

and that means not only scientific inquiry in the usual sense, but also inquiry into the life of human beings in society.

It is not too difficult to think of societies in which the natural sciences have been encouraged but the human sciences (among which I include what are commonly called the humanities) have been hamstrung, and the words of particular sages—together with those of whoever happens to be the current Party boss—accorded the seal of absolute and indisputable truth. Few, inside or outside these societies, would now regard them as having been outstandingly successful even in natural science and technology. The lesson is there for us to heed.

Why, after all, do we study the natural world at all? For two reasons—and we may not always know which of them is uppermost in any given piece of research. One is the pure advancement of knowledge—and there is plenty of that to be done in the human sciences as well. The other aim is that

²³ This definition of the profession of a civil engineer, framed by Thomas Tredgold (1788-1829), has appeared in all the Institution's successive Royal Charters. See Institution of Civil Engineers, *Power for the Use of Man: a series of addresses . . . commemorating the 150th anniversary of the Royal Charter of the Institution*, (1978), p. 1.

²⁴ Plato, *Apology*, p. 38a.

which the Institution of Civil Engineers declares to be the object of the profession over which it presides: namely, in one sense or another, “directing the Great Sources of Power in Nature for the use and convenience of man”.²³ And that at once begs the question: what *is* the use and convenience of man?

IN SO FAR as intellectual inquiry has a utilitarian object, inquiry into nature can inform us about means; inquiry into human nature can inform us, at least some of the time, about ends. It is not by chance that the two arguably most brilliant *natural* philosophers of classical Greece—Democritus and Aristotle—also wrote prolifically on *ethical* philosophy. It will be intellectual inquiry, *historia*, into *both* the natural world *and* the human world that we must hope will enable us, in the century soon to begin, to live on this planet in peace, with at least a tolerable living standard for all, without ruining the environment—the common terrestrial home which our descendents will inherit—and without sacrificing the ethical values that have come down to us from antiquity. Never has it been truer that—as Socrates put it when he refused to buy his life at the price of his silence—“a life devoid of questioning is not a life fit for a human being”.²⁴

Summer Comes

Summer is a naked god who squeezes night
in his thick fist, lets it peep an hour or so,
then yawns cool mornings and stretches out
contentedly
in poppy mist
to sleep.

The heavy settling of summer. The squalor of it;
seamless, sealed in green.

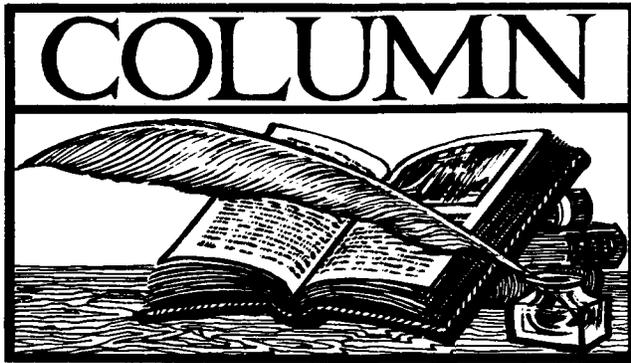
As summer comes, it seems we know the world
too well, though hidden: the trees
hidden under a hoist of leaves,
their character clogged,
and every growing thing
packed tightly into place,
soothed by the poisonous croon of doves.
No change or stir; a time of no surprises;
leaning heat and waiting.

Wait for the silver tilt of leaves, the kick
of lightning.

But nothing comes out of the swollen sky.
The white light weighs down the gaze;
the brain sparks messages that don't connect;
words will not form;
thoughts are not clearly thought and hang
in heavy air.

Sour summer, going round and round
and round.

Bryn Gunnell



WHEN DOES the once unthinkable become a matter of course? All the time—and not only when falling in love. Seeing Westminster televised, one could hardly imagine that until November 1989 the cameras had been banned from the House of Commons, like newspaper reporters in Dr Johnson's day. Seeing Eastern Europe stirring at last from its post-War nightmare, one wondered how so many people in the West had been able to take the Iron Curtain for granted, a deplorable but inevitable fact of life.

So the process has always been—with vernacular Bibles, universal suffrage, horseless carriages, submarines, air transport, space travel: we look back in wonder at those who once doubted or denied them. I remember in the late 1940s asking a friend at the Cambridge University Press why it didn't publish books in paperback. "Not worth it", was his answer: "There'd be no great saving." But then I too, for years, resisted pocket calculators, word processors, answer-phones, and video cassette recorders. These last, I thought (and still do), were popular in Britain largely to escape the inanities broadcast in the early evening, and record the more or less grown-up programmes put out after non-insomniacs have gone to bed.

Their other attraction, of course, is films. True, wide-screen pictures suffer on television; true, a movie-house audience greatly enhances comedies, especially those which leave gaps for expected laughter. But even at premium prices, and still more so in the bargain basement, it can be cheaper to watch a cassette in warm, dry, quiet, hygienic comfort at home than to drive, park, stand in line, pay, wait, sit through advertisements, buy popcorn or hear it consumed, and inhale influenza viruses in even the latest multiplex with quadrophonic sound.

For a long time, many people hired their video cassettes. Now I see, with mild surprise at anyone's surprise, that sales are beginning to catch up with hire. To me, that seems natural. I own my favourite books: why not my favourite movies? But the trade has a curious term for video cassette sales: the men with the Velcro chins call it "sell-through". Does this mean that people buy only to resell? If so, we should soon witness the growth of a new retail phenomenon—the Old Curiosity Cassette Shop. I can picture it already: a Dickensian establishment with bull's-eye windows and a bewhiskered custodian, parting the cobwebs to prise from the picturesque muddle a dusty first edition of D. W. Griffith, Pudovkin, or Abel Gance.

Conventional wisdom used to assume that TV and video

cassettes would be the natural enemies of cinema film. The contrast between cheap home comfort and a slow expensive outing was thought to be overwhelming. But social habits are more subtle than that. Not all members of families want to cluster round a TV set, or round the same offering. Younger people, involved in courtship rituals, may see the movies as part of their mating dance. *Aficionados* will want to catch the latest films before they reach the video market. And celebrants of various kinds may be tempted by the multiplexes' promise of "a complete evening out". Most of all, watching films is mildly addictive: interest in the cinema, kindled or sustained by the cassette habit (and perhaps by use of the hideously named "camcorder"), can spill over into regular movie-going. Not, of course, on the scale of the 1940s: but cinema attendances, which for decades seemed on an endless slide downwards, have in the last few years begun to rise again. Is it time for festivities in Tinseltown?

Probably not, or not yet. But festivals—yes. All the year round, somewhere, film festivals seem to be going on. I don't mean those pseudo-festivals run by small cinemas in Paris, which periodically advertise "*Le festival des Frères Marx*", "*Grand Festival Sam Wood*", or "*Festival de l'humour britannique*". These are simply repertory reruns of some scratchy old copies they happen to have clawed together. Those aside, however, the film festival has become what a steelworks or an airline used to be: a national status symbol. There are science-fiction festivals, avant-garde festivals, *film noir* festivals, documentary festivals, educational festivals, and animation festivals, as well as those with no particular badge. Altogether, including once-for-all events, about 200 film festivals are staged in any one year. A globe-trotting critic, working hard, could with luck survive on the free lunches alone.

I'm not in that league—though by the time you read this I'll have done jury service at a festival in Brussels. But in recent years I've repeatedly sampled several such annual shindigs, and each time have come away with somewhat altered ideas.

THE LATIN WORD *festus*, root of the medieval *festivus*, derives from the Sanskrit *bhas*, which seems to have meant "shine": it has nothing to do with the verb *festinare*, "to make haste". Both notions are just about appropriate: so is the cognate overtone of sabbath solemnity, as in church festivals. What's often missing, at least for professionals, is the primary sense of holiday merrymaking. Black ties and ball dresses notwithstanding, film festivals are first and foremost *work*.

The biggest, though not the oldest, is of course Cannes. Anatomised by Alexander Walker in the July-August 1988 issue of *ENCOUNTER*, this is to feature as fiction this May in Iain Johnstone's *Cannes: The Novel*. But it deserves an encyclopaedia. How else to convey the multiplicity of Cannes? First, there's the dwarfing of its fishing port, a very ancient tale. Already by 1900, when the very first Michelin guide appeared, the town had 19,470 inhabitants and two recommended hotels: the Grand (three stars) and the Hotel des Colonies et des Négociants (sounds inferior, one). Its reputation as a fashionable watering-place had been estab-