EDITORIAL

At least one periodical I receive is classified as an occasional journal. I take this to mean that it is published at no regular interval. If the choice for JUFF is between "regular" and "occasional," then certainly it is an occasional one--and with increasing obviousness. Perhaps a third category, "seldom," needs to be created since almost two and half years have elapsed since the publication of our last issue in Spring of 1981. But maybe a "seldom" journal is better than a "never" one.

If we as a faculty do not distinguish ourselves by our prolificity in writing, perhaps we do by our efficiency in effort. As a case in point, each of the articles printed in this issue of JUFF was formerly used in some previous connection. They have either been read for some professional or academic group or published in some previous journal. In some cases, they have been both read and published. The justification for their secondary appearance here is to acquaint colleagues with these works and hopefully, beyond that, to stimulate further scholarly dialogue.

Wayne Alford’s article was first read at the Southeastern Regional Association for Teacher Education in Tampa, Florida in October, 1982 and was later published in the Florida FATE Journal (II, pp. 60-63, 1983).

James Baggett’s paper was read to the Joseph E. Martin Shakespeare Circle in Jackson during December 1982.

Louise Bentley read her work at a conference on "Christianity and Literature," Southeastern Region. This group convened at Bryan College, Dayton, Tennessee, in April 1982.

Sara Harris made her presentation to the Conference on "Film and the Humanities" at Florida State University, Tallahassee.

Ernie Pinson’s paper grew out of work he did and presented to a group of his students here at Union.

The paper on "If I Taught Religious Studies in a Hungry World" was read to the Annual Meeting of the National Association of Baptist Professors of Religion, at the University of Florida in Gainesville, April, 1982. It is scheduled to appear in Perspectives in Religious Studies later this year.

This offering is sincerely made in the wish that each reader will find these works both enjoyable and stimulating.

W. Clyde Tilley, Editor
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the other well-known differentials of language, economy, size and age, gender, special interests, and values and attitudes. Unfortunately, neither do we arm our future teachers with these realities. The tragic result is a kind of future shock to many first-year teachers: They are rudely awakened to the fact that the erstwhile romance between them and the teaching profession is suddenly over. The final outcome is often unhappy for both the new teacher and his school, not to mention the school child.

A second myth widely circulating in American education today is the myth of "Sunday School" discipline—the myth that all catalysts of child pedagogy and behavior modification are pleasant and pacific and should never be stimulated by the ruder forces of intimidation, threats, or corporal punishment. The proponents of this view do not see the child as a natural creature. They do not remember that almost from his very beginning man has been possessed by an independent and rebellious character, and that it is quite unnatural for him to be controlled altogether by contentious means. When these facts are translated into the growth and development of children and adolescents in a modern school setting, where there is little regard for individual differences and the unique idiosyncrasies of these particular age groups, the "Sunday School" discipline theory becomes even more absurd. Learning can be fun, but it is a complicated process and often must be conducted in a rigorous manner. Moreover, it must be managed by someone more detached and objective than the learner himself. This frequently brings about natural conflict between the learner and the alien personality, especially if the learner is a child and the other person is an adult. Given the differences in personalities, attitudes, and values, together with the countless physical and psychological differentials in and between adult and child, conflict is imminent; and, in a formal school setting, it sometimes simply must be neutralized by promises of low grades, suspension or expulsion, or even to the tune of a hickory stick.

The application of "Sunday School" discipline is all too common in our schools. Should we be surprised that school systems are being sued for malpractice because their graduates cannot read, or that Russian, European, and Far Eastern school children know more math, science, history, and even English, than American children? Why shouldn't personal morality be at an all-time low in this land, and armed guards on patrol full-time in the corridors of many of our inner city schools? No wonder our young graduate teachers, who should be crossing over the threshold into a rewarding and fulfilling profession, are becoming, instead, innocent and disillusioned future shock victims of a blackboard jungle.

The third myth is the myth of pseudonymous professionalism—the myth that teaching is a bona fide profession. Teaching is not really a profession, except, fictitiously, in the minds of the teachers themselves. Teaching does take on some features that are characteristic of a profession. It performs a needed service, it stresses intellectual techniques in its purposes, and it requires a substantial period of specialized training. But it is not a self-governing organization, it does not subscribe to a common and universal code of ethics, and it requires that its constituency perform a wide variety of non-professional tasks. It is this last aspect in particular that separates teaching from the real professions, such as law and medicine.

Most new teachers see themselves as highly educated, skilled pedagogues, veritable pillars of respectability in their communities—in other words, they see themselves as professionals. In fact, they have read about these sterling attributes in all the educational literature and heard it from their professors of education. But it is all a myth, because when they reach their first teaching
position, they search their memories in vain for any philosophic pearls of wisdom, any pragmatic skills in methodology, or any student teaching experiences which in any way might have elaborated on the art of restroom supervision, traffic engineering and management in the halls and cafeteria, bank finance procedures as they relate to lunch money or field trip budgets, emergency janitorial science, snake extermination, zoological gardening, forestry, and elementary principles of plumbing and carpentry.

Initial contact with pseudonymous professionalism also jolts the young teacher in other ways, as he continues on his maiden voyage into the "profession" of teaching. The questionable striking of classroom teachers and their behavior during labor-management disputes are not always professional models for new teachers. The capricious dismissal of teachers for unjustifiable causes is not uncommon in the 1980s, in spite of tenure policies and the protests of so-called professional teacher organizations. The unprofessional intimidation and harrassment of teachers by parents, who have direct access to the teachers, is unbecoming and degrading to both parties, especially when it is done within earshot of the children. And, finally, the pseudonymous professional school administrators and board member politicians continue to employ teachers in their school systems for other than "professional" reasons.

Upon his first encounter with the shock waves of pseudonymous professionalism, the rookie teacher is understandably crestfallen and demoralized.

Myth number four is the "right to privacy myth"--the myth that teachers have private lives just like all other human beings and whose lives are not subject to public inspection. Just the reverse is the real case. Teachers live in glass houses, their lives are filled with "Thou shalt not." and their supervisors, the school board, and the P.T.A. all expect them to be exemplary in citizenship, paragons of virtue in the community, and very open (and conservative) with their views on controversial issues such as evolution, sex, drugs, politics, and curfew hours for teenagers on weeknights and where they ought and ought not to park their cars while on dates. Young teachers entering teaching for the first time are not often aware that if they are unusually attractive and fashionably attired females, or handsome, Greek god-like males, their personal lives are likely to undergo even more concentrated scrutiny by the noon literary societies or ladies' Sunday School classes, especially if male and female spend too much time together, and if they happen to teach children of members of the ladies' groups who are failing their classes.

Future teachers should somehow be prepared better for the certainty that parents, churches, and community shall expect the teachers of their children to be solid examples of good morality and citizenship, even if the parents and members of the churches and community themselves are not. It makes no difference that the academic preparation of the teacher is excellent, that he is unusually talented in motivating children to learn, and that he is a superior disciplinarian--if he is unwilling to "temper" his philosophy of life (his private life) to that of the community and school system, he will be labelled "uncooperative" and his contract will be placed in the "suspect" file in the superintendent's office for special review next contract time.

Thus, in the final analysis, the young, independent, optimistic, and often "liberated" teacher of our future shock world suddenly finds himself compromising two of his most treasured possessions--his personal freedom and his chosen career. How successfully he handles the problem ultimately depends on his "cope-ability" index.
The fifth and final myth to be considered is the Perry Mason myth—the myth that teachers are not legally responsible for their personal actions in the classrooms, as long as they operate within school board policy; and, if legal action is forthcoming against the individual teacher, the benevolent parent school system swoops down immediately to defend him (without charge, of course). Numerous court cases exposing this assumption as a myth are a matter of record, but since very few teacher education programs have courses in the rapidly emerging field of school law, the student teacher is rarely subjected to even its basic rudiments.

Another reason why new teachers may fall easy prey to litigations brought on by the Perry Mason myth is because neither the law nor school board policies are clear on these matters. For example, most laws permit corporal punishment as a means of controlling school children, but "not excessively." School principals tell their teachers to "apply the board of education to the seat of knowledge," but "do it responsibly and get a witness." What does "excessively" and "responsibly" mean to a beginning teacher—"not too hard," or "not too long" and "don't beat him up?" Sometimes there is not enough time to find a witness, and even then, may not witnesses themselves be named as accessories in such cases? Just where is the line to be drawn between corporal punishment and child abuse?

Of course, there are scores of questions such as these, still unanswered by civil law and school boards, that apply not only to discipline, but to a wide variety of other topics ranging from academic freedom to issues of church and state. The point is this: The student needs to become thoroughly indoctrinated and oriented in the principles of accountability, of being responsible "for his own wake," so to speak, and prepared for the distinct possibility that his new "parent" may turn out to be just another "fair-weather friend" when it comes to interceding on his behalf in personal legal allegations resulting from his questionable judgment of some ambiguous school board policy. Such forewarning may increase his "cope-ability" factor and one day help save him from the future shock of the Perry Mason myth.

This article has proposed the exposure of certain myths in education as a partial means of preparing new teachers for a "future shock" world. Limited space has restricted analysis and discussion to five such myths relating to (1) equality of all children in the learning process, (2) discipline, (3) teaching as a profession, (4) private lives of teachers, and (5) legal responsibilities of teachers; but there are at least as many other myths as there are controversial issues in education—in the areas of school politics, school finance, parent-teacher activity, prayer and Bible reading, busing, academic freedom, federal government involvement, "back to basics" and the three R's, and the I.Q., to name but a few. As teacher educators, we are obligated to probe all of them with unshackling determination and tenaciousness in an honest effort to sort out all viable alternatives for our beginning teachers. In so doing, we can hope realistically for better teachers, for better schools and for a better tomorrow.

\[1\text{Alvin Toffler, Future Shock (New York: Bantam Books, 1971), 561 pages.}\]
Shakespeare's Richard III:
An Example of the Meaning and Limits of Machiavellian Politics

James Alex Baggett

The world of statecraft supplied the setting for Shakespeare's tragedies and histories; the dramas are filled with politics and public scenes. Yet the accounts are not treated as "dead politics" (an expression sometimes used to describe textbookish history); but rather the affairs of state occur within the context of other fascinating relationships, such as those involving friendship and family, sex and violence, and feuds and factions. Or, more accurately, these happenings occur within a political context.

Apart from the accounts that Shakespeare followed in portraying patricians and princes, what views of the state from other sources did he probably absorb? Considering the literature available in his day and the sources evident from his works, the political traditions most likely to have influenced him may be grouped thusly: classical antiquity, emphasizing the ideal ruler and state; Judeo-Christian religion, stressing that government is one of God's means of control, protection and punishment; and Italian Renaissance skepticism, accentuating the violent and elitist origins of power and the state, derived particularly from the writing of Niccolo Machiavelli. Shakespeare lived a century before John Locke and was influenced very little, if at all, by any Lockean type ideas that laid the intellectual foundation of the American Revolution—that is, that man created government for his own protection, while retaining to himself his inalienable rights of life, liberty and property.

It is the Machiavellian influence upon Shakespeare which this paper addresses. In a soliloquy in Part Three of HENRY IV, Richard of Gloucester (the future Richard III) elaborates on his own Machiavellian nature:

... this earth affords no joy to me
But to command, to check, to overbear such
As are better persons than myself,
I'll make my heaven to dream upon the crown,

I can smile, and murder whiles I smile,
And cry "Content" to that which grieves my heart,
And wet my cheeks with artificial tears
And frame my face to all occasions.

I can add colors to the chameleon
Change shapes with Proteus for advantages
And set the murderous Machiavil to school.

(III.v.165-68, 182, 185, 191-93)

*An earlier and longer version of this paper was addressed to the Joseph E. Martin Shakespeare Circle, Jackson, Tennessee, December 16, 1982.
Richard defies God while daydreaming of the crown, even if the price of acquiring it is murder. And he glories in his duplicity, an attitude in perfect keeping with Machiavelli, the Florentine writer and sometimes diplomat. Machiavelli enumerates in his brief and best known work, The Prince, the techniques of gaining and holding political power. He is not at all concerned, as some have made him, with the question of ends justifying means; he concentrates totally on means. He describes what he sees in the real world of statecraft, where mistakes are more important than sins. He views from the top the affairs of state and portrays politics as being somewhat like chess, wherein sly strategy and bold, unmerciful action are rewarded.3

Always honest with the audience—if with no one else—in the opening soliloquy in RICHARD III, Richard represents himself as being physically deformed and inwardly "subtle, false, and treacherous." Altogether, the unlovable figure appears in ten of eighteen scenes, delivering about one-third of the dialogue, and through his eyes we see his own rise, brief reign and fall.4

Unlike Shakespeare's other histories, RICHARD III is less episodic and more intense—focusing on the self-centered protagonist. Adding to this concentration is the fact that Shakespeare telescopes the events of fourteen years—Henry VI's funeral (1471), the murder of Clarence, Richard's brother (1478), the illness and death of his other brother, King Edward IV (1483), and the Battle of Bosworth Field (1485)—into fewer than two weeks of dramatic time. Moreover, the events are positioned and adjusted to suit the focus of the dramatist.5

All of which has caused one historian to comment that "as myth" Shakespeare's RICHARD III is "indestructible, nor should one try to destroy him. ... As history, however. ... Richard is unacceptable. Some of the legend is incredible, some is known to be false, and much is uncertain or unproved.6 Several scholars have also noted the alterations made by Shakespeare from the faulty accounts available to him. None of the sources details Richard's deformity and devilish intent, spelled out graphically in the play's twelve soliloquies: soliloquies which voice not only his total selfishness and ruthless cruelty, but also his wit, shrewdness, and vitality, without which we could hardly abide Richard.7

Such a celebration of a talented villain suggests that RICHARD III is more than a morality play. Virtue triumphs, but rather belatedly so. And God's chosen ruler—Henry, Earl of Richmond, a Tudor—appears only briefly to kill Richard at the drama's end. Still, it is moral history, and Judeo-Christian history at that, for all the leaders are instruments of God's vengence and eventually all the sinners pay. But, like life, the drama is replete with relativity, irony and ambiguity.8

The opening scenes reveal the situation of the royal family. The House of York has triumphed, but of the Duke's sons, Edward IV is a dying ruler dominated by his wife Elizabeth and her family, the Woodvilles; Clarence, who on occasion has proven himself disloyal, is imprisoned; and Richard waits impatiently in the wings.

If I fail not in my deep intent
Clarence hath not another day to live:
Which done, God take King Edward to his mercy,
And leave the world for me to bustle in. (1.1.149-52)

6
In his quest for the crown Richard exhibits strategy elaborated in The Prince, a type of behavior unlimited by morality, taste or conscience. He plans his brother's murder and exclaims

Simple plain Clarence, I do love thee so
That I will shortly send thy soul to heaven
If heaven will take the present... (I.i.118-20)

And after Clarence's death, Richard views the entire experience as a well-devised accomplishment.

In the worst possible taste, Richard courts and wins Lady Anne, widow of the Prince of Wales and daughter of the Earl of Warwick, both of whom he has murdered. So happy is he that he gloats over his achievement as a lover, a role for which he is pitifully ill-suited:

Having God, her conscience, and these bars against me,
And I no friends to back my suit
But the plain devil and dissembling looks?
And yet to win her! All the world is nothing! (I.iii.234-37)

And, in perfect keeping with Machiavelli's prescription for a usurper's continued reign, Richard orders the deaths of King Edward's children, the little princes. Speaking to Buckingham, his co-conspirator, he asks

... shall we wear these honors for a day?
Or shall they last, and we rejoice in them?
Shall I be plain? I wish the bastards dead
And I would have it suddenly performed. (IV.ii.5-8)

Richard's attitude toward religion also is typically Machiavellian—religion should be used by the ruler so far as it is useful, but it should not impede objectives. He cites the scriptures to cloak his villainy when sowing dissension among Edward and his wife and her kindred. He often swears by the saints, on occasion talks of returning good for evil, leaving vengeance to God, and offering Christian forgiveness to those who have denounced him. Following the advice of his protege Buckingham, he seems the soul of humility when he is offered the crown. He appears bearing a book of prayer and walking between two bishops, thereby giving the impression that the office is seeking him, rather than the reverse.

Actually, as a Machiavellian, Richard has no fear of God or the hereafter, an attitude reflected in his aside after receiving the blessing of his mother, when he declares she will

... make me die a good old man.

That is the butt-end of a mother's blessing. (II.ii.108-09) He thinks little of that voice of God called conscience and seeks to discount the dreams that disturb him in the night before the Battle of Bosworth:

Let not our baddling dreams
... a'right our souls
Conscience is but a word that cowards use,
Devis'd at first to keep the strong in awe;
Our strong arms be our conscience, swords our law!
(V.iii.308-11)
What are the limits to such a Machiavellian approach to leadership? The greatest limit is that stipulated by the Florentine himself, fortune or chance, in which some might see the hand of God. Richard appears to discount fortune as a prime factor in determining the course of events. If the sun disdains to shine on his army, neither will it shine on Richmond’s forces. And, as circumstances and events cause Buckingham and other former advisors to forsake him and marshal their forces in Wales, Richard still sees the control of his destiny entirely in his own hands. “My counsel is my shield,” he proclaims. Ultimately, at the Battle of Bosworth, the fate of circumstance plays a beastly trick on him, and he delivers the best known line of the drama:

A horse, a horse! my Kingdom for a horse. (V.iv.7)

Of course, if the Tudor view of history is true: that there is predetermined design in the affairs of men and the Tudors have been called by God to reign, then the goal of Richard’s Machiavellian maneuvers is doomed. Then not only is he being punished because of his own sins, but also for those of his fathers who dethroned and murdered Richard II, God’s anointed. And that is precisely what happens in the closing scene.

Another risk of ruling by such a deceptive code of behavior is that of forfeiting the joys of loving and being loved. To the Machiavellian, people are valued only so long as they are useful. In the end Richard soberly admits

... no creature loves me.
And if I die no soul will pity me. (V.iii.200-01)

Finally, Richard seems to assume, along with the scholarly Italian, that a prince has at his disposal the freedom to will any action, that a man can easily escape both his experience and his conscience, that he can instantly change from lion to fox, that he can perpetually commit the foulest sins and play the man of God, and that he possesses an endless supply of ambition, passion and guile. Such is hardly the case with any prince.
NOTES


2Alvis and West, Shakespeare as Political Thinker, p.7.


5Champion, Shakespeare's Histories, p. 55.


7Champion, Shakespeare's Histories, pp. 66-67.

8Alvis and West, Shakespeare as Political Thinker, p. 12.

9Becker, Shakespeare's Histories, p. 113.


11I.iii.45, II.i.138, III.vii.95-108.

12Alvis and West, Shakespeare as Political Thinker, p. 57.

13IV.iii.56.


Frost’s Biblical Enigma in the Dialogue “Maple”

Louise D. Bentley

Robert Frost’s twenty-two dialogues written from 1905 to 1926, poems usually showing two characters conversing, illustrate both Frost’s theory of the conversational voice as the sound of poetry and his ability to portray human beings interacting with other humans. Frost, who fascinated people with his own scintillating talk in the many years of what he called “barding around” on American campuses and lecture circuits, had two loves—people and talk. His belief that “all truth is dialogue” emerges in these poetic dramas of people talking in a variety of emotional situations, seeking solutions to problems, and seeking better understanding of themselves and others. For the first quarter of the twentieth century Frost often chose to explore human relationships in dialogue; one of these poems, “Maple,” treats a father’s unsuccessful communication with a daughter. Couched in the overtones of a Biblical enigma, the poem shows both Frost’s theory and skill but most significantly the influences of his own past life experiences.

Written in 1921, “Maple” is intricately bound to the Frost family experiences. They moved frequently, but the move from Franconia, New Hampshire, to South Shaftsbury, near Amherst, in late 1920 was partly on account of their twenty-one-year-old daughter Lesley. She was sent to New York for the summer to work as a bookseller and to be “away for her own safety,” as Frost later told his biographer Lawrence Thompson. A neighbor, Raymond Holden, although married, had developed too great a fondness for Lesley; this fondness was causing estrangement from his wife. Frost not only sent his daughter away for the summer but also moved the family to the Peleg Cole house when she returned that fall to insure her being away from Raymond Holden.

One night shortly thereafter Frost and his wife were talking about their children’s names. Numerous times their son Carol’s teachers asked if his name should not be Carl. Lesley, too, whose name came from Burns’s “bonnie Lesley,” was often assumed to be a boy. Out of the evening’s musings came the dialogue “Maple,” a romantic story of a girl named by her dying mother after a maple tree.

The poem opens with a conflict between teacher and parent when the child comes home questioning if her name is Mabel or Maple. “...teacher told the school / There’s no such name” as Maple. With her father’s explanation the child can rebuke her teacher the next day assured that “Teachers don’t know as much / As fathers about children” (p. 180). Just before her death the mother had named her Maple. Although the father says, “I don’t know what she wanted it to mean,” he promises, “I will tell you all I know / About the different trees...and your mother” someday (p. 180). At the time he is aware that these two promises are “dangerous self-answering words to sow”; he must remember to fulfill those promises.

Years later as a teenager Maple stares into a mirror and ponders the “strangeness” of her name—“This difference from other names” that “made people notice it—and notice her.” She considers other names such as Lesley, Carol, Irma, and Marjorie (the names of Frost’s children) that “signified nothing” (p. 181). Because her father does not tell her its meaning, she begins to seek for answers—by looking at her mother’s picture and then by finding a bookmark of a reddish maple leaf in the mother’s Bible. Although Maple reads about a “wave
offering” at that marked place, she does not understand its meaning and even loses the place (p.181). This bookmark is the first clue to her later discovery, for the maple leaf marks the Old Testament rules about wave offerings. According to Mosaic law, sacrificial offerings were made for communion with Jehovah and for propitiatory pardons from sins. The wave offerings included both bloody and bloodless sacrifices, so-called because of the manner of their presentation. Listed under purposes and kinds in this category were a private thank offering and a jealousy offering, based on Numbers 5:25.6

The New English Bible translation clarifies chapter 5. If a married woman is unfaithful to her husband, or only if "a fit of jealousy comes over a husband which causes him to suspect his wife, when she is not in fact defiled" (Numbers 5:15), in either case the husband brings the woman and a prescribed offering to the priest to "set her before the Lord" (Numbers 5:16). From the burned barley offering the priest makes a drink of truth water with the following effect. If she is guilty, she will have a miscarriage or "untimely birth, and her name will become an example in adjuration among her kind" (Numbers 5:27). If she is pure, "then her innocence is established and she will bear her child" (Numbers 5:28).7 In this poem, if Maple’s father had, indeed, in "a fit of jealousy" suspected his wife of unfaithfulness but then saw her bear the child, a sign of innocence, he would find it hard to admit to the daughter his error of long ago. The maple leaf bookmark that furnished the name was the tangible expression to the dying mother that her innocence had been established and vindicated—according to the rules marked for easy reference in that ancient law, her Bible.

When Maple is a young woman, her search for self leads her to "city schooling" and secretarial skills that find her working for an executive in New York. In the middle of dictation one day he interjects: "Do you know you remind me of a tree— / A maple tree?" When he discovers her name is Maple, not Mabel as he had thought, they are both shocked that "he should have divined / Without the name her personal mystery" (p. 182). Soon thereafter they are married.

Her compelling quest for meaning sends the two of them seeking answers. Her perceptive husband offers three explanations of the father’s silence. First, he suggests that the mystery "may have been / Something between your father and your mother / Not meant for us at all." Second, it may have been "something a father couldn’t tell a daughter / As well as could a mother." Finally, "it may have been their one lapse into fancy." Here he cautions her: "’Twould be too bad to make him sorry for / By bringing it up to him when he was too old," especially since they both feel the father holds them off "unnecessarily" (p. 183).

During several autumn vacations the couple observes maples, always the straight-standing trees, not the maples with buckets catching sap. They discover two maple trees of significance—one that an autumn fire had run through "and swept of leathern leaves, but left the bark / Unscorched, unblackened, even, by any smoke" (p.184). The other is a maple in a glade "Standing alone with smooth arms lifted up, / And every leaf of foliage she’d / Laid scarlet and pale pink about her feet" (p. 184). The ability of the maple tree to survive clean and pure in spite of fire and weather is an apt analogy of the mother’s purity. Her dying words were "Be a good girl—be like a maple tree" (p. 180).

These clues reinforce the couple’s feeling that they are near discovery, "but lacking faith in anything to mean / The same at different times to different people" (p. 184), they stop the search. The twenty-five-year-old Maple decides: "We would not see the secret if we could now: / We are not looking for it any more" (p. 185). The deliberate decision to look no more is made partly because
Maple defers to her father and partly because she cannot bear to face the fact that her lovely mother, mostly idealized for her through a fading photograph, could have ever been suspected of infidelity. The one on trial is not the mother but the father.

The poet never reveals the meaning of the mother’s whim in naming Maple. Jean Gould relates that after the poem’s publication in 1923 an order of nuns wrote Frost to ask if the girl was called Maple because she was so sweet. The name and its secret meaning—certainly of greater depth than mere sweetness—ultimately alienate the daughter and the father. The fact that he does not keep his promise of long ago to give her answers complicates the mystery; the past becomes a burden that hinders free, open discussion between them.

The narrator’s conclusion is solemn: "A name with meaning could bring up a child, / Taking the child out of the parents’ hands." Then he issues an admonition: "Better a meaningless name, I should say / As leaving more to nature and happy chance" (p. 185). A name without meaning would be less likely to generate a crusade for discovery. The father has learned a lesson too late. His innocent, but suspected, wife bears a child, vindicating her own character—then dies. Losing his wife in childbirth is a heavy burden for the father; he continues to live with the innocent child whose name symbolizes for him his own weakness and lack of trust in a pure wife. His broken promises result in a broken relationship with his daughter because the right words of explanation never come. Maple must forever feel it unfair to have "a name to carry for life and never know / The secret of" (p. 183). She probably interprets her father’s not trusting her with the truth as a lack of love; what could have been a warm and lovely relationship becomes strained and cool through lack of conversation.

The earlier stated immediate circumstances surrounding the poem’s creation do not explain significant facets of human relationships within the poem. Three ingredients of profound personal influence offer a more complete analysis of this strange, unique poem. First was Frost’s mother, Belle Moody Frost, a devout but often misguided woman in her devotion to Swedenborgianism. She taught Frost at home during his first eleven years of an unstable childhood in California by saturating him in the Bible as well as classical and Ossian sources. Particularly intrigued by the Old Testament Scriptures, he continued to read the Bible throughout his adult life, often late at night as he sat alone. Many of his poems manifest his interest in laws and traditions.

The second influence, the confusion and contradictions of his own nature as a teenager growing up back in New England, also continued into his adult, mature years. His fits of jealousy, his uncontrollable temper, and his sense of competitiveness confused him. He and his future wife, Elinor White, were high school co-vedictors; his jealousy of her skills and her brilliance never ceased through forty-three years of marriage. His desire to dominate her life surfaced early; in fact, Frost ran away to Virginia’s Dismal Swamp and tried to kill himself just to make Elinor sorry she would not marry him before she finished college. Their tempestuous marriage was a loving one but filled with many frustrations because of Frost’s jealousy. She was also such a good poet that he asked her to stop writing poetry and instead to paint.
The third influence was Frost's own strong but somewhat unsystematic belief in God. He was sure that

the trust and faith and confidence which are available to human beings who align themselves on the side of God, in the warfare between good and evil, should serve as a form of inner defense and should not be paraded.¹¹

He felt the "flaunting" of such a belief tripped one with the sin of pride. The considerable evidence that his wife Elinor grew more atheistic through the years and often taunted him about God may account for his fear of "flaunting God"—even in poetry. By the time he wrote the above thoughts to his good friend Louis Untermeyer in 1920, he had been married twenty-five years, had experienced failure and success, the guilt and sorrow of death from the loss of two children and his mother, and the increasing bitterness of a wife who had decided the whole world was evil. Paradoxically, this woman who had years earlier delivered a valedictory titled "Conversation as a Force in Life" grew noncommunicative; her "speciality was meaningful silence."¹² For a man who loved the art of conversation as greatly as did Frost, those difficult times helped propel him to the "inner defense" of God.

"Maple" combines these three personal influences in a subtle, unique way. When Frost wrote the poem in 1921 it probably reflected his own puzzled inadequacy to understand children. His own troubled relationships with his four children often caused him to feel he had unintentionally failed them. With cruel irony, the future for Frost and his children exploded with terrible pain only a few short years later. He was to suffer from seeing one daughter become insane, one daughter die in childbirth, and his son commit suicide. The crushing tragedy was to bear his one remaining child, Lesley, accuse him vehemently of causing the death of the mother in 1938 and ruining the family. It was Lesley who resurrected his nagging doubt of many years that an artist ought never to marry and have a family.¹³ Although she was later to praise Frost as a true artist and genius in the Foreword to the Family Letters of Robert and Elinor Frost, her personal relationship with her father was tense and strained.¹⁴

Because "Maple," more than any other of his twenty-two dialogues, portrays such deep, personal influences and emotions from the poet's past, he conceals the poem's meaning in a Biblical enigma that has successfully eluded many readers. This dialogue stands, then, not only as an example of Frost's dramatic skill to show his insight into a dark corner of human life but also a powerful negative example of his basic philosophy that patient, accurate conversation is essential to viable human relationships.
NOTES


8 Gould, p. 220.


10 Thompson, The Early Years, pp. 211-12.


12 Thompson, The Early Years, p. 129.

13 Thompson, The Years of Triumph, pp. 496-97.

The Transcendent Center in Makhali-Phâl's Le Roi d'Angkor

Sara E. Harris

Born in the Orient but educated in Europe, Makhali-Phâl represents an intermediary between the two radically different cultures. Yet, according to such eminent writers as Paul Claudel and Gaston Bachelard, she is an author's author, whose collection of short stories, two collections of poems and six novels reflect a particular blend of East and West. In her third novel, Le Roi d'Angkor, Makhali-Phâl centers her energy on the poetic and metaphysical universe of King Iqavarman who ruled from within the sacred Bayon Temple in the heart of the ancient city of Angkor.

At the ultimate point of his initiation as the king of Angkor, Iqavarman ritually exorcises God's "Présence" from the Bayon and from Angkor, in order that during his reign all may be renewed in a fresh and pure beginning:

I enclose God in my body; once within my body I take a particle from Him; I bear this particle away in this obscure retreat; I shut up this particle within the lingam; I say to the Lingam: "You are me, who is God, and I now close the door of his prison..."  

So Iça stands atop the "triple montagne" and identifies himself with the Bayon, which is the ultimate center, from which he will lead his people, arms outstretched in blessing, in prayer and regeneration. Iça, "le grand suzerain magique," at the termination of the long ritualistic ceremony of his coronation, has established his identity as being One with God. Thus, at this point, his life will begin to follow the rigid ritual prescribed by his ancestors.

Iça has journeyed from the confines of a Buddhist monastery in the jungle to the sacred city of Angkor, to the sacred temple of the Bayon, to the utmost tower of the "triple montagne." to the lingam, in order that he might reach the ultimate center, which is in reality himself—the presence of God on earth. From him will issue forth in concentric circles his omnipresent energy, and his dominion over the universe, for he is "Dieu-face-partout." He, Iqavarman, ruler of the Khmer Empire, will recreate the act of creation, and from chaos will bring forth harmony. Iça, by his initiation, consecrates not only himself but also the city and the temple, and consequently he brings about that mythical "time" of illô tempore where, in fact, time does not exist. Through his initiatory death, the center is made holy, and not only is Iça reborn and cleansed, but so are all of his people.

Iça explains the centrality of his position: "Assez! Voilà plus de trois heures que la création accomplit le tour rituel du cercle sans lâcher le centre immobile qui est moi ...." (p. 138) Iça represents the center of the world from which emanates the divine power of the Father. And this power is centered in the Temple, in the Bayon, in the Lingam. The temple plays an enormous role in the lives of the people. The temple is the physical intermediary between God and man, earth and sky, the Visible and the Invisible. The Bayon is the sacred space from which Iça, "le Roi-Bieu," rules over his empire and serves as the "human" intermediary for God and his people. One cannot underestimate the power of the temple and the "Présence" which it embodies, for the Bayon is a living, breathing entity.
The "Présence" is so important to the understanding of Le Roi d'Angkor that Maikhali-Phāl addresses the reader directly to explain that it is this "Présence" of God that gives Angkor its metaphysical aspect:

Thus, look intently with your eyes, readers, look at this unique and flamboyant city, animated in its immensity by a people of statues who were, thanks to the presence in them of the divinity or of the devil or of deified kings, living, as living, as human beings or resuscitated men, just as alive however but motionless.

In the city of Angkor, the divine and the human, the animate and the inanimate are indistinguishable one from another, for the "Présence" invades everything:

But how can we forget the dogma of the "Presence" when we perceive that it is in function of this dogma that has been given to man which has allowed him to live within the confines of society. For, I ask you, in this city, who is the double of the other: statue or man? It seems that in Angkor that it is rather man who doubles the statue. (p. 103)

This is the metaphysical secret of Angkor: the all-encompassing "Présence" that dwells amidst a people of statues in a city where the demonic, the benign are incarnated in images and idols. This is the capital city. If the pilgrim is not aware of this mysterious and magical quality that forms the base of the sacred city of Angkor, then he will never be able to penetrate the all-pervading force behind its strength:

Therefore let the pilgrim put this dogma well into his head, the dogma of the "Presence." On this dogma the capital was constructed in order to project throughout the empire the omnipresence of God incarnated by the king, by the pyramidal images of the king. (p. 101)

The Bayon is the symbol of perfect centeredness and the principal character in Le Roi d'Angkor, at least on the metaphysical level. It is in this sacred temple that Iça undergoes his initiation as king. It is within the confines of the temple that time does not exist, for Iça is able to recapture the moment of Creation, the timelessness of 1116 tempore, the unsullied days before the Fall. It is at this central point—the Bayon—that creation began, and, with the archetypal gesture of his initiation as king, Iça once again tries to recapture the Golden Days in order to make Angkor "un microcosm de ma puissance." (p. 192) The Bayon, "le symbolisme cosmique de l'architecture angkorienne," embodies history, past, present and future. Its "Présence" is inescapable and inherent to the maintenance of the force of Iça, of Angkor, ("ville-de-l'Elbouche-de-Dieu"), and of the empire as a whole.

At the culminating point of Iça's sacred room at the apex of the Bayon is found the lingam, the phallic symbol of spiritual power. Here the myth of ascension and all that pertains to it is quite applicable. The Bayon, the "triple montagne," is apart from the profane; and indeed, everything connected with the ascent is symbolic of the rise of man above the common elements. The space on which it stands is itself sacred. The door or threshold is the dividing line
between the divine and the earthly. Once one has crossed the boundary into the realm of the sacred (i.e., when one becomes the godhead), then all things are possible. It is as if the whole world at the moment that Iça is enthroned has contracted to the lingam, to the center of the universe. The temple, the "Mont Mêru," is a living, breathing organism which controls not only the city of Angkor but the whole empire. As the novel develops, one feels expansion taking place. The rhythm of the temple has flowed into concentric circles until it has incorporated the whole world into its universal beat. At the end of the novel, the empire is again contracting to the main focal point, that is, to the temple and to "le Roi-Dieu," while the vertical immobility of the king makes manifest the indifference of God and his temple.

The qualities of solidity and stability are found only in the temple itself, which serves as a concrete symbol of God's "Présence." By its mere physical proportions the Bayon is overwhelming; but at the same time when viewed with its spiritual import, it evokes awe and fear. The Bayon is not only the house of God and/or Iça, but it is also the prison of the king. Iça is one with God and with "1"Incréé" or "the Uncreated"; however, he is also a prisoner of God.

Yes, the Bayon was such that one could say that it served simultaneously as my prison, my temple and my house—and also as that which seemed to spring from the terrifying dream of its birth, of its previous lives. (p. 116)

In one sense Iça is fulfilling his duty, as ritual and history (i.e., tradition) require; in another sense he has knowingly and willingly chosen to fulfill this role as the end product of an ascetic Buddhist priest. From the topmost tower of the Bayon, this "Présence" flows out over the city, and it is Iça who is the catalyst. His verticality, together with the verticality of the temple, expands horizontally over the city and over the empire so as to give added thrust to the power that Iça has over the people. He is One with "1"Incréé," a tie that must never be broken. As long as Iça is One with "1"Incréé"—also known variously as "1"Absolu," "1"Invisible," "1"Esprit," etc., then the principle of centrality will be basic to the novel.

There is a certain indifference which Iça has maintained not only between himself and the other characters but also between himself and the reader. This is a typical stance for a Makhali-Phal character, especially since Iça is God incarnate on earth:

I floated alone above Non-Being, because I was nothing but soul—I floated alone above Non-Being on the back of my attribute which is the serpent of eternity. And by the power of my contemplation the light sprang forth from my breast, and the world was created. (p. 118)

There was never any doubt in Içavaran's mind, or in the minds of the people, that he was God incarnate on earth. Even at the age of five, we learn, he was cognizant of his divine power;

Because I was Light, and I knew it. I carried the Light inside me. God has not left me since the ecstasy of this fifth year. I was God, and I knew it. I could not conceive of being anything other than Him. (p. 184)
Being the direct extension of the Absolute, Iša is always alone, and he carries within himself the Light of God.

In ensuing years Iša prepares himself for his kingship in the monastery. He remains untouched and unsullied by any earthly desires, including those of the flesh. His life is a ritual, even then—a ritual of renunciation:

I heard the cry of suffering of all creatures, and like the Buddha who offered his body to the famished tiger, I offered mine as pasture for the misery of the world. (p. 150)

Iša maintains this distance between himself and all other characters, even Nuit. Nuit is brought to him intended as a child bride, at the tender age of seven. When he does marry her, he loves and makes love with the tender indifference of a benevolent god. His love for Nuit remains as pure after their marriage as it was before their physical union.

In a "Poème magique" Iša supplicates God, in an invocation for His "Présence" on the Royal Wedding Night:

My Lord, we ask you to accord us chastity and contemplation. We ask you to accord us charity and renunciation, in order that we might liberate all beings through the sacrifice of our bodies, of our lives, of our spirit and even, if you exact it, of our love. So be it.

These four attitudes toward life—charity, chastity, renunciation and contemplation—characterize Iša's whole Weltanschauung. They form the base of his spiritual life, which includes his "physical" life. Nothing profane ever touches Iša, for he is the center of all of life. Spatially he is in the topmost chamber of the temple—in the sanctum sanctorum space of the lingam. This temple, the "prison de Dieu," is the axis of the world, and from this edifice all of God's power emanates towards His creation. Iša and the temple are one, each complementing the needs of the other. Both house the "Presence" of God; only the physical aspect is different.

The character of Nuit is that of a person complete and whole: Nuit does not close off her psyche to changes. We see her at first as a small child being taught very gently at her bedside by Iša. In the first part of the book we see her grow in purity, selflessness, mystery and 'songe' (i.e. dream). We see her respond to other people's needs. When Dieu Qui? first writes his letter to her confessing his love, she reacts positively, wondering why he has not spoken to her of his beauty, and why he has not spoken to her of his love much earlier.

Dieu Qui? is the complete opposite of Iša in every sense of the word. Both Iša and Dieu Qui? are powerful and dominating, and each refuses to bend to the will of the other. The destiny of Dieu Qui? involves every other main character, and he emerges from the story as the so-called "victor." His power, combined with that of the goddess Kali, is overwhelming. Together he and Kali present such a force that not even Iša is able to halt his influence while "l'inféral Dieu Qui?" is alive, much less when he is dead. The demonic sorcerer is heroic in this novel, just as the sorcerer is heroic in most of Makhali-Phāl's novels.
The presence of Dieu Qui? comes to visit Nuit in a terrifying appearance. It is in this vision that Dieu Qui? opens up the abyss before her eyes, and she sees her destiny. This experience has a devastating effect on her, for she accepts this destiny, and Iqa is completely powerless to change her mind. In a sense, Nuit herself is helpless, for she cries out in pain to Iqa:

Pity for your espoused who sees the jaws of hell open beneath her feet and cannot retreat—whose legs are interlaced by the fascination of the horrible...Too late, my king, my magician, your power has closed up the abyss, but a second too late. I have seen Hell. I have seen my destiny.

Even though Iqa casts out the evil spirit, Nuit succumbs to the superhuman and fascinating power of the demon. She now reaches the point where nothing can prevent her going to Dieu Qui? and she waits patiently for the proper time.

The imminent reappearance of Dieu Qui? is a sinister threat which hangs over the entire city. Dieu Qui? has stated plainly that he will have Nuit, that he will be delivered and set free through death, and that "le jour de la délivrance" will come. (p. 435) Nuit is certain that he will return, and so are the people: "...la résurrection de cet homme était certaine—il ne pouvait mourir." (p. 432) This "Prince du Mal" (p. 405) will come back reborn, endowed with even greater demonic power. During the four years that the empire waits for his funeral, the only constant is the unchanging rhythm of the seasons of fire and water. Even nature is almost ritualistic in her regularity, and the people mold their lives and cling to this rhythm—their only security.

At this point in time, since Dieu Qui? has turned the world upside down, the center has momentarily shifted from the Bayon temple to "le bûcher." In the fourth year the final act begins with the two main actors being Iqa and Dieu Qui? The final act of this "théâtre funèbre" is about to begin and "le jour de la délivrance" (p. 435) is at hand for every person in the empire. From the moment of Dieu Qui?'s death until the moment of the resolution on the funeral pyre, chaos and disorder have reigned. For the universe to return to its original state of harmony, it is necessary that Dieu Qui? completely separate his body and his spirit from the universe. Until the world again revolves around the temple, house of the enormous "Présence" that is the basis of all spiritual life in Angkor, and until Iqa, the figurehead of God, reigns once again in harmonious order within the temple, then peace will not descend upon the sacred city of Angkor. It is thus that during the actual funeral rites, the funeral pyre itself is the center: "Là au centre, rayonne une montagne aux pyramides odorantes, le bûcher de santal tout frissonnant d'oriflammes magiques et déjà peuplé par la cour nouvelle du roi défunt..." (p. 435)

The next rite is that of "la cueillette des cendres." But before any of the priests can go collect the bones, there is an unexpected sight: the goddess Kali rises from the flames to seize Nuit. So it is that Kali has come to collect Nuit, to fulfill Dieu Qui?'s vow. Nuit protests weakly, but goes willingly, and the two "disparurent happées par l'espace" (p. 442) and the novel closes.

As soon as Dieu Qui? and his consort, Kali, possess what they desire, the Bayon will again be the center of the world, the focal point from which Iqa reigns. But now, for the moment, "le visage suprême" of Içavarmman stares silently into the flames encircling Dieu Qui?. He remains as unmoved as a statue—as
if fixed in a trance—while Kali comes to take possession of Nuit. The flame of "l’Incrédé" again takes back unto itself what belongs to it. Again, "l’Incrédé" devours the essence of "le monde ineffable et invisible."

It is in the immobility of the dance of cosmic energy that Iça enters into the visible and the invisible world of Angkor; it is in the immobility of the dance of creation that he enters into the mystical realm of communion with Nuit; and, finally, it is in the dance of death that his Shakti, Nuit, is stolen from him. Together they reached transcendence, but Nuit’s destiny is out of the powers of the godhead, whose major characteristic is centrality and immobility. Hence, when Nuit chooses to deliver herself to Dieu Qui? and to Kali as the "soumoùa" to redeem Dieu Qui?’s soul, Iça remains vertical in mind, spirit and body. Thus, once the long ritual is ended, so is the novel. The work has come full circle as Içavarman, the godhead incarnate, is as spiritually and physically aloof at the termination of the work as he is at the beginning during his initiation ceremonies. The energy will once again contract until Iça, "le roi-dieu," is again the focal point of all life.
NOTES

1 The Lingam is the phallic symbol of the god Shiva (Civa) in the Brahman religion. Makhali-Phál explains the Lingam thusly in the text: "Formerly, the union of the king and of God was expressed in a stone, in the emblem of the masculine sex, in the lingam. God, king and lingam, all three carried the same name. Toward this trinity—one in three persons—rose the adoration of his subjects." (La Favorite de dix ans, Paris: Editions Albin Michel, 1940, p. 12).

2 Makhali-Phál, Le Roi d’Angkor (Paris: Editions Albin Michel: 1952), p. 167. All further references to this work appear in the text. All translations are by Sara E. Harris.
Hamlet's Charge:  
A Close Reading Exercise*  
By Ernest Pinson

Hamlet, Act I, sc. v., 11.95-109

95 Remember thee? (rhetorical question)
96 Ay thou poor ghost, whiles memory holds a seat (metaphor)
97 In this distracted globe, remember thee? (image)
98 Yea, from the table of thy memory (metaphor)
99 I'll wipe away all trivial fond records.
100 All saws of books, all forms, all pressures past (alliteration)
101 That youth and observation copied there, (personification)
102 And thy commandment all alone shall live
103 Within the book and volume of my brain,
104 Unmixed with baser matter, yes, yes, by heaven:  
105 O most pernicious woman! (internal rhyme)
106 O villain, villain, smiling, damned villain! (metaphor)
107 My tables meet, it is I set it down
108 That one may smile, and smile, and be a villain.
109 At least I am sure it may be so in Denmark.

*The following explication was written for illustration purposes in a composition course at Union. It is intended to show students how the stylistic and structural techniques enhance and are compatible with meaning in the superior works of literature.
"Remember thee? Ay thou poor ghost.......Remember thee?" Though the "thee" which resounds in the rhetorical question of lines 95 and 97 is an obvious reference to the ghost of Hamlet's father, it could just as easily cry out against his mother, or his uncle Claudius, for Hamlet does indeed "remember" them "within the book and volume of [his] brain." Although at least 26 of the words in this short 14 1/2 line passage are used repetitiously (some like "memory," "villain," "smile," and "yes" repeat 3 or 4 times), it should come as no surprise. For clearly Shakespeare wishes to stamp into our memory, as well as in the memory of Hamlet, the fact that the mission of the play is the vengeance of the dead king/father. As I intend to show, Shakespeare does this by juxtaposing question against answer, real against unreal, concrete against abstract words.

The passage is beautifully structured (as one has come to expect of the master Shakespeare). The first 8 1/2 lines pose the question "Remember thee?" in a rhetorical manner, and the last 5 1/2 lines separate the answer from the question: "yes, yes, by heaven...my tables, meet it as I set it down..." In addition to this question/answer division, one notices a subtle change in rhythm. The first part (95-103) ends in strong imbs ("seat," "thee," "past," etc.) while 5 of the 6 lines in the second part (104-109) end in the much weaker trochee ("heaven," "woman," "villain," etc.). One suspects that such weak endings reveal Hamlet's own irresolute weakness, for the whole play unfold into Act V before Hamlet finally avenges his father's ghost. That's hardly the action of a determined warrior. In point of fact, Hamlet broods, probes, and passively watches the scenes unfold throughout the play and almost botches the job.

Secondly, one critic's assessment that "the real subject of the speech is Hamlet himself" is certainly the correct view. Hamlet is apparently contradicting himself, as the writer charges in that article, by wiping away from his memory all "trivial fond records," and yet setting down in his memory "that one may smile, and smile, and be a villain." But the contradiction in his "distraught globe" is only apparent, for all Shakespeare means is that he is to empty his brain of school matters in order to fill it with vengeance—it is to become his obsession. Hamlet is recently from school where "records," "saws of books," "form," "pressures past," "copied" "book and volume" fill the "table of [his] brain." Now he must empty himself of all such materials in order that the ghost's "commandment alone shall live..." In this state of mind, Hamlet is quite vulnerable to a vision, any vision, from a ghost, any ghost. Whether or not the ghost addressed here is a real one, an evil one, or an illusion of his own brain is irrelevant. To Hamlet's mind it is real enough, and the "command" of the ghost is taken as sincere. Shakespeare's only concern is to make sure the ghost is taken seriously by us and does not become the stock spook and skelton of so-called gothic thrillers.

In the third place, the "commandment" given to Hamlet by the ghost smacks of real logic and not mere folly. Hamlet is to "remember" in the "table of [his] memory." The images and figures of speech found in "seat," "table," "book and volume of my brain," and what "youth and observation copies" are intended to contrast in a concrete way with the vague, vapor-like abstraction of a ghost. One can only conclude that the 26 or so repetition in 14 short lines are deliberate on Shakespeare's part. They show the fear and trembling of a stuttering mind
which is up against a four-fold dilemma: a ghost, a murder, an incestuous marriage, and a call for revenge. But the point to be made here is that the numerous tangible images ("globe," "book," "table," "seat," "record") are designed to counter the intangible qualities of a ghost. In short, this is a serious ghost, not a Halloween goblin, and the specific, concrete images underscore that fact.

The rime and rhythm need not concern us in this play. The steady, blank-versed, iambic pentameter is of no significance. Since Shakespeare wrote everything in that style, it is tempting to charge him with sterility. One could ask: -- "Why didn't you change the meter to fit the livid ghost, William?" -- except that once a mold has been preselected, the content must be made to fit the meter, not vice versa. So it is with this passage.

Having said all this, what then have we discovered? -- that Shakespeare intends to set question against answer, concrete image against vague abstraction, academic facts (school world) against empirical facts (real world), ghost against villain, Hamlet against injustice and that he intends to do this in order to underscore the seriousness of the ghost's charge to Hamlet "avenge me Hamlet." Suffice it to say, Shakespeare the master craftsman is even yet the master craftsman.
If I Taught Religious Studies In A Hungry World

W. Clyde Tilley

Let's pretend. Let's pretend that the world in which we live, though adequate for sustaining its inhabitants at a modest level, is plagued by hunger for a significant proportion of its tenants. The number of people who starve to death or die of hunger-related illnesses each day is a five digit number. Although a majority of the world's population is perhaps sustained at an adequate level, a sizeable minority of these overconsume to their own detriment and waste to the vexing detriment of their hungry brothers and sisters.

Let's further pretend that you and I teach religious studies at a college and/or graduate level. The particular religion which we espouse is the Christian faith, and we live and work in what is perhaps the most prosperous nation not only in the world but in the history of the world. Is there any sense in which this hungry world makes any claim upon us as we discharge our personal and professional responsibilities in this kind of world? Does what we do have any potential for impacting the deplorable hunger situation hypothesized above?

It is the thesis of this paper that the world of our hypothesis would press morally obligatory claims upon what I did if I were engaged in teaching religious studies in this kind of world. Further, I hold that what I do in that world as a professor of religion, if responsibly discharged, could make a difference for the hungry people of that world. Although I shall not separate these two questions for specialized treatment in this paper, I shall seek to support my claims that what I did as a teacher of religious studies would be morally relevant to the problem of hunger in that world and that the problem of hunger would be morally relevant to what I did as a teacher of religious studies.

If I taught religious studies in a hungry world, the presence and pervasiveness of that hunger would impinge upon every concentration of that discipline. Furthermore, every area of theology would be stocked with ammunition for doing battle with hunger.

For instance, if I taught Old Testament studies, I would regard myself fortunate in being heir of a theological tradition in terms of which the problem of world hunger could be set in clear perspective. In both creation accounts, the Creator God is depicted also in His role as provider. In Genesis 1:29 God said, "Behold I have given you every plant . . . and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food." In Genesis 2:9 "the Lord God made to grow every tree that is . . . good for food." In these accounts man is given the care of the garden and the dominion of the earth in order that this provision may be perpetual. Man who is in the image of God is to exercise a dominion that is under the auspices of, and in the image of, God's sovereignty.

In the narration of the fall of man, the roots of hunger in our hypothetical world can be uncovered. Man in the divine image disregards God's sovereignty and abuses his own freedom. In prideful response to the tempter's suggestion, he "goes for broke" in his bid for godhood. As a corollary to this, he greedily exaggerates his rightful dominion in the direction of a sovereignty that is commensurate with his new self-deluded status. This means that instead of interpreting his role of dominion as a shared "caretaker" role, he conceives it in the competitive terms of exploitation and oppression.
God's response to man's misdeeds is one both of judgment and redemptive intent. God sides decisively with the weak and the poor in this fallen aftermath of man's sin by choosing and delivering a slave people as His own. He made special provision for them as a dispossessed people among the nations and in times of their greater and later affluence made legal provision for those who continued to be needy among them. These provisions are amply stipulated in the Torah, in the prophets, and in wisdom literature. As an almost random example of the latter, I would cite Proverbs 14:31: "He who oppresses the poor man insults his Maker, but he who is kind to the needy honors him."

If I were teaching Old Testament studies in a hungry world, I would not have to look far to find the relevance of the prophets for this problem. Attention to the fragrane of both political and economic injustice, the substitution of ceremonial observance for moral righteousness, and the oppression of the poor for greedy gain comprised a disproportionate share of their preaching calendar. I should especially like to quote Ezekiel on his diagnosis of the Sodom holocaust: "Behold, this was the guilt of your sister Sodom: she and her daughters had pride, surfeit of food, and prosperous ease, and did not aid the poor and needy" (Ezekiel 16:49). Thus their Human Services Cutback was more germane to their destruction than was their Gay Rights Movement.

Although the Torah is replete with provisions for the needy among the Covenant people and the stranger, no part of the Hebrew legislation is more sweeping or revealing for our political purposes than the ideal expressed in the Year of Jubilee injunction (Lev. 25:8ff). The proclamation of liberty to the captive, but more especially the reversion of land holdings to the children of the originally designated owners as a part of this prescribed observance, is an important demonstration of the shape of Old Testament justice for the economically disadvantaged. It served not only as a forceful reminder of the divine ownership of all things, that man's proscribed exercise is that of dominion rather than of sovereignty, but it was to function as a check upon the excesses of wealth and poverty. Ideally, through the affirmative action of this program the people were to get a fresh start every fifty years.

If I taught New Testament studies in a hungry world, Jesus' use of the year of Jubilee, or "the acceptable year of the Lord" in his inaugural address of his kingdom ministry (Luke 4:18-19) would be irresistible. To see Jesus' application of this liberation model to the kingdom of God and to the New Testament sense of justice would be something I would covet for every one of my students. I would endeavor to capture the setting of this model within the wider context of the Lucan motif—the bringing down of the mountains and the raising up of the valleys so that a way may be prepared for the Lord and that all flesh may see his salvation (Luke 3:4-6). Mary's praise of God in her "Magnificat" as one who "has filled the hungry with good things and the rich ... he has sent empty away" (Luke 1:53) and Simon's blessing of the Christ child as one who "is set for the fall and rising of many in Israel" (Luke 2:34) I would cite as integral to this concept of kingdom justice. I would especially savor John's economic application of this leveling motif when he taught that those who lived on the mountains of two coats should share with the ones living in the valley of no coat so that they may live together on the level plain of one coat. The people who had a surplus of food were to follow the same example. (Luke 3:10-11)

Furthermore, in teaching New Testament studies in a hungry world, I would be eager to show Luke's structural and literary consistency in his second volume as he applies the leveling/sharing motif to the life of the early church. Here those who had more than they needed shared with those who had less than they
needed (Acts 2:44-45; 4:32-37). Paul’s offering among the Gentile churches for the impoverished Jerusalem saints could be cited as an attempt to implement this shape of kolonia on a universal scale by the church-at-large. His theology of economic sharing in II Corinthians 8-9 ensures equality as an ideal to be approximated within the family of God (II Corinthians 8:13-15).

Although I would find my hands most considerably strengthened for this task by Paul and by Luke’s portrait of Jesus, I would not neglect the other New Testament writers, particularly John, James, and the other Synoptic Evangelists. I would give voice to what has been called the “economics of Jesus” stressing not only such Biblical teachings already cited but also the divine ownership of all things, the economic interdependence of the Christian community, and sacrificial giving to a point that approaches equality; I would also stress the radical alternative between God and mammon (Matthew 6:24), responsible sharing with the poor and oppressed (I John 3:17; James 2:15-17), the perishability of riches and of the rich (Matthew 6:19, Mark 10:24-25), laying up treasures in heaven by giving to the poor (Mark 10:21; Luke 12:33), the power of Christ to use small and great gifts, faithfully giving, to accomplish His just purposes (John 6:6-13), and radical obedience to the Bible’s injunctions concerning economic matters.

If, in such a world as we are imagining, I were a teacher of Christian theology in an ordered, systematic sense, my work would still have that same moral claim upon it. This would be true because such theology would have to be shaped significantly by Biblical studies and the resultant theology could no more be isolated from the hunger issue than can the raw material from which it is hewn. One crucial task for discharging this moral obligation would be to clarify salvation primarily as a moral category rather than as a narrowly conceived eschatological category, i.e., that the ultimate end of God’s saving work is to make men righteous rather than to salvage them for heaven. That this righteousness is a moral righteousness and not merely an imputed forensic one could be made amply clear primarily with reference to the teachings of Jesus about cross-bearing as a condition for discipleship (Matthew 16:24), salvation as doing the will of the Father in a moral context (Matthew 7:21; Mark 3:31-35), and the stringency of the standard for kingdom entrance (Matthew 5:20, 7:13-14), among others. I John, James, and Paul’s letters in full context would serve to reinforce this same insistence upon costly grace in contrast to cheap grace. Care must be taken to see this moral righteousness as a result of God’s grace as power effectually working within the believer and not merely as pardon removing the requirement of righteous achievement. Grace works as an enabler rather than as a detour. If in God’s grace the perfect obedience required by the law is cancelled, it is cancelled not in deference to our disobedience but in deference to that imperfect obedience which is integral to the faith-response which we make to the God of grace. It is obedience because of the character of saving faith; it is imperfect because it is who we make it.

This emphasis upon salvation as a moral category would need to be reinforced by a stress upon the corporate character of salvation. Indeed, what is being redeemed is the entire world order and necessarily so because of the pervasive effect of the fall upon it (Romans 8:18-23). What God is doing is creating a new community, Christ’s own body, into which redeemed individuals are being gathered. God’s righteous demands for this new order are that it live as a kolonia, a sharing fellowship, in order that it may serve as a demonstration plot of this new order in the midst of the world which is the object of God’s redemptive activity. Excesses of hunger and gluttony within this new order are subversive and are subject to divine judgment which sometimes begins at the house of the Lord (I Peter 4:17).
If in the domain of religious studies, it fell my lot to teach Christian ethics at a time when the world was hungry, this situation would perhaps make the heaviest moral claim of all. I could ignore neither Biblical imperatives nor pertinent theological axioms as I sought to relate the Christian Faith in a practical way to the kind of world in which we lived. For one thing, it would be necessary to do battle with the "Lifeboat Ethics" mentality among us that seeks to secure the survival of an affluent minority while floating in a sea of drowning masses! I would seek to dislodge this analogy by citing both the productivity level and potential, on the one hand, and the exaggerated inequities of consumption, on the other. The problem appears to be one, not of carrying capacity, but of mal-distribution. The boat appears to be a luxury liner rather than a rubber raft.

Integral to the discharge of my responsibility as an ethicist in a hungry world, I would place the discussion in a framework of human rights. Students should have to become acquainted with the literature that discusses the right to life, the right to food, and the right to be saved from death by starvation. The issue would have also to be seen in the way that these rights impinge upon the affluent in terms of duty—the duties of justice and beneficence, the duty to bring aid, and the duty to prevent something bad from happening without sacrificing anything of comparable moral importance. The notion of "marginal utility" as a fixed limit for not sacrificing something of comparable moral importance would also be a crucial concept in my ethical tutelage. In the absence of any assurance or even likelihood that the world hunger problem could be solved in any utilitarian implementaion of these of my brothers and sisters entails some limits of abuse in my consumptive patterns.

The ethicist in a hungry world must also be quick to point out that not only must bread be shared but also that political and social structures must be changed if the world's hunger needs are to be impacted. Benevolent legislation, land reform, and responsible human rights incentives for foreign aid must all be a part of an effective hunger ministry. The way that the hungry problem is inextricably related to other human problems must be demonstrated: war and peace, overpopulation, and the ecological crisis. It should be made clear that the hunger problem is far more contributory to overpopulation than is overpopulation to the hunger problem. It is also imperative that people come to see that the neighbors whom we are to love as ourselves include not only the unseen alien but also the yet-unborn future generations.

The enterprise of ethics would also need to make clear the implications of the law of entropy for the world of today and of tomorrow. Jeremy Rifkin, among others, has recently alerted us in a couple of potentially epoch-making books to something very alarming about our world and ourselves. According to him, the current energy crisis comes in the aftermath of centuries of aggravated defiance of a very fundamental law of nature: the law of entropy (also called the Second Law of Thermodynamics). Although the amount of energy in our world cannot change (the First Law of Thermodynamics), the form of energy is constantly changing—from usable to unusable forms. We can get work out of energy only when it is hotter than the environment in which it operates. This is what the law of entropy means: the entire universe, conceived as a single energy system, is undergoing a constant cooling process, and the supply of energy available for work is continually declining. This leveling process is moving the universe toward greater stagnation and disorder. The geometric population growth combined with unbridled technological progress and inflated patterns of consumption, reinforced by a set of values culminating in progress as the queen of virtues, has become increasingly obsolete. This course of action has created a situation of
critical proportions in which we threaten to exceed the carrying capacity of our planet within the foreseeable future. To behave responsibly toward the present crisis we must dismantle the old order and replace it with a low-entropy society. This is possible only if we dare to develop a totally new world view that derives its directions from the fact of entropy. Progress must be dethroned as the central value. If the human species is to survive, we must cease our aggression against the planet, choose to respect its physical confines, and accommodate ourselves to the natural order. As we seek to exercise responsible dominion over Spaceship Earth, we must cease to commandeer it as pirates or to commit mutiny as rebel navigators against the other navigators aboard. We must see ourselves as a full crew to re-evaluate our voyage plans, rechart our directions where necessary, adjust our rate of energy consumption, and let our pantry provisions be dispensed according to need rather than greed. This enables us to see the hunger problem in contest and be aware of its mammoth root system in the complex of the overarching human problem.

If I were a church historian where people were hungry in a world of enough, I would be intent upon making my students aware of how the great preachers and thinkers of our faith have given expression through the ages to our indigenous demand for ministering to the needs of the hungry among us.

I would quote to these students from Didache: "Share everything with your brother. Do not say, 'It is private property.' If you share what is everlasting, you should be that much more willing to share things which do not last."

Basil the Great could speak through me to the people of our day: "When someone steals a man's clothes, we call him a thief. Should we not give the same name to one who could clothe the naked and does not? The bread in your cupboard belongs to the hungry man; the coat hanging unused in your closet belongs to the man who needs it; the shoes rotting in your closet belong to the man who has no shoes; the money which you hoard up belongs to the poor."

St. Ambrose of Milan could also preach again through me: "The bread which you withhold belongs to the hungry; the clothing you shut away, to the naked; and the money you bury in the earth is the redemption and freedom of the penniless." and again: "You are not making a gift of your possessions to the poor man. You are handing over to him what is his."

I would let these students know that St. Thomas Aquinas has said: "Whatever a man has in superabundance is owed, of natural right, to the poor for their sustenance."

I could also read to them from Menno Simons: "It is not customary that an intelligent person clothes and cares for one part of his body and leaves the rest naked. The intelligent person is solicitous for all his members. Thus it should be with the Lord's church and body. All those born of God are called into one body and are prepared by love to serve their neighbors."

If in the realm of religious studies my curriculum assignment were in the area of practical implementation, the challenge of world hunger must also leave its mark here. In teaching homiletics I would urge the young men and women in my tutelage to preach sermons on this menacing affront of world hunger and related issues and give guidance on how to do it. In the field of religious education I would devote attention to building church curricula that gives the kind of weight to hunger needs as the Bible itself does. Such direction could quicken local parishes and mobilize denominations to resist this tide of injustice.
In a hungry world, the moral claim upon me as one who taught religious studies would have other dimensions besides that of my role as classroom instructor. In my own situation, as is true also in the situations of many others I know in a similar function, there is also a pastor-prophet role. This role is borne of a sense of divine call from which it further derives a holy urgency. This sense means that I cannot only speak about such needs and injustices as an exegete or interpreter of prophet and apostle, but as I do so I must also exercise something of that same charismatic fervor which animated their oracles and must stand in solidarity with their own tradition. Not only as professor but also as counselor and confidant I must function in a shepherding capacity toward my make-shift parish of students. When these apprentices inquire at the Interpreter’s House concerning the direction of their own lives or of its meaning, I must be quick to point to those who are hungry as making claims upon them as well.

It may be that even upon the crest of this wave of anti-intellectualism which we now ride, some small number of students may seek to emulate me as a role model. The moral claim impinges upon me here also. Thus I must adopt a rule of economic simplicity for the governance of my own life that is compatible with the kind of world we are pretending and with the kind of ethical stance I have taken and urged upon others. My own stewardship and citizenship must involve me in a kind of activism that would rescue my words from dissipation into what Paul called "clanging cymbals." Ministries like Bread for the World with its attempts at influencing legislation in the interest of the world’s hungry, Habitat for Humanity with its opportunity for economic sharing, and my local church with its local and/or denominational ministry to the hungry would assist me in my efforts to maintain wholeness and integrity in our hypothetical world.

This is 1983. We need not pretend any longer. The world of our hypothesis is actualized on our planet. Details and statistics of the hunger plight are not hard to come by. The number of people who suffer in our world as a result of hunger approaches the one billion mark of a total four billion population. According to the report of the most recent Presidential Commission on World Hunger, more than three quarters of these live in India, Southeast Asia, and sub-Saharan Africa. But other parts of the world are not spared; Latin America, the Middle East and even the United States are represented. The hand of hunger is most heavily upon children under five—over half of the one billion—and upon women.

In Seeds magazine, Joe Haag, staff associate for the Christian Life Commission, Baptist General Convention of Texas, has plotted the geography of hunger. The 150 million Africans experiencing food shortages make that continent the most blighted by hunger. Because of high birth rate, low rain fall, high cost of oil, cash cropping, and war, 25 countries on half the continent’s land mass are affected. According to Haag:

Life teeters on the brink of chaos in the most seriously affected areas of Africa. While the basic necessities of food, clothing, and shelter evaporate, competition for what remains yields a gruesome mixture of atrocity and agony. Relief workers have watched grown men literally snatch food from the mouths of hungry children. Everyday, parents from coast to coast must decide which of their children live and which die. Usually, male children are protected as long as possible.
Relatively speaking, Asia experiences a moment of calm. Kampuchea (formerly Cambodia), due to enforced peace, mountains of emergency food relief, and an improved rice harvest, is not the scene of massive starvation that it recently was. Yet this calm is due largely to emergency-type relief, and awkward issues of international politics could soon undermine workable solutions. In spite of the enormous progress in China, the province of Hebei, due to the worst drought in 40 years, relied heavily upon $2,500,000 emergency food aid. India has avoided importing grain since 1977 but Calcutta alone has 200,000 people who live in the streets. Bangladesh, though very fertile, is seriously overpopulated and underdeveloped.

The Latin American hunger situation is plagued by the meteoric rise of dozens of urban population centers and an almost non-existent middle class, with war and refugee shifts aggravating already chronic conditions. In these countries:

The existence of the poor is almost hand-to-mouth. With little or no education, they work when jobs are available and otherwise forage for food. They live in shacks usually without running water or sanitary facilities. ... Most governments ... demonstrate more interest in staying in power than in solving the problems of the masses. Two out of three Latin Americans live under military regimes, and most governments spend much more money on their military than on health and education.¹²

Perhaps most inexcusable of all is an underclass of hungry Americans—poor aged, poor children, and migrant farmworkers. Patricia Harris, former Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services says: "If all of America's 25 million poor people lived in one state, it would be the nation's largest. If they were a separate nation, their total population would exceed that of more than half the nations of the world."¹³

Truly ours is a hungry world. We do teach religious studies in it. Our task is crucial. Our responsibility is awesome.
NOTES


4 William David Ross, The Right and The Good (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1930). Ross discusses the duties of justice and beneficence as prima facie duties which we have alongside other and sometimes conflicting duties.


7 Ibid, pp. 32

8 The reference here is to the necessity of poor families in underdeveloped countries having large families to assure the survival of one or two sons, thus to assure their own care in old age. A correlation between rising prosperity and declining family sizes has been documented. Arthur Simon, Bread for the World (New York: Foulis Press, 1975), pp. 27ff.


11 Ibid

12 Ibid

13 Ibid
Contributors

W. Wayne Alford serves as a Professor of Education. B.A. and M.A. degrees were awarded by Mississippi College and his Ph.D. was conferred by George Peabody College for Teachers (1965). He taught and held administrative posts at William Carey College and Wayland College before coming to Union in 1973.

James Alex Baggett is Dean of the School of Humanities and Associate Professor of History and Political Science. He came to Union in 1977 and did all of his higher education in Texas, receiving his Ph.D. from North Texas State University in 1972. He has done additional study at several other schools including Louisiana State and Vanderbilt Universities. His previous teaching experience was at Laredo Junior College in Texas.

Louise Bentley is in her third year as Associate Professor of English at Union. Her terminal degree is a Doctorate of Arts from Middle Tennessee State University (1979). Previous teaching experience in higher education was at Bryan College in Dayton, Tennessee.

Sara Harris is Assistant Professor of Languages and has been at Union since 1978. Her specialization is in French in which she holds a doctorate (Ph.D.) from the University of Kentucky. She has taught both at that school and at Berea College.

Ernest (Ernie) Pinson joined Union’s English Department in 1969 in which he has attained the rank of Professor. He earned a Ph.D. at Ohio University after taking an earlier degree at Vanderbilt. Previous teaching experience was at Bluefield College in West Virginia.

W. Clyde Tilley came to Union in 1960. Serving previously in the pastorate, all of his teaching experience is at Union. Graduate degrees are from Memphis State (M.A.) and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary (Ph.D.). He works in the Department of Religion and Philosophy where his primary assignment is in the field of Philosophy. He also edited this issue of JUFF.