ARCHIPELAGO

An International Journal of Literature, the Arts, and Opinion
www.archipelago.org

Vol. 5, No. 1 Spring 2001

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Contents

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All submissions on paper must be typed and double-spaced and sent by post with SASE or SAE and International Reply Coupon. An e-mail address is appreciated. No electronic submissions will be considered unless Editor is queried beforehand.

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All previous issues are available in the Download/pdf editions. All individual articles are available on-line at Archive.

Acknowledgements/permissions: ©1981, 2001 Tomaž Šalamun. English Translations ©Michael Biggins, 2001. *Poems and image from* A BALLAD FOR METKA KRAŠOVEC, published with permission of Twisted Spoon Press www.twistedspoon.com P.O. Box 21, Preslova 12, 150 21 Prague 5, Czech Republic. "With my tongue" first appeared in Tomaž Šalamun, THE FOUR QUESTIONS OF MELANCHOLY (White Pine Press). • "The Sub-Prefect Should Have Held His Tongue" ©Hubert Butler. From ESCAPE FROM THE ANTHILL, The Lilliput Press www.lilliputpress.ie,1986. Published by permission of The Lilliput Press info@lilliputpress.ie 62-63 Sitric Road, Arbour Hill, Dublin 7, Ireland.

Contributors

Chris Agee cagee2@visteon.com was born in 1956 in San Francisco and attended Harvard University, where he studied with the poet and translator Robert Fitzgerald. He is the author of two books of poems, IN THE NEW HAMPSHIRE WOODS (1992) and THE SIERRA DE ZACATECAS (1995); a third, FIRST LIGHT, was a finalist for the National Poetry Series (U.S.), 2000. A guest editor of *Poetry Ireland* and *Metre*, he also co-edited a double issue for *Poetry* of contemporary Irish poetry (Oct.-Nov. 1995), and an anthology, SCAR ON THE STONE: CONTEMPORARY POETRY FROM BOSNIA (1998). A selection of his poems will appear in the forthcoming THE BOOK OF IRISH-AMERICAN POETRY, edited by Daniel Tobin. "The Balkan Butler" and "The Stepinac File" will appear in his collection of Balkan essays, JOURNEY TO BOSNIA, to be published in Sarajevo later this year. He teaches at the Open University in Ireland and the School of Politics, Queen's University of Belfast, and divides his time between Ireland, New England, and the Balkans.

Michael Biggins (translator) is librarian for Slavic and East European Studies at the University of Washington Libraries in Seattle. His translations include the novels NORTHERN LIGHTS and MOCKING DESIRE, by

Drago Jančar; the memoir PILGRIM AMONG THE SHADOWS, by Boris Pahor; and a number of shorter pieces from Slovenian and Russian.

Hubert Butler www.hubertbutler.com (1900-1991) was born and died in Kilkenny, Ireland. He was educated at Charterhouse and St. John's College, Oxford, and subsequently worked for the nationally-organized Irish County Libraries. During the 1920s and '30s he taught and traveled in Egypt, Russia, the Balkans, and the Baltic countries. Upon his father's death, in 1941, he returned with his wife, Susan Margaret (Guthrie), to Maidenhall, his family home, where he lived for the next half-century. Their daughter, Julia Crampton, lives in the United States. An historian, translator, amateur archeologist, and essayist, Hubert Butler published in a number of Irish journals; in 1968, with Lord Dunboyne and George Butler, he founded The Butler Society. His first book, a scholarly investigation, was TEN THOUSAND SAINTS: A STUDY IN IRISH AND EUROPEAN ORIGINS, Kilkenny: Wellbrook Press, 1972. His essays were published thereafter by The Lilliput Press of Dublin in four collections: ESCAPE FROM THE ANTHILL, 1985; THE CHILDREN OF DRANCY, 1988; GRANDMOTHER AND WOLFE TONE, 1990; and IN THE LAND OF NOD, 1996. An English collection is THE SUB-PREFECT SHOULD HAVE HELD HIS TONGUE, AND OTHER ESSAYS, London: Viking Press, 1990. In France, Butler's work was introduced by Joseph Brodsky, in L'ENVAHISSEUR EST VENU EN PANTOUFLES, tr. Philippe Blanchard, preface by Joseph Brodsky, Paris: Anatolia Editions, 1994. At Brodsky's urging, a selection of the essays drawn from the four volumes brought out by The Lilliput Press was published in the U.S. as INDEPENDENT SPIRIT, New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1996. His essay "The Artukovitch File" appeared in *Archipelago*, Vol. 1, No. 2.

Suzanna Crampton suzanna@crampton.com was born in New York City in 1963, and was raised on both sides of the Atlantic, in Charlottesville, Virginia, U.S.A. and County Kilkenny, Ireland. Since 1996 she has pursued photography as an art-form, being self-taught and inspired by the Latin meaning of the word photography: "drawing with light." Among her works are the series influenced by dance called "Drawing With Light Playing With Shadows" and her studies of music collectively titled "Sights of Sound." The images exhibited here are from her series "Fauna," a solo exhibition of which was held during the Kilkenny Art Festival, August 2000. They were achieved using reverse-processing: the subject is photographed with transparency film, the exposures are developed as negatives, then returned to the original process and printed as transparency film, so that the colors and contrast attained are the opposite of reality. No computers were used in the process, only slide film and a Nikon camera. More of her work can be seen at Artvitae.com. www.artvitae.com/SuzannaCrampton

Bridget Flannery bridgetflanneryartist@hotmail.com was born in Cork in 1959. She graduated with honors from the Crawford College of Art and Design, Cork, in 1981, winning the Student of the Year Award for painting. Since then she has exhibited in group and solo exhibitions not only in Ireland but also in Europe and New England, where she lived for a number of years. The images in this issue were part of a solo exhibition in February 2000 and were inspired by travels in Northern Europe, especially Finland and the North Friesian island of Sylt during the winters 1997 to 1999. The paintings are of mixed media, a collage of Tibetan and Nepalese handmade papers, acrylic, watercolor, and natural pigments, and can be seen at Artvitae.com. www.artvitae.com/BridgetFlannery Her solo exhibition "The Possibilities of Stillness" will be held at the Ashford Gallery, R.H.A, Dublin, from 25 October to 25 November 2001.

Hua Li, formerly a reporter for Radio Beijing, earned a graduate degree in political science in the United States, where she has lived for the past ten years. She imports furniture from China. "Hua Li" is a pseudonym.

Gretchen McCullough gretchen@aucegypt.edu was raised in Harlingen, Texas. After graduating from Brown University in 1984, she taught in Egypt, Turkey, and Japan. She earned her M.F.A. from the University of Alabama in 1995, and was awarded a Fulbright Lectureship to Syria for 1997-99. Excerpts of her novel, THE CLEOPATRA SCHOOL, have been published in *The Texas Review* and *The Alaska Quarterly Review*. A radio essay about her experiences in Syria was broadcast in April 2000 on "All Things Considered." "The Sugar House," a fifteen-minute play, will be performed at the Famous for Fifteen Theatre Festival at the American University in Cairo, where she teaches in the Freshman Writing Program.

B. Z. Niditch bzniditch@webtv.net is a poet, playwright and teacher. His work has appeared in *Anthology of Magazine Verse & Yearbook of American Poetry, Columbia: A Magazine of Poetry and Art, The Literary Review, Denver Quarterly, International Poetry Review, Hawaii Review, Le Guépard* (France), *Prism International*, and *Je june* (Czech Republic), and in "Recommended Reading," *Archipelago* Vol. 3, No. 3.

CRUCIFIXION TIMES, a book of poems, was published recently. A selection of his work appears on "The World of B. Z. Niditch." community.webtv.net/buzzworthy/TheWorldofBZNiditch

Tomaž Šalamun was born in 1941 in Zagreb, Croatia, and raised in Koper, Slovenia. He has a degree in Art History from the University of Ljubljana. Before devoting himself to poetry he worked as a conceptual artist. Since the publication of his first book, POKER (1966), he has published thirty collections of poetry in Slovenia, and is now recognized as one of the leading poets of Europe. His honors include the Prešeren Fund Prize, the Jenko Prize, a Pushcart Prize, a visiting Fulbright to Columbia University, and a fellowship to the International Writing Program at the University of Iowa. He has also served as Cultural Attaché to the Slovenian Consulate, New York. His work has appeared in numerous international journals and, in English translation, in the following (selected) collections: THE SELECTED POEMS OF TOMAŽ ŠALAMUN (The Ecco Press, 1988); THE SHEPHERD, THE HUNTER (Pedernal Press, 1992), THE FOUR QUESTIONS OF MELANCHOLY (White Pine Press, 1997), and FEAST (Harcourt Brace, 2000). The selection of poems in this issue is from THE BALLAD OF METKA KRAŠOVEC, tr. Michael Biggins. (Prague: Twisted Spoon Press www.twistedspoon.com, P.O. Box 21, Preslova 12, 150 21 Prague 5,Czech Republic). He is married to the painter Metka Krašovec.

"**X**": The author of AGENT NINE is currently undercover. Comments and inquiries may be sent in care of *Archipelago*. editor@archipelago.org Book One, "Alice's Adventures Overseas," has appeared in seven installments in *Archipelago*. We regret to say that Part 7 is the final episode in this journal and look forward to congratulating the author when an enlightened publisher brings out this delightful book.

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News of Our Contributors

Maria Negroni: ISLANDIA, a book-length poem translated from the Spanish by Anne Twitty, has just appeared in a bilingual edition published by Station Hill Press. Passages exploring the island existence of exiled Nordic heroes and their bards, the skalds, alternate with reflections by the author's own persona – a contemporary poet exiled in Manhattan. Esther Allen has described it as "an extraordinary cycle of poems written in two very different and contrasting forms – the Nordic, masculine, epic style of the prose poems and the Mediterranean, feminine, mannered lyric style of the others." Selections from other books by Maria Negroni, also translated by Anne Twitty, appeared in *Archipelago,* Vol. 1, No. 1 and, Vol. 2, No.4. ISLANDIA can be ordered through Consortium www.cbsd.com/ or 1-800-283-3572, or directly from Station Hill www.stationhill.org.

Katherine McNamara, the editor of *Archipelago*, is the author of NARROW ROAD TO THE DEEP NORTH: A JOURNEY INTO THE INTERIOR OF ALASKA, a work of non-fiction just out from Mercury House www.mercuryhouse.org. Excerpts appear in the current issue of *Jack Magazine* www.jackmagazine.com and *Archipelago* Vol. 2, No. 2. The book can be ordered through Mercury House; Consortium www.cbsd.com/ or 1-800-283-3572; or from Internet and independent booksellers.

from
A BALLAD FOR METKA KRAŠOVEC

Tomaž Šalamun
tr. from the Slovenian by Michael Biggins

I remember a thorn in my heel.
Sheaves of wheat lay in a field.

When I climbed up on my father's shoulders,
I didn't know he would die.

Blue towels terrify me.

The pictures of naked women keep moving
to higher shelves as I grow up.

When father works, the clocks stand still.

Snowman

Suffering joins fear and disgust.
I see enormous snowballs. I SEE
ENORMOUS SNOWBALLS. People
think they contain the hidden horror
of the world. But I know. They're the finished
work of slaves, waiting for me.
I can build the little guy
half asleep. When I take a red root
from the bin and stick it in the smallest
ball, I'm more relaxed than a
king who's planted a tree. The photos
of my gestures go to the center.
Immortality is always nihilistic.

San Juan de la Cruz and John Dilg

My god is a cruel yellow bug,
it settles wherever it wants.
Clown! I don't fall for your tricks
anymore! My god is a thousand flashes in a

single cube of sugar. Now I dip it into
coffee in your castle, just as
fate dealt with your two children, Katrina Trask.
The sugar vanishes, I vanish. I wipe

my forehead. The guests stare and ask
if I'm insane. I come unstuck. And again
it transports me into the fire in the eyes of others.
Into the steely velvet irises of John

Dilg. Every bite in his bread is a
tempest. I bend like a bridge. I'll
endure this joke. Where are you,
grass? I'll wall you up in a bee.

Insects, insects! Striped, smelling
machines! Stay where you
were, friend. Don't stroll over the
abyss of my rights – human fibers.

Endure your crime.

To the nun who fixed
real hair onto the doll of Christ –
what did you pierce the head with?

Young ladies in far-off lands wear high heels.
Man strokes
a copper sphere.

If it weren't for Descartes, they'd have
found the golden flower!
Horses in the steppes would have their hooves wrapped
in a layer of nylon. The nylon would be in my
mothers' flesh.

I lifted the eastern edge
of the table, to let the
crumbs
of bread roll toward the
door.

With my tongue,
like a faithful, devoted
dog, I lick Your
golden head,
reader.
Horrible is my
love.

God's Straw

> "La sainte eut d'abord la vie d'une femme entourée
> d'un luxe frivole. Elle vécut maritalement, eux
> plusieurs fils et n'ignora pas la brûlure de la chair.
> En 1285, agée de trente-sept ans, elle changea de vie. . ."
> – Georges Bataille, *L'expérience intérieure*

May 22, 9:30, listen
Metka,
wretched creature, lurking from your ambush across
the ocean on my holy mouth with warm, dangling
members, affixed to that infamous
hen-house, dripping with oil and melon.
Into your blind alley, march!
Long live Agatha Christie and all tranquil
fossils! Disgusting
zipper!
Absurdly soldered flour-box, consuming
miles of my paper, even in my
sleep! Where did you get the right
to wiggle beneath me,
paramecium,
to quiver and yelp like the orgasm of some alpine
tour?
Your ears are flat! At every
throb I pray for an avalanche to
bury you. Hey, Saint
Bernards! I want your liquor for my wife. For
her sake I've neglected the
insects that have stopped
fluttering around my silk. Watch yourself,
cannibal, wanting to imprint
my face into your live
flesh.
I won't take the bait.
I'm not some Slovene peasant.
I'm Angelica da Foligno.
I remain god's straw.

Andraž and Tomaž Šalamun

Andraž and Tomaž Šalamun,
sitting in green armchairs,
two awesome salesmen from the least.
(I meant to write from the east,
but mistyped.)
He with his madness,
I with my Christ.
Both of us stare at the smoke.

Yeah, I fuck his brain.
He loves my cries.
(I meant to write Christ,
but mistyped,
word of honor in both
cases.)
The same, mum!

The Oeuvre and Its Brackets

Let various Marxists and the herd still
shuffling outside my door gnash their
teeth, but I'm living
now. All I
do is slightly
rearrange the struggle for the seed flowing
in the universe.
Remember how Maruška
went around dressed!
A fatter rope around
her waist – three years later it appeared in
Vogue – than
the kind they use to dock
a steamship. One day Metka will
show up at the Academy in
sackcloth, tongues of flame shooting from
her eyes. My wives
vie with the Lord
for disguises.
Right at the edge they scream.
They excise me from the head of the world. That's why
this time the muses dictate practical
instructions to me, because they want me to be
fine, even when I'm old and
dottering. With everything cooked
and laundered just right, young poets and lovers
met nicely at the door.
And not a day's delay with correspondence.
In short, my wives must leap into
the Void, but
not with their eyes
closed, or holding their noses from violent
love.
Clearly, that technique only leads to an awful
kerplunk!

Not just me.
Everyone I touch becomes
the food of this flame.

Doubting Grandson

"Children, go to sleep on the train from Trieste to Vienna. There's nothing to see along the way."
-- my grandmother Mila Gulič, 1891-1978

Don't nod off on
the train from Venice to
Vienna, dear
reader.
Slovenia is so
tiny you could
miss it. Tinier than my
ranch east of the
Sierras!
Instead, get up,
stick you head out the window, though it says
FORBIDDEN!
Listen to my
golden voice!

Prologue I

God is made of wood and doused in gasoline.
I take a cigarette to burn a spider's leg.

The gentle swaying of grasses in the wind.
Heaven's vault is cruel.

Prologue II

I write this to you, whom till now I've only
warned.
I can scarcely control my
servants, who threaten me with
revolt.

The smell of your burnt
flesh is my
life, they whisper.
We're too old to
change masters.

So I warn you, your fate is
not clear.
If I weary in
this battle, you'll
burn up.

Jerusalem

The crime has been written:
you will never
meet a person that you
love as much as
me.

Grain

In America Rose Kennedy goes to mass twice
each morning. Along the way she eats a sandwich
to save money. Three sons, three hero's medals
jingle on her blue blouse.
The woman even eats through the exaltation of the host.
All other women who don't eat through the
exaltation drown at
Chappaquidick, or go to hospitals
for electroshock. The third generation of Kennedys
numbers roughly a billion. They're sweeter than the
kitchiest picture postcards. Teddy
sails. He hasn't yet made up his mind. If America
fails, it will be because Teddy gets
mad at some prankster who breaks his sail's
frame. Meanwhile, in California my friend
Jerry Brown is sleeping sweetly. No
wonder he's rested. I make love to him night and day.
And somewhere, in America's heart, lost
amid the corn, an ordinary farmer says:
I've had it with this Boston quasi-elite
and their provincial Catholic bullshit.
To hell with Teddy and his health care
mafia! In green fields and in the
blue sky my most secret flower
opens. That's also how every young
Slovenian poet should behave,
and if not, then in this century they simply
do not have a chance.

Political Essay

The Sub-Prefect Should Have Held His Tongue
(1956)

Hubert Butler

In countries where the old beliefs are dying it is the custom for educated people to handle them with nostalgic reverence. It is thought crude and undignified for a sophisticated man to take sides in a religious squabble, and it often happens that, the less he believes in himself, the more indulgent he is to the time-honoured beliefs of others. I have been reproached several times by sincere and civilized unbelievers for my efforts to find out the details of the vast campaign in Croatia in 1941 to convert two and a half million Orthodox to Catholicism. 'Why not let bygones be bygones?' they say. 'If we rake these things up we'll merely start trouble at home and play into the hands of the Communists. And anyway, they are always killing each other in the Balkans.' I once heard an ambassador in Belgrade argue like that, and indeed I have never heard a British or American official abroad argue in any other way. When in 1946 I went to Zagreb and looked up the files of the war-time newspapers of Croatia in which the whole story was to be read, it was obvious that no foreign inquirer had handled them before, and the library clerks regarded me with wonder and suspicion.

Yet it seemed to me that for a man as for a community too high a price can be paid for tranquillity. If you suppress a fact because it is awkward, you will next be asked to contradict it. And so it happened to me when I got back to Ireland, and gave a talk about Yugoslavia, the country and its people, on Radio Éirann. I did not mention the Communist war on the Church, or Archbishop Stepinac, who had just been sentenced to imprisonment for collaboration with Pavelitch, the Quisling ruler of Croatia, and for conniving at the forced conversion campaign. I could not refer to the Communist persecution of religion without mentioning the more terrible Catholic persecution which had preceded it, so I thought silence was best. But silence did not help me. In the following week our leading Roman Catholic weekly, *The Standard*, published a long editorial diatribe against myself and against Radio Éirann. I had not, it declared, said a word about the sufferings of the Church and its ministers under Tito and, by sponsoring me, Radio Éirann had connived at a vile piece of subversive propaganda. The officials of Radio Éirann, knowing I was no Communist, supported me, and finally *The Standard*, under pressure from my solicitor, agreed to print a long reply from me. I received the proof-sheets, corrected and returned them, but the reply never appeared. Months later, a muddled, amiable explanation reached me, and my friends said 'let bygones be bygones'. I did. That is the way things happen in Ireland.

But it became increasingly difficult to be silent. The foreign editor of *The Standard*, Count O'Brien of Thomond, published a little book called ARCHBISHOP STEPINAC, THE MAN AND HIS CASE. It had an introduction by the Archbishop of Dublin, and commendation on the dust-cover from a couple of cardinals, Canadian and English, and half a dozen bishops and archbishops. Cardinal Spellman laid a copy of the book on the foundation stone of the new Stepinac Institute in New York, USA, and told 1700 schoolgirls, drawn up on a polo-ground in the form of a rosary, what they were to think about Croatian ecclesiastical history. Yet it seemed to me that there was a major error of

fact or of interpretation, or a significant omission, on almost every page of this book. Meanwhile all the county councils and corporations in Ireland met and passed resolutions. Extracts from Count O'Brien's book were hurled about, and fiery telegrams despatched to parliaments and ambassadors.* But the climax of my discomfort was reached when our Minister for Agriculture, Mr Dillon, addressing some law students, advised them to model themselves on Mindzenty, Stepinac and Pavelitch, who had 'so gallantly defended freedom of thought and freedom of conscience'. Those who knew Yugoslavia were aghast, for Pavelitch, one of the major war criminals, was the Yugoslav counterpart of Himmler, and it was under his rule that the gas chamber and the concentration camp were introduced into Yugoslavia and the forced conversion campaign initiated. Clearly Mr Dillon was speaking in ignorance, not in bigotry, but ignorance rampaging with such assurance and harnessed to religious enthusiasm is like a runaway horse and cart. It must be stopped before serious mischief results.

I felt that the honour of the small Protestant community in Southern Ireland would be compromised if those of us who had investigated the facts remained silent about what we had discovered. In many Roman Catholic pulpits the sufferings of the Catholics under Tito were being compared to the long martyrdom of Catholic Ireland under Protestant rule. 'Yesterday and today Herod abides.' If we agreed that history should be falsified in Croatia in the interests of Catholic piety, how could we protest when our own history was similarly distorted?

In letters to the newspapers I replied to Mr Dillon and many others who had expressed similar opinions. A well known Irish Jesuit, Father Devane, assuming a Slav name, Mihajlo Dvornik, to lend force to his accuracy, solemnly declared that there had been no forced conversions in Croatia, but I could find no one ready to argue the details .Mostly they quoted at me passages from Count O'Brien, or, on *a priori* grounds, accused me of vile slander. 'The Catholic Church had always insisted that conversion must be from the heart. *Ad amplexandam fidem Catholicam nemo invitus cogatur.* I was alleging the impossible.

Soon afterwards it was announced that Tito was to visit London, and in Ireland, as in England, various anti-Yugoslav demonstrations were arranged. My friend, Owen Sheehy-Skeffington, a lecturer in Trinity College and now a member of the Irish Senate, invited me to a meeting of the Foreign Affairs Association, at which the editor of *The Standard* was to read a paper on 'Yugoslavia — the Pattern of Persecution'. The Association had been modelled on Chatham House as an international fact-finding society and Arnold Toynbee himself had come over to give his blessing to the first meeting. In the *Survey of International Affairs* of 1955 he was later to express himself as strongly as I had about the persecution of the Orthodox. This is an undenominational society with a tradition of free speech. The lecturer had never been to Yugoslavia, and I believe that all the others on the platform were in the same position, though one of them said that on a cruise down the Dalmatian coast he had met members of a Yugoslav football team. I decided that at the end of his paper I would try to make those points which he had failed, despite his promise, to publish for me. I would try to show how variegated was the pattern of persecution in Yugoslavia, and how misleading our crude simplifications would be. What followed has been told by Paul Blanshard, whom I met for the first time that evening, in his book THE IRISH AND CATHOLIC POWER. It is enough to say here that the

* In my own county town, Kilkenny, a muddled but enthusiastic alderman insisted that Tito was in Dublin in the capacity of Yugoslav ambassador, and proposed at the Corporation meeting that he should be told 'Get out, Tito!'

Chairman's attempt to close the meeting at the end of the paper was ruled out, on a vote, as unconstitutional. I got up, holding in my hands THE MARTYRDOM OF THE SERBS, a book published by the exiled Serbian Orthodox Church in Chicago, in case anything I said required authoritative corroboration. It had been given me by archpriest Nicolitch, the head of the Serbian Orthodox Church in England. But I had spoken only a few sentences when a stately figure rose from among the audience and walked out. It was the Papal Nuncio, of whose presence I had been unaware. The Chairman instantly closed the meeting, and there was an appalled silence, followed by a rush of reporters in my direction. They had understood nothing in the confusion. There was, consequently, some lively reporting, and two leading dailies quoted me as saying that the Orthodox Church, not the Communists, had initiated the persecution of the Catholics in Yugoslavia. In gigantic letters in the *Sunday Express* (Irish edition) I read: 'Pope's Envoy Walks Out. Government to Discuss Insult to Nuncio.'

Blanshard has described the measures taken against Skeffington in Dublin and myself in Kilkenny. The persecution was of a familiar pattern, and I try to see in it not a personal hard-luck story, but material for a study in the modern indifference to evidence, but I think both of us knew that had we been less fortunate in our backgrounds we would have been ruined. Skeffington, the son of a father executed by the British in 1916 — or, to be more accurate, murdered at the orders of a hysterical British officer — is at his happiest when he is fighting, and shortly afterwards he had fought his way into the Irish Senate. For myself, I am grateful for the few inherited acres which have helped me to survive the disapproval of my neighbours. All the local government bodies of the city and county held special meetings to condemn 'the Insult'. There were speeches from mayors, ex-mayors, aldermen, creamery managers. The County Council expelled me from one of its sub-committees, and I was obliged to resign from another committee. Although my friends put up a fight, I was forced to give up the honorary secretaryship of an archaeological society which I had myself founded and guided through seven difficult years (see Appendix). My opponents hoped that my liquidation would be decorous and quickly forgotten, but my friends and myself were little inclined to oblige them, and for a time our small society enjoyed in the metropolitan press a blaze of publicity which its archaeological activities had never won for it.

I decided that before I resigned I would tell our two or three hundred members something about the forced conversion campaign in Yugoslavia. Much of the evidence, including the utterances of the Orthodox Church and its bishops, and Archbishop Sharitch's 'Ode to Pavelitch', with its sonorous denunciations of Serbs and Jews, I put aside, because I was certain that it would not be believed. Finally, I decided to publish the long letter written by Stepinac to Pavelitch on the subject of the forced conversions. I had translated it from a typescript in Zagreb in 1946, and it seems to me a document of vast importance which deserves a prominent place in the annals of religious history. Its reception was disappointing. Many were confused by the outlandish names and inextricably complicated series of events, and I was taken aback when one friendly disposed reader congratulated me on 'my interesting article on Czechoslovakia'.

There is in Ireland a historic loathing of proselytism. The well-meaning Protestants who plied the starving peasants of the west with soup and Bibles after the famine of 1846 have never been forgiven. Religious apprehensions as strong as these survive in Yugoslavia, and I had hoped that some of my neighbours would be capable of the necessary mental adjustment and would see the parallel. Surely it would be obvious to them from the Stepinac letter that the Croatian bishops, while denouncing the use of force, were delighted with the opportunity for mass conversion which the chaos and defeat

of Yugoslavia afforded them. There was, for example, Dr Mishitch, the Bishop of Mostar and the kindliest of mortals, whom even the Communists have praised for his clemency. He too had made quite plain the hopes which he had entertained at the beginning of Pavelitch's regime:

> By the mercy of God [he wrote] there was never such a good occasion as now for us to help Croatia to save the countless souls, people of good will, well-disposed peasants, who live side by side with Catholics…. Conversion would be appropriate and easy. Unfortunately the authorities in their narrow views are involuntarily hindering the Croatian and Catholic cause. In many parishes of (my) diocese … very honest peasants of the Orthodox faith have registered in the Catholic Church… But then outsiders take things in hand. While the newly-converted are at Mass they seize them, old and young, men and women, and hunt them like slaves. From Mostar and Chapljina the railway carried six waggons full of mothers, girls, and children under eight to the station of Surmanci, where they were taken out of the waggons, brought into the hills and thrown alive, mothers and children, into deep ravines. In the parish of Klepca seven hundred schismatics from the neighbouring villages were slaughtered. The Sub-Prefect of Mostar, Mr Bajitch, a Moslem, publicly declared (as a state employé he should have held his tongue) that in Ljublina alone 700 schismatics have been thrown into one pit.

Elsewhere in his letter the Bishop wrote:

> At one time there was a likelihood that a great number of schismatics would be united to the Catholic Church. If God had given to those in authority the understanding and the good sense to deal effectively with conversion, so that it could have been carried through more ably, more smoothly and by degrees, the number of Catholics might have been increased by at least five or six hundred thousand. Such a number is required in Bosnia and Herzegovina, if there is to be an increase from 700,000 to 1,300,000.

The other three bishops, whose letters Stepinac quoted, all took the normal human view that it is inadvisable in the name of religion to throw waggon-loads of schismatics over cliffs; they were critical of the conversion campaign, but they did not find the occasion for it unseasonable. Had there been no cruelty, and if possible a little soup, they would have welcomed it. But compared with Mgr Mishitch's letters theirs are cold, calculating and self-righteous. Archbishop Sharitch opined that the town council of Sarajevo was imposing too high a tax on the Bosnian Orthodox for their change of religion. The Bishop of Kotor, Dr Butorac, declared that the missionaries to the Serbs must be wisely selected. 'We must not entrust the problem,' he wrote, 'to monks or priests who have no tact at all and who would be much better suited to carry a revolver in their hands than a cross'. And he expressed the fear that if the Serbs were driven too hard they might, out of defiance, pass over in a body to Islam.

I must confess that I find Mgr Stepinac's comments on these letters and the situation that provoked them curiously narrow and thin-lipped. He scolds the miserable, hunted Orthodox for their terrible errors, deriving, he declares, from 'hatred and schism', and he blames them for the Russian Revolution, just as he blames the crimes of Pavelitch and his gang on the Chetniks — that is, the followers of Mijailovitch — the Communists, and the Royal Yugoslav Government. He considers that the best way to convert the

Orthodox might often be found through the medium of the Greek Catholic Church, which recognizes the authority of the Pope while preserving its Orthodox ritual. He ends his letter, as he began it, by exonerating Pavelitch from all blame in the crimes that had been committed.

Yet Count O'Brien tells us in his little book that at this time, in defence of the Orthodox, the Archbishop had swept into Pavelitch's office. '"It is God's command!" he said, "Thou shalt not kill!" and without another word left the Quisling's palace.'

Stepinac's long and respectful letter to Pavelitch at this date proves the anecdote to be a hagiographical fabrication. Yet it was quoted at me several times in the press at Kilkenny and Dublin. The letter was obviously the most important that Stepinac had ever written, and it struck me as odd that though I had published it twice in Ireland — for my critics in Kilkenny and also in *The Church of Ireland Gazette* — nobody in the British Isles, at a time when so much was written and said about the imprisoned Archbishop, ever commented on it, quoted from it, or wrote to me to enquire how I had secured it. Three years later, however, Richard Pattee published in America a lengthy book in defence of Stepinac, and among his documents the long letter belatedly appeared. Yet I believe that my translation is the more accurate of the two. Mr Pattee has thought it best to omit a sentence or two here and there. He leaves out, for instance, Mgr Mishitch's calculations of the number of conversions required in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Again, wherever the word 'conversion' appears in the text Mr Pattee reads it as 'legitimate conversion', thus adding an epithet which I could not trace in the original. Stepinac's admiring description of the Bishop of Banja Luka as 'that old Croatian warrior' likewise disappears, presumably because Mr Pattee does not wish his readers to infer that the bishops were Croatian separatists trying to ingratiate themselves with Pavelitch.

About the same time Mr Michael Derrick published in *The Tablet* a paragraph or two from Mishitch's letter, but he attributed it to Stepinac, and he omitted the extraordinary parenthesis about the Sub-Prefect who told of the barbarities inflicted upon the Orthodox, and the bishop's comment that 'as a state employé he should have held his tongue'. In the succeeding issue of *The Sword*, Mr Derrick published my translation of Stepinac's THE REGULATIONS FOR CONVERSION without acknowledgement! Anybody who read these regulations with an open mind, and particularly an Irish Catholic with his inherited horror of 'souperism', would have to admit that they bore every trace, except soup, of *illegitimate* conversion. For instance, Clause XI, an appeal that the Orthodox be granted full civic rights, has been much applauded, but it begins, 'A psychological basis for conversion must be created among the Greek Orthodox inhabitants.' If still in doubt as to the bearing of these regulations one would have only to read the manifesto of Dr Shimrak, editor of the leading Catholic daily, and chosen by Stepinac as one of his two colleagues in the supervision of conversion:

> Every priest must have before his eyes that historic days have come for our mission. Now we must put into practice that which we have spoken of in theory throughout the centuries. In the matter of conversion we have done very little up to this, simply because we were irresolute and dreaded the small reproaches and censure of men. Every great task has its opponents, but we must not be downcast on that account, because it is a question of a holy union, the salvation of souls and the eternal glory of the Lord Christ. Our work is legal in the light of the ruling of the Holy See … also in the light of the ruling of the Holy Congregation of Cardinals for the Eastern Church. . .and finally in the light of the circular sent by the Government of Independent Croatia, July 30, 1941, whose intention it is that the Orthodox

should be converted to the Catholic faith (*Diocesan Magazine of Krizhevtski*, No. 2 [1942], pp. 10-11).

Count O'Brien, an Austrian of Irish descent, had been until he came to Ireland after the war editor of an important Viennese paper, and he claims in his book to have known Shimrak intimately for twenty years. He also writes that all the Croat bishops had opposed Pavelitch's 'evil plan' for the forced conversion of the Orthodox. This seemed in such strong conflict with Shimrak's declaration that long before the 'Insult' I had visited Count O'Brien to ask for an explanation. An explanation was forthcoming. The Count replied at once that Shimrak had not been a bishop at the time, but only an administrator. It appeared from his reply that it was actually after he had proved himself in sympathy with Pavelitch's plan that Shimrak was appointed to the bishopric and to Stepinac's committee for regulating conversion. I then asked how it came about that, if all the bishops were hostile to Pavelitch and his plans, Archbishop Sharitch of Bosnia, one of the greatest of them, had been able to print his *Ode to Pavelitch* in the ecclesiastical papers of his own archdiocese and that of Zagreb. I had made a translation of his ode in twenty-six verses, describing his meeting with Pavelitch at St Peter's in Rome, and I now ventured to remind Count O'Brien of a few lines:

Embracing thee was precious to the poet
as embracing our beloved Homeland.
For God himself was at thy side, thou good and strong one,
so that thou mightest perform thy deeds for the Homeland. . .
And against the Jews, who had all the money,
who wanted to sell our souls,
who built a prison round our name,
the miserable traitors. . .
Dr Ante Paveliã! the dear name!
Croatia has therein a treasure from Heaven.
May the King of Heaven accompany thee, our Golden Leader!

Count O'Brien had an explanation for that, too. He said: 'The Archbishop was an abnormal man, very emotional. He was always embracing people. Whenever we met, he used to kiss me on both cheeks. He can't be taken seriously.'

These replies made me feel very helpless, since they could not have been made if venal indifference had not reigned around us. When I went home I was feeling as emotional as the Archbishop, and I remember that I wrote a poem myself of the Massacre of the Orthodox, though I must admit that it was the massacre of the truth that really outraged me.

Milton, if you were living at this hour,
they'd make you trim your sonnet to appease
the triple tyrant and the Piedmontese.
'Why for some peasants vex a friendly power?
We'd like to print it, but Sir Tottenham Bauer
and half the Board would blame us. Colleen Cheese
would stop its full-page ad. They're strong RCs.
It's old stuff now, and truth, deferred, goes sour.
So cut those lines about "the stocks and stones"

and "slaughtered saints", or keep for private ears
that fell crusade, for even in undertones
it breeds disunion and the Kremlin hears.
Say nothing rash or rude, for it is right
that all the godly (west of Kiel), unite!'

I thought my poem almost as good as the Archbishop's, but I had some difficulty in getting it published. In the end it appeared in a pacifist weekly, but very inconspicuously and in very small print. The Archbishop had been luckier. His had appeared in *Katolicki Tjednik (The Catholic Weekly)* on Christmas Day, with a signed portrait of Pavelitch and a decorative border of Christmas tree candles and little silver bells.

I suppose that the small community in which I live has about the same significance for the world as the community of Mr Bjitch, who as a state employé 'should have held his tongue' about the massacres, so I need not apologize for returning to it. My friends and neighbours were memorably kind and supporting; for they knew that I had not intended to insult anybody. But others were puzzled. I was not, like Mr Bjitch, a state employé, and some found it difficult to make their disapproval materially felt. This problem would not have baffled them for long had it not been for the courtesy and good sense of the local Catholic clergy. I was most vulnerable through the Kilkenny Archaeological Society. This had been a famous Victorian institution, with the Prince Consort as patron and the Marquess of Ormond as President, but it had shifted to Dublin as an All-Ireland Society, and when I revived it in Kilkenny in 1944 it had been dead there for half a century. In a couple of years the new Society became a real bridge between Protestant and Catholic, Anglo-Irishman and Celt. The friendliness which it created was perhaps our main achievement, but we did other things, too. Mr O. G. S. Crawford made for us a photographic survey of old Kilkenny such as no other Irish provincial town possesses; Dr Bersu, the Director of the Institute of Frankfurt, made his principal Irish excavation on a hill fort outside Kilkenny and reported it in our journal; we had a centenary celebration of the old society in Kilkenny Castle; and the National Museum co-operated in a very successful Kilkenny Exhibition. But I think I was proudest of having organized a week's visit from the principal archaeological society in Northern Ireland; for cultural fraternization between North and South are as rare as they are valuable. I feared that all this work would be wasted, so I decided to appeal to a certain Stephen Brown, a Jesuit, who had attended meetings of our Society. He had escorted the Nuncio to the fateful meeting, and afterwards in the *Irish Independent* had defended the Croatian hierarchy against the charges of illegitimate proselytism, with copious quotations from Count O'Brien but, as it seemed to me, with a total ignorance of Yugoslav conditions. Father Brown received me warmly. He said he was satisfied that I had not intended to insult the Nuncio, that he strongly disapproved of the introduction of the incident into the affairs of an archaeological society, and that in any case the Nuncio had visited the meeting by mistake under the impression that he was bound for a meeting of a Catholic society with a similar name. Father Brown said that he would send me a letter making these three points, and that I might publish it in any paper I chose. The letter never arrived. It seemed, however, that a compromise had been reached in the matter, for a few days later a paragraph appeared in *The Standard* under the heading 'Mr Butler rebuked'. After commending all the denunciations by public bodies, the passage ended:

> It is well that such a repudiation should be known. But we doubt if any good purpose would have been served by the proposed step by which Mr Butler would have been deprived of office in, say, the Kilkenny Archaeological Society, of which he is presumably an efficient functionary, and into which he can scarcely introduce secular issues. If he has any regard for public opinion he must know by now that his action met with not alone local but national disapproval. That is sufficient.

It was difficult for me to return as a presumably efficient functionary to a Society which I had myself founded, so I never after attended a meeting, but my friends, both Catholic and Protestant, still support the Society and I am glad today that it continues.

I hope I have not appeared to diagnose in my Catholic countrymen a unique susceptibility to a disease with which we are all of us more or less infected. Speed of communications has increased, and we are expected to have strong feelings about an infinite series of remote events. But our powers of understanding and sympathy have not correspondingly increased. In an atmosphere of artificially heated emotionalism truth simply dissolves into expediency. This shifting current of expediency may be illustrated by a chronicle of the changing attitude to Pavelitch in the past ten years. In Croatia, upheld by the victorious Germans, he had for four years been regarded as a great Christian gentleman and patriot. All the Catholic bishops and the Evangelical bishops were among his panegyrists and had received decorations from him. Then the Nazis collapsed, and Pavelitch was regarded by the outer world as one of the basest of war criminals, while in Croatia all the dignitaries hastened to disavow the compliments they had paid him. A former Italian Fascist, Malaparte, in his book, KAPUTT, has described how, as correspondent of *Corriere Della Sera*, he visited Pavelitch in his office in 1942 and saw behind him what appeared to be a basket of shelled oysters. 'Are these Dalmatian oysters?' Malaparte asked. 'No,' Pavelitch replied, 'that's forty pounds of human eyes, a present from my loyal Ustashe in Bosnia' — eyes, that is to say, of Serbian Orthodox. I am ready to believe that this story is an invention, like Stepinac's visit to the 'Quisling's Palace', and that stories like this were repeated by the ex-Fascists, who thought that if they made the whole world black their own shade of dirty grey would be less conspicuous. But in 1948 no one told Malaparte that he was a liar. Indeed, writing about KAPUTT in *The Irish Times*, Mr Kees van Hoek, the biographer of the Pope, said that Malaparte was 'the most accurate observer and reliable witness'.

That was the universal western view of Pavelitch seven or eight years ago — a monster of iniquity, an ogre out of a fairy-tale. But since then Pavelitch has become more respectable, and if he was wanted again in a campaign against Communism in the Balkans it is possible that he and his friends would be used. He now lives in South America and two or three papers and journals are published in his interest. Five years ago he issued postage stamps commemorating the tenth anniversary of Independent Croatia, and he has cashed in very effectively on the Stepinac legend, since one of his Ustashe clubs in the Argentine is called after the famous Cardinal. Archbishop Sharitch, the devoted admirer of both Pavelitch and Stepinac, lives in Madrid, but still publishes his odes (rather modified), as well as ecstatic reminiscences of Stepinac, in *Hrvatsk Revija*, a Croatian separatist quarterly of Buenos Aires. I once visited Mgr Stepinac in prison and found him a gentle and serious man, who obviously acted as he thought was right. Surely it must be one of the hardest blows that fate has dealt him that both Pavelitch and Sharitch speak well of him?

In one way or another the memory of a terrible crime against humanity is being confused and effaced, so that many people believe that it never happened at all or that it

has been monstrously exaggerated. I have seen Pavelitch compared in Irish papers with Roger Casement and Patrick Pearse as a simple-hearted patriot who merely did his best for his country in difficult circumstances. In October 1952 he was interviewed for an Italian picture paper, *Epoca* of Milan. He was photographed basking in the South American sun with his wife and family, stroking a pet dog. He told how he had escaped from Croatia through the Allied lines, how he had paused for weeks at a time in Naples, the Vatican City, and Castel Gandolfo. He was to be considered a romantic fellow, the carefree immunity which he enjoyed no more than his due.

How has all this happened? Three centuries ago Milton gave undying notoriety to the massacre and forced conversion of the Waldenses, and Cromwell sent out emissaries to collect information about the sufferings of this tiny Alpine community. We are mostly now immune from the religious fanaticism which once intensified racial antipathies and to which Cromwell himself was no stranger; why has it become unwise to censure or even to take notice of an explosion of those ancient passions fifty times more devastating than that which Milton observed? There were scarcely ten thousand Waldenses to be persecuted in Piedmont, while the decrees of Pavelitch were launched against more than two million Orthodox, and 240,000 were forcibly converted.

Looking for a reason, I can only conclude that science has enormously extended the sphere of our responsibilities, while our consciences have remained the same size. Parochially minded people neglect their parishes to pronounce ignorantly about the universe, while the universalists are so conscious of the world-wide struggles of opposing philosophies that the rights and wrongs of any regional conflict dwindle to insignificance against a cosmic panorama. They feel that truth is in some way relative to orientation, and falsehood no more than a wrong adjustment, so that they can never say unequivocally 'that is a lie!' Like the needle of a compass at the North Pole, their moral judgment spins round and round, overwhelming them with information, and telling them nothing at all.

APPENDIX

A Statement to the Committee and Members of the Kilkenny Archaeological Society by the Honorary Secretary, Hubert Butler

November 10, 1952

A Committee Meeting is being summoned on Wednesday next, at 8.30 p.m., in the Technical Schools, Kilkenny, to discuss the effects upon the Society of the incident at the International Affairs Association. I think it would leave you freer to discuss the matter if I did not come to the meeting myself but sent to each of you a statement which you could study before you reached the meeting.

I expect that some of you will think I ought to resign without more ado and others, who bear me no ill will and realize that I spoke without any intention to give pain to anyone, will think I ought to give up the secretaryship in order to tide things over and prevent the Society from dissolving.

I need not emphasize how desperately sorry I would be if the Society did break up along sectarian or other lines, and how ready I shall be to co-operate in any effort to keep it going. We are, I think, unique in having survived so long without a trace of bitterness or dissension. So I have to think hard what is the right thing to do.

In the first place, I do not believe that my resignation now would save the Society as an interdenominational one to which people of every shade of opinion could belong. Secondly, pressure has been exercised to make me resign. That makes resignation impossible for me for it would imply that I admitted that what I did or said was wrong, and that I cannot admit.

As I have been secretary for seven years, of which the recent year, in which we organized the exhibition in the Tholsel and the visit of the Belfast Field Club, has been the most successful, I should have to consider the request to resign as a mark of disapproval. I could not take it in any other way.

Before you make a decision I would like you to look back over the many pleasant summer afternoons we have spent together in the past seven years, and how often we might have split upon just such issues as this and yet we survived. Do you remember, for instance, the outing to Carrickshock, when Father Clohosey spoke to us on the Tithe War at the memorial to the three men who had been killed in an attack on the tithe collector, Edmund Butler, who, with twelve policemen, lost his life? Most of the Protestants went home from the bottom of the hill, but I went to the top, because I knew that Father Clohosey could be relied on to give an impartial account of this bitter controversial event. And that is just what he did do. And, if you remember, it was I who offered him the thanks of the Society when the evening ended at Ballybodan. Yet that was an issue which, had I been a bigotted person, might have affected me strongly. My great grandfather, Richard Butler, the Rector of Burnchurch, near Bennetsbridge, had been mobbed and molested so frequently by the agitators that in the end he had to leave his home for several years. Yet in fact, he thought, as I think, that the tithe agitators had right on their side. He did not, and no more could I, make a sectarian issue of it.

I mention this because I have been attacked, but each one of us has acted in the same way. Our little Society, under our chairman, John O'Leary, has been doing Christian work healing the sores of history and reconciling conflicting opinions. I am quite certain that His Excellency, the Nuncio, could not possibly wish it to come to grief.

It would not have been surprising if we had split on some local issue of Kilkenny history, the Confederation, Cromwell, the Penal laws, but it is to me almost unbelievable that we should be in danger of disintegrating because of two different interpretations of tragedies that happened eleven years ago in the plains of Slavonia and the wild hills of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

As I would like you to understand some of the issues at stake, I will quote you the letter I wrote to the Nuncio, but I gather at present he does not want it to appear in the press.

Maidenhall
Bennettsbridge
Co. Kilkenny
Nov. 2, 1952

Your Excellency,

I would like to express my regret at any embarrassment or pain I may have caused you by my remarks after Mr O'Curry's talk. I felt, as I have felt for six years, that vital facts were being suppressed and that, though their discussion might at first be very bitter, worse would follow if they were ignored.

I think the enclosed letter from Mgr Stepinac, which I translated and published Dec. 29, 1950 in the *Church of Ireland Gazette*, discloses a complex situation in Yugoslavia, which could not possibly be ignored in any discussion on 'Yugoslavia, the Pattern of Persecution'. You are not, I think, likely to have seen

this letter, because it was never published in Yugoslavia or mentioned at the Archbishop's trial by his accusers. The Communists were at that time holding him responsible for the barbarities of the conversion campaign and this letter shows too clearly that he was not responsible for them.

Nonetheless, it also shows (the quotation from Mgr Mishitch in particular) that force was being used to affect opinion, or, to put it differently, the violence of the times was being exploited for the purpose of proselytism. Since these were the methods used then and later by the Communists for their proselytism too, an unfair and unbalanced view of persecution in Yugoslavia would have been obtained if Mr O'Curry's paper had not been discussed in the light of these facts.

The International Affairs Association with its membership drawn from all creeds seemed the only forum in which these delicate issues could be soberly discussed. I went as the guest of a foundation member, who assured me that unfettered discussion had always been the order of the day.

I had gone, I admit, with the intention of disputing Mr O'Curry's interpretations, which I already knew, but, believe me, the last thing I wished to do was to insult you, your Church or Mr O'Curry.

My family is Irish, I was born here and have lived here most of my life. My experience and the experience of most Irish Protestants is that the kindliness, toleration and good will of Irish Catholics toward their Protestant fellow countrymen is such that it is hard for us even to conceive what bitterness and violence can exist in other lands.

In conclusion I would like to assure your Excellency of my sincere esteem and good will.

Yours sincerely,
HUBERT BUTLER

As for the charge that I spoke uncharitably of Mgr Stepinac, I hope that one of the Kilkenny papers will print the account which I published over a year ago in *The Church of Ireland Gazette*, 20 April 1951, of a visit I paid to Mgr Stepinac with four Quakers. It will show that I never thought him 'a dupe' (a misreporting) and that my feelings toward him have always been respectful.

I will quote here one extract: 'Mgr Stepinac in prison is a figure, who commands respect. What he did, he did in the belief that it was right. Christians, who think otherwise — and there are millions of them — would mostly agree that while he remains in prison, the focus of violent emotions, there is little hope of a dispassionate enquiry into the tragic story of 1941.'

I attach also a translation of the letter from Mgr Stepinac to Pavelitch, which I have sent to the Nuncio. It is long and difficult, but I took great pains to translate it accurately from the Serbo-Croatian, and I am rather surprised that here, where Mgr Stepinac is so greatly venerated, it excited so little interest on publication nearly two years ago. No Irish paper asked permission to republish it, yet I believe it is the most important letter the Archbishop ever wrote. The facts to which he refers are all corroborated in the publications of the Serbian Orthodox Church.

Those who read the letter will admire Mgr Stepinac for his courage and humanity, though some may share the views of the Serbian Orthodox Church, expressed very strongly in their war-time publications, that he could have helped them best by withholding his recognition from the Government which decreed their compulsory

conversion. But I do not think we are likely to divide on this point along the obvious lines. It is a question upon which each person will have his own individual opinion.

The Archbishop's letter will show that Count O'Brien, who is quoted against me in the Dublin and Kilkenny papers, is a wholly unreliable historian. Of the gigantic compulsory conversion campaign he writes on page 16 of his book on Mgr Stepinac, published by *The Standard*, 'It was through Mgr Stepanic's firm stand that Pavelitch's endeavours to impose the Catholic faith by force ended in complete failure.' Mgr Stepinac, who is modest as well as brave, shows in the attached letter how wildly untrue this statement is. The compulsory conversion campaign in Croatia, 1941, was one of the most terrible in the history of Europe.

I am glad to say that these problems do not touch us here, where for several generations we have shown tolerance and not tried to force our faith upon each other. Yet, at the meeting in Dublin, having expert knowledge relating to a subject which was being very seriously investigated, I felt it my duty to speak as I did. I could not have done otherwise.

HUBERT BUTLER

Books by Hubert Butler:

TEN THOUSAND SAINTS: A STUDY IN IRISH AND EUROPEAN ORIGINS. Kilkenny, Ir.: Wellbrook Press, 1972

ESCAPE FROM THE ANTHILL. Dublin: The Lilliput Press, 1985

THE CHILDREN OF DRANCY. Dublin: The Lilliput Press, 1988

GRANDMOTHER AND WOLFE TONE. Dublin: The Lilliput Press, 1990

THE SUB-PREFECT SHOULD HAVE HELD HIS TONGUE, AND OTHER ESSAYS. London: Penguin/The Viking Press, 1990

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IN THE LAND OF NOD. Dublin: The Lilliput Press, 1996

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Paul Blanshard, THE IRISH AND CATHOLIC POWER. An American Interpretation. Foreword, H. Montgomery Hyde. London: Derek Verschoyle, 1954

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Anthony Henry O'Brian, Count of Thomond, ARCHBISHOP STEPINAC: THE MAN AND HIS CASE. Westminster: The Newman Bookshop, 1947.

Richard Pattee, THE CASE OF CARDINAL ALOYSIUS STEPINAC. Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing, 1953

Marco Aurelio Rivelli, L'ARCIVESCOVO DEL GENOCIDIO: Monsignor Stepinac, il Vaticano, e la dittatura ustascia in Croazia, 1941-1945. Milan: Kaos Edizioni, 1998.

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Sudjic, Milivoj J. YUGOSLAVIA IN ARMS. ("Europe under the Nazis" series) London: Lindsay Drummond, Ltd., 1942

Various, MARTYRDOM OF THE SERBS (Persecutions of the Serbian Orthodox Church and Massacre of the Serbian People) (Documents and reports of the United Nations and of eyewitnesses) The Serbian Eastern Orthodox Diocese for The United States of American and Canada, 1943.

Also:

Chris Agee, "The Balkan Butler," this issue

_____, "The Stepinac File," this issue

Hubert Butler, "The Artukovitch File" *Archipelago*, Vol. 1, No. 2

Richard Jones, "An Appreciation of Hubert Butler," *Archipelago,* Vol. 1, No. 2

A selection of papers read at the Centenary of Hubert Butler (October 20-22, 2000) www.hubertbutler.com

The Bosnian Institute www.bosnia.org.uk, London, directed by Quintin Hoare bosinst@globalnet.co.uk

The Clero-Fascist Studies Project: Christianity, Fascism and Genocide in the 20th Century
www.home.earthlink.net/~velid/cf/index.html

"This site is a production of the Clero-Fascist Studies Project, an on-going research and public information project exploring the convergence between certain strains of Christianity and fascism in the 20th century. In part, this project is a response to attempts by some of the parties responsible to cover up, erase, or cleanse their history. Our goal is the preservation, not the purification of history."

Archbishop Stepinac's Reply at the Trial www.pope.hr/english/stepinac/11_eng.html

"The Case of Archbishop Stepinac" www.home.earthlink.net/~velid/cf/cs/index.html

"This document assembling facts in the case of Archbishop Aloysius Stepinac of Yugoslavia has been prepared because the arrest and trial of the Archbishop are still being used in the United States in a campaign of misrepresentation against the Federal Peoples Republic of Yugoslavia. This campaign, accusing Yugoslavia of religious persecution -- which does not exist in my country and which is specifically outlawed by the Constitution – has gone to considerable lengths. Petitions for which thousands of names have been obtained have been submitted to the White House and to the Department of State.

"Resolutions have been introduced in the Congress. In the face of such organized and continuing attacks I have felt compelled, in justice to the government and people of Yugoslavia, to make this material available in English. It shows that Archbishop Stepinac was tried and convicted solely because of the crimes in which he engaged against his own nation -- the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, later the Federal Peoples Republic of Yugoslavia -- and against his own countrymen.

"Americans who may have been misinformed on the point should know also that millions of patriotic citizens of Yugoslavia are Catholics, enjoying full freedom of worship today under constitutional guarantees. Having firsthand knowledge of the role played by Archbishop Stepinac during the war, they do not identify their religion with the secular political course in support of Hitler and Mussolini which he chose to follow.

"Sava N. Kosanovic, Ambassador of the Federal Peoples Republic of Yugoslavia.

"Washington, 1947"

The Lilliput Press www.lilliputpress.ie

The Balkan Butler (1999)

Chris Agee

1
The Ethical Imagination of Hubert Butler

Hubert Butler (1900-1991), the last late scion of the Irish Literary Revival, is surely one of the great essayists in English of the 20th century. Only over the last decade and a half, however, have his essays been collected and published, in Ireland, first with ESCAPE FROM THE ANTHILL (1985),then THE CHILDREN OF DRANCY (1988), GRANDMOTHER AND WOLFE TONE (1990), and IN THE LAND OF NOD (1996). The original appearance of his writings is confined almost completely to Irish periodicals, many of them obscure. For this reason his corpus of a hundred or so essays, including magisterial pieces on the Balkans and Mitteleuropa, has only recently come before a large readership in the English-speaking world, quickly mustering acclaim. Equally astonishing is the fact that, despite the historical importance of his writing on the Balkans (he spoke fluently what used to be called Serbo-Croat, having lived in the region in the mid-thirties), until recently none of it had ever appeared in the lands of the former Yugoslavia.

Not only is Butler a superb prose stylist, he is also one of those very rare writers, like George Orwell or Alexander Solzhenitsyn or Albert Camus, for whom the source of his inspiration is what might be termed the *ethical imagination*. His palette is narrow yet profound: he writes out of a compact but interrelated set of preoccupations that over the course of his life he elaborated into a unique terrain of historical, cultural, religious and philosophical reflection. A true son of the New Testament and the classics, of the Reformation and the Enlightenment, he writes with a modern dissident sensibility that is profoundly at odds with the civilizational grain of our centripetal century. The crux of his worldview is a championing of the small-scale over the colossal, the parish over "the global village," the intimate community over the mighty enterprises of state-nation-religion, the solitary spirit over the metropolitan "centers of culture" — the ant, in short, over the anthill. He is, in fact, an "artistic philosopher" of the various meshed forms of human relations — local, regional, national, continental, global: arguing from the start that our century's human energy and focus must be shifted back to the first two of those adjectives, whose vitality sustains the health of the rest.

Having come to maturity when the Russian, Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian empires disintegrated, and the British world imperium began to unravel in Ireland, he was deeply alert to the complex, ambiguous and pan-European phenomena often blithely described by that single rubric *nationalism*. Furthermore, as a member of the Protestant minority and steeped in the religious history of the island, where since the 17th century the great schism of Western Christendom has contended and co-existed, he had an intuitive feel for the complexities of the Yugoslav confluence of Islam, Orthodoxy and Catholicism. Of the Irish-Yugoslav parallel he himself remarked: "So even when these essays appear to be about Russia or Greece or Yugoslavia, they are really about Ireland."[1] In his own personal lexicon, *nationalism* was a positive and inclusive concept, the love of

[1] ESCAPE FROM THE ANTHILL, p. 2

one's country and *all* its inhabitants — defined thus when speaking of an early Irish nationalist: "He would have said that a country belongs to the people who were born in it and intend to die there and who make its welfare their chief concern."[2] It was *racialism* — the decay of nationalism into chauvinism and exclusiveness — that he saw as the grave and abiding danger. Perhaps no modern writer has enunciated this essential distinction with greater subtlety, and it speaks poignantly not only to the "Aeschylean tragedy" that has overtaken Bosnia, but also to the spirit that sustained the defense of Sarajevo, undoubtedly the Warsaw of our time.

2
Across the Barriers

Butler's oeuvre is the definitive confirmation that the seam of commonality between Ireland and the lands of the former Yugoslavia is a rich and important one. In all, twenty-six of his published essays, about a quarter of his work, deal in varying degrees with the former Yugoslavia, Greece, Bulgaria, and Romania. Of these, fourteen are on Yugoslavia and another six partly so. Moreover, seven of the essays devoted to Yugoslavia are among his greatest. In these, his overarching leitmotif is the corruption of Christianity by ecclesiastical and/or state authority.

The central historical example is the genocide unleashed in Croatia by the policy of forcible conversion endorsed by the hierarchy of the Catholic Church and executed by the Ustashe regime of the Second World War; "the most bloodthirsty religio-racial crusade in history," as he puts it, "far surpassing anything achieved by Cromwell or the Spanish Inquisitors."[3] Cumulatively, the great Yugoslav septet is surely the most devastating critique of the Church's collaboration with Balkan fascism ever to have appeared in English; and all the more powerful for the fact that he clearly loves Croatia and is writing in the spirit of Christianity, albeit a rather heterodox and secular Christianity that declines obeisance to any credo. It was, of course, his determination to speak the truth about the Croatian genocide that would lead to the Nuncio controversy in 1952[4]; to the subsequent furore and opprobrium in Kilkenny and further afield; and to his eventual removal from the Kilkenny Archaeological Society, which he had revived eight years before.

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[2] Ibid., p 259

[3] Ibid., p. 284

[4] Butler gives a full account of the Nuncio incident in "The Sub-Prefect Should Have Held His Tongue," ESCAPE FROM THE ANTHILL, pp. 270-82. It took place at a meeting of the Foreign Affairs Association in Dublin, following a lecture on the Church in Tito's Yugoslavia by the editor of the Catholic weekly *The Standard*, entitled "Yugoslavia – the Pattern of Prosecution." After the lecture, Butler attempted to raise the issue of Church collaboration with the Croatian genocide. He takes up the tale:

> I decided that at the end of his paper … I would try to show how variegated was the pattern of persecution in Yugoslavia, and how misleading our crude simplifications would be…. I got up, holding in my hands THE MARTYRDOM OF THE SERBS, a book published by the exiled Serbian Orthodox Church in Chicago, in case anything I said required authoritative corroboration. It had been given me by archpriest Nicolitch, the head of the Serbian Orthodox Church in England. But I had spoken only a few sentences when a stately figure rose from among the audience and walked out. It was the Papal Nuncio, of whose presence I had been unaware. The Chairman instantly closed the meeting, and there was an appalled silence, followed by a rush of reporters in my direction. They had understood nothing in the confusion. There was, consequently, some lively reporting, and two leading dailies quoted me as saying that the Orthodox Church, not the Communists, had initiated the persecution of the Catholics in Yugoslavia. In gigantic letters in the *Sunday Express* (Irish edition) I read: 'Pope's Envoy Walks Out. Government to Discuss Insult to Nuncio.'

In the ultramontane Ireland of the time, "the Insult," as it was dubbed in the press, proved a sensation, and Butler suffered a good deal of small-town persecution.

As Joseph Brodsky suggests in his Afterward to the posthumous fourth volume, Butler's work on Central Europe and Yugoslavia may be his most important; for in it he delineates, with a virtuoso mix of wit and ire, " the dirty grey" of a surpassingly violent century. It is a great pity he died just before the destruction of Yugoslavia and the sacking of Bosnia; not only did he speak the language, but he had lived in Yugoslavia for three years in the mid-thirties. He had crisscrossed all six constituent nations — Slovenia and Croatia in the north and west, Bosnia in the center, Serbia in the north and east, Montenegro and Macedonia in the southeast — and lived for longer spells in Zagreb, Belgrade, Dubrovnik, and further north on the Dalmatian coast. His Yugoslav work is extraordinary for the detail and rigor of his knowledge of the rich patchwork of cultural geography; it abounds in observations that become prescient and premonitory in retrospect. He was writing right up to his death; and had health permitted, it is difficult to imagine him *not* taking up Bosnia's tragedy, and the new variations on his old themes presented by the crimes of Karadzic, Milosevic, and Tudjman.

Yet, ironically, until very recently Butler was completely unknown in the region that figures so prominently in his life and work. The first and only of his essays to be translated into Bosnian, Croatian, or Serbian is one of his greatest, "Mr Pfeffer of Sarajevo," an account of the trial of the assassins of Archduke Franz Ferdinand that is also a parable about the death of Balkan liberalism in the interwar period. I included it in the Irish issue I edited for the Sarajevo journal *Zidne Novine*.[5] This issue appeared a little over a year after the end of the Bosnian war, and was the result of a trip I made to the devastated capital in March 1996.

The essay itself, published in 1956, ends with an Epilogue, whose three pages are, for me, among Butler's most moving. In it, he makes his classic distinction between nationalism and racialism, then turns to the modern genealogy of what Churchill once termed "the disentanglement of populations," but what we would now call "ethnic cleansing." "It was because nationalism lacked a philosophy," he writes,

> that in the early twenties it began to decay and racialism took its place. The first sign of this degeneration came in 1923, when by the Treaty of Lausanne in exchange for Turks from Europe over a million Greeks were moved from the coast of Asia Minor, where they had lived for three thousand years. This ghastly crime was committed so efficiently under the auspices of the League of Nations that it won universal applause. ...The old view that men should enjoy equal rights in the land of their birth began to seem hopelessly out of date, and soon Hitler and Mussolini and Stalin were eliminating causes of friction by large and admirably organized population exchanges in the Tyrol and the Baltic States….[6]

And a few paragraphs later Butler ends with this peroration:

> When we recall such gigantic endeavours, scientifically conducted, to sort out the old ragbag of nations of 1918 into homogeneous states, how petty and parochial seem the dreams of the Sarajevo conspirators, and the poor old League of Nations with its condominiums and Free Cities and minority rights! And how more than dead are Davis and Herder and their romantic insistence on Homeland and Nationhood! One has to listen hard to catch the least echo of that extinct

[5] "Sad Kad Se Zito Talasa Pored Rusevina" (Now that the Rye Crop Waves Beside the Ruins), Irish Issue, *Zidne Novine* (December 1996, A4 format, 44 pages)

[6] ESCAPE FROM THE ANTHILL, p. 259

ideology. Yet here is one from the most improbably source of all, from Germany, which once led the world in the social science of Distentanglement. It comes from the Exiles' Charter, an appeal for *Heimatrecht* published on behalf of the 7,500,000 German refugees from the East.

> God placed men in their homes. To drive men out of their homes spells spiritual death. We have experienced this fate. Hence we feel called upon to demand that the right to one's home be recognised as one of the basic rights given by God to man.[7]

Later I was told that Butler's essay had made a deep impression on its Bosnian readership. Sarajevo, of course, is now jammed with "the cleansed," a city of refugees where countrywomen in pantaloons jostle against dispossessed Muslim professionals from Priejdor and Banja Luka. With this apt parable, Butler the literary revenant had leapt the language barrier and crossed in print into the Slav lands in which he had once sojourned in life.

Nor is that quite the end of the story. There may be a sequel.

Last October I returned to Sarajevo for the Bosnian launch of the anthology I had edited. On the plane from Vienna, flicking through the complimentary paper, I came across an astonishing item. I read that during his current Croatian visit, the Pope would beatify Archbishop Stepinac. Stepinac was the Catholic primate of Croatia during the Ustashe genocide. Conservatively, it is estimated that this huge annex to the Nazi holocaust saw the massacre of several hundreds of thousands of Serbs, Jews and Gypsies. The whole tale of Stepinac's naïve collaboration is, of course, spelt out by Butler. At best, Stepinac had done little to vitiate the evil whose climate he had helped to cultivate. How had the Pope made such a grievous misreading of the Croatian crusade, that would one day find its Serb doppelgänger from Vukovar to Srebrenica to Kosova?

As it happened, I had in my bags all four volumes of Butler's essays. I had brought them because I hoped to finalize discussions about an edition of his Balkan work. Somewhere over Slovenia's Julian Alps, I suddenly realized that Butler's work was still dynamite. What would happen if the edition appeared in Croatia, where Stepinac is still widely revered, even by the intelligentsia, as saintly and patriotic? Nowadays there are some uncomfortable religious parallels between 'Fifties Ireland and post-Communist Croatia, to say nothing of the Croatian statelet within Bosnia, where Medjugore is. When this edition of Balkan essays appears, Butler may prove as challenging there as he once was here.

3

Balkan Excursions

Butler's first visit to the Balkans was in 1928, to Greece. Making his way back to Ireland from a sojourn in Egypt and a stop-over in Cyprus, he toured the Peloponnese with the Irish writer Monk Gibbon. Butler had had a classical education, first at

[7] Ibid., p. 259

Charterhouse, then at St John's, Oxford, where his scholarship gave him the sobriquet Senior Classical Scholar. But he became disenchanted with classics at Oxford, and took a third in 1922. In "Return to Hellas" (1961), a celebration of the small-scale simplicity of Greek civilization as well as a caution against the gigantism of modern life, he describes the trip thus:

> When I was young, but not young enough, I walked through the Peloponnese with a mule. It took, I think, thirteen hours from Andritsaena to the ferry across the Alphaeus. I had never enjoyed anything so much, but I felt very angry that my education had been back to front. Here was the jam at last after I had stuffed myself to repletion with dry bread. Had I known all this before, the fragrance of the myrtle and mule-droppings, the memory of roast sucking-pig and retsina, would have reconciled me to knowledge, which till then had flowed in the contrary direction to my curiosity. . . . Why did I never guess that in a meadow at Olympia, ringed with asphodel and narcissus, the Hermes of Praxiteles would shed like a scab of an old wound its frowsy kinship with a plaster cast in the Science Buildings at Charterhouse?[8]

After matriculation, Butler in the 1920s and '30s was what we might term today a forerunner of the backpacking hippie. (Minus the long hair and shambolic clothing and intemperate habits; and grafted onto an ideal of the country scholar modeled on Graves and Prim, founders of the Kilkenny Archaeological Society.) Apart from his two years of gainful employment with the Irish County Libraries in the early twenties, when he worked in Ballymena, Coleraine, and Portstewart, he seems to have applied himself to having no career.

In the mid-twenties, there was a term of teaching in London and a brief tutoring spell in Germany. Nineteen twenty-seven sees a few months of English-teaching in Egypt on the heels of travel in Italy and followed by the sojourn in the Peloponnese. In 1929 he is married to Susan Margaret Guthrie, called Peggy, the sister of the director and playwright Tyrone Guthrie, and they spend their honeymoon in Riga, Latvia, having been denied entrance to the Soviet Union.[9] In the spring of 1932, Butler visits Moscow; a few months later, he returns to Russia with Peggy, and they take a boat trip down the Volga to Leningrad. His wife returns home, but Butler stays on for a few months of teaching English in Leningrad, at the beginning of the Red Terror; this stay is described in his masterpiece "Peter's Window." In-between these flits and sojourns, his main bases are in West London and at the Guthrie Big House at Annaghmakerrig, Co. Monaghan. There is some piecemeal tutoring in London and the upkeep of the garden and grounds of Annaghmakerrig. It is clear that the agenda he is working to, the star he is following, is anything but conventional.

By the end of Auden's "low, dishonest decade," he is back in Austria after the *Anschluss*, working for the Quakers in order to expedite the escape of Jews in the grim Vienna of 1938-39. Only in 1941, when his father dies and he inherits Maidenhall in Bennettsbridge, does this period of wanderlust come to a close, and with it the peripatetic

[8] Ibid., p220

[9] Butler's earliest essay, "Riga Strand in 1930," was written soon after this visit. It was published for the first time, 58 years later, in CHILDREN OF DRANCY.

life of his twenties and thirties. Although punctuated by trips to Spain, Russia, China, Israel, and America, among other destinations, the rest of his life will be spent in Kilkenny.

But first, of course, there were the three years in Yugoslavia, from autumn 1934 to summer 1937. They are the most important of all his travels, and yet this chapter of his life remains quite blank. Yugoslavia, he would later write, "is the foreign country I know best" (his context suggests that the statement includes England).[10] Beyond the truism that everything in life is decisive, his time in the Slav Balkans has a seminal place in his writing and his life. It results, I think, in his greatest work and tinges with a bifocal perspective his whole intellectual approach to Ireland. It would lead two decades hence to the unpleasantness of the Nuncio incident.

But Butler and his wife are gone, and with them, a full and vivid account of their time in Yugoslavia. As with the work, so with the life; once again Butler seems a step or two ahead of us, and those who might have wanted to draw more out of them have been wrong-footed by death. Whereas his literary reputation is no longer in danger of vanishing into the Lethe of oblivion, much of the bare outline of his life in those years has. When I think of my own time as a student in Provence, between school and university, I realize on what a slim thread the seeming solidity of memory hangs. Without me, or the single Swedish friend of that period, almost nothing of my life there could be reconstructed.

I am afraid such a loss is now partly the case with Butler's time in the Balkans. There are some letters and papers, and snippets of recollection by others. Mainly, there is the Balkan work. Even here, however, firm autobiography is rather thin, as it is in most of his work, with the exception of those pieces whose intention is purely personal. Yet, somehow, the overall effect of the Balkan writing is deeply autobiographical, in a way that is less the case with much of the rest of his work. What it lacks in external incident it makes up for with a rich narrative of ideas and experience, through which his time in Yugoslavia vividly gusts. There is almost no discussion of literature and letters, as exists in so much of his corpus; and the tremendous focus is on the interplay between the individual, cultural background and contemporary history. This distilled intellectual narrative is the special autobiographical brandy to be tapped from the seemingly impersonal cask of his writing on the Balkans.

Sometime in 1934, Butler obtained a travelling scholarship for Yugoslavia from the School of Slavonic Studies in London; it was this that helped fund the three years. Or was it simply a case of new opportunity for travel presenting itself? It would seem he had not passed through the country previously, though he had skirted it in Austria. Very likely, his interest in Russia had something to do with it. This interest had been aroused by a distant cousin, Willie de Burgh, a philosopher at Reading University, with whom he stayed just after Charterhouse, when events in Russia were reverberating through the zeitgeist. A gifted linguist, Butler took up Russian sometime in the twenties; by the end of the decade he was fluent enough to begin translating Leonid Leonov's bulky novel, THE THIEF, and Chekhov's play *The Cherry Orchard*. They were published, respectively, in 1931 and 1934; and the play was produced that same year by his brother-in-law, Tyrone Guthrie, at the Old Vic. A half-century later, Joseph Brodsky would judge it the best translation of that play ever to appear in English.

Note the telling debut: Butler is a writer who begins with the East, not with Ireland. This is often overlooked in the effort to shoehorn him into one of the fashionable

[10] ESCAPE FROM THE ANTHILL, p. 8

Irish literary agendas; for instance, that of "the Protestant imagination." But such a categorical imperative can get woolly once outside Irish airspace, as Butler was so often in the interwar period. In fact, Butler is one of a distinguished line of Irish writers – such as Shaw, Joyce, Beckett, Aidan Higgins, Harry Clifton – whose sense of Irishness has been shaped by long periods of foreign residence, and so inflected by a cosmopolitanism that eludes, in part, the insular categories. Incidentally, Joyce lived in Trieste, then a part of Austria-Hungary, when it was as much a Slav city as an Italian one; and he often uses bits of Italo-Slovene dialect in his letters. In a like vein, Brodsky suggests, "Butler was interested in this border-line zone, with its fusion of Latin and Slavic cultures, presumably because he sense in their interplay the future of European civilisation."[11]

"Serbo-Croat" is closely related to Russian; and one is attracted to the thought that, with his interest in both Greece and Russia, the South Slav lands were a natural choice. From Istria to Kotor, the long *karst* littoral of Croatia and Montenegro, with its thousand-plus islands, is where the Slav world meets the warm oceans. Moreover, then as now, the field of Slavonic studies is a small one, and through some such contact he may have come across the travelling scholarship.

Equally, it may have been from a Yugoslav friend, or friends, that Butler gleaned further curiosity about the region, after some initial contact with Serbs and Croats at Oxford. There are several candidates, but the most likely is Dr. Milan Čurcin.[12] He crops up in several essays and was the source of Butler's account of Mr. Pfeffer, the judge at the trial of the Sarajevo assassins. In the introduction to ESCAPE FROM THE ANTHILL, Butler writes:

> Three years after I returned from Russia I went to teach in Zagreb in the Anglo-American-Yugoslav Society. It had been founded by my friend, Dr Milan Churchin, the editor of *Nova Europa*, the leading liberal journal of Central Europe, and by Dr Georgievic, the Orthodox Bishop of Dalmatia. I also had a small scholarship from the School of Slavonic Studies in London.[13]

He does not quite say that Čurcin was a friend before his arrival. However, in a 1946 essay, "Two Faces of Postwar Yugoslavia," he makes this aside about the famous Dalmatian sculptor Mestroviã: "Mestrovitch was at that time in America but his house was being looked after by an old friend of mine, Dr Milan Churchin. With the problems of Serbia and Croatia in mind, he had visited Ulster."[14]

The last remark suggests a further possible source of early interest in Yugoslavia. Had Butler got attuned to the depth of Irish-Balkan parallel through personal contact? It seems a reasonable supposition.

Butler arrived in Zagreb on 9 October 1934, having traveled by way of Vienna, Budapest and Belgrade. Zagreb seems to have been his main base during the three years. he was accompanied by his wife, and the unpublished correspondence suggests regular

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[11] IN THE LAND OF NOD, 268

[12] In Butler's day it was customary to anglicize Slav names. In my text, however, I have kept the Slavic spellings.

[13] ESCAPE FROM THE ANTHILL, p. 8

[14] GRANDMOTHER AND WOLFE TONE, p. 201

addresses in both Zagreb and Belgrade; it would appear they had two flats permanently at their disposal. Several Zagreb friends with whom Butler would later stay in touch appear in the correspondence; one was their mentor Dr Čurcin. But the correspondence also suggests that they spent considerable periods in Dubrovnik and Ploce, a small Dalmatian town at the mouth of the Neretva River, surrounded by strip-fields and a moonscape of low Adriatic sierra. At some point Peggy returned to Ireland to give birth to their only child, Julia; and when she and the child returned, they all stayed in Belgrade, where they had a number of friends in the English-speaking legations. At least one full winter was spent in a former monastery in Dubrovnik overlooking the sea, not far from the walled citadel of fountains and palaces, where Julia would play. Another letterhead tells us he stayed for a while in Pale, near Sarajevo, from where Karadzic would one day direct the siege of the Bosnian capital.

The most fascinating glimpse the correspondence gives us is of their stay in Ploce, sometime in 1936 or 1937. It was here, it would seem, that Butler first saw at close quarters the shadow of Hitler; there are many allusions to Jewish refugee friends or acquaintances staying in the area. An earlier Belgrade letter reads: "Gertrude has now discovered her name is Stern and that she has an Aryan nose and is dreadfully worried about this, and I'm afraid won't last." Back in Dubrovnik he runs into Rebecca West and husband, and tosses off this classic: "They were motoring via Mostar and Sarajevo to Belgrade and so they took me out of Orasac and had some wine with me on the way. It was a fearful day, pouring rain, so they must have had a disappointing drive. She, like so many others, is writing a book about Jugoslavia or rather she says 'Me in Jugoslavia'."[15] In fact, disguised as an Englishman, Butler appears in this novel, BLACK LAMB, GREY FALCON, now a bible for Balkan no-nothings.

The adjective in "travelling scholarship" turns out to be a significant clue to Butler's time in the country. True to proto-Beat form, he appears to have been on the road for a good deal of the three years. This can be surmised from his discussion, in "The Barriers" (1941), of the vitality of small provincial clubs and readings rooms, but he confirms his ingenious troubadour procedure in an unpublished (1949) article for *Peace News*:

> When I was in Yugoslavia over a dozen years ago I had a travelling scholarship which enabled me to go round the country. In the days before the Iron Curtain to be foreign was, at the start, an asset, and when I arrived in some town of Bosnia or Macedonia I was made to feel welcome. There was usually a little club presided over by someone who had travelled abroad, and I was entertained….[16]

No wonder he knew the country well.

Two essays treat highlights of his time there. In the spring of 1937 he traveled from Belgrade to Montenegro to witness the elaborate ritual of the *izmirenje*, or reconciliation ceremony, by which blood feuds were traditionally settled in the patriarchal peasant societies of the South Balkans. The experience is recounted in "The Last *Izmirenje*" (1947), a parable about an order of justice that took forgiveness instead of punishment as the true atonement for crime. And in his very early essay "In Dalmatia" (1937), a distillation of his travels through the archipelago and along the littoral, something of the emotional

[15] Butler Papers (unpublished correspondence)
[16] Ibid. (in typescript)

enchantment of those years is set in amber. It has the fresh-minted feeling of recent experience and conveys the delight and exuberance that must have accompanied him on his wanderings. It gives us a peaceful background to the somber meditations on what would later transpire "in the plains of Slavonia and the wild mountains of Bosnia."[17]

All this puts in the round Butler's one autobiographical overview of the Balkan years, given in his Introduction to the first volume. Here is most of it:

> The day we arrived in Zagreb, 9 October 1934, news had just come that King Alexander, a Serb, had, with Bathou the French Foreign Minister, been assassinated in Marseilles by agents of the Croat separatist leader, Pavelitch. Zagreb was plunged in well-organized mourning with portraits of the king surrounded by black crape in the shop windows and black bows on the funnels of the railway engines. Two days later the king's body arrived from Split, where it had been shipped from Marseilles, on its way to Belgrade. It lay for a couple of hours, surrounded by pot-plants, in the first-class waiting room at the station, where it was visited by mile-long processions. One of those who prayed beside the royal coffin was Archbishop Bauer, accompanied by his Auxiliary Monsignor Stepinac.
>
> During our time in Yugoslavia the shadow of the assassination hung over the whole country. Hitler had come to power in Germany and Jewish refugees were flocking to the Dalmatian coast. In Italy and Hungary, Pavelitch and his helper, Artukovitch, were training the army of Croat rebels who were, in 1941, to sweep into Yugoslavia with the Nazis and proclaim the Independent State of Croatia.
>
> And yet my recollections are of peace and beauty. There was almost no traffic in Yelachitch Trg, the central square. Fat amethyst pigeons strutted through the market stalls looking for pickings and panicking when the church bells rang. The scent of mimosa and wood-smoke, holy candles and freshly tanned leather drowned the faint whiff of petrol. On Sunday, we walked up Slijeme Mountain, where wild cyclamen and hellebore grew through beech woods. In our room I rooted oleander cuttings in bottles between the double windows. And when my pupils were on holiday I wrote down the story of Mr Pfeffer.
>
> Zagreb, in the thirties, was a very cultivated little town; it had an opera house and theatres, and there were still remnants of an Austrianized aristocracy in the leafy suburbs. Dalmatia was Italianate and Belgrade was still largely Turkish in character. When one went south and penetrated Montenegro, one seemed to pass from our cruel, complicated century to an earlier one, just as cruel, where each man was responsible to his neighbours for his crimes and where organised twentieth century barbarity had not yet emerged. . . .[18]

Turning to the period after his departure, he goes on:

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[17] ESCAPE FROM THE ANTHILL, p. 340

[18] Ibid., pp. 9-10

> The war came and Yugoslavia was carved up by Germany and her allies. Croatia, which had not resisted the Nazis, was rewarded with her Independent State under the rule of Pavelitch, King Alexander's convicted murderer.
>
> Then in Zagreb an Aeschylean tragedy was enacted. The same young priest who had stood beside the coffin of his murdered king, reappeared before his countrymen as Archbishop at the right hand of his king's assassin, helpless in the face of Pavelitch's resolve to exterminate the Orthodox by expulsion, massacre or forced conversion. Unhappy but icily correct, Stepinac considered himself to be the servant of a power that is higher than the king or his murderer, and one that has rules for every occasion. His conscience was clear.[19]

But Butler's conscience *was* unsettled. Sensing the scale of the cataclysm that had befallen Croatia, he returned to Zagreb in June 1947 for part of the summer. He saw some old friends, but also headed to the Central Library. He picks up the thread: what he found made "the heart stand still"[20]:

> When I was in Zagreb I spent several days in the public library looking up the old files of the newspapers that were issued in the occupation period, particularly the Church papers. I wanted to see what resistance, if any, was made by organised Christianity to the ruthless militarism of Pavelitch, the Croat national leader, and his German and Italian patrons; I am afraid the results were disheartening. I did not expect to find outspoken criticism or condemnation in the Church papers because, if it had been published, the papers would certainly have been suppressed. But I was wholly unprepared for the gush of hysterical adulation which was poured forth by almost all the leading clergy upon Pavelitch, who was probably the vilest of all war criminals. He was their saviour against Bolshevism, their champion against the Eastern barbarian and heretic, the Serb; he was restorer of their nation and the Christian faith, a veritable hero of olden time. As I believe that the Christian idiom is still the best in which peace and goodwill can be preached, I found this profoundly disturbing….[21]

Recollections of "the moment in the library" appear in seven of his essays, and the research done there permeates several others. It is as central to his work as the Nuncio controversy would be to his life. One might say it was the ethical equivalent of Proust's moment before the madeleine. Each time he returns to it, it is with some new mood or poignant twist.

It is for another occasion to rehearse Butler's *J'accuse*, his meticulous and psychologically subtle portrait of Stepinac. But its gist can be gathered from the first and the last appearance of the theme in his writing. During the same 1946 visit, Butler met, in Zagreb, Father Chok, an Orthodox priest who during the war ministered in "the wild district of Lika," near the Bosnian border, where there were large communities of Catholic and Orthodox. The horror of the priest's tale is insinuated with Swiftian understatement:

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[19] Ibid., p. 10
[20] Ibid., p. 10
[21] IN THE LAND OF NOD, p 106

> In the Lika the parishes are sometimes Orthodox, sometimes Catholic, and Father Chok found himself between two large Catholic communities whose priests were Father Mober and Father Mimica. Fortunately for him Father Mimica, the nearer of his two neighbors, was friendly and kind, while Father Mober, who was not, was busy with the affairs of another *Orthodox* parish, Shtikada. One day, after the government had announced its programme for the conversion of the Orthodox in Croatia, Father Mober arrived by car in Shtikada and ordered the villagers to assemble at the marsh where the ceremony of conversion would take place. He explained that in this way they would escape being killed. (emphasis added)[22]

Assembled in the unusual venue of a marsh, by a priest under the jurisdiction of Stepinac, a massacre of three hundred fifty souls occurs. Thirty-five years later, Butler bears witness again:

> The newspapers of the time, secular and ecclesiastical, are still to be seen in the Municipal Library, but this huge pile of documents, the Rosetta Stone of Christian corruption, has not yet been effectively deciphered…. In an authoritarian community, when there is hypocrisy and connivance at the centre, the ripples from them spread outwards to the remote circumference: 'In vain do they worship me, teaching as their doctrines the precepts of men.[23]

After Zagreb, Butler traveled to Belgrade and Split to see friends. Some of the people he met, as well as the postwar atmosphere of the three cities, are recounted in "Some Encounters: Zagreb 1947," "The Russian Consul," and "Two Faces of Postwar Yugoslavia: Belgrade and Split."

Butler's penultimate visit to Yugoslavia was in 1950, with a delegation from the National Peace Council in Britain.[24] True to form, the one essay to emerge from this trip, "A Visit to Lepoglava" (1951), opens with Butler at the gates of the prison where Stepinac is held. Stepinac had been found guilty of collaboration, and the Vatican was asked to withdraw him to Rome; when the Pope refused, he was jailed. When Butler and his Quaker companions are brought in to Stepinac, they find the cell a good one, with light, a shelf of books, cupboard and iron bedstead, and a small chapel in the adjacent room. Respectfully but directly, Butler probes him about his role in the conversion campaign. Stepinac proffers no qualms but also no complaints; he is tight-lipped, evasive, sentimental. Like Chekhov's visit to Sakhalin, or something out of E. M. Forster, it seems to me a quintessential moment in the literature of the Twentieth-century ethical imagination. "Surely," Butler would later write with consummate understatement, "it must be one of

[22] GRANDMOTHER AND WOLFE TONE, p. 181

[23] ESCAPE FROM THE ANTHILL, p. 285 and p. 304

[24] His involvement with the delegation may have been set in train by a 1949 War Resisters League International Conference in Holland, where he delivered a paper on pacifism and the Churches, "Memorandum on the Struggle between Communism and Christianity," which alludes briefly to Stepinac.

the hardest blows that fate has dealt him that both Pavelitch and Sharitch speak well of him."[25]

The Yugoslav swan song was a package holiday Butler and his wife took to Dalmatia in 1980. It proved an unpleasant affair, with sweltering heat and the cavernous Soviet-style hotels that had begun dotting the rocky promontories. Butler developed a leg ulcer, and they both returned exhausted.

4

The Balkan Butler

Are there any general conclusions about the Balkan Butler to be drawn from the foregoing?

The first is surely that the Balkan writings are central, not, as is sometimes assumed, a Ruritanian branch-line to the basic Irish track. Butler always rejected the Hiberno-centric note; he was not (to paraphrase a Serb friend on certain Serbs) more Irish than was necessary. If anything, the two tracks, Ireland and Yugoslavia, are parallel, with occasional crossovers and junctions. This Balkan centrality becomes clear when one studies the chronology of the writings. It may come as a surprise, but up to and including 1948, he had written eleven [essays] on the Balkans (and he may have been working on others), three on Russia, two on the small nations of Europe, and one each on a German and an English topic.[26] Thereafter, the Irish topics multiply, but even at mid-century, the tally is eighteen on the Balkans and Eastern Europe and five on Ireland. I repeat: Butler the writer begins in Eastern and Central Europe.

The second point flows from the first. The Croatian genocide is at the heart of the corpus; it is not so much a limb as a backbone. For sound editorial reasons, the arrangement of the writings in the four Lilliput volumes did not, and could not, take into account chronology. To read the Balkan essays in chronological order, however, is to became aware of the frugal skill with which he broaches and elaborates the matter of the genocide. Themes are introduced and outlined; later they are embellished and extended. He begins by writing of his Balkan time and the wartime genocide; then the Nuncio controversy intervenes; then he interlaces both perspectives; what emerges is something more universal, transcending the particulars of either country.

The difficulty is that, scattered through the four volumes, the pattern of the Balkan work, second nature to the author, is lost on the reader not intent on unraveling it. Even when laid out in chronological order, the titles have an occasional and even strange air to the English ear, and so do not quite do justice to the crafted and supple orchestration that they embody. After all, did he not consider the events in Croatia "the most bloodthirsty religio-racial crusade in history"? How could a writer like Butler, with his ethical and historical and cultural cast of mind, with an intimate knowledge of the country and that

[25] ESCAPE FROM THE ANTHILL, p. 281

[26] The three Irish essays are "New Geneva in Waterford" (1948), "Otway Cuffe" (1948), and the 1948 parts of "Midland Perspectives" (1948-49). It is possible, of course, that several of the Irish essays published later were written earlier than this; but this would not affect the basic balance between European and Irish work up until 1949.

defining moment in the Zagreb Municipal Library, give the theme short shrift? Indeed, how could he not make it central?

The last point puts the first two in context. It is that Butler first envisaged and then understood himself not merely as an Irish intellectual, but, equally, an intellectual of the larger cultural pattern to which Ireland belongs and into which it is subsumed: namely, the small nations of Europe, the so-called Succession States that emerged from the imperial aftermath of the First World War. This he makes clear in two related works of early genius, "The Barriers" (1941) and "The Two Languages" (1943), when at the height of the Hitleran darkness engulfing all those states save Ireland, he reflects on the cohesiveness of small communities and the role of the writer in the life of the nation. "It is a strange time," he remarks,

> to maintain the theory that a distinctive culture cannot exist without cultural intercourse, but since the mainspring of our freedom was not political theory but the claim that Ireland possessed and could develop a unique culture of her own, it is reasonable to examine this claim. . . . A nation cannot be created negatively by elimination or strategic retreats into the past. It must crystallize round the contemporary genius that interprets it. To acquire this detachment, they will need to have access to other forms of society, so that they can see their own lives objectively and in totality from the threshold.[27]

Through luck or design or both, Yugoslavia served as the twin, the parallel, the counterpoint, the contrasting other par excellence. There is this telling biographical passage in the Introduction to ESCAPE FROM THE ANTHILL:

> Yugoslavia had been born in 1918 after the defeat of Austria-Hungary and the rise of the Succession States. For the Southern Slavs it was the fulfilment of an ancient dream of harmony between four neighbouring and kindred peoples. I was at Oxford then and there was springtime in the air. There were Serbs, Croats and Czechs, there were Irish too, all rejoicing in their new-found freedom. We all had minority problems and I was surprised that Ireland, least scarred by war, did not identify herself with the other small new states more warmly, share experiences and take the lead for which she was qualified.[28]

Butler never lost the sense of that youthful springtime, when the ideals of the Easter Rising were only a spiritual stone's throw away from those of the Sarajevo conspirators.

Butler is a major Balkan writer. In historical terms, his prose is more insightful, sounder and more prescient, than the Balkan novels of Evelyn Waugh or Rebecca West. I do not, however, simply mean that he has produced major writing on the Balkans; that much has been obvious for some time. I mean, actually, that he is a writer whose Balkan work, in the cosmopolitan sense, also belongs, or ought to belong, to the lands that so

[27] GRANDMOTHER AND WOLFE TONE, pp. 32-33
[28] ESCAPE FROM THE ANTHILL, p. 8

intrigued him. In this, he is again one of literature's rare birds. Like Bruce Chatwin with Australia, or Alexis de Toqueville with America, or Lord Byron with Greece, he will sooner or later penetrate the barriers of distance and language and establish a niche in the national life that once hosted him. What that happens, it will be a long-overdue homecoming.

Hubert Butler: Balkan Essays, 1937-1990:

Escape from the Anthill *1985*
In Dalmatia *1937**
The Barriers *1941*
The Two Languages *1943**
Some Encounters: Zagreb 1946 *1946**
The Russian Consul *1947**
Father Chok and Compulsory Conversion 1*947**
Report on Yugoslavia *1947**
Yugoslav Papers: The Church and its Opponents *1947**
Yugoslavia: The Cultural Background *1947**
The Last *Ismirenje 1947*
Maria Pasquinelli and the Dissolution of the Ego *1947*
Two Faces of Postwar Yugoslavia: Belgrade and Split *1948**
Ireland and Croatia *1948**
James Bourchier: An Irishman In Bulgaria *1948**
Memorandum on the Struggle Between Christianity and Communism *1949**
Nazor, Oroschatz and the Von Berks *1949**
The Invader Wore Slippers *1950*
A Visit to Lepoglava *1951*
The Sub-Prefect Should Have Held His Tongue *1956*
Mr Pfeffer of Sarajevo *1956*
Return to Hellas *1961*
The Final Solution *1962*
Fiume, Sushak and the Nugents *1978**
The Artukovitch File *1970-1985*
A Three-Day Nation *1990**
Afterword by Joseph Brodsky

*Unpublished until his essays were collected by The Lilliput Press, 1985-96.

A bibliography is found after Butler, "The Sub-Prefect Should Have Held His Tongue," this issue, and Agee, "The Stepanic File," *ibid.*

This essay appeared in part in *Graph* (Dublin) 3.3, Summer 1999.

The Stepinac File (2000)

Chris Agee

In this essay, the author examines how Hubert Butler's experiences in post-war Yugoslavia led to the "Nuncio Incident" in the ultramontane Ireland of 1952, recounted in "The Sub-Prefect Should Have Held His Tongue," and considers why his writing on the Croatian Church remains deeply relevant to the mounting controversy over the beatification of Cardinal Alojzije Stepinac, Archbishop of Croatia during the Second World War.

I

In the summer of 1947, on his first trip to postwar Yugoslavia, Hubert Butler arrived at the reading room desk of the Municipal Library in Zagreb. Fluent in Serbo-Croat, he obtained his ticket and spent the next few days perusing the newspapers, especially the ecclesiastical papers, published during the 1941-45 Quisling regime of Independent Croatia. He was hoping to make, he would later say, "a study of the Christian crisis in Yugoslavia."[29] He had stumbled on the trail — the very beginning of the trail — of what I shall call, echoing his own phrasing, "the Stepinac File."

At 46, Butler was no stranger to the great events of his period. Already he had firsthand experience of the Russian Revolution, the rise of fascism, and what is surely the matrix for both, the unraveling of four empires on European soil. In 1931 he spent three months teaching English in Leningrad at the beginning of the Stalinist Terror. On the Dalmatian coast in the mid-thirties he saw early waves of refugees from Hitler and then, working with the Quakers in Vienna in 1938-39, helped expedite the flight of Jews after the *Anschluss.* Closer to home, traveling from Charterhouse during the term break, he had passed through the smoking ruins of Dublin in the aftermath of the Rising on Easter Monday and concluded he was an Irish republican.

Unlike many or most nationalists at the time, Butler from an early stage did not view the War of Independence in primarily insular terms. The freedom of Ireland was inextricably bound up with a wider pan-European phenomenon, the disintegration of empires and the emergence of what in the interwar period were known as the Succession States; a dozen small nations, he wrote, "formed at the same time (1918-1921) and under the influence of much the same ideas."[30] From this perspective, which he never abandoned, indeed never ceased refining, the ideals of the Easter Rising were but a spiritual stone's throw from those that brought forth the new states in the East. Pearse in Dublin was cognate with Princip in Sarajevo.

Notwithstanding the writerly potential of his wanderlust through the late twenties and thirties, Butler had not, by the end of the Second World War, written much in his own voice; and of this, very little had appeared in print. An early interest in Russia and

[29] Butler Papers (unpublished letter)
[30] GRANDMOTHER AND WOLFE TONE, p. 47

Russian had resulted in book translations of Leonid Leonov's THE THIEF in 1931 and Anton Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard* in 1934. But by the age of 46 his own work consisted of only a handful of essays and reviews. These included "Riga Strand in 1930" and "In Dalmatia," neither of which would appear until the Lilliput volumes, plus several others from the thirties which remain unpublished; three postwar reviews of Soviet literature; and two wartime essays, "The Barriers" (1941) and "Two Languages" (1943) in which, as from an Indian-summer chrysalis, Butler's prose genius is suddenly glimpsed in full flight. In short, Butler began unusually late.

When he arrived at the Municipal Library in Zagreb he had therefore little in the way of a published literary career behind him outside his considerable gifts as a translator. But although he had barely begun, the virtuosity of that beginning is unmistakable. His prose is already an instrument of unusual richness. It had long been tuned by his notebooks and letters.

Indeed, one wonders if he ever had a literary career in the usual sense; there is something of the urgent Reuters report in all his work, as if from the thick of life and its pressing issues, in a posting far from the literary world, he had found time to dispatch another report from the ethical front. In contrast to much of the professionalized literary milieu, there is never the sense of suborning life's grist to the mill of the next deadline or book; never the heresy of adjusting the course of living to the calculus of literary ambition; never the sacrifice of the passions of the amateur for the royal road of the professional career. That note of the far-flung ethical dispatch — the letter from the literary nowhere — is itself part of the distinction of the style.

To flourish, though, like the proverbial mustard seed, Butler's style still needed, it seems to me, the right soil. The instrument might be ready, mellowed by years of travel, but what would he play — and what would be the leitmotifs? In the best writing such themes are never wholly a matter of choice. The X-axis of the individual sensibility intersects the Y-axis of the historical moment. There is a sense in which many of the most indispensable writers — think of Kafka or Wilfred Owen — have been chosen by the themes imposed by the narrow gate of circumstance. Of potential, Ted Hughes remarks that "it is as if one grain of talent — in the right psychological climate — can become a great harvest, where a load of grains — in the wrong climate — simply goes off."[31]

II

What Butler uncovered during those first days in the Municipal Library in 1947 — and subsequent visits to the library of the University of Zagreb during the same trip and again in 1950 — astounded him. On every plane: ethical, historical, psychological, emotional. "The moment in the library," as I will call his various visits to the Zagreb files, would have a decisive influence on the course of his life and work. If Butler was one of a rare breed of writers, like Swift or Orwell, for whom the source of inspiration is what I have termed elsewhere "the ethical imagination," then we might liken his discovery in that first reading room to the moment before the madeleine with which Marcel Proust begins A LA RECHERCHE DU TEMPS PERDU.

At the very beginning of that novel, the narrator experiences an epiphany as he tastes a small pastry of that name, and it is the pursuit of the significance of this moment of sudden apprehension that informs the whole meandering epic flowing from it. Likewise, metaphorically, Butler's "moment in the library" is the ethical epiphany that would decant

[31] Ted Hughes, WINTER POLLEN (London: Faber and Faber, 1994), p. 31

into much of his greatest writing. As Joseph Brodsky observed while the Bosnian war raged,

> For modern readers, Hubert Butler's most valuable insights would be no doubt those that have to do with *Mitteleuropa*. He knew the reality firsthand, and its worst period at that. Which is to say that our understanding of its present conditions logically stands to benefit from what Hubert Butler depicted half a century ago. A man of immense learning, he was interested in this borderline zone, with its fusion of Latin and Slavic cultures, presumably because he sensed in their interplay the future of European civilization. Born where he was, he couldn't help being concerned with the fate of Christendom, whose natural son he was.[32]

We will come to the specifics of the Stepinac case, and "its supreme importance," as he put it, "to all thinking Christians."[33] But let us first register the haunting presence of the Zagreb files in Butler's writing. No other single experience is accorded such a repeated airing. A direct account of the visits to the two libraries is related in seven essays, while the nature of what he uncovered there appears in varying degrees in another four, as well as in a dozen or so uncollected letters published in the Irish and English press in the late forties and fifties.

Lining up all this material in the order it issued from his pen gives us Butler's accumulating account of Archbishop Stepinac. Since Butler had not written much before "the moment in the library," the Stepinac file becomes a fugal narrative that runs right through his entire corpus, from the clutch of early Yugoslav essays in the late forties, dealing directly with his post-war visits, to the last paragraphs of his last essay in 1990, "A Three-Day Nation," where the Stepinac theme reappears, and he concludes: "I have always thought that compared with the question of how we behave, what we believe is of little importance."[34]

III

Of what, then, did the epiphany in the reading room consist? For an answer let us now turn to the man himself, in four extracts.

Extract one, from "The Sub-Prefect Should Have Held His Tongue" (1956):

> I have been reproached several times by sincere and civilized unbelievers for my efforts to find out the details of the vast campaign in Croatia in 1941 to convert two and a half million Orthodox to Catholicism. 'Why not let bygones be bygones?' they say. 'If we rake these thing up we'll merely play into the hands of the Communists. And anyway, they are always killing each other in the Balkans.' I once heard an ambassador in Belgrade argue like that, and indeed I have never heard a British or American official abroad argue in any other way. When in 1947 I went to Zagreb and looked up the files of the war-time newspapers of Croatia in which the whole story was to be read, it was obvious no foreign inquirer had

[32] Joseph Brodsky, "Appendix," IN THE LAND OF NOD, p. 268
[33] IN THE LAND OF NOD, p. 137
[34] Ibid., p. 166

handled them before, and the library clerks regarded me with wonder and suspicion.[35]

Extract two, from "Report on Yugoslavia" (an address to War Resisters International, in Shrewsbury, England, in August, 1945): *Extract two*, from "Report on Yugoslavia" (an address to War Resisters International, in Shrewsbury, England, in August, 1945):

> When I was in Zagreb I spent several days in the public library looking up the old files of the newspapers that were issued in the occupation period, particularly the Church papers. I wanted to see what resistance, if any, was made by organized Christianity to the ruthless militarism of Pavelitch, the Croat national leader, and his German and Italian patrons; I am afraid the results were disheartening. I did not expect to find outspoken criticism or condemnation in the Church papers because, if it had been published, the papers would certainly have been suppressed. But I was wholly unprepared for the gush of hysterical adulation which was poured forth by almost all of the leading clergy upon Pavelitch, who was probably the vilest of all war criminals. He was their saviour against Bolshevism, their champion against the Eastern barbarian and heretic, the Serb; he was restorer of their nation and the Christian faith, a veritable hero of olden time. As I believe that the Christian idiom is still the best in which peace and goodwill can be preached, I found this profoundly disturbing . . . .[36]

Extract three, from "The Invader Wore Slippers" (1950):

> When an incendiary sets a match to respectability, it smoulders malodorously, but piety, like patriotism, goes off like a rocket. The jackboot was worn by the Croats themselves and used so vigorously against the schismatic Serbs that the Germans and Italians, who had established the little state, were amazed. Pavelitch, the regicide ruler of Croatia, was himself the epitome, the personification, of the extraordinary alliance of religion and crime, which for four years made Croatia the model for all satellite states in German Europe. He was extremely devout, attending mass every morning with his family in a private chapel built onto his house. He received expressions of devoted loyalty from the leaders of the churches, including the Orthodox, whose murdered metropolitan had been replaced by a subservient nominee. He gave them medals and enriched their parishes with the plundered property of the schismatics, and he applied the simple creed of One Faith, One Fatherland, with a literalness that makes the heart stand still. It was an equation that had to be solved in blood. Nearly two million orthodox were offered the alternatives of death or conversion to the faith of the majority. . . .
>
> Yet, as I read the papers in Zagreb, I felt it was not the human disaster but the damage to honoured words and thoughts that was most irreparable. The letter and spirit had been wrested violently apart and a whole vocabulary of Christian goodness had been blown inside out like an umbrella in a thunderstorm.[37]

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[35] ESCAPE FROM THE ANTHILL, pp. 110-11

[36] IN THE LAND OF NOD, pp. 106-7. The essay was published first, posthumously, in this volume.

[37] ESCAPE FROM THE ANTHILL, pp. 110-11

Extract four, from the "Artukovitch File" (1970-88) (Artukovič was the Croatian Himmler):

> These terrible Church papers, 1941 to 1945, should destroy forever our faith in those diplomatic prelates, often good and kindly men, who believe that at all costs the ecclesiastical fabric, its schools and rules, its ancient privileges and powers, should be preserved. The clerical editors published the Aryan laws, the accounts of the forced conversions, without protest, the endless photographs of Pavelitch's visits to seminaries and convents, and the ecstatic speeches of welcome with which he was greeted. Turn, for example, to *Katolicki Tjednik* (The Catholic Weekly), Christmas 1941, and read the twenty-six verse 'Ode to Pavelitch', in which Archbishop Sharitch praises him for his measures against Serbs and Jews. Examine the Protestant papers and you will find the same story. Is it not clear that in times like those the Church doors should be shut, the Church newspapers closed down, and Christians, who believe that we should love our neighbours as ourselves, should go underground and try to build up a new faith in the catacombs?[38]

Returning to my earlier imagery, is this not the soil in which a great crop first flourished?

What crystallizes for the first time in the early Yugoslav writing is an ensemble of characteristic themes the cohesion or which can be felt to descend through the variousness of the entire work. Butler's palette, I have written elsewhere, "is narrow yet profound: he writes out of a compact but interrelated set of preoccupations which over the course of his life he elaborated into a unique terrain of historical, cultural, religious and philosophical reflection." The outline of that terrain first migrates from the cast of sensibility to the temper of the writing in the Balkan work of the late forties. Orwell remarked that a writer should never depart too far from his first style, and the same might be said of first themes. Certainly Butler never did so.

To extend the point: Butler not only begins late, he begins, mainly, in the East. By my reckoning, up to and including 1948, the year after his first visit to Zagreb, Butler's published and unpublished essays, articles and reviews have expanded to include only three on an Irish topic, but fifteen on the Balkans, five on Russia, two on the small nations of Europe, and one each on a German and English topic. Thereafter, his output quickens still further and the Irish topics multiply; but even at mid-century the tally is twenty-five on the Balkans and Eastern Europe, and five on Ireland.

When the preponderance of the East in the early writing is appreciated, the place of the Croatian genocide in the overall evolution of his work also comes clear. "The moment in the library" was the first great Reuters report from the historical front; this was where "the ethical imagination" consolidated and embarked. As with Proust's small but momentous pastry, it was the démarche that he never quite left.

Spanning five decades, the Yugoslav work is not, therefore, some Ruritanian spur to a more central Irish track. On the contrary, the Croatian genocide is firmly at the center of his corpus; it not so much a limb as a backbone. To read the Balkan essays in chronological order is to become aware of the fugal skill with which he broaches and elaborates the matter of the genocide. Themes are introduced and outlined; later they are embellished and extended. He begins by writing of his Balkan time in the thirties, his postwar visits, and the wartime genocide; then the "Nuncio" controversy in Ireland intervenes; then he

[38] Ibid., p. 285

interlaces both perspectives. What emerges in the later essays is something more universal, transcending the particulars of either country.

The difficulty is that, scattered throughout the four volumes, the pattern of the Balkan work, second nature to the author, is lost on the reader not intent on unraveling it. Even when laid out in chronological order the titles have an occasional and even strange air to the English ear, and so do not quite do justice to the crafted and supple orchestration that they embody. After all, did he not consider the events in Croatia "the most bloodthirsty religio-racial crusade in history, far surpassing anything achieved by Cromwell or the Spanish Inquisitors?[39] How could a writer like Butler with his ethical and historical and cultural cast of mind, with an intimate knowledge of the country and that defining moment in Zagreb Municipal Library, give the theme short shrift? Indeed, how could he not make it central?

IV

At the heart of the Croatian work is, of course, the figure of Monsignor Alojzije Stepinac, the Archbishop of Croatia during the Quisling regime. Although there is no single essay devoted to Stepinac alone, Butler's *J'accuse,* his shrewd and meticulous portrait of a compromised prelate, belongs to one of his quintessential modes: the focus on the single personality through which a wider historical, cultural and/or ethical picture is adumbrated. Most of these figures — such as Anton Chekhov, Boucher de Perthes, Ernst Renan, Carl von Ossietsky, Mr. Pfeffer of Sarajevo — are drawn from Butler's eclectic pantheon of intellectual heroes, and in his hands they become universal parables for the struggle of the independent spirit against the conformist tide of history, culture or scholarship.

Only in the writing on Stepinac does this pattern vary decisively. The figure of the Archbishop is Butler's great parable for something at odds with the cussedness he extols in his heroes — not something more complex, necessarily, but something more opaque, fluid, unsettling, elusive. The Monsignor's is a parable about a breakdown in the ethical machinery connected to the absence of that independence of spirit.

Butler does not simply lay charges at the door of the Archbishop. With the forensic eye for inner detail that characterizes all his writing on personality, he is interested in something more important, more exemplary of a social process than simple moral condemnation. Butler avoids any sense of anathematizing the character of Stepinac, whose courage, piety and personal kindliness he emphasizes. Moreover, there is no suggestion that the Monsignor belongs to the same moral universe as actual war criminals like Pavelič, Artukovič, and Eichmann.

Nonetheless, Butler does not shirk from making a decisive comparison with them in the matter of the *process of behavior*. For Butler, Stepinac is another avatar of the Organization Man, subset Ecclesiastical. In a period of Alice-in-Wonderland values, institutional order itself, in a sense, is the problem. "The Organization Man's fatal respect for orderliness"[40] becomes integral to the vastness of the criminal enterprise. In bureaucratic cases like Eichmann and Artukovič, who were dutiful cogs in the momentum of the state, the role of the Organization Man is now well-understood. But what I think Butler saw in the figure of Stepinac — what he first saw firsthand in the Municipal library

[39] Ibid., p. 284
[40] GRANDMOTHER AND WOLFE TONE, p. 209

in Zagreb — is a less obvious form of the phenomenon, a corollary of the first, though perhaps no less essential to that breakdown in the ethical machinery: *the Organization Man in proximity to crime.*

These two faces of the Organization Man are so entwined as to suggest the continuum of human nature itself. If Eichmann and Artukovič are instances of what Hannah Arendt called the banality of evil, then Butler on Stepinac concerns what I would call the gentility of evil — so long as we understand the word *evil* as a moral evaluation of consequences and not an explanation of its metaphysical provenance.

V

Remembrance of things past was, of course, the emotional atmospheric behind Butler's return to Zagreb in 1947. Awarded a Travelling Scholarship to Yugoslavia by the School of Slavonic Studies in London, he had lived in the country for three years, from 1934 to 1937. "I think I was first attracted there," he wrote in 1979, "by the fact that it attained its independence at the same time as we did in Ireland and had to confront similar problems of diverse religions, cultures, loyalties."[41] Although he took seriously the adjective *traveling* and spent much of his time crisscrossing Croatia, Bosnia, Serbia, Macedonia and Montenegro, his main base was Zagreb, where he taught English for the Anglo-Yugoslav Society and had a wide circle of friends and acquaintances, including several notable literary and ecclesiastical figures.

Several essays tell us, in fact, that he was quite familiar with the public role of Stepinac in the interwar period. A mere four years after his ordination, Stepinac had become Archbishop of Croatia — the youngest archbishop in the world — and was soon embroiled in two major political controversies, the Yugoslav King's concordat with the Vatican (which was associated in the public mind with a simultaneous commercial treaty with Fascist Italy) and Catholic opposition to the building of an Orthodox cathedral in Zagreb. In such firsthand and telling detail, we see why Butler has good reason to remark, in the Introduction to ESCAPE FROM THE ANTHILL (1985), that Yugoslavia "is the foreign country I know best"[42]; those familiar with both Ireland and the Balkans will marvel at how his command of the cultural geography of the latter is no less magisterial than that of the former.

Butler heard of the terrible events in Croatia at an early stage. In a letter to *The Irish Times* in October, 1946, commenting on the recent Yugoslav trial of Stepinac, found guilty of collaboration, he mentions that he read during the war a volume entitled YUGOSLAVIA IN ARMS, by M. Sudjic. It had been published in 1942 in London on behalf of the exiled monarchist government as part of the "Europe under the Nazis" series. He adds: "The writer accused Stepinac and other prominent Catholic prelates of collaboration. For example, he asserted that Mgr Sharitch, Archbishop of Bosnia, published under his own name in a Zagreb paper a poem hailing the Quisling Pavelitch as 'the sun of Croatia.'"[43] Having gotten wind of the genocide, his intimate knowledge of prewar Croatia would have given him a vivid image of the nature of cataclysm engulfing Orthodox, Jew, and Roma.

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[41] Butler Papers (unpublished address)
[42] ESCAPE FROM THE ANTHILL, p. 8
[43] *The Irish Times*, 16 October 1946

Furthermore, from an unpublished letter of October, 1947, declined by the leading Irish Catholic weekly *The Standard*, one can glean the sequence of events that led him to the reading room in Zagreb:

> Before I went last summer to Zagreb, where thirteen years ago I held for a couple of years a scholarship from the School of Slavonic Studies, I made an examination of the large collection of documents dealing with the Churches under the occupation published by the Yugoslav Government in 1946 (known as Dokumenti). . . . A large part of these were photostats of the signed depositions of witnesses or of letters from prominent people in the Church or the Quisling state. I saw no way of verifying these because forgery and moral pressure are not easy for a foreigner to detect.
>
> But, in addition to these, there are about 500 newspaper extracts, some photographed, some merely quoted. They are all dated. It seemed quite a difficult thing to fake so many newspapers that had circulated five years before, because as well as the immense labour of editing and printing, it would be necessary to suppress all the genuine copies. Most of the papers were church papers and must have reached Italy, with which Croatia was, at that time, closely associated and possibly even the Vatican. The task of substituting the counterfeit for the genuine would be an impossible one. Therefore, I felt, even before I went to Zagreb, that either a transparent hoax has been perpetrated or the extracts were genuine. . . .[44]

Now we can see the chronology. During the war he reads that a great crime had befallen the much-loved country where he had lived for three years and where he still had many close friends. Somehow he obtains the postwar book of evidence for that crime, though it is not distributed outside Yugoslavia, and reads it in the original. The tale told seems incredible. Is it really to be believed? He must go back and see for himself.

VI

By the late forties the trial and imprisonment of Stepinac in Tito's Yugoslavia had become one of those tremendous political issues that is quickly forgotten by later generations. The question of the role of the Archbishop during the Quisling regime had fallen foul of the hardening dichotomies of the Cold War. The forcible conversion campaign was barely known outside Yugoslavia, and along with Cardinal Mindszenty in Hungary, Stepinac had shape-shifted into an imprisoned martyr of the struggle between Christianity and Communism. In his 1948 essay "Ireland and Croatia," Butler remarks:

> Few events in Europe excited such widespread interest in Ireland as the trial of Archbishop Stepinac and the struggle between the Catholic Church in Yugoslavia and the Yugoslav Government. It was as though after six years of discreet silence, we had at last found a subject about which we could safely vent our repressed indignation. Croatia is a remote, little-known part of Europe, and this made it very strange that our press, which had been silent when one country after another had been overrun by Germany, should suddenly pass resolutions in the strongest and boldest language….[45]

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[44] Butler Papers (Yugoslav documents)
[45] IN THE LAND OF NOD, p. 90

On the first of May, 1949, for instance, over 150,000 people gathered in the center of Dublin to protest the treatment of the two prelates. This was the perfervid background that would later decant into the Nuncio incident.

After his return from Zagreb, Butler gave a talk on Radio Éirann about postwar Yugoslavia that embroiled him in attacks from several correspondents in the Irish Catholic weekly *The Standard*, who criticized him for "whitewashing" the treatment of the Catholic Church by Tito. In the broadcast, Butler had, in fact, mentioned neither the Communist attack on the Church nor the forced conversion campaign for, he says, "I could not refer to the Communist persecution of religion without mentioning the more terrible Catholic persecution which had preceded it, so I thought silence was best."[46] Butler himself gives a barbed précis, in the first paragraphs of "The Sub-prefect Should Have Held His Tongue" (1956), of the evolution of the controversy that began to engage him in the letters columns after his return from Zagreb.

In retrospect, what is so striking when one sees the texts of these first attacks on Butler — besides the unpleasantness of the authoritarian tone — is the degree to which he had already, through his Irish newspaper letters before the 1947 visit to Zagreb, become associated with the Stepinac issue. A subsequent editorial in *The Standard*, devoted entirely to Butler, proceeds thus: "We remember every detail of Mr. Butler's record: his several attempts to depict Archbishop Stepinac as a 'traitor', a 'collaborator with the enemy' and the driving force behind the 'forced conversions. . . .'"[47] It goes on to elaborate the charge sheet for another twenty-one paragraphs. In a secularizing Ireland, we are beginning to forget the degree to which the monolithic political Christianity of both traditions was an organized power across the island. Indeed, it was precisely "militant and political Christianity,"[48] as he puts it, that had led to the ethical breakdown revealed in the Zagreb files, and he was now getting a small personal taste of one of its essential flavors.

A fuse had been lit that would smoulder on until its final flare-up in the so-called "Insult to the Nuncio." At the end of a Dublin meeting of the Foreign Affairs Association in 1952, following a lecture on religious persecution in Tito's Yugoslavia, Butler tried to raise the issue of the wartime persecution of the Orthodox. Unknown to him, Ireland's Papal Nuncio was in the audience and, on hearing Butler's opening, walked out. The "slight" had been unintentional, but the point here is to grasp the charged atmosphere of the meeting. The lecturer was none other than the editor who had published the diatribe against Butler in *The Standard,* and there was an attempt by the Chairman to foreclose discussion after the lecture, possibly in anticipation of an intervention by Butler. And after "the Insult" reached the papers and was transmogrified into a furor, there would have been no shortage of people in the press and public life well-aware of Butler's refusal to hold his tongue — and happy for the pretext to give the Kilkenny gadfly a hammering.

VII

Having laid general charges against Stepinac, Butler zeros in on the precise nature of his collaboration with a prosecutor's eye for the damning detail. If the several dozen passages assessing Stepinac are extracted and conflated, the result is an extraordinary tour

[46] ESCAPE FROM THE ANTHILL, p. 271
[47] *The Standard*, 10 October 1947
[48] IN THE LAND OF NOD, p. 133

de force, notable for its subtlety on three counts: the marshalling of primary sources; the parsing of coded meanings; the fair-mindedness of his moral delineation.

But one text above all stands out as Butler's summary of the Stepinac file. It is the uncollected preamble to a long document that Butler had found and translated himself. The preamble and the entire document of November 1941, which he titles "An Unpublished Letter from Archbishop Stepinac to Pavelitch," appeared in three installments in *The Church of Ireland Gazette* in December-January 1950-51.

The letter is a personal communication that accompanied a formal resolution from the Croatian bishops. In it, Stepinac protests against the barbarities of the conversion campaign; his letter also contains extracts from memoranda of protest from four other bishops. "When I was in Zagreb," Butler tells us, "I discovered that one of the most important of all the documents had never been published in Yugoslavia, let alone translated into English."[49]

For those familiar with the case mounted in defense of Stepinac, this is *the* key document, for extracts of *the accompanying resolution* would later often be used to absolve Stepinac of any responsibility for the conversion campaign. Here is part of Butler's preamble, republished for the first time since 1950, in which he dismantles that defense:

> When I was in Zagreb this September [1950] I secured through the Ministry of Justice some documents relating to the Stepinac trial. Most of them were already familiar to me, but the letter which I have translated below (though not the resolution that accompanied it) was new to me. Though it is of great importance, neither the enemies or champions of Mgr Stepinac have made use of it. The letter is not helpful either for the Communist prosecution or Catholic defence. It reveals a confused human situation, where angels and devils are not easily identified.
>
> The gigantic massacre of 1941, which was linked with Pavelitch's conversion campaign, has often been declared, particularly in Ireland, to be a fabrication of Chetniks or Communists or the Orthodox Church. Mgr Stepinac's letter, once and for all, establishes its actuality. In a more peaceful age, it would have been a great historical landmark, for the dead outnumbered the total of the victims of the massacre of the Albigeneses, the Waldenses, and of St Bartholomew's Eve. . . .
>
> The Archbishop's letter reveals the regret and revulsion which the violent methods used by Pavelitch's missionaries inspired in the Catholic hierarchy. The formal resolution, which was passed in conclave in November, 1941, was an attempt to bring the conversion campaign under the control of the Church, and to check the rule of violence. The attempt was belated since the fury had spent itself by July, 1941, three months earlier.
>
> If we exclude Archbishop Sharitch [of Bosnia], the author of the celebrated odes to Pavelitch and the fervent advocate of all his designs, the letters of Mgr Stepinac and the four bishops, whom he quotes, are moderate and humane. Why was the hierarchy so utterly impotent to check this inroad of fanatical barbarians into the purely ecclesiastical domain of conversion? I think the answer can be seen by a close examination of the letters [of the four bishops]. Pity for the heretic had always to be qualified, and was sometimes neutralized, by zeal for the extension of the Catholic Church. Never once did they say, 'Let there be an end to conversions! There can be no talk of free will and voluntary change of faith in a land invaded by

[49] Butler Papers (unpublished essay)

> two armies and ravaged by civil war!' Their concern is all for the right ordering of things…. A great opportunity had come to them. They must use it wisely, and not barbarously, for the saving of souls, but use it they must. . . .[50]

In the following letter, with its composite quotes, there are many passages in which the Bishops reveal the ambiguity at the heart of their thinking, including one (made famous by the title of one of Butler's greatest essays) about the protest against the massacres voiced by a Muslim Sub-Prefect in Mostar who, nonetheless, according to the Bishop of Mostar, "as a state employee should have held his tongue." Throughout, the ecclesiastical have-your-cake-and-eat-it, the careful eye on the future, are unmistakable.

But Butler, in the scrapbook where he kept much of his published Yugoslav writing, highlights in pencil just one passage in the unpublished letter. It is the following, also from the memorandum of the Bishop of Mostar (again, because quoted, given Church imprimatur by Stepinac): "Every single person will condemn this irresponsible activity, but in the present circumstances we are letting slip excellent opportunities which we could use for the good of Croatia and the Holy Catholic cause. From a minority we might become a majority in Bosnia and Herzegovina. . . ."[51] (Bosnia had been awarded to Croatia by the Nazis. Strangely, if everybody condemned the violence, why was it happening? Double-speak here? Pious connivance? *In the present circumstances* . . . .)

With that, the ethical imagination rests its case.

VIII

There is a final twist to the Stepinac file. The most astonishing of all, perhaps: Butler's visit, during the 1950 trip, to the imprisoned Archbishop himself, recounted in a single brief essay, "A Visit to Lepoglava." If one is not already familiar with the Balkan writings, it is easy to miss the drama of the encounter. In this exemplary moment of the ethical imagination in the 20th Century, the writer confronts the object of his writing. Butler and his Quaker companions have only a few minutes to ask the essential questions in French:

> I said I had read a letter he had written to Pavelitch … protesting against the barbarity with which the conversion campaign had been conducted and that I had never doubted his dislike of cruelty. But why, when he wished to regulate this campaign, had he chosen as one of his collaborators Mgr Shimrak…. Mgr Shimrak's enthusiasm for the disgraceful conversion campaign had been well known and publicly expressed. I had myself looked up his published address in his diocesan magazine *Krizhevtsi*…. The Archbishop gave the stock reply he had so often given at his trial (which incidentally has become the stock answer among the flippant of Zagreb to any awkward question): *Notre conscience est tranquille*.[52]

It is an extraordinary moment in the literature of actuality, reminiscent of Chekhov's trip to the penal camp of Sakhalin.

The encounter at Lepoglava gives us a further insight into Butler's persistence in truth-telling that would culminate in the "Nuncio incident" two years later. What was a

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[50] *The Church of Ireland Gazette*, 22 December 1950
[51] Ibid., 5 January 1951
[52] IN THE LAND OF NOD, p. 136

spat in Ireland, or even his removal from the Kilkenny Archaeological Society, which he had revived, compared to the events he was publicizing?

> I was denounced by special meetings of the Kilkenny Corporation and Kilkenny County Council, and the chain of events began which drew me from all this pleasant constructive planning for the revival of archaeology. I in "The Sub-Prefect Should Have Held His Tongue," [and] Paul Blanshard in THE IRISH AND CATHOLIC POWER, have told only a very little of it and later on I want to describe all that happened afterwards, a sequel of which I am proud enough, because I have stood by what I believed and hit back at those, who damaged me only a little, but damaged truth a great deal….[53]

That controversy, we can now see, was an exemplary moment in the history of the public intellectual in modern Ireland; one where Butler exemplifies, in the life of the parish as well as the nation, the independent spirit whom Chekhov extols. In the Nuncio controversy, life and work fuse in a moment of ethical courage.

IX

However remote the events in Quisling Croatia may now seem to the Westerner, their influence is still very much alive in the Balkans. The Croatian crusade is deeply connected to its recent Serb doppelgänger at Vukovar, Sarajevo, Srbrenica, Kosova, and the rest. What might be called a peregrination of trauma has occurred: the victim become the victimizer; the shame of defeat, the shamelessness of victory; the evil suffered, the evil done. It is a pattern we know well in Ireland. How can we expect better things in a renewed Serbia, if Stepinac is still revered in Croatia, even by the intelligentsia, to say nothing of the Church, as saintly and patriotic?

Since the break-up of Yugoslavia, an effigy of Stepinac, resembling nothing so much as the embalmed Lenin, sits in a glass case on the altar of Zagreb Cathedral. In 1998 the Pope initiated the process of his canonization. Shortly afterwards, in Italy, a small and respected religious press published a book about the conversion campaign entitled THE GENOCIDE ARCHBISHOP.[54] The struggle between hagiography and historiography, "of utmost importance to all thinking Christians," is still engaged. It would appear that the Stepinac file, which Hubert Butler did so much to keep open in the West, cannot soon be closed.

This essay was read at the Centenary Celebration of Hubert Butler
www.hubertbutler.com
October 20-22, 2000, Kilkenny, Ireland.

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[53] Butler Papers (diary)
[54] Marco Aurelio Rivelli, THE GENOCIDE ARCHBISHOP. Milan: Kaos, 1998

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Hubert Butler, "The Sub-Prefect Should Have Held His Tongue," this issue
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Hubert Butler, "The Artukovitch File" *Archipelago*, Vol. 1, No. 2
Richard Jones, "An Appreciation of Hubert Butler," *Archipelago,* Vol. 1, No. 2
A selection of papers read at the Centenary of Hubert Butler (October 20-22, 2000) www.hubertbutler.com
The Bosnian Institute www.bosnia.org.uk, London, directed by Quintin Hoare bosinst@globalnet.co.uk
The Clero-Fascist Studies Project: Christianity, Fascism and Genocide in the 20th Century
www.home.earthlink.net/~velid/cf/index.html
"This site is a production of the Clero-Fascist Studies Project, an on-going research and public information project exploring the convergence between certain strains of Christianity and fascism in the 20th century. In part, this project is a response to attempts by some of the parties responsible to cover up, erase, or cleanse their history. Our goal is the preservation, not the purification of history."
Archbishop Stepinac's Reply at the Trial www.pope.hr/english/stepinac/11_eng.html
"The Case of Archbishop Stepinac" www.home.earthlink.net/~velid/cf/cs/index.html
"This document assembling facts in the case of Archbishop Aloysius Stepinac of Yugoslavia has been prepared because the arrest and trial of the Archbishop are still being used in the United States in a campaign of misrepresentation against the Federal Peoples Republic of Yugoslavia. This campaign, accusing Yugoslavia of religious persecution -- which does not exist in my country and which is specifically outlawed by the Constitution -- has gone to considerable lengths. Petitions for which thousands of names have been obtained have been submitted to the White House and to the Department of State.
"Resolutions have been introduced in the Congress. In the face of such organized and continuing attacks I have felt compelled, in justice to the government and people of Yugoslavia, to make this material available

in English. It shows that Archbishop Stepinac was tried and convicted solely because of the crimes in which he engaged against his own nation -- the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, later the Federal Peoples Republic of Yugoslavia -- and against his own countrymen.

"Americans who may have been misinformed on the point should know also that millions of patriotic citizens of Yugoslavia are Catholics, enjoying full freedom of worship today under constitutional guarantees. Having firsthand knowledge of the role played by Archbishop Stepinac during the war, they do not identify their religion with the secular political course in support of Hitler and Mussolini which he chose to follow.

"Sava N. Kosanovic, Ambassador of the Federal Peoples Republic of Yugoslavia.

"Washington, 1947"

Kaos Editions www.kaosedizioni.com/catalogo_nomedidio.htm
The Lilliput Press www.lilliputpress.ie

Suzanna Crampton

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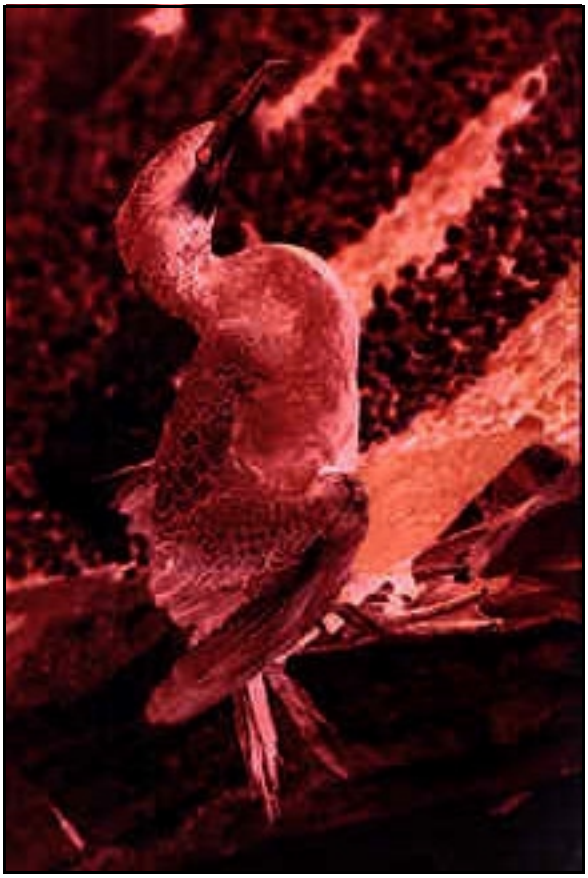

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Book One —ALICE'S ADVENTURES OVERSEAS

The Action Thus Far—

Central Europe, between the wars. Free-Lance Secret Agent Nine—otherwise known as fourteen-year-old Alice Rocket from Brooklyn— is in Switzerland on assignment for Scotland Yard. Her mission: to make contact with the White Russian Countess Lubyanka, who has offered to reveal (for a price) the details of a top-secret doomsday plan known as the Pyramid Scheme. In hushed tones, Agent Nine's mentor, Inspector Pundit, reveals that behind the Pyramid Scheme, he suspects none other than the Oriental mastermind, Doctor Fang of Harbin. . . .

On the trail of the Countess, Agent Nine and her partner, Mr. Vinup, attend a convention of international spies at a private Swiss resort. Behind its elegant façade, the Villa Febrile presents a maze of perils. Only the welcome presence of a Stateside dance band and its genial leader, Jimmy Dandy, offer Alice a familiar rhythm as her steps take twists and treacherous turns. . . .

Dodging attempts on her life, liberty, and affections, Agent Nine gets through to the Countess. She cuts a deal for delivery of the blueprints from Harbin—only to see the Countess struck down that very night on the dance floor before the eyes of all, as if by an invisible hand. But following as this does on her hard-boiled partner's abduction by Fang's own dragonish daughter, Agent Nine is left in little doubt that the hand in question belongs to the sinister Doctor—and that she now stands alone against its outstretched grasp. . . .

Agent Nine resolves to take immediate action—solo. But is she truly alone?

Clue Thirteen:
K i s s e l

In the pitchest black of night, with the Villa behind her, Alice ran down the mountain path. Open sleighs and rickshaws had pulled up outside the big front doors. Were the Karamazovs and the Makiokas planning a joyride together? Alice blew past them without a glance.

Overhead, the crescent moon grinned down from a sky that was dark and rich. It was star soup as far as the eye could see.

The wind was harsh; it lashed at her overcoat, actually tearing big chunks out of it. She drifted through the darkness to a sort of glade. She couldn't really tell whether the shapes looming around her were trees or big rocks. That wasn't important.

There was something dead ahead that might be, though—a large pale obstacle resting in her path, a ghostly heap that made no windbreak and seemed nearly immaterial. It was: …a snowdrift? …a bathtub? …a hippopotamus? The wind that whistled through this mirage carried with it the smell of gasoline. Alice drew closer and the thing came into focus: it looked like—it was—an automobile. An automobile made out of wicker.

A creamy white roadster, open to the sky, its body made of wicker basketweave; you got into it by climbing up a flight of steps in back that unfolded where the rumble seat would have been. Jalopies get no tonier than this! This was authentic American glamour, the current year's model from Kissel, purveyors to the choicest society set.

It didn't take a detective to figure out who would be driving it. Wrapped up in long coat and goggles though he may have been, Alice knew him without a moment's hesitation. He was truly the one person in the world she wished she was with there and then.

He hunched in front of the engine with his back turned to her, the tips of the hairs on his raccoon-skin coat silvered with frost by the wind. He had stuck the crank into the front of the car and was busily trying to start it up. Alice mosied up in her quiet way until she stood just behind him, and bent over him and spoke in his ear.

"Hotcha! Jimmy Dandy!"

Jimmy shot around like a snapdragon and stared at her, teeth bared. In his hand, he grasped the crank like a club or a gun. Alice doubled over in stitches.

"Haw! That was priceless!" she gasped, holding her sides. "You should have seen the look on your face!" The laughter went up her nose and tickled like fizz. It was choice.

It took some time for Jimmy's features to compose themselves—longer than it took Alice to finish laughing. He looked for a while like someone completely different. And even after he put away his hostile expression, he seemed cold.

"Alice," he said finally. "Yaas. What are you doing here? I'm busy with problems of my own at the moment."

"I know," said Agent Nine.

Jimmy put down the crank and leaned on one shoulder against the car. He took up his watch chain—his watch chain of brass with the tin whistle on it, the extra-long watch chain that draped down around his knees—and, twirling it in his fist, he said quietly to Alice: "Tell me anything, but tell me the truth."

He was still spooked. On reflection, it was no wonder, really.

"Jimmy—Mr. Dandy," Alice began carefully. "I know you have got a lot on your mind, and I know you have got business elsewhere. Well, so do I. I am in pursuit of a certain Miss Poppyseed Passion. She oined my ingratitude at the reception just a couple minutes ago by mortalizing a Countess friend of mine. Now it looks like for an encore she has gone and kidnapped my employer. So you might say that I have got an account to settle with her.

"What it might interest you to know is that, if my reasoning is correct, the lady in question is the very same skoit that set up your boys with a case of the squoits. So if it is justice you're after, look no foither than me. I say we jern forces and give her an etiquette lesson."

Jimmy kept cautious. "Keep talking," he said. But his face was beginning to bend into a grin.

"You know that what I am saying is true."

"That's as it may be."

"I want to help you track down the dame that done you doit. Don't you get it, Jimmy—I tell you we could help each other."

"Well now, Alice," said Jimmy—and his smile was enigmatic—"One never knows, do one? Tell me this: What makes you so certain that I'm rarin' to go chasing with you at this hour after someone who sounds more and more like the kind of gal who wouldn't take well to it? I dare say this could land me in a whole mess of trouble."

His question took Alice aback. The situation had seemed obvious from the moment she saw him with his getaway vehicle. Was he testing her in some way?

"On account of she has already landed you in a whole mess of trouble," she pointed out. "On account of you are a man of repute, and you have got a name to clear. On account of—for Pete's sake," she exclaimed, suddenly fierce, "what else do you mean to tell me you are doing here in the dead of the night, revving up your automobile while the boys in the band are all bunked up with the bellyache? I suppose it could be that you are running away—but in that case, I'd say you was running away from yourself."

The famous Jimmy Dandy heard her out attentively, nodding his head with each point. "Yaas…," he purred, "Yaaas." There seemed to be a lot going on inside his head.

The wind whipped at the edges of his enormous raccoon coat. In the shadows, he looked something like Dracula. She suddenly noticed that he was holding her face in his hand like an apple and that she had become immersed in a pair of rich, dark eyes, two mugs brimful of hot chocolate and cream.

"Alice," he said quietly. "Why, you're just a young girl yet. But I dare say you're ever such a sharp one. This wouldn't be your first time on the Continent?"

"It's my foist time overseas."

"Really. Wherever did you learn how to dance that way you do?"

"Brooklyn, New York."

"*Really*. Did you have time to see the sights in London before crossing over here?"

"Just the better part of a day. There was such a fog over everything—"

"Yaas, the weather there surely does leave a lot to be desired. Who are you working for, Alice?"

"Oh, Jimmy," Alice said breathlessly, "what would you want to go and sperl a poifeckly good evening for?" For some reason, the stitches were returning.

The truth was, she had only just stopped herself from spilling him the entire kit and kaboodle, going all the way back to that very late night back in Brooklyn. But how did he know she had been to London?

"You're a Free-Lancer, of course," Jimmy said ruefully. "I was just forgetting. Well now, you sure have gone and fallen in with a queer bunch of people. But I'll say no more. It's plain as day you know how to take care of yourself. You've got a quiet little baby face, Alice, but that's an old pair of eyes in there looking out on the world. Yaas, those eyes have seen a lot, I dare say."

Abruptly, he turned and strode rapidly back to the car. He opened the door on the passenger side and ushered her in.

He took her suitcase and strapped it onto the side. "And while I step back down to give the engine a talking to, you might as well tell me where we're going."

Alice settled down in the plush leather nest, inhaled the delicious smell of calfskin and motor oil. Holding court from the bucket seat, she laid out the plan of attack.

"What I figure is, she is heading back to whencet she came. She has completed her mission and now she's reporting to the man in charge. And she has a prisoner to sequester in a clerster somewhere. She don't have much of a head start. I say we cover the road to

the nearest port. With wheels like yours, we can flush out anybody in the area if we only get the direction right. And if we lose her tonight, we head on to the coast, and poichase two tickets for Harbin."

Jimmy's head popped up over the hood. He had the engine running and the headlights on.

"Harbin," he cried. "The international city in the far northeast of China. Political disputes and mining concessions. Warlords, smugglers, refugees. That Harbin?"

"Yes, Harbin," said Alice. "That's where she is from."

Over the next few minutes, as he continued to rummage outside, she told him what she had learned from her interview with the Countess. Jimmy worked on in silence. Once she had talked through her piece, there was nothing to do but to try to keep warm. She stared straight ahead, watching the clouds of cold breath that emerged from her mouth in the splash of electric light from the car.

"Southward lies the sea," Jimmy's voice said finally. "But our alleged Miss Creant won't be going by sea, not if she knows her onions, she won't."

"My geography is a little rusty," admitted Alice. "But how are you going to get us from here to China without booking a passage on a ship?"

He straightened up to look at her then.

"*There is another way,*" he said significantly. And with the sudden flare of a match, he touched off the pile of brushwood he had been collecting, and it sent up a dazzling sheet of flame that lit up the entire night.

"Watch it with that stuff!" Alice called in genuine fright. "You've got me sitting up here on a heap of gasoline and wicker."

"So climb on out of there," laughed Jimmy. "Ain't you cold?"

It was grand to join him by the side of the fire. She couldn't figure him out—one moment he would be scaring the dickens out of her, and in the next she was feeling all toasty and safe just sitting there on the ground next to him. The blaze was brisk and thrilling, and her friend had brought along a string of sausage links. As she speared them on a stick, he thumbed through a familiar orange book.

"Say, I seen that before," she said. "That's the Cook's railroad timetable, ain't it?"

"I dare say," came the answer, "and it also includes schedules for the major steamship lines. As it happens, it's just told me a useful thing."

Putting the book down, he picked up a long stick and began to draw in the dirt.

"To get from here to the coast is no tall order," he began. "By tomorrow we can be in Genoa, which is a port of call for a lot of passenger liners headed to the East. We may not be lucky enough to pick up a China-going steamer there straightaway, but chances are good that in a day or two we'll be en route for Egypt and the Suez Canal. And since all the traffic from these parts bound for China and Japan passes through the Canal, just as long as it stays open, Egypt remains the fail-safe connection of three continents: Africa, Asia, and Europe. So say it takes us five days to get to Egypt from Genoa. That means we could be sailing for Yokohama within the week…."

A jagged, lumpy thing took shape on the left-hand side of the drawing on the ground. Jimmy attached it to a much larger, bulgy thing on the right.

"This on the left here, we'll call this Europe. The rest is all Asia. Well now! To get from the Suez Canal"—and he marked the lower left-hand corner of Asia with an X—"over to Harbin"—he placed a second X in the upper right-hand corner—"I dare say we've got all this in between to get around."

With a sweeping gesture, he traced an arc from the Canal around the bottom of the landmass. Skidding past shapes representing India, China, and beyond, he stopped the stick just short of Harbin, letting it rest at a point offshore.

"The ship will get us as far as Yokohama, Japan. But cogitate on this: the fastest steamer in service can't make the voyage in under a month. After that, there's a ferryboat train leaves daily from Yokohama for Harbin." Now his stick crossed the blank distance to the second X, completing the link between the two cities. "That makes another four days on top of our month, in addition to the week we'll have spent getting to Egypt.

"What I'm saying is, if you add up all the time we're going to need from where we are at today, getting from here to Harbin by the seaborne route will take upwards of a month and a half. In other words: All boats to China are slow boats to China."

In the flickering light of the campfire, Alice gazed at the makeshift map scratched in the turf and thought about slow boats to China. The fire spat sparks that landed like meteors all along the stops of their journey. To each port of call, a snapshot, Alice thought: Onion-topped towers, burning sands and sheiks; pearl fishers, tigers, brass Buddhas, pagodas; open-air markets that sold nothing but fruit; flying fish clowning in the spray. It was a fortune that could have come straight out of a cookie—a month and a half on the trade winds with Jimmy Dandy.

"But look—"

Right in the space where Europe joined Asia, Jimmy had planted another X. "Moscow, capital of Russia," he explained, and with a well-aimed slash, he connected it with Harbin, direct.

He tapped the new line with his stick. "Here 'tis. The straight line from Europe to Asia: the Trans-Siberian Railroad. It takes you from Moscow to Harbin in one week, lickety-split. This here is the path she will choose."

"I expect it'll be snowing in Russia?" said Alice, rudely diverted from her plans of summer seas.

"This time of year? I dare say."

Alice huddled closer to the fire and opened up her tattered overcoat. She was so close to the flames now, it was ticklish. Seeing how cold she was, Jimmy wrapped his own fur around her. He squatted down close by her, his blazer collar turned up around his neck.

"We've got to get to Moscow by Thursday at five. We'll be setting a fair pace—precious little time to enjoy the scenery. But I reckon the first thing we need to do is get you a proper motoring coat, sugar."

"A coat," Alice repeated. "A new coat…." Motoring coats were handsome, if they were made to fit you snug around the waist. The leather ones squeaked when you walked. So just what was he saying?

"*Jimmy*—you don't mean to tell me you want to drive the Kissel all the way to Russia?"

"I make considerable good time with it—I dare say it can beat any train they care to tell me about in old Mr. Cook's orange book. Why, it's nothing but an engine hitched to a load of air! What about it, Alice? Are you on?"

"Where do I sign?" said Alice, giggling madly. She didn't know anymore where their paths were headed, but all of a sudden it was clear that—however it all turned out in the end—things were going to be mighty interesting in the meantime.

Her companion, by contrast, was coming across all serious. "Moscow is the bottleneck, now. Do you get it? If our alleged Jane Doe intends to get to Harbin, she'll be on that platform at the station at five on Thursday—however she chooses to get there. If

we miss her on Thursday, we'll stick around in town and try the same trick when the next train leaves on Sunday. I dare say we need never actually get on the train for Siberia a'tall."

Alice put her Oriental dreams aside. Jimmy had her thinking professionally now. She tried to look at the plan from the point of view of the enemy, to probe for weak spots and rain on their own parade.

"What if she gets there before us? What if she has a private areo plane?"

"The Russians have an air force for keeping people like her out. Even if they let her through, they'd never give her permission to land."

"Supposing she misses the Toisday train," she tried. "Are you positive she will be sticking around in town until Sunday? There's no other connections in between?"

"The express to Harbin leaves two days a week. The book says there's local trains that come and go in that direction, but they won't be gaining her any time on the trip, and I reckon it means changing trains further out East. Now, I don't know if there's much for a person to do with her spare time in Moscow, but—have you ever been out to the steppes of Siberia, Alice?"

"Ixnay," she confessed.

"Well now, neither have I—but I'll wager my hat our alleged rogue female will do her waiting before she gets out thataway, and not after. A body's liable to get weary out there in Siberia, where the sun don't shine."

He eyed her shrewdly, clearly pleased with himself. "Any other questions, comments, or remarks?"

Alice was reminded of something that had disturbed her. She spoke abruptly: "You are the fellow with all the answers, I see."

"I surely am that," he replied.

"I would like to ask you one more geography question," she said, "on account of how you seem to be unusually well informed on the subject for a bandleader."

"Well, I am world-famous," Jimmy offered.

"Level with me, James," she said sternly. She dropped her voice to a whisper. "How did you know I was in London before I came here?"

Jimmy's laughter came fresh and rich in response, making her feel like a stupe. "Why, shucks, Alice, *that*," he said, with a broad gesture of relief, "I didn't rightly know what you were going to ask me. Just take a look at your own suitcase, shorty. It's written plain as day on the sticker they labeled your bag with when you left New York Harbor—'S. S. *Transylvania*.' I dare say everyone knows that's a London-bound service."

"Well, if that is the case, you didn't have to carry on so confounded mysterious," Alice said, a little sulkily. She peeled off Jimmy's fur coat and held it out to him at arm's length. "Shall we get going?" she said.

"No, give me the old coat," Jimmy told her. Taking the shabby old number in hand, he carefully helped her back on with his own, warm coat; and then he shook out Alice's poor old tatterdemalion chesterfield and tossed it on top of the fire, which it soused like the wet blanket that it was—but not before the fire, with a hot, hissing sound, had burned it up and left it a limp slab of carbon.

A little charred piece of fabric fluttered up in the heat and drifted back down slowly into Alice's palm. It was shaped kind of like a heart.

Alice climbed into the passenger seat. Jimmy took the wheel.

and so ends the first book
of

AGENT NINE

by
"X"

Read the adventures of Alice Overseas on-line
in Archipelago

Part One
A Fish Between Two Waters

Hua Li

18 OCTOBER 2000

Coming back to Beijing, I feel like a fish dropped into the Yellow River after a long jump from the Potomac. The feeling is as always stimulating and piercingly distinctive, even though this fish jumps back and forth, back and forth between the two waters. As a matter of fact, she would feel bored and uncomfortable staying in one water for too long.

For the last ten days, I have had wonderful meetings with my old acquaintances: a stock-market player, a radio journalist, a writer, a computer specialist, two merchants, another correspondent, a librarian, a publisher, and, of course, the three ladies of my neighborhood. Actually, other people's life-stories make me feel this current I'm in is running ever more rapidly. The older generation has not so easily adapted to the Western, money-driven economy. There are regrets, sorrow, dissatisfactions. All of a sudden, they are pushed by this Western gust of capitalism.

How do people here take the recent announcement of the Nobel Prize for Literature, and how much can they accept the works by Mr. Gaoxingjian, the winner? A good question. These days, people here love to talk about medals from the Olympics and awards from the Nobel Foundation, any topic regarding national honor. It is quite easy to collect comments, ideas, and emotions, and I have put them into the sections below.

The Official Stance

Very few writers would not involve themselves in politics, the leaders think (the leaders always think everything is political). Gaoxingjian has a close relationship with the West and Taiwan, his writings about China were published first outside China, and he had announced that he would never live in China again. This is a betrayal (they say). China has many better writers: Luxun, Laoshe, Bajin, Wangmeng, and others, who are considered our national pride, not Gao. Some truly good Chinese writers and artists are hardly recognized by the West, which usually pays attention to exiled writers. That's fine, they say, we can just ignore them.

We need to make it clear, however, that if the Nobel Prize for Literature implies some kind of political purpose, it will then lose its literary authority.

We should also be aware (they say) that one of the reasons our native Chinese writers are not able to get the world-level attention is because our lack of work in creating the necessary transmission or translation channels; we have a lot to do in this regard.

People's Attitudes

The Nobel committee has absolutely belittled the Chinese people and Chinese literature! They never want to give credit to those who really spend their lives close and together with Chinese people, and therefore are the people's writers. Luxun is such a writer, Bajin, Laoshe and Wangmeng are such writers. Gaoxingjian is a Chinese, was born and grew up in China, worked and lived in China, tells stories about China, yet the Swedish Academy chose him, when he is not living as a Chinese but is French. They were

deliberately doing it to go around us Chinese; we could not at all feel happy about this. They never want to link such an honor to our nation and our people, and never are concerned with what real impact a Chinese writer has upon his own nation.

We have never read or heard of a book by Gao. It seems that the Swedish Academy has put more weight on a writer as a single individual than on his audience — Chinese people — although we always consider a writer as the nation's child.

Is this a problem of the Nobel Prize's standard, or a problem of our understanding? There is too much difference between us, in culture, language and politics. It seems the distance between the Chinese people and the Nobel Prize for Literature has drifted further apart instead of closer, and we cannot expect too much from the West in understanding our values.

Thoughts of Chinese Writers

"Belated is better than never."
"If I had got French citizenship I could have won it, too."
"Congratulations to Gaoxingjian!"
"What do the Westerners know about us? Do not bother me with it."
"I feel happy, all the same, because he is a Chinese."
"Do you know if it's ninety thousand or a million?"
"There is some trick in it."

I wish you could taste the flavor so far from the water I'm in: not too raw or somewhat sour.

As for works by Mr. Gao, such as (translated from Chinese titles) THE OTHER SIDE, ABSOLUTE SIGNAL, BUS STATION, and SOUL MOUNTAIN, I have tried and failed to get copies in the university library, because of their small print-runs and limited circulation. This has something to do with Gao as a "personal" writer. He is more Western-oriented and post-modern; he studied Western literature and drama. He is both traditional and Western in his enthusiasms. Like many Chinese writers, and people, he resents certain government policies. I don't know, I am guessing, but I think he resents the ignorance and arrogance of the government. But I think his talent and personality must be tenacious: he won't yield to the force of the government. He continues to see the differences, the varieties, of literature.

The government's policy about writers is like the people's – or, the people agree with the government. The government really likes those writers who genuinely reflect people's lives. I have noticed this in current works. The Chinese style of Socialist Realism is deeply rooted in the feudalist tradition of a thousand years, which doesn't favor the individual point of view. Rather, there has to be a *center*. This resides in the theory of the ruler. One theory of the glory of Chinese art was that the artist worked not merely for the glory of his art, but for the glory of the emperor, who was like a god. The power was there, that was why: there were no higher standards than this. Under this rule, you could create as an individual, but you could not violate those established standards. Long years after, I think, that rule is still in people's minds.

The difference is so long and wide and deep from Western individualism, in which you help yourself. But because the Chinese were led by a central leader, they looked at the people around themselves to see first what they did. There is an inherent lack of "selfness." Writers don't think, "I'm good at this, I'm interested in it, I'll go for it." Instead, they say: "This is what our nation needs, this is what our society needs, I'll sacrifice myself for it." The writers whose work I bring back are usually educational, they are teaching people what they need, whereas Gaoxingjian is at a different level.

27 OCTOBER 2000

Two Stories

One

A boy was born into a very poor family of intellectuals in Beijing during the 1970s, a time when China realized that the country would be humiliated if she didn't open her eyes and see the world and emancipate her people.

Both of the parents were of an impoverished peasant background and were always eager to help their needy families on either side. The budget of the house was always a hot issue. Money was available to other children but never seemed within reach of this boy, who would never forget the day that, with great joy, he showed his father a new textbook he had just bought. The father had gotten so mad at how the money was spent that he had hit the boy's head with a thick club until it bled.

There is something unique about these three people: they are all extremely smart, tenacious, and love the science of Physics.

The mother was quite a special girl in her home village because in every school she attended throughout Hebei Province, outside Beijing, she scored the highest at every level. She was guaranteed admission to any university in Beijing without further examination. She chose to study Physics in Beijing Normal University, for it was the only school where she would not have to pay her meal and lodging for the entire four years. She met and married a promising young professor in Theoretical Physics in her department, and was glad to share life with the man who was even smarter than she and totally poor. It was an honor to be poor at the time, at least on the social and political level.

Things were hard to manage domestically. Controversy occurred again and again and again, over sharing the money. Every little extra, every little squeeze, every little split could cause terrible strife. The couple divorced because of fights over money and remarried later out of sympathy for each other. The mother would often go to a trash pile to pick up vegetable leaves for dinner and, occasionally, a light bulb to replace a bad one in the apartment. For the few years that I worked with her in the university library, she was notorious for her marital problem, and for stealing books from the library. Sadly, in a way, since she worked in the library, word was spread about how her boy was knocked on the head and called a fool by his father because he had bought books.

Desperate about the meaning of life, the mother has been in recent years deeply involved in the practice of "Falungong," a spiritual belief and program of physical exercise banned by the Chinese Government for its wide social influence and potential political impact. Twice she was put in jail by the police, and continued practicing it after her release.

In the modern era of "China's capitalism in Chinese style," a handful of people have become rich swiftly. The rest all want to follow suit. The trend becomes a torrent and the torrent a hurricane. It is impossible for anybody to stand still in the middle of it.

The boy has grown, and the family remains poor. But the era of promise has finally arrived. This only son of theirs had just finished high school and passed the examinations for higher education, with an excellent score enabling him to go to any Ivy-League-type of school across the nation, such as Beijing University or Qinghua University. The father dreamed that his son could be a computer giant in China like Bill Gates in the United States. Growing up amid his parents' pain about money, the son has suffered enough. He hates money. He would try all he can to escape the pain by not thinking about money and finding his own happiness. Ironically, he has found *theoretical physics*. And he cared about

no Ivy-League school but one: China's Academy of Science and Technology in Anhui Province, southern China, where many Chinese prodigies have been accepted and trained, and where Nobel Prize winners in Physics offered classes.

When the time came to fill out college applications, the father forced the teenaged son to pick exclusively those lucrative subjects and schools in Beijing only. The forms were mailed away, the son was locked inside his room on the fourth floor of the dormitory building, and the father waited for the "dough to be baked into bread." The son, however, would not obey fate, but created his own. He went out through the window, stepped down along the weak aluminum water pipe, ran to Beijing and Qinghua Universities to cancel the applications, and made a new one to China's Academy of Science and Technology. He was accepted.

The boy studied Physics there for four years without coming back home once: not because he didn't want to, but because he did not have enough money for the trip from southern China back to Beijing. One day, eventually, he brought himself back home and stood in front of his parents with his college diploma. "Is now the time to get a job?" wondered their parents. It was quite a shock to the mother and a great fury to the father when the son announced that he had been already accepted by the graduate program in Theoretical Physics in Beijing University, where the instructor is a well-known physicist who was strongly against "Falungong" for its unscientific preaching. Honestly and bravely facing his parents, the young man said, "Mom, I am interested in understanding Falungong, and Pa, we can now study Physics in Beijing and, possibly, make a breakthrough together."

Two

It is 12:00 p.m. in a rainy Sunday. I meet Mr. Feng in front of the library of China's Art Institution.

"Is it Sunday? Oh!" said Mr. Feng confusedly with his aged eyes opening wider.

He is thin and tall; though weighty in head, he walks lightly and, on seeing me, seems ready to go off in all directions.

We jump into the only car, his car, parked among a flock of bicycles there in front of the library, and happily take off in the rain heading for a cozy place. There are many such places in Beijing, if money is available, for a nice lunch.

Mr. Feng is rich. He told me last year that the net income from his publishing business alone was around a hundred fifty thousand U.S. dollars, even though a lot of other business had suffered from the Asian economic crisis. He also runs two other business — one in exterior decoration for commercial buildings in Beijing, and some electrical engineering projects. He has purchased two houses for his family, one for his parents and daughter, one for himself only, and I am not sure about his marital status at the moment. One more brief note about him: He got his PhD in education a couple of years ago and currently is working on a post-PhD in art history.

Mr. Feng has generously ordered many dishes: crispy-fried east melon, spicy fish, stir-fried green tree ears, bloody beancurd hot pot, and salad.

I begin with my first question: "Have you heard about Gaoxingjian and this year's Nobel Prize in Literature?"

"Is that a man or a woman?" he asked.

"I was even hoping that you could help me to get some of his books," I laugh, and after I name a few of Mr. Gao's works, he says, "I can now recall ABSOLUTE SIGNAL, but I'm not sure I can get ONE MAN'S BIBLE and SOUL MOUNTAIN for you, since we only heard of this first from your American friend from the States. I'm afraid that only a very few

copies are in circulation here. And my company deals solely with reference books of all kinds."

"How is your publishing going this year? And have you been to the book fair in Nanjing this past month?"

"Very good." Mr. Feng continues without concealing his joy. "We did wonderfully at the fair, which is held only twice a year, much better than those novel-sellers, and this year our gross has already reached a few millions (U. S. dollars)."

"How could you manage so much – the three business, the post-Ph.D., and by the way, are you still going to *karioke* with girls?"

Understanding my puzzlement, he answered simply: "When my eyes are open, I do things; when they are closed, I sleep."

"Which part interests you more, producing money or deepening knowledge?" I am very curious.

"I am really just a bookworm. There are different types of pedants. One is the classical type who has the real ardor and gives a life-long dedication to academia. In the past, such people could make one or more inventions during a life. In the present era of specialization in science, the arts, and everything else, an outstanding academic achievement by a single person is less and less possible. The second type has the same dream as the first, but lacks true passion and dedication. They might also "face the four walls" and work hard enough, day in and day out; and after decades of this, they might turn into experts in their areas, except they would regret remaining forever poor in life experience and money. The third type is the kind who uses academia as a means to reach fame or money, by producing as many articles and books as possible — for a scholar's title, his salary, the size of his house are determined, in our now reformed social and economic system, not much by the quality of his work as by his quantity, by how much of it is accepted in the market. This is a mistake of our Government, that it links the academic work with the market, and it can be only corrected by some kind of political force. And I am a different type of all above. MY true love of life is academia, but academia without the rich colors of life is too boring and not complete. I would want them both, and try either one as much as I can. A few years from now, I will begin to teach, and will have many students, 'planting plums and peaches all over the world,' as they say."

Mr. Feng finished our meeting by inviting me go driving with him, on an outing to see the Fall.

3 NOVEMBER 2000

Here is a synopsis, in translation, of an article from CHINA'S HIGH-LEVEL THINK-TANKS, essays by Zhang Xiang Xia (Beijing: Jing Hua Publishing House, Sept. 2000).

Hexin: A Prophet of the Economy*?*

Within the academic fields of China there is a man who so often raises extreme beliefs and controversial opinions that he has earned himself a nickname: "mad-man." He has predicted the following events years before they happened, and he is always bold enough to present his predictions to the central government and paramount leaders:

* The collapse of the Soviet Union and East European Community in 1991.
* The turbulence on Tienanmin Square in 1989.
* The wars in Balkan area.
* A financial crisis in the 90's.

Hexin is not only able to make his penetrating analysis but also to offer plausible plans, which are often implemented as the central government's policies.

Self-education

Hexin was sixteen when Cultural Revolution began, in 1966. Not many books were available to him then except the works of Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Mao. It was with these books that he was dispatched to a farm by the rush of "Going to the Countryside" movement. While other teenagers were living a linear life of field work-eat-sleep, which was supposed to be a correct life-pattern to serve a political goal, Hexin did not stop reading his books at nighttime. He kept thinking about one question: What is the real meaning of this revolution, and what will be its final outcome?

It took ten years of China's modern history to tell the whole nation that this movement was total nonsense, and that was too much time for Hexin! In 1977, he finally went to a university but, in disappointment, found that the teaching there was not good enough. He did not want to waste any more time and so did something that shocked everybody: He quit the university and vigorously started his independent study of philosophy, economics, history and politics. Soon, Hexin was able to write articles about his original concepts and ideas, even criticisms. He mailed them to major newspapers, well-known academic journals, and certain politicians at the top. He did not care about the possible danger to – or good luck for – himself, he cared only about the truth. First he was punished by being moved from his secretarial work into the boiler room of a factory; then, as he continued even more audaciously sending his opinions and suggestions to the central government, and was called by many a real "mad-man," someone with authority from the top perceived his wisdom and promoted him to a research fellowship at CPPCC (The Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference) to participate in national policy-making.

Foreseeing the disintegration of the USSR

Closely following the on-going Soviet reforms in 1987 and 1988, Hexin told the Chinese paramount leaders of his worry of the "hidden danger" and "critical moment" that would shake the world: the collapse of the Soviet Union. The prediction was proven true in 1991. Hexin took the opportunity and wrote a letter to the Chinese Government, in which he reflected on and analyzed critically many serious problems of socialism, such as the ossified, totalitarian "system problem" of governing, and the ideology that has suffocated people's minds and caused long-term economic stagnation and crisis. All of these worked against binding the nation together; when the center was wrong, yet tried to bind the people to it, it would put the people off-balance. Hexin predicted in this letter that unless there were economic reform, the present course would inevitably cause vicious inflation and unemployment, and that the crisis would be a long one. He also warned that the West would, consequently, take the chance to isolate and besiege China, in order, eventually, to eliminate all socialist forces in the world. Hexin's analysis and warnings were seriously weighed and applied by the paramount leaders in policy making.

Western economic science is dangerous for China

Many Chinese economists and scholars in the '80's were beginning to accept the idea that the advance of the economy of the West resulted from its advanced theory, and that if China wanted to catch up to modernization and make its economy flourish at the level of the developed countries, the scientific, Western theory of economics must be introduced to China.

Amid naive and heated studies and discussions of Western economic theories, Hexin had kept his mind clear. He researched the failed experiments in Keynesianism and Marshallism of a few developing countries in the '60's and '70's, and declared that, although the modern Western economic theory applies scientific approaches, rather than emphasizing class antagonism as in Marx's political economics, economics is a science about the vital interests of our social community and, inevitably, involves ideologies, even in the Western World.

Giving historical examples of applications of wrong economic theories that resulted in national disasters – such during the during 18th century in France, and New Classism in the 20th century in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union – Hexin argued that important national economic policies should not be drawn solely from Western economic textbooks. He suggested that China should seek its own "developing economics" based on our national conditions, and argued that the inherent function of Western economics aims only at the greatest capitalists within the developed countries, and would direct and rebuild the Asian-Pacific economy into a hierarchical system.

Controlling China's "Foam Economy"

In 1992, a popular optimistic mood about economic prosperity filled the atmosphere over China's land. A large number of enterprises were taking off at all levels; high-rises, freeways, real estate developments were flourishing; ordinary Chinese had more cash in hand; and a class even developed, the financial bourgeoisie.

Hexin was at this time traveling across the country, doing research, observing, and thinking deeply. He wrote a report in November 1992 to the central leaders, suggesting that the current short-term economic prosperity was actually illusory and over-heated, and that the government should immediately make a controlling policy to prevent a possible wide-spread economic crisis. This worry was, as in many other times, laughed at and criticized by some reputable scholars and economists as being groundlessly conservative.

Hexin talked in his report about the causes of the high-speed bubble-economy of China, which was unlike that of the West and its established market economy. Major Chinese investors were local government officials at different levels who recklessly set up investment programs aiming to grasp as much of the central government's funds as possible, thus making quick profits and showing their own merits. These investors never considered factors like production cost, overstocking, market dynamics, and capital turnovers in the long term. The resulting prosperity was in fact pushed by unrealistic investments. New money was printed so that more could be invested. In addition, foreign currencies were also rushing into China, especially into high-profit areas such as real estate and capital construction, further stimulating this "foam economy" and its dependence on foreign capital. Hexin pointed out the effects of such short-sighted investment: once the funds ran out, there would be a pause somewhere, and this would trigger a series of halts in all programs in the process of developing. Eventually, the financial crisis would set off an industrial and agricultural crisis, like falling dominoes. Hexin's report was again considered seriously by the central leaders, and appropriate policies of economic control were enacted to counter the possible crisis.

The economic world war

Today, while many people feel happy and comfortable about the global economy, Hexin says: "I think that in about ten or twenty years, the world economic system will face the most dangerous and overall crisis in the whole of human history." According to him, the financial crisis in Southeast Asia is just the tip of a huge iceberg. It is an economic

world war having the same results as a shooting war: economic looting, political systems destroyed, and military force weakened – except the means of this war are not cannons and planes, but financial tools and information and currency reserves. In this war are the defeated countries of Russia, Japan, South Korea and a number of Southeast Asian nations. There are countless people who have lost all – their homes, jobs, and their life-savings. There are political powers and leaders overthrown; there are grievous losses of national capital. Who are winners? Hexin points out that they are the hedge-fund owners George Soros and the Tiger Fund, the American Federal Reserve, and the International Monetary Fund. These four parties have formed into a union that fights for the benefits of the United States and its monopolization of global finance.

He says that there are two strategic goals of this economic war launched by the United States. First, to destroy the economy in Southeast Asia, striking at Japanese financial bases and, therefore, confining the growing structure based on the pillar of the Japanese Yen. Secondly, to assemble enormous funds obtained from the Asia crisis, march into the markets of Russia and Europe, weaken the German Mark, restrain the rise of the Euro, and, therefore, maintain the American hegemony over international finance.

According to Hexin, this economic war is still far from at an end. It will shake European continents and, eventually, America itself: not only economically, but also socially and politically. Although the United States in the post-Cold War era has become the dominant world power, it takes enormous strength to maintain this mono-polar role. As the Americans try too hard, the Europeans would become further united, as would the Chinese and other Asians, the Russians and Japanese, the Chinese and the Europeans, and so on. A multi-polar economic structure will be soon formed out of this economic world war.

Unpredictable future

Turning into a new millennium, particularly in its first ten years, stated Hexin, the human race is facing a severe challenge that has more harsh or grim aspects than optimistic and easy ones. There will be many complicated and unpredictable possibilities. However, the possibilities of the market economy are reaching a certain limit. In order to keep and compete for the limited international market, the major world powers have become involved in more and more conflicts, which then raise many unfathomable situations with different necessary policies and complex consequences. History proves again and again that to seek after an ideal goal is one thing, and actually to influence and control reality is quite another.

Right now, the most important question before China, which is also the most common one in front of all the developing countries, is the possibility of becoming more industrialized and modernized, the possibility of exploiting natural resources and occupying the world market.

Hope you are not sleepy yet.

Here is a way of seeing what is behind this thinking. The economy in China is so heated, and people are so driven to improve themselves, that they often are confused and have lost their rationality. There is a saying that translates, roughly: "You want to go so fast that your speed slows you down." Its meaning is literal and ironic: the very reason you can't get there is because you want to be fast. You've lost direction.

What impressed me was that, when so many leaders, experts, ordinary people are thinking one way, Hexin is thinking another. He is cool-headed and is thinking more

deeply. Perhaps he has gotten many of his ideas from the West, but I don't know: the article says they are his ideas. But he has studied widely and has pondered.

I think that China learned many lessons from the Asian financial crisis. According to Hexin, we shouldn't just copy capitalism, because it only benefits capitalists. When things get tough, though, my idea is: how to think of this as not just a war, but how to cooperate with capitalism.

I wish I were able to write succinctly so this would not be not so long. Thanks for giving me a chance to brush up my English, and if you do not mind, I'll write you again.

End of Part One. In part two, "Hua Li" describes jumping into the fire-sea as the Beijing stock market closes for reform.

Syria: Living in Wild and Marvelous Stories

Gretchen McCullough

"We live in stories. What we are is stories. We do things because of what is called character, and our character is formed by the stories we learn to live in."
—William Kittredge

It has almost been two years since I left Syria. Eight months since I wrote my beau, Karim the last letter: love, yes, but not happily ever after. Six months since Hafez el-Assad died, not from a plot but heart failure. A few days since I received an e-mail from an American friend, Karen, who still lives in Damascus. When I lived in Lattakia, I waited for weeks, like a forlorn 19th Century traveler, for the occasional red-and-blue striped air mail envelopes from home. However, Bashar Assad knows that world is round: mail falls off the universe, but e-mail, sent at the speed of light, does not.

But now I am in Cairo, and I wonder. At the American University in Cairo, where I teach, my Syrian stories must seem so Draconian that they are unreal. An Assad put his servant in a cage in his own front yard; an Assad incinerated a Secret Policeman with a grenade; Assad's bodyguard kidnapped a proctor in the middle of an exam at Tishreen University; Assad bodyguards hijacked a Datsun truck and forced the driver to drive to Kerdaha with flowers for Hafez Assad's dead sister. Whispered news, *kalam in-nas*, the talk of the people in Lattakia, Syria. These stories reminded me of Don Corleone and the Family. What was reported on state-run television: problems in Israel and Lebanon, hurricanes in Florida, mudslides, famines in Africa – disaster elsewhere. Still, I was safer physically on the streets of Lattakia than in urban areas in the United States. Bad behavior from the Assad clan, but no street crime in Syria. However, the surface ease of daily life in Syria was deceptive. With time, I became worn down by the fear, suspicion, and paranoia, like the Syrians I knew. But I could easily leave Syria.

Syrian memories collide with cheerful, noisy Cairo, where I live now. I am a little surprised by my conversations with expatriates: "Syria, that sounds interesting." Yes, but it was hard, I always say. They never grasp a world ruled by rumor, dark jokes, gloom, isolation, and a feeling of helplessness. Even specific examples are not enough to make them understand the atmosphere: no Internet – no mail at all for sometimes five weeks; no books; the heavy breathing of my landlord on the phone; the suspicion of being a CIA agent; the presence of the *Muhabarat*, the Secret Police.

I am nostalgic, though, for leisurely conversations on balconies with my British-educated Syrian colleagues, who switched comfortably between Arabic and English. The nights were cool, and we cracked pistachios or ate nutty hummus and drank the local beer, *Sharq,* aptly named East. I admired their resilience and tenacious wit. One colleague told a

joke like this: "The CIA, KGB, and the *Muhbarat* decided to have a contest. Who could find a cock the fastest? The CIA came back in two hours. The KGB came back in two days. Time passed, and still the *Muhabarat* had not come back with a cock. Four days later, they were found beating a pale, thin rabbit, 'Say you're a cock. Say you're a cock. Say you're a cock.'" We laughed. The joke underscored a serious fact of life in Syria: people are afraid of the Secret Police.

Many Syrians are cautious about making jokes about the government, but they do it among trusted friends. I have also heard Syrians make sly jokes about the "Father, Son, and Holy Ghost": Hafez, Bashar, and Basil, the Assads, father and sons. The political iconography in Syria is overpowering. Photographs of the trinity covered the windows of grocery stores, the hallways at Tishreen University, or even windshields in minibuses: single pictures of the father, looking like a benevolent patriarch; or single pictures of the father in military fatigues; the father with his son, Basil; Basil, alone on his horse; masculine Basil clad in fatigues and a beret; pious Basil in robe on the Haj at Mecca; Basil again in military uniform, in an unguarded moment, looking dazed in front of his father; the rare photo of the father, with Basil and Bashar. Such pious images made me feel as if I knew the Assads. Now that Bashar has become President I'm sure there are more photographs of him, covering the walls of buildings, offices, and grocery stores.

Frustrated by the lack of opportunity and low salaries, many of my Syrian colleagues have gone elsewhere. They are intelligent, ambitious, driven; they want more than Syria has to offer them. I imagine they are skeptical about how fast Bashar will make changes in Syria. Karim has left to teach at a remote university in Saudi Arabia; Kemal and Aziz are working at private universities in Jordan. And lest I long too much to return, I have heard that some lectures are being held out on the grass in front of the University because there is no space in the Faculty of Arts building. Teaching composition to my class of two hundred in drafty lecture halls had not been easy, but the students were eager, curious, and respectful, and teaching was a joy, despite the difficult conditions.

Besides dark jokes, Syrians relish dark stories. When I first went to Syria, the Princess of Wales had just been killed in the automobile accident in Paris. On the first day of class, my students at Tishreen University buzzed with this news. I looked over the lecture hall; students were crammed together at long, wooden slabs for desks. The lecture hall was depressing and had an unfinished look: tangled wires hung from the ceiling; a rickety podium teetered on a platform in front of the chalkboard; a tattered eraser and a few nubs of chalk had been left at the board; and the spare walls were covered with replicas of the same Hafez al-Assad photograph. Still, the students were excited. Since I had an outdated Composition text and no real plan for the lesson, I asked, "What do you think about Lady Diana's accident?" The class roared. Hands waved in the air.

A young woman from the crowd spoke clearly, "She was murdered, Doctoor."

"Murdered?" I repeated.

"Murdered," they said.

The room was remarkably silent for an Arab crowd. I felt like a celebrity myself. I smiled, and they smiled back. "But why?"

The same young woman said, "The Queen killed her."

I smiled. "But I think it was a drunk-driving accident."

The class roared. "No," they said, shaking their heads.

Someone shouted, "It was a conspiracy."

Was I the innocent abroad?

"I think this might be a good chance for you to write a paragraph. So I can see what your writing is like."

A young man raised his hand. "But Doctoor, we don't write in the lectures."

"But I'm asking you to," I said.

After I had collected all two hundred or so paragraphs (I wondered how long it would take me to read them), a student stayed behind. She said, "We never had a Composition Professor like you before. We usually take the notes about the Comparison/Contrast, the Argumentative…"

I was feeling better already.

Most of the paragraphs repeated the same story, which had been written up in the Arabic newspapers: Lady Diana had been murdered because she was carrying Dodi's child. The Queen of England could not bear a Muslim becoming heir to the throne. On the night she was killed, Dodi had given her an enormous ring and proposed marriage. Except for the day of her marriage to Prince Charles, it had been the happiest moment of her life.

Maybe the class was really Creative Writing, not Composition. Such a tale reflected the storytelling tradition of *The Arabian Nights.* It was as if, like Dinarzad, I had said to my class, "Sister, if you are not sleepy, tell us one of your lovely little tales to while away the night." And my class, like Shaharazad, had said, "With pleasure, Doctoor." Maybe the Arab storytelling tradition, coupled with the bleakness of Syria, made stories even wilder, and more marvelous.

Karim also believed the tale about Lady Diana. He said, "Her bodyguard was with the British Intelligence. No air bags. Or why didn't they inflate?"

"Maybe it was just an accident. Anyway, I'm sure there would have been easier ways to kill her. Poison. But why?" I said, shrugging.

The tale about Lady Diana also reminded me of *Snow White*. The evil queen had tried to kill the beautiful princess by lacing her stays too tightly. Next she had used a poisoned comb. When that failed, the evil queen had disguised herself as a peasant woman and given Snow White the poisoned apple.

Poison was an old-fashioned way of murdering people. I thought of the Sultan's taster in the *Topkapi Saray* sampling succulent roast lamb until the day he choked and burbled, unable to utter a single last word. But were fear and paranoia more poisonous than arsenic? Though there was no evidence of a conspiracy in Lady Diana's accident, the Syrians I knew insisted on a plot. Freak car accidents were not just freak car accidents. Perhaps the vagaries of power in Syria have made Syrians sensitive to larger hands behind the scenes that, like a giant puppeteer, pulled the strings and controlled events. Since the Assads controlled most everything in Syria, the Queen of England must control events in England. And the United States must control all events in the world.

The air bags had not inflated on Basil Assad's car, either. The favored son, the son groomed to be President, had been killed in a high-speed car accident, except that he had been driving the Mercedes as it roared down a road in Damascus, late one foggy night. The car had careened off the road into an electrical pole that lay alongside the verge. The heavy pole had sliced through the car, and then the car had flipped into a field. (That was the story I was told.)

As in Lady Diana's accident, there had been rumors of a plot. Had someone tampered with the air bags or the brakes? Basil Assad's cousin, also riding in the car, survived. Had someone…?

Here is what I heard about Basil Assad:

"Someone could have murdered him. He had lots of enemies in Lattakia. A few years ago, he cleaned up the place. Before that, whenever his relatives wanted to, they stole people's cars, or demanded money from shopkeepers. Girls were kidnapped and raped by some of Assad's relatives. Who could the victims report to?"

"Lattakia was a separate kingdom from Damascus. Some of Assad's relatives in Lattakia did whatever they wanted."

"The common people loved him. He tried to help people."

"He drove too fast. That was one of his bad habits. I remember once, this car went by too fast in Lattakia. My friend said, 'That was Basil.' Driving fast, that was a kind of suicide."

"The day after Basil died, there was a pilgrimage to Kerdaha. All the students were told they would have to go. It's about thirty-five kilometers. They met at the University at five o'clock in the morning. They walked there in the rain. One poor boy caught a chill and fever, he died. They call him a martyr, a *shaheed."*

Hearing the stories about Basil Assad made me curious to see his shrine. Understandably, Karim was reluctant, but agreed to go with me. He was worried about being blacklisted by the *Muhabarat.*

"You're American," he reminded me.

I knew he was right. A simple visit to Kerdaha could be transformed into a nasty rumor such as, the American Fulbright Professor went to Kerdaha to collect "info" for the CIA; or, perhaps, a more marvelous story would be invented.

The only thing I did collect were marvelous arcane details. For example, to the right of the entrance to the shrine, on the white wall of a nearby house, are two bright, folk-y murals. One is of bearded, brown-eyed Basil, riding a white horse. Next to him appears the face of his brother, Bashar, with his astonishing blue eyes. Bashar's face is not in proportion to the painting of Basil on his horse. Even more puzzling, is the plastic toy-like model of Basil on his horse that I see on the balcony. This cannot be part of the official shrine.

Before Karim and I entered, a bored soldier took down our names. After we signed our names to the list, he sat down again on his chair.

In front of us, a concrete mosque was still under construction, one big dome with smaller domes. The building was drab and grandiose, and reminded me of the buildings at Tishreen University. It was as if, the engineer had become bored and lost interest.

A small sculpture had been erected in front of the unfinished mosque. Like the murals, the sculpture is curious. Slender white metal curve toward the blue sky. A yellow star crowns the top. On the sloped curve, President Assad, surrounded by imams and other VIPs, waves goodbye to his son. Further up on the sculpture, Basil on his white horse rides toward heaven.

"Gretchen," Karim said, gesturing with eyes toward the mosque. He put his finger to his lips as a warning: don't speak.

He held out his hand, and we trudged through the mud to the mosque, where Basil's coffin lay.

As we approached the entrance, a man appeared, and unlocked the door. He motioned for us to enter the small room.

"*Salaam Alekum*," Karim said.

"*Alekum salam*," the man answered.

To the left of the door was another picture of Basil, a large black-and-white framed photograph anchored in a pot of sand.

The guard followed us inside. Karim walked around the coffin but said nothing. Green cloth was draped over the coffin; green curtains smothered the walls. (Green is the color of the Prophet Muhammad and signifies peace in Islam.) An amateurish pencil sketch hung from the billowy green curtain but not a good one – Basil's brown eyes were

dull. Beside the coffin on a small table was a large gold trophy and some ribbons Basil had won for horseracing. The mementos were personal, in contrast to the enormous mosque.

As soon as we left the small room, another man appeared with thimbles of bitter coffee. (It is Arab custom to drink bitter coffee at a funeral.)

In front of us were several large platforms and bleachers. Enough places for a military band, dignitaries, and retinues of government people. On the platform, was a metal triangle. Tiny horse candles had been hung on the metal triangle.

"Those are strange," I said.

"Enough. Finish your coffee and let's get out of here," Karim said. He pulled on my arm. "Don't seem too interested. Everyone's watching."

"*Shokron,"* I said, handing my cup back to the man who had given us the coffee.

We headed back to the entrance, where the guard had taken our names.

"Don't look back," Karim said, as we walked through the gate.

After a few minutes, he glanced over his shoulder. "I've heard about stories about the shrine. When Basil died, some of my brothers and sisters came on pilgrimages here," he said.

I couldn't blame him. The speculation that I was a CIA agent was not absurd. I had heard that the previous Fulbright Professor in Lattakia had been the subject of a CIA agent rumor. And, although the head of Security at the University, Tamer, had decided I was harmless, he was still convinced that my Arabic was much better than it was in fact. I had ambitions for my Arabic but did not speak it fluently. Did Tamer also worry about me because I was a writer?

In Syria, was my simple observation of daily life spying? One morning, I heard the voices of children, like sparrows outside my window, singing, "*Bi rouh. Bi dam. Nefdek Hafez al-Assad"* over and over again. We sacrifice our souls and blood for Hafez al-Assad.

Or was my listening to disgruntled Syrians subversive?

A sensitive student confided to me that her only true companion was her diary. "I keep it in English. To keep my privacy."

The gossip and intrigue in Syria was wonderful for fiction, but became emotionally exhausting for me, especially if I were the subject. I spent a great deal of time unraveling rumors, deciphering motives, and judging people. Karim knew his way through the maze. When I had problems with my exit visa, Karim knew how to deal with Tamer. (Without a security clearance, I could not make a trip to Jordan, where I wanted to travel.) Karim had known him at secondary school, and called him up for an appointment at the Security office.

In Tamer's office, I was so startled to see a golden bust of Hafez al-Assad without his nose that I knocked my tea over on the floor. Had someone been hauled in for lopping off the Father's Nose? Or were they simply storing the bust without a nose, out of public view?

A servant quickly swept up the tiny shards of glass on the floor.

Tamer ordered another tea for me.

He was tall for a Syrian, with a healthy shock of brown hair, and a pleasant smile. Attractive. He wore a pilot's flight jacket. But his brown eyes were feral.

"*Tahki Arabe?*" he asked.

"*Aleel*." A little.

"*Fi intihabat fi Syria. Matha raik?"* Tamer asked. What about the elections in Syria?

"*Men yarif*?" I shrugged. Who knows?

"*Syria balad democratiya. Ahsan men America*," Tamer said. Syria is a democratic country. Better than the United States.

I smiled. Surely, he didn't delude himself. Yet this was the same man who did not know that the Democratic Party was one of the major political parties in the United States. The year before, he had been alarmed when I marked on the security form that I was a member of the Democratic Party. "Did you have a high rank?" he had asked.

"She speaks Arabic very well," Tamer said. But surely this was *mujamala*, courtesy. Karim agreed. And then because he was nervous, he made a joke, which I missed.

"*Narifik giddan*," Tamer said, turning his gaze towards me.

We know you well, he smiled. He knew that I was so cold at night I wore my warm-up suit to bed? That I had been asking my landlord, Yousef, for over a month to kill the giant sewer rat under my sink? That I was reading all of Henry James?

At last we left, and walked out of the garrison quietly. When I started to speak, Karim said, "Wait." We walked in silence for a few minutes. Further down the road, he said, "He will probably ask me to pass students later."

I wonder how many students Karim had passed in exchange for my security clearance and exit visa.

A few months later, Tamer was driving in the city center in his Mercedes, and he motioned to us, "Get in. I will take you home. *Kef kum*?"

He joked and laughed with Karim. "You should call me. You never call me. People never call me unless they need something."

I was opening the outside gate to my house. "He's lonely," I said.

Karim said, "We can never be friends."

One of my friendships with a lonely woman professor ended because of a wild, marvelous story. Initially we became friendly because we were co-teaching American Literature together; she would present *The Scarlet Letter*; I would discuss *For Whom the Bell Tolls*. Odd curriculum for a Survey of American Literature, but these were the novels that were approved. I thought *The Scarlet Letter*, with its Puritan background and theology and old-fashioned, anachronistic diction, a particularly bad choice for Syrian students so I volunteered to teach Hemingway. Magda was happy because she preferred *The Scarlet Letter*. "I can relate to Hester's isolation. It's the same for Arab women," she said. Soon, she was calling me for dinners and lunches, and taking me for rides in her father's truck; we cruised around Lattakia, like teenagers. "Driving gives me such a feeling of freedom."

Many of the single women Syrian professors I had met, lived with their parents. Magda was unhappy with the situation. This I could understand. A woman in her thirties who had studied in England, she felt confined. She had tried emigrating to Australia, but had only scraped by, living in a bedsit, and had not found university work.

"I could have done translation work for the Australian government, but it's not what I wanted. I wanted to be a lecturer at the University so I refused," she said.

"But that would have been good. You would have used your skills," I said.

"I didn't do a PhD in Literature to do translation work," she replied.

"Nothing shameful about translation work. It would have been a good job. You could have supported yourself."

She frowned. This was not the response she wanted.

Her parents had persuaded her to return to Syria. Now she had only her room with a view of the Mediterranean, which her brother wanted. With her salary, she felt she couldn't afford to rent a flat by herself.

"You see, it's not only that. It's not respectable for a woman to live by herself. People will talk. Say I'm loose."

"I know some single Syrian women who live by themselves," I said.

Being friends with her became more complicated. She told me more and more about her problems. Her parents quarreled. There were scenes at home. She was her father's favorite. Her mother was arranging suitors for her, whom she did not want. She fought with her two spoiled brothers, who were both unemployed. Her brother had a girlfriend, whom he wanted to marry, but he had no flat: he wanted her room with a view. I had recommended her for a USIS fellowship, since she was teaching American Literature; she had told her parents that I was going to help her find a job in the United States.

"But Magda, that's not true. I can't even find a job myself in the U.S. How could I find one for you? I've only recommended you for a two-week scholarship in the summer, sponsored by USIS."

She withdrew her application for the fellowship, and wrote a letter to the American Cultural Attaché saying that she didn't want to be thought of as a spy.

Shortly after, when we were driving around Lattakia in her father's truck, she blurted out, "My mother is telling her friends that you are a CIA agent."

"You have got to be kidding. Why?" I asked.

Next, Magda called with this cryptic message, "Gretchen, we can no longer be friends. We are just colleagues."

My other Syrian friends said, "Forget about it. She's crazy. Paranoid. That's ridiculous. Of course, you're not a CIA agent."

Did the paranoia come from the suspicion? Or was Magda already a little crazy to begin with? Or could you be driven mad by all the wild, marvelous stories? Did you eventually give up trying to disentangle rumors, and believe untrue stories because it was easier?

Four or five months later, Magda called me, desperate, to tell me a story. She had been harassed by some American Black Muslims; they had made all sorts of sweet promises to publish her poems and set her up in an artist's colony in the United States. Could she come tell me the story and show me the faxes? The American Embassy should be notified. The American police should be notified.

I stalled about calling the Cultural Attaché. She was busy.

I didn't really want to see Magda, because I was still a little hurt about the CIA-agent accusation. But she was insistent.

"Where did you meet these people?" I asked, looking over the faxes.

"Here in Lattakia," she said. "I was having ice cream with Mona, my friend who owns the bookshop. I asked them if they knew you since you were a writer."

"There are a lot of writers in the U.S. Anyway, I'm not well-known," I said.

"My father even met them. They seemed legitimate. Something should be done. They can't just around harassing women. You should notify the police in the United States."

"Did they rob you? Did they harm you?" I asked.

"No. But something has to be done. They might try to harass someone else," Magda said.

"Right. When was the last time you heard from them?" I asked.

"A year and a half ago. You saw the fax. Something has to be done. Why don't you call the Embassy?" Magda insisted.

"They look like frauds. But what am I going to say? The U.S. is a big place. Which police? And what have they done?" I asked.

"The U.S. Embassy should be told. So that women are not harassed by such people."

"Are you willing to write a letter? Make a formal complaint?" I asked.

"I don't want to get involved. I don't want to write anything down," she said.

"So what can I do? We don't know where these guys are now, or if they are using false names or not. If you want to make a complaint, you should write a letter to the Embassy. I am sorry. I don't think they were sincere about publishing your poems. And as far as making the promises about the artists' colony, well…," I said.

"They just wanted me to be their love slave. When I refused, they started sending the abusive faxes," she said.

"What about Mona?"

"She was the friend who introduced me to them. We're no longer friends," she said.

"How did she know them?"

Magda shrugged. "You are going to call the Embassy?"

"Yes," I said, gloomily. As I showed Magda out, I realized that we were no longer friends, either. And what would I tell the Cultural Attaché? That there had been a sighting of the Duke and the Dauphin in Lattakia? Frauds who had skipped town, but with no treasure? What were those characters doing in Syria?

When I finally got through to Damascus, I said to the Attaché, Leesa, "I'm sorry to bother you. But there's a story you should know about."

Leesa was glad to have been informed about the bizarre story when the Ambassador received a letter from Magda. But why now? Why had Magda waited a year and a half to complain?

I did not have the energy to unravel Magda's psychological motives. But this much was true: American Black Muslims had found this vulnerable woman in Lattakia. She had no friends in her family; her friend, Mona, had introduced her to these frauds; she had no friends at the University; I was no longer her friend. She was alone. Without friendship, there were only the wild, dark stories of betrayal, treachery, plots, conspiracies.

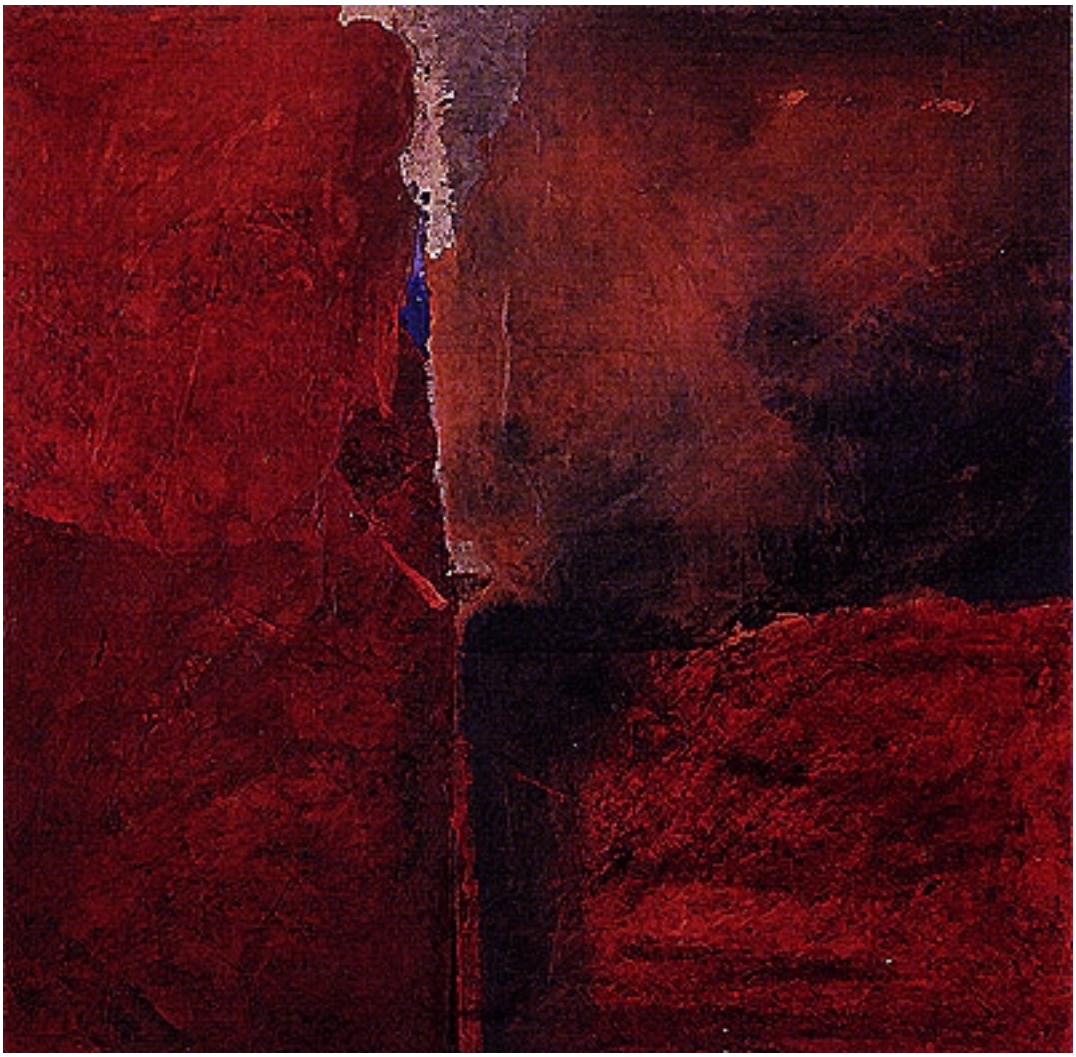
Shortly before leaving Syria, I went with Karim to see a friend of his who worked in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

"Clearly, the Monica Lewinski scandal is an Israeli plot," Ali said.

He looked at me. I was tempted to say, "I think it was just sex." But why argue? He'd made up his mind: the Monica Lewinski scandal was really THE SPY WHO LOVED ME. I had learned that in Syria conspiracy was a convention in most stories and anecdotes. That was the script.

Bridget Flannery

Four Landscapes



Fragments of Landscape
1999
Acrylic, Mixed Media on Wood
80 x 80 cm

Winterreise I
1999
Mixed Media
35 x 35 Inches

Listening to Silence
1999
Mixed Media
35 x 35 Inches

Wintertraum II
1999
Mixed media
35 x 35 Inches

From the solo exhibition, February 2000.
Images adapted from the Artist's portfolio on Artvitae.com
www.artvitae.com/Bridget Flannery
and *Bridget Flannery A Filled Silence*, Vangard Gallery, Cork Ireland,
with the assistance of the artist.

JERUSALEM

B. Z. Niditch

Yehuda Amichai
In Memorium (1924-2000)

Four sides of dreams
the sun, land, river, earth
holding doves and shadows
from twilight places
where generations await
and footsteps whisper
in the summer wind
of Jerusalem's eerie silence

may the words of your mouth
rise up
between earth and sky
from my own memory
hearing again your voice
breathless by the trees
as you sleep between two breezes
suspecting a poet's future
is in the open fields.

> It is worth keeping mind—indeed, it is worth harping on—that our forty-third President holds office only because a judicial order stifled the vote count in a decisive state, thereby letting stand a preliminary total that was incomplete, distorted by irregularities, at odds with the will of the electorate, and almost certainly wrong in its outcome. Reagan, on the other hand, was elected—and by an outright popular majority. And, when he ran again, he received a larger absolute number of votes than any other candidate in American history. (The runner-up is Al Gore, a visiting professor of journalism at Columbia University.)
>
> Inducing forgetfulness about these uncomfortable truths, quite as much as soliciting support for tax relief for the comfortable, has been the goal of the opening weeks of Bush II.
>
> —Hendrick Hertzberg, *The New Yorker*, Feb. 19 & 26, 2001

&&&&&&

A Local Habitation and A Name

In Kilkenny

In October of last year I went to Kilkenny, Ireland, for the Centenary Celebration of Hubert Butler (1900-1991). It was a remarkable event and unlike any literary meeting of my experience. Butler was a writer of prose of the tensile strength of silk through which the sharpest sword cannot cut, an international writer, very likely a great writer, and a moralist. Elsewhere in this issue appears his essay about the collusion of Archbishop Stepinac in the Croat Nazis' forced conversion, even unto death, of hundreds of thousands of Orthodox Serbs, and about what should have been the *unthinkable* willingness of the Church and many of Butler's fellow Irishmen to remain ignorant of it while praising the Archbishop for his resistance to godless communism. This willed ignorance, or covering-up, appalled Butler, I dare to say, to his soul. He paid a heavy price for speaking out about it, as is detailed in Chris Agee's essays, particularly "The Stepinac File." This man who had decided to remain at home and work among his neighbors was shunned in Kilkenny.

Although the Mayor of Kilkenny, clad in official regalia, delivered so handsome a speech of genuine apology on behalf of the townspeople as we would never hear in this country, I wondered if the old animus against Butler had been wholly subdued. In the meeting room, the spirit of the company was magnified. We who had come came for love of Butler, or at least with profound respect for him. There was no doubt among us that an old wrong had been righted and the small-minded overcome. The commemoration would open on a clear note; and so it did. For four half-days we heard speakers of verbal brilliance and mental acuity, many of whom themselves had known Butler. Among a group one was rarely so fortunate as to meet in one place were Roy Foster, the Carroll Professor of Irish History, Oxford University and biographer of Yeats; and Neal Ascherson, columnist for *The Observer* and author of a book I admire, THE BLACK SEA; and John Banville, the novelist – THE UNTOUCHABLE is unnerving in its attainment – and associate literary editor of *The Irish Times*; and John Casey, Henry Hoynes Professor of English at the University of Virginia and winner of the American National Book Award for his novel SPARTINA, who read us a light-filled memoir of Butler. The other speakers,

though they were less familiar to me, were hardly less worthy of attention. Listening to such people is a joyful occasion. I am convinced that the Irish invented language itself.

Kilkenny is a lovely town with an imposing castle and a fine, medieval cathedral built of the local limestone. The Celebration took place in the castle, ancient center of secular power. Across the street was the Butler House, an inn where the speakers were put up in comfort, and the Kilkenny Design Center; and down the street, called The Parade (where soldiers once had been reviewed or led forth into combat), that is, down the hill toward the lower town, was the bed and breakfast into which I had booked. Everyone says Ireland has changed greatly in the past two or three years. The people have money, and they don't have to leave the country to find work. These facts had not been true in a century and a half or longer. The house was owned by a young man in his thirties, I would guess, who had refurbished it tastefully and who served a lavish breakfast in the morning. (I did not have a bad meal in Ireland and feel I could subsist happily on brown bread.) He and his staff worked hard and hospitably to put visitors at ease, though their talk among themselves was sharp with teasing. Their shoulders were straight; they were not deferential; they moved with an air of confidence. A bit of money can give you this, when it comes from your own work and you feel that ancient stumbling blocks – the priest, the politician, the owner, the boss with the upper hand – have been shifted.

The Mayor, whose name was Paul Cuddihy, devoted his speech to the search for truth and the application of justice. He said:

> In order to understand fully why this happened it is important to remember the political climate that existed in Ireland and post war Europe at this time. The Soviet Union was expanding westward and democracy was being crushed throughout eastern Europe. It was the time of the Cold War. Anti-communism was rife and the 'Red Scare' was real for many people. Anyone who was perceived as being anti-communist was on our side according to public opinion. When Tito locked up those who had collaborated with the Nazis in Croatia during the war, public opinion in Ireland and Europe was outraged when some of the people concerned were senior churchmen. Ireland was at this time a very different society to that of today. People were inclined to be unquestioning and accepting of the status quo. Few people had access to second level, never mind third level education. That didn't make them any less intelligent than the young people of today. Those people just didn't get the opportunities that people take for granted today. People were poor, times were bad with high unemployment, emigration was rife.

"These are facts, but they are not excuses for what happened in Kilkenny," he insisted. The Mayor was also a schoolteacher. Some of his students were in the hall. He bade them listen and learn.

Irish people roll their eyes at the American Irish for idealizing the old sod their forebears had left behind; and it is true that Ireland is far from the coal-mining valley where I grew up, although anthracite was dug, too, in County Kilkenny. Yet, that day, the Kilkenny of 1952 evoked buried memories of my birthplace. The mistrust and resentment of those whom old gossips had called "the Prods" had long since crossed the ocean. A brown pall of narrowness had hung over the parish where once I received the sacraments. I did not find it difficult, remembering a bemused childhood, to recognize the fear of giving scandal, of the curtain-twitch.

For some time I have been worrying over a notion I have about absolutism and its structures in the mind; I am concerned, no doubt, with my own mind. Standing before the Parade Tower with a cordial acquaintance, an Irish woman, I had remarked how very strange it was to be in a real castle. The first castle of Kilkenny was a wooden fortress built by Richard de Clare, called Strongbow, the Anglo-Norman invader of Ireland, and rebuilt of stone by Strongbow's son-in-law, William Marshal, around 1192. Two centuries later the powerful Butlers, who also were Normans, bought it; it remained the seat of the Butlers, Earls and Marquesses of Ormonde, until 1935, when Kilkenny Castle was sold for a song to the city. (Hubert Butler wrote that his was a minor branch of that family.) My lively acquaintance had replied that what she always found remarkable was the self-confidence of Americans. It's because we have no mental category of monarchy, I had answered: our sovereignty lies in ourselves as citizens, and this knowledge gives us our assurance. *Is this true?* I wondered to myself. Often it is true.

In the meetings, the most curious (to me) and ridiculous thing happened, twice. Each day, a different man stood up and expressed his disagreement with Hubert Butler about politics. The first man, on the first day, said that for forty years he had thought Hubert Butler a communist, thus a sort of companion in arms, until upon reading Butler's Balkan essays for the first time just the previous nights, he had realized his massive error. He wished to express his disappointment. The second man objected to Butler's having made a claim during a long-ago political campaign for the congenital independent-mindedness of Protestants. The man objected that the Penal Laws of dread memory were imposed by Protestants and accused Butler of being in effect a racist. The discussion was handled firmly (it was suggested that an understanding of metaphor was a useful skill to have) and closed smoothly by the moderator (though I heard wry murmurs alluding to the meeting of the Foreign Affairs Association in 1952 described in Chris Agee's paper). Later it came out that both gentlemen were from the Cork Stalinists!

I wondered whether, in order to counter the awful (as I learned it) rule of the British for so many centuries, the Catholic Irish had turned to their Church, ceding so much of their personal autonomy to the hierarchy and its stringent rules of morality, as to a protector of sorts. Even so, for generations after British dominion was broken the hold of the Church remained tight on the populace; for instance, the hierarchy controlled schooling until lately, and divorce was only voted into law in 1995. In other nations these have long been secular matters regulated by the polity. But Stalinists, these days, in Cork? In the face of two implacable powers, had that totalitarian, terror-based rule by cult of personality become abstracted into yet another absolutist counter-force? What could these men, who demonstrated that they could not read with discrimination, have believed? I don't know an answer, unless it lies in the banal observation that in the dimmest matters of the human heart change occurs slowly. This cannot be answer enough. A certain cast of mind led them to call themselves Stalinists; what form had cast those minds?

Hubert Butler, for speaking a hard truth, was shunned by many – not all – of his neighbors and erstwhile friends. He must have been resented. No doubt he, described as a man whose mind did not flinch, would have recognized it, almost impersonally, as he did on another occasion, when he spoke at a small service in memory of his friend and distant cousin Elizabeth Bowen. He referred to her family's house, called Bowen's Court, and three other houses burned down during the Troubles.

> …I think we underestimate the extent to which our remembrance of people, families, classes and even races is linked with bricks and mortar. It ought not to be so, but it is…. It is hard for an Anglo-Irishman not … to suspect that our

> indifference was a foretaste of the neglect and distortion that whole centuries of Anglo-Irish history may have to suffer in the future. These four houses had all, in their day, given shelter to an attempt to blend two traditions, the imagination and poetry of the Gael, with the intellectual vitality and administrative ability of the colonist. And though this mingling of loyalties frequently did happen, each generation found it not easier but harder to create for Ireland some common culture which all its citizens could share.

Hubert Butler's determination early in his life to remain in his locality and earn his living as a market gardener seems in retrospect both inevitable and unyieldingly brave. Shunning is an ugly act. The people remembered dimly from an American childhood who with pursed mouth and averted face would have walked righteously past a Butler: their shades were in Kilkenny. They were my ghosts; the American Irish were a hard-headed, nostalgic lot, but no more of Ireland than I was. And so, afterward, I was curious to see how Irish people who had not been on the program would respond to this celebration of Butler, and whether the old divisions had healed over; I had a sense they had not, entirely. It is well to remember that he thought his countrymen had a good deal in common with the people of the Balkans, not the least in making war on themselves. The best commentary that came my way I will leave till the end. The two others I will quote from are public letters. The first was in fact rejected for publication by the *Kilkenny People* and the *Irish Times*. Its author, a Dominican priest from the Dublin area, then distributed it by hand throughout Kilkenny, including the pubs and supermarkets and in front of churches, until the mayor passed the word that it could be considered libelous, whereupon it disappeared from circulation. It was faxed to a friend in the States, and given to me.

> 30 October 2000
>
> Sir, I write in response to the inappropriate apology made by Mayor Paul Cuddihy and Kilkenny Corporation to Ms Julia Crampton as reported in the *'Kilkenny People'* (27 October) [and in the *'Irish Times'* (18 and 24 October). Right of reply to my letters was refused by both papers.]
>
> Ms Crampton dredged up the controversy sparked by her late father, Hubert Butler, on a highly political and complex topic, which led to the silent withdrawal of the Papal Nuncio from a public meeting in Dublin in 1952. Mr Butler had wronged the Holy See and the Catholic Church by falsely alleging that both had approved and promoted the forced conversions of Orthodox Serbs to the Catholic faith in wartime Croatia. With due respect to the dead, Mr Butler was not a professional historian, still less an expert on the centuries-old tangled web of Serbo-Croatian racial, political and religious history.
>
> ….Now a Mayor of Kilkeny [sic] has issued an objectionable apology on behalf of the Catholics of Kilkenny (but by whose mandate?), to whitewash the deliberatively provocative incident of forty-eight years ago. His action constitutes another false gesture based on historically defective information. Mr Butler was responsible for disrupting community relations, and for the social backlash (from Protestants as well as Catholics) that he brought upon himself.
>
> Perhaps the Mayor might carefully read Mr Butler's writings where (quite apart from the Balkans issue and his support for Tito) his rather bitter anti-Catholic spirit is apparent. Mayor Cuddihy's injudicious and insensitive comments have caused a slur on the memory, decency and integrity of his deceased predecessors in the Tholsel. An apology to their insulted families is surely called for, or will the

> secularists, combining with the history and theology revisionist lobby, which seeks to neutralize and depreciate Catholicism in Ireland, be allowed to go on rejoicing. Yours etc.,
>
> (Revd) Thomas S. R. O'Flynn, OP, Ph.D.

It is as if no time passed. The pity of it is, while calm, reason, and serious reflection are preferable, sharp correction is what this letter requires, ridicule what it deserves. The comic pathos of the Cork Stalinist who had not read Butler has turned deathly in the mind of this spiteful cleric, with his imprecisions – I count at least three – shading into distortions and untruths, his high-handed willingness to continue to take offense when none was given. Need it be said yet again how precisely Butler had chosen his words, how closely he had done his research, how exactly he had made his argument? It seems so; for the polemic this reader would call hysterical might actually be taken seriously somewhere. Intellectually, his is an example of *mauvaise foi*. In the church in which I was raised, it would have been called giving scandal.

The second letter was published in the *Kilkenny People* November 3, 2000 under the title "The Mayor, the Professor and a great 'Plaster Saint'":

> Sir,
>
> ….Being in town, I went along to the Butler Conference to see for myself. After the Mayor's apology on Friday evening (October 20), a Professor, Roy Foster of Oxford University, related to the meeting an anecdote of Hubert's, about the fundraising efforts of two local Republicans who came to their door in 1920.
>
> His mother's response was: "I know who your are, Jim Connell, and take that cigarette out of your mouth when you are talking to me."
>
> I do not know whether the particular quality of disdain displayed by the Professor was part of Butler's original anecdote, or whether it was added on by Mr. Foster himself. but the last two words of Mrs. Butler's rebuke were emphasised by Mr. Foster in a significant semi-tone higher than the others, and he went on to say with relish that the two fund-raisers "slunk away" when the 20-year-old Hubert engaged his mother in argument on their behalf in the doorway.
>
> I myself was born and bred in Butler's own neighbourhood of Bennettsbridge, and grew up quite aware of Hubert, or of how I and our other neighbours might, in some way unknown to ourselves, have wronged him. So why, fifty years on, does the Mayor now feel he must apologise in our name?
>
> ….What further emerged over the weekend was Butler's address to the people of Kilkenny when he stood for election to the County Council in 1955. He got very few votes. The reason is evident from his election address:
>
> "We live in a democracy, but the democratic principles which we obey were not developed in Ireland by the Roman Catholic majority, except under Protestant leadership. There are historical reasons for this which don't reflect discredit on our Roman Catholic countrymen, and need not concern us here.
>
> "The point is that most of our free institutions in Ireland were evolved by Protestants, or men of Anglo-Irish or English stock and it would be very strange if we had not a particular gift for making them work (county councils developed in England. They worked badly in Ireland) because the heirs of the men who invented them and have a sort of hereditary understanding of how they work play no part in them. Most of us can act independently because we have independence in our blood."

> So democracy is a matter of inherited racial breeding. The only thing I will say about this is that the two young Republicans who called at Mrs. Butler's in 1920 would probably have been able to live out their lives quietly in Bennettsbridge if the Irish people had not, in defence of their democratic vote for independence in 1918, been compelled to resort to arms against the military dictatorship imposed on them by the world's biggest superpower. The people of Bennettsbridge needed no lessons in democracy from anybody….
>
> The project of turning Butler into a plaster saint – himself a great demolisher of plaster saints in his own time – is not something he would have approved of.
>
> Yours etc.,
> Pat Muldowney

Here the signatory is a man living in Co. Waterford. Like the second Stalinist from Cork, he has not learned the use of metaphor, though he may be said to have a sensitive ear, and, like the priest from Dublin, he will never let go of a cherished grievance. But even an American of (partially) Irish descent knows that "the Irish people" to whom the writer harks back, not a year after the world's biggest superpower had given way to them, went to war against each other.

The third excerpt is of so different a measure and tone that it suggests to this reader one reason parochial arguments will never cease in this life: because the sides are never evenly matched. The author is Eoghan Harris, writing in the Sunday *Times of London*, October 29, 2000. Eoghan Harris also wrote the Foreword to GRANDMOTHER AND WOLFE TONE, a volume of Butler's essays. In this column, he recounts why he took to Butler's thinking – in 1985 he was given ESCAPE FROM THE ANTHILL to review, and did so with passion – and, gleefully, calls him "a fast-moving fighter."

> Butler was born into a famous Protestant Kilkenny family at the beginning of the 20th century. He remained rooted in the Nore Valley through all the turbulent events of the last century. But unlike most southern Protestants he cast aside the political passivity of his peers, professed himself a Protestant republican, said yes to the new state but no to its culture of the Catholic nationalism. But unlike most other "Protestant republicans" he continually challenged the Roman Catholic Church, whether it was covering up Croatian atrocities or fanning sectarian fires at Fethard-on-Sea [where the clergy incited a boycott of Protestant merchants].
>
> ….But back in 1985, apart from Butler's literary merits, I had pressing political reasons to breathe eureka when I read Escape from the Anthill. Because I was beginning to wrestle with the problem of "Protestant republicanism". In that year, Tomas MacAnna and the Abbey theatre staged my play Souper Sullivan which dealt with Irish-speaking converts to Protestantism during the famine. But in the course of researching the play I had become convinced that the two main protective colourations adopted by southern Protestants – religious passivity or Protestant republicanism – had historically conspired to strengthen the status quo.
>
> This is how it worked. By the 1960s a substantial number of Irish Catholics were fighting on two fronts – against the Catholic church and the Sinn Fein tradition. But instead of forming an alliance with the progressive Catholics, southern Protestants, in search of a spurious acceptance, seemed ready to sell out on two fronts. First, the majority of Irish Protestants failed to proclaim firmly their

full religious rights as Protestants. Second, a trendy minority professed themselves to be "Protestant republicans" and implicitly agreed to the suppression of the British strand in the Protestant cultural identity.

At times of acute crisis, Catholic nationalism has no compunction about using Protestant republicans (who are really Protestant nationalists) as a cultural militia against Catholic revisionists. Butler showed that there is a possible third way between southern Protestant passivity and Protestant nationalism.

Here is a political Protestant who runs for Kilkenny county council in the belief that Protestants can offer conscience-driven independent thinking. Here is a pluralist Protestant who does not believe in empty ecumenism. Here is a Protestant activist, who with his Peggy, physically breaks the boycott of Protestant shops by driving to Fethard-on-Sea to buy food from them.

Southern Protestants should remember that while Butler invited integration, he did not accept assimilation. In every edged essay he says in effect: "I am Irish and Protestant, which is not quite the same as being Irish and Catholic, and the details of that difference are essential to my identity."

Every polity needs so-called outsiders, even when they are of its own: those who think well and under no coercion, who will take up the principled argument, who will not accommodate to covering-up. Butler is essential reading for any educated person. Antony Farrell of The Lilliput Press, his long-time publisher in Dublin, is preparing a Butler Reader. Why, then, is the Farrar, Straus edition of essays, called INDEPENDENT SPIRIT, out of print in the United States?

KM

The quotation by the Mayor of Kilkenny is from his speech given at the Centenary Celebration of Hubert Butler www.hubertbutler.com
The quotation by Hubert Butler is from "Elizabeth Bowen," ESCAPE FROM THE ANTHILL (Dublin: The Lilliput Press www.lilliputpress.ie, 1985), p. 200
The Kilkenny People www.kilkennypeople.ie/
The Irish Times www.irish-times.ie
Hubert Butler, "The Sub-Prefect Should Have Held His Tongue"
Chris Agee, "The Balkan Butler"
_____, "The Stepinac File"
The American edition of Butler's essays is INDEPENDENT SPIRIT, Essays, ed. and with a preface by Elisabeth Sifton. New York: Farrar Straus and Giroux, 1996.
A bibliography of Hubert Butler is found after "The Sub-Prefect Should Have Held His Tongue"

Previous Endnotes:

The Blank Page, Vol. 4, No. 4
The Poem of the Grand Inquisitor, Vol. 4, No. 3
On the Marionette Theater, Vol. 4, Nos. 1/2
The Double, Vol. 3, No. 4
Folly, Love, St. Augustine, Vol. 3, No. 3
On Memory, Vol. 3, No. 2
Passion, Vol. 3, No. 1
A Flea, Vol. 2, No. 4
On Love, Vol. 2, Nos. 2/3
Fantastic Design, with Nooses, Vol. 2, No. 1
Kundera's Music Teacher, Vol. 1, No. 4
The Devil's Dictionar ; Economics for Poets, Vol. 1, No. 3
Hecuba in New York; Déformation Professionnelle, Vol. 1, No. 2
Art, Capitalist Relations, and Publishing on the Web, Vol. 1, No. 1

Recommended Reading

Desmond McCarthy once said that good society was an association of
people to give each other pleasure, while second-rate society was competitive.
-*Martin Boyd,* A DIFFICULT YOUNG MAN

&&&&&&

A friend of Archipelago *asks Umberto Eco about readers and reading:*

TAIJE SILVERMAN: You've spoken about a new public that wants to read a higher calibre of literature. How would you define that public, and what do you think brought it about?

UMBERTO ECO: I made a discovery twenty years ago, when I published THE NAME OF THE ROSE. And I always heard the same silly question: 'Why, when your books are so full of quotations, historical references, and philosophical problems, do you have so many readers? ` And I answer, `I think probably you're still thinking that readers are stupid.' Only publishers believe readers want to read trash. The world is full of people who read just to be challenged. To be engaged in an intellectual affair.

I'll give you an example. When my American publisher first read THE NAME OF THE ROSE, she told me `Oh, I love your book'—she was Serbian-American, but also read and spoke Italian and German...a really great person—'and I want to publish it. But in America, you know, with a book set in the Middle Ages and filled with Latin quotations, we'll be lucky if we sell 3,000 copies. So if you accept an advance for 3,000 copies`—and that was nothing—`then I will do it.' And I said, 'Okay, do it!' And it was a smash in America. I received a lot of letters—not from people of New York and San Francisco, which are cultivated cities—but from the Midwest, from Texas. Letters from people who were really challenged by this. They didn't understand everything, but they understood a lot, and they wanted to have a discussion about it.

Obviously we all need very easy reading, like crime novels, in order to sleep in the evening, or to pass an hour on the train. But this is not the norm. And the same person who might want a crime novel to relax a little will, in another moment, want a book that posits problems and questions. There are more of these people than publishers believe. More and more often I find people asking me for a signature. And these people are the gasoline attendant, or the man on the train, or the policeman at the airport. Thirty years ago we believed that these kind of people were not reading books. But something has changed. They read. Obviously, among six billion people living at this moment on the planet, the community of readers is still very small. But it's bigger than it was fifty years ago. But I shouldn't make such a statement in this country, because here people used to read a lot more than people in Italy or in other countries did.

You know, there are always journalists asking, what do you think of the death of the book, of the fact that people do not read any longer? But in the cities, bookstores are flourishing. New bookstores, six floors tall, like the Fnac in Paris, or the Feltrinelli bookstores in Italy. And they're full of young people! I ask myself, where do these people come from? And maybe they don't buy a book every day but . . .I repeat, among six billion inhabitants of the earth, there are not enough readers. But I am a little more optimistic about it.

TAIJE SILVERMAN: Do you think that with the huge quantity of information that the Internet has made so readily available, we're going to see a new breed of literature coming into being?

UMBERTO ECO: There are two phenomena. One is the *samizdat* era. The Internet allows people to put their text on-line without passing through publishers. Which is why we have the crisis of the so-called vanity press ... those publishers who make you pay in order to publish your book. This is a good, democratic event. A young person who wants to make his or her texts known will put them on the Internet. And something can come of it. I know a young friend of mine who put their novel on the Internet, and then a publisher asked to publish it as a book. But this can also create confusion. Because for a young surfer, there are no criteria to decide if that publication is good or bad. In a way, the publishing houses represent a criterion. You think—at least, if the publisher's not crazy—that there is a selection process involved. I remember reading a cultural magazine in Italy when I was young. The magazine published poems sent by its readers, and those poems were commented on in the magazine. The critics would say, 'That's good,' or, 'I don't like it.' For me, this school of criticism is very important. To learn how to judge a poet. To make up my taste. To say, 'This is a good verse, this looks very outdated,' or 'This is an imitation of a lot of previous poetry.'

With the Internet, the risk is that a young surfer doesn't know whether what he or she receives is worth something or not. It can create a certain anarchy. But I don't see this as a tragic problem. There is the possibility of making one's own work known. My students have a site on which they publish their own papers.

Then there is another phenomenon. It's the idea that now, with the Internet, there can be a kind of free literature without author, which one person starts and the other continues and it goes on. This is good creative play, but it's no more than play. I think we need a finished, authored book to confront ourselves with. This authorless Internet literature could be equivalent to a jazz jam session that every night will become a little different…and why not? Provided you don't say, 'as so-and-so says…' But I don't think the new Internet literature will destroy authorship. It's the same as saying, 'If you put your children in a sort of sanatorium, it will destroy fatherhood or motherhood.' No. We will always need a father or a mother.

TAIJE SILVERMAN: You're likely in a single paragraph to describe Superman, Santería, California's wax museums, Communism, and the Middle Ages, and make them all seem effortlessly connected. How do you keep so much information in your head at once? Is your tendency to cross-reference so wildly an intuitive one, or is it more that you are just having fun?

UMBERTO ECO: Well, I know a lot of people who keep more information in their head than me. And live happily forever!

I think the moving element is a curiosity. If you are curious, you absorb what you see and you keep it in your memory. And in learning it, you feel pleasure. Even though it can be tiring. This problem, I know, belongs to the privileged person like me. Many of my fellow human beings work, and then when they are free they cultivate a hobby. For people like me, the job is the hobby. They're the same thing. So you can work even during the night, and still have fun. I know this is a privilege. A lot of people cannot do it. They are obliged to work, perhaps at an office, making calculations. And then they might read a book.

The other side of the story is that if your job is the same as your hobby, you can, unfortunately, never have the pleasure of sitting down and reading a book. Because even when you read a book, you're speculating about it as if it were your job. So you lose some

of the pleasure which other people might get. But in general, I think, yes: the fact of identifying two sides of your activity is a real fortune.

TAIJE SILVERMAN: Are you constantly making connections between everything?

UMBERTO ECO: [*Laughs*] No! I spend my time stopping myself from making connections. Trying not to exaggerate.

Taije Silverman is a poet and journalist formerly with the Prague Tribune. *She has been published in* 64, *a magazine published in Virginia*, and Ploughshares. *She spoke to Umberto Eco in the Prague Castle last Autumn.*

Umberto Eco, selected titles:

THE NAME OF THE ROSE (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich)
FOUCAULT'S PENDULUM
MISREADINGS
THE ISLAND OF THE DAY BEFORE
KANT AND THE PLATYPUS
TRAVELS IN HYPERREALITY
A THEORY OF SEMIOTICS (Indiana University Press)
THE ROLE OF THE READER: EXPLORATIONS IN THE SEMIOTICS OF TEXTS
SIX WALKS IN THE FICTIONAL WOODS (Harvard University Press)

Feltrinelli Bookshops www.gnomiz.it/librerie/feltine.htm
Fnac www.fnac.com

Letters to the Editor

"Woman Driving a Car"

To the Editor:

A fire of ideas has resulted from one small section of Cornelia Bessie's article about Lev Dodin and the Maly Theatre Company:

> Once, when I was driving him somewhere I caught him looking at me
> as though he were studying a painting called "woman driving a car."

I began to tinker on-line with gazes/sight/perspective/art/and iconography; hours later found an illuminating piece on why there is no perspective in Persian miniatures, or in Muslim art at all* learned about the iconography of women's gazes in Christian art, in an exhaustively argued but fine thesis by a feminist scholar+; and, while I was at it, skimmed the long history of theories of sight and read up on the discovery of perspective – all the while thinking about Lev Dodin's gaze in that car. I recalled that the power of the 'gaze' in Western art is such because our world is Greek-based and their approach to life was visual, unlike the Middle Eastern world where it is audial. Hardly my idea – I think it is Auden's; but it struck home while learning how to look at Muslim art last night, where perspective was not just ignored, but forbidden.

Some of the last decade I spent involved with peoples who long ago came from further east, or east and south – Estonians and Lithuanians. Their cultures remain strongly audial: they like their difficult, musical, very old languages spoken with care and precision; are much given to choral singing, opera, drama – all the oral arts, important not only in the Baltics but to a wide swath of peoples to the east and south. The plastic arts until recently were embellishments, repeated motifs carved, painted, woven and sewn on items for practical use and, like language and music, eminently portable, for these once semi-nomadic peoples. It is the ear which defines this east-to-southeast imagination most comprehensively, not the eye. On the Aegean Peninsula, the Greeks viewed life rather differently and, as a result, so do the rest of us in much of the Western world.

Arguments over where light comes from and how we see have been in contention since Plato and Aristotle, with Platonic thought leaning somewhat farther east, later to strongly influence Christology and Western religious art. From Eros to the arrows of Mary's penetrating gaze is one smooth line, passion redirected for mystical purposes. The idea behind this fills Western libraries and has since the founding of the monasteries: you gaze on beauty or pathos and the emotion engendered leads by stages to the Ideal or to God, or it does not (Plato and Aristotle still arguing). Is the eye the gateway to the soul? Dangerously so, to religious thinkers of the Middle East, where worshipping an object or representing the Almighty is proscribed in two major religions. There, the ancient spoken Word is sacred, true all the way to India. Despite the Christian Bible's *In the beginning was the Word,* the Western Christian cannot feel its aural impact, unable to hear the original and not inclined to, where the syllables are direct lines to G_d for Judaism and Islam (and to any devout Hindu). For others of us, the Aramaic is missing, and so is our belief in the elemental, transforming power of the spoken word. West and north of the Aegean, we've gone instead with the power of the eye.

When perspective was first discovered and applied to art, the Individual separated himself out forever from the undivided world and stood complete, which worried the Church Fathers but not the Humanists, who felt we could now continue what the Greeks had started. This discovery of perspective was greeted with much greater alarm farther to the east and south, where it was thought to cut the viewer apart from God, throwing him out of the picture, as it were, and so its use in art was forbidden. Those flat placements in Persian miniatures are to *protect* the devout from the 'evil of perspective.' If things looked more real, the viewer would be too much recalled to himself and miss the point, which was union with G_d. The Word seemed far more reliable– the ear more tractable than the eye.

And so, to me, Lev looks at Cornelia Bessie, on that ride, in a slightly Eastern way, just long enough for the reader to catch the alchemy in that focus. They do not move much – and cannot speak for lack of language; it's all in line-of-sight. She thinks he sees her as a painting, but I think he imagines her speaking lines as on a stage (perhaps his). He's hearing spoken words. For some, meanwhile, his gaze has set off a roar of recognition to do with Christian iconography, but it's now turned upside-down, for a *woman's* sanction to look at all is here reversed. A physically powerful but gentle bear of a man regards a calm woman, one who happens to be in charge of the vehicle. At the same time, we gaze on him as she cannot (partly because she's driving: a nice nuance on the female gaze averted), but also because he's not staring at *us.*

Lev looks at her, she says, "as though he were studying a painting called 'Woman Driving a Car.'" He is our vehicle for seeing her, but the gaze rebounds, for Lev looks nothing if not apostolic, himself, like an enormous saint squeezed into this car; until it all begins to seem a mild send-down of centuries of Christian art. Now add the reader, that orphaned witness, and the ghost of perspective comes along, too. Lines of sight multiply to aggravate the geometry, until the scene in the car– with the East contemplating the West, and the West imagining the mind of the East but from a very Western point of view – accomplishes exactly what the clerics of both would wish. The target is the same. We may have overcome our prodigal status, here in the West, with the spread of the *printed* word – Gutenberg's press appearing the same century as the use of perspective – by employing both the eye and the ear and trusting imagination to set the stage: a leap of faith. We watch Lev watching Cornelia by reading the words on the page – we're a part of it, too.

No division.

Kathy Callaway

*no perspective in Persian miniatures, or in Muslim art at all:
www.persianart.net/libreries/article/Perspective.htm
†fine thesis by a feminist scholar: sterling.holycross.edu/departments/english/sstanbur/Stanbury.htm

Kathy Callaway is a contributing editor of Archipelago. *Her "Estonian Letters" appeared in Vol. 1, No. 1, and her "Lithuanian Letters" will appear in the Summer issue. "The Maly Theater Company," by Cornelia Bessie, appeared in Vol. 4, No. 4.*

The Making of Saints

To the Editor:

I was much interested in your reading of Paul Celan, line by line. I undertook, years ago, the study of German just to be able to read Celan in the original. I will have to read the biography you mentioned, along with GLOTTAL STOP, the new translation of some of his poems by Heather McHugh and Nikolai Popov. Some of their translations were in our summer issue but are gone now from our pages, as the German publisher Suhrkampf, which owns all of the rights to Celan's work, I believe, only gave us permission for six months' posting.

I understand, too, your ambivalence toward the Pope. I became a Catholic as an adult, converting when I was 26. My mother was a fallen-away Catholic, an odd case in that it was her marriage to my father that kept her out of the church, and that, once they divorced, after almost thirty years of marriage, she was able to go back; the divorce, and her going back, occurred in the couple of years after her conversion. And yet, I, too, have fallen away, for all of those reasons that you touched upon. I found myself recently much disturbed by the reading of HITLER'S POPE, a disturbance expressed in these two poems that I send you. I hope they don't seem too strong. I have a sense from your writing of a certain evocative exactitude and silence..

Rebecca Seiferle seiferle@thedrunkenboat.com
Rebecca Seiferle is the editor of The Drunken Boat. www.thedrunkenboat.com *The essays to which she refers are "The Blank Page," in Endnotes, Vol. 4, No. 4, and "The Poem of the Grand Inquisitor," Vol. 4, No. 3.*

The Making of Saints

A peasant girl who roots in the mud
for the unfailing spring becomes one,
not because the trickle of water eventually
overfills the grotto, not because her neighbor's
baby, thrashing his limbs, on his back
in the desperate puddle, cries out with restored
health and life, not because a bonfire of crutches
will be left at the site which was once the village dump,
not because anyone who stands beside the girl
can see the lady to whom she speaks, and not because
of her fervor which only grows as the laughter
swells around her, but because the girl will name
the Lady as the Immaculate Conception, on a day–
o careful scrutiny of the calendar!–just days before
the Pope in Rome announces the Doctrine
of the Immaculate Conception, a doctrine
that will be twin, hinge, foundation
to the new Doctrine of his own Infallibility,
and, which this girl, digging in the mud of Lourdes–
the *dolt* of her class, *a very idiot* according to the sisters,
empty as the earth itself filling up with water–
will become the cornerstone of.

"A lonely man in his greatness"

Pius XII, who for some unknown reason
always hated flies, rotted in his coffin.
He who had been crowned with such ceremony,
glittering in a bejeweled, ascetic pose, had
the tip of his nose fall off while he reposed
in state. He who had such a delicate stomach
that trains of food stuffs traveled with him
and yet who, as Europe starved, faced
every heaping plate as if *opening a warrant,*
who was so parse, he said nothing of the Jews,
who *smelled of the absence of all scents,*
who lifted his arms in a gesture of *immolation*
and said nothing for the Jews, who had himself
filmed carrying a lamb on his shoulders, who
required that *no human presence should mar*
his daily stroll in the gardens, whose odor
of sanctity was antiseptic doused on his hands
and linens, from whom the workers hid
in the bushes rather than disturb the *pure white wraith*,
who would not sanctify those who smoked
or uttered a single curse, who would say nothing
to the Jews, rotted in his coffin. The doctor
who tended to his strange undiagnosed ailments
embalmed his body with a technique
that failed like the Concordant with Hitler,
though, in a sense, it was successful,
elevating the absolute power of the Pope,
as his coffin was elevated through the streets
of Rome. As the trinity of coffin, one nested
inside the other, passed from the caecum
of St. Peter's, past the appendix of the archives,
to the colic streets, through the gates of Ileum,
the bowels of the city itself, strange noises,
of belches, flatulence, erupted from the corpse
of the Angelic Shepherd–like the earth
in many places in Europe, even in 1958
still rising and falling to the noises of death.

—Rebecca Seiferle

An enthusiastic e-mail letter

To the Editor:

A few weeks ago a Swiss film maker approached me with a request to translate the scenario of a documentary film about Annemarie Schwarzenbach. A colleague of hers, a German journalist who is hoping to interest American institutions in mounting an exhibition about A.S., also got in touch with me. Seeing the film, looking at her photographs, reading excerpts from her novels and travel books, discussing her with the journalist, all amounted to a sort of crash course in the life and work of Annemarie Schwarzenbach. You can imagine my surprise at seeing her name on the list of contributors to the current *Archipelago*.

This evening I received an enthusiastic e-mail letter from a man in Kansas who had read and loved "The Storm." I'm not used to hearing from readers at all. It was a pleasure.

Joel Agee JAGEE@worldnet.att.net
Joel Agee received the Helen and Kurt Wolff Prize for his translation of Heinrich von Kleist's PENTHESILEA (deCapua Books/HarperCollins). His story "The Storm" appeared in Archipelago *Vol. 4, No. 4. An excerpt from Annemarie Schwartzenbach's LYRIC NOVELLA, tr. by Isabel Cole, appeared in the same issue.*

No Bitterness, No Recrimination

To the Editor:

It took me a while to "read" the on-line version of *Archipelago*. I discovered (from the technical point of view) that I can read but not print the whole issue. Maybe it has to do with my system, but it doesn't really matter. The reading gave me a fine view of *Archipelago*, its international scope, and its slant toward political matters, human rights, abuse of power and its corrupting nature. Given my background, I can relate very well to these issues and wish that many people read more about these subjects and meditated on their implications.

What I like particularly of *Archipelago* Vol.4, No.3, is the lack of preachiness. That we read about the above subjects just because the writers are good writers and whatever we learn from them happens because of their lyricism, subtlety, sophistication. I don't detect bitterness, though the above subjects can easily lend themselves to bitterness and recrimination.

I hope what's good about *Archipelago* will spread and affect change.

Renata Treitel Rtreitel@aol.com
Renata Treitel's "The Burden of Silence" appeared in Vol. 4, No. 3. Her translations from the Italian of poems by Rosita Copioli will appear in the next issue. She is also the translator of Rosita Copioli, SPLENDIDA LUMINA SOLIS / THE BLAZING LIGHTS OF THE SUN (Sun and Moon Press).

The flash of words versus the flash of imagery?

To the Editor:

Novelists writing for TV? Oh, I think it's part of the American writing mythology: Fitzgerald, Faulkner, Odetts, Parker, Benchly, and others working in the industry.

Novelists who are writing in Hollywood are at the golden extreme, lying around in the Beverly Hills clover. So, what's that writing life like? It's the question every aspiring writer has at one time or another: what's it like to be on the inside?

I have seen TV shows that have more to say than any short story in *Zoetrope* or the *New Yorker*. I wonder whether the constraints of money and taste in TV are any worse than the ruling fashions of multi-culti- and PC-writing are in the book industry. Each industry has its own skew toward the market that in turn blinds it to life in this United States.

I know I'm rattling along here, but consider: I'm willing to bet that you, like me, often think that our pop culture is driven by rock and roll and NFL football. That's what the NY and LA media tell us over and over, subtly through programming, and obviously through magazine and newspaper coverage.

But that's a mistaken impression. Country music sells ten times the volume of rock and roll; and NASCAR racing has ten times the business of NFL football. As far as representing the country as it really is, we are living in an upside-down media world.

We are living in the great sentimental age of the book, but could it be that the brash media of TV and movies take over simply because they can do what words do not? And didn't literature begin in theater, and isn't immediate representation what we crave for our literary experience? The flash of words versus the flash of imagery?

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Avery Chenoweth is the author of WINGTIPS Johns Hopkins Press), a collection of linked stories.

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Katherine McNamara

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