

## VIII

### Broken Memories

AND in this way many suburbans have seen the paradise of their boyhood effaced. The building rises during some long farewell, and steals away a fraction of the very sky in which once we beheld Orion sink down like a falling sword into the west and its line of battlemented woods. Only here and there a coppice will survive, blockaded by houses a-row. Sometimes a well-beloved pleasaunce is left almost as it was; the trees are the same; the voices are the same; a silence is there still; but there is a caret somewhere in ourselves or in the place [...]. A railway bisects the common we cross. Everything is haggard and stale; the horizon is gone; and the spirit chafes and suffocates for lack of it. (But the gorse is in flower still.) Then the feet weary on gravel paths downhill. On either side are fields, edged by flaccid suburban grass, with an odour as of tombs as though nothing fair could blossom in a soil that must be the sepulcher of many divinities [...]. There is an horizon barred with poplar trees to the south; the streets are behind, in the north. The horizon is dear to us yet, as the possible home of the unknown and the greatly desired, as the apparent birthplace and tomb of setting and rising suns; from under it the clouds mount, and under it again they return after crossing the sky [...]. The big wood we called it So well we knew it, and for so many years —wandered here with weeping like Imogen's, and with laughter like Yorick's laughter— that when past years bulk into the likeness of a forest, through which the memory takes its pleasure at eventide, “Or in clear dream or solemn vision”, it is really this wood that we see, under a halcyon sky [...]. We cannot summon up any thought or reverie which had not in this wood its nativity. 'Tis we have changed! [...]. Out of this rose up trees that preserved their wild attitudes. The age-fallen or tempest-uprooted oak tree lay where it dropped, or hung balanced in the boughs of others. Tenderest bramble spray or feeler of honeysuckle bridged those gaps in the underwood that served as paths. And the winds were husbandmen, reapers and sowers thereof. Though, indeed, the trees were ordered with an incongruous juxta-position of birch and oak and elm, it

seemed to us a fragment of the primaeval forest left by a possible good fortune at the city verge. But it was more than this. With its lofty roof and the mysterious flashes of light in the foliated clerestory, with its shapely boles in cluster and colonnade, and the glimpses of bright white sky that came and went among the leaves, the forest had a real likeness to a temple. Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind" and passages of [sic]Adonais were the *ediscenda* of our devotions [...]. A dim solitude thus circumscribed liked us hugely. We loved not the insolent and importunate splendours of perfect light. Cobwebs and wholesome dust —we needed some of both in the corners of our minds. They mature the wine of the spirit perhaps. We would always have had, as it were, a topmost and nearly inaccessible file of tomes, which we never read, but often planned to read —records peradventure of unvictorious alchemist and astrologer [...].

## IX

### Caryatids

THE oriel surveys an angular plain of roofs blue slate, auburn tile-work, grizzled stone and soaring thence a steeple, the clustered masonry at its base inhabited and ever guarded by sad crowned women, with faces lifted skyward. Very likely these are saints, perhaps martyrs; but I never heard their legend from the pigeon that sways about them, or the wind that sharpens the angles of their faces. Night after night I see them, and after many vigils, whilst bells are calling to each other above us, and night closes over the placid city, faces seen in the enchanted past reappear, faces of men and women like Caryatids, and close kin to these guardians of the spire, among cloud and star. Nor merely faces I have seen, but the long-enduring I have read of also. One by one as I watch the queenly stone figures, wrought upon by the magic of distance and lofty place (nearer the stars than we!) such faces emerge from the past, with more of the uncomplaining benedictionless [...].

## X

## February in England

[...]. A railway journey had effected just such an inconsequent change as comes in dreams. The air was full of that oppressive silence into which changes the unintelligible clamour of towns. Looking scarce farther or higher than the cathedral tower, the sun vainly competed with the clock face gleaming beside the Thames. Over the grey water rose and fell continually the grey wings of gulls; others screamed with a melancholy "dying fall" in the grey spaces of heaven, soaring doubtless into silence beyond the mist, in the enjoyment of we knew not what amenities of light and warmth. "*Solemque suum, sua sidera norunt*". Grey roofs, grey ships; indeed, only one immobile ruddy sail of a barge, drifting up, coloured the Quakerish raiment of the day. By dipping my pen into the grey Thames ripple I am fain to make grey the reader's mind as it did mine. But words are frail; even the word "grey," which of all chromatic epithets is most charged with mental and sentimental meaning, has boundaries. The grey changed somewhat; it was night. If the day had seemed a dying thing, the night seemed dead, and not a funeral note came through the mist. So a week passed, and, defrauded thus of a sweet tract of life (such as that February dawn had promised), I watched the clockwork movements of the grey-minded men and women pacing the streets. I met hundreds of people in the streets that might have taken roles in the Inferno. And in a more personal and horrible sense than Goethe meant, I felt that here on earth we have veritably to enact hell, as I looked down from a great bridge. A steamer the ghost of a steamer passed under [...]. From London, I remember, we travelled to the county of \_\_, in South Wales. February was making the best of his short life, and leaving March a great deal to undo [...]. Reaching the castle on the hill, I came from those creatures of the seasons and the hours as if straight upon time itself. The noble masonry preserved the curves of several pointed arches; some of the apartments might still have sheltered a stout physique from the pleasantries of wind and rain; but the building had unmistakably been overtaken by eternity. It had for centuries ceased to live. Now death itself was dead within these stones; it was resolved into its elements again. Approaching

the castled crag, it was hard to say where crag ended and castle began [...]. Our entering footsteps and voices sounded most unreal. We were the ghosts. Antiquity the echo, the shadow was the one thing real [...]. By degrees a feeling of horror grew and became less vague. I accidentally loosened a stone, which fell noisily down the almost perpendicular cliff for two hundred feet to the fields below, and by no hard feat of the fancy I felt myself as insignificant as that stone; I too was cast over the abyss [...].

## THE THAMES

Shelley

THAT Shelley was born at Horsham, went to school at Isleworth and Eton, and to University College, Oxford, sojourned in North and South Wales, in Cumberland, Devon, Berkshire, and Buckinghamshire, and in London—so much is true ; but of few poets is it less true that he has a country and a topography distinctly his own. There are great mountains in his poems, “eagle-baffling” mountains—Alpine, Caucasian, Himalayan— rivers and lakes and islands, forests and meadows, cliffs and caves, and we know that he saw some of the finest examples of these things which the earth has to show. I am not about to trace or conjecture the origin of all the heavenly mountains and ocean-seeking rivers of his poems. I have no theory as to the original of that “little lawny islet,” neither have I gone in search of the shelving bank of turf

“which lay

Under a copse, and hardly dared to fling  
Its green arms round the bosom of the stream,  
But kissed it and then fled, as thou mightest in dream.”

I do not propose to show that Shelley was a thoroughly Sussex poet because the great snake in the Field Place garden and the legendary one of St. Leonard's Forest may have given him the primary impulse towards creating magnificent serpents in poetry [...]. Not often did he write in a manner permitting the direct use of what the eyes saw. When he did, he could either be literal, as in “The Sunset”, which begins:

“He walked along the pathway of a field  
Which to the east a hoar wood shadowed o'er,  
But to the west was open to the sky ...”

or he could loiter luxuriously over natural details for their own sake, as in “The Question”, which has some very English passages. These two lines,

“And in the warm hedge grew lush eglantine,

Green cowbind, and the moonlight-coloured may”,

are very English ; so are these three:

“And floating water-lilies, broad and bright,  
Which lit the oak that overhung the hedge  
With moonlight beams of their own watery light.”

[...]. He was thinking of Man and Freedom and Virtue; the mountains provided an harmonious accompaniment to his mistily aspiring thoughts, and their grandeur was to him already in part moral and spiritual [...]. Observe how Nature has to bow to morality. His ideas were stronger than his surroundings [...]. “Laon and Cythna”, his summer task, was written “in his boat”, says Mrs. Shelley, “as it floated under the beech -groves of Bisham, or during wanderings in the neighbouring country” [...]. And, very naturally, a poem written rapidly in such a place reflects the river and the woods of Marlow. It begins with a river and ends with one. The first canto has a boat designed for Ariel to wind “among the lawny islands fair”:

“A boat of rare device, which had no sail  
But its own curved prow of thin moonstone,  
Wrought like a web of texture fine and frail. ...”

[...]. He left England in March, never to return, but to write poetry where Italy is mirrored more than England, and still more a kind of not wholly unearthly paradise that he had already imagined in Wales and England, as he walked their mountains and woods, or lay on his back looking up at their clouds and firmament.

## THE WEST COUNTRY

Coleridge

[...]. On a walk with Wordsworth and Dorothy to Watchet and Linton “The Ancient Mariner” was begun in November, 1797. It was finished, as Dorothy's journal says, in March, 1798. The entries relating to “the one red leaf, the last of its clan”, etc., are supposed to “show, not only how much Coleridge was aided by her keen observation of Nature, but fix unmistakably the date of composition of Part I.” of “Christabel”. The May of 1798 was probably the month of “Kubla Khan”. Coleridge had retired to a lonely farmhouse between Porlock and Linton. He fell asleep under the influence of opium while reading in Purchas the sentence, “Here the Khan Kubla commanded a palace to be built, and a stately garden thereunto, and thus ten miles of fertile ground were enclosed with a wall”. The poem was composed during the sleep, and would not, said Coleridge, have been so short and a fragment had not “a person on business from Porlock” interrupted him. The “deep romantic chasm which slanted down the green hill” alone connects it, and that tenuously, with Somerset. If Dorothy Wordsworth did help Coleridge to the isthmus by which he and we pass out from this earth to that other, she performed a great service, perhaps one he could not have done without; but it has not been proved yet.

This being a time of war as well as of poetry, the rambles of the poets brought them under suspicion as spies. How was a plain man to know that Coleridge “liked to compose in walking over uneven ground or breaking through the straggling branches of a copse-wood”. The suspicion seems to have turned Wordsworth out of his house, and he did not find another to suit him in the neighbourhood. The Stowey period was almost at an end. The Wordsworths went to Germany before the end of 1798; Coleridge went with them. Coleridge stayed on into June, 1799, and in a year's time he was at Greta Hall, Keswick; Wordsworth at Town End, Grasmere. The spies who suspected Coleridge had not read his “Fears in Solitude, written in April, 1798, during the Alarm of an Invasion”. It shows us that, though a bad soldier, he was a tolerably complete Englishman, aware of the follies both of peace and war, himself once probably one of those who speak from the newspapers [...].

## THE NORTH

Emily Brontë

EMILY BRONTE'S country is that tract of the West Riding of Yorkshire which is the scene of "Wuthering Heights" and of Mrs. Gaskell's "Life of Charlotte Bronte." She was born at Thornton in 1818, but by 1820 the family had moved to Haworth Parsonage, where she was to die in 1848. Thornton was "desolate and wild; great tracks of bleak land, enclosed by stone dykes, sweeping up Clayton Heights" [...]. She fits into the moorland—she is part of it—like the curlew and the heather, and she herself knew it. The moorland was a necessity to her, but it was also her chief pleasure and joy. Her poems always imply it, and often express it. These stanzas are among the most explicit:

“Awaken, o'er all my dear moorland,  
West-wind, in thy glory and pride!  
Oh! call me from valley and lowland  
To walk by the hill-torrent's side!  
It is swelled with the first snowy weather;  
The rocks they are icy and hoar,  
And sullenly waves the long heather,  
And the fern leaves are sunny no more.  
There are no yellow stars on the mountain;  
The bluebells have long died away  
From the brink of the moss-bedded fountain.  
From the side of the wintry brae.  
But lovelier than corn-fields all waving  
In emerald, and vermeil, and gold,  
Are the heights where the north-wind is raving,  
And the crags where I wandered of old.”

[...]. She asked for nothing, while she was on this earth and on the moor, save her own heart and liberty. Her poems and her life, in fact, reveal her as a wild spirit, as what Byron seemed in his poetry when he had a background of



mountains and thunder. Her background is the everlasting wild itself and “Wuthering Heights”. She “rides on the whirlwind” in the country described in the first chapter of that book [...].

[2513 palabras]

## REFERENCIAS

Thomas, E. (1902). *Horae Solitariae*. Londres: Duckworth & Co. / Nueva York: E.P. Dutton. [Edición norteamericana digitalizada por el Internet Archive, 2007, <https://archive.org/details/horaesolitariae00thomrich/page/n10>].

Thomas, E. (1917). *A Literary Pilgrim in England*. Londres: Methuen & Co. / Nueva York: Dodd, Mead & Co. [Edición norteamericana digitalizada por el Internet Archive, 2008, <https://archive.org/details/aliterarypilgri00thomgoog>].