HENRY TREECE AND THE NEW APOCALYPSE: A STUDY OF ENGLISH NEO-ROMANTICISM

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CHAPTER I

THE WHITE HORSEMAN: HENRY TREECE

Then it was always sunlight, and mellow gorse
Gilded the cliffs above a singing sea;
When, hawk-handed, breasting the heathered rise,
Came the tall riders through the amber air,
Brazen their tawny hair in morning breeze.[1]

In eras of confusion, such as that embracing the first and second World Wars, many attempts are made to provide an ordered universe. Among the more comprehensive attempts is the Apocalyptic vision, a revelation of an approaching dreadful future followed by a restoration of goodness, an important element of this vision being a myth-- "the myth, if we can call it that, of Transition. Before the End there is a period which does not properly belong either to the End or to the _saeculum_ preceding it."[2] Such a transitional period finds its origin in the Reign of the Beast, which according to the Book of Revelation will precede the last days and will endure three and one-half years.

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[1]Henry Treece, "Summer Orchards, 1. Childhood," _The Exiles_ (London: Faber and Faber, 1952), p. 71.

[2]Frank Kermode, _The Sense of an Ending_ (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 12. Kermode uses the word _saeculum_ to designate a fundamentally arbitrary chronological division.

This concept of a traditional phase was originally popularized by the thirteenth-century philosopher and Biblical commentator Joachim of Flora (1135-1202), who, on the basis of the Trinity, divided all history into three periods.[3] According to Joachim, the first phase, characterized by law, was the age of the Father; the second, characterized by grace, was that of the Son; and the third phase, characterized by love, would be the age of the Holy Spirit, one calculated to begin in 1260, the date being the product of forty-two and thirty, the number of years in each generation between Abraham and Christ. Before the onset of the third phase, however, the Anti-Christ was to appear. When the Thirteenth Century passed without giving rise to an Anti-Christ, the numerous followers of the Joachim theory were left in a state of transition awaiting the dreadful last days. As one critic has pointed out, for those in any generation who hold to the Joachite triad, it is inevitable "that the present become 'a mere transitional stage,' and leaves people with a sense of living at a turning-point of time."[4]

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[3]Joachim von Fiore, Exposito in Apocalypism (Venice, 1527). Reprinted in Frankfurt by Minerva, 1964; Majorie Reeves, The Influence of Prophecy in the Later Middle Ages: A Study in Joachimism (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969).

[4]Ruth Kestenberg-Gladstein, "The Third Reich," Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes, xviii (1955), p. 221. This author points out that "The Third Reich" is a Joachite expression.

The Apocalyptic vision is common to Romantic literature, generally. To cite only three examples, it is found in Blake's writing such as in his Everlasting Gospel, which portrays the Christ of Joachim's third period; in D.H. Lawrence's later works, such as his Apocalypse; and, generally, in the works of W.B. Yeats, who can definitely be called, in the general sense, an Apocalyptic poet--that is, any poet adhering concurrently to a deep belief in the decadence of the world, a prophetic confidence in its renovation, and the conviction that his age is the transitional period between the two.[5] In this general sense, Yeats considered himself and his peers to be "the last Romantics"; in actuality, however, they were only the last of the old Romantics, their demise, in effect, paving the way for a new Romanticism.[6]

Although Romantic poetry continued to exist during the first three decades of the twentieth century, the poets writing it were primarily sentimentalists, who added little if anything to the Romanticism of the nineteenth century, but looked back, instead, nostalgically to past literary principles. With the passing of the Georgian movement,

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[5]William Blake, "The Everlasting Gospel," The Poetry and Prose of William Blake, ed. David V. Erdman (Garden City: Doubleday, 1965); D.H. Lawrence, Apocalypse (second edition, London: Martin Secker, 1932).

[6]W.B. Yeats, The Collected Poems (New York: Macmillan, 1951), p. 276.

very few avenues of publication remained opened to Romantic poetry in general. The back files of the avantgarde periodicals of that time, for example, Criterion, New Verse, Contemporary Prose and Poetry, and Twentieth Century Verse, show that these journals had quit publishing Romantic works almost altogether in favor of social poetry. Some degree of change in this state, however, resulted from the work of Henry Treece and his literary movement, the New Apocalypse—the latter owing most directly to Treece's own sense of Apocalyptic vision, and ultimately deriving from Revelation's account of the White Horseman:

> And I saw, and behold, a White Horse; and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer.[7]

By means of his movement, Treece was to become somewhat of a White Horseman in the name of Neo-Romanticism, gathering together the Romantic poets of his time in an attempt to abolish the purely social literature of the thirties, which he felt was stifling man's individuality and reducing poetry to a mere mechanical process.

Henry Treece, born of Welsh-Irish extraction in Wednesbury, Staffordshire, led the life of multiplicity that he was to later advocate in his poetry and literary

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[7]Revelation, VI, ii.

platform.[8] Born prematurely on December 22, 1911, Treece was chronically ill as a pre-school child, at one time having both meningitis and pneumonia; however, compensating for his poor health was a rich early environment. When Treece was to later recall his childhood, his earliest memories were not of his many bouts with disease but of events associated with World War I, events which perhaps formed the earliest basis of his Apocalyptic vision. Outstanding in his childhood memories was the installation of steel doors over the cellar windows of his home to protect it against bombs, a broken piano stored by his parents "for friends whose house had let the bombs in," and "the authentic, blood-red fiery cross, bigger than a house . . . [and] perched on the top of a near-by hill, foretelling a British victory and the end of the war . . . ."[9] But if the memories of World War I instilled in young Treece a sense of an ending, the events of the following years were to awaken his interest in myth and legend and thereby influence him in the direction of a Romantic vision. During these years, Treece lived with his grandparents and searched for "fairy punks," that is, toy dolls that his grandfather hid beneath

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[8]The following account of Treece's life is primarily based on autobiographical statements, so its validity may be questioned. The factual events, of course, speak for themselves.

[9]Henry Treece, "Chapter One," Life and Letters Today, XL (February, 1944), 86.

gooseberry bushes, alleging that they grew there. Living in a non-industrialized district, his grandparents owned horses and wagons and in their leisure engaged in relating much family legend, telling Treece of his great-grandfather, owner of a country mansion and factory, who paid his help with gold guineas with which he filled his beaver hat on pay days, and of his great-grandmother who was noted for her unconventional boldness. Also adding romantic color to Treece's younger days was the influence of two uncles of differing temperaments, one a poacher who told Treece fantastic tales of allegedly first-hand experiences with gypsies, and the second an upright wealthy man who supplemented the tales with precise knowledge and prints of highwaymen, the latter leaving a lasting impression on Treece. During his early period of life, Treece was also to learn of the events of the Irish Revolution, having had relatives on the defeated side of the Irish troubles. Such alternation of the genteelity and the adventurous all occurred before Treece's tenth birthday.

For the remainder of Treece's youth, formal education was to take priority. Apparently interested in studies as a young man, Treece won the science prize for two years in high school and was granted a scholarship to Birmingham University, where an interest in extracurricular events overwhelmed his interest in scholarship. By this

time the sickly young child had developed into a powerful
strong young man who, at college, played hockey, was a
welterweight captain of university boxing, acted with the
university dramatic society, and at his leisure, played the
piano, particularly blues tunes, for various small dance
bands. In 1937, Treece was granted "a degree scarcely worth
the paper bearing its inscription."[10] Treece felt that the
college regimen was inimical to genuine learning and perhaps
to spontaneity, for when later speaking of having learned to
be a professional writer, Treece stated it was somewhat
difficult "since I had to re-educate myself from a Univer-
sity training."[11] Despite his aversion to the systemization
of formal education, however, that same year Treece was to
receive a diploma in Spanish from the University of
Santander and the following year earned a diploma in educa-
tion from his alma mater.

Treece's robust attitude toward life was to become
more aesthetic beginning with a visit to Spain in 1933
where he became interested in the flamenco guitar. On his
return to England Treece accepted a position as an officer

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[10]Henry Treece, How I See Apocalypse (London:
Lindsay Drummond, 1946), p. 14. Mrs. Henry Treece writes
that "it was possible at that time to take a degree attach-
ing equal importance to more than one subject" and alpha-
betically lists Treece's area of academic concentration as
English, History and Spanish. Letter to author dated
January 31, 1973.

[11]Ibid., p. 2.

at a Leicestershire school for delinquents but shortly
moved to Shropshire to begin a career as an English master
at Mortimer College. It was there in Shropshire, as he
looked out across a beautiful patchwork of fields, that he
first felt the stirring of the poet within him and began
seriously to write poetry. It was there also that he met
Mary Woodman, who four years later became his wife.

In 1935, Treece began teaching at Tynemouth, a
public school in Northumberland, and at this time met
Michael Roberts, a poet and critic, who encouraged him in
his poetry. Treece's verse now began appearing in little
known magazines. Although he was to later oppose Auden's
social poetry as mechanical, as a very young poet, he was
anxious to share in the reflected glory of Auden, and wrote
poetry which, although including Hopkins-like pastorals,
consisted primarily of "self-conscious exercises in
Marxism," ones portraying war and all its mechanisms.[12]
Treece at that time identified himself with the communist
creed but upon examining the values of those whom he
admired, readily came to see that his "communism" was in
actuality a sense of injustice expressed in the common terms
of the day. By 1938, the year in which he met Dylan Thomas,
Treece had written enough poems to form a small collection
and had finished a book of criticism, but, having recently

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[12]Ibid.

changed to a Romantic philosophy, destroyed both. In 1938 also, Treece met J.F. Hendry, a Scottish poet, and with him founded the New Apocalypse movement which was to express his new literary viewpoint and provide a manifesto for Neo-Romanticism.

Having married in 1939, Treece settled down in a small Lincolnshire town shortly after beginning his literary movement and, although actively involved with the New Apocalypse, accepted a position as English Master at Barton-on-Humber Grammar School where he was to be employed until 1959. At the height of his involvement with his new movement, Henry Treece in 1941 heard a strange whistling near his house and turned to his wife, asking, "Now, I wonder if that can be a bomb?"[13] No answer was necessary as the sound of one of the first bombs to be dropped in England grew nearer. At a later date, a mine intended for the Humber would explode between Treece's house and the river, less than a quarter of a mile away. War had again become a dominant part of Treece's life, only this time an active part. In 1941, upon joining the Royal Air Force in which he served as a flight lieutenant and intelligence officer in Bomber's command, Treece felt fear not "that I should lose anything that I already had or knew, but rather what I

[13]Ibid., p. 6.

hoped to have, to know, and to do. And especially the last."[14] The war, surprisingly however, rather than negatively affecting his career was to strengthen his romantic view of life, with a consequential softening and beneficial effect on his poety. Thus, although Treece felt he had been too close to the war to write specifically about it, he felt nonetheless that it had taught him "sincerity, sympathy and one way of Christ"; and, indeed it was only after the war, beginning in 1945, that his best poetry was published.[15] Having an Apocalyptic vision similar to that of Yeats, Treece felt that "out of death and division can come life and unity and a new profundity, to existence," and that as a consequence some literary good had resulted from the conflict.[16] Treece saw the war and newscasts of it as awakening the public's interest in ideas and in the sound of words, and had great hopes that the occupation of troops in foreign lands would foster an understanding between men. Although the war was to separate the individual members of the New Apocalypse, it was to bring Treece together with Stefan Schimanski, with whom he established Personalism, a second Neo-Romantic movement

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[14]Ibid., p. 4.

[15]Ibid., p. 12.

[16]Ibid., p. 10.

which continued to advance Romanticism following the New
Apocalypse's loss of cohesiveness as a movement.

In 1942, Treece's interests were turned to fiction,
when George Orwell, who was at that time working with the
British Broadcasting Company, introduced the poet to broad-
casting, a career which Treece pursued more seriously after
his demobilization in 1946. It is possible that it was at
this point that Treece decided to forsake a public poetic
career, for in 1946, the year in which he published a
volume of short stories, he also published his Collected
Poems--even though his best poetry was yet to be written.[17]
For despite the premature appearance of Collected Poems,
Treece was to continue to write poetry for another eight
years, also putting out a volume of short stories, and
writing plays, and topographical features for the radio.
Only in 1952, after the Neo-Romantic movement was a fact,
did Treece complete the transition to the novel as his chief
mode of composition. Continuing in the Romantic temper, he
wrote historical novels of adventure, including juveniles,
his interest in children's books being fostered by a
daughter and son and his career as English Master at Barton-
on-the-Humber Grammar School.

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[17]Henry Treece, I Cannot Go Hunting Tomorrow
(London: Grey Walls Press, 1946); Collected Poems (New
York: Alfred Knopf, 1946).

Despite the multiplicity of careers in which he engaged concurrently and the novels of adventure he wrote, Treece was basically a family man, after World War II never leaving the small Lincolnshire town in which he lived except for a visit to the United States in the winter of 1950, where he covered the New York theatre for the Manchester Guardian and lectured at the Poetry Center in New York-- following Dylan Thomas--and then at the University of Buffalo. Although Treece was never again to publish poetry after his change to the novel in 1952, his basic literary position remained unchanged during his preoccupation with fiction; he did, however, become more conservative in his later political beliefs. As a matter of fact, Treece as early as the fifties identified himself as a strong monarchist and a conservative in politics. Like most revolutionary Romantics, Treece's vision of renovation became more conservative as he became older. At the age of 54, Treece died at his home of coronary thrombosis, having established a reputation as a historical novelist but still relatively unknown as the innovator of the only formal Neo-Romantic literary movement in England, one which unified the Romantic writers of his day against the powerful social-realist poetry which had established itself between the wars.

CHAPTER II

TOWARDS ARMEGEDDON: PHILOSOPHICAL AND LITERARY

BACKGROUND OF THE NEW APOCALYPSE

Let us arise and walk now
Out of this bare land, where the wind
Blows over cruel hills cold as a stone;
Out of the plain where grass as sharp as knives
Cuts to the limping bone.
. . . .
And let us find our way
To where the strutting peacock trails
His glory at the edge of the dark lake,
Where cypress underneath a lover's moon
Comforts the old wound's ache.[1]

Between 1918 and 1939, poetry in England in the

changes marking it came almost to rival in number those of

the national government. During this period a series of

poetic movements appeared, each having its own program and

each with a propaganda praising its favored form of govern-

ment and denouncing the others. Although poets have always

had a degree of relationship with public events, during

these troubled years between the wars, poets seem to have

born the burden of historic consciousness at least as

greatly as did the politicians. While the politicians

attributed the troubles of society to unresolved political

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[1]Henry Treece, "Poem," The Haunted Garden (London: Faber and Faber, 1947), p. 17.

conflicts, and in general looked for the cause of their troubles in surface events, the poets affirmed that reality is not found on the surface, but beneath it, and that the disorder of surface events cannot be understood until it is related to that within the inner nature of man. The history of English poetic movements during the inter war years is therefore the history of the intuitive knowledge and reaction of different poetic schools toward those disorders in the world which they could see but of which others were unaware.

In the early 1920's, after World War I, the dominant poetic caucus was a group of poets known as the Georgians. When T.S. Eliot's Poems was published in 1920, as one critic has affirmed, it set "a standard of intelligence, seriousness, wit, and literary conscience which had not existed in England since the end of the last century."[2] Eliot's importance lay not only in his poetry, which was to exert a great influence on the entire poetical productivity of its time, but in his views on tradition, technique, and criticism, and in the critical influence of his poetry, which was of utmost importance. A waste land, or similar barren picture of the world, was to form the background for many of

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[2]Stephen Spender, "Some Observations on English Poetry between Two Wars," Transformation, III, ed. Henry Treece and Stefan Schimanski (Lindsay Drummond, n.d. [1945?]), p. 175.

the poems written between the wars. Being aware of
society's sterility, the poets suggested various solutions.
Eliot found the answer in the hope of Christian redemption;
however, other poets, believing that the chaos of the times
was primarily a social problem, did not see a solution in
either personal salvation or in poetry in itself. Just as
the politicians after World War I had need of a poetic
vision to see that the problems of the world would not be
solved solely in terms of political thinking and action, so
the poets of that time needed politics, since the low ebb of
poetry was the result of the disorder in society. Only when
society resolved its problems could poetry again root itself
in healthy soil.

Because of this, in the 1930's, the younger poets
sought allies in the non-literary world, for, for them, only
through action could the problem of the collapse of cultural
tradition be remedied. Seeking a political or sociological
approach which offered a fundamental criticism of postwar
western civilization as did Eliot's Waste Land, these poets
were attracted to two theories; Marxism, which made a
radical diagnosis of the problems of society, and psycho-
analysis, which diagnosed the relationship of the individual
to society. The leading poet and poetic theorist of this
period was W.H. Auden, the constructive side of whose work
at this time consisted of political radicalism and the

healing of neuroses in the citizens of "England, this country of ours where no one is well."[3] Auden attributed the social and economic depression of the 1930's to the industrialists, who had failed to adjust themselves to a changing civilization. They created a mechanistic society which produced psychological maladjustment in men, and in particular, a feeling of isolation which thrived as a defensive reaction against insecurity. Maladjusted individuals, in turn, caused society to exhibit what might be termed a communal neurosis, one which could easily lead to war in an unconscious attempt on the part of society to unite--if only in common fear. Auden saw a cure for this ominous emotional isolation in psychoanalytic therapy and in Marxism, a social philosophy which offered man a powerful collective existence as well as a strict intellectual discipline.

Auden, like Eliot, was a poet of intellectual power, but the poets who began to write in the latter half of the decade reacted against any form of poetry of ideas. Auden's poetical development had begun at a time when a political and psychological solution to the respective problems of society and the individual was still foreseeable. But in reacting to Auden, the younger poets were reacting as well

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[3]W.H. Auden, Collected Poetry of W.H. Auden (New York: Random House, 1945).

to a period which no longer offered them the hope that an understanding of events would enable them to diagnose society's problems and point to a ready cure. Intellectualism was not only failing to solve the world's problems but indeed seemed to be stifling the natural and vital humanity of man. The new poets therefore turned their interests to the emotional and subconscious aspects of man, bringing to England in the 1930's the influence of Surrealism, a movement which had flourished in France a decade earlier and which was to provide the germ for Neo-Romanticism.

Surrealism as practiced in France was an attempt to express the actual functioning of thought through pure psychic automatism by means of the spoken or written word or by any other means available. Andre Breton, the founder and principal theoretician of Surrealism, in his "Premier Manifeste" relates that just before falling asleep one night, he heard a statement expressing a thought which had nothing to do with his preoccupations of that day or with any experience he could recall; "There is a man cut in two by the window."[4] Accompanying this sentence was a very weak but corresponding visual image of a man being perpendicularly bisected by a window. On the basis that they would make valuable poetic elements, Breton attempted to produce

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[4]Andre Breton, "Premier Manifeste," Manifestes du Surréalism, ed. Jean-Jacques Pauvert (Paris: Gallimard, 1962), p. 35. Translations by this author.

subsequent sentences deliberately, an attempt which led him

to the discovery of automatic writing which was to become

the basis of Surrealism. Indeed Breton's first definition

of Surrealism was in actuality a definition of automatic

writing:

> SURREALISM, n.m.: Pure psychic automatism by which it
> is intended to express, verbally, in writing, or by any
> other manner, the real functioning of thought, without
> any control exercised by reason, outside of all aes-
> thetic or moral preoccupations.[5]

During World War I, Breton had worked in a mental hospital,

where he had gained at least a superficial knowledge of

Freud's theories, and was therefore able to recognize the

similarity between his audio-visual experience and the

concept of free association in which inhibition is loosened,

letting subconscious thoughts spring to the surface.[6] Freud

had demonstrated that free association is not actually free,

or a matter of choice, but that its content and direction

are rigorously determined: "'Creative' fantasy can, in

fact, invent nothing new, but can only regroup elements from

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[5]_Ibid._, p. 40.

[6]Andre Breton, _Entretiens, 1913-1952_ (Paris:
Gallimard, 1952), p. 20. During the war, Breton was
between eighteen and twenty-two years old, so it is possible
that his understanding of Freud at this time was not very
deep; he merely borrowed from Freud that which he did under-
stand.

different sources."[7] While Freud viewed the dream as
revelatory only of past experience, involving external
reality only to the extent that it influenced the sub-
conscious, Breton saw the dream as revelatory of future
experience, involving external reality in a complex dialec-
tical relationship where dream and external reality are
synthesized in a higher plane and all contradictions
resolved.[8] In Surrealism and automatism, the distinctions
and oppositions between the real and the imaginary, and the
subject and the object are viewed as fabrications of the
rational mind, artificial differences which can be recon-
ciled in a realm not ruled by reason. In 1934, Breton
defined and summarized the new emphasis of Surrealism, one
quite close to that in the movement to be initiated by
Treece. The main interest of Surrealism continued to be
that of liberating the mind of man, but its pre-eminent aim
was now the reconciliation of exterior reality with interior
reality:

> We have attempted to present interior reality and
> exterior reality as two elements in process of unifica-
> tions, of finally becoming one. This final unification
> is the supreme aim of surrealism: interior reality and
> exterior reality being, in the present form of society,
> in contradiction . . . we have assigned to ourselves the

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[7]Sigmund Freud, A General Introduction to Psycho-
analysis, trans. John Riviere (Garden City: Garden City
Publishing, 1943), p. 229.

[8]Andre Breton, Entretiens, p. 157.

task of confronting these realities with one another on
every possible occasion, of refusing to allow the pre-
eminence of the one over the other . . . allowing us to
observe their reciprocal action and interpenetration and
to give this interplay of forces all the extension
necessary for the trend of these two adjoining realities
to become one and the same thing.[9]

The Surrealists presupposed a complex net of correspondences

between the universe and the individual unconscious, sug-

gesting that their concept was no more nonsensical than the

assumption of rationalism, which supposes a correspondence

between the universe and the rational mind.[10] Breton's

extension of the meaning of automatism, which includes the

dream, is a reaffirmation, not an abandonment of material-

ism; for automatism recognizes that man is not an epiphe-

nomenon in the universe but an innate part of nature; and

automatism, by penetrating into man's subconscious, is a

means of investigating and revealing material reality. For

the Surrealists, then, the unconscious was a vantage point

from which they could examine and appraise the moral order

and was in fact the true resource of knowledge, exposing the

mind's functioning at the moment it is liberated from the

control of reason and from conscious and moral preoccupa-

tions.

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[9]Andre Breton, What is Surrealism?, trans. David
Gascoyne (London: Faber and Faber, 1936), p. 49.

[10]George Le Maitre, From Cubism to Surrealism in
French Literature (New York: Russell and Russell, 1941),
pp. 215-216.

Although the Freudian theories of the unconscious were of great importance to the Surrealists, they nevertheless rejected the greater part of Freudian philosophy as metaphysical, employing Freud's principles in a non-psychoanalytic manner. Thus, whereas Freud wished to understand repressions, the Surrealists wished only to obliterate them so that the subconscious would no longer be in subjection to the ego or reason, but at least a co-ruler of the mind. By bringing the workings of the unconscious into a state of consciousness, Freud meant to enlarge the field of consciousness, thereby strengthening the power of reason and reinforcing the ego as the ruler over all. According to Freud, if the unconscious is so forceful that it threatens the rule of the ego, psychosis is impending; according to Breton the same situation would provide healthy freedom for man from the rule of the ego, whose content is conditioned by the despised bourgeois society. By translating the functions of the unconscious into rational terms and thereby reviving the rational effort of the ego to organize and control them, Freud enabled an adjustment to society; Surrealism on the other hand, offered a revolution against it.

Surrealistic poetry was primarily an instrument of knowledge which brings the reader and poet to a clearer awareness of the world perceived by the senses. The poet,

in turn, becomes a revolutionary in that he seeks to solve the principal problems of life and thereby change the human condition. In surrealistic poetry, whose main themes are love, the marvelous, freedom, the exaltation of desire, black humor, the universe of subconscious thought, and revolt against logic, there was no attempt to adhere to established rules of versification, its most notable characteristic being its imagery. By considering words as images having an autonomous life of their own, and by bringing together incongruous word-images, the Surrealists created a unique image, the validity and importance of which was questioned only by those minds restricted to traditional modes of perception. The purpose of many of these Surrealistic images was to disturb the habits of traditional perception and present a world governed by chance. Once such traditional habits were broken, the Surrealists believed, the world would show itself to contain unlimited possibilities. Thus it was the image rather than figures of speech that formed the basis of surrealistic poetry.

The advent of Surrealism in England may be marked by the year 1935, in which appeared the first manifesto of Surrealism in England, Hugh Sykes Davies' surrealistic Petron, and Gascoyne's A Short Survey of Surrealism. Although the English Surrealist manifesto was issued and prepared by Gascoyne with the assistance of Breton and other

French Surrealist leaders, it was never published in full

and indeed was never published at all in England. The

announcement of its circulation and an abbreviated form of

it were, however, published in Cahiers d'Art, a periodical

widely known in England.[11] Gascoyne, in his manifesto,

denies that Surrealism is a foreign contribution to the

English tradition, defining it as an international system of

ideas effected by the specific conditions of that time.

Gascoyne further asserted that Surrealism offers the solu-

tion to the writer's dilemma of choosing between the leftist

position, in which the primary concern is producing prole-

tarian propaganda, and a non-political position, in which

the prime concern is merely self-expression. In concluding

his essay, Gascoyne lists the following principles as those

of English Surrealism:

1. Complete agreement with the principles of surrealism
    as set forth by Breton.
2. Complete adherence to the historical materialism of
    Marx, Engles, and Lenin.
3. The opening of vast fields of action in England in
    poetry, the arts, and philosophy.
4. Complete and unrelenting opposition to fascism, war,
    imperialism, nationalism, humanism, liberalism,
    idealism, anarchic individualism, art for art's
    sake, religious fideism, and generally any doctrine
    that would tend to justify the doctrine of capital-
    ism.[12]

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[11]David Gascoyne, "Premier manifeste anglais du
surréalisme," Cahiers d'Art, X (1935), 112, 106.

[12]Ibid., p. 106.

But despite the fact that <u>Cahiers d'Art</u> was widely distributed in England, Gascoyne's manifesto apparently attracted little attention therein, for no mention of the manifesto itself appeared in England even in the avant garde magazines of that time.

Although the manifesto was the first formal statement of surrealistic principles in England, the official beginning of English Surrealism is marked by Gascoyne's <u>A Short Survey of Surrealism</u>, which appeared in November, 1935.[13] England was apparently ready for a literary change, for the first printing of the book was quickly depleted, making necessary a second printing in February, 1936. The merit of <u>A Short Survey</u>, which does not explain Surrealism but merely calls attention to it, lies in its translations of excerpts from Breton's manifestos and its accompanying slim anthology of surrealistic texts. The actual definition of Surrealism for English readers was not to be offered until Gascoyne's translation of Breton's <u>Qu'est-ce que le Surréalisme?</u> in early 1936, and examples of the new art displayed that spring at the International Surrealist Exhibition in London, which coincided with a visit by Breton arranged by Gascoyne.

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[13]David Gascoyne, <u>A Short Survey of Surrealism</u> (London: Cobden-Sanderson, 1935).

Despite Gascoyne's efforts at naturalizing Surrealism in England, it was Herbert Read who was to emerge as the principal theoretician of English Surrealism; for, unlike Gascoyne, he was to transform the French concept of Surrealism into strictly English terms. In 1934, Criterion published an excerpt from Hugh Sykes Davies' surrealistic Petron, a novel which was to become a showpiece of English Surrealism when it was published the following year, despite the fact that its author was not apparently firmly committed to Surrealism; for other than Petron, Davies wrote only two surrealistic poems and published only three essays on the movement.[14] The novel was well received. Herbert Read in a review of Petron in The New English Weekly (November 14, 1935) took the liberty of making a few general statements about Surrealism, the most important of which is that--

> under another name, or no name at all, it is already indigenous . . . . Webster, Peele, Donne, Young, Blake, Beddoes, Poe, Swinburne (besides the whole of Monk Lewis, Maturin school of fiction) might all be regarded as precursors of Surrealism.[15]

In short, Read viewed Surrealism, or "Superrealism" as he preferred to call it, as merely another label for the

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[14]H.S. Davies, "Bandetti: From the Biography of Petron," The Criterion, XIII (July, 1934), 577-580; Davies, Petron (London: J.M. Dent and Sons, 1935).

[15]Herbert Read, "Views and Reviews," The New English Weekly, VIII, No. 5 (November 14, 1935), 92.

recourse to the unconscious which had long been a distinctive feature of English literature. At the center of Read's belief was the idea that there exists a fundamental opposition between emotion and reason and that art is produced from the conflict and reconciliation of romanticism and reason, romanticism and classicism, and organic and abstract form. Since Freud had proved the unconscious to be collective rather than essentially personal, Read denied the necessity of Classicism, which he identified with society, viewing classical beliefs as simply "the temporal prejudices of an epoch," whereas "the universal truths of romanticism are coeval with the evolving consciousness of mankind."[16] Although Read had earlier viewed form and order as categorically opposed to the disorder of the unconscious, by the 1930's he began to see form as "really intuitive in origin; it is not in the actual practice of artists an intellectual product."[17] Read completely ignored the Surrealistic point of impersonality, viewing the creative process as simply that of the poet being inspired and then giving form to his inspiration. For Read, Surrealism was in essence a

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[16]Herbert Read, ed., "Introduction," Surrealism (London: Faber and Faber, 1936), p. v.

[17]_____, The Meaning of Art (London: Faber and Faber, 1931), p. 21. Read's earlier views are well expressed in "Psychoanalysis and Criticism," Reason and Romanticism (London: Faber and Faber, 1926), pp. 83-106.

reaffirmation of what he termed the Romantic principle, the right of the poet to disregard whatever interfered with the fullest, freest expression of his personality. Most English surrealistic poets viewed Surrealism similarly, i.e., as a process of giving free rein to the imagination without any regard for Breton's rigorous system. They sympathized only with certain aspects of the philosophy such as its opposition to reason and its attempt to demolish that which inhibits instinct. Thus, for the English poets of the 1930's, Surrealism became somewhat of a reassertion of the Romantic principle, but from a scientific basis established by Freud and Marx. As such, it was to revive an enthusiasm for Romanticism which had been relatively dormant since the early nineteenth century.

Although Herbert Read created a bridge between Surrealism and Neo-Romanticism in the critical realm and was to greatly influence the Apocalypse movement, it was another author who performed the function most adequately, namely D.H. Lawrence, who had died in 1930 but whose work was at this time undergoing a revaluation. The turning point in Lawrence's career as a writer had been his rejection of the empirical basis of psychoanalysis in favor of his own theory of the unconscious, whereby he had exchanged a purely clinical viewpoint for a mythological one. Lawrence's book Apocalypse provides insight into the Laurentian tradition

which was to influence the Neo-Romantic writers. The book,
in part, discusses the structure of the Book of Revelation
and the modifications made by various scholars on the
original text, but more importantly, it discusses the sym-
bolism of the Apocalypse. In his discussion, Lawrence
disposes power as demonstrated in the political expressions
of his day, in favor of the power of Apocalyptic religion,
which he sees as representing a second type of Christianity,
that commonly seen in evangelical meetings and meetings of
the Salvation Army. He interprets such religion as a form
of self-glorification which seeks, through compensation, to
destroy the power vested in authority and saints, and whose
Apocalyptic fervor is, in actuality, an expression of a fear
of centralized power combined with a resentment of it.
Lawrence saw such congregations as glorifying an avenging
God who will restore to them the power which they have
given away. To Lawrence, then, the Apocalypse is the Book
of Revelation, which provides for "The hidden side of
Christianity . . . . For the Apocalypse does not worship
power. It wants to murder the powerful, to seize the power
itself, the weakling."[18]

Lawrence's theory initiated in twentieth-century
England an awareness of the importance of the self, an
independent and exploring self resistant to the social

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[18]D.H. Lawrence, Apocalypse, p. 27.

pressures of society which attempts to subdue man, and to make him a servant to efficiency, in short, reducing his individuality. The writers who emerged in the 1930's, then, were influenced by both Lawrence and by Surrealism, in general, the latter at that time having become more of a way of life than a philosophy. The uncertainty and perplexity of the immediate predecessors of the emerging poets now appeared to have been systematized, and the resources of the world governments to be dedicated to producing surrealistic-like effects. The youngest--and last--English poetic school of the 1930's signified this state of affairs by calling itself the New Apocalypse, a name suggested to it by the writings of Lawrence.

Superficially there was little difference between the Surrealists and the Apocalyptics, for free association and catastrophic imagery are common to both; however, the Apocalypse was concerned with a disorder that had now come to the surface of events, whereas Surrealism attempted only to penetrate beyond the superficial order of reality into the disorder of the human mind. The members of the Apocalypse had noted that though the two world wars did not free society of evil and brutality, they, in hours of great fear or affliction enabled men to envision a united, humanitarian society instead of one victimized by its own economic processes, mechanical inventions, and the avarice of its

various classes and states. The Apocalyptics identified the reality for which man was searching as a battle between the spiritual, the human, and the individual on the one side, and power, self interest, falsehoods, and destruction on the other, and consequently set about to transpose the products of man-made invention back into the realm of humanity which had invented it, giving man hope of a spiritual freedom. Finally in doing so, the new Apocalypse was to offer a social-literary movement which would promote the works of such writers as Dylan Thomas, George Barker, and Vernon Watkins, and which bound together all the new Romantic writers, whether or not they themselves were true Apocalyptics. The movement, being headed by a Welshman, was to also fan the sparks of the Welsh Renaissance. Ultimately, though Apocalypticism failed quickly as a formal movement, its ideals, which Treece was to later translate into a philosophy called "Personalism," remained to influence and nourish the Neo-Romantic tradition until 1950.

CHAPTER III

THE NEW APOCALYPSE AS A NEO-ROMANTIC MOVEMENT

Stars shook as my silver screams shore high
Into their hearts, and heaved a sigh that I
Should in that minute shout
A song that other ears and other stars
Find but the birthling ballad of a boy,
The baby-babble as the tooth breaks through.[1]

General Manifesto

Once the truths proposed by the social poetry and
philosophies of the 1930's became obvious, a reaction
against them was inevitable. The best projects of Marxist
dialectical materialism were increasingly seen to be of less
ultimate value than the inward and spiritual life of man,
and hope for a better way of life was increasingly felt to
lie in man's realization of his intrinsic and spiritual
purpose and destiny. The New Apocalypse Movement, under the
aegis principally of Henry Treece and J.F. Hendry, Scottish
poet and philosopher, began in 1938 to provide a suitable
challenge.[2] A poetical as well as a social movement, it

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[1]Henry Treece, _Towards a Personal Armegeddon_
(Prairie City, Illinois: James A. Decker, 1941), p. 8.

[2]In America, the movement was known as "The Inter-
national Workshop." Although the founders never mention the

advocated the liberation of man from mechanistic thinking

and established as a symbol of the liberated man the White

Horseman of the Apocalypse. In The White Horseman, the

second anthology of the movement, a passage from D.H.

Lawrence's Apocalypse is a significant explanation of this

symbol's meaning:

> The rider on the white horse! Who is he then? . . .
> He is the royal me, he is my very self and his horse is
> the whole MANA of a man. He is my very me, my sacred
> ego, called into a new cycle of action by the Lamb and
> riding forth to conquest, the conquest of the old self
> for the birth of a new self . . . .[3]

The Apocalyptic Horseman is here translated into the man

whose natural thoughts and actions have not been inhibited

by centuries of social customs. In psychological terms, he

is the man whose id and ego are not dominated by a rigid

superego and whose actions are not always consciously

determined.

The Apocalypse movement, however, was not merely a

reiteration of Lawrence's beliefs, but fused its concern

American branch in their writings, critics have made passing
references to it in writing about the Apocalypse. Francis
Scarfe, Auden and After (London: 1942), p. 155, notes that
the movement was "particularly active in America" and
"later left in almost entirely American hands"; however,
since there appears to be no record of the activities of
the American branch, it was apparently not as successful as
Scarfe claimed.

[3]D.H. Lawrence, Apocalypse, p. 100. Henry Treece
and J.F. Hendry, eds., The White Horseman (London: Rout-
ledge & Kegan Paul, 1941).

with the unconscious with the anarchism of Herbert Read to form a new philosophy and to take advantage of the constructive power of these new possibilities. Read, perturbed by various restrictive factors in the Russian state, and noting the significance of Mayakovsky's suicide, as well as the obvious sinister influences in such events as the Moscow Treason Trial, concluded that Marxism, like other forms of theoretical totalitarianism, was destructive of the very values that it professed to maintain and offered little, if any, freedom for the unfettered development of the spirit. As a result of his realization, Read, in 1938, abandoned communism for his own form of anarchism, which based its premises on the intrinsic rights of man and denounced any form of totalitarianism that placed restraints on the freedom of the individual personality.[4]

Combining Read's new emphasis with that of Lawrence and the Surrealists, several young poets, including Henry Treece, J.F. Hendry, and very possibly Nicholas Moore and Norman McCaig, met in a Leed's garrett in the winter of 1938 to sign the following statements of principles and to begin the New Apocalypse movement:

1) That Man was in need of greater freedom, economic no less than aesthetic, from machine and mechanistic thinking.

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[4]Herbert Read, Poetry and Anarchism (London: Faber and Faber, 1938), p. 20.

2) That no existent political system, Left or Right; no artistic ideology, Surrealism or the political school of Auden, was able to provide this freedom.
3) That the Machine Age had exerted too strong an influence on art, and had prevented the individual development of Man.
4) That Myth, as a personal means of reintegrating the personality, had been neglected and despised.[5]

Although these principles constitute the only part of the Apocalyptic manifesto ever to be published, they apparently did not constitute the complete manifesto. When Treece sent the manifesto to Dylan Thomas asking him to sign it, Thomas' reply indicates that the manifesto was, in actuality, much more extensive:

> Answering your first letter: I won't sign, with or without argument, the Apocalyptic Manifesto. I wouldn't sign any manifesto unless I had written every word of it, and then I might be too ashamed. I agree with and like much of it, and some of it, I think, is manifestly absurd. That's not giving my own variety of the bird to a thing over which you and others have spent considerable time and thought; it's only to say that the language of such documents is strange to me, that organic reality is all my cock. I cannot see how Auden is unaware of Donald Duck unless Donald Duck is supposed to be a symbol and not a funny bird. Donald Duck is just what Auden is aware of. To him (Auden), what this problematical squirrel of ours stumbles over is more important than the squirrel's act of stumbling. . . . I liked very much your reasonable contradiction of the quotation from Marx. But it's all rather like

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[5]The poets who signed the manifesto have never been identified but Treece in How I See Apocalypse speaks of the movement's very "first poetic enthusiasts as J.F. Hendry, Nicholas Moore, and Norman McCaig" (p. 175), and G.S. Fraser in The Modern Writer and His World (New York: Frederick A. Praegar, 1964), p. 324, adds Vernon Watkins, Tom Scott, and himself to the list of members "at or near the beginning" of the movement; Apocalypse principles cited by Francis Scarfe, Auden and After (London: Routledge and Sons, 1942), p. 155.

flogging a dead force. Another thing that's admirable
is the insistence, without irrational prejudice, on
man's dissolution. I like the title "Apocalypse: The
Dissolute Man" more than yours. But this isn't the
time to argue with a statement of belief in which I
mostly believe but with which I cannot sympathise wholly
(or even dissolutely), owing to my own dogma of Arrogant
Acceptance. If I'm given time--you know I write slowly,
and not too often to be interfering--I'd be very glad
to write for Apocalypse, whole or corner.[6]

Ironically the manifesto which Thomas refused to sign con-

tained a quotation from one of Thomas' letters:

> About the manifesto quotation from that letter of mine:
> Don't you think, looking at it coldly, that its effec-
> tiveness (if any) would be increased by cutting out
> " . . . but I am aware of these things as well." Surely
> catalogue implies that? I think those last few words--
> whoever wrote them--sound smug. Imagine me suggesting
> that I was not aware of Oxo, Damaroids, and Bunny
> Austin. Can't you end the quotation " . . . tick and
> revolve in"? Please; and that is, too, if you have to
> use the bit of silliness at all.[7]

The date of Thomas' reply, December 31, 1938, suggests that

he is indeed referring to the same manifesto that the other

poets had already signed. Treece had actually sent the

manifesto to Thomas at an earlier date, in all probability

before the other poets signed it, but his letter had been

returned by the post office marked "unknown."[8] Treece, in

writing of the Apocalypse movement ten years after its

initiation, lists the above statement of principles, in

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[6]Letter dated December 31, 1938, Selected Letters of
Dylan Thomas, ed. Constantine Fitzgibbon (New York: New
Directions, 1966), pp. 219-220.

[7]Ibid., p. 220. Ellipses are those of Thomas.

[8]Ibid., p. 219.

which for the first time in print, six elliptical dots
appear after the fourth principle--a further indication that
the manifesto had contained some additional elaboration of
the stated principles.[9]

Although the Apocalyptic manifesto was first codi-
fied in 1938 and its first anthology, The New Apocalypse,
issued in 1939, the philosophy was not officially made
public until 1942, when The White Horseman was published.[10]
In a lengthy introduction to the second Apocalyptic anthol-
ogy, G.S. Fraser, who like Alex Comfort was to become some-
what of a spokesman for the group, defined the movement, its
major writers, and its relation to literary history.[11] The
major goal of the Apocalypse was freedom for man in all
aspects of living, both conscious and unconscious. Treece,
in his definition of the movement, saw it as a "wholeness,
a new-romanticism, a broader Humanism," "wholeness" becoming
the key word to the New Apocalypse.[12] As Treece here
announced--

[9]Henry Treece, "The New Apocalypse," Outposts,
No. 12 (Winter, 1948), p. 14.

[10]Henry Treece and J.F. Hendry, editors, The New
Apocalypse (London: Fortune Press, 1939).

[11]G.S. Fraser, "Apocalypse in Poetry," The White
Horseman, ed. J.F. Hendry and Henry Treece (London:
Routledge, 1941), pp. 3-31.

[12]Henry Treece, How I See Apocalypse, p. 21.

> Apocalyptic means: apprehending the multiplicity of
> both Inner and Outer worlds, anarchic, prophetic, whole
> and balanced in the way a man becomes whole and balanced
> when he has known black as well as white, death as well
> as life, kindness as well as cruelty, madness as well as
> sanity, and all the other paradoxes and opposites, in
> his own nature as well as in the world about him.[13]

Although Treece attempts in this same statement to define

the movement with such a precision he admits that he can

not do so, explaining that "Apocalypse has always been, and

always will be, as long as life lasts. Therefore, only when

life itself becomes obsolete might a true definition be

attempted."[14] Perhaps a general definition of Apocalypse

may be made to emerge by taking a negative approach, by

noting, in other words, what it is not and contrasting it

with Surrealism, a movement with which many critics,

incidentally, have indiscriminately identified it. Although

the New Apocalypse was a dialectical development of Sur-

realism, and shared with it an interest in the productivity

of the unconscious, it was not the French movement natural-

ized nor did its leaders wish it to be considered a British

or surrealistic movement. The Apocalypse was an attempt at

a Neo-Romantic movement for men of all nationalities, and

its founders preferred to speak of its origin as being

within each man at the time he accepts it: "it begins with

man's first knowledge of his man-ness; it starts with the

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[13]Ibid.

[14]Ibid., p. 77.

first itch in the hand, the fever in the head. It is the beginning of awareness and the answer to despair."[15] Though frequently catalogued as a type of surrealistic movement, the Apocalypse actually embodied only the positive aspects of Surrealism. It refuted the negative aspects, opposing Surrealism's refusal to allow the individual conscious control over his political and social destinies, and that material offered to the artist by his subconscious. While Surrealism proposed freedom for man's unconscious mechanisms, it did not propose freedom for man as a whole human being. Apocalypse, on the other hand, viewed the intellect and its activity in voluntary action as an important part of the completeness of man, and acknowledging the formal conscious element of creating to be part of the completeness of art. In short, the Apocalypse advocated a fusion of both conscious and subconscious elements in all aspects of life. Though this philosophy was intended for all men, Treece thought it to be more easily comprehensible to--and therefore more readily acceptable to--the Welsh. Indeed, the philosophy of wholeness is perhaps more readily understandable to all, when Treece describes it in relation to the Celtic imagination:

> A tolerance for the idea of compound realities is essential, in which respect the Celtic imagination has always held the floor. The English, for instance, call the

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[15]Ibid., p. 74.

Welsh "two-faced," a derogatory expression, but a bit
nearer the truth than they imagine, for this double-
facedness is a recognition of at least two modes of
thought or action. To the Welshman, and to the ·Celt as
a whole, there are at least two worlds; that of objects
and that of dreams. The balanced man recognizes both;
the whole man sees even more than that. He sees a
world of action, one of thought, one of feeling and one
of imagination; and moreover he sees each one of these
splitting up into other, equally important worlds. And,
like Lawrence, he "admits a god in every crevice." For
him, life does not progress in a simple, narrative time-
sequence, from A to Z, but is something that moves in
all directions at once, like man's total consciousness.
Present is but an aspect of past, and future but a
development of present; myth and history are but two
ways of explaining one life-process; prophecy is the
next step towards that state of godhead to which man's
desire for completeness points . . . . The apocalyptic
message is one of strength, of confidence as much in
man's dreams as in his achievements. There must be a
balance, poise, equal recognition of the worlds without
and within, for that way lies wholeness.[16]

It is perhaps because of its inclusiveness and ubiquitous

concept of wholeness that the movement has been misunder-

stood. In the general preface to the movement's first

anthology, The New Apocalypse, J.F. Hendry indicates that

the contributors to this volume have in common the search

for--

> the optimum living synthesis of man and exterior world;
> the fusion of man and object in philosophy through the
> collapse of the subject-object relation; the fusion of
> man and government through the collapse of totalitarian-
> ism and "state," as a superhuman concept; fusion of man
> and art, by bringing art to actual life.

Although all the writers who contributed to the anthology

did not sign the Apocalypse manifesto and were therefore

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[16]Ibid., pp. 74-75.

not official Apocalyptic writers, Hendry's statement con-
cerning their beliefs provides a concise summary of
Apocalyptic objectives.

Social-Political Position

The political position of the New Apocalypse was
clearly one of anarchy, a position intended to be an anti-
dote to both right-wing Squirearchy and left-wing Audenism.
The Apocalypse poets joined D.H. Lawrence and Herbert Read
in condemning modern civilization for its dehumanizing
properties, and advocated an anarchy similar to that which
Herbert Read outlined in his Philosophy of Anarchism, that
is, a way of life in which justice is replaced by equity and
in which man-made law, including that of Fascism, Marxism,
and Capitalism, is replaced by natural law.[17] The Apocalyp-
tics developed their doctrine of anarchism as a direct
reaction to socialism. In their eyes, "Logic [i.e.,
Totalitarianism or Capitalism] machine-made logic, has
resulted from our fear of ourselves, fear of our uncon-
trolled energy, being translated into fear of the outside
world"; their solution to the problem was that arrived at
by Herbert Read: "Each man . . . has his own space, his
own orientation, which must be encouraged or adapted if we

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[17]Herbert Read, Philosophy of Anarchism (London:
Freedom Press, 1940).

are to attain the wholeness we are seeking."[18] Since the
Machine State left little room for the individual, the
Apocalypse movement was anti-mechanistic, placing its hope
for man in myth, which according to Freud, "is the step by
which the individual emerges from the group psychology."[19]
The Apocalypse sympathizers considered themselves to be "on
the side of what Hendry calls the myth, the living and
organic expression of human need, against the object-
machine--the attempt by newspapers, government rhetoric,
and systematic organization to manipulate men as mere parts
of a huge (but quite silly and non-productive) State
Machine."[20] For the Apocalypse the logical consequence of
an affiliation with myth and a distrust of the mechanistic
society was a type of doctrinaire anarchism.

Because the poets of the Apocalypse considered the
mechanistic society a dehumanizing one, they naturally
exalted the small group as opposed to the large, believing
that in a smaller social structure, an individual could
express his opinions with greater freedom and with the
assurance that they would receive consideration. The

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[18]J.F. Hendry, "Writers and Apocalypse," The New
Apocalypse (London: Fortune, 1939), p. 12; Herbert Read,
Philosophy of Anarchism, p. 4.

[19]Sigmund Freud, Group Psychology and the Analysis
of the Ego (London: The Hogarth Press, 1949), p. 114.

[20]G.S. Fraser, "Apocalypse in Poetry," p. 9.

Apocalyptics thus advocated revolt, if only in spirit,

against the centralized government in favor of the small,

local government. Treece, speaking for the Apocalypse

movement, noted:

> Politically, there is a large element which is still as
> unsure of the Left as of the Right; such people trust
> Pritt no more than they did Mosley or Pétrain. And the
> middle way is foolish because it is the vulnerable way--
> the bourgeoisie of any totalitarian state will support
> me, if they still dare be the bourgeoisie. The only way
> Left [sic], as I see it, is that of anarchism--of small,
> local "collectives," worked by individuals; a new Guild
> system, not an octopus Trades Unionism; the burial of
> The State without honours; the dispossession of all
> Capitalists unwilling to toe the new line.[21]

In the form of anarchy advocated by the Apocalypse, the

aristocracy would continue to exist only as long as it

remained serviceable to its community; when it became merely

ornamental it would be disestablished. The church, on the

other hand, would cease to exist as a formal establishment,

but would remain as a local organization for those who

desired it. According to the Apocalyptics, the real villain

of society was the nouveau riche, who enjoyed the privileges

but yet escaped the obligations of the aristocracy. The

parvenu was a natural target for the Apocalypse movement

since he was usually the owner or manager of the large

industries, against which the Apocalypse advocated revolt.

Although the Apocalypse saw machines as controlling man and

transforming him into a mechanism, they nonetheless wished

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[21]Henry Treece, How I See Apocalypse, p. 22.

to retain machines and use them to advance the leisure and
comfort of mankind. To the Apocalyptics, controlling the
machine meant abolishing the competitive and profit motive,
and thus abolishing the purely private owner, whom Treece
described as--

> the factory owner whose profits send his son to the
> older universities, and pay a rich dividend in the form
> of a partnership with another industrial firm later on.
> . . . The final result is, of course, an armaments
> chain; and this ingrained desire for dividends calls
> once more upon the classes who have kept the machines
> hotted up to present their second generation as
> targets.[22]

The private owner was thought to be basically good but
driven on by the machine to new systems of belief, the only
function of which was to increase production and dividends.
The truly good owner was thought to be the small owner, who
employed others not for private gain but for their mutual
convenience. The difference, then, between the acceptable
and non-acceptable owner was one of degree based on the
Apocalyptic philosophy that--

> whenever an operative group becomes too large for close
> personal contact between all its members, the extraneous
> profit motive appears, and the group sinks to the status
> of a money-making machine.
>   Keep the group small enough for intimacy among its
> units, so that men do not lose the sense of neighbourly
> decency, and such a machine is impossible.[23]

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[22]Ibid., p. 15.

[23]Ibid., p. 16.

According to the political theory of the Apocalypse, an employee's first obligation would be to the trade which he shares with the other members of his community. Since he himself would be using his products, and would later exchange them with other local collectives for commodities which he did not manufacture, he would out of necessity do his job well. His second obligation would be to himself as an individual, an outgrowth of his commitment to his trade. The employee would perform the job he enjoyed and wanted, not hindered by unnecessary external factors, factors which would not exist under anarchism; and his orders would come from his own perception of a need for a particular course of action.

Although the members of the Apocalypse advocated a definite political and social philosophy for the improvement of society, they did not have in mind a definite process by which to achieve this goal other than by appealing, particularly through poetry, to people to change. As Treece stated, the Apocalypse movement was not primarily asking for "a revised economic system, the destruction of caste and privilege, the establishment of industrial zones and the limiting of the size of our towns, the abolition of dividends and the muzzling of machines" but for a "CHANGE OF HEART."[24] The Apocalypse held in common with the Romantic

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[24] Ibid., p. 17.

Movement the belief that all people are innately good. The

world, consequently, is in its present condition not because

people are innately evil but because they are so preoccupied

with dreams of profit, or if on the lower economic level, so

overwhelmed with fear for their security or even their

existence, that their hearts remain unexplored and their

innate goodness ignored. What the Apocalypse wanted, then,

was not so much a change of heart as a recognition of heart,

a recognition of the innate goodness and potential within

each man. Although Treece admitted that a civilization

founded on the tenets of the heart would make mistakes, he

had enough faith in men to believe that they would be no

more numerous--and far less serious--than any created by a

civilization based on strict reason. The Apocalyptics'

faith in the goodness of men, and in their ability to get

along with one another, formed the chief basis for their

political philosophy of anarchism:

> We have seen what The State as a machine can lead men
> to; we have also seen what a bureaucracy and a Civil
> Service can achieve. Let the small men, the individ-
> uals, have a say in the matter now, and I'll be willing
> to bet all I have in this world, together with all I
> hope to get in the next, that the laugh will be on the
> Central Government. And it's no argument to say that
> this is retrogression into Saxon times. That just isn't
> true; men have learnt a lot about living together since
> Saxon times; it is only that the industrialists haven't
> allowed men to put into practice what they have learned.
>   Such a belief, and such a practice, demand faith
> with a capital F. But then why not? I cannot think

of anything <u>worth</u> believing in that doesn't demand faith--Christianity not excepted.[25]

For the Apocalyptics, there would be little difference between idealism and realism, for they saw these two poles less as opposites, than part of a continuum and as closely related as thought and deed or theory and practice. To them, realism was merely the attainment of the ideal, and only by a constant striving for an idealistic state of being could there be improvement in the world.

A unique tenet of the Apocalypse movement was its concern for the social emancipation of women. J.F. Hendry, in explaining this aim, joins with Mario Praz, author of <u>The Romantic Agony</u>, in noting that during historical periods of violence, the dominant figure is the male hero whereas in more peaceful times, woman plays the dominant role.[26] Hendry, in terms of the Apocalyptic movement, extends Praz's thesis to affirm that only within an equal relationship between the sexes lies the source of power and freedom:

> The Knight, idolising woman and depriving her thereby of freedom, sowed the seeds of his own betrayal and down- fall. Woman escaped him, and power escaped him. Senti- ment, and freedom, fled the feudal system. Woman became herself hard and powerseeking: "la belle dame sans merci," driving men to further acts of violence and denials of freedom. Aristocratic morals decayed into bourgeois morality not merely because the bourgeois was the representative of the new wealthy class . . . but

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[25] <u>Ibid</u>., p. 23.

[26] Mario Praz, <u>The Romantic Agony</u>, trans. Angus Davidson (New York: Oxford University Press, 1951).

> more essentially because the aristocracy had lost the sense of power, and had forgotten that power and freedom are identical. "Los Aristos" had lost control over their women: ergo their society was out of joint.
> To-day it is bourgeois society that is out of joint, and devoid of morality, and again, for the same reason, the maladministration of power, beginning in marriage . . . Today with society, we must free woman, as repository of emotion.[27]

The Apocalypse movement wanted to resolve this struggle of the sexes by creating unity and equality of love. This was to be done through the Apocalyptic writers publishing "poetry presenting the humanity to which Europe must turn if we are to have any order at all, let alone a new one."[28] Although Hendry was the principal spokesman for this philosophy, it was also shared by Treece, if not by all of the Apocalyptic poets, for it was again to appear in the Personalist movement, established later by Treece and Stefan Schimanski.

Literary-Artistic Position

Though it had its political and social aspects, the New Apocalypse was primarily a reaction against the political poetry of the day which threatened, and to extent, succeeded, in reducing creative literature to the level of political propaganda and in disregarding the individual's

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[27] J.F. Hendry, "The Apocalyptic Element in Modern Poetry," Poetry Scotland, II (1945), 61-62.

[28] Ibid., p. 62.

sensibilities in favor of the collective man. The Apoca-

lyptic view of poetry, like its view of politics was

influenced by Read's theory of anarchy. Read asserted that

the poet possesses a temperament that is instinctively

inimical to any externally imposed political system and

therefore "is necessarily an anarchist."[29] The poet cannot

allow society to interfere with his work, for "no great art

is possible unless you have as corresponding and contempo-

rary activities the spontaneous freedom of the individual

and the passive coherence of a society."[30] When passive

coherence becomes impossible to maintain, Read advises, the

poet must remain apart from "everything temporal and oppor-

tunist" and "stay where you are and suffer if you must."[31]

The anarchic Apocalypse poet, moreover, through his writing,

attempted to free the reader from his confining environment.

According to the Apocalyptics, fear is the result of man's

instinctive and intellectual awareness of his inability to

master the environment which motivates him. Apocalyptic

writing attempted to relieve this problem by reacting

against, or at least providing relief from, the economic,

social, and political conditions which suppress his free

will. The literary techniques through which this result is

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[29]Herbert Read, Poetry and Anarchism, p. 15.

[30]Ibid., p. 20.

[31]Ibid.

to be achieved are the use of novel images in place of descriptions of concrete objects, the use of myth, and a reliance on the subconscious as a source of subject matter.

Since the Apocalyptics associated all mechanisms with the suppression of the inner man, they were adamantly against poems being used as machines to produce descriptions of objects. The anti-object argument of the movement is concisely stated by Treece:

> a machine is an object which converts energy into work, so, since their intention is the conversion into verbal currency of ideas, both words and poems (which are groups of words) must necessarily be machines . . . . It would seem, therefore, that any writer of words, by virtue of his use of words, is mechanistic; and that, as a consequence, those writers whose ability to employ these machines as machines (in the production of perfect objects) is most pronounced are the best writers. However, since the word even in its most expert usage can never produce a true object (a razor with which one might shave) but only a verbal reflection, however realistic as distinct from real, it appears to me that those writers (like Auden, Day, Lewis, and Symons) whose writing is so dependent on its shadow-productions of externalities are short-circuiting their own and their readers' intelligence. Yet, to a poet who is scared by the depths of human nature, who prefers the safe superficiality of the railway engine, this is no crime.[32]

Those poets who did rely on objects, according to the Apocalyptics, did so because an idea based on an object is readily forthcoming and because an objet trouve can never suffer sabotage. In the case of a hostile criticism, the poet can always lay the blame on nature. Thus, rather than employ words mechanically, either as objects or as the means

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[32]Henry Treece, How I See Apocalypse, pp. 65-66.

of reflecting objects, the Apocalyptics suggested that the writer use them in such a manner as to create an attitude or way of thinking which is for the most part independent of external factors, and which can, by themselves, form the desired attitude without the poet's intervention. The poet should therefore subject his words to his own personal creative instinct and use this instinct in such a way that his own individuality, "his own organic myth," becomes apparent, to be used as a searchlight on his own private problems as well as those of his readers.[33]

According to the Apocalypse philosophy, the poet should, in place of objects, fill his poem with individual organic myth. By myth, the Apocalyptics did not neces-sarily mean fable or fairy tale, although Treece did fre-quently use these terms, but Marx's definition of mythol-ogy: "All mythology masters and dominates nature in and through the imagination; hence, it disappears as soon as man gains mastery over the forces of nature."[34] Myth thus becomes the imaginative equivalent of an act, and since society must ultimately demand real action in conformity with its needs, which are reflected by the myth, the myth eventually disappears. The Apocalypse, however, advocated

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[33]Ibid., p. 68.

[34]Karl Marx, cited by Henri Lefebvre, The Sociology of Marx (New York: Pantheon Books, 1968), p. 79.

not only myth in this sense, but individual or personal

myth, as well, that which grows out of man's inner needs and

is not a form of propaganda imposed upon him. To the Apoca-

lyptics, myth becomes a projection of the self into the

world, the result of creative impulse working on matter.

Radically opposed to both the poet and his individual myth

is the mechanistic world, the entire field of objects and

all systems of thought or inferences founded on these

objects, systems such as science and what men term "objec-

tivity." Apocalyptic writing notes the war waged between

these two opposing forces and thus the war between it and

preceding movements:

> the war for justice to man, to prevent his becoming an
> object as in abstract art of the Totalitarian State; the
> war is not against the object, since it is hopeless ever
> to try to free man from matter, but to attain optimum
> living fusion between man and total environment.[35]

While the main war of the Apocalyptic movement with preced-

ing movements was between object and subject, its members

felt a secondary conflict to exist between individual myth

and collective myth. As soon as myth becomes collective,

asserted the Apocalyptics, it becomes stabilized and a means

of propaganda, that is, a machine to influence those who

come into contact with it. The collective myth, then, is

one which dominates the individual, resulting in artistic

sterility. Yet, while the Apocalyptics did admit that the

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[35]J.F. Hendry, "Writers and Apocalypse," p. 11.

construction of individual myth has its dangers, they saw these as favorable to the sterility which they thought would inevitably result from prolonged reliance on the machine. The simplest danger, in any attempt at total anarchism, was for the Apocalypse poet to lose his craftsman control and "become the recording tool of his word's desire."[36] In this case, one word would prescribe another word, without the discipline of the mind or ear, and thus result in a mechanical process in which the word as an object overwhelms the poet as an individual. A second and more serious danger might also be assumed to result if the poet, like many Surrealists, would allow himself to be ruled "by that sort of word, which, though uncontrollable has a potential meaning," for these words could possibly form "a deceptive half-meaning, a charlatan semi-rationalism."[37] If, however, the Apocalypse poet recognized the importance and potential of personal myth that is also organic--myth resulting from the individual's reaction to others, his environment, and living in general--the dangers of employing individual myth would be lessened; indeed, Treece attributed the artistic failure of the Surrealists to their reliance on myth that is dependent on external, objective phenomena as opposed to that which is organic:

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[36]Ibid., p. 69.

[37]Ibid., p. 70.

> [Poets] should be concerned with the personal reactions
> of man to man, where those reactions are honest and
> individual, not falsified by group propaganda, and the
> reactions of man to himself . . . and our concern will
> be heightened or lessened by his use of those words
> which may most effectively show us his, and perhaps our
> own problems. The true poet . . . must necessarily be
> a prophet . . . . Yet he shall have faith in his own
> word, and those who have eyes to see and ears to hear
> shall learn from his Apocalyptic utterance his problem
> and their own problem, his solution and their own solu-
> tion.[38]

Myth in this sense becomes a form of prophecy which warns of

forthcoming hazards and provides goals for the future, but

which once fulfilled is no longer necessary.

Since the effectiveness of the myth presented in

poetry is naturally dependent upon the imagery through which

it is transmitted, the poets of the Apocalypse gave great

importance to the image, conceding "that poetry would go the

way the images go."[39] J.F. Hendry, co-leader of the move-

ment, compared the image to a psychoanalytic symbol,

believing that it should reveal the poet's infirmities, and

by doing so, concurrently cure such disorder. The poet

should discover and disclose to society, by both reason and

intuition, by image and narrative, the organic myths funda-

mental to all human endeavor. By recognizing the signifi-

cance these myths have for his own life, man will integrate

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[38]Ibid., pp. 72-73.

[39]Ibid., p. 61.

his personality with society.[40] Treece agreed with this

ideal, but further described the Apocalyptic image as a

development of Dylan Thomas' modus operandi, that is, as a

concept or sensation produced through the reciprocal impact

of other concepts or sensations. These concepts and sensa-

tions, however, were to be of the real world or else the

impact would produce only foolishness; they also were to be

slightly obscure, for too much abstraction and clarity are

capable of sterilizing an image based on an idea, just as

"too deliberate isolation of a sensed element" is capable of

sterilizing an image based on sensation.[41] Since the verbal

image of an object is the poet's usual way of reproducing

the world, he--if for any reason, is dissatisfied with the

world--can change the world by altering his image of it; and

such is what the Apocalypse attempted to do in its use of

myth:

> Where this metamorphosis is effected by a casual,
> arbitrary selection, the result must be paranoiac and
> pathological, and is nothing short of Surrealism in the
> Bad Old Manner. But where the change is consciously
> willed and motivated by sincere and consistent philoso-
> phy, the result, though possibly startling, as are so
> many things when seen clearly for the first time, or
> seen set against a new background, must be artistically
> rejuvenating, and at the lowest level, psychologically
> useful.[42]

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[40]J.F. Hendry, "Myth and Social Integration," The
White Horseman, pp. 153-179.

[41]G.S. Fraser, "Apocalypse and Poetry," p. 10.

[42]Henry Treece, How I See Apocalypse, p. 62.

And as a result of this fresh view of life, the poet will continue to note further promising interrelations of objects and events which he has not previously seen or which he has forgotten. In accordance with Freud's discovery that it is impossible to produce true nonsense, the Apocalyptic writers believed that any concepts or sensations joined together by the poet had, for him, montage value; hence, they did not insist that a poet immediately be able to understand completely his own images. They did, however, ask that his images "arouse in him a massive rather than a trivial response, that both he and his reader . . . be able to feel them as the expression of a general rather than a too private predicament."[43] This massive quality differentiated the Apocalypse images from those of the Surrealists, which tended to be private and thus cerebral. The Surrealists contemplated all sorts of incongruous relationships without placing emphasis on action, while the Apocalyptics accepted dreams, fantasies, and obscure energies as only part of man's completeness. They insisted that the poet be granted the privilege of imposing form and imaginative order on material having its source in the subconscious, and as a result, they, unlike the Surrealists, were not limited by reoccuring motifs or by any repetitiousness of unconscious imagery. By reinstating consciousness as a significant

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[43]G.S. Fraser, "Apocalypse and Poetry," p. 14.

factor in creating subconscious-based imagery, the poets of

the Apocalypse introduced--

> the proper function of the conscious and creative mind,
> a function which is the aesthetic equivalent of the
> service which the rational mind performs for the psycho-
> analyst . . . . Surrealist imagery, once released from
> the confinement of the unconscious, provided a much more
> significant basis of poetic development in Apocalypse
> poetry, in which the metaphors and symbols of the uncon-
> scious were thematically developed within the strategy
> of structural organization.[44]

As such, Apocalyptic imagery provided the means for both

extensive and illuminating comment on the problems of man's

existence in a society which sponsored conditions repudiated

by the Apocalypse.

The Apocalyptic poem, presenting myth built both

from consciously and unconsciously created images, was also

to have unity of intention--that is, unity of the source

from which the images arise and the montage they produce.

The Apocalypse movement further advocated the use of rhyme

and word-similarity in order to unify a poem's images, as

well as the use of a definite metrical form to add a sense

of movement to the images. The Apocalypse poets conse-

quently placed a greater emphasis on metrics than other

contemporary writers, believing that the non-metrical form

could not be sustained for long without losing coherence.

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[44]Frederick J. Hoffman, "From Surrealism to 'The
Apocalypse': A Development in Twentieth Century Irration-
alism," English Literary History, XV (June, 1948), p. 162.

Without metrical form, "intellectual image structure will arrest all movement, and leave us solid, crystallographic, unmoving cubes of image."[45] Since the poets of the Apocalypse believed that the English preoccupation with metrical feet had resulted from a deep misunderstanding of the classical systems of slow and quick syllables--which were obviously impractical in the English language, they advocated--

> a repetitive stress pattern which is serviceable and flexible, unmonotonous and not liable . . . to cramp the imagery and the vowel play with some kind of literary squeegee, a strait-jacket in which one can do nothing. It was a horror of these strait-jackets which made free verse an obligatory form if any new discoveries were to be made. But now that we have made the discovery of the involuntary, the need is for discipline which can formalize our myth and our image enough to render it coherent without the sacrifice of any plane of interpretation . . . . There needs to be a formulation of stress patterns used as Swinburne used them to enhance vowel patterns and carry on the sense and the picture.[46]

Alex Comfort, a later spokesman for the Apocalypse movement, believed that the stress pattern advocated by the Apocalypse poets could--and should--be applied to narrative poetry, the traditional verse of the people, in order to save it from extinction. It was his particular belief that a declining interest in the narrative poem resulted from the difficulty poets had in finding a repetitive metrical form suited to

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[45]Alex Comfort, "It Goes Like This," Life and Letters Today, XXXI (October, 1941), 39.

[46]Ibid., pp. 37-40.

its use and that it is necessary for the narrative form to remain popular in order for poetry to reach all men, since it is narrative poetry which the common masses read and remember. Comfort saw a similarity between the narrative which tells a story and the Apocalyptic poem which presents a myth. For to him, the myth and story were one and the same thing; a story being a contemporary myth having a different meaning on each level of examination, with the best meter for either being five stressed points to the line. Although the Apocalyptics believed that metrics were important to all poetry, it was of special import to Apocalyptic writing, for only by adding meter to the other advocated literary techniques could they achieve the wholeness they so much desired. Apocalyptic poets, wanting to represent the totality of experience, insisted on fusing in their work multiple elements of life and thought, at a high pitch of intensity:

> Apocalyptic writing, then, is the art form of the man who can recognize, without fear, the variety and the multiplicity of life; of the man who acknowledges his dreams and his laughter, and the tiny and almost unmentionable things of life, as being real and desirable for sanity's sake. And the Apocalyptic attitude will teach poetry to be broad, deep, limitless, like true life. It will teach men to live more, and to exist less; it will be militant against all narrow, shallow, half-thoughts, and back-door sniggerings. Such poetry will burn with a great fire, intensely, and out of that fire will spring a remoulded life, strong, happy, prophetic, scorched free of dross and cruelty.[47]

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[47]Henry Treece, _How I See Apocalypse_, p. 80.

In addition to writing, the New Apocalypse was concerned with drawing and painting, a facet apparently initiated by an art critic and friend of Treece, Robert Melville. Apocalyptic painting, to the untrained eye, closely resembles that of Surrealism but its matter, conscious and unconscious, is "ordered to the integrating process of myth."[48] A description of the art by Ivor Francis shows that it both follows the same principles as Apocalyptic writing, and has as well the same purpose of showing the multiplicity of man's nature:

> Apocalyptic paintings are noted for their dynamism which expresses itself in the constant and stirring movement . . . . The art features soft indefiniteness and mystery, suddenly concreting itself with overwhelming hardness. It is rich in tonals, a branch of art sadly neglected since Rembrant more than touched its melancholy and beautiful fringe . . . . It delights in caves and caverns, in transparencies and half embryonic forms; it allows of passion, and of dead things fading into night . . . .[49] (See Appendix.)

Although Treece included Apocalyptic art and art essays in the anthologies, and a few poets including Treece tried their hand at drawing, the movement did not emphasize this aspect as a major fact.

Since the chief concern of the English poetic movements popular between the first and second world wars was partly an attempt to alert society to the true condition of

[48]Ivor Francis, "Reintegration and The Apocalypse," Angry Penguins (September, 1943), n.p.

[49]Ibid.

the world which the poets could see but which was not apparent in surface events, and partly an attempt to help society adjust to this condition, the necessity for such movements, once World War II began, was decreased. Also, when England entered the war in 1941, the year in which The White Horseman, the second Apocalypse anthology, was published, Henry Treece and J.F. Hendry joined the armed forces and their movement lost its coherence. And by the time The Crown and the Sickle was published in 1943, it had even dropped its manifesto, a fact acknowledged by Treece in its preface:

> This, the third Apocalyptic anthology, contains no manifesto and presents no editorial policy distinguishable from a general desire to collect and display these international examples of a new Romantic tendency, whose most obvious elements are love, death, an adherence to myth, and an awareness of war.

This was to be the last Apocalypse anthology, J.F. Hendry thereafter withdrawing from his role as co-leader of the movement. Treece, however, with the encouragement and aid of his "good friend Stefan Schimanski who would not allow the war to prevent me from writing," was to continue the movement under the new name, Personalism, which may now be considered.[50]

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[50]Treece's dedication of How I See Apocalypse.

Personalism

On joining the armed forces in 1941, Treece became acquainted with Stefan Schimanski, then personal secretary to Lord Wedgewood; and by the end of that year, the two were co-editing Kingdom Come, A Magazine of War-time Oxford which had been founded by John Waller. As its editor, Treece widened his acquaintance with young writers, secured Robert Melville as its art critic, and began to include in the periodical, essays which in essence contained Apocalyptic philosophy. Therefore, with the publication of The Crown and the Sickle which ended the Apocalypse movement as such, Treece and Schimanski were prepared to begin a new movement, which they called Personalism, publishing that same year (1943) Transformation I, the first Personalist anthology. Personalism, like its predecessor movement, bore a name of long standing, its origin being traceable to the sixth century.[51] The philosophy of Personalism advocates that it is the person who is--

> the key to the meaning of the universe and believes in
> the creative and not mechanical evolution of man; it
> acknowledges God as the creator of our being, but it
> also stresses man's independence of God, for the
> realization of the individual is an end in itself,

[51]Ralph T. Flewelling, "Personalism," Twentieth Century Philosophy, ed. Dagobert D. Runes (New York: Philosophical Library, 1943), pp. 323-341.

whereas the spirit of God is the link between the individual and the outside world.[52]

It had been Herbert Read who had introduced Henry Treece to Stefan Schimanski, and the new movement, like the old, considered Read's concept of anarchy to be to that point the most perfect state of life, following the tenet that the root of totalitarianism lies in man's failure to act independently and responsibly. Although Treece admitted that Personalism owed much to Apocalypse, he nevertheless felt it to be a separate movement. Their differences he expressed as follows:

> Apocalypticism expressed its faith in man's freedom, wholeness and the necessity for organic living, and disagreed with the common lack of humanity shown by most of the known political systems.
> Personalism follows these main lines but its survey of personality is wider-reaching, broader rather than deep-cutting. Instead of tunneling into the subterranean depths of each single individual it stretches out its root to embrace the widest sphere . . . .[53]

Despite Treece's statement of distinctions however, it seems that Apocalypse and Personalism, in his mind, were almost one and the same. As a matter of fact, he did not publish How I See Apocalypse until 1946, well after the first movement had ended and Personalism had begun. In

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[52]Stefan Schimanski, "Towards a Personalist Education--the End," Transformation II (Drummond, 1944), 1.

[53]Henry Treece, "Towards a Personalist Attitude," Transformation I (Gollanz, 1943), 14.

actuality the only significant aspect added to Apocalyptic

philosophy to form Personalism was a theory of education.

True to the Personalist theory of developing the

complete individual, Personalism advocated education of the

whole person. To its adherents, education was the great

equalizer, that which would give all men the opportunity to

use their innate abilities as best they could. It would

allow people to enter those occupations in which they

belonged solely on the basis of their ability, irrespective

of all other advantages. The ideal education, according to

the Personalists, should be threefold: social, cultural,

and vocational. The first, social, would be the same for

all men, but the latter two would differ according to

individual abilities. Nevertheless, all areas of education

would be studied by all individuals, each area attempting to

achieve a balance between the intellect and the emotions,

the subjective and the objective. To the Personalist,

creative participation was an important part of education,

for "the hand which has not learned to make is in danger of

unmaking, or worse, of neglect and atrophy."[54] Standard

subjects therefore need to have a creative dimension added

that balance might be achieved. For example, Treece sug-

gested that in geography the students make plaster-relief

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[54]Henry Treece, "Towards a Personalist Education--
the Means," Transformation II (Drummond, 1944), 4.

maps and build log huts, act out historical scenes, and
write accounts of them by candlelight with quill pens. In
addition to creatively-taught formal subjects, the Person-
alist philosophy advocated walks in the woods and by the
seashore to help the student appreciate the natural balance
and harmony of Nature. Believing schools of their day to
be too divorced from life, Personalism also advocated the
teaching of sex education and affirmed that anthropology
and psychology be permanent parts of the basic curriculum.
A knowledge of anthropology, they projected, would insure
against the younger generation believing in a master race
and would lead to international understanding and hence
peace; and the study of psychology, including that of per-
ception, free association, and theories of memory, would
help the student understand himself and therefore his
fellowmen. The basic purpose of all the subjects and
activities of the Personalist educational philosophy was to
teach man to live in harmony with himself and with mankind,
and to tear down any barrier between men, or between man
and his self, which had been erected by the machine. This
proposed educational system would result in a social system,
a way of living, based on--

> the integrity of each individual, on the full equality
> of the sexes, on the family system, the smallest of
> co-operatives where each member is acknowledged as the
> other's equal, where each has a particular job to do for
> which he is best fitted, where each is given his own
> natural Dignity with the limits of the other's rights,

> and where against any aggressor from within and without, there is a cohesive and respected body of resistence.
> In such a world, in an atmosphere of freedom where man walks once again with dignity, human beings could not be but noble, well-balanced and happy creatures, which they have it in themselves to be.[55]

The Personalist movement, though essentially the same as Apocalypse, attracted a wider range of contributors for its anthologies. Besides those writers associated with the Apocalypse, including J.F. Hendry, the new list of contributors included as well Kenneth Burke, Oscar Williams, William Saroyan, Stephen Spender, Henry Miller, Lewis Mumford, and Boris Pasternak. In 1947, the fourth volume of Transformation was issued with the promise that another anthology would be forthcoming; however, for some unknown reason, it never appeared. After the publication of Transformation IV, Treece and Schimanski apparently decided to end the Personalist movement, and as a consequence, in 1949, published two non-Personalist anthologies of poetry, A Map of Hearts and A New Romantic Anthology, the latter having an extensive preface on the Apocalyptic School.[56] There is no reason, however, to believe that these anthologies were merely meant to substitute uniformly for the Transformation anthologies, since Treece--even since

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[55]Stefan Schimanski, "Editorial," Transformation III (London: Lindsay Drummond, 1945), 16-17.

[56]Henry Treece and Stefan Schimanski, A Map of Hearts (London: Lindsay Drummond, 1949), and A New Romantic Anthology (London: Grey Walls Ltd., 1949).

beginning Personalism, had published three poetry anthol-

ogies unrelated to the movement, and indeed both he and

Schimanski had collaborated on the anthology, Wartime

Harvest, in the same year (1943) in which they had published

the first volume of Transformation, and on a second war

anthology, Leaves in the Storm, in the year in which they

had issued the fourth and last volume of Transformation.[57]

In 1950, Schimanski on his way from a journalistic assign-

ment on the Korean war-front, was killed in an airplane

crash--a strong factor in the termination of the Personalist

movement. After the death of his literary partner of eight

years, Treece published only a few poems, his only non-

dramatic work being the poetic sequence "Summer Orchards,"

which depicts the stages of man's life. The final section

of this work, a lamentation that "death walks too often in

this valley," Treece entitled "Poem for Stefan," and placed

it as the final poem in his last book of poetry--thus ending

his career as poet-philosopher.[58]

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[57]Treece had published the anthologies Air Force
Poetry (London: Bodley Head, 1944) with John Pudney;
Sailing To-morrow's Seas (London: Fortune Press, 1944)
with Maurice Lindsay; and Poems of Swinburne (London:
Crown Classics, 1948). Treece and Schimanski, Wartime
Harvest (London: Staples, 1943), and Leaves in the Storm
(London: Lindsay Drummond, 1947).

[58]"Summer Orchards," The Exiles, p. 77.

CHAPTER IV

TRANSFORMATION: TREECE'S POETIC THEORY

Poets, thank God, are tearing wolves
But not to you.
Their enemies are men whose decalogues
Can find no place for love, and little frogs.[1]

Although the tenets of the Apocalypse movement represent possibly the best statement of Treece's basic poetic philosophy, certain additional private beliefs concerning the writing of poetry are expressed here and there in his writings. As a whole, these support the theory, even outside the Apocalyptic creed, of his tendency toward a purely Neo-Romantic position.[2]

Treece's conception of the poet is definitely a Romantic one. To him, a poet is born a poet; that is, he is born with the ability to see deeper and more varied meaning in ordinary objects and events than can the average person, this ability being more evident in the case of indefinite objects. Such innate sensibility raises the poet to an almost sacred level. In his poem "The Poet," Treece speaks

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[1]"Little Green Frog," The Haunted Garden, p. 10.

[2]These views are most concisely expressed in "Letters to a Very Young Poet," How I See Apocalypse, pp. 35-50, and "Notes on Poetry," Transformation III (London, n.d. [1945?]), 122-132.

of the poet as having a "priest-hole heart," "a eagle's heart in sparrow's coat . . . / As God walks with me [the poet] in the street."[3] The poet, having a heart or perspective spirit differing from that of the average man, is not only capable of putting his perceptions on paper, but has the power in addition of presenting them in such a way that he can greatly influence, even to the extent of controlling, the reader. For Treece, poetry often does "work at the subterranean level from which dreams spring," poetically phrased ideas being capable of slipping through the defense of reason.[4] The reader is therefore often unconscious of the poet's influence, especially if those phrases are further camouflaged by rhythm, which the poet can use to lull the reader into a mood that makes him more receptive to the poet's ideas. Treece's conception of the poet therefore places a great responsibility on the poet to use his powers for the improvement of mankind. On the incorporal level, the poet is somewhat of a spirit guide; on the mundane level, he has much in common with the

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[3]"The Poet," 38 Poems (London: The Fortune Press, 1940), p. 27. Treece did not, however, consider the poet a type of God, for in his Preface, p. vii, to How I See Apocalypse, he criticizes Henry Miller for having such a viewpoint and affirms that the poet "is an instrument of God only as a recorder, for the greater understanding by other men of these [already existent] phenomena."

[4]How I See Apocalypse, p. 46.

psychologist, being a person capable of "help[ing] or hinder[ing] the simple neuropath," the average man in the Age of Anxiety.[5] The poem in consequence not only has a therapeutic effect on its readers but also on the poet himself. This idea of Treece's differs somewhat from the philosophy of the "sick artist," in that he realizes that all men living in Auden's Age of Anxiety are sick to some degree. Apparently the poet differs from the remainder of society not in being sick but in knowing how to heal himself through art. By recording his poetry and having it read, the poet integrates his personality with that of society, thereby becoming a whole being in relation to others. The reader of poetry can likewise reintegrate his personality with society by recognizing the universal application of the fundamental truths revealed in Apocalyptic poetry.

Though viewing the poet as a select person, Treece does believe that the poetic sensibility can reveal itself in two types of poets, those who write poetry and those who are true readers of poetry. For Treece does not consider all readers of poetry to be poets, but only those who have all the necessary natural qualifications of a poet except that of transferring their poetic conceptions onto paper. The latter, while they cannot help others, can themselves

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[5] "Notes on Poetry," Transformation III, p. 123.

gain therapeutic effect from their mental creations and from the reading of poetry.

Perhaps because he attributed healing properties to poetry, Treece found the correct time for creating a poem to be when "tension which results in a poem begins."[6] This truth does not necessarily mean that the poet should begin writing when he experiences tension, for the recording of a poem can be different from the creation of it; moreover, not every experience of tension is indicative that one should begin the creative process, but only an unspecified degree of tension--that recognized by the true poet. As to how the poem is generally created, Treece held to two statements made by T.S. Eliot. The first is that a poem proceeds--

> along two lines in an imaginary graph; one of the lines being his conscious and continuous effort in technical excellence . . . . The other line is just his normal human course of development, his accumulation and digestion of experience (experience is not sought for, it is merely accepted in consequence of doing what we really want to do), and by experience I mean the results of reading and reflection, varied interests of all sorts, contacts and acquaintances, as well as passion and adventure. Now and then the two lines may converge at a high peak, so that we get a masterpiece. That is to say, an accumulation of experience has crystallized to form material of art, and years of work in technique have prepared a medium; and something results in which medium and material, form and content, are indistinguishable.[7]

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[6] Ibid., p. 128.

[7] T.S. Eliot, "Introduction," Ezra Pound: Selected Poems (London: Faber & Gwyer, 1928), xx.

The second statement of Eliot's with which Treece agrees is
that the primary way of expressing emotion in art is through
an objective correlative, or "emotive image" as Treece
refers to it. The "emotive image," or formula by which a
particular emotion is to be evolved, is one which is
dependent on the convergence of the two co-ordinates of
technique and experience. Though admittedly also strongly
influenced by Dylan Thomas, Treece verbally favored the
above theories of Eliot's over Thomas' theory of letting an
image be made. Thomas' technique as stated in a letter to
Treece, was to let--

> . . . an image be "made" emotionally in me and then
> apply to it what intellectual and critical forces I
> possess,--let it breed another, let that image con-
> tradict the first, make of the third image bred out of
> the other two together a fourth contradictory image,
> and let them all, within my imposed formal limits,
> conflict.[8]

Nevertheless it is Thomas' method which is most obvious in
much of Treece's poetry. Treece's method of comparing
romantic and non-romantic periods, and his adoption of
Thomas' method of inquiry both lead to the presentation of
contradictory images and their resolution, an aim shared by
the Surrealists. Although Thomas' method is more likely
than that of Eliot's to produce a juxtaposition of conflict-
ing images, a frequent phenomenon in Treece's poetry, such

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[8]Letter dated March 23, 1938, Selected Letters of
Dylan Thomas, p. 190.

juxtaposition can also result from Eliot's convergence of
co-ordinates as shown by the following lines from Eliot's
poems of the 1920's:

> Dead mountain of carious teeth
> (The Wasteland l. 339)
>
> . . . the surface of the blackened river
> Is a face that sweats with tears
> ("The Wind Sprang Up at Four O'clock")
>
> . . . breastless creatures under ground
> Leaned backward with a lipless grin.
> Daffodil bulbs instead of balls
> Stared from the sockets of the eyes!
> ("Whispers of Immortality")

The preceding excerpts are not meant to imply that Eliot was
by any means a Surrealist, but they do show that an objec-
tive correlative can be at least superficially equivalent
to a surrealistic image. What Treece apparently disliked
about Thomas' method is that it is too conscious; it
produces images which appear to be strung together by an
unconscious process but which are actually connected by a
rigorous logic and move around a center which is itself a
"host of images."[9] Treece did not believe that a poet
could "let an image image be made" but that images were
automatically made by the subconscious; thereafter, they
could be presented to the conscious mind to be used or
disregarded. Indeed, he believed the success of the con-
vergence of technique and experience to be usually a

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[9]Ibid.

subconscious one, the objective correlative slowly growing "out of the poet's psychological unrest when he is writing."[10] In other words, Treece, like the Romantics, believed a poem was created largely through inspiration; but his conception of inspiration differs in that it is partially Eliot's convergence of the two co-ordinates and partially "the shaping of the subconscious by the individual spirit"--the spirit being an indefinable interplay of the poet's character and personality.[11]

Treece found that he personally received inspiration most readily in the early morning and late evenings, perhaps because he favored haunting tones and themes; however, he did not recommend these times for all poets. He dismissed the issue of the best time and place for creating a poem by defining them as "those which are when a poem is born."[12] Although he saw good in various motivations for creating poems, Treece believed most poets write primarily to please themselves, a reason he also considered worthy. The only poet whom he discredited is the one who "forces himself to write in order to improve or instruct other persons."[13] Thus he opposed Auden and other politically oriented poets,

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[10]"Notes on Poetry," Transformation III, p. 124.

[11]Ibid.

[12]Ibid., p. 131.

[13]How I See Apocalypse, p. 37.

not because he necessarily opposed their ideas or thought them incompatible with poetry, nor because he was against the classic poetic function of instruction, but because he believed such poems to be contrived rather than inspired. Whereas poetry could reflect a poetic philosophy, the essay or the political pamphlet would be a more proper medium for an explication of philosophy itself.

Treece believed a poet's task is "to interpret the world as he sees it, with the subsidiary duty of recreating it as he would like to see it," and thus saw no special subject matter as belonging particularly to poetry.[14] In his own poems, Treece continually envisions a unified world, his ideal of the way things should be, but recurrently uses the theme of horror to show the actual condition of the world such as in "In the Third Year of War," in which he compares two dreams:

> I dream now of green places
> And the gentle kine
> Wading knee-deep in rushes;
> . . . .
> But I wake to bitter winds,
> And blown sand's whine
> Across forgotten lands;
>
> And empty skies at night
> And cold star-shine
> Where lonely spirits meet
> . . . .

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[14]Ibid., p. 44.

> I dream now there is no ending,
> No golden, breathless dawn;
> Only seeking, seeking without finding.[15]

The ideal and actual, however, do not apparently have to be presented in the same poem, nor is the ideal limited to the modern world. As a result much of his poetry approaches the quality of medieval romances in mood as well as in language.

The language a poet uses to express his subject will vary with his viewpoint of the world. Because Treece interprets the world from a romantic viewpoint, he uses short words, romantic derivatives, and Latinate expressions, discrediting technical language since the fundamentals of life, both spiritual and physical, are not dependent on them. Treece, nevertheless, combines some contemporary language effects with his romanticism, insisting that the "pure language for poetry, [is] somewhere between Keats and that of the Daily Press."[16] Occasionally this combination results in faulty decorum such as in "Poem of Hope from Crosses," where Treece mixes imagery and terms from the contemporary world in speaking of Christ's crucifixion.[17] The first stanza glorifies the effects of Christ's death,

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[15]Henry Treece, "In the Third Year of War," The Black Seasons (London: Faber & Faber, 1945), p. 91.

[16]How I See Apocalypse, p. 45.

[17]Since this poem is from an early work, what appears to be faulty decorum is possibly an unsuccessful attempt at a surrealistic image.

"The nail / Flames through a world of darkness like a
sword," whereas the second stanza speaks of it in modern
terms: Christ is said to have--

> had other business on that day, alas!
> That was a pox of pages in the dead
> Past, But watch the fled fears on next week's reel;
> See how the promise blossoms. Lo, a bird![18]

In better poems, this language serves to merge Treece's
romantic ideal with the contemporary.

Being influenced by Surrealism and its emphasis on
the unconscious, Treece invented much of his vocabulary in
a manner similar to that of Hopkins and Dylan Thomas.
Treece's inventions include the coining of adverbs by
adding "wise" to a noun such as in "manwise," or "ice-night
blew windwise" and the conversion of nouns into verbs as in
"to mansion a mammon" and "Boys kinging castles."[19] Further
characterizing Treece's vocabulary is the frequent use of
coined adjectives such as "death-day mouth," the use of
archaic words such as "kith," and the occasional use of
archaic spellings such as "dun" for "done."[20] Generally
speaking, the vocabulary distinctive of Treece's poetry

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[18]Henry Treece, "Poem of Hope from Crosses," Towards
a Personal Armegeddon (Prairie City, Illinois: James A.
Decker, 1941), p. 37.

[19]38 Poems, p. 10; Towards a Personal Armegeddon,
p. 20; 38 Poems, p. 10; Black Seasons, p. 67.

[20]Towards a Personal Armegeddon, p. 9; 38 Poems,
p. 8; Towards a Personal Armegeddon, p. 11.

progresses from surrealistic and early Dylan Thomas to mystical and medieval-romantic.

Treece distinguished between two types of forms in poetry, an organic and traditional form, the latter being equal to the former in some cases. Organic form, being dependent on function, is the natural form of a poem, one which enables its inspired words and content to operate to their highest degree of efficiency. A traditional form may also be organic when poetic matter falls naturally within its limitations. Being a Romantic, Treece favored the organic form, believing that if form is imposed rather than organic, a larger part of the poem than usual is lost between its inception and its recording. When an inspired poem is received basically in prose, its organic poetic form is determined by allowing the "word rhythms [to] fall naturally into lines: [the] lines [to] fall instinctively into verses or strophes," thus making a traditional or novel form.[21] Of course, the poet may have to alter the form to gain the emphasis he desires but it basically remains organic.

Most of Treece's poems are written in organic but traditional forms, including the lyric--both descriptive and thematic; the polyphonic poem such as "To the Edge and Back"; the sonnet, as illustrated in "The Betrayal" and

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[21]How I See Apocalypse, p. 42.

other Christ poems; the sonnet sequence, the best known of which is "Towards a Personal Armegeddon"; and the narrative poem such as "Ophelia."[22] A semi-traditional form found in Treece's poetry is what might be called an unrhymed sonnet, a poem which has the line, meter, and superficial form of a sonnet, Italian or English, but which lacks rhyme. "Prayer in Time of War," and "Poem," are illustrative of this form.[23] Although Treece's poetic forms are primarily conventional ones, this fact is many times not obvious because of the poet's frequent use of eye rhyme, off-rhyme, and, in his later words, enjambment. The great liberty which Treece took with off-rhyme is well illustrated in "Poem," whose abab rhyme scheme is made apparent only by the first and fourth stanzas combined:

> The pod bursts open and the seed
> Is left for all to see;
> So from the mouth breaks forth the word
> To all eternity.
>
> The fire that flares upon the hill
> Is soon too fierce to hide,
> Nor can man now undo the spell
> That festers in the word.

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[22]An example of the Philosophical lyric is "The Poet," 38 Poems, p. 27. Invitation and Warning contains numerous lyrics such as "Old Welsh Song," p. 17. The other poems mentioned are discussed in Chapter V, pp. 115-117, 112, 98-100, infra.

[23]"Prayer in Time of War," The Black Seasons, p. 73; "Poem," The Haunted Garden, p. 83.

> Once uttered, sound falls like a germ
> Into the womb of life,
> To ferment and at last to form
> The progeny of grief.
>
> If only love grew through the eyes,
> And hate sprang from the hands,
> With word we could paint Paradise
> A solitude of sounds.
> . . . .[24]

At other times, a close poetic form goes unnoticed on first

reading when Treece rhymes the lines of one stanza only with

the corresponding lines of the second, such as in "Post-

Winter" and "Poem."[25] The forms of the majority of Treece's

poems are organic, and do not correspond to specific sub-

jects or effects--an exception found in Treece's last three

books. Therein he occasionally uses a two pentameter line

stanza (distich) to provide the climax for the preceding two

or three longer stanzas. Sometimes this occurs at the end

of a sonnet, such as in "The Betrayal" and other times

intermittently throughout a poem, such as in "Elegy."[26]

Regardless of the form, and whether or not the progression

is narrative or thematic, it is characteristic of Treece's

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[24]"Poem," The Black Seasons, p. 32.

[25]"Post-Winter," and "The Poem," The Haunted Garden,
p. 80 and p. 66.

[26]"Betrayal," The Black Seasons, p. 39; "Elegy,"
Haunted Garden, p. 53.

poems to have strongly climactic last lines--the climax

occasionally consisting of an ironic twist.[27]

The overwhelming bulk of Treece's poetry is written

in iambic and trochaic meter (pentameter and tetrameter line

lengths), with a frequent substitution of spondees for

iambs, his primary concern apparently lying with the stress

rather than with the over-all regularity of the meter.

Though Treece considers meter very important in underscoring

the meaning of a poem, he varies his line length little and

his basic meter even less, but his use of polyphonic stanzas

and polyform sequences do add variety to his poetry. In his

first book of poetry, Treece has only one significant line

variation, iambic hexameter, in his sonnet "Poem for

Christmas." In his third book, he begins using trimeter

lines, alternating short and long lines, and using poly-

forms. The last may be seen in "Inscription on a Begging

Bowl," where eight lines of iambic dimeter are followed by

four lines of iambic pentameter. Here the lines appear to

be an organic result of the message rather than the result

of mere experimentation, for the short lines record a list

of equations and the longer lines give exceptions to the

former. Most of Treece's line experimentation occurs in his

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[27]This is best seen in "A Thief to His Lord," The
Black Seasons, p. 43 and "Hamlet," The Exiles, p. 57, both
of which are discussed in Chapter V, pp. 114, 123-124,
infra.

fourth and fifth books, The Black Seasons and The Haunted Gardens, but really significant variations occur in a total of only eight poems. Treece's alternation of short and long lines appears to be his most effective variation in emphasizing the content of a poem. In "The Lost Ones, IV and VIII" from The Black Seasons, tetrameter lines presenting general neutral information are followed by climactic dimeter lines which relate the information to the persona. In "Conscripts," somewhat of the reverse method is employed. An emphatic trimeter, which advances the theme, is followed by a less emphatic dimeter line which adds information usually in the form of a prepositional phrase:

> Those very souls who lay wrapped
> In the turf he trod,
> Wise in their impotence, longing to leap
> From their clay cells
> To life, however harsh, brave pain
> To see the sun![28]

In The Haunted Garden, Treece varies tetrameter with dimeter for another purpose, that of giving the lines a childlike quality. His "Little Green Frog" proceeds somewhat after the manner of Blake's "Little Lamb," and the short uncomplicated lines underscore the naturalistic simplicity of the theme of the poet's affirmation to a frog of his protective interest in nature. In three poems, Treece employs dimeter lines for different purposes. In "To the Edge and Back,

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[28]"The Conscripts," Black Seasons, p. 75.

V and X," they serve the organic purpose of listing items,
while in "Two Versions of a Poem, II," they are used to
create a haunting voo-doo like rhythm:

> Deep in the forest
> In a sea-green light,
> Where the fern springs thickest
> In eternal night--

a rhythm suited to a poem depicting an animal-inhabited
forest unscarred by civilization except for the presence of
a human skull.[29] The dimeter and monometer lines of "Duet
for the Times," seem to have no special function. Since
they seem to have been formed by a needless division of
couplets at the ceasura, which destroys the couplet expec-
tancy one might experience in a poem given both a duet form
and the name "Duet" in the title. Treece's use of dimeter
is much more effective in "In Between Seasons, I," where the
short line is well-suited to the compact verses of this
imagistic poem:

> Stones lie like skulls
> Along the road
> In a prism of pain
> The shadows bleed.[30]

The only remaining line variation employed by Treece is the
open couplet which is monotonously employed (thirteen
times) after the manner of many folk ballads to form the

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[29]"Two Versions of a Poem," The Haunted Garden,
p. 11.

[30]"In Between Seasons," ibid., p. 74.

narrative "Ophelia."[31] While a few of Treece's poetic
variations appear to be mere experimentation, most of them
are organically justifiable. Likewise his predominant use
of basic forms, meters, and lines seems to form a most
suitable foundation for his poetry, one distinguished by
ornate language and rich sounds. In explaining his use of
traditional poetic forms, Treece discredited free verse
since it gives "no honour to a real poet. The only 'free'
verse I can accept is so intricate and subtle a thing as to
be infinitely more difficult to execute than a formal
sonnet or rondeau."[32] Beginning with his third volume,
Invitation and Warning, Treece did occasionally write in
free verse, but because of its division into verse para-
graphs and its intricate internal sound patterns, only upon
close examination is it distinguishable from his loosely
rhymed verse having a traditional form.[33] Indeed, if one
may generalize, the most distinctive characteristic of
Treece poetry, regardless of its form, is the poet's
reliance on sound, particularly vowels, to underline his
theme.

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[31]"Ophelia," The Black Seasons, p. 54.

[32]How I See Apocalypse, p. 43.

[33]The poem best illustrating Treece's intricate free
verse is "The Ghosts," Invitation and Warning, p. 36; an
excerpt from this poem appears on page 85.

Since Treece's favorite method of showing the need
for a romantic outlook on life is to present non-romantic
historical periods as barren, terror-filled, or leading to
the annihilation of man, he favored long vowel sounds,
particularly haunting sounds such as "oo," "O," and "ah."[34]
The following passage from "An Easter Passing" in The Exiles
is characteristic of the tone for which Treece is noted:

> Then the high voices died. We heard their feet
> Treading the stairs again, slowly this time,
> As though the ordinary room, the silent bed,
> Had raised a doubt that had not been before;
> As though the white ones had betrayed a trust
> And made the garden hateful evermore.[35]

The long vowels not only contribute to a haunting tone but
cause the passage to be read slowly. Most of Treece's verse
has slow movement to it, the poet sometimes employing
cacophonous lines such as "once the young sun swung in that
bell," which both slows down the reader and underscores the
tragedy of the poem. Another sound technique characteristic
of Treece is the use of alliteration and assonance to an
extent that they create the impression of rhyme where none
actually exists. In Treece's third book, Invitation and
Warning, a number of unrhymed poems, such as "The Ghosts,"
use this technique:

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[34]Although such judgments as this are essentially
impressionistic, and hence unprovable, they still seem
valid.

[35]"An Easter Passing," The Exiles, p. 72.

Out of my breast breaks penance, like a sign
Lost in a silent room of dust, where dead
Hands are clasped in memory
. . . .
But dreams and deeds, head, heart, and hands
Tenant a tower of brilliants that flash
Yet never burn.[36]

Because a combination of rich sound and strong end-rhyme often makes his poetry too artificial and overwhelms the theme, it is in his unrhymed or loosely rhymed poetry in which Treece most frequently excels. It is indeed unfortunate that Treece was not greatly inclined to write free verse.

As a true Romantic who credited the subconscious with a major role in the creation of poetry, Treece did not recommend any author whose work should be used as a standard. This however does not mean that a poet's work must be free from conscious influences. The imagery and figurative language of Treece's poetry shows clearly the influence of the work of Dylan Thomas, Yeats, Keats, and to a lesser extent, that of Hopkins and Eliot. A surrealistic emphasis dominates Treece's use of figures of speech, with the poet employing such similes as "suave as sin in a black velvet glove," and metaphors such as "five-knifed hand."[37] In his earlier poems, Treece freely refers to such repulsive

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[36]"The Ghosts," Invitation and Warning, p. 36.

[37]"The Haunted Garden," The Haunted Garden, p. 16; "Poems from a Work in Progress," 38 Poems, p. 8.

creatures as the moth, mole, ape, and hawk, and uses per-
sonification extensively, presenting not only death but many
aspects of man--his emotions, dreams, and physical proper-
ties--as frightened or frightening subjects. Even a man-
made entity such as a building "shudders in starlight"; and
the natural source of radiant energy and life,

> The roaring, blind Castilian sun
> Grins like an imbecile and crushes rocks
> To a fine powder, winks at the harvest
> And shrivels it to crackling husk.[38]

The influence of Surrealism is further apparent in many of
Treece's symbols. In his earliest poems, a mole is used to
represent man, and throughout his works, the surrealistic
raven is used to represent death and, in general, man's
enemy. Occasionally conventional symbols are reversed. In
"Poem Before the End," prior to the return of freedom, rich
and poor "both awoke to watch the same red dawn / Shriek
from the hills, / To see the raven riding from the West."[39]

Although Surrealism is the dominant influence in
Treece's early works, and still one of the most important in
his later, Dylan Thomas is the author whose influence is
most pervasively apparent throughout Treece's poetry.
Besides coining words, especially compounds, in a manner
similar to that of Thomas, Treece--in a few poems--even

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[38]"Psalm Carved from Sorrow," 38 Poems, p. 26;
"Domenico Scarlatti," The Exiles, p. 61.

[39]"Poem Before the End," The Black Seasons, p. 74.

borrows Thomas' use of <u>green</u> to indicate life force and youthful vitality. Among his references to <u>green</u>, the poet speaks of "the [human] mind's green escapades," of a "twig, whose green mind drives it on" and of a hawk who "droppeth down on the green blood of earth."[40] Furthering the similarity of Treece's poetry to that of Thomas is his ability to produce images and narratives having a mythical quality, an ability which very possibly stems from the Welsh extraction Treece shares with Thomas.

The influence of Yeats, with the exception of that exerted by his folk scenes, is not as integral a part of Treece's style as is that of Thomas, and consists generally of images adopted from him. In several early poems, Treece employs Yeats' dance image to show unity, as in the erotic passage, "Deep in the forest like a giant's hair / The twilit trolls danced madness into peace . . . ."[41] At other times, he borrows Yeats' scarecrow imagery, which readily adapts to Surrealism: e.g., Treece speaks of men as sticks and love flaunting "his singing tatters as a robe."[42] In his later poetry, it is the poet's image of salmon that points to Yeats' influence. While it is also possible that

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[40]"Poem," and "The Twig," The Haunted Garden, pp. 32 and 14; "Poems from a Work in Progress," 38 Poems, p. 8.

[41]"Poems from a Work in Progress," 38 Poems, p. 11.

[42]Ibid., p. 12.

Treece's frequent depiction of the two-fold nature of man is influenced by Yeats' mask theory, it is more likely that this is a natural consequence of Treece's own concern with the two opposite interpretations, romantic and systematic, of the world, and of his Celtic view of "compound realities."[43]

An admirer of Hopkins, Treece occasionally achieves a Hopkinesque image, ambiguously but subtly blending nature and God as in "God bloomed over all, a benevolent sun."[44] At other times, he produces waste land imagery much like that of T.S. Eliot's themes to portray the mechanical age. But most often, perhaps Treece employs rich tactile and visual imagery typical of Keats, frequently referring to metals, jewels, and the color gold. Finally, one may find a strong affinity with medieval literature, the influence of which is evident in the Christian poems of The Black Seasons, in the personification of nature in The Haunted Garden and throughout the poems written on Celtic and Medieval themes in Treece's last three books of poetry. Indeed, as Treece's poetry progresses from an intricate to a simpler style and from basic Romantic themes to historical ones, the influence of Keats and medieval literature becomes more apparent even than that of Thomas, blending with

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[43]See supra, Chapter III, pp. 38-39.

[44]"That Summer," The Exiles, p. 73.

surrealistic influence to introduce the colorful and

vigorous scenes of early England that eventually become the

prime feature of Treece's work.

CHAPTER V

CROWNS AND SICKLES: THEMES IN TREECE'S POETRY

>I take with me where I go
>A pen and a golden bowl;
>Poet and beggar step in my step,
>. . . . .
>I bring with me when I return
>To the house that my father's hands made,
>A crooning bird on a crystal bough,
>And O, a sad sad word![1]

Development of Poetic Philosophy and Growth as a Poet

All but the first of Treece's volumes of poetry have a unifying title, yet none was written as a complete unit. Each is a compilation of the unpublished poems Treece had written up to the time of the book's publication. As a result, Treece's poetry is best examined according to theme; but a brief preliminary chronological survey of his volumes will be useful in giving some indication as to the general development of his poetic philosophy and his growth as a poet. Treece's first book, 38 Poems (1940), includes seventeen short poems and eleven poems from a work which was in progress but never completed. All the poems are highly

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[1]"Old Welsh Song," Invitation and Warning, p. 17.

personal and surrealistic, the incomplete work being so
almost to the point of obscurity. The latter work, rather
gothic in manner, emphasizes the fear and terror in life,
comparing men to the lowly mole who is ever in fear of the
raven--a surrealistic symbol of death--and the spade. The
gothic horror of the sequence reaches its climax as the
poet depicts a corpse decaying in the grave as its "ears
grow friendly to the scream of moles."[2] Although some of
the horror and Surrealism of this sequence is put in the
form of dreams, the work is more surrealistic than Romantic.
The remaining poems in the book, however, can be considered
Romantic and introduce the main themes which continue to
appear in Treece's work; the nature of truth, death, and
man, and their relationship to cosmic nature.

With his second book, Treece begins entitling his
volumes to show the progression of his poetic philosophy.
In the poem sequence bearing the same title as his second
work, Towards a Personal Armegeddon (1941), Treece, using
the subjective voice, traces man's life from birth, "that
dark minute," to adulthood showing his inevitable initia-
tion into a society of deceit, where one is taught "to live
on lies," and to use "a knife of words."[3] In depicting life
as a type of wasteland, "matter without mould" and the home

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[2]"Poems from a Work in Progress," 38 Poems, p. 16.

[3]Towards a Personal Armegeddon, pp. 10, 11.

as a place "where walls hold mirrors which alone hold walls," Treece in this volume presents his basic Apocalyptic philosophy which calls for a return to a way of life filled with a Romantic spirit.[4] The poet, after questioning in detail the nature of truth, asks,

> how many centuries
> Must we be stifled in this stony grave?
> How many bloody minutes roll across
> The land, before the love we bear is born?[5]

Despite the stolid condition of the world which the poet presents, he gives hope that with patience, a return can be made.

With his third volume, Treece begins to show his later and better manner of writing, that which can be called his typically mature style. His imitation of Thomas is fading and his poetry now bears an air of folk mysticism, one which is still similar to that of Thomas but primarily because of the two poets' common Welsh background. Because Treece found himself unable to write about the war in which he was actively involved at this time, he spent the war years completing "all the work which had been started or projected before the war came."[6] As a result, the poems in this volume show little or no effect of the war. The title

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[4]Ibid., p. 24.

[5]Ibid., p. 28.

[6]Henry Treece, How I See Apocalypse, p. 5.

of this third work, Invitation and Warning (1942), as
explained by the poem bearing the same title, refers to the
attractiveness and repulsion of life, good and bad being
complementary parts of nature.[7] Over half of this volume is
composed of short poems which are listed under the subtitle
of "Mystic Numbers." These poems, though written on a
variety of subjects, read like a piece of ancient lore,
their mystical quality presenting the attractiveness of
life. Counterbalancing these poems is the sequence "The
Never Ending Rosary," which combines a few poems taken from
Treece's first work with new creations to form a sequence
depicting the despair of life. The sequence, somewhat on
the order of a circle, begins and ends with the following
stanza which both acknowledges life's despair and the end
of an era:

> Slow Sarabande of pain in all the air;
> Everywhere cadence, decay of a tone, of time,
> Death of the gold days and the fealled joy
> And across the purple bells and the purple sky
> The long unending rosary of despair,
> . . . .
> . . . . dog at the end of his rope
> Gnaws at the door, howls as he feels as we
> The wide immeasurable knowledge of an end.[8]

It seems that Treece had originally intended "The Never
Ending Rosary" to precede, and thus to create the foundation

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[7]"Invitation and Warning," Invitation and Warning,
p. 33.

[8]"Never Ending Rosary," ibid., pp. 58, 72.

for, <u>Towards a Personal Armegeddon</u>, for not only does it consist of earlier poems, but it appears before a condensed version of "Towards a Personal Armegeddon," which is again included in this volume. Viewed in this order, Treece's poetry affirms the hopelessness of the present age, offers hope for a new world, and in this third volume shows the duality of nature in general.

In his fourth and longest volume, <u>The Black Seasons</u> (1945), Treece points out the duality of man's nature, although the volume's title gives emphasis to only the negative side. While there is no poem bearing the same title as the volume, one poem employs the phrase in a manner which indicates that it refers to man's passions:

> I see your virgin blossom splashed with blood
> Bright red against the white, and at your feet
> The gentle prince who walked away without a sword
> Believing talks of peace among the hills,
> Trusting the word, the signatory name,
> Forgetting the black seasons of a race.[9]

More specifically defining the title is the apparent synonym "dark seasons":

> These are dark seasons of the mind where grow
> The fruits of terror and the crops of woe, where fly
> Strange birds whose sombre songs like death-knells ring
> Through the soul's woods, where no dawn-bird dare sing.[10]

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[9] "The Crimson Cherry-Tree," <u>The Black Seasons</u>, p. 17.

[10] "The Seasonal Mind," <u>ibid.</u>, p. 41.

The passions of man are presented in this volume primarily through its inclusion of war poems. Although many other poems in the volume also present the dark side of man's nature, they present and contrast it with the good, which is given dominance. By the time of this volume, Treece was infusing his Welsh spirit into longer creations which show goodness followed by evil: "The Lost Ones," a history of the Saxons, who are replaced by a less noble race, and "The Ballad of the Prince," a work with a medieval flavor in which a prince and his maiden dream of the "gilded years" which are past but which can possibly return. A third long poem is "To the Edge and Back," in which Treece presents the "black seasons" of madness, the vision of an insane man in which the despair of all history is seen. Many of the shorter poems concern the life of Christ and, though separate from it, could easily have formed a part of "Second Coming," a religious sequence also included in this volume. Here the black seasons of Christ's persecution are stressed, yet an underlying glory is evident in the description.

In The Haunted Garden (1947), Treece continues his war themes, this time not to show the normalcy of good and evil in life but to evaluate the effects of World War II, which had now ended. Also in this work, Treece begins to combine in a traditional Romantic manner his themes of universal nature and human life, creating in "Seven Stations

to the Tomb" a pattern which he employs for "Summer
Orchards" in his final poetic volume. The haunted garden,
according to the title poem of this volume, is a natural
land which is inhabited by the spirit of the past, a past
which cannot be revived but whose spirit needs, for prac-
tical purposes, to be infused into the present society. The
content of this volume was perhaps in part influenced by the
death of Treece's son who had died in 1946 at the age of
eleven and one-half months. Using a personal symbolism,
Treece dedicates this volume to the memory of his deceased
child:

> To the memory of a little bird that flew
> into our lighted room and then out again,
> into the dark--

a dedication which possibly provides deeper insight into the
many nature images appearing within this work.[11]

In Treece's final book of poetry The Exiles (1952)
there is a move away from glorification of the past to a
more objective look at it and the present. In the poem
which shares its title with the volume, Treece notes that
rumination of the past is not enough:

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[11]The personal symbolism of the dedication was
clarified by Mrs. Henry Treece in a letter to this author,
dated April 6, 1973.

It would be easy to lie down and drink the sky,
Or calculate the size of yesterday
While waiting bird flaps leather wings and laughs . . . .
There is no going back along this road.[12]

In this book, the poet still expresses hope for the future,
but a future beginning with the present: "nor do we leave
the weeping land, because here is our home, our past, the
future's bones."[13] Accompanying this move toward greater
objectivity is a move from non-dramatic poetry to verse
drama, the dominant subject of Treece's final volume being
the tragic hero. When Treece published The Exiles, he was
in all probability aware that his days as a poet-philosopher
were over, for at that time, Neo-Romantic literature and
ideas were flourishing, though no great Romantic social
revolution has yet taken place; therefore, in his final book
of poetry he takes the opportunity to temper his past
idealism with reality.[14]

Themes Showing the Multiplicity of Man's Nature

The chronological view of Treece's poetry just
presented in his work shows that his poems progress from
shorter lyric to long poetic sequences, the latter

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[12]"The Exiles," The Exiles, p. 56. The ellipsis in
the third line is part of the poem.

[13]Ibid., p. 78.

[14]Ibid., p. 55.

integrating what were initially separate themes such as cosmic nature and human life, good and evil, and the past and the future. Such a poetic progression also anticipates his progression from poet, to playwright, to novelist. In the preface to The Crown and the Sickle, Treece explains the title of the third Apocalypse anthology as follows: "the crown is glory, victory, the imagination; the sickle is the surgical reason. The two together are symbols of man's completeness, and it is totality of experience which this collection attempts to portray." Similarly, Treece, in his own poetry, also attempts to present a view of man as a complete being, and through themes on the experiences common to men, show the multiplicity of man's mind.

Treece's search for truth--"What is the shape of truth? I ask"--is one of the first of his poetic themes.[15] But such a concern appears to have been for Treece a passing one, for it is dealt with only in his first three books, primarily in Towards a Personal Armegeddon, perhaps his most autobiographical poem. Treece's first view of truth is that it is totally elusive:

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[15]Towards A Personal Armegeddon, p. 22.

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    The shapes of truth are no man's history
    Or hope . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .
    They die with the daylight, ere the surgeon's hand
    Can grasp the knife to solve the mystery
    Of feeling and the half-formed word.

                        the word of truth, in light
    Stands bare for one brief footfall--then is gone . . . .[16]
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The possibility of discovering truth not only vanishes with

daylight but also with death. For Treece, death is not the

ultimate key to the mysteries of life; for though he

describes the scream of "The Spade!" as "the last shape of

truth," he also declares that the voice of the dead "screams

of spades, and then is still."[17] Although Treece never

directly declares the type of truth for which he is search-

ing, the context of his poems reveal that he is primarily

concerned with truth in the form of words, with philoso-

phies of life and decalogues. Having, then, finally

decided what truth should ideally be, the poet offers this

test of doctrine and its subsequent expression: truth is

that which can "heal wounds" of life's problems without

anger or war, without "sharpen[ing] hearts like knives."[18]

But in the realm of reality, he finds words fail to pass the

test, and he proceeds to narrow his search for truth, near

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[16]Ibid., p. 5; "The Word," 38 Poems, p. 25.

[17]"Poems from a Work in Progress," ibid., pp. 16,
17.

[18]Towards a Personal Armegeddon, p. 22.

the end of <u>Towards a Personal Armegeddon</u>, with the prelimi-
nary conclusion that the essence of "truth's in the tendons
and the sobbing heart."[19] Truth is thus in feeling, in
following the natural goodness in the human heart. But it
is not until his third book, however, that the poet, after
considering both the positive and negative aspects of
nature, is finally able to resolve his search and to con-
clude, "All is truth for those who dare seek."[20] In his
search for truth, Treece discovers that good, the test for
truth, is present in all of life's occurrences; nothing is
totally false.

An extension of Treece's discovery of the duality in
life forms another of his major themes, that of each person
possessing two contrary selves. This dual self is not
acquired through defensiveness or social custom but is
innate:

> From that hard minute when the tortured womb
> Dropped me . . .
> My double-crossing soul has worn two masks.[21]

In his first poem containing the concept of dual selves,
Treece labels the two facets of himself as the "singer" and

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[19]<u>Ibid</u>., p. 26.

[20]"The House of Truth," <u>Invitation and Warning</u>,
p. 23.

[21]<u>Towards a Personal Armegeddon</u>, p. 35.

"the hard-handed."[22] Later in "The Possessors," he repre-

sents them as "the fool" and "the tyrant," and introduces

the additional concept of masks disguising each self as the

other:

> So these fine two strut up and down my days,
> One with his hawk, the other with a lute,
> Bowing each-other in and out of rooms
> That give upon the avenues to death,
> Erasing public pose in secret acts;
> One hawks for love--the lutanist plucks hate![23]

Regardless of the names applied to the two natures and their

degree of conspicuity, Treece's basic idea remains the same;

man is both good and evil. This dual nature connects him

with the animal kingdom: "no-one can censure tiger or quick

snake, / And not a man remains / But would nail up the

master once again."[24] Treece's comparison of man with an

animal is not as derogatory as it may appear; he is merely

showing man to be a part of nature. Treece sees animals as

basically benign:

> The small bird whistling in my tree
> Knows no black hate or enmity . . . .[25]

The bird "minds not if the red blood's shed"; yet "without

fail / He marks the movements of the snail."[26] The bird

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[22]Ibid.

[23]"The Possessors," The Black Seasons, p. 31.

[24]"Poem," The Haunted Garden, p. 33.

[25]"Prologue," ibid., p. 9.

[26]Ibid.

notices not the destructiveness of life but the smallest

hints of life and the smallest steps of progress. If the

bird does feed upon the snail, his motivation for doing so

is a natural, innocent one, not one of hate. Animals by

nature look to the positive aspects of life, and Treece

presents the blinded bird as thinking not of his bitter

future but of his past happiness and therefore singing.[27]

Man with his dual nature also has many correspon-

dences with cosmic nature. The poet reads in the

"disordered motions" of the sea, the "lyric of my life,

spirit's obituary"; while in the "uncertain lift and swoop"

of the clouds, he knows "Heart's weathers and my future's

solitude."[28] In two longer poetic sequences, "Seven

Stations to the Tomb" and "Summer Orchards," Treece subtly

parallels seasons with stages of life by employing the names

of seasons for the titles of poems which reflect upon man's

life, but which use nature as a symbol-filled backdrop. The

more successful is "Summer Orchards" which, in the Romantic

manner, contains digressions on specific characters and

situations in addition to generalizations on certain stages

of life. Man, like nature, is shown to possess both posi-

tive and negative aspects, the negative aspect not

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[27]"Blind Bird," The Haunted Garden, p. 15.

[28]"Two Metaphors," ibid., p. 46.

necessarily being evil but simply a destructive force which can be used for either evil or good. Indeed in both man and nature, good and evil can co-exist at the same time in the same form.

The theme which most nearly shows the good aspect of man's nature is that of love; that is, a humanistic love, a concern for one's fellow man. Love in Treece's poetry is primarily expressed as the absence of war, hate, and enmity, aspects encouraged by one's environment. Love in this sense occurs throughout Treece's poetry but without being labeled as such. Treece does, however, consider amatory love in his poetry, usually equating it with youth, innocence, and tenderness. In writing on this theme, he achieves a gentle tone not otherwise approached in his poetry:

> Brief months ago I loved a merry girl,
> Whose fingers wove with mine a merry game.
> While our flocks mingled, mingled was our tale
> Of faith, and fullness and the fire-lit home.
> . . . .
> Yet that was years ago, yes, that was Once
> Upon a Time, when time was very young,
> When I would leap broad rivers in my pride,
> And a laughing lass strode golden at my side.[29]

Treece's romantic passages are similar to those of Dylan Thomas, not only in tone but in the device of limiting romantic love to youth, which is in turn equated with the nescience of the swiftness and destructiveness of time.

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[29]"The Shepherd Lad's Lament," The Black Seasons, pp. 65-66.

In Summer Orchards, Treece parallels the shortness of
innocence and the shortness of youth with summer. Here he
stresses the theme of innocence through the nonce symbolism
of red and white coupled with Garden-of-Eden imagery:

> That Summer the red may and the white may made
> Glorious the garden wall, and bees burdened
> The golden air with them carrying, till it hung
> Heavy, a canopy over our heads
> As we lay on the lawn and dreamed our way
> Through jungles of tangled marrow-shoots.
> Foxgloves and campanulas swayed in the borders
> And God bloomed over all, a benevolent sun.
> . . . .
> But in Summer, under the white-washed trees,
> A girl in a white dress gave me an apple.
> . . . . Then dusk
> Moved slowly among the trees like a blue
> Smoke at night, and I cried that joy
> Could come so easily; for them I knew
> It must break with as little warning. So
>
> I learned among foxgloves and campanulas;
> That Summer flashed by in ten short years.[30]

Though romantic love swiftly fades, Treece, as a Roman-
ticist, represents love in general as extending beyond
death. It will end "only as leaf ends in the wind / Blown
to a new world's edge / For future's growth the food / Rich
as a dying word."[31] For the most part, Treece does not
glorify love but considers it more as a natural aspect of
man, one which can be stifled by the mechanical society.

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[30]"V. Now Summer Has Been and Gone," The Exiles,
p. 73.

[31]"Dumb Love," The Black Seasons, p. 49.

Treece also recognized the bellicose nature in man as natural, but thought it should be controlled. This attitude is best seen in Treece's war poems. Recalling an early English War, the poet states,

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                                              I feel
       The failure of a people when that wind
       Howls through my heart and shows me Caradoc
       Heaped high with lads who should have brought their songs
       Right to the walls of Ludlow, over Severn,
       Regaining the green pastures with a word.[32]
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A poet who glorified the early Anglo Saxon people, Treece saw good in man's destructive instinct when its use was necessary for self-protection and the protection of natural ideals. Treece apparently considered World War II necessary, for his attitude toward its earlier stages was very favorable. In his early war poems, Treece emphasizes the loneliness of the soldiers' wives and contrasts their home with the battlefield, but he does this not to belittle war but to glorify the soldiers. In "The Conscripts," a soldier wonders, "Why must I suffer for a nation's lies?" The answer comes to him as he observes a cherry tree: "fruit will come / Though bird take blossom and man break down bough."[33] Treece considered the means worth the end and

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[32] "The Crimson Cherry Tree," ibid., p. 17.

[33] "The Conscripts," ibid., p. 75.

presents those who died in battle as ghosts "maimed but magnificent."[34]

But as the war progressed, the poet's attitude toward it changed. In his poem, "In the Third Year of War," he wonders if the war will ever end and whether it is beneficial; and in "The Conquerors" Treece shows no pleasure in the glory of conquering, for soldiers are not directly engaged in overpowering the source of evil but are, in contrast, often innocent victims of the war:

No-one had told us victory was like this;
Not one amongst us would have eaten bread
Before he'd filled the mouth of the grey child
That sprawled, stiff as a stone, before the shattered door.
There was not one who did not think of home.[35]

In his first post-war poem, "Christmas 1943," death in war is no longer seen as patriotic but is spoken of as merely an alternative to other ways of death. In his poem, Treece comforts the dead and their survivors, noting that the soldiers have gone first but all will die; "only the iron foot of Time will march; / The clock will tick all life to quiet dust."[36] The war has ended, bringing peace, but at this time, Treece cannot commend it, only offer comfort.

Treece's longest and most comprehensive war poem is "Elegy," primarily a plea to remember those who died in

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[34]Ibid., p. 76.

[35]"Conquerors," The Haunted Garden, p. 49.

[36]"Christmas 1943," ibid., p. 50.

battle. Treece describes the different types of death, by
sea and by air but always death that is different from what
was expected. In speaking of his fellow airmen who died in
combat, Treece notes,

> Death came with no white skull and gleaming scythe,
> No thunder rumbling from glory's past;
> But with a spume of contrails and a scream
> And all Time's hatred in a five-second burst . . . .[37]

His description of those who died by sea is even more
repugnant, and they are even more shown worthy of remem-
brance. The poet's tone softens, however, as he assures the
survivors that the dead are no longer suffering; he depicts
them as saying, "We feel no pain now, still beneath the
turf; . . . what is this, the grief of one short death, /
Set up against a lifetime of despair?"[38] The soldiers
Treece shows the most concern over are those who are--

> neither under ground nor underneath the sea,
> But wandering lost in a world
> That is neither one or the other,
> Where feet move onward never nearing home,
> Where hands reach out for love
> And clutch the mist.[39]

Treece thus in the process of his elegy gains the reader's
sympathy for all the soldiers of the war and concludes with
sympathy for those who survived the war and who are now left
to do what they can with the ruins:

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[37]"Elegy," ibid., p. 53.

[38]Ibid., p. 56.

[39]Ibid., p. 59.

It has been a long and dusty road to read
Even for those who at the start
Saw but a short and flowered-border path
Into the rising sun.
. . . .
. . . we are left standing where the world begins
Facing a broken signpost and staring at a sun
That soon will sink below the hills,
When the dark will come upon us all again . . . .[40]

With time, however, Treece adopts a more objective view of
the war than his formerly hopeless view. In "Duet for the
Times," Treece, even in satirizing war, shows some good in
it; and in "Poem after War," he asks, "and who shall blame
us if we take / The sword again to bring to life the
past?"[41] Though Treece once had thought that peace should
ideally be achieved without war, he finally concludes that
peace is worth the price, that "We can be saint or troglo-
dyte, the sons of peace."[42]

Closely related to the theme of war is perhaps the
most striking theme of Treece's poetry, death. This theme,
however, unlike that of war, shows the influence of Surreal-
ism, especially in Treece's earlier poems, in which the
horror of death is exaggerated. An overall view of Treece's
poetry, however, shows that his attitude toward death is not
as negative as it appears on the surface. Like Dylan

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[40]Ibid., p. 61. Final ellipsis is part of the poem.

[41]"Poem after War," ibid., p. 62.

[42]"Sons of Peace," ibid., p. 64.

Thomas, Treece sees death as omnipresent in life; in Towards

a Personal Armegeddon, he relates that

> From that dark minute [birth] I have felt my future
> Stalk through the land and scythe the hour through,
> While in the warm womb's cavern even,
> I saw my hearse, felt the rough prick of shroud.[43]

Unlike Thomas, Treece shows man as being aware of death's

presence in his life even in youth, though at this period,

he does not normally fear it. In youth,

> Death walks through the mind's dark woods,
> Beautiful as aconite,
> A lily-flower in his pale hand
> And eyes like moonstone burning bright.[44]

It is only when Treece presents death as approaching that

he personifies it as a "grinning" figure carrying a scythe.

Although in one poem, Treece has the bone, muscle, and heart

"nightly neigh their pain" at the approach of death, the

"pain, [is] the noise that midnight nothing makes."[45] It is

not death itself that is so horrible but the dread of the

unexpected; Treece speaks of man as a fugitive from death

who treads--

> on the rim of death
> With lute to cover lack of sword,
> With robe where iron should be worn,
> And heart a-flutter at the plover's word![46]

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[43]Towards a Personal Armegeddon, p. 8.

[44]"Summer," The Haunted Garden, p. 73.

[45]"See-Saw on Dying," 38 Poems, p. 19.

[46]"The Fugitive," The Black Seasons, p. 30.

Upon the realization that he will no longer exist, "man ends where he makes his start / In the bitter storm of tears."[47] The tears are not caused by death itself, for "'There's no more weeping when you're dead.'"[48] The grotesquerie in Treece's theme of death ends when he speaks of the state of death itself, affirming that--

> his [death's] pictured pain
> Is only paper talk . . . .
> . . . .
> Is no more than a wet page in the rain,
> The midnight noise that empty rooms make . . . .[49]

What makes death horrible is not a sense of punishment but the fact of mere cessation of life. Treece places such a value on life that "being forgotten's the only hell."[50] After death, there is no chance again to live an existence as we know it. Death proves--

> to man that life is a dream
> And the man and the lath are things of the world,
> That the black velvet stays when the tale has been told.[51]

> This [death] is the end of all things, end of time
> And end of all the mind's green escapades,
> That brought love back with every sign of Spring
> Through whistling wood and daffodil's gold horn,

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[47]"Autumn I," The Haunted Garden, p. 76.

[48]"Ophelia," The Black Seasons, p. 54.

[49]"Emperor Zero on Death," 38 Poems, p. 21.

[50]Ibid.

[51]"Ballet," Invitation and Warning, p. 31.

It is the window's close, the lute's last dying fall,
The dark cloud's finger reaching over all.[52]

In Treece's poetry, the sole terror of death is its final-
ity.

Religious Themes

Despite the finality which Treece attributes to
death, he never denies the existence of an afterlife. He
simply denies the existence of a hell, affirming with cer-
tainty that death is the end of our earthly existence, an
existence which should be lived vigorously but peacefully.
Treece's poetry does in fact hint of an afterlife. Indeed
the story of Christ, related through one poetic sequence and
a series of separate non-consecutive poems included in The
Black Seasons, is a poetic subject in which Treece excels;
however, in his presentation of this subject, he is pri-
marily concerned with the historical side of Christianity
rather than with its spiritual significance or its promise
of an afterlife. In actuality Treece relates the story of
Christ in a manner which approaches that of Welsh folklore
and in which Christ is portrayed as somewhat of a folk hero.

Reminiscent of medieval religious poetry, the poem
depicts Christ's birth with humility, as both joyous and
sad. While Joseph "sang a merry herding song," Mary tends

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[52]"Poem," The Haunted Garden, p. 32.

to the Christ-child whom Treece depicts as an ordinary baby

with no hint of supernatural powers. However, "the lowing

ox, the moaning tree, / Hinted the cruelty to come: / A

raven croaked, 'Gethsemane.'"[53] Here the Biblical crowing

of the cock is replaced by a surrealistic raven croaking,

and the moaning tree recalls the empathetic tree of "The

Dream of the Rood."

The betrayal of Christ is depicted in starker terms

of a dice game:

>   I heard the dark shape speak;
> "This is an entertainment fit for heaven
> Finer than rack or screw, or blinding beak."
> And then he took the cup and flung a three.
> A thief was hanging either side of me.[54]

The poems on Christ's crucifixion gain their shock effect in

contrasting the living Christ with the mocked, dying victim.

In one poem, Christ is described as being arrayed in fine

clothes, his black hair hanging in ringlets all bound in

silver bands with a pattern "woven by sunlight on his

rings." When the people realized that Christ was claiming

to be the Son of God, they "tore off all the purple / They

quarreled for the gold . . . ."[55] Whereas the masses did

not empathize with Christ, Nature did: "Struck blind, the

tottering sun / Tapped his slow way behind the echoing

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[53] "Christ Child," The Black Seasons, p. 38.

[54] "Betrayal," ibid., p. 39.

[55] "Sermon in the Field," ibid., p. 41.

cloud" while the villagers "stared / At the twitching white thing that had been / A Prince in purple till the cock had crowed."[56] Again recalling the religious poetry of medieval times are the poems on the Resurrection, which is described in magnificent terms. Treece often employed the symbol of the Holy Spirit for Christ, and in the following excerpt depicts Christ as a bird, a bird also being the medieval symbol for the Christian soul and a figure of the ascension:

> He rose, upon hysteric wreaths of love,
> Soared, nailed to an unrelenting beam;
> Through airs that tingled with a child's low cries
> He glided, gentle as a girl's soft dream. . . .
> . . . .
> His soul, ecstatic as the chains fell free,
> Sped in the likeness of a tiny bird.[57]

Yet, though Christ's ascension is glorious, it is the humble folk, "the young nun" with her "hair newly shorn" and "perhaps the milkmaid scrubbing at her pail" who hear Christ's scream of triumph.[58] But others missed not only the ascension but the crucifixion as well. Thus, in "A Thief to His Lord," which shows the dual nature of good and evil in man, a thief seeks information about the crucifixion from Christ himself, whom he sees as somewhat of a folk hero:

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[56]"Second Crucifixion," ibid., p. 42.

[57]"Martyr," ibid., p. 79.

[58]"Resurrection," ibid., p. 40.

Holy Jack, they say your side bled gold;
They say flame leapt from the holes across your brow.
And Jack, that flowers sprouted from your hands
Where iron drove them hard against the bough.

I wish I had been there, old lad of love;
You must have looked a King upon that tree!
I'm game to wager either my ears
The guards looked small against your majesty.

I met a woman in the tavern here
Who says they wept, the folk to hear you jest
At being given wine upon a sponge.
And did you them? O I always miss the best!

Oh Jack, don't hold it hard against me that
I stabbed a soldier later for your cost.[59]

The poem not only has a mood of folk legend, but shows

clearly the irony of men crucifying, then asking forgive-

ness, of Christ. The latter fact is further touched upon in

"The Seasonal Mind"; at the will of the people "The cross

can make a body meat for worms"; yet these same people with

their lips "make a King / Of what was left a dangling life-

less thing."[60] It is only after crucifying Christ that the

people accept him as the Son of God. In this respect,

Treece depicts communion of his characters with Christ as a

physical union,--a somewhat metaphysical notion, thus

thus literalizing the Biblical bride and bridegroom

symbolism. In "The New Way," the invitation of Christ into

a nun's life is described in terms of her petitioning him

as a lover; in another poem, Christ as a beggar is

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[59] "A Thief to His Lord," ibid., p. 43.

[60] "The Seasonal Mind," ibid., p. 41.

transformed into a prince after he and a lady "Dressed in a silken gown . . . lay as wife and lord."[61]

Two longer poems which carry through the religious spirit in The Black Seasons are "Ballad of the Prince" and "To the Edge and Back," the former being a fairy-tale interwoven with Christian elements, which depicts a turning away from Christ for the sake of materialism. But whereas the prince of the story is a Christ type, his maiden, the wizard's daughter, is a type of Virgin Mary. The following excerpt catches the innocence of mood which surrounds her:

> The girl in the spendthrift habit of despair,
> Dyed in the wailing anthem of Christ's blood,
> Festoons the foliage of her hair and sings:
> The bright-minted music of her throat
> Swims through the world of less-than-yesterday
> Probes the forgotten limits of dismay . . . .
> . . . .
>
> Mary she moves, with more than Mary-grace
> Among the grey unleavened progeny of stone,
> Past the slow vastness of the sodden byre.[62]

Though the poem "To the Edge and Back" is a study in madness and not strictly a religious poem, its introduction describes the beginning of time and man's relationship to creation. Here again Treece depicts the Deity in the form of a bird as he presents his version of the book of Genesis and the Gospel of John:

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[61] "A Young Nun to Her Lover"; "The New Way," ibid., pp. 44, 40.

[62] "Ballad of the Prince," ibid., p. 59.

> In the beginning was the bird
> A spume of feathers on the face of time
> Man's model for destruction, God's defence.
>
> Before man, a bird, a feather before time,
> And music growing outward into space,
> The feathered shears cutting dreams in air.
>
> Before birds, a God, a Nothing with a shape,
> More horrible than mountains or the Plague,
> A voice as large as fate, a tongue of bronze.
>
> Before this, O no before was there.[63]

In this poem Treece sees God as both the Creator and
Destroyer: a bird constitutes the symbol for the Holy
Spirit as well as a model of a bomber jet; and a pair of
scissors, in cutting, can create or destroy. Since God was
before the bird, it seems the bird or feather is meant to
depict a spirit life, or perhaps Christ or the Holy Spirit
since "In the beginning was the bird" is an obvious parody
of John I:1, "In the beginning was the Word." The plural
"birds" in the third stanza can, however, be seen as
representing angels. Treece further views creation as
harmony--a view similar to that of the Renaissance. The
poem "To the Edge and Back" then continues the sequence,
recounting in narrative the history of Christianity:

> God on the edge of swords
> Looked in man's heart and found distress,
> Hands turned to Hell, and cut them off.

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[63]"To the Edge and Back," ibid., p. 81.

> Past on the edge of man
> Pulled tight the rack, put back the clock,
> And left a dream of twilight graves.
>
> Man on the edge of Past
> Admired the future, loved a bird,
> And gazed into the eye of God.[64]

The last two stanzas also depict the last phase of Treece's

Romantic philosophy, a turning from a rumination of the

past toward the outlook of the future--beginning with the

present.

The final view of God in "To the Edge and Back" is

as though seen through the eyes of one on the brink of

madness: God "in the shape of a goat," his "four sharp

hooves tearing the page of truth, . . . And passion

quavering behind yellow teeth."[65] God, through insane eyes,

is seen as evil. The madman sees only the despair in life,

not the goodness. In this and his other religious poetry,

Treece does not moralize, advocate faith in God, or exhalt

Christianity. His primary purpose in writing on religious

themes is to entertain, to present a moving folk legend.

Christ, with his love philosophy, offers a ready prototype

for Treece's view of Apocalyptic man; thus, the poet, to

a lesser extent, uses the story of Christ to show the

"black seasons" of man in relation to a past ideal.

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[64]Ibid.

[65]Ibid., p. 85.

Early English Historical Themes

Because Treece dislikes the mechanical age in which
he lived and could see no future in the continuation of
such, he glorifies the past and its values; and the past
which Treece overwhelmingly emphasizes is the early English
period. Treece sees the Saxon people as natural, in tuen
with nature; they "spoke the language of the trees / And
opened veins to let love in."[66] Yet despite Treece's dis-
like for the mechanical age, he sees in it some traces of
the spirit of the ideal past: "The lonely child fondles the
lichen, / Squeezes the garden mint and smells the past."[67]
Treece often depicts the presence of the Saxon spirit by
figuratively portraying it in the form of ghosts, many times
referring to the Saxons as "the lost ones" or "the old
ones." These epithets are perhaps misleading since although
Treece glorifies the past, he speaks negatively of age as a
part of man's natural life span:

> Age is the act of being held by life
> A minute after Death has passed the door . . .
>
> It is the state of seeing in a fire
> Not passion but a shield against the cold.[68]

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[66] "The Old Ones," ibid., p. 9.

[67] "Lonely Child II," The Exiles, p. 71.

[68] "Age," The Black Seasons, p. 10.

Yet it is apparently merely the passiveness associated with age which Treece dislikes; it takes an active vigorous person to effect the social change which Treece's philosophy advocates, and "'When you grow grey you think on little things.'"[69]

In his emphasis on adventure, Treece is somewhat of a medieval Romanticist, and indeed, two of his five longer poetic works are on themes of historical adventure. In The Lost Ones, "it is evening and the wounded sun / Throws its red road across the sea"; a road the poet follows to the isles where the Lost Ones lived, and looks out upon the history of an earlier English era.[70] This history is presented in a series of twelve unrelated poems of varied form, and one prose narrative under the title of "The Lost Ones," which reviews varied aspects of Britain's past. Treece records the history of Britain, describing the original inhabitants as "Little Folk," with "stone swords and speaking with words of flints."[71] Despite this inconsistency with English history, the poet apparently identifies these "Little Folk" with the Picts, for he later mentions their "Pictish flints."[72] After their departure, the

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[69]"Poem," The Haunted Garden, p. 44.

[70]"The Lost Ones," The Black Seasons, p. 18.

[71]Ibid., p. 21

[72]Ibid., p. 22.

land is inhabited by a fair-haired people, apparently the
Celts, whom Treece glorifies throughout his poetry, and who
in his poem are spoken of as "brave as the Eagle."[73] Next
come a red-haired tribe with "tongues as slow as dying
glaciers"--a tribe later turned back by the "dark men," the
Romans, as they are joined by the Celts and the returning
"Little Folk."[74] Other sections of "The Lost Ones" portray
variously the Celts' love for and dependency on their boats,
the joys and sadness of being a bard, and a robust argument
between Celtic shepherds as to the greatness of the heroes
of their youth. The shepherds, similar to those in medieval
literature, are hostile characters who throw scurrilous
insults at each other:

> Between the two of you I smell the bones
> That sway ten fathom deep out in the Sound!
>
>   Have senses left
> Your skulls that this maid's talk should tumble out
> Like scum upon the babbling pot of broth.[75]

Common to all the sections of the poem is the vigor attrib-
uted to Saxon life. The first inhabitants of Britain are
"Screaming their thorney songs / Weaving their stony
spells, / And chuckling in their hearts of flint."[76] Scenes

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[73]Ibid., p. 21.

[74]Ibid., p. 22.

[75]Ibid., p. 26.

[76]Ibid., p. 21.

of other inhabitants show "harpers and pipers in gallant cloaks of gold, / A man and his maiden crossing the bleak moor," and a peasant bolting his door as "over the harsh heather the wind blows cold."[77] These people, who were ruled by their hearts rather than by machines, are, in a modern mechanistic society, the lost ones.

No less vigorous is "The Princes of Twilight," a narrative on the death of King Arthur. Though apparently based on Morte D'Arthur, Treece's version differs from that of Malory in leaving Arthur's slayer unnamed and in portraying Arthur's son Mordred as a child at the time of his father's death. The dying Arthur does not even know the whereabouts of his lost son, who is living in another part of the land, and even this early is already showing signs of his treacherous nature. "Princes of Twilight" is predominantly written in prose, but in prose employing poetic language. In a passage in which Treece again emphasizes the importance of following one's heart or natural goodness, King Arthur's disloyal knights are engaged in a conversation in which "their words flew in and out of the branches like coloured birds, climbing and soaring, swooping and striking, skimming from head to head and hardly ever perching in the heart."[78] Further logic for Treece's inclusion of this work

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[77]Ibid., p. 19.

[78]"Princes of Twilight," The Haunted Garden, p. 25.

in a book of poetry is its incorporation of poetic passages
to introduce each prose section; this narrative usage, at
the same time, seems to be foreshadowing Treece's impending
turn to the novel, and his chorus-like poetic passages, his
consequent achievement in drama.

This incipient use of prose and dramatic-like
material as a foreboding of a complete turn to fiction and
drama is further corroborated by the fact that his last book
of poetry, The Exiles, includes, besides "Summer Orchards,"
eleven descriptive poems classified under the major title of
"The Characters," and a poetic drama, "The Tragedy of
Tristram."[79] These drama-related works, published in 1952,
continue to focus on historical themes, but in addition are
concerned with the portrayal of a tragic hero. Treece thus
begins his last volume with a short poem defining the tragic
hero, in which he questions the authenticity of the stoicism
which the tragic hero exhibits in public:

>   If we returned
> But one hour later, when the dust they raised
> Had settled to the quiet boards again,
> Should we find whimpering humility
> Lonely before an unrelenting stone,

---

[79]"Summer Orchards," a sequence on the stages of
life, is considered under Treece's nature poetry, supra,
p. 102. It focuses on tragedy only in its short final
section, "Poem for Stefan (Schimanski)," which is dedicated
to the memory of Treece's literary partner of eight years
who had died in 1950. See Chapter III, p. 66, supra.

> Crying for audience and getting none,
> Begging forgiveness to an empty stage?[80]

Having questioned the true nature of the tragic hero, Treece

in the remainder of the volume concerns himself with pre-

senting various types of tragic heroes.

"The Characters" is not dramatic in its internal

form, but consists basically of a series of unrelated poems,

each delineating a person or place associated with tragedy.

Cast in this work are the mythical figures of Dido, Electra

and Ulysses; the historical figures of Jezebel, Caratcus

[sic], Domenico Scarletti; the literary figure of Hamlet;

non-specific characters, such as the court fool; and two

places of historical importance such as a ditch near Inver-

ness. Though all the poems are descriptive, only one

approaches in technique the formal character sketch, that of

dancing Jezebel, in which Treece's meter reinforces the

action of the poem:

> Her hands like heads of Cobra writhe
> Her long brown thighs rise mockingly
> Rise and fall, thrust and retreat
> In time to clashing timbrel's beat.[81]

The remaining poems are more narrative than descriptive and

relate the primary events associated with the concerned

character. In "Hamlet," Treece emphasizes the protagonist's

dislike for all father figures:

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[80]"Tragic Heroes," The Exiles, p. 11.

[81]"Jezebel," ibid, p. 45.

Sweet prince, the tragedy's complete before
Ever you come to manhood, if indeed you came;
For always now you'll be a sharer at the breast,
Not sole possessor; what does it matter whether
Father or uncle push you from your prize?
The tragedy's complete, so dry your eyes
And take out vengeance on an easier prey,
Some weak one you can hurt, Ophelia, say![82]

While "Hamlet," like all of the poems in "The Characters,"
is generally good, it is at times marred by poor lines such
as those ending the play, where Treece, after showing the
reactive consequences of anger, pulls a switch on the reader
and asks, "What moral? Pity the poor man girl, / Laugh at
the Fool, for you are of one sort."[83]

Perhaps the best poem in "The Characters" is "The
Exiles," after which the volume was named. Ironically, this
poem, which does not limit itself to one definitive charac-
ter, is the least representative poem in the drama-related
work although it is basically tragic. "The Exiles" is also
somewhat of a war poem, but one in which Treece's primary
concern is the portrayal of the physical and mental suffer-
ing of the homeless in Europe after World War II. The most
poignant description in the poem is that of the exiled
commoner who, unable to accept his condition, denies it,
seeking comfort in a world of insanity only to suffer the
tortures of a paranoid condition:

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[82]"Hamlet," ibid., p. 57.

[83]Ibid., p. 60.

> Losing identity, the tired mind
> Assumes divinity for the sake of ease;
> A troubled god, whose head turns here and there,
> Staring at mouse's footfall, searching the bed
> For adders, moving through the world
> Fearful and restless, like a traveller
>
> Who finds himself in some dark foreign town
> Of words he knows not. Sheltering,
> He stands beneath the dripping bridge,
> Watching the lights in windows, always
> Hearing his name spoken with a laugh . . . .[84]

But the common man is not the only one to suffer from the war. Treece suggests that the military, religious, and well-known political figures have suffered even more, their present condition contrasting with their former status, their disillusionment contrasting with their former hope:

> They who started out with trumpets
> Or under the eagles,
> Even carrying the scallop-shell of peace;
> Even they, and especially the last, fared worse.
> . . . .
> Forgotten of men they read the scraps
> Of greasy paper that the wind flung down,
> And felt their dead hearts gasp with joy
> Or fear, or mild expectancy at month-old news.[85]

No one in the war-torn country has escaped the physical suffering, not even those displaying the shell of Pecten Jacobaeus; but mental distress is less for those who knew less and hoped for little: "Hoping less, because our minds, / Cribbed, cabined, and confined / Could show us

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[84]"The Exiles," _The Exiles_, p. 54.

[85]_Ibid._, pp. 54-55.

less / The less we suffered."[86] At the end of "The Exiles,"

Treece relieves some of the tragic indications of his

portrait, casting a heroic aura on the exiled, by placing

their suffering within the broader context of a continuing

progression toward peace, in which "there is no going

back."[87]

In the "Tragedy of Tristram," a verse drama written

for radio, Treece resumes his method of drawing upon

literary characters for his subjects and is this time wholly

successful.[88] This poetic drama shows the potential which,

when fully developed in the later Carnival King, would win

Treece the Art Council play prize.[89] To compose "The

Tragedy of Tristram," Treece took a few passages from

Malory's "Tristram and Iseult" and expanded them into an

original complication. In Treece's drama, Tristram is the

husband of Yseult Blanchemain and the father of her two

sons. For seven years, he has been pining because of his

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[86]Ibid., p. 55.

[87]Ibid.

[88]The "Tragedy of Tristram" constitutes the last play of a radio trilogy. The other two plays, "The Dark Island," and "The End of a World," were never published although Treece was again to use "The Dark Island" as the title of his first novel.

[89]The Carnival King was successfully performed at the Nottingham theatre in 1954, and Treece's unpublished second play, Footsteps in the Sea (1956), commissioned by the British Arts Council, was also well received.

love for King Mark's consort, Yseult of Ireland. King Mark

arrives in Britain to slay Tristram, who "stole that beauty

and left me the husk," but Yseult Blanchemain convinces the

king that he can better revenge Tristram by allowing him to

live and suffer with the "truth" which he mutters in his

sleep each night: "Yseult of Ireland loves me not! She

said / The same to me when we last met . . . If / He'd

[King Mark] bring a white dove's feathers to her bed / Love

would be free . . ."[90] Yseult's convincing lie even

deceives Tristram, who then seeks to slay King Mark before

he departs for Ireland. It is then that Yseult truthfully

informs her husband that--

> Yseult of Ireland waits you in your halls
> She came, a grey thing on a stumbling horse,
> Clothed in a mantle that reached down to the ground,
> After you'd left tonight to walk this road.[91]

Despite Tristram's protestations that he cannot stand to see

Yseult of Ireland in her dying condition, his wife coldly

but sacrificially denies ever having loved him and asks him

to look to his "fading dream."[92] As she permanently departs

with their children, Tristram is left shouting in vain for

her to return.

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[90]Ibid., pp. 21, 29.

[91]Ibid., pp. 34-35.

[92]Ibid., p. 38.

In Treece's poetic drama, Tristram is more of a
pathetic figure than a tragic one. As a matter of fact, he
has more than one tragic flaw: his uxorious love for Yseult
of Ireland; his marriage to Yseult Blanchemain under the
circumstances; his failure to tell her of the other Yseult;
and his murderous anger toward King Mark. These cause
Tristram to seem worthy of his fate, for within the play
itself his nobility is not shown but merely stated by him-
self. In contrast, Yseult is almost entirely noble, never-
theless believable. Unlike Tristram, she has great insight
into life and human behavior. When Yseult is confronted by
King Mark and for the first time learns the entire truth
concerning her husband's involvement with Yseult of Ireland,
she makes light of the revelation in an attempt to diminish
Tristram's guilt and thereby assuage King Mark's wrath.
When this is not wholly successful in itself, Yseult uses
the carpe diem argument to lighten his mood:

> We came into this miserable world,
> Breasting the womb's dark waters and wailing
> For sins we never knew and pains we never felt,
> Then after a brief day we pass again
> Through the long arches of the twilight tunnel
> Into the dark again, all wailing done.
> That is our life. Should we not laugh a little?
> Should we not play while that short sun still shines?[93]

Throughout the drama, Yseult is philosophical and somewhat
of a spokesman for Apocalyptic ideals. When King Mark tries

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[93]Ibid., p. 26.

to kindle Yseult's wrath against Tristram, telling her she too will be avenged through Tristram's death, she considers his death in relation to all life. She realizes that while she has little to gain from saving Tristram, she also has nothing to gain from his death:

> What satisfaction would I gain tonight
> If this one's blood should run among the grass?
> Would birds sing sweeter underneath the eaves?
> Would deer run fleeter over the green hill?
> Would salmon leap the higher in the stream?[94]

If Yseult's stoic objectivity reduces the reader's credibility in her as a real person, the credibility is regained when Yseult confides to King Mark that she has always known within her heart that her husband's love belonged to another. Her source of this knowledge is Tristram himself, for men—

> Carry the chronicles of guilt in their own eyes;
> They are not more than larger boys at best;
> What wrongs they do, they cannot keep from light![95]

Yseult is not the stereotype medieval woman, for she is believably feminine. Treece, in Yseult, presents not a superficial femininity but that of a mature woman, deeply sensitive to the interrelationship of good and evil in life.

Yet whereas Yseult belittles the significance that Tristram's death will have on her and the world, and

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[94] Ibid., p. 27.

[95] Ibid.

belittles his importance to her, she explains to King Mark

that her words in favor of Tristram's life are made

because--

>   all has place
> Provided that it moves with grace
> And has at one time separate identity
> And yet a changeless harmony
> With all surrounding motions.
> . . . .
> Yet out of fertile ruins leaps a Spring,
> As out of calm rises another storm
> To fill the vacuum and restore the norm.
> Out of the strange, the ordinary;
> Out of the dream, the actuality;
> Out of the dead, a new vitality;
> Out of ruin, the moveless victory;
> Provided it be won, I say, with dignity.[96]

Yseult also has insight into both the nature of life and

death. After persuading King Mark to return to Ireland, she

dissuades Tristram from pursuing and murdering his uncle by

telling him:

> He who has felt the axe does not weep now!
> He's laughing at you earth-chained fools who dream
> Such worlds of terror in an ounce of death![97]

As the play closes, Yseult's insight is seen to be valid.

Tristram, now deserted by Yseult, sees no refuge in "peace-

ful death where all dreams fade / And let the body sleep and

sleep."[98] In the midst of a rising wind which drowns out

his voice, Tristram finally admits to himself that he is

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[96]Ibid., p. 28.

[97]Ibid., p. 31.

[98]Ibid., p. 39.

incapable of changing. Although he is in ill health, he

must look at his dream:

> Moon grows and wanes, and grows and wanes again
> Men have their seasons, nights beside the fire
> Or bent in sultry harvest-field; but we
> Are out upon the heath in rain or snow
> Speaking the only part fate lets us know.
> O, weep for us who must walk up and down
> The restless world, and play our parts again
> And yet again; weep for this sorrowing shade
> Whose lines go on although the curtains fall
> For other men; he who must speak his words
> Though no one listens, to eternity . . .[99]

Treece, unlike Tristram, did not go on playing the

role of a dreamer but, rather like Iseult, turned to seek a

more personally productive existence. In 1952, the same

year in which Treece published The Exiles, he also published

his first novel, thereby following the inevitable develop-

ment of his poetic progression: "having learned by poetry

. . . to manipulate words, and by drama to construct forms"

he turned to the novel which "allows the poet to exercise

his talent with as much license as he wishes, and the

dramatist to employ as big a cast and as many changes of

scene as he needs."[100] As a novelist, Treece would continue

to write on historical themes, but with the sole purpose of

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[99]Ibid.

[100]"Henry Treece," Twentieth Century Authors, First
Supplement, ed. Stanley J. Kunitz (New York: 1955),
pp. 1006-1007. A complete listing of Treece's fiction as
well as his non-fictional writings can be found in Contem-
porary Authors, Vol. 1-4, ed. James M. Ethridge and Barbara
Kopala (Detroit: Gale Research Co., 1967), pp. 943-944.

entertaining, for 1952 not only marked the end of Treece's career as a poet but also as a philosopher, innovator, editor, and critic.[101] Although it was through his novels that Treece was to achieve recognition as an author, his greatest contribution to literature lies in his earlier roles.

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[101]In the mid 1950's, Treece wrote, "I ask only that my novels entertain . . . ." Ibid., p. 1007.

CHAPTER VI

THE THIRD SCROLL: AN EVALUATION OF

TREECE'S POETIC CONTRIBUTIONS

At the sad's seas's edge dreams fall away,
Weak against waves' and rocks' reality.
. . . .
. . . . Nothing is left
But the incessant wheep of birds, the deep deep sigh
Of lonely creatures bedded in the slime, that wait
All thing's return, the resurrection of
All things the world has lost and never called to mind
Again. Nothing, O nothing is left but sea-scur,
Nothing but sand-hail and the shore's
Slow moving back and back into the West,
Into the Vale of Time, to some dark past
And there but a setting sun; perhaps
High voices on some twilit, glassy sea;
Or the faint scent of rosemary
On some still bank, under a dying moon.[1]

Because Treece wrote historical poems and novels

presenting segments of early English history, his reputation

as a creative author is best established in England; even

there, however, the fruits of the New Apocalypse Movement--

and particularly Treece's contribution to Neo-Romantic

poetry--have gone unnoticed, or if noticed, only the short-

comings emphasized.

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[1]Henry Treece, "Court Fool to His Masters," The
Exiles, p. 66.

The literary movement which Treece helped establish was looked upon with skepticism from its very inception if only because of its name, one especially pretentious to those who knew little of the history of Apocalyptic vision. For the mass of people, the name Apocalypse simply failed to indicate the basic purpose of the movement; even the name change to Personalism, while eliminating the matter of pretentiousness, suggested standards opposite those advocated by the movement. As a result, Treece was evaluated according to criteria to which he himself had laid no claim. Such a comment as the following by Marguerite Young is a typical result of such misunderstanding:

> Treece poems are not . . . in our sense personal. They turn upon the old wheel of fortune with little individual vision.[2]

Critics were to take the later name of the movement at face value, as suggested by the word Personalism, apparently not aware that its doctrine was by definition much broader than that simply of a personal viewpoint in any specific poem, though a similar misunderstanding of the term appears in Kenneth Rexroth's comment--

> In spite of his Personalist professions, it is very difficult to come at the personal core in his poems,

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[2]Marguerite Young, "Selections from Two English Poets," New York Times Review, August 18, 1946, p. 23.

they slip away into anonymity, like handicrafts of
Gothic woodcarving.[3]

The root of Personalism was, of course, "person" not "per-
sonal" in the sense of meaning "private." It was perhaps
because of the confusion caused by this name, then, that
Treece came to use the term Apocalypse almost completely to
refer to his poetic beliefs even after the instigation of
the second movement even though "as the [Apocalypse] move-
ment widened . . . it became more usual and more tactful
[for critics] to describe it as Neo-Romanticism."[4]

The critics who were able to progress beyond the
mere names given the movement, furthermore, found its aims
vague and general--as indeed they were, especially at the
time the Apocalypse was first begun; particularly in view
of the fact that its objectives were not defined in specific
terms until the second anthology, The White Horseman, was
issued and then primarily for the purpose of correcting
"those who had accused the Movement of being another form of
Surrealism."[5] Perhaps the Apocalypse movement, in an
attempt to gain the attention of a socially involved
literary world, stated in an essentially unnecessary verbose

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[3]Kenneth Rexroth, "Introduction," New British Poets
(New York: New Directions, 1949), xxxiii.

[4]G.S. Fraser, The Modern Writer and His World,
p. 324.

[5]Henry Treece, "The New Apocalypse," pp. 14, 15.

and repetitive manner its general aim of replacing the social-realist poetry of the thirties with a Romantic humanism.

Other critics, even when recognizing the aims of the movement, found, like John Atkins, "an enormous gap between their poetic practice and the programme they profess to observe . . ."; the discrepancy being most obvious in their social-political stand.[6] Since the proponents of the Apocalypse movement believed prose to be the proper medium of propaganda and not poetry, their works only indirectly supported their social-political views. And, obviously, to include these views in their poetry would be to join the very social-realist poets that they opposed; thus their social-political position necessarily existed more as a concept than a reality. When the war became inevitable, the idealistic position of the Apocalypse, based on the goodness of man, seemed totally unrealistic to those not having Treece's Apocalyptic vision. Even Treece himself was later to regret that the movement felt it necessary to become involved in politics, saying "what Apocalypse forgot was that a creative writer should not meddle with politics, abnormal psychology, or industrial theory."[7]

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[6]John Atkins, Adel (July-September, 1947), p. 234.

[7]Henry Treece, "The New Apocalypse," p. 14.

If a discrepancy existed between the Apocalypse poetic practices and poetic platform, it centered around the Apocalyptic image, which was intended to show the multiplicity of man's life. Paul C. Ray has asserted that the image "attempts to express the fusion of 'all the elements of experience,' but which unfortunately, succeeds only in moving in all directions at once."[8] At the beginning of the movement, a fusion of various incongruent elements was attempted through the use of surrealistic imagery or imagery similar to that of the early Dylan Thomas, each author using the image in his own personal manner; J.F. Hendry employing it in hard explosive lines, Treece in the manner of a Celtic craftsman, and Nicholas Moore in a simple and fluid style. But as the movement progressed, however, Treece found myth and folk elements increasingly better suited to the fusion of opposing elements, and the other poets of the Apocalypse gradually drifted into the practice of creating whatever type of image they desired, so that eventually a fusion of life's experiences was evident only when the group's work was viewed collectively. The Apocalypse, having on the one hand, founders of whom Fraser could say, "nobody, at first sight, could be more unlike J.F. Hendry than Henry Treece"; and on the other, followers whose

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[8]Paul C. Ray, The Surrealist Movement in England (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1971), pp. 294-295.

poetry fell in-between and beyond these limits, on the sur-
face justified those who saw the aims of the movement as
vague and violated; and gave truth as well to such comments
as Ivor Francis' statement, "The beauty of Apocalypticism
. . . is that it means just whatever the individual adherent
desires it to mean."[9]

Yet the Apocalyptic movement, despite such adverse
criticism, had its authentic core of values. Thus, while
Western civilization was trying to solve its problems
methodically through social systems, and poets were filling
volumes with discouraging reminders of the precarious state
of affairs of the world, Treece was to note--

> that the man without a dream, without a compelling force
> of a visionary and perfect world before him, would lose
> his desire to love, or would at least atrophy to that
> state which might best be described as that of "machine
> slavery" wherein efficiency, and precision were the
> compensations for spontaneity, thrilling uncertainty,
> unexpected patterns and color.[10]

Socially Treece's aim was to awaken people's faith in their
own innate qualities and to provide them with a vision of a
society that could be rich without material wealth, and
toward which they could strive. Although the basic concepts
of Apocalypse were not new--its principal tenets were

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[9]G.S. Fraser, "Apocalypse in Poetry," p. 19; Ivor
Francis, "Reintegration and the Apocalypse," Angry Penguins,
IV (September, 1943), n.p.

[10]Henry Treece, Dylan Thomas: "Dog Among the
Fairies" (London: Lindsay Drummond, 1949), p. 19.

implicit as far back as the work of the Elizabethans and the
Jacobeans, and John Donne, and in more recent writers such
as Hopkins, Joyce, and Lawrence--in the literary realm, it
was to bring Romanticism to a "poetic world that had for ten
years been unaccustomed to richness, music, and a certain
animal gusto," and add impetus to a special brand of Neo-
Romanticism.[11] The members of the New Apocalypse, unlike
Herbert Read, did not insist that Surrealism was only
Romanticism with a new name, but recognized with Breton that
it was the "prehensile tail" of Romanticism and hence took
advantage of its potential.[12] Realizing that "Complete lack
of discipline is as stultifying and deadening as is an
excess of regulation," Treece and other disciples of the
New Apocalypse added Surrealism to Romantic principles,
giving new life to Romantic imagery.[13] Writing in 1940,
Treece was to predict that the main trend in literature
after World War II would be "a fusion of Neo-Romanticism
and Surrealism," and indeed it was toward this end that the
Apocalypse movement strove.[14] Even such a rational poet as

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[11]Henry Treece, "The New Apocalypse," p. 17.

[12]Andre Breton, "Second Manifeste," Manifestes du
Surréalism, p. 184.

[13]Henry Treece, Dylan Thomas, p. 20.

[14]Henry Treece, "Literary London," View, I, no. 1
(September, 1940), 5.

Wallace Stevens recognized the value Surrealism had for poetry and envisioned much the same future for poetry as that predicted by Treece:

> They [the Surrealists] are extraordinarily alive and that they make possible for us to read poetry that seems filled with gaiety and youth just when we were beginning to despair of gaiety and youth is immensely to the good. One test of their dynamic quality and, therefore, of their dynamic effect, is that they make other forms seem obsolete. They, in time, will be absorbed, with the result that what is now so concentrated, so inconsequential in the restrictions of a technique, so provincial, will give and take and become part of the process of give and take of which the growth of poetry consists.[15]

Such a development was hastened by the advent of the Apocalypse movement whose fusion of Romantic and surrealistic elements was to result in poetry "more freshly original, technically more skillful, and aesthetically more valuable than surrealistic work; yet it does not deny itself whatever value the psychoanalytic textbook offers to the poet."[16]

The most obvious value of the Apocalypse movement was the encouragement and publicity it gave to the young Romantic writers of that day. For while it can be assumed that many of the authors who wrote for Apocalypse were perhaps more interested in getting their works published than in the tenets of the movement, and that Treece's intent

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[15]Wallace Stevens, "The Irrational Element in Poetry" (1937), Opus Posthumous (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1957), p. 228.

[16]Frederick J. Hoffman, "From Surrealism to 'The Apocalypse,'" p. 160.

in publishing Romantic authors was at least in part the
advancement of his movement, he was sincerely and unself-
ishly interested in the works of many upcoming authors, in
particular those of Dylan Thomas. In a response to a letter
from Treece, offering him publicity, Thomas argued:

> Don't you believe me when I say I don't want to be
> publicized, or don't you? I have all the publicity that
> my small output deserves, and because some other
> people's small output has more and undeserved publicity,
> should I worry? Publicity will not get me more money;
> the little work I produce is paid for as highly as the
> rags I contribute to can afford.[17]

Although Thomas refused to join the movement, Treece con-
tinued to be interested in the Wild Welshman's career, as
indicated throughout his letters to Treece, and to attempt
to advance his poetry despite Thomas' irresponsibility, as
the following excerpt reveals:

> Thanks for the good letters. And straightway I must say
> that I haven't got anything for Seven. Half a poem's on
> my table and that's all. I'm sorry my name has to
> remain on the cover . . . . Actually, I still have that
> large chunk of prose I told you about, and from which I
> read you bits; but that's got to be bought.[18]

Because the third charter poet of the Apocalypse, Nicholas
Moore, was editor of Seven, and Stefan Schimanski editor of
World Review, Treece had a part in the selection of poetry
for these periodicals and was therefore able to offer
publicity to those he thought worthy of it. Treece's

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[17]Letter dated December 31, 1938, Selected Letters
of Dylan Thomas, p. 220.

[18]Letter dated January 26, 1939, ibid., p. 222.

sincere faith in Thomas is best shown by his writing Dylan
Thomas: "Dog Among the Fairies," a critical evaluation of
Thomas, at a time when Thomas' total poetic production was
forty-three poems. Treece's book, the first critical work
on Thomas, and written with the Welshman's co-operation, has
remained a classic criticism of Thomas' work. Because of
his admiration for other Romantic writers, Treece was also
to publish a collection of Swinburne's poems and an anthol-
ogy of essays on Herbert Read; and in How I See Apocalypse
he included critical essays on Swinburne, Hopkins, Eliot,
Joyce, John Sparrow, and Herbert Read.[19] Treece thus served
to advance the works of others, not only through publication
of their poetry but through critical appraisals prompted by
a sincere interest in their work.

Outside of its role as publicity agent, the Apoca-
lypse movement was in itself recognized as having real
merit, many reputable magazines of the day disseminating its
doctrines and publishing the poetry of its principal advo-
cates, one such periodical being Contemporary Poetry, a
magazine devoted to the continuation of "the traditions of
British poetry and prose through the years of World War

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[19]Henry Treece, Herbert Read: An Introduction to
His Work by Various Hands (London: Faber and Faber, 1944).

II."[20] Indeed Ivor Jacobs attributed the movement's "influence over a large section of the young intelligentsia" of the day somewhat "analogous to papal encycial," to their being "accorded [support] in many of the journals and reviews in which the literary consciousness of the nation is supposed to reside."[21] While the presence of Herbert Read on the editorial board of the publishing firm of Routledge during the early 1940's possibly aided in the publication of at least The White Horseman, the appearance of Apocalyptic poems in periodicals was on the basis of their own merit, Poetry being "willing to recognize the growing importance of a modern group of poets who have been called, for various reasons, the 'New Apocalypse writers'"; a group also--

> vigorously defended and applauded by the magazine's [Poetry Quarterly's] editor . . . . Through the pages of the Poetry Quarterly, one sees the young poet of the thirties shocked by events, changing with them, and in his verse triumphing over them.[22]

In addition to appearing in journals, Apocalyptic poetry filled the pages of many short-lived anthologies such as Orpheus, Angry Penguins, Voices, Poetry Scotland, and New

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[20]Frederick J. Hoffman, et al., The Little Magazine: A History and a Bibliography (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1947), p. 346.

[21]Ivor Jacobs, "Auden Aftermath," Horizon, VIII, no. 46 (October, 1943), 285.

[22]Frederick J. Hoffman, The Little Magazine, p. 349.

Road--the last representing almost a party-line for Treece's movements. "'The Apocalyptic Movement' in modern poetry . . . was recognized and encouraged" by New Road to support the desire of its editors, Alex Comfort and John Lehman "to humanize Socialism, to establish a society with a less impersonal shape, and to reassert the importance of individual effort and the individual as final criterion of society."[23] Because of the similarity of the aims of New Road and Transformation, the editors and contributors to these anthologies were often considered by critics as a mutual admiration and publishing society, and, as often as not, simply grouped together as Apocalyptic poets.

Although the various sympathizers of the movement often engaged in such logrolling, the fact that the Apocalyptic poets were able to get their anthologies and poetry published during wartime, when as a consequence of the paper shortage many periodicals were forced out of business and others had to use lower case letters for headlines, shows the forcefulness, if not necessarily the merit, of the movement. Despite its shortcomings, real and assumed, the Apocalypse helped to establish Neo-Romanticism, a fusion of Surrealism and Romanticism, as a valid and acceptable mode of literary expression and to advance the writings of Twentieth Century Romantics. As one critic suggests:

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[23]Ibid., p. 403.

> If their program and poetry was disconcertingly vague
> and evangelical, it carried a recognition of what was
> wrong with their world . . . . To poetry, they gave a
> quasi-religious significance.[24]

And if nothing else were true of the movement, it can be
said that its aims at least incited enthusiasm among poets
in a tired, solemn literary world.

Although critical evaluation of the Apocalypse
movement might not be favorable, that of Treece's own poetry
was--even though his verse centered upon the same poetic
elements. Critics seem generally to agree that Treece's
basic strength as a poet is his skill in the use of words,
his ability to balance "the sound and meaning of every word
he wrote."[25] Speaking of Treece, G.S. Fraser characterized
him as--

> a man who cares very deeply indeed about the art of
> writing . . . And as a poet, he is an elaborate artist,
> perhaps more of a craftsman, more of a traditionalist
> than anybody else writing in England at the moment.[26]

This skill with language, however, was not without fault.
One of the most obvious obstacles to appreciating Treece's
early poetry is its overrich language with images sometimes
condensed to the point of obscurity, and expressing an

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[24]Babette Deutsch, Poetry in Our Time (Garden City:
Doubleday, 1963), p. 369.

[25]"Mr. Treece" [Obituary], London Times, June 11,
1966, p. 12.

[26]G.S. Fraser, "Apocalypse in Poetry," p. 19.

abundance of emotion, deficiencies which Treece himself

recognized in his earlier works:

> My own [poetry was] too full of sound and fury . . . .
> We yelled our heads off, we tormented the verb in a
> hundred fantastic manners, and we acted the prodigal
> with our adjectives until they were ankle-deep on the
> page.[27]

Treece apparently had trouble recollecting emotion in tran-

quility, for he was unable to write about the war in which

he was physically and emotionally involved but yet was to

recommend narrative as a good form for the war-poet because:

> narrative is remembered [by the poet] afterwards,
> whereas emotional reaction is soon forgotten unless
> recorded on the spot which is usually impossible in
> wartime.[28]

Despite the "sound and fury" of Treece's earlier poetry, it

did even at this stage show potential. Francis Scarfe was

able to overlook the excessive emotion and craftsmanship as

a fault common to young poets, believing that if a poet's

work is not rich at the beginning of his career, he is

forever poor; and even T.S. Eliot was to compliment Treece's

early poetry on its "striking images."[29] As Treece's poetry

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[27]Henry Treece, "The New Apocalypse," p. 16.

[28]Henry Treece, "A Statement on Poetry To-day,"
Kingdom Come (Spring, 1942), p. 23.

[29]Francis Scarfe, Auden and After, p. 164; T.S.
Eliot, cited in an advertisement for Towards a Personal
Armegeddon in View I (September, 1940), 5. Eliot's state-
ment was taken from a letter written to Treece in 1940 and
which is now in the Eliot collection at the University of
Texas. Faber and Faber, Eliot's firm, was to publish all of
Treece's poetic volumes after Towards a Personal Armegeddon.

progressed, it lost both some of its emotion and richness and at the same time focused on themes better suited to a rich language, but the loosening of excessive craftsmanship and addition of narrative matter in Treece's case was not progression toward a new and better poetic phase, but toward the novel, Treece finding "it possible to write prose, a more closely intellectual process, about what I see of the war."[30] Just as he was to begin to achieve a more fluid poetic facility, Treece abandoned poetry for the other genre.

A more serious fault which the critics found in Treece's poetry was his imitation of Dylan Thomas, William Tindall considering Treece a combination of Housman and Thomas, even referring to him as a Neo-Thomist.[31] Although a conscious imitation of Thomas seems undeniable in Treece's earliest works, Francis Scarfe defends the early similarity as only superficial and disclosing that although "less disciplines than Thomas, his syntax was nonetheless easier, his vocabulary less disturbing and his rhythm more fluid . . . ."[32] At this same period, of course, Thomas himself was somewhat of a tyro, his talent, though well recognized

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[30]Henry Treece, How I See Apocalypse, p. 7.

[31]William Tindall, Forces in Modern British Literature (New York: Vintage Books, 1956), p. 242.

[32]Francis Scarfe, Auden and After, p. 164.

by those in literary circles, still not having received
public acclaim. By Treece's third volume of poems, the
difference between him and Thomas--himself having grown also
in the meantime--was notably apparent, Thomas in his poetry
speaking "for the aristocratic underworld of a suppressed
civilization . . . always the Druid, passing on his occult
wisdom within the sound of the church bell," Treece using "a
material much closer to folk art, to the changeless, gnomic
tales of universal peasant, Teuton, Celt, or Finn."[33]
Treece's poetry, however, never entirely escaped from the
influence of Thomas, and the debate among critics amounts to
little more than whether Treece consciously attempted to
imitate Thomas or whether the bond between their poetry was
one peculiar to their Welsh background.

Though the mood of Treece's poetry was to change
from a surrealistic one to Folk mysticism, its aim remained
the same throughout, namely an attempt, through folk ele-
ments, to unify men of several eras. In Robert Melville's
words, Treece's personages are "the transparent I," being--

> the morphological projection of the phenomena of the
> human psyche . . . directed toward the elimination of
> that idealistic surgery which has amputated our nature
> and isolated us from the rest of the world.[34]

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[33]Kenneth Rexroth, "Introduction," p. xxxiii.

[34]Robert Melville, "Apocalypse in Painting," The
White Horseman, ed. J.F. Hendry and Henry Treece (London:
Routledge, 1941), p. 152.

Such personages would be the protagonist of Treece's "Ballad of a Prince," an interweaving of Christ and the princes of fairy tales. By means of this ability to employ persons as symbols, as well as an ability to give common elements symbolic value by such a simple process as putting a "the" in front of their designations, Treece was to translate the personal mythology of his earlier poems into that which could be comprehended by the popular imagination, thus creating poetry that was both personal and universal.

Though admitting its technical skill, John Atkins felt that Treece's folk poetry detracted from special Apocalyptic aims of his poetry:

> The aim is good. I can also respect Treece's sincerity
> . . . His "forlorn princess" and "gaily colored prince"
> are such inapt symbols as to make his argument appear
> unreal and unconvincing . . . . If we could abstract
> what he has to say from his manner of saying it, I
> believe we would find a sane critic, with a highly-
> developed capacity of appreciating the best in another's
> work, but so long as he allows his style to be pocked by
> these uneasy evidences of self-consciousness he will
> never command the attention he deserves.[35]

However, when not considered specifically in relation to its aim, Treece's folk-like poetry was generally viewed favor- ably--Kenneth Rexroth remarking, for example, that Treece's "best poems are very Germanic, Märchen poetry, Grimm capsules."[36] It is this same Celtic imagination which went

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[35]John Atkins, Adel, p. 236.

[36]Kenneth Rexroth, "Introduction," xxxiii.

into the compilation of his serious folk poetry that is the
quality responsible for making Treece a noted writer of
juvenile works, his poem "The Dyke Builder" appearing in
school anthologies in England, and his later juvenile
historical novels being quite popular throughout the United
States. The most unappreciative of Treece's imaginative
world were critics accustomed to social-realist poetry, who
found the "beautiful paraphenalia" of Treece's poetry
tiring:

> the weary reader wishes for a little social realism or
> if not that, a dazzling metaphysics . . . . Treece, a
> respectable poet, cannot match his arms against those
> poets he presumably opposes, for none of them is
> respectable. First of all, he does not have the tech-
> nical fireworks, a sense of language as reality.[37]

One answer as to why Treece's poetry was both praised and
criticized for the same qualities is offered by a social-
poet Stephen Spender:

> Treece the leader of the Apocalyptic movement is a
> writer of individuality and perhaps it is not his fault
> that his greatest weaknesses have been singled out for
> approval by his admirers.[38]

Unfortunately Spender did not name these weaknesses. Offer-
ing another answer to the critical disagreement over
Treece's poetry is G.S. Fraser who warns that--

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[37]Marguerite Young, Selections from Two English
Poets," p. 23.

[38]Stephen Spender, Poetry Since 1939 (London:
Longmans, Green, for the British Council, 1946), p. 58.

> it would be dangerous, I think, to approach Treece with too much of a post-Renaissance mind . . . Treece, like Spencer, offers you a rich elaborate world, in which you can lose yourself. . . .[39]

Since Treece interprets the present in terms of past ideals, only by first projecting himself emphatically into the way of life presented in the poem, can the reader vicariously feel the personal freedom offered by a non-mechanistic world and thereby be made receptive to Treece's Apocalyptic vision for his society. Thus, though the reader may enjoy Treece's poems as simply beautiful narratives, if he is expecting any form of realism, and therefore fails to appreciate the legend, he will correspondingly fail to realize the fullness of Treece's aims.

Perhaps one need approach Treece's metrical usage with a post-Renaissance mind as well to appreciate it. Many of his poems, especially his earlier ones, have the simple iambic tetrameter abac stanza of the folk ballad with the latter's corresponding skips in narrative. As a result, the poems are often monotonous to read and probably could be better appreciated if sung. Maynard Solomon, of Vanguard Records and a casual collector of Treece's poetry, was later to see the musical potential in Treece's poems and compiled several into a cantata-like composition, entitled "Baptism," selecting, as he himself declares:

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[39]G.S. Fraser, "Apocalypse in Poetry," pp. 19-20.

the poems for their lyric beauty, their inter-weaving
of personal expression and mythic co-ordinates, and
because Treece's meters (apparently deriving in part
from ballad and folk lyric forms) lend themselves so
readily to musical setting.[40]

The cantata was recorded by folk singer Joan Baez in an

album bearing the same title as the musical composition--the

purpose of which was to project "the universal experiences

of birth, childhood, tragedy, and transcendence," experi-

ences which Solomon found Treece's poems to touch upon "so

beautifully and transparently."[41].

In his historical poems, Treece was to present that

side of history not commonly cited in chronicles, blending

historical and imaginative events; nevertheless, these poems

do contain much scholarship. Though, in reviewing his

novels, critics were "practically unanimous in their con-

cessions to his [Treece's] formidable learning in history,

anthropology, and archeology" as well as "ancient literature

(particularly Norse and old English)," the scholarship in

Treece's poetry has been largely ignored, critics generally

focusing their concern on the imaginative quality of his

work.[42] The scholarship in Treece's poetry not only has

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[40]Maynard Solomon, Letter to author, dated February
5, 1973. The cantata was originally entitled "a Winter's
Journey" and was set to music by Peter Schickle.

[41]Ibid.

[42]"Mr. Henry Treece" [Obituary], p. 12; "Henry
Treece" [Obituary], New York Times, June 11, 1966, p. 31.
The scholarship in Treece's novels was also unappreciated,

value in itself but served to extend Treece's sources of imagery. In his earlier poetry, there are many reoccurring or partially repetitive images, such as those incorporating "thing" to refer to a person, a limitation which Treece overcame when he began to rely on historical events for his themes. Having researched the background of his poems, and later those of his novels, Treece was not content to file away his research but compiled parts of it into non-fiction books on the crusades, castles, and weapons, again putting into action his belief in the multiple abilities of an individual.[43]

Along with his poetic production during the 1940's, Treece published over two volumes of poetry per year in addition to many articles. Although this production is low compared to his later output as a novelist, it is rather extensive considering the fact that Treece was also a full-time teacher, a flight lieutenant during the war, and, after 1942, also a writer for the British Broadcasting Company. Had he been less busy he perhaps would have pruned his work, neglecting through revision many of the poor images that

critics opposing his interweaving of fact and fiction so that they were indistinguishable.

[43]Henry Treece, Castles and Kings (New York: Criterion, 1959); The True Book about Castles (London: Muller, 1960); The Crusades (London: Bodley Head, 1962 and New York: Random, 1963); Know about the Crusades (London: Blackie, 1963); with R.E. Oakeshott, Fighting Men (London: Brockhampton, 1963 and New York: Putnam, 1965).

exist side by side with extremely good ones. And it is perhaps to be regretted also that by the time he had achieved a general mastery in poetic technique, he dropped poetry for fiction.

Treece's final contribution to twentieth-century poetry lies perhaps less in his poetic work than in his role as poetic innovator, editor, and critic. James Agate called Treece "the most pernicious influence" of his generation because through these roles, he was "making all the young poets become Romantics."[44] Though Treece would object to the idea that poets are made, he would have had to admit to his own influence, to have, while yet in his twenties, gathered together the young Romantics, and by offering them media of publication and by founding Apocalypse and Personalism, with their social-literary aims, to giving cohesiveness and force to Neo-Romanticism as a literary movement. After turning to fiction, Treece never again returned to poetry, and in the 1950's came to declare that "my evangelical days are now so far away that I would not wish to persuade anyone of anything"; he could not, however, keep from adding, "except the multiplicity of man's mind."[45] For inwardly at least, Treece had not entirely lost his

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[44]Henry Treece, "The New Apocalypse," p. 17.

[45]Henry Treece, Twentieth Century Authors, First Supplement, ed. Stanley Kunitz, p. 1007.

earlier vision of man as somewhat of a White Horseman, or

his faith in man as the basis of the enthusiasm with which

he approached Neo-Romanticism. The words which Merezhkovski

used to characterize Pascal are indeed ones well suited to

stand as well as a concise description of Henry Treece:

> Sometimes he would entreat God to grant him simple
> faith, but God refused him the simplicity.[46]

[46]Dmitri Merezhkovski, Pascal, trans. by Constantine
Andronikof (Paris: B. Grouet, 1941), p. 89.

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APPENDIX.

APOCALYPTIC PAINTINGS

Fig. 1.--Roberto Matta Echaurren (born 1911).
Morphological Psychology. 1939.

Like all of Matta's Morphological Psychologies, this
one portrays what Matta called an "inscape" or physic land-
scape. Blending the conscious and the concrete with the
unconscious and the abstract, it visually integrates man
with his world. A similar landscape is presented by Henry
Treece in his poem, "The Ballad of the Prince":

It was a winter's night
And lanes beneath the grey hills whispered feet,
Feet treading worlds away to other worlds,
Legs forcing feet towards the weeping sea:
And her feet safe upon the hearth, away
From hills and sea and the winter lanes. Safe
From the terrors she had dreamed, that crouched like men
Masked by the trees, listening for feet:
Safe from the dwarf who lurched along the shore,
Here in her safe stone house she was secure
From all but the dark stranger at the door.
(The Black Seasons, p. 61)

Fig. 2.--Roberto Matta Echaurren. Listen to Living.
1941.

Listen to Living presents a primordial landscape of
Apocalyptic splendor. In a series of transformations
through vapors and crystalline states, the earth is being
destroyed, and perhaps at the same time recreated, its
melting surfaces taking the form of animate creatures.