

require, firstly, a correction of that fundamentally warped attitude of mind which imagines that understanding comes uniquely through knowledge of practical purposes! Secondly, it will require, communication by shared experiences of the pure enjoyment of nature. This means that school outings, for example, will not be restricted to visits to the British Museum, science exhibitions and art galleries, but will also include visits to lakes, woodlands, farms, hills, moors and rivers and occasional outings to see the sunset.

## The Sleeping Lord

by Rene Hague

*The Sleeping Lord*<sup>1</sup> brings together all that has been printed, sporadically, of David Jones's work since *The Anathemata* was published in 1952, except *The Narrows* (in the *Anglo-Welsh Review*, Autumn 1973) and *The Kensington Mass* (*Agenda*, special issue, 1974). These nine pieces are described as 'fragments', but the word can hardly be used here in the sense in which it is applied, for example, to the fragments of Ennius (I choose Ennius because that dogged old hexametrists is specially dear to David—what would he not give to have half-a-dozen complete books of Ennius discovered?). There is nothing broken or incomplete in anything that is built into this work. The last piece, it is true, from *The Book of Balaam's Ass*, starts with a ragged edge, but the context is restored and the continuity re-established in a very few lines.

The collection falls into four parts: an introductory poem, *A, a, a, Domine Deus*, which comes close to, but leaves a loophole from, despair; then four sections, *The Wall*, *The Dream of Private Clitus*, *The Fatigue*, and *The Tribune's Visitation*, which have in common (to put it crudely for the moment) an imperial Roman setting; then comes *The Tutelar of the Place*, which may be read as a prayer against the imposition of order at the cost of diversity and personality; and this acts as a natural bridge to the two 'Welsh' sections, *The Hunt* and *The Sleeping Lord*. Finally, *Balaam's Ass*, which comes as an addendum: differing considerably in style, scale, and feeling from the preceding poems, and yet, in spite of its position in the book, serving as a link between David's earliest and latest work.

As I write these words it is borne in upon me that I was wrong, convenient though it was at that moment, to use the word 'collection'; for the eight sections, with the addendum, form a complete whole,

<sup>1</sup>*The Sleeping Lord, and other fragments*. By David Jones. Faber & Faber. £2.95.

each separate 'fragment' a 'squared, dressed stone' in the orderly structure. I recognise that I may be imposing my own pattern upon what is in fact a chance arrangement, or an arrangement dictated by quite other considerations than those I guess at; but I am none the less confident that I am justified by the event. It should be remembered that even the *Anathemata*, than which no artefact could be finished more curiously (if I may use the word in an outmoded but appropriate sense) is described by the poet as mere 'fragments of an attempted writing'.

Anyone who moves among the real heavy-weights of poetry and tries to explain to his friend the delight and solace he finds in their work, is forced to do no more than pay tribute in metaphor to their power. That third thing, that mania from the muses without which (Plato tells us in the *Phaedrus*) the man equipped only with intelligence and *technê*, knocks in vain at the gates of poetry, eludes definition, and all comment becomes either a banality or a record of personal experience. There is no great difficulty in defining the *function* of the poet. Plato does so in that same passage of the *Phaedrus*. The simplicity of his statement that by incarnating in ordered form the endless *gestes* of the ancients the poet educates later generations is matched by that of the old Welsh poet Aneirin, *Beird byt barnant wyr o gallon*, 'the bards of the world assess the men of valour'—words that appear in the inscription which serves as frontispiece to *Epoch and Artist*. And the twentieth-century Anglo-Welsh poet, particularly in two essays in that book ('Art and Sacrament' and 'The Myth of Arthur'), and in his preface to the *Anathemata*, has expanded the central notion common to his predecessors into an elaborate and powerful analysis of the poet—of man-the-artist, indeed—as he who reminds us, by the perfection of his image (that is, by his inspiring it with the fulness of being) that there is a sacredness in particular things; to put it in his own poetic and even more cogent form, he 'guards the *signa*: the pontifex among his house-treasures (the twin-*urbes* his house is) he can fetch things new and old: the tokens, the matrices, the institutes, the ancilia, the fertile ashes—the palladic fore-shadowings: the things come down from heaven together with the kept memorials, the things lifted up and the venerable trinkets'. I may have somewhat forced that quotation out of its context: but if I have it is for the sound reason that what David is there describing is the greatest of all poetic acts. Here man is eminently the maker, and it is from the particular reality of that particular making that we draw our delight.

That I have already strayed so far from the *Sleeping Lord* is due to the solidarity of David's work. Each of the four books reinforces, illustrates, complements, and illuminates the others: often in detail, always in the central theme of a basically sacramental cosmos. How true this is becomes evident as soon as one turns to the section which,

printed last in the book, is best treated first. David himself speaks of *from the Book of Balaam's Ass* as 'affording a link of sorts between two widely separated books, *In Parenthesis* and *The Anathemata*'. True enough: though I would prefer to say an extra link, and to regard the separation as purely chronological (from 1937 to 1952)—for the peaks of *In Parenthesis* run on without interruption into the great mountain range of the *Anathemata*. *Balaam's Ass* is much nearer in its method of writing to the earlier than to the later poem. Like *In Parenthesis*, it has a greater simplicity of form (and, indeed of content: though here the reader should beware of over-confidence lest he miss much that calls for objective or subjective gloss), and a more tightly-knit structure: whereas the *Anathemata* achieves, continuously, a grander symphonic effect.

Like *In Parenthesis*, *Balaam's Ass* is attached to the 1914 war, but it soon becomes apparent that, as the date is later (David tells us this in his introductory note) so, too, the terrain differs from the battered woods of the Somme in July 1916. That terrible plain of *Balaam's Ass*, 'as level as Barking, and as bare as your palm, as trapped and decoyed as a Bannockburn frontage for 300 yards below his glacis . . . not a bush, no brick-bat, not any accidental and advantageous fold, no lie of dead ground the length of a body . . . 'Not a rock to cleft for, not a spare drift of soil for the living pounds of all their poor bodies drowned in the dun sea', can only indicate the ghastly 'Third Ypres', which Liddell Hart calls 'the last scene in the gloomiest drama of British military history', and to which is attached the dreadful name of Passchendaele: where men did indeed drown in the mud.

As the framework of the last part of *In Parenthesis* is the attack on Mametz Wood, so that of *Balaam's Ass* is an attack, from which but three men returned:

'There was no help for them either on that open plain because the virtue of the land was perished and there was not grass but only broken earth and low foliage of iron; and from the tangled spread of the iron hedge hung the garments peculiar to the men of Ireland and their accoutrements, and the limbs and carcasses of the Irish were stretched on some of the iron bushes, because the men of Ireland had made an attempt on the Mill in the early spring of '15 and again in high summer by express command of the G.O.C. in C. So that the Mill was named on English trench maps: Irish Mill, but on enemy maps it was called Aachen Haus. And as there was no help for the men of Ireland so there was no help for the men of Britain . . . and with field-glasses it was possible to discern . . . the chequered cloth of the men of Lower Britain'.

What a catholicity of compassion the man has! Irish, English, Welsh, Scottish, German, are all covered by a mantle of tenderness, even though in this iron-hedged tangle there is no Queen of the Woods

to 'cut bright boughs of various flowering' for the dead—no Emil, indeed, to be given a curious crown of golden saxifrage, no dead Hansel to share dog-violets with Goronwy: for 'his' structure 'is of re-inforced concrete, the loopholes are of the best pattern and well disposed so as to afford the maximum sweep of fire, the approaches are secured by a triple belt and his trip-wire is cunningly staked'.

And what a power this poet has to stimulate endless echoes by a crafty simplicity of phrase. Those few words, 'the men of Ireland . . . the men of Britain . . . the men of Lower Britain', brought together in that one place, recall the whole range of Irish-Welsh-Anglo-French epic literature, and the inclusion, even craftier, of 'pounds' in 'the living pounds' adds, by its slang, a wry but kindly humour that belongs peculiarly to that one war period, and to that one type of infantryman.

Nor is this a mere description of horror, for running through the texture are two strands, one of humour, and one which I can describe only as a grandeur of cosmic concept: an awareness of the inter-connection of all things, great and small, of an all-embracing unity in which all is cared for, of what in a different context one would call a *pleroma*. It is what we had in mind when we said the Christmas Preface: *nova mentis nostrae oculis lux tuae claritatis infulsit, ut dum visibiliter Deum cognoscimus, per hunc in invisibilium amorem rapiamur*—the particular concrete things of here and now expanding into the one and perennial. And the second strand: when I say 'humour', it is because I am at a loss for a word which will cover not only wit but an amused delight—almost that quality we read into 'Cum eo eram cuncta componens . . .', boldly but aptly translated by Knox as, 'I was at his side, a master-workman, my delight increasing with each day, as I made play with him all the while; made play in this world of dust, with the sons of Adam for my play-fellows'.

It is the transition from one strand to the other, often sudden, never shocking (though I must confess that the horror of the reference to Hector is almost too much for me)—it is this transition which is eminently skilful and beautiful. Thus, *Balaam's Ass* builds up to a far-reaching litany of all those upon whom the dying called. Weaving in and out of the solemnity (with the full, Vergilian, sense of *sollemnis*) is the at once pathetic and laughter-provoking account of the escapes of the three survivors, Pussy (earlier Squib) Lucifer, Pick-em-up Shenkin, and Dodger (earlier Ducky) Austin: and the cry is not only to 'that Creature of Water . . . to gentle Margaret . . . to Joan the Maid that keeled the pots . . . Brigit the Kildare maid . . .' but also to 'God the Father of Heaven . . . who knows best how to gather his epiklesis from that open plain, who transmutes their cheerless blasphemy into a lover's word, who spoke by Balaam and by Balaam's ass, who spoke also by Sgt. Bullock'.

As I turn back to the opening poem, *A, a, a, Domine Deus*, the unity of the book is again borne in upon me, for here we have a statement of the theme: a lament for all that is lost by *Gleichschaltung*—a word which David uses later, its literal meaning (I take it) having an elasticity which covers all that distinguishes the ‘fact-man’ from the ‘signifer’, the technocrat from the artefactor: with, maybe, a further bestiality born of its Nazi association. It disguises, too, our old dialectical friend, who destroys the very thing which he seeks to build; by imposing conformity instead of true unity, he kills diversity and produces our modern fragmentation; by developing man’s technological powers, he kills the artefact. This intensely moving poem is saved from utter despair only by being a prayer: for where there is prayer there must be hope. Will we see ‘the Living God projected from the Machine’? Will ‘the perfected steel be my sister’? This was a problem raised by Eric Gill, too, whose thought ran parallel to David’s: we discussed it constantly in the twenties and thirties without ever finding an answer that was not catastrophic—yet the mere fact that such a man as David can write such a poem with that problem as the material of the artefact, must indicate that somehow, some time, man will re-emerge. There is a curious ending to one of his poems, not included in the *Sleeping Lord, The Narrows*: ‘I wonder how the Dialectic / works far-side the Styx / or if blithe Helen toes the Party Line / and white Iope and the Dog / if the withering away / is more remarked / than hereabouts’. I do not think it is being over-fanciful to re-transfer the dialectic to this side the Styx, and to take comfort in the assurance that the ‘trivial intersections’, the ‘dead forms causation projects from pillar to pylon’, the ‘automatic devices’, the ‘inane patterns’, must contain their own contradiction, with a new synthesis, still human, to emerge at a higher level.

The next four sections, *The Wall*, *The Dream of Private Clitus*, *The Fatigue*, and *The Tribune’s Visitation*, may be taken together. They are each a close-up of the hateful process at work, though *The Dream* also pictures the reality of which the process is a contradiction. In *The Wall*, a Roman legionary, puzzled, devoted, humorous, resigned, sarcastic, laments the degradation of the Roman ideal. (Look at a good drawing of a Roman *signum*, if you would read all that is contained in what follows.)

‘Erect, crested with the open fist that turns the evil spell, lifting the flat palm that disciplines the world, the signa lift in disciplined acknowledgement, the eagles stand erect for Ilia.

○ Roma

○ Ilia

Io Triumphe, Io, Io . . .

the shopkeepers presume to make the

lupine cry their own.

The magnates of the Boarium  
leave their nice manipulations. You may call the day ferial, rub  
shoulders with the plebs. All should turn out to see how those  
appointed to die take their Roman medicine . . .'

—and follow up, I beg you, the implications of 'the maimed king  
in his tinctured vesture, the dying *tegernos* of the wasted *landa*  
well webbed in our marbled parlour, bitched and bewildered and  
far from his dappled patria far side the misted Fretum'.

*Implications*, mark you, as when one thing may be folded, twisted,  
woven, into others.

With the poet's characteristic shift of level, he slides into nobler  
heights when he asks (the enthusiasm of the learned craftsman passing,  
as so often in David's writing, into the unlettered ranker):

did the bright share	turn the dun clod
to the star plan	did they parcel out
<i>per scamna et strigas</i>	the <i>civitas</i> of God
that we should sprawl	from Septimontium
a megalopolis that wills death?	

—and finally, with a dreadful sigh, he returns to duty. At first reading  
(and this applies to all the apparently simple sections) the language  
may appear completely straightforward; but a closer examination  
discloses so intricate a pattern that every line lends itself—like the  
'Mantuan's ordered mine of meaning'—to an endlessly fruitful  
exegesis. As a random example may serve the single phrase 'the  
troia'd wandering'—consider the depth of the adjective: the Homeric  
association (both *Iliad* and *Odyssey*), Aeneas and Vergil, the boys'  
formalised ride in the Fifth Aeneid (and what of the Royal Horse  
Artillery's tremendous ballet?), the labyrinth, the Sybil, and all the  
related haes Jackson Knight put up in *Cumaeae Gates*. When three  
words can contain so much, to expound the meaning of a complete  
poem is indeed a formidable task.

Almost as a by-product there comes into *The Wall* the character  
of this particular bloody but unbowed wearer of the rooty-medal.  
There is a similar unstressed, 'thrown-away' characterisation in *In  
Parenthesis*. In the passage referred to earlier Plato says that the  
divine mania visits only the soul which is *hapalê* and *abatos* (might  
one not say, in words that are—no, that used to be—familiar to all  
of us, *mitis* and *intemerata*?)—and might one not apply those words  
to the young soldier, John Ball, and identify him with, recognise  
him in, the gentle, wide-eyed, innocent, so much younger than his  
calendar years, painter represented in the self-portrait of 1931,  
entitled (matter again for thought) 'Human Being'? Such character-

isation is even more noticeable in the kindly Private Clitus, who describes his dream to a young Greek recruit as they serve their spell of guard duty on the wall of Jerusalem: and over the whole dream looms the emperor's 'Vare, Vare, redde legiones'; for the dream came to Clitus as he slept, bivouacked in the Teutoburg Forest, where 'these big, fair-hued square-heads had hung on our exposed flank for five days'. The dream presents a different, if dream-land, vision of Rome, Terra Mater, of great sweetness—echoing the sweetness that is found in the Lady of the Pool section of the *Anathemata*: and (an elegant, if endlessly debatable, touch) it is from the gate of *horn* that the dream emerges. It ends in a fine fusion of humour and mystery with the introduction of the hateful, sly, time-serving, calculating, aptly named C.S.M. (if that is something like the equivalent rank) Brasso, whose mother:

'was ventricled of bronze  
had ubera of iron

and [they say] that at each vigilia's term  
she gave him of her lupine nectar  
and by numbers'.

and yet

'That'd be a difficult thing to dream, Oenomaus:  
Dea Roma, Flora Dea

meretrix or world-nutricula

without Brasso.

There are some things

that can't be managed

even in these dreams'.

So the book builds up to its first climax in *The Fatigue*, where the scene is Jerusalem, the time just before the Passion of Christ. It is a wonderfully bold concept to treat that central act from the point of view of the common soldiers detailed for what is to them but one more fatigue. It is introduced by a short poem, *Gwanwyn yn y llwyn* (Primavera in the woodland?) which brings sudden radiance into this sombre landscape. It is, moreover, a fine example of David's power of assimilation and re-presentation, and at the time of opening doors that lead to ever more distant *agalmata*—and I use that word to describe objects of delight—as Penelope's keepsake to Odysseus was to 'be for him an *agalma*—because of the glittering quality (with the glitter of Odysseus's engraved golden brooch) of this short poem, and because of the connection between the two words, *agalmata* and *anathemata*: for to Homer the contributions of the poet to the ceremonial meal were *anathemata* or *agalmata daitos*; and it is as well to remember (a point to which David himself refers somewhere) that the *anathemata* are not only the things held up 'for a remembering' but also the things *made* to give delight.

'Arbor axed . . .', the poem starts; and arbor takes us straight to Fortunatus and the *Vexilla Regis* (to which it returns) while 'axed' reminds us of Ennius ('*securibus caedunt*'), Vergil, and Homer. But there is more to it than that. *Vexilla* sends us to *Pange lingua gloriosi Proelium certaminis*, which in turn sends us to Aquinas' borrowing in *Pange lingua gloriosi Corporis mysterium*; and the densely-packed doctrinal content of Aquinas' hymn reminds us of the element of teaching or education in all poetry of the first order. It reminds us, too (for the reader can never confine his attention to an isolated part of David's work) of the particular weight of the word *recumbent* in the closing lines of the *Anathemata* ('*recumbens cum fratribus*'—and the 'turba' is there, too, and the Irish *fiana*, and even what David calls Nelson's *ecclesia* . . .): so that we have a direct succession, Homer, Ennius, Vergil, Fortunatus, Aquinas, David. And yet this, one might add, is but a splinter in the great beam that supports David's work.

*The Fatigue* is a daring piece. The men are told off for their duty by an N.C.O. who rattles out the almost liturgically compulsory sarcasms and witticisms of the parade-ground. The solemnity of the occasion is introduced unobtrusively by a reference to the Water Gate ('. . . when you have entered the city a man carrying a jar of water will meet you . . .'), and with typically Davidian craft this serves as an excuse for a whole series of those conventional military wisecracks and exhortations with which every square-bashing recruit has been familiar. Thus one of the men asks for trouble by reporting (from outside his sector) 'a movement out beyond the Water Gate' and brings down upon himself, 'And you can report for *optio's* party immediate, on relief of guard, that's *now*. He wants a few extra details at the Water Gate and seeing you're so attracted to the Water Gate, why then, for once in y'r twenty years service your duties may fit your desires'. Gradually the sergeant's language shifts into a higher and even higher gear (I would have avoided that metaphor, had I not noticed that David uses it himself) until the awful majesty of the occasion becomes apparent—and (this is a cunning touch) the poet takes advantage of the Celtic origin of the two soldiers detailed to express the climactic words ('the place of the skull') in Welsh,

in that place  
which little Ginger the Mountain  
the Pretanic fatigue-wallah  
(shipped in a slaver to Corbilo-on-Liger)  
calls in his lingo  
Lle'r Benglog.

This comes as a vast explosion, as though the heavens had indeed been rent asunder. And then a sudden deflation: back to the vast,



sprawling, impersonal administrative machine which initiates in the heart of megalopolis the process which comes down, step by step, and decides for *this* man and *that* man, that

By your place on a sergeant's roster  
 by where you stand in y'r section  
 by *when* you fall in  
 by if they check you from left or right  
 by a chance numbering-off  
   by a corporal's whim  
 you will furnish  
   that Fatigue.

After a long spell of hard and dangerous service, the old soldier not only develops a contempt for bull, but may even begin to question the very foundation for which he serves. Hence, in part at least, the Tribune's (Brigadier's?) visitation. He has come, unexpected, to stamp out—not by severity ('I've never been one for the vine-stick, I've never been a sergeant-major "Hand-me-another" to any man') but by reasoned explanation, a hankering after what is particular, diverse, and local: 'the remembered things of origin and streamhead, the things of the beginnings, of our own small beginnings'. It is the 'fact-man's' apology. 'We serve contemporary fact', he reminds his men, and it is their duty to 'discipline the world-floor / to a common level / till every presuming difference / and all the sweet remembered demarcations / wither / to the touch of us / and know the fact of empire'. There is great pathos in this address, for the tribune himself is only too dearly aware of how precious are the 'bumpkin sacraments'. 'No dying Gaul / figures in the rucked circus sand / his far green valley / more clear than do I figure / from this guard-house door / a little porch below Albanus'.

Here, then, we see portrayed, both in its majesty and in its horror, the same monster against the later form of which the poet cries out in *A, a, a, Domine Deus*: the barren uniformity which can ruthlessly insist that 'only the neurotic look to their beginnings'. And again, with admirable audacity, David ends, through the medium of the tribune's final words, with a devastating parody of the Pauline doctrine of the mystical body. Almost every word in the last page of the *Visitation* is a heart-chilling reflection, as though in a distorting mirror, of everything that is most sacred to man: all the more terrible in that the speaker is a reasonable and kindly man.

Here again, with the transition to *The Tutelar of the Place*, we have to recognise the structural unity of this collection; for we pass on to an invocation of her who 'loves place, time, demarcation, hearth, kin, enclosure, site, differentiated cult, though she is but one mother of us all'. Again it is a prayer that is saved from despair by the fact that the prayer can still be made, that there is still some

gleam of hope: 'In all times of *Gleichschaltung*, in the days of the central economies, set up the hedges of illusion round some remnant of us.' The tenderness of the writing, the sense of possible comfort, the love and respect for what is individually real, rooted, warm, for the stuff of which those are made of whom it is said that they shall inherit the earth—this, particularly because it comes hard upon the fact-man's cold and inflexible iconoclasm (a shatterer of images, indeed, is he)—this is intensely moving and, to my mind, supremely beautiful.

It makes us ask again, what can be the answer to that prayer. Would we do well to turn to another writer, who has much in common with David, and yet much to weaken that bond? For all his love of man and concern for man's future, Teilhard de Chardin had no interest whatsoever in the human artefact, and no conception of man as the maker. Man's development on this globe was a technological affair, and Spengler's distinction between culture and civilisation would, I imagine, have been unintelligible to him. On the other hand, his links with David are of uncommon strength. In the first place, Teilhard saw the whole cosmos (though it is doubtful if he would have expressed it so) as an artefact. Secondly, he shares with David an over-riding optimism based on the assurance of an ordered cosmic design. Thirdly, he was governed by an impassioned respect for the feminine principle, lamentably though he failed to express poetically what David expresses so magnificently. Readers of Teilhard will remember his affection for Aeschylus's lovely phrase, *kumatôn anêrithmon gelasma* and his association of those words both with the reflection of God's smile in his universe and with the emergent glory of Mary, and may perhaps remember another poet's bracketing of the 'Greek soldier' with the 'Auvergnat seer as two of three poets who 'in worship held our kosmos queen / sun-clothed, moon-shod / six and six her constellation crown / Earth's gateway she / kekaritômenê': and it is surely unnecessary to name the third poet.

The particular and the universal, the multiple and the one, the many and the whole: these are problems brutally bull-dozed aside by the servants of empire; but they are problems to which both David and Teilhard suggest the same answer, though the form of words is peculiar to Teilhard, the union that differentiates. In every case unity is the ultimate goal, but it is only those who respect person (whether in God or in man) and particularity, who can hope to attain a union that is an expansion and fulfilment of person. Teilhard, time and again, says this explicitly: he expresses it in evolutionary terms and foresees—even recognises as present—a new critical point through which man will break, to continue, at a higher level, the release of spiritual energy which works towards unity and which (though this he does not recognise) is the motor that drives

poiesis. In David a similar thought, and a similar hope, is implicit. He prays to the queen of the differentiated sites that she may 'in the December of our culture ward somewhere the secret seed'—and December spells May, and seed spells fruit.

So: we have had the problem stated, the case argued, and the prayer spoken. Now we pass into the poetry of application, as with *The Hunt* and *The Sleeping Lord* we enter 'these whoreson Marchlands' (if I may be forgiven the quotation from a very different context) 'of this Welshry'. When St Guthlac felt his way with sounding-pole up-river to Crowland (cf. *Anthemata*, p. 112), 'hearing the speech of the surviving Britons, he thought it the language of devils'. Readers who have English alone and are unwilling to make the effort required by the shift from the pronunciation of English to that of Welsh—even with the annotated help provided—and to continue the effort until they have developed their own built-in synchro-mesh, should encourage themselves to do so by reading or re-reading the essay on 'The Myth of Arthur' in *Epoch and Artist*, and the Rees *Celtic Heritage*. To minds that are governed by a purely English tradition—which skips over all that is British in our many-stranded culture—even *The Mabinogion* is a strange book (as is Irish epic) in comparison with Malory. And such a reader gravitates naturally towards and finds himself more at home in 'Peredur' than he does in the 'Four Branches'—for which he has to suffer the superciliousness of the Welsh scholars. In such cases, as David argues most convincingly, the fault is ours. We are blind both to that particular period, unique in Western European history, when the Arthurian myth was born from the last struggle of the Romano-Britons in their abandoned island, and to the dim recesses into which the Celtic imagination disappears. This is what David has in mind when he blames Tennyson not for what he put into the Arthurian legend (for he rightly 'invested the subject with the values of his own age') but for what he left out. Sliding, as he often does when the pressure builds up, into poetry, David puts the matter in a form that is more cogent than argument:

' . . . from Chrétien to Malory we are aware of unplumbed deeps and recessions below and beyond the medievalised and christianised story. Gusts drive down upon us through sudden rifts in the feudal vaulting, up through the Angevin floor; we stumble among twisted roots of primeval growth among traceries of Gothic and Christian workmanship. Behind the contemporary 'sets' the ever recurring 'passing meek gentlewoman' complete in the paraphernalia of medieval high life . . . we scent things of another order. . . . Could we remove the Gothic attire, the figure beneath would be very other than that of 'a fair lady and thereto lusty and young'. Rather we should see displayed the ageless, powerful,

vaticinal, mistress of magic, daubed with ochre, in the shift of divination, at the gate of the labyrinth’.

There, indeed, the leaves flutter, and we may say that ‘clear the cipher runs from Cumae, though hinge creak and wind scatter manic fronds’. It is this reaching back into the dimmest caves of the folk-mind that fascinates the archaeologists who delight in David’s work. And that is why Ireland, as in the *Mabinogion*, feels so close—and, incidentally, it adds something peculiarly moving to the battle-scenes of *In Parenthesis* and *Balaam’s Ass*, the Irish heroism both on that first day of July and on the earlier attack on the Mill, with, on each occasion, a Welsh accompaniment and the contiguity of the men in the chequered cloth.

The correction of our ignorance is simple enough for the reasonably industrious: it involves, surely, less than is called for in correcting the same fault in relation to the nordic strand in our culture. Most English speakers must be obliged to read the *Dream of the Rood* in translation, but even a slightly more complete knowledge of the language brings an enrichment that runs through the whole of our reading—and can affect even our visual perception, in, for example, David’s use of ‘Ongyrede Hine tha geong haeleth thaet waes God aelmihtig . . .’ both in an inscription and as an immensely fruitful source in the final section of the *Anathemata*: as an illumination, too, of Fortunatus’s ‘*Arbor decora et fulgida*’ and so of David’s ‘*Primavera in the Woodland*’ and so of all the Passion-centred poetry of *The Sleeping Lord*.

The same applies to what we must accept as an equally important source of light, the early literature of Wales. To take an extremely simple example, the grand catalogue of Culhwch’s ‘invocation of his boon’, and Arthur’s catalogued reply, obviously lend themselves (like the Homeric catalogue of ships) to, and have their grandeur enlong vista of a new and different world, still bound by tradition to hanced by, recitation. And this is true of the *Sleeping Lord*, too, written, as David tells us ‘essentially for the ear rather than the eye’. And what sort of recitation can there be without familiarity with pronunciation and accentuation, and some knowledge at least of the background of reference?

It is the Culhwch and Olwen story from the *Mabinogion* which provides the matter for *The Hunt*, and the earlier story should be read first if one is to appreciate how David has imposed his own loves, sources of amusement, and peculiar pathos on the ancient framework. A characteristic detail is an example, taken almost at random, of the careful juxtaposition of grand and time-worn with conversational and workaday—a juxtaposition that introduces a the old. The poet is listing those who rode out to hunt the great Boar:

'(if there were riders from the Faithful Fetter-locked War-Band  
there were riders also from the Three Faithless War-Bands: the  
riders who receive the shaft shock

in place of their radiant lords  
the riders who slip the column  
whose lords alone  
receive the shafts)

Those three words 'slip the column' give a change of emphasis, of context, of association, which strengthens the link between the Welsh prince's retinue and the fusilier.

To us, at home in the romanticised anglo-continental tradition of chivalry, the Arthur, *rex quondam rexque futurus*, is a very different figure from the sleeping Lord; and the fund of knowledge the reader *must* acquire covers wide tracts of geology, pre-history and the origins of myth and folk-lore. Nor can maps be neglected, for the vast figure is seen as literally covering and guarding the whole of that special third of Britain. At the same time, the poet lets loose his peculiar facility for the particular image, the sharply drawn, the visually individualised. The descriptions of each of the king's retainers, the Foot-holder, the Candle-bearer, the Priest, introduce a special person, performing a special sacred function, with just that delicacy in the construction of detail which you find, in the drawing, super-imposed on or blended with, David's use of colour.

David is fond of a pattern in which a poem builds up to a first climax—like the shattering 'Lle'r Benglog:

*There, in that place  
that will be called  
The Tumulus  
you will complete the routine.*

a first climax which is followed by a more meditative passage, which again boils up to the final climax. Here, in the *Sleeping Lord*, we find a well contrived change. The climax comes when the Priest, praying for all the 'departed of the universal orbis', murmurs 'requiem aeternam dona eis, domine': and the Candlebearer, unable to contain himself, 'sings out in a high, clear and distinct voice the respond ET LUX PERPETUA LUCEAT EIS'. The sleep of the lord, and of the land that sleeps, is assumed into the eternal rest of Paradise—with just a hint (and here again we meet David's use of the immediate and contemporary in the heart of the perennial—when the sentinels wonder 'what's on the west wind', and whether 'these broken dregs of Troea yet again muster')—a hint of the *rex futurus*. And the poem ends with that hush, dear to Vergil as the ending of a book. The hush contained in the last line of the Second Aeneid—*Cessi et sublato montis genitore petivi*—the quiet finality of the first

word, and the suggestion of expectation that follows, these I find again in the conclusion of the *Sleeping Lord*:

Does the land wait the sleeping lord  
   or is the wasted land  
 that very lord who sleeps?

As I look back on what is written here, I feel as one who, trying to picture the many beauties of a countryside, can only offer an ill-drawn sketch-map: yet even that may perhaps help the traveller to guess at the lie of the land, and to imagine what grace it enfolds.

# Dhammapada: Words of Wisdom

by W. L. A. Don Peter

## I

Of the many works which comprise the *Tipitaka*, the Buddhist canonical scriptures in Pali, none has had greater appeal to the Buddhist, whether monk or layman, than the *Dhammapada*. It is the favourite vademecum of the devout Buddhist. The reason for this is mainly the fact that it is a small work which contains in concise, epigrammatic form 'the concentrated essence of the religion'.<sup>1</sup>

The *Tipitaka* is a collection of the traditionally accepted canonical texts of the *Theravada* (also called *Hinayana*), the form of Buddhism which with local variations is dominant in South-East Asian countries—Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia—and is therefore known as the Southern School of Buddhism, which is one of the two main branches of the religion, the other being the Northern School, the *Mahayana*, which once flourished in India, whence it spread into Tibet, Nepal, China, Korea and Japan, in which countries it counts large numbers of adherents.

Pali, a sort of softened Sanskrit,<sup>2</sup> appears to have been a dialect of the kingdom of Magadha, in North India, where early Buddhists were

<sup>1</sup>K. J. Saunders in *The Buddha's 'Way of Virtue'*, a translation of the *Dhammapada* by W. D. C. Wagiswara and K. J. Saunders, John Murray, London, 1912, p. 19.

<sup>2</sup>Some of the hard sounds of Sanskrit are softened in Pali. For instance, the Sanskrit words *dharma*, *karma*, *nirvana* and *amitya* become *dramma*, *kamma*, *nibbana* and *anicca* respectively in Pali.