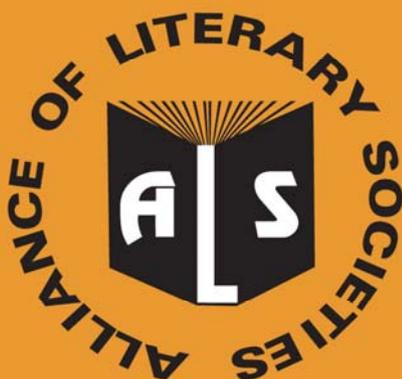


ALSo...

The Journal of the Alliance of Literary Societies

Volume 13 – 2019

**WHEN WRITERS ATTACK:
AUTHORS IN THE PUBLIC
SPHERE**





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**WHEN WRITERS ATTACK:
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Editor: Linda J Curry

If you wish to contribute an article to the 2020 edition of this journal, please contact Linda Curry by email to ljc1049@gmail.com or by post to 59 Bryony Road, Selly Oak, Birmingham B29 4BY, by 1 March 2020.

The theme for 2020 will be "20:20 Vision". This is really one to get your teeth into!

Just some thoughts:

- Perhaps something on a writer celebrating some sort of anniversary (birth, death, publication of first novel, etc) in 2020.
- How might your writer have reacted to the sort of world we will be living in in 2020?
- Did your writer 'imagine' the future (H G Wells comes immediately to mind!)?
- And, completely out of the box, are there any humorous references to spectacle wearers in your writer's works!?

As always, the theme is broad – open to many forms of interpretation and the above are just some ideas.

Would someone from your society be willing to contribute a piece for the journal – of around 1,000 to 1,500 words? If so, I would be delighted to hear from you. I can also provide you with a style sheet to follow.

Remember – it's good advertising for your society!

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Editorial

Writers rail against political and social conventions in different ways.

We begin with J. M. Barrie who used humour to get his point across in a very subtle way; moving on to the less subtle Virginia Woolf and the radical thinking of the young Coleridge living in the time of the French Revolution; to Johnson (of course!), and the plays of Bjørnsterne Bjørnson. Then, last but not least, John Moore, challenging what he saw as the despoiling of his beloved countryside over a hundred years after John Clare's rants against enclosure, though Clare was at the mercy of editors and patrons who had power over what he had published.

I hope that reading these articles will inspire you to submit something for the next (or future) edition of the Journal. My thanks to all the contributors.

Linda J. Curry

J. M. BARRIE GIVES A MASTERCLASS IN THE WRITERLY ATTACK

Cally Phillips

In *fin de siècle* Britain, writerly attacks were commonplace. Indeed, during the emergence of mass market publishing they formed a key part of publishers' marketing strategies. Battles were played out in the weekly and monthly periodicals and magazines, and the contemporary literary scene was awash with larger than life men, each of whom seemed to believe their authority was legitimised by the strength of their opinion. These physically big men sported big literary characters. Barrie was a small man physically, but he did not suffer from small man syndrome in this respect.

Barrie's trademark attack strategy was subtle humour. Examining his short dramatic sketch, *Brought Back from Elysium*, first published in 'The Contemporary Review' (June 1890) affords us a masterly example. The piece opens as follows:

SCENE: The Library of a Piccadilly club for high thinking and bad dinners. Time, midnight. Four eminent novelists of the day regarding each other self-consciously. They are (1) a Realist, (2) a Romancist, (3) an Elsmerian, (4) a Stylist. The clock strikes thirteen, and they all start.

Barrie is clever, clear and concise. In a 'familiar' setting, the tone is clearly set – and it is clearly humorous. Only Barrie would link 'high thinking and bad dinners'. The clock striking thirteen refers to a proverbial saying, alerting us to call into question the credibility of all that has gone before. This offers the promise of something beneath the light humour. Barrie offers levels of engagement.

The substance of the sketch is the confrontation between five modern novelists, plus an 'American' who wanders in, and the ghosts of five 'classic' novelists Sir Walter Scott, Smollett, Fielding, Dickens and Thackeray. The attack is on the very nature of literature.

The moderns, representing the contemporary literary factions, cannot agree on anything. We may be familiar with (and able to hazard a guess at the identity of) all but the Elsmerian who says '*we still disapprove of your methods as profoundly as we despise each other*'. This character would be instantly recognisable to Barrie's contemporary society, relating to *Robert Elsmere*, the popular novel of 1888 by Mrs Humphrey Ward which quickly sold over a million copies and was admired by Henry James. We might then, rebrand him as the 'novel of purpose' writer.

The novelists send Stanley (presumably he of the 'Doctor Livingstone' fame) to fetch the ghosts. On their arrival, the modern novelists - obsessed with realism, style, analysis and methods - are confronted by men for whom writing novels is a simple task. We see Barrie having a dig at the self-importance of the 'moderns' as the Elsmerian says:

Since your days a great change has come over fiction - a kind of literature at which you all tried your hands - and it struck us that you might care to know how we moderns regard you ...

The American backs him up with the bald conclusion that '*All the stories have been told*'. This is surely Barrie softening us up for the battle.

The Romancist patronisingly observes that:

Now that fiction is an art, the work of its followers consists less in writing mere stories (to repeat a word that you will understand more readily than we) than in classifying ourselves and (when we have time for it) classifying you.

To which the stylist adds 'Style is everything. I can scarcely sleep at nights for thinking of my style'.

The ghosts seem perplexed by the moderns. Once again, trademark Barrie. He uses humour to manipulate our sympathy. By personifying the main concerns of the literary times, he forces us to consider the true nature of fiction. He allows those from the past to challenge but, by showing them somewhat overawed by the circumstances they find themselves in, we are not drawn into an open battlefield, yet we cannot help but agree with their statements.

Fielding asks:

Does it make a man a better novelist to know that other novelists pursue the wrong methods? You seem to despise each other cordially, while Smollett and I, for instance, can enjoy Sir Walter. We are content to judge him by results, and to consider him a great novelist because he wrote great novels.

Here, Barrie makes a plea for a less partisan critical approach to literature. At this point, we do well to remember the clock striking thirteen. The attack is subtle but it is there. He gives his characters and reader alike, more than enough rope to hang themselves in the process.

ELSMERIAN: "You will never be able to reach our standpoint if you cannot put the mere novels themselves out of the question. The novelist should be considered quite apart from his stories."

REALIST: "It is nothing to me that I am a novelist, but I am proud of being a Realist. That is the great thing."

In a classic feint, Barrie alerts us to the reductive nature of the moderns while purporting to illustrate the reductive absurdity of the classic novelists. Taking a seemingly serious question, the Elsmerian says, 'May I ask what was your first step toward becoming novelists?'

The response, while simple, again leads the reader along a humorous (and serious) path of Barrie's making.

SMOLLETT (with foolish promptitude): "We wrote a novel."

THACKERAY (humbly): "I am afraid I began by wanting to write a good story, and then wrote it to the best of my ability. Is there any other way?"

STYLIST: "But how did you laboriously acquire your style?"

THACKERAY: "I thought little about style. I suppose, such as it was, it came naturally."

SMOLLETT: "We thought that the best way of showing how they should be written was to write them."

The conflict between style and nature explored here calls to mind Barrie's 'Am I a Genius' article from 1887, which itself illustrates amply Barrie's use of self-deprecating humour – attacking the self as a form of defence – as part of his broader writerly attack strategy. The challenge in 'Elysium' is the wisdom of the quest to turn literature into art and gives us the conclusion via Thackeray:

Perhaps if you thought and wrote less about your styles and methods and the aim of fiction, and, in short, forgot yourselves now and again in your stories, you might get on better with your work. Think it over.

The final instruction to think it over, places the reader alongside the ‘moderns’ in the position of having to reappraise their opinion. And, of course, the irony of a dramatic piece all about style and method dishing out the message that one should think less about these things, is surely part of Barrie’s own strategy.

This piece was published when Barrie was thirty. He was up and coming, having experienced great popular and critical success with his Thrums works: *Auld Licht Idylls* (1888), *When a Man’s Single* (1888), and *A Window in Thrums* (1889). It is contemporary with and complements the sketches that formed *My Lady Nicotine* (1890).

Above all, I believe this sketch shows that Barrie was adept in biting the hand that fed him without getting caught. He repeatedly managed to turn a mirror on society and yet have the society laugh along with him at itself. It became his trademark. I suggest that answers his own earlier question ‘*Am I a Genius*’ with a resounding ‘Yes’. The proverb of the clock striking thirteen might serve as a trope for much of his prose and dramatic work throughout his long career in prose and drama. I conclude that in ‘*Brought Back from Elysium*’ we have evidence that while Barrie might have been small in stature, he was no small writer – and find conclusive proof that a subtle attack is sometimes the most powerful of writerly weapons.

References

The full sketch is republished in this year’s J. M. Barrie Literary Society Journal titled ‘Making Connections’ which is available to purchase from www.unco.scot (J. M. Barrie collection). More about J. M. Barrie, including his many connections to contemporary writers, can be found at www.jmbarriesociety.co.uk

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‘THINKING IS MY FIGHTING’: VIRGINIA WOOLF’S SHOCKING MESSAGE IN *THREE GUINEAS*

Matthew Macer-Wright

When *Three Guineas* was published on 2 June 1938, Virginia Woolf was braced for negative criticism: ‘If I say what I mean in 3 Guineas I must expect considerable hostility’. A cartoon in *Time and Tide* from 25 June captured the critical furore, with male critics bowing graciously before an ethereal Woolf, while stamping on her book. The editorial expounds:

On the one hand there is Mrs. Woolf’s position in literature: not to praise her work would be a solecism no reviewer could possibly afford to make. On the other hand there is her theme, which is not merely disturbing to nine out of ten reviewers but revolting.

What made this text so ‘revolting’? *Three Guineas*, an experimental mixed-generic polemic, is perhaps now Woolf’s least read work. It is often grouped with *A Room of One’s Own* (1929), with which it is paired in recent Oxford and Penguin editions, though deliberately lacking the persuasive charm of Woolf’s better-known feminist argument that women need financial independence and a private room if they are to write.

Unlike the earlier essay, *Three Guineas* is hard to précis. On the surface, Woolf is replying to a letter from an ‘educated man’, a barrister, asking what can be done to prevent war. Woolf’s text – which entails insurrectionary detours, extensive quotation from further relevant letters, ripped up draft replies and deferred actions – is laid out in a series of twelve different letters, over three parts. Bizarrely enough for the epistolary form, there are also intricate, sometimes explosive, footnotes such as one linking St Paul and Hitler, and a series of contextually disturbing photographs of men dressed up in their official regalia – as general, judge and archbishop.

More broadly though, this is Woolf’s cultural and sociological research into the status of a particular class, ‘the daughters of educated men’ and their position in society, from Victorian times to the present, as they encounter the rising fascist threat in the 1930s. Woolf kept scrapbooks of topical material culled from newspapers, much of which is presented to support her arguments. Crucially, the text is an imaginative exercise: Woolf’s letter writers are not real, but a series of personas. Often Woolf speaks as ‘we’, in the collective voice of the daughters of educated men. Fictional techniques are used to amplify factual information, whereas a realist or historical novel like Woolf’s previous work *The Years* (1937) commonly builds an imagined landscape from a researched basis of reality.

What she had written in *Three Guineas* was incendiary. Her core argument, locked inside the subtle epistolary form, was that the fascist in the home breeds the dictator overseas. She compares domestic patriarchal tyranny to that of a fascist state, inferring that a ‘subconscious Hitlerism’ needs to be eradicated from the male psyche before warring nations would desist. She had no armature for defending culture from the Nazi threat, beyond the freedom to think differently about fundamental social organisation. This was not something that those, like Graham Greene, who found her arguments silly and shrill, wished to hear in 1938, when another European war seemed inevitable. Unusually for Woolf, though, she did not mind what people said about the book. She wrote in her diary on 3 June that she was less perturbed by critical reactions than ever before, noting a few days later, in her familiar alignment of childbirth with creative progeny, that this was “the mildest childbirth I have ever had”.

What she did not expect was silence. Yet this was how the Bloomsbury cultural establishment responded. Regarded as the doyenne of high modernism and by the late 30s a redoubtable figure herself, Woolf did something entirely new in *Three Guineas*. She fully renounced a mantra which she had expressed from early essays such as ‘Modern Novels’

(1919) on through to *A Room of One's Own*, that art should remain detached from politics. Yes, in 'Why Art Today Follows Politics', an essay for the *Daily Worker* from December 1936, Woolf had proclaimed that it was impossible for the artist figure herself not to take part in politics; no-one was immune. But up until *Three Guineas*, in keeping with Bloomsbury aesthetic theories proposed by Clive Bell and Roger Fry, Woolf had always believed that anger aroused by political dissent distorted art. Now, in a particularly rebarbative taunt, Woolf's narrator recommends burning down an educational college for women because it is modelled on competitive masculine principles. Daughters of educated men must 'set fire to the old hypocrisies'. An odd image indeed in a work billed as a defence of pacifism.

Later that summer, Woolf learnt on the Bloomsbury grapevine that John Maynard Keynes was very critical of *Three Guineas*. Woolf felt nervous about his potential 'heckling', though a showdown at a Sunday lunch gathering was averted. Nothing was said about her book. Only when she was leaving, did Keynes's wife Lydia whisper to Woolf, 'We all put up with you Virginia'. It was as if by breaking the codes of 'civility' on which Bloomsbury prided itself Woolf must be treated like a naughty child.

For all his life, the shocking nature of Woolf's central message in *Three Guineas* remained an unfinished argument with Quentin Bell, her nephew. In 1938, he was a young, forward-thinking idealist who worshipped his aunt for her marvellous humour and fantastical imaginative flights, not her political acumen. As Virginia's husband Leonard decisively put it, Woolf was presumed to be 'the least political animal that has ever been since Aristotle invented the definition'. So, Quentin summed up a Bloomsbury attitude when, in the authorised 1972 biography of his aunt, he stated that Woolf's family and friends had 'kept rather silent' about the book because they felt it was wrong to link questions of women's equality with, as he saw it, the very different problem of how to respond to fascism.

Quentin could not get this topic through his system, returning to it in a late memoir *Elders and Betters* (1995). There, in an appendix, he takes further stabs at Woolf's 'weak' arguments in *Three Guineas*, especially her view that men, not women, are war-mongers – flagging up with relief that his aunt never lived to see the bellicose Margaret Thatcher in power. It is a shame that Bell could not appreciate how far Woolf's position had grown in response to the terrible death of his brother Julian, killed in July 1937 aged only 29, while driving an ambulance for the Republicans during the Spanish Civil War. 'I was always thinking of Julian when I wrote', Woolf confessed in her diary.

If Woolf's immediate circle refrained from direct criticism of *Three Guineas*, despite their distaste for its message, one of its sternest critics was a woman, Queenie Leavis, whose brutal dissection for *Scrutiny*, 'Caterpillars of the Commonwealth Unite!', has some acerbic sense amidst much nonsense. Leavis wilfully ignored the fictional inventiveness of the text, treating the outlooks portrayed simply as Woolf's own. Furthermore, because she denigrated Woolf an amateur, she overlooked her research. Information Woolf gleaned from *Whitaker's Almanack* was, where Leavis disagreed with it, misread as authorial error. Fundamentally, though, Leavis felt outcast from the small club of women she, not Woolf, consigned to the category 'daughters of educated men' – mocking Woolf's exposure of male institutional exclusion in *A Room of One's Own* by accusing her of the same prohibitive spirit. Woolf's daughters are defined as members of the middle and upper-middle classes; Leavis perversely mistakes them for aristocratic wives of the landed gentry, thus eliding the educated, intellectual class with its moneyed overlords. Woolf's curt response in her diary was that this review expressed 'Queenie's own grievances'.

Plenty of other women, and some men too, took Woolf's revolutionary message to heart. She was besieged by letters from unknown members of the public largely commending her, including the working-class Agnes Smith, with whom Woolf corresponded for the rest of her life. Yet, Smith had originally complained about Woolf's more utopian recommendations,

especially that women of her class might cease work, as a form of passive resistance, in order to prevent the machinery of war. Smith would starve, she replied.

One intriguing response from those who admired *Three Guineas* was to deem Woolf sibylline. Thus, Theodora Bosanquet pronounced in an early positive review for *Time and Tide*:

Since Mrs Woolf is a prophet, her vision will no doubt be fulfilled; but since prophets are notoriously unreliable in matters of days and centuries, the world may have to wait a long time for that fulfilment.

These words are themselves oracular. *Three Guineas* gained a new lease of visionary life when, in the 1970s, feminist critics revisited its revolutionary message under the slogan that the personal is political.

Does this provocative text still have the power to shock? Given the depressing return of protectionism and the closing down of borders, Woolf's themes could not be more prescient and pressing than when her narrator subversively announces: 'as a woman, I have no country. As a woman I want no country. As a woman my country is the whole world'. This persists as stirring a renunciation of sham nationalism today as when, in 1938, its rejection of patriotism so affronted Middle England.

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SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE

Ian Enters

It was courageous for a young man of known radical sympathies to speak out against the slave trade and its iniquities in June 1795. It was foolhardy to do so in Bristol, one of the main cities profiting from the slave trade. To exacerbate the situation even further, this young man was the founder, writer and editor of *The Watchman*, a magazine devoted to exploring the inequalities within society, holding up to examination the dreadful consequences of these inequalities, and arguing for the principles of the French Revolution to be adopted in England. He was a watched man: a silver-tongued republican with like-minded associates.

The times were seething with desperate poverty at home and the threat of invasion from France. Coleridge believed in open sharing, common ownership, and mutuality, not exclusivity; he also believed that these principles would be realised in the fullness of the Almighty's greatness. Coleridge's radical position was infused with a spiritual dimension -- the great spirit within each creature building creation through thought. 'In the beginning' was not the authority of God's 'word', but the free ownership of all thought made manifest in words. That Coleridge was beset with anxiety about the nature of evil and its source was hardly surprising. He was seeing his idealism betrayed abroad and at home in the terrible conditions of the poor and the continuance of the slave trade.

Coleridge is primarily known for his work with Wordsworth in creating the revolutionary *Lyrical Ballads* and his own poetry, particularly *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* (first published in the *Lyrical Ballads* with a few others of his poems), *Kubla Khan*, *Christabel*, and his magnificent conversation poems, including *This Lime Tree Bower My Prison*, *Fears in Solitude*, and *Dejection: An Ode*. His contributions to journalism, religious thought, philosophy, politics, science, the arts, and, of course, literary criticism are also extensive and powerful. He was a polymath of immense influence. This short article concentrates on his radical political beliefs and their expression.

Coleridge gave his *Lecture on the Slave Trade* in public on the quay from which ships sailed to the Guinea Coast to pick up slaves to work the sugar plantations in the Caribbean. He was just 23 years old, a Unitarian minister, and his reputation as a public speaker was growing.

In this lecture, he uses arguments already espoused by Thomas Clarkson, a close friend, but they are infused by Coleridge's own fierce anger. Having said that the slave trade is built on the production of luxury goods for the rich (rum, sugar, coffee, indigo, cotton, mahogany) 'of which none is necessary and only wood and cotton useful', he describes the destruction of the bodies, minds and spirits that fuel this trade. A quarter of the crew of every Bristol slave ship dies on every voyage, and survivors 'employed as the immediate Instrument of buying, selling and torturing human Flesh, must from the moral necessity of circumstances become dead to every feeling of confession'. He contrasts those involved in prosecuting the trade with the unfortunate African people, who are not uncivilised and barbaric as often depicted, but intensely human, pastorally at one with Nature, and with an 'acuteness of intellect' lacking in the European mechanic. He uses an idealised picture of the African's natural self-sufficiency to pour scorn on British materialism. Coleridge's underpinning

principle encapsulated by his later reading of Kant is that 'a person can never become a Thing, nor be treated as such without wrong'.

The additional power of this lecture rests, however, on Coleridge's criticism of the hypocrisy and virtual cannibalism of the supposedly civilised Europeans and of the sacrament within the Anglican church. As a Unitarian at this time, Coleridge was opposed to the cosy alignment of church and state.

A part of that Food among most of you is sweetened with the Blood of the Murdered. Bless the Food which thou hast given us! O Blasphemy! Did God give food mingled with Brothers' blood! Rather than being comfortable with 'sweetmeats' and 'music', our imaginations should be alive to the 'tears, Blood and Anguish and the loud Peals of the Lash.

Coleridge went on to invite his great and lasting friend Thomas Poole to contribute an article to *The Watchman*. At the time that Poole's article was published, Pitt's government was bringing forward two bills to extend the legal definition of treason and to curtail the right of free assembly to discuss political grievances: The Treasonable Practices Bill and The Seditious Meetings Bill. These became law in December 1795.

At significant risk to himself and his other friends (including John Thelwall, later to be imprisoned in the Tower), Coleridge published his pamphlet *The Plot Discovered* after the Bills had become law! He accuses Pitt of a *coup d'état* in abrogating the Bill of Rights of 1689. He argues for key constitutional freedoms: the right to petition; the freedom of the press; and freedom of speech. He suggests that there are three forms of government: by the people; over the people; and with the people. His own preference would be Pantisocracy (government *by* the people) but government *with* the people is a necessity for fair rule, and the state can only flourish when the three freedoms are assured. 'The Liberty of the Press' gives an 'influential sovereignty' to the people whose voice is heard 'gradually increasing till it swells into a deep and awful thunder, the VOICE OF GOD'.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, given Coleridge's recent marriage to Sara Fricker, his financial difficulties (*The Watchman* was struggling for survival), and his desire with Robert Southey to create a small self-sufficient community based on the principles of Pantisocracy, he sought refuge in Nether Stowey, Somerset. The arrival of Dorothy and William Wordsworth into his life produced a convulsion of thought and a passion for poetry to speak for all people. The government sent a spy to check on their activities. Were they inspecting the rivers to see whether Napoleon could invade along them? No, they were writing poetry and talking philosophy. 'Spynozy' was really Spinoza!

Many have criticised the older Coleridge for betraying the principles of radical thought he had expressed so effectively as a young man. William Hazlitt, who had been one of his most fervent followers, was a particularly vituperative speaker against his supposed apostasy. But as late as 1815, when he was living in Calne, Coleridge spoke in public against the iniquity of the Corn Laws, whereby farmers and landowners were enabled to inflate the price of bread despite the threat of consequent famine. Soldiers returning from Waterloo, often terribly disabled and impoverished, were given no succour. Coleridge considered standing for Parliament, but the rotten borough system would have made his candidacy futile.

Although Coleridge became a member of the Church of England when living in Highgate in his latter years, he maintained a rigorous criticism of a society in which 'sects' scabble for

power and dehumanise others. He came to believe that the French Revolution had become a travesty of what it had seemed to prefigure, and he espoused education for all led by people of moral and intellectual rigour.

His influence on the later Romantic poets was significant. John Keats, for example, having read and enthused about Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria*, in the *Fall of Hyperion* writes:

*Fanatics have their dreams, wherewith they weave
A paradise for a sect. The noble savage too
From forth the loftiest fashion of his sleep
Guesses at Heaven*

The passionate voice of Coleridge, the young radical opposing the slave trade well before opposition was widespread, was still alive. Throughout his life, his deep-seated religious belief in the power of God as the foundation of shared imagination and compassion remained.

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JOHNSON AGAINST WALPOLE: *MARMOR NORFOLCIENSE*

John Winterton

'Sir, I perceive you are a vile Whig.' This comment, reported by Boswell (1934–50, vol. 2, p. 170), will, for many people, sum up Samuel Johnson in political terms: an unabashed and strident Tory, always eager to ensure that 'the WHIG DOGS should not have the best of it' (Hill 1897, vol. 1, p. 379). Modern scholarship (notably Greene, 1960) has shown that, aside from such memorable pronouncements, Johnson's political views were, in fact, far more nuanced than has generally been recognised. It is, nonetheless, true that, at the start of his literary career, Johnson attacked the Whig government of Sir Robert Walpole and its policies in a number of publications; this article examines one of these, *Marmor Norfolciense* ('The Norfolk Marble').

In 1737, after several abortive attempts at teaching, Johnson made the move from Lichfield to London to pursue a literary career. Many of his earliest pieces were published in *The Gentleman's Magazine*; others appeared in pamphlet form, including *Marmor Norfolciense: Or an Essay on an Ancient Prophetic Inscription, in Monkish Rhyme, Lately Discover'd near Lynn in Norfolk. By Probus Britanicus* (Johnson 1958–2019, vol. 10, pp. 22–51). Nothing seems to be known regarding the background to this work, which was issued anonymously in 1739. It is a satire against Walpole and the Hanoverian dynasty, based on the imaginary discovery, in a field near King's Lynn in Norfolk (Walpole's parliamentary constituency), of a slab of marble bearing a Latin inscription containing various doom-laden prophecies for Britain. The discovery is said to have been made by 'A gentleman, well known to the learned world, and distinguish'd by the patronage of the Maecenas of Norfolk' (a swipe at Walpole, who was criticised for being anything but a Maecenas, and failing to promote the arts). The alleged discoverer of the inscription made, we learn, a translation of it into English, which begins:

To Posterity.

*Whene'er this stone, now hid beneath the lake,
The horse shall trample, or the plough shall break,
Then, O my country! shalt thou groan distrest,
Grief swell thine eyes, and terror chill thy breast.
Thy streets with violence of woe shall sound,
Loud as the billows bursting on the ground.*

Both original and translation are stated to have come into the hands of 'Probus Britanicus', who offers a commentary. The satire of the piece is twofold: though mainly directed at the monarch and his prime minister, it also pokes fun at the sort of scholar who offers recondite explanations while completely failing to spot the obvious meaning. When the true sense does present itself to the commentator (who is clearly a Walpolite Whig), he goes into denial; since Britain is (in his view) flourishing under George II and Walpole, they cannot possibly be the intended targets of the inscription. For example, the commentator is baffled by the opening passage quoted above:

These are the words literally render'd, but how are they verified? The lake is dry, the stone is turned up, but there is no appearance of this dismal scene. Is not all at home satisfaction and tranquillity? all abroad submission and compliance? Is it the interest or inclination of any prince or state to draw a sword against us? and are we not nevertheless secured by a numerous standing army, and a king who is himself an army?

The standing army was a traditional target of complaints by the Tories, who perceived it as a potential threat to liberty, since in their view it gave the monarch power which unbalanced

the constitutional settlement; they were also concerned about the cost of quartering and maintaining troops in peacetime, and about possible pillaging and other antisocial actions by the troops. The 'translation' continues:

*Then thro' thy fields shall scarlet reptiles stray,
And rapine and pollution mark their way.*

The 'scarlet reptiles' are clearly intended to be the 'redcoats' of the standing army. The learned commentator, however, professes perplexity:

"Red serpents shall wander o'er her meadows, and pillage and pollute," &c. The particular mention of the colour of this destructive viper may be some guide to us in this labyrinth, through which, I must acknowledge, I cannot yet have any certain path. I confess that when a few days after my perusal of this passage, I heard of the multitude of ladybirds seen in Kent, I began to imagine that these were the fatal insects, by which the island was to be laid wast[e], and therefore look'd over all accounts of them with uncommon concern. But when my first terrors began to subside, I soon recollected that these creatures, having both wings and feet, would scarcely have been called serpents; and was quickly convinced, by their leaving the country without doing any hurt, that they had no quality, but the colour, in common with the ravagers here described.

Apart from its inherent humour, the commentator's analysis here serves to heighten the satire, by contrasting the harmless ladybirds with the marauding troops.

After various other quasi-prophetic digs at the King and government policy, the 'translation' concludes with the following prediction about the 'lyon' (of course symbolising Britain):

*And, yet more strange! his veins a horse shall drain,
Nor shall the passive coward once complain.*

The horse is the emblem of Hanover, and the 'prophecy' is obviously that, under the Georges, Hanover will siphon off the wealth of Britain. In this instance, the commentator does eventually hit upon the real explanation – only to reject it indignantly:

... I might observe that a horse is born[e] in the arms of H—. But how then does the horse suck the lyon's blood? Money is the blood of the body politic. ... But my zeal for the present happy establishment will not suffer me to pursue a train of thought that leads to such shocking conclusions. The idea is detestable, and such as, it ought to be hoped, can enter into the mind of none but a virulent Republican, or bloody Jacobite.

The idea of using an imaginary prophetic inscription as the basis for satire was not original to Johnson; it was previously employed, for example, by Jonathan Swift in his *The Windsor Prophecy* of 1711. There is, indeed, something Swiftian about Johnson's satire in *Marmor Norfolciense*, albeit flavoured with Johnson's own distinctive style and robust humour.

As noted above, *Marmor Norfolciense* was originally published anonymously. Its authorship did, however, leak out. Alexander Pope knew the piece was by Johnson, and found it 'very humorous' (Johnson 1958–2019, vol. 10, p. 19); not everyone, however, agreed. According to Sir John Hawkins, Johnson's friend and biographer, its publication had unfortunate consequences for Johnson (Hawkins 2009, p. 46):

A publication so inflammatory as this, could hardly escape the notice of any government, under which the legal idea of a libel might be supposed to exist. The principles it contained were such as the Jacobites of the time openly avowed; and warrants were issued and messengers employed to apprehend the author, who, though he had forborne to subscribe his name to the pamphlet, the vigilance of those in pursuit of him had discovered. To elude the search after him, he, together with his wife, took an obscure lodging in a house in Lambeth-marsh, and lay there concealed till the scent after him was grown cold.

To a somewhat overactive imagination, this account might almost conjure up an image of Johnson lurking Magwitch-like in the marsh. Regrettably, corroborative evidence in official records seems lacking; however, it is possible that Johnson, fearing potential repercussions, simply took himself out of the way for a while. In any event, the story is symbolic, and too good to abandon altogether.

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BEYOND THEIR CONTROL: BJØRNSON AS A PROPHET AGAINST EXTREMISM

John Lingard

Bjørnsterne Bjørnson, Norwegian poet, novelist, and dramatist, was born in 1832 and died in 1910. He was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature in 1903. A contemporary of Henrik Ibsen (1828-1906), Bjørnson was once regarded, in Norway at least, as the equal of his now more famous rival. His stature as a dramatist has diminished, even in his own country, where he is chiefly valued for his fine lyric poetry, novels, and short stories. His better plays, however, with their strong social and political focus, deserve reappraisal, especially in a troubled century that has been scarred by international terrorism and war.

In the later nineteenth century, Bjørnson came more and more to oppose and fear what he saw as the dangerous spirit of the age: the greed of industrialists who were unashamed in harnessing the powers of science and mechanisation to their own ends, and the revolutionary fervour, spilling over into anarchy, of the workers whose sweated and underpaid labour fed the machines. In the resulting clash, both sides felt drawn to what Bjørnson calls 'the longing for the boundless' (1995). Edwin Björkman has summed up the dramatist's target as: 'that principle of overgrown, unconscionable anti-social individualism which has its main roots in the misconstrued philosophies of Stirner and Nietzsche' (1914).

Bjørnson wrote two plays with the title *Over ævne*. These have been translated as *Beyond Human Might* and *Beyond Our Power*. In the first (1883), Pastor Sang, a Lutheran minister in the far north of Norway, has gained a reputation for miracle healing. During the action of the play, Sang says he will heal his bedridden wife Klara by prayer. The consequences are terrible. Both Sang and his wife die. Their teenage children Elias and Rakel are traumatised and lose their Christian faith.

Written in 1893, *Over ævne II* takes place some years later than the action of Part I. Elias and Rakel, now adults, have moved to an industrial town further south. Rakel is the more mature sibling. She has been able to put her parents' death into the past, whereas Elias is still too much his father's son. They have inherited wealth from their Aunt Hanna who emigrated to America. Rakel uses her inheritance to build a hospital in the town. Her Christianity has been transformed into a secular version of what St. Paul called agape: a caring love of her fellow human beings. Elias, however, has his father's messianic extremism without his faith. He chooses to live in a large sunless ravine below the town, and devote his energy and his wealth to helping the now desperate miners in a strike. When the play begins, Elias has exhausted his inheritance by anonymous donations to the strike fund. From the first act on, it is clear that he is contemplating action that goes beyond mere suffering and defiance.

I have chosen to translate this second *Over ævne* as *Beyond Their Control*. This is because it is not just Elias who is the extremist. The mine owners, led by Holger, a multi-millionaire, are just as intransigent. Their refusal to compromise with the miners is as much what Bjørnson calls *overgrep* [overreaching], as Elias's anarchy. The play's first three acts are, to my mind, among the most powerful in modern drama: moving towards a catastrophe with the inexorability of Greek tragedy.

The play begins with the funeral of Maren, a miner's widow who has killed her two children and herself, driven by starvation and despair. We learn that Holger has chosen this very evening to hold a meeting in his castle in the town above the ravine. He and other industrialists are gathering to decide what actions to take over the strike. A deputation has been chosen to present the miners' demands. However, the recent tragedy has exacerbated their bitterness and resentment against the plutocrats who treat them effectively as slaves. Audiences and readers will be reminded of a world of idle wealth above, and embittered slavery below in H.G. Wells' (1995) futuristic novel *The Time Machine* written, by striking coincidence, in the same year as Bjørnson's play: 1895.

In Wells' vision, the conflict between capitalism and labour has, in a Darwinian process, created two different species: the idle pleasure-loving Eloi who live on the earth's surface in a kind of fragile Eden, and the simian Morlocks who inhabit tunnels and caverns below. Whilst Wells' story is half science fiction, half fantasy, and Bjørnson's play is naturalistic, there is a clear link between their respective readings of the late nineteenth century, with its slide through repression into anarchy.

Already, in Act I of *Beyond Their Control*, there is a sense that disaster is inevitable, whatever decisions are made in the world above. One of the miners, Otto Herre, tells two of his mates the history of the sunless ravine where they are condemned to work and live:

This hell is nothing but the former river bed. Those old mining shafts that begin behind the houses here and go into the cliffs on either side, we should find them! They should be filled with powder, with dynamite, and every kind of explosive! And then electric wires should be attached.

What Herre does not know is that his scheme has already been implemented: by Elias and a sinister, half-crazed 'man in brown'. We will learn that he is the son, almost certainly illegitimate, of Holger. Rakel blames him for preying on her brother's idealism. Elias appears briefly at the end of Act I. Pastor Bratt, who knew Elias and Rakel in the north, and witnessed the failure of Sang's miracle, senses that the young man is determined to go beyond mere negotiation with Holger. He tries to warn him against dangerous action, but Elias ignores him and leaves: the die is cast.

In Act II, the miners' deputation fails. Rakel meets with Holger and warns him about the old mine system that lies directly below his castle. He must hold his meeting with the other industrialists somewhere else. And he should not illuminate the castle, as he plans to do, since it will clearly be an act of hubris. Holger ignores her, and goes so far as to show her, and the audience, a large painting of the building that is like a fairy-tale version of a medieval castle in France, with turrets and a moat. Holger ignores her warning, almost as if he too has something of Elias's martyr complex.

Rakel now meets her brother for the last time. Like Bratt, she senses that he is about to go 'beyond the limits set by life'. and begs him to join her in a return to their childhood home. It is, however, too late, and, once more, he avoids discussion by leaving.

Bratt finds Rakel, and shares his fear that 'something terrible is about to happen'.

The climactic Act III is set in an 'immense hall' complete with a throne where Holger will sit to greet his fellow plutocrats. Bjørnson may well have been thinking of the still extant

Håkonshalle in Bergen, the last remaining hall in Norway from the late Viking age. It still amazes visitors by its sheer size.

The industrialists are to vote on the strike. Only two moderate voices are heard. Sverd warns the gathering that wealth and power have crossed a border into 'det overnaturlige' - a word that translates as 'unnatural' or 'supernatural'. Both sides will destroy each other unless they, especially the mine owners, return to what is natural, in other words realistic. His fellow liberal Anker warns the industrialists that their 'wasteful private lives' have gone 'beyond their control'. Anarchy is inevitable.

Both men are ignored, and a vote is taken to shut the workers out. The writing is on the wall. All but one of the servants who have been serving celebratory drinks have disappeared, and the doors to the hall have been shut from the outside with iron bars. The last servant is, of course, Elias who is intent on a frighteningly prophetic murder-suicide: a message, he says, from the dead Maren. She wants the delegates to join her - in death.

Occasionally glancing at his watch, Elias informs Holger and the others that explosives have been laid beneath the hall, ready to be detonated. A large window is opened, and one delegate jumps through, only to be smashed on the stone pavement below. Rakel's voice is heard from beyond the moat. She shouts out that the drawbridge - yet another sign of absurd excess - has been drawn up. Holger kills Elias with repeated shots from a revolver, to prevent him giving the signal for the detonation; but like every action in the play, it is too late. The hall is blown up, and all the delegates killed, except Holger who will survive, though partially paralysed.

In Act IV, Rakel is at first unable to deal with her brother's death and the mass murder he has committed. In the first *Over ævne*, Bjørnson did not flinch from a tragic ending as powerful as any in Ibsen's modern plays (1968). In this second part, he must have felt obliged, as it were, to leave his audience with some hope after the horrific climax in Act III. This hope comes from the curiously named Credo and Spera, the nephew and niece of Holger. Credo tells Rakel he will change the world with inventions, and Spera will form youth groups that will lead to a less divided society. In the face of the preceding catastrophe, these utopian plans seem airy and naive. The one hope that has some ring of truth is that Holger and the miners may well bury their differences after the tragedy.

In spite of this relatively weak resolution, *Beyond Their Control II* remains a powerful, and unjustly neglected play. As I have suggested, it is uncannily prophetic of a twenty-first century torn as it is between power and anarchy. One form of extremism battles another, at a terrifying and seemingly unending cost.

All quotations from Beyond Their Control are taken from: Bjørnson, Bjørnsterne. 1995. Samlede verker. Bind III. Oslo Gyldendal Norsk Forlag. Translations from the Norwegian are my own.

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JOHN MOORE - A GENTLE FURY

Valerie Haworth

John Cecil Moore (1907 - 1967) was a Gloucestershire writer who delighted readers with his recollections and (sometimes) fictionalised representations of life in and around his country town of Tewkesbury (aka 'Elmbury'), in his books and regular newspaper and magazine columns.

Four of his best loved books are together referred to as his 'Countryside Contentments', but amid his abounding humour is a resigned acknowledgement that the rural way of life must adapt to fit the needs of the growing population and its increasingly mechanised existence, and a sad rage at the manner in which the change was despoiling the countryside he loved. In the Foreward to *The Year of the Pigeons* (Collins, 1962) he wrote that, from the back of his horse:-

I watched the seasons come and go; I looked over the hedges and saw the crops planted and the crops reaped; and ... I got to know the familiar land in a way I had never known it before. Also, I saw it changing before my eyes, as the new motor-road slashed through it, the suburbs crept out from the little towns, immemorial elms came down, the great yellow Cats purred and roared in the old orchards, lumbering to and fro, bunting down the cider-apple trees that no longer served any purpose but to delight the eye. And everywhere I saw how the new techniques of scientific agriculture imposed their new totalitarian order upon the land; so that sometimes, despite such loveliness that is left for a little longer, I would look across country from Zena's back and see, spread out before me, a battlefield in which the tragic conflict between man and nature was being bitterly fought out.

One August, he first noticed how much scarcer even the common butterflies were becoming. They were disappearing

... from the thistle-heads and the hedgerows; from the railway embankments and the gardens, where on a buddleia bush you would have seen, only a few summers back, an assortment of red admirals, tortoiseshells, painted ladies, peacocks and commas, with perhaps a yellow brimstone or two for contrast. The main reason ... is the destruction of their food plants; good farming demands that we should get rid of the nettles and thistles upon which many of the caterpillars feed. That can't be helped but in many places ... we spray the roadside verges too, pointlessly, wastefully, and wantonly. The caterpillars die as the plants blacken and decay; or the eggs hatch when the plant on which they were laid is already dead, the young larvae crawl for a short while on the withered foliage and starve...

Nor do the woodland species escape. Recently the Forestry Commission has begun to employ brushwood killers to destroy all the undergrowth and small standing trees in preparation for replanting, generally with conifers. The dead trees are left to give shelter to the seedlings. If this practice becomes general it will probably mean the end in Britain of many of our loveliest butterflies, the purple emperor, the white admiral, the silver-washed fritillary.

Does it matter if we lose them? I ... suggest that it does. We ... have got to look at nature in the context of man's ruthless and competitive world. But we are bound to disagree with the utilitarians who see the whole problem as a simple question of money, productivity, balance sheet profit and loss. ... You cannot draw up such a balance sheet because you don't know what this or that butterfly, or the roadside wild flowers, or any delight to the eye, may actually be "worth".

Nor was it certain, he said, that the tactics of the scientists did result in an economic gain. He recalled *Silent Spring*, the book by Rachel Carson who

suggests that the chemists into whose hands we have delivered the fate of nature, and of ourselves, simply don't know what they are doing ... The incidental killing off of large numbers of agreeable birds, butterflies, birds, beast and bees might ... be acceptable as part of the price we must pay for the privilege of having cheap food. But the horrid truth is beginning to dawn upon even the chemists that the sprays aren't working effectively any longer; they soon probably won't work at all; and if so then it is look out for mankind.

In the 56 years since that was written, we have become much more aware of dangers and bad practices, and yet so much of what John said then remains valid - and even more significant - today. Our surroundings and environment were also being detrimentally affected by physical tidying up.

There is a length of the Squitterbrook, which I do not like to look at these days. We used to call it the Colonel's stream because it ran through his farm and because, every may-fly time, he would catch a score or so of trout in it. ... There are no trout today in the Colonel's stream. It used to run crooked, matching its course to the rolling English road which the rolling English drunkard is said to have made long ago. This meandering habit presented itself as an offence to the tidy-minded bureaucrats of a River Board who had bought a lot of expensive machinery and naturally wanted to use it. They descended on the stream, six years ago, with all [its] apparatus and mechanical frightfulness. They ironed out the bends in the little brook, bunted down all the trees and bushes, built the banks high with sludge removed by mechanical dredgers and, at the trifling cost of the loosestrife, myosotis, willowherb, kingfishers, water rats, and of a hundred willows each as lovely as Ophelia's own, at the cost of so much beauty which has no value in cash, they achieved their aim, which was to turn the stream into a drainage ditch. The winter rains go through it like a dose of salts; some meadows which used to flood each season do so no longer. But we lose the heavy hay crop which was due to the rich silt from the floods; and in summer we generally get a local drought sooner than we should have if the Colonel's brook had been allowed to follow its own sweet will; for in deepening it the bureaucrats have lowered the water table. So much for the marvels of modern science.

If the Colonel's shade could revisit his brook today ... it would find nothing familiar, nothing recognisable, neither fish nor bird nor beast, neither loosestrife nor forget-me-not, only sullen ditchwater flowing between rows of coarse plantain, docks, thistles and burdocks proliferating out of the banked-up sludge.

In addition to the wanton spraying, by local authorities, of weedkiller, which destroys 'every agreeable manifestation of nature along their roadside verges', John deplored more small-scale depredation and, in May 1966, he wrote:

Churchyards, generally speaking, are in the charge of civilised and sensitive people. The wild flowers are allowed to flourish, the birds to sing and the butterflies to flutter there. Nevertheless there are a few parsons ... who seem to have caught this infection of suburban tidiness. Despite the disapproval of the Church, protests from historical societies and the risk of greatly upsetting the relatives of the dead, they have taken it upon themselves to remove the headstones from the graves, to level the grave mounds and to turn the churchyard into a 'pretty' formal garden.

Such people cannot appreciate the casual beauty of primrose, stitchwort, moon-daisy in their season; the lush loveliness of long grass. They think in terms of a silly little lawn, trimmed, close-mown, sprayed against daisies and poisoned against worms.

John then referred to one local authority which decided to spray its main 'green' area - its park - because 'people complained of being bitten by insects', according to an Alderman. John retorted

Every day, every hour, the destruction of the natural environment proceeds apace. Much of it is inevitable. Food production, industrial growth, communications, water storage: all make bigger and bigger demands upon our resources. Those who wish to conserve wild nature

have to concede them for the sake of sheer necessity and the public good. But honestly - to blitz with DDT, or some other such weapon, one of the last refuges of wild nature in [that area] simply to save a few people from the itch of gnat bites is carrying the cult of subtopia a bit too far.

Five decades or so after John's writings, conservationists in the New Forest have begun to right one wrong and, in conjunction with other organisations, are beginning a programme of recreating meanders in rivers - it will be many years before the benefits are seen to the full but it is a start, and churchyards are being allowed to become 'wildlife friendly' in numerous areas. John would have smiled.

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JOHN CLARE AND ENCLOSURE

Robert Heyes

In the great wave of enclosures which swept the south-east quarter of England in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, Northamptonshire was more affected than most counties. The common fields, which had been farmed communally for generations, were replaced by individually owned fields. The commons, or waste, which had alleviated the poverty of the landless labourers by giving them rights to such things as gathering fuel, or a place to keep a few animals, were also incorporated into the new farms.

John Clare's parish of Helpstone was one of those which was enclosed. The process began in 1809, when Clare was in his mid-teens, and took a decade to be completed. The landscape of Helpstone was completely transformed, as hedges were planted dividing the land into fields, some roads disappeared and new ones were created. The commons, which had afforded a habitat for plants and animals, were no more. This was, for all the villagers, a profoundly disorienting experience, as the familiar landmarks of their neighbourhood vanished.

Clare wrote a number of poems which were highly critical of the enclosure of his village, and of the effects which followed; for example, a poem entitled 'The Mores':

*Far spread the moory ground, a level scene
Bespread with rush and one eternal green,
That never felt the rage of blundering plough,
Though centuries wreathed spring blossoms on its brow.
Autumn met plains that met them far away
In unchecked shadows of green, brown, and grey.
Unbounded freedom ruled the wandering scene;
No fence of ownership crept in between
To hide the prospect from the gazing eye;
Its only bondage was the circling sky.
A mighty flat, undwarfed by bush and tree,
Spread its faint shadow of immensity,
And lost itself, which seemed to eke its bounds,
In the blue mist the horizon's edge surrounds.*

*Now this sweet vision of my boyish hours,
Free as spring clouds and wild as forest flowers,
Is faded all—a hope that blossomed free,
And hath been once as it no more shall be.
Enclosure came, and trampled on the grave
Of labour's rights, and left the poor a slave;
And memory's pride, ere want to wealth did bow,
Is both the shadow and the substance now.*

[...]

*Like mighty giants of their limbs bereft,
The skybound wastes in mangled garbs are left,
Fence meeting fence in owner's little bounds
Of field and meadow, large as garden-grounds,
In little parcels little minds to please,
With men and flocks imprisoned, ill at ease.
For with the poor scared freedom bade farewell,
And fortune-hunters totter where they fell;
They dreamed of riches in the rebel scheme
And find too truly that they did but dream.*

Small wonder that he has often been described as someone who protested against the enclosure of villages such as his. However, as soon as we look at this group of poems in detail we come up against the fact that none of them were ever published. Moreover, there is not the slightest evidence that Clare ever attempted to publish these poems. He seems not to have showed these poems to any potential publisher, or to anyone else. It might be argued that this was a form of self-censorship, given the repressive political atmosphere of the 1820s. This is an argument that cannot be dismissed, although one might have expected that the poems would, at least, have been shown to sympathetic friends, and there is no evidence from Clare's correspondence that this happened. None of these poems were printed until John and Anne Tibble printed their two-volume selection of Clare's poetry in 1935.

There is nothing unusual in any of this. John Clare was a prolific poet, as evidenced by the nine hefty volumes of his poetry in the standard edition published by the Oxford University Press. He wrote several thousand poems, but only a small proportion of these appeared in print during his lifetime. Clare seemed to have, at best, an ambiguous attitude to publication. The writing of his poems was its own justification; that was what gave him pleasure. Occasionally he would show poems to friends, but often he was the only reader of what he had written; for most of his career as a poet he had an audience of one. That being so, it becomes difficult to view him as a writer who attacked; he was not 'in the public sphere' so far as his poems on enclosure, indeed so far as most of his poems, were concerned.

My own theory, for what it is worth, is that these were poems which are essentially poetic exercises. Particularly in his early days, John Clare learned by imitating his predecessors, as most poets do. His poems weren't simply imitations, there was always an element of originality in his response, but he relied greatly on those who had come before him. There was already a long tradition of anti-enclosure poetry. It was half a century since Goldsmith had published *The Deserted Village*, and there had been many other poems in the succeeding years which had had the same theme. What more natural, then, when enclosure came to Helpstone, than that Clare should try his hand at this class of poetry. The finest account of enclosure we have is that given by George Sturt, particularly in *Change in the Village*, written under his pen name of George Bourne. One of the things which Sturt emphasises is that the effects of enclosure were slow to make themselves felt. Yet Clare was writing about the malign effects of the system when they could have barely begun to appear. Some of these enclosure poems are clearly derivative. This is most clearly seen in the poem known as 'The Lamentations of Round Oak Waters', which seems to be directly inspired by Burns, a poet who was a particular influence on the young Clare. Burns wrote a poem entitled 'The Humble Petition of Bruar Water' in which, I believe for the first time, the poem was written as though it was the water that was speaking. Clare uses precisely this device in his poem, giving a voice to Round Oak Waters. Similarly, in the, untitled, poem known as 'The Lament of Swordy Well':

*I'm Swordy Well, a piece of land
That's fell upon the town,
Who worked me till I couldn't stand
And crush me now I'm down.*

The strength of Clare's feelings in these poems is unmistakable, whatever their purpose may have been. He was clearly getting something off his chest. How far the poems were based on John Clare's experience of the enclosure of his village, and to what extent they reflected his reading of earlier poets, is a matter for conjecture. However, if nobody but their writer ever saw them it is difficult to consider them, in any meaningful sense, as poems of protest.

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Robert Heyes is a former primary school teacher who has, for many years, collected books by and about John Clare. In his retirement, he has had the opportunity to carry out research, which has produced a number of articles in various journals, as well as being the Membership Secretary of the John Clare Society.

John Lingard specialises in Scandinavian literature and drama. He has published articles on the Norwegian Romantic poet J. S. Welhaven, Henrik Ibsen, the Danish playwright Kjeld Abell, and crime fiction novels by Henning Mankell and Åsa Larsson. His translation of Abell's play *The Blue Pekinese* is available in *Scandinavian-Canadian Studies*, Vol. 24, 2017.

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John Winterton studied Classics at King's College London before pursuing a career as a civil servant, and latterly as a freelance copy-editor. His interest in Samuel Johnson goes back some 50 years, and culminated in a move to Lichfield in August 2018. John is a member of the Council of the Johnson Society (Lichfield), and co-editor of its *Transactions*.