Poetry

CRITICISM

VOLUME

164

ISSN: 1052-4851

Poetry Criticism

Excerpts from Criticism of the Works of the Most Significant and Widely Studied Poets of World Literature

Volume 164

Lawrence J. Trudeau
Editor

GALE
CENGAGE Learning

Farmington Hills, Mich • San Francisco • New York • Waterville, Maine
Meriden, Conn • Mason, Ohio • Chicago

GALE
CENGAGE Learning®

Poetry Criticism, Vol. 164

Layman Poupard Publishing, LLC

Editorial Directors: Richard Layman, Dennis Poupard

Editorial Production Manager: Janet Hill

Permissions Manager: Kourtnay King

Quality Assurance Manager: Katherine Macedon

Production Technology Manager: Natalie Fulkerson

Content Conversion, Data Coding, Composition: Apex CoVantage, LLC

Advisors to LPP:
Ward W. Briggs
Robert C. Evans
James Hardin
Joel Myerson
Andrew S. Rabin

Volume Advisors:
Christopher Garland, University of Southern Mississippi (for "James K. Baxter")
Michael Bradshaw, Edge Hill University (for "Thomas Lovell Beddoes")
Anne Day Dewey, Saint Louis University, Madrid Campus (for "Denise Levertov")

Gale
27500 Drake Rd.
Farmington Hills, MI, 48331-3535

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS CATALOG CARD NUMBER 81-640179

ISBN-13: 978-1-56995-633-5

ISSN: 1052-4851

Printed in Mexico
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 19 18 17 16 15

Guide to Gale Literary Criticism Series

For criticism on	Consult these Gale series
Authors now living or who died after December 31, 1999	*CONTEMPORARY LITERARY CRITICISM (CLC)*
Authors who died between 1900 and 1999	*TWENTIETH-CENTURY LITERARY CRITICISM (TCLC)*
Authors who died between 1800 and 1899	*NINETEENTH-CENTURY LITERATURE CRITICISM (NCLC)*
Authors who died between 1400 and 1799	*LITERATURE CRITICISM FROM 1400 TO 1800 (LC)* *SHAKESPEAREAN CRITICISM (SC)*
Authors who died before 1400	*CLASSICAL AND MEDIEVAL LITERATURE CRITICISM (CMLC)*
Authors of books for children and young adults	*CHILDREN'S LITERATURE REVIEW (CLR)*
Dramatists	*DRAMA CRITICISM (DC)*
Poets	*POETRY CRITICISM (PC)*
Short story writers	*SHORT STORY CRITICISM (SSC)*
Literary topics and movements	*HARLEM RENAISSANCE: A GALE CRITICAL COMPANION (HR)* *THE BEAT GENERATION: A GALE CRITICAL COMPANION (BG)* *FEMINISM IN LITERATURE: A GALE CRITICAL COMPANION (FL)* *GOTHIC LITERATURE: A GALE CRITICAL COMPANION (GL)*
Asian American writers of the last two hundred years	*ASIAN AMERICAN LITERATURE (AAL)*
Black writers of the past two hundred years	*BLACK LITERATURE CRITICISM (BLC)* *BLACK LITERATURE CRITICISM SUPPLEMENT (BLCS)* *BLACK LITERATURE CRITICISM: CLASSIC AND EMERGING AUTHORS SINCE 1950 (BLC-2)*
Hispanic writers of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries	*HISPANIC LITERATURE CRITICISM (HLC)* *HISPANIC LITERATURE CRITICISM SUPPLEMENT (HLCS)*
Native North American writers and orators of the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries	*NATIVE NORTH AMERICAN LITERATURE (NNAL)*
Major authors from the Renaissance to the present	*WORLD LITERATURE CRITICISM, 1500 TO THE PRESENT (WLC)* *WORLD LITERATURE CRITICISM SUPPLEMENT (WLCS)*

Preface

Poetry Criticism (*PC*) presents significant criticism of the world's greatest poets and provides supplementary biographical and bibliographical material to guide the interested reader to a greater understanding of the genre and its creators. This series was developed in response to suggestions from librarians serving high school, college, and public library patrons, who had noted a considerable number of requests for critical material on poems and poets. Although major poets and literary movements are covered in such Gale Literary Criticism series as *Contemporary Literary Criticism* (*CLC*), *Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism* (*TCLC*), *Nineteenth-Century Literature Criticism* (*NCLC*), *Literature Criticism from 1400 to 1800* (*LC*), and *Classical and Medieval Literature Criticism* (*CMLC*), librarians perceived the need for a series devoted solely to poets and poetry.

Scope of the Series

PC is designed to serve as an introduction to major poets of all eras and nationalities. Since these authors have inspired a great deal of relevant critical material, *PC* is necessarily selective, and the editors have chosen the most important published criticism to aid readers and students in their research.

Approximately three to six authors, works, or topics are included in each volume. An author's first entry in the series generally presents a historical survey of the critical response to the author's work; subsequent entries will focus upon contemporary criticism about the author or criticism of an important poem, group of poems, or book. The length of an entry is intended to reflect the amount of critical attention the author has received from critics writing in English and from critics who do not write in English whose criticism has been translated. Every attempt has been made to identify and include the most significant essays on each author's work. In order to provide these important critical pieces, the editors sometimes reprint essays that have appeared elsewhere in Gale's Literary Criticism Series. Such duplication, however, never exceeds twenty percent of a *PC* volume.

Organization of the Book

Each *PC* entry consists of the following elements:

- The **Author Heading** cites the name under which the author most commonly wrote, followed by birth and death dates. If the author wrote consistently under a pseudonym, the pseudonym will be listed in the author heading and the author's actual name given in parentheses on the first line of the biographical and critical introduction. Also located here are any name variations under which an author wrote, including transliterated forms for authors whose native languages use nonroman alphabets. Uncertain birth or death dates are indicated by question marks. Single-work entries are preceded by a heading that consists of the most common form of the title in English translation (if applicable) and the author's name (if applicable).

- The **Introduction** contains background information that introduces the reader to the author and the critical debates surrounding his or her work.

- The list of **Principal Works** is ordered chronologically by date of first publication and lists the most important works by the author. The first section comprises poetry collections, book-length poems, and theoretical works by the author about poetry. The second section gives information on other major works by the author. In the case of authors who do not write in English, an English translation of the title is provided as an aid to the reader; the translation is either a published translated title or a free translation provided by the compiler of the entry. In the case of such authors whose works have been translated into English, the **Principal English Translations** focuses primarily on twentieth-century translations, selecting those works most commonly considered the best by critics.

- Reprinted **Criticism** is arranged chronologically in each entry to provide a useful perspective on changes in critical evaluation over time. All individual titles of poems, poetry collections, and theoretical works about poetry by the

author featured in the entry are printed in boldface type. The critic's name and the date of composition or publication of the critical work are given at the beginning of each piece of criticism. Unsigned criticism is preceded by the title of the source in which it appeared. Footnotes are reprinted at the end of each essay or excerpt. In the case of excerpted criticism, only those footnotes that pertain to the excerpted texts are included.

- A complete **Bibliographical Citation** of the original essay or book precedes each piece of criticism. Citations conform to recommendations set forth in the Modern Language Association of America's *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers,* 7th ed. (2009).
- Critical essays are prefaced by brief **Annotations** describing each piece.
- An annotated bibliography of **Further Reading** appears at the end of each entry and suggests resources for additional study. In some cases, significant essays for which the editors could not obtain reprint rights are included here. Boxed material following the further reading list provides references to other biographical and critical sources on the author in series published by Gale.

Cumulative Indexes

A **Cumulative Author Index** lists all of the authors that appear in a wide variety of reference sources published by Gale, including *PC.* A complete list of these sources is found facing the first page of the Author Index. The index also includes birth and death dates and cross references between pseudonyms and actual names.

A **Cumulative Topic Index** lists the literary themes and topics treated in *PC* as well as in *Classical and Medieval Literature Criticism, Literature Criticism from 1400 to 1800, Nineteenth-Century Literature Criticism, Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism, Contemporary Literary Criticism, Drama Criticism, Short Story Criticism,* and *Children's Literature Review.*

A **Cumulative Nationality Index** lists all authors featured in *PC* by nationality, followed by the number of the *PC* volume in which their entry appears.

An alphabetical **Title Index** lists all individual poems, book-length poems, collection titles, and theoretical works about poetry contained in each volume of *PC.* Titles of poetry collections and separately published poems are printed in italics, while titles of individual poems are printed in roman type with quotation marks. Each title is followed by the author's last name and corresponding volume and page numbers where commentary on the work is located. English translations of titles published in other languages and variations of titles are cross-referenced to the title under which a work was originally published so that all references to discussion of a work are combined in one listing. All titles reviewed in *PC* and in the other Literary Criticism Series can be found online in the *Gale Literary Index.*

Citing *Poetry Criticism*

When citing criticism reprinted in the Literary Criticism Series, students should provide complete bibliographic information so that the cited essay can be located in the original print or electronic source. Students who quote directly from reprinted criticism may use any accepted bibliographic format, such as Modern Language Association (MLA) style or University of Chicago Press style. Both the MLA and the University of Chicago formats are acceptable and recognized as being the current standards for citations. It is important, however, to choose one format for all citations; do not mix the two formats within a list of citations.

The examples below follow recommendations for preparing a works cited list set forth in the Modern Language Association of America's *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers,* 7th ed. (New York: MLA, 2009); the first example pertains to material drawn from periodicals, the second to material reprinted from books:

Linkin, Harriet Kramer. "The Language of Speakers in *Songs of Innocence and of Experience.*" *Romanticism Past and Present* 10.2 (1986): 5-24. Rpt. in *Poetry Criticism.* Ed. Michelle Lee. Vol. 63. Detroit: Gale, 2005. 79-88. Print.

Glen, Heather. "Blake's Criticism of Moral Thinking in *Songs of Innocence and of Experience.*" *Interpreting Blake.* Ed. Michael Phillips. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1978. 32-69. Rpt. in *Poetry Criticism.* Ed. Michelle Lee. Vol. 63. Detroit: Gale, 2005. 34-51. Print.

The examples below follow recommendations for preparing a bibliography set forth in *The Chicago Manual of Style,* 16th ed. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2010); the first example pertains to material drawn from periodicals, the second to material reprinted from books:

Linkin, Harriet Kramer. "The Language of Speakers in *Songs of Innocence and of Experience.*" *Romanticism Past and Present* 10, no. 2 (summer 1986): 5-24. Rpt. in *Poetry Criticism.* Edited by Michelle Lee. Vol. 63. Detroit: Gale, 2005. 79-88. Print.

Glen, Heather. "Blake's Criticism of Moral Thinking in *Songs of Innocence and of Experience.*" In *Interpreting Blake,* edited by Michael Phillips. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978. 32-69. Rpt. in *Poetry Criticism.* Edited by Michelle Lee. Vol. 63. Detroit: Gale, 2005. 34-51. Print.

Suggestions Are Welcome

Readers who wish to suggest new features, topics, or authors to appear in future volumes, or who have other suggestions or comments, are cordially invited to call, write, or fax the Product Manager:

Product Manager, Literary Criticism Series
Gale
Cengage Learning
27500 Drake Road
Farmington Hills, MI 48331-3535
1-800-347-4253 (GALE)
Fax: 248-699-8884

Acknowledgments

The editors wish to thank the copyright holders of the criticism included in this volume and the permissions managers of many book and magazine publishing companies for assisting us in securing reproduction rights. Following is a list of copyright holders who have granted us permission to reproduce material in this volume of *PC*. Every effort has been made to trace copyright, but if omissions have been made, please let us know.

COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL IN *PC*, VOLUME 164, WAS REPRODUCED FROM THE FOLLOWING PERIODICALS:

American Journal of Philology, v. 4.4, 1883. Public domain.—***Biography,*** v. 27.4, 2004. Copyright © 2004 Biographical Research Center. Reproduced by permission of University of Hawai'i Press.—***Bucknell Review,*** v. 45.2, 2002. Copyright © 2002 Associated University Presses. Reproduced by permission of the publisher.—***Christianity and Literature,*** v. 45.2, 1996. Copyright © 1996 *Christianity and Literature.* Reproduced by permission of the publisher.—***Feminist Studies,*** v. 3.1-2, 1975 for "The Critique of Consciousness and Myth in Levertov, Rich, and Rukeyser" by Rachel Blau DuPlessis. Copyright © 1975 Rachel Blau DuPlessis. Reproduced by permission of the author.—***Journal of New Zealand Literature,*** v. 13, 1995. Copyright © 1995 University of Waikato. All reproduced by permission of the publisher.—***Landfall,*** v. 28.3, 1974; v. 37.3, 1983; v. 38.4, 1984. Copyright © 1974, 1983, 1984 University of Otago Press. All reproduced by permission of the publisher.—***Literature and Theology,*** v. 25.1, 2011. Copyright © 2011 Sarah Law. Reproduced by permission of Oxford University Press.—***New Quarterly,*** v. 1, 1907. Public domain.—***Nineteenth-Century Literature,*** v. 52.4, 1998. Copyright © 1998 the Regents of the University of California. Reproduced by permission of University of California Press.—***Northwest Review,*** v. 44.1, 2006 for "The Hasid and the Kabbalist: Denise Levertov, Robert Duncan" by John Felstiner. Copyright © 2006 John Felstiner. Reproduced by permission of the author.—***PMLA: Publications of the Modern Language Association of America,*** v. 119.1, 2004. Copyright © 2004 Modern Language Association of America. Reproduced by permission of the copyright holder, the Modern Language Association of America.—***Poetica,*** v. 38.1-2, 2006 for "Thomas Lovell Beddoes and the German Sciences of Life" by Ute Berns. Copyright © 2006 Ute Berns. Reproduced by permission of the author.—***Religion and Literature,*** v. 32.1, 2000. Copyright © 2000 *Religion and Literature,* University of Notre Dame. Reproduced by permission of the publisher.—***Romanticism on the Net,*** v. 19, 2000 for "Representing Some Late Romantic Era, Non-canonical Male Poets: Thomas Hood, Winthrop Mackworth Praed, Thomas Lovell Beddoes" by Susan J. Wolfson. Copyright © 2000 Susan J. Wolfson. Reproduced by permission of the author.—***University Magazine,*** November 1879. Public domain.

COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL IN *PC*, VOLUME 164, WAS REPRODUCED FROM THE FOLLOWING BOOKS:

Alcock, Peter. From ***Awakened Conscience: Studies in Commonwealth Literature.*** Ed. C. D. Narasimhaiah. Sterling, 1978. Copyright © 1978 Sterling Publishers Private, Ltd. Reproduced by permission of the publisher.—Allard, James Robert. From ***Romanticism, Medicine, and the Poet's Body.*** Ashgate, 2007. Copyright © 2007 James Robert Allard. Reproduced by permission of Ashgate Publishing.—Bloom, Harold. From ***The Visionary Company: A Reading of English Romantic Poetry.*** Doubleday, 1961. Public domain.—Bradshaw, Michael. For "Introductory" and "Last Things" in ***Resurrection Songs: The Poetry of Thomas Lovell Beddoes.*** Ashgate, 2001. Copyright © 2001 Michael Bradshaw. Reproduced by permission of the author.—Davidson, John. From ***Refashioning Myth: Poetic Transformations and Metamorphoses.*** Ed. Jessica L. Wilkinson, Eric Parisot, and David McInnis. Cambridge Scholars, 2011. Copyright © 2011 Jessica L. Wilkinson, Eric Parisot, and David McInnis, and contributors. Reproduced by permission of Cambridge Scholars Publishing.—Gelpi, Albert. From ***Robert Duncan and Denise Levertov: The Poetry of Politics, the Politics of Poetry.*** Ed. Gelpi and Robert J. Bertholf. Stanford University Press, 2006. Copyright © 2006 the Board of Trustees of the Leland Stanford Junior University. Reproduced by permission of Stanford University Press, www.sup.org.—Lacey, Paul A. From ***Robert Duncan and Denise Levertov: The Poetry of Politics, the Politics of Poetry.*** Ed. Albert Gelpi and Robert J. Bertholf. Stanford University Press, 2006. Copyright © 2006 the Board of Trustees of the Leland Stanford Junior University. Reproduced by permission of Stanford University Press, www.sup.org.—Marten, Harry. From ***Understanding Denise Levertov.*** University of South Carolina Press, 1988. Copyright © 1988 University of South Carolina. Reproduced by permission of University of South Carolina Press.—Moylan, Christopher. From ***The Ashgate Research Companion to Thomas Lovell Beddoes.*** Ed. Ute Berns and Michael Bradshaw. Ashgate, 2007. Copyright © 2007 Ute Berns and Michael Bradshaw. Reproduced by permission of Ashgate Publishing.—Newton, John. From

Advisory Board

The members of the Advisory Board—reference librarians from public and academic library systems—represent a cross-section of our customer base and offer a variety of informed perspectives on both the presentation and content of our literature products. Advisory board members assess and define such quality issues as the relevance, currency, and usefulness of the author coverage, critical content, and literary topics included in our series; evaluate the layout, presentation, and general quality of our printed volumes; provide feedback on the criteria used for selecting authors and topics covered in our series; provide suggestions for potential enhancements to our series; identify any gaps in our coverage of authors or literary topics, recommending authors or topics for inclusion; analyze the appropriateness of our content and presentation for various user audiences, such as high school students, undergraduates, graduate students, librarians, and educators; and offer feedback on any proposed changes/enhancements to our series. We wish to thank the following advisors for their advice throughout the year.

Barbara M. Bibel
Librarian
Oakland Public Library
Oakland, California

Dr. Toby Burrows
Principal Librarian
The Scholars' Centre
University of Western Australia Library
Nedlands, Western Australia

Celia C. Daniel
Associate Reference Librarian
Howard University Libraries
Washington, D.C.

David M. Durant
Reference Librarian
Joyner Library
East Carolina University
Greenville, North Carolina

Nancy T. Guidry
Librarian
Bakersfield Community College
Bakersfield, California

Heather Martin
Arts & Humanities Librarian
University of Alabama at Birmingham, Sterne Library
Birmingham, Alabama

Susan Mikula
Librarian
Indiana Free Library
Indiana, Pennsylvania

Thomas Nixon
Humanities Reference Librarian
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Davis Library
Chapel Hill, North Carolina

Mark Schumacher
Jackson Library
University of North Carolina at Greensboro
Greensboro, North Carolina

Gwen Scott-Miller
Assistant Director
Sno-Isle Regional Library System
Marysville, Washington

Contents

James K. Baxter
1926-1972

(Full name James Keir Baxter) New Zealand poet, playwright, critic, and essayist.

INTRODUCTION

James K. Baxter is best known for poems that use mythology to explore the relationship of the individual to the whole, particularly in terms of the collective unconscious. This Jungian concept, explored in such volumes as *Beyond the Palisade* (1944), *Blow, Wind of Fruitfulness* (1948), and *Pig Island Letters* (1966), is often fused with the motif of a spiritual quest, Christian in character and influenced by the belief in a fallen humanity that requires redemption. During his lifetime, Baxter was popular as much for his eccentric behavior as for his poetry. Late in his career, he established a commune comprising both Maori participants and pakeha, the Maori term for New Zealanders of European descent. The poems that resulted from this experience, included in *Jerusalem Sonnets* (1970) and *Autumn Testament* (1972), demonstrate Baxter's burgeoning interest in the social ills of New Zealand, as well as the trauma of the country's colonial history and its impact on Maori culture of the 1960s.

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Baxter was born on 29 June 1926 in Brighton, Otago, New Zealand, and received his primary schooling there, in nearby Dunedin (a city that celebrates its links with Scottish culture), in Wanganui, and in the Cotswold Hills, England. His childhood interest in poetry, expressed as early as age seven, continued through high school and especially at the University of Otago, where he encountered the psychological theory of Carl Jung that became central to his writing. He dropped out of the university after a year and published his first book at the age of eighteen. *Beyond the Palisade* offers Baxter's initial articulation of his ideas about the unconscious and his attempt to make sense of a seemingly chaotic world. His relocation to Christchurch in 1947 proved to be crucial in two respects: he met two influential poet-mentors there, the printer Denis Glover and the literary critic Allen Curnow, both of whom later withdrew their support; and he continued his study of psychology, working with the Jungian psychoanalyst Grete Christeller. In 1948, Baxter married Jacqueline Sturm and published his second collection of poetry, *Blow, Wind of Fruitfulness,* which includes his often-discussed mythological poem, "The Cave." After moving to Wellington, he attended Victoria University College, earning a BA in 1952. He continued to write poetry while working at a variety of jobs, including mail carrier and teacher. His third collection of poetry, *The Fallen House,* was published in 1953.

Baxter's interest in Roman Catholicism, already developed in his poetic exploration of the unconscious and the quest for spiritual rebirth, led him to convert in 1958, and he became an important spokesperson for the Catholic Church in New Zealand. He was awarded a Robert Burns Fellowship at the University of Otago for 1966 and 1967. Scottish culture was an important influence on Baxter. Like several other prominent New Zealanders, he was of Scottish descent, and that lineage influenced his cultural self-identity.

During this period, he produced *Pig Island Letters,* which, while examining psychological themes, is more politically engaged than his previous works. Baxter's political activism ultimately inspired his decision in 1968 to leave his family in Wellington and form a commune known as Jerusalem on the Whanganui River. He drew a contingent of refugees and disaffected youth who came to see him as a spiritual mentor. Adopting the name "Hemi," the Maori transliteration of James, he grew his own food and continued to write poetry, including *Jerusalem Sonnets,* which appeared in 1970. After the commune was disbanded in 1971 because of sanitation concerns and pressure from the owners of the property, Baxter returned to his family in Wellington. *Autumn Testament,* his last volume of poems and prose, was published in 1972. The poet died of a heart attack in October of that year. He was given a *tangi,* a full Maori burial, an honor that is unusual for a pakeha.

MAJOR POETIC WORKS

Many of Baxter's poems focus on themes of loss and redemption, employing a variety of mythological motifs to examine the temptations that must be overcome to achieve spiritual knowledge. In several early poems, a wilderness motif is associated with adolescent feelings of separation, rebelliousness, and defiance of convention—feelings assuaged by the promise of a journey that might bring enlightenment. *Beyond the Palisade* argues that materialism has become a barrier between humans and the spiritual world, preventing the individual's ability to return to the larger tribe of humanity. "The Cave," from *Blow, Wind of Fruitfulness,* also conveys a distinct sense of this fallen world, or failed existence, which can be rejuvenated only

through poetry and myth. After the descent to the "cave," the speaker of the poem, though yearning to stay, "turned and climbed back to the barrier, / Pressed through and came to dazzling daylight out."

Although critics have noted that the mythological mode of Baxter's poetry implies his Christian belief in redemption and rebirth, many of his poems include characters who fail. Moral corruption and materialism frequently appear in the guise of a female, often a femme fatale, of monstrous appearance. The Greek goddess Aphrodite is one such figure. Because she was born from the severed genitals of the sky god Uranus, she is simultaneously associated with sex and death. Poems that reference the goddess include "Tunnel Beach" and "Crossing Cook Strait," from *In Fires of No Return* (1958), and "Rhadamanthus," from *The Bone Chanter* (1976); in these poems she is evoked as a representation of unattainable love, the pursuit of which leads to either death or disappointment. Despite some more positive associations of the sex drive with elemental forces, as in "Spring" from *The Lion Skin* (1967), many of the poems treating sex reinforce its intimate connection with corruption, as in "Summer 1967," from *Runes* (1973): "Summer brings out the girls in their green dresses / Whom the foolish might compare to daffodils, / Not seeing how a dead grandmother in each one governs her limbs."

Elsewhere, Baxter critiques materialism and the tendency of modern New Zealanders to retreat to suburban comforts. In "Poem in the Matukituki Valley," published in *The Fallen House,* the landscape dominates the people who inhabit it. Ultimately, however, the curiosity of a world outside the domestic space is quashed by the wish for peace and security, "the gentle / Dark of the human daydream." "The Beach House," included in *Pig Island Letters,* expresses this wish to remain in the domestic sphere while threatening winds blow outside. Noting that the quest motif runs through much of Baxter's poetry, Rob Jackaman (1983) observed that the poems' speakers fail even to begin their spiritual journey. The bleak message, reflecting the focus in *Pig Island Letters* on themes of loss and failed redemption, is that death also lurks in the living, breathing body. These later poems embody Baxter's disappointment in the society he inherited at birth—a sentiment implied in the title of the collection, which is a derogatory term for New Zealand's North Island.

The hippie tribalism of Jerusalem seemed to compensate for the disconnection Baxter had expressed throughout his life; according to John Newton (2012), he found his lost "tribe" there. The discovery, dramatized in *Jerusalem Sonnets* and *Autumn Testament,* displays Baxter's change in focus from a universal, mythological concern to a more distinctly political and historical one. Instead of using his poems as a means to deal with his personal moral struggles, as in the earlier volumes, Baxter now turned his attention to the Maori, who, like other indigenous groups around the world, suffered as a result of colonization and dispossession. This growing political focus is apparent in the late poem "Sestina of the Makutu," which describes "towns built over this / Black bog of a people's anger." In sympathy with the indigenous population, Baxter articulates an anticolonial rage to pakeha who remained ignorant or indifferent.

CRITICAL RECEPTION

An issue that has attracted scholars is the relationship between Christianity and society in Baxter's poetry and the question of whether the poet managed to connect the spiritual quest with the social realities of New Zealand. The subject was broached in a 1971 interview with J. E. Weir in which Baxter admitted to a "subconscious arrogance" in his youthful claim that poets should be prophets. Despite this ostensible weakness, Peter Alcock (1978) asserted that Baxter had always demonstrated a social conscience in his poetry, citing as an example "The Returned Soldier," which evinces the poet's concern for "colonial alienations and structures." His early work reveals many "roads," Alcock added, that led Baxter to the Jerusalem poems. Nevertheless, most critics have identified the years from 1968 to 1971 as the most intensely political period of Baxter's writing career, when, in the words of Russell Phillips (1995), he "sees the identity of Christ in Maori prophets. He realises Maori prophets' value in confronting the institutional Church with the truth of their culture and being." In particular, Baxter began to see the church as an instrument of social activism. In Newton's view, Baxter compelled his generation, including contemporaries such as Curnow, to see the Maori as people rather than as exotic elements of the otherwise European landscape. More than at any other time in his career, Newton added, Baxter attempted in his later years to "subordinate his writing to the needs of his community and to that greater social vision of which the commune was the most concrete expression."

A lingering critical debate is Baxter's ambiguous attitude toward sexuality and, specifically, his depiction of monstrous women. Vincent O'Sullivan (1973; see Further Reading) identified this conundrum as theological and philosophical in nature, remarking on the frequency with which sex generally ends in despair in Baxter's poems. Associated with the Christian notion of moral corruption, O'Sullivan explained, this view of sex indicates the dominant Manichaean strain in Baxter's poetry—dualistic thinking that insists on contrasts such as dark and light and, especially, the physical body and the soul. In tackling this question of sexuality, Kai Jensen (1995) lamented the tendency for critics to read Baxter's biography into his poetry, observing the ways in which anecdotes about the poet's youthful liaisons with women distracted attention from his Jungian interest in mythology. Although Jensen acknowledged the recurring figure of the monstrous female

in Baxter's poetry, he rejected the Freudian reading that this association between sex and death necessarily reflects on the sexual proclivities or purported misogyny of the author. Noting Jensen's insistence that the Jungian reading should trump biographical concerns, John Davidson (2011) maintained that this "one-stop-shop approach to any writer is likely to be simplistic." Considering that Baxter "responds to the female factor, so often with disappointment and disillusionment," Davidson argued that "his own personal experiences and relationships with a range of women simply cannot be overlooked."

Adam Lawrence

PRINCIPAL WORKS

Poetry

Beyond the Palisade: Poems. Christchurch: Caxton, 1944.

**Blow, Wind of Fruitfulness.* Christchurch: Caxton, 1948.

†*The Fallen House: Poems.* Christchurch: Caxton, 1953.

The Iron Breadboard: Studies in New Zealand Writing. Wellington: Mermaid, 1957.

‡*In Fires of No Return: Poems.* Wellington: Oxford UP, 1958.

Howrah Bridge and Other Poems. Wellington: Oxford UP, 1961.

§*Pig Island Letters.* Wellington: Oxford UP, 1966.

#*The Lion Skin.* Dunedin: U of Otago, 1967.

The Rock Woman: Selected Poems. Wellington: Oxford UP, 1969.

Jerusalem Sonnets: Poems for Colin Durning. Dunedin: U of Otago, 1970.

The Junkies and the Fuzz. Wellington: Wai-te-ata, 1970.

Letter to Peter Olds. Dunedin: Caveman, 1972.

Ode to Auckland and Other Poems. Dunedin: Caveman, 1972.

‖*Runes.* Wellington: Oxford UP, 1973.

The Labyrinth: Some Uncollected Poems, 1944-72. Comp. J. E. Weir. Wellington: Oxford UP, 1974.

The Tree House and Other Poems for Children. Wellington: Price Milburn, 1974.

***The Bone Chanter: Unpublished Poems, 1945-72.* Comp. Weir. Wellington: Oxford UP, 1976.

The Holy Life and Death of Concrete Grady: Various Uncollected and Unpublished Poems. Comp. Weir. Wellington: Oxford UP, 1976.

††*Collected Poems.* Ed. Weir. Wellington: Oxford UP, 1979.

The Essential Baxter. Comp. Weir. Auckland: Oxford UP, 1993.

Cold Spring: Baxter's Unpublished Early Collection. Ed. Paul Millar. Auckland: Oxford UP, 1996.

New Selected Poems. Ed. Millar. Auckland: Oxford UP, 2001.

Collected Poems of James K. Baxter. Ed. Weir. South Melbourne: Oxford UP, 2004.

James K. Baxter: Poems. Comp. Sam Hunt. Auckland: Auckland UP, 2009.

Poems to a Glass Woman. Ed. Weir. Wellington: Victoria UP, 2012.

Other Major Works

Recent Trends in New Zealand Poetry. Christchurch: Caxton, 1951. (Criticism)

The Fire and the Anvil: Notes on Modern Poetry. Wellington: New Zealand UP, 1955. (Criticism)

Jack Winter's Dream. NZBS. 26 Sept. 1958. *Landfall* 10.3 (1956): 180-94. Wellington: Price Milburn, 1979. (Radio play)

Two Plays: The Wide Open Cage and Jack Winter's Dream. Hastings: Capricorn, 1959. (Play and radio play)

Three Women and the Sea. Victoria University Memorial Theatre, Wellington. Nov. 1961. (Play)

The Spots of the Leopard. Downstage, Wellington. May 1967. (Play)

The Band Rotunda. Globe Theatre, Dunedin. 15 July 1967. *Landfall* 22.1 (1968): 27-55. (Play)

The Sore-Footed Man. Globe Theatre, Dunedin. 4 Sept. 1967. (Play)

The Devil and Mr. Mulcahy. Globe Theatre, Dunedin. 25 Nov. 1967. (Play)

Aspects of Poetry in New Zealand. Christchurch: Caxton, 1967. (Criticism)

The Bureaucrat. Globe Theatre, Dunedin. 1967. (Play)

The Man on the Horse. Dunedin: U of Otago P, 1967. (Lectures)

Mr. O'Dwyer's Dancing Party. Globe Theatre, Dunedin. 14 Nov. 1968. (Play)

The Starlight in Your Eyes. Otago University, Dunedin. 1968. (Play)

The Day Flanagan Died. Globe Theatre, Dunedin. Mar. 1969. (Play)

The Flowering Cross. Dunedin: New Zealand Tablet, 1969. (Prose)

The Temptations of Oedipus. Globe Theatre, Dunedin. 3 Apr. 1970. (Play)

The Sore-Footed Man; The Temptations of Oedipus. Auckland: Heinemann Educ., 1970. (Plays)

The Devil and Mr. Mulcahy; The Band Rotunda. Auckland: Heinemann Educ., 1971. (Plays)

Jerusalem Daybook. Wellington: Price Milburn, 1971. (Poetry and prose)

Autumn Testament. Wellington: Price Milburn, 1972. (Poetry and prose)

Collected Plays. Auckland: Oxford UP, 1982. (Plays)

Horse. Auckland: Oxford UP, 1985. (Novel)

Spark to a Waiting Fuse: James K. Baxter's Correspondence with Noel Ginn, 1942-1946. Ed. Millar. Wellington: Victoria UP, 2001. (Letters)

*Includes "The Cave" and "The Returned Soldier."

†Includes "Poem in the Matukituki Valley."

‡Includes "Tunnel Beach" and "Crossing Cook Strait."

§Includes "The Beach House."

#Includes "Spring."

||Includes "Summer 1967."

**Includes "Rhadamanthus" and "Sestina of the Makutu."

††Includes "Song to the Lord God on a Spring Morning."

CRITICISM

James K. Baxter and J. E. Weir (interview date 1971)

SOURCE: Baxter, James K. "An Interview with James K. Baxter." Interview by J. E. Weir. *Landfall* 28.3 (1974): 241-50. Print.

[*In the following interview, conducted in 1971, Weir questions Baxter about his understanding of poetry's psychological and spiritual significance, including the poet's goal of expressing religious views without resorting to propaganda.*]

[*Weir*]: *Why do you write poetry?*

[Baxter]: Well, that's a question people often ask and the answer would have to be pretty subconscious. You'd know, you write poems yourself, you see ... Perhaps a solitary adolescence. You talk to an imaginary companion—that would be the psychological cause: to fill that solitude with another voice—two people, yourself and yourself as poet. There was an Irishman who said his writing was a conversation between the older man and the younger man inside himself. Artists populate their solitude. That's one answer. But why? Really it would differ from time to time and one wouldn't be sure of the reasons.

Now in **Recent Trends in New Zealand Poetry** *you wrote 'I don't advocate that we should all put on sackcloth and ashes but I think it reasonable and necessary that poetry should contain moral truth, and that every poet should be a prophet according to his lights.' You wrote that twenty years ago. Has your position changed in any way?*

In some ways. I think there was a touch of subconscious arrogance in my attitude at that time—again quite natural—a certain crudity. One can't inject a moral message into a poem, and a prophet is not a prophet because he chooses to be but because God makes him one. I mean was Jeremiah a poet or was he a prophet? Well, primarily prophet, I think. You see he didn't say 'Well, I'll write a poem.' A poem is a freer, more personal thing, perhaps. It's not a message to the world at large. Not quite.

You would agree then with Fairburn when he said 'The man who sets out with a message is quite likely to be a maniac of some kind'?

Yes, he's quite likely to be. He may, of course, have a message to give, but this is not so common. Again it's this matter of bringing light to the Gentiles: that in actual fact the Gentiles may be the source of one's light—one's friends, the people one meets. I've said in the Church often 'Go out and learn from the atheists and agnostics. Don't assume necessarily that you have some great thing to carry to them.' What might be brought would be just intellectual furniture: the authenticity would come from parts of one's own experience revealed. I think. ... well, poetry is often experience revealed. Yes.

Is the poet in any way committed to save society?

I think everyone is committed to save themselves and society together. I mean to keep spiritual life in themselves and in society as *person* whether they're poet or not. But the poet is a man who holds up a mirror to what is happening. It's the truthfulness of his mirror which is valuable—the moral element in the poem is in its truthfulness. Many people misunderstand this and think that one can just give a message, but the poem, I think, is a mirror. That's the way it is.

Now art and propaganda are usually at cross-purposes. I think that you yourself have indicated that propaganda will work only if it is unconscious.

I think any propaganda is probably illicit in art because then the art is instrumental: it's not just honest communication, to put it at its minimum. Now a Communist . . . you see the Marxist poets write bad poems because they're propaganda. They're wanting to prove something . . . But one has to say (and the same with the Christian poets when they are saying 'Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ' or start writing odes to St. Joseph or something) there's no point in this, because one is in just the same position as the man who says 'I know nothing, I know nothing.' I did say once 'A Christian poet is in the same position as an agnostic one when he is writing.' He is still dealing with an unknown life, unknown experience, trying to get it onto the page—a very subconscious process. He can't put a public stamp on what he says.

Now then, when you use varieties of myth in your poems are you not going against your stated position of reflecting the world as it is*?*

Well, when you are dealing with the world you tend to see it as Chaos. Here is a scientist and he looks at the Chaos of the world, the multiple Chaos as it appears to the human mind—perhaps to the eye of God it is not Chaos at all, but to us it looks like Chaos—and he looks through his scientific lens and through that discipline he gives it an intellectual order. The poet does the same, I think, and the two—the scientific formula or the poem—are really equivalent. The poem is not more subjective: it's just a different style. I think that's the way it goes. And the myth is the form that the poet uses to crystallise experience.

In **Pig Island Letters** *you said, 'The poem is a plank / Laid over the lion's den.'*

Yes! One has to be pretty close to the fire, I think, pretty close to this position of Chaos. The nearer you are to it and can survive the better. One critic of my verse, a sympathetic critic, said that I was like a man who worked very close to the bull, a bullfighter. You almost get grazed by the horns. Perhaps you do. Perhaps the blood is helpful that goes into the poem. But this is just as *man*: one is not doing this as propagandist or anything like that.

Would that, perhaps, not make the poetry too personal?

Yes. There has to be some distance. The 'I' of the poem is not the autobiographical 'I' it is a dramatic 'I.' The poem is a dramatic device which one uses. People mistake the capital 'I' of the poem (either the poet or the reader) for the personal 'I'—the 'I' that says 'I think it's a fine day . . .' or 'I love you . . . ,' or something like that. No, that doesn't make a poem: it's a dramatic 'I.' You see, I said once in a poem . . . I introduced the atheist self inside me and this became part of the poem. . . . Someone said, 'You're not an atheist, Jim.' I'd say 'But for the sake of the poem I am.' That layer of myself has to be represented dramatically. I think that's right.

Does this not lead to contradictions within the same poem—to two voices speaking?

It mightn't be—it might be ten voices. That one with Mother Mary Joseph Aubert. Well, she would represent part of my own mind—perhaps the rather housewife figure of the Church speaking—very much a pakeha figure, of course. But I'm speaking on behalf of something else—the Maori pa, perhaps, or the rather multiple world of experience. Of course there are contradictions—that is the drama. Men just live in contradictions: that's the nature of man.

You announce yourself as a Catholic poet.

Yes.

What effect does this have on your verse?

Well, a man is a Catholic because he believes. He is a poet because he has a particular gift and function and also way of approaching things. If he says 'I am going to tell the world they should be Catholics,' this would be absurd. But if he says 'I am a Catholic poet. . . .' I think the practice of one's religion has a very subtle effect on the way one thinks. I think that Catholic art—Christian art I'd rather say—at its best is wounded art. There is blood in it; you know, the wounds of the person are present in it. It's close to the Crucifixion. It's not Apollonian: it's more Dionysiac.

Do you regard this as bringing you closer to the world as it is—this view of the poem as a mirror of reality?

Well, I did. I sometimes call myself an ex-poet. It's a joke in a way. At times I write poems, but perhaps I don't give them a top priority. At a certain point for one's own personal benefit one may have to smash the mirror. I remember when I was coming off the grog—it was in third-stage alcoholism—and I was writing some very, very good poems, I knew, which were of a negative, death-seeking kind (there were one or two that were really good, **'Lament for Barney Flanagan'** [**'Lament for Barney Flanagan, Licensee of the Hesperus Hotel'**], I think, is one of them) . . . but I realised that if I came off the grog and made a change in my life-style then my poetic mirrors would be shattered. And it did happen. For three or four years I was writing bad verse. I couldn't write good verse because I was recovering, because I was reforming my life. But I think the life morally has to have priority over the work. Old Yeats said, you know 'Perfection of the life, or of the work, / And if it take the second must refuse / A heavenly mansion, raging in the dark.' Well, alright, he was joking, I think. These things are never quite as severe or opposite as that.

In his review of **Pig Island Letters** *Charles Brasch claimed that you wrote 'phrases, not poems' and regretted the diffusion of your poetic powers. How do you regard the role of aestheticism in art?*

Well, Brasch himself would be an Apollonian poet, you see, and **'Pig Island Letters,'** that actual sequence, is more

Dionysiac—the blood-from-the-wound type of thing. There is a certain breakdown of form that occurs, but there is an advantage in spontaneity, I think, and in authenticity. I wanted that: just someone speaking authentically. There are other poems in that same volume though which are quite formal in their construction—the **'Henley Pub'** poem, for example, has a highly formal construction, like, as I've said, a straight-jacket to contain the experiences of the manic-depressive, or something like that. Again a joke, one has to joke all the time. I think that when you get near to this chaotic centre it's best expressed in jokes often, and the poems may be jokes—quite serious jokes.

Does this mean that you find a place for aestheticism in your late poems?

Well, aestheticism ... *aesthetics* is necessary: to have a form, a way of approaching things. One needs the form. When one begins to idolise the form or the artistic experience ... this is where the danger comes in, a sort of idolatry. I don't like that. It can happen so readily in our culture. Whereas actually the experiences of a poet or of another man are just the same: it's just that the poet articulates them. That's the difference.

*The poems that you once wrote in the grand manner—**'Wild Bees,' 'Rocket Show,' 'The Fallen House,'** for example—how do you regard them now?*

With regret and envy of another self who could make those formal structures so well. I think I did make them well, you see. I couldn't do it now—my life-style has changed. Perhaps some of my brain-cells have gone that were there then. It's possible. But I'd make use of the ones I've got. You get cunning: you learn to use the gaps in experience and develop new styles to cope with a different situation. Nevertheless, these very formal poems are rather circular: they're closed in on themselves in a way, the perfect round, this kind of thing. I prefer one that is like a house with all its doors open. Anything could happen, you know.

Do you consider that the freedom of your late poems (for example I'm thinking of **Pig Island Letters** *and* **Jerusalem Sonnets***) reflects your life-style?*

It does up to a point. ***Pig Island Letters***—I thought 'That book will break the critics' teeth.' I felt happy about it. The critics had sometimes annoyed me. It was not my reason for writing the poems, but it was a subsidiary thought. I thought, 'Well, I'll throw it into the jaws of that dog ...' and then he clamps his jaws on it and he finds he gets broken teeth, because it's made of rock, you understand me. It had some solidity. But the 'Jerusalem' poems are different. They are more uneven. I'm not concerned with their quality, only with saying something. And some of them, I think, are good; and some of them are not good. This doesn't worry me.

Is there not, then, a necessary conflict between moralism and art?

I think there is. But a moralist often has fear. Now the thing is, as Maritain said, 'The prudence of the bourgeoisie and the prudence of the artist are different.' They both have their prudence. But they're always in conflict. And the moralist tends to be exercising the prudence of the bourgeoisie. He may say 'We don't want our kids to read this ...' or something like that—that's a crude moralist, I know. Or he may demand a message. And the poet says 'To hell with your message and your children; I am writing to communicate truthfully, and truth can be terrible. That is *his* morality. Truth can be terrible, but I'll speak truthfully. It is necessary that some voices should simply say what they think they know.

This is the role of the poet as prophet?

Yes. Truth perhaps is prophetic in the sense that it will reveal relationships between man and man and possibly between man and God, you see. It will do this. But—I think this is the point—the prophet will not be troubled whether his poem is good or not; but the poet will be troubled whether his poem's good or not. And one can't make a poem prophetic. Rimbaud's *Season in Hell* happens to be a prophetic work, but I don't think he designed it as such, it was very subconscious. It was rather the place it occupied in French culture and literature. It was not recognised at the time as being valuable.

You seek, then, a form of truth through your art?

Always, yes, I think truth has been predominant. I've sometimes said, you know, men are truth-people, women are love-people. We have to learn from one another. But some men are love-people, some women are truth-people. Perhaps that's why there are more heavy, strong male artists—because they are truth-people. But ... I'm not discriminating against women or anything: I'm just saying that's possible.

Now it has been predicted for us that the truth will set us free. ...

Mmmm.

... but the truth will also scandalize. Are people sometimes scandalized by what you regard as truth?

Yes, that's right. When Gautama Buddha Sakyamuni went out and took his robe from the bodies of the dead—the yellow robe—and said 'The ego is a hole in the ground; it is a gap.' People would be scandalized, wouldn't they? And when he held up a flower for half an hour and said nothing people would be scandalized, wouldn't they? You see? But this was truth. Truth is hard to put a name to, isn't it? And they want a name, and they want a fixed position because they want their own fixed identity which does not exist. I think that before God a man is a hole in the ground. Yeah.