or, as we are told, it is really a change; a migration of the soul from this place to another'. Well, if it is annihilation and loss of consciousness, then it is a 'marvellous gain', because 'the whole of time ... can be regarded as one single night' of rest and deep, dreamless sleep. If, on the other hand, death implies a removal to another place, and we believe ancient legend, then again this must be the greatest 'blessing'. Imagine encountering the 'true' jurors – Minos, Rhadamanthys, Aeacus and Triptolemus – after having dealt 'with these so-called jurors here'. Think how wonderful it would be meeting Orpheus and Musaeus, Hesiod and Homer, Agamemnon and Odysseus: 'their company and conversation – like the chance to examine them – would be unimaginable happiness' (Plato, *The Last Days of Socrates* 69–70, 40c–41e).

Socrates resorts to archaic conceptions of Hades, to the view of myth and poetry. He does so again at the end of *Phaedo*, just before dying, when, expounding his view of the universe, he reaches the other world. He looks at death with the eyes of *imagination* – one of the 'springboards' Michael Paul Gallagher points to in his last book, *Into Extra Time*. But Socrates is not done, yet. He ends his address to the jurors by taking leave with his famous phrase: 'Well, now it is time to be off, I to die and you to live; but which of us has the happier prospect it is unknown to anyone but God' (Plato, *The Last Days of Socrates* 70, 42a).

The second dialogue, *Crito*, does not bear directly on the question of death, but rather on the problem of what it might be right to do in the case of a death sentence. Socrates is now in prison and is being visited by one of his disciples, Crito. Crito encourages Socrates to flee from Athens – he and his friends could bribe the guards and get him off. After all, the judges were wrong and the sentence unjust. Socrates refuses, developing an argument based on his respect for the law. He has, he says, freely signed a pact with the laws of Athens. What would they, the laws, say if he now broke it simply because he has been unjustly condemned to death? Socrates stays on in jail, serenely waiting for death.

The question, even in ancient Greece, would appear to be more complex than this, as Sophocles's *Antigone* had shown forty years before with its debate on the conflict

between natural law – the law that prompts Antigone to bury her brother Polynices – and the law of the state – which by Creon’s decree forbids just that. Although the two cases are different, the dilemma of what to do when the law is unjust is still relevant, as Hegel’s discussion of it witnesses. Yet Socrates is unique in his sticking to the law of Athens. Of course Jesus, too, abides by the law after an unjust death sentence, but his reasons for doing so are more numerous than the mere respect for the law. There is for instance the sense that his mission has yet to be accomplished and that the Scriptures must be fulfilled, as when at the beginning of the Passion, in Gethsemane, he reproaches the disciple who draws his sword against a servant of the high priest, saying: ‘Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?’ (Matthew 26: 53–4 KJV).

Socrates remains in jail. The day of his death approaches. When it comes, he spends some time explaining to Cebes why he has lately composed lyrics by adapting Aesop’s fables and the prelude to Apollo, then explains why the philosopher avoids suicide but welcomes death. Death frees man from the body, and is therefore the culmination of a life’s work in search of wisdom, because the body hinders the philosopher in his attempt at understanding the Ideas of things. In the *Phaedo*, despite Plato’s physical absence – due, he writes, to illness – on the last day of Socrates’ life, a very Platonic Socrates launches now into the Argument from Opposites, the Theory of Recollection, and the Argument from Affinity, to proceed, finally, to the existence of an afterlife, the nature of the universe, and the immortality of the soul. Socrates echoes, and at times teases, the theories of Pre-Socratic thinkers such as Empedocles, Anaximenes and Heraclitus, approves of some of the ideas of his older contemporary Anaxagoras, and, like the character who spoke to the jurors in the *Apology*, employs mythic material, even ‘Orphic’ tales of the afterlife. Tartarus, Oceanus, Acheron, Styx, Pyriphlegethon, Cocytus – all the names of rivers and places of the other world one can find in poetry, and above all in the *Odyssey* – are mentioned here (Plato, *The Last Days of Socrates* 191–4, 112a–14b).

The newly dead, Socrates maintains, are judged immediately after dying and sent to their appropriate destinations. Those who have lived a neutral life are despatched to the Acheron and, crossing it, reach the Acherusian Lake, where they dwell undergoing purification. Those who have committed irreparable crimes are hurled into Tartarus, ‘from whence they emerge no more’. But human beings who have lived a life ‘of surpassing holiness’ are allowed to live on the earth’s surface, and those who have purified themselves by philosophy will live without bodies and will reach habitations of ineffable beauty. Socrates adds:

Of course, no reasonable man ought to insist that the facts are exactly as I have described them. But that either this or something very like it is a true account of our souls and their future habitations – since there is certainly evidence that the soul is deathless – this, I think, is both a fitting contention and a belief worth risking; for the risk is a noble one. We should use such accounts to enchant ourselves with; and that is why I have already drawn out my tale so long. (194, 114a).

At this point, Socrates tells his disciples they will all, sooner or later, make this journey. For him, however, the time is now. He must take a bath before drinking the poison, because he would prefer the women not to have the trouble of washing him when he is dead. It is in this mood that Socrates prepares himself and his disciples to his death. When Crito asks him how he would like to be buried, he replies, 'Anyway you like, that is, if you can catch me and I don't slip through your fingers', and laughs gently. Crito, Socrates says, hasn't understood a word of his explanation. 'I am Socrates, this Socrates here who is talking to you now – he thinks I am the corpse he will soon see. But I shall not be that corpse. I promised Athens I would stay in prison and not flee, as Crito wanted me to. But after death, oh! I shall depart and be gone instantly. Bury my body in whatever way you think is most proper' (195, 115b–d).

Socrates, followed by Crito, goes into another room to bathe, while the others wait for him to return. After the bath, his two little sons, his one big boy and his women are brought in, and he gives them directions about carrying out his wishes, sends them away, and joins his disciples once more. He only talks for a few minutes when, just before sunset, the prison officer enters to warn the time for drinking the hemlock has come. The officer is both apologetic and embarrassed – he has learnt to appreciate Socrates as 'the noblest and the gentlest and the bravest' of all men that have ever been in this prison, and he is sure Socrates will not be angry with him. He says good-bye and bursts into tears as he turns to go. Socrates says goodbye to him, then tells his disciples what a nice man the officer has been. Finally, he asks Crito to have the poison brought in. Crito begins by replying that no, the sun is still high on the mountains, and besides, other people have enjoyed dinner, wine, and the company of those whom they loved long after receiving the warning. To make Crito obey, Socrates has but to reply that there is no reason for delay, that he would gain nothing by drinking the poison a little later, and that he would indeed make himself ridiculous in his own eyes if he clung to life.

A man whom Socrates asks for instructions brings in the poison: he just has to drink it, and then walk about until he feels a weight in his legs. At that point he should lie down, and the poison will work of its own accord. He hands the cup to Socrates, who receives it 'quite cheerfully' and 'without any change of colour or expression' asks to be permitted to pour a libation with the drink itself. There is no extra liquid for that, replies the guard, we only prepare the normal dose. Socrates nevertheless prays the gods to grant him a prosperous removal from this to the other world, and as he says his prayer he drains the cup in one draught, calmly and with no apparent sign of distaste. The disciples, unable to hold themselves any longer, burst into tears. Socrates reproaches them humorously: 'Really, my friends, what a way to behave! Why, that was my main reason for sending away the women, to prevent this sort of discordant behaviour; because I am told that one should make one's end in a reverent silence. Calm yourselves and be brave' (198, 117e).

They regain their composure. Socrates, feeling his legs get heavy, lies down. The man who had brought in the poison pinches his feet and legs and keeps his hand over him. Everyone can see that Socrates's body is gradually going cold and numb. When the coldness reaches his waist, Socrates uncovers his face and tells Crito: 'We ought to offer

a cock to Aesculapius. See to it, and don't forget'. 'Are you sure there is nothing else?' Crito asks. There is no reply, then Socrates stirs. When the man uncovers him his eyes are fixed. Crito closes Socrates's mouth and eyes. 'This', says Phaedo, who has been telling the story from the beginning, 'this, Echecrates, was the end of our comrade, who was, we may fairly say, of all those whom we knew in our time the bravest and also the wisest and the most just' (198–9, 118a).

How many times have we – have I – read this story? For me, the first time must have been over fifty years ago, in high school, and some of it – the *Apology*, I seem to remember – we did in Greek. Still, it never fails to move me. The trial and death of Socrates must have been quite momentous already in Athens, at the end of the fifth century, as Xenophon's version of the *Apology* testifies. But what is more is that Plato, the absent disciple, writes them down with a perfect sense of drama, as if he were Sophocles composing *Oedipus at Colonus*. First come the trial and the first sounding of the death theme. Then we have the *Crito*, where death is only in the background. Finally, in the *Phaedo*, Plato presents the long argument for the immortality of the soul and Socrates's actual death in perfect counterpoint. The only thing Xenophon adds to our theme is that in leaving the jurors his Socrates tells his weeping friends: 'Haven't you known all along that from the moment I was born nature had condemned me to death?' It is better to die now, Xenophon's Socrates maintains, than to live with the hardships of old age (685, 1.27).

Plato's Socrates, as we have seen, is far more articulate. His first step is to tell the judges – one can imagine how they must have taken it – that either death means the end of everything or it opens the door to the other world, which, as myth and traditional religion would have it, must be a happier one than ours. From the point of view of rational, philosophical discourse, I still don't know of a better answer to the problem that torments all human beings. Yet it is clear that from the very end of his trial Socrates's inclination is to dwell on the other world rather than total annihilation. Once he decides to stay in Athens and accept the death penalty – for which the *Crito* provides rational justification – Socrates moves towards the deathless life of the other world. The closer he gets to dying, the more he speaks of immortality of the soul. True, this increasingly is Plato's Socrates, as the allusions to Ideas in the *Phaedo* prove, rather than, so to speak, Socrates's Socrates. But the argument on the immortality of the soul in that dialogue clearly is one that Socrates himself might have developed or did in fact develop. It is a rational argument, based on pure *logos*, and one which I would maintain still holds. Socrates proves *rationally* that the soul of human beings is immortal – full stop.

It is at this point that he enters, in his words, the realm of *mythos*, of a discourse that is not necessarily the factual 'truth', but 'very like it'. Socrates is willing to, as it were, suspend disbelief. As a matter of fact he says that this is a belief 'worth risking', and that the risk is 'a noble one' – *καλός*, beautiful, as the original has it. Earlier on (145, 78a) he had told his friends that in order to exorcise the fear of death they should pronounce an 'enchantment' over him every day until they have charmed his fears away. Now he proclaims that we all should use such accounts, i.e., the 'mythical' ones, to 'enchant ourselves with' (*The Last Days of Socrates* 194 and 145; id., *Tetralogias I-II* (1900) 114d and 78a). Risk and enchantment are the kind of thing one would associate with *Oedipus at*

*Colonus* rather than with Socrates, yet here they are. Belief in the other world of tradition is ‘worth risking’, and the risk itself is beautiful. We should let ourselves be enchanted by the vision of this *status animarum post mortem*. And this is not exactly a small point – per se, and because it connects with Christian belief. In the *Convivio*, for instance – let alone the *Comedy* – Dante shows a very similar attitude (IV. xxviii).

The account is not without pathos. Its intensity derives from the fact that his women and disciples – and we with them – suffer and weep, while Socrates smiles in utter calm. But what I think hits the reader of these scenes is their simplicity and homeliness, the serenity that emerges from their perfect dramatic orchestration. Socrates appears throughout as a tranquil, even humorous man devoted to reason and myth, able to comfort his friends as well as the jailer – a man who has as it were digested death long before dying. Socrates dives deeper into death than anyone we know before him. He dies ‘more deeply’.

Of course, no physical pain is present. Had Socrates been tortured or crucified, things might have been different. Almost five hundred years after him, another philosopher was, as Tacitus tells us in his *Annals*, condemned to death, this time without trial and without judges. Seneca’s death sentence was issued by the Emperor Nero, whose teacher and advisor he had been, and was brought to him by a centurion. It was a privilege of the Roman upper classes to be offered the choice of committing suicide instead of being beheaded by an executioner. Seneca accepted. He asked for the tablets containing his will. The centurion stopped him. The philosopher then turned to his friends and called them to witness that ‘as he was prevented from showing his gratitude for their services, he left them his sole but fairest possession – the image of his life. If they bore it in mind, they would reap the reward of their loyal friendship in the credit accorded to virtuous accomplishments’. At the same time, he recalled them from tears to fortitude, sometimes conversationally, sometimes in sterner, almost coercive tones. ‘Where’, he asked, ‘were the maxims of your philosophy? Where that reasoned attitude towards impending evils which they had studied through so many years? For to whom had Nero’s cruelty been unknown? Nor was anything left him, after the killing of his mother and his brother, but to add the murder of his guardian and preceptor’ (Tacitus 315: XV, 72).

Referring to the Stoic and Epicurean attitudes to death he had propounded in the *Letters to Lucilius* – he who learns to die learns to be free – Seneca and his wife cut a slit in their arms. Seneca’s body, however, was old and thin, and the blood coming out from his veins was too slow. So, he also cut the arteries in the legs and behind the knee. Exhausted by the racking pains, he persuaded his wife to withdraw to another room (she was subsequently reprieved by Nero), called his secretaries and dictated a long speech. Still, not enough blood was oozing out of his emaciated body. He asked a friend to bring a cup of hemlock, the poison that had killed Socrates, and drank it at once, but to no avail, because his limbs were already cold and ‘his system closed to the action of the drug’. Seneca then got into a tub of hot water, sprinkling the slaves around him and saying he was offering the liquid as a libation to Jove the Liberator. Finally, he was lifted into a bath and ‘suffocated by the vapour’. He was cremated on the spot without ceremony (Tacitus 319: XV, 74).

Seneca's aged body simply refuses to die artificially, as it were – it is so naturally close to death that it eludes death. Nothing works for him, not even the example of Socrates, whom he would gladly imitate. His suicide is devastated by pain: it is, indeed, pure torture, yet he bears it all patiently, almost lightly. If it were not so typically Stoic – and if it were not a suicide – one could say it resembles Christ's Passion. I don't know, no one knows, if Tacitus had read the Gospels, but the account of Seneca's death comes, in Tacitus' *Annals*, only twenty chapters after that of Nero's persecution of the Christians after the fire that destroyed most of central Rome in July 64. In order to scotch the rumour that he himself had initiated the fire, Nero, Tacitus recounts, accused the Christians:

Nero substituted as culprits, and punished with the utmost refinements of cruelty, a class of men, loathed for their vices, whom the crowd styled Christians. Christus, the founder of the name, had undergone the death penalty in the reign of Tiberius, by sentence of the procurator Pontius Pilatus, and the pernicious superstition was checked for a moment, only to break out once more, not merely in Judaea, the home of the disease, but in the capital itself, where all things horrible or shameful in the world collect and find a vogue. First, then, the confessed members of the sect were arrested; next, on their disclosures, vast numbers were convicted, not so much on the count of arson as for hatred of the human race. And derision accompanied their end: they were covered with wild beasts' skins and torn to death by dogs; or they were fastened on crosses, and, when daylight failed were burned to serve as lamps by night. Nero had offered his Gardens for the spectacle, and gave an exhibition in his Circus, mixing with the crowd in the habit of a charioteer, or mounted on his car. Hence, in spite of a guilt which had earned the most exemplary punishment, there arose a sentiment of pity, due to the impression that they were being sacrificed not for the welfare of the state but to the ferocity of a single man. (Tacitus 283–5: XV, 44)

Tacitus has no sympathy for the Christians and shares his contemporaries' prejudices about them. But, faithful to his intention to narrate history 'sine ira et studio', without anger and without partiality, he relates the death of the Christians in all its crudity and cruelty, and records the arousal of pity towards them amongst the citizens of Rome. Presumably, it is this incipient compassion that draws an increasing number of Romans to the new religion. Stoicism and Epicureanism, the pillars of Seneca's ethics, remained doctrines for the few, while Christianity spread like the Great Fire of Rome. To find the accounts of the two respective martyrdoms side by side in Tacitus' account of Nero's reign makes quite an impression. Yet Seneca was for quite some time considered by Christians as their close friend or ally. Tertullian speaks of him as a writer who is 'often one of ours'. Lactantius opines 'Seneca could have been a true devotee of God if someone had shown God to him' (VI, 24). A correspondence between Saint Paul and Seneca was even invented in the fourth century AD, in the course of which Seneca speaks of the Christians accused of the Fire with the *miseratio* mentioned by Tacitus (see Barlow).

Seneca was not the last thinker to be put to death. Almost four centuries later, in 405, the mathematician, astronomer, Platonist philosopher and head of the Alexandrian school, Hypathia, was murdered by a crowd of furious Christians, apparently including monks, just as she was going back home one evening. In due course, her case became an example of the martyrdom of paganism and freethinking at the hand of reli-

gious fanatics, but it is more likely that things leading to the lynching were more complex and involved politics and misunderstandings of various kinds (see Ronchey). Still, the murder had immediate resonance all over the later Roman Empire, and we have several versions, both pagan and Christian, of her horrible death. Here is what Socrates Scolasticus, a Christian and one of the early witnesses, writes of it:

Those men, those incandescent spirits whose chief was a certain Peter the Reader, conceived a plan and set up an ambush against the woman who was going back home. They pulled her down from the chariot and dragged her to the church that has its name from Caesar. There they stripped her of her clothes and butchered her using sharp shards, tearing her to shreds. They then transported those remains to the place called Kynaron and burnt them. This infamy, carried out by Cyril and the Church of Alexandria, was not a small one. For assassinations and slaughters are wholly alien to the spirit of Christ. (361)

Socrates's indignation expresses what the best Christians thought at the time, but it was not a generalized reaction. The pagan Damascius was much stronger, but the sixth-century Egyptian Coptic bishop John of Nikiû turned Hypatia into a witch (Ronchey 177–83). Poetry was content to celebrate her long before her death, when Palladas wrote an epigram preserved in the *Greek Anthology*:

Revered Hypathia, ornament of learning,  
 Stainless star of wise teaching, when I see  
 You and your discourse I worship you,  
 Looking on the starry house of Virgo;  
 For in heaven is your business. (IX, 400)

Unless we turn to fiction (see \Kingsley), we do not know what Hypatia said, thought, or felt while she was being massacred, and hence we cannot say that she 'died deeper'. But what we can say is that her murder is a form of dying more deeply *for us* – that her story is one we know only too well, of people killed because of politics, ideology, or religion in the past and in our own days. For, as Socrates Philosophicus says, reminding us of the *scandal* her death represents, 'assassinations and slaughters are wholly alien to the spirit of Christ'.

It was only a hundred years after this, in 524, that the Christian philosopher Boethius was executed in Pavia by order of Theodoric, King of Italy. He knew he was but the latest in a sequence that had started a long time before. At the beginning of the *Consolation*, Philosophy tells him:

But even if you had never heard of Anaxagoras' banishment from Athens, or Socrates drinking the hemlock, or the torture of Zeno, all of which happened abroad, surely you would know about such Romans as Canius, and Seneca, and Soranus, whose stories are neither so old nor from so far away. And the only cause of their deaths was their dedication to me and their indifference to and contempt for the beliefs and pursuits of wicked men that my teaching had instilled in them. (Boethius 8–9: I, pr. 3)

People who have not read the *Consolation* think that it is meant as a consolation for Boethius's impending death, but it is not. Death is lamented only in the very first section of verse in the book, when Boethius sings that

To the young, Death  
 is a threat to their pleasures, but now that I am worn down and out  
 and it offers at last a remission of all my pains,  
 it is cruel, paying no heed to my imploring cries,  
 and will not deign to close my weeping eyes. (2: I, m. 1)

Later in the *Consolation* Boethius complains of having been condemned unjustly and defends himself against the accusations that brought him to trial (II, pr. 4), but he knows very well that the ‘minds’ of human beings are immortal, and Philosophy reminds him of that while speaking about happiness (II, pr. 4). Boethius needs no consolation on account of death. What he needs is a consolation for problems he has encountered in the course of his meditations on the nature of things – happiness, the good, God, wickedness, fate, providence, chance, divine prescience, contingency, eternity. He needs a rational explanation of how the universe works and of how humans are free to conform to its rhythm. And he does indeed receive this explanation. Philosophy is there precisely for that purpose – Philosophy, not Theology. Boethius is a Christian, yet Philosophy’s arguments are mainly Platonic, her reasoning Aristotelian and her imagery informed by pagan poetry. When, in m. 9 of Book III, *O qui perpetua*, she sings the harmony of the cosmos, one can trace her sources of inspiration fairly clearly. He who rules the universe with perpetual reason, who sows heaven and earth and bids time move, is an Aristotelian unmoved mover: ‘stabilisque manens das cuncta moveri’. Yet at the same time he who shapes flowing matter draws out all things from a ‘model’ (*exemplo*) like Plato’s Demiurge, and, beautiful in himself, like Plotinus’s One, bears in his mind a beautiful world (Boethius 52: III, m. 9, 3–8).

For a man who was about to die and wrote his book in prison, this is quite impressive. Boethius was consoling not so much himself as humankind – and indeed in this respect there is a deep affinity between his *Consolation* and Michael Paul Gallagher’s last book, in which Gallagher comforts not himself for his coming death, but his friends and his readers about dying tout court. Boethius was also going much further than Socrates and Seneca, while using purely pagan philosophy to expound Christian theology. He was dying, to go back to my theme, much more deeply than his predecessors. For all this, he was cudgelled to death. The likeliest account of his execution, recorded by the Ravenna Chronicler, reports that a cord was twisted round his head so tightly that it caused his eyeballs to protrude from their sockets, and that his life was then beaten out of him by a club. Theodoric was a Christian and had been educated as Roman in Constantinople, but he and his men remained Ostrogoth.

The further we have advanced in our account of dying deeper, the more gruesome the way of dying has become in passing from civilized Athens to less civilized imperial Rome to uncivilized, if Christian, Alexandria and Pavia. Of course, one could have mentioned plenty of Greek, or indeed Senecan, tragedies where dying is horrible. But after Oedipus my concern was with the death of philosophers, i.e. of those whom classical antiquity thinks are the best of men.

I have duly noted the differences, and the similarities, between the pagan accounts and the Christian ones. I am aware I have left out the Christian story par excellence, that

of the Passion; I would like to examine that in another essay, and in any case many people in the past have compared the death of Socrates and that of Jesus (Steiner 524ff). I merely wished to sketch a pre-Christian view of dying deeper. That of Oedipus and that of Socrates in many ways look like ‘intuitions pre-Chrétiennes’, but also tell us why the citizens of Athens rejected Paul’s message from the Areopagus. If you have such luminous examples of dying and belief in eternal life, why should you accept a new one – one that adds resurrection of the flesh to immortality of the soul?

Yet perhaps there is a link between the pagan attitudes towards death I have described and that of a Christian like Michael Paul Gallagher. Socrates’s awareness of his guard’s gentleness and his care to keep his sons (and the weeping women) away from his deathbed can be seen not only as an attempt to face death unemotionally, but also to admit that those who love him will feel pain and express it emotionally, nonetheless keeping this in what he considers its proper place. We remember too that Oedipus expressed concern for his daughters before his death in *Oedipus at Colonus*, thus highlighting the importance of *love*. Michael Paul too, in his quiet way, expressed his love for his friends by not wanting to burden them with the knowledge that he had given up chemo and was taking only palliative drugs (Gallagher, *Into Extra Time*). They would otherwise know that this meant they would soon lose him – he tried to keep this knowledge from them for as long as possible.

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# Poetry as Revelation: Secular and Sacred

by FRANK TURNER SJ

This paper does not propose a logical argument trying to prove some pre-existent conclusion. It is primarily an appreciation of certain poets and poems and an expression of gratitude for the pleasure and illumination that derives from reading poems attentively. It is also implicitly an appreciation of Michael Paul Gallagher. Like him I'm a Jesuit priest, if you like a 'professional believer', feeling enriched by that belief while still always needing to pray 'Help my unbelief'. Like him, I think my responses to the world are fundamentally shaped by literature, including poetry – sometimes almost inseparably from religious faith, sometimes in tension with it.

## Poetry as Perception

Let us first leave aside any explicit religious referent. Poetry often enables us to glimpse new aspects of material reality, or to see that reality in a new and fuller way. Naturally, poetry is not unique in this. In her memoir entitled *An American Childhood*, Annie Dillard speaks of what she learned from her first attempts to draw:

Evidently a given object took no particular time to draw; instead the artist took the time, or didn't take it, at pleasure. And similarly, things themselves possessed no fixed and intrinsic amount of interest; instead things were interesting as long as you had attention to give them. (79)

One of my junior-school teachers used to tell us, 'Don't say "That's boring": say, "I'm bored"'. The lack of interest belongs to the person, not to the object.

In *The Sportswriter*, the first volume of Richard Ford's Frank Bascombe trilogy of novels, the entirely secular Bascombe calls himself a 'literalist'. The heart sinks, till he explains the term idiosyncratically. The 'literalist' does not fixate, but appreciates:

A literalist is someone who will enjoy an afternoon watching people while stranded in an airport in Chicago, while a factualist can't stop wondering why his plane was late out of Salt Lake, and gauging whether they'll still serve dinner or just a snack. (128)

Later, Bascombe adds of his ex-wife (named 'X' in the book):

X, I know, is not taking Paul and Clarissa [their children] to church, a fact which worries me – not because they will turn out godless (I couldn't care less) but because she is bringing

them up to be perfect little factualists and information accumulators with no particular reverence or speculative interest for what's not known. ... Naturally there was no time for religion in the Dykstra household, where facts and figures reigned. (200)

These are prose examples: but much poetry has at its heart the function of enhancing our interest in and attention to reality and its depth. The narrator of Robertson Davies's novel *The Manticore* writes, 'I had just begun to see that poetry was about life, and not ordinary life but the essence and miraculous underside of life' (191). This is what Hopkins meant by 'inscape'. 'There is the dearest freshness deep down things', Hopkins wrote in 'God's Grandeur' – a perception which for him, of course, has theological roots. Hopkins's own poetry frequently exemplifies and justifies this claim.

But let me take less familiar examples, such as the opening of a poem by the Australian Les Murray, 'First Essay on Interest':

Not usury, but interest. The cup slowed in mid-raise,  
the short whistle, hum, the little forwards shift  
mark our intake of that non-physical breath  
  
which the lungs mimic sharply, to cancel the gap in pressure  
left by our self vanishing into its own alert –  
  
...

...What we have received  
is the ordinary mail of the otherworld, wholly common,  
not postmarked divine; no one refuses delivery, ... (*Collected Poems* 169–70)

We know the device of 'defamiliarisation' by the so-called 'Martian' poets, such as Craig Raine: startling metaphors, verbal and visual puns, refresh our perception and often amuse us. In Raine's poem 'In Modern Dress', for example, a baby is 'Stuck in the high chair / Like a pillory, features / Pelted with food' (*Collected Poems* 151). But Murray is more than pleasantly surprising. His 'ordinary mail of the otherworld' indicates that he is 'diving deeper', and in two ways. His poem 'Homage to the Launching Place' is full of intelligence – with jokes thrown in:

Pleasure-craft of the sprung rhythms, bed,  
    kindest of quadrupeds,  
you are also the unrocking boat  
    that moves on silence.  
  
Straining hatchway into this world,  
    you sustain our collapses  
above earth; guarantor of evolution,  
    you are our raised base-line.  
  
Resisting gravity, for us and in us,  
    you form a planet-wide  
unobtrusive discontinuous platform,  
    a layer: the mattressphere,

pretty nearly our highest common level  
(tables may dispute it).

[...]

Primly dressed, linen-collared one,  
you look so still, for your speed,  
shield that carries us to the fight  
and bears us from it. (*Collected Poems* 168–9)

Some of these phrases could have been written by Craig Raine: ‘kindest of quadrupeds’, ‘primly dressed, linen-collared one’. But the joke (‘the mattressphere’) evokes precisely that imaginary atmospheric layer located just above (or below?) the ‘stratosphere’. And the notion that the bed is the place of rest, of renewal, of openness to the unconscious without which our imagination and creativity go unnourished lies at the heart of Murray’s poetic creed. Karl Rahner, for example, characterises Night Prayer as an expression of trust in God just at the moment when we invite a sphere of consciousness in which we lose rational control (Rahner 232–3).

Secondly, Murray’s poetry evokes not only the life within things, but also qualities of the spirit. ‘The Quality of Sprawl’ celebrates a virtue he takes to be characteristic of Australians at their best, namely, an instinctive and unostentatious generosity, thinking big without arrogance or callousness. ‘Magnanimity’ comes close to this, but the word ‘sprawl’ suggests a quality that is indigenous, almost casual. I quote the poem substantially but not completely:

Sprawl is the quality  
of the man who cut down his Rolls Royce  
into a farm utility truck, and sprawl  
is what the company lacked when it made repeated efforts  
to buy the vehicle back and repair its image.

Sprawl is doing your farming by aeroplane, roughly,  
or driving a hitchhiker that extra hundred miles home.  
[...]

Sprawl is Hank Stamper in *Never Give an Inch*  
bisecting an obstructive official’s desk with a chainsaw.  
Not harming the official. Sprawl is never brutal  
though it’s often intransigent. Sprawl is never Simon de Montfort  
at a town-storming: Kill them all! God will know his own.  
Knowing the man’s name this was said to might be sprawl.

[...]

Sprawl gets up the nose of many kinds of people  
(every kind that comes in kinds) whose futures don’t include it.  
Some decry it as criminal presumption, silken-robed Pope Alexander  
dividing the new world between Spain and Portugal.  
If he smiled *in petto* afterwards, perhaps the thing did have sprawl.

[...]

Sprawl leans on things. It is loose-limbed in its mind.  
Reprimanded and dismissed  
it listens with a grin and one boot up on the rail  
of possibility. It may have to leave the Earth.  
Being roughly Christian, it scratches the other cheek  
and thinks it unlikely. Though people have been shot for sprawl. (*Collected Poems* 186–7)

References to Simon de Montfort and Alexander VI – surely outside the range of reference of the people Murray admires – are juxtaposed with demotic usage (‘gets up the nose of’). ‘Gets up the nose of’ equally prompts a wry critique of the human tendency to reduce complex personal reality to convenient ideological abstraction: ‘gets up the nose of many kinds of people (every kind that comes in kinds)’. In the line ‘Being roughly Christian, it scratches the other cheek’ the wit of ‘scratches the other cheek’ gives full value both to the adverb ‘roughly’ and the adjective ‘Christian’. Sceptical barroom realism and imaginative hope are pithily combined in the image ‘one boot on the rail of possibility’. Finally, an apparently throw-away conclusion, ‘Though people have been shot for sprawl’, warns that generosity of spirit in a self-righteous culture is likely to provoke less generous responses.

## Form, Linguistic Register and Language

### Form

Delight, recognition and poignancy can be conveyed by form, by register, and by language itself. Robert Graves’s ‘Poem: A Reminder’ ingeniously makes the poem’s form the content itself:

Capital letters prompting every line,  
Lines printed down the centre of each page,  
Clear spaces between groups of these, combine  
In a convention of respectable age  
To mean: “Read carefully. Each word we chose  
Has rhythm and sound and sense. This is not prose”. (*Complete Poems* 630)

Appropriately, the language here is plain, unvarnished, concise. As Graves insists, every word counts. The impact of form and concision survives even the loss inevitable in translation. Here is a salutary little verse by Berthold Brecht, translated by Lesley Lendrum, consoling to those engaged in any kind of planning that affects others:

When it’s a notion,  
When it’s still vague,  
It is praised.  
When it looms large,  
When plans are in motion,  
Objections are raised. (*Poems: 1913-56* 423)

Let us now consider what U.A. Fanthorpe does with form. Fanthorpe (1929-2009) had taken a First at Oxford, then taught for sixteen years at Cheltenham Ladies College – itself, no doubt unfairly, emblematic of order to the point of fussiness. Aged forty-five, she became a receptionist in a Bristol hospital, and it was then that she began writing poems. In her own words, she was ‘fiercely devoted to the out-patients, who were my business’ often, she admits, ‘against the doctors who always had the last word (usually a medical cliché)’. She had found her subject, ‘the strangeness of other people’. But this ‘strangeness’ never demeans those people. In ‘The List’, the hospital typist is an artist – so the low-status role of typist, too, is honoured – who honours a humanity that strains at the bounds of order and whose dignity is intrinsic but is rarely acknowledged by others. Fanthorpe enacts that dignity, precisely through poetic form:

Flawlessly typed, and spaced  
At the proper intervals,  
Serene and lordly, they pace  
Along tomorrow’s list  
Like gift bearers on a frieze.

In tranquil order, arrayed,  
With the basic human equipment –  
A name, a time, a number –  
They advance on the future.

Not more harmonious who pace  
Holding a hawk, a fish, a jar  
(The customary offerings)  
Along the Valley of the Kings.

Tomorrow these names will turn nasty,  
Senile pregnant, late,  
Handicapped, handcuffed, unhandy,  
Muddled, moribund, mute,

Be stained by living. But here,  
Orderly, equal, right,  
On the edge of tomorrow, they pause  
Like gift bearers on a frieze

With the proper offering,  
A time, a number, a name.  
I am the artist, the typist;  
I did my best for them. (*Collected Poems* 21)

Form does not negate feeling, any more than in music Mozart’s restraint embodies less intensity of feeling than, say, Beethoven or Rachmaninov whose apparently freer forms are no less conscious.

### Linguistic Register

As already pointed out, Murray characteristically shifts register from the learned to the homely. One contemporary English master of such effects is Philip Larkin. Larkin's 'This be the verse', was evidently written to shock and amuse – and still does so. It begins, famously,

They fuck you up, your mum and dad.  
 They may not mean to, but they do.  
 They fill you with the faults they had  
 And add some extra, just for you.

But I want to point in particular to the decisive modulation within the third and final stanza:

Man hands on misery to man.  
 It deepens like a coastal shelf.  
 Get out as early as you can,  
 And don't have any kids yourself. (*Collected Poems* 180)

The first couplet twists Larkin's fierce initial joke into a solemn, sonorously grim generalisation about the futility of human life. The second couplet, though, is a sarcastic second joke which, as Larkin knows well enough, will hardly avert the fate of procreation.

In 'Vers de Societé', the poem's narrator paraphrases a fellow academic's social invitation, then ponders his reply:

My wife and I have asked a crowd of craps?  
 To come and waste their time and ours: perhaps  
 You'd care to join us? In a pig's arse, friend.  
 Day comes to an end.  
 The gas fire breathes, the trees are darkly swayed.  
 And so *Dear Warlock-Williams: I'm afraid* –

Funny how hard it is to be alone.  
 I could spend half my evenings, if I wanted,  
 Holding a glass of washing sherry, canted  
 Over to catch the drivel of some bitch  
 Who's read nothing but *Which*;  
 ... (*Collected Poems* 181)

Here formal courtesy ('Perhaps you'd care to join us') mocks the host's imagined crude disdain for his guests ('a crowd of craps, wasting their time and ours'). But since that tone is matched by the recipient's response ('In a pig's arse, friend') we realise that the contempt belongs rather to the speaker who, however, is then seized imaginatively, as people say 'poetically', by the 'darkly swaying trees' – and a 'gas fire'!

The second stanza introduces the poem's underlying theme, the desperation to escape aloneness which finally will lead the narrator to accept the invitation after all ('*Dear Warlock-Williams: Why, of course*–'). It does this while intensifying the loathing that will

later again turn to self-doubt: both witty ('washing sherry') and coarsely offensive (the 'drivel of some bitch'). Where do we locate the authorial voice in this clash of registers, namely elegiac evocation, crude insult, Larkin's trademark alleged misanthropy, including a more specific misogyny? Does the poem share this grossness – or castigate it? Where is Larkin himself, who has attracted such a mixture of admiration and opprobrium? The poem is so enigmatic and artful that we don't quite know. But the bleakness is unmistakable and far from mitigated by the comedy.

### Language

In his book *The Edge of Words*, Rowan Williams notes how ordinary speech can be paradoxical and playful: *language itself*, poetry aside, is often strange. The sentence 'I can't tell you how grateful I am' precisely tells you how grateful I am. My own first childhood sense of the strangeness of language came through common phrases like 'Free House' for a pub, and especially the road sign I found baffling, 'Heavy Plant Crossing'. Jokes too revel in this strangeness. Here are two 'one-liners' judged to be among the best told at the Edinburgh Festival of 2013: 'The universe implodes. No matter.' And the winner: 'I've got rid of our Hoover. Well, it was just collecting dust.' But poetry, too, notes Rowan Williams, is 'excessive speech': utterance transcending what is functionally required (*The Edge of Words* 131–6).

A second poem of Robert Graves shows this 'excess' functioning with opposite effect. Language can channel and temper the intense reality of beauty or terror rendering it capable of assimilation without psychic overload. Loss of control is dangerous, and we prefer our pilots not to have an ecstatic experience of the sunset. Yet there is a counter-truth to this common sense. The persuasive dictum of Lao Tze, 'The one who knows does not speak, the one who speaks does not know', may be persuasive but so is the testimony of Peter and John in the *Acts of the Apostles* who, when enjoined to silence by the religious authorities in Jerusalem, reply: 'We cannot not speak about what we have seen and heard'. Here is Graves's 'The Cool Web':

Children are dumb to say how hot the day is,  
 How hot the scent is of the summer rose,  
 How dreadful the black wastes of evening sky,  
 How dreadful the tall soldiers drumming by.

But we have speech, to chill the angry day,  
 And speech, to dull the rose's cruel scent.  
 We spell away the overhanging night,  
 We spell away the soldiers and the fright.

There's a cool web of language winds us in,  
 Retreat from too much joy or too much fear:  
 We grow sea-green at last and coldly die  
 In brininess and volubility.

But if we let our tongues lose self-possession,  
Throwing off language and its watery clasp  
Before our death, instead of when death comes,  
Facing the wide glare of the children's day,  
Facing the rose, the dark sky and the drums,  
We shall go mad no doubt and die that way. (283)

Language both articulates and 'dulls' the kind of intense personal experience that, as Graves suggests, can validate our lives but overwhelm our faculties. But 'this is not prose': so the poem does more. It embodies a sense of our relationship with the ineffable that must yet be spoken.

Finally, in this reflection on language, here is a poem by the American Lisel Müller (b. 1924). We have seen how language can help us 'see more' and 'dive deeper'. Müller reverses this dynamic of our perceptions. It is not merely that poetic language can disclose things to us. Rather, 'objects' and human linguistic experience shape each other reciprocally: the poem's title is 'Things' but the subject is our relationship to things:

What happened is, we grew lonely  
living among the things,  
so we gave the clock a face,  
the chair a back, the table four stout legs  
which will never suffer fatigue.

We fitted our shoes with tongues  
as smooth as our own  
and hung tongues inside bells so we could listen  
to their emotional language,

and because we loved graceful profiles  
the pitcher received a lip,  
the bottle a long, slender neck.

Even what was beyond us  
was recast in our own image;  
we gave the country a heart, the storm an eye,  
the cave a mouth  
so we could pass into safety. (Keillor 104)

## Poetry and Religious Transcendence

I prefer not to separate these two streams, poetic and religious, of formation and potential transformation. For sure, their confluence can cause white-water turbulence. Poetry can skewer certain forms, or perversions, of religion: most devastatingly in Blake's 'The 'Garden of Love', in which the chapel has "Thou shalt not" writ over the door' and where:

... Priests in black gowns, were walking their rounds,  
And binding with briars, my joys & desires.

However, identifying the pathologies of religion, whether in our cultural environment or in ourselves, is itself part of religious conversion, so the mutuality remains.

In 'Poemes [*sic*] and the Mystery of Embodiment' Murray writes: 'Humans are not rational, but poetic. For this reason the world we have inherited is a vast texture of overlaid and overlapping poetries, often competing inside individual human heads' (356). In Murray's argument here, a 'poetry' is not a single literary artefact but a mental structure. We cannot avoid ordering our perceptions, Murray suggests, into some 'poetic structure': loyalty, for instance, 'quickly wraps itself around almost any instance of vision or purported inspiration and defends it sturdily' (356). Factual analysis often fails to dispel the visions that people live by. But Murray also argues in a brilliant essay entitled, in his self-deprecating way, 'Some Religious Stuff I know about Australia', that the religious dimension also 'exists in every human being' (142). Thus, according to Murray, both poetry and religion structure our understanding and our perceptions, less by rationalisation than by 'inspiration'.

Murray is not uncritical about 'inspiration'. 'God's Spirit may stir our soul and then not be allowed to enlighten it' (143). But even in prose, his critique of unenlightened 'inspiration' conveys the sensibility of a poet. He works less through conceptual analysis than by 'diving deeper' into metaphor. Here is his eloquent account of human sacrifice – and what he believes to be its religious corrective:

Surely that's an archaic horror that survives only very marginally in a few Third World groups that anthropologists write about? Surely the holocausts of this century ... can only be called human sacrifices in a very metaphorical sort of way? Surely there's a distinction to be made here between the literal and the metaphorical? My answer is, there may be, but I don't know of one watertight enough to prevent the blood from seeping through it. When I hear someone say, as I did again the other day, that this country needs a war to restore and cement its sense of community, I recognise that as a call to literal human sacrifice, to be performed for one of the classic archaic reasons . [...] And this despite not only the Enlightenment we used to praise as our deliverance from such archaic nonsense, but also despite the much earlier action of Christ in consciously taking the ancient human motif of sacrifice on himself and as it were completing it and sealing it, so that henceforth we might refer the whole complex impulse to his action, and never again enact it literally on a living victim. ('Some Religious Stuff' 144)

Now if 'humans are not rational but poetic', then we would expect that the religious transcendent is better expressed imaginatively and poetically than by attempted conceptual definition, however necessary that might be. The hymn of *Philippians 2* discloses the self-emptying and the glorification of Christ, before that is done conceptually in doctrine, and perhaps more nourishingly.

Similarly, just as in Shakespeare wit and puns often underline tragedy not dilute it, we recall that the Gospels exult in profound wordplay: the Christ who is 'lifted up' in both agony and glory; the Christ who is 'handed over' (*John 18:36*) both to his executioners and to the divine will. Or recall the famous punning conclusion of John Donne's

‘Batter my Heart’: ‘for I/ Except you enthrall me, never shall be free,/ Nor ever chaste, except you ravish me’.

The passage makes sense – and acquires its poetic resonance – only because the words ‘enthrall’ and ‘ravish’ each have both ecstatically positive and destructively negative meanings. But that paradox, that poetry, is inherent in the Christian brief that true freedom is found in faithfulness to the divine will, and that ‘chastity’ is a function of loving union.

Let me end with an entire poem by the American Denise Levertov (1923-1997), ‘Agnus Dei’, which reverses the pattern I have so far explored. Levertov does not contemplate something ‘ordinary’ and then discern in it some symbolic or transcendent reality. Rather she takes a religious image, the ‘Lamb of God’, that has evolved through a complex, even esoteric, theological history. (It is so esoteric that it defies the proof-readers of my edition, whose Contents page lists the poem as ‘Angus Dei’!) Levertov then redirects us from the religious image to the ‘ordinary’ perceived reality, though this ordinary reality is observed with extraordinary attention and tenderness:

Given that lambs  
are infant sheep, that sheep  
are afraid and foolish, and lack  
the means of self-protection, having  
neither rage nor claws,  
venom nor cunning,  
what then  
is this ‘Lamb of God’?

This pretty creature, vigorous  
to nuzzle at milky dugs,  
woolbearer, bleater,  
leaper in air for delight of being, who finds in astonishment  
four legs to land on, the grass  
all it knows of the world?  
With whom we would like to play,  
Whom we’s lead with ribbons, but may not bring  
into our houses because  
it would soil the floor with its droppings?

What terror lies concealed  
in strangest words, *O lamb*  
of God that taketh away  
*the Sins of the World*: an innocence  
smelling of ignorance,  
born in bloody snowdrifts,  
licked by forbearing  
dogs more intelligent than its entire flock put together?

God then,  
encompassing all things, is  
defenseless? Omnipotence  
has been tossed away, reduced  
to a wisp of damp wool?

And we,  
frightened, bored, wanting  
only to sleep till catastrophe  
has raged, clashed, seethed and gone by without us,  
wanting then  
to awaken in quietude without remembrance of agony,

we who in shamefaced private hope  
had looked to be plucked from fire and given  
a bliss we deserved for having imagined it,

is it implied that we  
must protect this perversely weak  
animal, whose muzzle's nudgings

suppose there is milk to be found in us?  
Must hold to our icy hearts  
ashivering God?

So be it.  
Come, rag of pungent  
quiverings,  
dim star.  
Let's try  
if something human still  
can shield you,  
spark  
of remote light. (*The Stream and the Sapphire* 12–14)

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# Fruitful Disagreements: a Challenging Debate About Flannery O'Connor's *Prayer Journal*

by ELENA BUIA

The following reflections originate from an event held in March 2014 at the Centro Hurtado for Faith and Culture of the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome. Fr Michael Paul Gallagher and I were asked, as invited speakers, to discuss Flannery O'Connor's (1925-1964) posthumously published *Prayer Journal* (2016). Consisting of short paragraphs, partly reflective diaries and partly correspondence, O'Connor's *Prayer Journal* is rather difficult to classify. This black notebook containing a series of entries was found among the stacks of unpublished manuscripts buried in the attic of Andalusia, the farm in Georgia where O'Connor lived. She wrote it – not with a view to having it published – in 1946 and 1947 in Iowa City, where in her early twenties she had gone to study journalism far from home. She returned with the knowledge that her path had changed: she had prayed to become a writer, and her prayer had been heard.

I was aware that Gallagher held the American writer and essayist in high esteem not only as an exceptional author, but also as a fine theologian. O'Connor is the only literary writer whom he had included in his book *Faith Maps* (2010) among the great thinkers and theologians of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, from John Henry Newman to Joseph Ratzinger. Gallagher had justified his choice of O'Connor by emphasizing how strongly in her fiction Flannery portrayed faith as 'a rupture with what we take for granted about ourselves or about religion' (87).

Gallagher's admired her work so much because he valued imagination so highly. By 'imagination', which is a keyword in his writings, he meant the ability of artists to create stories which are understood as narratives of experiences, whether realistic or invented, and at the same time are able to present new perspectives on the world. According to Gallagher, imagination was 'the key to hope' when 'the poetry of God is calling for new expressions' (*Dive Deeper* 11). In his view, religious faith and artistic creativity meet in the realm of imagination because of the artist's capacity to present abstraction in concrete terms, to represent the concrete drama of life which religion often fails to touch. Artists are able to 'awaken wonder and develop it into wisdom' (6).

For O'Connor the exercise of imagination was no mere intellectual game since, as she wrote, 'the beginning of human knowledge is through the senses, and the fiction writer begins where human perception begins' (*Mystery and Manners* 67). In other words, according to her, the true writer must banish abstraction in favour of concrete reality 'because fiction is so very much an incarnational art' (68). Gallagher appreciated Flannery O'Connor because her stories had the ability to evoke possible meanings, to come close to the mystery of our existence on earth by leading us along paths where we might not otherwise venture. Through her narrative, which nourishes a disposition of wonder, the reader could enter into and experience a new world. For these reasons Gallagher considered her to be 'the most theologically alert novelist of the entire century' ('Flannery O'Connor' 12).

Yet, at the Rome conference Michael Paul Gallagher surprised the audience. He said that his first impression of O'Connor's *Journal* was disappointment, describing it as immature, self-concerned and full of complaints about herself, with no reference to Scripture or to Christ. Her diary was, in his words, a series of 'immature pages filled with complaints about herself and no consolation in prayer' (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gdeZWhziJbA>). True, he also admitted that in rereading the journal, he found some jewels, some real pearls, even some prophetic indications of her future greatness. But he found them only in the final pages, in the lines that O'Connor dedicated to the French writer Leon Bloy, whom she described as an 'iceberg hurled at me to break up my Titanic and I hope my Titanic will be smashed' (*A Prayer Journal* 33). At that moment of her life the young O'Connor was lost, according to Gallagher, in a sort of negative spirituality and was still protected against the sudden irruption of God in her inner self. So, Leon Bloy's reading disturbed her but in a healthy way, because of his militancy in defending and promoting the Christian faith and because of his interpretation of the relationship with God as a battle.

I was quite taken aback by Gallagher's statements. There followed a challenging debate between us because, though I appreciated Michael Paul's position, I argued for the significant value of the way in which the *Journal* charted O'Connor's growing relationship with God and how her creativity and faith were rooted in that relationship. I had read, studied and translated O'Connor for more than twenty years and found in her writing important moments of convergence with my own spiritual journey. For that reason these allegations seemed unfair, partial and pedantic, particularly also because we were discussing a work that had not been intended for publication and which was written with the vehement sincerity of youth. I started my defence by saying that the diary provided an image of O'Connor that was uncharacteristically unedited. Through it we were privy to an understanding of her which was different from the image she presented of herself through her stories, essays and letters.

O'Connor was a determined woman, who gave in her writing the impression of being in control of every situation: a sarcastic woman, full of lucidity and wit, who never lamented about the disease which would eventually lead to her death. through all of her writings she bore witness to what she saw as the undeniable presence and the living God in this world. Yet, in this diary, we see her as insecure, complex, troubled and less

dogmatic than in her other writings. In the last few pages of the *Journal*, she certainly appears immature, as Gallagher argued, but she also earnestly reveals her first spiritual and artistic steps and shows that discomfort, discouragement and confusion may become resources for an artist if they are explored. The theological assumptions of her future narratives arose from such personal and interior disturbances, which she needed to confront over time in order to find a proper form.

From the very first page O'Connor addresses the so-called 'problem of the ego', an issue that would be central to her future works, in which the protagonists are stubbornly closed in on themselves and their own opinions until something external, namely the grace of God, arrives to challenge and even to destroy their certainties. In the first page of her journal she reveals her discomfort at not being able to 'feel' what is expressed in traditional prayers and pleads with God in a heartfelt way. Using lyrical images, she describes the Lord as 'the slim crescent of a moon' while she herself is 'the earth's shadow', that prevents her 'from seeing all the moon' (*A Prayer Journal* 3). I read those lines, not as a self-centred complaint about O'Connor's mediocrity and failures, but rather as her personal desire to be close to God whose beauty she grasped and was drawn to immediately and intuitively. At the same time she was also able to identify an obstacle in the path of this movement towards God in the shape of her own ego, with its baggage of selfishness, presumption and a clumsy need for self-affirmation: a fragile, limited self, undermined by its ontological condition of sin. For me this is a clear example of a seed planted in the writer's restless inner life starting to grow, and it shows us once again how O'Connor's future theological and spiritual wisdom has deep roots in a genuine experience of life rather than in the soil of intellectual arguments and beliefs.

Michael Paul Gallagher listened attentively to my intervention. He took copious notes and his response was typical of his unfailing recognition of the importance of dialogue. He replied that although he usually did not like to link writers' biographies closely with their works, none the less in this case he had been – with a smile at the audience – 'converted, even if not completely'. With this reply Michael Paul showed in a practical way that what I have called 'the problem of the ego' was something he had resolved in his own life: his reconsideration of his position is a sign of his own freedom from pride and vanity, the main themes of O'Connor's stories. He showed a humility which only a great person is not afraid to demonstrate: he was able to revisit his earlier position, to return to the beginning of his process of understanding and interpreting O'Connor's text, and to allow his judgement to be changed. At the end of our discussion he showed in a very practical way the meaning of one of his most well-known statements: 'to renew the freshness, we need to dive deeper' (*Dive Deeper* 11). Our discussion illustrated not only the extent and depth of Michael Paul's understanding of O'Connor's work but also his idea of literature as a 'road that leads towards Christian faith' (*Faith Maps* 4) and as a way of accessing and addressing the central questions of existence. It further highlighted for me the importance of open-mindedness and the fact that, in the context of a good process of Ignatian discernment, disagreement can be fruitful.

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## Notes on Contributors

**Piero Boitani** is a Fellow of the British Academy, the Medieval Academy of America, the Accademia dei Lincei, and Professor of Comparative Literature at 'Sapienza' (Rome) and at the University of Italian Switzerland (Lugano). His books include *The Shadow of Ulysses* and *The Bible and its Rewritings* (Oxford 1994 and 1999), *Winged Words. Flights in Poetry and History* (Chicago 2007), *Letteratura europea e Medioevo volgare* (Bologna 2007), *The Gospel according to Shakespeare* (Notre Dame 2013), *Il grande racconto delle stelle* (Bologna 2012), *Riconoscere è un dio* (Turin 2014), *Il grande racconto di Ulisse* (Bologna 2016). He received the 2016 Balzan Prize for Comparative Literature.

**Mark Bosco SJ**, vice-president for Mission and Ministry, was associate professor of English and Theology at Loyola University Chicago from 2003 to 2017 and director of their *Joan and Bill Hank Center for the Catholic Intellectual Heritage*. He researches the intersection of religion and art, especially the twentieth-century Catholic literary tradition. His publications include *Graham Greene's Catholic Imagination* (Oxford 2005), *Revelation and Convergence: Flannery O'Connor and the Catholic Intellectual Tradition* (Catholic University of America Press 2017) and articles on Gerard Manley Hopkins, Margaret Atwood and Shusaku Endo. He is in discussion with PBS/American Masters to produce and direct a documentary feature film, *Flannery O'Connor: Acts of Redemption*.

**David Jasper** is Professor Emeritus in the University of Glasgow having previously been Professor of Literature and Theology. He is also Distinguished Overseas Professor at Renmin University of China and Canon Theologian of Glasgow Episcopal Cathedral. He holds degrees in English Literature and Theology from the universities of Cambridge, Oxford, Durham and Uppsala. His latest book is *Literature and Theology as a Grammar of Assent* (2016).

**Francesca Bugliani Knox** is Research Associate at Heythrop College and Honorary Senior Research Associate at University College London. She is interested in the study of the interconnections between literature, theology and spirituality. She published several books and articles on various aspects of English and Italian literature from the Renaissance to the present. Her publications include *The Eye of the Eagle: John Donne and the Legacy of Ignatius Loyola* (Peter Lang 2011) and the edited volume *Ronald Knox a Man for all Seasons* (PIMS 2016). She has co-edited *Poetry and the Religious Imagination* (Ashgate 2015) and *Poetry and Prayer* (Routledge 2016).

**David Lonsdale** taught Christian spirituality at postgraduate and doctoral levels for more than twenty-five years at Heythrop College, University of London, before retiring in 2012. He was also co-editor of *The Way* journal between 1984 and 1995 and is currently interested in links between literature and religious faith and practice. His books on Ignatian spirituality have been translated into several languages, including Vietnamese.

**Jennifer Reek** teaches Catholic Intellectual Tradition seminars at Sacred Heart University, Fairfield, Connecticut. She has a PhD from the Centre for Literature, Theology and the Arts, University of Glasgow, and a Master of Divinity from Regis College, the Jesuit Faculty of the University of Toronto. Her research is interdisciplinary, often engaging intersections of poetry and faith between Ignatian spirituality and postmodern theory and literature. Her essays have appeared in Heythrop College's 'Power of the Word' project's first two volumes. She is co-editor of the fourth volume, *On Wonder*, and author of *A Poetics of Church* (Routledge 2017).

**Elena Buia Rutt** is a poet, translator and literary critic holding degrees in Philosophy and Literature and an MA in Journalism. She contributes to cultural programs on Italian television and national newspapers, including *La Civiltà Cattolica* and *L'Osservatore Romano*. A prize-winning essayist, Elena has written on Pier Vittorio Tondelli and Flannery O'Connor. Elena has published two books of poetry, *Ti stringo la mano mentre dormi* (Fuorilinea 2012) and *Il mio cuore è un asino* (Nottetempo 2015). Elena's translation work includes poems by Rowan Williams, poems by American poet Mary Oliver (2012) and Flannery O'Connor's *Prayer Journal*. Since 2016, Elena has taught the 'Art of Literary Translation' at John Cabot University University (Rome).

**Gemma Simmonds** is Senior Lecturer in Pastoral Theology at Heythrop College, University of London. A past president of the Catholic Theological Association of Great Britain, she teaches ecclesiology and Christian Spirituality, specializing both as a teacher and a practitioner in the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises, the life and teaching of Mary Ward and in applied spirituality in the contemporary context. She is a sister of the Congregation of Jesus and Director of the Religious Life Institute. She travels globally teaching and researching the theology and practice of religious life, engaging in dialogue with both Catholic and Anglican religious.

**Nicolas Steeves SJ** lectures in Fundamental Theology at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome. He holds a Doctorate in Sacred Theology from Centre Sèvres-Facultés jésuites de Paris. His dissertation, *Grâce à l'imagination : Intégrer l'imagination en théologie fondamentale*, was published in 2016 at Editions du Cerf. Before joining the Jesuits in 2000, Fr Steeves worked as a business lawyer in Prague and Paris. He studied philosophy and theology at Centre Sèvres and Heythrop College, and obtained a licentiate in Fundamental Theology in Rome in 2010. He has worked with Vatican Radio as a campus minister and an associate pastor.

**Frank Turner SJ** is currently ‘Delegate for the Intellectual Apostolate’ in the British Province of the Society of Jesus. His central work has been to seek the integration of theological and spiritual reflection with social justice. He has taught at the universities of Manchester, London and San Francisco, was advisor to the English and Welsh Bishops on international affairs (1997-2004) and worked in Brussels on the politics of the European Union (2005-2014). Hence his interest in communicating a Christian perspective, and specifically the Catholic Social Teaching tradition, in a secular environment.

**Jean Ward** teaches at Gdańsk University. Her doctoral thesis in Polish on the Polish reception of the poetry of T.S. Eliot, published in 2001, led her into the field of religious poetry. Besides her study *Christian Poetry in the Post-Christian Day: Geoffrey Hill, R. S. Thomas, Elizabeth Jennings* (2009), she has co-edited and contributed to a collection of essays in Polish on the themes of incarnation and the body in Eliot’s poetry. In 2016 she co-edited *Striking the Chords of Spirit and Flesh in Polish Poetry. A Serendipity*. She has also published poetry in translation, in this collection and elsewhere.

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