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# READER ON THE COAST

The photograph overleaf, which accompanies John Millar's second instalment of 'Reader on the coast', is of a watercolour painted by Alexandra Cardew in 1899. The tendering of Saunton beach has a spacious endless quality, and the clouds appear just as vast and wild, with Hartland Point pointing into infinity. The scene must have represented a special challenge to her, since it was seen in daily variations from 'Saunton Cleave', the lone house of the Cardew family which stood beside the Burrows.

John has chosen passages from Henry's writing to cover a walk from Westward Ho! towards Crow Point and then along Saunton Sands to accompany it.

"Our coat collars were up against the north wind which cut across the estuary. We were walking on the edge of the dunes. Northwards across the half-mile of uneasy grey water the lighthouse stood small and white .... Beyond the lighthouse and the Burrows, beyond the sand dunes and marshy plains where ten thousand rabbits are trapped every winter, the hills showed dimly under the northern sky scarcely trailed by clouds.

In the mind one saw beyond the indeterminate hills, the higher and incult ground of Exmoor, the Severn Sea wrinkled under wind cold from Welsh mountains: and beyond to colder hills where white ptarmigan crouched from the stereoscopic gaze of white gerfalcon, where yellow fox-eyes stared as from snow for the limping by of Artic hares: onwards and onwards, across ice-fields where the only movement was of sleet carving bergs glimmering in Polar twilight.

I thought of Heine's poem of the solitary pine tree in the snow which dreamed of a palm lonely in the burning deserts of the South.

We walked silently westwards along the curve of Greysands, passing the area of smooth boulders half-buried by the scouring of tides. Then the Atlantic breaking on the shoals known as the South Tail came into sight. Even the wind could not push back from our ears the roaring of the great seas...

But it was on the shoals of the South Tail that the sea was most grand. The blind force of the wind-harried sea was beautiful to watch from the shore, as the invisible sun diffused a pale pink hue to the surges.

Never before have I seen such a colouring, more delicate than the pink of apple blossom: the more lovely and life-giving, for that it was also in the face of one walking beside me".

(Sea and the Wind: North Devon - *The Linhay on the Downs*)

"Everything has its dream: who shall know even the dream of the grain of sand? What dreams will our dust have, when it is loose in the winds again?

The sun had gone down behind Lundy, and the sea was growing grey. He turned away from the wreck and walked towards the Burrows. She followed, buoyantly, and longing to say a thousand things to him, but she had not the gift of tongues....

She was filled with the lovely feeling she always felt on the Burrows at dimmit light, when the body seemed balanced in the harmony of day and night". (*The Pathway*)

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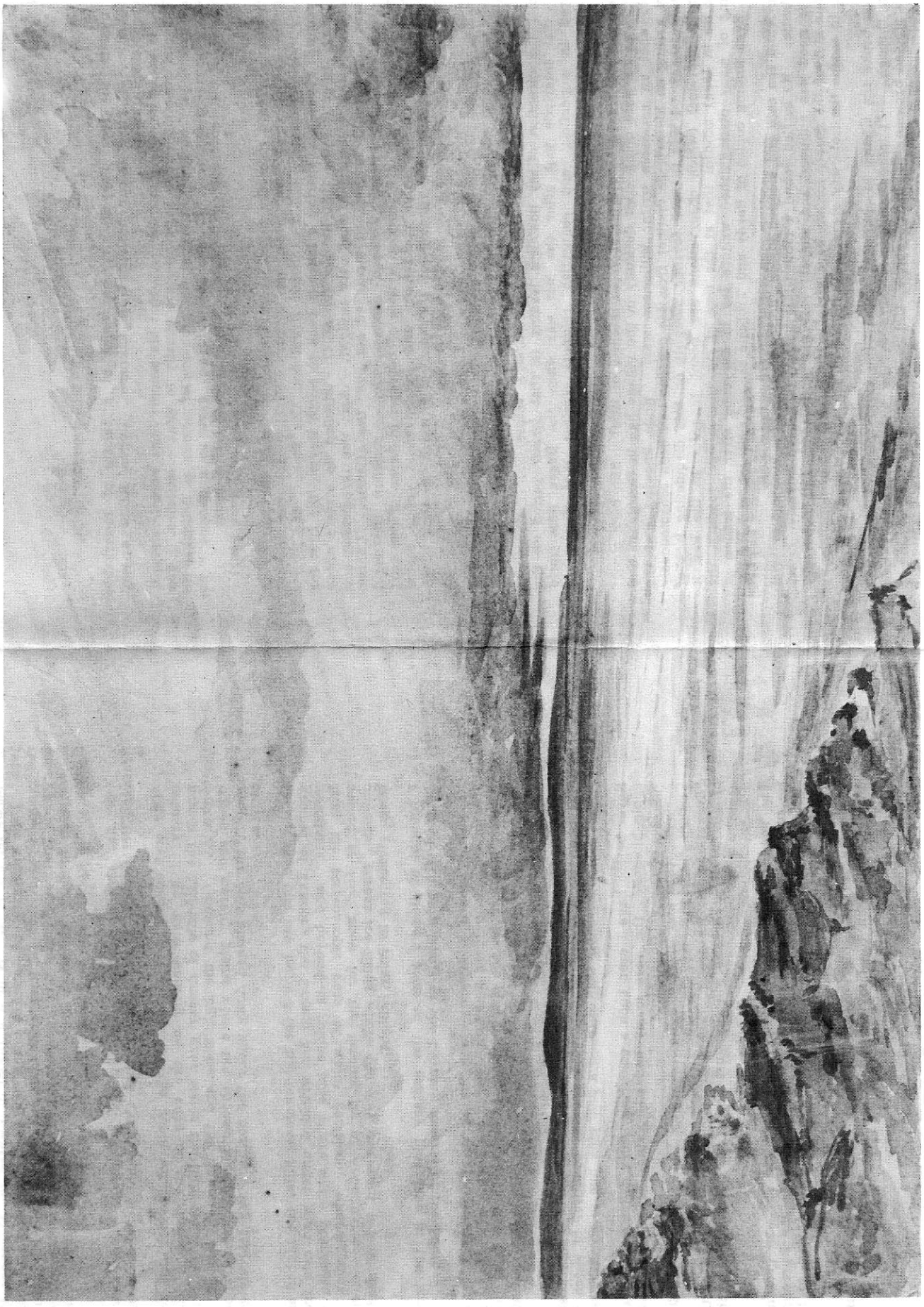

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# A READER ON THE COAST - 2

## John Millar

> Thus in the free play of .... harmonies in a palette of remarkable subleties of pure colour rather than mixtures, Delius found a way unmistakably his own.
>
> It would be wrong to infer .... that his melodic lines were irrelevant. The end function of the harmonies are usually to vitalise melodies. Few composers have worked so hard at the problems of melody as Delius. He alone among composers, or so it seems to me, gave us a glimpse - no more - of the rapturous possibilities latent in flowing lyrical prose.
>
> (Eric Fenby, *Delius as I knew Him*.)

On seeing a cafe near the Square, we decided to break the journey in Barnstaple and have a meal while we could. Parking the car without difficulty, we - Jack and Doris Whitehead, David and Elsa Stokes, and myself (all, you will remember, sharing a journey back to North Devon, the first for many years, to attend the 1982 HW Society AGM) - strolled up streets whose outlines had a homely aspect in the misty twilight. Rain was threatening and the storm-clouds could be imagined stretched out over the Atlantic. Chance ruled when it came to our weekend accommodation: somehow the rigid apoproach of a 'package' stay carried a note of betrayal in terms of our past life here, a time of youthful spontaneity and impulsiveness, of a casual unliterary approach in our reading of HW's books - which in their free, intuitive style, also reflected a sense of untidy reality.

Reading HW was like by-passing all the literary drawing-rooms and being in direct communion with his raw artistry. You lolled there on the dunes with the wind ruffling the pages and a murmur of surf in the background, the bass sound mingling with the treble of children's voices ... Always, I thought, the direction of my nostalgia leading to that former period on the coast, that interlude just after the last war when the Brave New World appeared in superficial and coquettish raiments against that degree of naturalness and harmony and freedom.

How did you return here after such an interval of time? Slip back almost stealthily as we were doing - sit dutifully in the village hall in Georgeham and be told what an estimable writer Williamson was? While knowing that the critical writing on his art, as distinct from his person, had been conspicuously undistinguished? I was to have further thoughts on this disquieting lack of influential appraisal (which observations are meant to refer to the way it struck me in 1982) mindful that at the time of my 'golden age' reading, the standing of many distinguished writers lay in abeyance after the trauma of war. Even finding copies of Hardy and Trollope seemed quite an undertaking them.

We found the cafe and stepped inside, noting that the predominant material was plastic. We settled round a table while bathed in a hard intrusive light, and our mood was subdued and stoical. It was a paradox, this departure from our idea of the coast, for we were virtually there and yet in nomansland, hoping to escape the motorway stress, the horror of empty tourism.

Jack broke the silence in confident style; the vivid sense of his reality seeped through. "I remember coming here in the late Thirties. I had already started browsing in old bookshops, and liked coming on good writing

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in a natural style; and the writing in HW's *The Lone Swallows* and *The Linhay on the Downs* made such an impression on me that I wanted to see the scenes for myself. I travelled down from Gloucestershire with a party of scouts and we camped near the beach at Croyde and had a wonderful time. There was an extra something in the atmosphere that drew you back here. It drew me back in '46 when I settled in a tent that was pitched close to that Croyde beach, and this was 'home' for the family - Doris and a young son and small baby. I had no job. There were constant gales and rain in the August of '46; and we retreated to a small disused chalet which was very cold in that grim winter. It was named 'Why Worry?', and we didn't .... For life was uncluttered and basic, and the setting was out of this world. Those years - which included living in Beach Cottage which lay right on the beach at Croyde - were the most idyllic we have known.

"I got a job doing various wood carvings for Shapland and Petters, the Barnstaple furniture firm. I was asked to provide a female torso, and chipped away at it in the chalet at Croyde, Doris was persuaded to act as my model, and we had a daily routine of her shedding her clothes and kneeling with her back to the wood fire - often complaining of the front half of her being frozen. The firm displayed the torso at the first post-war exhibition of their furniture ..."

David reached the coast as a result of the mid-Thirties depression. His father lost all his money in the market garden he'd cultivated in Norfolk and then had to abandon (shades of HW's ill-starred struggle with the land there); and the family, after they spent a year in a caravan in south Devon, went to live in a rented cottage in Georgeham.

"I sat in the back of the furniture van amid our wordly goods and saw the golden spread of sands and coast, and the lanes and villages. It was like stuff you find in a story-book, nowhere seemed lovelier. Except that there was another side to it - the cottage had damp, crumbling walls, and rats gnawed at the floor-boards (as they had in HW's 'Skirr' in his early writing days), and beetles chased you out of the larder, which at certain times in winter was under water. Now, with people having the money to modernise the old properties, they pay a staggering price for a thatched-roofed cottage in Ham. Then, a lot of villagers envied the townsman with his convenient modern house. Yet that old ramshackled place was home to me ... and I loved it."

"We used to take in P.G.'s (paying guests), and I remember two of them well. They were young men who stayed at different times, and both turned up on aged bicycles. They were fascinated by the political writings of Henry, and they wrote to him and were told to meet him in the Kings Arms in Ham. It was like waiting for Godot (I). But they were enchanted with the area, and I showed them round; they were naturists and loved every minute of it. One, a young Irishman, was full of stories of his dad who'd fought the 'Black and Tans' in the twenties. My shotgun which I used for rabbit-hunting was borrowed by this young P.G. for practising firing through the window of our cottage."

"Tommy Thompson, the travel writer living near us, was a great friend of mine and presented me with a signed copy of his 'Home in Ham'. But my parents were upset when he wrote about the village for a daily paper - the Sketch I believe - and the piece included a photograph of my father in an unflattering pose, the caption referring to 'Old Stokes' and showing him leaning on a gate and looking exhausted. It annoyed my mother particularly. But it was a problem for writers there; it caused resentment against Henry, villagers saying that you needed to be careful or 'He'll put 'ee in a bluidy

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book surenuff'. Still, when I played with the Thompson children, Henry would be great fun and chatted with us now and then. He liked using a phrase which I noted was used in an old Bette Davis film they ran on TV recently - 'You could knock me down with a feather'. I remember his large eyes, and how he often seemed full of pent-up energy like a greyhound".

We were slipping into the focus of those days, evoking an awareness of the resonances that you could easily assume were beyond resurrection, seeking for the small moments of living detail. As the talk went on, the names would tumble forth in fresh-minted exactitude - Winnie Williams, Negley Farson, Archie Powell, Dr. Elison Wright (who wrote the nature book on the Braunton Burrows that HW had reviewed in a shorter piece), Tom Lang ....

The vividness seemed to reflect the impact of the coast on us, the fixing of scenes and faces under the ancient sunlight - as if in the casualness of the table-talk each vignette was sought to be neatly grasped amid the slangy good humour. I thought of the purist way that Edward Thomas or Richard Jeffries would project it. Jack had lent me a book entitled *The Prose of Edward Thomas* (1948), and it was absorbing to read of E.T's appraisal of Jeffries' writing quality:

> .... the words remain, and though they also pass away under the smiling of the stars, they mark our utmost achievement in time. They outlive the life of Creation - making today the first day, and this field Eden annihilating time - so that each moment all things are fresh ... The seeing eye of the child or lover, the poet's verse, the musician's melody ... Jeffries surely possessed such an eye, such an imagination, though not for many years could he reveal some of its images by means of words ....

The meal over, we went back into the street, and were in a chilled yet soothing darkness. I remembered a walk to the coast in the 50's and being reawakened to the totality of a Devon night. Not that I was unresponsive to night impressions before the 50's, when I lived on the coast, for I didn't forget joining in midnight barbecues on Saunton Sands, or night fishing off Croyde beach, or the walks and cycle rides along winding lanes in the wartime 'black-out' - walking beside a heaving mass of dark sea that was like an endless revelation of naked power, watching its phosphorescent waves glimmer and dance and vanish in the depths. But that later walk - I wondered if it was the contrast that made it stand out.

There was contrast all right - I standing and observing the traffic as it went endlessly by the statue at Piccadilly Circus, and feeling disconnected and null; and that same day travelling by train to North Devon. When the train pulled in to Barnstaple Junction station, it went no further that night. So no blasé journey to Braunton (my destination) while reclining in comfort between darkened windows. And at that late hour, there was no other transport that I could afford. I had to walk it.

If I thought of Piccadilly Circus initially as the point of contrast, it left out the enormity of the whole Eastern lifestyle that came to mind: how it emphasised the sense of the pragmatic, materialist tone in our society - the swirling intimations of vision and feeling treated as awkward manifestations needing to be labelled and relegated to the sidelines. But out 'there' - the vagueness coalesced into images of the Himalayas - the intimations were quietly recognised amid the overwhelming scenic impressions .... were accepted as natural with the rest. The Devon walk evoked those other moods and harmonies, those other worlds that were almost beyond the contrast. Frank Smythe, whose books were so popular in the 30's and 40's but have suffered

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neglect in this technological age, portrayed such visionary feeling in his account of a lone venture to the Bhyundar Valley in the Garhwal Himalayas (his book *The Valley of Flowers* (1938) was mentioned in the notes to my first 'Reader' article), and in it he wrote some lines that came to me as I commenced this night walk:

> It was the first time I had travelled alone in the Himalayas and the experience after the last two caravanseries to Mount Everest was more than refreshing. For the first time in my life I was able to think. I do not mean objectively or analytically but rather to surrender thought to my surroundings. This is a power of which we know little in the West but which is a basic of abstract thought in the East. It is allowing the mind to receive rather than seek impressions ....

Which is not to attach a Himalayan reference to a simple Devon walk, but merely to point at one among the meditative memories it prompted, of having stayed in the Himalayan valley that was the subject of Frank Smythe's book (2). My thoughts dwelt on the Devon walk now, of the unpromising tedium of the start when I trudged up a hill on leaving Barnstaple and continued along the old road to Braunton. It followed the direction of a ridge on one side of the river Taw, a deserted secondary road winding between high hedges as it moved into open country. It needed the eye of imagination to realise the detailed unfolding of the natural scenes on either side; but in a notably short time the moonlit landscape began to exert a powerful effect on me.

Contrast, as I noted, was playing its part. That morning I was one of the teeming millions in London, caught up in its urban sprawl and din, and now I was walking alone under a Devon sky at midnight - and feeling an endless expansion of the spirit and an acute awareness of every natural feature around me. All sounds were magnified and positively enjoyed, the heavy movement of cattle, the swish of wings and a night-jar's call, a sea breeze brushing softly through trees and hedges close at hand. A faint moon-glow was seen on the river, and withal a deep peace pervaded this (to me) transformed landscape. No one else was abroad - but with one exception ....

As I came on the silent, lightless cottages of Heanton Punchardon, the calm was broken by a distant voice calling out. "Goodnight to 'ee. And what a proper warm night to be out in". I replied in kind, a simple greeting between lone travellers. I could just detect the dark silhouette of a countryman; he was wheeling a bicyle along an adjoining road. Then, later in the walk, the anticipated moment as the ground dropped away and before me the view of the coast in all its night intimacy. The long shoreline was etched with a silvery surf, The Burrows were an impenetrable mass of black, the ocean was lying quiescent in a kind of primal mystery. The Hartland and Lundy lighthouses sent their occasional flashes across it, like torch-lit signals of friendship. I paused there on the empty road, savouring these moments that belonged to dream and reality, my registering that this shore seemed like a border, a significant divide, beyond which space and adventure beckoned without limit. (3)

Abruptly I turned away and resumed the walk. Soon came the descent and the entry into Braunton. How many times had I come back to this border? I had lost count, but never had its harmony and simplicity made a greater appeal than on this unsought walk.

Naturally a reader's experiences on an intuitive plane can enrich the appreciating of HW's work when its range and texture are so far-reaching. For as a 'reader on the coast', these factors which may have been

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extra-literary - I didn't care - did introduce a further dimension into my reading responsiveness. HW's reveries and glancing intimations were like a brilliant exposing of layers of inner perceptions which a reader could recognise as being drawn from a common reservoir of coastal experience. Living in the heartland that inspired the leaps and impulses expressed in HW's part-imaginative, part real-life passages of inspired prose, you felt that the writing simply brought to the surface what you knew was there - the mysticism and mystery, the ultimate challenge posed by buried strands of feeling which our strife-torn century has slowly begun to acknowledge more openly - the interland that plays an important role in complex reality. Writing that provides a satisfying identification with the totality of place, that draws the fullest commitment and sacrifice in its creation into literature - this for me constitutes one of the impressive rewards that HW offers the reader. After my modest rediscovery of a Devon night, I turned to certain passages where HW had explosed this dimension in easily assimilable terms, seeking to express such truth in experience:

> The lane led westwards to the combe and the sea. As he went gaily in the keen air he felt an exaltation at the thought of his free life. He joyed in the night beauty. Like a gold curlew bill the new moon curved in a violet sky, the movement of the sea suddenly increased to a noise like the rumble of a distant barrage, and the combe opened up before him .... His way was lit by a globe of silver, Venus reluming the pale evening vapours over the sea. By his side the stream murmured round the stones and its bubbles shimmered .... (*The Dream of Fair Women*)

Beauty of language allied with sensitivity of feeling and thought combine to provide a reader with an artistically satisfying whole, a felt fidelity to the recaptured impressions and the transition into art. And the poetic phrase "murmured round the stones" is embedded naturally, at one with the total sensuousness and smoothness of effect. In another passage, in the same book, the feeling is instantly recognisable to anyone who has swum at night in the open sea, and especially after plunging in off those huge beaches (usually without a costume) and luxuriating on a plane of pure detachment -

> With the otter beside him he swam towards the Cormorant Rock, feeling the unreality, the timelessness of a summer night. He had no body, no senses, no instincts, no thoughts: he was a dream of moon and water.... Sitting on the seaweed of the Cormorant Rock .... he watched her swimming to him, part of himself, the rib that had been striving to grow again to cover his heart ....

Direct, uncluttered, austere, such narrative moves like a surging current in a tidal flow. It evokes echoes on the musical level - bringing to mind an echo of Delius, perhaps, as a fragment unfolds in delicate chromatic eddies.

Another of HW's night passages (in *Tales in a Devon Village*) (4) refers directly to Delius, a reverie that is prompted by HW hearing the music as he looks out on the village which he was indissolvably part of -

> .... In my room was a wireless set, and from the Queen's Hall came the green-corn music of Delius, akin to the green-corn spirit of Jeffries: men who strove to dream themselves out of the present, whose desires arose like mayflies in ancient sunlight. The ancient moon shone over the village, the sad ecstasy of 'Brigg Fair' floated from the dark alcove above the fireplace, the candle flame wavered as the slant of pallid light moved across the floor; and it seemed, as when I first came to dwell here, nearly ten years ago now, that the night was immortal, of interstellar Truth, the celestrial strength behind the temporary nights of the solar

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system; that life was a spirit of harmony behind the outward forms of light. Idolised in the New Testament were incidents in the strivings of genius to reveal this immortality of Night, religion, poetry, music, all art was of this starry stream which poets saw in moments of exaltation, but not with their eyes.

Many such moments lay in the books, and my thoughts turned to *The Pathway* and the visionary presentation found in the related account known as *The Star-born*. But that opened up an extensive theme beyond the scope of my random reflections on a journey. Suffice to recall a night meditation of Mary Ogilvie's, the choice for the beautiful opening paragraph of *The Pathway*. In it you find the sentence -

> Above the earth dependent for its mortal life on the light and heart of a dwarf-yellow star, a vast firmament was held in a negation of darkness, pierced in vain by its glittering night-stars.

And the book ends with Mary's valediction, in which she is -

> .... thinking of the darkness of men's minds, pierced in vain by the shining light of Kristos, and of the agony of Christ, as the end of the Pathway.

But for this journey in 1982, we returned to the car for the last stage of the journey. To leave Barnstaple at night, and by car, lessened the impact of the obvious changes on the road to Braunton. You looked in vain for familiar hedges and fields and saw that an industrial suburb had replaced them, its lights shining in monotonous rows on modern warehouses and on surrounding areas of asphalt - turn-ins for services required for the yearly car-borne invasion. Strange the disturbing effect it had when you knew the places where the hedges had existed and were now destroyed - mostly a realisation that the descruction extended to a complete habitat for wildlife and to altering the aesthetic character of this coastal country which, having been preserved for generations, was under serious threat. The message in the film *The Vanishing Hedgerows* was still as topical as ever, a warning made specially distinctive when Williamson lent his voice in direct support. But in driving further along the highway, we were back to our normality, to the narrower Thirties road flanked by its traditional hedges, the old pattern standing foursquare and indifferent to the modern mechanical tide. But for how long?

On this open stretch, especially when swirling winds and rain swept in fiercely - as they did now - you are made to feel the close proximity of the Atlantic. How often had I cycled to Braunton against these punishing south-westerlies - elemental forces producing a mental picture of Nature's chaos in the dark wildness, of awesome power unleashed and unstoppable in the churning-up of sea and spray to places far inland? Primitive ... elemental... untamed? I reflected on another writer I had read on the coast ... D.H.Lawrence. How his standing with the Establishment had gone through remarkable variations, a forceful, uncomfortable artist who had met with the kind of prejudices and antagonisms that are familiar to a modern Williamson reader. Were there lessons to be learnt by the latter when contemplating the ascendancy of Lawrence into modern mainstream acceptance? I was not clear how far there were, but as a reader of both authors, my awareness of the critical breakthrough with Lawrence seemed to imply a challenge unmet in the case of Williamson, especially when I was reminded of the lengthening age of the barriers which stood in the way of HW's true recognition.

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In the Mcmillan casebook on the Lawrence novels - *The Rainbow* and *Women in Love*, (these casebooks, designed for students, each deal with books that are classics or have modern significance in English literature, and show the value of an informed critical response), Colin Clarke referred to the formidable opposition that had existed for decades when the merits of the Lawrentian case were debated and ignored. Those who opposed his literary revival held that Lawrence was remarkable for intuitive powers rather than powers of intelligence, that his only theme was sex, that he surrendered to the primitivist illusion, that he fostered the spirit of something akin to Nazism - that he rarely or never produced finished works of art and lacked the novelists' power to create characters as individuals.

The story of how Dr. Leavis threw himself into this battle and contributed critical studies of surpassing penetration and power in which the emphasis was placed firmly on Lawrence's tales and on *The Rainbow* and *Women in Love*, and of the eventual recognition by many critics of Lawrence's major status, is all part of a noted literary revaluation in the 50's (5). I have personally found the Lawrence travel books - e.g. *Twilight in Italy*, *Sea and Sardinia* - ultimately the most absorbing, though aware of the significance of later books like his novel *Kangeroo* - a study of the inner conflicts of political power in Australia and moving to the sensuous, inner planes of oneness with a wild coastline set beside the Pacific, where Frieda and Lawrence were to stay briefly in a wooden bungalow.

Something that John Worthen wrote - a recent perceptive critic of Lawrence - in his introduction to a Penguin edition of *The Rainbow*, served to chrystallise an impression I had of Lawrence's mature writing not being fundamentally unravelled and appraised in terms that are ordinarily understandable. That Lawrence turned aside from the intricacies of the social world in later writing: that after World War I he compulsively left 'society' and embarked on his 'savage pilgrimage', is interestingly pondered on by John Worthen; and he quotes from a Lawrence essay written in 1923 - that you could not get any more literature out of man, either in his relation to women, or to other men, nor could you out of women in a like way (6). Lawrence had added:

> Because any new book must needs be a new stride. And the next stride lands you over the sandbar in the open ocean, where the first and greatest relation of every man and woman is to the Ocean itself, the great God of the end, which is the All-Father of all sources ....

Struggling through here was an intuitive apprehension of the need to forge new literary links with the inner modes and impulses, with the human aspiration - beyond the technology - to belong to a natural environment .... For the reaching out for community roots and a religious communion in a rhythmic accord with nature (7). Reflections of this kind came from the fact of the Lawrence renaissance, and they were stimulating to muse over as the car ploughed on into the Devon night, bringing nearer 'the coast' and all the natural scenes that Williamson had brought with an intuitively-formed balance and fervour on to the pages of his earlier work: the literary outpouring that had resonance and basic relevance, and the sense of 'a new stride' towards the natural fulfilment which is our birthright.

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NOTES

1. A reference to the Samuel Beckett play *Waiting for Godot*. Originally written in French in 1952, this controversial play was first performed in London in 1955 and gained something of a cult following.

2. Recently published is Harry Calvert's book *Smythe's Mountains*, a review of Smythe's climbing career.

3. James Farrar, who had a fleeting glimpse of this Devon coast from the air, wrote in *The Imagination to the Wraith* the sort of memorable lines that can belong to moments like this. To quote briefly -

> "Now I have come intimately into your way of thinking I have no need of self-questioning or introversion. Tonight you and I are one, sun and sea bind me to you as night upon the earth".

4. This extract forms part of HW's delightfully reflective opening to chapter fifteen - *The Fox in the Moonlight*.

5. Middleton Murry's book *Son of Woman* helped to set the critical tone after Lawrence's death in 1930. Murry is surely one of the best critics within the solid, rationalist tradition, but Frieda burnt her copy of his book and posted the ashes back to him. Interpretations of Lawrence and his intuitive literature (and of Williamson's also) call for exceptional critical tools if the appreciation is to attain a desirable fullness.

6. John Worthen notes that it is astonishing to find a major novelist saying that you cannot get any more literature out of human, social relationships, but it is consistent with the direction that Lawrence's writing was tending towards, though not keeping absolutely to it.

7. Henry Miller's book on Lawrence's work takes you into the realms of non-rational areas and mysticism. Entitled *The World of Lawrence* (published in America 1979, and in Britain 1985) it began as a short work published in the Thirties, and was then rewritten over and over, until, when he was aporoaching eighty-eight, Miller arranged to publish it. He died before it came out.

To the Williamson reader, passages like the following can induce speculations on how the visionary side of HW's art might be interpreted through a like unorthodox approach, particularly where the question of form is brought up and where the verbal impressionism seems to slip into a musical sphere. Perhaps in places where intimations of music occur to a reader immersed in, say, Lawrence's *The Trespasser* or Williamson's *The Pathway*, a certain converging of both authors' artistic aims becomes apparent. To quote from *The World of Lawrence* -

> In fragmenting the man, laying bare his conflicts, exploring his experiences, underscoring his shocks and his sufferings ... The living dynamism, the unity which is the man and which made him what he was, escapes, eludes forever the probing, useless, scientific instruments ...
> ... In the poems it (the mystery) flames up and defies all approach, in the novels it gets smothered under the excrescence of fact and incident, in the essays it flowers again and turns to ash which the mind blows hither and thither, as if frantically seeking for a form which is anterior to language, for a form which would be a blend of music and idea.