

AN ATTEMPT TO EVOLVE

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(natural selection)

I said in the beginning of saying this thing that if it were possible that a movement were lively enough it would exist so completely that it would not be necessary to see it moving against anything to know that it is moving. This is what we mean by life and in my way I have tried to make portraits of this thing always have tried always may try to make portraits of this thing.

If this existence is this thing is actually existing there can be no repetition. There is only repetition when there are descriptions being given of these things not when the things themselves are actually existing and this is therefore how my portrait writing began.

So we have now, a movement lively enough to be a thing in itself moving, it does not have to move against anything to know that it is moving, it does not need that there are generations existing.

Then we have insistence insistence that in its emphasis can never be repeating, because insistence is always alive and if it is alive it is never saying anything in the same way because emphasis can never be the same not even when it is most the same that is when it has been taught.

And now to begin as if to begin. Composition is not there, it is going to be there and we are here. This is some time ago for us naturally. There is something to be added afterwards.

Just how much my work is known to you I do not know. I feel that perhaps it would be just as well to tell the whole of it.

In beginning writing I wrote a book called *Three Lives* this was written in 1905. I wrote a negro story called *Melantha*. In that there was a constant recurring and beginning there was a marked direction in the direction of being in the present although naturally I had been accustomed to past present and future, and why, because the composition forming around me was a prolonged present. A composition of a prolonged present is a natural composition in the world as it has been these thirty years it was more and more a prolonged present. I created then a prolonged present naturally I knew nothing of a continuous present but it came naturally to me to make one, it was simple it was clear to me and nobody

knew why it was done like that, I did not myself although naturally to me it was natural.

After that I did a book called *The Making of Americans* it is a long book about a thousand pages. Here again it was all so natural to me and more and more complicatedly a continuous present. A continuous present is a continuous present. I made almost a thousand pages of a continuous present. Continuous present is one thing and beginning again and again is another thing. These are both things. And then there is using everything. This brings us again to composition this the using everything. The using everything brings us to composition and to this composition. A continuous present and using everything and beginning again. In these two books there was elaboration of the complexities of using everything and of a continuous present and of beginning again and again and again. In the first book there was a groping for a continuous present and for using everything by beginning again and again. There was a groping for using everything and there was a groping for a continuous present and there was an inevitable beginning of beginning again and again and again.

Every invention in art is a single event in time, has no evolution. With the passage of time different variations of the same theme are composed around the invention, sometimes more sharpened, sometimes more flattened, but seldom is the original power attained. So it goes on till, after being performed over a long period, this work of art becomes so automatic-mechanical in its performance that the mind ceases to respond to the exhausted theme; then the time is ripe for a new invention. The so-called 'technical' aspect is, however, inseparable from the so-called 'artistic' aspect and therefore we do not wish to dismiss close associations lightly, with a few catchwords.

To-day we have two dimensions for the word. As a sound it is a function of time, and as a representation it is a function of space. The coming book must be both. In this way the automatism of the present-day book will be overcome; for a view of life which has come about automatically is no longer conceivable to our minds and we are left suffocating in a vacuum. The energetic task which art must accomplish is to transmute the emptiness into space, that is into something which our minds can grasp as an organized unity.

Some time then there will be very kind of a history of every one who ever can or is or was or will be living. Some time then there will be a history of every one from their beginning to their ending. Sometime then there will be a history of all of them, of every kind of them, of every one, of every bit of living they ever have in them, of them when there is never more than a beginning to them, of every kind of them, of every one when there is very little beginning and then there is an ending, there will then sometime be a history of every one there will be a history of everything that ever was or is or will be them, of everything that was or is or will be all of any one or all of all of them. Sometime then there will be a history of every one, of everything or anything that is all them or any part of them and sometime then there will be a history of how anything or everything comes out from every one, comes out from every one or any one from the beginning to the ending of the being in them. Sometime then there must be a history of every one who ever was or is or will be living. As one sees every one in their living, in their loving, sitting, eating, drinking, sleeping, walking, working, thinking, laughing, as any one sees all of them from their beginning to their ending, sees them when they are little babies or children or young grown men and women or growing older men and women or old men and women then one knows it in them that sometime there will be a history of all of them, that sometime all of them will have the last touch of being, a history of them can give to them, sometime then there will be a history of each one, of all the kinds of them, of all the ways any one can know them, of all the ways each one is inside her or inside him, of all the ways anything of them comes out from them. Sometime then there will be a history of every one and so then every one will have in them the last touch of being a history of any one can give to them.

This is then a beginning of the way of knowing everything in every one, of knowing the complete history of each one who ever is or was or will be living. This is then a little description of the winning of so much wisdom.

I build my time

In His very truly great manners of Édouard Manet very heroically Jesus Christ had very exorbitantly come amongst his very really grand men and women to Otto Julius Bierbaum, Sean Whelan, Nikolai Andryéevitch Rimsky-Korsakov, Philip Duffield Stong, Paul Vincent Carroll, Ludwig Lewisohn, William Hogarth, Robert Bridges, Henri Matisse, Isaac Newton, Charles Edwin Markham and Raffaello Sanzio very titanically.

In their very truly great manners of Ruth Maxine Martin very heroically Michael Gold, Walter Whitman, Henry David Thoreau, John Keats, Ernest Hemingway, Stefan Zweig, Clyde Brion Davis, Françoise-Auguste-René Rodin, Fannie Hurst, Elmer Reizenstein, Arturo Toscanini and Helen Brown Norden had very staggeringly come amongst her very really grand men and women to Frances Gertrude Fiedler very titanically.

In his very truly great manners of Gertrude Allain Mary McBrady very heroically Mencken as bachelor had very frustratedly come amongst her very really grand men and women to René François Nicolas Marie Bazin, Clifford Odets, George Louis Palmella Busson Du Maurier, William Wilkie Collins, Joseph Joachim Raff, Conrad Potter Aiken, John Henry O'Hara, Frederick O'Brien, Robert Lee Frost, Paul Rosenfeld, Giotto di Bondone and Daniel Foe very titanically.

In their very truly great manners of John Barton Wolgamot very heroically Thomas Babington Macaulay, Carl Sandburg, Maria Konstantinova Bashkirtseff, Victorien Sardou, James Matthew Barrie, Jean Baptiste Racine, Margaret Mitchell, Marjorie Kinnan, Maxwell Beerbohm, Emile Herzog, Louis Hector Berlioz and Anita Loos had very ironically come amongst his very really grand men and women to Ambrose Gwinnett Bierce very titanically.

Music as a Gradual Process

I do not mean the process of composition, but rather pieces of music that are, literally, processes.

The distinctive thing about musical processes is that they determine all the note-to-note (soundtosound) details and the overall form simultaneously.

I am interested in perceptible processes. I want to be able to hear the process happening throughout the sounding music.

To facilitate closely detailed listening a musical process should happen extremely gradually.

Performing and listening to a gradual musical process resembles: pulling back a swing, releasing it, and observing it gradually come to rest; turning over an hourglass and watching the sand slowly run through to the bottom; placing your feet in the sand by the ocean's edge and watching, feeling, and listening to the waves gradually bury them.

Though I may have the pleasure of discovering musical processes and composing the musical material to run through them, once the process is set up and loaded it runs by itself.

Listening to an extremely gradual musical process opens my ears to it. But it always extends farther than I can hear, and that makes it interesting to listen to that musical process again. That area of every gradual (completely controlled) musical process, where one hears the details of the sound moving out away from Intentions, occurring for their own acoustic reasons, is it. I begin to perceive these minute details when I can sustain close attention and a gradual process invites my sustained attention. By "gradual" I mean extremely gradual; a process happening so slowly and gradually that listening to it resembles watching a minute hand on a watch—you can perceive it moving after you stay with it a little while.

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play
Four Organs, Steve Reich, 1969
(with Arthur Murphy, Philip Glass, Jon Gibson and Steve Chambers)
NewTone Records - Rdc 5018
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SIMPLICIO To tell the truth, I have not made such long and careful observations that I can qualify as an authority on the facts of this matter; but certainly I wish to do so, and then to see whether I can once more succeed in reconciling what experience presents to us with what Aristotle teaches. For obviously two truths cannot contradict one another.

SALVATI Whenever you wish to reconcile what your senses show you with the soundest teachings of Aristotle, you will have no trouble at all. Does not Aristotle say that because of the great distance, celestial matters cannot be treated very definitely?

SIMPLICIO He does say so, quite clearly.

SALVATI Does he not also declare that what sensible experience shows ought to be preferred over any argument, even one that seems to be extremely well founded? And does he not say this positively and without a bit of hesitation?

SIMPLICIO He does.

SALVATI Then of the two propositions, both of them Aristotelian doctrines, the second—which says it is necessary to prefer the senses over arguments—is a more solid and definite doctrine than the other, which holds the heavens to be inalterable. Therefore it is better Aristotelian philosophy to say Heaven is alterable because my senses tell me so, than to say, Heaven is inalterable because Aristotle was so persuaded by reasoning. Add to this that we possess a better basis for reasoning about celestial things than Aristotle did. He admitted such perceptions to be very difficult for him by reason of the distance from his senses, and conceded that one whose senses could better represent them would be able to philosophize about them with more certainty. Now we, thanks to the telescope, have brought the heavens thirty or forty times closer to us than they were to Aristotle, so that we can discern many things in them that he could not see; among other things these sunspots, which were absolutely invisible to him. Therefore we can treat of the heavens and the sun more confidently than Aristotle could.

the Middle Ages have never been reconstructed from scratch: We have always mended or patched them up, as something in which we still live. We have cobbled up the bank as well as the cathedral, the state as well as the church. We no longer dwell in the Parthenon, but we still walk or pray in the naves of the cathedral. Even when we live with Aristotle or Plato, we deal with them in the same terms suggested by our medieval ancestors. When one scrapes away the medieval incrustations from Aristotle and renews him, *this* reread Aristotle will adorn the shelves of academic libraries but will still not connect with our everyday life.

Since the Middle Ages have always been messed up in order to meet the vital requirements of different periods, it was impossible for them to be always messed about in the same way. So I'll try to outline at least ten types of Middle Ages, to warn readers that every time one speaks of a dream of the Middle Ages, one should first ask which Middle Ages one is dreaming of.

TEN LITTLE MIDDLE AGES

1. The Middle Ages as a *pretext* This is the Middle Ages of opera or of Torquato Tasso. There is no real interest in the historical background; the Middle Ages are taken as a sort of mythological stage on which to place contemporary characters. Under *this* heading we can include also the so-called cloak-and-dagger novels (or *les romans de cape et d'épée*). There is a difference between historical novels and cloak-and-dagger stuff. The former choose a particular historical period so as to gain a better understanding not only of that period but (through it) of our present time, seen as the end result of those remote historical events. The characters of the novel need not be "really historical" (that is, people who really existed); it is enough for them (albeit fictional) to be representative of their period. Lady Rowena and Pierre Bezukhov are inventions of novels, but they tell us something "true" about the English Middle Ages and about Russia at the time of Napoleon. On the contrary, in the cloak-and-dagger novel

the fictional characters must move among “real” historical figures who will support their credibility. Think of Dumas and of *the crucial* narrative role played by such characters as Richelieu and Louis XIII. Notwithstanding the presence of “real” characters, the psychology of d’Artagnan has nothing to do with the psychology of his century, and he could have blustered through the same adventures during the French Revolution. Thus in historical novels fictional characters help one to understand *the past* (and the past is not taken as a pretext), while in cloak-and-dagger novels the past (taken as a pretext) helps one to enjoy the fictional characters.

**I build my time
In gathering flowers
And throwing out the weeds**

- Z. The question depends on whether we can *see* that change in matter. The occultists even say that something of the aura of the person who touches an object lingers around it. If true, this might explain the strange feeling we get in museums of old art: the old aura resisting the new, and conversely. However that may be, inner and outer are closely linked: what seems a “thing” to us is also a force, just as man is another force—and also a thing. Perhaps one force can sense the other. Since we do not know *for sure*, wouldn’t we do better to remain with the *certain*? Our senses are attuned to the physical world, not to the ether or the astral plane. Let us confine ourselves to the outwardly visible so long as we have no deeper or other senses. What we cannot perceive is in the realm of knowledge or feeling. Higher knowledge is relative, and as for individual feeling, only physical sensation can be generally determined. Being determined universal feeling is superior to all other feeling; but it can manifest itself only where particular; individual feelings are not involved. That is why the new art excludes them.
- X. So you do not exclude all feeling?
- Z. Feeling *changes*, just as beauty changes.
- Y. True, our ordinary feelings are far from certain.

- Z. Life has only two expressions upon which, aided by pure vision, we can rely: *action* and *plastic manifestation*. We could call pure plastic manifestation a *stilled action*, or *stilled outward plastic manifestation*, *appearance*. The latter contains everything and radiates everything, and yet it does not move. It is movement as purely equilibrated relationship expressing repose. Both action and plastic manifestation are usually obscured and unclear in life; it is the great task of the new age to make both *shine forth clearly*. In this way *truth* is manifested. Thus truth is the doctrine of the new age, as love was the doctrine of the earlier age. In the past, love veiled *things*, now love is *veiled-within truth*. Love has grown into truth.
- Y. Yes, everything is changing—yet basically remains the same.
- Z. This is the great revolution, the reason why the old age resists the new, and conversely. The old era seeks—in its fashion—love, but not *truth*. And as long as the old prevails, the new, in life as in art, will make only slow progress.
- Y. Because for us truth is only what we can perceive, I recognize the importance of plastic appearances.
- Z. And the more purely we can see truth, the more the most external will diminish and the more abstractly we will see and express ourselves plastically.

We are helping to lay the table.

We are helping to wash up.

I am helping Mummy to make the bed.

I am helping Mummy to dust.

We are helping Mummy to polish.

We are helping to do some cooking.

We are helping Mummy to hang out the washing.

We are helping Mummy to feed the animals.

I am helping to sweep the floor.

I am helping to pick some flowers.

We are helping to plant some bulbs.

We are all helping to do the shopping.

We are helping to clean the shoes.

We are helping Daddy to weed the garden.

We are helping Daddy to carry the logs.

We are helping Daddy to pick the potatoes.

We are helping to clean the car.

I am helping Daddy to mend the fence.

I am helping Daddy to paint the gate.

We are helping to rake the leaves.

We are helping to sweep the paths.

We are helping to tidy the shed.

We are all helping to make a bonfire.

Assuming that the Middle Ages can be synthesized in a kind of abstract model, to which of the two does our own era correspond? Any thought of strict correspondence, item by item, would be ingenuous, not least because we live in an enormously speeded up period where what happens in five of our years can sometimes correspond to what happened then in five centuries. Secondly, the center of the world has expanded to cover the whole planet; nowadays civilizations and cultures and various phases of development live together, and in ordinary terminology we are led to talk about the “medieval condition” of the people of Bengal while we see New York as a flourishing Babylon. So the parallel, if we make it, must be established between certain moments and situations of our planetary civilization and various moments of a historical process that stretches from the fifth to the thirteenth century A.D. To be sure, comparing a precise historical moment (today) with a period of almost a thousand years sounds like an insipid game, and it would be insipid if that were what it is. But here we are trying to formulate a “hypothesis of the Middle Ages” (as if we were setting out to fabricate a Middle Ages and were deciding what ingredients are required to make one that is efficient and credible).

What is required to make a good Middle Ages? First of all, a great peace that is breaking down, a great international power that has unified the world in language, customs, ideologies, religions, art, and technology, and then at a certain point, thanks to its own ungovernable complexity, collapses. It collapses because the “barbarians” are pressing at its borders; these barbarians are not necessarily uncultivated, but they are bringing new customs, new views of the world. These barbarians may burst in with violence, because they want to seize a wealth that has been denied them, or they may steal into the social and cultural body of the reigning Pax, spreading new faiths and new perspectives of life.

—OH,

FUCK ALL THIS LYING!

—fuck all this lying look what in really trying to write about is writing not all this stuff about architecture trying to say something about writing about my writing in my hero though what a useless appellation my first character then im trying to say something about me through him albert an architect when whats the point in covering up covering up covering over pretending pretending i can say anything through him that is anything that I would be interested in saying

—so an almighty aposiopesis

—Im trying to say something not tell a story telling stories is telling lies and I want to tell the truth about me about my experience about my truth about my truth to reality about sitting here writing looking out across Claremont Square trying to say something about the writing and nothing being an answer to the loneliness to the lack of loving

—look then I'm

—again for what is writing if not truth my truthtelling truth to experience to my experience and if I start falsifying in telling stories then I move away from the truth of my truth which is not good oh certainly not good by any manner of

—so it's nothing

—look, I'm trying to tell you something of what I feel about being a poet in a world where only poets care anything real about poetry, through the objective correlative of an architect who has to earn his living as a teacher. This device you cannot have failed to see creaking, illfitting at many places,

many places, for architects man quós can earn livings very nearly connected with their art, and no poet has ever lived by his poetry, and architecture has a functional aspect quite lacking in poetry, and, simply, architecture is just not poetry.

**I build my time In gathering fruits
And throwing out all that is bad
And old
And rotten.**

- Above and beyond this participation, the poet had, perhaps for the first time, the opportunity to be an important, if not in fact a leading, member of this new team—a team whose creative efforts were all in some respect or other concerned with verbal communication. Concrete poetry saw itself for this reason as the aesthetic chapter in the development of a universal language. Concrete poetry afforded a comprehensive intellectual playing field in which, as was indicated earlier, the poet functioned as rule maker and umpire. By the concept of a universal language we did not mean a new version of Volapuk or Esperanto, nor merely the selection of some existing language (despite how well English serves this purpose practically speaking anyway) ; rather we meant a conscious approach to the visual and acoustical potential for communication in language—an approach which would draw from all existing languages and yield a new language easily comprehensible in its signs and syntax. The resultant new language would be nourished from the most diverse sides, not the least of which could be that of dialects—an early source to which concrete poets turned both instinctively and consciously. Concrete poetry saw itself as the core of such a universally understood language in that it sought to construct its models from the objectified elements of many different languages.

But in order to assume his place in the teamwork described here, the poet had not only to risk changing his traditional attitudes, but to shed his entire former role as aesthete on the edge of society and become a direct participant in that society. He must neither be a tragic figure who cannot understand the world—indeed, our challenge to him is that he try to understand the world with all his might—nor can he assume the role of the jealous, compulsive, destructive genius. And there are many

other roles he must abandon, roles which no longer have any part in the enlightened, elemental, constructive world of the rational creative builders. He who ought to participate in the very core of the restructuring, ought also to be able to hold his own when measured against the leading creative geniuses like Le Corbusier, Mies van der Rohe, Gropius, Max Bill, and others.

THE CRYPTOGRAMS in Pry's little garden of fungi had 'taken' well. The spores had germinated and sent out their ramifications of spawn under the surface of the jelly; fruiting bodies had been thrust up; and there were visible circular patches of mould, some red, some grey, some orange and some white. At a casual glance, and to an unsympathetic eye—such as Mary's—this garden of Pry's had no very great aesthetic appeal: just so many dishes of mouldy jelly.

It was not until Pry examined the tufts of mould with a strong lens or under the microscope, and picked out individual threads from the mass, that the beauty of detail was revealed. The tufts were made up of multitudes of fine filaments which branched and were hung with spores like queer fruit on glassy, leafless trees; or there were mace-like sporing heads; or flails delicate as poised beads. Between the various species were great differences and also confusing similarities; there was much for the eye to see and for the mind to dwell upon. These pretty parasites were of negative economic value: mycologists studied them in order to destroy them. Pry was not going to do that; one of the consequences of having bought himself out of Industry for two years was that he was free to do things, and to regard things, for their own sake. It was very important that he should take that freedom, or he would have achieved nothing.

But to cultivate his fungi successfully it was necessary to maintain them at the right temperature and to provide them with the right nutriment and moisture: to set them in the environments best suited to their habits of life. Each tiny fungus was, like himself, a living organism in an environment. Organism and environment had to be considered together.

The same thing applied to his novel, in the virtual isolation of the House, out on the marshes, the conditions for incubation of the novel were, on the whole, satisfactory. But writing the novel was only half the total enterprise: the other half was getting it published; and the real environment of the novel, even in process of writing, was his imagination of the readers with whom he was communicating. To write for himself was not art for art's sake, it was narcissistic and sterile. The freedom that Pry had won for himself was not freedom to jump off the earth, but to do things of his own choosing, within the limitations of a pre-existent environment.

Every sentence he wrote was referred to his readers, a ghostly company in his mind. When at this or that passage they seemed to yawn, he drew his pen through it, when they seemed to exclaim at a gentle prod, or to chuckle, or to be listening thoughtfully, he took courage and went on. They were sinful people, on the whole, Pry's readers, they hid behind defensive pretensions of all sorts, and in their lives they had to endure an appalling amount of monotony and boredom. Hardly anybody escaped the monotony and boredom, and the efforts of the human animal to get out of it provided some of the most conspicuous mass-phenomena of the time - from revolution-politics to petty speculation on second-hand sport. The world was a paradise for purveyors of anti-boredom goods and services.

The exhibition of 'Mass-Art', then on at the Hurlingham Galleries, would, Pry felt, enlighten him a little further about his environment. He knew practically nothing about 'Culture', and it said in the prospectus that Mass-Art was not only a new social dynamic but a last desperate effort, on the part of the seriously minded intelligentsia, to preserve Culture on earth. The sort of thing a novelist could scarcely afford to miss.

No. 207, before which Pry stopped first, was an enlarged photograph, ten feet by six, of some two thousand workmen going to

work at a motor-car factory on a wet Monday morning. The next, a painting in oils—the distraught colouring of which revealed the torment in the artist's soul—showed twenty-five workmen standing in a line at a communal urinal in Pradvak. And the next was a neo-pastel, in the Japanese style, of migrating swallows. Pry paused in turn before a realistic painting of a green swarm of locusts in Liverpool Street Station; an 'object' being a real wasp's nest with a Swastika painted on it; and a 'montage' of two hundred and fifty pearl buttons falling into a tin. At floor level, all round the main gallery, was a strip cartoon of boots, workers' boots, of heavy tread, marching in dull and endless monotony.

Every now and then a tall woman in shrouds, her face a painted death-mask, went slowly round the gallery with five dachshunds on a leash. And the central exhibit listed as sculpture (reinforced concrete) was an enormous head-with-megaphone, petrified in the act of pouring forth tram tickets, which, with the help of some gauze, were arrested in multitudinous spiral flight to the roof.

Pry sat down after a while and watched the people. There were smooth, well-dressed young men, not yet weaned from public schools, talking very earnestly with bearded young men in proletarian lounge suits, jerseys and plus-fours. There were about an equal number of young women, less solemn than the young men, but of the same well-fed social caste. Then there were a number of women of indefinite age, with carefully built-up complexions, who wore the latest things from Oxford Street shop windows—hard-slimmed women, with a sort of instructed brightness of expression. In these last Pry took a particular interest, surreptitiously sketching them on his programme. From amongst them he picked out a few more acquaintances for Agatha Boom. Not forgetting Mrs. Vogue, who had no children because of the political situation, and was thus just able to live within the Hampstead postal district; and Miss Peahen, who wore homespuns, went in for crafts and had a little shop where she sold penwipers and perfectly sweet red goblins to sit a-fishing beside concrete ponds in gardens.

By the table reserved for members of the committee, Pry caught sight of Geoffrey Warp. The thin sideboards, the cravat and the double-breasted waistcoat were unmistakable. He was listening with a non-committal expression to one of the smooth young men, who, Pry felt, was undoubtedly trying to interest him in some very undergraduate poems. Geoffrey Warp shook off the young man after a while, and his place was promptly taken by an intense-looking young woman. Pry kept his eye on Geoffrey Warp as he went round the rest of the exhibition and noticed that he seemed to be holding a sort of court.

'Who is the distinguished gentleman by the table he asked the red-haired young man at the bookstall in a respectful whisper.

'Why, that's Geoffrey Warp, the publisher,' said the young man. 'Ah!' said Pry.

There was nobody else at the exhibition Pry knew, and a publisher was, after all, a publisher; but the idea of joining in the courting of Geoffrey Warp, and with the same *arrière pensée* as all the rest, was distasteful to Pry.

Geoffrey saw him, after a while; came up to him when he was in the 'mobile' room, gently blowing on a Frenchified contrivance of polished steel wire, making the suspended parts of it swing to get the mobile effect. Geoffrey didn't know he was interested in art, and asked him what he was doing there.

'Looking for a publisher,' said Pry.

AN ATTEMPT TO EVOLVE

3

(natural selection)

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS ON THE ART OF PROPHECY

THE HUMAN RACE has been playing at children's games from the beginning, and will probably do it till the end, which is a nuisance for the few people who grow up. And one of the games to which it is most attached is called, "Keep to-morrow dark," and which is also named "Cheat the Prophet." The players listen very carefully and respectfully to all that the clever men have to say about what is to happen in the next generation. The players then wait until all the clever men are dead, and bury them nicely. They then go and do something else. That is all. For a race of simple tastes, however, it is great fun.

For human beings, being children, have the childish wilfulness and the childish secrecy. And they never have from the beginning of the world done what the wise men have seen to be inevitable. Individually, men may present a more or less rational appearance, eating, sleeping, and scheming. But humanity as a whole is changeful, mystical, fickle, delightful. Men are men, but Man is a woman.

But in the beginning of the century the game of "Cheat the Prophet" was made far more difficult than it had ever been before. The reason was, that there were so many prophets and so many prophecies, that it was difficult to elude all their ingenuities. When a man did something free and frantic and entirely his own, a horrible thought struck him afterwards; it might have been predicted. Whenever a duke climbed a lamp-post, when a dean got drunk, he could not be really happy, he could not be certain that he was not fulfilling some prophecy. In the beginning of the century you could not see the ground for clever men. They were so common that a stupid man was quite exceptional, and when they found him, they followed him in crowds down the street and treasured him up and gave him some high post in the State. And all these clever men were at work giving accounts of what would happen in the next age, all quite clear, all quite keen-sighted and ruthless, and all quite different. And it seemed that the good old game of hoodwinking your ancestors could not really be managed this time, because the ancestors neglected meat and sleep and practical politics, so that they might meditate day and night on what their descendants would be likely to do.

But the way the prophets of the century went to work was this. They took something or other that was certainly going on in their time, and then said that it would go on more and more until something extraordinary happened. And very often they added that in some odd place that extraordinary thing had happened, and that it showed the signs of the times.

Thus, for instance, there were Mr. H. G. Wells and others, who thought that science would take charge of the future; and just as the motor-car was quicker than the coach, so some lovely thing would be quicker than the motorcar; and so on for ever. And there arose from their ashes Dr. Quilp, who said that a man could be sent on his machine so fast round the world that he could keep up a long chatty conversation in some old-world village by saying a word of a sentence each time he came round.

Then there was the opposite school. There was Mr. Edward Carpenter, who thought we should in a very short time return to Nature, and live simply and slowly as the animals do. And Edward Carpenter was followed by James Pickie, D.D., who said that men were immensely improved by grazing, or taking their food slowly and continuously, alter the manner of cows. And he said that he had, with the most encouraging results, turned city men out on all fours in a field covered with veal cutlets. Then Tolstoy and the Humanitarians said that the world was growing more merciful, and therefore no one would ever desire to kill. And Mr. Mick not only became a vegetarian, but at length declared vegetarianism doomed ("shedding," as he called it finely, "the green blood of the silent animals"), and predicted that men in a better age would live on nothing but salt.

And on the other hand, some people were predicting that the lines of kinship would become narrower and sterner. There was Mr. Cecil Rhodes, who thought that the one thing of the future was the British Empire, and that there would be a gulf between those who were of the Empire and those who were not, between the Chinaman in Hong-Kong and the Chinaman outside, between the Spaniard on the Rock of Gibraltar and the Spaniard off it, similar to the gulf between man and the lower animals. And in the same way his impetuous friend, Dr. Zoppi ("the Paul of Anglo-Saxonism"), carried it yet further, and held that, as a result of this view, cannibalism should be held to mean eating a member of the Empire, not eating one of the subject peoples, who should, he said, be killed without needless pain. It was said that he had attempted the experiment, and, living in London, had to subsist entirely on Italian organ-grinders. And his end was terrible, for just when he had begun, Sir Paul Swiller read his great paper at the Royal Society, proving that the savages were not only quite right in eating their enemies, but right on moral and hygienic grounds, since it was true that the qualities of the enemy, when eaten, passed into the eater. The notion that the nature of an Italian organ-man was irrevocably growing and burgeoning inside him was almost more than the kindly old professor could bear.

There was Mr. Benjamin Kidd, who said that the growing note of our race would be the care for and knowledge of the future. His idea was developed more powerfully by William Borker, who wrote that passage which every school-boy knows by heart, about men in future ages weeping by the graves of their

descendants, and tourists being shown over the scene of the historic battle which was to take place some centuries afterwards.

There was Mr. Sidney Webb, also, who said that the future would see a continuously increasing order and neatness in the life of the people, and his poor friend Fipps, who went mad and ran about the country with an axe, hacking branches off the trees whenever there were not the same number on both sides.

All these clever men were prophesying with every variety of ingenuity what would happen soon, and they all did it in the same way, by taking something they saw 'going strong,' as the saying is, and carrying it as far as ever their imagination could stretch. This, they said, was the true and simple way of anticipating the future. "Just as," said Dr. Pellkins, in a fine passage, "...just as when we see a pig in a litter larger than the other pigs, we know that by an unalterable law of the Inscrutable it will some day be larger than an elephant, just as we know, when we see weeds and dandelions growing more and more thickly in a garden, that they must, in spite of all our efforts, grow taller than the chimney-pots and swallow the house from sight, so we know and reverently acknowledge, that when any power in human politics has shown for any period of time any considerable activity, it will go on until it reaches to the sky."

And it did certainly appear that the prophets had put the people (engaged in the old game of Cheat the Prophet) in a quite unprecedented difficulty. It seemed really hard to do anything without fulfilling some of their prophecies.

But there was, nevertheless, in the eyes of labourers in the streets, of peasants in the fields, of sailors and children, and especially women, a strange look that kept the wise men in a perfect fever of doubt. They could not fathom the motionless mirth in their eyes. They still had something up their sleeve; they were still playing the game of Cheat the Prophet.

Then the wise men grew like wild things, and swayed hither and thither, crying, "What can it be? What can it be? What will London be like a century hence? Is there anything we have not thought of? Houses upside down...more hygienic, perhaps? Men walking on hands...make feet flexible, don't you know? Moon... motor-cars... no heads..." And so they swayed and wondered until they died and were buried nicely.

Then the people went and did what they liked. Let me no longer conceal the painful truth. The people had cheated the prophets of the twentieth century. When the curtain goes up on this story, eighty years after the present date, London is almost exactly like what it is now.

Very few words are needed to explain why London, a hundred years hence, will be very like it is now, or rather, since I must slip into a prophetic past, why London, when my story opens, was very like it was in those enviable days when I was still alive.

The reason can be stated in one sentence. The people had absolutely lost faith in revolutions. All revolutions are doctrinal...such as the French one, or the one that introduced Christianity. For it stands to common sense that you cannot upset all existing things, customs, and compromises, unless you believe in something outside them, something positive and divine. Now, England, during this century, lost all belief in this. It believed in a thing called Evolution. And it said, "All theoretic changes have ended in blood and ennui. If we change, we must change slowly and safely, as the animals do. Nature's revolutions are the only successful ones. There has been no conservative reaction in favour of tails."

And some things did change. Things that were not much thought of dropped out of sight. Things that had not often happened did not happen at all. Thus, for instance, the actual physical force ruling the country, the soldiers and police, grew smaller and smaller, and at last vanished almost to a point. The people combined could have swept the few policemen away in ten minutes: they did not, because they did not believe it would do them the least good. They had lost faith in revolutions.

Democracy was dead; for no one minded the governing class governing. England was now practically a despotism, but not an hereditary one. Some one in the official class was made King. No one cared how; no one cared who. He was merely an universal secretary.

In this manner it happened that everything in London was very quiet. That vague and somewhat depressed reliance upon things happening as they have always happened, which is with all Londoners a mood, had become an assumed condition. There was really no reason for any man doing anything but the thing he had done the day before.

Will Holder, Tuesday 10th January, 2006

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This booklet was published on the event of **Bold Italic**, Gent, May 9th, 2006, where Will Holder presented part 4 of **AN ATTEMPT TO EVOLVE**.

This booklet is a transcript of parts 2 & 3 of same ongoing lecture **AN ATTEMPT TO EVOLVE**, which began at **Bold Italic** of the previous year. Part 1 stated, in 99 ways, how the root of healthy design lies in adaptation and a correct choice of words. (A transcript can be found in the publication **Dutch Resource** (Werkplaats Typografie), Valiz, page 241.)

Parts 2 and 3 were an exploration into the oral transition of information: a consideration of the material and non-material characteristics of books as sociable tools, and how images can be created, given a chance. They were composed specifically for two presentations entitled **The Tomorrow Book**, at the Jan van Eyck Academy, Maastricht. Both parts were read aloud from the original books, without amplification.

The title of this lecture, is taken from **A Craft too Small**, by Frances Stark, on the work of Bas Jan Ader: **AN ATTEMPT TO EVOLVE** as a suggested subtitle to his work **In Search of the Miraculous**.

Will Holder still believes that a lot has been said already, and if we all keep trying to repeat and improve ourselves in a new ways, some of the nicest things might get lost in the resulting pile. If anyone wishes to get in touch about this matter, please write to Will Holder, goodwill@xs4all.nl

Bold Italic is a seminar relating to graphic design organised by Michaël Bussaer, Sint-Lucas Visual Arts, Ghent (department of the Institute for Higher Education in the Sciences)