

THE LAND OF COKAYGNE

A study of the Middle English poem and
the traditions to which it is related.

by

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ABSTRACT

The Land of Cokaygne may be interpreted as a burlesque of the paradise legend of the saints' abode in the Eden of the blessed. Or it may be taken as a poor folk's utopia, expressing the desire of the common people for a life of abundance and ease.

The essay is therefore divided into two parts. The first concerns the poem as burlesque. What beliefs and conventions are being parodied and what can be learned of the satirist? To answer the first question I offer as a frame of reference a resumé of conventional paradise motifs as illustrated in certain paradise legends which were widely known in medieval England. To answer the second question I find analogies to the poem in Greek and Celtic literature and discover the sceptical and satirical spirit in which they were written. The Celtic analogue invites comparison of the Cokaygne poet with the wandering scholar of the Middle Ages. It is possible that the Cokaygne poet with his sceptical spirit and delight in the sensual pleasures was a goliardic clerk.

Turning to the poem itself, I set forth those passages of the poem which burlesque the conventional paradise motifs--the list of negative joys, the rivers, the abode of holy men, the garden, well and tree, the catalogue of precious stones and, finally, the barrier. The poet's method is to improvise freely, introducing foreign elements into a familiar series and thus making an exalted theme ludicrous. The Cokaygne motifs--the

cloister roofed with cakes, the roast goose, the well-seasoned larks--are used in this way. But the poem may be taken out of its Middle English context and given a larger literary relationship. Structurally, it may be classed as a satiric utopia, for in his burlesque the poet has created a topsy-turvy land as a vehicle for breaking down existing ideas about paradise and for criticizing the religious orders for their immorality.

The second part of the essay concerns the poem as a utopia. The Cokaygne fantasy has its origins in primitive agrarian rites and its themes are abundance without toil, general license and inversion of status. The acting out by the folk of these themes in the medieval folk festivals may be taken as a projection of the world as they would like it to be. Around the Cokaygne fantasy the utopia of the folk takes shape.

The poet uses the roast goose motif to burlesque the saints' paradise. But he also uses it as a symbol of the good life without fear of want. His poem takes up the Cokaygne theme of abundance without toil, and communicates as well a sense of the injustice suffered by the poor. Two hundred years later, Thomas More also speaks for the poor and oppressed in his Utopia, and it is his conviction of social injustice which gives emotional force to the theme he shares with the Cokaygne poet of abundance without toil. Other utopians have in some way given expression to this theme, but only William Morris in News from Nowhere has captured that sense of freedom and of delight in the abundant earth which pervades the Middle English poem. The utopian element

in the poem may also be measured by contrasting it with the anti-utopia. Swift, Huxley and Orwell create wonderlands in the spirit of anti-Cokaygne. They mistrust the idea of abundance without toil and take a gloomy view of the perfectibility of man. They have never been inspired by the vision of the wonderful tree, symbolic of utopian dreams, or else they have rejected it out of concern for our minds and spirits.

The burlesque utopia of the Cokaygne poet lives on in North American folk literature of the twentieth century. It is best known in that well-loved Cokaygne song, The Big Rock Candy Mountains.

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The Land of Cokaygne

Fur in see, bi west spayngne,
 is a lond ihote cokaygne.
 þer nis lond vnder heuen-riche,
 of wel, of godnis, hit iliche; 4
 þo₃ peradis be miri and bri₃t,
 cokaygn is of fairir si₃t.
 what is þer in peradis
 bot grasse, and flure, and grene ris? 8
 þo₃ þer be ioi and gret dute,
 þer nis met bote frute;
 þer nis halle, bure, no benche;
 bot watir, man-is þurst to quenche. 12
 beþ þer no men bot two,
 hely and enok al-so;
 elinglich mai hi go
 whar þer woniþ men no mo. 16

In cokaigne is met and drink
 wiþ-vte care, how, and swink.
 þe met is trie, þe drink is clere,
 to none, runnin, and sopper. 20
 i sigge for-sop, boute were,
 þer nis lond on erþe is pere,
 vnder heuen nis lond, i-wisse,
 of so mochil ioi and blisse. 24

Þer is mani swete si₃te:
 al is dai, nis þer no ni₃te;
 þer nis baret noþer strif;
 nis þer no deþ, ac euer lif; 28
 þer nis lac of met no cloþ;
 þer nis man no womman wroþ.
 þer nis serpent, wolf, no fox,
 hors no capil, kowe no ox, 32
 þer nis schepe, no swine, no gote;
 no non horw₃, al god it wote,
 noþer harace, noþer stode.
 þe lond is ful of oþer gode. 36
 nis þer flei, fle, no lowse,
 in cloþ, in toune, bed, no house;
 þer nis dunnir, slete, no hawle;
 no non vile worme, no snawile, 40
 no non storme, rein, no winde.
 þer nis man no womman blinde.
 ok al is game, ioi, and gle.
 wel is him þat þer mai be. 44

Þer beþ riuers gret and fine,
 of oile, melk, honi, and wine;

watir seruip **per** to no-**ping**
 bot to sigt and to waiissing. 48
per is mani maner frute;
 al is solas and dedute.

Per is a wel fair abbei,
 of white monkes and of grei. 52
per bep bowris and halles;
 al of pasteis bep **pe** walles,
 of fleis, of fisse, and rich met,
pe likfullist **pat** man mai et. 56
 fluren cakes bep **pe** schingles alle,
 of cherche, cloister, boure, and halle;
pe pinnes bep fat podinges--
 rich met to prince3 and kinges. 60
 man mai **per**-of et ino3,
 al wip rigt and no3t wip wo3.
 al is commune to 3ung and old,
 to stoute and sterne, mek and bold. 64

Per is a cloister, fair and list,
 brod and lang, of sembli sigt;
pe pilers of **pat** cloister alle
 bep iturned of cristale, 68
 wip har bas and capitale
 Of grene laspe and rede corale.
 In **pe** praer is a tre,
 swipe likful forto se: 72
pe rote is gingeuir and galingale,
pe siouns bep al sedwale,
 trie maces bep **pe** flure,
pe rind canel of swet odor, 76
pe frute gilofre of gode smakke.
 of cucubes **per** nis no lakke.
per bep rosis of rede ble,
 and lilie likful forto se-- 80
pai faloweb neuer dai no nig3t;
bis a3t be a swet sigt.

Per bep iiij willis in **pe** abbei,
 of triacle and halwei, 84
 of baum and ek piement,
 euer ernend to rigt rent;
 of **pam** stremis al **pe** molde,
 stonis preciuse, and golde. 88
per is saphir and vniune,
 carbuncle and astiune,
 Smaragde, lugre, and prassiune,
 beril, onix, topasiune, 92
 ametist and crisolite,
 calcedun and epetite.

- Per beþ briddes mani and fale--
 þrostil, þruisse and niȝtingale, 96
 Chalendre and wodwale,
 and oþer briddes wiþ-out tale,
 þat stinteþ neuer bi har miȝt.
 miri to sing dai and niȝt. 100
 ȝite i do ȝow mo to witte:
 þe Gees irostid on þe spitte
 fleeȝ to þat abbai, god hit wot,
 and grediþ, "gees, al hote! al hot!" 104
 hi bringeþ garlek gret plente,
 þe best idiȝt þat man mai se.
 þe leuerokes, þat beþ cup,
 liȝtip adun to man-is muþ, 108
 idiȝt in stu, ful swiþe wel
 pudrid wiþ gilofre and canel.
 nis no spech of no drink;
 ak take inoȝ wiþ-vte swink. 112
- Whan þe monkes geeþ to masse,
 al þe fenestres þat beþ of glasse
 turneþ in-to cristal briȝt,
 to ȝiue þe monkes more liȝt. 116
 whan þe masses beþ iseiid,
 and þe bokes up ileiid,
 þe cristal turniþ in-to glasse,
 in state þat hit rapre wasse. 120
- Þe ȝung monkes euch dai
 aftir met goþ to plai;
 nis þer hauk no fule so swifte
 bettir fleing bi þe lifte, 124
 þan þe monkes heiȝ of mode
 wiþ har sleuis and har hode.
- Whan þe abbot seeþ ham flee
 þat he holt for moch glee; 128
 ak napeles al þer amang
 he biddiþ ham liȝt to euensang.
 þe monkes liȝtip noȝt adun,
 ac furre fleep in o randun. 132
- Whan þe abbot him iseep
 þat is monkes fram him fleep,
 he takeþ a maidin of þe route
 and turniþ vp har white toute, 136
 and betip þe taburs wiþ is hond
 to make is monkes liȝt to lond!

Whan is monkes þat iseeþ,
 to þe maid dun hi fleep,
 and geþ þe wench al abute
 and þakkeþ al hir white toute.
 and siþ aftir her swinke
 Wendip meklich hom to drinke,
 and geþ to har collacione
 a wel fair processione.

140

144

Anoþer abbei is þer bi,
 for-sop a gret fair nunnerie,
 vp a riuer of swet milke,
 whar is plente gret of silk.
 whan þe someris dai is hote,
 þe 3ung nunnes takip a bote
 And dop ham forþ in þat riuer,
 boþe wiþ oris and wiþ stere.
 whan hi beþ fur fram þe abbei,
 hi makip ham nakid forto plei,
 and lepiþ dune in to þe brimme
 and dop ham sleilich forto swimme.
 þe 3ung monke3 þat ham seeþ,
 hi dop ham vp and forþ hi fleep,
 and commip to þe nunnes anon.
 and euch monke him takeþ on,
 and snellich berrip forþ har prei
 to þe mochil grei abbei,
 and techip þe nunnes an oreisun
 wiþ iambleue vp and dun.

148

152

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164

Þe monke þat wol be stalun gode
 and kan set ari3t is hode,
 he schal hab, wiþ-oute danger,
 xii wiues euche 3ere,
 al þro3 ri3t and no3t þro3 grace,
 for to do him-silf solace.
 and þilk monke þat slepiþ best,
 and dop is likam al to rest,
 of him is hoppe, god hit wote,
 to be sone uadir abbot.

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176

Whose wl com þat lond to,
 ful grete penance he mot do:
 Seue 3ere in swine-is dritte
 he mote wade, wol 3e iwitte,
 al anon vp to þe chynne,
 so he schal þe lond winne.

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Lordinges gode and hend,
 mot 3e neuer of world wend, 184
 fort 3e stond to 3ure cheance
 and fulfille þat penance,
 þat 3e mote þat lond i-se;
 and neuer-more turn a-3e. 188
 prey we god so mote hit be,
 Amen, pur seint charite.

Copied from Historical Poems of the XIVth and XVth Centuries, ed. Rossell Hope Robbins (New York, 1959), pp. 121-127 (& replaced by "and"). All citations from the poem in my text are from this edition, hereafter cited as Historical Poems.

Previously edited by F. J. Furnivall, Early English Poems and Lives of the Saints (Berlin, 1862), p. 156; W. Heuser, Die Kildare Gedichte (Bonn, 1904), p. 141; Eduard Mätzner, Altenglische Sprachproben (Berlin, 1867), I, 147. Complete text also in George Ellis, ed. Specimens of the Early English Poets (London, 1811), I, 83.

INTRODUCTION

The Land of Cokaygne tells about an earthly paradise where "al is game, loi and gle." To render game as "fun," "sport," "amusement" is correct (NED), yet misses somehow the Middle English sense. The word is not used in the same way now, and we have no synonym in Modern English which expresses in one word the idea of fun and conviviality, of talk and raillery, gaiety and high spirits which in Middle English was called game. There is much game among the Canterbury pilgrims as they walk the English countryside from Southwark to Canterbury, telling tales both bawdy and moral, engaging in good-humoured banter, exchanging shafts of wit, and submitting to the offices of a Host who is alert to the interplay of personalities. And Pandarus, too, we associate with game. He bursts on the scene with a merry jape or an invitation to dance, ready in his humorously self-deprecating way to become the butt of a joke, to let others find game in his hood. This one word gives us the character of the country of Cokaygne,¹ and it also gives the poem a pervading gaiety as if the good food and wine,

¹"name of an imaginary country, the abode of luxury and idleness" (NED). The origin of the word has not been finally settled, but there is general agreement that it came into ME. from OF. coquaigne, cokaigne (mod. F. cocagne, Sp. cucaña, It. cuccagna). It may be connected with a Romanic word meaning 'cake,' or with a derivative of the Latin coquere to cook. Grimm connects it with Ger. kuchen cake (NED). Also connecting cokaygne with some word meaning 'cake' is Middle Dutch kokenje, a confection given to children on the occasion of an annual fair (Dictionnaire étymologique de la Langue française, ed. Oscar Bloch and W. von Wartburg, [Paris, 1960]).

the geniality of the abbot and the boisterous behaviour of the monks had somehow become part of the very texture of the poem.

Where else in Middle English literature can we find this gaiety, this game? In the second half of the thirteenth century² the literature of England is still predominately religious and didactic, and although some secular lyrics are lighthearted responses to love and nature, they are more than balanced by a large number of religious lyrics of simple and touching piety.³ The romance takes root in English soil at this time,⁴ but these stories of knightly adventure, even when leavened with touches of broad humour, are quite often strongly moral in tone. The saint's life, the biblical paraphrase, the homily and the exemplum are still the staples of English literature. Nor, considering the Middle English period as a whole do we find very much that is light and humorous. Langland bears the whole weight of the world's sin on his shoulders and "moral Gower" adopts the role of public mentor. We might expect to find it in Dunbar, but his nimble and spirited verse is most often darkened by the shadow of a twisted personality. Henryson is too filled with moral fervor to be gay. Of all the major figures in Middle English literature, Chaucer is the only one who has this quality which combines a

²The date of the composition of The Land of Cokaygne is 1250-1300. It exists in a single manuscript, MS. Harley 913, first quarter fourteenth century (John Edwin Wells, A Manual of the Writings in Middle English, 1050-1400 [London, 1916], p. 228).

³Albert C. Baugh, "The Middle English Period (1100-1500)," A Literary History of England, ed. Albert C. Baugh (New York, 1948), pp. 211-215.

⁴Ibid., pp. 174, 181.

sense of fun with a refined wit. In ascribing a Chaucerian quality to The Land of Cokaygne we are indeed giving our unknown poet the accolade. The gesture has the approval, however, of at least three authorities. Furnivall has characterized The Land of Cokaygne as "the airiest and cleverest piece of satire in the whole range of Early English, if not of English poetry."⁵ William Schofield is willing to say that its good-humoured, if coarse, satire anticipates Chaucer.⁶ And Laura Hibbard Loomis notes that its burlesque spirit anticipates Sir Thopas.⁷

Like most medieval writing, this poem draws heavily on tradition. The roast goose crying his wares like any street vendor and the church and cloister constructed of good things to eat belong, as we shall see, to a very ancient comic tradition. They are elements of folk song and fairy tale, of The Big Rock Candy Mountains with its soda water fountains and lakes of stew, and Hansel and Gretel with its witch's cottage of sugar and cake. In contrast to the comic fantasies of folk lore is the fabliau humour in the incident about the monks and nuns. The Land of Cokaygne is not a fabliau, although it has sometimes been called one.⁸ It lacks the story element which gives us a

⁵Cited by Robbins, ed. Historical Poems, p. 317.

⁶English Literature from the Norman Conquest to Chaucer (London, 1906), p. 325.

⁷"Sir Thopas," Sources and Analogues of Chaucer's Canterbury Tales, ed. W. F. Bryan and Germaine Dempster (New York, 1958), p. 553, note.

⁸Schofield, p. 325. Also Bernhard Ten Brink, History of English Literature, trans. Horace Kennedy (London, 1914), I, 259.

January, a Daun John or a hende Nicholas. But the bizarre and bawdy episode making a sly hit at some member of the clergy was one of the mainstays of the genre. The abbot's way of calling his monks back to their devotions and the amorous sports of the monks and nuns are materials which some jongleur could very well have worked into a fabliau.

The comic element, then, follows conventional patterns. But the wit, the esprit which distinguishes the poem, is to be found in the way in which these and other conventions have been used. Henri Bergson described wit as a dramatic way of thinking by which the wit may reply, not just to a single absent interlocutor, but to the whole world, whose habits of thought he examines critically.⁹ In The Land of Cokaygne the poet rejects the commonly accepted beliefs about paradise. On the one side are those who solemnly perpetuate the marvellous tales about the "other world." On the other side is the poet who laughingly rejects these marvels. "What is per in paradis/bot grasse, and flure, and grene ris?" he scoffs (7-9). For him the subject of paradise is a source of game and gle, and he burlesques the hoary commonplaces which the world credulously accepts.

Who was the audience who listened to the recital of this parody? (In all likelihood it circulated orally before it was recorded in manuscript). Who were the "lordinges gode and hend"? They may have been a group of convivial churchmen who, like the

⁹"Laughter," Comedy, with an introduction by Wylie Sypher (New York, 1956), p. 129.

Bishop Wolfger of Passau, would risk the disapproval of the Church and pay a jongleur for an amusing song or two,¹⁰ or perhaps members of the nobility being entertained by some wandering minstrel. They may have been peasants in a market place or burghers in a town square, or even pilgrims on their way to Canterbury, glad of a diversion which would speed a tedious journey.¹¹ Whoever they were, whether churchmen or laity, they would be familiar with a certain set of commonplaces about the earthly paradise. The Church taught the doctrine of purgatory and paradise and reinforced its teachings in sermon, homily and saint's life, all popular forms used for the religious instruction of the people.

The Land of Cokaygne, then, is a burlesque or parody which makes fun of certain traditional ideas as expressed by medieval writers. But are we to take it only in game? There is an underlying seriousness in the poem, for the Cokaygne poet leaves us with the impression that he is a man with a dream, and that dream is a paradise truly of this earth. What he gives us is the poor man's paradise which has to do, not with the perfection of the soul, but with gross animal comforts--food and drink, warmth and love. Beyond the idea of the body appetites gratified is the sense of hunger, cold and poverty experienced, and a sense, too, that such things should not be.

• The vision of the better life he takes from the very old

¹⁰ Helen Waddell, The Wandering Scholars, 6th ed. (Harmondsworth, Eng., 1954), p. 256.

¹¹ Sir Edmund K. Chambers, The Medieval Stage (Oxford, 1903), I, 55-56.

folk tradition of Cokaygne in which the people over the centuries have recreated in fantasy the peace and plenty of the golden age. The tradition is a persistent one and the motifs remarkably constant. Variations on the theme of roast goose flying to the table and houses roofed with cakes may be found in many countries and many ages. Cokaygne is the universal garden of delight made over by the folk. It is Eden without the serpent, without the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. It is the Fortunate Isles somehow transported to the village square at carnival time. This pagan paradise of the folk is expressed in comic terms, and as the subject of folk song or story is the signal for laughter. But the laughter echoes back the genuine desire of the common people for a place of peace and rest and abundance without toil. Grotesque and fantastic as it is, the country of Cokaygne is the poor man's utopia. The Cokaygne poet retains the boisterous folk humour and the utopian spirit of the folk tradition in his stanzas.

Thus The Land of Cokaygne is a poem of conflicting modes. The prevailing mode is ironic, burlesquing the wonderland, the marvelous journey to the "other world," the paradise of the saints' legends. The second is romantic, holding out the vision of desire and wish fulfillment, projecting the utopian ideal in the imagery of the garden, the miraculous streams and fountains and the wonderful tree. The dream of a paradise on earth is an easy mark for ridicule, but it will not be destroyed. And so there is a tension in the poem between the ironic and the romantic. This is what gives the poem its interesting ambiguity.

In the notes to his edition of the poem, Robbins implies the existence of this ambiguity (pp. 317-318). On the one hand he cites Furnivall, Wells and Wright, who appraise The Land of Cokaygne as a satiric work, and on the other he cites the historian A. L. Morton,¹² who stresses the utopian spirit in the poem. Evidently Robbins lends some weight to Morton's judgment, for in his collection of historical and political poems he assigns The Land of Cokaygne a special classification, "The First Utopia."

One important example of ambiguity in Middle English literature is in Chaucer--the result of the tension in his work between the chivalric and the bourgeois. The Goose in the Parliament of Fowls is the bourgeois exponent of common sense in the debate over which of the courtly birds shall win the formel eagle for his mate. Pandarus in Troilus and Criseyde guides the lovers through the prescribed rituals of the courtly love code in a manner at once officiously solemn and ironic. Chaucer himself, the teller of romantic tales, becomes one of his own characters when he burlesques traditional romances in Sir Thopas. The Cokaygne poet, too, may be seen to be one of his own characters. We shall let him play the fool, but let it be the wise fool who is at once satirist, buffoon, poet and prophet. As Chaucer's Host says, "a man may say full sooth in game and play."

In using Chaucer to explain my point I am not trying to elevate The Land of Cokaygne to the ranks of great literature. It is, after all has been said about it, a minor piece by an

¹²The English Utopia (London, 1952), ch. i.

anonymous poet and, suitably bowdlerized, will always find a place in anthologies of Middle English verse as an amusing anti-clerical satire. But even though it is a minor poem, it has unusual interest for the student of English literature. It is a poem of wit and sophistication at a time before these qualities were generally to be found in English verse. It is also a poem of genuine feeling. It opens outward in the direction of burlesque literature and satire on the one hand and of utopian literature on the other. It has its roots in folk lore and gathers into itself the materials of classical mythology and Christian belief. My purpose in this essay will be to re-assess the value of The Land of Cokaygne by analyzing it as a literary parody and as a utopia, and unfolding the traditions which lead up to and surround it. This done, we shall better be able to enjoy this gay and witty poem as one of "best sentence and moost solaas."

PART I

THE LAND OF COKAYGNE AS BURLESQUE

Chapter I

THE BACKGROUND FOR THE BURLESQUE

Parody is a sophisticated art which assumes that its audience has completely assimilated the literary tradition which is the object of ridicule. The relationship between poet and audience is an intimate one, for many things are left unsaid in the understanding that a certain fund of knowledge is shared. We do not need to have Pope preface The Rape of the Lock with an account of the epic conventions. It is assumed that readers know their Homer, Virgil and Milton and do not need to have literary jokes about a branch of healing spleenwort or fumes of burning chocolate explained.

But parody is also an ephemeral art, living in the reflected light of its subject. When that subject fades in interest and dims, so also does the satellite parody. Some six hundred years after the writing of his poem, the Cokaygne poet needs to have his literary joke explained. With his own audience he was able to establish a rapport in the first couplet:

Fur in see, bi west spayngne,
is a lond ihote cokaygne.

He expects them to call to mind at once tales of the Fortunate Isles in a western sea, and, by implication, other tales about the terrestrial paradise which lies "eastward in Eden." There were two paradises, one to the east and one to the west and each

one had gathered to itself an accretion of lore.¹ In this chapter I shall set forth some of that lore, and thus reconstruct the frame of reference for the poem so that the Cokaygne poet and his audience may once more be in rapport.

People of the Middle Ages believed in the actual existence of paradise and gave it a definite geographical location. Medieval maps locate the terrestrial paradise in some remote spot in Asia. A typical map in a thirteenth century psalter depicts the earth as an island in an ocean surrounded by the sphere of heaven. The Garden of Eden is in the east and the east is at the top of the map. From this spot flow the four rivers, the Pison, the Gehon, the Tigris and the Euphrates.²

Paradise, then, was part of the geography of the time, and men took as their authority on the subject the writings of antiquity. Even that man of the new age, Christopher Columbus, relied on the authority of established tradition. Discussing in his Narrative of the Third Voyage the possibility that America might be the site of the earthly paradise, he argued: "St. Isidore, Bede, Strabo, and the Master of Scholastic History [Peter Comestor] with St. Ambrose, and Scotus, and all the learned theologians, agree that the earthly paradise is in the

¹S. Baring-Gould, Curious Myths of the Middle Ages (London, 1906), p. 524.

²Lars-Ivar Ringbom, Paradisus Terrestris, Myt. Bild och Verlighet, Acta Societatis Scientiarum Fennicae, Nova Series C., 1, N: o 1 (Helsingfors, 1958), p. 289. English interpretation of the map, pp. 435-436.

east. . . .³ Like Columbus, men of the Middle Ages found their auctorite for the earthly paradise in "the holy and wise theologians." The early Church Fathers had looked back to that golden age before the Fall when Adam and Eve had enjoyed an unspoiled felicity in their Garden. St. Basil, St. Ambrose and St. Augustine, writing about the original condition of man, had all described the geographical location and the physical attributes of life in Eden.⁴ Later medieval scholars, relying on the authority of patristic writings, continued to speculate on the actual existence of the earthly paradise⁵ and lent their authority to the body of legend which surrounded the biblical story. One of the most popular of such legends was that concerning the voyage of St. Brendan. A St. Brendan did exist in the sixth century⁶ and may, as was common among the early Irish clerics, have made a penitential sea pilgrimage in search of hermitage. In the ninth or tenth century the story of his journey to the earthly paradise was recorded in the Latin prose Navigatio Sancti Brendani.⁷ The story was certainly known in England in the early part of the twelfth century, for a certain Benedeit

³Cited by George Boas, Essays on Primitivism and Related Ideas in the Middle Ages, in Contributions to the History of Primitivism (Baltimore, 1948), p. 173.

⁴Ibid., pp. 31-33, 42-45, 45-53.

⁵Ibid., pp. 67-86, and Howard Rollin Patch, The Other World According to Descriptions in Medieval Literature (Cambridge, Mass., 1950), ch. v.

⁶Boas, p. 158.

⁷Ibid.

dedicated his Anglo-Norman version of the story (1121) to Queen Adelaide.⁸ A Middle English version appears at the end of the thirteenth century in the Early South English Legendary.⁹ As early as 1275 St. Brendan's Island had found a place on the maps of medieval cartographers, its location changing as voyages of exploration in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries eliminated first one possible location, then another. For three centuries the legend of St. Brendan continued to be a source of wonder and interest. Not until the end of the sixteenth century did the island cease to appear on maps (the latest date we have is 1570). But even as late as the eighteenth century an expedition is known to have sailed in search of St. Brendan's Island.¹⁰

In Benedeit's version of the story,¹¹ St. Brendan, after many wanderings filled with strange adventures, sails towards the east in search of paradise. He finds his way through a dark mist and arrives at a high, white wall set with precious stones. This is the wall of paradise and it is built on a mountain with a summit of gold and a base of marble. A sharp-edged sword hangs over the gate and fiery dragons stand on guard. A fair youth, the

⁸Baugh, p. 139.

⁹Or Lives of Saints, ed. Dr. Carl Horstmann, EETS, OS, 87, (London, 1887), I, 220-240. Hereafter cited as ESEL.

¹⁰William H. Babcock, Legendary Islands of the Atlantic, A Study in Medieval Geography, in American Geographical Society Research Series, No. 8 (New York, 1922), pp. 38-48.

¹¹The Anglo-Norman Voyage of St. Brendan by Benedeit, ed. E. G. R. Waters, (Oxford, 1928), pp. 84-92.

servant of God, greets the travellers, and allows them to enter the gates past dragons and sword into paradise. Here they find a fertile land where fruit and flowers are ever in abundance, where the woods are full of deer and the streams full of fish. The rivers run milk, and honey-dew falls from the sky. Here is neither heat, nor cold, nor grief, nor pain, nor any kind of adversity. They see a choir of angels and hear them rejoice in song. The angels tell St. Brendan that he may not now stay in paradise, but that he shall one day return there. This will be after his death when he returns in spirit to await the day of judgement.

Another popular legend was that concerning St. Patrick's Purgatory. It was first recorded by a Benedictine monk, Henry of Saltrey, and the number of manuscripts of this and other versions of the tale attest to its popularity. The Latin account exists in many manuscripts dating from the twelfth to the fifteenth centuries. Jacobus de Voragine includes it in his Legenda Sanctorum and Roger of Wendover, Matthew of Paris, Ranulph Higden and other chroniclers repeat the story. It exists also in many French versions, the most notable being that of Marie de France. There are three Middle English versions and the inclusion of one of them in the Early South English Legendary made the story widely known.¹²

The legend centres around a certain cave near Lough Derg in Ireland which was said to have been revealed to St. Patrick as the entrance to purgatory. The spot was famous throughout Europe

¹²Wells, p. 334.

from the beginning of the thirteenth century and pilgrims from all parts of Europe were attracted to it. Froissart wondered about the truth of the stories told about this spot and took the opportunity to question a knight who had been there. The knight assured him that the cave did exist and that those who entered it underwent a mystical experience.¹³

The Middle English versions all tell much the same story.¹⁴ The Knight Owayn, wishing to be absolved of his sins, enters St. Patrick's Purgatory and passes through seven fields of punishment. Each time in the midst of suffering he calls on the Lord and is released from pain. He then passes over a high, narrow bridge under which the fiends of hell are howling and waiting for him to fall. Safely over the bridge he sees a high, shining wall decked with precious stones. Entering the gate he is greeted by a procession of folk, who, singing joyfully, lead him into a fair meadow filled with light and the fragrance of flowers and trees with fruit. He learns that this is the earthly paradise whence Adam was cast out for his sin. Here will the souls be welcomed of those who have done penance for their sins and here will they wait until they are ready for the bliss of heaven.

¹³Thomas Wright, St. Patrick's Purgatory: An Essay on the Legends of Purgatory, Hell and Paradise Current during the Middle Ages (New York, 1843), pp. 44-46.

¹⁴Version in ESEL, pp. 198-220.
Version in MS. Auchinleck, ed. Eugen Kölbing, in pp. 98-112 of "Zwei mittelenglische Bearbeitungen der Sage von St. Patrik's Purgatorium," Englische Studien, I (1877), 57-121.
Owayne Myles, ed. Kölbing, ibid., pp. 113-121.

Mandeville's Travels provides a third description of the earthly paradise. The author has written a traveller's guide "to teche 3ou the weye out of Englonde to Constantynoble," to the Holy Land and other places in Eastern Asia which he purports to have seen himself. He has been to Polombe in India and seen the Well of Youth which has its source in the waters of paradise. Whoever drinks three times fasting of its waters is cured of any sickness. Mandeville reports, "I haue dronken pere of .iiij or .iiij sithes, and 3it me thinketh I fare the better."¹⁵ He himself has not been to paradise, but he knows what wise men say. It lies in the Land of Prester John in Central Asia and is separated from this empire by a desert of rocks and darkness where wild beasts roam. In the emperor's domain is the Gravelly Sea, which, though it is all gravel and sand, yet ebbs and flows as other seas do. Since no man may navigate the sea, it forms an effective barrier for the paradise which lies three days' journey in the mountains beyond that sea. Paradise is the highest place in all the world, and thus remained untouched by Noah's flood. It is enclosed by a wall so covered with moss that men may not find it and the gate is closed by flames so that no mortal may pass through. The Phison (Ganges), the Gyson (Nile), the Tigris and the Euphrates have their source in a spring in paradise and thence come all the sweet waters of the world. Many men have tried to reach paradise by the swift and noisy rivers. But they have

¹⁵Mandeville's Travels, ed. P. Hamelius, EETS, OS, 153-154 (London, 1919), I, 112-113. In quotations from this work the sign ± has been replaced by "and."

perished in the attempt, for mortal man may not enter paradise except by the special grace of God.¹⁶

From these tales and travels we may summarize the characteristic paradise motifs. There is first of all a barrier. Access to paradise is variously made difficult by wild beasts in a rocky desert, a gate of flames, dragons and a sharp-edged sword, and a high, narrow bridge. There is a wall, usually high and shining and brilliant with precious stones. Within the wall, a fertile garden watered by the four rivers which have their source in a fountain or spring. And in the garden flowers bloom never-fading, trees bear abundant fruit and a fragrance fills the air. This is what it was like in the 'Garden of Eden where Adam and Eve ate of the forbidden fruit. It still exists in some remote spot, but only mortals favoured by the grace of God are vouchsafed a glimpse of it. All else must wait till after death when they have purged their sins. Then they will be welcomed into paradise to wait to be called to the bliss of heaven.

All this the Cokaygne poet and his audience could have known about the earthly paradise. But quite likely they knew also about another paradise, the Fortunate Isles in the western sea. The Greeks believed in a western land beyond the Pillars of Hercules. The west was as yet unknown, and Atlantis, the Isles of the Blest and the Gardens of the Hesperides must surely be

¹⁶Ibid., pp. 181, 201-204.

in that undiscovered country.¹⁷ The known world, according to Strabo, extended north to Germania, eastwards to Asia, and southwards to Egypt and Ethiopia.¹⁸ But what lay in the west beyond Britannia and Iberia nobody knew. The ancient tale of how Atlantis disappeared into the sea explained the shallows which were to be found beyond the Pillars of Hercules, and mariners' tales of a vast shallow area in that part of the Atlantic supported the legend. Accounts of Madeira and the Canary Islands brought back by Phoenician and Greek sailors lent support to the legend of some such delightful land as the Fortunate Isles.¹⁹ And so the west became the place where the life of the golden age had been lived and could still be lived if only that place could be found.

The Middle Ages inherited this belief that a western island, now lost, did exist; a land such as that which Virgil envisioned for a future age of gold when "the plain without a sower/shall ripen into waves of yellow corn" (Fourth Eclogue).²⁰ It is in terms such as these that Geoffrey of Monmouth in the Vita Merlini attributed to him tells of the wonderful fertility of

¹⁷"Blest, Abode of the," Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, ed. James Hastings (New York, 1928), II, 696-698.
¹⁸"Atlantis," Encyclopaedia Britannica, 11th ed., Vol. II.
¹⁹"Hesperides," ibid., Vol. XIII.

¹⁸The Geography of Strabo, trans. Horace Leonard Jones, Loeb Classical Library, I (New York, 1917), frontispiece.

¹⁹Babcock, pp. 4-5.

²⁰Trans. R. S. Conway, in Joseph Mayor, W. Warde Fowler, R. S. Conway, Virgil's Messianic Eclogue; Its Meaning, Occasion and Sources (London, 1907), p. 5.

Avalon, the island of apples:

The Isle of Fruits, which is called the Fortunate Island, has its name from its peculiar fertility. Its fields have no need of the farmer's plow; they are utterly uncared for except as Nature tends them. It brings forth grain of rare fertility and grapes and fruits ripened on its trees with spreading boughs. The soil bears everything as if it were grass, by spontaneous production. Man lives there a hundred years or more.²¹

Ireland comes to be thought of in the Middle Ages as one of these distant fortunate lands. Bede describes Ireland as a temperate and fertile land, rich in milk and honey. The grass is green all year round so that there is no need to mow hay for the winter or build stables for cattle. The country is free from snakes and poisonous insects and the leaves of a certain tree when soaked in water will cure snake bite. In the twelfth century, Giraldus Cambrensis adds to the marvelous tales about Ireland in his travel book account of an Island of the Living in Northern Munster where nobody dies. A fourteenth century account of Ireland emphasises, as does Bede's, the fertility of Ireland, the temperate climate, and the magical property of the soil, which counteracts poisons.²²

These descriptions of Ireland in terms of the marvelous may owe something to the tales in Celtic folklore of a happy "other world." The Island of the Living described by the Welsh chronicler recalls Mag Mell, the Land of the Living beneath a fairy mound.

²¹Cited by Boas, p. 169.

²²Ibid., pp. 169-171.

In The Adventures of Connla the Fair (eighth century)²³ a fairy woman summons Connla to this land where there is no death, but always youth, beauty and life. And it is, moreover, a land where only women and maidens dwell. Cormac's Adventures in the Land of Promise²⁴ repeats the theme of timelessness, not in a Celtic maidenland but in a land of wonderful fertility and abundance. A warrior comes from a land where there is neither age nor decay, sadness nor hatred. He gives Cormac a musical branch of silver with three golden apples on it, and the music of this branch has the power to banish all sorrow. Cormac finds the warrior's land guarded by a fortress hidden in a mist. Within another stronghold is a shining fountain with five streams flowing out of it, and a bathing pool heated by stones which put themselves in and out of the water. The field ploughs, harrows, sows and reaps itself and the amount of the crop never diminishes. Seven sheep and seven cows supply all the wool and milk needed for the people. This is the Land of Promise where Manannan, son of Lir, is king.

The Voyage of Bran²⁵ gathers together all these motifs and adds a Christian element. A woman from unknown lands sings to Bran of a distant isle "around which sea-horses glisten" (p. 589). Here wailing and treachery, sickness and death are unknown and there are "many thousands of variegated women" (p. 590). She

²³Ancient Irish Tales, ed. Tom Peete Cross and Clark Harris Slover (New York, 1936), pp. 488-490.

²⁴Ibid., pp. 503-507.

²⁵Ibid., pp. 588-594.

prophecies the coming of a saviour of humble birth. Bran sails in search of this land and in the course of his wanderings is met by Manannan who comes to him in a chariot over the sea. He also sings to Bran of this land where "rivers pour forth streams of honey" and "speckled salmon leap from the womb/of the white sea" (p. 592). Bran finds the island and passes many years there and the years pass as one.

A distinction was made in the Middle Ages between the earthly paradise to the east and the Fortunate Islands to the west.²⁶ But paradise literature does not classify itself neatly into one or the other category. Christian belief and pagan legend colour one another. St. Brendan sails according to the Christian tradition to the east in search of the earthly paradise, but he finds it according to the pagan Celtic tradition beyond a mist. The sword hanging above the gate recalls the flaming sword over the eastern gate of Eden "which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life" (Gen. iii.24), but the dragon which also guards the gate belongs more to folklore than to Christian story. The Voyage of Bran mingles characteristic pagan narrative elements--the fairy messenger, the sea god, the magic branch, the island of women--with the Christian ideas of greed, lust, sin and the wonderful birth.²⁷ It is not always possible to classify the paradise legends

²⁶ Patch, pp. 144-145.

²⁷ Cross and Slover, p. 588.

strictly according to one or the other tradition. The Cokaygne poet, however, would have us keep the distinction in mind. In the tales of the earthly paradise the emphasis is on spiritual joy and perfection. By contrast, the pagan western paradise stresses the felicity of the physical life in a bounteous land and the themes of everlasting youth, timelessness and the magical cure.

This, then, is the frame of reference of the poem. Now that we know what sort of place is the eastern earthly paradise and what sort of lands lie "bi west spayngne" we see what the literary joke is about. What is there indeed in paradise but grass and flowers and green boughs? We are ready to listen to the poet make game of a very old and respected Christian tradition. We are ready to meet the satirist and watch him at work.

Chapter II

THE COKAYGNE POET IN A BURLESQUE TRADITION

Who was the Cokaygne poet? The manuscript and the poem itself provide a few suggestive details. The Latin and English pieces in MS. Harley 913 (the Kildare MS.) were "composed probably in or about the Abbey of Kildare in Ireland, by emigrants from Southern or South-Western England."¹ The poem satirizes the white and grey monks (52), and Dr. Carleton Brown conjectures that the poet was a Franciscan friar attacking the Cistercians (the "white and grey monks" was an accepted designation for the Cistercians).² But these clues do not really make the poet less anonymous. His identity would be better revealed if something about his literary milieu were known. We would like to know his name; but failing an answer to this question we will ask instead, "In whose company does he belong?"

Other satirists before him had written in the same vein, employing literary parody to make fun of wonder tales and old myths and sometimes, moreover, employing the same absurd fantasies. Lucian was one of these, and before him the Greek poets of the Old Comedy. A twelfth century Celtic story teller has given us the likeness of one Aníér MacConglinne and repeated his

¹Wells, p. 228.

²Cited by Robbins, "Authors of Middle English Religious Lyrics," JEGP, XXXIX (1940), 235.

satiric verses about an Irish Cokaygne. Something of the literary character of the Cokaygne poet will emerge as we set forth analogous lines from Greek and Celtic literature and learn something of the satirists who wrote these lines. Exploring his literary relationships further we shall find that he has something in common with the skeptical and pagan spirit of the goliardic poets who took irreverent parody as their means of satirizing the abuses of the Church.

Like the Cokaygne poet, the Greek poets of the Old Comedy made fun of wonder tales. In the Athens of the fifth and fourth centuries the idyllic day-dreams of a golden age such as Hesiod had described were giving way to a vision of perfection in the future. Instead of indulging in day-dreams about the mythical utopias dependent on the bounty of the gods, men were conceiving ideal societies in which the good of all would be achieved by imaginative planning.³ The old myths about the golden race of men who lived in the time of Kronos were falling into disrepute. Kronos himself had become a figure of fun, a deity whom Aristophanes in his plays treats with contempt.⁴ Henceforth the stories about men who lived like gods and enjoyed the bounteous earth in peace would be used to embody new hopes for a better society. But they would also provide Greek playwrights with

³H. C. Baldry, Ancient Utopias (London, 1956), p. 11.

⁴Ibid.

material for comic parody.⁵

A parody of the golden age appears to have been part of the stock-in-trade of the poets of the Old Comedy. None of their plays are extant, but Athenaeus, the second century Greek writer, has recorded in The Deipnosophists fragments of the old comedies which contain burlesques of the mythical golden age.⁶ In one section of this symposium the diners discuss various aspects of slavery. In the course of the discussion one of them delivers a harangue to prove that in primitive times no use was made of slaves, and his documentation consists of passages quoted from Pherecrates, Telecleides and other poets of the Old Comedy.

In The Miners Pherecrates describes a wonderland where
 ✓ " . . . roast thrushes, dressed for a réchauffé, flew round our mouths entreating us to swallow them as we lay stretched among the myrtles and anemones."⁷ The Cokaygne poet describes an abbey where "þe leuerokes, þat beþ cup, /li₃tiþ adun to man-is muþ, /idi₃t in stu . . ." (107-109). The resemblance between the two passages is striking. Pherecrates continues in this burlesque vein, leaving no doubt that the comic fantasies of the Cokaygne poet had been used in the spirit of parody some 1800

⁵For discussions of these parodies see also Arthur Lovejoy and George Boas, Primitivism and Related Ideas in Antiquity in Contributions to the History of Primitivism (Baltimore, 1935), pp. 38-39; Patch, pp. 18-22; Erwin Rohde, Der griechische Roman und seine Vorläufer (Hildesheim, [1960]), pp. 206-209, note 4.

⁶Trans. Charles Burton Gulick, Loeb Classical Library, III (London, 1929), 203-213.

⁷Ibid., p. 209.

years before:

And the apples! The fairest of the fair to see hung over our heads, though there was nothing on which they grew. Girls in silk shawls, just reaching the flower of youth, and shorn of the hair on their bodies, drew through a funnel full cups of red wine with fine bouquet for all who wished to drink. And whenever one had eaten or drunk of these things, straightway there came forth once more twice as much again.⁸

The abbey of Cokaygne with its walls of pasties and pinnacles of "fat podinges" has an early counterpart in the ✓ Cokaygne of Pherecrates. In The Persians we read:

Rivers of black broth, gushing forth copiously of their own accord over the cross-roads with rich spice-cakes and barley-cakes of finest meal, will flow from the springs of Plutus all ready to be ladled up. And Zeus will rain smoky wine and drench your tiles like a bath-man; and from the roofs conduits of grapes, in company with cheese-cakes, stuffed with cheese, will draw off rills of hot pease-porridge and polenta made of lilies and anemones. The trees on the mountains will put forth leaves of Kids' guts, tender cuttle-fish, and boiled thrushes.⁹

A passage from The Amphictyons by Telecleides is very similar, and the repetition of these motifs indicates the existence of a burlesque formula which the playwrights employed:

Every torrent flowed with wine, barley-cakes strove with wheat loaves for men's lips, beseeching that they be swallowed if men loved the whitest. Fishes would come to the house and bake themselves, then serve themselves on the tables. A river of broth,

⁸ Ibid., pp. 209-211.

⁹ Ibid., p. 211.

whirling hot slices of meat, would flow by the couches; conduits full of piquant sauces for the meat were close at hand for the asking, so that there was plenty for moistening a mouthful and swallowing it tender. On dishes there would be honey-cakes all sprinkled with spices, and roast thrushes served up with milk-cakes were flying into the gullet. The flat-cakes jostled each other at the jaws and set up a racket, the slaves would shoot dice with slices of paunch and tid-bits. Men were fat in those days and every bit mighty giants.¹⁰

Athenaeus quotes also from The Sirens of Nicophon and The Thurio-Persians of Metagenes; from The Plutus of Cratinus and the Wild Animals of Crates. Seven playwrights he mentions in all, names obscure enough now, but well-known in their day as competitors at the festivals of Dionysus.¹¹ What are now mere esoteric fragments were in all likelihood once spoken before an appreciative holiday crowd at the annual springtime Dionysia.

Five hundred years later, Lucian burlesques in A True Story the wonders of the golden age.¹² "...Everything in my story," says Lucian, "is a more or less comical parody of one or another of the poets, historians and philosophers of old, who have written much that smacks of miracles and fables."¹³ Iambulus is one of these, and no doubt Lucian has in mind his tale of a voyage into the southern seas where he found the Islands

¹⁰Ibid., pp. 205-207.

¹¹"Comedy," Oxford Companion to Classical Literature, ed. Sir Paul Harvey (Oxford, 1959).

¹²Trans. A. M. Harmon, Loeb Classical Library, I (London, 1927), 247-357.

¹³Ibid., pp. 249-251.

of the Sun.¹⁴ As for Homer, he is the "guide and instructor in this sort of charlatanry."¹⁵ And so Lucian sets out, "once upon a time," from the Pillars of Hercules and sails in a trim little vessel into the western ocean where, as we have seen, the ancients thought Atlantis and the Isles of the Blest and all those other wonderful lands and people to be. He puts in at one of the Isles of the Blest and discovers it to be inhabited by shadows of men with shape but no substance, who, incorporeal as they are, nevertheless enjoy the combined luxuries and sensual delights of a great city and rural retreat:

The city itself is all of gold and the wall around it of emerald. It has seven gates, all of single planks of cinnamon. The foundations of the city and the ground within its walls are ivory. There are temples of all the gods, built of beryl, and in them great monolithic altars of amethyst, on which they make their great burnt-offerings. Around the city runs a river of finest myrrh, a hundred royal cubits wide and five deep, so that one can swim in it comfortably. For baths they have large houses of glass, warmed by burning cinnamon; instead of water there is hot dew in tubs. For clothing they use delicate purple spider-webs.... Moreover, they are acquainted with only one season of the year, for it is always spring there and the only wind that blows there is Zephyr. The country abounds in flowers and plants of all kinds, cultivated and otherwise. The grape-vines yield twelve vintages a year, bearing every month; the pomegranates, apples and other fruit-trees were said to bear thirteen times a year, for in one month, their Minoan, they bear twice. Instead of wheat-ears, loaves of bread all baked grow on the tops of the halms, so that they look like mushrooms. In the neighbourhood of the

¹⁴Diodorus of Sicily, trans. C. H. Oldfather, Loeb Classical Library II (London, 1953), 65-83, passim.

¹⁵Lucian I, 251.

city there are three hundred sixty-five springs of water, as many of honey, five hundred of myrrh--much smaller, however,--seven rivers of milk and eight of wine.¹⁶

The mockery of Lucian finds a later echo in the Celtic Vision of MacConglinne, a manuscript of the twelfth century or earlier.¹⁷ In this humorous prose tale we are concerned with two satirists--the twelfth century narrator who is retelling the old Celtic tale, and Aníer MacConglinne, the poet to whom the vision in the tale is ascribed. The story tells how Aníer MacConglinne, a wandering scholar, goes on a journey into Cork. He is about to be crucified for reviling the Church with some verses he has composed about the food of the abbey of Cork. But an angel of God manifests a vision to him in which he discovers how he may rid the king of the demon of gluttony which afflicts him. When he tells the monks of his vision they give him respite so that he may come before the king and work his cure. This vision is of exceptional interest, for it is an analogue to The Land of Cokaygne.

MacConglinne's vision is of a journey to a wonderland in a coracle of lard. Here are some of the verses:

The fort we reached was beautiful,
With works of custards thick,
Beyond the loch.

¹⁶ Ibid., pp. 313-317.

¹⁷ Aislinge Meic Conglinne; The Vision of MacConglinne, A Middle-Irish Wonder Tale, ed. and trans. Kuno Meyer, with an introduction by Wilhelm Wollner (London, 1892). Citations from the tale in my text are from this edition. Also printed in Cross and Slover, pp. 551-587.

New butter was the bridge in front,
 The rubble dyke was wheaten white,
 Bacon the palisade.

Behind was a wine well,
 Beer and bragget in streams,
 Each full pool to the taste.
 Malt in smooth wavy sea,
 Over a lard-spring's brink
 Flowed through the floor.

A row of fragrant apple-trees,
 An orchard in its pink-tipped bloom,
 Between it and the hill.
 A forest tall of real leeks,
 Of onions and of carrots, stood
 Behind the house.

(pp. 36, 38).

Here is the Celtic counterpart of the abbey of Cokaygne, the witch's cottage and the Big Rock Candy Mountains. As the vision continues we may hear echoes of the tales of the Finn and Ulster cycles in which the fairy messenger comes from the Land of Promise and lures a mortal to an island maidenland where he is cured of his sickness. The echoes come back to us distorted and what we hear is a burlesque of the "other world" journey.

In his vision MacConglinne meets a messenger from the Fairy Mound of Eating who brings the warning, "Beware, lest the gravy drown you." He sets sail in a little coracle of beef-fat (Cu Chulainn is transported in a coracle of bronze and Connla the Fair in one of crystal), and rows across a lake of milk and seas of broth to the "other world" where a wizard doctor cures him of his gluttony. The cure is to eat hugely of choice foods served by a beautiful maiden (pp. 66-100). The scene, comically voluptuous, recalls the wonderland of Pherecrates.

The verses just quoted suggest at once a farmland Cokaygne. In contrast to The Land of Cokaygne with its fine dainties and riches, MacConglinne's "other world" is described entirely in terms of farm produce. Butter, milk and cheese predominate, and suet, bacon, lard, tripe and flitches of boar. Wheat, oats and barley are the cereals and the vegetables such homely ones as leeks, onions, carrots and boiled kale. Wollner takes this as evidence of the primitive character of the legend and suggests that what we have in the MacConglinne vision is the sort of tale shepherds and peasants might tell of the vanished golden age of their forefathers. The English Cokaygne poem, he concludes, is essentially different, for unlike the Celtic tale it has a utopian theme, contrasting the misery of reality with the happiness of a dreamland.¹⁸ But is it not possible that the English poem represents the same legend overlaid by the appurtenances of later cultures and that the legend burlesqued in MacConglinne's vision is a very old and unique relic preserved in a way which shows the long distance the Cokaygne theme has come through the centuries?

In any case, in the Celtic tale the theme is repeated in MacConglinne's vision and is used in a satiric way to satirize royal gluttony. But who was MacConglinne? His twelfth century narrator tells us that he was a wondering scholar who decided to abandon his studies and make a poetical journey (p. 8). Before

¹⁸ "Introduction," in The Vision of MacConglinne, ed. Meyer, pp. xxxii-xxxvii.

Wakefield
St. Shepherds
Play.

he was to come before the king, he dressed himself as a gleeman or buffoon:

And as he came to the very meeting house where the hosts were gathering, he put on a short cloak and short garments: each upper garment being shorter with him, and each lower one being longer. In this wise he began juggling for the host from the floor of the royal house, (a thing not fit for an ecclesiastic) and practising satire and buffoonery and singing songs; and it has been said that there came not before his time, nor since, one more renowned in the arts of satire.

(p. 42).

MacConglinne, as characterized by the narrator, is one of those wandering scholars of the Middle Ages who makes a living by begging and singing verses and sometimes playing the household buffoon. There is also the suggestion in the story that he was a historical personage, for the narrator tells us that he was celebrated in a lay about eight famous persons of Armagh:

I heard of eight tonight
In Armagh after midnight;
I proclaim them with hosts of deeds,
Their names are no sweet symphonies.

Comgán was the name of the Two Smiths' son.
Famous was he after the hunt.
Critán was Rustang's noble son,
It was a full-fitting name.

* * * * *
Never-Refused was MacConglinne's name,
From the brink of the sweet-crested Bann.

(p. 6).

And so on. The narrator then continues:

One of these eight, then, was Aniér
MacConglinne, a famous scholar he, with
abundance of knowledge. The reason why
he was called Aniér was because he would

satirise and praise all. No wonder, indeed; for there had not come before him, and came not after him, one whose satire or praise was harder to bear, wherefore he was called Anéra [i.e. Non-refusal], for that there was no refusing him.

(p. 8).

The narrator obviously here intends a little parody of the style of the saint's life, which sometimes begins with an etymology of the subject's name. What concerns us more, however, is that the narrator thought that MacConglinne actually lived.

The name of MacConglinne appears in at least one other place in Irish literature, a poem in which he is mentioned in a list of students at Armagh:

Critan was MacRustaing's name,
Garbdaire was MacSamain's name,
Aindiairr was MacConglinne's --
Many lays he made.

Wollner, citing this passage,¹⁹ concludes that "the popular conception of MacConglinne . . . seems to have been that of a clerical student, who was also a poet,"²⁰ and that the twelfth century narrator, himself a gleeman, re-creates him in the character of the wandering scholar. The narrator is, moreover, at pains throughout the story to present him in a favourable light. Summing up his evidence for this last conjecture, Wollner concludes, "Such a glorification of the vagrant state can only be conceived of as penned in the interest of gleemen or vagrant

¹⁹ Ibid., p. xli.

²⁰ Ibid.

scholars, and as originating in their circle.²¹

There may, however, be some basis in fact in the narrator's characterization of MacConglinne, for Enid Welsford points out that among the eight famous persons of Armagh mentioned in the lay, Comgán Mac-da-Cherda is known to have been a fool and poet of the seventh century, and Critán, son of Rustaing, "seems to have been a famous jester."²² From the association of MacConglinne in the poem with these historical personages we may infer, as Miss Welsford seems to, that he was a satirical poet and buffoon and that the narrator is not far wrong in so describing him. Whatever his origins, MacConglinne exists now for us in the likeness given him by his narrator, the likeness of a man who, as the Wizard Doctor in the tale says, has "wit both to censure and to praise the hearth of a well-appointed, gentle, fine, mirthful house with a mead-hall" (p. 86).

We have been concerned thus far with MacConglinne, the wandering scholar who recites a comic vision about a land of plenty. We turn now to the narrative framework in which the vision is set and find in that framework satiric elements which are analogous to those in The Land of Cokaygne. Comparison of this twelfth century version of the story with a shorter, plainer

²¹Ibid., p. xliv.

²²The Fool; His Social and Literary History (New York, [1935]), p. 92.

one by a later author²³ reveals our narrator as an irrepressible satirist who takes monkish and royal gluttony and hagiographic writing for the special targets of his wit.²⁴

In a story which deals with a quarrel between the monks of Cork and a wandering scholar, the narrator takes every opportunity to prolong the quarrel and abuse the clergy.²⁵ He allows MacConglinne to slander the abbot Manchin to his face with a scurrilous food pedigree:

Then it was that he traced Manchin up to
Adam, according to the pedigree of food, saying:
"Bless us, O cleric, famous pillar of learning,
Son of honey-bag, son of juice, son of lard,
Son of stirabout, son of pottage, son of fair
speckled fruit-clusters,
Son of smooth clustering cream, son of butter-milk,
son of curds,
Son of beer (glory of liquors!), son of pleasant
bragget,
Son of twisted leek, son of bacon, son of butter,
Son of full-fat sausage, son of pure new milk, . . .

(p. 32).

In the shorter version MacConglinne addresses these lines to the Wizard Doctor in the vision with quite different intent (p. 152). At another point in the story when the demon of gluttony, expelled from the throat of King Cathal, sits on the roof tree of the burning house, MacConglinne taunts the monks with another jibe at monkish gluttony: 'Well, now, ye men of Munster, . . .

²³Supplied in translation by Meyer, pp. 148-155. For a comparison of the two versions and an assessment of how the twelfth century narrator has embellished the story, see Wollner, pp. xiv-xxix.

²⁴Cross and Slover, p. 551.

²⁵Wollner, pp. xliii-xliv.

yonder is your friend. Shut your mouths that I may speak with that . . . unworshipful monk' (p. 104).

That part of the story which deals with King Cathal's unnatural craving for food provides the narrator with an opportunity for a hit at royal luxury. He dwells comically on the two wheaten cakes and the slice of old bacon with which the poor scholar starts his journey and the "tender corned-beef, and full-fleshed wether, and honey in the comb, and English salt on a beautiful polished dish of white silver" on which he feasts in the court of King Cathal (pp. 8, 22, 60).

Finally, the twelfth century narrator plays with great enjoyment on the theme of MacConglinne, the martyr suffering punishment at the hands of the monks of Cork, and parodies his martyrdom in the best hagiographic style:

. . . In that hour MacConglinne was taken to the Foxes' Wood, and an axe was put in his hand, his guard being about him. He himself cut his passion-tree, and bore it on his back to the green of Cork. He himself fixed the tree. And the time had outrun the close of vespers, and the one resolve they had was to crucify him there and then.

[MacConglinne demands a fine meal before going to meet his death. This the abbot Manchín refuses, but gives him a short respite]:

" . . . Thy scanty clothing shall be stripped off thee, and thou shalt be tied to yonder pillar-stone, for a fore-torture before the great torture tomorrow."

.

They [the abbot and his monks] turned away home But they left that sage to fast, who came, having been sent by God and the Lord for the salvation of Cathal MacFinguine and

the men of Munster, and the whole Southern Half to boot. The justice of the law was not granted him.

He remained there until midnight. Then an angel of God came to him on the pillar-stone, and began to manifest the vision unto him.

(pp. 28-30).

By contrast, the corresponding part of the shorter version reads simply and briefly: "On the morrow he was taken to a gathering of the men of Munster to be crucified. Cathal and the nobles of Munster were there. C[athal] said he would not crucify a bard, but the clerics might do it themselves, for it was they that knew the wrong he had done (p. 149)."

In The Vision of MacConglinne, then, we have the anti-clerical satire of a wandering scholar who gives us as his mirror image a MacConglinne who composes comic verses about an "other world" journey. The Cokaygne poet wrote in the same vein. He too parodied religious writings, satirized the gluttony of privileged people and burlesqued the idea of the "other world." The suggestion that the Cokaygne poet was a goliardic clerk has already been made,²⁶ and there is evidence for supposing that he was indeed one of those who earned the censure of the Church Councils for "nightly divagation, with drums, flutes, and singing" and for "wearing red, green, yellow, and white hose."²⁷

The goliards delighted in parodying the sacred offices of the Church. A hymn in praise of the Virgin Mary becomes a hymn

²⁶ Wells, p. 228.

²⁷ Waddell, The Wandering Scholars, pp. 282, 287.

in praise of wine, and the Gospel according to St. Mark becomes the Passion of our Lord the Pope of the Romans according to the Gold and Silver Mark. There is a Gormandizer's Mass and a Gambler's Mass to the god Decius. Prayers are addressed to Bacchus in The Drunkard's Mass and "let us pray" becomes "let us sing."²⁸ We may take the irreverent delight of the goliards in parody as a sign of their skeptical spirit. For what are the irreverent parodies on the Mass, the hymns and Scriptures but an expression of the incredulity of the goliards and their disdain for Church doctrine and practice?²⁹ The parodist writing in a bidding prayer, "For our abbot: Fat, thick, haughty and puffed up wast thou to us" is making a mockery of a text from Deuteronomy.³⁰ A parody of a Eucharist hymn defiles one of the holiest sacraments of the Church.³¹ This ironic mockery is characteristic of the goliards and our anonymous poet shares in this skepticism.

The Church theologians had for centuries discoursed learnedly on the subject of the earthly paradise. Its location and attributes had engaged their scholarly attention.³² Many religious folk and lay folk as well had seen visions and dreamed

²⁸J. A. MacCulloch, Medieval Faith and Fable (London, 1932), pp. 280-283.

²⁹Ibid., pp. 231 and 280.

³⁰Cited by MacCulloch, p. 284.

³¹Ibid., p. 281.

³²Boas, pp. 54-86, passim.

dreams which were duly recorded and made a part of the legendary of the earthly paradise.³³ The Cokaygne poet dismisses the whole vast structure of legend, vision and learned speculation in some two hundred lines of light verse. He makes a mockery of the earthly paradise.

One of the goliardic parodies is of special interest to us because it contains a reference to Cokaygne. This is the Gambler's Mass found in the Carmina Burana (thirteenth century).

In the closing lines of the Mass is this antiphon:

I am the Abbot of Cocaigne, and my council
is with the toppers and my will with the sect
of Decius; and he who, in the morning, seeks
me in the tavern will go out naked at night,
and thus, despoiled of his garment, will sing:

Wafna! Wafna!

What hast thou done, most evil dice?

Thou hast taken away all the joys of my life.³⁴

The passage suggests that the goliards adopted Cokaygne as their own country and thought of themselves as boon companions belonging in that land. A later allusion connecting the wandering scholar with Cokaygne is to be found in a fourteenth century Spanish manuscript which mentions an escolar golosos compañero de Cucaña.³⁵

The prototype of the goliardic boon companion is revealed

³³Patch, chs. iv and v.

³⁴Translation provided by MacCulloch, Medieval Faith and Fable, p. 283.

³⁵Elfriede Ackermann, "Das Schlaraffenland" in German Literature and Folk Song; Social Aspects of an Earthly Paradise, with an Inquiry into its History in European Literature (Chicago, 1944), p. 72.

in the Confessio Goliiae of the Archpoet (c. 1130-1165).³⁶ The Archpoet confesses that he is like a flowing river, never under the same sky. He will find his heaven on this earth, and so he spends his life in pursuit of pleasure--the pleasure of a young girl's beauty, the pleasure of the table and the tavern. And evidently his verse is inspired by the Muse of Cokaygne:

Never hath the spirit of
poetry descended,
Till with food and drink my lean
Belly was distended,
But when Bacchus lords it in
My cerebral story,
Comes Apollo with a rush,
Fills me with his glory.³⁷

This second characteristic of the goliardic poet--his delight in the sensual pleasures--also applies to the anonymous Middle English poet. He has written a poem about eating and drinking and frank male sexuality, a poem full of his zest for living. In Cokaygne the drinker's prayer has been answered, and if there are any angels there they will repeat the pagan credo of the Archpoet:

Deus sit propitius
Huic potatori.³⁸

Thus the shadowy figure of the Cokaygne poet emerges and stands with MacConglinne, the twelfth century Celtic storyteller and the Archpoet among the wandering scholars of the Middle Ages. Skeptical and boldly satirical, devoted to the

³⁶For an account of the life of the Archpoet see Waddell, The Wandering Scholars, ch. vii.

³⁷Medieval Latin Lyrics, trans. Helen Waddell, 4th ed. rev. (Harmondsworth, Eng., 1952), p. 193.

³⁸Ibid., p. 189.

fleshly lusts and pagan in his disregard for the purgatorial fires, he seems to be one of that disreputable company. And beyond this company of goliardic clerks one may see other satirists who delight in skeptical and mocking parody--Lucian and the Greek poets of the Old Comedy. They would none of them, I think, be strangers to one another.

Chapter III

AN ANALYSIS OF THE POEM: METHOD AND STRUCTURE

If the Cokaygne poet were a goliardic clerk, he would have some pretensions to learning and would quite likely have read in Latin or in English some of the tales of journeys to paradise and visions of paradise. The legends of St. Brendan and St. Patrick's Purgatory could very well have been among them. I do not think the Cokaygne poet is specifically parodying either of these legends. It is rather the conventional style and content of the whole paradise legendary that is the object of his ridicule. But the St. Patrick and St. Brendan legends were so widespread and so much the type of pious tale which a clerk would know and count on his audience to know, that I shall use them as a basis of comparison.

Not everyone agrees that the poem satirizes the tales of the earthly paradise. Howard Patch says that "obviously the satire is not directed at the idea of a Paradise on earth,"¹ and Baring-Gould thinks that it is directed at the idea of the Fortunate Isles to the west.² On the other hand, Samuel Tucker in Verse Satire in England before the Renaissance remarks that the poem may be a parody of the medieval vision genre.³ A comparison of The Land of Cokaygne with versions of the St. Patrick and St. Brendan

¹P. 171.

²Pp. 537-539.

³New York, 1908, p. 58.

legends⁴ will make clear that there is some merit in Tucker's suggestion and that the subject of the burlesque is the earthly paradise, not the Fortunate Isles of the western sea.

In St. Patrick (ESEL) the emphasis in the description of paradise is on spiritual joy. The Knight Owayn discovers that meat and drink in the garden of paradise are not necessary to him:

A fair Medwe he sai₃ with swete floures: swottere
ne mi₃te non beo,
Treon al-so with noble fruyt; ~~pat~~ smulde swote Inov₃;
And ~~pe~~ swotnesse of euer-ech stude; al a-boute op drou₃,
~~pat~~ ~~pare~~ with-oute mete and drunch: him bou₃te, euere-mo
he mi₃te libbe with alle Ioie: 3if he moste ~~pare~~-Inne go.

(491-495).

This is the sort of paradise which the Cokaygne poet has contemptuously brushed aside because it has nothing to commend it but grass and flowers, green branches and fruit:

What is **per** in paradis
bot grasse, and flure, and grene ris?
po3 per be ioi and gret dute,
per nis met bote frute.

(7-10).

In St. Patrick (ESEL) the leader of the saints tells the Knight Owayn how the lord feeds the souls in the earthly paradise:

Ech dai þe 3wuyke we here beoth: ore louerd us
fedez ene
with riche metes of heuene: þat swete is and clene;
3wuche þulke metes beon: are þov heonnes wende
with us þov schalt sone i-wite: 3wane god it wole
us sende.

(570-573). 著

⁴See above, p. 15. Hereafter reference will be made only to the Benedeit version of St. Brendan and the versions of St. Patrick will be designated by the abbreviations St. Patrick (ESEL), St. Patrick (Auchinleck) and Owayne Myles.

No sooner are these words spoken than there comes a breeze from heaven and a clear, bright light descends on every head. Owayn feels the light go through his body, giving him such great joy that he is quite carried away. He feels as though he is neither living nor dead, but in a dream. The sensation lasts but a moment and then the light withdraws (574-583). Sir Owayn thinks that he will never more need any other nourishment than the heavenly light:

So fol he was of þat holi leome: þat so swete was and guod:
him þou₃te, þei he leouede euere-more: and neuereft more ne
ete,

Ne scholde him neuereft to mete luste: so guod was þe leome
and swete.

(587-589).

The poet is here trying to say what the joy and bliss of paradise is like. It is as though one's body were somehow briefly suffused with light. The Cokaygne poet has another idea of joy and bliss. It consists of regular meals at noon and evening and a light snack in between:

In cokaigne is met and drink
wip-vte care, how, and swink.
þe met is trie, þe drink is clere,
to none, russin,⁵ and sopper.
i sigge for-sop, boute were,
þer nis lond on þerþe is pere,
vnder heuen nis lond, i-wisse,
of so mochil ioi and blisse.

(17-24).

A convivial place, Cokaygne, with monks and nuns eating,

⁵russin: NED does not give this word. Robbins glosses it 'bite between meals,' possibly Anglo-Irish (Historical Poems, p. 318).

drinking and making merry. By contrast, paradise is rather dreary, since only two men dwell there, Enoch and Elijah. The poet is drawing on tradition here, for it was thought that Enoch and Elijah still dwelt in the Garden of Eden.⁶ It must, says the poet, be rather lonely (13-16).

Traditionally paradise is described according to a negative formula, for perfect happiness is an elusive state which ultimately must be described in terms of the things which contribute to unhappiness. There is no sickness, old age or death, no hunger or thirst; no cold winds blow, no hail or snow falls; the roses and lilies never fade. Benedeit repeats this negative formula in his St. Brendan, closely following the Latin Navigatio:

Sanz fin i luist li clers soleil,
Ne venz n'orez n'i mot un peil;
N'i vient nule nue del air
Qui del soleil tolget l'esclair.
Chi ci estrat, mal n'i avrat,
Ne dunt mals vent ja nel savrat,
Ne chalz, ne freiz, ne dehaite,
Ne faim, ne seit, ne suffraite.

(1761-1768).

After humorously stating his preference for a western island paradise, the Cokaygne poet also offers a list of negative joys in the conventional manner:

Der is mani swete sizte:
al is dai, nis per no nizte;
per nis baret no per strif;
nis per no dep, ac euer lif;
per nis lac of met no clob;
per nis man no womman wrop.

⁶Patch, p. 151; Wright, pp. 18-19. Enoch: Gen. v.24; Elijah: II Kings ii.11.

þer nis serpent, wolf, no fox,
 hors no capil, kowe no ox,
 þer nis schepe, no swine, no gote;
 no non horw₃, al god it wote,
 noþer harace, noþer stode.
 þe lond is ful of oþer gode.

(25-36).

The passage seems at first to be a mechanical recitation of the usual formula. But at line 32 the recitation begins to stumble on foreign elements in the series. The desert country where wild beasts roam is in Mandeville one of the obstacles to be overcome before the earthly paradise can be reached, and so the absence of serpents and wolves may properly be considered negative joys. But horses, sheep, cows, pigs and goats belong to the world of everyday, and wherever such animals are someone has to fetch water, fill the feed bins and carry dung. Where stud horses are kept for breeding⁷ there must be a groom to do the menial work. It is the word "horw₃" (dirt, filth, foulness: NED) which dispels any doubt that the poet is intentionally making his list smell of the barnyard. "þe lond is ful of oþer gode," he comments ironically.

° Having brought his description of paradise down to the farmyard level, the poet continues in a bluntly realistic vein:

Nis þer flei, fle, no lowse,
 in cloþ, in toune, bed, no house;
 þer nis dunnir, slete, no hawle;
 no non vile worme, no snawile,
 no non storme, rein, no winde.
 þer nis man no womman blinde.

⁷haras, harace: "an enclosure or establishment in which horses and mares are kept for breeding; hence a stud, breed, or race of horses," obs. (NED).

ok al is game, Ioi, and gle.
wel is him pat per mai be.

(37-44).

The absence of insect pests and stormy weather are conventional enough,⁸ but by association with pigs and goats the emphasis is less on their absence in the earthly paradise than on their troublesome presence in the here and now.

Having completed the traditional list of negative joys, the poet turns to the familiar motifs all will recognize--the four rivers, the garden, the tree, the fountain.

The rivers of oil, milk, honey and wine are traditional. Ovid recalls the Age of Gold as the "season of milk and wine in amber streams/And honey pouring from the green-lipped oak."⁹ St. Brendan found a river of sweet milk in paradise (1755). St. Paul, according to the apocryphal story as told in an eighth century Latin manuscript, saw the four rivers which encircled paradise--the river of oil, the Geon; the river of wine, the Tigris; the river of honey, the Phison; the river of milk, the Euphrates (Patch, pp. 91-92). Cokaygne too has these same rivers. Once again the poet recites a list, crowding a whole body of legend about the rivers of paradise into one couplet:

per bep riuers gret and fine,
of oile, melk, honi, and wine;
watir seruip per to no-ping
bot to sigt and to waissing.

(45-48).

⁸Boas, p. 82.

⁹Ovid: The Metamorphoses, trans. Horace Gregory (New York, 1958), p. 34.

The humorous aside about the uses of water undercuts the familiar formula about the rivers and invites the complicity of the audience.

Line 49, "þer is mani maner frute," seems at first an awkward repetition of a motif already dealt with. However, to an audience well-instructed in paradise lore it is high comedy. It relates to line 10, "þer nis met bote frute," and sums up the whole idea of the abstemious pleasures of paradise. Dwellers in the garden of delight satisfy their hunger with a simple repast of fruit plucked from the everbearing trees and "in the rind/Still as they thirsted scoop the brimming stream." The following passage from Owayne Myles will illustrate the emphasis on the fruit motif in descriptions of paradise:

Hyt was grene and full of flowres
 of mony dyuers colowres,
 hyt was grene on euery syde,
 as medewus are yn someres tyde.
 Ther were trees growying full grene,
 ffull of fruyte euur more, y wene;
 ffor þer was frwyte of mony a kynde:
 suche yn þys londe may no mon fynde.
 Ther þer haue þe tree of lyfe,
 ther yn ys myrthe and neuur stryfe;
 ffrwte of wysdom also þer ys,
 of þe whyche Adam and Eue dede a mysse.
 Oþur maner frwytes þer were fele,
 and all manere joye and wele.

(517-530).

The wonderful endowments of paradise may vary from story to story, but the detail about the trees bearing fruit at all seasons of the year is almost always present.¹⁰ The remark

¹⁰Patch, chs. iv and v, passim.

about the abundance of fruit could apparently be counted on to provoke some amusement in an audience. It is one of those off-hand remarks which a modern comedian would deliver with a straight face and a perfect sense of timing.

With his description of the abbey the poet introduces for the first time a Cokaygne motif and uses it for a satiric purpose. Since paradise is the dwelling place of the souls of holy men, logically there should be an abbey. But this abbey has walls of pasties, roof tiles of "fluren cakes" and pinnacles of fat puddings (51-59). This little bit of comic burlesque is used to satirize the gluttony of the monks. Specifically he mentions the white monks and grey monks (Cistercians¹¹), excluding the Benedictines, who wore black. He is improvising freely now and interrupts his description of the abbey to offer a comment on the injustice of a society which reserves the good things of life for the rich:¹²

be pinnes bep fat podinges--
rich met to prince₃ and kinges.
man mai per-of et ino₃,
al wip ri₃t and no₃t wip wo₃.
al is commune to ₃ung and old,
to stoute and sterne, mek and bold.

(59-64).

Returning to his description of the abbey, he visualizes the cloister (which was roofed with flour cakes), with pillars of

¹¹See above, p. 23.

¹²See below, p. 87.

crystal, the plinth being of green jasper and the capital of red coral (67-70). The jasper bases of the pillars recall the wall and the first foundation of the New Jerusalem.¹³ Crystal is a common motif in Celtic and Teutonic folklore,¹⁴ but it also appears in Christian legend, as does coral. In St. Patrick (Auchinleck) the gates of paradise are decked with coral and other precious stones and the tabernacles are pinnacles of crystal (vv. 131-132). Traditionally, crystal, jasper and coral all contribute to the splendour of paradise, a splendour which may be a little obscured in Cokaygne by the meat and fish pasties and fat puddings close by.

But the garden of paradise needs a tree. Then let it be a spice tree with fruit of "gode smakke." Once again the poet rattles off a list:

pe rote is gingeuir and galingale,
 pe siouns bep al sedwale,
 trie maces bep pe flure,
 pe rind canel of swet odor,
 pe frute gilofre of gode smakke.
 of cucubes per nis no lakke.

(73-78).

The list or catalogue of birds, trees, flowers, spices, etc. was a favourite medieval literary convention. Here the poet uses the familiar spice list of romance to burlesque the description of the tree of paradise¹⁵ and the sudden incongruity

¹³Rev. xxi. 18-19.

¹⁴Patch, p. 56, note 67.

¹⁵On the burlesque spirit of this passage see Laura H. Loomis, Sources and Analogues, p. 553. See also Martha Shackford, Legends and Satires (Boston, 1913), p. 173.

would find a delighted response in an audience familiar with the conventional spice list as illustrated in these lines from Alisaunder, a late thirteenth century romance:

Forth Alisaundre gan wende,
Til he com to theow trowes ende.
Notemugge, and the sedewale,
On heom smullith, and the wodewale,
Theo canel, and the licoris,
And swete savour y-ment, y-wis,
Theo gilofre, guybibe, and mace,
Gynger, comyn gaven odour grace;
And, undur sonne, of alle spices
They hadden savour with delices.¹⁶

Provided with this context, one notices immediately the sly shift of construction in line 78, "Of cucubes per nis no lakke." It is a very light satiric thrust, so light that among modern readers it is likely to go unnoticed. But a medieval audience hearing the line would almost certainly catch the nuance in the turn of phrase which does so much more than merely provide a convenient rhyme.

Hard on the spice list of romance the poet gives us the traditional flowers of paradise, roses and lilies unfading (79-81.).¹⁷ Then, still reciting full tilt, he describes the required wells of paradise and allows them to dispense treacle,¹⁸

¹⁶ Cited by Laura H. Loomis, p. 552. Cf. Rom, 1359-1372 and Thop, 760-765 in The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, ed. F. N. Robinson, 2nd ed. (Boston, 1957). Citations from Chaucer in my text are from this edition.

¹⁷ For the flowers and wells of paradise see St. Patrick (Auchinleck), vv. 147, 149 and Patch, p. 111.

¹⁸ treacle, triale: "medicinal compound, originally a kind of salve, composed of many ingredients, formerly in repute as an alexipharmic against and antidote to venomous bites, poisons generally, and malignant diseases." obs. (NED).

healing waters,¹⁹ balm and spiced wine, a catalogue of useful elixirs (83-86).

The burlesque intention of the poet will now be clear, and his method. The poet describes Cokaygne in the conventional style of the paradise legend, and as he mechanically recites the familiar formulas--the negative joys, the rivers, the abode of the holy men, the garden, trees and wells--he improvises freely on his theme, introducing incongruities and interpretive comments which make an exalted theme ludicrous. He mixes together motifs from paradise legend, romance and folk lore in so absurd a potpourri that one almost expects to hear one of his listeners, like Chaucer's Host, interrupt his "drasty rhyming" and beg him to tell instead a tale in prose.

The comparison with Sir Thopas at this point is not inappropriate, for Chaucer uses similar burlesque devices. He turns the "auntrous" knight so full of "love-longyng" for his "lemman" into a burgher who climbs awkwardly into a saddle, "pricks" through a forest inhabited by beasts as wild as deer and hare, and swears a mighty oath on such homely fare as bread and ale.²⁰ Also he employs the list to humorous effect, parodying the burlesque catalogue no fewer than seven times.²¹ I have referred

¹⁹halwei, halewei (obs.): "a healing water, used both as a drink, and as a lotion for wounds; balm, antidote." (NED).

²⁰For the hero's vow, see Laura H. Loomis, Sources and Analogues, p. 541; for other incongruities in the description of Sir Thopas, pp. 496-550, passim.

²¹Ibid., pp. 550-551.

elsewhere to the comparison Laura H. Loomis makes of the burlesque spirit of the two poems,²² and certainly one must agree that the lists of rivers and wells, flowers, spices, precious stones and birds recited tongue-in-cheek by the Cokaygne poet in his burlesque of paradise do suggest the lists recited by Chaucer in his burlesque of the metrical romance.

The manner in which the Cokaygne poet turns the medieval list to satiric advantage is nowhere better illustrated than in lines 87-112, which begin with an account of the precious stones to be found in the rivers of paradise. The catalogue of precious stones is a regular feature of the paradise legend.²³ When St. Brendan and his followers emerged from the dark mist they saw the brilliant wall of paradise before them:

Mais les gemmes funt granz luurs,
 Dum purplantez esteit li murs.
 As gutes d'or grisolites
 Mult i aveit d'isselites;
 Li murs flammet, tut abrase,
 De topaze, grisopase,
 De jargunce, calcedoine,
 De smaragde e sardoine;
 Jaspes od les amestistes
 Forment luisent par les listes;
 Li jacinctes clers i est il
 Od le cristal e le beril;

(1685-1696).

In St. Patrick (Auchinleck), when the Knight Owayn had passed

²²See above, p. 3.

²³Ezekiel xxviii.13: "Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God; every precious stone was thy covering, the sardius, topaz, and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, and the carbuncle, and gold."

safely over the high, narrow bridge of hell he beheld the gate of paradise wrought of red gold and decked with precious stones:

Jaspers, topes and cristal,
margarites and coral
and riche saferstones,
ribes and salidoines,
onicles and causteloinnes,
and diamaunce for þe nones.

(v. 131).

Traditionally, the precious stones are also to be found in the rivers of paradise. So it is in the St. Patrick story just quoted (vv. 150-151), and Mandeville also tells us about the Phison (Ganges) which runs out of paradise and is full of gold and precious stones.²⁴

There are precious stones in the river that flows out of Cokaygne too and the poet embarks on another catalogue:

Þer is saphir and vniune,
carbuncle and astiune,
Smaragde, lugre, and prassiune,
beril, onix, topasiune,
ametist and crisolite,
calcedun and epetite.

(89-94).

Then, reaching into the grab bag of his repertoire he produces another list which is more often associated with the Garden of the Rose than with paradise:²⁵

Þer beþ briddes mani and fale--
prostil, þruisse and ni₃tingale,
Chalendre and wodwale,
and oþer briddes wiþ-out tale,
þat stinteþ neuer bi har mi₃t.
miri to sing dai and ni₃t.

(95-100).

²⁴Mandeville's Travels, I, 202.

²⁵See Robbins, ed. Historical Poems, p. 319.

He has not changed the rhyme in the second couplet and the cumulative effect makes a little chant. Now he adds the birds of Cokaygne to this list. "3ite i do 3ow mo to witte," he interjects (101), and completes his recitation by including in his catalogue a well-seasoned lark and a roast goose who "gredip" like any street vendor crying his wares:

De Gees irostid on þe spitte
 flee3 to þat abbai, god hit wot,
 and greditþ, "gees, al hote! al hot!"
 hi bringeþ garlek gret plente,
 þe best idi3t þat man mai se.
 þe leuerokes, þat beþ cup,
 ligtip adun to man-is mup,
 idi3t in stu,²⁶ ful swiþe wel
 pudrid wiþ gilofre and canel.
 nis no spech of no drink;
 ak take ino3 wiþ-vte swink.

(102-112).

There were roast thrushes begging to be eaten in the wonderland of Pherecrates. Similar details appear in a French poem, Li Fabliaux de Coguaigne (c. 1250):²⁷

Par les rues vont rostissant
 Les crasses oes et tornant
 Tout par eles, et tout adès
 Les suit la blanche aillée après.

(13-16).

A German tale, Das Wachtelmaere (c. 1355) describes the land of Gugelmiure which is tied to heaven with willows. Here also are roast geese which walk in the streets with a knife in the beak

²⁶ stu, stew: "a vessel for boiling, a caldron." obs. (NED).

²⁷ Reproduced by Ackermann, pp. 144-147 from E. Barbazan (1696-1770), Fabliaux et Contes des Poètes françois des XI^e, XII^e, XIII^e, XIV^e, et XV^e Siècles. Nouvelle Edition augmentée par M. Méon (Paris, 1808), IV, 175-181.

and pepper in the tail.²⁸ The fantasy is a persistent and enduring one, but we cannot presume to trace a line of descent from Pherecrates to medieval literature. We may safely note, however, that it is a motif with a wide currency in folk literature. Cokaygne folk songs and tales employing this and related motifs (houses roofed with cakes, trees growing waffles) were popular throughout Europe from the thirteenth to the seventeenth century.²⁹ More will be said about the folk element in Cokaygne and its German analogue, Schlaraffenland, in the next chapter. Here it is enough to note that a Cokaygne motif is once more being used with a satiric purpose. The goliardic clerk changes the fair arbor where thrush and nightingale sing for a noisy street with perhaps a pastry cook's shop at the corner and an inn or tavern where there "nis no spech of no drink." And we can no longer discern the sweet fragrance of paradise because of the overpowering smell of garlic.

The next sixty lines describe the inhabitants of this paradise. They are a lusty, bawdy crew who make, the poet says with heavy irony, "a wel fair procession" (146). In St. Patrick (ESEL) Sir Owayn, emerging from purgatory, had been greeted at the gates of paradise by

a procession fair i-nov₃: of noble men ech-on,
with creioiz and with taperes: and with baneres clere;

(475-476).

²⁸ Ackermann, pp. 150-151.

²⁹ Ackermann gives complete texts of representative poems and tales from France, England, Spain, Italy, Germany and the Netherlands.

In Owayne Miles once again the knight is greeted by the holy men of paradise--"a swyde fayr processyioun/of all maner men of relygyoun" (485-486):

Myche joye hym þow₃te to se
 bysshopes yn her dýgnyte.
 Ilkone wente opur be and be,
 eury man yn hys degre:
 he sy₃ þer monkes and chanones,
 and freres wyt newe shauen crownes;
 ermytes he sawe þer amonge,
 and nonnes wyt full mery songe,
 persones, prestes and vycaryes,
 they made full mery melodyes;
 * * * * *
 myche was þe joye þer on euery syde;
 for all was joye þat wyt hem ferde,
 and myche solempnyte þer he herde.

(489-508).

It is the great "solempnyte" of paradise that we must keep in mind as we read about the frivolous monks of Cokaygne--all the pomp and circumstance that surrounds the Church on earth as each member of the hierarchy moves through his appointed part in the ritual. Martha Shackford conveys this atmosphere in her translation of the Auchinleck version:

He went near the gate and saw approaching
 a procession of folk with gracious countenances,
 bearing tapers and candlesticks of gold and
 crosses and banners. Popes there were, of great
 dignity, and many cardinals, kings and queens,
 knights, abbots superior, monks, canons and
 preaching friars, and bishops who wore crosses.
 Minorite friars and Jacobins, Carmelites and
 Austin friars, black and white nuns--all manner
 of religious orders went in that procession. . . .
 When the praises had thus been sung, two
 archbishops came out of the midst of that
 company, bearing palms of gold. They advanced
 to the knight, and, taking him between them,
 led him up and down, and showed him still
 greater joys and also much melody. Merry were
 their carols of joy and minstrelsy. They

went carolling with a joy no man can divine,
singing and praising God; angels guided them
with harps and fiddles and psaltery, and bells
rang merrily.³⁰

The Cokaygne poet turns this holy place into a Garden of Original Sin where uninhibited carnality holds sway. It is not perhaps a very subtle joke. It is certainly coarse and obscene. But fashions in humour change. The bodily functions were a source of great amusement in the Middle Ages, as Chaucer's fabliaux well illustrate. And it was a free and unembarrassed laughter, unaffected by Freudian insights and introspections, and not necessarily complicated by any need to find a satiric purpose. A frankly bawdy story could be enjoyed simply because it was funny, and this is one reason why one immediately remarks on the tolerance with which the poet views the immorality of the monks and nuns. He is satirizing the concubinage of the clerical orders, but he is also amusing an audience with a wildly funny story about some monks and nuns having a wonderful time in paradise. The story is not so crude that it does not have its nice ironic touches. Elijah went up in a whirlwind to heaven³¹ and Alexander soared with large birds to the skies.³² Perhaps the monks' method of air transport by means of the wide sleeves and hoods is a comic burlesque treatment of the traditional journey to the heavens. And is there perhaps also a wry comment

³⁰Legends and Satires from Medieval Literature (Boston, 1913), pp. 44-45.

³¹II Kings ii.11.

³²Patch, p. 25.

on the lack of preferment of deserving persons in the religious orders? Advancement, it appears, does not come easily. Even after conscientious attention to "duty" the monk can only hope to be a father abbot.³³

The detail about the community of nuns appears in two other satires on the monastic orders³⁴ and may have been one of the conventional jokes. Its manner of presentation in this poem, however, recalls the maidenland of Celtic myth and suggests that the author was elaborating on the joke with material from folk lore.

In The Voyage of Bran there is an account of an island of women where grief, sorrow and death are unknown and time does not pass, for many years seem as one day. On this island of women

A beautiful game, most delightful
They play sitting at the luxurious wine,
Men and gentle women under a bush,
Without sin, without crime.³⁵

What these lines suggest is the time when women of the matrilinear Tribes of Danu (Tuatha De Danann), the sidhe or shee of modern Irish folk lore, performed orgiastic rites directed to the vegetation gods.³⁶ These are the divine women who lure Connla the Fair to the fairy mound of Mag Mell, the Land of the

³³Robbins, line 176, gives "to be sone uadir abbot." Mätzner, AE Sprachp (full text in Ackermann, pp. 147-150) gives "to be some undir abbot" which has other shades of satirical meaning.

³⁴See below, p. 66.

³⁵Cross and Slover, p. 592.

³⁶J. A. MacCulloch, Religion of the Ancient Celts (Edinburgh, 1911), p. 385.

Living, where only women and maidens dwell.³⁷ They lure Cu Chulainn to an island palace in which there are thrice fifty couches and three times fifty women upon the couches.³⁸ In Arthurian romance the divine women are Morgan and her maidens who convey the King to Avalon there to be cured of his wounds.³⁹

We cannot be certain that the Cokaygne poet's community of nuns is an intentional parody of the Celtic maidenland. We may suppose that the tales were widely disseminated and that a goliardic clerk associated with the Abbey of Kildare in Ireland would be familiar with tales about Mag Mell and a Land under the Waves. It is possible, of course, that he is satirizing some local condition (Wells, p. 228). The folk motif of a community of women in a Land of Promise is, however, quite plain. And since the poet has already shown himself so well-versed in the lore of paradise, it seems reasonable to give him the credit for substituting sturdy English nuns in row boats for fairies in crystal coracles.

In conclusion the poet warns his audience that only those who do penance for their sins may come to this paradise. In St. Patrick (ESEL) Sir Owayn had been told the same thing by the leader of the saints:

For we alle þat þou here i-sixt: þare-forth hidere come
And ore sunnes þare betten: and harde penaunce nome,
Ne miȝte we elles here come: ase guod bi þe it is:

³⁷Cross and Slover, pp. 488-490.

³⁸Ibid., pp. 176-198.

³⁹MacCulloch, Religion of the Ancient Celts, p. 369.

For ₃if þine sunnes nere for-₃iue: þov ne come nou₃t
here, i-wis.

(536-539).

Sir Owayn had done penance in purgatory. He had suffered frightful torments in the seven fields of punishment before he had finally crossed the high narrow bridge which separated purgatory from paradise:

For heo was narov₃, and slider, and hei₃: þat he ne
scholde him so bi-telle,
₃if þat he glufte in ani half: þat he ne fulle in-to helle.

(429-430).

The howling fiends of hell were under the bridge:

Heore Oules heo nomen and heore hokes: and toward him
casten an hei₃;
Ake þare nas non þat him touchi mi₃te: ne no-þing come
him nei₃.

(447-448).

The high, narrow bridge may be recognized as the barrier which traditionally guards the entrance to paradise. When St. Brendan finally approached paradise after a seven-year quest, he had to find his way through a heavy fog (1649-1658). In Mandeville, too, we may read of the perils which make paradise inaccessible to mortal man:

For be londe noman may go for wylde
bestes þat ben in the desertes and for the
high mountaynes and grete huge Roches þat
noman may passe by, for the derke places
þat ben þere and þat manye. And be the
Ryueres may noman go, for the water renneth
so rudely and so scharply because þat it cometh
doun so outrageously from the high places abouen,
þat it renneth in so grete wawes þat
no schipp may not rowe ne seyle a₃enes it
Many grete lordes han assayed with gret wille
many tymes for to passen be þo ryueres toward

paradys with full grete companyes, But þei
 myghte not speden in hire viage. And manye
 dyeden for weryness of rowynge a₃enst þo
 stronge wawes, And many of hem becamen blynde
 and many deve for the noyse of the water.
 And summe weren perisscht and loste withjnne
 the wawes, so þat no mortell man may approche
 to þat place withouten specyall grace of god⁴⁰

Wild beasts, roaring waterfalls, blinding fogs, dizzy
 heights, demons, dragons and the stinking pits of hell--the
 Cokaygne poet is not to be outdone by these in the matter of
 a penance or a barrier:

Whose wl com þat lond to,
 ful grete penance he mot do:
 Seue ₃ere in swine-is dritte
 he mote wade, wol ₃e iwitte,
 al anon vp to þe chynne,
 so he schal þe lond winne.

(177-182).

The barrier of filth also occurs in one of Grimm's tales. In
Die Barenhauer (The Bearskin), admission to the land of delights
 is to be gained by wallowing in filth for seven years.⁴¹
Schlaraffenland was the subject of half a dozen German meister-
lieder of the sixteenth century and in two of them the motif of
 the mountain of filth appears.⁴² Once again the poet introduces
 a traditional folk motif and once again he puts it to the uses
 of parody.

It is not only in the folk utopia that the dung heap is
 regarded as a penance to be endured. When Nathaniel Hawthorne

⁴⁰Mandeville's Travels, I, 203-204.

⁴¹Ackermann, p. 120.

⁴²Ibid., pp. 90-93.

was living at Brook Farm, the New England utopian community, he found the manure pile a great barrier to the happy fulfillment of his new life. After two months of work on the farm, he came to look on the dung heap as symbolic of soul-destroying, hard, physical labour. In a letter to his betrothed he wrote a sardonic and vehement protest:

That abominable gold mine! Thank God, we anticipate getting rid of its treasures, in the course of the next two or three days. Of all hateful places, that is the worst; and I shall never comfort myself for having spent so many days of blessed sunshine there. It is my opinion, dearest, that a man's soul may be buried and perish under a dungheap or in a furrow of the field, just as well as under a pile of money.⁴³

Like the Cokaygne poet, Hawthorne discovered a barrier of degrading physical labour separating him from his utopia of "blessed sunshine."

The Cokaygne poet, having delivered his mock-heroic exhortation about the barrier of filth, warns his listeners: "Gentlemen, you will never see that land until you fulfil this penance." He is offering the formal sermon applicatio, for he knows the proper rhetorical forms which must be observed. Then, as a final mockery:

Prey we god so mote hit be,
Amen, pur seint charite.

(189-190).

⁴³Autobiography of Brook Farm, ed. Henry W. Sams (Englewood Cliffs, N. J., 1958), p. 21. For other letters containing similar complaints see pp. 14, 18, 30.

In this analysis of the poem we have been trying to hear the poet as he replies to the world of his day. What he is doing is breaking down fixed beliefs and criticizing contemporary social ills by changing the perspective.⁴⁴ Structurally,⁴⁵ The Land of Cokaygne belongs to that kind of writing which sets up a new society and uses it as a vehicle for making a critical appraisal of contemporary society. Aristophanes from the vantage point of Cloud Cuckooland caricatures the ambitious schemes of fifth century Athens. Anatole France also creates a birdland in his Penguin Island, and Swift invents a land of Yahoos and Houyhnhnms and an Island of Laputa the better for us to see ourselves. Butler discovers a topsy-turvy land beyond a mountain range where people treat crime as an illness and illness as a crime. Such works are sometimes called satiric utopias, though More's word has been pressed into service here for want of a better one. The Land of Cokaygne is one of these satiric utopias.

In Butler's Erewhon⁴⁶ the hero is Higgs, a middle class Englishman who has been brought up according to the conventional nineteenth century morality. But despite his conventional set

⁴⁴For an analysis of this kind of satire see Northrop Frye, Anatomy of Criticism (Princeton, 1957), pp. 229-235.

⁴⁵"Most modern critics agree in the use of the term 'structure' for the organization, or over-all design, or 'form' of a particular literary work . . ." (M. H. Abrams, A Glossary of Literary Terms (New York, 1957), p. 94.

⁴⁶Samuel Butler, Erewhon; Erewhon Revisited (London, 1942).

of beliefs, Higgs is willing to explore a social and religious ethic completely opposite to his own. Let us imagine some fourteenth century Higgs washed ashore on an island "bi west spayngne," an island which is like the familiar earthly paradise he has learned about since childhood and yet not the same. Let us imagine his earnest endeavour to comprehend the strange morality of the religious folk who live in this topsy-turvy land. He discovers that the goddess Nyottulg is their daily help and guide and that in her honour they have built an abbey of pasties, puddings and flour cakes. Officially, however, they worship another God in the Church of the Magical Windows. He sees that while they go about their daily affairs, immoderately indulging their fleshly appetities, the windows of the church are ordinary glass. He observes with some surprise that as soon as they enter the church to say Mass for their soul's need, the windows turn into shining crystal to give the monks more light (113-116). Then when the Masses have been said and the books put away, "þe cristal turnip in-to glasse,/ in state þat hit rapen wasse" (117-120). Now admittedly one cannot make a philosophical novel out of The Land of Cokaygne by transposing it in terms of Ydgrun and the Musical Banks. But the exercise will at least have served to show that the distance from this Cokaygne to Erewhon is not so great after all. Here is a nowhere in which everything is topsy-turvy: we find self-indulgence, not self-denial; carnality, not chastity; voluptuousness, not asceticism; not a procession of holy saints but a wild saturnalia, and

perpetual carnival the perpetual bliss. What we have in this situation is a rudimentary satiric utopia through which the author breaks down existing ideas about paradise and criticizes the religious orders for their immorality and hypocrisy on this earth.

Two other medieval satires against the monastic orders have a similar structure. In the Speculum Stultorum⁴⁷ (c. 1180), Nigel Wireker, a Canterbury monk, invents an "ideal" society, a nowhere by means of which he satirizes the monastic orders. A century later an Anglo-Norman poet, contemporary with the Cokaygne poet, creates a similar fiction entitled L'Ordre de Bel Ayse.⁴⁸ It will contribute to our understanding of The Land of Cokaygne as a satiric utopia to compare it with these two poems.

The Speculum Stultorum describes in picaresque style the adventures of Brunellus, the Ass. Brunellus represents the whole monastic body, greedy, vain and engaged in worldly pursuits. The allegory turns on the comic quest of Brunellus for rare and exotic medicines which will make his tail grow to match his ears in length. Central to the story is the critical appraisal of the religious orders.⁴⁹ Brunellus, though hypocritical, boastful, lazy, stupid and consumed with vain ambition is not incapable of remorse for his wasted youth and a desire to repent and win

⁴⁷The Book of Daun Burnel the Ass; Nigel Wireker's Speculum Stultorum, trans. Graydon W. Regenos (Austin, 1959).

⁴⁸Anglo-Norman Political Songs, ed. Isabel Aspin, Anglo-Norman Text Society, XI (Oxford, 1953), 132-138.

⁴⁹Speculum Stultorum, pp. 101-117.

salvation for his soul before it is too late. He resolves to take religious vows and must decide which order he will join. He passes in review each group in turn with a good-humoured criticism of each. In the end he decides to organize his own society, drawing from each of the other orders those characteristics which will make monastic life comfortable. From the Templars he takes smoothly stepping horses, from the Cluniacs rich food and fat meats on Friday, from the Premonstratensians the luxury of soft, full-pleated robes. The Carthusians think one Mass each month is enough and the Grandimontane monks do not keep tiresome vows of silence. Brunellus will adopt these practices in his order. But still one thing is lacking in the ideal order and that is the society of women. Brunellus will allow his monks to choose their mates from the Moniales, an order of nuns "serpent-bodied, siren-voiced, with breasts/ of dragons, Paris' heart, Susanna's charms," nuns whose lovely legs are hidden beneath black skirts.⁵⁰ Brunellus is sure the Pope will give his consent to this venture. Here then is a supposedly ideal society set up by the author to satirize the concubinage, hypocrisy and self-indulgence of the monastic orders.

The Anglo-Norman poem has a similar plan. L'Ordre de Bel Ayse describes another mock-ideal monastery which draws on the "best" features of all other orders. From Beverley it takes the rule that each brother must sit drinking at meals until a candle

⁵⁰ Ibid., pp. 114-115.

as long as his forearm is burned. From the Hospitallers it takes the indulgence of fine robes, well-fitting shoes and gently ambling palfreys. As at Sempringham, monks and nuns may share the religious life. On pain of excommunication each brother must play the game of love with his sister every morning before matins, and he who excels at the task wins the approval of his superiors.⁵¹

There was evidently a body of satiric commonplaces from which the writers drew.⁵² None of the monks in these three poems is "pale as a forpynded goost" from praying and studying within the cloister walls. They are worldly men, addicted to good food, rich clothing and fine horses. Brunellus, who travels across Europe, and the monks of Cokaygne, who simply take flight up the river in search of pleasure, are satiric counterparts of the roving monks whom the Church censured. And in all three poems the virility of the monks is a claim to distinction. Chaucer's portrait of the Monk makes use of the same details (Gen Prol, 165-207). The Monk's robe is fur-trimmed and fastened with a gold pin, his boots are of soft leather and his round, shiny face a testimony to the good dinners of fat roast swan he has enjoyed. Astride his brown palfrey, bridle bells jingling in the wind, he could belong to the Order of Fair Ease. And he is a manly man. Chaucer's host chaffs him about his unused virility,

⁵¹Trans. Aspin, pp. 138-141.

⁵²Dom David Knowles, The Monastic Order in England: A History of its Development from the Times of St. Dunstan to the Fourth Lateran Council, 943-1216 (Cambridge, Eng., 1949), p. 677. This reference supplied by Aspin, p. 131.

and one cannot think the Monk was not secretly flattered by these remarks.⁵³ The Daun John of the Shipman's Tale behaves in the manner we have come to expect and cuckolds his best friend. Evidently the monks of Cokaygne and the monks of the Canterbury Tales are part of a well-established satiric tradition.

The Land of Cokaygne unmistakably censures the lax moral standards of the monks and nuns. Yet there is a spirit of tolerant amusement in the Cokaygne poem which is lacking in the other two. It tempers the satire, so that the Abbey of Cokaygne looks forward to the Abbey of Thelema in which all restraints of the monastic order have been removed and the only rule is "Do as you will." Not that the monks of Cokaygne are to be seen as the cultivated men and women whom Rabelais endowed with the ideals and aspirations of the Renaissance.⁵⁴ The exaggerated scenes of feasting and drinking which occur elsewhere in Rabelais are not part of the description of the Abbey of Thelema. The inscription over the great gate begins on a high note of moral severity. But this same inscription becomes finally an exuberant song of praise of the joyous unascetic life:

Here enter you, and welcom from our hearts,
 All noble sparks, endow'd with gallant parts.

 Stay here you lively, jovial, handsom, brisk,
 Gay, witty, frolick, chearful, merry, frisk,
 Spruce, jocund, courteous, furtherers of trades,
 And in a word, all worthy gentile blades.

 Here enter you all Ladies of high birth,

⁵³Prol MkT, 1943-1964.

⁵⁴The Works of Mr. Francis Rabelais, Doctor in Physick, trans. 1653 (London, 1954), pp. 150-168.

Fortunate Isles are being ridiculed may thus be put aside, with the understanding that, since the western and eastern paradises are not completely separate traditions, no final judgements can be made. According to my analysis, however, the parody is specifically directed toward the paradise of the saints. At the same time, the purposes of a satiric utopia are accomplished, most of all in the satire on the concubinage of the monks and nuns. The poem may thus be taken out of the context of Middle English literature and given its larger literary relationship. It may be seen in relation to the stories of St. Brendan and St. Patrick and Mandeville's Travels, and in relation to a work like Erewhon as well.

PART II

THE LAND OF COKAYGNE AS UTOPIA

Chapter IV

THE FOLK ORIGINS OF THE COKAYGNE THEME

Thus far we have considered The Land of Cokaygne as a parody in the skeptical and satirical vein of the goliardic poets. We have thought of it as a poem of game and solace. We shall turn now to the sentence in the poem, for there is sentence here. The several Cokaygne motifs--the roast goose, the houses roofed with cakes, the springs of treacle and spiced wine, the wonderful spice tree--are used in a literary way to burlesque the earthly paradise. Yet the poem invites a reaction to something other than the ironic. It invites a reaction to poverty and social injustice and to abundance and equality. It invites us who read it in the twentieth century to think about it in terms of utopian literature. It invites us to believe in Cokaygne, the poor man's utopia. But what is Cokaygne, and what does it have to do with utopia? And what is the connection between the Middle English poem and the utopia?

The Cokaygne tradition belongs to the folk, and the comic songs and stories of this land of luxurious living appear in many countries and many ages. In Denmark it is Overdaadighednsverden (world of dissipation), and in Sweden it is Lättingersland (land of loafers).¹ Italy has its Cuccagna with a mountain of

¹Ackermann, p. 78.

cheese and a cauldron of macaroni.² In Canada and the United States we know Cokaygne best as the Big Rock Candy Mountains, where, according to the hobo jongleur, "there are lakes of stew and whiskey too/You can paddle all around in a big canoe." In Germany it is called Schlaraffenland,³ and first appears in German folk literature of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.⁴

Individual Schlaraffenland-Cokaygne motifs may be recognized in the German märchen. Those familiar fairy tales in which tables spread themselves with food and certain objects magically produce automatic wealth may be recognized as belonging to this tradition.⁵

In these folk songs and tales the burlesque element is prominent. They tell about a fantastic, topsy-turvy world of abundance. But fantasy needs the world of experience, whether direct or vicarious, for what is fantasy but a distortion of the real world? Behind the ancient stories about rivers of wine, milk and honey and other rivers of black broth and pease porridge is the age-old struggle of man against nature. There

²Johannes Bolte and Georg Polívka, Anmerkungen zu den Kinder- u-Hausmärchen der Brüder Grimm (Leipzig, 1918), III, 246-247.

³schlaraffe, an idler fond of good living, from MHG. slur lazy person (Etymologisches Wörterbuch der deutschen Sprache, ed. Friedrich Kluge, 17th ed. rev. Walter Mitzka (Berlin, 1957)). See Stith Thompson, Motif-Index of Folk Literature, rev. (Copenhagen, 1955), V, 531, no. X 1503 and III, 197, no. F 701.

⁴Ackermann, p. 81.

⁵Ibid., pp. 119-120.

is evidence that both the golden age myth and the Cokaygne folk burlesque have their origins in the seasonal agrarian rites by which men from time immemorial have sought to induce the return of an ample supply of food and water.

We have seen that the Greek poets of the Old Comedy burlesqued the commonplaces about the golden age. The stories of the golden age came first and the comic accounts followed, being inventions of the literary mind. But the poets in inventing rivers of broth flowing by the couches may themselves have been drawing on an old folk tradition. This is the suggestion put forward by Campbell Bonner in "Dionysiac Magic and the Greek Land of Cokaigne."⁶ He argues that the motif of the rivers of wine in the Cokaygne fantasy may have had its origin in the Dionysiac vegetation rites such as the one described in The Bacchanals. In Euripides' play the celebrants make the earth flow with wine, milk and honey. The herdsman describes the rites performed by the frenzied women:

One grasped her thyrsus-staff, and smote the rock,
And forth upleapt a fountain's showering spray:
One in earth's bosom planted her reed-wand,
And up therethrough the God a wine-fount sent:
And whoso fain would drink white-foaming draughts
Scarred with their finger-tips the breast of earth,
And milk gushed forth unstinted: dripped the while
Sweet streams of honey from their ivy-staves.⁷

Jane Harrison's interpretation of these lines is interesting

⁶Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association, XLI (1910), 175-185.

⁷Euripides: Plays, trans. A. S. Way, Loeb Classical Library, III (London, 1950), 61, lines 704-711.

for the light it throws on the Dionysiac ritual as a fertility rite. The frenzied Bacchantes are celebrating on Mount Cithaeron the rite of the New Birth, in which the child approaching manhood must die (that is, leave his mother) and be born again. They are the mothers and nurses of the holy child who has now grown to be a young man. That young man is Dionysus. He embodies the spirit of the holy bull, symbol of fertility. The mothers, then, as the bearers of young men, are the givers of life and they have the power to make the earth yield its fruits. Wine, water, milk and honey spring from the rocks at the touch of their wands.⁸

One can see how legends about miraculous streams might grow from cults such as this. Through mimesis which may be an act of magic the people seek to ensure the return of an ample supply of food and water. And as they simulate the rush of wine or of milk or honey they utter the mythos, the spoken words which accompany the acted rite. Eventually they will cease to believe in the rite, but they will continue to utter the words.⁹ Words such as these would be handed down from generation to generation and would supply the popular imagination with material for a fable of a land of peace and plenty where the toil-driven peasant might lie on his back beside a river of wine and let the food drop into his mouth.

⁸Themis, a Study of the Social Origins of Greek Religion (Cambridge, Eng., 1912), pp. 39-42.

⁹Ibid., pp. 327-330.

In one of the dialogues of Lucian, the familiar Cokaygne motifs are directly associated with the Saturnalia, the pagan festival of sowing. The Greeks thought that the golden age had flourished in the Age of Kronos and they compared this time of peace and leisure with their own age of strife and toil, the Age of Zeus. Kronos was a pre-Hellenic deity and he seems to have been regarded as a harvest god, a daemon-king who belonged to the earth and its seasons, not like Zeus a king of the skies.¹⁰ His festival was the Kronia, the precursor of the Roman Saturnalia, and some idea of the character of the festivities may be found in the Saturnalia of Lucian. The Kronos of Lucian's dialogue, caricatured as a gouty old man, describes what is allowed at his festival:

What I may do is drink and be drunk,
shout, play games and dice, appoint
masters of the revels, feast the servants,
sing stark naked, clap and shake, and
sometimes even get pushed head-first into
cold water with my face smeared with soot.¹¹

Kronos reigns for seven days, and during this time there is a general relaxation of restraints. Slaves sit down at table with their masters and everyone drinks the same wine. Kronos tells us that he takes over sovereignty for this brief time to remind men what life was like in his reign. It was a time

when everything grew for them without sowing
and without ploughing--not ears of wheat, but
loaves ready-baked and meats ready-cooked.

¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 495-496.

¹¹ Trans. K. Kilburn, Loeb Classical Library, VI (London, 1959), p. 91.

Wine flowed like a river, and there were springs of honey and milk; for everyone was good, pure gold. This is the reason for my short-lived dominion, and why everywhere there is clapping and singing and playing games, and everyone, slave and free man, is held as good as his neighbour.¹²

Lucian thinks of the golden age as a time when loaves came ready-baked and meats ready-cooked. At the Saturnalia the people re-enacted that time, perpetuating the primitive orgiastic rites by which an agrarian people had hoped to exert an influence on the fertility of the seed.¹³

Shrovetide and Lenten Carnival and the Feast of Fools go back ultimately to some such period of license and ritual as the Saturnalia.¹⁴ That Shrove Tuesday had a ritual significance for English country people is confirmed by an entry in a Book of Knowledge, dated 1703: "On Shrove Tuesday, whosoever doth plant or sow, it shall remain always green: how much the sun did shine that day, so much shall it shine every day in Lent"¹⁵

A relationship may be established between Cokaygne and these folk festivals with their remote ritual origins. In Germany in the fifteenth century, Fastnachtspielen, usually performed at Shrovetide, contain Schlaraff characters and deal with an

¹²Ibid., p. 99.

¹³Sir James George Frazer, The New Golden Bough, ed. Theodor H. Gaster (New York, 1959), pp. 559-560.

¹⁴Ibid., pp. 566-570.

¹⁵John Brand, Observations on the Popular Antiquities of Great Britain, rev. Sir Henry Ellis (London, 1890).

abundance of food and lazy living.¹⁶ Cokayne and Carnival are further linked by traditional games involving the mât de cocagne. A sixteenth century Flemish painting shows a circle of people dancing around a tall pole topped with things to eat.¹⁷ That it was a Lenten holiday custom is suggested by the record of a similar event which took place in Naples on the Thursday before Lent. At that time a pyramid decked with geese, sausages and other foods was carried in procession through the streets. This cuccagna was then abandoned to the people for them to enjoy.¹⁸ Climbing a greased pole to win a prize at the top is still a traditional holiday stunt and that greased pole is the mât de cocagne.¹⁹ Speaking of the connection between the traditional Shrovetide games and ancient sacrificial rites, Chambers suggests that the prize at the top of the pole was originally a sacrificial victim which, buried in a field, would bring abundant crops to the owner.²⁰

We have seen how a reversal of status in the midst of abundance characterized the Saturnalia as described by Lucian. The

¹⁶Ackermann, pp. 83-84.

¹⁷"Nasentanz zu Gumpelsbrunn" by Nicolaus Mildemann, reproduced by Ackermann, p. 59, from Louis Maeterlinck, Le Genre satirique dans la Peinture flamande (Bruxelles, 1903).

¹⁸Bolte and Polívka, III, 248.

¹⁹"mat élevé, lisse et glissant, au sommet duquel sont suspendus des objets qu'il faut aller décrocher" (Nouveau petit Larousse illustré: Dictionnaire encyclopédique, sous la direction de Claude Augé et Paul Augé [Paris, 1924], s.v. "cocagne").

²⁰Chambers, I, 148-149.

slave sat down at table and was served by his master and drank his wine. Normal rules of decorum were abandoned and general license prevailed. We may see the same theme in a medieval church festival, the Feast of Fools, which was essentially a folk festival.²¹ "The ruling idea of the feast," observes E. K. Chambers, "is the inversion of status, and the performance, inevitably burlesque, by the inferior clergy of functions properly belonging to their betters."²² At this time the lower clergy elected one of their own as pope or bishop to lead them in their profane celebrations. The feast began at Vespers with the singing of a line from the Magnificat: "He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree." During the singing of this line the leader of the revels was probably given the symbol of his new office, the baculus or staff used to conduct the choir. Deposuit became the symbolic utterance and "was hailed with inordinate repetition by the delighted throng of inferior clergy."²³ One Church decree aimed at curbing the exuberance of the lower clergy at this time stated that deposuit was not to be sung more than five times.²⁴

We have a typical description of the antics of the ecclesiasts in a letter of censure which an outraged theologian addressed to

²¹Ibid., pp. 325-327.

²²Ibid., p. 326. Morton, pp. 21-24, uses Chambers' description of the Feast of Fools to establish a connection between Cokaygne and the folk festival.

²³Chambers, I, 278.

²⁴Ibid., p. 277.

his bishop in 1445:

Priests and clerks may be seen wearing masks and monstrous visages at the hours of office. They dance in the choir dressed as women, panders or minstrels. They sing wanton songs. They eat black puddings at the horn of the altar while the celebrant is saying mass. They play dice there. They cense with stinking smoke from the soles of old shoes. They run and leap through the church, without a blush at their own shame. Finally they drive about the town and its theatres in shabby traps and carts; and rouse the laughter of their fellows and the bystanders in infamous performances, with indecent gestures and verses scurrilous and unchaste.²⁵

The theologian's letter echoes the account given by Lucian's Kronos of his Saturnalia. It also echoes that passage already quoted from the Gambler's Mass of the goliards.²⁶ That profane mass reads like a boisterous reply to any reforming churchman who might try to do away with the festivities: "Ego sum abbas Cucaniensis et consilium meum est cum bibulis, et in secta Decii mea voluntas est,"²⁷ Chambers suggests that the goliards probably did take part in the Feast of Fools, and that it was they who provided the wit and ingenuity.²⁸ One might almost imagine that this mock abbot of Cokaygne had at some time been handed the baculus and led his vicars in chanting deposuit more than five times.

²⁵Cited in translation by Chambers, I, 294 from a letter by a member of the faculty of the University of Paris.

²⁶See above, p. 39.

²⁷The Latin original of this part of the Gambler's Mass is given by Ackermann, pp. 41-42.

²⁸I, 326.

In the English Mummers' Play the Cokaygne fantasy again appears. It has come down to the twentieth century from early times, though records of its performance do not appear until the beginning of the fifteenth century when gentry like the Pastons gave their patronage to the players.²⁹ We cannot know how closely, if at all, the plays as we know them today resemble those in which Sir John Paston's man played the part of St. George. We have already noted, however, the persistence and vitality of the Cokaygne motifs and so it is not unreasonable to suppose that these motifs did occur in the early plays. Even if they did not, their occurrence in the versions we know today is still a matter of interest.

A regular feature of the performance is a stereotyped nonsense patter delivered by the grotesque supernumeraries in the second part of the play. In the Weston-sub-Edge Play from Gloucestershire two of these stock characters, Beelzebub and Jack Finney, deliver a typical recital. Beelzebub speaks first in this vein:

I went on a bit further, I came to a little
big house, I knocked at the door and the maid
fell out. She asked if I could eat a cup of
her cider and drink a hard crust of her bread.

And so on. Jack Finney then speaks:

Now my lads we've come to the land of
plenty, rost stones [*sic*], plum puddings,
houses thatched with pancakes, and little
pigs running about with knives and forks
stuck in their backs crying 'Who'll eat
me, who'll eat me?'³⁰

²⁹R. J. E. Tiddy, The Mummers' Play (Oxford, 1923), p. 91.

³⁰Ibid., p. 168. Discussed by Morton, pp. 20-21.

The Cokaygne motif appears in a number of other plays in the Tiddy collection, usually in connection with a nonsensical journey in a topsy-turvy land.³¹ Grimm's Das Märchen vom Schlaraffenland is based on this same motif. Grimm derived his story from a thirteenth century tale which consists of a recital of impossibilities--a plough ploughing without a horse, a legless man running, etc.--in a land where hot waffles grow on linden trees and honey flows in streams.³²

We have seen, then, that Carnival and Cokaygne go together. In the Shrovetide games the mât de cocagne contributes to the fun. In the Feast of Fools the mock abbot leads the revels in the roistering manner of the abbot of Cokaygne. The Cokaygne theme appears also in the Fastnachtspielen and Mummers' Play with their remote ritual origins. Clearly the Cokaygne idea is associated with those periods of license which have their origin in the pagan rites through which man in earliest times attempted to exercise some control over the natural forces on which his food supply depended. It is a fantasy, moreover, which gives expression to a robust folk humour. Nevertheless, there is an element of genuine desire in it, a desire to recreate the golden age here on earth.

³¹Sapperton, p. 171; Longborough, pp. 181, 183; Lower Heyford, p. 219; Ilmington, p. 226; Kempford, p. 252.

³²Ackermann, pp. 6, 143-144.

Chapter V

UTOPIA, ANTI-UTOPIA
AND THE LAND OF COKAYGNE

The folk celebrations I have been describing could very well have been the starting point among the common people of dreams of a better world. One may think of the Cokaygne dream as an escape from reality. But a dream is also a projection of the world as we would like it to be, an imitation of some ideal form.¹ Looked at in this way, the re-creation of the golden age in the Cokaygne fantasy becomes, not an anodyne for present misery, but a positive expression of man's desire for a better life. The Land of Cokaygne for all its gaiety preserves this serious, positive meaning. And so it is possible to suggest that this Middle English poem with its insistence on the good life for all is a primitive folk utopia.

One of the few people to interpret The Land of Cokaygne in this way is A. L. Morton in the first chapter of The English Utopia. He sees the poem as the first English utopia, "the beginning of a dialectical growth of the conception of Utopia" (p. 33). I agree that the poem does contain the germ of the utopian ideal, though I think it unlikely that there is a direct line of descent between it and the utopia. Morton stresses the utopian aspect of the poem, treating the work as social history rather than as literature. Such an emphasis distorts the poem

¹Frye, pp. 183-184.

and exaggerates its significance as a poem of social content. Cokaygne is one thing. The Land of Cokaygne is another. Cokaygne could indeed be described as "the Utopia of the hard-driven serf" (p. 14), and the relationship which I have established between Cokaygne and certain primitive agrarian rites gives support to this description. But I have also demonstrated that the poet uses the Cokaygne motifs with a conscious literary purpose to make fun of the earthly paradise. Always keeping this satiric purpose in mind, we may study the poem further for that utopian element which gives it greater strength and life. Burlesquing the earthly paradise, he offers a vision of his own. This is by no means the apocalyptic vision of a New Jerusalem in England's green and pleasant land, for this poet is, as Chaucer might have said, "betwixen earnest and game." The balance is a delicate one, the utopian element providing the tension in the poem. It seems to me that Morton, in making use of the sentence for his own argument, has made a social document out of a poem in which there is much solas and thus destroyed this balance.

It is very easy to make a social document out of this poem. One is tempted first of all to make assumptions about the social awareness of the anonymous poet. But here a good deal of caution is necessary. If he were indeed a wandering scholar, he would belong to a class who would hold the peasant in contempt. The Church had a low opinion of peasants, whom it thought to be little better than beasts, cunning and sly and incapable of the finer

feelings.² The clerk shared this attitude. Goliardic parodies of prayers and offices sometimes ended with a prayer against the peasants, asking that "we may live of their labours, enjoy their wives, and rejoice in their mortification."³ The humorous Peasants' Catechism by a scholar of the University of Vienna (fifteenth century) repeats this prayer and further echoes the scorn of the clerk for the rustic:

What part of speech is peasant [rusticus]?--
 a Noun.--What sort of noun?--Jewish.--Wherefore?
 --Because he is as silly and ugly as a Jew
 What gender?--The asinine gender; for in all his
 deeds and works he is ever like unto an ass
⁴

The poet of L'Ordre de Bel Ayse expressly excludes peasants from his happy society of monks and nuns:

Mes a ribaldz e a pesauntz
 Est l'ordre del tot defendu.

(20-22).

They would be a disgrace to the order, for they have no more moderation than the wolf who devours lambs (27-28). This poem, contemporary with The Land of Cokaygne, could also very well have been written by a clerk. Even if the reference to peasants is part of the satire against lamb-eating monks, it still illustrates a prevalent attitude toward the rustic. Humanitarian sympathy toward the downtrodden is a modern phenomenon. Langland

²G. G. Coulton, The Medieval Village (Cambridge, Eng., 1925), pp. 231-252.

³MacCulloch, Medieval Faith and Fable, p. 282.

⁴Cited by Coulton, The Medieval Village, p. 235.

utters a compassionate cry for the poor folk in hovels, but for the most part the medieval writer finds the peasant a distasteful creature unworthy of his sympathy.⁵

With these reservations, I nevertheless think that there is a real sense in which the Cokaygne poet does speak with the voice of the common man. What he has experienced himself or what he sees around him he universalizes, and so we hear him interrupting his humorous description of paradise with a comment which reveals his sense of social injustice:

Fluren cakes bep þe schingles alle,
of cherche, cloister, boure, and halle;
þe pinnes bep fat podinges--
rich met to prince₃ and kinges.
man mai þer-of et ino₃,
al wiþ riȝt and noȝt wiþ wo₃.
al is commune to ₃ung and old,
to stoute and sterne, mek and bold.

(57-64).

What we have here is the dream of a better life in a time when men shall enjoy the fruits of the earth without toil. This is the utopian theme of the poem and it is stated clearly near the beginning:

In cokaigne is met and drink,
wiþ-vte care, how, and swink.

(17-18).

And again, later in the poem:

Nis no spech of no drink;
ak take ino₃ wiþ-vte swink.

(111-112).

⁵Ibid., p. 252.

What is being stressed here, as Morton points out (p. 17), is not so much laziness as the desire to obtain the means of subsistence without that excessive and unremitting toil which was the lot of the poor. In The Land of Cokaygne joy and bliss comes from three square meals a day:

De met is trie, þe drink is clere,
to none, russin, and sopper.

(19-20).

In the comic satire, The Vox and the Wolf, the Cokaygne ideal of abundance without swink is repeated in almost the same words. Reynard tricks the wolf into descending into a well by describing to him the paradise which exists at the bottom:

Her is þe blisse of paradīs;
Her ich mai euere wel fare,
Wip-uten pine, wip-uten kare;
Her is mete, her is drinke,
Her is blisse wip-uten swinke;
Her nis hounger neuermo,
Ne non oþer kunnes wo.⁶

The description of paradise has evidently been reduced to a stereotype, and it might seem at first that "wip-vte swink" is one of those meaningless tags which the medieval poet used to fill out his verse. But Kenneth Sisam reminds us that

. . . these tags, more or less emptied of meaning through common use, and ridiculous by modern standards, have their importance in the economy of spoken verse, where a good voice carried them off. They helped out the composer in need of a rime; the reciter on his feet, compelled to improvise; and the audience who, lacking the reader's privilege to linger over close-packed lines, welcomed familiar turns that by diluting the sense

⁶Early Middle English Texts, ed. Bruce Dickins and R. M. Wilson, 3rd ed. rev. (London, 1956), p. 66, lines 140-146.

made it easier to receive.⁷

The Cokaygne poet's closing address to the "lordinges gode and hend" indicates that he had an audience listening to him. We have already noted passages in the poem in which the poet seemed to be improvising on the theme of paradise. We have also noted his underlying seriousness. Taking these things into consideration, we may reasonably conclude that the phrase, "wip-vte swink," is a convenient but not at all meaningless tag which does indeed "dilute the sense" and make it easier to receive.

The undiluted sense of this tag may be found in another poem contemporary with The Land of Cokaygne. Life in the Middle Ages was made precarious by famine, pestilence and war, and poor folk, whether farm labourers or town dwellers, were engaged in a constant struggle for survival.⁸ The Song of the Husbandman⁹ will give us some idea of what that struggle was like and reveal also the bitterness that was felt because rich food was for princes and kings.

The husbandman tells us in his song that the rye has rotted in the field because of bad weather. He complains that he is at the mercy of the manorial officers: hayward, woodward and bailiff all extort money from him. Added to these grievances is the

⁷ "Introduction," Fourteenth Century Verse and Prose, ed. Kenneth Sisam, 3rd ed. rev. (Oxford, 1955), p. xxxix.

⁸ For an account of the sufferings of the medieval peasant in times of famine see G. G. Coulton, Medieval Panorama, The English Scene from Conquest to Reformation (Cleveland, 1955), pp. 92-93.

⁹ Historical Poems, pp. 7-9.

heavy taxation. The foreign wars of Edward I had placed a heavy burden on the people, and the husbandman tells of how the beadle comes and roughly demands silver for the king:

"greyþe me seluer to the grene wax;
þou art writen y my writ, þat þou wel wost!"
mo þen ten siþen told y my tax.

(38-40).

As a final indignity the beadle stays for dinner and the husbandman must produce roast hen, salmon and lamprey for his unwelcome guest. To pay his taxes he must sell his seed grain, his corn while it is still green, his cattle, even his halberd and axe. As good to perish at once, he concludes bitterly, as to waste away in unremitting labour: "ase god in swynden anon as so forte swynke" (72). The injustice of it rankles. The poor are robbed of the fruits of their labour, and ultimately must perish in sweat and toil:

þus me pileþ þe pore, þat is of lute pris.
nede in swot and in swynk swynde mot swo.

(19-20).

The husbandman is one of those whom Langland saw in that plain full of people one morning in May, sweating at the plough to produce food for gluttons to waste.

The Cokaygne poet does not express the intense bitterness of the husbandman or the indignation of Langland in his poem. Nevertheless he conveys clearly his sense of social injustice, and in presenting his equalitarian paradise he could be speaking for just such a one as the husbandman or Langland's poor country folk who live in hovels. In Cokaygne everyone, not just princes

and kings, can enjoy the fish and meat pasties, the flour cakes and fat puddings. This much is explicit statement. What is implicit in this enumeration of good things to eat is the "attempree diet" of poor folk like Chaucer's widow--milk and brown bread and sometimes an egg or two (NPT, 2844-45). Or the meagre fare with which Langland's Piers Plowman must satisfy himself--two loaves of beans and bran, a few curds of cream, an oatcake and two green cheeses.¹⁰ Fat puddings for princes and kings, and roast goose for monks and nuns, but what for the rest of the folk? A farthing's worth of cockles and mussels perhaps.¹¹

Spices were another luxury far beyond the reach of the common people. Chaucer, describing the simple diet of his poor widow, says, "Of poynaunt sauce hir neded never a deel" (NPT, 2834). We may also read of another mediæval housewife, the child wife of the Goodman of Paris, who received careful instructions from her husband on how to season many a sauce with ginger, cinnamon, cloves and nutmegs to accompany a dish of eel reversed or a rosee of young rabbits, larks and small birds. The Goodman, however, could afford a dinner for a meat day served in thirty-one dishes and six courses, beginning with veal pasties and

¹⁰Piers Plowman, in Fourteenth Century Verse, p. 88, lines 275-278 (B-text, Passus VI).

¹¹William Langland, The Visions of William Concerning Piers the Plowman . . . , ed. Walter W. Skeat, EETS, OS, 53 (London, 1873), Passus X, 94-95 (C-text). For the full passage describing the miseries of the poor, see lines 71-98.

black puddings and ending with pears and comfits and hippocras.¹² In Cokaygne the spices which the rich use as a matter of course every day are all to be found on one splendid tree. And from this tree--root, branch, bark, fruit and flower--one may gather the precious spices of the east as readily as one does cabbages and apples in a kitchen garden.

The poet's sense of social injustice is felt most strongly in the closing lines of the poem in which he employs, in mock-heroic style, the motif of the barrier of swine's dirt. Perhaps, after all, this motif had its origin in the mock-heroic, the comic burlesque which the folk had invented as their version of the pains of purgatory and hell. But this is only speculation. Whatever its origins, the motif is here intended as a seven-year test of patience, humility and endurance, with the final reward the bliss of paradise. As a cynical comment on the Christian doctrine of compensation in the after life these lines have a modern analogue in The Preacher and the Slave, an I.W.W. song which became the marching song of the unemployed in Canada and the United States in the nineteen thirties:

Long-haired preachers come out ev'ry night
Try to tell you what's wrong and what's right.
But when asked how bout something to eat,
They will answer with voices so sweet.

You will eat, bye and bye,
In that glorious land above the sky.

¹²"The Good Wife," The Portable Medieval Reader, ed. James Bruce Ross and Mary Martin McLaughlin (New York, 1949), pp. 159-160.

Work and pray, live on hay
 You'll get pie in the sky when you die.¹³

The derision and sense of grievance in this song echoes the feeling of the closing lines of The Land of Cokaygne:

Whose wl com þat lond to,
 ful grete penance he mot do:
 Seue 3ere in swine-is dritte
 he mote wade, wol 3e iwitte,
 al anon vp to þe chynne,
 so he schal þe lond winne.

(177-182).

Medieval preachers did hold out the promise of a "sweet bye and bye" in the earthly paradise. To the Cokaygne poet such a promise is "pie in the sky." And in the meantime, it is understood, the "swynk" and "swot" must be endured.

The poet ends with an admonition to his listeners to seize the opportunity to fulfil this penance, else they will never reach the country of Cokaygne:

Lordinges gode and hend,
 mot 3e neuer of world wend,
 fort 3e stond to 3ure cheance
 and fulfille þat penance,
 þat 3e mote þat lond i-se;
 and neuer-more turn a-3e.

(183-1888).

If the poet is addressing members of the nobility, he may, as Morton suggests (p. 18), be humorously advising his listeners that it is harder for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of Cokaygne than for a camel to go through the eye of a needle. If, on the other hand, he has an audience of poor country folk, the final

¹³American Song Bag, ed. Carl Sandburg (New York, 1927), p. 222.

admonition is richly ironic. In adjuring them to seize their opportunity to surmount the toilsome barrier which bars them from Cokaygne, he is implying that they have some other choice than a whole lifetime of this kind of penance.

I have said that The Land of Cokaygne is the first English utopia, but I do not mean by this that it may be classed with the ideal commonwealths of More, Bacon and Morris and other utopian writers by virtue of any system proposed or plan adopted for bringing about perfect conditions. What The Land of Cokaygne does have in common with these works is its insistence on physical well-being and happiness, on "met and drink/wip-vte care, how and swink." For what are the ubiquitous roast goose and the pig with a knife in its back but age-old symbols of the good life without fear of want? The writers of utopias wanted to make the roast goose a reality. This was the problem which presented itself to them. What was needed was a plan to make the dream of happiness come true. If society were regulated in a certain way, if people were required to behave in a certain way, economic equality and justice would prevail and at the same time, spiritual well-being and peace throughout the land.

More's plan has an austerity which relates it more to the monastery than to Cokaygne.¹⁴ The inhabitants of Utopia enjoy a life of comfort and well being by adherence to their own Benedictine Rule.¹⁵ There is time for work, time for study, time for

¹⁴Citations from More in my text are from Utopia, trans. and ed. H. V. S. Ogden (New York, 1949).

¹⁵Cf. Marie-Louise Berneri, Journey through Utopia (London, 1950), p. 55.

pleasure. Clothing is plain and simple (p. 33). Indeed, ostentatious adornment is scorned and gold and silver are held in contempt (pp. 43-45). Children are quiet and mannerly, women are upright and obedient, men are wise and stern. They live together in a strict but benevolent patriarchy, all temperate, chaste, and industrious in the common good. And although More insists that Nature requires men to enjoy a life of pleasure, he is equally insistent that the dictates of Nature preclude as unwholesome any pastimes as ribald as those of Cokaygne. He punishes promiscuity and adultery severely (pp. 58-59), and disallows taverns, brothels and gaming houses (pp. 42, 51). And if he allows his Utopians to finish dinner with dessert, to have music with their meals, and burn incense and scatter perfumes (p. 41), he is only granting them those little amenities which a cultivated gentlemen of the sixteenth century enjoys.

And yet this treatise on the well-ordered life has something in common with the exuberant burlesque about Cokaygne and this is the utopian theme of "met and drink/wip-vte care, how and swink." Again and again More comes back to this idea:

When no one owns anything, all are rich.
What greater riches can there be than to
live cheerfully and serenely, free from
all anxieties, without worries about
making a living and unvexed by the complaints
of one's wife about money?

(p. 80).

There is much else in More's Utopia besides this concern for the physical well-being of the people. There are plans for penal and religious reform and satiric thrusts at the priesthood

and the nobility. But certainly one of the controlling ideas of the work is the Cokaygne theme of abundance without toil for the common people. It is around this theme that More devises his plan for a new society. To achieve this ideal he envisions nothing less than the abolition of private property and the complete re-organization of society so that the common good will be served in a true commonwealth. Four hundred years before the appearance of the welfare state, More called for special provision for the aged, nurseries for working mothers and free medical care for all citizens (pp. 40, 57). No longer would the lower classes toil that the Church, the aristocracy and the wealthy bourgeoisie might live in luxury. Everyone must share in the labour and work an allotted six hours a day. Nobody was to be exempt except the magistrates and certain learned men whose intellectual labours were needed more than the work of their hands (pp. 34-40, passim). But

Noone has to wear himself out with endless toil from morning till night, as if he were a beast of burden. Such a life, though it is the common life of workmen in all other countries is no better than a slave's.

(p. 34).

That a large section of the population should be condemned to a life of endless toil was a matter of deep concern to More and he felt the injustice of it strongly. The Cokaygne poet had stopped the traveller short at the gates of paradise before a barrier of social injustice. Two hundred years later More, speaking for the poor and oppressed, tears down that ignominious barrier, the purgatory of the poor. He is concerned in his

Utopia with a wrong to be righted and it is this sense of social injustice which gives emotional force to the theme which he shares with the Cokaygne poet of abundance without toil.

"Is it just," More asks in effect, "for economic inequality to prevail?" "Is it just for land to be enclosed for sheep farming and the tenants turned out to suffer want and degradation?" His language is coloured by his strong emotion:

As though forests and game preserves were not already taking up too much land, these worthy men turn all dwelling places and fields into a desert. So one covetous insatiable glutton, a veritable plague to his native country, may enclose many thousand acres of land together within one hedge. The tenants are turned out, and by trickery or main force, or by being worn out through ill usage, are compelled to sell their possessions. These miserable people, men, women, husbands, wives, orphans, widows, parents with little children, whole families, poor but numerous . . . are forced to move out.

(pp. 9-10).

He envisions a new society where, in the words of the Cokaygne poet, "al is commune to 3ung and old," and he looks back from that state, ideal in its justice to the England of his day:

What justice is there in this, that a nobleman, a goldsmith, a money-lender, or some other man who does nothing at all for a living or does something that is of no use to the public, lives a sumptuous and elegant life? In the meantime a servant, a driver, a blacksmith, or a farmer works as hard as a beast at labour so necessary that the commonwealth could not last a year without it. Yet they earn so poor a living and lead such miserable lives that their conditions seems worse than that of draft animals. Beasts do not work so incessantly and do not live much worse--in fact they live better--and they have no worries about the future.

But working men are burdened with
barren and fruitless toil, and live in
fear of want in their old age.

(p. 80).

More then launches into a tirade against the rich, accusing them of a conspiracy to oppress the poor: "With insatiable greed these wicked men divide among themselves the goods which would have been enough for all" (p. 81). Speaking for the "farmers, charcoal burners, servants, drivers and blacksmiths" (p. 80), More offers a new dream for the dream of Cokaygne. It is still nowhere; still, like Schlaraffenland, "drei meylen hinter Weynachten." But it ought to be somewhere. Justice demands it. In The Land of Cokaygne the sense of "ought" is only an overtone, a pervasive feeling made explicit in the sardonic closing lines. In Utopia it is the informing spirit of a new kind of dream for mankind of the abundant life without toil.

Many utopian writers have had the conviction that the realization of this dream would be just and desirable. They have been visionaries, but they have been planners too. "I will yet, to satisfy and please myself," says Richard Burton, "make an Utopia of mine own, a New Atlantis, a poetical commonwealth, in which I will freely domineer, build cities, make laws, statutes, as I list myself."¹⁶ Unfortunately, the laws and statutes of the utopian planners, which succeed so well in

¹⁶"An Utopia of Mine Own," The Quest for Utopia: An Anthology of Imaginary Societies, ed. Glenn Negley and J. Max Patrick (New York, 1952), p. 351; cf. Berneri, p. 4.

providing the equal distribution of goods and a just division of hours of labour, do not provide that spirit of vibrant life and freedom which is part of the abundance of Cokaygne. We have already noted how More provides for a strict adherence to rule in his utopia. Campanella decrees that in his City of the Sun the procreation of the race shall be controlled by eugenic laws.¹⁷ Andreas legislates for Christianopolis around stern Calvinistic moral standards.¹⁸ Gerrard Winstanley, having obtained economic freedom in his ideal commonwealth, and with it the moral freedom of men formerly in bondage to pride, hypocrisy, greed and fear, prudently establishes authoritarian safeguards for the protection of this state.¹⁹ H. G. Wells, deploring the lack of freedom in other utopias, makes a vast filing system the basis of one of his utopias.²⁰ It remains for a nineteenth century socialist to capture in his utopia the spirit of Cokaygne.²¹

In News from Nowhere,²² William Morris creates a green and pleasant land on the banks of the Thames where men, unspoiled by a restrictive environment, flourish in the climate of their natural goodness. Morris repeats the usual features of other

¹⁷The City of the Sun, cited in translation by Berneri, p. 97. For a discussion of the authoritarian nature of many utopias, see Berneri, pp. 3-8.

¹⁸Berneri, pp. 104-105.

¹⁹Ibid., pp. 170-171.

²⁰Ibid., pp. 5, 298-299.

²¹Morton, p. 171.

²²Citations from William Morris in my text are from News from Nowhere or an Epoch of Rest (London, 1910).

utopias. Private property has been abolished and with it the evils and tyrannies it engendered. The anarchy of production has been eliminated in a planned economy and goods are freely available to all in communal storehouses. Work is a very necessary part of life in this commonwealth and manual work is especially honored. Yet the spirit of News from Nowhere recreates that of the age-old dream of Cokaygne and of the Middle English poem as no other utopia has been able to do.

Morris speaks of an abundant and carefree life in his England of the nineteen sixties in terms which recall the golden age. It is childhood come again and it reminds the dreamer of the days when he was a happy child on a sunny holiday and had everything that he could think of (p. 152). He is a traveller sojourning in an "other world." Ellen is the fairy in the fairy garden and Dick and Clara the two lovers, but the dreamer is left out of the tale. "You had better consider that you have got the cap of darkness, and are seeing everything, yourself invisible," remarks Dick (p. 174).

As in the myths of the golden age and the Cokaygne fantasy, the sense of the abundant earth emerges. Partly this is achieved through the emphasis on work as a means of creative fulfillment. Man in this new society re-establishes that kinship with the natural world which he had lost in the industrial age. All are assured of material security through a system of production which allows every man to work at what he can do best. And so, as Hammond explains to Guest, "Thou shalt not steal," becomes "Thou shalt work in order to live happily" (p. 89). Swinging a

scythe in a hayfield becomes a rewarding work experience, a joyous expression of abundant physical energy. The haymakers, merry as starlings and gay in embroidered silks and white flannels, adorn the fields like brightly coloured tulips and celebrate the harvest (p. 173). For Morris, man is most himself, bright, beautiful and spiritually alive when he is physically shaping, employing, using the world of which he is a part and not merely contemplating it. Recalling the gaunt, toil-worn men and women in the hay-fields of his own England, Morris exclaims:

. . . How often had I longed to see the hay-fields peopled with men and women worthy of the sweet abundance of midsummer, of its endless wealth of beautiful sights, and delicious sounds and scents.

(p. 161).

Men and women rejoicing in the "sweet abundance of midsummer" and in the health and vigour of their own bodies--the picture is more idyllic than robust. Nevertheless it captures the essential spirit of Cokaygne of freedom and uninhibited delight in a world of sensuous pleasure.

More had insisted on the pleasures of the physical life but he made the praise of pleasure an intellectual statement only. In contrast, Morris evokes intense impressions of the sensual world--the texture of a beautiful garment, the warmth of sun-browned arms, the shape of a delicately carved pipe, the fragrance of new-mown hay. Other utopian writers only tell us how the ideal society will be administered. Morris tells us as well what it will be like to live at this new time and makes

us experience its felicity by describing for us that immemorial occupation of man as it will be when the golden age comes again:

As we went, the folk on the bank talked
indeed, mingling their kind voices with
the cuckoo's song, the sweet strong
whistle of the blackbirds, and the cease-
less note of the corn-crake as he crept
through the long grass of the mowing-field;
whence came waves of fragrance from the
flowering clover amidst of the ripe grass.

(p. 224).

The Archpoet of the goliards had felt this pleasure in the sensual world and the Cokaygne poet had felt it too. This is why his satire of the incontinence of the monks and nuns is so good-humoured. Here again are men and women rejoicing in the "sweet abundance of midsummer":

Whan þe someris dai is hote,
þe 3ung nunnes takip a bote
And doþ ham forþ in þat riuer,
boþe wip oris and wip stere.
whan hi bep fur fram þe abbei,
hi makip ham nakid forto plei,
and lepip dune in to þe brimme
and doþ ham sleilich forto swimme.

(151-158).

The playfulness of this passage and the one that follows describing the visit of the monks to the nuns removes any severe note of censure. Instead it is, as in The Voyage of Bran, "a beautiful game, most delightful," "without sin, without crime." I am not suggesting a parallel between the boisterous pastime of the monks and nuns and the quiet ardour of Dick and Clara's love affair. There is, however, a certain joie de vivre in these lines which contributes to the spirit of delight and freedom in the poem.

Ellen's grandfather in News from Nowhere complains that for his part he does not think much of heaven. He means that there is such a thing as too much happiness. "I think one may do more with one's life than sitting on a damp cloud and singing hymns," he observes tartly (p. 170). But the old carle has it wrong. Morris imagines heaven on earth to be a life of rich experience. The spirit of the new age will be

delight in the life of the world; intense
and overweening love of the very skin and
surface of the earth on which man dwells,
such as a lover has in the fair flesh of
the woman he loves . . .

(p. 147).

The Cokaygne poet, no more than Morris or the old grandfather wants to sit on a damp cloud and sing hymns. In his vision of the earthly paradise he, like Morris, sings this delight in the abundant life of the world.

In our own century in which technological advances have allowed man to fulfil his utopian dreams, the desirability of an ideal society "wip-vte care, how and swink" has been questioned. Like Ellen's grandfather we are inclined to view too much happiness with suspicion. The trend in modern literature has been towards the anti-utopia in which the perfectly regulated society is seen to produce a perfectly regulated man grotesque in his enslavement to the machine and the bureaucratic state. The Land of Cokaygne does not have anything to do with systems of society. But it does have to do with happiness, and it does not view happiness with suspicion. The spirit of the medieval

poem is alien to the spirit of the anti-utopia. The strong utopian element in The Land of Cokaygne may be measured by the distance between it and works with an anti-utopian message.

The writers of these anti-utopias are disenchanted with Cokaygne. They make of the wonderland an anti-Cokaygne, mistrusting happiness and taking a gloomy view of the perfectability of man. They give us another kind of writing in which man is seen to be degraded by luxury and ease, and solas and dedute are looked on with distrust.

A notable early example of the anti-utopia appears in Joseph Hall's Mundus Alter et Idem (c. 1605).²³ Burlesquing with huge gusto serious ideal commonwealths and contemporary travel literature, Bishop Hall, like another Magellan, discovers a new world in the southern seas bordering Terra del Fuego. Here in the great southern continent he finds Tenterbelly, Shee-landt, Moronia and Theevingen, four countries populated by gluttons, drunkards, shrews, fools, flatterers, thieves, hypocrites and rascals. It is a world of comic fantasy, a world the other and yet the same. It is, in fact, a satiric utopia. It is in the first section of this work that Hall gives us an anti-utopia in which Cokaygne becomes anti-Cokaygne.²⁴

With a mischievous fancy which puts to use the resources of a scholarly mind, he describes the country of Tenterbelly

²³The Discovery of a New World (Mundus Alter et Idem), trans. John Healey, c. 1609, ed. Huntington Brown (Cambridge, Mass., 1937). Citations from Hall's work in my text are from this book.

²⁴Discussed by Morton, pp. 25-26.

with its two provinces, Eat-allia and Drink-allia, and their cities, Flesh-pasty-nople, Idle-bergh and Carousi-kanikin (I am using the names assigned to Hall's Pamphagonia by his translator, John Healey). But unlike the poet of Cokaygne who allows us to savour the delights of the palate, Hall dwells on the gross physical effects of too much eating and drinking, evoking revulsion, not delight. In Tenterbelly there are no pinnacles of fat puddings or roofs of fine wheaten cakes. The cities here are double-walled with bones from carnival revellings and the houses are roofed with the shoulder bones of animals (pp. 25-26). The people are inhuman, deformed shapes which have never been quickened by spirit:

The whole sort of al these citizens
are generally of an vnmeasurable grose-
nesse (and seemed to mee when I sawe
them walke iust like so many tunnes,
mouing each vpon two pottle pots):
nor is that man worthy of any (the
meanest) salutation in the world, that
is not all cheekes to the belly, and
all belly to the knees: and such shapes
doe the women of this cittie walke in
also.

(p. 29).

They are Sloth and Gluttony become animate:

They loue venison dearely well, yet can
they not tell how to catch it: onely such
Deere as comes willingly amongst them,
those they entangle in netts and foyles, and
so take them. But the noble Swine, oh they
prize that beast aboue all that euer nature
produced: but whether it be because of
their sympathy of natures, being both fatally
consecrated to the table, or by reason that
the swine will feede on the coarsest meate,
and yet be soonest fedde, this I leaue to a

more iudicious Censor to determine.

(p. 31).

The monks of Cokaygne also wait for their food to come to them and in a sense the roast goose is a symbol of sloth and gluttony. But that same roast goose, censuring one class of people, puts forward the ideals of another, the Cokaygne ideal of the poor folk for abundance without toil.

The difference between the Mundus Alter et Idem and The Land of Cokaygne is ultimately that between the bishop²⁵ and the goliardic clerk. The bishop disapproves of luxury and dissipation. He is quite likely censuring the decadent life of the rich bourgeois and noble. Though he alludes to the farmer, he is obviously most concerned with "the ritcher sort":

They sup, they sleepe, they rise, they
dine, and they sup, and so round in a
ring, (vnlesse a little whoring now and
then chance to adde one dance more to
ye round.) . . . Their swine serue for
their plow-men (as they did whilom in
Aegipt) they vse no other husbandrie:
yet the ritcher sort haue attendants:
one to open the maisters eyes gently when
hee awaketh: another to fanne a coole
ayre whilest hee eateth, a third to put
in his viands when he gapeth, a fourth
to fit his girdle to his belly, as it
riseth and falleth, the maister onely
exerciseth but eating, digesting, and
laying out.

(p. 34).

²⁵ Hall was not a bishop when he wrote Mundus Alter et Idem, but we may take into account the observation of a contemporary, Peter Heylin, who describes the work as "a witty and ingenious invention of a Learned Prelate, writ by him in his younger dayes (but well enough becoming the austerity of the gravest head)." From the supplement to his Cosmographie (1660); cited by Huntington Brown, "Introduction," The Discovery of a New World, p. xxxiv.

The note of moral censure is very strong. The goliardic clerk, however, his pockets empty and his coat worn thin, approves of luxury and of "a little whoring now and then."

Hall's visceral country called Tenterbelly, with its St. All-Paunch, its Servants of the Maw and its Gulpers' Court is a long journey from the country of Cokaygne. The Land of Cokaygne is filled with the colour of roses and lilies, with the fragrance of garlic and cinnamon, the song of thrushes and nightingales, the shimmer of crystal pillars--everything to touch, and taste, smell and see. In Hall's new world we know that the trees must be fruit-bearing, that fish and game must abound in wood and stream, yet our impression is that the country is barren. There is nothing to delight us, but much to warn us of our sinful human nature.

Breugel the Elder gives us this same warning in his painting entitled "The Land of Cokaygne" (1567).²⁶ A soldier, a clerk and a peasant lie under a tree on whose trunk is placed so that it seems to grow there a circular table spread with the remains of a meal. Stupid with food and drink, the inert figures look as if they will never again pick up the implements of their calling which lie beside them--the flail, the lance and the book. A house shingled with cakes, a mobile egg with a spoon in it and a roast pig with a knife in its back remind us that they will never again have to make any effort. One interpretation of this painting suggests that it is a satire on the three principal social classes of the sixteenth century: "Probably he wished to

²⁶ A reproduction of this painting appears in Robert L. Delevoy, Breugel: A Historical and Critical Study, trans. Stuart Gilbert (Lausanne, 1959), p. 60.

satirize his compatriots too much addicted to good cheer and laziness, and to demonstrate, as was proved by the future, that too great a devotion to physical well-being would smother in them vigor and moral strength, and leave them ripe for oppression and tyranny."²⁷

What has happened to the Cokaygne theme is that it has been taken over by the moralists. By the time of Hall and Breugel the life of ease and abundance has become the life of sloth and gluttony. Three centuries after the writing of the Middle English poem, Cokaygne has taken on a pejorative meaning. In his Italian-English dictionary (1598), John Florio gives the English equivalent of the Italian Cocagna as "Lubberland."²⁸ The unfavourable connotations of the new word are illustrated in some lines from Ben Jonson's Bartholomew Fair (1614). Dame Purecraft admonishes her son for being tempted by the roast pig offered for sale at the fair. Littlewit replies:

Good Mother, how shall we find a pig if we
don't look about for't? Will it run off
o' the spit into our mouths, think you? as
in Lubberland and cry we we?²⁹

Roast pig is not to be had without working for it. A. L. Morton suggests that this attitude to Cokaygne may be connected with that of the new bourgeoisie who gained their wealth and prosperity by hard work and industry (p. 24).

²⁷ Cited by Ackermann, p. 57 from Maeterlinck.

²⁸ "Cockaigne," Encyclopaedia Britannica, 11th ed., Vol. VI.

²⁹ The Complete Plays of Ben Jonson (London, 1946), p. 212 (III.i). See NED s.v. "Lubberland."

The same disapproval of Cokaygne-Lubberland, he points out (pp. 26-27), may be found in Charles Kingsley's The Water Babies (1863). In this edifying tale Kingsley relates the history of the Doasyoulikes who came away from the country of Hardwork because they wanted to play on the Jew's harp all day long. They settled in the Land of the Readymade at the foot of the Happy-go-lucky Mountains where flapdoodle grows wild:

And they sat under the flapdoodle trees
and let the flapdoodle drop into their
mouths; and under the vines, and squeezed
the grape-juice down their throats; and,
if any little pigs ran about ready roasted,
crying 'Come and eat me,' as was their
fashion in that country, they waited till
the pigs ran against their mouths, and then
took a bite, and were content, just as so
many oysters would have been.³⁰

Once again, as in Hall's Mundus Alter et Idem, the anti-Cokaygne and the association of the Cokaygne theme with a sub-human condition. The Doasyoulikes suffered the process of evolution in reverse. Soft living and self-indulgence turned them back into beasts, and Kingsley draws this moral from their sad fate:

Meanwhile do you learn your lessons, and thank
God that you have plenty of cold water to wash
in; and wash in it too, like a true Englishman.
And then, if my story is not true, something
better is; and if I am not quite right, still
you will be, as long as you stick to hard work
and cold water.³¹

Thus does the Protestant ethic of thrift, industry and distrust of pleasure discredit the old myth of an imaginary land of plenty

³⁰In The Life and Works of Charles Kingsley, XIX (London, 1903), 139.

³¹Ibid., p. 202.

without labour.

Hall, Breugel and Kingsley warn us about the danger of Cokaygne. Anti-utopian writers like Swift, Huxley and Orwell also warn us about the danger of placing our faith in illusory hopes for a perfect society in which there shall be abundance without toil, life without struggle or pain. The Cokaygne of the folk and the utopia share the vision of Homer of the pleasant, fruitful land of Phaeacia:

Their fruit never fails nor runs short,
winter and summer alike. It comes at all
seasons of the year, and there is never a
time when the West Wind's breath is not
assisting, here the bud, and here the
ripening fruit; so that pear after pear,
apple after apple, cluster on cluster of
grapes, and fig upon fig are always coming
to perfection.³²

Ultimately the roast goose of Cokaygne and the everbearing tree of Homer's western land may both be used as metaphors for the abundant life. The utopians, one might say, are inspired by the vision of the wonderful tree. But the anti-utopians either have no such vision or reject it.

Swift had characterized Utopian Man in his satire on the Royal Society. For him the scientific schemes of the projectors are chimerical and unpractical and quite beyond the ability of imperfect man to achieve. The luxuriant trees which in Homer's Phaeacia had borne fruit twelve months in the year continue to yield abundantly in Bacon's New Atlantis, through the application

³²The Odyssey, trans. E. V. Rieu (Harmondsworth, Eng., 1946), p. 115 (Bk. VII).

of the scientists to the problems presented by nature. Here is Bacon's description of an orchard such as Homer imagined for Odysseus:

In these [orchards] we practise likewise all conclusions of grafting and inoculating, as well of wild-trees as fruit trees, which produceth many effects. And we make by art, in the same orchards and gardens, trees and flowers, to come earlier or later than their seasons, and to come up and bear more speedily than by their natural course they do; we make them also, by art, much greater than their nature, and their fruit greater and sweeter, and of differing taste, smell, colour, and figure, from their nature . . .³³

In Laputa, however, the scientists fail to work this wonder and the land is barren despite the great expectations of the learned scientists:

All the fruits of the earth shall come to maturity at whatever season we think fit to choose, and increase an hundred fold more than they do at present, with innumerable other happy proposals. The only inconvenience is, that none of these projects are yet brought to perfection; and in the mean time, the whole country lies miserably waste, the houses in ruins, and the people without food or clothes.³⁴

In his conviction of man's folly Swift does not share in the utopian aspiration for the abundant life.

Scientific planning has had no more success in Orwell's Oceania than it had in Laputa. In this utopia of 1984 mankind has regressed. The Ministry of Peace is engaged in continual war and the Ministry of Plenty rations food and small comforts.

³³Bacon's New Atlantis, ed. A. T. Flux (London, 1941), p. 34.

³⁴"A Voyage to Laputa," Gulliver's Travels, ed. John F. Ross (New York, 1948), p. 169.

Winston Smith, a misfit in the new technological society, recalls:

In any time that he could accurately remember, there had never been quite enough to eat, one had never had socks or underclothes that were not full of holes, furniture had always been battered and rickety, rooms underheated, tube trains crowded, houses falling to pieces, bread dark-colored, tea a rarity, coffee filthy-tasting, cigarettes insufficient--nothing cheap and plentiful except synthetic gin.³⁵

The description might well have served Swift in his account of the misfortunes visited on the people by the projectors. But they, bungling fools that they were, at least were well-meaning. Orwell's elite are power mad. They have put technology in the service of political oppression and tyranny, and destroyed in the people all capacity for "delight in the life of the world." Nor does Orwell have any hope they will ever regain what they have lost. Winston Smith, who did briefly behold the vision of the wonderful tree, is defeated. And Orwell no more than his defeated hero any longer has that vision.

In the same tradition as the anti-utopias of Swift and Orwell is Huxley's Brave New World. But Huxley's projectors, unlike those in Lagado and Oceania, have been successful; so successful that all those things which were dreamed of in Cokayne have become a reality. In a world where bottled babies are certified happy when decanted, where youth does not know it ages and malcontents may take a soma holiday from care, all is indeed solas and dedute. These people are able to sit under the flap-

³⁵George Orwell, Nineteen Eighty-Four (New York, 1949), p. 60.

doodle trees and let flapdoodle drop into their mouths. They are content as so many oysters might be. For Huxley, like Kingsley, sees how the human spirit deteriorates in the Land of the Readymade, where there is nothing to try its strength. Huxley demands the right to be unhappy, to suffer in body and spirit. Despising security, comfort, stability, love without sin and the easy gratification of desire he claims the right to a life of struggle. The Savage from outside the New World protests for him: "But I don't want comfort, I want God, I want poetry, I want real danger, I want freedom, I want goodness, I want sin."³⁶

The poet of Cokaygne would hear these words uncomprehending. "O brave new world that has such people in't." The right to suffer had never been in jeopardy in the Middle Ages. Christian asceticism was an accepted norm. Men, not knowing that they had been conditioned by heredity, environment and psychological and bio-chemical impulses still felt the pangs of guilt and remorse. And so at least part of the pleasure of Cokaygne was the pleasure of yielding to temptation. The life of game and solas, and the uninhibited life of sensual pleasures still seemed desirable. Huxley looks back from utopia to the world which a wandering scholar would like to leave behind, from a pagan industrial civilization based on self-indulgence to the austere world of Christian self-denial.

³⁶ Aldous Huxley, Brave New World (Harmondsworth, Eng., 1955), p. 187.

What Huxley and Orwell are really concerned about is man's soul and they create their wonderlands in the spirit of Hall's Tenterbelly and Kingsley's Land of the Readymade--in the spirit of anti-Cokaygne. Thomas More is concerned about man's soul too, but not in the same way. Pride, "the infernal serpent," prevents men from achieving the good life (p. 82). But the good life itself, as he thinks it ought to be realized, is the subject of his treatise and many of his utopian plans spring from a consideration of how contemporary economic problems may be solved. What is to be done about evicted tenant farmers and their families? How are the "farmers, charcoal burners, servants, drivers, and blacksmiths" to exist on their pitiful wages? Man's daily bread, the theme of Cokaygne with its roots in primitive seasonal ritual, is a theme taken up in one way or another by More and Morris and other utopians. It is also the theme of the Middle English poet who in game and pley gives us a poor folk's utopia.

EPILOGUE

A LIVING FOLK THEME

EPILOGUE: A LIVING FOLK THEME

Why does The Land of Cokaygne have a special appeal to the modern reader? I think it is at least partly the persistence and vitality of the folk theme it embodies which gives it this appeal. Recent years have seen a surge of interest in the folk song, and collectors have made the folk song a popular art. We have become more conscious too of the folk theme in literature. But even without the work of such people as Carl Sandburg, Allan and John Lomax and Charles and Ruth Seeger, the Cokaygne theme would still be familiar to a great many ordinary people in the twentieth century. Though it fell into disrepute among the moralists and preachers, it has persisted throughout the centuries as a fantasy which expresses the universal yearning for a carefree life of peace and plenty.

Even at the time when Ben Jonson refers contemptuously to Cokaygne as Lubberland, we may still find the Cokaygne theme in literature in its original carnival setting. In Dekker's Shoemaker's Holiday, the shoemaker becomes Lord Mayor and the Mayor sits down at the table with the shoemaker and his journey-men. The pancake bells ring for Shrove Tuesday and there is much feasting and drinking. "Let's feed and be fat with my lord's bounty," says Hodge. And Firk replies, ". . . There's cheer for the heavens: venison-pasties walk up and down piping-hot, like sergeants; beef and brewis comes marching in dry-fats,

fritters and pancakes come trowling in in wheelbarrows . . ."¹

A popular song printed sometime between 1685 and 1688 and entitled Invitation to Lubberland² also preserves the carefree Cokaygne theme without any moralizing. It is a boisterous account of a wonderful country across the sea where there is no landlord's rent to pay and each man is a freeholder. It goes to the tune of "Billy and Molly" or "The Journeyman Shoemaker." The language is not very elegant nor are the sentiments very elevated, and one can imagine with what gusto such a verse as this might have been sung at the village pub:

The king of knaves and Queen of sluts
reign there in peace and quiet;
You need not fear to starve your guts,
there is such store of diet.

(p. 161).

The song is worth looking at because it repeats so faithfully the motifs in The Land of Cokaygne. The streets are paved with pudding pies, powdered beef and bacon. The buildings are made from nutmegs, pepper, cloves and mace boiled in hasty pudding ingeniously carved and tied together with pancakes. Roast pig begging to be eaten, of course, and the wine is free:

The Captain says in every town
Hot roasted pigs will meet ye
They in the streets run up and down,
Still crying out come eat me;
Likewise he says at every feast
The very fowls and fishes
May from the biggest to the least
comes tumbling to the dishes.

¹Six Plays by Contemporaries of Shakespeare, ed. C. B. Wheeler (London, 1947), p. 74 (V.iv.229-237).

²Copied by Ackermann, pp. 160-162 from J. Ashton, Humour, Wit and Satire of the Seventeenth Century (London, 1883).

The rivers run with claret free
 The brooks with rich canary
 The ponds with other sorts of wine
 to make your hearts full merry;
 Nay more than this, you may behold
 the fountains flow with Brandy
 The rocks are like refined gold
 The hills are sugar candy.

(p. 161).

Mention of the hills of sugar candy in Lubberland brings us in one leap to the well-loved modern American folk song, The Big Rock Candy Mountains. I cannot presume to trace the Cokaygne theme in folk literature throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to the present day. I may confidently note, however, its survival in American folk literature. For that the theme remained very much alive among the emigrants to the New World, and is alive today, there can be no doubt. The closest analogue to The Land of Cokaygne is The Big Rock Candy Mountains. But the theme appears in other songs and stories too, untouched by any puritanical disapproval and still carrying the hopes of the poor man for his own utopia.

We have noted the inclusion of the Cokaygne theme in the Mummers' Play which the English villager has continued to perform into the twentieth century. English emigrants brought with them to America some such folk drama as this and with it the roast pig and pancakes of Cokaygne. In "Survivals of the Old Folk Drama in the Kentucky Mountains," Marie Campbell records a fragment of one of these plays. Aunt Susan of Caney Creek had recalled for her some lines which "her pap's pap used to say in

a 'piece of play-acting!':³

And I went on a bit further and I come to the land of plenty with stones of plum puddings, houses thatched with pancakes, and pigs running about saying, "Who will eat me, please?"⁴

The Cokaygne theme appears also in the Jack tales told by the southern mountain farmers of the United States. One of the story tellers, Boyd Bolling of Flat Gap, Virginia, has a long tale entitled The Forks of Honey River at the Foot of Pancake Mountain. In Richard Chase's adaptation of it, Jack is amazed to discover a bee tree so dripping with honey that it flows away in a creek:

"Now, ain't that a sight in the world!" says Jack, and he leaned back on a little tree to watch the bees fly and the honey run, and when he jarred that tree something started floppin' down on the ground around us.

I picked one up and looked at it, then I smelled of it, and then I tasted of it, then I says to Jack, "Fritter!"

"Surely not," says Jack.

"Pick one up and taste it," I told him.

So Jack tried one, and don't you know there we stood in a little grove of fritter-trees. They were the best fritters you ever tasted. We shook down a mess of 'em and dipped 'em in that honey creek and eat fritters and honey till we was nearly foundered.

And just about that time we heard a racket up above us, and here came a

³ Journal of American Folk Lore, LI (Jan.-March, 1938), 23.

⁴ Ibid., p. 24.

little roast pig runnin' out the bresh with
a knife and fork stuck in its back, a-squealing
to be eat. But we wasn't hungry by then, so
we ran it on back.⁵

The wonderful deeds of John Henry, the Negro folk hero,
are not without reference to the abundance of Cokaygne. One
story repeats the pancake-honey-roast pig motifs in a context
of humorous bravado (Morton, pp. 29-30).

Norwegian emigrants to Minnesota also brought with them
their own version of the Cokaygne song. Theodore C. Blegen and
Martin B. Ruud give its history in their collection of Norwegian
emigrant songs.⁶ In 1852, Ole Bull, the Norwegian violinist,
had founded a colony for his countrymen in Pennsylvania. The
venture failed, but the idealistic hopes of the founder and his
settlers were commemorated in 1853 by a Norwegian wit in the
satiric Oleana. Here are some of the verses:

In Oleana, that's where I'd like to be,
and not drag the chains of slavery in Norway.

In Oleana they give you land for nothing,
and the grain just pops out of the ground.
Golly, that's easy.

The grain threshes itself in the granary while
I stretch out at ease in my bunk.

And M^unchener beer, as sweet as Ytteborg's,
runs in the creeks for the poor man's delectation.

And the salmon, they leap like mad in the rivers,
and hop into the kettles, and cry out for a cover.

⁵The Jack Tales, ed. Richard Chase (Cambridge, Mass., 1953),
p. 159 and Appendix, sec. xvi, p. 199.

⁶Norwegian Emigrant Songs and Ballads, ed. and trans.
Theodore C. Blegen and Martin B. Ruud (Minneapolis, 1936), pp.
187-198.

And little roasted piggies rush about the streets,
politely inquiring if you wish for ham.⁷

The song was an immediate success in Norway. Among Norwegian settlers in America also it became a favourite folk song. But when they sang about grain threshing itself in the granary and roast pigs running about the streets, were they making fun of their dreams of paradise in Minnesota and Dakota, or were they, with the invincible optimism of the pioneer, projecting Oleana into the future?

The depression years inspired a militant version of the Cokaygne song, Poor Man's Heaven. A. L. Lloyd, a British collector of folk songs, has supplied the words.⁸ Here are three stanzas:

We'll run all the banks and shoot all the cranks
And we won't give a darn who we hurt
And the millionaire's son won't have so much fun
When we put him to shovelling dirt.

We'll take an old rail and open the gaol
And let all the poor men out quick,
And those blue-coated mugs we'll lock in the jug
And we'll give 'em their own bloody stick.

In Poor Man's Heaven we'll live at our ease,
No skilly and beans over there,
But we will be fed on breakfast in bed
And served by a fat millionaire.

The song describes a paradise for hungry men. Here again are the familiar Cokaygne motifs--the ham and egg trees, fountains

⁷Ibid., pp. 192-193. See also The Folk Songs of North America in the English Language, ed. Alan Lomax (London, 1960), pp. 88-89. The history of the song is given on p. 77.

⁸Personal letter, Oct. 1, 1963. Mr. Lloyd has also provided the results of his research into the origin of this song which here follows.

of beer and "strawberry pie that's twenty foot high/And whipped cream they bring in a truck." But that sense of grievance which was only an undercurrent in The Land of Cokaygne is here the dominant theme. The language is crude and violent and probably does express the hostility of the great numbers of unemployed at this time. One notes that in the eyes of the poor, shovelling dirt is still the ultimate ignominy.

Searching for the origin of this song, Mr. Lloyd traced it to an American singer of the type of song known as the "western." Carson J. Robison copyrighted Poor Man's Heaven as his own composition in 1930 and made a recording of it. Lloyd suggests that he may have re-worked a song that was current at the time, possibly an I.W.W. song. (He had re-worked other "Wobbly" songs). The suggested connection with the I.W.W., the union of the migrant worker is not improbable, for this song with its reference to skilly and beans, Pullman berths and policemen with sticks suggests the migrant worker who rode the rods in search of work and camped out in a hobo jungle.

The song does not seem to have been well-known in Canada and the United States, however, even though it was recorded again in the 1940's by "Cowboy" Dallas Turner. But the theme of the poor man's heaven being quite imperishable, the song turns up again in England, sung by two farm labourers in a pub called the Eel's Foot in Eastbridge, Suffolk. Mr. Lloyd recorded it here in 1937, one of the worst years of the depression. The two singers said they had learned it from an old cylinder phonograph record.

We said earlier that Cokaygne belongs to the folk and now we know who some of the folk are. They are descendants of Negro slaves and they are emigrants from Norway. They are mountain farmers of the southern states, like Aunt Susan of Caney Creek and her grandpap, and Boyd Bolling of Flat Gap, Virginia; popular singers like Carson Robison and "Cowboy" Dallas Turner; and, across the sea again, farm labourers like T. Cook and J. Brightwell in Eastbridge, Suffolk.

To these must be added the name of Harry McClintock, the hobo jongleur who claims the authorship of The Big Rock Candy Mountains. In American Folk Songs of Protest, John Greenway gives some details about his life which illuminate the origins of the song.⁹ McClintock was a young "busker" or tramp entertainer who spent some of his early years "riding the rods" from town to town and singing for hand-outs. Later he joined the I.W.W. as one of its first singers and played an E-flat baritone horn in its first band. McClintock himself has told how he began his career as a "busker." It was in a saloon in New Orleans just before the turn of the century. A group of English sailors were having a sing-song and invited him to join in. He reports:

Somehow I dropped the information that I had hoboed into New Orleans and expected to resume my wanderings as soon as the weather got warmer. Their interest was flattering and I am afraid that I loaded them with some pretty tall tales about hobo life. They kept dropping coins into my pockets at odd intervals and I woke up next morning with nearly four bucks in

⁹New York, 1960, pp. 174, 197-204.

small change. So when I hit the road again I was no longer a moocher of poke-outs at back doors; well, anyway, not exclusively. In a strange town I searched for sounds of "revelry by night" and there were few saloon crowds that would refuse to listen to a kid who wanted to sing.

(Cited by Greenway, p. 200).

The Big Rock Candy Mountains had its origin in the seamier side of hobo life. McClintock knew how the "jockers" or experienced tramps used to describe in glowing terms the life of the road and thus recruit apprentices from the youngsters who played around the jungles of the railroad yards. He wrote The Big Rock Candy Mountains as a parody of one of these "ghost stories." In the original version, the "jocker" lures the boy into joining him on the road with his story of

• • • the bees in the cigarette trees,
And the soda water fountain
And the lemonade springs where the blue bird sings.
In the Big Rock Candy Mountains.

(Cited by Greenway, p. 203).

One wonders from what source McClintock had his inspiration for his Cokaygne song. Alan Lomax suggests as possible sources several Spanish-American analogues. Among them is the Mexican song about the "City of I Don't Know Where," which celebrates roast duck flying about and churches made of sugar. "Was it," asks Lomax, "a Mexican or a Scandinavian hobo who told these wonder tales at the hobo jungle fire where the road kid McClintock was listening? Or did these old Utopian motives come from English, Celtic, or German sources? Since the folk fantasy of the roast pig running about squeaking 'Eat me' was common to the whole of

hungry West Europe, we shall probably never know."¹⁰

Despite its unsavoury origins, The Big Rock Candy Mountains is now sung around the family piano and is included in many folk song anthologies. What happened to McClintock's song was that the people changed the words to suit themselves. Of this change Alan Lomax says, "Fifty years of re-working by other balladeers have obscured the raw irony of McClintock's original song, but have graced it with age-old Utopian fantasies which inspired the song Oleana."¹¹ It became, not the song of the "jocker," but the song of the hobo looking for that land "bi west spayngne." In a number of different versions it became a favourite song of the depression years. People sang Hallelujah, I'm a Bum (another of McClintock's songs), and Joe Hill's The Preacher and the Slave. And they sang The Big Rock Candy Mountains, the hobo song of Cokaygne:

One evening as the sun went down
And the jungle fire was burning,
Down the track came a hobo hikin'
And he says, "Boys, I'm not turning.
I'm headed for a land that's far away
Beside the crystal fountains,
So come with me, we'll go and see
The Big Rock Candy Mountains."

In the Big Rock Candy Mountains,
There's a land that's fair and bright,
Where the hand-outs grow on bushes,
And you sleep out every night.
Where the boxcars all are empty,
And the sun shines every day.
Oh, the birds and the bees and the cigarette trees,

¹⁰Lomax, ed. The Folk Songs of North America, p. 411.

¹¹Ibid.

The lemonade springs where the bluebird sings,
In the Big Rock Candy Mountains.

In the Big Rock Candy Mountains,
All the cops have wooden legs,
The bulldogs all have rubber teeth
And the hens lay soft-boiled eggs.
The farmers' trees are full of fruit,
And the barns are full of hay.
Oh, I'm bound to go where there ain't no snow,
Where the rain don't fall and the wind don't blow,
In the Big Rock Candy Mountains.

In the Big Rock Candy Mountains,
You never change your socks
And the little streams of alcohol
Come trickling down the rocks.
The brakemen have to tip their caps
And the railroad bulls are blind.
There's a lake of stew and whiskey too,
You can paddle all around in a big canoe
In the Big Rock Candy Mountains.

In the Big Rock Candy Mountains
All the jails are made of tin,
And you can walk right out again
As soon as you are in.
There ain't no short-handled shovels,
No axes, saws or picks.
Oh, I'm going to stay where they sleep all day,
Where they hung the Turk who invented work
In the Big Rock Candy Mountains.¹²

I have talked a good deal about the folk in these last pages and I may have seemed to idealize, in a condescending way, the aspirations of a worthy but lower class of people. R. J. E. Tiddy acutely observes that part of our enjoyment of folk literature is based

on our philanthropic feelings and tinged
by an element of de-haut-en-bas detachment,

¹²It seems appropriate in quoting this song to recall one's own set of words rather than to cite a collector's anthology. See also Berneri, pp. 318-319; The Folk Songs of North America, pp. 422-423.

friendly and affectionate, but detachment none the less. It has even a touch of surprise, of delighted wonder that 'the likes of them' can say such things. . . . But this emotion is certainly not felt by the folk themselves. When the folk say 'the likes of us' they say it with no sense of pathos, but either with a happy indifference to what we may choose to think of the hardship of their lot, or . . . with bitterness and irony. In any attempt to define or to explore folk literature, the pathos which we are apt to find in poverty or helplessness must simply be dismissed.¹³

In addition, an unsentimental and realistic observer will fail to discover, as Carl Sandburg does, that the People, any more than anyone else, speak "for the Family of Man," that "they are in tune and step/with constellations of universal law," marching "in the darkness with a great bundle of grief."¹⁴ Nor will the unsentimental observer find a special merit in their utterances simply because they are, quaintly, of the folk. Folk literature, if the Cokaygne songs and stories we have examined are any indications, can be gay, charming and touched with a humorous bravado. It can also be dull and pedestrian, and unpleasantly coarse, brutal and obscene. What gives these particular pieces of folk literature their special interest is that, taken together, they give us something which we may call a folk utopia. This folk utopia is not a single, complete idea, but an accretion of moods, aspirations and desires. A minstrel (perhaps a wandering scholar) of the Middle Ages can give us a song about

¹³The Mummers' Play, pp. 68-69.

¹⁴The People, Yes, in The American Tradition in Literature, ed. Sculley Bradley et al. (New York, 1956-1957), II, 689-690, lines 47-49, 75.

it and so can a tramp entertainer of the twentieth century.

But the Cokaygne poet does not really belong to "the likes of them." As we have seen, he has something in common with satirists like Lucian, Nigel Wireker and Samuel Butler. Like them, he brings to his theme a knowledge of literary conventions and a flair for clever and sophisticated mockery which the folk, charming, gay and robust, are lacking. The folk are essentially inarticulate. They express themselves more eloquently, as Tiddy points out (p. 89), with dance and music than with words. The Cokaygne poet chooses a popular folk theme as a vehicle for satire and parody, plays with it, improvises, displays at once the ironic wit of the sophisticated mind and the forthright humour of the folk. He gives us a folk utopia in the spirit of game and play.

In this essay I have created, if I may borrow a metaphor from Henry James, a "square and spacious house"¹⁵ with many windows from which to view my subject. I view it through the saint's life and find that the St. Patrick and St. Brendan legends give it one aspect. I view it through the utopia and anti-utopia and discover that the writings of More, Morris, Swift, Huxley and Orwell give it another aspect. I view it through the Greek, Celtic and Latin satire of educated men and through the comic burlesque in the oral tradition of unlettered folk, and see yet other aspects of my subject revealed. In the

¹⁵ "Preface to Portrait of a Lady," The Art of the Novel: Critical Prefaces by Henry James (New York, 1934), p. 48. For James' "house of fiction" see p. 46.

end I have observed The Land of Cokaygne through many apertures. The subject still presents itself as a minor piece by an anonymous poet. Thus illumined, however, it has a fresh and vivid identity with every right to claim a new interest among students of English literature.

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